WATER, LANGUAGE, AND RELATIONALITY FOR LIBERATORY INTER*NATION*AL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Cross-linguistic communication is necessary for international education, especially if the goal is for peoples of the world to learn together to support the thriving of all. This is not what happens in settler-colonial nation-states like Canada. International education is a colonial, instrumental endeavor in which international students are recruited for their multi-billion-dollar contribution to the economy. Within this system, linguistic racism thrives, upholding a linguistic and racial hierarchy that maintains colonial power (Ramjattan, 2023). The purpose of this qualitative research was to support liberatory language practices for wholistic and anti-colonial international education. The foundation of this research is the connection between water and language which supports an expansive and relational understanding of language and languaging. This research considers what might happen to international education when this connection is prioritized. Foregrounding the water-language connection requires an understanding of Indigenous relationality and necessitates transdisciplinarity. Taking a transgressive stance, this multi-method research was conducted in partnership with Kristi Talbot, a Haudenosaunee woman of Mohawk and Ojibwe lineage, and a Kanyen'kéha educator and cultural consultant. Drawing from anti-colonial and critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA) theories (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Prasad, 2020) and informed by Haudenosaunee teachings (e.g. Hill, 2020), we implemented a social design-based experience (SDBE) for a linguistically diverse group of 11 adults. Taking place at a Lake Ontario beach and following an embodied approach, the SDBE included a water-based Kanyen'kéha lesson and CMLA activities. Haudenosaunee teachings were woven throughout the event. Participants completed a pre-event survey which supported the development of the

instructional aspects of the SDBE. Following the event, participants were invited to a semi-structured photo-elicitation interview. Inspired by a wave pattern in the lake, I developed a Cross Seas Analysis Model. Applying this model helped to maintain wholism (Absolon, 2022) during analysis. Learnings from this wholistic approach highlight that relationality-focused language learning and languaging can support relationship-building, linguistic agency, and shifts in thinking toward more expansive understandings of language. The depth of learning indicates the importance of prioritizing local Indigenous language(s) and knowledge(s) of the land and water so that international education can steward conversations for anti-colonial change.

Dedication

To Onyatarí:yo, my most influential teacher even when I did not know it.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the contributions and guidance of Mohawk Language Warrior, Kristi Talbot. What began as a research partnership, continues as a friendship. I am immensely grateful for both. Nyá:wen!

Wholehearted gratitude is extended to the research participants. Their enthusiasm was meaningful encouragement, and their experience and knowledge make this research matter. I am also grateful to the beings of the beach who participated with us during International Beach Day. The water, wind, sand, midges, grass, boats, and hydro towers were awesome interlocutors.

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Dr. Natalia Balyasnikova held multiple roles in my grad school world. As my doctoral committee member, RA supervisor, and Graduate Program Director, her mentorship as a qualitative researcher has been invaluable. One of her superpowers is the ability to clearly explain complicated systems and processes. I always left our meetings knowing exactly what to do next.

Enormous gratitude for Tehota'kerá:ton, Dr. Jeremy D. Green, who is Kanyen'kehá:ka, wolf clan, from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. A fluent Kanyen'kéha speaker and Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies, Dr. Green agreed to transcend university silos to join my doctoral committee. My education and this dissertation are greatly improved by his contributions.

What fortune to have been placed with Dr. Sue Winton when I joined the program. An amazing mentor and academic, Dr. Winton provided many opportunities for learning and growth. When I think of these past five years, my memories are awash with PEX green and the beauty of collaboration. Thank you for everything.

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There is a clear division in my learning journey: before I met Dr. Vidya Shah and after. Dr. Shah is an exemplary scholar activist, and I am a better educator for having been her student. Thank you for the guidance.

Dr. Johanne McCarthy, Onondaga Nation, Beaver Clan from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory was my first Haudenosaunee teacher. At our previous place of employment, Dr. McCarthy was famous for her much needed educational programming for faculty and staff: *InDidYouKnow?*. Dr. McCarthy's dedication to Truth and Reconciliation is the reason that this dissertation exists. I will be forever grateful for the education she provided. Thank you!

Everyone I know who has been a student of Dr. Rachel Silver agrees that her teaching is lifechanging. Her course on global migration influenced the trajectory of my research. She is a model educator, and I hope I can take another class with her one day.

As I prepared my literature review on the water-language connection for publication, Dr. Magali Forte's mentorship was hugely impactful. Her expertise and generosity supported deeper thinking about the structure and content. Merci beaucoup!

Most of this dissertation was written during co-working sessions with Fatemeh Gharibi. Sitting together several days a week, Fati's sage advice and constant presence kept me going. I am also grateful for my first two accountability friends, Jenna D'Andrea and Stephanie De Santis, who were always willing to help with conference proposals, article drafts, and funding applications. Thank you, my friends!

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The smartest thing I did during this PhD program happened on the first day during orientation. I reached out to Myrtle Henry Sodhi, now *Doctor* Sodhi (!), and asked if I could join an event she was organizing. Walking, sometimes dragging our heels, sometimes flying through this academic journey together has been the greatest education. Although I reference her throughout this dissertation, no number of citations could justly demonstrate the influence on my thinking that Dr. Sodhi has had. I wish I knew all the thank yous in all the languages to properly show gratitude for my academic bestie and forever friend.

I am thankful for the love and encouragement of my chosen family. Graduate school can be all consuming, and these beautiful people cared for me throughout the process. Weekly calls across the ocean with Kerri kept me grounded and encouraged. My Two Row paddle sister Mel helped me stay connected to other water and nature lovers. Marie Anne, BFFEF and knowledge keeper of our amazing life together, cheered me on from the desert. Ann's passion for justice was influential across the many state borders between us. Emma, my surf wife, shared many sunrises with me. Liz brought the crafts and the laughs. Janet supplied the books and kept me socializing. I must also thank the Wieners & Pickles club for ongoing hilarity.

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Notes on Language

Resisting Standards

In this dissertation, I purposely break from citation norms prescribed by the American Psychological Association (APA), one of the style guides prescribed by my institution for theses and dissertations. I choose to include full names the first time I refer to people. This practice is a gesture toward wholism as described by Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe), an Anishinaabe and english educator and re-searcher from Flying Post First Nation (refer to Definition of Key Terms below). Including the whole name is a reminder that the people I cite are more than their publication dates or the quotes I select from their texts. When I introduce Indigenous people, I include their Nation or other relational elements about their identity that they provide in the text I reference or their public bios. (If the information is from a public bio, I add a footnote to indicate the source.) Dr. Johanne McCarthy, Onondaga Nation, Beaver Clan of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, taught me to honour and respect Indigenous self-identification, something that colonial powers have tried to deny. Including first names and honouring Indigenous self-identification is a small act of resistance against colonial fragmentation and control.

My doctoral committee member, Tehota'kerá:ton, Dr. Jeremy D. Green, who is Kanyen'kehá:ka, speaks Kanyen’kéha, wolf clan, from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and is an Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies at York University, taught me to ensure that the reference list reflects the people whose oral teachings I had the honour to learn from. The APA standard is to indicate such teachings as personal communications in the text but not the reference list. I have heeded his advice and included oral teachings and personal

communications, both formal and informal, in the reference list. My learning about how to honour Indigenous teachings in ways that respect the diversity of the Nations they are from is ongoing. In this dissertation, I followed a template provided by the Douglas College Library and Learning Centre (2026).

While I follow the dissertation format prescribed by my institution, like water, I find cracks to seep through, where I attempt to open the format to engage more wholistically. For example, the research activities include methods that do not yield data, and those methods are just as important as the methods that invite gifts (an alternative to data) from participants.

I also do not "correct" or add the "sic" notation to any so-called non-standard language usage of people I quote. As I discuss in this dissertation, language standardization is more a practice of colonial control than a facilitation of communication. I recognize the irony that my own writing style aligns with standard practices more than it breaks them. This writing style is an indication of my colonial education. It belies my desire to stop perpetuating the notion that a standard form is more "academic." My language activism is developing. I value diversity in language usage, and my ultimate goal is to dismantle linguistic hierarchies.

Indigenous Vocabulary

Vocabulary from multiple Indigenous languages appears in this dissertation. I employ the Indigenous vocabulary that is presented in the texts I cite and the small amount of vocabulary that I have been taught. I am not a speaker of any Indigenous languages. None of the Indigenous vocabulary in this dissertation has been translated by me. Because I stay true to the sources I cite, there is often variation in spelling, even within the same language.

Referring to the Haudenosaunee languages, Daniel Coleman, Ki'en Debicki,

Kanien’keha:ka, and Bonnie M. Freeman, Algonquin/Mohawk and a member of the Six Nations of the Grand River, (2025) explain that "language standardization is a recent effort born of language revitalization programs. Kanien'kehá, for example, did not undergo systemic standardization until the mid-1990s, and dialect differences between certain communities and reserves are still maintained" (p. 8). When I introduce Indigenous teachers and writers, I use the languages and spelling that they use. In direct and indirect quotations, I maintain the language and spelling of the original text.

Honouring my relationship with Kristi Talbot, a Haudenosaunee woman of Mohawk and Ojibwe lineage and a Kanyen'kéha (Mohawk language) educator and cultural consultant (see chapter 4 for more about our partnership), I default to the Kanyen'kéha words and spelling she taught me when presenting some Haudenosaunee concepts, unless I am citing someone who uses a different spelling or language, in which case I honour their usage.

Definitions of Key English Terms

Table 1

Definitions of Key English Terms

applied linguistics	"a practice-driven discipline that addresses real-world language-based problems” (Kaplan, 2010, p. 42) with a strong focus on how languages are taught and learned
anti-colonial and decolonial	There are many discussions and definitions of *anti-colonial* and *decolonial* (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012). One commonality is that decolonization should address mental, spiritual, and material aspects of what is colonized. The material aspects include Land. In their oft cited article, *Decolonization is not a metaphor*, Tuck and Yang (2012) explain that “decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 7). This dissertation does not involve the repatriation of land, but it does counter colonialism in many ways. Anti-colonialism interrogates and counters the power

	configurations of coloniality and prioritizes Indigenous and other onto-epistemologies that colonialism renders inferior (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). This anti-colonial dissertation is in support of decolonization.
borders	socio-political constructs imposed by those in power (e.g. nation-state governments) to establish, maintain, and sometimes expand control (Walia, 2021)
boundaries	community- or self-determined and regulated; used to maintain safety and protect needs and energy. "Boundaries protect us, they help educate and call in others, and they help us to create more relationships and opportunities that serve our deepest needs, including those aligned with racial justice" (Ricketts, 2021, p. 288).
Critical Multilingual Language Awareness (CMLA)	CMLA is both an analytic framework and a state of consciousness that centers/understands how power dynamics, and other factors, affect multilingual contexts (Prasad & Lory, 2020).
Indigenous	Daniel Delgado, a Quechua and Jewish writer (2024), explains that Indigenous "is an intrinsically political term, created in response to colonization" (para. 8). In Canada, Indigenous differentiates between the peoples (i.e., First Nations, Métis, Inuit) whose ways of life and places of being were (and continue to be) suppressed, stolen, destroyed, and superimposed by colonial powers and those who arrived (and continue to arrive) as part of the Canadian colonial project, regardless of their understanding of their role in perpetuating colonialism (i.e., colonists, settlers, immigrants, international students, etc.).
international education	In Canada, "internationalization is often equated with the recruitment of international students, who pay substantially higher fees than domestic students. These fees constitute an important revenue source for public institutions in an era of rising costs and stagnant provincial funding levels. Internationalization also entails integrating international perspectives into curricula and academic programs; supporting study abroad; and pursuing international research and partnerships. Collectively, these practices constitute an institutional project that seeks to transform the university into a global actor with influence that transcends its local community and national border" (Buckner, 2022, paras. 6-7). Such an instrumental approach to international education perpetuates neoliberal, colonial practices (refer to *Situating the Research* in chapter 1).
	To counter the colonial status quo, this dissertation research takes a

	wholistic approach to inter*nation*al education whereby people(s) of the world can learn with and from each other to support thriving for all. Inter*nation*al education is inspired by an Anishinaabe understanding of Nation which has to do with kinship and relationships (personal communication, P. Toulouse, July 5, 2022; refer to *Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Teachings*, chapter 3). Focusing on relationality and connections to the Land is a way to recognize the similarities and boundaries between people, maintaining diversity even as people join together. This wholistic definition prioritizes human learning and the welfare of humans and all earthly relations. Inter*nation*al education can include Indigenous nation-to-nation education as well as education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations. It can be between individuals or between representatives of larger groups.
Land	Land, with a capital L, refers to Indigenous understandings of land and is "shorthand for land, water, air, and subterranean earth (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 8). It includes the understanding that Land has spirit and "is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (Watts, 2013, p. 21). Land-based learning practices can apply to water-based learning.
languaging	The perceptible and imperceptible, dynamic, and ongoing action(s) and process(es) of accessing multiple linguistic and semiotic resources to make and communicate meaning (García, 2008; Li, 2018b; Piccardo, 2019; Swain et al., 2009).
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is an English language program funded by the federal government under the ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The French equivalent is Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC).
Social Design-Based Experiment/Experience (SDBE)	SDBEs are pedagogical and research interventions that forge utopian yet plausible learning environments that are contextualized in participants' lived experiences (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). For the purpose of this dissertation, the E stands for experience.
plurilingual/ plurilingualism	"Plurilingualism offers a lens through which to view all people as continually developing and expanding their linguistic repertoires over the course of their lives" (Prasad, 2015, p. 23). Plurilingualism is an asset-based understanding of a person's language abilities that does not focus on proficiency but rather on developing competence to "to draw on one's linguistic and cultural resources (as partial as they may be)" (Prasad, 2024, p. 57) for communication. Plurilingual is the term for someone with multiple languages in their linguistic repertoire.

relationality	Relationality is a common understanding among Indigenous Nations worldwide that "takes at its starting point the multiplicity of relationships that humans have with each other and the natural world" (Wildcat & Voth, 2023, p. 476). How relationality is specifically understood and applied varies widely according to context. It is important to attend to context so as not to dilute or elide particular knowledge traditions. "Attention also needs to be paid to how relational worldviews are ultimately located in specific languages, locales and intellectual traditions of Indigenous peoples" (Wildcat & Voth, 2023, p. 477). One Haudenosaunee teaching that supports my humble and nascent understanding of relationality is Kanonhweratónhsera, the Thanksgiving Address, also referred to as Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, which means The Words Before All Else in Kanyen'kéha. I have also been influenced by the Anishinaabe concepts of Nation and All Our Relations. Refer to the Transgressing Theory section of chapter 3 for more details.
translanguaging	Translanguaging refers to the natural way that multi/plurilingual speakers draw on their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire for sense-making and communicating that transcends the borders of named languages (García & Li, 2013). Within translanguaging theory, language is conceptualized as "a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making" (Li, 2018b, p. 22).
Whiteness	Whiteness stems from the ideology of White supremacy and refers to "the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of white identifications and interests" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 488). Whiteness changes as these identifications and interests change but always to uphold the racial order. "'White' is whatever Whites and Whiteness say it is. Whiteness has no essence, and its shape shifts according to the whims of Whiteness as long as its overall interests remain intact" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 85). While Whiteness operates "most saliently in White bodies but also in and through racially oppressed bodies" (Shah & Peek, 2020, p. 42), Whiteness upholds the dominant position of Whites. Whiteness is inherent in teaching colonial languages, including English (Gerald, 2020).
wholism/ wholistic	Wholism with a w refers to the whole self which includes "spirit, heart, mind, and body" (Absolon, 2022, p. 75). Indigenous re-search methods are wholistic (Absolon, 2022).

1. Introduction: Situating the Researcher and the Research

Land Acknowledgement

This doctoral dissertation connects water, language, and international education. These elements are connected through relationships to Land. Institutional land acknowledgements that are recited as a formality without heart and without changes in actions have become part of systems that "reinforce settler logics" (Wemigwans & MacKay, 2023, p. 1). In a beautiful land acknowledgement that made its way to my core, the late Sara Roque, a media artist and filmmaker of Ojibwe-Metis descent[1], said, “for Indigenous peoples, land acknowledgements are not only to assert our sovereignty and treaty rights of today, but it's also a way for all peoples to feel more connected to a place” (Local Love Magazine, 2018, 1:54; click here to watch *Land acknowledgements: uncovering an oral history of Tkaronto*).

Preparing land acknowledgments helps me dedicate time to learning and thinking about the Land I am on, the treaty relationships of my region, and my ongoing questions about my role in reconciliation and decolonization. The more land acknowledgements I do, the more I learn about the impacts of past and present iterations of colonization and the many original Peoples of this land, and the more I begin to appreciate the vastness and beauty of the Land that supports me.

My name is Sonia Martin. I am a sixth-generation descendent of European settlers to Canada. My ancestral legacy affords me material and social benefits made possible by the past and present violences of settler colonialism. I live in what is colonially known as Hamilton, Ontario. My house is a 13-minute drive from Lake Ontario where I often go to rejuvenate. I am grateful to

[1] Roque's bio found on the O'Kaadenigan Wiingashk Arts Collective website: https://publicenergy.ca/old_site/OKW_website/biographies.htm.

the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe who are among the original and current stewards of this lake and have been caretaking it and other bodies of water in this region for millennia so that all of us here can exist.

One treaty that people in Hamilton are subject of is the Between the Lakes Purchase which was negotiated 233 years ago between representatives of the British monarchy and representatives of the Mississauga nation. The written document on the Government of Canada's website is one-sided, focusing mostly on what the treaty allows the king and his subjects to do:

> Now this Indenture doth hereby ratify and confirm the said conference and agreement so had between the parties aforesaid, giving and granting His said Majesty a power and right to make roads thro' the said Messissague Country together with the navigation of the said rivers and lakes for His vessels and those of His subjects trading thereon free and unmolested. (Government of Canada, 2016)

The treaty does not mention any responsibility of the settlers to care for the land or to contribute to peaceful relationships between peoples and all relations on the land. The written version is devoid of the Mississauga's view of the treaty relationship. This treaty and others on the government website are called "Land Surrenders" (Government of Canada, 2016), which is misleading. Richard Hill, Tuscarora, Beaver Clan, of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, a community researcher and historian, states: "Just because it's written, doesn't mean it's true. Oftentimes the British and the French would alter what was said, would put words in the mouths of my ancestors and write it for their convenience not for ours" (Historica Canada, 2020, 10:08-10:19). The treaty does not grant permission to the king and his subjects to molest or attempt genocide or imprison or kidnap or murder the people or pollute or destroy the land and relations on the land. And yet, this is

what happened and continues to happen today.

While it is important to recognize the treaties, it is also important to recognize the context under which the treaties were made and how that affects us today. The representatives of the monarchy did not make this treaty in good faith. In the last 233 years, approximately five or six generations, there is little evidence of a desire on the part of the colonial governments to live peaceably on this land. There is significant evidence of a desire to exploit the land for profit without respect or reciprocity. Understanding the colonial motivation behind the treaty means that reconciliation is not possible if settlers continue on the path that the British version of the treaty set for us. David Garneau (2016), Métis painter, curator and writer, explains that reconciliation assumes a return to *conciliation*: “reconciliation assumes that the parties were once in harmony” (p. 33). We cannot return to something that did not exist, and when I first learned about how the treaties were misaligned, I wondered why it was important to uphold something that had never been agreed upon. One of my classmates changed my mind. In a Zoom chat discussion about the importance of treaties, Julie Pigeon, Batchewana First Nation, Robinson Huron Treaty, said, "Just because they have not been honoured does not mean that it always has to be so. It is about creating good relations." (J. Pigeon, personal communication, July 6, 2022). The Between the Lakes Treaty legally allows me to live on this land, but it is my responsibility to unlearn the colonial attitudes enshrined in the English version of the treaty so that I can be a good neighbour and care for the land that cares for all of us.

Sara Roque says that the truth comes first before reconciliation (Local Love Magazine, 2018). Understanding the truth about Canada's colonialism is important, but knowing the truth does not necessarily catalyze lasting change (Schutt, 2023). Because colonization has a centuries-long

stronghold, Dr. Deborah McGregor, Anishinabe scholar, lawyer and environmental advocate, explains that quick fixes cannot work. We need paradigm shifts, especially when it comes to caretaking of the Land. For Dr. McGregor, one paradigm shift is about language. Because Indigenous languages carry knowledge of the Land and ways of understanding all beings' relationships to each other, Dr. McGregor asserts that Indigenous language revitalization is climate action (Callison et al., 2023). Long before Europeans imposed their languages, Indigenous peoples have understood that "language is land and land is language" (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022, p. 210), so any actions toward decolonization must include language action.

Tehota'kerá:ton, Dr. Jeremy D. Green, who is Kanyen'kehá:ka, speaks Kanyen’kéha, wolf clan, from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and is an Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies at York University, shared with me that the Kanyen’keha:ka have a traditional story that demonstrates and teaches the connection between Land, language, and knowledge (personal communication, May 27, 2026). Tehota'kerá:ton found an online version called The Storytelling Stone (Magelomaniac, 2013), but he knows it as The Origin of Stories:

> Long, long ago in a Seneca [village] there lived a young boy. Both of his parents had died and he was sent to live with a woman who had no children of her own. In time they began to enjoy each other's company and she taught him many things. Most importantly, she taught him to hunt so he could one day provide them with food.
>
> That day came, and the boy's foster mother sent him out to the forrest with a new bow and an ear of parched corn for lunch. He was to return with as many birds as possible. The boy did this with great success for many weeks and his foster mother was so proud.
>
> One day, the boy was not having too much luck at the edge of the woods where usually hunted so ventured further into the woods and found many birds. At lunch time he found a clearing with a large stone in the center. So he climbed up on the stone and began to munch on his parched corn when he heard a voice, "Shall I tell you stories?"
>
> The boy looked around the clearing, but there was no one there. He slowly went back to munch his corn. The voice came again, "Shall I tell you stories?"

The boy suddenly realized there was no person in the clearing, this was the stone speaking.

He had never heard of a talking stone but he responded anyway, "What does this mean - to tell stories?"

For this was a time when there were no stories. "It is to tell of things that happened a long time ago."

The boy thought and quickly decided, "I think I would like that."

And so the stone told the boy stories. It told stories from the time when people lived up in the sky. It told stories of the earth's creation. It told stories of long, long ago, when then animals could talk to each other. The boy was enchanted, he couldn't get enough. But when the sun went down he knew it was time to return home to his village. He asked the stone if he could return again the next day and the stone said, "Only if you promise not to tell anyone what you have heard." The boy quickly agreed.

When he returned home with less birds than usual his mother was confused but decided that you cannot be lucky every day. The following day she watched him run into the forrest at top speed, and she hoped that this meant he would be returning with many birds.
Instead of hunting though, the boy immediately returned to the clearing and sat on the stone, closed his eyes and listened to stories. On his way back home at sunset he shot a few lingering birds and returned to a now upset foster mother. Something bad was happening to the boy in the woods and she was determined to find out.

So, she sent another boy from the village to follow her foster son into the forrest. When the boy reached the clearing and saw the other boy sitting on the stone he confronted him,

"What are you doing? Why aren't you hunting for your family?"

"I am listening to the stone tell stories. Would you like to listen?"

"What does this mean - to tell stories?" the boy asked.

"It is to tell of things that happened a long time ago."

So the boy jumped onto the stone, they closed their eyes and spent the day caught up in every word of the stones. They returned every day to hear the stones stories, and still the foster mother had no answers. So she sent two men, hunters in fact, into the woods to discover what her foster son was up to. When the men saw the two boys sitting on the stone in silence they confronted them, "What are you doing? Why aren't you hunting for your family?"

> "We are listening to the stone tell stories. Would you like to listen?"
>
> "What does this mean - to tell stories?" the men asked.
>
> "It is to tell of things that happened a long time ago."
>
> The men cautiously agreed but when they too sat on the stone they were whisked away to magical lands in the sky, and to times where animals could talk. They could not get enough. When the last story was told and the sun was setting in the sky the stone spoke to all four of them, "You must bring all of your people to hear my stories tomorrow. Everyone must come and everyone must listen."
>
> And when the entire village arrived the next day the storytelling stone told all of its stories. It told stories from the time when people lived up in the sky. It told stories of the earth's creation. It told stories of long, long ago, when then animals could talk to each other. The people were overwhelmed and undone. They had never heard anything so beautiful. They had never been so transported and when the sun began to set the stone spoke its final words,
>
> "You must keep these stories until the end of time. Tell them to your children and your children's children, for I am now done."
>
> And the stone fell silent and the people returned home recounting the stories they had heard sharing them again and again. Ever since the time that stone brought all the stories into the world the people of the world have been less lonely, less cold and much, much happier.
>
> (Magelomaniac, 2013)

How might our actions change when we understand that all stories come from Land?

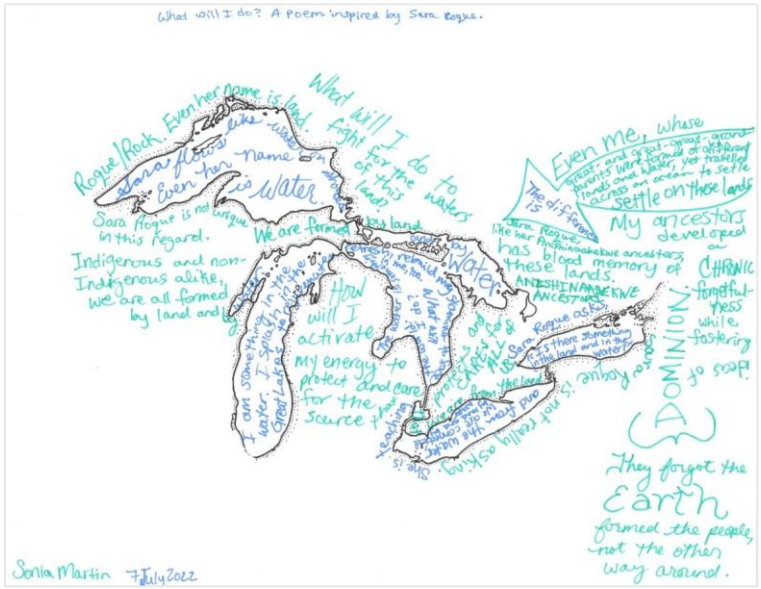
Not far from my house is the Woodland Cultural Centre which "serves to preserve, promote and strengthen Indigenous language, culture, art and history" (Woodland Cultural Centre, n.d., para. 1). Managed by First Nations, this facility is partially housed in a large brick building that was the first residential school in Canada. Its former official name was The Mohawk Institute, but this place was known by locals as the Mush Hole, a reference to the food that the government-funded Christian administrators forced the children to eat. Like residential schools across Canada, the Mush Hole was a site of horrific violence and linguicide. The Woodland Cultural Centre has transformed this building into a place of healing, remembrance, teaching, and community

engagement. For 41 years, the Woodland Cultural Centre has focused on language reclamation and revitalization, providing resources and supports for community-based language programs. I used to wonder how it could be possible to change the energy of a place in this way. The paradigm shift from harm to health is not a shift toward something new. It is a shift toward Land. The land beneath the building, the land that formed the bricks of the building, has been nourishing people for millennia.

Shifting toward Land happens in many ways. In 2022, I took a course with Dr. Pamela Toulouse, an Ojibwe/Odawa woman from Sagamok First Nation. One of her assignments was to write a poem. Mine was inspired by Sara Roque's Land Acknowledgement. My original concrete poem (also called a shape poem) is below (Figure 1), followed by the typed version of the text.

Figure 1

What will I do? A Poem Inspired by Sara Roque



Note. Shoreline map of the Great Lakes by NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (2004) CC BY-SA 2.0; poetry by Sonia Martin.

What will I do? A poem inspired by Sara Roque

Sara Roque asks, “Is there something in the land and in the water?”
Sara Roque is not really asking. She is teaching that we are from the land and water, we are connected by land and water, we are formed by land and water.

Roque/Rock. Even her name is land. Sara flows like water on shores. Even her name is water.

Sara Roque is not unique in this regard. Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, we are all formed by land and water. Even me, whose great- and great-great-grandparents were formed of different lands and water yet travelled across an ocean to settle on these lands.

The difference is, Sara Roque, like her Anishinaabekweg ancestors, has blood memory of these lands. My ancestors developed a chronic forgetfulness while fostering ideas of dominion. They forgot that the Earth formed the people, not the other way around.

I am something in the water. I splash in the Great Lakes to rejuvenate, refresh, rebuild my stamina to face the world. The water is something in me, too. What will I do to fight for the waters of this land? How will I activate my energy to protect and care for the source that protects and cares for all of us?

This concrete poem visually portrays connections between water, land, colonialism, and language. As I look at this poem again three years after I wrote it, I see the shoreline outline as an unnatural border that separates land and water. This separation that I unwittingly incorporated into my poem is indicative of the Eurocentric understandings of land and water that are part of my subconscious. Returning to the poem and noticing something different is indicative of the slow and iterative nature of paradigm shifts and of learning with and from Land. My goal as an educator is to support decolonial paradigm shifts, beginning with myself.

Although I did not realize it when I wrote the poem, shaping my words around and within the Great Lakes foreshadowed the direction of my anti-colonial research, the foundation of which is the connection between water and language. In the next section, I situate myself in relation to colonialism, language, and water.

Situating the Researcher

Research is personal. Not only are researchers' skills informed by their positionality (Bhattacharya, 2017), but I have witnessed during my time in the doctoral program that the rationale for any compelling research is driven by the researcher's own experiences. Every decision and action made by researchers is affected by their accumulation of knowledge and ways of understanding, which often change as the researcher develops. The notion that researchers can safeguard against bias to achieve neutrality and objectivity in order to find “the truth” has been critiqued by critical scholars for decades (e.g. Benston, 1982; Edwards, 2024; Haraway, 1988; hooks, 1994; Patel, 2016; Tripp-Knowles, 1993). The very essence of objectivity is subjective (Edwards, 2024). Born from the Enlightenment period in Europe through the desire of prominent thinkers to depart from theology toward rationality, objectivity and other notions of Western science were influenced by the worldviews of the people who created them (Bristow, 2023; Edwards, 2024). Any response to theology, even one that attempts to counter it, is still influenced by it. "The modern Western version of science ... maintains the Christian onto-epistemic orientation that a single universally applicable truth exists and can be known – a legacy of the neutral and objective 'God-Eye view' assumed within Christianity" (Edwards, 2024, p. 6; Grosfoguel, 2013). Attempts at neutrality and objectivity will always be affected by the researcher's understanding of the world.

Explicitly maintaining a personal connection to the research can be beneficial, especially when approaching research from a critical stance. In her book *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies,* Absolon (2022) suggests that many researchers merely claim objectivity by not explicitly locating themselves, but self-omission does not disappear the

self:

> Taking ourself out of the picture presents a misrepresentation that the author does not matter and that the researcher's gender, race, class, sex, age or identity has no impact on the research. In reality it is *people* doing the research and *people* are interpreting and making meaning; who they are does impact the interpretation and meaning and who they are does matter. (p. 168; emphasis in the original)

By locating ourselves and how we relate to the world, researchers become more accountable to their interlocutors (Absolon, 2022). Māori historian Aroha Harris explains:

> Subjectivity doesn't need to be feared ... We're humans. We are biased, so how do we work with it ... how do we read for it. And this is what I think Indigenous peoples do really well. When you know how to locate yourself, know how to position yourself, it's a way of declaring what your bias is ... it's a way of connecting because it's a way to further discuss what our similarities and differences are. (Harris & Gismondi, 2025, 24:46)

To be clear, I am not arguing against science or the scientific method, but rather for scientists and researchers (of all kinds) to critically examine and name how their worldview affects their work. Locating the self is a way to strengthen science and research. Locating myself is an opportunity for self-accountability as I reflect on and continue the ongoing work of identifying and unlearning my internalized colonialism. Locating the self can be a tool to disrupt hegemonic thinking:

> To break from hegemonic thinking ... involves seeking out questions of epistemology (what are the logics informing this research practice and from whose values do they emerge?) because the ideas we hold about Self/Other and the world will shape our ontological selves as researchers and our ways of engaging with others who participate in our research

> endeavors. (Kress et al., 2013, p. ix)

Similarly, Absolon (2022) explains the importance of centering the self in Indigenous re-search[2]. Situating the self is about recognizing interconnected relationships within and beyond the self within the re-search. Absolon (2022) states:

> situating self in Indigenous re-search is different from eurowestern research in that we acknowledge and include the relationships between self, Spirit, responsibility, knowledge and truth. Situating self in Indigenous searches puts location, political climate, environment, history and cultural knowledge front and centre. (p. 172)

I am a White[3], non-Indigenous researcher, so I cannot do Indigenous re-Search. However, like most researchers in colonial systems, I am affected by what Absolon (2022) calls *colonial research trauma*:

> Colonial research trauma is an extension of other systems that have been established to colonize our minds — in particular, the omission and erasure of wholistic Indigenous methodologies in education coupled with the active promotion of eurowestern dominant theories and methodologies. (p. 71)

Absolon (2022) further explains that colonial research trauma leads to "insecurity, fear, and doubt"

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[2] Absolon (2022) notes that "research" carries a negative connotation of suspicion and mistrust. Researchers, historically and presently, (have) contribute(d) to the genocide, disenfranchisement, and other material and social harms of Indigenous peoples worldwide (Kress et al., 2013; Schnarch, 2004). Absolon (2022) uses re-Search to disrupt the negative ways Eurowestern research has influenced Indigenous people's notions of searching and to situate "the act of searching again from an Anishinaabe place of knowing versus mainstream methods" (p. 26).

[3] Following Eve L. Ewing (2020), I capitalize White and Whiteness in this dissertation to denaturalize this social category "that confers identifiable and measurable social benefits" (Ewing, 2020, para. 4). The tension is that capitalizing White risks perpetuating the centering of Whiteness and upholding violent racial power dynamics, so it is important to consider the context before deciding if capitalizing White could be helpful or harmful (V. Shah, personal communication, January 21, 2025).

(p. 71) and hinders the ability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners alike from "stepping into their own centre and creating search processes and methodologies that are grounded in location and identity" (p. 72). The challenge for me is to recognize the centrality of myself in my research without centering Whiteness in an uncritical way, further perpetuating colonialism, or appropriating Indigenous knowledges and cultures. To offer an understanding of my ways of knowing and being that have influenced why and how I conducted this research, I begin autobiographically.

Situating Myself

My doctoral research is trans-disciplinary, which reflects the foundation of my research ─ the water-language connection ─ and my identity as an international educator. My doctoral project connects several issues, each of which has had a profound impact on my life: languaging and language teaching, bordering practices, international education, and water-based learning. To situate myself within the research, I focus on my relationships to and between language and colonialism, borders and my international identity, water and the Two Row Wampum covenant. Each set of relationships contributes to the integrity of who I am as a researcher.

Language, Colonialism, and Me.

Language has been a source of privilege, joy, and shame in my life, and it has been the key tool that I have inherited to perpetuate colonialism. My mother's mother was a French- and English-speaking Québécoise of French, Scottish, and Italian descent, and my mother's father was born to German-speaking farmsteaders in Saskatchewan. My father's parents, both from Nova Scotia, have French ancestry with a mix of Prussian and English. When my parents were born, Canada's official status as a bilingual/bicultural country had not yet materialized, nor had

multiculturalism been adopted as a Canadian identity[4]. The goal for both my parents' families was to assimilate into the dominant language, English, and they succeeded. Speaking English affirmed their Whiteness (Sterzuk, 2015; Von Esch et al., 2020), ensuring their legitimacy and security within Canada's settler-colonial project. All my grandparents' grandchildren grew up in English-speaking homes. When my father was a baby, his English-speaking mother stopped letting my Acadian great-grandmother babysit him because his first words were in French, and she could not understand him. I did not know these stories when I chose to do my undergraduate degree in French, a language I did not yet speak, write, or understand. I only knew that I felt a bone-deep affinity for French. My body knew French was my language before I even learned it.

Both of my parents play with language and passed that joy down to me. My dad and his sisters purposely pronounce words differently: schedule is *skadulie*; wee bit of dirt is *reebadort*, cutting board is *cutter-onner*. My mother, a bit more academic about her linguistic glee, was always proud of her "excellent" grammar. In her 40s and 50s, she became an English language teacher and studied Spanish, French, German, Arabic, and Russian. When I consider my childhood, my grandparents' languages made daily appearances. In my home, a pacifier was a *souce* and an idiot was a *dummkopf*. I wonder if my parents' joyful language practices were a result of my grandparents' and great-grandparents' experiences in translanguaging.

I grew up in Saudi Arabia. My dad learned conversational Arabic at work, but we spoke English at home. Language policies changed while we lived there; sometimes Arabic was a

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[4] While celebrated as the first national policy in the world to uphold multiculturalism (Jodwab, 2020), Canada's 1971 multiculturalism policy does not inherently support equity among cultures in Canada. It subsumes "Other ethnic groups" (Haque, 2010, p. 82) into Canada's existing racial hierarchy (Haque, 2010).

required course at our company-run American school and sometimes it wasn't, but the main language of instruction was always English. Equating schooling with education, knowledge and status, my young subconscious believed that English was more important than Arabic and that English speakers had more knowledge than Arabic speakers. I did not always differentiate between Arabic and English, though. Like the French words in my home vocabulary, some of the Arabic vocabulary that my dad incorporated into our daily repertoire remained unmarked for me: "Let's pop into this store and take a shoof." I knew what he meant (take a look), but I didn't realize until I was in my 20s that *shoof* was Arabic. Even though Arabic sounds like home, I can only count to 10, greet people, and ask how much something is. I have long been ashamed that I do not speak the language of the land that formed me.

As an adult, I was drawn to English language teaching for its promise of creating shared experiences between peoples of different cultures. Yet I was raised to be ignorant of the languages of my ancestors and the languages of the lands that raised and sustain me:

> Rather than being a *deficiency* of knowledge, ignorance might be thought of as a surfeit of a particular kind of knowing produced by dominant settler groups, who create omissions and misconceptions in knowledge systems, undermining the credibility of Indigenous peoples and upholding their own knowledge claims as objective and true. (Rice et al., 2022, p. 18, emphasis in the original)

My surfeit of colonial knowledge manifested in my becoming an English language teacher. A demonstration of how "ignorance reproduces power" (Rice et al., 2022, p. 18), I believed that English could be a neutral lingua franca, supporting connections and relationships between peoples of the world.

A Balanced Approach to English Instruction AKA My Move to Innocence.

"So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language.
Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language."

Gloria Anzaldúa
Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza
(1987, p. 81)

I was first introduced to Anzaldúa during my master's program in Applied Linguistics, specializing in teaching English as a subsequent language. Anzaldúa's words had a profound impact on me. At the time, my daughter and I had recently spent a year in a francophone-dominant town in Québec where English was minoritized. Minoritized languages (and their speakers) carry less power and status than the dominant language (and its speakers). I have lived in countries where English is not the majority language but where English speakers still hold some level of dominant language status (i.e., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Netherlands). This town in Québec is the only place I have lived where being a native-English speaker was not necessarily a linguistic privilege. I had recently completed my BA in French Language and Literature, and my daughter had completed kindergarten to grade two in French Immersion, so we were both proficient in French, but our English accents marked us as socio-political outsiders, and we experienced language-based discrimination. I would like to think that I would not have had to personally experience discrimination to be able to recognize it and fight against it, but I cannot deny that my year as a minoritized language speaker offered a deeper level of understanding, especially regarding how political language is and how difficult it can be for non-dominant speakers to navigate the power imbalance. My increased critical awareness was the direct result of my lived experience, which "reflects the power of embodiment" (G. Prasad, personal communication, August 17, 2023). I had learned about linguistic discrimination in university, but until I lived it, felt it in my body, I did not

fully comprehend the impact of it.

Anzaldúa's words, *I am my language*, guided my passion for linguistic inclusion in language teaching. My final master's project introduced a balanced approach to English instruction, one that respected context, valued everyone's Englishes and full linguistic abilities, and focused on strategic skills for negotiating meaning more than on ensuring everyone conformed to a standard (see Farrell & Martin, 2009, for the published version of my master's project). Over the next decade and a half, I further developed my understanding of racism and oppression, as I continually adapted my teaching approach in a variety of contexts in Canada, Europe, and the Middle East: government-funded language programs for immigrants and refugees, private academic English institutions, corporate language tutoring, and post-secondary academic programs. Yet, no matter where I worked, the system was always the same — the same learning objectives regardless of the context, the same pedestal upholding one standard way to communicate. This was not the *international education* I had imagined being a part of when I became a language teacher. I grew increasingly frustrated and burnt out.

Colonial pedagogy includes the narratives, objects, and practices that teach us how to think like colonial subjects (Brand, 2020). Dionne Brand (2020) explains that one trick of such pedagogy is that it claims to diffuse hierarchical systems while obscuring the violent colonial framework beneath. My balanced approach to English Instruction claimed inclusivity while covering up the system of linguistic imperialism that it was perpetuating (Phillipson, 2017). Formed out of my *settler move to innocence* (Mawhinney, 1998, as cited in/adapted by Tuck & Yang, 2012) whereby I equated my experience of language-based discrimination "with stories of structural racism and exclusion" (Mawhinney, 1998, as paraphrased in Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9), my balanced approach

to English instruction could never be more than colonial pedagogy.

Borders, Worldliness, and Potential History.

My father worked for an oil company in Saudi Arabia. We lived on one of four gated compounds built for expatriate employees and their families. The physical borders of the compound represented the social stratification of company life. Each employee's grade code, the numerical employee identification system, indicated their level of employment (i.e., manager, administrator, physical laborer), type of housing (on or off compound; private or shared; house or apartment), and family status (families allowed to live with employee in Saudi Arabia; families allowed to visit Saudi Arabia; families not allowed to visit). Grade codes aligned with race, class, and gender divisions. Generally, "professional" employees like accountants, engineers, and teachers were American (or American-adjacent like Canadians). British women were secretaries and nurses. Street cleaners, janitors, cooks, and nannies were from places like India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Many employees believed the company line that the hiring practices were market-based, driven by national economies. Every worker, regardless of grade code, was paid more than they would receive in their home country. This was an acceptable rationalization for White liberals like my parents, "as if markets were not places where racism is deeply encoded; as if something couldn't be both a product of the market and racist" (Parssinen, 2021, para. 66). The laborers were part of our daily life but excluded from our world. They worked at the recreation center but were not members of the bowling league; they cleaned the schools that their children could not attend; they cut the grass but were never invited to lawn parties. Meanwhile, my father's grade code afforded me free access to all the amenities of the compound: attendance at a well-funded school, swimming lessons in gorgeous pools, ability to leave the compound to tour Saudi Arabia, and access to parts of the

world that I likely would never have visited had I grown up in Canada.

I was a *third culture kid*, someone raised as a non-resident in a host culture that is not their parents'. I did not feel Canadian, and I could never be Saudi. People can live in Saudi for decades, even be born there, but it is very difficult to obtain Saudi nationality without Saudi parents. Most people who live there on a visa status are required to leave at some point. My father's visa required us to leave the country annually. We would often take this as an opportunity to visit my grandparents in Canada. Canada was a strange, exciting place to me. My parents called it home, but it wasn't mine. In the 1980s, most people I met in Canada had not heard of Saudi Arabia. Their questions about where I lived contributed to my budding international identity. To me, *international* meant being of nowhere in particular, and the potential to be of anywhere. My privilege as a White Canadian passport holder meant that, instead of being stateless, I was worldly. Like many third culture kids, I developed an "acceptance of cultural diversity, interest in travel and learning multiple languages along with a desire to live an international lifestyle" (Misanko, 2020, p. 15), but I was never taught the colonial history that made my reality possible.

It is possible to tease apart commonly accepted narratives of "reality" presented by colonial pedagogy to determine the unchosen options of the past. Ariella Azoulay (2013) calls this *potential history*:

> Potential history insists on restoring within the order of things the polyphony of civil relations and forms of being-together that existed at any moment in history … Potential history … extract[s] from the past its unrealized possibilities as a necessary condition for imagining a different future. (pp. 565-566)

The potential history I am interested in does not have gradecodes, compound fences, or nation-state

borders that ignore people's relationships to each other and to land. "Borders are an ordering regime" (Walia, 2021, p. 2). What the oil company employees consider to be mere company policy couches a border violence that reifies social categories: expatriate vs laborer; citizen vs non-resident. Such categories obscure the "the possibility of a civil life" (Azoulay, 2013, p. 558) that existed between all these people before the option to create borders was chosen.

When I hear Arabic, even though I can't understand it, my heart skips a beat. I am drawn back to the excitement of leaving the company compound to go to the gold souqs in Al Khobar, meet my dad's Bedouin friends in the desert, or visit Al Hofuf, my favourite place with its tall, narrow caves where potters would set up wheels and sell their earthenware. But Arabic isn't the sound I hear when I think of life on the compound. It's English. What would my childhood memories sound like had Malayalam, Sinhala, Jawa, Urdu been amplified? I want to hear that potential history.

Relating to Water.

In my thirties, I moved to Ontario, only a few hours away from where I was born, near Lake Ontario. For many years thereafter, I kept trying to leave, using winter as an excuse. Then I met the Lake Surfistas, a grassroots group of women surfers who are advancing inclusivity in the man-dominant sport. Surfing the Great Lakes is a year-round activity, but the best waves arrive between fall and spring. Surfing in February gave me a completely different perspective of Ontario winters and of the lakes. Grey, windy weather is no longer depressing. It means there will be waves. Spending so much time immersed in lake water, I developed intimate knowledge of water as agent of power, transforming my previous conception of water as victim of pollution. I have witnessed lakes taking charge, cleaning themselves and pushing us out (people and refuse alike) when we are

not supposed to be there. Even when I'm not surfing, I now feel more connected to the land where I was born. Water helped with that.

Although I didn't always know it or name it, I have always been a water person. In Saudi Arabia, we lived on the Arabian Gulf whose warm waters helped shape my identity. I learned to scuba dive there. I communed with sea turtles. My daughter was born in Victoria, BC, surrounded by the waters of the lək̓ʷəŋən, the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, and the constant aroma of sea kelp. For years, I would not leave my house without a bottle of water in my purse — water calms my anxiety. Noticing the water-language connection during my doctoral studies has been an awakening for me, as if I am meeting water again for the first time. Water has been so generous and generative in my upbringing. Centering water in this research is an opportunity to reciprocate.

Tékeni Teyohá:te - The Two Row Wampum

I have learned that as a non-Indigenous person living in the Great Lakes region, my experience with water is more than personal. Water plays a role in the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers on Turtle Island, as evidenced by the *Tékeni Teyohá:te*, the Two Row Wampum. The Tékeni Teyohá:te, often referred to as the Kahswénhta[5], is an agreement made in 1613, is one of the first treaties between the Haudenosaunee and European settlers (Freeman & Van Katwik, 2019; Muller, 2007; R. Hill in Historica Canada, 2020), although the principles guiding this treaty pre-date European contact (Coleman et al., 2025). The physical representation of the Tékeni Teyohá:te relationship is a long belt made of shell beads called wampum. The belt is

[5] Kahswénhta is the Kanyen'kéha word for wampum belt and is often used to refer to the Tekeni Teyohá:te (Tehota'kerá:ton, personal communication, May 27, 2026). The literal translation of Tekeni Teyohá:te is two roads (K. Talbot, personal communication, May 24, 2026).

mostly white beads with two parallel rows of purple along the length. One purple row represents the Haudenosaunee in their canoe and the other purple row represents the Europeans in their ship. Hill explains:

> It represents an agreement that we are going to co-exist on the river of life. One path represents the canoe of my ancestors. Think of it this way - if you're getting in a canoe, inside you put your laws, your customs, your beliefs, your language. The other path represents the ship of the Europeans. Inside their ship are the same things: their laws, their beliefs, their customs, everything that matters to them. These two ships are supposed to go down the river together, but they're not supposed to interfere with each other. People in the canoe aren't supposed to steer the ship. People in the ship aren't supposed to try to steer the canoe. This was really the founding treaty. Now, treaty isn't just words on a paper. It's really about the relationship between these two things. The relationship of the people of the canoe to the people of the ship. (Historica Canada, 2020, 5:47-6:33)

As the Two Row Wampum depicts, the two groups of people are both connected and separated by water. Actions from one row will always affect the other row. The *Tékeni Teyohá:te* "symbolizes that we are all treaty people who can journey together on the same river" (Doxtater, 2021, p. 4). For two summers, I have participated in a multi-day canoe and kayak trip with a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous paddlers, led by a Mohawk woman and educator from Six Nations of the Grand River, Ellie Joseph, and her paddle friend and settler ally, Jay Bailey. The Two Row on the Grand Paddle is an annual event in which "participants, native and non-native, partake in educational events given by knowledgeable persons each day; treaties, cultural teachings, dance/social demonstrations, storytelling, environmental concerns, and sharing circles" (TwoRow

Info, 2020, 5:39). During the day, we paddle in two rows down the river, embodying the Tékeni Teyohá:te. Every evening, in addition to the teachings, there is a communal meal. These activities support cross-cultural learning, relationship-building, and improved physical and mental health. The event contributes to a greater respect for the water and land (TwoRow Info, 2022).

Twenty twenty-five marked the 10th anniversary of the Two Row on the Grand paddle. To celebrate this occasion and support continued education about Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships and the Tékeni Teyohá:te, representatives of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council shared the original Tékeni Teyohá:te Wampum belt, as well as the Friendship Chain Wampum, with the participants of the Two Row Paddle so we could see them and feel the spirit of these living agreements. Leroy Hill, Cayuga Nation, Bear Clan, Secretary of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council, offered a message of encouragement: Canadians need to know about this treaty and the teachings that accompany it (Hill, 2025). As we learn about it, we have a responsibility to share the message. Although colonial settlers' Kahswénhta responsibilities have not been upheld throughout most of the relationship, the Tékeni Teyohá:te, like other Wampum covenants, continues to inform Haudenosaunee law and practices (e.g. Williams, 2023). The historic and current applications of the Tékeni Teyohá:te and related treaties continue to be discussed and written about (e.g. Coleman et al., 2025), and I am still learning what it means to be a treaty person. I imagine this learning will continue for the rest of my life. My experiences with the Two Row paddle and my continued learning about the Tékeni Teyohá:te contribute to my developing ethical stance as I engage in research about international education in Haudenosaunee territory.

Becoming Unbalanced: A "Proleptic" Approach to Research

In this autobiographical section, I have brought my past into the present (Cole, 1996, as cited in Becker & Gutiérrez, 2022), so I can attune to potential histories that existed but were not selected (Azoulay, 2013) and "open up to the process of prolepsis" (Becker & Gutiérrez, 2022, p. 117). Being simultaneously "future-oriented and historical" (Becker & Gutiérrez, 2022, p. 104) ensures that I account for the "historical and ongoing link to settler colonialism" (Becker & Gutiérrez, 2022, p. 104) in language education and international education while also imagining an anti-oppressive future. Inspired by anti-oppression and liberation-focused advocates and scholars (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2020; Brand, 2020; Love, 2019; Simpson, 2025b; Sodhi, 2023; Tuck, 2009; Walia, 2021), my doctoral research begins with my refusal to perpetuate colonial pedagogy, neither as the teacher nor as the student. Like Azoulay (2019), "I do not refuse, however, to assume the implications of this perpetrator's position that I inherited" (p. xiv). Throughout my doctoral journey, I have been interrogating, and will continue to interrogate, my positionality, aspects of my identity ─ e.g. as a White, native-English speaking, Canadian passport holder ─ which have afforded me the privileges of my international life. I look like the stereotypical English language teacher, an image that has been curated by colonial pedagogy, perpetuating the notion that only certain people can authorize *appropriate* English usage (Flores & Rosa, 2015). No matter how I attempt to adjust the system, my very *being* perpetuates it. There are other ways to be. Sharon Stein (2021) states that addressing coloniality:

> will require that we stay with the uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and equivocal authority, and it will require that we not only do things differently, or even just think about them differently, but that we actually learn to be differently. (p. 1777)

This doctoral research is an opportunity to learn *to be* differently. While my master's project considered how to be balanced, my PhD dissertation embraces being unbalanced. When people are in or on water, they often feel unbalanced, worrying about their canoe tipping or not being able to stand on their surf or paddle board. Even in the calmest water, there is always the risk of a current or slippery lake bed disrupting people's intended movements. At the same time, if we let it, water can hold us, float us, allowing us to engage differently in a world that is actually quite fluid.

Situating the Research

Post-Secondary International Education in Canada

In Canada, international education is more a strategy to strengthen the nation-state than to encourage learning and sharing between peoples of the world. From 2014 to 2024, the federal government maintained an international education strategy (Government of Canada 2014; 2019). While the strategy document has not been renewed, likely due to changes in federal government leadership, the tenets of the strategy live on, partly through the government's international student recruitment brand and website EduCanada (Government of Canada, 2019; 2025b). I have elsewhere described the most recent iteration of the strategy and its context:

> The federal government of Canada has developed an international education strategy, which is unusual because education falls under the purview of each province and territory. The federal strategy is introduced by the Minister of International Trade Diversification, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labor, and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. The titles of these officials indicate that the goal of international education is more about nation-state building than about education. Indeed, the strategy documents state that "educational expenditures by international students have a

> greater impact on Canada's economy than exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft" (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 2), reducing international students to sources of revenue. In 2022, Canada sourced approximately 80% of international students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 2022). Consequently, in addition to collecting revenue, post-secondary institutions in Canada benefit from increased diversity, checking off the D box in their equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). [Sarah] Ahmed (2012) explains that "people of color are welcomed on condition they return that hospitality by integrating into a common organizational culture, or by 'being' diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity' (p. 43). This conditional hospitality (Derrida as cited in Ahmed, 2012) is reflected in international students' experiences of marginalization, which is well documented in Canadian-context academic literature (Ge & Durst, 2022; Guo & Guo, 2017; Houshmand et al., 2014; Hutcheson, 2020; Power et al., 2021; Tavares, 2021). (Sodhi & Martin, 2023, p. 71)

International students pay up to ten times the tuition as domestic students (Universities Canada, n.d.) to attend Canadian educational institutions, on the condition that they contribute to Canada's economy and contribute to diversity, while remaining in an inferior position.

Government and institutional policies about international education create and/or maintain binary categories of people to distinguish between types of experience and status in the nation-state. The federal international education strategy that was in effect in 2024, the year my main research event took place, mentions two categories of students: *international students* and *Canadian students* (Government of Canada, 2019). While definitions are not provided, descriptions in the text

indicate the differences between the categories (Government of Canada, 2019; Table 2). International students are considered important for nation building as they are highly skilled and can meet Canada's economic and population needs across the country. Canadian students are positioned as unworldly and unskilled, but they could learn highly valued skills if they engaged in education outside of Canada, or presumably by engaging with international students in Canada. Both categories are reductive, offering a homogeneous picture of each type of student.

Table 2

Descriptions of International Students and Canadian Students in the Federal International Education Strategy

International Student Description	Canadian Student Description
"sparking new ideas, strengthening innovation and building people-to-people ties that are crucial to international trade and the global economy" (para. 16)	"benefit from the world of learning beyond our borders" (para. 9)
"young, have Canadian educational qualifications and in-demand labour skills, and are proficient in one of our official languages" (para. 16)	"will have the chance to develop internationally valued skills" (para. 15)
"ideal candidates for permanent residency" (para. 16)	"few Canadian students choose to study abroad" (p. 5)
"an important source of revenue" (p. 3)	face "barriers" to international education (p. 5)
mostly from "India and China" but the goal is to attract students from more countries (p. 4)	"encourage Canadian students to gain new skills through study and work abroad opportunities" (p. 7)
mostly "live in large cities in Canada" but the goal is to distribute students across the country (p. 4)	

It is noteworthy that this strategy document positions international students as highly skilled and Canadian students as needing to learn. Research about international students has typically demonstrated an opposite attitude in Canada, providing many examples of international students' struggles. This attitude is also reflected in the ubiquity of support programs in educational institutions for international students "designed with the assumption that 'they' need to learn about education 'here' so they too can be successful" (Bista, 2023, p. 2). The federal strategy document's seemingly positive picture of international students should not be understood as an improvement. The strategy document is more aligned with a marketing ploy than an education focused policy, selling the idea that Canada needs international students' money. This is yet another aspect of conditional hospitality — international students are welcome if they contribute to the economy.

