

Editorial

Christopher Cox
Carleton University

Olivia N. Sammons
Carleton University

This special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* examines the current relationships between the fields of applied linguistics (henceforth AL) and Indigenous Language Revitalization (henceforth ILR).¹ By highlighting contemporary practices and shared challenges, this collection seeks to advance understanding and foster collaboration among practitioners working at the intersection of ILR and AL today, both as a practical reflection on ongoing work in this area and as a response to recent calls in the literature of both disciplines for sustained dialogue and partnership between individual practitioners and communities of practice engaged in both fields (see, e.g., Daniels & Sterzuk, 2022; McIvor, 2020 for ILR; Cope & Penfield, 2011; Penfield & Tucker, 2011 for AL).

This stock-taking is particularly timely, as it coincides with significant developments in language education and revitalization efforts focused on Indigenous languages, both within Canada and globally. Indigenous communities have long asserted the critical importance of their languages and been acutely aware of the devastating impacts of settler-colonial violence, forced assimilation, and genocide on their vitality. However, widespread awareness and appreciation of Indigenous languages have only begun to gain traction among non-Indigenous communities in Canada relatively recently. The decade following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) Final Report has seen substantial growth in community-based language revitalization programs across many Indigenous communities (cf. DeCaire and Ingram et al., this issue). It has also witnessed the advancement of innovative approaches to Indigenous language teaching, learning, and promotion (cf. Benson, Sleeper, and Dormer et al., this issue). Concurrently, we observe notable shifts in the landscape of federal legislation and funding programs in Canada related to Indigenous languages, including the passing of the *Indigenous Languages Act* in 2019 and the subsequent establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. Globally, this momentum is mirrored by increased international attention to Indigenous languages, with UNESCO declaring 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages and launching the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in 2022. These developments highlight the growing recognition of Indigenous languages and initiatives, while providing an opportunity for deeper reflection on the current state of ILR. They also invite a closer examination of the connections that ILR research and praxis may have with neighbouring fields, such as AL.

As co-editors, we approach this Special Issue from our positionality as non-Indigenous researchers with backgrounds in applied and general linguistics. Over many years, we have had the privilege of collaborating with Indigenous colleagues, communities, and programs in the United States and Canada. These relationships have profoundly shaped our professional (and personal) lives, particularly in the areas of Indigenous language learning, teaching, and revitalization. Our interest in encouraging further dialogue around

the intersections of ILR and AL is shaped—and necessarily bounded—by the nature of our relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners in these fields. While those working in both areas share overlapping interests and commitments, they often operate in isolation from one another. In this regard, the “two solitudes” metaphor suggested by Rice (2009) to characterize the relationship between theoretical linguistics and language activism could no less aptly describe the state of many areas of practice within ILR and AL. As McIvor (2020) observes, this division is not due to a lack of shared interests but rather to the distinct histories of each field’s emergence and development, as well as the differing motivations and epistemologies that underpin contemporary work in both areas. These differences contribute to the separations that are often observed in the work of ILR and AL practitioners today, despite their potential for collaboration.

With such differences in perspective and practice in mind, we invited contributions to this Special Issue that specifically address the intersection of ILR and AL as they are practiced today. Submissions were encouraged to reflect on the relationship between ILR and AL in current theory and practice and/or to explore specific programs, initiatives, and case studies that advance understanding of the connections between these fields. We were delighted to receive a diverse range of submissions, including five full-length research papers from fourteen contributing authors, each drawing meaningful links between current research in both disciplines. In their article “O’ónna: A curriculum for land-based language learning,” **Rebekah R. Ingram, Ryan T. Ransom, and Kahente Horn-Miller** consider the importance that contemporary digital language atlases play not only in language documentation, but also as resources for language revitalization, particularly within land-based learning contexts. They chart the development of the *Atlas of Kanyen’kehá:ka Space*, a recently created digital resource that centers on Kanyen’kehá:ka (Mohawk) language, landscape, and culture. The authors examine how this atlas connects ongoing documentation efforts with language transmission, fostering collaboration between first-language speakers of Kanyen’kéha (Mohawk) and language learners. Situating this work in the context of current Kanyen’kéha language revitalization initiatives (cf. DeCaire, this issue), the authors outline a task-based curriculum for land-based language learning and documentation. This curriculum incorporates, innovative activities, such as the creation of drone-assisted video footage paired with audio commentary by L1 Kanyen’kéha speakers. These activities enrich the contents of the Atlas while promoting engagement with the surrounding physical environment and associated Kanyen’kehá:ka cultural knowledge. The authors further draw connections between aspects of this work and current practices in AL and ILR. They note challenges in applying established language transmission models from one field (e.g., Master/Mentor-Apprentice models; Hinton et al., 2018) to this curriculum, which required drawing on methodologies from the other field. Given the importance of integrating land, culture, and language in education for many Indigenous communities (cf. Chiblow & Meighan, 2022), this detailed case study provides a valuable example of how such integration can be achieved in practice.

