

# Linguistics & Language Communities

Jessica Coon

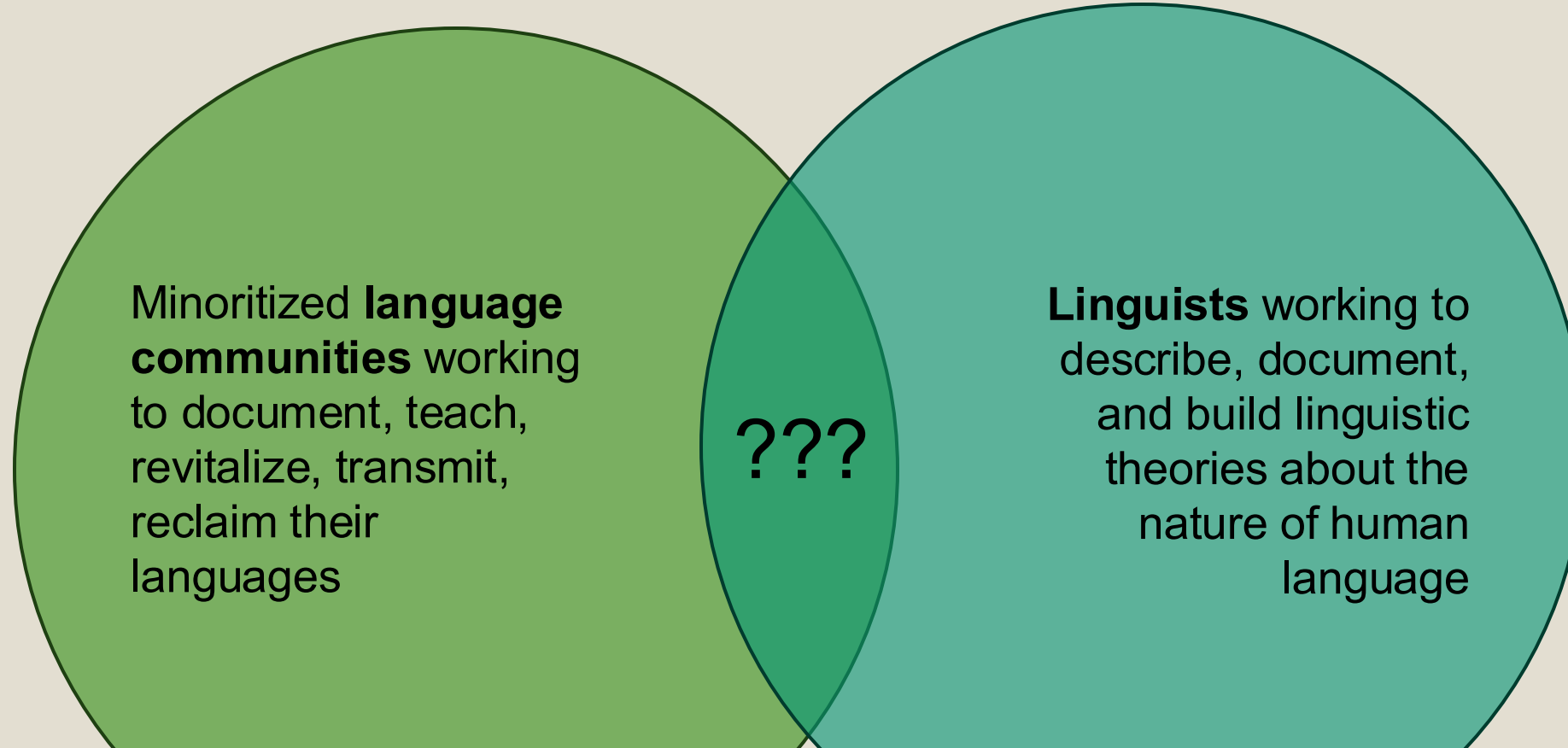
March 2026

GLOW-ing Lecture

# Context: language endangerment crisis

- 50–90% of today’s roughly 7000 currently-spoken languages will either **no longer have speakers** or be **severely endangered** by 2100
- “Humanity may well have only 300–600 oral languages left that are unthreatened by the end of this century” (UN DESA 2022)
- Familiar reasons:
  - colonization, imperialism, forced assimilation, genocide, social pressures, economic pressures, ...
- Detrimental impacts for **language communities** and the field of **linguistics**

# Context: language endangerment crisis



What opportunities are there for work at the intersection of these groups — especially for *generative linguists*?

# Where does generative linguistics fit?

As generative linguists, we are interested in abstract and often highly technical representations underlying language

- As we work to build theories of how **human language** works, it is essential that we include a typologically diverse set of languages
- But the output of our work is often not directly accessible to communities of language experts working to document, learn, teach, and revitalize their languages

**Goal today:** some examples of projects at the intersection

# Disclaimers

- I'm mostly going to talk about my own experiences and work (together with collaborators), drawing primarily from:
  - Mayan languages and communities
  - More recently: Kanien'kéha (aka "Mohawk") language and Kanien'kehá:ka communities
- I won't attempt to generalize to all languages or language communities (but will try to offer some general lessons)
- Mostly I'll discuss my experiences as a linguist who is not a member of a minoritized language community — but of course, many people wear both hats!

# Plan

- Background
  - What I learned working with Mayan language communities
  - New work with Kanien'kehá:ka communities
- Three recent projects at the intersection of linguistics and community work
  1. Community+university course: Elicitation for language learners
  2. *lakwarihwí:saks* language research partnership
  3. University-based course: Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study
- Reflections