Who are "Canadian students"? The federal strategy document does not describe them, but a picture can be garnered from another binary categorization. *Represented students* is an unstated category with its explicit binary opposite *under represented students*. Under represented students are described as:

> (e.g. low-income students, Indigenous students, and students with disabilities). Students from these groups are the least likely to pursue study abroad opportunities but stand to gain the most from those opportunities, gaining highly valued skills and competencies and developing a professional network of contacts within their field of study. (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 7)

The excluded subtext is that the under represented people have been purposely othered from Canadian citizenry. Thobani (2007) explains:

> Citizenship was instituted in a triangulated formation: the Aboriginal, marked for physical

> and cultural extinction, deserving of citizenship only upon abdication of indigeneity; the 'preferred race' settler and future national, exalted as worthy of citizenship and membership in the nation; and the 'non-preferred race' immigrant, marked as stranger and sojourner, an unwelcome intruder whose lack of Christian faith, inherent deviant tendencies, and unchecked fecundity all threatened the nation's survival. These foundational horizons were institutionalized in the burgeoning apparatus of the settler state and its expanding geographical domain, as well as in the inscription of whiteness as embodiment of legitimate and responsible citizenship. (p. 75)

Evidence of these attitudes is visible in the federal strategy document with the paternal wording that these under represented students "stand to gain the most" from the experiences the government could facilitate for them (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 7).

Placing Indigenous students in the under represented students group is a form of continued colonialization that overlooks Indigenous national sovereignty. Canadian citizenship was born from the colonial process that "transformed insiders (Aboriginal peoples) into aliens in their own territories, while simultaneously transforming outsiders (colonizers, settlers, migrants) into exalted insiders (Canadian citizens)" (Thobani, 2007, p. 74). Indigenous students are under represented because the Canadian government has pushed Indigenous people to the margins.

An unstated homogeneous image of "real Canadians" exists that perpetuates Canada's "racial hierarchy of white nationalism despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism" (Zine, 2009, p. 151). Extending the racial hierarchy to include white supremacy's intersecting oppressions, the "real Canadian students" are White, able-bodied, born in Canada of European descent, mostly English- but sometimes French-speaking (depending on location), Christian aligned, cisgender, heterosexual,

and of middle or upper socioeconomic status. These Canadians are the insiders, the norm, and all othered outsiders may be welcomed conditionally, according to the insiders' needs.

This Canadian vs. international student binary also excludes *newcomers to Canada* — the government term for *immigrants* and *refugees* that is used to avoid the stigma or bias associated with those categories (Heisler, 2022[6]). Like international students, newcomer students have lived experience in other countries and often speak languages other than English or French. This federal category of people is not typically recruited to Canada as students, and, depending on status and provincial/territorial regulations, does not usually pay higher international fees at post-secondary institutions (e.g. McGill, 2025; Ontario Tech University, 2025; University of British Columbia, n.d.), which could be one reason — in addition to the fact that many newcomers do not fit the homogeneous image of the imagined "real Canadians" described above — they are not considered in Canada's economy-centric international education strategy. Academic literature typically separates discussions of international students and immigrant students (Sawata, 2025).

International students' and newcomer students' statuses and potential financial expenditures differentiate their inclusion or exclusion from Canada's international education project. However, as with many externally imposed categories, the experiences of international students and immigrants often overlap. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has positioned international students as "ideal immigrants" (Trilokekar & El Masri, 2017, p. 669), and studying in Canada is an immigration pathway (Government of Canada, 2026). Lisa Brunner (2021) coined the term *edugration*, which describes the blurred "line between student and immigrant" (p. 27). The

[6] The glossary of key terms created by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada does not offer a definition for *newcomer* even though *newcomer* is mentioned 14 times in the glossary (Government of Canada, 2025a).

point is not to homogenize the experiences of international students and newcomer students, but to recognize that these categories do not describe the full picture. Excluding newcomer students from discussions of international education is another example of colonial pedagogy, erasure, and systemic racism.

Binary labels elide the multitude of experiences among heterogeneous groups (Jones, 2017). There is no doubt that people who are Indigenous, Canadian, permanent residents, refugees, student permit holders, other types of visa holders, and/or undocumented of any income category and any dis/ability have the potential to contribute to and benefit from an international education that focuses on learning with, from, and between peoples of the world, particularly when they are all located on the land claimed by Canada. When international education is more about the nation-state economy than about education, binary labels become part of public discourse and support *us* versus *them* thinking which contributes to the normalization of conditional hospitality and the foreclosure of opportunities for collaborative learning in international contexts. As an act of anti-colonialism, my dissertation research aims to transcend these labels. I recruited a diverse group of adult participants who currently reside in the land colonially known as Canada and whose identities combine, overlap, or are outside of the label markers typically included in international education (refer to chapter 4 for a description of participants).

The federal government's international education strategy expired March 31, 2024, but the values of the strategy live on. When the latest document expired, international students were being scapegoated by the federal government as the reason the country was in a housing and healthcare crisis (Government of Canada, 2024c; Wherry, 2024). This scapegoating is a result of "the dominant, dehumanizing narrative focusing solely on the value of international students' economic

contributions to Canada" (L. Brunner in Critical Internationalization Studies Network, 2024, 27:47). This dehumanizing narrative normalizes using international students as pawns for political posturing, which is what happened when the federal government switched their position from framing international students as great for the economy to positioning them as a threat to Canada's immigration system (Brunner & McCartney, 2026). In 2024, the federal government significantly reduced the amount of international student visa approvals, which had devastating effects on students' lives as well as on the academic institutions, and the people working within them, that had come to rely on international student fees (Ozonum & Tajmel, 2026). This dehumanizing narrative also perpetuates other discriminatory actions, like language-based discrimination, as discussed in the next section.

Canada's nation-state focused international education has been the reality I have worked in, but it does not have to continue this way. My dissertation research demonstrates that international education can be *otherwise* (Martinez et al., 2023) by adopting an anticolonial approach in which local Indigenous knowledge and language are prioritized, and people are encouraged to engage wholistically, moving beyond state-imposed binary categories (Martinez et al., 2023). My definition of inter*nation*al education for this research is: people(s) of the world connecting to learn with and from each other for the thriving of all (refer to chapter 3 for a relational definition of *Nation*). This wholistic definition can include Indigenous nation-to-nation education as well as education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations. It can be between individuals who identify with many nations, groups, or categories. In this dissertation research, inter*nation*al education occurred between individuals who identify as being part of different Indigenous nations, non-Indigenous nations, nation-states, and other earthly ways to relate (i.e. one participant

described herself as a citizen of the ocean).

Language-Based Discrimination in International Education

Although evidence of advanced language proficiency has long been a requirement of international student admission to post-secondary institutions in Canada, in November 2024, the federal government instituted a new policy that international students are required to provide proof of proficiency *after* graduating from Canadian institutions to be eligible for the post-graduate work permit (Government of Canada, 2024d). Official test scores cannot be more than two years old, which means most graduates must retest. This political move, which has negative material and emotional consequences on international students' lives as they need to prepare and pay for another expensive test that has nothing to do with their ability to communicate (Shirzadi, 2025), perpetuates the notion that international students are deficient English or French speakers. This is a form of language-based discrimination.

Language-based discrimination is the unjust treatment of people whose language variety and accent is perceived as different from that of the dominant societal norm (Altidor, 2020; Ng, 2007). Language-based discrimination is a normalized occurrence in Canadian post-secondary institutions (El Masri & Khan, 2022; Kang, 2020) and cannot be divorced from systemic racism (Sterzuk, 2015). Even though international students must demonstrate advanced English proficiency to be admitted to post-secondary institutions, universities and colleges nation-wide offer remedial programs and resources to “improve” international students’ language skills. This treatment stems from the monolingual ideology that everyone should strive for a single standard of (academic) English. While one standard for all may appear to foster equality, this ideology is a legacy of Canada’s European colonial history whereby “white settler ways of speaking English

remain elevated over other(ed) Englishes, particularly those Englishes connected to non-white bodies" (Sterzuk, 2015, p. 56). As approximately 80% of international students are from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (CBIE, 2022), a significant commonality among this heterogeneous group is that they become racialized in Canadian institutions. Language-based discrimination of racialized people overlaps with linguistic racism, which includes "the violation of one's fundamental human rights based on how one speaks certain languages and how one's entitlements are denied and discriminated against in both institutional and non-institutional settings" (Dovchin, 2020, p. 805). In Canada, heinous government policies have created linguistic racism and led to linguicide, annihilating many Indigenous languages, "and nearly extinguished all others" (Ball & McIvor, 2013, p. 21). Languages and their speakers carry knowledge and ways of being that are required for healthy international relationships and the co-construction of shared futures. Maintaining a monolingual ideology threatens these possibilities.

When I taught in the English Language Programs at the University of Guelph, I interviewed international students about their experiences with language-based discrimination. One of the students I interviewed said, "if you are in a class and trying to talk, and people look at you weird, would you have the courage to talk?" Her question highlights the ubiquity and often subtle nature of language-based discrimination, as well as its extreme impact. It is important to note that language-based discrimination is not only perpetrated against post-secondary international students. Researchers at McGill University, Angelica Galante, Li Peng, and Hannah Keim (2023), conducted a study of linguistic discrimination among plurilinguals with immigrant backgrounds in Canada. They found that the White participants with Canadian citizen status who had both English and French in their repertoire reported no experiences of discrimination, while racialized plurilingual

immigrants, which included permanent residents and student visa holders, reported experiencing several types of linguistic discrimination, such as racial microaggressions and linguistic illegitimation. While research about immigrant post-secondary students in Canada is scant, emerging reports offer hints that align with the McGill study findings. Eun Gi Kim's (2023) paper about Korean immigrant students notes, "linguistic difficulties and loss of self-confidence lead many immigrants to perceive their language skills as not fluent enough and to encounter discrimination from their peers, many of whom conflate language difficulties as an indicator of lack of knowledge" (p. 108). Regardless of status, the onus of effective communication lies with the minoritized language speaker. When linguistic differences or difficulties arise for immigrant students or international students in post-secondary institutions, their capabilities are questioned, not the capabilities of their dominant language interlocutors.

One of the international students I interviewed at the University of Guelph said the focus should be on changing the behavior of those who enact language-based discrimination rather than on “fixing” international students, to which I add "fixing" anyone who faces language-based discrimination/linguistic racism. Heeding this call, one goal of my research is to challenge beliefs and attitudes about language among both dominant and minoritized language speakers. By disrupting monolingual ideology and its racial power dynamic, my goal is to contribute to destabilizing colonial insider/outsider ideology and conditional hospitality, so that Internationalized education can become multi-directional, with people learning with and from each other, rather than everyone learning colonial pedagogy.

Resituating: Linguistic Borders and the Surface Tension of Water[7]

Language barrier is defined as a difficulty in or absence of communication between people who do not speak the same language (Collins, n.d., Merriam-Webster, n.d.). A language barrier is a common-sense concept that has become naturalized as a normal part of life in a multilingual world. In Canada, language barriers are frequently blamed for routine problems such as injuries at work (e.g. Premji et al., 2021), films not being produced (e.g. "Language Barrier Stops Canadian Films from Getting Funding," 2018), academic research not being published (e.g. St-Onge et al., 2021), inadequate health care (e.g. Bowen, 2001; CMAJ, 2018), decreased commercial competitiveness (e.g. Sauter, 2012), and international students' struggles in class (e.g. Ge & Durst, 2022). A common thread is the focus on the language barrier as the issue, with a subtext connoting language deficiency of certain speakers, rather than on the cause of the barrier. A helpful way to denaturalize language barriers is to understand them as linguistic borders. "Borders are productive regimes both generated by and reproducing racialized social relations, further imbued by gender, sexuality, class, ability, and nationality" (Walia, 2021, p. 78). Linguistic borders are socio-political constructs. Linguistic borders are often created and upheld by colonial regimes and processes to maintain hierarchical power relations.

Linguistic borders in Canada serve the Canadian state which was founded by settler colonialism through the disenfranchisement and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The function of linguistic borders is to protect the privileged status of the "two founding races" (Royal

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7 This section is adapted from a paper I presented at the Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada (LLRC) Association 2023 pre-conference at Congress. The paper, entitled Canada's Official Languages Act, Border Imperialism, and the Surface Tension of Water, was subsequently published in the journal Language & Literacy (Martin, 2024a). The paper presents the Official Languages Act in juxtaposition to border governance strategies (Walia, 2021) to examine the actions and consequences of Canada's linguistic border imperialism.

Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1967, p. xxvi) of Canada. These linguistic borders are upheld by the Official Languages Act (OLA; 1988) which grants official and equal status to both English and French, and renders the remaining 200 languages in Canada, including at least 70 Indigenous languages (Government of Canada, 2023a; 2024b), unofficial. Maintaining White settler English and French in a superior position leads to insecurity and exclusion for the rest.

In June 2023, a new bill to "modernize" the OLA came into effect (Government of Canada, 2023b). The focus of the amendments is to better support the French language, particularly in French communities under threat of English hegemony outside of Québec. Some wording regarding Indigenous groups has been updated:

> AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French and reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening Indigenous languages while strengthening the status and use of the official languages. (An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, 2022, p. 3; emphasis in original to denote amendment)

Despite this wording, the overall intent of the Act remains unchanged. The OLA will fortify its bordering practices to ensure that both French and English maintain their privileged status.

The addition of "reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening" is a discursive maneuver that acknowledges the newly instituted Indigenous Languages Act (ILA) which came into effect in 2019 (Government of Canada, 2021). One benefit to the Government of Canada of the Indigenous Languages Act is its increased social and political capital on the world stage as it publicly announces its response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and its adherence to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However,

Canada's intentions are visible in the numbers. The 2024[8] promise for Indigenous languages was: "$225 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, with $45 million per year ongoing to Canadian Heritage for Indigenous languages and cultures programs, in support of Indigenous Languages Act" (Government of Canada, 2024a, p. 280). Indigenous language reclamation may also receive federal funds from other contributions such as:

> $60 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to support Friendship Centres, across the country, which provide much-needed supports and services to members of their communities across a range of areas including health, housing, education, recreation, language, justice, employment, economic development, culture, and community wellness. (Government of Canada, 2024a, p. 280)

However, the federal budget numbers do not appear to add up to the $2.002 billion dollar approximate annual cost of Indigenous language revitalization (Brant & Associates, 2022). In the same budget document, the government promised "the largest official languages investment of any federal government in Canadian history—$4.1 billion through the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration" (Government of Canada, 2024a, p. 228). This funding disparity is even greater in light of the fact that the OLA had 50 years of funding before the ILA was legislated. For more than half of that time, the federal government was still actively preventing Indigenous youth from learning their languages, as the last residential school, where Indigenous children were forced to learn an official language and often punished for using their own languages, did not close until 1997 (Your questions answered about Canada's residential

[8] The year of the main research intervention for this dissertation project.

school system, 2021). Despite the implementation of the Indigenous Language Act in 2019, federal funding is nowhere near enough to address the “state of emergency” (Assembly of First Nations, 2023, p. 1) of Indigenous language revitalization. While the government maintains the colonial OLA, any other language rights will always be under threat. Eve Haque (2023) coined *the OLA in the ILA* to indicate OLA interference in ILA funding. For example, ILA funded programs must do their reporting in English and French (Haque, 2023). Government funding for Indigenous language revitalization is piecemeal and difficult to access (Brant & Associates, 2022). Any gains to Indigenous language revitalization and reclamation that the ILA contributes to now should not overshadow the attention, care, and work that Indigenous activists and communities have been doing long before the ILA existed (e.g. Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na, 2025).

I am inspired by scholars and activists who are rethinking (e.g. Li, 2018a) and renewing (e.g. McIvor, 2020) how we understand what languages are. Within Eurocentric colonialism, languages have been thought of as discrete, bound entities as if contained within borders. For example, it is easy to recognize the differences between English and French, so it is not a giant leap that we would view them (or their speakers) as uniquely distinct. Holding this bordered view of languages contributes to our acceptance of bordered language practices like the OLA. However, Li Wei (2018a) explains that languages are socially constructed systems that have more similarities than differences. The neural networks in the human brain that process language are also involved with non-linguistic functions and cognitive processes (Li, 2018a). Language, then, is neither bound socially nor physically. Translanguaging refers to how "people fluidly use their linguistic resources — without regard to named language categories — to make meaning and communicate” (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 2). According to Li (2018a), translanguaging

> moves *beyond* languages, i.e., transcending. In so doing, it challenges the conventional understanding of language boundaries between the culturally and politically labelled languages (e.g. English, Chinese). With its emphasis on meaning making and knowledge construction, it also challenges the boundaries between language and other cognitive systems as separately encapsulated systems or modules. (pp. 24-25)

Translanguaging alone cannot fix systemic problems. Like race, another socially and politically constructed concept, language has profound impact on lived experiences, and the fact remains that people feel and experience the socio-political divides between languages. Discussions of translanguaging must acknowledge the social, material, and political realities of linguistic borders as well as the need to maintain the integrity of languaging systems that have been harmed by colonial practices.

While Western linguists are influenced by Eurocentrism, multiple language onto-epistemologies exist in the world (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). Onowa McIvor, maskiko-nehinaw (Swampy Cree) and Scottish-Canadian, (2020) shares that in many Indigenous epistemologies, there is a connection between language and earth. Mother tongue came from Mother Nature. It is important to consider, then, how we can "protect the identity and integrity of individual languages while recognizing and promoting the fluidity of linguistic diversity and contact between languages" (Li, 2018a, p. 22). What can we imagine about transcending language when we remember that language and earth are connected? If language is fluid, it might have other water-like properties. Since most of the earth's surface is water (Williams, 2014), this may be where all epistemologies can connect.

Languages do not have fixed borders but are recognizable as distinct. Water does not have

borders, but drops are recognizable as distinct. Water has a flexible quality called surface tension. In H_2O, hydrogen bonds form, break, and reform depending on the surrounding conditions (Breslyn, 2020; LEARN PHYSICS, 2021). These loose hydrogen bonds create a bit of tension on the surface of the water, making the drop appear to be a distinct entity. The beauty of surface tension is how it shifts when two water drops come near each other. The bonds reform so the drops can join, creating a new unique shape. Just like water atoms, language speakers change how they act with each other according to their environment. As they come closer together, the language users (aka atoms) create new bonds that can be formed, broken, and reformed. The boundaries between them are transformed (see Figure 2). As the atoms form new connections, they create new shapes. I love how the shapes resemble continents.

Figure 2

Water Drops Reforming



Note. In the lefthand picture, water has been dropped onto a table. In the righthand picture, more water has been dropped in the same area. Inside the blue circle of the righthand picture, an original

drop has reformed to connect with a new drop (Martin, 2024).

Borders vs Boundaries.

Having learned from water about the importance of fluid boundaries, for the remainder of this dissertation, I will differentiate between borders and boundaries. The notion that borders protect people is a fallacy that has been adopted into our collective common sense. In the current world order, borders are used to protect the interests of nation-states, which do not necessarily align with the interests of the people who are contained within, excluded beyond, or crossed by these borders (Walia, 2021). When nation-states insist on the power of their borders, they often change the names of languages and bodies of water, as witnessed with the American president's recent renaming of the Gulf of Mexico (Kinnard, 2025). Borders "manufacture spatialized difference" (Walia, 2021, p. 132) capitalizing on controlling. Conversely, boundaries maintain space for self and community care (S. Kara Martin, personal communication, September 15, 2023; see also Gumbs, 2020). Boundaries are defined by the self and/or community to protect their needs, not to assert power (Ricketts, 2021). Borders obscure and override existing boundaries (Gumbs, 2020; Walia, 2021). Notice that the surface tension of water is a boundary, not a border, an important distinction. Both boundaries and borders can be negotiated, but boundaries are often more fluid, shifting as relationships and contexts change.

The Tékeni Teyohá:te provides an example of the importance of the fluidity of boundaries. While the people in the ship and the people in the canoe are not supposed to steer each other's vessels (R. Hill in Historica Canada, 2020), sharing the river of life means that they must sometimes navigate together, crossing the water between them. I experienced this understanding of boundaries during the Two Row on the Grand paddle (refer to chapter 1 for a detailed description of

this event). While we paddled in two rows, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous, there were many occasions when we needed to join together for safety or rest. When navigating rapids, we formed one line, for example. When we needed breaks, it was not always possible to disembark, so we would *otter up* for safety so that we could put our paddles down without worrying about capsizing or being swept away. Ottering up means we all paddled toward the riverbank. People in vessels closest to the bank would hold on to a branch or rock, or stick out a leg and dig their heel into the mud. They became the anchors to which others would reach out a hand to hold on. We created a floating island of canoes and kayaks, all holding on to each other so we could nourish our bodies and relationships as we ate together on the river.

While I differentiate between borders and boundaries in this dissertation, it is important to remember that national borders do not have to be so harmful. They could operate more fluidly, like boundaries. Niigaan Sinclair, Anishinaabe from Peguis First Nation[9], (2017) provides an example:

> Every year – usually in the spring – Anishinaabeg and Nihiwak (often called Ojibway and Cree) nations would meet to discuss their governments. They would trade goods and stories of their struggles and successes, their upcoming needs and desires, and negotiate. The most pressing issue to be decided is where the borders would be. If one nation had more needs then the other, or was experiencing some conflict with another community, or needed a certain waterway or path to travel, the borders would be determined through offerings, gifts and commitments. The next year the two nations would do it again. (para. 7)

The system Sinclair (2017) describes relies on an understanding of nation that centres relationality

[9] Sinclair's bio found here: https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/biographies/niigaan-sinclair.

and does not serve neoliberalism, the hyper-capitalist colonial force that drives much of the world's nation-state political systems today (Monbiot & Hutchison, 2024; refer to chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of nation). My research aims to denaturalize borders while respecting boundaries.

Purpose and Research Questions

Possibilities exist for international education beyond Canada's colonial version of it, and positioning ourselves outside of linguistic bordering practices could be the key to revealing these possibilities. This requires decentering human constructs like borders and language hierarchies. The goal of this transdisciplinary research is to notice connections — between peoples and between people and other beings and elements — that support learning and sharing in international education settings by transcending colonial bordering practices that render such connections invisible. To achieve this goal, I partner with a local Kanyen'kéha (Mohawk language) teacher (see chapter 4 for a proper introduction) to create an anti-colonial international education experience that centres the water-language connection.

My overarching questions are:

- What connections become apparent when we bring together water, language, and international education while prioritizing local Indigenous language and teachings?
- What happens to international education when we prioritize the water-language connection?

These questions encompass the study's aim to be an antidote to colonial pedagogy. It is necessary to prioritize the knowledge and languages of the land, which is why Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe teachings are an integral component of the theoretical framework. The study is also framed within critical anti-oppression theories (refer to chapter 3). The water-language connection is a novel concept in Eurocentric academia. In language studies, scholars are just beginning to

consider water-centered understandings (e.g. Makoni, 2025). To my knowledge, the water-language connection has not previously been considered in the field of international education.

2. The Water-Language Connection: A Critical Literature Review[10]

Reconceptualizing the borders between languages as water surface tension boundaries sparked my curiosity about the water-language connection (chapter 1). I had never heard of the water-language connection, but I believed I could not have been the only person who had ever thought about it, so I began a search to see what other people knew. Aligned with the properties of water, my method for conducting this literature review was fluid and rippled into all aspects of my life. I began by thinking about what I already knew, and it occurred to me that a common descriptor of language is a water word. *Fluent*, often used to describe language proficiency, is etymologically a water word: "1580s, 'flowing freely' (of water), also, of speakers" (Harper, 2023), and has historically been interchangeable with the word fluid (Harper, 2023). I started a scoping review in library databases but soon found that search terms such as *language OR linguistics AND water,* and reconfigurations with various synonyms, yielded thousands of results. I chose to abandon that type of review for a more fluid approach. I searched for water references in anything I read about language, and I sought language references in anything to do with water. I also talked to people in and out of my doctoral program about the connection between water and language, which led me to ideas and sources that I would otherwise not have found. This organic search was validating, as I found that people from diverse knowledge traditions discuss the water-language connection. I learned that the water-language connection is much more than a metaphor. In this chapter, I present the literature review of the water-language connection, followed by discussion about the colonial risk of fragmenting the water-language connection. I demonstrate that prioritizing the water-

[10] This section has been adapted for publication in the Journal of Belonging, Identity, Language, and Diversity (see Martin, 2026).

language connection comes with a responsibility to strive for decoloniality. Informed by thinking with water, I further demonstrate how the water-language connection is a lived experience for many.

Water-Language Literature Review

Scholars from multiple disciplines, such as applied linguistics, public health, water governance, Indigenous language revitalization, and environmental justice, often describe language in terms of the properties, actions, and interactions of and with water. Some connections are implied while others are more explicit. While some people draw on water as a metaphor to explain how language functions, many explain the water-language connection as a reality, a lived experience. In this section, I share several examples of the water-language connection. Some examples presented in this literature review stem from conflicting linguistic theories (e.g. normative vs. generative). My purpose here is not to dive into linguistic debates, but to demonstrate that water examples are common among scholars from multiple traditions who hold vastly different beliefs about language. Note that this is not an exhaustive list, but it is comprehensive enough to form a robust view of current understandings and to notice that the water-language connection is prevalent within Indigenous Land-based perspectives.

In the field of applied linguistics, water is sometimes used as a metaphor to describe how people access their linguistic resources to communicate, and it is particularly common in discussions of translanguaging. Translanguaging refers to the natural way that bi/plurilingual speakers draw on their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire for sense-making and communicating (García & Li, 2013). Translanguaging theory focuses on the people who communicate rather than on discrete named languages (García in NALDICvideo, 2009). Bi/plurilingual people transcend

named languages (Canagarajah in De Costa et al., 2017), drawing from the entirety of their "sense- and meaning-making" (Li, 2018a, p. 22) knowledge and skills, as if from one body of water. This process is often described as "fluid" (e.g. García & Kleyn, 2016; Li, 2018a; 2018b). Like the fluidity of water, translanguaging is considered *dynamic* (e.g. Collins & Cioè-Peña, 2016; Ebe & Chapman-Santiago, 2016; Kleyn, 2016). For example, in the classroom, "translanguaging can take a variety of forms—from teacher to student, student to teacher, student to student, and even student to self" (Kleyn, 2016). This dynamism is also described as *flow* (Lemke, 2016, as cited in Lin & He, 2017). Angel M. Y. Lin and Peichang He (2017) describe an example of a speech act flow from a classroom. The teacher asks how to say *write* in the students' home language. One student tells her how to say *right*. The teacher clarifies with hand gestures that she means *write*. Meanwhile, students are joking about the pronunciation of *villi* as they read the words on the overhead projector, watch the teacher's actions, listen to their classmates translate *right*, and write the word *villi* on their worksheet. These speech actions are dynamically connected through people, time, and space, as well as with materials. Each action of the speech acts like one of many H2O molecules; together they constitute the whole body of flowing water. Like the speech act flow, water interacts with different bodies external to it (land, animal, plant) and of itself (liquid, solid, gas). Water operates on different time scales (new water is formed as one exhales and becomes connected to the earth's oldest water through the earth's water cycle; Harding, 2020). Water interacts in different spaces (e.g. terrestrial, atmospheric). It is therefore not surprising that Lin and He (2017) use flow, a water word, to describe the speech act.

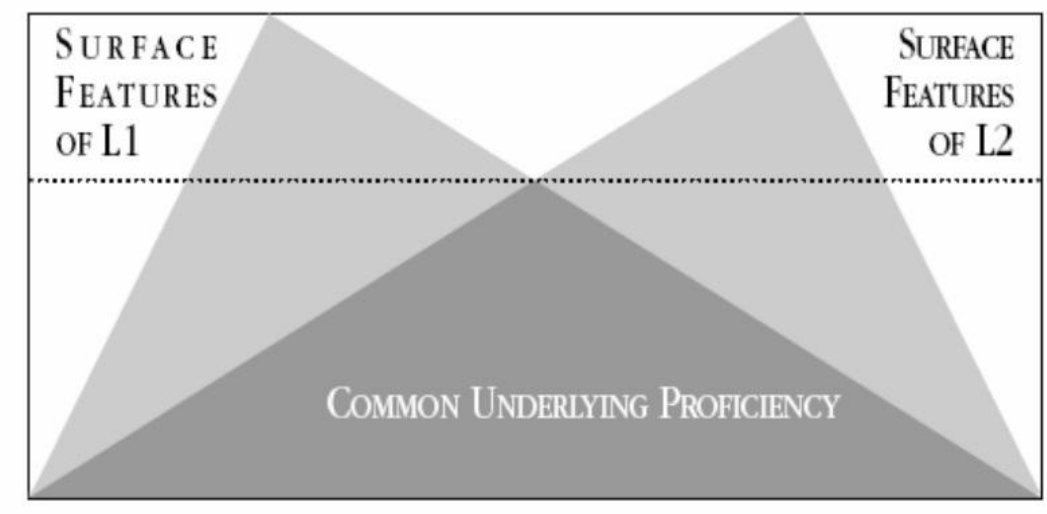
Jim Cummins (2005) and Ofelia García, Susana Johnson, and Kate Seltzer (2016) make the water-language connection explicit in their work. Cummins (2005) uses icebergs, frozen water, as a

metaphor for bilingual communication. Similarly, García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2016) coined the term 'translanguaging *corriente,'* "a river current that you can't always see or feel, but that is always present, always moving, and responsible for changes in the (classroom) landscape" (p. 13). While the two concepts stem from different theories, they both rely on water for exemplification.

In support of bilingual education, Cummins (1981, 2005) developed the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model of bilingual language proficiency in which he compares the bilingual speaker's two languages to two icebergs that are connected underwater. Above the water level, each iceberg (i.e. language) has observably unique features. For example, a bilingual person's surface level proficiency, such as pronunciation or fluency, can be observably different in each language. However, below the water level, the icebergs are connected by "cross-lingual proficiencies" (Cummins, 2005, p. 7; Figure 3) such as literacy and pragmatic skills. "This common underlying proficiency makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related proficiency from one language to another" (Cummins, 2005, p. 4). Cummins (1981; 2005) refers to this linguistic transfer as the interdependence hypothesis, whereby learning/using one language is affected by understanding, proficiency, skills, and awareness of the other language, and vice versa. The icebergs/languages appear distinct, but below the water line, they have a foundation that supports them both. This model challenges the conventional monolingual approach to language education that insists language learners should only use the language of instruction to prevent hinderance of their new language development (e.g. French-only in French class). Cummins (2005) argues that a student's first language "can be a powerful resource for learning" (p. 16) other languages.

Figure 3

The Dual-Iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency



Note. Image reproduced from Cummins (2005, p. 7).

Like the dual iceberg theory, translanguaging corriente was developed to improve pedagogy in bilingual education settings. García and Kleyn (2016) elaborate:

> The current, its dynamic flow, affects the nature of the bed of the river, with elements of what are perceived as two separate banks intermingling. The levels of the riverbanks, that is, what is seen above the water line, is also always in a state of flux. Thus, the two banks of the river are an illusion, what an observer sees at a particular time. In the same way, the language practices of school and homes of bilingual children are externally perceived as being English in school, and the language other than English at home. In reality, when perceived not externally (above the water line) but internally (below the water line), those practices are much more intermingled, dynamic, and complex. (p. 192)

García and Kleyn (2016) maintain that viewing the language practices above the water line as

discrete named languages, i.e. the riverbanks, is a misperception. The riverbanks are part of the same riverbed and affected by the current - a single linguistic system. Rather than a switch or transfer between two or more named languages, the translanguaging corriente is "the natural flow" of bilingualism (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 115). When it is understood that there is only one linguistic system, the socio-political hierarchy of languages can be denaturalized. From this perspective, educators and policymakers may understand the importance of fostering and accepting diversity in languaging practices. Importantly, they may also reconsider unrealistic and exclusionary classroom policies that inhibit students from drawing on the fullness of their linguistic repertoire to learn and express themselves.

While Cummins's (1981, 2005) dual iceberg model and García et al.'s (2016) translanguaging corriente were both developed to support equitable language education practices, the difference between them is how they present language systems—two discrete yet connected languages (Cummins, 2022) vs. a single linguistic system (García & Kleyn, 2016). It is noteworthy that even among language scholars who hold fundamentally different linguistic theories, the water-language connection is maintained.

Sometimes, the connection between water and language may not be intentional but can still be found within the text. For example, in Li's (2018a) comprehensive chapter about the relationship between multilingualism and superdiversity, he writes:

> No single nation or community can claim the sole ownership, authority and responsibility for any particular language, and no individual can claim to know an entire language, rather bits of many different languages. What is more, the association between a language and a nation or a community can change over time, just as an individual can also give up a

> language and adopt another. (p. 22)

The paragraph speaks to the universality of language despite inevitable changes in political borders and human interests over time. Given that all water on the planet is connected and held within the earth's shared eco-system, the same could be said about water. If each instance of the word "language" in Li's (2018a) paragraph were replaced with "body of water," the text would still make sense:

> No single nation or community can claim the sole ownership, authority and responsibility for any particular body of water, and no individual can claim to know an entire body of water, rather bits of many bodies of water. What is more, the association between a body of water and a nation or a community can change over time, just as an individual can also give up a body of water and adopt another.

Through this thought experiment, the water-language connection can be inferred regardless of the original author's intent.

Thinking with water can help us understand language (Makoni and Pablé, 2024). Sinfree Makoni, in his work with collaborator Alastair Pennycook, suggests that water is rarely considered for understanding language because "languages have been linked to land and territory, mapped onto a cartographic and territorial vision of the world" (Applied Linguistics @ UoL, 2025; Makoni, 2025). Makoni argues that "notions such as language, languaging, translanguaging can be enhanced if we float ways of thinking through conceptual metaphors drawn from water" (Applied Linguistics @ UoL, 2025, 5:48–6:01). Borrowing from Karin Amimoto Ingersoll (2016), Kānaka Maoli, and Astrida Neimanis (2017a; both of whom are also discussed in this literature review), Makoni and Pennycook highlight the terms 'waterscape epistemologies' and 'hydrologics' to express:

> ways of thinking and being in water that question ideas of the individual, and for us, the separability of humans from other earth beings. Concerns about ownership of water, what we call hydro-commons, can help us reconsider what it means to have ownership over linguistic resources. (Applied Linguistics @ UoL, 2025, 9:09-9:35)

Hydrologics support thinking beyond nation-state control and ownership of language. One example Makoni provides is the idea of modern water and language:

> modern water, we argue, like modern language, is an invention reproduced by similar institutions, discourses, and mechanisms. This is not only to observe that the ways we divide oceans up into separate entities, a puzzling idea when we stand where two oceans meet, is in a number of ways akin to the ways we divide language into separate named entities, a puzzling idea when we observe how language, like water, flows in many directions. (Applied Linguistics @ UoL, 2025, 13:21-13:57)

For Makoni and colleagues, thinking with water contributes to an analysis of power hierarchies and responsibilities. While they draw on metaphor to support thinking with water, they also move beyond metaphor, recognizing water-as-teacher and the connection between humans and "other water sharing beings" (Applied Linguistics @ UoL, 2025, 31:30). Their view aligns with Indigenous concepts of relationality.

In many Indigenous epistemologies, it is understood that language comes from or is connected to land (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022; Degai, 2021; Tuck et al., 2014; Wall, 2022), which includes water (Ingersoll, 2016; Simpson, 2025; Tuck et al., 2014), and "an intimate knowledge of the land is embedded in Indigenous languages" (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022, p. 208). Furthermore, "language is not something that developed in isolation in human brains, but in relationship to land

and water" (Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009, paraphrased in Tuck et al., 2014). This view of language stems from the Indigenous understanding of relationality. How relationality is understood and applied varies, but a common thread across Indigenous contexts is that humans are interconnected with the natural world (Wemigwams & MacKay, 2023; Wildcat & Voth, 2023).

Regarding this relational connection, Barbara Wall, Bodwewaadmii Anishinaabekwe, states that variation in Anishinaabemowin exists "because of the variation in land and waterscapes" (Wall, 2022, p. 110). How waterscapes can affect language variation is exemplified in this description offered by Magali Forte (2024), a non-Indigenous scholar in Canada, who shares a teaching she learned from Dianne Biin of the Tŝideldel First Nation in Tsilhqot'in territory:

> Biin highlighted the importance of paying attention to the different sounds that exist within different Indigenous languages that might be part of the same family. She explained that the difference between these sounds can be accounted for when you think about the relationship between languages and lands. She gave the example of the barred L sound which is more pronounced in the languages that inhabit the BC coast, where the ocean and its waves are present, and stated that, as we learn in the language, the land is sharing with us what that sound is as well (Biin, 2021). This worldview is embedded in the land and the waterways, and the people who speak and understand these languages thereby enact an onto-epistemological perspective that is always situated, always in relation. (p. 757)

While Biin's example describes a relationship between water and phonetic variation in language varieties, Edna Ahgeak MacLean (2010, as cited in Tuck & Yang, 2012) an Iñupiaq scholar, offers an example of how the relationship with water affects grammatical features. In a description of Iñupiaq and Yup'ik cultures, she states:

> The sea and land that people depend on for their sustenance are almost totally devoid of landmarks. These languages have therefore developed an elaborate set of demonstrative pronouns and adverbs that are used to direct the listener's attention quickly to the nature and location of an object. In place of landmarks, words serve as indicators about proximity, visibility, or vertical position and implies whether the object is inside or outside, moving or not moving, long or short. (MacLean, 2010, as cited in Tuck et al., 2014, p. 12).

Like phonetics and grammar, vocabulary can also be affected by the sounds of water. Karen Amimoto Ingersoll (2016), a Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) surfer and scholar, offers several examples of how ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (the Hawaiian language) reflects the ocean:

> ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi mimics the lexicon of waves reflected in the matrix of aquatic molecules forming and breaking in an energetic hula:
>
> > That which swells and rolls in "furrows" (ʻaui kawahawaha) just makai of the surf line (kua'au) is a nalu, a wave.
> >
> > …
> >
> > A wave that swirls and "eats away" [the sand] (po'ai ʻonaha) is a nalu ʻa'ai or ʻae'i; one that rolls in diagonally (waiho ʻao'ao mai) is a nalu kahela. (Kamakau, 1976, as cited in Ingersoll, 2016, p. 86)

These are just a few of the many examples of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi words that developed in relation to water. The connection between ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi and water is more than vocabulary. It is spiritual, political, and ethical (Ingersoll, 2016).

In the seminal book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), member of the Potawatomi Nation and a plant ecologist, explains that 70% of the Potawatomi language consists of

verbs, unlike noun-based English, of which only 30% is verbs. She found this maddening at first, unable to understand, through her English education, how words that she initially perceived as being inanimate could be verbs:

> I grabbed the dictionary and flipped more pages and all kinds of things seemed to be verbs: "to be a hill," "to be red," "to be a long sandy stretch of beach," and then my finger rested on wiikwegamaa: "to be a bay." ... In that moment I could smell the water at the bay, watch it rock against the shore and hear it sift onto the sand. A bay is a noun only if water is dead. When bay is a noun, it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores and contained by the word. But the verb wiikwegamaa — to be a bay — releases the water from bondage and lets it live. "To be a bay" holds the wonder that, for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing with cedar roots and a flock of baby mergansers. Because it could do otherwise — become a stream or an ocean or a waterfall, and there are verbs for that, too. … Water, land, and even a day, the language a mirror for seeing the animacy of the world. (pp. 54-55)

Kimmerer's (2013) water-language experience, along with the Iñupiaq and ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi examples (Ingersoll, 2016; MacLean, 2010 as cited Tuck et al., 2014), demonstrate how worldviews are held within Indigenous languages, and how these knowledges are always in relation with land and water. Land and water are therefore integral aspects of languages as evidenced in grammar, lexicon, rhythm, semantics, etc. The languages in turn support people's understanding of and relationships to land and water.

Christina Severinsen and Angelique Reweti (2021), researchers in the School of Health Sciences in Aotearoa New Zealand, provide an example that highlights the multi-faceted and

political nature of the water-language connection. They conducted a study of the health benefits of *waka ama*, a Māori collaborative paddling sport, and they report that *waka ama* supports te reo Māori (Māori language) revitalization. *Waka ama* is more than a sport as its practices are steeped in te ao Māori (Māori worldview), which is shared through te reo Māori. Severinsen and Reweti (2021) explain:

> A significant aspect of the cultural value of waka ama is its function as a vehicle for the revitalization and retention of te reo and tikanga Māori. Paddlers learn and use karakia [prayer], waiata [song], and te reo Māori as part of their everyday practice on the water, providing a pathway for many to learn and engage in te ao Māori. (p. 527; translations found in the article's glossary, p. 529)

They also indicate that many participants, inspired by their waka ama experience, went on to pursue te reo Māori courses.

While engaging with water can support language learning, the reverse is also true. Because Indigenous languages carry environmental and relational knowledge, Indigenous language reclamation/revitalization plays a key role in addressing environmental issues (McGregor, 2012; Callison et al., 2023). One of the participants in Severinsen and Reweti's (2021) study demonstrates this point:

> A lot of people that are into waka ama are also very much into protecting these waterways or fixing them or getting change to happen, because they're in direct contact with them. . . . you're in the water three times a week, you get to know the different states of the water, you know when it's wrong, and to me that's a real Māori thing. You know everything is connected to the land, connected to the water, and so that part I really value. (p. 527)

Engaging in *waka ama* in the water supports learning te reo Māori. Learning te reo Māori supports an increased understanding of relationality. Understanding relationality and being on the water both support taking action to protect the water.

In many epistemologies, water communicates through others' voices. From an Anishinaabek perspective, water is a relative (Bédard, 2017) and is "alive with spirit, is sacred, is medicine, is healing, carries knowledge, and is life" (Chiblow, 2023, p. S87). Within this worldview, it is understood that human language can be a medium for water's messages. Anishinaabek women have a special relationship to water (Chiblow, 2023; McGregor, 2012), and consider it their responsibility to speak for water to share water's knowledge (Chiblow, 2023; McGregor, 2012). Susan Chiblow (2023), an Anishinaabek woman and scholar, provides an example from the context of water governance of the Great Lakes, which colonial governments have attempted to control, often excluding the expertise of Indigenous Nations or of water. Chiblow (2023) shares a statement from someone she interviewed about Anishinaabek water governance: "the lake has a voice that needs to be listened to and respected in major decision-making processes" (p. S89). For water's voice to be heard, Anishinaabek women must be included in discussions about water (Chiblow, 2023; McGregor, 2012).

From other perspectives, water has a language of its own, without the need for another's voice to translate it. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars across disciplines describe water sounds in terms of voice, speech, and articulation. White settler posthuman feminist scholar[11] Astrida Neimanis (2017b), for example, describes the communication of water as a *hydro-logic*

[11] Additional bio details found here: Neimanis, A. (2022). Toxic erotics and bad ecosex at Windermere basin. Environmental Humanities, 14(3), 699–717. https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-9962981.

whereby “water, in its various mixtures, articulates sounds, temperatures, and other matters between and across bodies” (p. 54). The Creek Collective (2025), a group of diverse creatives and advocates in Kitchener, Ontario present an audio-walk along a local creek, with a mapped route and recorded speech to support reflecting with the water. The final stop offers an example of the water speaking: "Under the bridge, whirlpools form below the concrete outflow basin, speaking their own burbling, foaming language that turns back in order to spill forward" (0:20-0:30). Listening to water speak supports an understanding of relationality and human responsibility within nature. Similarly, Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, of Anishinaabeg ancestry, member of Dokis First Nation, (2017) writes about the rapids in the French River:

> The water moves forward and backward, upward and downward, and from side to side. Twisting and swirling together, these converging currents are spaces where the river speaks to the world in a thundering voice to all who come across its presence. … speaking of regeneration, transformation, and the health of both the water and the land. (p. 91)

Kimmerer (2004) describes how water drops in a rainforest have different properties, which are influenced by the relationships water has with diverse plants. This affects not only how water sounds but the stories it tells:

> Sshhhhh from rain, pitpitpit from hemlock, bloink from maple and lastly popp of falling alder water ... I close my eyes and listen to all the voices in the rain. The reflecting surface of the pool is textured with their signatures, each one different in pace and resonance. Every drip it seems is changed by its relationship with life, whether it encounters moss or maple or fir bark or my hair. And we think of it as simply rain, as if it were one thing, as if we understood it. I think that moss knows rain better than we do, and maples. We should be

> listening. Maybe there is no such thing as rain; there are only raindrops, each with its own story. (paras. 19-20)

In this example, water speaks, but not just to humans.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2020), an American Black feminist scholar, provides another water-language example that does not involve humans. As the descendent of "Shinnecock ancestors who have been in sacred relationship with the Atlantic Right Whale for centuries and … Ashanti ancestors who call the name of the whale as one of the names of god" (p. 11), Gumbs (2020) shares lessons she has learned from marine mammals, such as the importance of being present. The Indus dolphins recovered from near extinction by their constant presencing via echolocation, by which water carries the message:

> The Indus and Ganges river dolphins live in sound. They make sound constantly, echolocating day and night. In a quickly moving environment they ask where, again where, again where … Could I learn from the Indus river dolphin a language of continuous presence and offering? A language that brings a species back from the brink, a life-giving language? Could I learn that? Could we learn that? (p. 68)

By communicating and connecting with each other through water, the dolphins were able to find safety in community. From an Indigenous perspective, not all language is human. Humans have much to learn from the languages of water and water-based languages.

Understanding that water has language and knowability also appears in non-Indigenous posthumanism and holistic science scholarship. Sometimes water's messages are obvious, and sometimes water communicates in language that is incomprehensible to humans. Stephan Harding (2020), a British ecologist, relays his experience with the River Dart:

> I connect with trillions upon trillions of tumbling water molecules, making and breaking their hydrogen bonds, becoming one emergent flowing whole: the river itself with its speech as it cascades over rocks – a synergistic duet of rock and water. I try to catch what it says – to parse that deeper voice I sense within it, but I never quite catch the message. (p. 16)

Neimanis (2017b) describes this lack of understanding as water's unknowability:

> Because of varying abilities to live *in* water and *with* water, different bodies (human, sunflower, toad, jellyfish) also have varying capacities to *know* water. In other words, bodies are oriented in and toward water in species — or being-specific ways … In this way (and in resonance with other feminist epistemological projects of "situated knowledges"), the grammar of water necessarily rejects total knowledge by any body. (p. 57)

Here, the linguistic term *grammar* relates the structure of water to the structure of language. Like human languages, water's language is only intelligible to some people, sometimes, depending on factors such as context, situated knowledge, and the interlocutor's willingness and ability to receive the message.

From Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems to Black feminism and posthumanism, there is a relational connection between language and water. A diversity of knowledge exists within this relational understanding. Human language comes from water (Tuck et al., 2014) while water has its own language (Bédard, 2017; Kimmerer, 2004). Water's messages are presented through human language (Chiblow, 2023; McGregor, 2012) while water is a conduit for and of language (Gumbs, 2020). The water-language connection provides the means of communication for living with, respecting and protecting water (Callison et al., 2023; Severinsen & Reweti, 2021; Tuck et al., 2014). The water-language connection is spiritual (Chiblow, 2023), corporeal (Neimanis, 2017b),

emotional (Kimmerer, 2013), and intelligent (Harding, 2020). From these perspectives, the water language-connection is real and observable, and it is in relation to all elements of life.

Water-Language Discussion

Recognizing Coloniality

As I conducted the literature review, I noticed that I sought linguistic aspects that I was trained to value, such as phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary ─ like the barred L shaped by the sound of water, the demonstrative pronouns and adverbs that developed from the ice, and the words that were formed by waves (Biin, 2021, as cited in Forte, 2024; MacLean, 2010, as cited in Tuck et al., 2014, Kamakau, 1976, as cited in Ingersoll, 2016). This helped me believe in the reality of the water-language connection because I connected it to something I understood. When I presented this water-language literature review at an academic conference about language, I over-emphasized these "valued" examples, hoping to convince my fellow language scholars of the reality of the water-language connection (Martin, 2024b).

My over-emphasis of certain aspects of the water-language connection is indicative of my formation within colonial systems and upholds the logics within them. The field of applied linguistics, which has strongly influenced language educators like myself worldwide, stems from Western Eurocentrism (Pakir, 2004; Pennycook, 1990), with close ties to coloniality and Christian missionary work (Makoni & Meinhof, 2004). Within this context, "language has been described as a disembodied set of linguistic features — an assumption that can only be made by white male scholars whose bodies have been framed as the unmarked norm that others are expected to emulate" (Charity Hudley & Flores, 2022, p. 145). Adult human bodies are 60% water (Water Science School, 2019), so disembodying language means disconnecting language from water. This

disembodiment is a form of disintegration or fragmentation (Sodhi & Martin, 2023). Myrtle Sodhi explains that fragmentation of self, i.e. viewing bodies as separate from mind and spirit, is a colonial tool that allows certain bodies to "be extracted for labor and financial gain" (Sodhi & Martin, 2023, p. 77). Epistemologies that predate and/or resist Eurocentric colonization focus on the integrated wholeness of, and relationship between, all beings. In this vein, humans are not a sum of fragmented parts, nor is the earth a sum of fragmented beings. Everyone/thing/being is connected, integrated in life. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2025) reminds us that "water is the network that facilitates communication and relationship between all forms of life" (p. 50). This Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg perspective can help those of us with fragmented views "to re-member that language is always and has always been whole" (M. Forte, personal communication, February 15, 2026).

Recognizing this interconnected wholeness also requires an understanding that humans are part of the natural world, not the rulers of it. Within Eurocentric, Christian-informed traditions, "there is a recognized hierarchy of beings with, of course, the human being on top–the pinnacle of evolution" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 9). Within this hierarchy, language is considered uniquely human:

> Language is the highest and most amazing achievement of the symbolistic human mind. The power it bestows is almost inestimable, for without it anything properly called "thought" is impossible. The birth of language is the dawn of humanity. The line between man and beast – between the highest ape and the lowest savage – is the language line. (Langer, 1944/2004, p. 30)

Following this line of thought, only human language, produced by a certain type of human, is acknowledged as legitimate. No other beings could have language, not so-called "inferior" races,

not animals, not water. Conversely, Indigenous epistemologies and those that resist coloniality do not maintain a human-peaked hierarchy. Rather, humans have much to learn from the intelligence of nature (Kimmerer, 2013).

Returning to my experience at the language conference, when I over-emphasized the pieces of the water-language connection that relate to human articulation, I realize now I was perpetuating colonial logics of fragmentation and human-centrism. By disconnecting these examples from those of water having its own language (Bédard, 2017), or Indigenous relatives using human language to share water's voice (Chiblow, 2023), for example, I degraded the wholism (i.e., the sensorial, embodied, spiritual reality) of the water-language connection. As these aspects align with Indigenous relationality, downplaying them reinforces the systemic racism within the colonial status quo that devalues Indigenous onto-epistemologies.

It is easy to perpetuate colonialism in this way as colonial institutions teach academics to sort and extract. Unangaŝ scholar Eve Tuck, an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska[12], describes settler academics when they read Indigenous texts:

> Often it seems that settler readers read like settlers (that is, read extractively) for particular content to be removed for future use. The reading is like panning for gold, sorting through work that may not have been intended for a particular reader, sorting it by what is useful and what is discardable. (Tuck in Smith et al., 2018, p. 15)

Just because it is easy to perpetuate this system does not mean we have to keep doing it. Change might include mistakes, like my overemphasis example, but it is possible to learn from mistakes.

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[12] Tuck's bio found on her website: https://www.evetuck.com/.

The water-language connection and Indigenous relationality should not be appropriated to uphold the colonial status quo. Natalie Diaz (2023), Mojave and enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Tribe, poet, author, and educator, highlights the importance of land and water language for envisioning and creating a decolonial future, something that is not possible to do through a colonial language that does not convey relationality:

> Our relationality has to exist outside Settler State borders of meaning. We require a language beyond the English language of citizenship. I don't seek our future *We* and *Us* or dream our relational practices from inside the vocabulary of the English language. (p. 54)
>
> … there are still other bodies in and of language we can turn toward or back to, as we face the morning and remember the land is not human, and beneath our human catastrophes, beneath our beautiful or painful suffering and bearing, the land and the water are good. The land and the water are our *before language* and our future. There is a *We* and an *Us* who are there now. (p. 60; emphasis in the original)

Prioritizing the water-language connection comes with a responsibility to strive for decoloniality.

More Than a Metaphor[13]

When I first thought about the water-language connection, I came to it through metaphor, thinking about the similarities of the permeable boundaries between languages and the surface

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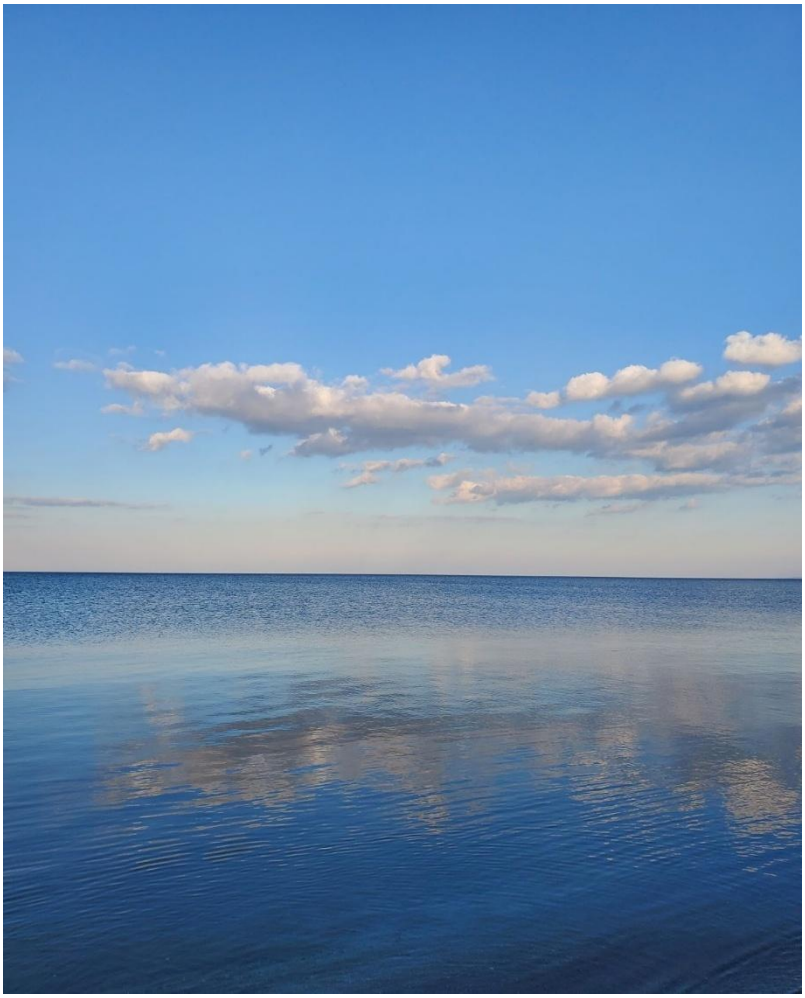
[13] As I discuss metaphor from an anti-colonial perspective, I must acknowledge the seminal article *Decolonization is not a metaphor* by Eve Tuck and collaborator K. Wayne Yang (2012). Recognizing the water-language connection as more than a metaphor can support an anti-colonial stance that works toward decolonization, but it should be noted that pushing back against metaphor is not a decolonial action in and of itself. In fact, depending on how the water-language connection is applied, it could support settler futurity through reconciliatory acts, which, as Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, is incommensurate with decolonization.

tension of water. As I engaged with water intentionally thinking about language, I realized that water had been my teacher. Water taught me about fluid boundaries. That lesson was more than metaphorical. It reflected the reality of my own experience with language.