Nicki Benson’s article ““Don’t Just Collect Words”: Strategies for Advanced Indigenous Language Learning” examines strategies that adult learners use to successfully advance their proficiency in Indigenous languages. The author highlights considerable gaps in both the ILR and AL literature, where most research has focused on beginning and intermediate learners, with relatively little attention given to advanced language learning, particularly in the context of Indigenous languages. Drawing on a combination of long-term observations and participation with the Skw̓xwú7mesh Sníchim Stewardship—a group

dedicated to the revitalization of Skw̓wú7mesh sníchim (the Squamish language)—as well as semi-structured interviews with advanced additional language learners of Indigenous languages across Canada and a review of recent literature in AL and ILR, Benson identifies six categories of strategies that have been effective in supporting the attainment of advanced proficiency. Building on these findings, Benson proposes specific areas where greater interaction between AL and ILR may prove mutually beneficial. She underscores the potential for AL research to inform decision-making and enhance proficiency development in ILR initiatives, while also advocating for the integration of insights and empirical results from ILR contexts into AL. This cross-disciplinary exchange, Benson argues, could challenge and refine current understandings of language learning and teaching in AL, while simultaneously advancing the goals of Indigenous language revitalization.

In “Singing Synthesizers: Musical Language Revitalization through UTAUoid,” **Morgan Sleeper** considers the role of music in language revitalization and the potential of collaborative, low-resource methods for digital speech-and-music synthesis to facilitate greater engagement with music in ILR contexts. Sleeper highlights previous studies in ILR and AL that document the positive impacts of integrating music into language learning and revitalization activities, benefiting both individual learners and broader language communities. He advocates for the connections between language, music, and technology to expand these benefits further. Positioning his research at the nexus of these fields and within the context of Cherokee language revitalization, Sleeper provides a detailed account of creating a customized digital synthesizer for Cherokee. Through this process, he draws explicit links between the knowledge and technical skills common in AL and the critical, community-driven perspectives and experience central to ILR, drawn on in this work. By demonstrating how digital tools and musical engagement can support language revitalization, Sleeper offers an innovative contribution that bridges these disciplines and opens new pathways for collaboration.