# Introduction & background

Mayan languages & linguistics

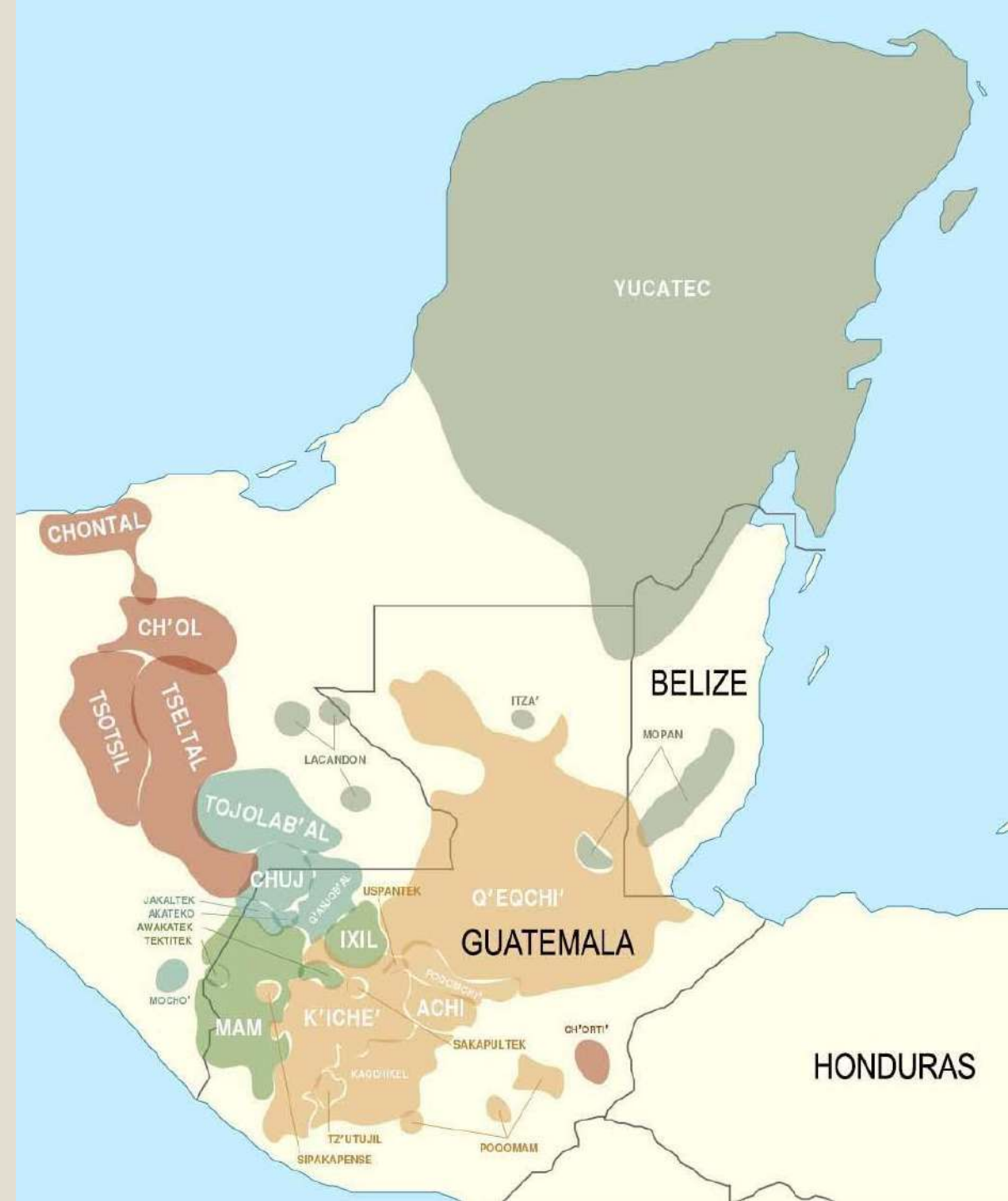
# Work with Ch'ol Mayan

- I first had the opportunity to live and work in a Ch'ol-speaking community as an undergraduate student of John Haviland in 2002
- His advice as he left:  
**“Make some friends, learn some Ch'ol”**



# Mayan languages

- Family of ~30 languages spoken in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and in diaspora by 6–7 million people
- Languages range from very few elderly speakers (Itzaj) to over a million (K'iche', Q'eqchi')



# Mayan languages and linguistics

- Mayan languages stand out for the large the number of community members who are engaged in **linguistic work on their own languages**
- This is in part the result of **BA, MA, and PhD programs** designed for members of these language communities



CIESAS students; <https://ichan.ciesas.edu.mx/>



NORA C. ENGLAND

## **Mayan Language Revival and Revitalization Politics: Linguists and Linguistic Ideologies**

“Mayas are participating in a **movement of cultural reaffirmation, a principle focus of which is language**. Maya linguists are central in formulating and reshaping language ideologies to further the goals of revitalization, and they play a significant role in cultural and linguistic activism. This article [... offers] a review of an apparently **successful attempt at reversing language loss that has arisen through an integrated community-based program of cultural revitalization that centers, to a large extent, on language and makes specific use of linguistics.**”

— England 2003

# Linguistics programs for speakers



- CIESAS (Mexico) has an MA program in Indoamerican Linguistics that celebrated its **35<sup>th</sup> anniversary** last year
- The PhD program was added later due to student interest
- This work has resulted in significant increases in descriptive documentary materials, theoretical research, pedagogical resources, and community engagement

Three things I've learned  
working with Mayan language  
communities

# 1. Linguistic work is better when done in collaboration with community members

- If linguistic work is going to have positive impacts for language communities, the best hope for this is through collaboration with community-based language experts
- Work with community-based language experts leads to **better linguistics**
  - Richer and more accurate language material
  - Better identification of empirical puzzles
  - Opportunities for student training and engagement

## 2. There are different ways to contribute

- Even if your primary interests and skills are in abstract formal representations of languages...
- And even if these are not the primary interests of community-based collaborators...
- There are different possible ways to contribute and work together given shared common interest in achieving a **better understanding of how language works**

# 3. This work takes time

- Sustained relationship-building and maintenance is essential to this kind of work
  - We can't just ask: "what do you need?" or "what can I do?"
  - ... because it isn't obvious what is possible!
- It's also important to recognize that different types of contributions are going to be possible at different career stages
- But even seemingly small things can have bigger impacts over time

GRAMMARS OF WORLD & MINORITY LANGUAGES

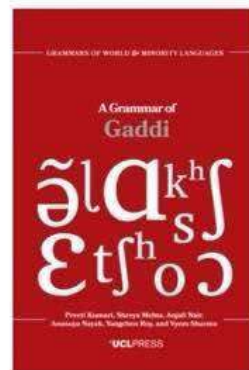
# A Grammar of Gaddi

~lɑ<sup>k<sup>h</sup></sup>ʃ  
ɛtʃ<sup>h</sup>oɔ

Preeti Kumari, Shreya Mehta, Anjali Nair,  
Anusuya Nayak, Yangchen Roy, and Vyom Sharma

UCLPRESS

## A Grammar of Gaddi



Series: Grammars of World and  
Minority Languages

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<https://uclpress.co.uk/book/a-grammar-of-gaddi/>

This is the first long-form descriptive grammar of the Pahari Indo-Aryan language, Gaddi (also called Shirmauri), spoken by the Gaddi people, a traditionally pastoral community now undergoing rapid occupational and lifestyle change. In 2010, the language was considered 'definitely endangered' by the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.

A Grammar of Gaddi begins with an account of the historical and sociolinguistic profile of the community, including a discussion on the vitality of the language. Following this is a detailed documentation of the linguistic properties of the language, with chapters dedicated to the language's phonetics and phonology, its word classes, its morphosyntax and its syntax. The appendices in the book contain the phonemic inventory of the language, a basic word list, and the cardinal, ordinal, fractional and distributive numerals of Gaddi.

The careful linguistic analysis in the book allows for Gaddi language data to be presented in the International Phonetic Alphabet, with minute morphological glosses for maximum transparency. The book thus serves as a vital resource for public and private bodies, and will be of use to the language community as a basis for primers, textbooks and learning tools.