As I consider the examples of the water-language connection in this literature review, I notice that they all exist in a relational way, even the metaphorical ones. Thinking with water, we can notice how reflections exist in relation to the natural world. This photograph I took while visiting my favourite Lake Ontario beach represents this notion (Figure 4). The reflection of the clouds appears on the water. The reflection, like metaphor, is not really the cloud, but it indicates that the cloud exists. When I talk about the water-language connection, non-Indigenous people have typically responded along the lines of "what a great metaphor!" It is a great metaphor, but only because it reflects reality. While metaphor can be helpful for understanding translanguaging (García et al., 2016), for example, it is necessary to push back against the misconception that the water-language connection is *merely* metaphorical. Viewing the metaphor as disconnected from reality aligns with the colonial logics that disconnect humans from the natural world and language from bodies. More importantly, as demonstrated in this literature review, the water-language connection is a physical and spiritual reality for many peoples (i.e., Bédard, 2017; Chiblow, 2023; Degai, 2021; Tuck et al., 2014). Relegating the water-language connection to metaphor would be another iteration of colonial erasure of Indigenous knowledges and languages. "Water has power ─ a spirit and life-force with agency" (Tehota'kerá:ton, personal communication, May 21, 2026a).

Figure 4

Onyatarí:yo Reflecting Clouds



Note. Onyatarí:yo means beautiful lake in Kanyen'kéha (K. Talbot, personal communication, June 24, 2024). Photograph by S. Martin, March 28, 2024.

Water-Language Summation

"Dominant colonial languages and global monocultures, such as English and the neoliberal, imperialistic worldview" (Meighan, 2022, p. 2) may have pushed out the wholism of the water-language connection, but the water metaphors that Eurocentric language scholars, like myself, are

so often drawn to are indications that the water-language connection cannot be suppressed. It creates and seeps through cracks in coloniality's unnatural borders. Once attuned to the water-language connection, it becomes easier to look beyond these borders and notice the ubiquity of the water-language connection. Examples are everywhere, which makes it impossible to conduct an exhaustive literature review. As I write this dissertation, new examples appear: "water speaks in voices that cannot be understood or denied" (Macfarlane, 2025, p. 5).

Recognizing the water-language connection requires a note of caution. "Movements toward fluidity and hybridity of language sometimes work against efforts that draw on the collectivity and political strength of unified minority voices and can similarly obstruct indigenous language maintenance and revitalization efforts" (Von Esch et al., 2020, p. 395). I notice this tension within discussions of translanguaging. Translanguaging theory, which focuses on a unitary flow of language, tends to perpetuate a human-dominant understanding of language and languaging (e.g. Li, 2018b). This framing overlooks the heterogeneity of language onto-epistemologies. Prominent translanguaging advocates argue that named languages "are *brought into existence* through sociopolitical forces that are part of the broader (re)configuration of the world that serves dominant interests" (García et al., 2021, p. 208; emphasis in the original). This description is important because it recognizes harmful nation-state and colonial control of languages. However, it erases all other understandings of the origins of language, including Indigenous ones (e.g. Ingersoll, 2016; Tuck et al., 2014; Wall, 2022). Because translanguaging advocates recognize the inherent heterogeneity of all human languaging, I see room to extend this to recognizing the heterogeneity of language onto-epistemologies. This would result in being specific about when transcending named languages is important and when maintaining integrity of named languages is important, as in the

case of Indigenous language revitalization.

It may be that (re)centering water in languaging practices holds potential for re/conciliation in anti-colonial efforts. “Reconciliation is more than words and involves the restoration of good relations with the Earth, including the waters” (Chiblow, 2023, p. S88). Keeping water at the fore can influence pedagogy so that the outcomes and learning may benefit all beings on earth (including water), not just humans. As a non-Indigenous person in a settler-colonial nation-state, I must respect the epistemologies, ontologies, and languages that were born of the land and water that sustain me without co-opting them or extracting from them to maintain the status quo. Simpson (2025) explains:

> Institutions such as universities and the agencies that fund research were for decades, and still are, only just beginning to acknowledge Indigenous Knowledge, and only ever on their terms. The recognition of Indigenous Knowledge was and is being driven by the state, non-Indigenous researchers and even environmental activists who see our bodies of knowledge as enhancements to Western science and Western natural resource management strategies. [...] In short, sharing Indigenous Knowledge with the state primarily serves the state, and invests in sustaining the present colonial system of knowledge. (pp. 145-146)

The water-language connection, and the Indigenous knowledges that recognize it, should not be used to uphold the status quo.

Prioritizing the water-language connection aligns with the call for rethinking critical language studies and considering "entangled pedagogies that resist the separation of mind and body, human and animal, reason and affect" (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017, p. 250). Understanding that metaphors reflect the material, spiritual, social, political, and embodied reality of the water-

language connection can support anti-colonial action. Prioritizing the water-language connection includes prioritizing Indigenous knowledges with the ultimate goal of “liberation of the planet and all the living systems that make up the earth” (Simpson, 2025, p. 146). This goal drives my research.

3. Transgressing: A Transdisciplinary Framework

The water-language connection crosses multiple socio-political borders, which emphasizes the need for noticing and/or highlighting connections between disciplines, epistemologies, and ontologies. Rita Wong and Dorothy Christian, Cucw-la7, who is from the Secwepemc and Syilx Nations, (2017) write: "our shared need to protect and respect water brings new conversations and connections into being, gradually wearing away the colonial mindsets and disciplinary barriers that would normalize separation and compartmentalization of what is actually a very fluid *umwelt*" (p. 12, emphasis in the original). The diversity in umwelts, i.e. how all beings perceive this shared world, simultaneously holds difference and togetherness (not unlike the perceived boundaries between languages or the surface tension separating unique water drops!). Highlighting connections between disparate elements, things, events, phenomena, etc. can deepen insights not just about each discrete unit but also about the whole of which they are a part (e.g. Nasser, 2023, a report on what scientists learned about global capitalism and the climate when they compared tree rings to shipwrecks). Recognizing and leveraging this connection through difference is a necessary aspect of my research, and I do this by transgressing.

Motivated by bell hooks's (1994) seminal book *Teaching to Transgress*, I conceptualize transgressing as a mode of transdisciplinary research. Transdisciplinary is a term that is often undefined by researchers who use it (Darbellay, 2015; Sell, et al., 2022) but generally refers to research that brings together academics and community members from different disciplines (Christie, 2006; Tejedor et al., 2017) to address complex problems (Takeuchi et al., 2023; Tejedor et al., 2017) and disrupt the status quo (Adams et al., 2022; Klein, 2015). While my research fits this general definition of transdisciplinary, transgressing is a more powerful and fitting term for my

situation. To transgress is to "open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, a movement against and beyond boundaries" (hooks, 1994, p. 12; n.b. hooks uses boundaries as a synonym for borders. I intend to transgress oppressive borders, not helpful boundaries. Refer to chapter 1 for a discussion of the distinction). hooks's (1994) descriptions of transgressing are not prescriptive; just as each classroom is different, so too is each research project. While others have found "researching to transgress" through, for example, youth participatory action research (Nastasi, 2012) and critical feminist gerontology (Ray, 2000), transgressing for this study will be "changed, invented, reconceptualized" (hooks, 1994, p. 11) in ways that address the current research context. Transgressing relates to the teaching of the Two Row Wampum as it simultaneously focuses on wholeness/togetherness and recognizes "the particularity of individuals" (hooks, 1994, p. 7), including the particularity of epistemologies, ontologies and languages. Transgressing recognizes the impacts of borders while respecting boundaries. Transgressing can be frightening because it challenges the status quo (hooks, 1994, p. 9, p. 203) which risks, for example, censure (Ray, 2000) and dismissal (Nastasi, 2012). Transgressing means taking action even when afraid.

Transgressing allows for my learning and inspiration from scholars like Michael D. Blackstock (2017) and Onowa McIvor (2020), who identify the importance of interdisciplinary and trans-epistemological collaboration, while I think critically about how their work does and does not align with my research context. Blackstock (2017), a "professional chartered mediator, forester, a member of the Gitxsan First Nation, and also of Euro-Canadian descent" (p. 47), embodies connection through diversity. Blackstock (2017) advocates for interweaving Indigenous and

Western thought:

> A great deal of energy goes into rationalizing, promoting, and protecting an epistemology. However, now we need to acknowledge that we don't have all the answers. We can build a collaborative epistemological framework if we transcend sovereign contemporary narrative's boundaries, and literally mine each epistemology for gems that can be interwoven in a collaborative manner. (p. 41)

Through this epistemic interweaving, Blackstock (2017), in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, developed four steps that support "transforming sovereign knowledge into collaborative knowledge: (1) humility, (2) transcending, (3) interweaving, and finally (4) transformation" (p. 40). Similarly, McIvor (2020), a nehinaw (Swampy Cree) and Scottish-Canadian language revitalization scholar activist, encourages bridging the practices and theories between Applied Linguistics and Indigenous language revitalization. The key is to focus on decolonization which "means to turn a system around so that it is no longer oppressive and insists on an empowerment approach that is self-determined and self-governed. All are welcome and encouraged to take a decolonization approach. tawâw - there is room for you here" (McIvor, 2020, p. 79).

Interweaving (Blackstock, 2017) and bridging (McIvor, 2020) are both useful methods for connecting different epistemologies and fields of study. These concepts have helped me to think through different possibilities for relating Indigenous/non-Indigenous thought, but my context and positionality require something different.

Transgressing supports noticing differences and similarities between McIvor's (2020),

Blackstock's (2017), and my contexts. Michele A. Sam, Ktunaxa ʔaqłsmaknik[14], asserts the importance of context; each nation, land and waterway is unique, and ways of connecting Eurocentric epistemologies with Indigenous epistemologies from one context may not necessarily work in other contexts (Neeganagwedgin et al., 2022). I am non-Indigenous and must not assume the position of one who decides what should be taken or what should be bridged from/with Indigenous epistemologies. My theoretical and methodological frameworks must be contextually relevant and respectful. Neither Blackstock nor McIvor is working with the waters, languages, and teachings of the land and nations where my research takes place. Sam's point about contextual relevance helped me to notice that interweaving and bridging do not reflect the transcendent properties that are inherent in water and language. Blackstock's (2017) interweaving supports mining epistemologies for gems. In the mining industry, water is used as a tool to separate the elements being mined from the earth in which they are embedded (A. Robson, personal communication, August 29, 2023). Once these elements have been extracted, they are interwoven with other items for a new purpose, like copper traces that connect the components of a computer motherboard (Evanson, 2020). A common side effect of mining is the pollution of the water that facilitated the extraction (A. Robson, personal communication, August 29, 2023; Miller et al., 2023). For Blackstock's (2017) purposes, interweaving is an important part of transforming sovereign knowledge to collaborative knowledge. However, one goal of my research is not to transform, but to better understand and highlight how different elements are already connected in complementary and faciliatory (or otherwise) ways. McIvor's (2020) bridging analogy is helpful to

[14] Sam's bio found on her website: https://www.michelesam.com/.

understand that different fields of research can benefit from collaborating in ways that are supportive rather than oppressive. From a bridge, one can view what's on either side, above and below. While connected by the bridge, each of the surrounding elements remains discrete (similar to the umwelt situation above, simultaneously holding difference and togetherness). The bridge may also symbolize a boundary (or sometimes a border) between all sides. However, my research is about noticing existing connections rather than building bridges to make connections. Similar to McIvor's (2020) point about turning the colonial system around, transgressing is a choice to strive for "the practice of freedom [… rather than] reinforce domination" (hooks, 1994, p. 4). Like Blackstock's (2017) point about recognizing that one way of understanding/doing/being cannot provide all the answers, transgressing is a commitment to flexibility, an understanding that there cannot be a set agenda and to allow for "shifts in direction" (hooks, 1994, p. 7).

Significantly, *transgress* carries a negative connotation: "to break a law or moral rule" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). I embrace this negative connotation. As a White settler, I must be vigilant about my actions as I approach boundaries to engage on Indigenous lands, with Indigenous epistemologies, with Black and mestiza feminisms, with any new-to-me epistemologies and ontologies that were not developed/do not exist, necessarily, by/for me or my ancestors/successors. I must recognize and fight against my inheritance, the colonial attitude:

> The colonial attitude is characterized not only by scopophilia, a drive to look, but also by an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit. The attitude assumes that everything should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage. (Garneau, 2016, p. 23)

It is likely that, despite my vigilance, at times I might trespass boundaries rather than transcend borders (this is further addressed in the ethics section). Maintaining the negative connotation of transgression is a reminder of the tensions that exist in any anti-colonial, anti-racist work, and a reminder for me to be humble and to only proceed when reciprocity is possible. The negative connotation also reflects an irreverence for divisive borders. Water and language are affected by borders, but they often find ways to transgress them.

Transgressing is my approach to transdisciplinary research. Transdisciplinarity transcends disciplinary borders (Adams et al., 2022; Darbellay, 2014). There are unlimited ways to conduct transdisciplinary research, but one typical feature is that it is collaborative (Childs, 2022). People from different disciplines and backgrounds, within and outside the academy, address a common issue. Disciplines, like named languages, are a form of bordered knowledge, but these borders are socio-political epistemic constructs. Like languages, the boundaries between disciplines are more fluid than rigid. Miwa A. Takeuchi and Jennifer Adams (2020) explain:

> Inviting interactions across disciplinary boundaries create a new space of encounters and interactions in the same way that the places where different fluids meet and create a boundary layer (Shanahan, 2011). The creation of this boundary layer can interrupt disciplinary hegemonies and can also lead to the emergence of new concepts, representations, and applications, that ideally should also re-centre voices from the margins (Sengupta, Shanahan, & Kim, 2019). An integral part of this boundary work involves redressing the historical and systemic violence and barriers experienced by people from non-dominant groups in accessing disciplinary practices. (p. 21)

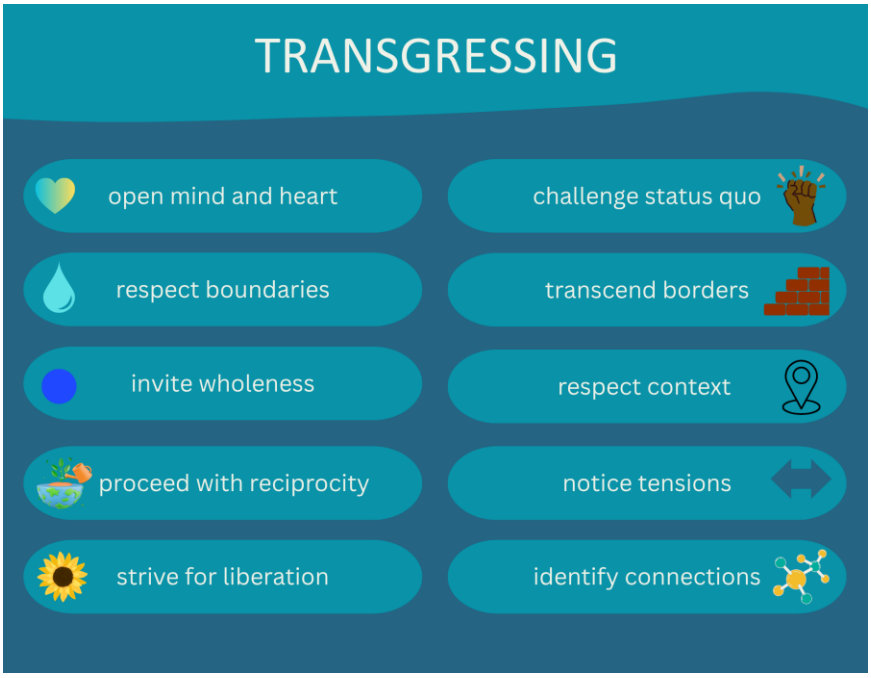
In my transdisciplinary research, boundaries afford flexibility while recognizing differences

between bodies (of knowledge, of methods, of water, of languages, of people, etc.). Boundaries can be negotiated and changed while protecting the integrity of the important aspects that make the body unique.

To summarize, transgressing requires accepting the wholeness of bodies and respecting boundaries while transcending externally imposed borders. Transcending borders is a means to challenge the status quo and counter oppression, but it is important to do so with an open mind and heart to accept the wholeness of bodies and beings. Transgressing requires an understanding of context and the need to reconceptualize methods according to local needs. Transcending borders allows for tensions to arise, and it is important to accept these tensions as they can help identify the limits of healthy boundaries. Transgressing must prioritize reciprocity in relationships. The goal of transgressing is liberation. Figure 5 is a visual summary of transgressing.

Figure 5

Summary of the Elements of Transgressing



Transgressing Theory

In this section, I present information from different theories and local Indigenous knowledge that inform my research. I begin with teachings of Indigenous relationality because this is the foundation through which everything connects. Specifically, I relay what I have learned about Anishinaabe teachings on *Nation* and *All Our Relations* and the Haudenosaunee *Kanonhweratónhsera*, the Thankgiving Address, also known as *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen*, the Words Before All Else. The tension of transgressing is important to remember as I recount and reflect on what I have learned from Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee writers and educators. As a White European settler, these teachings are new to me, so any fault in their retelling is my own. My intention is not to become a teacher of these knowledges, but to share how these teachings and practices have influenced my own thinking and the development of my doctoral research. I hope to avoid the pitfall of settler epistemic privilege that only shares Indigenous knowledges as supplemental to Eurocentric knowledges (Brant-Birioukov, 2022). I understand these teachings to be integral and foundational to any research that has to do with education on this land.

I then present three critical theories: *critical multilingual language awareness*, *raciolinguistics*, and *anti-coloniality*. Critical theory emerges from lived experience and presents an explanation of that experience for the purpose of transformation — liberation from systemic oppressions (hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2013). "Because theory is not disembodied, dominant theorizing determines whose voice is privileged in education. ... It is not surprising, then, that theories of the human in philosophical discourse are overwhelmingly about European humanity" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 24). As I transgress theory, I prioritize learning from and citing critical theorists from diverse backgrounds to counter epistemic racism and the surfeit of White

Eurocentrism (Brant-Birioukov, 2022; Kubota, 2020; Rice et al., 2022).

Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Teachings

Nation and All Our Relations.

In 2022, I enrolled in the course *EDUC 5370 Indigeneity and Territory in Cultural Traditions* taught by Dr. Pamela Toulouse, an Anishinaabe scholar from Sagamok First Nation. On the first day of class, she explained the importance of introductions, stating that Anishinaabe people want to learn first who you are as a human being, as a two-legged: "We want to know who you are, the lands of your people, your language before hearing about your credentials. That is the heart to heart that connects us" (Toulouse, 2022). Dr. Toulouse explained that sharing one's Nation in an introduction is important because Nation has to do with kinship and relationships. Focusing on a people's kin and the land that forms them is a way to recognize the similarities and boundaries between people, maintaining differences even as people join together. Anishinaabe professor Niigaan Sinclair (2017) explains that Nation also includes more than human kin:

> It was the non-human world, we must remember, who adopted us into their nations. Gave us a place to live, their skins to wear, their bodies to eat. We are guests in these territories and must meet, confer, and offer gifts with them too. The borderlands between ourselves and the water, earth, and animals must also be under constant negotiation as needs and conflicts arise. (para. 9)

Inherent in this understanding of Nation is the concept of *All Our Relations,* the Anishinaabe understanding of relationality, which "honours the connection and relationship to all that is. Gratitude and an awareness that everything in the natural world, beings that are seen and unseen, and the universe are connected to us" (All our relations, n.d., para. 4). All Our Relations, then,

includes all animals, plants, earth, water, the sun and the moon, which is not an exhaustive list. All Our Relations presupposes the aliveness, or *animacy* (Kimmerer, 2013), of *all,* and the importance of respecting each kin to maintain harmony and health for all. Through the mindset of All Our Relations, Nation is more than a place. Nation is a way of relating, a way of being.

This Anishinaabe concept of Nation is antithetical to the concept of nation-state. A nation-state is a political entity that is formed by the ruling class. Nation-states manufacture national identity "to centralize power, facilitate governance, and achieve unity" (López-Alves, 2018, p. 24). A nation-state identity perpetuates myths of homogeneity and unity within federal systems that exert power over multiple nations, as is the case in Canada (Balthazar, 1998; Moscovitz, 2021). The Canadian identity is a tool for Canada's imperialism and colonialism, as seen in Canada's international education strategy. Goals of the strategy include solidifying and "exporting Canadian values" (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 3). The implication is that the federal government's values represent a unified Canadian people's values and that these values are superior and should be spread worldwide. Recruiting international students as *ideal immigrants* (Trilokekar & El Masri, 2017) to become Canadian citizens who settle on treaty and unceded land is a tactic to further entrench nation-state power and domination. Not only does this imperialist, colonial agenda ignore the multi-national, heterogeneous reality that exists on the land that Canada claims, it also ignores people's relationships with and responsibility toward the land, water, and all inhabitants/relations.

Interestingly, integrating the manufactured-by-the-state national identity as part of one's self-identity is a relatively recent phenomenon (López-Alves, 2018). Identifying oneself through kin and land is a millennia-long practice. One goal of my research is to highlight *Nation* in inter*nation*al education. What are the possibilities when we transgress manufactured identities that

support nation-state bordering regimes to prioritize relationships, diversity, and boundaries inherent in nationhood?

Kanonhweratónhsera (The Thanksgiving Address).

While *All Our Relations* is an Anishinaabe teaching, a similar understanding is integral to the Haudenosaunee way of life. One way this understanding is expressed is through the Haudenosaunee practice of Kanonhweratónhsera, the Thanksgiving Address, also known as Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, the Words Before All Else (K. Talbot, personal communication, May 25, 2026). Kanonhweratónhsera is central to Haudenosaunee philosophy (Hill, 2020; Wemigwans & MacKay, 2023). Oneida writer Roberta Hill (2020) explains:

> The Thanksgiving Address opens our rituals. It expresses the recognition of our place on the earth and all the beings that support and sustain life. It is intended to focus the community's attention to the interconnected relationships between the Earth, sky and all that is in-between, to generate a communal vision of these relationships, and to have people let go of their resentments and hostility in order to generate gratitude for the Earth's power, so they will act with positive communal effort to gather together and send forth the energies for sustaining life. (p. 160)

Ron Thomas, Seneca Nation, Bear Clan, is a Haudenosaunee Knowledge Keeper who spoke during the Two Row on the Grand paddle excursion I participated in. He explained that Kanonhweratónhsera is delivered orally and varies according to who is speaking. It can be minutes or many hours long. The speaker expresses gratitude for elements in the natural world, naming and expressing thanks for them one by one. The Thanksgiving Address is different every time. The speaker decides which elements are named and thanked. Thomas also discussed the importance of

being present, so you can be mindful and so you can be grateful (Thomas, 2025). The listeners are active participants:

> After each aspect of the living world is acknowledged, the speaker states: 'now our minds are one,' and listeners offer their affirmation aloud through expressions like tho, huh, yes, yeah, and uh-huh (Porter, 2008, p. 11) thus recognizing the interconnectedness of the living world. This call and response strengthens the coming together of minds through the active participation from all in attendance. (Wemigwans & MacKay, 2023, pp. 8-9)

In her book Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer (2013) details how powerfully Kanonhweratónhsera teaches a culture of gratitude that contains many lessons: "a material, scientific inventory of the natural world" (p. 108), "a civics lesson" (p. 111), "a statement of sovereignty, a political structure, a Bill of Responsibilities, an educational model, a family tree, ... a social contract, a way of being" (p. 115). Kanonhweratónhsera is also a way to unlearn the culture of scarcity that capitalism relies on. Kimmerer (2013) explains:

> You can't listen to the Thanksgiving Address without feeling wealthy. And, while expressing gratitude seems innocent enough, it is a revolutionary idea. In a consumer society, contentment is a radical proposition. Recognizing the abundance rather than the scarcity undermines an economy that thrives by creating unmet desires. Gratitude cultivates an ethic of fullness, but the economy needs emptiness. The Thanksgiving Address reminds you that you already have everything you need. Gratitude doesn't send you out shopping to find satisfaction; it comes as a gift rather than a commodity, subverting the foundation of the whole economy. That's good medicine for the land and people alike. (p. 111)

Kanonhweratónhsera is respected by many Indigenous people and Nations. Kimmerer (2013) calls

it "a gift of the Haudenosaunee to the world" (p. 116). Kimmerer (2013) quotes Chief Oren Lyons, member of the Onondaga and Seneca Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy[15]: "It's supposed to be shared, otherwise how can it work? We've been waiting five hundred years for people to listen. If they'd understood the Thanksgiving then, we wouldn't be in this mess" (p. 116). I am very grateful for this gift.

I have been asked how, as a White descendent of settlers, I will rationalize my engagement with Indigenous teachings. I understand this question because I have committed the trespass of cultural appropriation at times, and I have at other times done nothing for fear of causing harm. Both of these responses to colonialism perpetuate colonialism. Between cultural appropriation and inaction is a space where non-Indigenous people can learn and centre Indigenous knowledges respectfully. Respectful engagement stems from the relationality that is taught in Kanonhweratónhsera. Learning about and sharing Indigenous knowledges must be done in relationship, which I have come to understand includes in-person relationships as well as engaging with texts and materials created by Indigenous people for others. Respectful engagement includes honouring the teachings without trying to change them or judge them through a Eurocentric lens, acknowledging and naming the teachers, and accepting that not all knowledge belongs to all people. Some knowledge is not for some people (Garneau, 2016). As I unlearn my colonial attitude and grow beyond my surfeit of Eurocentric knowledge (Garneau, 2016; Rice et al., 2022), I have come to understand the imperative for educators and researchers to learn about settler colonialism and its effects on all of us, and to prioritize the knowledges and languages of the land where we reside.

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[15] Chief Lyons's found in Coleman et al. (2025).

Ignoring the knowledges of the land that supports us leads to incomplete and irresponsible education and research.

Critical Multilingual Language Awareness – An Evolution

As noted in the water-language literature review above, applied linguistics originated from White patriarchal traditions, but there has been an emergence in recent years of more "socially oriented theorizing" (McIvor, 2020, p. 90), such as critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA). CMLA encompasses a theoretical construct, research and teaching practices, and a state of consciousness. This section presents snapshots of the evolution from language awareness to multilingual language awareness to CMLA as well as my own adaptation of CMLA.

According to the editors of the first issue of the England-based European journal *Language Awareness*, the study of language awareness "rose mistily from the consciousness-raising movements of the seventies" (Donmall, 1992, p. 1), so discussions of language awareness have historically presented a social justice hue. The basics of language awareness have to do with "finding things out about language, with becoming conscious of one's own and others' use of it in speech and its written forms, with developing a sensitive relationship to it, with being able to talk explicitly about one's insights into it" (Donmall, 1992, p. 1). Donmall (1992) explains that raising language awareness is important because "'language is a means of social control' […] and the ability to understand the process of control reduces the efficacy of the control" (citing David Abercrombie, p. 1).

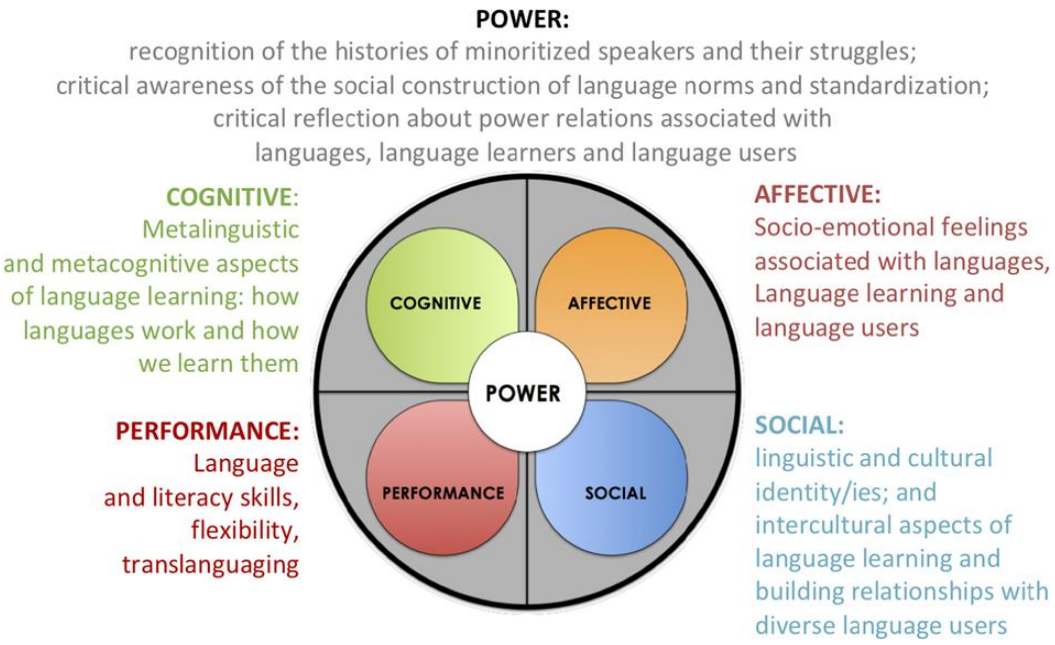
Multilingual language awareness builds on language awareness by denaturalizing and decentering the *monolingual habitus* that developed as a tool of nation-state control. The monolingual habitus "is founded on the basic and deep-seated conviction that monolingualism in a

society, and particularly in schools, is the one and only normality, forever and always valid: the characteristic of a nation" (Gogolin, 1997, p. 41). Gogolin (1997), a German educational researcher, coined monolingual habitus following Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, whereby individuals are socialized to act a particular way, producing and reproducing appropriate ways to be/long in/to a social class. Gogolin (1997) argues that "one of the main motives for development of education systems [in modern European nation-states] was linguistic homogenisation: the establishment of one national language and of a monolingual national society honouring one standard form of a language. This was seen as essential for the ultimate economic success of the nation state idea" (p. 41). Thus, being a successful citizen is predicated on speaking one language a particular way. This bias extends to language teaching in multicultural contexts, in second and foreign language teaching contexts, and in international education. Language teaching in these contexts is about teaching non-citizens (or perceived non-citizens) how to speak/act appropriately. "The focus has been on the target language, that is, the language the teacher was trying to teach in the classroom, with little understandings of the students' language, except as it 'interfered' with the language being taught" (García, 2008, p. 386). Multilingual language awareness in education recognizes that multilingualism is common in schools worldwide, and that multilingual students do not use or learn language the way that languages have typically been taught through a monolingual habitus (García, 2008). Multilingual language awareness in education puts "language difference *at the center* of the educational enterprise" (García, 2008, p. 393, emphasis in the original) and values the full breadth of linguistic skills of all interlocuters. An important aspect of multilingual language awareness is identifying and understanding the "social, political, and economic struggles" (García, 2008, p. 387) and the power dynamics at play in all language acts.

Although power dynamics may have been a central theme in the field of language awareness, "most language awareness research and curricula focus on the cognitive, affective, and performance domains" (Frijins et al, 2018, as cited in Prasad & Lory, 2020, p. 809), neglecting the importance of power relations. In 2018, Dr. Gail Prasad updated the CMLA framework to situate power at the center of multilingual language awareness (Prasad, 2018, as cited in Prasad & Lory, 2020; Figure 6).

Figure 6

Critical Multilingual Language Awareness Framework



Note. Reproduced from Prasad and Lory (2020, p. 809)

The CMLA framework acknowledges the importance of the cognitive, affective, performance, and social domains of language awareness while asserting a critical awareness and reflection of the socio-political construction of language norms and how these affect "power relations associated with languages, language learners and language users" (Prasad & Lory, 2020,

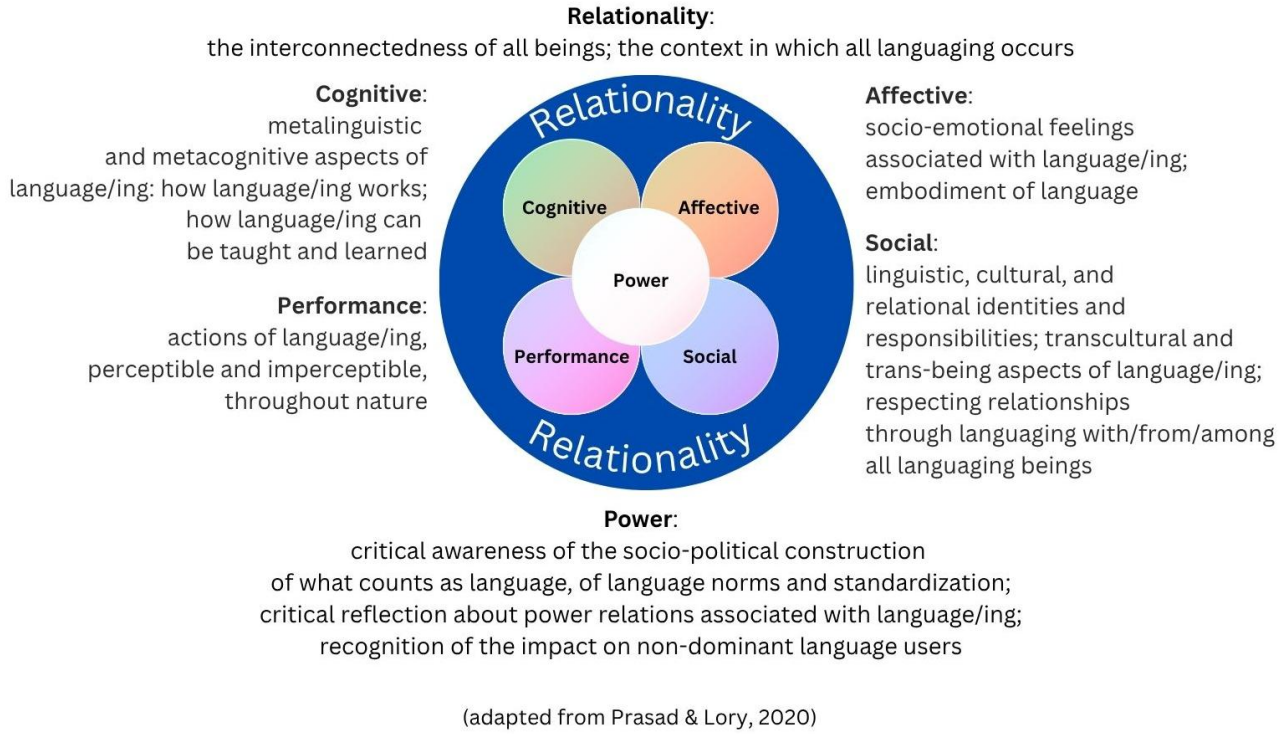
p. 809). The CMLA framework focuses on the language users rather than on a disembodied language(s) to highlight individuals' "expansive communicative repertoires" (Prasad & Lory, 2020, p. 810) and practices of meaning making as well as the ways that "linguistic hierarchies have been socially constructed" (Prasad & Lory, 2020, p. 810) as understood through people's experiences.

To date, language awareness in all its forms has focused on human-human interaction, a legacy of Euro-centrism. Continuing the language awareness r/evolution, my doctoral research would benefit from an expanded version of the CMLA framework that connects to Indigenous understandings of interconnectedness by identifying the context in which all languaging occurs: relationality. In this expanded version the L in CMLA includes both language and languaging. *Languaging* is an embodied practice of using language of different forms to make meaning. "Languaging is an important part of the learning process, as it transforms inner thoughts to external knowing (externalization) and, conversely, it transforms external knowing into internal cognitive activity (internalization)" (Swain et al., 2009, p. 5). Swain et al. (2009) describe how the act of verbalizing thoughts helps people to understand new concepts. Languaging has since been augmented to describe how humans draw on "the multicodes within one language, that is, the images, music, art, graphs that make up today's ways of using language" (García, 2008, p. 395) to make and communicate meaning. *Plurilanguaging* moves beyond a single language and describes the dynamic human action of meaning making and communicating that naturally draws from "different linguistic and semiotic resources" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 10). For my research, I use languaging to encompass all the above definitions with the addition of relationality, which transgresses human-centric language. What possibilities arise when we recognize that linguistic and semiotic resources are produced by all beings? Highlighting languaging and relationality

necessitates adjustments to the five domains of CMLA framework (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Expanded Critical Multilingual Language/ing Awareness Framework



Each of the domains has been updated to include the possibilities of languaging of/with/between all beings. The expanded descriptor of the performance domain includes the perceptible and imperceptible facets of languaging. This acknowledges the actions of languaging that humans may not *be able* to be aware of within ourselves as well as among other languaging beings. Acknowledging the imperceptible can contribute to humbling the human ego, placing humans as part of nature on par with other beings, and acknowledging that human languaging is not superior to other forms of languaging. Similarly, the expanded power domain includes a prompt to reconsider what counts as language, to reflect on the effects of assuming that only humans can do

this amazing thing. The social domain includes trans-being interactions which supports the understanding that human language practices affect everything/one, not just humans, and that languaging can be a more-than-human experience. Embodiment has been added to the affective domain. It could be argued that embodiment is physical more than affective. However, people feel language in different parts of their bodies (i.e. Prasad, 2014; I offer more details about embodiment in chapter 4), and languaging with other beings is a deeply embodied experience. Expanding the cognitive domain to connect to all beings through the broadened definition of languaging supports the ability to learn from and with water as an active participant/languaging being.

Keeping the negative connotation of transgressing in mind is helpful to notice two cautions with this expanded CMLA framework. Decentering humans to include all beings should not negate the lived experiences of humans, especially the "histories of minoritized speakers and their struggles" (Prasad 2018, as cited in Prasad & Lory, 2020, p. 809) resulting from colonialism, systemic racism, and other intersecting oppressions. Furthermore, the expanded CMLA is not meant to subsume Indigenous knowledges into a Eurocentric framework. Rather the goal is to prioritize Indigenous Land-based knowledge to notice existing connections between the knowledge systems with the goal of liberatory languaging for all. As shown in Figure 7, relationality is the main circle. It represents the context of all languaging.

Anti-Coloniality

All aspects of my doctoral research are affected by colonialism: international education, water, and language. International education in Canada operates within colonial and settler-colonial systems and beliefs (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Canada recruits students mostly from Asia to contribute to the Canadian economy (Government of Canada, 2019; Sodhi & Martin, 2023). The

focus is on nation building and imperialism rather than knowledge creation and exchange between peoples of the world (Stein & Andreotti, 2016: Sodhi & Martin, 2023). Water is also subjected to coloniality in Canada. In colonial systems, water is considered a "resource" that can/should be manipulated, owned, and controlled, often for profit. This view of water leads to actions that disproportionately negatively affect communities that are already harmed and disadvantaged by colonial systems, such as Indigenous communities across Turtle Island (Miller et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2023). Water is also used by colonial governments as a tool to exert power over people, as seen in Canada with historic and current poor water access and quality in residential schools and on reserves and in Indigenous communities (University of Manitoba Sustainability, 2023). Language is also under colonial rule in Canada. The Official Languages Act (OLA; 1988), for example, reinforces power through linguistic domination by the so-called *two founding races* of Canada (i.e., English and French; Haque, 2019), and has systematically othered and minoritized all languages on this land that are not English and French, including Indigenous languages. Anti-colonial theory and praxis are necessary to inform and support my research.

In this dissertation, I employ the prefix anti- in anti-colonial to emphasize that I am countering colonialism. There are many discussions about the definitions of anti-colonial and decolonial. As Aman Sium, who identifies as Tigrinya, Indigenous, Eritrean, and African[16], with colleagues Chandni Desai and Eric Ritskes, (2012) writes, "decolonization, and the Indigenous knowledges that sustain it, are diverse and, due to the embedded nature, unique to particular contexts and geographies" (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012, p. II). One commonality among many

[16] Sium's bio found here: https://about.me/amansium.

understandings of decolonization is that it should address mental, spiritual, and material aspects of what is colonized. The material aspects include Land. Following Tuck & Yang (2012), I understand decolonization in settler colonial contexts to "involve the repatriation of land" (p. 7). My dissertation research does not involve the repatriation of land. Identifying and countering colonialism, at all scales from multiple perspectives, is necessary for decolonization to occur (Patel, 2016). This dissertation counters colonialism in many ways, and my anti-colonial work is in support of decolonization.

According to George J. Sefa Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh (2001), "anti-colonialism interrogates the power configurations embedded in ideas, cultures, and histories of knowledge production, validation, and use. It also examines our understanding of indigeneity, pursuit of agency, resistance, and subjective politics" (p. 300). In their anti-colonial discursive framework, which extends anti-colonial theory to ongoing, dynamic praxis, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) highlight the power of those who are marginalized by colonialism to fight colonialism:

> A key argument in this approach is the notion that institutional structures are sanctioned by the state to serve the material, political, and ideological interests of the state and the economic/social formation. The anti-colonial discursive framework acknowledges the power of local social practice and action in surviving the colonial and colonized encounters. It argues that power and discourse aren't possessed entirely by the colonizer. (p. 300)

Furthermore, "anti-colonial theorists seek to work with alternative, oppositional paradigms based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference" (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 301). Taking an anti-colonial approach requires prioritizing epistemologies and ontologies that colonialism renders inferior. Anti-coloniality moves beyond theory to relational

actions (Dei, 2015; Patel, 2016). In education and educational research, this relational action involves seeing "learners as whole beings whose educational journeys touch on the nexus and interface of the body-mind-soul and spirit, as well as the interface of society, culture and nature" (Dei, 2015, p. 14). Anti-coloniality embraces relationality with the understanding that "we do not exist in isolation from social and material contexts, separated from each other. This is true in the sense of humans being connected as well as human and nonhuman entities being connected and coming into existence with each other" (Patel, 2016, p. 49), which relates to the Anishinaabe teachings of Nation and All Our Relations and the Haudenosaunee Kanonhweratónhsera (as described in chapter 3). Dei (2015) argues for critical reflexivity in anti-colonial practice. Regarding language in global education, one critical question he poses is, "What modes of communication produce multiple knowledges and who is left out or excluded" (Dei, 2015, p. 18). These elements of anti-coloniality — i.e., interrogating power relations in what is considered knowledge and how it is created and used; prioritizing Indigenous and oppositional epistemologies and ontologies; highlighting relationships within and between humans and more-than-humans; and engaging in critical reflexivity — are integral aspects of my research.

Critical Race Theory & Raciolinguistics.

Anti-colonial theory and praxis must include understandings of race and racism, since current concepts of race and racism were created for and continue to maintain colonialism (Smedley, 1997). Critical race theory (CRT) "is a way to make intelligible the lived dimensions of race" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 24). The goal of CRT research in education extends beyond identifying racial disparities. CRT researchers disrupt the status quo and fight to redress racial injustices (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). My research is further positioned within the multidisciplinary field of

raciolinguistics which addresses the relationship between race, language, and power (Alim et al., 2016). Dominant raciolinguistic ideologies are produced by colonial discourses ingrained in mainstream institutions and conflate linguistic "deficiency" with racialized people (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2019). Whiteness and White language practices stem from the Christian notion of human supremacy, whereby (White) man holds dominion over the earth (Justice, 2021) and therefore over so-called inferior races. This is amplified in settler-colonialism. "The thirst for property and accumulation of wealth, because land is defined as a finite resource, then converts other entities into property, including people, air and sea, and status" (Patel, 2016, p. 31), and language (Sterzuk, 2015). The White speaking subject is the model for appropriate language usage. As the holder of this property, the White listening subject determines if/when linguistic appropriateness is met, but the White listening subject "often continues to hear linguistic markedness and deviancy regardless of how well language-minoritized students model themselves after the white speaking subject" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152). Race and language are thus intertwined. CRT and raciolinguistics provide the lens to notice these normalized practices.

Raciolinguistics is embedded in the expanded CMLA framework *and* situated alongside it. Raciolinguistics is central to the power domain of the CMLA framework as it helps to raise critical awareness of the socio-political construction of what counts as language and of language norms and standardization. While an understanding of raciolinguistics is not a prerequisite for understanding relationality ─ the context of all languaging in the expanded CMLA framework ─ it can certainly help. Raciolinguistics supports the disruption of human-created racial power dynamics that place White languaging at the top of the colonial hierarchy. This denaturalization of the race–language hierarchy could have a ripple effect toward supporting the understanding that the human–

non-human language hierarchy is also a human construct.

Theory of Change

Tuck (2009; 2018) calls for researchers to explicitly state their theory of change. The unstated theory of change that dominates education research is that documenting harms caused by socio-political oppressions will lead to reparations or other gains (Tuck, 2009). Tuck (2009) questions whether the amount of change resulting from such "damage-centered research" (p. 409) is outweighed by the large body of pathologizing narratives that such research creates and/or perpetuates. This is a difficult issue to grapple with because, as Tuck (2009) admits, it is important to understand and name oppressions in order to refute them. Negative experiences of international students and newcomers to Canada have been documented in research (e.g. Amoako et al., 2024; Bonistall Postel, 2020; Houshmand et al., 2014; Kim, 2023; Liu, 2017), including my own past research on international students' experiences with language-based discrimination (Martin, 2022). Mainstream media has also been headlining these negative experiences in recent years (e.g. Bascaramurty et al., 2021; Sasitharan, 2023). Documenting oppression is important, but so is documenting alternative ways of being. I am using this doctoral research as an opportunity to consider what opportunities for change arise when we focus on liberatory ways of being, and my theory of change reflects this commitment.

While "all social science research, and likely all research" (Tuck, 2018, p. 95) is driven by theories of change, they are often unstated, unanalyzed, or implied. There are few explicit examples of theories of change to draw on, and when they are explicit, they are not always labeled. For example, Cummins (2011) offers a theory of change that he refers to as an *underlying logic*, which is: "actuality implies possibility. If a particular intervention *has* happened, and if particular effects

have been observed, then this intervention and its impact *can* happen" (p. 19). My theory of change is similar to Cummins's (2011) logic but is also informed by my theoretical and methodological frameworks and highlights embodiment and liberation:

> When people experience a better (i.e., less oppressive / liberating) way to be/engage, and when they experience this wholistically (physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, spiritually), they will believe that such ways of being/engaging are possible, and they will be motivated to recreate such states within their spheres of influence.

Transgressing Methodology

As with my theoretical framework, I maintain the power and nuance of transgressing as I find and employ points of connection between discrete methodologies to inform my methods. In this section, I describe three methodologies and how I have reconceptualized them for my research context.

Social Design-Based Experience

Social design-based experiments are a form of participatory research in which researchers and community members/participants work together to forge utopian yet plausible learning environments that are contextualized in participants' lived experiences. "A central premise of SDBEs is that learning is organized as a formative anticipation of a possible future" (Gutiérrez et al., 2020, p. 331), which relates to my theory of change described above. The social part of SDBEs reflects the careful consideration of historic and current oppressions so that the chosen methods privilege equity, resilience, and sustainability (Bang et al., 2014; Gutiérrez et al., 2020). My methodological transgression steps past the human aspect of social to include all beings, considering how everyone, not just humans, in the research context has been affected by historic

and current oppressions. The design part of SDBEs enables the creation of "learning conditions that learning theory suggests are productive, but that are not commonly practiced or are not well understood" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 5).

Because SDBEs disrupt oppressive power dynamics, it is important to focus on the lived experiences of people who are disproportionately negatively affected by these oppressions. Many SDBEs work mainly with communities who are marginalized to create "alternate orientations toward the future in which [the people] themselves signify meaning" (Becker & Gutiérrez, 2022, p. 117). My research transgresses this position by adding a conciliatory aspect between peoples of varying experiences within colonial international education. While prioritizing Indigenous epistemology and valuing experiences of people who are othered (e.g. racialized and minoritized language speakers) and their ability to disrupt colonial systems (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001), this project also recognizes the importance of education and unlearning for people who are privileged in colonial systems (e.g. White and dominant language speakers) so that they become better able to work toward dismantling coloniality and related oppressions. Everyone is affected by coloniality, and everyone can work against it. By learning/unlearning together, my hope is that participants will notice pre-existing connections between them, allowing for conciliatory relationships to form, which can strengthen anti-colonial actions. Precedent exists for such hope. Dr. Gail Prasad facilitated linguistic and cultural collaboration in an elementary school in the United States. As a result of that SDBE, minoritized and dominant language speakers alike unlearned their monolingual bias and became co-conspirators, working together as language activists to make change in their school and greater community (Prasad, 2024; Prasad & Lory, 2020).

The idea of conciliation does not presume that a previous harmonious relationship once

existed between monolithic Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups (Garneau, 2016). Conciliation transgresses the current discourse on reconciliation by acknowledging that Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups are heterogeneous, that disingenuous and unhonoured agreements of the past coupled with current systemic and legalized racism continue to hinder relationship-building. The notion of conciliation fits within ~~a~~ SDBE because it attends to the past while creating the possibility of a utopian future. The idea is that everyone can "work together to produce meaningful change in [a context] of practice" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2002, p. 6) so that they know it can be done. With the goal of conciliation, learning in relation with humans and more-than-humans may support the understanding of how each person's unique positionality is affected by/contributes to coloniality, which can support an understanding of each person's unique role in anti-colonial work.

The E in SDBE typically refers to experiment, which can be appropriate when the experiment is designed with and by community members rather than conducted on them. My research context does not take place within a pre-existing community, partly because I left my teaching position one year into the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue my doctoral studies, and partly because of the shifts in educational engagement during the pandemic, which dissolved many of the cohesive educational circles I had previously belonged to. For these reasons, I did not have a community group who could participate in the research design. Instead, I partnered with a local Indigenous educator/cultural consultant who supported the entire process. Since we could not co-create an experiment with the participants, and I did not want to experiment *on* a group of people, we prepared an international education intervention, an *experience*, which is the E word I choose for my SDBE. A proper introduction of the consultant as well as details of the experience are provided in chapter 4.

Water-Based Learning

According to Tuck and colleagues (2014), from Indigenous understandings, Land with a capital L, is “shorthand for land, water, air, and subterranean earth” (p. 8) and includes the understanding that Land has spirit and “is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (Watts, 2013, p. 21). Land-based learning practices can apply to water-based learning. Tuck et al. (2014) explain that Indigenous peoples’ longstanding relationships to land (and water) are diverse and specific to each unique context. "Pedagogies and knowledges” (p. 8) have emerged from these Land-based relationships. It is important to note the distinction between Land-based learning and discussions of place-based learning that do not hold the same notion of Land. The differences stem from “the ontologies that animate them” (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 10). Megan Bang, who is of Ojibwe and Italian descent, Lawrence Curley, Ojibwe ad Dine, Adam Kessel, Lakota, Italian, and German, Ananada Marin, of African American, Choctaw, and European American descent, Eli Suzukovich, Little Shell Chippewa-Cree, and George Strack, Miami, (2014) explain: “we might imagine that ontology of place-based paradigms is something like ‘I am, therefore place is,’ in contrast, the ontology of land-based pedagogies might be summarized as ‘Land is, therefore we are’” (p. 45). Place-based learning moves colonial pedagogy outside, continuing the erasure of Indigenous “ways of knowing, being, and thinking” (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 134). Land-based learning recognizes Land, including water, as teacher (Bang et al., 2021; Bowra et al., 2021).

As all beings on earth “have water in common” (Chen et al., 2013, p. 6), centering water in any teaching and learning has expansive benefits beyond whatever topic the lesson may be about. Cecilia Chen and colleagues (2013) suggest that “a recognition of water’s critical presence in all

aspects of our lives can encourage a radically inclusive politics" (Chen et al., 2013, p. 6). Water is not just a resource that can be manipulated for educational purposes, water is the teacher. "In acknowledging nature as teacher, […] we ask ourselves what we can do to honour our relationships that allow all of Earth's creations to live in harmony and balance" (Zimanyi et al., 2020, para. 22). Water-based learning is relational, so there is no prescriptive method for how to learn. Louise Zimanyi, Joanne Helena Keeshig, Saugeen Ojibway Nation member[17], and Lynn Short, (2020) describe a few ways that children learn from water:

> Children are drawn to stick and water play. They throw stones back to the water, jump in puddles.
>
> They notice turtles on logs, investigate velvety green mosses revived by spring rains and make up stories about muddy animal tracks.
>
> They like drinking wild peppermint tea outdoors, collect water for the vegetable garden and say that water nestled in flower petals are the drinking cups for bees and birds. The children walk with GabeKanang Ziibi flowing alongside the forest trails.
>
> These relationships help children read the stories of what water is teaching them. (paras. 6-9)

Other examples of water-based learning include being *on* water, such as paddling (e.g. Severinsen & Reweti, 2021), *in* water, such as swimming or scuba diving (e.g. Appleby & Pennycook, 2017), or *with* water, such as considering the embodiment of water (e.g. Neimanis, 2022). "(Re)connecting to land and water is a sensory balm we need, the seeds of hope and resilience through activities like

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[17] Keeshig's bio found here: https://midwesternnewspapers.com/water-walkers-from-saugeen-ojibway-nation-speak-to-south-bruce-clc-members/

planting a garden, embracing rain or reading and sharing knowledge. What will you do?" (Zimanyi et al., 2020, para. 34). I have made water-based learning central to my dissertation inquiry.

Water-based learning is for everyone, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. Centering Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and pedagogies can support a more wholistic understanding of water as a respected being and teacher rather than water as resource. This paradigmatic difference affects how people interact with water. "Narratives in which Indigenous people are absent, or relegated to a liberal multiculturalism that subsumes Indigenous dominion to occupancy, and narratives and positionings of land as backdrop for anthropocentric life, will only help to produce new narratives of territorial acquisition and fail to bring about needed social change" (Bang et al., 2014, p. 50). In 2023, on Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, I attended an event in Hamilton's harbour. R. Stacey Laforme, Gimaa (Chief) of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, shared his thoughts on the importance of centering Indigenous knowledges. He laughed at the irony of the Canadian government's failed attempts to suppress Indigenous knowledges when now it is obvious that we all need Indigenous knowledges to address world-wide issues like climate change. Gimaa Laforme (2023) said, "We can help and we need help." He explained that Indigenous people can and will teach non-Indigenous people, but they cannot do all the work of fixing the issues caused by colonialism by themselves. A hope for my research is that centering Indigenous led water-based learning for CMLA will lead to more equitable language practices, but will also support and mobilize "Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in appreciating each other and our roles and responsibilities to our treaty relationships, families, and as humans in protecting the land, water, place, and each other" (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019, p. 162).

Embodiment

This doctoral research highlights the embodiment of the water-language connection. As noted in the *Discussion: Water-Language Connection* section of the literature review, the supposed disembodiment of language stems from Eurocentric, patriarchal, colonial logics (Charity Hudley & Flores, 2022; Sodhi in Sodhi & Martin, 2023). Linguistic borders are reinforced when language is understood to be a disembodied experience, so this inquiry aims for the reverse — embodying language diminishes linguistic borders. Remembering the embodiment of language also supports an understanding of the water-language connection and vice versa since water constitutes bodies and both language and water require bodies to function. Harding (2020) describes one aspect of the embodiment of water:

> Life on land is one huge interconnected cellular meshwork of flowing water which [is called] 'Hypersea' - literally, a living, pulsing interactive sea within the tissues and cells of all land organisms […]. The inter- and intracellular waters of Hypersea move horizontally through soils within fungal tubes and into the plant roots with whom they connect symbiotically, sharing nutrients and information, promoting diversity in Gaia's terrestrial ecosystems. (p. 18)

I am drawn to the "sharing nutrients and information" line at the end of this quote, which connects embodiment to languaging. Embodiment can support an awareness and understanding of diversity in languaging. When language is considered disembodied, the monolingual habitus can remain unnoticed or unquestioned as any *feeling for a language* is relegated to the subconscious (Gogolin, 1997). In my research, embodiment encourages focusing on how the bodies are a necessary part of languaging, as well as on the diversity of languaging bodies.