Focusing on digital methods and resources for Indigenous language revitalization in another context, the article “Orthography Choice in Indigenous Language CALL Courses” by **Jackie Dormer, Kari A. B. Chew, Colette Child, Sara Child, Lokosh, Juliet Morgan, Olivia N. Sammons, and Heather Souter** examines dynamics around orthographic decision-making in the development of online Indigenous language courses. Employing the methodology of storywork (Archibald, 2008), the authors reflect on the complexities of representing Indigenous languages in written form within digital learning environments. They share insights gained from creating online courses for Chikashshanompa’ (Chickasaw), Kwakwala, and Southern Michif, offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between historical and contemporary orthographic practices. The authors situate their decisions within the broader histories that underlie the emergence of multiple writing systems for their languages, highlighting the relevance of orthographic diversity for many present-day Indigenous language learners. They also address key issues in ILR and AL, including strengthening relationships between individual learners and their communities, supporting effective intergenerational transmission of language and cultural knowledge, and deepening Indigenous learners’ connections to their languages, lands, and communities. By situating their work at the intersection of ILR, AL, and computer-assisted language learning (CALL)—a field where Indigenous languages remain underrepresented (cf. Bontogon et al., 2018)—the authors identify new opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Finally, **Ryan DeCaire**'s article "Adult Immersion in Kanien'kéha Revitalization" provides an assessment of current language use and transmission within Kanien'kehá:ka communities, relating these dynamics to the development and current state of Kanien'kéha adult immersion programs. DeCaire considers the impact that such programs have had on the advancement of the Kanien'kéha revitalization movement to date, emphasizing the critical role of graduates from these programs with high language proficiency in strengthening the social structures associated with Kanien'kéha revitalization and reintroducing the language into critical domains, including intergenerational transmission in the home. At the same time, DeCaire notes a range of challenges facing adult Kanien'kéha immersion programs and their participants, including the availability and stability of funding for both programs and students. He also examines the limitations of the current "root word" method (Green & Maracle, 2018) in advancing learners' proficiency beyond basic levels and underscores the need for additional support to ensure the overall wellbeing of participants. As adult immersion programs increasingly play a pivotal role in fostering advanced language proficiency in Indigenous communities (cf. Benson, this issue), DeCaire's detailed discussion of Kanien'kéha language vitality and its interaction with current adult immersion initiatives provides valuable insights for Indigenous language education and language planning, both within and beyond Kanien'kehá:ka territory.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the editors-in-chief of *CJAL*, Eva Kartchava and Michael Rodgers, for the opportunity to organize this Special Issue. We are grateful to Alexandra Ross, the journal's managing editor, for her invaluable assistance in coordinating the submissions and publication processes. Our thanks also go to Jessa Hudson for her assistance with copyediting. We also thank Ann-Sophie Boily for her work as the French linguistic editor. Colleagues with experience in ILR and AL contributed substantially to the anonymous peer review process, and we are deeply grateful for their insightful comments and the valuable revisions that they helped shape in this collection. Finally, we wish to thank all of the authors featured in this issue for their contributions and for their patience and good humour throughout the editorial process. It is our hope that this Special Issue not only brings deserved attention to their important work, but also contributes to advancing and deepening the broader, ongoing dialogue between practitioners in Indigenous Language Revitalization and Applied Linguistics.

Notes:

¹ In dedicating its attention to concerns at the intersection of these fields, this issue implicitly adopts McIvor's (2020) position that AL and ILR should be understood as distinct yet interconnected disciplines. This perspective aims to encourage balanced comparisons of the contemporary theoretical and methodological practices within each field without presupposing that one should be subordinated to or subsumed by the other.

References

- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, body, and spirit*. University of British Columbia Press.
- Bontogon, M., Arppe, A. Antonsen, L., Thunder, D., & Lachler, J. (2018). Intelligent computer assisted language learning (ICALL) for nêhiyawêwin: An in-depth user-experience evaluation. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 74(3), 337–362. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.4054>
- Chiblow, S. & Meighan, P. (2022). Language is land, land is language: The importance of Indigenous languages. *Human Geography*, 15(2), 206–210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427786211022899>
- Cope, L. & Penfield, S. D. (2011). ‘Applied linguist needed’: Cross-disciplinary networking for revitalization and education in endangered language contexts. *Language and Education*, 25(4), 267–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.577217>
- Daniels, B. & Sterzuk, A. (2022). Indigenous language revitalization and applied linguistics: Conceptualizing an ethical space of engagement between academic fields. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 25(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2022.31841>
- Green, J., & Maracle, B. (2018). The root-word method for building proficient second-language speakers of polysynthetic languages: Onkwawén:na Kentyóhkwa Adult Mohawk Language Immersion Program. In Hinton, L., Huss, L., & Roche, G. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization* (pp. 146–155). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271>
- Hinton, L., Florey, M., Gessner, S., & Manatowa-Bailey, J. (2018). The Master-Apprentice language learning program. In L. Hinton, L. Huss, & G. Roche (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization* (pp. 127–136). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271>
- McIvor, O. (2020). Indigenous language revitalization and applied linguistics: Parallel histories, shared futures? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 40, 78–96. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000094>
- Penfield, S. D., & Tucker, B. V. (2011). From documenting to revitalizing an endangered language: Where do applied linguists fit? *Language and Education*, 25(4), 291–305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.577219>
- Rice, K. (2009). Must there be two solitudes? Language activists and linguists working together. In J. Reyhner, & L. Lockard (Eds.), *Indigenous language revitalization: Encouragement, guidance and lessons learned* (pp. 37–59). Northern Arizona University. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/ILR/ILR-4.pdf>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future*. McGill-Queen’s University Press.