### Shreya Mehta (AO1)

Shreya Mehta is Temporary Assistant Professor at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.

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Anjali Nair is an independent researcher and a resource person at Pagdandi Collective, a Delhi-based education group.

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# Linguistic elicitation for Indigenous language learning

Community–university course

# Kanien'kéha

- In 2011 I joined the Linguistics Department at McGill University
- McGill sits on Haudenosaunee territory, home to extremely active community-led language revitalization efforts for Kanien'kéha (“Mohawk”), a Northern Iroquoian language
- In 2021 I first got connected with **lonkwahronkha'onhátie'** (*We are becoming fluent*) a grassroots organization of second-language learners of Kanien'kéha interested in organizing some linguistics workshops during COVID...

# Linguistic elicitation for advanced learners: A community–university partnership

Jasmine Jimerson<sup>1,2</sup>, Karohniióstha Shea Sky<sup>1</sup>, Mary McDonald<sup>1</sup>,  
Tahohtharátye Joe Brant<sup>3</sup>, Ryan DeCaire<sup>3</sup>, Luis Alonso-Ovalle<sup>4</sup>, Meghan  
Clayards<sup>4</sup>, Dzéiwsh James Crippen<sup>4</sup>, Jessica Coon<sup>4</sup>



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Presented virtually at the 2023 *International Conference on Language  
Documentation and Conservation*



McGill



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INDIGENOUS STUDIES &  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
INITIATIVE

# Introduction



# Introductions



Teyútkw^ Jasmine Jimerson



Karonhiióstha Shea Sky



Onwá:ri Mary McDonald



Tahohtharátýe Joe Brant



Oheróhskon Ryan DeCaire



Luis Alonso-Ovalle



Meghan Clayards



Dzéiwsh James Crippen



Jessica Coon

# 5-week summer course

Together we planned and piloted a new course in McGill's May 2022 condensed summer term. The course brought together...

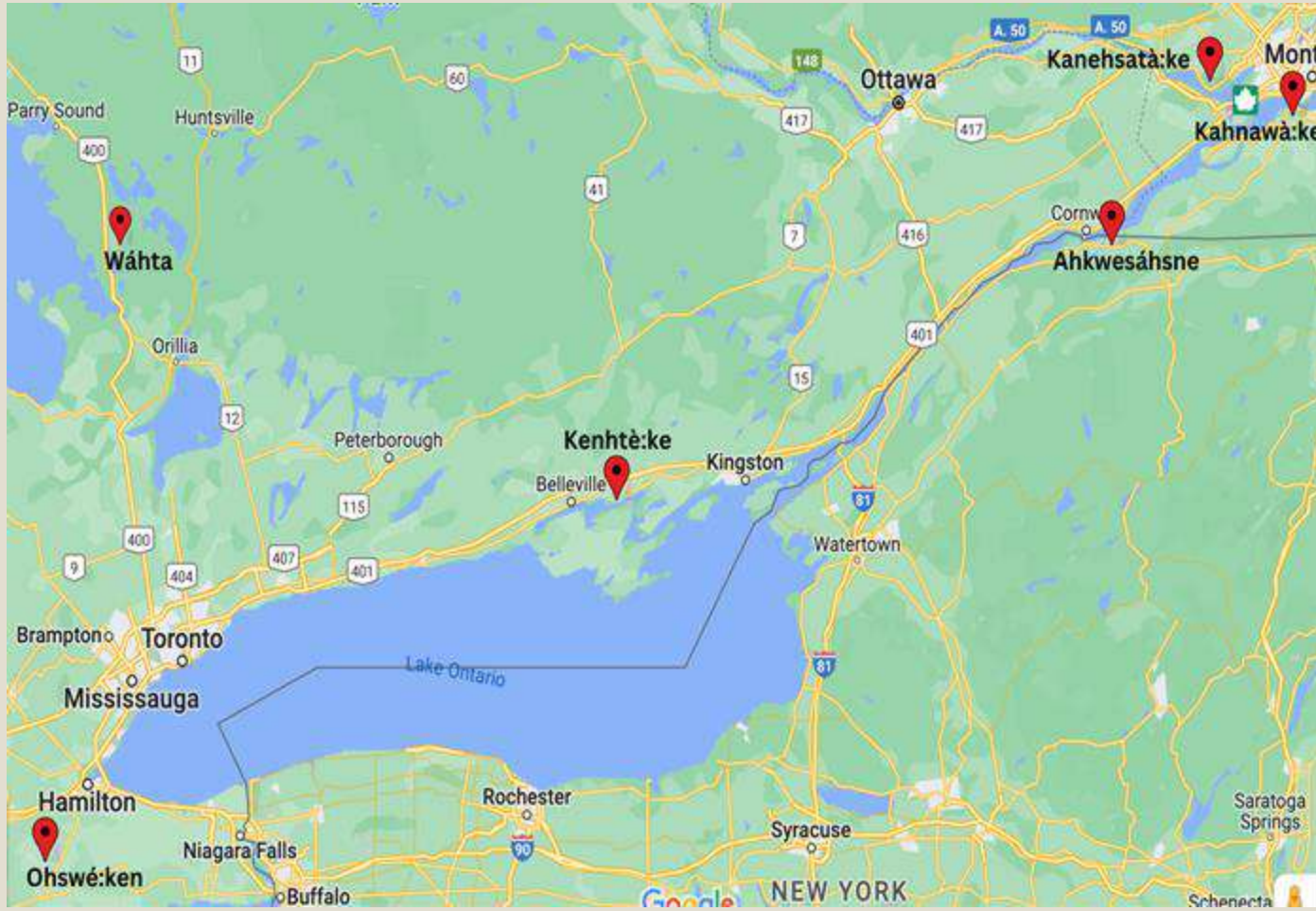
1. a group of **advanced second-language learners of Kanien'kéha**
2. McGill-based **linguistics graduate students**, and
3. a **fluent first-language speaker**

...with shared goals of gaining skills in linguistics and elicitation methods to discover and analyze grammatical phenomena in Kanien'kéha.