Learning is more than a cognitive process; it incorporates one's whole being. Embodied practices support learning because "the physical engagement of our bodies connects us to our emotions and consciousness on various levels" (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019, p. 158). Eurocentric science has recently begun to promote embodiment in education, including language education (Jusslin et al., 2022; Mavilidi et al., 2021; Stolz, 2021). Mavilidi et al. (2021) provide an overview of empirical evidence pointing to the body's "central role" (p. 195) in cognition. Mavilidi et al. (2021) indicate that "gestures, fine-motor and gross-motor movements, ... physical activity ... [and] the physiological mechanisms of interoception" (p. 195) all relate to cognitive function. This "new" science is a return to ancient Greek and Roman understandings of a united body and mind (Mavilidi et al., 2021).

Embodiment also connects "learning processes with the learner's environment" (Jusslin et al., 2022, p. 3). In Indigenous pedagogies, embodiment is a necessary part of Land-based learning which is enacted in:

> a physical way through one's body—the five senses and activities that involve locomotion or doing (walking the water, paddling the river, harvesting the rice, and restoring the mounds). All these acts are embodied to activate learning as physical ways of knowing through doing. (Desmoulins et al., 2023, p. 194)

Embodiment considers the wholeness of a person, the mind, body and spirit (Absolon, 2022; Dei, 2015). Absolon (2022), who supports graduate students in decolonizing research, offers this:

> Permission is granted, if that is needed, to deepen one's relationship to how one comes to know. The spirit has permission to emerge. The heart is nurtured to connect processes. The intellect is enacted to build consciousness of Indigenous intelligence. Physically embodying

> searches with art, dance, song, pickling, jam making, berry picking, journeying, gathering and so much more is a manifestation of integrating spirit, heart and mind into one's search. (p. 96)

Embodiment is an integral aspect of Indigenous and anti-colonial research that invites broader forms of engagement than sitting in a classroom. My research encourages participants to show up wholistically, welcoming their "spirit, heart, mind, and body" (Absolon, 2019, p. 27), and invites them into embodied practices together, making room for conciliation.

Transgressing Data

Wholism also relates to the actions, conversations, thoughts, ideas, language, and things that the participants share or make during the research, all of which are part of the participants. Conflating activities and items like learning, language portraits, conversations, photographs, etc. with disembodied evidence (data) can lead to objectification, the opposite of relationality. As St. Pierre (2021) explains, "the concept *data collection* is itself problematic because it points to an ontology that assumes data are separate from human being and so can be 'collected'" (p. 5, emphasis in the original). I see all of the elements that were shared with me as extensions of the beings who shared them. To clarify, I am not arguing for a rejection of data. Data is often a very useful tool for anti-oppression work (e.g. Kunnas, 2024). I also respect the need for and importance of data sovereignty and governance, particularly for Indigenous nations (more details on this in the Transgressing Ethics section). Yet, for this study, it *feels* wrong to refer to the conversations I had with participants, the photographs of our time with the water, the personal language portraits and other ephemera from our engagements as data. Focusing on embodiment includes paying attention to my gut, which led me to understand that the experiences I had with the participants and

documents that represent them are *gifts*. “Conceiving of something as a gift changes your relationship to it in a profound way, even though the physicial makeup of the “thing” has not changed” (Kimmerer, 2024, p. 22). Referring to them as gifts helps me to maintain the importance of wholism, and it drives how I treat the gifts as I learn from them and represent them. These gifts are not mine to own. The participants decided what was shareable and what was not (more details on this in the Transgressing Ethics section). These gifts have been shared with me for learning, and I share them here for continued learning with you.

Transgressing Ethics

> and how did the conversation get shifted into the western category of “rights”
> including aboriginal rights
> we never had “rights” before contact we had relationships we had community
> talking about aboriginal rights is a way of moving an aboriginal relation al con-
> versation away into a western legal discourse
>
> Peter Cole, 2002
> aboriginalizing methodology: considering the canoe

First, I must acknowledge that as a PhD student in a Eurocentric settler-founded institution, my following the institution’s ethics protocols necessarily means that I am perpetuating Eurocentric, Western hegemonic norms. Even as I attempt to conduct an anti-oppressive, equity focused inquiry, I must still apply the institution’s notions of consent, respect, justice, equality, etc. as if these were universally understood values (Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2018). The people I engage with may sign an informed consent document and verbally state consent, but how do we know if we are agreeing to the same thing if we do not “share *accord* – beliefs, values, trust, worldview, and truth*”* (Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2018, p. 679)? I may be placing participants in the position of surrendering “the right to practice the ethics they know [in favor of] ethics that they do not know” (Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2018, p. 682). Ultimately, in this context, my institution’s version of

consent (and other ethical considerations) subordinates anyone else's versions, rendering me an actor of Eurocentric hegemony even as I try not to be (Cole, 2002; Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2018). I will benefit from this inquiry as a White person with a doctoral degree, which will "sustain [my] own advantage and power" (Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2018, p. 677) with no guarantee, or even likelihood, of equal benefits to the participants. Worse, my anti-colonial efforts within this colonial institution serve to strengthen the colonial system while giving the impression that it is changing (Simpson, 2025b). This is one of the many ugly paradoxes of attempting anti-oppression work from within oppressive states.

To attempt to mitigate the extractive nature of my inquiry, I strive toward the tenets outlined by Tuck and Guishard (2013) in their Ethical Framework of Decolonial Participatory Action Research (EFDPAR). While my SDBE research is not participatory action research, the spirit and intent align. According to Tuck and Guishard (2013), PAR researchers:

> contend that people have deep and significant knowledge about their everyday lives, and that people are complex and have valuable insights about the world and institutions they inhabit. PAR shifts notions of the purposes of research, validity, rigor, and generalizability away from fantasies of discovery toward aims of co-constructing knowledge for social change. (p. 15)

The piece about recognizing participants' knowledge and insight describes my research. My research differs in that my goal is not to co-create new knowledge. The knowledge for social change already exists, but it is hampered by intersecting oppressions that relate to colonialism. My goal is to counter colonial bordering practices in order to highlight connections that already exist, so people can learn with and from each other and with all of earth's beings for a liberatory future.

Following the tenets of EFDPAR can support this lofty goal. The six tenets are reflexivity, expertise, humility, dignity, action, and relationality. Table 3 highlights how this inquiry transgresses EFDPAR, indicating the convergences and divergences.

Table 3

Identifying Convergences and Divergences Between My Research and EFDPAR

	Convergences	**Divergences (concerns to remain vigilant about)**	**Considerations**
decolonial	This inquiry recognizes the impact of settler colonialism on nation-states' successes in land theft and other atrocities that have affected Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and worldwide. This research is concerned with colonially created linguistic bordering practices that hinder learning between peoples/beings of the world.	This inquiry does not specify rematriation of land or mitigate settler futurity, especially as it aims to find connections between new and existing settlers (i.e. international students who plan to immigrate and domestic students).	I see the anti-colonial intent and impact of this research as a necessary step toward decolonization. Countering linguistic bordering practices may create (more) openings for collaborative decolonial actions.
reflexivity	Through an anti-colonial lens, this dissertation has outlined my critical reflections on the purpose of the inquiry, my stance as a doctoral candidate, my emerging theory of change, and the risks of the research.	While it pushes back against many conventions, this research still meets the standards of a colonial research institution. From this position, I do not think it's possible to account for the scope of the potential consequence of this research serving the state to entrench colonialism.	The SDBE activities encouraged reflexivity for the participants, the consultant, and for myself (i.e. learning Kanonhweratónhsera, the language portrait, and the linguistic landscape). The survey and interviews also provided an opportunity for participants to share some of their critical

	Convergences	Divergences (concerns to remain vigilant about)	Considerations
			reflections if they chose.
expertise	This research attempts to disrupt the Euro-dominant knowledge hierarchy by privileging: a) Haudenosaunee language and knowledge b) lived experience and knowledge of all participants, and c) openness to learning with and from water and all earth's beings.	The fact that this dissertation is written according to the institution's standards entrenches the dominant style of knowledge communication, which is not a good start to disrupting "knowledge hierarchies … in all phases of the research project" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 18).	Knowledge sharing between people and between Land and people was an integral aspect of the research design. The interviews also offered participants an opportunity to indicate how they would like the learnings from this event to be shared.
humility	I recognize that the knowledges I have received through my upbringing and education are not inherently superior and, in fact, have often harmed rather than liberated. "Embracing humility will release the energy used to protect and rationalize the current academic and political sovereignty and redirect it" (Blackstock, 2017, p. 41). The intention of this research was to redirect that energy toward collective anti-colonial and liberatory languaging to promote the thriving of earth and all its beings.	One of the integral theoretical frameworks informing this inquiry, CMLA, has evolved from Eurocentric understandings of language and the importance of language awareness. Connecting CMLA to relationality is an ethical red flag as it risks subsuming Indigenous knowledge into dominant colonial knowledge (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Simpson, 2025b). This action could also contribute to a continued settler move to innocence on my part.	Conducting this inquiry in partnership with Kristi Talbot helped to ensure that any Haudenosaunee teachings were understood as Haudenosaunee, sovereign, and not subsumable by any other knowledge system.

	Convergences	Divergences (concerns to remain vigilant about)	Considerations
dignity	This research aimed to build on the existing knowledge and abilities of the participants and facilitators "while assisting in the cultivation of new capacities" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 19) and ways of understanding. The SDBE activities were designed to support a transformation that replaces "theories that have been used to disempower" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 20), such as the monolingual bias, with those that support wholism, such as plurilingualism.	The participants were not involved in the research design, nor in determining what was appropriate or safe to discuss/include in the activities. I risked touching on individuals' vulnerabilities, and without the benefit of a long-term relationship, they may not have felt secure enough to state that they were not comfortable sharing, or to state their caveats around my resharing of their information.	In the consent documents and survey form, and at the start of the SDBE and interviews, I did my best to communicate that participants were welcome to participate or contribute as much or as little as they felt comfortable doing. Talbot and I discussed this concern (and all ethical concerns) as we planned and designed the activities.
action	Aligned with SDBE, this research was designed "to blur the lines between method and action so they are pedagogical or provocative and serve as dynamic interventions to unfair practices for all contributors" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, pp. 20-21). The SDBE was an educational experience as much as it was a research method.	The participants were not involved in deciding which actions to prioritize as we developed the SDBE. While we gave them the option not to participate in the actions we chose for the SDBE, other than learning from their responses to the survey, we did not work with them to determine appropriate actions.	The survey offered an opportunity for participants to communicate their hopes for language learning and teaching and for international education, and Talbot and I considered their thoughts as we finalized our plans. The interviews offered more space for participants to indicate the actions they intended to take or hoped for us to take in the future.

	Convergences	Divergences (concerns to remain vigilant about)	Considerations
relation-ality	Centering wholism resists turning the participants into research subjects. Rather, "the focus of the research is not on people, not on their bodies, but on the relationships between bodies, ideas, and institutions" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 21). Learning from my Two Row on the Grand experiences and the teachings of the Tékeni Teyohá:te, the goal of the research was to recognize and maintain difference between people(s) even as we came together around and with water.	This research did not include time for relationship-building prior to the SDBE, which meant that we did not identify forms of reciprocity that would be personally meaningful to the participants and/or would go beyond gift cards "or other tokens of appreciation that might be encouraged by IRBs [institutional review boards]" (Tuck & Guishard, p. 22).	The SDBE was designed to highlight the importance of relationality between people, earth, and all its beings. The main way this was done was by prioritizing Kanonhweratónhsera, and acknowledging the languaging of all beings through encouraged interaction. Identifying points of connection was a relational act and stance of this research.

In addition to thinking through how my work relates to EFDPAR, in 2024, I completed OCAP® training delivered by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). OCAP® stands for Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, and is a registered trademark of the FNIGC. According to the FNIGC (2022):

> OCAP® is intended to support strong information governance on the path to First Nations data sovereignty. Given the diversity across and within Nations, the OCAP® principles can be expressed and asserted in line with a Nation's respective world view, traditional knowledge, and protocols. (para. 11)

While I am not conducting research with a First Nation, I am collaborating with a Haudenosaunee

woman, and I also recruited Indigenous participants of different nations. OCAP® principles speak to data governance at the level of nation, but they can also apply to individuals (FNIGC, 2014). I ensured that all participants had ownership, control, and access to any gifts they offered directly or indirectly. I communicated that I would send them whatever materials or information they shared with me if they wanted, and I would delete from my possession anything they wanted me to delete. I only retained the gifts with participants' consent. Some participants asked me to delete parts of the transcripts, and some participants asked me to delete some photos. I followed their instructions. Regarding naming practices and confidentiality, I talked to participants about options for anonymity and how they would like me to refer to them. I respected their decisions to identify in ways that were important to them, which, for some, included their name, community, nation, and citizenship.

OCAP® training gave me the confidence to ask questions of Indigenous teachers about what I can include in my dissertation, what I am welcome to learn but not share, and what I am not welcome to learn. It solidified the importance of First Nations ownership, and I became vigilant about these tenets. During our planning, I asked Kristi what we should or should not photograph. She said that we should not take photographs during the reciting of Kanonhweratónhsera. I also sought permission to reproduce in my dissertation the photograph of the original Two Row Wampum that I took at the 10-year anniversary of the Two Row on the Grand Paddle event. I did not receive a reply, and rather than continuing to ask different people until I find someone who answers, I have chosen to accept this lack of response as an indication that I do not *need* to take up the time of people who have several competing priorities. I believe that every researcher in Canada, even those who do not work directly with Indigenous communities, can benefit from OCAP®

training, but doing the training is just the first step. Honouring OCAP® requires continued practice of unlearning the colonial attitude of the right to know and own everything.

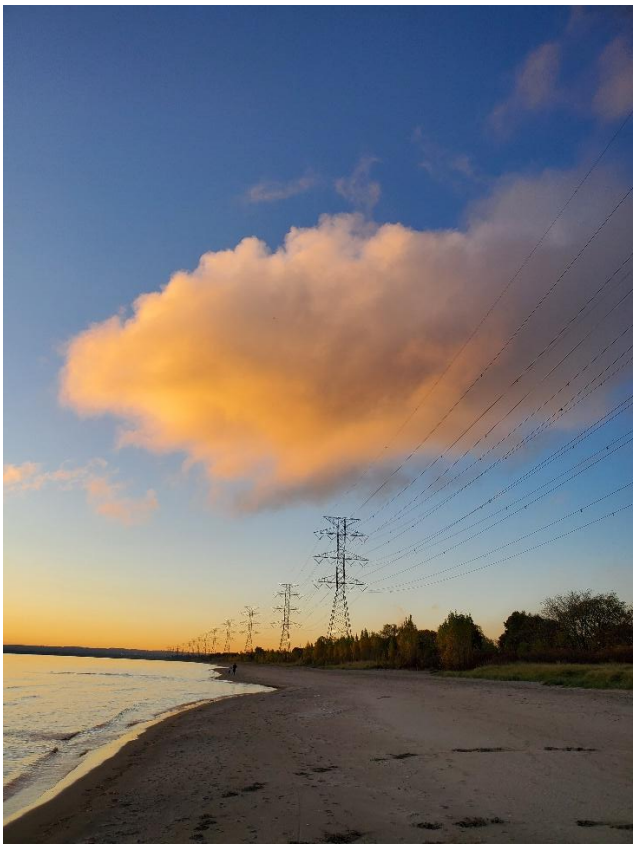
4. Transgressing Methods: Greetings, Methods, Models

Greeting Onyatarí:yo

Join me in greeting Onyatarí:yo. What do you hear? Who can you see? What languaging do you notice? How do you respond? Click on the image of Figure 8 to access the embedded link and watch the multimedia collage.

Figure 8

Greeting Onyatarí:yo

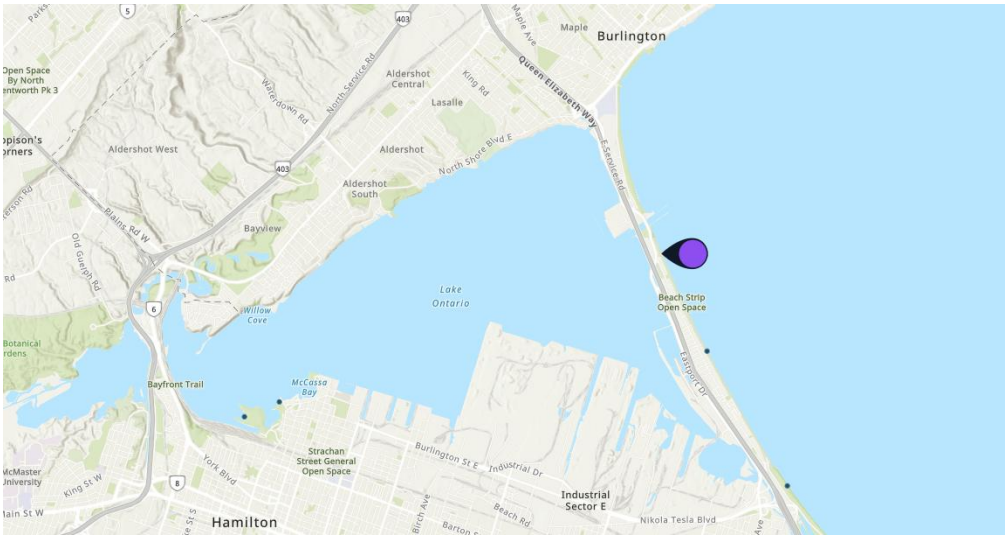


Note. This multi-media collage compiles a small sample of the 389 photographs and audio-video recordings that I took at the Onyatarí:yo research location between 2021 and 2025 with my mobile phone camera. The collage was created with the InShot app.

Onyatarí:yo means beautiful lake in Kanyen'kéha. Lake Ontario is aptly named, and I am fortunate to have been able to host International Beach Day, my research event, at a Lake Ontario beach. The site is relevant to my research not only because of the water-language connection or my personal relationship to this beach, but also because the Haudenosaunee have an intergenerational relationship with Lake Ontario and its connected waterways (K. Brant-Birioukov, personal communication, October 5, 2023). International Beach Day occurred at the western end of Lake Ontario on a sandstrip that creates a bay at the tip of the lake. A typical consequence of colonial naming and mapping, I was not able to find an Indigenous name of this sandstrip in online sources. Tehota'kerá:ton shared with me that Teyonehsarónhkware means sand bars which "describes the lake bottom in this area as there used to be a series of sand bars there" (personal communication, May 21, 2026b). On the City of Hamilton map, the area is called Beach Strip Open Space, but nobody who lives here calls it that (Figure 9). Local surfers refer to this location as *The Bridge*. Two bridges cross a channel through which vessels pass from the open lake to the bay and back. One bridge is part of a highway that connects the Niagara region and the Greater Toronto Area. The other is a federally operated lift-bridge that facilitates the passage of vessels through the canal. The lift-bridge is more visible from the beach, but the noise from the land vehicles on the highway bridge is constant, even when that bridge is out of sight. The heavy traffic on and under these bridges and the steel industry in the bay have turned many people off, but surfers love this spot. Because The Bridge is at the west end of this oblong lake, easterly winds can travel far across water without interference, bringing surfable waves with them. I have taken hundreds of photographs at The Bridge. Every time I visit, I am awestruck. Onyatarí:yo has many dispositions, all of them beautiful (e.g. Figure 10).

Figure 9

Map of the International Beach Day Location



Note. Public sector data made available under the City of Hamilton's Open Data Licence

Figure 10

Sunrise with Onyatarí:yo



Note. Photograph by S. Martin, October 16, 2024.

Meeting Kristi Talbot – Mohawk Language Warrior

Kristi Talbot is a Haudenosaunee woman of Mohawk and Ojibwe lineage and a fluent Kanyen'kéha speaker. In her twenties, Kristi attended a two-year Kanyen'kéha adult immersion program, Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa, at Six Nations of the Grand River. Kristi is committed to reclaiming and revitalizing Kanyen'kéha. She explains: "I've been taught by elders that passing on the language strengthens [our] values, as our traditions are woven into every word" (as cited in Martin, 2022, para. 2). Kristi is a credentialed Early Childhood Educator, and one teaching method she is known for is translating English children's songs into Kanyen'kéha ("Preserving language and identity," 2022). Early in her career, Kristi noticed that her young students' parents were eager to learn the language. She has since developed methods to teach people of all ages. Learning Kanyen'kéha has been healing for Kristi, and she is dedicated to sharing the language and supporting language reclamation for her family and her community. Kristi also enjoys teaching Kanyen'kéha to people outside of the community to ensure the survival of the language. Kristi runs her own educational consultancy business, Teach Native Culture, and she has taught Kanyen'kéha and created curricula for several school boards and organizations in Ontario, like Niwasa Head Start, Akwesasne Board of Education, and the Art Gallery of Ontario (Martin, 2022). Kristi calls herself a Mohawk Language Warrior, a perfect description of her passion, knowledge, and drive.

The first time I met Kristi Talbot, we chatted about our experiences with language, and she agreed to work with me because I said my body knew I was French before I did — we connected through our shared appreciation of the embodiment of language. I am so grateful that Kristi saw something valuable in this project and has generously contributed her knowledge and skills. While we share some common goals, I must be explicit about the fact that Kristi is a consultant supporting

my work. I am not collaborating within her community (Leonard, 2021).

Reciprocity is an important part of our relationship. This project could not have happened without the knowledge and teachings that Kristi provided. Kristi appreciates having a different platform to share Kanyen'keha in a way she had not tried before. Working together has also been a way to *raise her name*, as she puts it. We share resources she creates and information about her work and her consultancy, Teach Native Culture, on social media, in publications, and in presentations. We also learn together. Our conversations about languaging and language teaching have enriched us both. She determines her renumeration and I honour it. Kristi has a generous and caring way of teaching that supports inclusivity; she has encouraged me to participate in ways that are appropriate for my positionality. We have had opportunities to present at conferences together in and outside of Canada. These experiences have strengthened our relationship, and I am privileged to call Kristi my friend. I will be forever thankful to the person who introduced us, Dr. Kiera Brant-Birioukov, a Kanyen'kehá:ka educator and researcher, who has become my mentor and friend over the course of this project. Figure 11 is a photograph of Kristi taken during our research event. I love the participants' reflection in Kristi's glasses.

Figure 11

Kristi Talbot at International Beach Day, 2024.



Note. Photograph by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations.

Research Design

This multi-method SDBE consists of several stages:

1. Recruitment
2. Pre-Social Design-Based Experience (SDBE)
3. International Beach Day (the SDBE)
4. Post-SDBE

Each stage includes several research activities. In the following sections, I provide outlines of the methods for each stage as well as narrative descriptions. Table 4 provides an overview of the research design, indicating which methods requested gifts from the participants and which gifts were included in the analysis.

Table 4

Overview of Research Design

Stage of Research	Methods	Gifts[18] Received	Included in Analysis
Recruitment	In-person recruitment at a local college and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC); online recruitment on social media and by email in the research partners' networks	n/a	n/a
Recruitment	Interested people completed a registration form	demographic information	n/a
Pre-SDBE	Survey	short answer written responses to questions about participants'	n=6

[18] For this project, I choose the word gifts rather than data as a way to maintain wholism; refer to the Transgressing Data section above for a detailed explanation.

Stage of Research	Methods	Gifts[18] Received	Included in Analysis
		experiences and hopes for international education, language learning, and water-based learning	
Pre-SDBE	Beach clean-up to show gratitude to the beach and ensure a welcoming space	photographs	n/a
Pre-SDBE	Practice International Beach Day	n/a	n/a
International Beach Day	Kanonhweratónhsera (beginning and end of day)	n/a	n/a
International Beach Day	CMLA Activity: Language Portraits	photograph of language portraits; photographs of making the portraits	portraits n=8; photos of creating portraits n=15
International Beach Day	Kanyen'kéha lesson about Kanonhweratónhsera vocabulary	photographs of participants and facilitators interacting with each other and beings of the beach	n=30
International Beach Day	CMLA Activity: Linguistic Landscape Noticing of the Beach	participants' hand-written notes on handouts; photographs of participants interacting with beings of the beach	handouts n=6; photos n=19
International Beach Day	Water Song	photographs of learning and singing the song	n=10
International Beach Day	general movements of the day	additional photos of participants, facilitators, and beings of the beach	n=19

Stage of Research	Methods	Gifts[18] Received	Included in Analysis
		that are not specific to a particular method (e.g. breaks, hydro towers, animals)	
Post-SDBE	Semi-structured, photo-elicitation interviews	transcripts	n=8
Post-SDBE	International Beach Day Reunion: Kanyen'kéha review; sharing preliminary findings with participants	photographs	n/a

Methods

In this section, I describe my methods in the order they were conducted as indicated in Table 4. Each sub-section includes an outline of the methods and a narrative description. Following the descriptions of the methods, I provide an overview of the study participants.

Recruitment

Recruitment took place in March and April 2024. Kristi Talbot and I both participated in recruitment. The recruitment steps were:

1. Delineated the recruitment goal and inclusion criteria: 10-12 adults of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds
2. Recruited from Mohawk College
3. Recruited from Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC)
4. Recruited online

People interested in participating in the study were asked to complete a registration form (Appendix

A.2). Narrative descriptions of the recruitment steps and the registration form follow.

Recruitment Goal

Creating a utopian international education intervention requires a diversity of participants. I recruited a mix of adult students — international and domestic (broadly defined; visa status did not matter) — and non-students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and dominant language mother tongue speakers (i.e., English in my context) and minoritized language mother tongue speakers (i.e., any language other than English). Because the research concerned water, I also wanted to recruit people with different relationships to water: water activist, water enthusiast or neither. I recruited adults of any age as long as they were over 18 because most of my teaching career has been with adults. I recruited from Mohawk College and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. Some of my professors at York University shared my recruitment material with their students. Kristi participated in recruitment by advertising on the Hamilton Urban Indigenous Community Facebook page and on her personal and professional social media pages (Appendix A.1). We also created an Instagram account together, @decolonizinglanguage, and posted our recruitment material there.

My initial goal was to recruit 10 participants, with a minimum of six and a maximum of 12. Because the SDBE took place at the beach, water, wind, and other forms of nature would heighten the soundscape, and it would be too difficult to communicate in a large group. We also wanted to ensure that all participants would have the opportunity to do the activities and share their experiences within the time frame. A group smaller than six may not have been large enough to include the diversity of participants I was hoping for.

Recruiting from Mohawk College.

Recruitment was an exciting and emotional process. Prior to becoming a doctoral student, I taught at Mohawk College in the Communication and Liberal Studies departments. Many of the courses I taught were exclusive to international students, but I also taught courses that included a mix of domestic and international students, so I was hopeful that recruiting from within these departments would invite interest from a diversity of people. I emailed former colleagues who I had stayed in touch with, including an associate dean who forwarded the email to her entire department. A colleague introduced me by email to the college's Indigenous student centre, and I shared information with them by email. An anthropology professor and two LINC professors invited me into their classrooms to speak about the project. It was fun to be on campus again, to feel the student energy. I started the PhD program during pandemic distancing, so most of my recent student experience had been from home. Returning to a place full of people wanting to learn was energizing and motivating.

Recruiting from HRIC.

Recruiting from the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) was a completely different experience. Part of my (un)learning colonialism journey has been about facing my discomfort and anxiety around perpetuating harm. Fear of misstep leads to inaction which reinforces the status quo (Carroll et al., 2020). The HRIC is near my house. I had driven, walked, cycled by it many times, but I had never entered. I did not want to insert myself where I did not belong. During my recruitment period for this research, I had been engaging in another research project with two classmates from my graduate program who are also language teachers. We conducted a multi-autoethnography in which we questioned how/if we could be anti-colonial while teaching colonial

languages. It was through that project that I named my fear and identified how it was operating. Fear is instilled by White settler colonial institutions that focus on individualism and perfectionism, key aspects of White supremacist culture which maintains the colonial order (Okun, 1999; 2025). Through the multi-autoethnographic reflection, I was able to interrogate that fear. Doing something wrong, making a mistake, is an opportunity to learn. I know this as a teacher, yet I needed to do some deep inner work to address it in the context of colonialism (Carroll et al., 2020). When I finally walked into the HRIC, the receptionist was helpful and gave me the name of the appropriate person to contact. I received permission to display my poster on the bulletin board in the lobby. Every time I entered the HRIC, people were kind and helpful. Looking back, the fear feels ridiculous. There was no real threat to cause fear; I understand now that there is a distinction between fear and discomfort or anxiety. As a White person, I do not face the threat of "state-sanctioned violence" (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 11) like many Indigenous and racialized people do. Understanding that I was facing discomfort and anxiety, not fear, does not fully alleviate the difficulty of the situation, but it does make it easier to address. Turning toward my discomfort (Carroll et al., 2020) rather than avoiding it is much easier to do than facing a real threat (Carroll et al., 2020). Now I see my so-called fear as a reflection of the ridiculousness of colonial practices that prevent people from forming relationships in wholistic ways.

Recruiting Online.

Kristi participated in recruitment by sharing our poster on the Hamilton Urban Indigenous Community Facebook page and her personal and professional online spaces (Appendix A.1). We also created an Instagram account together, @decolonizinglanguage, and posted our recruitment material there. Some of my professors at York University shared my recruitment material with their

students by email.

Registration Form.

The recruitment process included a Microsoft Forms registration form (Appendix A.2). People who did not have access to the internet were able to register over the phone with me. The purpose of the registration form was to ascertain how many people were interested in the project and to collect practical information: contact details for coordination purposes, accessibility needs and dietary restrictions. The registration form also collected some demographic information. A multiple-answer question requested registrants to check boxes that they identified with regarding student status, Indigeneity, first language, and relationship to water. The purpose of the demographic information was to ensure the recruitment of a diverse group of people. If we had ended up recruiting only non-Indigenous English mother tongue speakers, for example, we would have reconsidered recruitment methods. The registration information indicated that we had enough interested people whose self-identity markers reflected a broad mix of the inclusion criteria, so we did not need to enhance our recruitment procedure. So many people registered for the event (n=27), that Kristi and I reassessed the situation and increased our maximum to 16 participants. I maintained a waitlist; when people withdrew in advance, I was able notify people on the waitlist. I prioritized Indigenous participants on the waitlist, coupled with a first-come-first-served strategy.

Pre-SDBE Activities

The Pre-SDBE activities were:

1. Beach clean-up
2. Practice International Beach Day
3. Pre-Event Survey (n=6)

Narrative descriptions follow.

Beach Clean-Up.

Before every in-person event — the practice day, International Beach Day (the SDBE), and the reunion — I invited friends and family to join me in cleaning up the beach. The City of Hamilton cleans the beach regularly in the summer, but not as often during the other seasons when the beach is less frequented by humans. Not only did I want to make sure the area was inviting for participants, but picking up garbage was a concrete way to show the beach my gratitude (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Human Trash Collected from the Beach



Note. This is a fraction of the waste we collected. A water-bottle label on top of this heap advertises "Pure Life" mineral water. Photograph by S. Martin, May 3, 2024.

Cleaning up the beach was an opportunity for the people who joined me to learn with me. During one of the beach cleanups, my friend brought her young children (Figure 13). She was happily surprised to see how engaged they were and the insights they made about the negative effects of human activity. My friend and I took this opportunity to talk about settler colonialism with the children.

Figure 13

Beach Clean-Up Crews



Note. Clean-up crew members (from left to right): May 3, 2024 ─ Alec, Alex, Dottie, Heather (Sonia not pictured); September 19, 2025 ─ Sonia, Anna, Joey, Maya, Jessie, Emma; photographs by S. Martin

Practice International Beach Day.

On April 21, 2024, we invited seven friends and family members to join us at the beach for a practice session. Rehearsing the physical parts, like transporting the required equipment (camping

chairs, a table, lesson supplies, first aid items, blankets, etc.) and setting up a large canopy, helped to reduce anxiety the day of the event. Facilitating the educational components was also helpful to do in advance, and we ended up making an important change. During the practice session, the Kanyen'kéha lesson included written handouts for participants to read, which replicated a classroom feel even though we were outside. During our debrief of the practice event, Kristi and I discussed what went well and what we wanted to change. Kristi decided to teach the language lesson without paper visuals, which aligned with the oral tradition of the language. Removing the handout also provided an opening to the beach as participants would look up and around instead of down. This change liberated our minds, too, as we thought through how we might better incorporate the beach into the language lesson.

Pre-Event Survey.

The pre-event survey had two purposes: 1) to gain insight into participants' experiences with and hopes for international education, language learning, and water-based learning / water activism prior to the intervention, and 2) to collect more detailed demographic information than the registration form had collected (Appendix B.1). Gifts from the survey were included in the analysis. Fifteen people completed the survey. Of these 15, six were included in the focal participant group (n=6; refer to the Study Participants section for more details). All participants who completed the survey were offered an inducement.

The survey included questions about national identity, Indigeneity, ethnicity/race, student status, language information, and relationship to water. The question about national identity included an instruction to respond how they identify even if it was not the same as their official citizenship; the purpose of this instruction was to allow for broader responses of nationhood and not

limit participants to nation-state citizenship if that was not how they identified. I included a question about racial/ethnic identity because, in international education, diversity is celebrated but race and racism are often ignored, which perpetuates systemic racism and Whiteness (Buckner et al., 2021). Collecting detailed demographic information supported a more wholistic and critical analysis of all the participant gifts.

I prepared a draft of the survey questions and then Kristi and I reviewed them together to ensure they met our teaching, research, and contextual needs. Like the registration form, the non-anonymous survey was also conducted online via Microsoft Forms. Participants also had the option to complete a paper version, and then I would enter their answers into the online form. The survey included a mix of question types: multiple choice questions, experience-rating questions on a five-star scale, and open-ended questions "to allow respondents to freely express their individual views […] while avoiding the bias resulting from suggesting options to them" (Zipp, 2022, p. 145). All survey questions were optional, and participants were reminded that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to answer.

International Beach Day – The Social Design-Based Experience (SDBE)

The International Beach Day activities and research methods were:

1. Kanonhweratónhsera (beginning and end of day)
2. CMLA Activity: Language Portraits (portraits: n=8; photos of activity: n=15)
3. Kanyen'kéha lesson about Kanonhweratónhsera vocabulary (photos of lesson: n=30)
4. CMLA Activity: Linguistic Landscape Noticing of the Beach (handouts: n=6; photos of activity: n=19)
5. Water Song (photos of activity: n=10)

Narrative descriptions of these activities follow, beginning with an overview of the day and an introduction of the photographer who took pictures of all beach day activities, except the Kanonhweratónhsera.

Overview of International Beach Day.

The morning of May 4, 2024 was one of the first warm days of the year. Participants arrived in summer clothes, happy to be outside after a grey winter, which is what Kristi and I had hoped for when we chose the date. Leading up to the day, I was stressed about the midges — tiny, non-biting bugs that emerge every spring. They swarm the beach and their large numbers can be unsettling. They typically come out at the end of May, but that year, they arrived in time for International Beach Day. I had brought several face nets that people could wear to prevent the insects from bothering us. (Feedback from the practice day was that people were impressed that I had thought of everything they might need, especially the face nets; Appendix B.2.a.) Just when participants were starting to get annoyed by the midges, the wind picked up and blew them away. We were relieved to be bug free, but then the temperature dropped. Some participants had brought layers of clothing, as I had suggested in my pre-event email (Appendix B.2.b), but others were not prepared for the wind chill. I had brought extra hats, blankets, and jackets, which a few participants used. I believe this prevented a few people from leaving early, although one participant still left at lunch, stating that she was too cold.

Table 5

International Beach Day Event Plan

Activity	Details	Timing
Arrival of participants	• Participants check in, get name tag, sign consent; choose chair and get comfortable. • Sonia will provide some housekeeping and safety details (e.g. where the bathrooms are, where the first aid kit is, extra blankets, midge nets etc.) *No photos*	15 minutes
Opening Acknowledgment and Remarks	• Kristi will offer the Thanksgiving address in Mohawk and English • Kristi will explain why Haudenosaunee people do the Thanksgiving address and the notion of relationality to all of earth's beings • Kristi - Acknowledgement of water - asking for permission and invite participants to do the same with tobacco. Explain about tobacco. • Sonia will thank everyone for coming, introduce self, and Kristi introduce herself; Aríhwaiens introduce himself. • Sonia will share the agenda for the day. *No photos*	20 minutes
Language Portrait	• Sonia will lead the language portrait activity, and Kristi will support. *Photos of people doing the activity AND photos of everyone's portraits (except people who don't consent)*	45 minutes
Break	• Snacks – chips, apples, granola bites Photos of beach, birds, grasses, etc.	15 minutes
Kanyen'kéha lesson	[No papers] We are going to learn the Thanksgiving address, remind what it is, acknowledge that we cannot learn the whole thing, will focus on five elements for today (will share video after) (3-5 mins) Teach whole group "We give thanks to" (10 mins) (explain we use this for most elements, but not for the Sun and the Creator) Share the elements/words that we will be learning today: water, grasses, birds, wind (say them in English and Mohawk) You will be in a small group, and you will learn one of these	65 minutes

Activity	Details	Timing
	words. You can choose which group. Who wants to be in the water group? Raise your hand Etc. (10 mins) Move to sit next to your group mates. Kristi teaches pronunciation to each group (but whole group listens). (15 mins) Groups practice – go out to find their element to practice saying "we give thanks to _____" (10 minutes practice) Groups return to the circle – each group takes a turn saying their phrase (5-10 mins) Ask people to return to their language portrait. Where would they put Mohawk on their body? (5 mins) *Photos of group and individuals*	
Lunch	• Food prepared by Gage Park Diner (a Hamilton-based restaurant owned and operated by a Haudenosaunee woman) • In conversation as it makes sense, Kristi will talk about three sisters soup, Indian Tacos, Strawberry juice • Sonia hand out gift cards *Photos of food (three sisters soup, Indian taco, strawberry juice) and people*	45 minutes
Linguistic Landscape	• Sonia will lead linguistic landscape activity *Photos of people doing the activity*	40 minutes
Song	• Kristi – the Lake likes to listen to us • Group sings the water song to the water *Maybe photos...let's check the vibe. Could be vulnerable for people while singing. Maybe just photos of Kristi and Sonia and maybe one of whole group rather than individuals*	15 minutes
Closing Remarks and Acknowledgement	• Thank people, Sonia will share details about what to expect for the interviews and thank everyone for attending • Kristi will lead a closing acknowledgment, variation of the Thanksgiving Address – we all say "we give thanks to" and each group says their part when it's their turn. • Offer tobacco again to say thank you *No photos*	15 minutes

Total Time: 4 hours, 35 minutes

Greeting the Photographer.

Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Nation, bear clan, documented the event. Martin is a photographer from Six Nations of the Grand River, a Haudenosaunee reserve not far from the beach location. Talbot had recommended Martin because he was a local photographer whose work she appreciated. Neither of us expected how much he would contribute to the day. Martin is a Kanyen'kéha speaker and knowledgeable about Haudenosaunee culture. He contributed stories, answered questions, and supported language learning throughout the event. This is a testament to the importance of working with members of the community. Martin took more than100 photographs during the beach day. Ninety-one photographs were included in the study (n=91).

Kanonhweratónhsera.

Kristi Talbot opened the day with Kanonhweratónhsera (the Thanksgiving Address). She offered the address in both Kanyen'kéha and English. We stood together by the water's edge as she offered gratitude to all the beings of the beach and beyond. Beginning with gratitude together set the intention and tone for the day. After Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, the Words Before All Else, Talbot invited us to offer tobacco to the water as a way of greeting and seeking consent. The teachings from these Haudenosaunee practices were central to the activities throughout the day.

CMLA Activity: Language Portraits.

The language portrait was the first of two CMLA activities that I conducted. The purpose of this activity was to demonstrate to participants that the whole of their languaging is valued, which means their identity is, too (Anzaldúa, 2012). This activity helped to develop language awareness and scaffolded the Kanyen'kéha lessons and the expanded CMLA activity that followed. While all eleven participants at International Beach Day created language portraits, only portraits from the

participants who attended the interview were included in the analysis (refer to Study Participants below).

Language portraits raise awareness of how languaging is an embodied experience in both a physical and a metaphorical way. People often feel language in different parts of the body. For example, when I think of Arabic, I feel a fullness around my heart. Thinking about the embodiment of language can help people understand the richness and depth of their relationship to language(s)/ing (Prasad, 2014). Language portraits are an entry into understanding that everyone is plurilingual to some extent (Piccardo, 2019) and that "all languages are ensembles of different elements in a dynamic and constantly changing relationship" (Piccardo, 2013, p. 605), which helps people to see beyond linguistic borders and language hierarchies.

I began the activity with a discussion of the fluidity and embodiment of language. Participants were given clipboards with handouts and coloured pencils. One handout included the silhouette of a human body (Appendix B.2.c.i; Prasad, 2008, as cited in Piccardo, 2021). The written instructions, adapted from Prasad (2020), were:

1. Write a list of all the languages that are part of your life in any way.
2. Draw an outline of a body that represents you or choose to use the silhouette provided.
3. Select a colour for each of the languages on your list.
4. Apply the language colours to your body portrait.

I verbally instructed participants not to think about proficiency when creating their list of languages but to focus on languages that were meaningful to them or that they felt related to in some way (refer to Appendix B.2.c.ii for my detailed teaching notes). I also instructed participants to think broadly about the definition of language. I offered surf lingo as an example and elicited

more ideas from the group. After colouring their language portraits, participants shared their portraits in small groups, offering explanations of the relationship(s) between the languages and their bodies and the languages and their life. The photographer took photos of everyone's language portraits.

Making a language portrait is a creative act. Natalia Balyasnikova (2023) explains that playful and creative elements are often included in children's learning environments, while adult language classes typically focus on pragmatic elements. However, creativity is important for adults, too. "By intentionally incorporating plurilingual creative prompts, we can foster a learning environment where learners act as agentive and confidant communicators" (Balyasnikova, 2023, p. 62). Creative tasks can be a catalyst for engaging deeply in the process of learning.

Initially developed by Brigitta Busch and colleagues (2006), language portraits have become increasingly popular as a pedagogical and research tool to use with children and adults (e.g. Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2025, p. 27), and for decolonial purposes (e.g. Chung & Cardoso, 2025). To my knowledge, language portrait activities are typically conducted inside. Taking this creative activity outside, beyond the confines of a classroom, supported an openness of thinking that mirrored the openness of the beach.

Kanyen'kéha Lesson.

The purpose of the lesson was to introduce people to Kanyen'keha. This was a relational activity that also raised awareness of the importance of Indigenous languages. Kanonhweratónhsera was the topic of the Kanyen'kéha lesson. Kristi taught the whole group the recurring phrase *teyethinonhwerá:tons ne* which means we give thanks to. We then divided into smaller groups. Each subgroup learned the Kanyen'kéha word for one relative to thank, such as *kahnekarónnyon*

(the water), *ohonte'shón:'a* (the grasses), *otsi'ten'okón:'a* (the birds), *kayé:ri nikawerà:ke* (the four winds). Kristi taught this lesson orally, without worksheets. Groups were given time to roam the beach to practice saying the words to and/or with the being whom they were thanking. Thirty photographs of this activity were included in the analysis (n=30).

Expanded CMLA Activity: Linguistic Landscape Noticing of the Beach.

The second CMLA was the Linguistic Landscape Noticing of the Beach. The purpose was to support awareness raising of the linguistic power dynamics of this place, and to notice the languaging of beings of the beach. The activity drew on the Expanded CMLA framework which highlights relationality. I invited participants to notice the linguistic landscape of the beach. LoCALL (2019), a European multi-university collaborative project that advances global language education, offers this definition of linguistic landscapes:

> Linguistic landscapes are the ensemble of linguistic, semiotic and sensorial cues in public and private spaces. The linguistic landscape can inform us, for example, about the linguistic composition of a given society or space, the power dynamics and hierarchies between languages and modes and about who produces and consumes those ensembles. (p. 2)

I appreciate this definition because the wording (e.g. sensorial cues, space, modes) can be inclusive of the languaging of all beings, which may not have been the intention as LoCALL focuses on human schools; nevertheless, it works. Because linguistic landscapes blend into the everyday world, their ever-presence becomes invisible to the conscious mind. Linguistic landscapes are influenced by socio-political constructs, so the subconscious engagement with them "implicitly influence[s] language/race ideologies" (Przymus & Kohler, 2018, p. 67). Noticing and analyzing linguistic landscapes can "illuminate [their] covert power" (Przymus & Kohler, 2018, p. 67),

ultimately contributing to raising CMLA. Elana Shohamy and Shoshi Waksman (2008) explain:

> The main idea is the need for students to be aware and notice the multiple layers of meanings displayed in the public space. In that way, each building, each site, each sound, a billboard, an outdoor moving screen, a mall, a homeless person sitting in the corner of the street, is actually [a linguistic landscape] text that has to be critically "read." In other words, all those visible "texts" need to be processed as "tips of icebergs" to a deeper and more complex meaning which are embedded in histories, cultural relations, politics and humanistic interrelations.

I add to this explanation that linguistic landscapes are also influenced by the natural world, so noticing and analyzing them can support an understanding of languaging of more-than-human beings and can raise awareness of human connection to, and place within, the natural world.

During International Beach Day, the linguistic landscape activity was conducted after the Kanyen'kéha lesson. I introduced a definition of linguistic landscapes and elicited a discussion of the meaning of languaging. Participants were then invited to walk the beach independently. Their clipboards had a Linguistic Landscape handout with prompts to support their noticing (Appendix B.2.c.iii). Prompts included:

- Choose a particular part of the linguistic landscape that attracts you and stay with it for a few minutes. What do you notice about the language(s) and languaging around you?
- Do you notice anything new that you might not have noticed before the Kanyen'kéha lesson?
- What human language(s) are visible? What does this say about this space?
- What else stands out for you about the languaging of this place?

- Fill in the blank (choose one sentence). You can use any language(s) to complete the sentence.
    - Languaging here is...
    - _____ (insert the name of a being/place/element) is saying...

Bonus instruction: Try to use a Kanyen'kéha word!

After the activity, participants were invited to return to the circle and share anything they wanted to share with the group. Participants were invited to keep their handouts or leave them. Unlike the language portraits, I did not ask the photographer to take pictures of the linguistic landscape handouts, which I regret as two of the focal participants chose to keep theirs.

Water Song and Closing.

Before closing the day, Kristi introduced us to the Water Song, written by Theresa Bear Fox, sung by the Akwesasne Women Singers (Bear Fox Time, 2021; Mohawk Media Creations, 2013; refer to Appendix B.2.e for the lyrics). While this song provided an opportunity to learn more Kanyen'kéha, it was also our way of showing gratitude to the water before departing. Kristi orally taught the pronunciation, meaning, and tune. Click on the still image of Figure 14 to access the embedded link and view a music video of the Water Song created by Mohawk Media Creations (2013).

Figure 14

Water Song by the Akwesasne Women Singers



Note. From *Water Song by the Akwesasne Women Singers* [Video recording], by Mohawk Media Creations, 2013, YouTube (https://youtu.be/9MvNaFWcQf4?si=c8eQ4wkiWY0FVSU-)

International Beach Day closed the way it began — with Kanonhweratónhsera. This time, standing in a circle by the water, we were all able to verbally express our thanks in Kanyen'kéha. Kristi offered Kanonhweratónhsera, holding illustrations she created as a visual aid so that we could follow along without English. Every time *teyethinonhwerá:tons ne* (we give thanks to) came up, we were able to say it with Kristi. As she named different beings to thank, participants were able to say the words they had learned. A beautiful end to the day.

Post-SDBE Activities

The post-SDBE stage included two activities:

1. Semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews
2. International Beach Day Reunion.

Narrative descriptions follow.

Photo-Elicitation Interviews.

A few weeks after the beach day, I conducted semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews (Bakker & Telli, 2023; Elliot et al., 2017; Hattingh & de Kock, 2008; Maitra & Coley, 2022; refer to Appendix B.3 for interview protocol and questions). The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the International Beach Day intervention affected participants. Waiting a few weeks after the event gave participants time to process their experience. All 11 participants who attended the beach day were invited to an interview, and eight participants responded to the invitation. I conducted the interviews online via Zoom to provide greater accessibility as people lived in different areas in and out of Hamilton. I enabled the closed caption feature in Zoom which generated a text file of the conversation. One participant did not have internet access, so we agreed to meet in person. I had suggested a study room at the local library, but the participant found a location they were familiar with that suited our needs. I brought my computer and recorded the interview on Zoom to capture the captions in the same manner as the other interviews. (At the time, my Zoom subscription did not have the transcription feature.)

Like the survey questions, I prepared the interview questions in advance and Kristi reviewed them. Together, we added a question that elicited feedback on the teaching aspects. My goal was that the interview would be relaxed and feel more like a discussion than a formal procedure. While

the interviews had conversational elements, and participants appeared comfortable, I adhered to the "structure" part of the semi-structured interviews by ensuring that I asked each participant all of the main questions. I was more flexible with the sub-questions, depending on how the conversation flowed.

The first question of each interview was a free association prompt. I asked participants to state the first thing that came to mind when they thought about International Beach Day. I wanted to elicit "the spontaneous emergence" (Fortunati et al., 2022, p. 80) of feelings or thoughts participants had about the SDBE before any interview questions could affect their answers. This question also served as an ice-breaker because it was easy and fun, setting the tone for the rest of the interview.

The interview proceeded with photo-elicitation questions using the photographs taken by Aríhwaiens Martin during International Beach Day. Photo-elicitation questions serve many purposes. Discussing images can help mitigate power dynamics between researchers and participants, especially when the participants have some control over the visuals being discussed (Bakker & Telli, 2023; Maitra & Coley, 2022); images help to elicit insights that may be difficult to express or less likely to emerge from verbal cues alone (Bakker & Telli, 2023; Elliot et al., 2017; Hattingh & de Kock, 2008); using visual and verbal prompts in the same interview brings together physical and psychological realities, creating broader possibilities of responses (Elliot et al., 2017; Taylor, 2002); and images can be more culturally inclusive as participants direct the emerging narrative, which centres their point of view (Maitra & Coley, 2022). Boucher (2018) asserts:

> The discussion of the photos easily turns into a discussion of the participant. It is a natural flow of the conversation and the participant can go back and forth from the photo to

themselves without feeling that they have changed the subject. (p. 207)

Using photo-elicitation is also a way to engage participants in analysis as they share their explanation of the photograph, providing a point of view of a shared event/image that the researcher may not have considered (Lory et al., 2025).

The photographer took more than 100 photographs during International Beach Day, too many to show each participant during the interviews. I created individual photo banks of about 30 photos for each participant. These banks included several common photos of the beach and group activities as well as participant-specific photos in which the interviewee was the main subject. I asked participants to select three photos that stood out to them as I shared my screen and scrolled through their photo bank. I then prompted them to explain why they chose each photo. Discussing photos of shared experiences provided an avenue for participants to share their versions of what happened or how their thinking evolved about shared events after they happened. This provided insight into convergences and divergences between participants' understanding of the events as well as between the participants' and my own understandings. This was a valuable way to notice points of connection, one of the goals of the research.

After the photo-elicitation portion of the interview, I asked a mix of open-ended and closed questions. I started with a request that the participant share their language portrait with me as I was not able to listen to everyone's full explanations during the beach day when they were in small groups. We also returned to their pre-event survey responses. I asked participants if they would answer any of the questions differently after the beach day intervention. Two participants who attended the beach day and the interview did not complete the survey in advance, so we went through the survey questions together and they answered them verbally with the instruction to

consider if their answers would have been the same or different if they had done this before the beach day. While they may not have been able to know how they would have answered prior to the event having already been influenced by the beach day, talking about the survey questions led to fruitful discussions. I then asked several questions about their experiences during and since the beach day regarding the role of water, language, communicating, international education, and Haudenosaunee teachings.

At the end of the interview, I checked in again about confidentiality and anonymity. I reminded participants that they could still withdraw from the study or remove anything from the transcript that they did not want me to keep. Nobody withdrew, but a few participants asked me to delete parts of the transcript, which I honoured. Some participants asked us to delete some photographs that they did not like of themselves, which I did. All participants were given the opportunity to remain anonymous and to choose how I would refer to them in publications and presentations.

International Beach Day Reunion.

In September 2025, Kristi and I hosted an International Beach Day Reunion. The goals were to reconnect with participants, share preliminary findings from the research, and review, in a relational way, some vocabulary Kristi had taught during International Beach Day. This event was a way to reciprocate gift giving with participants and people who supported the project. A couple of friends from the practice day and several participants from International Beach Day signed up, but illness and work commitments reduced our group to three people plus Kristi and myself. It was a sunny but very windy day. Surfers were catching waves while the five of us gathered to share our learnings. We needed a microphone to hear each other over the wind. Fortunately, one of the

attendees owned a portable amp and mic that she let us use for the reunion. I had made cloud decorations out of the photographs from International Beach Day, and I wanted to display them hanging from the inside of the beach canopy roof. The wind had other ideas and refused my plan, blowing them out of my hand as I tried to hang them.

Kristi opened our gathering with Kanonhweratónhsera. I shared preliminary findings with participants. Even though Kristi and I could see that participants were grasping the idea of languaging during International Beach Day, some participants expressed confusion when we talked about languaging afterward, so I included additional information and several definitions of languaging on my handout (Appendix D.1). To existing definitions of languaging, I added that languaging occurs "in the natural world," emphasizing the importance of relationality in languaging. Kristi created a languaging activity inspired by a scavenger hunt. The idea was to walk mindfully alongside the water, noticing and listening to the beings of the beach. One instruction was: "Practice using Kanyen'kéha words to name and honour each being (use the QR code handout to hear how each word sounds). This is a way to speak back to them in the language of the land." (Appendix D.2). Each QR code linked to a recording of Kristi pronouncing one of the Kanyen'kéha words we had learned during International Beach Day, such as Ohné:ka (water), Otsi'nón:wa (insect), and Otsi'tén:'a (bird). Although small, the reunion was beautiful and attendees appreciated learning about the research project and reconnecting with Kanyen'kéha, the beach, and the water (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Photographs from the Reunion



Photograph by K. Talbot



Photograph by S. Martin



Photograph by K. Talbot

Note. All photographs shared with permission of the attendees.

Study Participants

Participants (n=8) were human residents of the area now called Ontario, Canada, coming from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds and nations. While participants languaged and interacted with beings of the beach, including water, these residents were not study participants. They were interlocutors, teachers, neighbours, relatives. This research study was about the education of humans, so I did not request gifts for analysis from the beings of the beach.

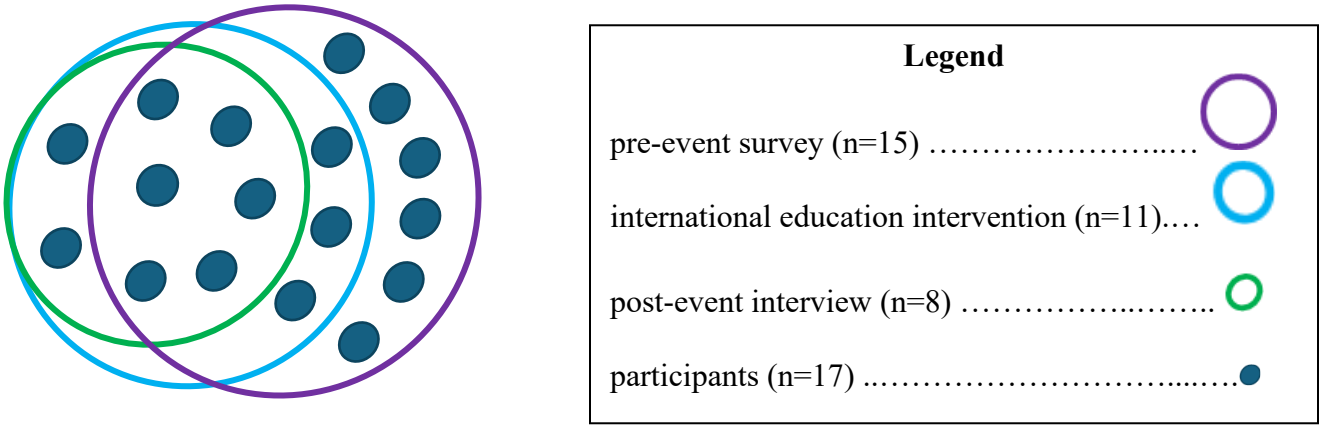
A total of 17 people participated in at least one of the research methods. Fifteen people completed the pre-event survey (n=15). Eleven people attended International Beach Day, nine of whom completed the pre-event survey, plus two who did not (n=11). Some people withdrew the morning of the event, so it was too late to fill the remaining spots from the waitlist. Eight of the International Beach Day participants attended the post-event interview (n=8). These eight people were the focal participants for this study.