# Language & Community Context



# Kanien'kéha background



- Northern Iroquoian language of what is now Ontario, Quebec, New York State
- ~500 first language speakers, most over 70 (DeCaire 2023)
- Emerging "**new speaker**" population: adults within adult immersion programs across communities, and new L1-speaking children (Brant 2023; DeCaire 2023; Stacey 2016; 2024; Benedict in prep)

# Challenges for advanced Kanien'kéha learners

- Shortage of programs, classes, and other resources that are targeted at learners who have reached **advanced** speaking level (i.e., immersion program graduates)
- Struggles with continuing to improve proficiency once within the advanced range of speaking
- Limited understanding of effective learning strategies for advanced learners of Kanien'kéha (i.e., polysynthesis pedagogy)
- Limited opportunities for engaging with L1 speakers

# Parenthetical: Successes of Kanien'kéha language work

- The fact that these challenges exist — i.e., that there is a significant number of **advanced L2 learners and their L1 children** looking for resources — is already a success
- It is the direct result of **community-based expertise** and **community-led initiatives**, and a strong cross-community focus on adult immersion programming (see DeCaire 2023; Benedict in prep)
- Especially: “**Root–Word Method**” developed to teach polysynthetic languages to adults (Maracle 2002; Green & Maracle 2018; DeCaire 2023)

lonkwahronkha'onhátie'





**Ionkwahronkha'onhátie' (We are Becoming Fluent)** is a grassroots Kanien'kéha language initiative and network created **by and for** adult L2 speakers across Kanien'kehá:ka communities with goals to:

1. support second language speakers throughout their language learning journey
2. provide and continue to develop a network of speakers
3. re-center elders and first-language speakers to prioritize language and knowledge transmission

# Course Motivation

- online talk and workshop series organized by *lonkwahronkha'onhátie'* held in summer 2021, with support from McGill's ISCEI program
- Goal: help language learners gain knowledge about tools for language learning, transmission, and documentation
- **Pedro Mateo Pedro** (U Toronto) and I talked about linguist–community collaborations in Latin America

## Owén:na Tewahtá:rahkw (Let's Talk about Language)

Tuesday July 27th, 2pm



### Collaborative Projects in Mayan Communities: Applications for Language Learning, Documentation, and Research

Presented by Jessica Coon and Pedro Mateo Pedro

Jessica and Pedro will talk about their work with collaborative language projects in Mayan-language communities in southern Mexico and Guatemala, with a focus on some of the ways that linguistic research can be used to contribute to community-driven documentation and revitalization goals. They detail a documentation project for the Chuj language, in which community members recorded, transcribed, and translated narratives to create an archive of the language. Using Chuj's unique system of nominal classifiers as a case study, they discuss how recorded narratives and conversation can be supplemented with elicitation work with speakers of the language, to dig deeper into certain topics in the grammar of a language. In a hands-on workshop after, they will discuss basics of linguistic elicitation, how it can be used for language-learning, and give participants a chance to try eliciting phrases and sentences in Q'anjob'al.

Thursday July 29th, 2pm

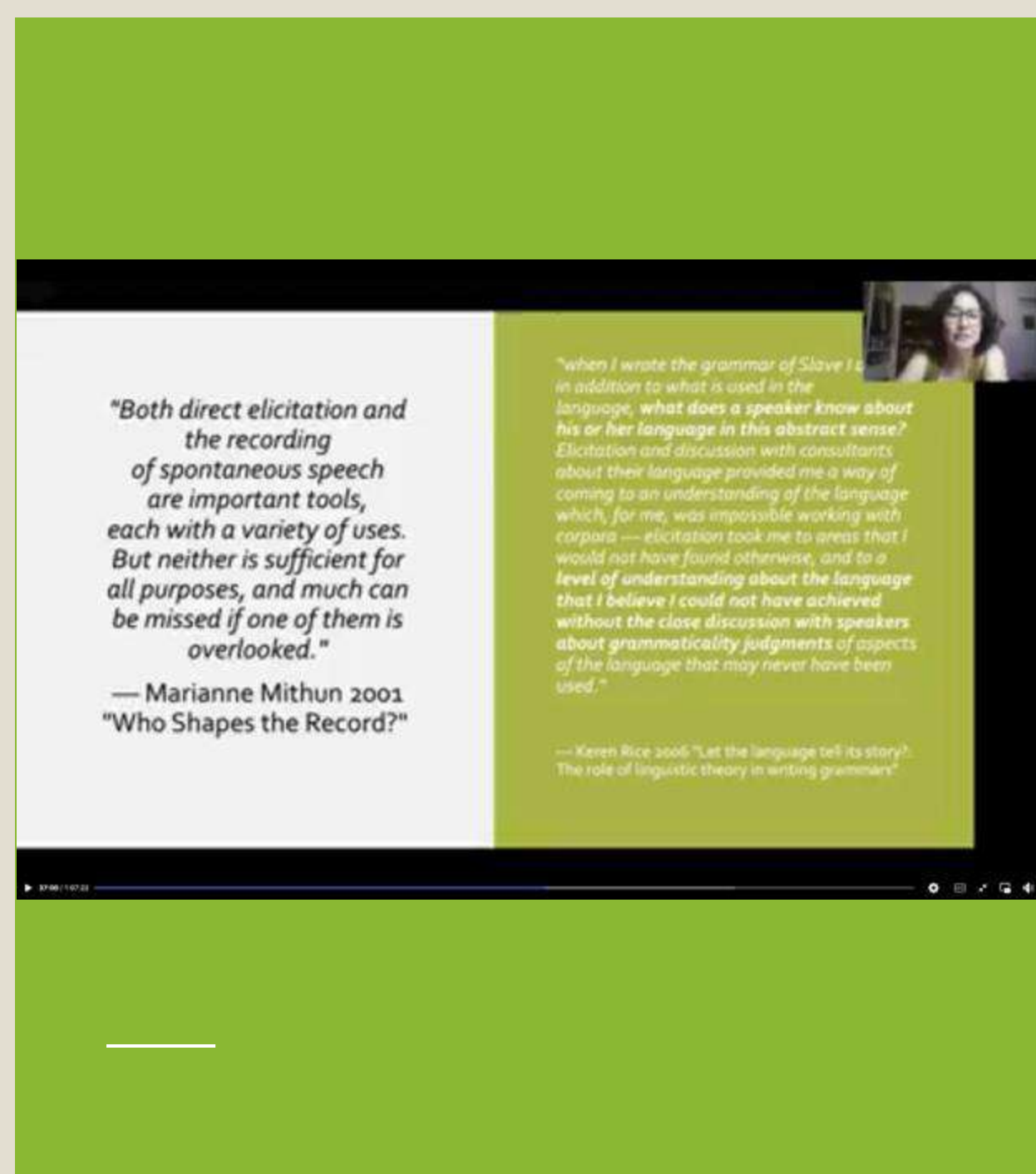


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# Mini hands-on workshop on linguistic elicitation

(eliciting the possessive paradigm  
in Q'anjob'al)

**Organizers:** can we do this  
again... but for advanced  
learners, and with Kanien'kéha?



*"Both direct elicitation and the recording of spontaneous speech are important tools, each with a variety of uses. But neither is sufficient for all purposes, and much can be missed if one of them is overlooked."*

— Marianne Mithun 2001  
"Who Shapes the Record?"

*"when I wrote the grammar of Slave I... in addition to what is used in the language, what does a speaker know about his or her language in this abstract sense? Elicitation and discussion with consultants about their language provided me a way of coming to an understanding of the language which, for me, was impossible working with corpora — elicitation took me to areas that I would not have found otherwise, and to a level of understanding about the language that I believe I could not have achieved without the close discussion with speakers about grammaticality judgments of aspects of the language that may never have been used."*

— Keren Rice 2006 "Let the language tell its story? The role of linguistic theory in writing grammars"

*Elicitation for Language Learners:*  
Goals and course structure



# Larger aims of the course

- Given the shortage of available resources, advanced L2 speakers effectively need to **become researchers of their own language**
- Skills that may be helpful:
  - How to *learn what you don't know* about the language
  - How to access and understand available linguistics literature
  - How to work with an L1 speaker efficiently to fill gaps in knowledge and ask questions in a way that speakers can comfortably answer
  - How to take notes and record what you learn in a way that is usable for future learners
- → These are the basic goals of many typical university-based “Field Methods” classes...

# “Field Methods” ... with a twist

As in a typical field methods class, students would...

- Learn elicitation and other skills for working with first-language speakers
- Gain practice in understanding and describing properties of the language
- Learn to develop a research question and make progress on it

Unlike in a typical field methods class, here we had a **two groups of students**...

1. Advanced L2 learners of the language, most with little/no linguistics background
2. Linguistics graduate students, with little/no knowledge of Kanien'kéha

# Why a mixed group of learners and linguists?

1. **Learning through knowledge-sharing:** Pairing advanced L2 learners with linguistics students allowed for **bidirectional knowledge sharing**, allowing us to get to advanced topics even in the condensed 5-week course
2. **Relation building:** Aim to foster productive collaborations among students with different backgrounds that could continue after the course ended
3. **Practical & administrative:** At least in this first pilot class, including McGill graduate students along with L2 learners meant this could be offered as a “special topics” graduate course

# KANIEN'KÉHA ELICITATION COURSE

A pilot 3-credit course bringing together community-based advanced Kanien'kéha learners and McGill linguistics students to work with a first-language speaker to learn skills in linguistic elicitation, data management, and documentation, with benefits for language learning and linguistic documentation.

Co-taught by: Jessica Coon, Meghan Clayards, and James Crippen



**May 2nd, 2022 - June 2nd, 2022**



**ionkwahronkhaonhatie@outlook.com**

*Open to registration by both degree seeking and non-degree seeking students*



- gain skills in self-directed language learning through working with a first-language speaker
- gain practice in formulating and testing research questions about a language
- learn about topics in fieldwork ethics and linguistic typology
- create a collaborative language database
- learn about specific topics in the grammar of Kanien'kéha
- gain practice presenting findings and producing relevant language material



# Linguistics 483/683: Special Topics – Linguistic Elicitation for Language Revitalization

McGill Summer Class, May 2022

## Course instructors:

Meghan Clayards – [meghan.clayards@mcgill.ca](mailto:meghan.clayards@mcgill.ca)

Jessica Coon – [jessica.coon@mcgill.ca](mailto:jessica.coon@mcgill.ca)

Two instructors with different areas of expertise: phonetics-phonology (Clayards) and morphosyntax (Coon)

## Course advisors:

James Crippen – [james.crippen@mcgill.ca](mailto:james.crippen@mcgill.ca)

Tahohtharátýe Joe Brant – [tj.brant@utoronto.ca](mailto:tj.brant@utoronto.ca)

Ryan DeCaire – [ryan.decaire@utoronto.ca](mailto:ryan.decaire@utoronto.ca)

Luis Alonso Ovalle – [luis.alonso-ovalle@mcgill.ca](mailto:luis.alonso-ovalle@mcgill.ca)

Team of course advisors with expertise in: Kanien'kéha language and culture (Brant, DeCaire); teaching linguistics to language learners (Crippen); and semantics (Alonso-Ovalle)

**Language consultant:** Mary McDonald

An amazing L1 speaker

**Class Schedule:** May 2<sup>nd</sup>–June 2<sup>nd</sup>; Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays 4:05–6:25; primarily over Zoom with some in-person sessions TBD.

Primarily virtual class

- Note: the schedule also lists Wednesdays 4:05–6:25; this slot will be reserved for office hours and smaller meetings, to be discussed
- Final presentations will take place during the official “exam day”, June 2<sup>nd</sup> in the regular meeting time

# A split syllabus

Disclaimer: “linguists” vs. “community members”

## Schedule for reading

**Note:** Many of the readings we will look at in this class either explicitly or implicitly set up a distinction between “linguists” and “communities”, or between “researchers” and “speakers”. Similarly, you’ll notice readings which assume that the researchers are traveling to “the field” (reinforcing the assumption that researchers aren’t working within their own communities). Even here, we have divided readings that are recommended/optional for “linguistics grad students” and “language learners”. However, part of the goal of this course is to break down this division, and we encourage reflection and discussion on these issues throughout.

### Week 1: ethics, phonetics, transcription, orthography

	language-learners recommended; linguistics grad students optional	recommended for all (in parentheses = suggested if you have time)	linguistics grad students recommended; language-learners optional
Monday	Hayes 2021 ch.1 – What is linguistics?	Bowern ch. 1 – Introduction  (Bobaljik 1998 – Visions & Realities)	Leonard 2017 – Decolonizing ‘language’
Tuesday	Hayes ch. 10 up to end of section 4 – Phonetics	Bowern ch. 11 – Ethical fieldwork  Bowern ch. 2 – Technology (skim if interested)  <i>Learn about:</i> Mohawk Standardisation Project: <a href="http://kanienskeha.net/the-mohawk-">http://kanienskeha.net/the-mohawk-</a>	Rice 2006 – Ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork

Split reading list

# What we covered



**Week 1:** Goals, introductions, ethics; transcription, orthography

**Week 2:** Intro to phonetics and phonology; ELAN

**Week 3:** Elicitation basics; **information structure**

**Week 4:** Elicitation methodology; **tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality**

**Week 5:** Develop research questions and final presentations

# Assignments:

## Assignment 1:

Assignment 1: reflections on goals and skills

due 5/4/2022 at 11:59pm

Please take a moment to reflect on the class and tell us what you want to accomplish and what skills you might have to share. This reflection could include motivations, specific things you'd like to learn, things you're worried about, what you're curious about, what you love about languages/your language, what you enjoy about linguistics, or anything else you'd like to share.

# Working in teams

## Linguistic Elicitation – Assignment 2 – Transcription Frog story

You will be assigned a segment of the Frog Story we recorded in class (available on MyCourses under Content>Frog Story). Your assignments are below. Your task is to transcribe this segment in ELAN, using Kanien'kéha orthography (your community's version) and IPA, to the best of your ability. You might not get through the whole thing, that's ok. You should spend about 2-4hours on this, not more.