Each method included a diversity of participants regarding Indigenous/non-Indigenous

identity, international/domestic student/non-student, dominant/minoritized mother tongue, and water enthusiast/activist or not. Figure 16 is a visual representation of the number of participants per method. Table 6 indicates diversity of participants — in terms of recruitment criteria — for the three methods during which gifts were received from praticipants. All 17 participants were offered an inducement: a $25 gift card to either a local bookstore or a grocery store.

Figure 16

Number of Participants per Method



Note. The mini circles, dark blue, represent the participants. The largest circle, purple, represents the pre-event survey (n=15). The medium circle, light blue, represents the international education intervention at the beach (n=11). The small circle, green, represents the post-event interview (n=8).

Table 6

Number of Participants by Identity Label per Method

Identity Label → Method ↓	**Indigenous (I) / non-Indigenous (NI)**	**International (Int) / Domestic (Dom) / non-Student (NS)**	**Dominant (D) / Minoritized (m) Mother Tongue**	**Water Activist or Enthusiast (W) or not (No)**
Pre-Event Survey n=15	I = 5 NI = 9 no answer = 1	Int + Dom mixed = 3 Dom = 10 NS = 2	D = 7 m = 8	W = 7 No = 5 unsure/no answer = 3
International Beach Day n=11	I = 3 NI = 7 no answer = 1	Int + Dom mixed = 3 Dom = 5 NS = 3	D = 5 m = 6	W = 7 No = 3 no answer = 1
Interview n=8	I = 3 NI = 4 no answer = 1	Int + Dom mixed = 2 Dom = 3 NS = 3	D = 4 m = 4	W = 5 No = 2 no answer = 1

Note. Int + Dom mixed refers to individual students who identified as both international and domestic.

The eight participants who completed both the International Beach Day and the post-event photo-elicitation interview became the eight focal participants whose gifts were included in the analysis (n=8). The post-event photo-elicitation interview was integral for learning from and with the participants. It offered an in-depth opportunity to learn about their experience and learnings from the SDBE. Without interacting with the other participants during both the International Beach Day and the post-event photo-elicitation interview, it was not possible to develop a wholistic sense of their offerings.

While one goal of this anticolonial inter*nation*al education research is to move beyond state-imposed binary categories, it is important to recognize that these categories are related to status in the nation-state, which affects power relations and experiences in Canada. For example, international students do not have long-term security in Canada as their study permits have expiry dates and strict conditions around student status and employment (Government of Canada, 2026), which create emotional and material stressors on their lives. These particular conditions are not imposed on domestic students, even those who are newcomers to Canada. As far as I can tell, none of the focal participants had official international student status. Only two of the focal participants described themselves as international students, and these two also described themselves as domestic students. In one case, the participant had come to Canada as an international student, but years later her status changed, and she was returning to school in Canada as a domestic student. The other person indicated that she was a domestic student on the pre-event survey, but she referred to herself as an international student during the interview, which may reflect similarities in how racialized newcomer students and racialized international students are treated in Canada (Shin, 2022). Having domestic status decreases some of the precarities that come with study permits, which may contribute to changes in power and agency in educational settings. Therefore, I must be explicit that findings from this research cannot be interpreted in terms of the experiences of people residing in Canada on a study permit. As discussed in the next section, analysis takes a more wholistic approach as it relates to my definition of inter*nation*al education (refer to the *Post-Secondary International Education in Canada* section of *Situating the Research* in chapter 1).

Analysis

I undertook the following actions to analyze the participants' gifts:

1. Reviewed and intuitively highlighted interview transcripts
2. Created the Cross Seas Analysis Model
3. Created "participant clouds" - one document per participant that included all their gifts
4. Analyzed each participant cloud by applying the elements of the Cross Seas Model
5. Created the Cross Seas Charts and reflected on what I noticed
6. Shared findings with participants as a form of relational accountability

Narrative descriptions of these actions follow. Rather than steps, I liken the process to lapping waves where the lake water meets the shore. While I present these laps linearly for ease of explanation, each lap was iterative and some overlapped in time. For example, I filmed the wave phenomenon that inspired the analysis model six months before the SDBE occurred. Think of standing at the edge of the lake, watching waves move in succession toward the shore; they then retreat as new waves approach the shore.

Lap One: Reviewing and Highlighting Transcripts

During the first lap, I refamiliarized myself with the interview conversations. While listening to and watching the audio and video recordings, I edited the computer-generated text files to turn them into transcripts, noting who said what. I also fixed the spelling and formatting errors created by the automated closed caption software. Two participants used non-English words that I could not recognize or figure out, and I emailed them to check spelling and confirm meaning. I then read through each transcript at least two more times, highlighting parts that struck me. While my theoretical framework and my experience of thinking with water were at top of mind, I was not necessarily looking for connections at this stage. Taking an embodied approach, I trusted my gut and highlighted pieces that felt important. I did this on digital copies of the transcripts.

Lap Two: Developing the Cross Seas Analysis Model

The Cross Seas Analysis Model is informed by my theoretical framework and my experience of *thinking with water.* I have been actively and passively thinking with water for years, over countless visits to the beach. Thinking *with*, not *about* or *of*, stems from the understanding that thinking is not exceptionally human, but rather "a way of interaction with the world and intra-action in it" (Roca-Servat and Golovátina-Mora, 2020, p. 15). My thinking with water is an embodied practice, incorporating all senses, and often involves movement near or in water.

In November 2024, I was walking along the shore of Lake Ontario, near the International Beach Day location. I witnessed and video recorded a wave pattern that created a grid formation on the surface of the water. This grid formation is a visible indication of "cross seas" which occurs when "two or more wave trains moving in different directions run together" (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2023). According to Environment Canada (2002), cross seas are typical in this part of Lake Ontario, but I had not seen such a clear grid pattern before at my local beach. I had seen it elsewhere and was aware of the phenomenon and its associated dangers. Swimmers and boaters are warned about losing control in the opposing waves. It felt special to witness and record this formation in the safe and shallow water of my local spot, and I knew this moment carried significance for my work. Click on the still image of Figure 17 to access the embedded link and view the recording. (Notice that you can hear traffic from the highway bridge in the background of the recording!)

Figure 17

Cross Seas Phenomenon in Lake Ontario

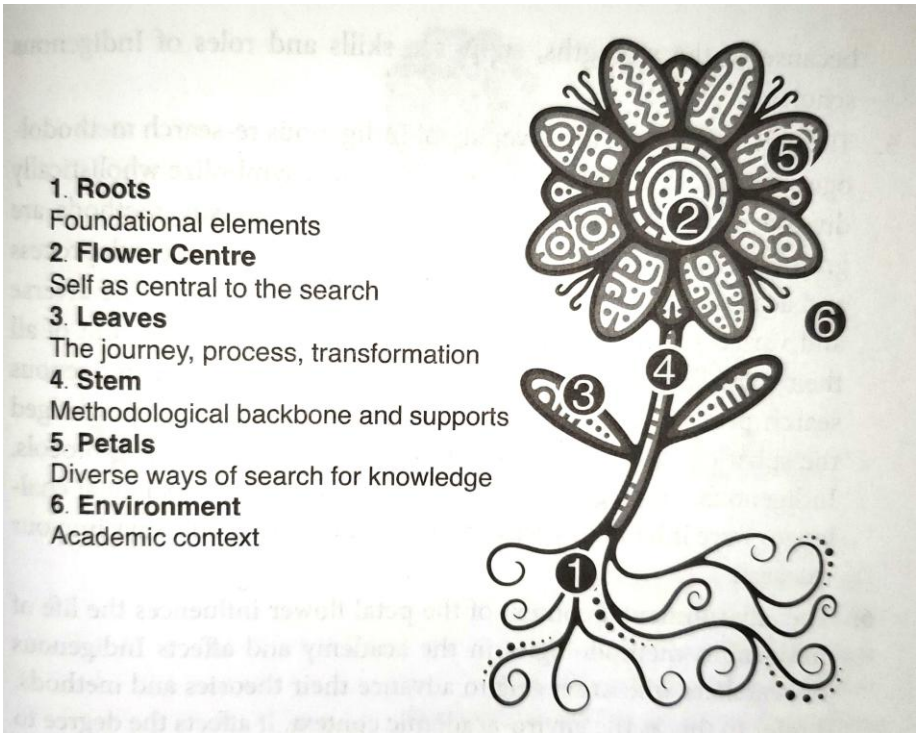


Note. Still image from video recorded by S. Martin on Android phone, November 2, 2024, Lake Ontario.

Embodiment and wholism are central to my research, so I wanted to maintain the integrity of the gifts offered by the beach and the participants (refer to chapter 3 for an explanation of my decision to use the word gifts instead of data). By the time I completed the interviews, I knew that coding the transcripts, the method I had been trained in as a qualitative research assistant, would be insufficient for my water-based project — coding and sorting codes can decontextualize or disembody the parts from the whole. I returned to the literature and found inspiration from Absolon (2022), who offers a petal flower as a wholistic framework for understanding Indigenous re-search methodologies (p. 139; Figure 18).

Figure 18

The Petal Flower Wholistic Framework



Note. Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe) (2022). Reproduced with permission from the publisher.

Absolon's (2022) explanation reminded me of the cross seas:

> Wholistic frameworks are also guided by natural cycles of life, cycles of the moon, seasons in a year and many others. The concentric circles of a tree or the whole tree are examples of wholistic frameworks. Wholistic frameworks are not linear, but rather facilitate process among multiple layers of knowledge building. Re-search that considers process versus outcomes is wholistic research. (p. 132)

Cross seas are not a life cycle, but they are a natural interaction between water, wind, energy, and barriers such as sandbars or piers. Cross seas are multi-layered, multi-directional, and dynamic.

While Absolon's (2022) wholistic framework provided the foundation for my Cross Seas Analysis Model, I did not know *how* the cross seas could help me learn until I read Nathan Beck's chapter *Trouble the Translating: Border Thinking, Indigenous Knowledges, and Undoing Method*. Similar to Absolon (2022), who focuses on searching rather than research, Beck's (2019) purpose is not to produce knowledge but understanding:

> In this moment of knowing, we are not researchers, we are not producers, we are learners. By centering ourselves as learners rather than producers, we resist (to some small degree) the global designs imposed on knowing, data, and legitimacy through research methodologies. (p. 53)

Beck (2019) shares an analysis model he created to disrupt the "rigid, bound, and exclusive" (p. 46) aspects of colonial research. His model is informed by Border Thinking and Indigenous Knowledges and aims to "unearth the commonalities in border(ed) and indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world" (p. 51). The model centers the body, recognizes the effect of borders, and is dynamic and fluid (Beck, 2019, p. 54). The visual representation of the model is a circle with vertical and horizontal lines intersecting at the centre. Beck (2019) explains each section of the model:

- The top hemisphere consists of indignation, the combination of love and anger for transformation.
- The bottom hemisphere consists of physical and mental geography, the sites from which we speak.
- The left hemisphere consists of hope for the future grounded in place, history, and memory.

- The right hemisphere consists of historical condition, structural impositions, tensions.
- The center is the body, holding all of these contradictions, not categorizing them, and acting through them.
- Between and among all of these "categories" are borders that render bodies separate. (p. 53)

The way Beck (2019) applied this model was significant for me as he did so while maintaining the connection between the participant and their data (his wording). The testimony that was shared with him by a Palestinian farmer is as follows:

> Since they have taken my land, I feel as if my children and I have no future. I have become poor, and am left with only thirty head of sheep and goats. I began to sell my flock to meet our household needs. In the past, the flock grazed in wide-open spaces on the land, but now they are confined, and I have to buy them fodder. I feel that I'll end up with not even one sheep, which means that I will have lost my livelihood and my last source of food, having lost my land. I hear the flock moaning, and understand their frustration, just as I understand the frustration of a person who is imprisoned and can't get out. When the time comes for me to feed them, I feel queasy out of sorrow for my flock and the situation they are in. (B'Tselem, 2005) (pp. 55-56)

Beck (2019) applied his model in this way:

> Love: Having land that can produce, having family return, having a livelihood, being able to meet our needs, having peace, having sheep be able to graze/roam.
>
> Anger: The occupation has destroyed my livelihood, separated me from family, imprisoned

> me, caused me fear for my flock and my life, taken my land, put me in danger, I am losing my flock, I can no longer support myself or my family.
>
> Location: My land, children, sheep/goats, farming, memories of children on land, wide-open spaces.
>
> Dislocation: Wall built on my land, separation from my land, inability to feed my flock, national borders, diaspora, collective memory of Nakba, freedom/ imprisonment, Occupation, property/collectivity, prison. (pp. 56-57)

Applying the model supports noticing that the participant is negotiating love, anger, location, and dislocation at all times, without having to translate the participant's meaning to something other than what it is, and supports learning the data (Beck's wording) in an embodied way that involves intuition and solidarity (Beck, 2019).

Absolon is "Anishinaabe kwe from Flying Post First Nation Treaty 9" (Absolon, 2022, back cover), and Beck is a white, cis-male activist (Beck, 2019, p. 58) in the United States. It is appropriate that the Cross Seas Analysis Model for my transgressive, transdisciplinary work was inspired by connections between the works of two people with different positionalities. I am drawn to these models for their insistence on maintaining embodiment for both the participant and the researcher and maintaining the connection between the gifts and the participants who shared them.

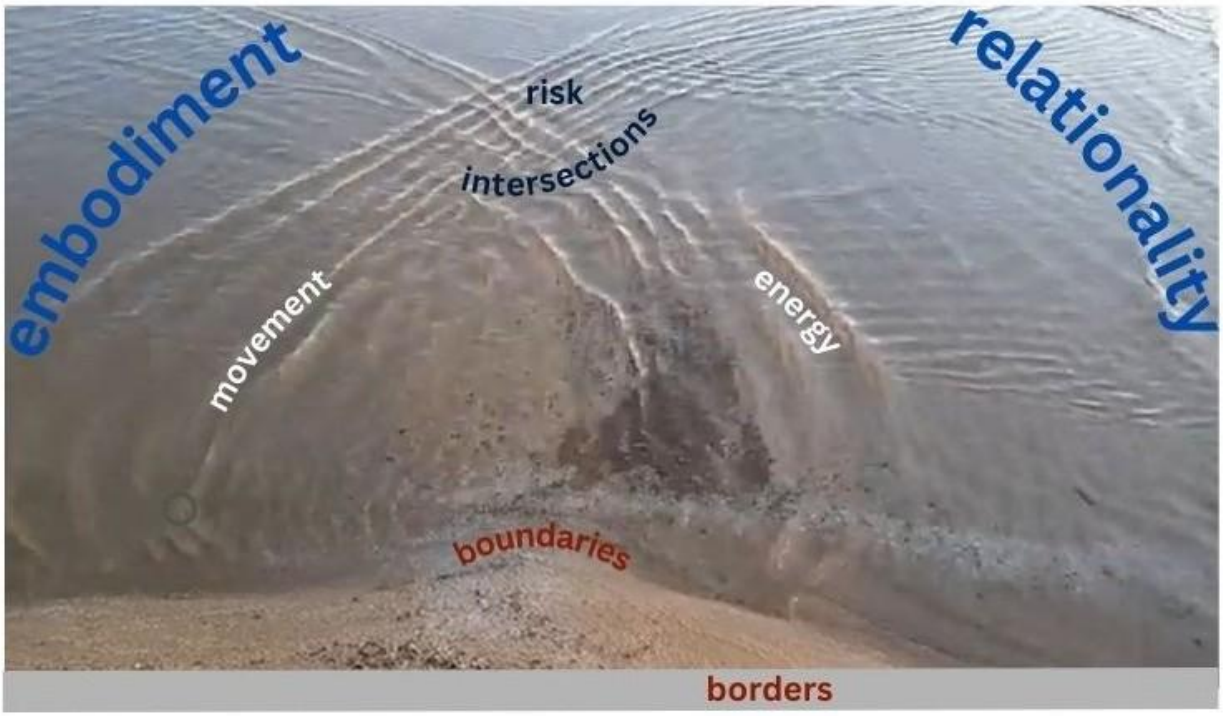
The Cross Seas Analysis Model.

Informed by water and my theoretical framework and inspired by Absolon (2022) and Beck (2019), I identified elements of the cross seas that support learning as I look for connections within the gifts offered by the participants. The four elements of the cross seas analysis model are water, shore, waves, and grid. Each element has two properties. Water's properties are relationality and

embodiment. Shore's properties are boundaries and borders. Waves' properties are movement and energy. Grid's properties are risk and intersections. Figure 19 offers a static representation of the model, but it is important to remember that these elements are dynamic, fluid, related, and interconnected[19]. Table 7 provides a description of the properties.

Figure 19

Cross Seas Analysis Model



[19] For scholars who study language variety and change, this Cross Seas model may bring to mind Charles-James N. Bailey's (1973) Wave Model of language change. While Bailey (1973) does not relate this wave model to water, he does provide an idealized schematic of competing waves that demonstrates how different linguistic rules can move through space and time from opposite directions, affecting language varieties in their path at different times. His schematic resembles the Cross Seas. I would like to thank Tehota'kerá:ton for introducing me to this work (personal communication, May 22, 2026).

Table 7

Elements and Properties of the Cross Seas Analysis Model

Elements	Properties	Image
Water	relationality – all beings are in relationship with each other, connected through life; water is life embodiment – interaction through wholeness of being; bodies interacting and internal action within bodies	
Shore	boundaries – supportive barriers created naturally and/or by self or community; can adapt to shifts in relationships as contexts change (e.g. sandbars; protected spaces for revitalization) borders – rigid barriers, often imposed externally; difficult to change (e.g. hydro towers, highways, official language policies)	
Waves	energy – physical or metaphysical; power, spirit, existence movement – of bodies or energy; any type of shift such as paradigmatic or temporal	
Grid	risk – the potential for harm or loss intersections – points of connection between beings, ideas, places, languages, actions, etc.	

My Cross Seas Analysis Model is not intended as a template for others' analysis. If others find inspiration in it or ways to adapt it to their context, that would be a welcome outcome, but if this model "*is applied with rigidity, it becomes a border itself*" (Beck, 2019, p. 54, emphasis in the original) which would defeat the anti-colonial nature of water-based learning.

Lap Three: Compiling Participant Clouds.

To maintain wholism, I wanted to have all the gifts for each participant in one place. I

created *participant clouds*, a unique MSWord file for each participant. This H2O term was fitting as each file was stored on the cloud (in my online OneDrive), a visible but intangible space, much like clouds in the sky. Each participant cloud contained all the ephemera that I had collected from each person: the highlighted portions of their transcripts, the words they picked to describe International Beach Day, the photographs they selected during their interview, the photographs of their language portraits, the way they chose to identify (i.e. their name, student status, nationality, ethnicity/race), and notes they wrote on their linguistic landscape handouts. After I created each cloud, I reviewed the information in each one and returned to the transcripts and surveys to see if anything more should be added to provide a wholistic view of the participant.

These intangible participant clouds were too large to easily view on my computer monitor. I wanted to see the whole of each one without having to scroll up and down or side to side. I decided to print the participant clouds, creating tangible posters that I taped to my home-office wall.

Lap Four: Applying the Cross Seas Analysis Model.

I then applied the Cross Seas Analysis Model. Serendipitously, I already owned a pack of eight sticky note tabs that came in two shades of four colours, the exact amount I needed for the cross seas elements. I selected one colour for each element and assigned light and dark shades of that colour to the respective properties (Figure 20):

- water = blue
    - relationality = light blue
    - embodiment = dark blue
- shore = yellow
    - boundaries = light yellow
    - borders = dark yellow
- waves = green
    - energy = light green
    - movement = dark green

- grid = pink
    - risk = light pink
    - intersections = dark pink

Figure 20

The Sticky Note Notebook

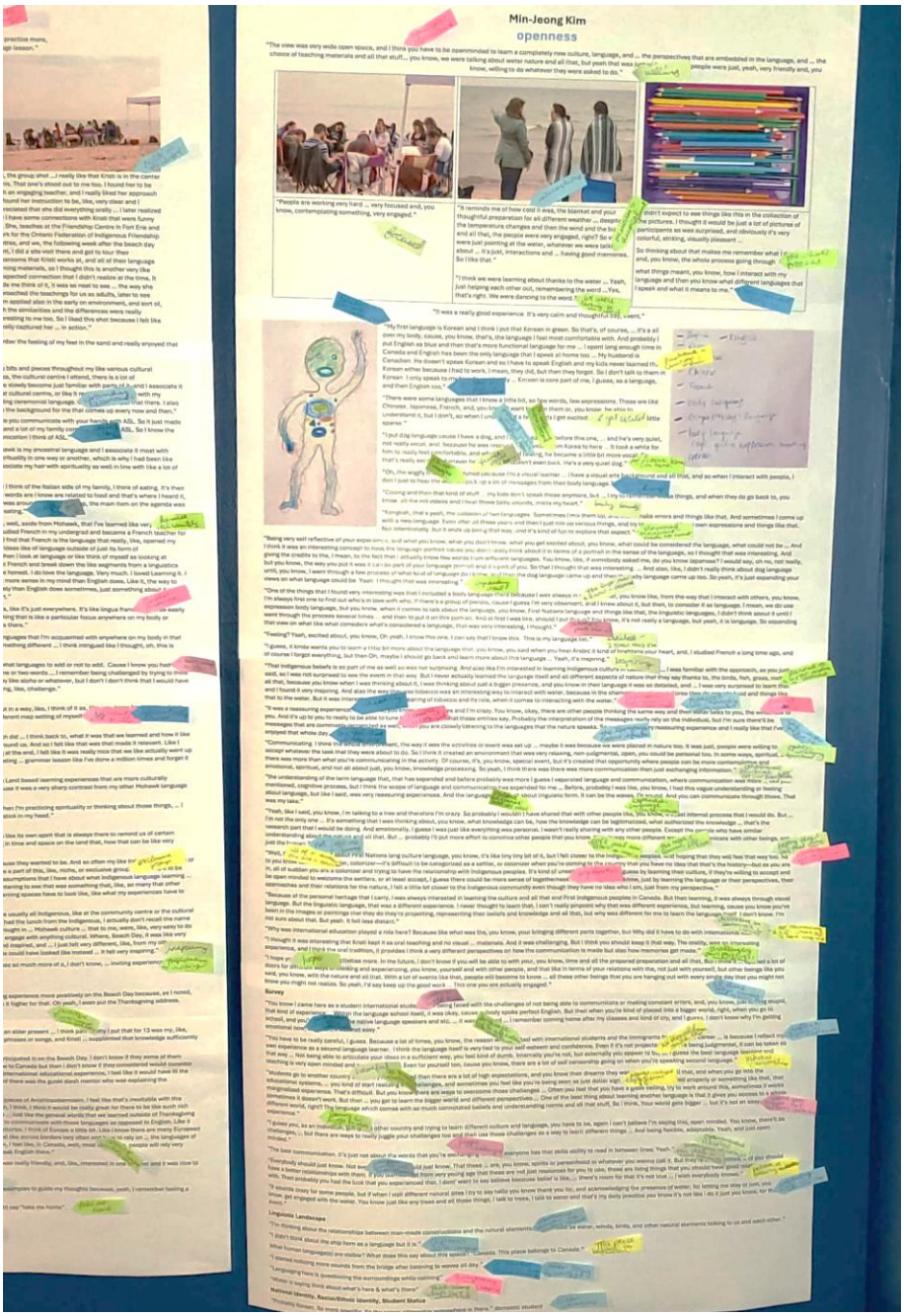


I read through the participant cloud posters again and added sticky tabs as I identified elements and properties of the Cross Seas Model in the text and images. If something they said related to more than one property, I put more than one sticky tab on the same location. As I added sticky tabs to the posters, I wrote a note on the tab to identify its location on the poster so that I would be able to replace the tab if it fell off. I added a set of purple sticky notes to the notebook to represent areas that seemed forced in the interview process, e.g., the interviewee rephrased something I had said because they were trying hard to respond to the question but then admitted

that they did not have something to say. Figure 21 is an example of a participant cloud poster after I applied the Cross Seas Analysis Model.

Figure 21

Participant Cloud Poster After Cross Seas Analysis



The beauty of the sticky note/poster process was that I was forced to stand up and move around as I applied the analysis model, which invigorated my mind. As my body moved, analysis became more of an embodied experience. I was also able to visually absorb a feeling of the hues of each participant. Some were very mixed, while others tended more toward particular colours.

Lap Five: Creating the Cross Seas Charts.

Noticing the colour differences in the posters made me want to bring the colours visually closer together, and this became too cumbersome with the sticky notes. I decided to adapt a code sorting method that Dr. Natalia Balyasnikova, one of my committee members, had taught me when I worked with her as a research assistant. This method employs MS Forms, a software program for creating surveys. Dr. Balyasnikova created a form in which each survey "question" field was one code. After we had coded the data (we did not use the term gifts for that project), we copied the coded text into the corresponding question fields in the form. This generated a spreadsheet with the data sorted according to the codes, making it easy to view and manipulate. For my dissertation research, I adapted Dr. Balyasnikova's process by creating one MS Form per participant to ensure that I maintained the integrity of the participants' gifts. The resulting spreadsheets included each participant's quotes organized by the Cross Seas properties. This helped me to notice more overlaps between the different elements, i.e. many statements the participants made relate to more than one Cross Seas property. In the spreadsheets, I shaded the text to match the colours of the Cross Seas Model sticky tabs, and I generated a pie chart using Excel's chart feature. I was then able to visually sense, in an embodied way, predominant Cross Seas elements for each participant. I purposely did not add numeric labels to the charts because I wanted to focus on the visual sense the chart evoked.

Quantifying the elements would have given the charts a finite feel, whereas the pinwheel look of the pie chart without numbers maintained a more dynamic quality, a reminder that each element could increase or decrease, depending on the variables of any given moment.

Throughout the process, I had been noticing conversations between participants that had not happened between them. These were points of connection that came up between participants while they were in conversation only with me. To see if these points of connection would make sense if the participants had been talking to each other, I created a separate document called Conversations, and I copied and pasted text from participant clouds to create dialogues between participants. This brought the points of connection closer together for me to notice.

Reflection about Analytic Method.

My analytic method borrows some elements of qualitative analysis in that I applied the Cross Seas Model elemental properties (i.e. relationality, embodiment, boundaries, borders, energy, movement, risk, and intersections) to the text and visual gifts. In a way this is similar to applying codes: "a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). However, I transgress qualitative coding by insisting on maintaining the wholism of each participant without translating (Beck, 2019) their words into different meanings or themes and without suggesting that the connections I notice are static or permanent. The Cross Seas Model properties do not represent any of the text or visuals in the participant clouds. They are simply connections that I noticed between the cross seas and the gifts of the participants. Because this analytic process is embodied and maintains wholism, it is dynamic. If I were to repeat the process, I would likely find different connections as I would be doing it at a

later time, my body having aged, my thoughts having evolved. If you were to apply the model on the same day I did, you would likely apply it differently as you think differently than I do. There would be no need to find consensus between our different applications. The goal is not to find consistency, patterns, or themes, but points of connection that may exist in certain moments, and that would not have been noticeable under rigid, bordered practices. As the waves pass through each other, the connections appear and disappear. The waves maintain their integrity until the energy moves on to something else.

Lap Six: Relational Accountability – A Transgression.

As part of my responsibility to the participants, after writing a draft of their introductions and the conversational connections (findings) section, I invited each participant to meet with me via Zoom so I could share their introduction and provide an explanation of their cross seas chart and table. They also had the choice to communicate by email instead, or to do a combination of a call and email. I wanted to make sure that the way I presented the information felt good to the participants. During this process, two of the participants asked me to revise some of the wording, which we did together until they were happy with what was written.

In qualitative research, member checking is one means to maintain rigor and validity (Birt et al., 2016), often to "ensure shared understanding of meanings" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 23). Ensuring shared understandings was not my goal. Maintaining my transgressive stance, I was more concerned with my responsibility to the participants and wanting to make sure that the way I presented their offerings felt right to them. If my introduction of them or the charts and tables I created caused concerns in any way, I wanted to know so I could make changes. This transgression of member checking is inspired by the Indigenous research concept of relational accountability.

Shawn Wilson (2001) from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation provides this description of relational accountability:

> You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgements of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship. (p. 177)

It is important to understand that I did not maintain full relational accountability in this dissertation research. I have been transparent about my positionality, aiming to "disrupt the myths of objectivity and neutrality" (Absolon, 2022, p. 297), which is important for relational accountability. However, relational accountability starts with relationships and often includes community and relations throughout the research process, ensuring that the purpose and methods are beneficial for them (Absolon, 2022; refer also to Leonard, 2021 for continued discussion of Indigenous ways of knowing and collaborative research). I did not consult my participants in the design of this research. My position here is an instance in which the negative connotation of transgressing matters. I must be vigilant that any after-the-fact attempts to be accountable to my participants do not have the reverse effect of severing relationships or trust, or appropriating Indigenous ways of doing.

5. Transgressing Findings

This section introduces the eight focal participants who attended the International Beach Day and the follow-up interview. In addition to the participant introductions, I share *conversational connections.* While participants were conversing with me during the interviews, there were many moments when they brought up specific ideas or experiences that other participants also mentioned. I present these points of connection as conversations between participants to maintain the wholism of the participants. (Refer to the Conversational Connections section for more details.)

All participants were offered the opportunity to remain anonymous. None of them chose this option. Several participants asked me to redact information, which I did, but none of them felt the need to use a pseudonym or have their identifying characteristics anonymized. One participant even said that she would be proud and happy to see her name in this study. This is an indication of the significance of our interactions during International Beach Day. It is also an indication of the responsibility that comes with the participants' trust that I will act with integrity and respect our relationships.

While I am introducing the participants and their gifts, it is important to remember the dynamic nature of people, places, and information. The introductions vary in length, depending on how much each participant shared during the interview. Here I transgress disciplinary borders again to borrow from non-representational researchers. Rather than trying to perfectly represent each person or precisely recreate their gifts — both of which would be impossible — I am more concerned with "evoking, in the present moment, a future impression" (Vannini, 2015, p. 12) for you, the reader. As you are introduced to these participants and their gifts, how do you relate? How do you feel? What connections do you notice?

Meeting the Participants

Each introduction includes the participant's own vocabulary for self-identification, the word or words that they associated with the International Beach Day, and some descriptions from the language portrait they created during International Beach Day. I share an image of the language portrait they created in which each colour represents a language in their linguistic repertoire (refer to the CMLA Activity: Language Portraits section). The placement of each colour in the portrait indicates the language's relationship to the participant's embodied linguistic experiences.

These introductions are followed by summaries of the Cross Seas Analysis I conducted for each participant. I indicate the participant's predominant Cross Seas elements and properties in text and chart form, and I share some key examples in both written descriptions and individualized Cross Seas tables (refer to Appendix C to view the Cross Seas Tables). Each Cross Seas property "is connected and interrelated to the whole and ought not to be interpreted in absence of its wholistic context" (Absolon, 2022, p. 135). Because of this wholeness, many of the quotes relate to more than one property in the Cross Seas Analysis Model. Each property is dynamic and only represents my embodied learning about these participant gifts in the moment that I did the analysis. I introduce the eight participants in the order that I interviewed them to share the experience with you, the reader, in the order that I experienced it.

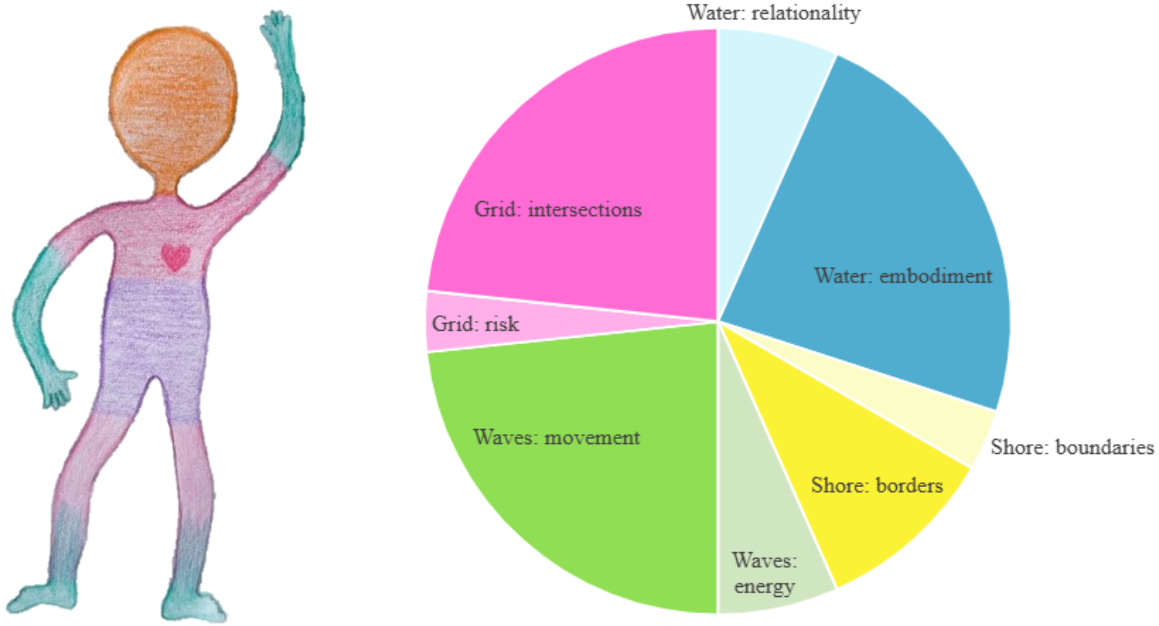
Suhaila

Suhaila identifies as Afghan and she indicated that she is a domestic student. The first words that popped into her mind when she thought of International Beach Day were amazing and joyful. She said, "It was a joyful day for me. I enjoyed a lot during the beach day, meeting with new people and sharing our ideas and thoughts. It was really amazing."

Suhaila's mother tongue is "Persian, or Dari." She said, "it's always in my heart, of course, I won't forget it, like wherever I go in the world." Suhaila said that she is "always interested in K-drama, K-pop, and K-culture," so she was familiar with the Korean language. She was excited to meet someone from Korea for the first time at International Beach Day. Suhaila said she's "more into Asian things" because she's from Asia. She is really into Japanese animation, for example, so her linguistic repertoire includes Japanese, Thai, and Mandarin "of course," because she has an interest in those cultures. Her repertoire also includes Urdu, Pashto, Hindi, and English. Prior to the International Beach Day, Suhaila had not known that Kanyen'kéha existed, so, she said, "it was a great experience with Kristi and learning the Mohawk language." After the Kanyen'kéha lesson, she added, "I would put Mohawk language beside my heart." Suhaila's linguistic repertoire is represented in her language portrait (Figure 22).

Figure 22

Suhaila's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas analysis, Water and Waves were Suhaila's predominant elements, followed by Grid and Shore (Figure 22). The embodiment property of Water commonly showed up as emotions. She spoke a lot about happiness and joy: "I felt really happy to share and to learn, to get to know someone's ideas ... about the languages and stuff. So it made me really grateful to be there." Suhaila mentioned a couple of times that the water brought the participants together "like a union." Despite the diversity of nationalities and ethnicities represented, Suhaila expressed that the experience of sharing each other's languages and being with the water highlighted people's commonalities.

When Suhaila talked about English, even though she mentioned a restrictive aspect of this dominant language, she focused more on the affordances that having a common language offers. Her comment, "if we don't know English, we can't make a future here," relates to the borders property of Shore. She immediately follows this with the benefits that accompany knowing English, which relates to the movement property of Waves: "If we know English, we can build up, we can stand up, we can use our hand to do something." The intersections property of Grid regularly appeared, as exemplified in Suhaila's comment about English as a lingua franca. She said that "English, of course, for everyone" would be the best communication across the world because it is "the most common one." Table 8 provides additional key quotes for Suhaila's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.1).

Rita

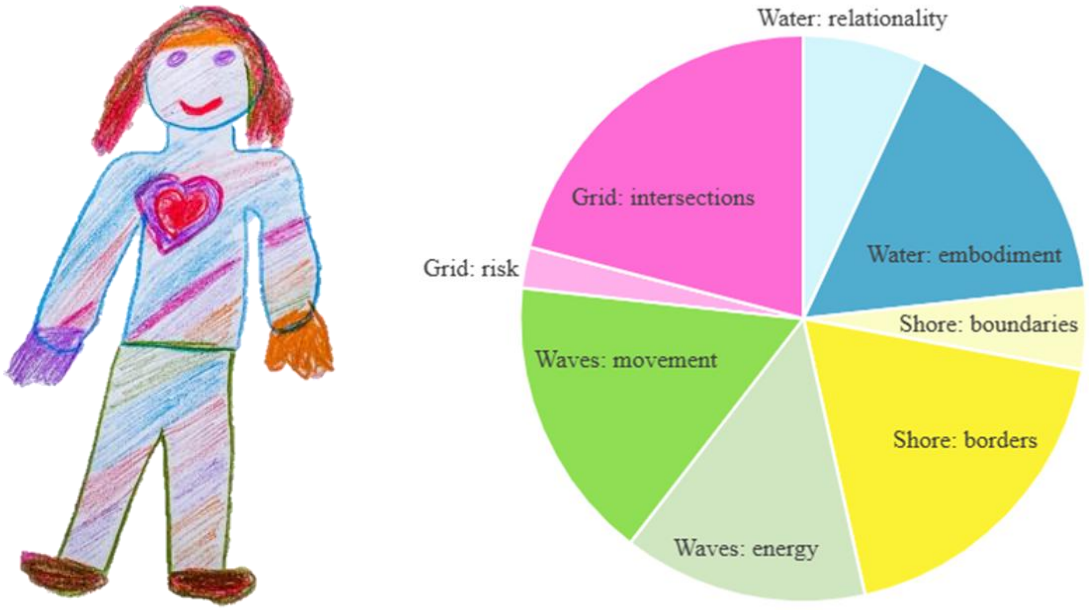
Rita identifies as Italian and “white, Caucasian.” About her national identity, she said, "I don't want to say Canadian. Italian." Rita is not a student, but she works in education. The first word that popped into her mind when she thought of International Beach Day was pleasant. Rita

explained, "I wasn't stressed during that day. I think I was open to all the conversations that were happening. The setting was lovely, on the beach, was really nice to be there and spend the day in nature and by the water."

English is Rita's main language, but Italian is in her heart. Her linguistic repertoire also includes French, Mohawk, Ojibwe, and Polish. About her language portrait, she said she had initially related French to her feet because, even though she sometimes uses French for work, she is not emotionally connected to it. Then she noticed that someone else had felt their native language in their feet, and she thought, "Oh my God, because that keeps you grounded! And that's your base!" So she recoloured her feet with Italian. She explained, "Italian is my base, that's, like, my home. That's what you see grounded, is my culture." She also feels connected to Mohawk and Ojibwe. Not only does she use these languages for work, but she is "very involved in Indigenous culture," has relationships with Indigenous people, and has lived in an Indigenous community. Music helps Rita learn language. She said, "It was funny that [the Water Song] was a song Kristi chose to do for the day because it's like one of the few songs I know." Rita's linguistic repertoire is represented in her language portrait (Figure 23).

Figure 23

Rita's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas analysis, Rita's predominant element was Waves, followed closely by Water, Shore and Grid, which were equally present (Figure 23). The movement property of Waves was common for Rita, including physical and metaphorical movement as well as emotional and mental shifts and learning. For example, she pointed out that the "unpredictability of nature was a lesson" that day as her "expectations of what the weather and the elements were going to be like was not what happened." Being at the beach had a "positive emotional effect" on her. Rita values and advocates for respect for cultures and languages. The borders property of Shore often shows up when Rita identifies oppressive or harmful situations. She said, "I've seen where people equate language barriers with cognitive ability. We assume, right? Very frustrating. Yeah, this person is trying to learn two languages and you barely know one. Like just because you're English

and speak English doesn't mean you're more intelligent. Yeah, so that's another thing that really frustrates me.” The relationality property of Water shows up for Rita in terms of relationships between humans as well as between humans and the natural world. While Rita appreciated learning at the event, connecting with other participants was a highlight for her. She said, "We were there to learn. We were there to absorb what was being said. ... halfway through, I think I just started socializing more than I was listening, but in that picture you can see that we were all very involved." Rita respects nature and the human connection to nature, even when she does not enjoy it. She commented that the "insects were annoying, but we were trying to be positive about it." Table 9 provides additional key quotes for Rita's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.2).

Sophia

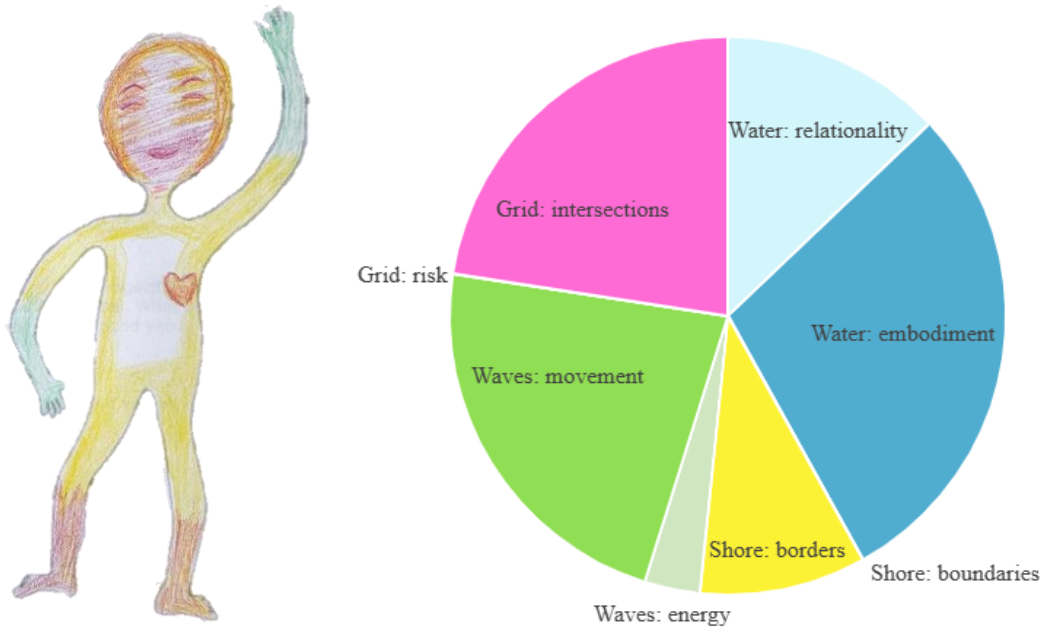
Sophia's national identity is Chinese. She is a domestic student. The first word that popped into her mind when she thought about International Beach Day was exciting. She explained, “It's an experience that I haven't had, and it's a new culture to learn a new language, so it's exciting for me to learn a new things.”

Sophia indicated that her mother tongue is Chinese, Mandarin, and she also uses the Hui'an dialect with her family. In her language portrait, she coloured these languages in different parts of her body: her head to indicate mother tongue, her heart to indicate familial connection, and her feet for connecting with community in Canada (Figure 24). Explaining the connection to the feet, she said, "I use the Mandarin and the dialect in, how to say, I use it to connect with other Chinese, maybe because I'm a newcomer, so I maybe use this language to connect with other Chinese people. So I think it is a good networking with parents or with friends from the same country. … And then, yeah, *then* use English." Sophia included body language and Japanese in her linguistic

repertoire. She chose body language because it is ubiquitous, "we use our postures to show ... how to express us more." Japanese is one of her favourite languages because she likes "watching animation." Sophia continued learning about Kanyen'kéha after the event. She said, "I worked with some videos about [Kanyen'kéha]. After the beach day I watched the video and ... enjoy the sounds. And I think it's kind of a new thing for me. Yeah. It's a new culture, new language. We are not familiar with, but I can see the smile, the sounds from the video ... I can enjoy, I can feel they like their culture, they like their language. I can see."

Figure 24

Sophia's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas analysis, Sophia's predominant element was Water, followed by Waves and Grid (Figure 24). Shore was the least observable. Sophia relates emotions to the experience of learning, a demonstration of the embodiment property of Water. She said, "Everyone

enjoyed the experience, everyone happy with the whole day, and we're wearing smile on their face and everything is good. It's happy day." She commented on the importance of getting out of the classroom and being with water:

> Yeah, I think we, are sitting on the beach … and we are not in the classroom. And we get together ... get everyone more closer and to learn something. So it's got the relationship to connect with each other, and work in groups and also we can share our ideas within our group, in the whole group, with everyone. And we step out of the classroom. We learn with the nature. We feel the wind, the water, the beach. It's, open. It's open your mind and also cheer you up … instead of just sitting in the classroom. Yeah. It's break the environment … It will raise your emotions and make you just enjoy the wind, the fresh air, I think so, in a peaceful and more comfortable environment and can help you learn much more.

Sophia appreciated learning with and getting to know others. About the language portrait activity, she said, "We know each other by the self-portrait." Table 10 provides additional key quotes for Sophia's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.3).

Claudia

Claudia identifies as Latin-American. She indicated that she is a domestic student, and she also describes herself as an international student. The first word that popped into her mind when she thought about International Beach Day was unexpected. She explained, "because when I think about beach, I was thinking about enjoy the day, sunny day. But when it's about... International Beach Day with focus on language. Hmm. How, it will be related with water and language? For this reason, my mind was open to learn and understand what is the relationship between language, water, international — the connection with everything."

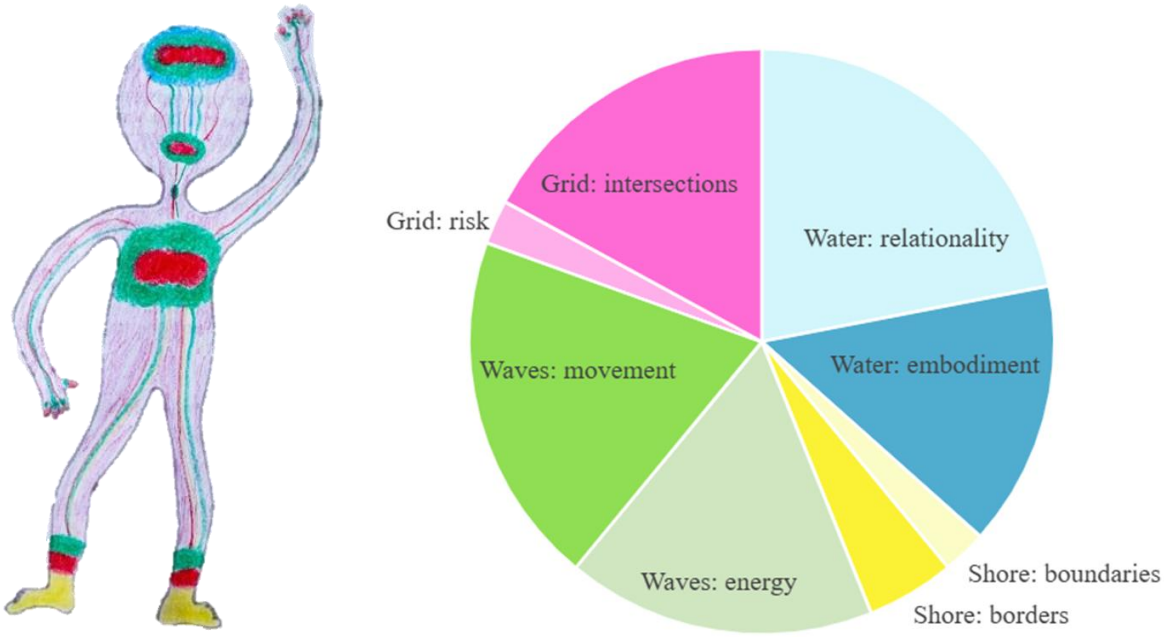
Claudia's first language is Spanish. She connects Spanish and English to the same parts of her body (Figure 25). She explains:

> In my mind, in my heart, in my mouth, and also in my feet, Spanish is the language that makes me feel alive because it's my first language. And I communicate better in the Spanish. But when I came to Canada, my mind started to change. And my second language is now English. And as you can see, in my mind, in my mouth, in my heart, and also in my feet. In my fingers. Now I feel more confident with my English.

Claudia's linguistic repertoire also includes French and Nahuát as she knows some words in both languages. Claudia spoke about the importance and power of Indigenous languages. She said that Nahuát "is a language that is disappearing in El Salvador because we was conquest for Spain, but there are a lot of words that are still there. For example, guacal, frijol, cuchumbo. There are so many words that are still there. But it's important to remind that." Claudia mentioned several times that she has a physical reaction when she hears Kanyen'kéha. "Now that I am aware of some words of Indigenous people, when I hear, for example, she:kon, hello in the First Language, I understand, and that reminds me the International Beach Day, and I feel chills because I know that word ... I recognize that word, my mind and my heart is beating, and I feel chills." If she were to redo her language portrait, she said, "I would like to add a color with the First Nation language because now I feel that I would like to learn more ... Maybe I will choose the color green? As a hope."

Figure 25

Claudia's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas Analysis, Claudia's predominant elements were Water and Waves, followed by Grid and Shore (Figure 25). Representative of the relationality property of Water, Claudia stated that the reason that First Nations language, i.e. Kanyen'kéha, is so powerful is because "it's a connection with everything, with the earth, with the beach, with the water, and for this reason I like to know more." When she thought about the linguistic landscape of the beach, Claudia wrote, "The languaging of this place is meaningful because everything says something." The energy property of Waves often showed up around Claudia's attitude toward learning. She talked about being open to learning new languages, and that learning new vocabulary is "powerful." Table 11 provides additional key quotes for Claudia's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.5).

MJ

MJ identifies as Korean and a citizen of the ocean. She came to Canada years ago as an international student, and now she is a domestic student. The first word that popped into her mind when she thought about International Beach Day was openness. She explained that both the beach and the people were "open."

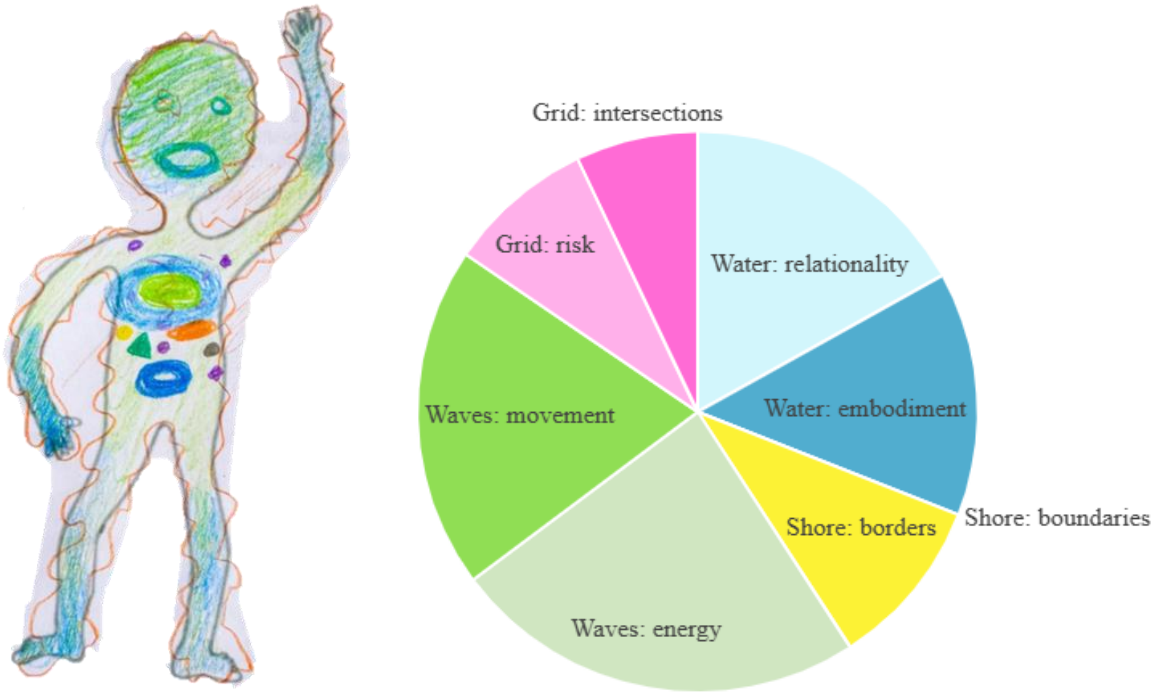
MJ's first language is Korean, and it's the language she feels most comfortable with. The language she speaks at home with her husband and children is English. MJ was the only person to include animal language in her language portrait (Figure 26). She said:

> I put dog language cause I have a dog, and I never had a pet before this one. … He's very quiet, not really vocal, and, because he was rescued, he traveled from Korea to here, … it took a while for him to really feel comfortable, and when I started talking, he became a little bit more vocal. So that's really exciting whenever he speaks.

MJ also included Konglish in her linguistic repertoire, "the collision of two languages," Korean and English. She has fun exploring Konglish, making "errors" and making her own expressions, which she said is not intentional, "but it ends up being that way, and it’s kind of fun to explore that aspect." MJ also included Japanese, Chinese, French, baby language, and body language in her linguistic repertoire. About body language, she said, "I'm always first one to find out who's in love with who if there's a group of people cause I guess I'm very observant."

Figure 26

MJ's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas Analysis, MJ's predominant element was Waves followed by Water, Grid, and Shore (Figure 26). Indicative of the energy property of Waves, MJ spoke a lot about her Shamanic heritage. Shamanism, coupled with Buddhist teachings from Korea, supports her understanding of "the importance of water, land, the spirits and all those things," which are "very similar to Indigenous teachings in Canada, too." MJ explained that these teachings are not honoured and respected in "contemporary Korean society" because of "the process of Westernization and modernization." In terms of the movement property of Waves, she indicated a plan for action. Motivated by the connections she made during International Beach Day, she will "put more effort to convince other people that, you know, there's way more different ways to

communicate with other beings, not just the human." Table 12 provides additional key quotes for MJ's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.5).