### GOALS

1. For the linguistics students to start to get a handle on how to write in Kanien'kéha, so that we can use this as a tool going forward
2. For the Kanien'kéha speakers to get some familiarity with the IPA.
3. For everyone to start to notice patterns of when and how letter/sounds are different

*This will work best if you work together in your team, noticing things together. Try to do the part you find most challenging, not the part you find easiest.*

# What to elicit?

Beyond IPA, orthography, and ELAN, decisions about what to focus on for elicitation skill development became more challenging

- The complexity of Kanien'kéha morphology would make it difficult for the linguists (and instructors!) with little/no Kanien'kéha language background to understand details of word-internal processes in a short period of time
- At the same time, spending time eliciting things like pronominal prefix paradigms would be boring for L2 speakers
- Two areas we settled on: (1) **information structure** (topic, focus), and (2) **tense, aspect, mood** (TAM)

# Why information structure?

**Information structure:** Kanien'kéha is often described as having “free” word order (4), and “optional” noun incorporation (9) (examples from Baker 1996):

- (4) a. Sak ra-núhwe’-s ako-[a]tyá’tawi.  
Sak MsS-like-HAB FSP-dress  
‘Sak likes her dress.’
- b. Ra-núhwe’-s Sak ako-[a]tyá’tawi.  
like Sak her-dress
- c. Sak ako-[a]tyá’tawi ra-núhwe’-s.  
Sak her-dress like
- d. Ra-núhwe’-s ako-[a]tyá’tawi ne Sak.  
like her-dress NE Sak
- e. Ako-[a]tyá’tawi ra-núhwe’-s ne Sak.  
her-dress like NE Sak
- f. Ako-[a]tyá’tawi Sak ra-núhwe’-s.  
her-dress Sak like

- (9) a. Wa’-k-hnínu-’ ne ka-nákt-a’.  
FACT-1sS-buy-PUNC NE NSs-bed-NSF  
‘I bought the/a bed.’
- b. Wa’-ke-nakt-a-hnínu-’.  
FACT-1sS-bed-Ø-buy-PUNC  
‘I bought the/a bed.’

But more recent work (e.g. DeCaire et al 2017, Boles 2024, Flaim 2025) discusses the relevance of information structure on both word order and incorporation choice...

- DeCaire, Johns, & Kučerova 2017: incorporation is **obligatory** whenever it is possible!
- Focussed nominals *must not* be incorporated (7)
- Incorporable unfocused nominals *must* incorporate (8)

- (7)
- a. Q: Wahahonwahní:non'                    ken ne Sewátis?      NI  
       wa-ha-honw-a-hninon-'                ken ne Sewatis  
       FAC-M.SG-boat-LK-buy-PUNC        Q    NE    John  
       'Did John buy a boat?'
- b. A1: Iah.      Kâ:sere      wahahní:non'                    non-NI  
       iah.      ka-'ser-e'      wa-ha-hninon-'  
       No.      N-car-NS      FAC-M.SG-buy-PUNC  
       'No. He bought A CAR.'
- c. A2: # Iah.      Waha'serehtahní:non'.  
       iah.      wa-ha-'sereht-a-hninon-'  
       No      FAC-M.SG-car-LK-buy-PUNC  
       'No. He bought a car'

- (8)
- a. Q: Ónhka      wa'ehonwahní:non'  
       onhka      wa'-e-honw-a-hninon-'  
       who      FAC-F.SG-boat-LK-buy-PUNC  
       'Who bought a boat?'
- b. A1: Wá:ri      wa'ehonwahní:non'  
       Wari      wa'-e-honwa-hninon-'  
       Mary      FAC-F.SG-boat-LK-buy-PUNC  
       'MARY bought a boat'
- c. A2: # Kahonwé:ia      wa'ehní:non'                    ne      Wá:ri  
       ka-honwei-a'      wa'-e-hninon-'                ne      Wari  
       N-boat-NS      FAC-F.SG-buy-PUNC            NE      Mary  
       'Mary bought a BOAT'

- Flaim (2024): Kanien'kéha has dedicated preverbal topic and focus positions; in the context in (57), other orders are infelicitous:

(57) a. Q: What are you going to buy for your son and daughter for Christmas?

b. [Riién:'a]<sub>TOP</sub>                      [okón:tshera']<sub>FOC</sub>    enhihnínon'se',                      tánon  
ri-ien-'a                      okon-tsher-a                      en-hi-hninon-'s-e',                      tánon  
1SG>MSG-child-DIM    paint                      FUT-1SG>MSG-buy-BEN-PUNC    and

          [kheién:'a]<sub>TOP</sub>                      [soccer ahthé:non]<sub>FOC</sub>    enkhehnínonse'.  
          khe-ien-'a                      soccer ahtenon                      en-khe-hninon-'s-e'.  
          1SG>FI-child-DIM    soccer ball                      FUT-1SG>FI-buy-BEN-PUNC

          'For my son, I'll buy paint for him, and for my daughter, I'll buy a soccer ball for her.'

- Previous work discusses the relevance of “newsworthiness” in word order (Mithun 2015; 2020) — but introducing concepts of **topic** and **focus** allowed us to be more precise and test predictions with a speaker
- Focusing on alternations like this allowed us to avoid word-internal complexity and get into an area of potential interest to advanced learners

# Information structure workflow example

- Short presentation on basics of topic and focus
- Assigned background reading: Aissen (2023) “Documenting Topic and Focus”
- In break-out groups, students develop plans for eliciting assigned structures using contexts and storyboards (picture from StoryboardThat):
  - Information focus
  - Contrastive focus
  - Contrastive topic
- Reconvene and practice elicitation with speaker
- Debrief and discuss findings



# Why TAM?

**TAM:** Kanien'kéha primarily makes use of the categories *aspect* and *mood* — not tense (e.g. Michelson 1975; Gatchalian 2025)

However, many teaching materials rely on translations from English, resulting in ambiguities or areas of confusion

- By digging into differences among these categories, we aimed to provide learners clarity in why mismatches might occur, while also gaining practice eliciting

# Contributions from community course advisors were essential

Slide from a presentation by course advisor Tahothorátye Joe Brant on successes and impact of community-led orthography standardization (Lazore 1993)



*Tuesday, May 3, 2022*

**Tó: Kanyen'kéha Tewahyá:ton**

## Goals:

1. Begin in a good way

2. **Activate:**

Why standardize Kanyen'kéha?

3. **Acquire:**

What was the process and outcomes of the Mohawk language standardization project?