Allison

Allison's national identity is Ogweho:weh. She is a domestic student and she teaches in an elementary school. The first word that popped into her mind when she thought about International Beach Day was "healing," but she decided to switch to "relearning" because it was a better description of her experience. Allison explained that she "grew up on the reserve," Six Nations of the Grand River, and "went to Longhouse," so she was familiar with the Haudenosaunee teachings and Kanyen'kéha vocabulary that were shared during International Beach Day. She elaborated:

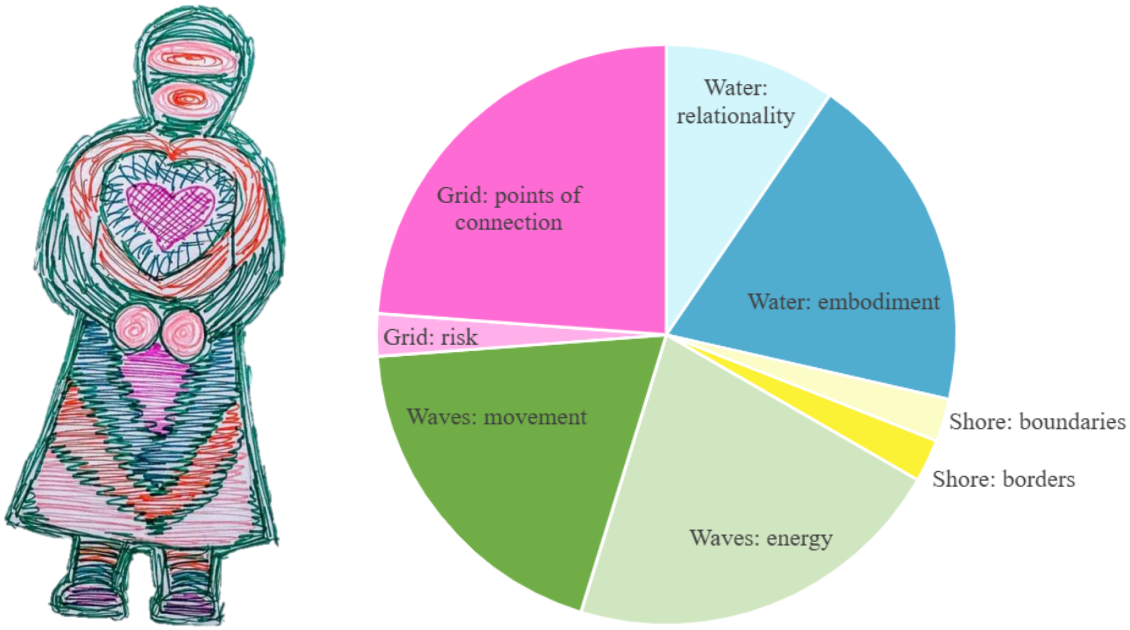
> I had the Cayuga side, so it was nice to hear Mohawk and I've been learning the language as well … for my students at schools because there's Mohawk language being taught in our schools here and not Cayuga. So that's where the relearning comes in. For the last couple of years, that's what I've been doing is relearning the culture. I kind of took a huge step back when I was younger, so getting back to my roots.

Allison's first language is English, which dominates much of her language portrait (Figure 27). She said that when she was young, she was not given the choice to attend 50% or full Cayuga immersion schooling. She said, "I wish that I could understand more in the language when I had those years that I could have learned that, but that's not something I can fix now, and I can just go back and start to relearn the language now, which is what I'm doing. And I'm going to be helping to teach my children both Cayuga and Mohawk because those are the languages that I'm learning." Allison drew her language portrait to resemble a ribbon skirt. Referring to the portrait in the third person, Allison said, "she carries all the languages throughout her body instead of coming from one

specific space." She included love and art in her linguistic repertoire. Love is the language she speaks the most. "Same with art," she said, "I carry that in my everyday life as well because I teach culture through art to my students in the elementary school."

Figure 27

Allison's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas Analysis, Allison's predominant element was Waves. Water was the second largest, closely followed by Grid. Shore was the least observable (Figure 27). The energy property of Waves showed up in many forms. Passing the Haudenosaunee language learning on to her children is a transfer of energy. About the hydro towers on the beach, she said, "the angles are beautiful" even though she did not feel good about what they stand for. This is a metaphysical and spiritual energetic stance (finding beauty) about structures that support the transmission of energy (hydroelectric power). She also spoke explicitly about wind, which also relates to energy and movement, the two properties of Waves:

> The wind yeah, and I feel like it's been coming to me a lot lately, too, so it was really special for me when it was happening that day. Because there was a lot of the relearning happening, and then that's where I think that my healing came in because we were near the water, and I was hoping for it to be calm and warm because that was the first little bit of warmth that we did get. And then the big gusts of wind started coming along, and I feel like learning the Ganǫ́hǫnyǫh [Thanksgiving Address in Cayuga language] this year, that's what keeps coming up for me is the Four Winds and then I noticed that it keeps popping up everywhere I go and like even today it keeps coming in. So I think there's something there that I still haven't figured out, but I think it's there. Significant.

Table 13 provides additional key quotes for Allison's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.6).

Jasmine

Jasmine has mixed ancestry, and her national identity is Canadian and Mohawk. She is a domestic student. When she thought about International Beach Day, the phrase that popped into her mind was Thanksgiving Address. She explained, “it was something I had already been exposed to in my learning journey and wanting to practice more, so it was very pleasant surprise that that ended up being the focus of the language lesson.”

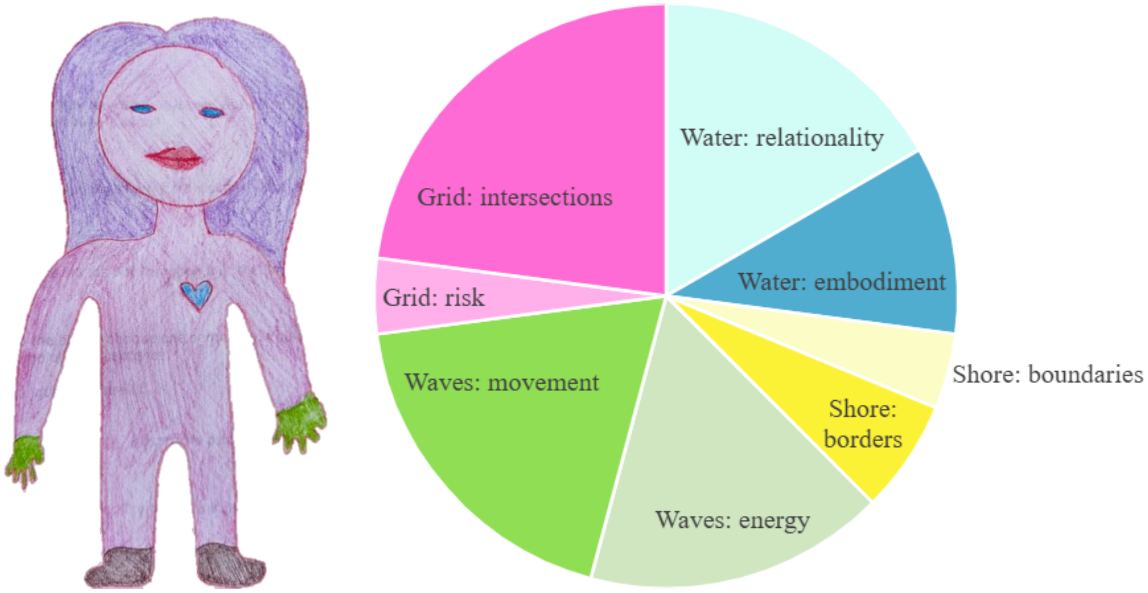
Jasmine has a background in languages. English is her first language, but she started learning French in kindergarten and “became a French teacher for a little bit.” She said, “French expresses my thoughts more accurately than English does sometimes,” and learning French “opened her eyes to linguistics, and … meta-linguistics and the ideas of language outside of just its form of communication.” She is deliberately learning Mohawk, her ancestral language. She associates Mohawk with spirituality, “which is why,” she said, “I had been trying to learn the

Thanksgiving Address and stuff like that." In her language portrait (Figure 28), she applied Mohawk to her hair, which she also associates with spirituality, "in line with a lot of Indigenous teachings." Jasmine's linguistic repertoire includes American Sign Language (ASL) and Italian, both of which are familial languages. Although Anishinaabemowin is not an ancestral language for her, it is also part of her linguistic repertoire as she's "picked up bits and pieces throughout … various cultural endeavors." She explained that Anishinaabemowin is commonly spoken in the urban Indigenous spaces she frequents and in much of what she reads. She coloured Anishinaabemowin in her feet because, as she explained:

> whenever I hear it, I'm always doing something that's very grounding for me, like whether it is at that cultural centre, or like it reading, or engaging with my colleagues at work who are speaking that language, like we do a lot of ceremony at work … I just really associate it as like a grounding ceremonial language.

Figure 28

Jasmine's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



Regarding the Cross Seas Analysis, Jasmine's predominant element was Waves (Figure 28). Water and Grid were equally present, and Shore was the least observable. The movement property of Waves presented in terms of physical movement and experiential shifts. Physically interacting with relations at the beach supported learning. Jasmine explained:

> I think back to what it was that we learned and how ... the parts of the Thanksgiving Address that we learned were chosen based on what flora and fauna and our nature was around us. And so I felt like that made it relevant. Like I could look around and see the birds that we were saying that we were thankful for. Same with when we learned the water song at the end. I felt like It was really nice that we, like, actually went up and were close to the water for that part … It just made those learnings … stick in my brain a lot more, like it wasn't some … fleeting … grammar lesson like I've done a million times and forget it one month later, like I feel like it was … nice that it was made more significant in that way.

She said the event "affirmed" how she feels about language learning. "There needs to be a lot more Land-based learning experiences that are more culturally relevant, especially for Indigenous language learning." Table 14 provides additional key quotes for Jasmine's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.7).

Marc

Marc's national identity is Metis. He is not a student. The first word that popped into Marc's mind when he thought about International Beach Day was peace. He explained, "it was something I needed at the time, and I was looking forward to it. And I have always been at peace with the water. It's always given me fulfillment, and … it didn't let me down that day."

Marc's linguistic repertoire includes English, Mohawk, Ojibway, Flemish, French, and Sign.

On his language portrait, Marc put each language around his heart because they are all important to him (Figure 29). Relationships are a significant motivation for Marc to learn languages. On the pre-event survey, Marc said that his dream language learning would happen during a "passionate love affair while visiting a new country." He was interested in sign language because he dated someone who was studying sign language in college.

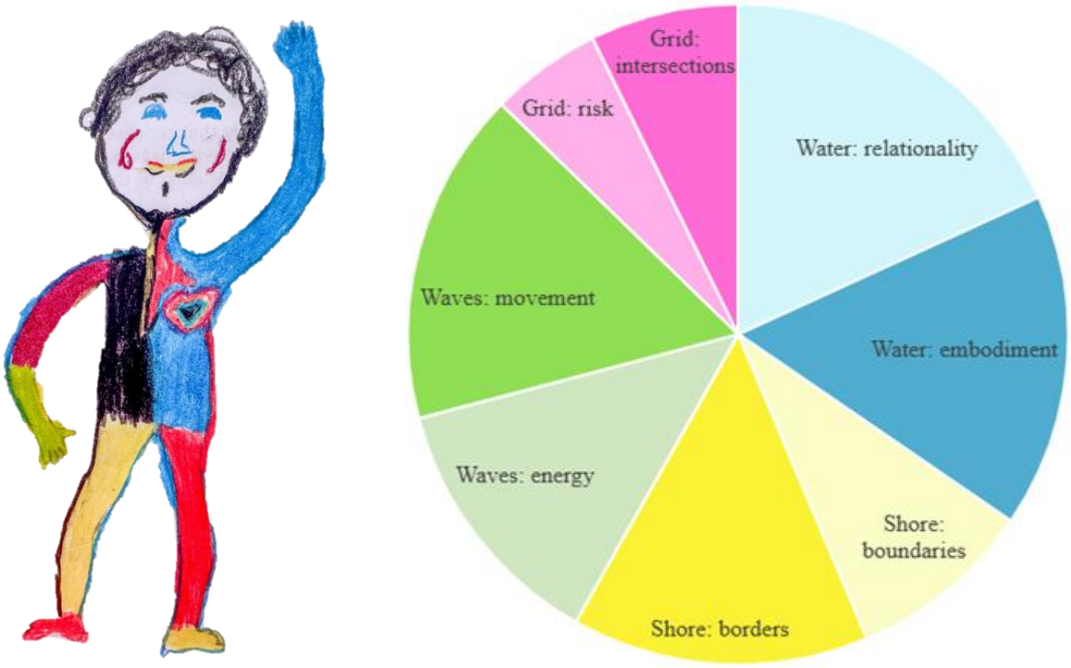
He also appreciates online language translation for maintaining relationships across languages. He said:

> The Google setup where you can just hit the language ... and it will interpret ... I speak to a former girlfriend's mom a lot, and she's Croatian, and she always sends me everything in Croatian … Yeah, so I find that pretty useful … And I always send her answers in Croatian. Yeah it's just something we do.

Relationships also affected what Marc included in his linguistic repertoire. The ancestral languages on his mother's side are Ojibway, French, and Irish, but he did not include Irish in his repertoire "because of turmoil on that side of the family." Marc has a desire to learn more about Indigenous languages; he said, "I'm always interested in learning about my heritage."

Figure 29

Marc's Language Portrait and Cross Seas Analysis Chart



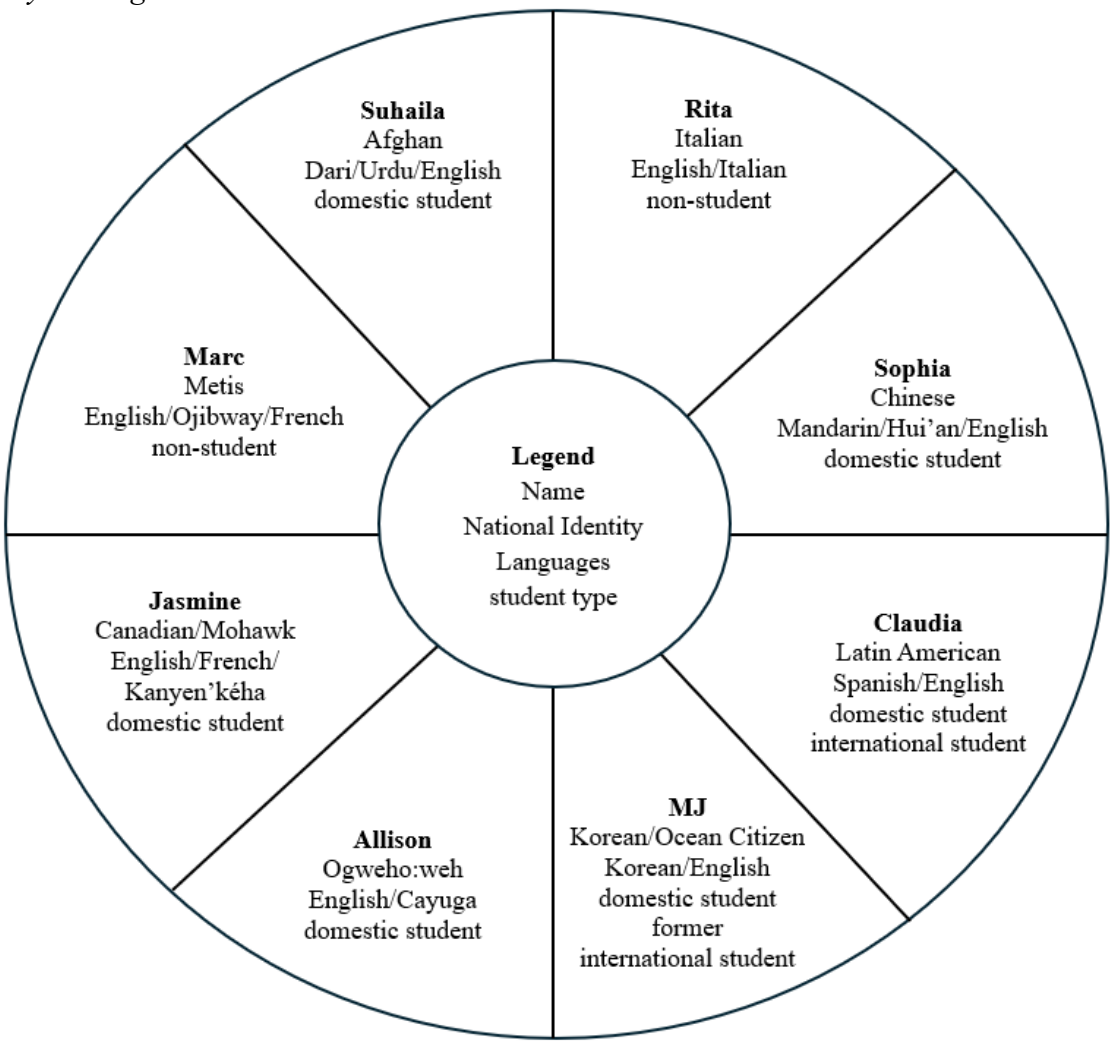
Regarding the Cross Seas Analysis, Marc's predominant elements were Water and Waves, followed by Grid and Shore (Figure 29). Marc is a sailor and has had many water-based learning experiences in his life. He said that there are some "things you can only learn on a boat, really." The relationality and embodiment properties of Water were both significant for Marc. The water and the beach reminded him "to be patient, and to stop and smell the roses, so to speak." Prior to International Beach Day, he hadn't been to the water in a while, and the experiences of that day inspired him to visit nature more often again. He said, "last week … we're going down to the dock ... and I just ran and jumped in fully clothed, you know, because the water was speaking to me." Table 15 provides additional key quotes for Marc's Cross Seas properties (Appendix C.8).

Everyone Together

Figure 30 provides an at-a-glance summary of the eight focal participants, bringing everyone together in one place. The purpose of this summary is to support you, the reader, with an overview of who the human interlocutors are before you engage with the conversations in the next section. This chart includes each participant's name, their own description of their national identity (not necessarily official citizenship), their main languages (i.e. mother tongue(s) and ancestral languages, regardless of proficiency), and their student type according to information they provided in the survey and interview (not necessarily institutional status).

Figure 30

Everyone Together



Conversational Connections

This section presents points of connection that I noticed between participants during the interviews. Even though the quotes presented in this section occurred in conversation only with me or as individual reflections on participants' linguistic landscape handouts, they came about because of shared experiences at the same event. Noticing and presenting these points of connection as conversations helps maintain a wholistic understanding of the participants' engagement with the facilitators, with the topics, with each other, and with the water and the beach. This conversational form transgresses the notion of themes or thematic analysis by insisting on keeping the quotations within the embodied aspect of conversing.

I format each conversational connection like a script, a form that emphasizes the relational act of conversing. The script format highlights the fact that I, the researcher, am wholly involved in making meaning of these participant gifts as I maneuver them to highlight connections. While I move pieces of conversations together, I do not change the participant's wording, aside from light editing for clarity. I have removed some filler words and strings of words (e.g. um, like) and false starts (e.g. lang language), and I have deleted my own interjections that indicated I was listening (e.g. hmm) or seeking clarification (e.g. can you expand on that). All points of connection are valuable, even if they are present between just two people, not a majority of the group, so these conversational connections vary in length. Applying this script format may appear similar to ethnodrama or verbatim theatre (e.g. Summerskill, 2020), but, transgressing methodological borders, my purpose is not to stage a play. The point of each script is to evoke in the reader the feeling of a conversation that the reader is now a part of. Reading the script becomes a layered embodied engagement between the researcher, the participants, and the reader (refer to Norris &

Sawyer, 2016 for similar reader engagement in duoethnographies). Each script begins with the speakers' names and identity markers as well as a synopsis of the connection and the predominant Cross Seas element and property within the conversation. After each script, I offer commentary that relates it to the International Beach Day as a whole, and I explain how it relates to the following script in sequence.

Participants Discuss Relationships with People

PARTICIPANTS:	SOPHIA, Chinese JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk ALLISON, Ogweho:weh RITA, Italian SUHAILA, Afghan CLAUDIA, Latin American
CONNECTION:	Many participants at International Beach Day either developed new relationships with other participants or deepened existing relationships (Figure 31). In this conversation, SOPHIA comments on the diversity of relationships and that she reconnected with a friend from a previous course she took. JASMINE, ALLISON, and RITA indicate that they were pleased to develop relationships with acquaintances from an organization they are all part of. CLAUDIA says she met someone from her country and reminisced about food. SUHAILA, who loves K-pop and Korean language and culture, says she was happy to meet some from Korea for the first time.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: relationality When the opportunity exists for people to engage wholistically, relationships between people develop or deepen.

Figure 31

People Developing Relationships at International Beach Day



Note. Photographs by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

SOPHIA

Yeah. Not only relationship between people. Also, people with different background, different culture, and different age also. … between female and male.

JASMINE

The connection that I developed with those two people who had sat beside me. It was just such a small world, they work at the cultural center that I attend, so we had like a great time chit chatting about that, and about sort of mutual friends and colleagues, and mutual interests. So that was like another thing that stood out to me as a something interesting that I learned and that was important to me. It was really nice to be able to, like, meet people in that way and just something that was really unexpected for me.

ALLISON

It was cool to see Rita because she was like my face that I recognized. And I was able to actually connect with her on a different level than just being a parent of a student that she's had. … We work together, but we don't know much about each other. She knows my kids … so it was nice to be able to sit and actually get to know her, and talk to her and I know who she is outside of work … I like that that captures our connecting. Since then we've had like conversations at school when I go pick up my daughter.

RITA

It was so great to have that conversation with Allison…. It was just so great. Yeah, yeah, that was a great picture. And we were both laughing, which is funny. (Figure 31)

ALLISON

Also, I gave myself a chance to make a couple of other connections with, I think, two other people that were there. … Another good connection that I got was with Artie [Aríhwaiens Martin] when

we were just geeking out over ghosts ... I've always been interested in all that stuff.

SUHAILA

I felt great. I shared, I remember there was a lady from Korea I think. We spoke together and we share our thoughts. I think, I felt that day, on that particular moment, I felt really happy to share. And to learn, get to know someone's ideas … about the languages and stuff. So it made me really grateful to be there. …I talked about my own language and my most favorite one, Korean. And it was my first time meeting Korean person … in person. So it was a great experience.

CLAUDIA

I make connection there with most of the people that I did that activity … one … from El Salvador, and … we start to talk about pupusas. That is a traditional dish in my country, and we make connection.

SOPHIA

My picture with my friend … my classmate ... After the LINC class we have
long time we didn't met each other, so at the beach day, we met again and we can talk about something else. (Figure 31)

SUHAILA

That day … developed more, I think, friendship as we talked and all shared our experiences. So I think it built up a friendship out of like strangers.

Relationship-focused activities were central to the International Beach Day program. Kanonhweratónhsera acknowledged relationships in all of the natural world; offering tobacco to the water at the beginning of the day respected water as an important relation; creating and sharing our language portraits together provided an avenue for people to learn about each other beyond first impressions; conducting the linguistic landscape activity helped participants attune to the interlocutors of the beach. Even though Kristi and I planned these activities, I was still pleasantly surprised by how many participants made heartfelt comments about the relationships that formed or strengthened during International Beach Day. Several unexpected synchronicities made the day feel special, like Suhaila from Afghanistan who loves Korean language and culture meeting a person from Korea, MJ, for the first time, or Jasmine, Allison, and Rita being excited to get to know each

other on a deeper level even though they had been acquainted through their various roles at an Indigenous cultural centre. Not everyone enjoyed the relationships. One participant indicated that they had felt disrespected by another participant during one of the activities, but in the moment, they chose to ignore the perceived offense and focus on the benefits of the activity. (I share the details of this complaint anonymously because the person who mentioned it did not attend to the issue when it happened, nor did they tell me who they felt was being disrespectful. Given the small group size, if I name the person who felt disrespected, participants might be able to guess who was involved.) This is an important reminder that conflict and negative feelings are a normal part of relationships. In the next conversation, participants move beyond human-to-human relationships and talk about connections with and in nature, which also included positive and negative reactions.

Participants Discuss Relationships with Beings of the Beach

PARTICIPANTS:	SOPHIA, Chinese RITA, Italian CLAUDIA, Latin American SUHAILA, Afghan MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship MARC, Metis
CONNECTION:	SOPHIA explains that nature has an emotional effect on humans. CLAUDIA shares a lesson from ladybugs. SUHAILA talks about what it feels like to talk to water. ALLISON talks about being one with nature. MARC points out that the human participants are enmeshed in nature. (Figure 32)
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: relationality People are in relationship with nature/people are part of nature.

Figure 32

Beings of the Beach



Note. Photographs by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

SOPHIA

And also the relationship: people with nature, with water with the environment …And I think environment is more, have more effect … on people when you learn or when you, maybe when you get out and to watch or enjoy the nature, it can make you calm down and more peaceful. Not only for the study … every time if you feel down, you can go outside. Just to watch the nature. Yeah, you can feel a lot of things.

RITA

For a lot of the day when I was trying to concentrate, I actually found the waves disruptive, disturbing. The background noise was a lot, and it wasn't soothing. Like, everybody says that they find the water and waves calming and soothing, which I think if you're not trying to think, if you're only focusing on the waves. … I found the crashing … overstimulating.

CLAUDIA

When I explore the beach and I found the ladybugs together … that remember me when … I arrived in Canada. If you are alone, you will be a struggle with a lot of thing, but if you start to share your ideas, if you need help, you can find a community. And for this reason, when I saw this bunch of ladybugs together, that remind me of the experience that I have here, learning English, when teachers help me to understand this new word for me. (Figure 32)

SUHAILA

Relationship with water of course. [That day] pulled up, like, a strong relationship with water because I wasn't thinking before this experience … of water as something really big, but then after the email I feel like, oh, this is like something more important. Talking to water is something that I always heard about it but I never tried it, but that day, yeah, I tried that and ... it felt really great. Because water is something that is like always flowing like always goes with the flow. So when we talk or speak out our heart to water we know that it's secure. It won't go like anywhere, so it makes you feel secure.

ALLISON

I was listening to the grass and the water and the wind, and I was surprised … I didn't notice until that very day how much I was really missing it over the winter … I think that was probably the best thing cause that was my first time for this year to just let myself be one and be with the nature and be in the moment. Yeah it was awesome.

MJ

I started noticing more sounds from the bridge after listening to waves all day.

CLAUDIA

I have noticed through this activity that everything is connecting.

MARC

You know, there's us in the background there. …We're enmeshed in nature here. (Figure 32)

CLAUDIA

Ladybugs are saying cooperation. (Figure 32)

Being enmeshed in nature includes talking with water, listening to grass, and noticing what the ladybugs have to say. Being enmeshed in nature also includes allowing nature to affect us even when we do not necessarily like the feeling. Rita was not complaining about the waves. In fact, she described the entire day as "pleasant." She was just explaining that the waves prevented her from concentrating on the activity we were doing, which changed how she engaged at the beach. Instead of focusing on the clipboard papers, she spent more time chatting, deepening relationships with other people. Being enmeshed in nature can also make us more aware of our human ways, like when MJ began to notice the traffic noises that she had tuned out until spending the day at the beach. In the next conversation, MJ and Allison talk about how the events of International Beach Day validated their feelings around their relationships with plants and trees.

Participants Discuss Feeling Validated for Talking to Plants

PARTICIPANTS:	MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	MJ and ALLISON both point out that the word crazy has been/might be used to describe them because they talk to trees and

plants. MJ says she felt reassured and ALLISON notes that her confidence was boosted after participating in our event that welcomed languaging with other beings in nature.

CROSS SEAS ELEMENT: WATER: relationality
Understanding that people and plants can language together is a recognition of the relationship between humans and plants. Feeling validated or judged by other humans is an indication of the importance of human-human relationships.

MJ

It was a reassuring experience. It's not like, you know, I talk to trees and I'm crazy. You know, okay, there are other people thinking the same way, and then water talks to you, the winds talk to you.

ALLISON

I'm known as like the crazy lady in my neighborhood because I talk to my plants all the time, and … I sing to them, and, like, that's just something that I've known my whole entire life.

MJ

And it's up to you to … be able to tune to the messages that those entities say. Probably the interpretation of the messages really rely on the individual, but I'm sure there'll be messages that are commonly recognized as well, when you are closely listening to the languages that the nature speaks.

ALLISON

Seeing that there's other people out there that think the way I do, it helps me to feel a little bit more confident.

MJ

Yeah, it was very reassuring experience.

MJ and Allison come from opposite sides of the earth, but there are similarities in the ancestral knowledges that formed them, particularly regarding relationality. Their experiences of having confidence boosted and feeling reassured points to the importance of centering wholism in education. The focus on relationality supports the idea that people do not have to leave parts of themselves behind, because it is about connection, not fragmentation. These aspects were

reinforced because local Indigenous teachings and language were integral to the entire event. In the next conversation, participants comment that many non-Indigenous people are not aware of local Indigenous language and culture.

Participants Discuss Lack of Knowledge of Indigenous Languages

PARTICIPANTS:	RITA, Italian SUHAILA, Afghan CLAUDIA, Latin-American
CONNECTION:	RITA notices that new immigrants to Canada, like Canadians, do not know about Indigenous people here, which SUHAILA confirms with her personal example. CLAUDIA concludes with the importance of more education about Indigenous languages for international students.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	SHORE: borders The lack of knowledge about Indigenous people, language, and cultures is the result of colonial epistemological bordering.

RITA

I have noticed that most international students or like recent immigrants really don't know anything about Indigenous, but to be honest, most Canadians don't either.

SUHAILA

The Mohawk language one that we all practiced and did, like, in groups, I enjoyed that part a lot. Because it was something new for me. I didn't know ... something like that ever existed. So it was kind of really amazing for me. Like, I had to learn a new things and a new language, and with the meaning as well.

CLAUDIA

If you can do more events related with everything: language, beach, … First Nations language, it will be a great experience for international students as me. Because we focused just in learn English. And it is important to learn about First Nations languages as international students. The language is very rich and powerful. For this reason, if you can do more activities like this, it will be great, because now I can share, 'Oh, I have this experience. It was great. I learned how to say this.' And maybe with that, they will be interested, another friend as well. And we can create, not a big community, but we can create a community that is interested or focused on the same to learn First Nations languages.

For Suhaila and Claudia, learning about Kanyen'kéha and Haudenosaunee culture was inspiring. They understood the importance of the language and teachings, and both asked if Kristi and I could facilitate more events like this. Learning about local Indigenous language and culture can lead to a desire to know more. In the next conversation, participants speak more specifically about the positive aspects of non-Indigenous people learning Indigenous languages.

Participants Discuss Non-Indigenous People Learning Indigenous Language

PARTICIPANTS:	JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	JASMINE and MJ talk about non-Indigenous people learning Indigenous languages. Jasmine compares this to her previous Indigenous language learning which has only included Indigenous people, and MJ explains how it feels from an immigrant perspective to learn an Indigenous language. ALLISON shares her experience teaching non-Indigenous students and mentions the importance of sharing the Indigenous perspective that everyone is connected to nature. The conversation concludes with MJ noticing a difference between learning about Indigenous culture through art versus through language.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	GRID: intersections People of different backgrounds and heritages can connect through respect for local Indigenous language and relationship to nature

JASMINE

It was enlightening to have a language learning experience with so many non-Indigenous people who were there, like, cause they wanted to be. So often my Indigenous language or cultural learning experiences are all Indigenous people and it can feel a little bit, not necessarily closed off, but like you're a part of this, like, niche, or exclusive group.

ALLISON

I have students that are not Indigenous, but they want to be in Mohawk. At first they … joined the Mohawk class because they … think it's easier than French. They see everyone doing crafts and stuff, so we do bead work and whatever, but they quickly realized that it's not all fun and games. But they end up … being the ones that are excelling in the classes, and it's so cool to see like they love the culture, they love the language. … It's really nice to see that and to have

seen that in the adults that were [at International Beach Day] and know that it doesn't just stop in elementary, and if somebody wants to learn it, they can.

MJ

Well, the more I learned about First Nations culture, language, you know, it's like tiny, tiny bit of it, but I felt closer to the Indigenous peoples. And hoping that they will feel that way too.

JASMINE

I found it to be very, like, lovely that … there was such a diverse community of people that wanted to be there … I think it would change, like, the assumptions that I have about what Indigenous language learning looks like, or can look like. … So far all my experiences have been in groups of all Indigenous people, and so it was enlightening to see that was something that, like, so many other people from other heritages would be interested in learning.

MJ

As a settler colonizer — it's difficult to be categorized as a settler or colonizer when you're coming to the country that you have no idea that that's the history — but as you are in, all of sudden you are a colonizer, and trying to have the relationship with Indigenous peoples, it's kind of unsettling feeling. But I guess by learning their culture, if they're willing to accept…the settlers, … I guess there could be more sense of togetherness. And I thought, you know, just by learning the language or their perspectives, their approaches and their relations for the nature, I felt a little bit closer to the Indigenous community even though they have no idea who I am. Just from my perspective.

ALLISON

Yeah, it's all about connection and growth and making those connections and showing other people about it, and I think that's where my dream education comes into … not discriminating against anybody that's not Indigenous and helping them to reconnect with that part of, like, nature and learning and connection as well.

MJ

Because of the personal heritage that I carry, I was always interested in learning the culture and all that and First Indigenous Peoples in Canada. But then learning, it was always through visual language. But the linguistic language, that was a different experience. I never thought to learn that. I can't really pinpoint why that was different experience, but learning, cause you know you've been in the images or paintings that they do, they're projecting, representing their beliefs and knowledge and all that, but why was different for me to learn the language itself? I don't know. I'm not sure about that. But yeah. It felt less distant. I don't know if closer is the right [word] or if that is the same thing.

Jasmine and Allison both showed appreciation for non-Indigenous people learning Kanyen'kéha, which relates to MJ's experience of feeling closer to Indigenous people by learning their language. MJ cannot figure out why learning the language felt more relational than viewing

art. Prioritizing the embodiment of languages in our language activities, something that MJ, Marc, and Claudia talk about in a later conversation, can support feeling more connected. Language learning as a whole-body experience involves active engagement, which facilitates connecting with others and with the knowledge carried in the language. In the next conversation, Allison and Jasmine talk about aspects of Indigenous culture that should not be shared with non-Indigenous people as well as aspects that they think are helpful to share.

Participants Discuss What Should (Not) Be Shared with Non-Indigenous People

PARTICIPANTS:	JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	JASMINE and ALLISON explain that there are varying opinions from Indigenous people and teachers about what should or should not be taught to non-Indigenous people. JASMINE suggests that it would be helpful for people to learn Indigenous phrases so that when they travel to different territories, they can engage with locals respectfully. ALLISON appreciates that there are other Indigenous people like her who want to share aspects of the culture to increase understanding, but she also respects that not everything should be shared.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	SHORE: boundaries Boundaries around teaching Indigenous culture and language vary according to context. Opinions also vary about what the boundaries should be. However, boundaries are necessary as they support integrity and safety. Boundaries are important to consider and respect, especially in communities whose ways of life have been and continue to be negatively affected by colonial harm.

JASMINE

Courses that I've taken or been a part of that are geared towards like Indigenous cultural teaching outside of spaces that are usually all Indigenous, like at the community center, or the cultural center, my experience is usually like not touching on cultural elements like the Thanksgiving Address.

ALLISON

That's the part too that really stood out to me, the Thanksgiving address and learning that. Cause there's a lot of different beliefs on oh… we shouldn't be teaching that or … I've had friends tell me that non-Indigenous people shouldn't learn how to say that, … but then seeing it from a different perspective, too, coming from the public school board where some of my language teachers that I have known won't teach it because they don't know how a parent is gonna see it. …When their child's being taught Thanksgiving Address and say the Creation story or something like that, then, they're, I guess, gonna believe that we're trying to push religion onto them or something, you know, and it's gonna look bad. But that's where we have to… tell people and inform people that it's not religion in that sense where we're like … you have to believe this. It's more about respecting nature, and if you word it in that way, I think it's more understandable.

JASMINE

It would be helpful to have a population willing to learn a handful of [Indigenous] phrases so that they could get by travelling in those territories. I think of Europe a little bit. Like, I know there are many European countries where it's considered very much the norm to know like three, four, five languages, because it'd be more common to travel, like, across borders very often and have to rely on those languages of the country that you're in or the region you're in. And yeah, I think that would be my dream world for that to be the norm.

ALLISON

It's good to see that a bunch of different people have different ways of looking at it and I'm not the only one that is okay with sharing [Indigenous culture] with people because it does bring more understanding into the culture and to see why we do the things that we do, like seed songs. … I teach seed songs. I only do a couple of different ones just because I got the permission from the person that taught me. … There's this one that we just teach like every baby and child learns right away and it's, like, not even anything, it's just sounds. But that's all I do because I know that seed songs are actually, like, you're not supposed to share those, those are supposed to be for you personally and for people that are at Longhouse. … It's a really spiritual thing because you're thanking or talking about you're connection, I guess. And then it's just, I don't know, … that's where that kind of gets hard to separate, so I just do the basic child one even though some people might wanna learn more. … I can only do the ones that I was given to share. Especially cause most of my students are non-Indigenous, and it wouldn't be okay for me to do that.

JASMINE

[International Beach Day] was just a very sharp contrast from my experience where, like people are so afraid to talk about anything cultural or engage with anything cultural. Where, Beach Day, it was like very celebrated, and … for a lot of people was completely new to them, they were like super interested and inspired, and … I just felt very different, like, from my other experiences in that realm where there's a lot of hesitation or fear or like politics, and this … was an example of, like, what this could have looked like instead … It felt very inspiring.

Allison and Jasmine point to the tension caused by colonial harms that complicates sharing

Indigenous language and culture with non-Indigenous people. While Allison and Jasmine both comment on people's hesitancy to teach Indigenous culture because it might be received negatively or is too sacred to share beyond the boundaries of the community, they are happy to know that non-Indigenous people want to learn. They both offer examples of how parts of the language and culture can be shared respectfully to benefit relationships between peoples and with nature. In the next conversation, participants talk about getting to know each other by learning about their differences.

Participants Discuss Unifying Through Difference

PARTICIPANTS:	SUHAILA, Afghan RITA, Italian SOPHIA, Chinese
CONNECTION:	SUHAILA highlights the unity that exists when people come together to share their different experiences. SOPHIA and RITA notice that talking about each person's languages, no matter how different their linguistic repertoires were, helped people get to know each other and identify similarities.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	GRID: intersections Focusing on plurilingual identities facilitates noticing points of connection.

SUHAILA

We all are from different communities, from different countries all around the world, so it is kind of a reunion of people from different types of community, sitting together and sharing about their own experiences and ideas.

SOPHIA

When we talk about the self portrait with different color, we learn and we can see we are all different background.

RITA

So I did enjoy, I guess, learning from [English as a second language people] and how the similarities as well in our drawings with our pictures, of how language affects those. A lot of similarities, and yeah, so our approaches were similar even though our backgrounds were different.

SOPHIA

We know each other by the self portrait.

SUHAILA

So I would say union.

The linguistic and cultural diversity of the participants was vast, yet talking about their linguistic repertoire supported connection. Recognizing that everyone's linguistic identity represents a plurality of experience is the opposite of relying on first impressions and stereotypes and allows for a more wholistic understanding. In the next conversation, participants talk about another commonality, the ubiquity of English.

Participants Discuss English Everywhere

PARTICIPANTS:	MARC, Metis RITA, Italian ALLISON, Ogweho:weh SOPHIA, Chinese JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk SUHAILA, Afghan
CONNECTION:	This discussion is about how people relate to English. Participants share these points while talking about their language portraits. MARC indicates that English surrounds his body because he is Canadian. RITA, SOPHIA, and JASMINE point out that English is everywhere. JASMINE, SOPHIA, and SUHAILA note that English is a Lingua Franca. ALLISON expresses sadness that she did not have a choice but to attend an English medium school, and SUHAILA remarks that not knowing English is detrimental here.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	SHORE: borders Despite the diversity and multitude of languages in each person's linguistic repertoire, English hegemony is noticeable in many people's language portraits as well as in their attitudes toward language.

MARC

I surrounded the whole, well almost the whole perimeter my body with the blue because I'm first and foremost Canadian. English.

RITA

So English is everywhere [on my portrait] cause that's my language.

SOPHIA

English around all our bodies because we are living in the English environment. So we use English every day and the English around us.

JASMINE

English I put everywhere else because to me that's what English is, like it's just everywhere. It's like lingua franca, it can be easily relied on. I don't have to think about it too much, so it's not something that is like a particular focus anywhere on my body or particularly symbolic for me, it's just everywhere, and yeah, always there.

SOPHIA

So we have different first language, but when we use the same language such as English, we can communicate more easily and get more connections with different people.

SUHAILA

I think the best communication... language across the world would be … if we see it from like language speaking, it would be English of course for everyone. That is … the most common one I would say.

ALLISON

Most of it's green for English, but that's bittersweet though because I don't have a choice and how that turned out … It had me thinking … about how my mom got me registered in the school on the reserve, and she had a choice to put me in like English, 50/50, or full [Cayuga] immersion for schooling, and she chose English. I asked her why, and she said because she wanted me to still have the language, but to be able to continue my education further than being on reserve if that's what I wanted.

SUHAILA

If we don't know English, we can't make a future here. If we know English, we can build up, we can stand up, we can use our hand to do something.

JASMINE

In Canada, well, most of Canada, people will rely very heavily on English, and even increasingly internationally as well. It's just assumed, like in tourist areas, that you could speak English there.

MJ

[What does this say about this space?]
Canada. This place belongs to Canada.

The dominance of English in our context and in the world was noticeable in how several participants coloured English around the perimeter of their bodies in the language portrait. How participants feel about English hegemony varies along a spectrum of pride ("I am first and foremost Canadian. English.") to neutrality ("English is everywhere") to sadness ("I don't have a choice in how that turned out"). The utility of English as a lingua franca is noted in how it can facilitate communication, but also in how not knowing English can prevent people from making a future in Canada. Even though some participants may not like or want English hegemony, it is not actively contested. In the next conversation, participants talk about how painful it can be to learn English in Canada.

Participants Discuss the Difficulties of Learning English

PARTICIPANTS:	MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship CLAUDIA, Latin-American
CONNECTION:	MJ and CLAUDIA describe the challenges and negative emotions that accompany learning/speaking English in Canada.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: embodiment Feeling pain and feeling stupid are emotions, feelings within the body.

MJ

You know I came here as a student, international student ... being faced with the challenges of not being able to communicate or making constant errors, and, you know, just feeling stupid, that kind of experience.

CLAUDIA

When I started drawing English [on the language portrait], that reminds me how hard was learn English, and how difficult was communicate with that, with other English speakers because, as I say, I learned from zero … But here it was essential to communicate your ideas clear, concise in English. For this reason, well it was a painful to learn. I don't know if it's correct to say that, but was painful for me. Because sometimes I mix the words, and I don't say correctly. But I try to communicate. Sometimes people was, okay, I understand. No, I don't understand you. It was painful for me. But, a lot of people, as I said before, help me to understand better how can they

say word in English and for this reason, now I feel that I understand better.

MJ

Within the language school itself, it was okay, cause nobody spoke perfect English. But then when you're kind of placed into a bigger world, right, when you go to school, and you're mixed with the native language speakers … it was very hard … I remember coming home after my classes and kind of cry, and I guess, I don't know why I'm getting emotional now, but yeah, it was not easy.

CLAUDIA

However, with English, I can communicate with, other cultures. ... For example, I can speak with someone that is from Chinese or Iran. And I don't know any word in Arabic, but with my classmate we can communicate in English. For this reason, even when it was painful to learn, it was really helpful for communicate with my classmates. And we have each other because we was struggling with some words in English.

The pain of learning English is not because English itself is difficult to learn, but because of the social context, especially outside of the language classroom. In the language classroom, students can communicate and bond because the classroom is understood as a space for learning. Outside of the classroom, there is less tolerance from dominant language speakers for communicating with someone with whom they may have to put in more effort to understand. It is interesting that Claudia points to the utility of English as a lingua franca, like participants in the previous conversation. The utility works in supportive spaces where other people understand the pain of learning English. In the next conversation, participants talk about shifting their understanding of what constitutes a language and knowing a language.

Participants Discuss Thinking Differently About Language

PARTICIPANTS:	JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	JASMINE considers what it means to know a language while MJ considers the definition of a language. They describe the process of deciding whether or not to include certain languages in their portrait. ALLISON interjects that creating the language portrait helped her to notice the importance of languages and the feeling of

	where they reside within her. They all conclude with their positive assessment of the experience.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WAVES: movement Thinking differently about what counts as a language, what it means to know a language, and the embodiment of language is a paradigmatic shift away from institutional norms that focus on proficiency and assessment of disembodied forms of language.

Figure 33

Jasmine Sharing Her Language Portrait



Note. Photograph by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

JASMINE

I don't know what defines, like, knowing a language.

MJ

One of the things that I found very interesting was that I included a body language [on the language portrait] because ... from the way that I interact with others, you know, I'm always first one to find out who's in love with who, if there's a group of people, cause I guess I'm very observant. And I knew about it, but then to consider it as language? I mean, we do use expression *body language*, but you know, when it comes to talk about the language, you know, First Nations language and things like that, the linguistic languages, I didn't think about it until I went through the process … to put it on this portrait. And at first I was like, should I put this in? You know, it's not really a language, but yeah, it is language. So expanding that view on … what's considered a language.

JASMINE

I never, despite my background in languages, never would have thought to place the languages that I'm acquainted with anywhere on my body in that way. And I enjoyed being creative, like, I was happy to be able to … think outside the box in that sense and do something different.

ALLISON

It helped me to recognize where I place importance, and where … those different languages come from within me. I didn't look at it like that before, but I feel like I see it in a different light because I did have the task of drawing it in front of me and having to illustrate where exactly I feel them coming from.

JASMINE

I remember … challenging myself to think about the languages that I know … I remember having a difficult time distinguishing what languages to add or not to add. Cause I know you had mentioned, like, different understandings of fluency and not being, like, afraid to put something even if you only know one or two words … I ended up choosing ones that were just in any way meaningful to me. Cause, like, I could say aloha or whatever, but I don't think that I would have been able to put Hawaiian anywhere on my body …it's not representative of any part of me. Yeah, so I think that was an interesting challenge.

MJ

I'm thinking about the relationships between man-made constructions and the natural elements. What would be water, winds, birds, and other natural elements talking to us and each other. …I didn't think about the ship horn as a language, but it is.

ALLISON

That was cool. I liked it.

JASMINE

I think intrigued. Like, I thought, oh, this is really interesting.

MJ

That was very interesting, I thought.

The language portrait activity prompted participants to analyze subconscious notions they held about language and helped them to identify which languages were important to them in ways they had not considered before. In some cases, this meant redefining language. MJ was already aware of her heightened proficiency with body language but placing it in the same realm as spoken languages highlighted for her its importance within her linguistic repertoire. It was noteworthy that

Jasmine questioned what constitutes knowing a language, especially since she has been a language teacher, a profession that often focuses on benchmarks and other methods for assessing a person's knowledge of a language. For Allison, who defined art as a language, the artistic act of drawing the languages on her self-portrait helped her to notice the embodiment of languages as well as identify the importance she applied to them. Later in the day when we conducted the linguistic landscape noticing of the beach, MJ's definition of language expanded even more as she began to think about the relationality between all beings, including things constructed by humans like boats, relating the boat horn to language. In the next conversation, participants talk about the pride they felt about their linguistic repertoire.

Participants Discuss Pride for Their Linguistic Repertoire

PARTICIPANTS:	MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	MJ and ALLISON describe feeling proud of their linguistic repertoire.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: embodiment Pride is an emotion, a feeling within a body.

MJ

Yeah, excited about, you know, Oh yeah, I know this [language]. I can say that I know this. This is my language list.

ALLISON

Yeah, I mean like it was a sense of pride for all of it.

Both Allison and MJ have experienced sadness related to language learning – Allison

because she did not learn her mother tongue[20] when she was young and has to work on learning it now, and MJ because of the negative experiences she was subjected to by dominant language speakers when she was learning English. The materiality of the language portraits helps externalize the fullness of the linguistic repertoire, making it easier to comprehend its expansive nature. With these participants, the effect was viewing their language abilities in a positive way, rather than from a deficit perspective, as in MJ's case, or even when there is a sense of loss for what could have been, as in Allison's case. In the next conversation, participants talk about physical aspects related to learning Kanyen'kéha.

Participants Discuss the Embodiment of Learning Kanyen'kéha

PARTICIPANTS:	MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship MARC, Metis CLAUDIA, Latin-American
CONNECTION:	MJ comments on how people were physically interacting to help each other learn Kanyen'kéha vocabulary. CLAUDIA and MARC notice the physical feeling of articulating Kanyen'kéha words. MJ remembers dancing to help learn the word. They share their positive assessment of this experience.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: embodiment Languaging is a physical act.

[20] McIvor (2020) explains that, for Indigenous language reclamation, mother tongue refers to the ancestral language with which Indigenous people often "have a spiritual connection … that not only has to do with their ancestors but also with the ground beath them … Mother Earth" (p. 85).

Figure 34

Embodying Learning Kanyen'kéha





Note. Photographs by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

MJ

Despite the temperature changes and then the wind and the bugs and all that, the people were very engaged, right? So we were just pointing at the water, whatever we were talking about. So yeah, it's just interactions and you know, having good memories.… I think we were learning about thanks to the water. … Yeah, just helping each other out, remembering the word.

MARC

It was fun to try to, you know, enunciate, and I wish I could take it in more. But it was really fun. And I thought Kristi was awesome. She worked with us pretty well. She was very patient.

CLAUDIA

It was incredible how my mouth moved when I learned this word. It was totally different from Spanish or English. And the sounds that I did, it was so powerful. For this reason, for me, it was a really great experience.

MJ

We were dancing to the word!

MARC

It was cool. It was really cool.

CLAUDIA

Now that I am aware of some words of Indigenous people. When I hear, for example, she:kon, hello in the First Language, I understand, and that reminds me the International Beach Day, and I feel chills because I know that word. I understand what that word means, and for me it was a really great experience.

Being at the beach, as opposed to being in a classroom, required a different type of physical interaction between people and between people and other beings of the beach. This interaction was relational, one shift in movement affecting another. The loud sound of the waves encouraged Kristi to move closer to the participants as she was teaching pronunciation so that they could hear her better, which also helped people to visually see how Kristi's mouth moved, and for her to notice their articulation. As we were helping each other practice how to say the water word that Kristi had just taught us ─ kahnekarónnyon ─ we noticed the rhythm of the word and the music of the waves, and we started dancing as we articulated the word, which had the added benefit of keeping us warm. In the next conversation, Rita and Allison talk about the hydro towers, another kind of energetic movement.

Participants Discuss Hydro Towers

PARTICIPANTS:	RITA, Italian ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
CONNECTION:	ALLISON and RITA discuss the juxtaposition of the hydro towers and the beach (Figure 35). Rita finds it sad, and Allison has mixed feelings.
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WAVES: energy and movement Metaphysical energy appears in the form of honouring water and finding beauty in human intervention in nature. Hydro towers support power lines that transmit energy which has been harnessed from water. Physical energy moves from the water source to the electric grid. Metaphysical energy moves within the people as their emotions shift from honouring to sadness and between like and dislike.

Figure 35

Hydro Towers at the Beach



Note. Photographs by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

RITA
Actually that one made me sad. The power line above us. It's just … like encroaching on the nature... We're there, we're trying to focus on the water, and we're honoring the water, but the power lines are right above us. That made me sad. It instantly hurt my heart. (Figure 35)

ALLISON
The world now, and then the part of nature that is shown in the picture, to me it's what it used to be. Like the beach and everything. And then you have … the invasion of the hydro towers being there. And it's kind of like both worlds being combined. And in a way, I don't like it, but I do at the same time. Like it's a conflicting picture for me, but I like it.

RITA
The power line seems so much more - powerful? I don't know how to say. You know what I mean? Like it's overtaking the beauty of the water.

ALLISON
But that's also the part that I do like. Cause … the angles are beautiful, the way they look, and the way … it lines up. But what they are and what they stand for isn't what makes me feel good … Learning to accept it.

One of the reasons I chose this beach location was because of the juxtaposition between the natural environment and human-constructed objects like the hydro towers, the highway, and the bridges. These hydro towers transmit energy harnessed from water (IESO, 2022). The beauty

Allison notices in the angles of the hydro towers can also be found in the human ingenuity that works with other natural beings to support relational activities like power devices that facilitate communication across long distances, for example. The sadness both participants feel reflects the way this ingenuity turns to greed, with humans taking more than they need. Rather than honouring the relationship with water, humans "encroach" and "invade" nature, causing harm to the environment, including the water source that makes it all possible. In the next conversation, participants talk about staying grounded.

Participants Discuss Culture Keeping You Grounded

PARTICIPANTS:	MARC, Metis JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk RITA, Italian
CONNECTION:	Three participants discuss how culture keeps you grounded. They relate the feeling of being grounded to feet. (Figure 36)
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	WATER: Embodiment The feeling of being grounded keeps people physically present and helps to stay connected to Land.

Figure 36

Kristi's Moccasins



Note. Photographs by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

MARC

It's like you're grounded, you know? And I mean, that's an obvious statement, but the fact that [Kristi] wore her moccasins … it's … fitting … for the day that we had. That's the Indigenous community. They always seem to have that knowledge with them. It's just second nature to bring the things as makes you grounded. And that's just proof of it right there. You know? Like, where was I the other day? Oh, when I was at the lodge and we were having our ceremonial fire, and I took my shoes and socks off at the fire just to ground myself. You know. And that's what that says to me.

JASMINE

I didn't wear shoes the whole time because we were in the sand, and I remember the feeling of my feet in the sand and really enjoyed that and found the whole experience to be grounding.

RITA

I heard someone else say that their native language was in their feet, like that's where they put it, and I'm like, oh my God, because that keeps you grounded! … Italian is my base, that's like my home. That's what you see grounded is my culture.

JASMINE

One thing that we've talked about in a class that I took last year was, like, the concept of Land as first teacher, and the Land as like its own spirit that is always there to remind us of certain lessons and teachings. And I feel like the Beach Day was an example of that. It represented an example of, like, learning in time and space on the Land, … that can be very culturally grounding.

Feeling grounded relates to the feeling of stability. It is not surprising, then, that participants connect this feeling to feet, the appendages that, for many of us, often make physical contact with the land that supports us. Relating this conversation to the previous one, grounding also refers to the method of preventing electric shock, stemming from a practice of running excess electric current into the earth to dissipate. Connecting to land offers stability in many ways. In the next conversation, participants talk about being open, something that is easier to do when feeling grounded.

Participants Discuss Being Open

PARTICIPANTS:	MJ, Korean and ocean citizenship JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk CLAUDIA, Latin American

ALLISON, Ogweho:weh
RITA, Italian
SOPHIA, Chinese
MARC, Metis

CONNECTION: MJ begins by noticing the openness of the International Beach Day location, of nature, and of the participants. JASMINE also indicates that everyone was open and friendly. CLAUDIA, ALLISON, and RITA speak about individuals being open to learning, sharing, and conversing. SOPHIA explains that nature opens people up, and MARC concludes by explaining that open water is good.

CROSS SEAS ELEMENT: WAVES: energy
Being open is an energetic stance.

MJ

The view was very wide open space, and I think you have to be open minded to learn a completely new culture, language, and … the perspectives that are embedded in the language, and … the choice of teaching materials and all that stuff… you know, we were talking about water, nature and all that, but yeah that was just wide open and people were just, yeah, very friendly and, you know, willing to do whatever they were asked to do.

JASMINE

Everybody was really friendly, and, like, interested in one another and it was nice to be able to forge connections with people in that way … everybody was there with a very open spirit.

CLAUDIA

I opened my heart to understand and I would like to learn more about that language.

ALLISON

It was nice to see that [Artie] was so open to sharing what he had learned because he was good with language and stories too, and it was cool to hear, like, … there were a bunch of different ways that people told creation story, and it was cool to be able to just sit there and talk ... I really liked it.

RITA

I wasn't stressed during that day. I think I was open to all the conversations that were happening. The setting was lovely on the beach. Was really nice to be there and spend the day in nature and by the water.

SOPHIA

We learn with the nature. We feel the wind, the water, the beach. It's, open. It's open your mind and also cheer you up.

MARC

You know, like it, you see the water. No land behind it. … I think that's a good thing. It's like the open water, and what you're leaving behind to go into the open water.

This conversation points to the effect of the environment on participants' ability and willingness to learn. The openness of the beach, not constrained by institutional walls, supports the opening of the mind, readying oneself for learning. Being near the water is a reminder of what is needed for life, and therefore for learning. As Marc points out, everything else can be left behind. In the next conversation, participants talk about the water song.

Participants Discuss the Water Song

PARTICIPANTS:	ALLISON, Ogweho:weh JASMINE, Canadian and Mohawk RITA, Italian MARC, Metis
CONNECTION:	ALLISON, JASMINE, and RITA discuss being pleasantly surprised that Kristi chose the Water Song because they were already familiar with it. ALLISON and JASMINE say that they appreciated the way Kristi taught it, and they comment on how being by the water supported learning it. RITA says that songs help her learn language. MARC concludes by commenting on the beauty of being by the water and singing this Indigenous song together. (Figure 37)
CROSS SEAS ELEMENT:	GRID: intersections Many points of connection exist in this moment: people connecting through music; three people being pleasantly surprised to learn more about the Water Song; music connecting people to water; water supporting language learning; music supporting language learning.

Figure 37

Kristi Teaching the Water Song at the End of International Beach Day



Note. Photograph by Aríhwaiens Martin, Mohawk Bear from Six Nations

ALLISON

The water song. I've said for months … I want to learn water song, and I wanted to learn it in a way that I'd be comfortable to sing it because I know it to like hear it and sing along with it, but I wanted to kind of like just learn how to do it on my own. And the way she taught us helped me a lot. Not enough for me to be able to sing it on my own yet, but I'm practicing and I sing it with my daughter, and I think I'm just trying to work my way up to be able to sing it in front of my students and teach them that song. We have a talent show coming up at one of my schools and my students wanted me to join them, so we might do the water song, but I'm still kind of debating, but that played a big role. With the waves being as noisy as they were, it was it was still so so nice and so fitting to have that happening, and learning that song that I've been dying to learn for the longest time.

JASMINE

That was also a standout moment for me. At that cultural center that I was referencing, I sometimes attend the drum circle there, and the water song that Kristi sang is like on our set list … so I was a little bit familiar with it, but it had never been translated to me and I didn't realize that there was so much, like, meaning behind it. So I really, really enjoyed the way Kristi broke that down and kind of getting to apply some of the learning, and like make the connection between something that I had already been practicing and then something that was new and that I was learning … it was great. It all felt very, like, serendipitous because there were so many parts of it ... that were already top of mind for me that were very pleasant surprises or, like, connections that we're so unexpected.

RITA

I do find if it's in a song it sinks in much better. If I hear the song with the words, so, [singing] *Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka*, I already knew that song because my friend sings that song. She sings it on stage and I've recorded it, have it on my phone, and I play it at work with our kids and the kids love it so we all pull up the drums and shake, and I can sing the song in Mohawk most of it. It was funny that that was a song, like, Kristi chose to do for the day because it's like one of the few songs I know. Music really helps me learn the language.

JASMINE

It was really nice that we like actually went up and were close to the water for that part … It just made those learnings … stick in my brain a lot more, like it wasn't some … fleeting … grammar lesson like I've done a million times and forget it one month later, like I feel like it was … nice that it was made more significant in that way.

MARC

I just remember us all banding together and trying to sing Indigenous song, and with the water in the background, it's just very beautiful. And the kindness that yous guys portrayed to us was really cool. And the fact that you thought about doing something like this was pretty neat. And letting me be a part of it.

Singing the Water Song by the Akwasasne Women Singers to the water was a beautiful and moving way to bring everyone back to the water (refer to Appendix B.2.e for the lyrics). For Allison and Jasmine, it was further connection to important cultural aspects of their lives. For Jasmine and Rita, it was a way to reinforce language learning. For Marc, it was a feeling of togtherness as everyone sang along:

Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka (we love water)

Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka (we love water)

Kahnekarónnyon mmmmm (all types of water)

Kahnekanó:ron mmmm (water is precious)

Transgressing Findings Summary

The participant introductions and Cross Seas descriptions coupled with the conversational connections provide a glimpse of who the participants were, the gifts they offered, and the

connections I noticed from these gifts. This glimpse is meant to evoke an embodied sensation as the reader develops a feeling for the International Beach Day. Presenting the participants' quotes as conversations supported a wholistic understanding of the participants' engagement with the facilitators, with the topics, with each other, and with the water and the beach. This form transgresses the more conventional presentation of themes by maintaining the embodied act of conversing. The conversational connections covered several topics: relationships with people and nature; teaching and learning Indigenous culture and language; diversity; the ubiquity of English; emotional and physical feelings about learning and knowing language; and being grounded and open. These points of connection are indicative of the learning and sharing that happened among this diverse group during International Beach Day. In the following chapter, I extend these findings and conversations by continuing to think with water about relationality, boundaries, and movement.

6. Discussion: Continuing to Think with Water

In this chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to three properties of the Cross Seas Analysis Model: 1) relationality, a property of Water; 2) boundaries, a property of Shore; and 3) movement, a property of Waves. Each subsection begins with a description of the property as it appears in the cross seas video to support thinking about the findings in relation to water and the theoretical framework. In this section, I discuss relationships between humans and relationships between humans and other beings; boundaries for linguistic agency and for Indigenous language learning; and movement of thought and obstruction of movement. I conclude the discussion by noticing what happens between the points of connection in inter*nation*al education.

Relationality

Thinking with water can support an understanding of relationality. Returning to the cross seas video (Figure 17 in chapter 4), it is easy to notice that the different elements ─ water, waves, shore, and grid ─ are all connected by water. Relationality is a water teaching: "Water is the network that facilitates communication and relationship between all forms of life" (Simpson, 2025b, p. 50). It is not surprising that so many of the Conversational Connections focus on relationships. A general understanding of Indigenous relationality "takes at its starting point to be the multiplicity of relationships that humans have with each other and the natural world" (Wildcat & Voth, 2023, p. 476). Kanonhweratónhsera is one way that the Haudenosaunee teach relationality, and this teaching was integral to International Beach Day.

All eight focal participants spoke about relationships. In a literature review of Indigenous Land-based learning (which includes water-based learning as noted in chapter 3) on Turtle Island, Andrea Bowra and colleagues (2021) indicate that relationships "are a common focal point of land-

based learning" (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 136). International Beach Day participants highlighted relationships between people as well as relationships between people and other beings of the beach. As discussed in the following two sections, the relationships that developed between humans and between humans and other beings of the beach did not transgress all colonial borders, but they do indicate the anti-colonial potential for wholistic education like International Beach Day.

Relationships between People

Several participants spoke about human-human relationships that developed during International Beach Day, either deepening pre-existing relationships or forming new ones through shared interests. Sophia was excited to reconnect with a former classmate from her English language class; Jasmine, Allison, and Rita were pleased to have the opportunity to get to know each other better, having been acquainted through an Indigenous cultural/educational centre; Suhaila, whose favourite language is Korean, was thrilled to meet MJ who is from Korea; and Claudia enjoyed meeting another person from El Salvador, connecting over a shared love for national cuisine. MJ talked about how learning Kanyen'kéha was an important aspect toward her feeling "closer" to Indigenous people, something that she had not felt from other modes of engaging with Indigenous culture. Jasmine found it lovely and hopeful that so many non-Indigenous people, particularly newcomers to Canada, were interested in learning about Indigenous language and culture.

The relationship from International Beach Day that I am most struck by is the affective/potential one that MJ and Jasmine commented on. They both noted the importance of learning Indigenous languages and how this might support relationships between Indigenous people and others of diverse heritage. I see their thinking in this way as an "internalized relationship"

(Fettes, 2022, p. 190). For MJ, learning Kanyen'kéha helped her feel closer to Indigenous people. MJ indicated that she did not know why this was, but I wonder if it had to do with the understandings of relationality ─ connections between human knowledge and land ─ that are embedded in the language (Brant-Birioukov, 2022), and how similar that might be to MJ's own shamanic heritage. For Jasmine, learning common phrases in Indigenous languages is a sign of respect and means of connection as people of any heritage travel through Indigenous territories. Although this relationship occurred internally for both participants, as a feeling of closeness and dream for the future, it is an indication that wholistic education that focuses on relationality and language can support relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, including newcomers to Canada and international students.

Education research regarding relationships between newcomer to Canada students and international students (hereafter newcomer/international students) with Indigenous students is emerging and indicates that a focus on relationships and knowledge exchange is lacking but necessary for working toward a more just future (e.g. Kim, 2025; Shin, 2022; Trudeau et al., 2025). Hyunjung Shin (2022) points out that newcomer/international students are not educated about Canada's colonialism or systemic injustices prior to arriving, which Eun Gi Kim (2025) and Lyn Trudeau, who is from Sagamok Anishinawbek First Nation, Eagle Clan[21], and colleagues (2025) echo (see also Stein, 2018). This explains Suhaila's comment about enjoying learning "the Mohawk language" during International Beach Day. She said she did not know that "something like that ever existed." The fact that Mohawk College, where I recruited Suhaila in 2024, uses the name of the

[21] Trudeau's bio found here: https://brocku.ca/social-sciences/womens-studies/people/lyn-trudeau/.

Mohawk Nation without ensuring students are educated about its namesake exemplifies Canadian education's role in the extractive nature of the nation-state's colonialism.

Relationship development between people is not unique to this SDBE. Forming and strengthening relationships can happen in many educational contexts, even oppressive ones. Claudia mentioned, for example, that in the past she had bonded with other international classmates through their shared struggle of learning English. However, relationship-building cannot be presumed to occur in all educational spaces, especially among diverse groups, which is a critique of Canada's federal international education ethos that takes for granted that intercultural exchange will occur simply by bringing people from different countries together (Montsion et al., 2023). This assumption ignores many obstacles to intercultural and cross-linguistic relationship-building, such as the raciolinguistic ideology that places the onus of communication on the racialized/minoritized speaker whose language skills are presumed inferior and often dismissed or othered by the dominant group, deeming their contributions to the relationship inferior or invalid (Kubota et al., 2023; Martin, 2022). International students in Canada "report wanting to make Canadian friends but feeling as though linguistic and cultural differences serve as strong barriers inhibiting their ability to make Canadian friendships" (El Masri & Khan, 2022).

A related power dynamic may have affected relationship-building during International Beach Day. Aside from the potential one that MJ and Jasmine mention, most of the human-human relationships reported by participants seem to be divided according to dominant-minoritized language usage. Jasmine, Allison, and Rita have an ease with the dominant language, English, which indicates they grew up speaking it in Canada. Conversely, Suhaila and Claudia found affinity with other minoritized speakers. Furthermore, the one conflict that I described anonymously in the

first Conversational Connection was between an Indigenous dominant language speaker and a non-Indigenous minoritized speaker. I do not know if language was at play in that instance. The direction of disrespect was not typical of language-based discrimination ─ the dominant language speaker felt that the minoritized speaker was "snooty." Most International Beach Day participants did not talk about a dominant-minoritized language divide. Rita did mention that she felt bad for the participants for whom "English was not their strongest language" and suggested that "if they could communicate in their native language, they would have obviously been able to communicate more, especially about their feelings about nature and answering the questions." I found this observation interesting because none of the minoritized speakers commented on this during the interviews, and I noticed that they participated and conveyed meaning using English throughout the event. This comment demonstrates Rita's strong feelings about inclusion and equity.

It might also be an indication of the pervasiveness of the monolingual habitus coupled with raciolinguistic ideology, which is not a reflection of any individual, but of the normalization of these ideologies. Dominant language speakers (i.e. White listening subjects) are not raised with the skills of drawing on the entirety of their linguistic repertoire to communicate with people who demonstrate varying degrees of proficiency of the dominant language (Gogolin, 1997; Flores & Rosa, 2015; 2019).

Shin's (2022) study offers additional insight into (mis)perceptions that can occur between newcomer/international students and Indigenous students. The context of Shin's (2022) study is a Canadian university course on second language teaching with 15 newcomer/international students and two Indigenous students. Shin (2022) relays that the newcomer/international students, who are racialized minoritized language speakers, considered the Indigenous students lucky because they

were Canadian citizens and dominant language speakers. Shin (2022) describes the reaction of one of the Indigenous students:

> She wrote how difficult it was for her to digest the idea that she was privileged just because she grew up in Canada. Given the colonization and its effects on Indigenous peoples, she did not feel lucky at all. Unlike the international students who chose to come to study in Canada to obtain global linguistic capital of English, English was forced on her and her family. She said she would feel lucky and privileged if she was fluent in her mother tongue instead, feeling sad and worried about the idea of losing her own language, an important part of who she was as Cree. (p. 5)

The Cree student wondered why the newcomer/international students were unaware of the colonialism and racism that affects Indigenous people, especially since newcomer/international students are also marginalized in Canada and "should be able to see social inequality more clearly" (p. 5). Shin (2022) explains that newcomer/international students "often struggle socially, linguistically, culturally, and financially while learning new language, culture, social system and building new social networks away from family and home" (p. 6). This struggle leads to a feeling of being "at the bottom of the social hierarchy in Canada" (p. 6) and makes it difficult to understand how they may be benefiting from settler systems. While structured education about colonization and Indigenous peoples is necessary, Shin (2022) also argues that "decolonizing Indigenous-newcomer relationship in Canada is not just about newcomer students learning more about settler colonial history, but about building solidarity across different groups that can jointly challenge colonial capitalism" (p. 7).

While building solidarity to challenge colonialism was not an outcome of International

Beach Day, the focus on relationality and language did encourage new learning and create the potential for continued learning for newcomer/international students. Claudia expressed this potential when she requested more events like International Beach Day, stating that "it is important to learn about First Nations languages as international students. The language is very rich and powerful." Sophia also demonstrated continued learning when she said that, since International Beach Day, she had been watching videos to learn more about Kanyen'kéha.

The importance of the human-human relationships that were deepened or formed during International Beach Day should not be undervalued. Even though Jasmine, Allison, and Rita are all dominant language speakers, theirs is a relationship between different Indigenous nations, Cayuga and Mohawk, as well as between Indigenous (Haudenosaunee) and non-Indigenous (Italian settler) people. The relationship between Claudia and her El Salvadorian compatriot represents the importance of recognizing and nourishing similarities even while engaging across difference. The relationship between Suhaila and MJ is an example of a cross-cultural interaction that is not about global competencies that Canadians can gain from international students, but about connecting over shared interests, something that is often missing from colonial forms of international education in Canada (Montsion et al., 2023).

Missing from the classroom-based education literature quoted in this section is the important role that land and water play in human-human relationship formation when people attune to their relationships with land and water (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019; Severinsen & Reweti, 2021). As Suhaila said, the water brought participants together "like a union." This reflects the experience of Bonnie Freeman, Indigenous scholar and community member of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and her allied colleague, Trish Van Katwyk (2019) who describe their experience

together in one canoe during a Two Row on the Grand excursion (refer to chapter 1 for more details of this event). On the first day, they hit a rock and capsized. That experience made them focus more closely on what the river had to say, and they changed how they engaged with each other in the canoe to become better navigators. They state: "The river asked us to undertake our place in the relationship and then provided us with the knowledge drawn from the entirety of the environment in which we move and journey" (p. 164). Drawing from Vanessa Watts, Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River[22], (2013), who writes about Indigenous place-thought, Freeman and Van Katwyk (2019) explain that "interactions with the land, water, and air awaken a place-based consciousness" (p. 162) that mobilizes their appreciation for each other and for the land and water. The importance of land and water in relationship-building is expanded in the next section.

Relationships Between Humans and Other Beings of the Beach

Several participants spoke about their relationships with other beings at the beach, like the water, the bugs, the sand, the wind. They talked about the interconnection of all beings, their experiences languaging with other beings, and how they (i.e. the participants) related to human-built structures at the beach, which is also a form of relationality (Bowra et al., 2021). Such relationship formation is common with Land-based learning (which includes water-based learning; Bowra et al., 2021) as participants have embodied interactions with land.

The interconnection between all beings came up several times. Allison indicated that listening to the grass, wind, and water helped her to feel herself and to feel one with nature, which

[22] Watts's bio found here: https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/centres-institutes/centre-oral-history-and-tradition/dr-vanessa-watts.

Marc also alluded to when he said that we are enmeshed in nature. During the linguistic landscape activity, Claudia wrote that she noticed “everything is connecting.” Feeling and noticing the connections between all beings/things is a typical occurrence of land/water-based interaction and education (Bowra et al., 2021). This oneness, enmeshedness, connectedness is considered a spiritual aspect of Land-based learning. “In this sense, spirituality refers to the fundamental ways in which we see the world, how we relate to it, and how it relates to us” (Bowra, 2021, p. 136).

Focusing on languaging of/at the beach helped participants to engage differently with other beings and notice what they had to say. Claudia related to the ladybugs who were grouped together on a stick, reminding her of when she found support from community after struggling as a newcomer to Canada. She explained that the ladybugs were in community: “Ladybugs are saying cooperation.” Similarly, Suhaila began to talk to water which helped her to feel secure. Claudia and Suhaila both referred to their experience as “amazing” which is indicative of the transformative nature of Land-based learning that prioritizes Indigenous language and teachings (Bowra et al., 2021).

Land-based learning is not just about “nature” but includes the landscape regardless of its current state (Bowra et al., 2021). As described in chapter 4, the International Beach Day location was next to two bridges with heavy vehicle traffic and a channel that connected the lake to a bay and through which ships navigated to and from steel factories. After listening to the waves all day, MJ began to notice the vehicle noises from the bridge and the sounds of the ships more acutely. This is similar to Rita and Allison relating to the hydro towers on the beach. They noticed that the towers were “encroaching” the beach but they were also “beautiful.” Keyes et al. (2025) explain that a Land-based learning experience rooted in Indigenous teachings helped university students to

"[see] through the eyes of ravens, red-cedar trees, and ocean water" (p. 1098), so it is possible that being in relationship and languaging with the water and other beings of the beach for several hours helped International Beach Day participants to view these human-built structures from the perspective of those beings. It might also be that "being on the land, in [a mixed] urban and rural [context], assists people with uncovering the layers of relationships that continue to exist even as the physical landscapes change over time" (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 136). For Rita and Allison, these layers include human-built structures that support settler-colonial destruction of nature but also assist the current state of life for humans in urban places. Viewing the hydro towers as part of the land unearths this intermingled relationship.

For MJ and Allison, languaging with the land and water affirmed relationships that they already valued with plants and trees, which in turn supported their relationship with the self. They felt validated and more confident about their own ways of being in relationship with non-human entities. Keyes et al. (2025) noted something similar after participating in a course that focused on relationality: "I have realized that this includes growing a healthy relationship with myself – taking care of my mind, body, heart and spirit" (p. 1096). The value we hold for other beings supports the value we hold for ourselves.

Relationships with other beings of the beach did not always feel good, but this was not considered bad or something worth complaining about. Rita was overstimulated by the sound of the waves. Others were bothered by the midges when it was warm. When the wind became stronger, participants had mixed feelings. They were grateful for the midges to be blown away, but they did not love the cooler temperatures. One person found a tick on their clothes. Another got a sunburn. As MJ said, "despite the temperature changes and then the wind and the bugs and all that, the

people were very engaged." In a classroom, bugs, noise, and extreme temperatures are not acceptable. They are considered something that needs to be controlled so people can focus. At the beach, the relationship changes. There is a recognition that the insects have just as much reason to be at the beach as humans do, and that there is something to learn from changes in temperature. Part of that learning is being okay with not knowing what will happen. The "unpredictability of nature" was a lesson for Rita. Land-based learning also promotes different reactions. When Rita felt overstimulated, she changed the way she engaged, turning away from her clipboard toward her new friends. In a classroom, this would be seen as not focusing. At the beach, it was appropriate behaviour because the wind was telling us to be present in different ways. Land-based learning requires a different attitude than classroom-based learning. Participants express this attitude as "openness." Open air and open water invite an open mind.

For the Indigenous participants, "these relationships are integral because they open up space for the resurgence of old perceptual ways which allow people to better connect with their ancestors, who are seen to be present in the living landscape" (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 136). This was evident when participants described the feeling of being grounded. By literally connecting their feet to the ground, Jasmine and Marc felt more connected to their culture, their ancestral knowledge. For non-Indigenous participants, being with land and water "provides truths that have either unconsciously or deliberately been ignored" (Bowra, 2021, p. 134), like how the traffic noise becomes more noticeable after spending the day at the beach. For all participants, languaging with the land and water was a way to support "healing from colonial practices" (Bowra, 2021, p. 134).

Relationality was the context, the teaching, and the learning of International Beach Day. The focus participants placed on their relationships with each other, with themselves, and with

beings of the beach indicates that prioritizing relationality through Land- and water-based learning and local Indigenous teachings and language can support defragmenting relationships. An important teaching from Indigenous water activists is that we need "to cure relationships that have been damaged with more than humans and between humans" (Altamirano-Jiménez, in Alook & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2026). Prioritizing relationality can support this cure, but simply forming relationships is not enough to counter colonialism.

Dwayne Donald, descendent of the amiskwaciwiyiniwak (Beaver Hills Cree)[23], (2011) argues for *ethical relationality* which supports a deeper understanding of "how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (Donald, 2011, p. 103). In Shin's (2022) university course, newcomer/international students and Indigenous students approached this ethical relationality as they discussed how their "particular historical, cultural, and social contexts" (Donald, 2011, p. 103) affected their different interpretations of their experiences of the world. Such discussion was missing from International Beach Day. Given the relationships that did form in such a short amount of time, educational interventions like International Beach Day can lay the foundation for people to have such conversations with each other, supporting an understanding that, through their relational positioning, liberation for one means liberation for all. Such interventions can support the ethical imperative to build solidarities across difference to challenge colonial domination.

Boundaries

Boundaries form when two or more entities come together. In the cross seas video (Figure

[23] Donald's bio found here: https://www.unlearningcolonialism.ca/research-team.

17 in chapter 4), it is the coming together of sand and water that requires the sandbank to be a boundary, and the air above the water requires the surface tension of water to be a boundary. The sand forms natural boundaries which shift. The sandbar that formed where the water laps the shore created a space for water to pool, and that is where the cross seas occurred. Without these shifting boundaries, the cross seas would not exist in this precise way at this precise location. The existence of the cross seas in that space is a demonstration that boundaries can support flourishing (Simpson, 2025b). Boundaries also provide limits of such engagement; the cross seas at this location will end when the sandbar changes shape. These limits are not harmful; they change as needs change, like when the wind speed increases or the temperature rises and sand and water need to move differently. Unlike borders, boundaries do not exist to assert power and control over others. They change as needed. Borders are externally imposed and typically serve a utilitarian purpose. Any negative consequences are overlooked as long as the objective is achieved. There are no borders in the video, but we know they exist on land not far from the water. The concrete/steel base of each hydro tower, for example, is a hard border that makes it difficult for others to enter or negotiate the space it takes. Borders can be changed over time and through active pursuit, like erosion caused by sand in the wind, or graffiti caused by artists (Figure 38).

Figure 38

"WATER IS LIFE" on the Concrete Base of a Hydro Tower at the Beach



Note. Photograph by S. Martin, May 3, 2024, taken during the beach clean-up the day before International Beach Day.

For humans, boundaries exist to protect the needs of the self or the community (Rickets, 2021). Boundaries appeared in the Conversational Connections as an antidote to colonial linguistic bordering and as a way to protect Indigenous knowledge and language.

Boundaries for Linguistic Agency

The language portrait activity provided an opportunity for participants to recognize and assert boundaries around their own languaging. MJ and Allison choosing to include body language and art, respectively, in their language portraits was a way to assert their linguistic identity. For MJ,

body language is a valued part of her linguistic repertoire, especially in reading other people's body language. She said, "I'm always first one to find out who's in love with who … cause I guess I'm very observant." For Allison, art is integral to her world. She uses art to teach Haudenosaunee culture to her students. About her language portrait, Allison said, "the hands, too, they're colored in for art because I speak with my hands through that." Jasmine considered her boundaries when she decided which languages would not appear in her language portrait. She explained that even though she could say aloha, the Hawaiian language does not have a place in her body. She said, "it's not representative of any part of me."

This linguistic agency is contrasted by participants' personal experiences with English, which in Canada and other colonial nation-states is affected by linguistic border practices like the OLA (chapter 1). MJ got emotional as she described feeling "stupid" when she experienced language-based discrimination for using English that was not "perfect." MJ's experience is reflected in Claudia's description of the "painful"ness of learning English when she came to Canada. Negative experiences like MJ's and Claudia's are common for newcomer/international students in Canada (Galante et al., 2023; Martin, 2022; Nangia, 2013). When thinking about how much of her language portrait was green for English, Allison expressed "a sense of sadness" because it represented the missed opportunity to learn Cayuga, her ancestral mother tongue, when she was younger. Belinda Daniels, a nēhiyaw from Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan, and colleagues (2024) explain that colonial violence continues to cause "trauma and feelings of historical family language loss" (p. 8), which weighs "on the minds of the current generation of Indigenous peoples" (p. 8). While newcomer/international students and Indigenous people alike experience linguistic harm in Canada, it is important not to homogenize these experiences. The root

problem is the same ─ settler colonialism ─ but the effects are experienced differently by different groups of people. Linguicide is related to but not the same as language-based discrimination. As Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, who is Cree and Anishinaabe and a member of the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba, (2017) states, "my family is not new to Canada – we are *Indigenous* and *so is our mother tongue*" (p. 195; emphasis in the original). Linguistic agency is important for everyone, but the meaning and potential it creates will be different for each context.

Asserting boundaries around what counts as language, how and where language is embodied, and what is included in one's own linguistic repertoire is an agential and anti-colonial act. This agency can feel good as people notice the abundance and beauty of their linguistic repertoire. Allison said she felt "a sense of pride" when she created her language portrait. She explained, "it helped me to recognize where I place importance. And where those different languages come from within me." MJ was "excited" about her portrait, stating, "I can say that I know this. This is my language list." Asserting personal language boundaries is an antidote to colonial bordering practices in that it counters the colonial pedagogy that the individual has internalized. It is important to note that individual agency does not necessarily lead to systemic change (Ahearn, 2001). However, releasing oneself from colonial "mental bondage" can be an important part of being able to oppose and rupture systemic oppression (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 302).

Boundaries for Indigenous Language Learning

Boundaries are important to consider regarding the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages. Jasmine commented that her previous Indigenous language and culture learning experiences had typically been in groups of only Indigenous people. She said that when there were

Indigenous events at a community centre that non-Indigenous people attended, certain aspects of the culture were not usually taught, such as the Thanksgiving Address. Allison noted that she has witnessed mixed feelings among her colleagues about teaching the Thanksgiving Address, namely that it was not meant for non-Indigenous people or that non-Indigenous people might not receive it well. Given the experiences of the last several centuries in which Europeans actively tried to decimate Indigenous languages and cultures, it is not surprising that many Indigenous people feel the need to protect their languages and cultures from further harm.

Even if/when Indigenous teachers and communities find benefit in sharing language and culture, which are inseparable (Leonard, 2017), there are many considerations to take into account when including non-Indigenous people. One is that there is a shortage of qualified teachers of Indigenous languages, and these "teachers are often poached by non-Indigenous organizations with larger funding envelopes. It also makes it impossible to hire enough language educators, as there is already a shortage of them" (Brant & Associates, 2022, p. 18; see also Shah, 2024). Another issue is inconsistent funding. "Year after year, funding for language revitalization has fluctuated, leading to disruption in language programming. This demonstrates a continued lack of government commitment to revitalizing First Nations languages." (Assembly of First Nations, 2023, p. 2). Daniels et al. (2024) explain that Indigenous language revitalization organizations "compete for the same resources" (p. 11), and any funding that goes toward non-Indigenous learners is being directed away from those who need it most.

While International Beach Day was not funded by federal dollars, this funding issue is still relevant. Insufficient and inconsistent funding means that people are in dire need of programming. International Beach Day offered a free Kanyen'kéha lesson to participants, and this was so enticing

that the number of people interested in attending exceeded the number of spots available. I maintained a waitlist which included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As I received cancellations, I offered the spots to the Indigenous people first (regardless of their position on the waitlist). However, had we not had any non-Indigenous people registered, we would have had room for all the Indigenous people on the waitlist. While the purpose of International Beach Day was not Indigenous language reclamation but liberatory language practices for all involved (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous people), this is an example of how non-Indigenous priorities that are not designed by and for Indigenous communities, regardless of good intentions, can lead to outcomes that supersede Indigenous priorities (Leonard, 2021).

Another issue to consider is that non-Indigenous learners do not have the same motivation as Indigenous learners. Allison noted that non-Indigenous students join her Mohawk language class because they think it looks fun and that "it's easier than French." Conversely, a significant motivation for Indigenous people to learn their language is to ensure generational transmission of the language and culture. Brant-Birioukov explains, "creating the next generation of Mohawk language speakers in my own home feels so damn urgent and so damn serious every single day" (Shah, 2024, 00:32:17). Indigenous language revitalization programs simply "can't afford hobbyists" (K. Brant-Birioukov, personal communication, February 17, 2026; see also Shulist & Pedri-Spade, 2022).

It's also important to consider the fact that non-Indigenous learners do not carry trauma caused by the violence of linguicide, whereas many Indigenous people learning their mother tongue feel shame, inadequacy, anxiety, disappointment, and sadness (Daniels et al., 2024). This came up for Allison when she explained that she was not given the choice to learn Cayuga when she was

younger because her parent believed that English would serve her better academically. She explained what it feels like to learn her mother tongue as an adult: “So now I'm backtracking in a sense … Like I wish that I could understand more in the language when I had those years that I could have learned that, but that's not something I can fix now.” Because non-Indigenous learners do not have that trauma, Indigenous language learning for them can be “much less difficult emotionally” (Daniels et al., 2026, p. 13). Indeed, Allison noted that the non-Indigenous students she teaches “end up … being the ones that are excelling in the classes.” Indigenous learners can experience “a sense of having sacred spaces invaded” (Daniels et al., 2026, p. 12), especially if non-Indigenous learners are perceived to be learning more easily or to be dominating the class (Daniels et al., 2026). None of the Indigenous participants expressed these negative feelings regarding the non-Indigenous people at International Beach Day. Allison said, “it's really nice to see … and know that it doesn't just stop in elementary, and if somebody wants to learn it, they can,” and Jasmine expressed that “it was enlightening to have a language learning experience with so many non-Indigenous people who were there, like, cause they wanted to be.”

A few aspects may have influenced Jasmine and Allison’s positive reactions. One may have been the focus on relationality during International Beach Day. The language lesson included time for individuals or groups of two or three to practice their Kanyen’kéha vocabulary with the beings of the beach whose names they were learning, so participants were languaging with the beach more than with each other. Another possibility is that International Beach Day was just over four hours long; feelings might have changed had they spent more language-learning time with the non-Indigenous learners. Also, Jasmine and Allison had prior Kanyen’kéha learning experiences, so there was no perceived inferiority in terms of proficiency compared to the non-Indigenous

participants for whom it was a completely new language. Finally, Allison and Jasmine's reactions align with their dreams for international education. Jasmine dreams of a world where everyone learns enough language to be respectful as they engage across nations. Allison said, "Yeah, it's all about connection and growth … and showing other people about it … not discriminating against anybody that's not Indigenous and helping them to reconnect with that part of like nature and learning." Note that Allison's desire to include non-Indigenous people still respects boundaries. She loves music and Haudenosaunee seed songs, but she will only teach her students the one seed song that she received permission to teach. For Allison, the boundaries protect the culture while making room for others to learn about the importance of connections between humans and between humans and nature.

As a non-Indigenous researcher engaging with Indigenous language and teachings, I risked making unintentional negative transgressions. Risk is an element of the cross seas because they can be very difficult to navigate. International Beach Day respected boundaries *and* was an act of transgression. Partnering with Kristi was a way to respect the wholism of Kanyen'kéha through the teaching of the Kanonhweratónhsera and languaging with the beach. However, registering non-Indigenous participants for the event was a transgression of Indigenous language reclamation as I placed Indigenous people on the waitlist, preventing them from accessing free language programming. Wesley Y. Leonard (2017), citizen of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and Native American language reclamation scholar, explains the difference between Indigenous language revitalization and reclamation. He states that revitalization focuses on the language rather than the community, so successful revitalization includes increased number of speakers, regardless of who they are. Reclamation, on the other hand, is "a larger effort by a community to claim its right to

speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives" (Leonard, 2012, as cited in Leonard, 2017, p. 19). While I recruited from HRIC, I did not collaborate with the HRIC community to determine goals for Indigenous language reclamation in Hamilton. International Beach Day may have contributed to Indigenous language revitalization as it inspired non-Indigenous participants to continue learning Kanyen'kéha (e.g. Sophia mentioned that she watched Kanyen'kéha videos after the beach day), but this came at the cost of potential support for reclamation for some Indigenous people.

Movement

In the cross seas video (Figure 17 in chapter 4), movement is required for the cross seas to occur. Water is dynamic, never static. Without movement, there would be no points of connection between the waves. Movement is also a requisite of embodiment, and embodied learning includes movement. "Embodiment refers to the double sense of the body as both experiencing living in the world and as a context for knowing about the world" (Ritenburg et al., 2014, p. 69). This means that the body is an assemblage of understandings "that are innate, acquired, and dependent on culture" (Ritenburg et al., 2014, p. 69) and are changing and changeable through living and experiencing. For the International Beach Day participants, embodied learning included movement of thought ─ hints of, or potential for, paradigmatic shifts about language, languaging, and language learning. Also noticeable was an obstruction of movement caused by colonial linguistic bordering practices.

Movement of Thought

Participants described shifts in thinking about language as they considered their personal embodiment of languages. Jasmine noted that even though she has a professional and academic

background in languages, she had never thought about languages in the way that creating her language portrait prompted. She said, “I remember … challenging myself to think about the languages that I know … I remember having a difficult time distinguishing what languages to add or not to add.” This challenge is an indication of her shift in thought as she started to realize which languages represented parts of her and which did not. Thinking through the embodiment of language, Allison began to recognize where languages come from within her, something she had not considered before. She said, “I didn't look at it like that before, but I feel like I see it in a different light.” MJ had experienced a shift, too, when she was deciding if body language should be part of her language portrait. She said, “And at first I was like, should I put this in? You know, it's not really a language, but yeah, it is language. So expanding that view on … what's considered a language.” This thinking differently about language, regarding how it represents a part of the self, how it is embodied, and what counts as language, represents a shift from disembodied, proficiency-focused, bordered views of language to understandings that are more aligned with the participants’ lived experiences.

Using a visual method to prompt thinking about one’s linguistic repertoire challenges “the traditional notion that the social world can be explored fully through language” (Gauntlett and Hozwarth, 2006, as paraphrased in Prasad, 2014, p. 56). This helps participants to notice that “linguistic language,” as MJ called named languages, are not superior to other self-defined languages, like the languages of “art” and “love,” that Allison placed on her portrait. The shift in thinking during the language portrait activity is also indicative of embodied learning that requires “doing” something (Absolon, 2022; Desmoulins et al., 2023). Through this creative and embodied activity, participants did not just represent the objective (a language portrait) but also what they

discovered in the process of creating the portrait (Eisner, 2002, as cited in Prasad, 2014).

Some participants also began to shift their understanding of who/what can be an interlocutor. Suhaila said, “Talking to water is something that I always heard about it but I never tried it, but that day, yeah, I tried that and ... it felt really great.” She explained that her view of water expanded to something “really big.” She had not felt that way before. MJ, who already had an expansive understanding of languaging with multi-species interlocutors, developed her views even further. On her linguistic landscape worksheet she wrote, “I didn’t think about the ship horn as a language, but it is.” MJ’s defining the ship horn as language reflects the understanding of multilingualism “as a form of multimodal meaning construction” (Shohamy & Waksman, 2008, p. 320). MJ is demonstrating a stance that transgresses the colonial, bordered notions of what language is and who can language. MJ noticed this shift in thinking near the end of the day, which is indicative of the combined effects of being validated by the teachings of relationality, being encouraged to think *agentially* about her linguistic repertoire, and doing/thinking about language with water.

Movement Obstruction

While participants demonstrated several shifts in thinking, raising awareness and/or expanding ideas about language and languaging is not enough to neutralize ongoing power dynamics or embodied colonial experiences (Prasad, 2024). Colonized understandings are difficult to dislodge because “colonization is present in our bodies and in the bodies of those with whom we engage … colonization restricts and shapes our thinking, our actions, and interactions” (Ritenburg et al., 2014, p. 69). The bodies at the beach also include constructed bodies like the bridges and hydro towers. MJ pointed out the visible colonialism of the International Beach Day location on her

linguistic landscape worksheet. In response to the question about what the languaging of this place says, she wrote: “Canada. This place belongs to Canada.” MJ was likely referring to the word Canada that looms over the beach from atop the federal lift bridge. MJ did not indicate on her handout whether or not she believed that this place belongs to Canada, but she astutely pointed out that this giant sign makes sure that everyone who passes by, over, or under the bridge knows who “owns” this place (Figure 39).

Figure 39

Federal Lift Bridge with Hydro Towers in the Foreground



Note. On her linguistic landscape handout, MJ wrote, “Canada. This place belongs to Canada.” Photograph by S. Martin, March 28, 2024.

On her linguistic landscape worksheet, Jasmine wrote: “English. It says that this is the lingua franca.” In addition to written text around the beach, English was the dominant language of engagement between humans during International Beach Day. Furthermore, Kristi and I inadvertently modeled what April Baker-Bell (2017) refers to as White Mainstream English (WME). WME is the expected form of English in Canadian schools and educational spaces, “because it represents White linguistic norms, not because it is a universal, proper way of using language” (p. 103; see also Sterzuk, 2015). WME has achieved this privileged location in Canada by design as the colonial government aimed “to create a homogenous nation” (Sterzuk & Shin, 2021, p. 54). My being a White settler teacher further entrenches how my languaging is unquestioned and perceived as “appropriate” (Flores & Rosa, 2015), especially in educational spaces. This is not something we did/I do on purpose, but a consequence of teaching in a colonial context. Our use of WME aligns with what the participants have learned throughout their lifetime regarding the dominance of English and its supposed importance in Canada and the world. Marc made this clear when he related English to being Canadian. Even though he is Metis and he included Mohawk, Ojibway, French, and sign language in his language portrait, he said, “I’m first and foremost Canadian. English.” Sophia, Jasmine, and Suhaila pointed out the dominance of English in Canadian life. Sophia said, “We are living in the English environment. So we use English every day and the English around us.” Suhaila said that “English for everyone” would support the best cross-linguistic communication because it is “the most common” language. Jasmine also pointed out how common English is. She said, “that's what English is, like it's just everywhere. It's like lingua franca, it can be easily relied on. I don't have to think about it too much.” Her comment that she does not have to think about it is telling. The normalization of

English makes it so common that people do not question why we believe a monolingual lingua franca is the best form of communication in international/multilingual contexts, even when we are learning other languages, even when we are expanding our notions of languaging in the world. Sophia said, “when we use the same language such as English, we can communicate more easily and get more connections with different people.” While a lingua franca can support communication, as MJ, Claudia, and Allison poinSo ted out with their painful stories of English interactions, in practice, English as a lingua franca is a tool for dominance. As Suhaila noted, “if we don't know English, we can't make a future here. If we know English, we can build up, we can stand up, we can use our hand to do something.” Suhaila is describing an outcome of colonial linguistic bordering practices (Martin, 2024a; chapter 1). While the participants experienced many shifts in thinking, the material effects of English hegemony and the monolingual habitus on their lives prevented unlearning the supposed necessity of English as a lingua franca.

Between the Points of Connection

The weathered base of the hydro tower that displays the message “Water Is Life” is an indication that linguistic bordering practices can be changed, but it takes time and continued effort. One half-day SDBE cannot possibly attend to the consequences of centuries of colonialism. There are no quick fixes (Callison et al., 2023).

Even though coloniality was a part of International Beach Day, through the teachings of Kanonhweratónhsera and the CMLA activities, liberatory points of connection were made. From the Anishinaabe understanding of Nation as a way of relating, a way of being (Sinclair, 2017; chapter 3), participants formed inter*nation*al relationships with each other and with other beings of the beach, with whom they languaged, transgressing colonial language borders. They began to

understand their linguistic repertoire as something bountiful, something to be proud of, and something they could define themselves. They learned about the power of and within Kanyen'kéha and that learning a language of the Land can support relationships with people of this land. Some participants felt validated. One participant said the day was "healing."

Thinking with water, in the cross seas video (Figure 17 in chapter 4), when the waves cross and form a grid, the intersections look like a bump or a node. These intersections are points of connection. When I began this doctoral research, I was seeking points of connection in inter*nation*al education. What I learned is that the points of connection are important, but so are the bonds between them. This is relationality.

Through her own thinking with water, Simpson (2025a; 2025b) offers an explanation. She writes that "water is a network, linking endless forms of life to bring about more life, more diversity of life, more abundance of life" (2025b, p. 155). She continues:

> The thing about a network is that the sustaining parts are not the hubs, but the connections between the hubs. Nibi [water], the air, the land. The thing about a network is that the individual beings aren't so important but rather the quality and strength of the relationships between beings-so much so that the hubs, or the bodies of the network, are composed of these relationships. Life is made in the interstitial spaces between beings." (Simpson, 2025b, p. 156).

The first words that popped into participants' minds when they thought about International Beach Day were peace, amazing, joyful, relearning, exciting, unexpected, pleasant, openness, and Thanksgiving Address. These words represent the participants' embodied experiences, the living-doing of the day that both supported the points of connection and happened between them. In the

next chapter, I consider the implications and significance of inter*nation*al education.

7. Crossing Seas: Transgressing Limitations, Significance & Implications

When seas cross, they do not stay crossed (Figure 17 in chapter 4). There are moments of connection which support transformation, visible by the nodes in the grid. As movement continues, these nodes dissipate and the waves carry on, less bumpy but still changed. The crossing that creates these nodes is risky. In deeper water, cross seas can capsize vessels, but not always. With experience and knowledge of the local waters, people can learn when to enter and how to engage safely. Gaining this experience comes from relationality – learning with the water and from people who understand it. This learning cannot happen without taking the risk to engage.

Conducting this SDBE was a risk. As a White settler, I am still unlearning, and my surfeit of colonial knowledge can make it difficult to predict how my actions might perpetuate colonialism. This SDBE is an example that taking the risk can be worth it when done in partnership with the people (human and beyond-human) and knowledges of the land and water. Participants came away from International Beach Day with feelings of validation, healing, peace, joy, and excitement for new possibilities. These feelings are not typically reported in literature about newcomer/international students and Indigenous students in mainstream post-secondary education (e.g. Canel-Çınarbaş & Yohani, 2019; Guo & Guo, 2017; Houshmand et al., 2014; Kim, 2023). Relationships were formed, not just for participants as noted in the Findings and Discussion chapters, but also between Kristi and myself. We became friends. While Kristi joined this project in her roles as Kanyen'kéha teacher and cultural consultant, we both benefited from working together. Kristi expressed that our partnership in this project supported her thinking about languaging and decolonizing language teaching, as it did mine. Through our many discussions preparing for and debriefing after the International Beach Day events, creating our conference presentations, and

travelling internationally to share our experience, we evolved as educators. My relationship with Onyatarí:yo also deepened. I spend more time at the shore, singing and talking with the water, picking up human trash, and inviting others to do the same. I am learning about Indigenous water protectors and beginning to increase my water advocacy efforts.

Transgressing Limitations

One limitation of this study is also one of its strengths. The experiences and knowledge of eight participants, that were created through and between the connections that formed as participants learned with the language and teachings of one local Indigenous Nation in a relational way, cannot be generalized to other contexts. This SDBE was created for and by its specificity, which is the only part that can be generalized ─ the importance of attending to context in a relational way through an anti-colonial lens. While learnings of this project may ripple out and inspire learning elsewhere, there is a difference between generalizability and learning from others. Generalizability implies that knowledge is a product of research that can then be transferred from researcher to researcher. Leigh Patel (2016) suggests a different relationship with knowledge:

> If we are to be other than owners invested in settler colonialism, educational research needs a radical restructuring of its relationship to knowledge. Rather than property, we should see knowledge, and more specifically knowledge about learning, as what we are answerable to. We should see ourselves as stewards not of specific pieces of knowledge but rather of the productive and generative spaces that allow for finding knowledge. But we must also learn to regard all knowledge as incomplete, partial, contextually created, and perspectival. (p. 79)

This research project stewarded space for participants to think with and about ubiquitous entities in their/our lives, namely water and language, which they did. Their thinking began to change in this

space.

Another limitation of this study relates to an alternative question to generalizability that Patel (2016) asks:

> Instead of asking how to pursue mythical objective truth (which is a facade for coloniality), we can ask what knowledge might be useful at this moment, in this place, and how does our pursuit of it stay attentive to its material effects? (p. 79)

The latter part of the question about *staying attentive to the material effects of knowledge* is the part I am focusing on here. International Beach Day was a half-day event, and participants recalled and continued to evolve their learning afterward, as was made evident during the post-event interviews. However, these relatively brief encounters might not have been enough to contribute to material effects on participants' lives, or the water, or the language(ing), especially as participants returned to colonial (education) systems. In short, the SDBE was too short. Prasad et al. (2026) found that co-learning of liberatory plurilingual practices and un-learning of oppressive dominant language ideologies (like the monolingual habitus) is possible among linguistically and culturally diverse groups. Together, co-learning and un-learning support a shift in action as students become plurilingual activists. Given that Prasad et al.'s (2026) SDBE occurred across an entire school year, it is impressive that International Beach Day stewarded so much co-learning in such a brief amount of time. If we had had extended or additional periods of engagement, what might have been the possibilities for un-learning dominant oppressive paradigms?

While this study focused on inclusivity in terms of Indigenous and non-Indigenous National identity, language, and student status, other identity markers were not prioritized. I did not actively recruit people who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ or disabled, for example. Participants may have

related to these positionalities, but I did not ask. I do not know if/how identity markers other than the ones I asked about might have contributed to our experiences of the day.

Significance: Highlighting Social Design-Based Experience

The significance of this research is largely the result of the methodological approach. Participants experienced relational and grounded education, moving educational dreams into educational reality. For years, critical researchers have been advocating for just forms of international education that are not motivated by colonial, neoliberal goals, but these efforts have had almost no effect on government policy (D. McCartney in Brunner et al., 2026). As Chief Lyons said, "the forces that are injuring our Mother the Earth are not waiting to create subcommittees, to set dates for meetings, or to set budgets" (Coleman et al., 2025). The forces that are perpetuating colonial, neoliberal international education are not waiting, either (likely because they are the same forces harming the earth). According to Dale McCartney, researchers and advocates operate as though politicians will pay attention to well-constructed arguments, but in reality, politicians respond to pressure from political powers. Where educators and education researchers can make an impact is in our teaching, with our students and colleagues, and in our communities (D. McCartney in Brunner et al., 2026). I am not suggesting that advocates stop holding politicians accountable or that we stop fighting for better governments. I am learning that we cannot wait for better ways of being to be approved by colonial powers to make them happen. SDBEs provide practical means for creating "radical openness and possibility" (Gutiérrez et al., 2020, p. 344) for liberatory international education. Sharon Stein, Vanessa Andreotti, and Rene Suša (2019) speak to the importance of imagining different forms of international education:

> While it is highly unlikely that mainstream institutional internationalization practices and

> policies will change any time soon, the kind of questions that can be opened by imagining internationalization through different kinds of approaches can nonetheless play an important and generative role — both educationally and relationally. If we can challenge dominant assumptions about what is possible and consider that there are other possibilities that are viable but lie beyond what is currently imaginable, then we can create the potential for something new and different to emerge. (p. 37)

SDBEs are one option for stewarding the space where the imagination↔reality interchange can take place. Liberatory experiences can support changes in thinking, which can support different imaginings of what is possible.

Transgressing Implications

I recognize the value this SDBE brought to all involved and that much learning came from this experience that can support my own future research. From a transgressive position that prioritizes anti-coloniality, I will refrain from suggesting implications for research, especially beyond my specific context. I align with Stein (2021) who states:

> Ultimately, we will need different kinds of research and conversations about internationalization, conversations that can open up a space in which we can admit to ourselves and to each other that the problems we face are enormous, and in which we can ask earnestly how we got here, why we keep repeating circular colonial moves, and how we might experiment with ways to interrupt this circularity without assuming we know how to do it. (p. 1782)

Rather than prescriptive implications, I follow Stein's (2021) example and offer questions that emerge from my specific context and are not intended as transferable recommendations. "There

is power in questions and questioning, in being able to live in the understanding that not everything is known or knowable" (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012, p. XI). In support of decolonization, questioning requires humility and can support noticing what more can be done or learned before, during, and after theorizing and taking action (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012).

The rest of this chapter is divided into two sections. I pose questions that remain from my own research and comment on a possibility for my future research. Next, rather than extend these questions to other contexts, I provide questions that will not only serve me as I continue to engage in anti-colonial research and education but may also support other educators and researchers hoping to engage in anti-colonial work in their unique contexts.

Questions Remaining from My Research.

International Beach Day had many benefits. For some non-Indigenous participants, International Beach Day offered an introduction not only to the spirit and vocabulary of Kanyen'kéha but also to the very fact that Kanyen'kéha exists. Suhaila, Claudia, and Sophia all recognized the importance of this learning. Allison expressed the benefits of non-Indigenous people learning about relationality, and Jasmine suggested that learning phrases in local Indigenous languages would be a sign of respect for those who travel through National territories. All participants talked about relationships that formed or deepened during the event. These are indications that continuing to prioritize the water-language connection and Haudenosaunee teachings might support ongoing relationship-building among Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people, students and non-students, and newcomers to Canada and international students ─ fluid "groups" that are often discussed separately in the literature. Discussions about relationships, solidarity, and coalition-building between some of these groupings are emerging

(Kim, 2025; Sawata, 2025; Shin, 2022; Trudeau et al., 2025). The suggestion is that when people cross the colonial divides between them and learn with and about each other and their shared and divergent experiences, opportunities exist for solidarities and coalitions to form to oppose and change colonial systems. International Beach Day provided the starting point for such relationships. However, aside from two participants whose daily lives intersect, I do not think there was continued engagement among most of the International Beach Day participants after the day ended, and I do not know if or how their experiences from International Beach Day may have affected the potential for other relationships in their lives, with humans or with other beings, long-term. My first question is: How might continued prioritizing of the water-language connection ─ for which, in this location, Haudenosaunee language(s) and teachings are integral ─ over multiple occasions support relationships, solidarities, and coalitions for anti-colonial change?

The CMLA activities that participants engaged in supported linguistic agency and more expansive thinking about languaging. These are indications that continued engagement with relationality-focused CMLA activities might further paradigm shifts away from the monolingual habitus and assumptions about English as a neutral lingua franca. My second question is: How might continued engagement with relationality-focused CMLA activities contribute to intercultural communication and understanding, and how might this support solidarity and coalition-building across groups?

My theory of change described my own experience. Through this SDBE, I experienced, wholistically, a liberating way to engage in international education. Now I know that such learning is possible, and I am motivated to recreate such states within my spheres of influence. I want to continue to facilitate water-based SDBEs with adults in inter*nation*ally diverse contexts. This

dissertation research invited participants to engage outside of their respective institutions ─ outside of the walls of the buildings where they worked and studied, and outside of the labels that institutions impose. Outside ─ with the land, water, and other nations of beings ─ provides openness that allows for different ways of engaging. I believe that having more time together would allow for a more participatory approach in which participants could collaborate to determine the research rationale, goals, and questions. I wonder what their questions will be.

Questions for Anti-Colonial Researchers and Educators

Inspired by my experience conducting this dissertation research, I have developed questions to support different kinds of conversations (Stein, 2021) for researchers and educators in international education, broadly defined. I pose these questions for anti-colonial researchers and educators working with adults (e.g. in post-secondary or adult education), but they may also be useful for those working with youth in diverse primary and secondary education settings. While I wrote these questions, I imagined that they might support thinking about the design of anti-colonial and liberatory research and education, but there is no prescription for how they should/can be used. While these questions were written for educational contexts, many of them might also spark thinking/questioning for people wishing to conduct anti-colonial research or learning in other linguistically and culturally diverse fields that are similarly affected by colonial practices, such as health care. Readers should remember that these questions are written by a White settler woman. I list the questions within disciplinary subheadings while recognizing that each field is broad and has fluid boundaries that overlap and intersect: international education, language work, and Land- and water-based learning. From a transdisciplinary perspective, all questions are relevant to all three fields.

Questions for International Education.

- Given that *nation* is rarely defined in discussions of international education, the assumption must be that the definition of the root word of international is universally understood. This is not the case. Within Eurocentric understandings, "nation is one of those key terms which, although it is central to our comprehension of human communities, tends to defy clear definitions" (Chernilo, 2020, p. 1072). Thinking beyond the current system of political nation-states that dominates mainstream notions of internationalization, what are and have been definitions of nation in your context? What are the borders and boundaries of these definitions? Who/what is included? How might different understandings of nation support liberatory possibilities for inter*nation*al education?
- Who are the original people(s) of the land and water where this international education takes place? What are your relationships (treaty or otherwise)? What are the language(s) and knowledge(s) of this land? (How) should/can these language(s) and knowledge(s) be prioritized in respectful and safe ways in an international education context?
- Who can/will participate in international education and how does government status affect this participation? What assumptions and biases about status need to be uncovered and analyzed (Bennett et al., 2023; Vowel, 2016)? (How) can/should colonial status be transgressed to support liberatory international education?
- Who will be the researchers/teachers? How will researcher/teacher be defined? (How) will/should the project support fluidity of roles? How do the researcher/teacher's positionalities influence the research/teaching?
- Is there a need for researchers/teachers? The colonial attitude "assumes that everything

should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage" (Garneau, 2016, p. 23). Is it possible that what is not known to some should not be known to them? Is it possible that what is not known to some cannot be known to them? When should one not engage in international education?

- In what ways can international education and international education research be implemented and conducted *with* interest-holders rather than *for* or *on* them?
- How can the trap of *liberal multiculturalism*, that celebrates diversity on the surface while maintaining the racial ordering of the colonial state (Stein, 2018), be avoided? In what ways will the research/teaching support solidarities/coalition-building across different groups of people to challenge coloniality and its related oppressions that prevent learning and sharing across difference (Sawata, 2025)?
- What are the understandings of wholism in your context, and how might wholism be prioritized?

Questions for Language Work[24].

- Are there/What are the linguistic bordering practices and policies in your context and what are their effects? What are examples of transgressing these linguistic borders?
- How will you respect Indigenous linguistic boundaries while attempting to transgress colonial linguistic borders? How might your language work support or hinder Indigenous language

[24] *Language work*, as defined by Leonard (2017), is an umbrella term that includes "language documentation, description, teaching, advocacy, and resource development" (p. 16) all of which could be relevant to international education depending on the context and purpose.

revitalization/reclamation efforts?

- Which/whose language(s) will be prioritized in your work?
- What is/are the dominant definition(s) of language in your context? Are there other, perhaps minoritized, understandings of language? Within these understandings, who languages?
- Saskia Van Viegan and Sunny Man Chu Lau (2022) argue that "language use and practices are embodied, situated, and interanimated with the living and nonliving, human and nonhuman, entangled assemblages of meaning and meaning making" (p. 203). What are the language practices in your context? (How) will your language work encompass/validate/support the multitudes contained within language use and practice?
- What/how are the languages in your context related to land and water, politically, socially, linguistically? How are their histories and futures connected? How might your language work support socio-eco-linguistic activism?

Questions for Land- and Water-Based Learning.

- What is your relationship with the land and water where you reside? Do you know who are and have been the human stewards of this land and water? What are your relationships with them? Whose language(s) developed from this land? What is your relationship with them?
- When Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Simpson (2025b) participates in Land-based education, she advocates "for curriculum and learning objectives to be left behind, and for educators to bring ingredients — Elders, learning, land and water — together, and then see what learning emerge from that alchemy" (Simpson, 2025b, p. 186). Who will you work with to support land-/water-based learning alchemy?
- What are the connections between bodies ─ of land, of water, of animals (including human), of

plants, of fungi, etc. ─ of this place? What are the local Indigenous understandings of these connections, and how can they be respected?

- How can/do differently abled bodies engage with this land and water? How can/will you support diverse forms of engagement?
- How healthy is the land and water? What/who are the causes of any environmental degradation? What do you know about the history and current state of these causes? What impact might your land-/water-based learning experiences have on the land and water? How can your plans for land-/water-based learning support improved health of the land and water?