4. **Apply:**

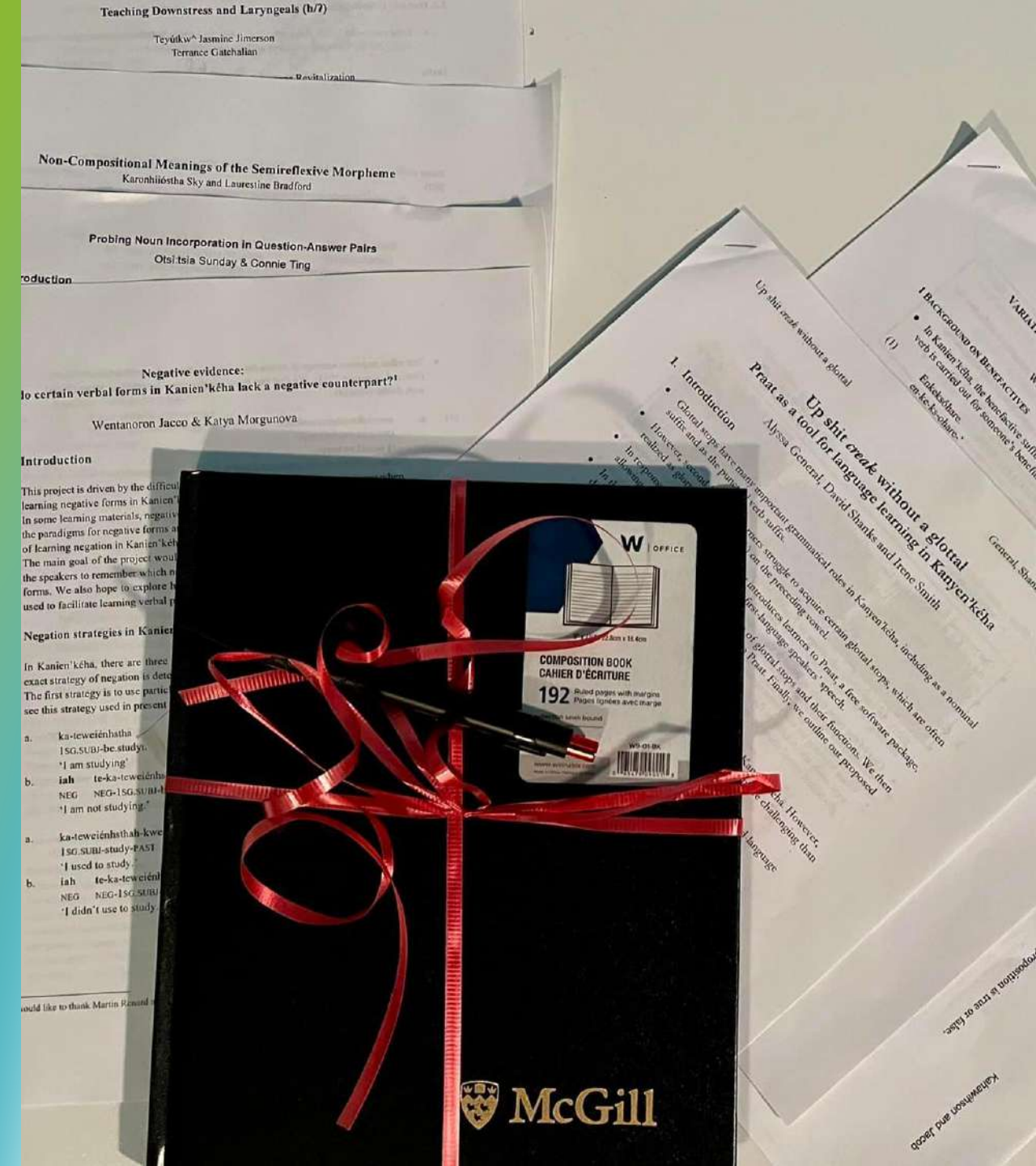
a. Reflect on your goals from yesterday.

b. Kanyen'kéha orthography and IPA activity.

## Final assignment:

- Small groups develop research question and elicitation plan
- Final presentations in person at Thomson Island Cultural Camp in Ahkwesáhsne





# Examples of final team projects

- Possible meanings of the “benefactive” suffix
- Using Praat to see glottal stops
- Noun incorporation in question/answer pairs
- Intonation in polar questions (contrast with English)
- When to use the “semi-reflexive” prefix
- Verbs that lack a negative form

# Elicitation for Language Learners: Successes & Challenges



# End-of-class survey/break-out group discussion

How did the class meet/not meet your expectation?

What was the most impactful thing for you?

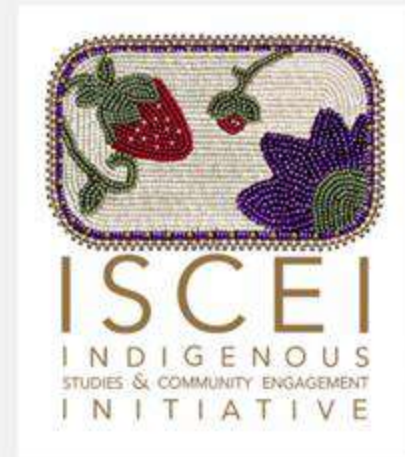
What was less useful?

What would you like to see in the future? What would your dream class be?

<https://forms.gle/ttYCKwnTL4D3LwuL9>



 **McGill** | Linguistics



# Course Outcomes & Feedback

“This class was beyond expectation. It gave me so much insight into the language that I hadn’t considered before. I came to the program wanting to more about the language, and that’s exactly what I walked away with.”

“I expected to learn more about linguistics and learn how I could work with a first language speaker to improve my proficiency. My expectation was met regarding learning more about linguistics, we touched on a lot of topics I never heard of before and learned new terminology.”

“Seeing the **commitment of language learners** in both their personal language goals and their involvement with creating spaces for the language was **incredibly impactful for me.**”

“It was incredibly helpful in learning how to elicit, track, and test language out with the first speaker. This is such a difficult part for second language speakers. **I’ve watched so many students ineffectively try to elicit speech. I think programs like this would be extremely helpful,** and urgently needed in working with the speakers we still have.”

# Successes

- Linguistic students gained experience working with a community of speakers and built a connection to a living language
- L2 Learners created and built a base in linguistics and gained applicable skills for working with a first language speaker
- Both groups gained practice teaching and learning from peers with different backgrounds, knowledge, and goals



# Challenges

- The 5-week pilot course was condensed, fast-paced, and didn't allow for enough time to get deeper into topics
- Finding common times where learners and university students were available
- Students needed more time to practice elicitation techniques one-on-one with a speaker
- Administrative hurdles to registration and covering tuition for community language learners/non-McGill students
- Challenges in communicating the potential of the course within communities and L2 learner outreach and recruitment

# Next: Meetings with immersion teachers at KOR



- Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa (KOR) Language and Cultural Center in Kahnawà:ke offers a 2-year adult immersion program: *Ratiwennahní:rats*
- Format: immersion courses are full-time and led by advanced L2 speakers, with support from L1s
- **Question for KOR:** would they be interested in collaborating on an extended version of the course?