These lists of questions about international education, language work, and land- and water-based learning are by no means exhaustive. Perhaps the questions will spark other questions pertinent to the readers' specific contexts. My hope is that these questions will support researchers and educators as they prepare for or continue their anti-colonial work.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I offer a summary of the research in the form of a memory narrative, a way to share wholistic aspects of the story of the research that includes emotions and relationships. I then describe the International Beach Day reunion that took place 16 months after the main event. The dissertation concludes by returning to the Two Row Wampum, which offers lessons in support of inter*nation*al education.

Remembering the Research

This dissertation research, initially, was an attempt to create a version of my dream for international education in which peoples of the world could learn and share together without having to fit within a colonial box. International Beach Day surpassed anything I had ever dreamed. Prior to this project, I never imagined that water would play a role or be a teacher. This project changed me.

The purpose of this dissertation research was to create possibilities for liberatory language practices to support anti-colonial international education. The research questions were:

- What connections become apparent when we bring together water, language, and international education while prioritizing local Indigenous language and teachings?
- What happens to international education when we prioritize the water-language connection?

This anti-colonial transdisciplinary research was framed and motivated by the act and understanding of *transgressing*, which combines the positive connotation of transcending and the negative connotation of transgression (chapter 3). Transgressing keeps at the fore the paradoxes that are inherent in anti-colonial work. For example, as a White settler, I have a responsibility to leverage my unearned privilege to work toward dismantling the colonial systems and power

structures that have afforded me this privilege, without centering Whiteness or perpetuating the colonial ways of being that formed me. Remembering the elements of transgressing ─ open mind and heart; challenge status quo; respect boundaries; transcend borders; invite wholeness; respect context; proceed with reciprocity; notice tensions; strive for liberation; identify connections ─ prevented me from being too daunted by the paradox to engage.

The water-language connection was at the heart of this project (chapter 2). At a time when I was struggling to understand the seeming incongruence between the need to transcend harmful socio-political language borders and the need to maintain the integrity of languages that are being reclaimed and revived, like Kanyen'kéha, water taught me about surface tension and helped me to understand the difference between borders and boundaries. Learning about this connection led me to Dr. Kiera Brant-Birioukov. I had attended her keynote address at a conference in 2022 in which she spoke about the importance of Indigenous languages. The more I learned about the water-language connection and the importance of Indigenous understandings of relationality, the more I realized I needed support from a person whose worldview would not automatically assume the water-language connection was merely a metaphor. In June 2023, I nervously crafted an email asking if we could talk about the water-language connection. She responded immediately with kindness and enthusiasm, "I am thrilled to hear all about this fabulous project which immediately has my heart" (K. Brant-Birioukov, personal communication, June 19, 2023). Kiera introduced me to Kristi, without whom International Beach Day could not have happened.

Kristi and I developed a social design-based *experience* (SDBE), an adaptation from the original E for *experiment* (Bang et al., 2014; Gutiérrez et al., 2020; chapter 4). Our SDBE was an international education intervention that we named International Beach Day. We gathered 11 adult

participants at one of Onyatarí:yo's beaches in Hamilton, Ontario. This international group included Indigenous (Ogweho:weh, Metis, Mohawk) and non-Indigenous people (Afghan, Canadian, Chinese, Hispanic, Italian, Latin-American, Syrian), some of whom carried both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry. Participants were dominant and minoritized language speakers with a total of 37 languages listed in their language portraits. We began the day with Kanonhweratónhsera, which Kristi delivered in Kanyen'kéha and English. We greeted and offered tobacco to the water, showing our respect, which helped us feel our connection to the beach. Being with the water supported our embodied engagement throughout the day. Kristi led a Kanyen'kéha lesson, which was facilitated by the water and other beings of the beach. I engaged participants in two critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA) activities that were framed by the concept of relationality, the interconnectedness of all, a lesson of Kanonhweratónhsera (Hill, 2020). We made language portraits as a way to notice our plurilingual identities and embodied language practices (Prasad, 2020). We conducted a linguistic landscape activity around the beach, each of us drawn to different areas. This helped us notice the vast forms of languaging and raise awareness about the many roles of language and languaging in our world (Przymus & Kohler, 2018). We enjoyed the warm sun at the beginning of the day, but the midges overwhelmed us. The wind picked up and blew the midges away, and we all got cold. Our embodied reactions to the bugs and wind reminded us of our connections to nature. We gathered again at the water's edge to express our gratitude to the water by singing the Water Song (Bear Fox Time, 2021). We closed the day with Kanonhweratónhsera. This time, Kristi did not translate into English and participants were invited to join in naming the beings of the beach in Kanyen'kéha throughout the address.

Before International Beach Day, participants completed a pre-event survey describing their

experiences and sharing their dreams about water, language, and international education. Kristi and I used the survey results to inform our planning for the day. After International Beach Day, I conducted semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with eight participants using photographs that were taken during the event by a local photographer, Aríhwaiens Martin (Bakker & Telli, 2023; Elliot et al., 2017; Hattingh & de Kock, 2008; Maitra & Coley, 2022). The participants shared many gifts as a result of these activities ─ their language portraits, their photographs, their linguistic landscape notes, their survey responses, and the ideas they shared during the interviews. I felt lost at first about how to honour these gifts and maintain a wholistic perspective during the analysis process (Absolon, 2022). I remembered that thinking with water would help. I rewatched the Cross Seas video and felt again the awe of witnessing this phenomenon at my local beach. I developed the Cross Seas Analysis Model, which included four elements: Water, Shore, Waves, and Grid. This model helped me notice points of connection between all the participants' gifts as well as the bonds that formed between these points.

Findings highlighted three properties from the Cross Seas Analysis Model: relationality, a property of Water, boundaries, a property of Shore, and movement, a property of Waves (chapter 5). Participants spoke about their relationships ─ between humans and between humans and other beings ─ that they developed, noticed, or deepened during the SDBE. Linguistic boundaries, rather than borders, supported participants' agency regarding what counts as language and which languages were part of their embodied experience. Regarding teaching Haudenosaunee language and culture, I learned that boundaries shift according to context, but it is recognized that boundaries are necessary to protect sacred elements. Participants demonstrated movement of thought as they began to think differently about language. In some ways, their thinking did not shift. This

obstruction of movement was an indication of the stronghold of English hegemony and the monolingual habitus.

Every participant I spoke to during the interviews and the member checking calls (chapter 5) talked about how International Beach Day had a positive effect on their life, which was largely attributed to the fact that all the learnings of the day were connected to water and the beach, a way for participants to reconnect with nature and feel grounded. Kristi and I also deepened our relationship, our understandings of languaging, and the potential for water-based learning in language teaching and international education. Prioritizing the water-language connection requires and reproduces an insistence on relationality, which is a central teaching in the Haudenosaunee Kanonhweratónhsera (Hill, 2020). This focus on relationality was validating, healing, grounding, and supported relationship-building for everyone.

Learning from the Tékeni Teyohá:te

The Tékeni Teyohá:te (Two Row Wampum) is a 400+ year old living example of learning and sharing between nations, including but not limited to human nations. Kelsey Leonard, enrolled citizen of the Shinnecock Nation, (2025) explains that the Shinnecock, "People of the Stony Shore" (p. 52) from the east coast of Turtle Island, have an ancestral connection with the quahog and whelk mollusks whose territory they share. These mollusks are "remarkable bivalve filter feeders that take in water and clean approximately one gallon of water per hour" (p. 54). The purple and white wampum (beads) that form the rows of the Tékeni Teyohá:te Wampum belt were fashioned out of quahog shells. Through the wampum exists a spiritual, embodied connection that began long before the Kanyen'kehá:ka met the Dutch and continues to this day, through space and time, between the shore of the Atlantic and the shores of the Great Lakes, between the Shinnecock and the

Haudenosaunee, between the Haudenosaunee and the Canadian governments, between the water of Onyatarí:yo and the 11 participants who learned about Kanyenkeha and the Kanonhweratónhsera, between my book club and the tree whose body composes the pages of the book where Leonard's (2025) words are teaching us about the quahog. Leonard (2025) shares that, to the Shinnecock, words are medicine and should not be used to cause harm. Just as quahogs clean the water, the wampum filters language. "When an orator carries wampum, it filters out all the bad in their mind, heart, or words. The orator embraces the life force of the wampum to speak only the truth." (Leonard, 2025, p. 62). This water-language connection has always and continues to support wholistic inter*nation*al education.

We do not need to create something completely new for wholistic international education to occur. As García and colleagues state when they describe translanguaging ─ the beautiful ways that people transcend externally imposed linguistic borders to make and communicate meaning ─ "a different world is already here" (García et al., 2021, p. 206). This isn't about being nostalgic for a non-existent conciliatory past, nor a dismissal of ongoing colonial harms. As Tuck explains, it's about prioritizing *futurity*, actions we can take now "to bring about the futures we can't even fully imagine yet" (Tuck in Smith et al., 2018, p. 23). It's about understanding that, when we pay attention to the languaging of the land and water, inter*nation*al education can steward a space for us to change the conversation.

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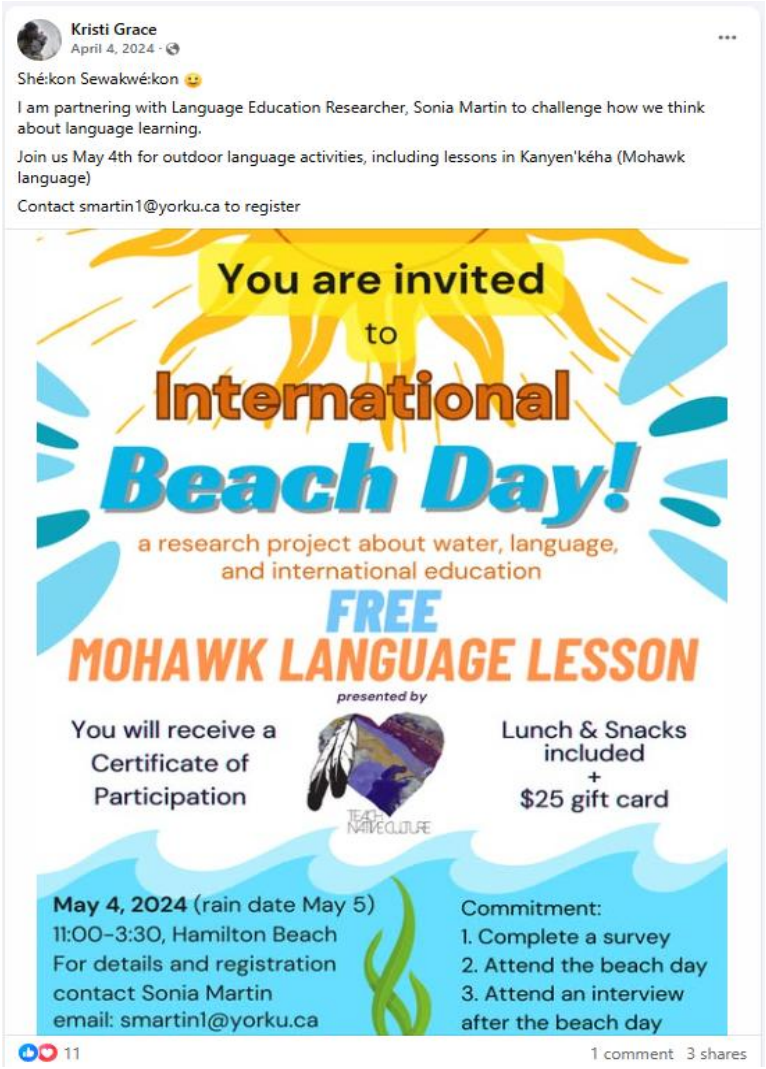
Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Material

A.1 Recruitment Poster in a Social Media Post

Figure 40

Social Media Recruitment Post



Note. Kristi Talbot shared our recruitment poster on the on the Hamilton Urban Indigenous Community Facebook Page.

A.2 Registration Form Text

International Beach Day Registration Form

Please complete this form to register for the International Beach Day research project. The information in this form is used for registration purposes only and will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please contact Sonia Martin: email - smartin1@yorku.ca, text message or call - 905-516-3138.

This project explores connections between water, language, and international education while prioritizing Haudenosaunee teachings.

You are asked to participate in:

- the beach day event which includes a Mohawk language lesson and language awareness activities
- a pre-event survey
- a post-event interview

You will receive:

- a $25 gift card
- lunch and snacks during the beach day event
- a certificate of participation

* Required
1. What is your name? *
Enter your answer

2. What are your pronouns?
Enter your answer

3. This project is for adults. Are you 18 years old or older?

- Yes
- No

4. The International Beach Day event is May 4, 2024. If the weather is uninviting that day, the event will be rescheduled to May 5, 2024. Are you available on May 4 and May 5?*

- Yes, I am available both days.
- No, I am not available either day.
- Other:

5. Because this event is about water, language, and international education, we are hoping to recruit people who represent different identities. Please select any of these broad categories that relate to you.

- ❑ international student
- ❑ domestic student
- ❑ water activist
- ❑ water enthusiast
- ❑ I am Indigenous
- ❑ I am not Indigenous
- ❑ English is my first language
- ❑ English is not my first language

6. Is there anything else about your identity that you would like to share?
Enter your answer

7. This event will take place at a sandy beach. We will **not** go in the water.
Do you have any accessibility requirements to participate? If yes, please indicate your requirements.
Enter your answer

8. We will provide lunch and snacks. Please list any dietary restrictions or allergies you may have.
Enter your answer

9. What is the best way to contact you?*
- o email
- o text message
- o call

10. Please enter your contact information. (telephone number and/or email address).*
Enter your answer

Appendix B: Research Instruments and Documents

B.1 Pre-Event Survey Questions

Pre-Event Survey for International Beach Day

1. What is your national identity? Please answer the way you identify even if it is not the same as your official citizenship.

2. Do you identify as an Indigenous person?
Yes
No

3. What is your racial and/or ethnic identity?
Enter your answer

4. Are you currently a student?
Yes - I am a domestic student.
Yes - I am an international student.
No - I am not a student.

5. What languages do you know?
Enter your answer

6. What languages do you feel comfortable speaking?
Enter your answer

7. Have you tried to learn a new language?
Yes
No

8. In general, how would you rate your language learning experience? (1= very bad, 10 = excellent)
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

9. Please explain your rating.
Enter your answer

10. Imagine a dream world with the best language learning and teaching. Please describe it.
Enter your answer

11. Have you ever participated in any form of international education? (Note: International education is a very broad label. Any definition you use is acceptable.)
Yes

No
Unsure

12. In general, how would you rate your international education experience(s)? (1 = very bad, 10 = excellent)
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

13. Please explain your rating.
Enter your answer

14. Imagine a dream world with the best international education. Please describe it.
Enter your answer

15. Have you ever communicated with someone who does not speak the same language as you or who speaks at a different level?
Yes
No

16. In general, how would you rate your experience communicating with people who do not speak the same language as you or whose language level is different from yours? (1 = very bad, 10 = excellent)
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

17. Please explain your rating.
Enter your answer

18. Imagine a dream world with the best communication across languages. Please describe it.
Enter your answer

19. Have you ever participated in water-based learning or land-based learning?
Yes
No
Unsure

20. In general, how would you rate your experience with water-based learning or land-based learning? (1 = very bad, 10 = excellent)
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

21.Please explain your rating.
Enter your answer

22. Imagine a dream world with the best water-based learning or land-based learning. Please

describe it.
Enter your answer

23. Do you identify as a water enthusiast or activist?
Yes
No
Unsure

24. Please explain why you do or do not identify as a water enthusiast or activist.
Enter your answer

B.2 International Beach Day Documents

B.2.a Packing List.

- ❑ Documents and Lesson Stuff – put in bag with clip boards
- ❑ Attendance list with participants' names and column re: whether they consent to participate and whether they consent to photos
- ❑ Name stickers
- ❑ Sticker/lanyard to identify people who do NOT want photos taken
- ❑ Clipboards with CMLA activities
- ❑ Tin with coloured pencils, sharpies, name stickers, and no photos labels
- ❑ Plan for day x 3 (Kristi, Sonia, Artie)
- ❑ My notes
- ❑ Gift cards
- ❑ Microphone

Beach Stuff

- ❑ Canopy
- ❑ Garden trowel for filling sandbags
- ❑ Beach blankets – 2 Mexican, 1 cheer sport (black/pink)
- ❑ Sun screen – put in basket
- ❑ Extra baseball hats (nice clean ones)
- ❑ Natural bug spray - put in basket
- ❑ Camping chairs
- ❑ 2 buckets
    - ☐ One white with a compost bag in it for lunch waste (plus one extra compost bag)
    - ☐ One tin with lid and no bag. Can dump the garbage into the bins in the parking lot after.
- ❑ Mosquito nets – put in basket
- ❑ First aid kit, including tick tweezers (purchase alcohol swabs) - put in basket
- ❑ Umbrellas 3 large and 3 small (put small ones in basket)

Food Stuff

- ❑ At start of day:
    - ☐ Giant bag of chips from costco
        - Blue tongs for serving chips x 2
        - Compostable bowels for chips (check if we need more)
    - ☐ Roll of paper towel
    - ☐ Apples/fruit, in big white bowl
    - ☐ Bag of granola bites/other snacks from costco
    - ☐ Water cooler (to clean and fill with water!)
    - ☐ Alan, Sonia, Nik – bring own water bottles

- ☐ A couple of extra reusable cups in case people forget water bottles

❑ At lunch time:

- ☐ Large coolers some for hot some for cold
- ☐ The large round cozy we had the pot in last time – for strawberry juice jug?
- ☐ When picking up food from GPD, ensure that there are 21 meals:
  - One dairy free (vegan)
  - One dairy free and gluten free
  - Disposable eco dinnerware

B.2.b Pre-Event Email for Participants.

Hello!

International Beach Day is almost here! Kristi Talbot and I are excited to see you this weekend.

This email includes practical information about the event and another consent form to ensure you are fully aware of what you will be asked to do.

There are three action required items in this email:

1. Read the consent form before you come to the beach
2. Tell me which gift card you prefer (Option 1 or Option 2)
3. RSVP as soon as possible
   Please continue reading for more details:

Informed consent:
Action required: Please read the attached consent form that describes the benefits and risks of participating in the event. The form also provides details about photography at the event.

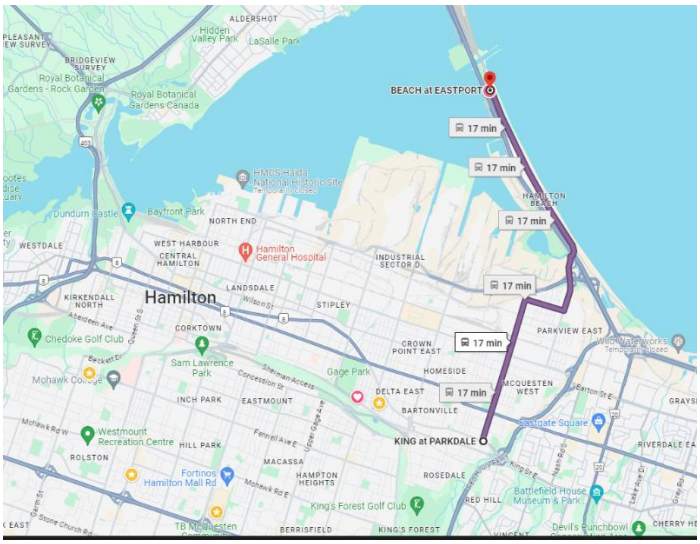
- I will ask you to sign this form when you arrive at the beach. Alternatively, you can provide consent verbally.
- You can withdraw consent at any time, without penalty. You do not have to do anything you do not want to do.
- If this form is too long, I can share the information verbally if you prefer. Just let me know. Please message me if you have any questions about informed consent.

Date:
Saturday, May 4 *or* Sunday, May 5, from 11:00 to about 3:35

We are monitoring the weather forecast to select the best date. On Friday afternoon, we will check again and message you to confirm the date. At this point, May 4 is still most likely.

Location:
Location: Hamilton Beach A. There is plenty of parking at the beach as well as a bus stop.

Bus information:
The closest bus stop is near our beach location:
Hamilton bus route 11, stop Eastport & Beach.



Click this link to view Hamilton's bus network map to see which bus routes connect with route 11.

What you will receive:

- Kanyen'kéha (Mohawk language) lesson
- Certificate for Participating in the lesson
- Lunch
- Snacks
- Water to refill bottles
- $25 Gift Card
    - Option 1 = The City & The City bookstore
    - Option 2 = FreshCo grocery store Action required: please tell me your preferred gift card option by Thursday.

What you need to bring:

Light rain is predicted, so dress for the weather. It's best to dress in layers. The beach can be warmer and colder than other places, and we may experience different temperatures throughout the event. Be prepared for both hot and cold weather on the same day. This is a sandy beach, so wear shoes that won't bother you if they get sandy.

Please also bring:

- a refillable water bottle
- hat
- sunglasses
- coat/raincoat
- scarf
- mitts/gloves
- sunscreen (preferably environmentally friendly)
- a beach blanket
- umbrella

- an open mind and heart
  Other notes:
- We will not be going in the water.
- There is a public toilet nearby.
- We will have a large canopy set up, and we will also provide a few extra umbrellas, clean hats, clean blankets and sunscreen for anyone who may forget theirs.

RSVP:
Action required: If your plans have changed and you are unable to attend, please message me as soon as possible.

Questions?
Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I'm happy to hear from you. You can email, text, or call: smartin1@yorku.ca, 905-516-3138.

Thank you again for your interest in this project! See you soon!

Warmly,
Sonia

Sonia Martin (she/her) ● **Doctoral Candidate, Education: Language, Culture & Teaching**
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B.2.c CMLA Activities.

B.2.c.i Language Portrait Handout.

Language Self-Portrait

Instructions

1. Write a list of all the languages that are part of your life in any way
2. Draw an outline of a body that represents you

   or choose to use the silhouette provided
3. Select a different colour for each of the languages on your list
4. Apply the language colours to your body portrait



B.2.c.ii Sonia's Language Portrait Teaching Notes.

Language Self-Portrait 45 mins NOTES

Objectives: notice embodiment of language, fluidity of language within oneself and beyond, and fluidity between languages (plurilingualism)

- Introduce selves, name, maybe pronouns, and one word about how you are feeling right now – feel free to use any language 10 mins

- Warm up: Mini challenge before we get started – Can you tell me an English word that relates to water and language proficiency? 5 mins

    - Considering the etymology of fluent highlights its close ties to water: "1580s, 'flowing freely' (of water), also, of speakers" (Harper, 2023). Historically, fluent and fluid have been interchangeable (Harper, 2023)

- Language is often described as a disembodied system, but languaging is very much an embodied experience. Bodies and language cannot be disconnected.

- When we attune to our own embodied experience of language, we can also notice the fluidity of language within ourselves.
    - Example Arabic-English story "let's pop in there and take a shouf around" - I didn't even know shouf was Arabic until a few years ago when I analyzed that story

Instructions – 20 mins to do the activity

1. Write a list of all the languages that are part of your life in any way

NOTE: this can include any type of language. Don't get caught up on what you think a real language is.

2. Draw an outline of a body that represents you
   or choose to use the silhouette provided
3. Select a different colour for each of the languages on your list
4. Apply the language colours to your body portrait

For example, my list would include Arabic, and maybe I would relate red to arabic, and I would colour the heart area on my body red because my heart swells when I hear Arabic. 10 mins

- After they colour their portraits:

Think, pair, maybe share
Discussion/Reflection: What came up for you from this activity? Did anything surprise you?

- REFLECTION Question to take away with you: Think about the role water plays in

how your body uses language.

Disembodying language means disconnecting language from water. This disembodiment is a form of dis-integration or fragmentation. Fragmentation of self – viewing bodies as separate from mind and spirit (Sodhi in Sodhi & Martin, 2023)

B.2.c.iii Linguistic Landscape Handout.

Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic Landscape Definition: All of the language(s), signs, symbols, and sensory signals in a place
Awareness of a linguistic landscape can help us understand the relationships (including power dynamics and hierarchies) of that place.

(Defintion adapted from LoCALL, 2019)

Instructions: Take your clipboard and a pencil and roam the beach. Pay attention to the *languaging* around you.

1. Choose a particular part of the linguistic landscape that attracts you and stay with it for a few minutes. What do you notice about the language(s) and languaging around you?

2. Do you notice anything new that you might not have noticed before the Kanyen'kéha lesson?

3. What human language(s) are visible? What does this say about this space?

4. What else stands out for you about the languaging of this place?

5. Fill in the blank (choose one sentence). You can use any language(s) to complete the sentence.

    - Languaging here is....

    - _____ (insert the name of a being/place/element) is saying …

    Bonus instruction: Try to use a Kanyen'kéha word!

B.2.c.iv Sonia's Linguistic Landscape Teaching Notes.

Linguistic Landscape – 40 minutes - NOTES

Objectives: To make the implicit explicit; noticing/analyzing linguistic landscapes can "illuminate [their] covert power" Przymus & Kohler, 2018, p. 67), ultimately contributing to raising CMLA. 10 mins

- When you hear the phrase "linguistic landscape" what do you think it means?

Linguistic Landscape Definition: All of the language(s), signs, symbols, and sensory signals in a place
Awareness of a linguistic landscape can help us understand the relationships (including power dynamics and hierarchies) of that place.

(Defintion adapted from LoCALL, 2019)

- Today I've been using the word languaging. What does this mean?

Languaging is all actions for processing, accessing, and producing language to make and communicate meaning. It is inclusive of all language types including signs, symbols, and sensory signals.
(Definition adapted from García, 2008; Li, 2018; Piccardo, 2019; Swain et al., 2009)

For this activity, I want you to roam the beach, and pay attention to all of the languaging around you.

Choose one spot that calls your attention. Pay attention to what you notice.

There are some reflection questions on your paper to help you pay attention.
Answer the questions, and then write a sentence about the place.

There are two sentence prompts at the bottom of your page. Choose one:

- Languaging here is....
- _____ (insert the name of a being/place/element) is saying …

You can write the sentence in any language or mix of languages you want.
Bonus instruction: Try to use a Kanyen'kéha word!

You have 20 minutes to roam and complete this activity.

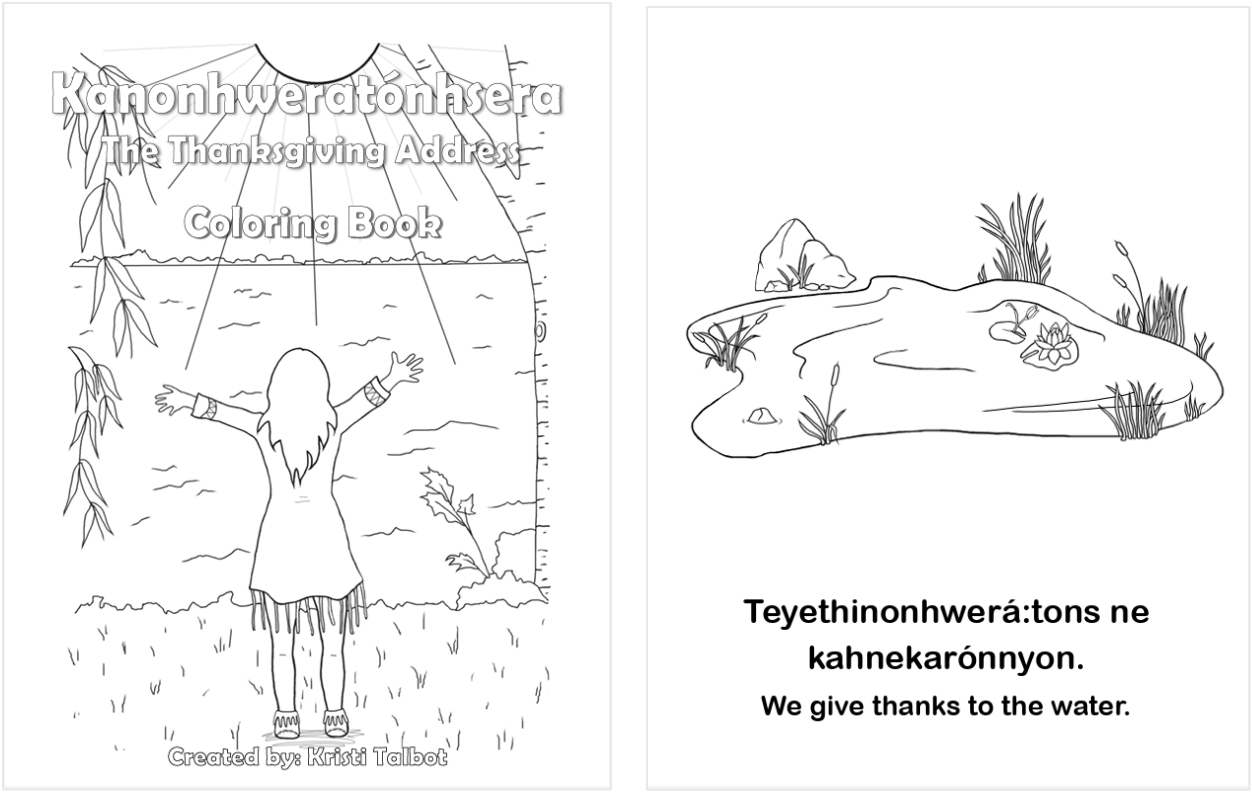
Pair, share .... share your sentence with your partner 5 mins

If time: what is coming up for you? Let's go around the circle and say one word each. 5 mins

B.2.d Kanonhweratónhsera Illustrations by Kristi Talbot.

Figure 41

Sample Pages of the Book of Illustrations of Kanonhweratónhsera



Note. Kristi Talbot created this book and shared it with the participants.

B.2.e Water Song Lyrics

After International Beach Day, Kristi Talbot provided a handout with these lyrics that I emailed to the participants:

WATER SONG - Mohawk and English

Written by Theresa "Bear" Fox
Found on YouTube (Water Song by Akwesasne Women Singers)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MvNaFWcQf4

Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka (we love water)
Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka
Kahnekarónnyon mmmmm (all types of water)
Kahnekanó:ron mmmm (water is precious)
Kayanaweya heyah
(x2)

Yo ho yo ho weya hey
Yo ho yo ho weya hey

Kahnekarónnyon mmmmmm
Kahnekanó:ron mmmm
Kayanaweya heyah
(x1)

Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka (we love water)
Yonkwanorónhkwa Ohnéka
Kahnekarónnyon mmmmm (all types of water)
Kahnekanó:ron mmmm (water is precious)
Kayanaweya heyah
(x1)

Yo ho yo ho weya hey
Yo ho yo ho weya hey

Kahnekarónnyon mmmmmm
Kahnekanó:ron mmmm
Kayanaweya heyah
(x1)

Yo hoooo

B.3 Post-Event Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Questions

Meeting Start Time:

Thank you for attending this interview.

This inquiry looks at the connections between water, language, and international education while prioritizing Haudenosaunee teachings, to consider anti-oppressive language practices. Our interview today will be about one hour, depending on how we chat.

On Friday, I sent you another consent form for the interview. You indicated that you do/don't consent to being audio recorded, do/don't consent to being video recorded, and that you do/don't consent to me using your quotes. Do you still feel this way, or is there anything you would like to change or discuss?

During the interview, please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

[If no recording: Thank you for letting me know. I will only type notes of our conversation; I won't video/audio record].

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If you think of other questions or concerns at any point during the interview, feel free to ask them at any time. Same goes for after the interview. You can message me any time.

Your responses will be kept confidential. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Are you ready?

START RECORDING (with consent only)

- Thank you for attending the beach day event! It was three weeks ago. When you think about it now, what's the first word that pops into your mind?
    - Why do you think that word came to mind?
    - What part of the beach day do you think about the most? Why?
    - Today, right now, can you sense any part of the beach day in your body? Explain.

- I'm going to show you a bank of photos from the beach day event.
    - Choose three photos that represent one or more of the following:
        - a moment of insight
        - a connection you made or
        - a relationship that formed
        - something you felt
    - Potential prompts for discussion:
        - Why did you choose these particular photos?

        - What stood out to you in each of these photos?
        - What do these images represent to you?
        - Was it difficult to choose? Why?
        - Is there anything else you want to say about any of these photos?
- I would love to chat about your language portrait. During the beach day, I didn't get to hear everyone's explanations. Let's look at the photo of yours. Can you walk me through it?
    - When we were doing this activity, how did it make you feel?
    - How do you feel now, looking at it again?
    - When we were doing it, what did it make you think about? What ideas came up?
    - What does it make you think about now that we look at it again? Any new ideas?

- Have a look at the survey responses that you wrote over a month ago. Take a few minutes to skim through them. Does anything you wrote pop out to you now?
- Potential Prompts for discussion:
        - What pops out? Why?
        - Would you answer any of the questions differently now?

- Did water or the beach play a role in anything you learned that day? If so what/how?

- How would you describe your experience with language during this event?
    - How would you describe your experience communicating during this beach day event?
    - Has anything shifted for you about language or communicating since the beach day event?
    - Has the language learning at the beach day event had an effect on how you communicate with people since that day?

- As you reflect on our International Beach Day together, what stands out to you about relationships that formed?
    - Relationships with people and/or beings of the beach / elements
    - Did the events of the day affect the way you engage with people who speak differently than you? With other languaging beings?

- The Beach Day event attempted to bring together water, language, and international education while prioritizing Haudenosaunee language and teachings.
    - Is there anything else you would like to say about this event or what you learned during the event that I didn't bring up?

- Since Kristi and I are both teachers, we would also like your feedback about the language lesson and other activities.
    - What worked the best for you that day?
    - Did anything hamper your learning that day?

- If you could offer any advice, what would it be?

END RECORDING

When I share learnings from this project, I will maintain your confidentiality and I will only share information about you that you are comfortable sharing. For example, I can use pseudonyms instead of real names. Would you like to use a pseudonym? If yes, would you like to choose your pseudonym?
Is there any other information about your identity that you would like to remain identifiable or anonymized? For example, your profession, nationality/nation or clan?

Before we leave, I have a couple of non-interview questions and reminders:

- If we had a beach day reunion in a few months, would you be interested in attending? Something less formal? Maybe a potluck?
- Are you on instagram? We created the page as a way to connect everyone and share info about languaging, but we haven't done much with it yet. Do you follow us? (If yes, thank you/if no, would you consider it?) What would you like to see for the instagram page? Any tips?
- I'll be sending you your photos and language certificate soon.
- Any other questions at this point?

Meeting End Time:
Sonia's post-interview thoughts:

Appendix C: Cross Seas Analysis Key Quotes per Participant

Each Cross Seas property "is connected and interrelated to the whole and ought not to be interpreted in absence of its wholistic context" (Absolon, 2019, p. 135). Because of this wholeness, many of the quotes relate to more than one property in the Cross Seas Analysis Model. To facilitate presentation in this document, I have matched each key quote to just one property in the tables, but as you read, you will likely notice how they overlap with other properties or elements. Each property is dynamic and only represents my embodied learning about these participant gifts at this moment.

C.1 Suhaila's Cross Seas Table

Table 8

Suhaila – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – "Talking to water is something that I always heard about it but I never tried it, but that day, yeah, I tried that and ... it felt really great. Because water is something that is like always flowing like always goes with the flow. So when we talk or speak out our heart to water we know that it's secure." **embodiment** – "The best communication [across] languages, I would say heart to heart. Someone who's communicated with, like, truthful, like sharing their true nature through like true ideas, with the pure heart."	
Shore	**boundaries** – "Whenever I see the bird looking at the seaside, it reminds me of freedom. They fly whenever, wherever they want, and they do whatever they want." **borders** – "If we don't know English, we can't make a future here."	
Waves	**energy** – "I think water is something pure and that it's life. If there is no water, there's no life. That's why." **movement** – "The water made us pour our heart out and speak to each other truthfully."	
Grid	**risk** – "Actually, before participating, I was kind of nervous. I was not sure if I would be able to like go all alone and be part of the beach day, but I was like, no, I'm going. I'm joining, like, it was something that I wouldn't, I think I would never experience. So I was like, I want to join this one." **intersections** – "I remember talking to that lady about languages and a moment of our connection we got from it, like everyone ... experience the same thing, I would say, like similar things in life. It doesn't matter that they're from which country or which community, but as a human, everybody is, I think, kind of similar."	

C.2 Rita's Cross Seas Table

Table 9

Rita – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – "I was kind of sad that Polish was an afterthought, cause my husband's Polish. But we don't use it… I don't hear it ever. … but I know that it's in his heart, so I added it to my heart." **embodiment** – "When I think of [the beach day], I can feel the waves. And the noise…. Background noise really bothers me … So for a lot of the day when I was trying to concentrate, I actually found the waves disruptive, disturbing. ... It was really windy, right? It would have made the waves more, almost, almost violent, like, it was a lot, but you're right, the wind and the moon, I'm not sure what cycle we were in the moon."	
Shore	**boundaries** – "[International education] would have to be respectful of [international students'] culture." **borders** – "It just shows the colonizer selfishness. We see that people are selfish, like this is what they need and forget about nature. Who cares about nature and what we're destroying? We need power. We're going to do this. Like that's people's view of the world."	
Waves	**energy** – "I understand that traditional Haudenosaunee language is not written. So I respect her decision to not use written language because that's not how it would be shared." **movement** – "You'll see it took a little bit for us to open up. I think at first there wasn't a lot of conversations, but then by the end of the day, it seems that the whole people were."	
Grid	**risk** – "The sun was nice and warm, and I wasn't really paying attention, but the next day my face was burnt. But I didn't [notice], because it was cold and windy." **intersections** – "So it was it was nice to be in that environment. It was more relaxing like I said, I think it helped with other people opening up to be in that situation and to be in nature, had a positive emotional effect on me and probably other people."	

C.3 Sophia's Cross Seas Table

Table 10

Sophia – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
water	**relationality** – "Not only relationship between people, also, people with different background, different culture, and different age also. …Yeah, the, different, between female and male ... And also the relationship people with nature, with water with the environment relationship. … And I think environment ... have more effect ... on people when you learn or when you, maybe when you get out and to watch or enjoy the nature, it can make you calm down and more peaceful. Not only for the study or every time if you feel down, you can go outside. Just to watch the nature. Yeah, you can feel a lot of things." **embodiment** – "On the beach that the beach day is kind of water-based learning I think, yeah, so I may, change the answer [on the survey] and I can describe it, What is the water-based learning? Yeah, I have experience with it … It is kind of a learning from nature. ... Just, like what you say, the water is part of our body and language is also a part of our body with connection with water and language we learn with these two elements right, so it is not separated with our body. And we learn with. Well, we learn, we get acknowledged in our body."	
shore	**boundaries** – n/a **borders** – "We have different first language. But when we use the same language such as English, we can communicate more easily and get more connections with different people."	
waves	**energy** – "I think [offering tobacco] is great experience, and you can just put your wish and your hope and pray something when you put this into the beach. **movement** – "I think I will communicate with friends or just to maybe ask a friend or partners to get outside and communicate in person. More in person."	
grid	**risk** – n/a **intersections** – "We share our portrait, why we use this color to represent our languages. We know each other by the self-portrait."	

C.4 Claudia's Cross Seas Table

Table 11

Claudia – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Images
water	**relationality** – I am related with this … bird … Because when I left my country, I flew in an airplane, and there is a destination that was my goal. … it was a long travel to do it. …through the travel you pass difficult moments, but there is a place where do you belong. **embodiment** – It was incredible how my mouth moved when I learned this [Kanyen'kéha] word. It was totally different from Spanish or English. And the sounds that I did, it was so powerful. For this reason, for me, it was a really great experience.	
shore	**boundaries** – Sometimes I assume that everybody will understand me, but in reality, you need to learn the language if you want to communicate with others. Even though, can use nonverbal communication. But the most important is reflect your message through your words, through your body language. For this reason, for me this activity was really interesting. That allows me to know what language I prefer to speak. **borders** – Because we focused just in learn English. And it is important to learn about First Nations languages as international students.	
waves	**energy** – I learned that we need to stay calm as the water. Because everything needs to flow around you, and you need to be open to pass the difficults with calm. Because, in the beach day, it was windy, it was sunny. They're was a lot of noise, but the water was still calm. And I learned that. **movement** – If I learn that language, I can teach others and keep that memory for generation through generations. And I change my mind, for this reason, now I am aware that it's important to learn that language and share with others.	
grid	**risk** – Because when I left my country, I flew in an airplane, and there is a destination that was my goal. And for this reason, it was a long travel to do it. But here is the point that through the travel you pass difficult moments, but there is a place where do you belong. **intersections** – I didn't think about how important is the language. Now I know that this is a reconnection with the community. With animals plants verbal and non-verbal communication.	

C.5 MJ's Cross Seas Table

Table 12

MJ – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – Probably the interpretation of the messages really rely on the individual, but I'm sure there'll be messages that are commonly recognized as well, when you are closely listening to the languages that the nature speaks. **embodiment** – People can be more contemplative and emotional, spiritual, and not all about just, you know, knowledge processing. So yeah, I think there was there was more communication then just exchanging information. **boundaries** – n/a **borders** – I think the language itself is very tied to your self-esteem and confidence. Even if it's not projected as you're being judgmental, it can be taken as that way … Not being able to articulate your ideas in a sufficient way, you feel kind of dumb. Internally you're not, but externally you appear to be, so I guess the best language learning and teaching is very open minded and non judgmental. Even for yourself too, cause you know, there are a lot of self censorship going on when you're speaking second language.	
Waves	**energy** – I think the whole environment, the way it was the activities or event was set up … maybe it was because we were placed in nature too. It was just, people were willing to accept whatever the task that they were about to do. So I think it created an environment that was very relaxing, non-judgmental, open, you could be personal too. In some ways, spiritual. **movement** – I thought it was interesting that Kristi kept it as oral teaching and no visual … materials. And it was challenging. But I think you should keep it that way. The orality was an interesting experience, and I think the oral tradition, it provides I think a very different perspectives on how the communication is made but also how memories get made.	
Grid	**risk** – Students go to another country being very hopeful, and then there are a lot of high expectations, and you know their dreams they wanna achieve and all that, and when you go into the educational systems, … you kind of start realizing the challenges, and sometimes you feel like you're being seen as just dollar signs. You know, not served properly or something like that, that	

	marginalized experience. That's difficult. But you know there are ways to overcome those challenges … Often you feel that you have a glass ceiling, try to work around this, sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't work. But then … you get to learn the bigger world and different perspectives … One of the best thing about learning another language is that it gives you access to a whole different world, right? The language which comes with so much connotated beliefs and understanding norms and all that stuff. So I think your world gets bigger … but it's not an easy experience. **intersections** – The way they use tobacco was an interesting way to interact with water, because in the shamanic practices in Korea they do provide food and things like that to the water.

C.6 Allison's Cross Seas Table

Table 13

Allison – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – I bring it back to the, Ganǫ́hǫnyǫh and how we've always had a connection with land and water and I feel like that's where the best learning is done. … Yeah, it's all about connection and growth and making those connections and showing other people about it, and I think that's where my dream education comes into … not discriminating against anybody that's not Indigenous and helping to them to reconnect with that part of, like, nature and learning and connection as well. **embodiment** – And I was listening to the grass and the water and the wind, and I was surprised … I didn't notice until that very day how much I was really missing it over the winter … I think that was probably the best thing, cause that was my first time for this year to just let myself be one, and be with the nature and be in the moment. Yeah it was awesome.	
Shore	**boundaries** – I did her in a skirt and I did it in a way that it resembled like a ribbon skirt. **borders** – a small sense of like sadness because most of it's green for English, but that's bittersweet though because I don't have a choice	

Waves	**energy** – My teacher friend and I always talk about our dream education, like our dream school and how it would look and represent how our villages were back in the day with longhouses, and how … each longhouse be a different thing, like you can go to this one longhouse to just speak with elders and learn from them or go to another one and … it's not your typical Western education, and all the communities and families are together and you're not just learning from one teacher you have all these community members that have different things they can offer you, like the elders share their stories and the older adults can share like life skills, and even elders can share their life skills as well, and … the adults can learn from the children that are there to learn as well because there's that learning patience and understanding, and … it would be so amazing to have that. **movement** – I brought a lot of it to school with me. So I have a lot more patience with students ... when I'm trying to teach someone how to say a word, I think back to that day and how much patience [Kristi] had to break it down for us and take it slow with us. And it was different experience to see that happening in real time.	
Grid	**risk** – I gave myself a chance to, like, make a couple of other connections with, I think, two other people that were there … and that's me taking, healthy risks and that's not something I usually do **intersections** – It really brought together the ways of teaching and learning that I like and that I really thrive in. And I feel like most people do. And it was just a really awesome experience to be able to just be there with a small group and it was more intimate and fun.	

C.7 Jasmine's Cross Seas Table

Table 14

Jasmine – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – One thing that we've talked about in a class that I took last year was like the concept of Land as first teacher and the Land as like its own spirit that is always there to remind us of certain lessons and teachings, and I feel like the Beach Day was an example of that. It, like, represented an example of, like, learning in time and space on the land that, how that can be like very culturally grounding. **embodiment** – It was very grounding and I didn't wear shoes the whole time because it was, we were in the sand, and I remember the feeling of my feet in the sand and really enjoyed that and found the whole experience to be grounding.	
Shore	**boundaries** – Learning in person with other community members, which happened … with an elder present … I think part of why I put that for 13 [on the pre-event survey] was my yearning for cultural knowledge that elders typically provide, like explaining the significance of certain, you know, terms or phrases or songs ... Kristi … supplanted that knowledge sufficiently … It was fine that an Elder wasn't present, like, she is so knowledgeable, so that was great. **borders** – I don't know if [the participants who were not from Canada] some of them would have considered it, like the day, to be an international educational experience, like, given that some of them were new to Canada but then I don't know if they considered themselves Canadian nationals at this point yet or not.	
Waves	**energy** – It all felt very, like, serendipitous because there were so many parts of it that ... were already top of mind for me that were very pleasant surprises or like connections or that were so unexpected. **movement** – I do have the Thanksgiving Address, like I have this print of it hanging on my wall, and I do like speak differently about it when I'm practicing spirituality or thinking about those things … I walk by it every day and now I will catch myself, like, rehearsing it and remembering how to say it because I want that to stick in my head.	

Grid	**risk** – I remember … challenging myself to think about the languages that I know … I remember having a difficult time distinguishing what languages to add or not to add. Cause I know you had mentioned, like, different understandings of fluency and not like being afraid to put something even if you only know like one or two words … I remember being challenged by trying to think … of what languages to put on there. I ended up choosing ones that were just in any way meaningful to me. Cause like I could say like aloha or whatever, but I don't I don't think that I would have been able to put Hawaiian anywhere on my body …it's not representative of any part of me. Yeah, so I think that was an interesting, like, challenge. **intersections** – Friendly and open … Everybody was really friendly, and, like, interested in one another and it was nice to be able to forge connections with people in that way … everybody was there with a very open spirit.	

C.8 Marc's Cross Seas Table

Table 15

Marc – Cross Seas Key Quotes

Elements	Properties and Quotes	Image
Water	**relationality** – We're enmeshed in nature here. **embodiment** – It was fun, you know, to try to enunciate.	
Shore	**boundaries** – I took it to what it was, and it was a nice day on the water and learning something new, and being reminded that I can, you know, that my word means something. **borders** – Well, I surrounded the whole, well almost the whole perimeter my body with blue. Because I'm first and foremost Canadian. English.	
Waves	**energy** – I find myself gravitating more toward the beach and water and the bush. **movement** – Languaging here is common and brings me back to simpler times.	
Grid	**risk** – I felt kind of out of place ... I was going through a lot at the time. And I felt insecure ... everybody else seemed to be a student. **intersections** – And I just remember us all banding together and trying to sing Indigenous song, and with the water in the background, it's just very beautiful.	

Appendix D: International Beach Day Reunion Materials

D.1 International Beach Day Reunion Handout by Sonia Martin

International Beach Day Reunion
with Sonia Martin and Kristi Talbot
September 20, 2025

The International Beach Day events are part of Sonia Martin's doctoral inquiry that focuses on water, language, and international education while prioritizing local Haudenosaunee language and teachings. Building bridges is not a goal of this project but rather identifying connections that already exist. Some noticeable connections that came up during interviews with participants are:



Relationality
Participants strengthened relationships with colleagues and former classmates. Some formed new relationships with strangers, with ladybugs, with wind, with birds.



Validation
Engaging with nature as kin is validating, as many feelings arise when in nature. Some participants were happy to learn that they were not the only ones who talk or sing to trees and plants. For some people, the event confirmed that they were on the right path with their own teaching or educational endeavors.



Photographs by Artie K. Martin

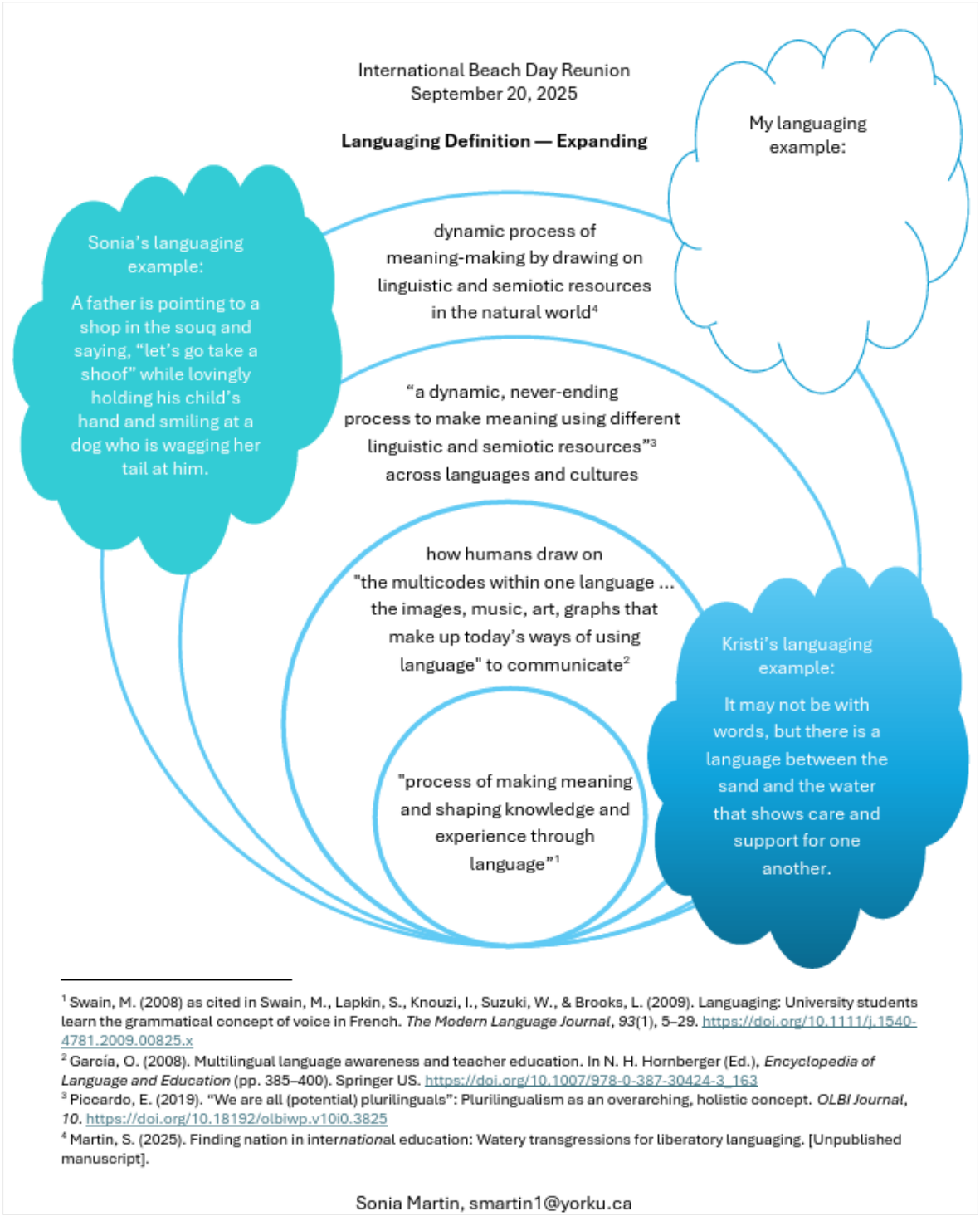
Empowerment
Trying something different and showing up in new ways boosts confidence and strength. Relating to new knowledge and language, particularly the language of this place, is empowering.

Inspiration
Thinking about language as an embodied experience, participants moved past ideas of proficiency to embrace their vast linguistic knowledge. Some participants were inspired to learn more about local Indigenous language and culture. Some were inspired by the diversity of people wanting to learn Kanyen'kéha, which highlighted possibilities for the future.

Communion
For some, learning Kanyen'kéha in nature with this diverse group nurtured the desire to learn more or share more about local Indigenous language and culture, and the desire to be with nature. Some experienced a deeper connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.



Words that come to mind when we think of International Beach Day



[1] Swain, M. (2008) as cited in Swain, M., Lapkin, S., Knouzi, I., Suzuki, W., & Brooks, L. (2009). Languaging: University students learn the grammatical concept of voice in French. *The Modern Language Journal*, *93*(1), 5–29. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00825.x

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[3] Piccardo, E. (2019). "We are all (potential) plurilinguals": Plurilingualism as an overarching, holistic concept. *OLBI Journal*, *10*. https://doi.org/10.18192/olbiwp.v10i0.3825

[4] Martin, S. (2025). Finding nation in inter*national* education: Watery transgressions for liberatory languaging. [Unpublished manuscript].

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D.2 Listening for Language Handout by Kristi Talbot, Teach Native Culture

Listening for Language

Water	Sand	Sky
Grass	Flower	Bird
Insect	Sun	Cloud
Rock	Shell	Tree

Listening for Language

This is more than a scavenger hunt. It is a journey of listening, learning, and gratitude.

Today, you will walk gently on the land and along the water, observing the beings who live here (sand, water, birds, shells, rocks, plants, and more). Each one has a voice. Each one has a role. Each one contributes to the balance of life. Your task is to discover what they are saying and why we are thankful for them.

What to do:

Open your senses:

Walk slowly and attentively. Look, listen, smell, feel. The beings are speaking, not with human words, but through their presence, their actions, their place in the web of life.

Find the beings:

Use the provided list or visual guide to help identify beings you may find at the beach (e.g. water, sand, birds, shells, rocks, etc.).

Listen for languaging:

Ask yourself:

- What is this being's role or responsibility in the world?
- What message might it be communicating?
- How does it care for the Earth, for us, or for others?
- How might we express thanks ?

Record Your Reflections:

In your worksheet write down:

- A short description of what you observed
- The language or message you hear
- What have you learned from this message?
- Why we are thankful for its existence and work

Use the language:

Practice using Kanyen'kéha words to name and honour each being (use the QR code handout to hear how each word sounds). This is a way to speak back to them in the language of the land.

A few reminders:

Move with respect. Do not disturb the beings. Observe, listen, and learn

Ask permission: If you feel called to touch or take something (like a shell), ask silently or aloud and be sure to give thanks.

You are in a relationship: These are not things to collect but relatives to connect with.

Honour the teachings: What you hear and feel may be personal. Carry the lessons with care.

Closing circle: At the end of the hunt we will come together to share what we learned, heard, or felt. We'll reflect on what it means to truly listen to the world, and how language connects us not just to people, but to all life.

Onkwawén:na

Scan the QR code to hear the words in our language

Water Ohné:ka	**Sand** O'nehsarónhkwa'	**Sky** Karón:ya
Grass Óhonte	**Flower** Otsì:tsya	**Bird** Otsi'tén:'a
Insect Otsi'nón:wa	**Sun** Karáhkwa	**Cloud** Otshá:ta
Rock Onén:ya	**Shell** Ókta	**Tree** Kérhite