→ **lakwarihwí:saks partnership**



**JNU Fieldwork Trips**  
Ayesha Kidwai

# Iakwarihwí:saks

Community–university partnership

**lakwarihwí:saks**

iakwa-rihw-isak-s

1EXCL.PL-matter-look.for-HAB

‘We research’; ‘We are researchers’

# lakwarihwí:saks: KORLCC–McGill partnership

## KORLCC

- given a lack of resources for advanced learners, and shortage of opportunities to engage with L1 speakers, advanced L2 learners of Kanien'kéha need tools and concepts to become **researchers of their own language**

## McGill

- linguistic research has better outcomes and better potential for impact when it is designed from the outset to respond to the interests of communities of language users, and incorporates the knowledge of language communities



# Basic format: Team

Grant funding (SSHRC) supports positions for KORLCC *Ratiwennahní:rats* immersion program members during the academic year:

- **Tsowén:te Cross**, KOR team coordinator
  - **Katerí Deer & Konwaronhiá:wi Norton**, L1 speaker experts for biweekly meetings
  - **3 community RA positions**, selected from students in Year 2 of immersion program for 5 paid hours/week of meetings and independent research time
  - **Immersion program teachers**, provide support to RAs and attend meetings when possible
- 3 McGill graduate students**, paired up with RAs

# Basic format: Schedule

- **August:** presentation during *Ratiwennahní:rats* program orientation to describe partnership; open short RA application
- **September:** RA selection; RAs paired with McGill grad student “buddies” to discuss interests and research
- **October–April:** weekly 90 minute afternoon meetings at KOR
  1. Group elicitation meeting with L1 Elders; usually divided into 3 30-minute elicitation segments
  2. Debrief, planning, and skills meetings with the KOR–McGill group
- **May:** mini year-end day-long symposium with presentations

# Some adjustments we've made

- Moved meetings from conference room meeting space to open communal space
  - Demystifies “research” and “elicitation”
  - Easier for people to drop by out of curiosity
  - Snacks!
- Buddy system
- Broadening scope of “research projects”
  - Not just how does morpheme X work
  - How do I express concept X?
  - Transcription and translation work

# IAKWARIHWÍ:SAKS

**MAY 16, 2024**

**KORLCC**

**KANIEN'KÉHA RATIWENNAHNÍ:RATS**

**9:15-9:30 - WELCOME!**

**9:30-10:30 - SHORT PRESENTATIONS**

**Willie Myers** – The repetitive prefix vs. English "again"

**Tsowén:te Cross** – Figuring out the facilitative

**Kanontienéntha' Brass** – Pronoun reversal in kinship terms

**10:30-10:45 - BREAK**

**10:45-11:45 - INVITED SPEAKER**

**Tahohtharátye Brant**

Tó: nya'teká:yen entewà:ronke'

Documentating Onkwehonwehnéha for Learning

**11:45-12:45 - LUNCH (PROVIDED)**

**12:45-1:15 - GUIDED DISCUSSION**

**1:15-2:15 - SHORT PRESENTATIONS**

**Shona'tsó:wane Diabo, Terrance Gatchalian, &  
Katsi'tsí:io Splicer**

Narrative transcription as a tool for language  
learning: The stative in stories

**Kanontienéntha' Brass, Sophia Flaim, Austin  
Kraft, Martin Renard**

Discourse structure, transcription, and LingView

**2:15-2:30 - BREAK**

**2:30-3:15 - MINI DEMO**

**Heather Goad and Simon LiVolsi**

Downstress, h, and glottal stop:  
Visualizing speech sounds in PRAAT

**3:15-3:30 - CLOSING**

# PROGRAM

## Iakwarihwí:saks

May 22nd, 2025  
KORLCC

9:15

### WELCOME!

9:30

### 3 SHORT PRESENTATIONS

- **Terrance Gatchalian**  
*Habitual actions with the Habitual and Future*
- **Tsowén:te Cross**  
*Intensifier*
- **Katya Morgunova**  
*Embedded sentences in Kanien'kéha*

10:30

### BREAK

10:45

### SPEAKERS PANEL

with **Akwiratékha' Martin**,  
**Ro'nikonhkátste' Norton**, and  
**Karonhiiósthá Sky**

12:00

### LUNCH

1:00

### 2 SHORT PRESENTATIONS

- **Tahothoratie Cross**  
*Just "Just"*
- **Arihwí:saks Benedict, Terrance Gatchalian, Willie Myers**  
*Patterns with Present, Reversive, and Repetitive Readings*

1:40

### BREAK

2:00

### 3 SHORT PRESENTATIONS

- **Katsi'tsohrónkwás Jacobs**  
*Iewennéhawe: What is she doing with the word?*
- **Willie Myers**  
*Niwakenehrakò:'oni! How to exclaim in Kanien'kéha!*
- **Simon LiVolsi**  
*Preview of Praat workshop*

3:00

### CLOSING



# Proceedings volume in prep

## **Iakwarhihwí:saks: Special Topics in Kanien'kéha**



Contributions from Arihwí:saks Benedict, Kanontienéhtha Brass,  
Tahothoratie Cross, Tsowén:te Cross, Terrance Gatchalian,  
Katsi'tsohrónkwás Jacobs, Katya Morgunova, and Willie Myers

Based on work with  
Konwaronhiá:wi Norton and Katerí Deer

Edited by Jessica Coon and Ro'nikonhkátste' Norton

©2025

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<a href="#">Introduction – Jessica Coon and Ro'nikonhkátste' Norton</a>	3
<b><a href="#">Part I: 2023–2024</a></b>	<b>5</b>
<a href="#">Kinship terms – Kanontienéhtha' Brass</a>	6
<a href="#">Some benefactive patterns – Jessica Coon</a>	10
<a href="#">Facilitative – Tsowén:te Cross</a>	15
<a href="#">Remote and Former Past – Terrance Gatchalian</a>	20
<a href="#">Negation and the contrastive – Katya Morgunova</a>	22
<a href="#">Repetitive – Willie Myers</a>	26
<b><a href="#">Part II: 2024–2025</a></b>	<b>29</b>
<a href="#">Patterns with present, reversive, and repetitive readings – Arihwí:saks Benedict, Terrance Gatchalian, &amp; Willie Myers</a>	30
<a href="#">Just “just” – Tahothoratie Cross</a>	37
<a href="#">Habitual actions with the habitual and future – Terrance Gatchalian</a>	39
<a href="#">Iewennéhawe: What is she doing with the word? – Katsi'tsohrónkwás Jacobs</a>	43
<a href="#">Visualizing Upstress and Downstress – Simon LiVolsi</a>	46
<a href="#">Embedded sentences in Kanien'kéha – Katya Morgunova</a>	51
<a href="#">Niwakenehrakò:'on! How to exclaim in Kanien'kéha! – Willie Myers</a>	55

# Benefits & Challenges, (from McGill perspective)

(see upcoming presentation at SAIL 2026 for more!)

# Benefits for McGill-based linguists

- Building relationships with members of Kanien'kéha language communities
- Elicitation work with L1 speakers *together with* language experts
- Better understanding of how linguistic puzzles relate to language-learning
- Reminder of what LANGUAGE means to people outside of narrow world of formal linguistics
- Practice presenting to non-linguist audiences
- Chance to get out of the McGill/academia bubble

# Examples of collaborative projects

- The “stative aspect” receives either an ongoing or result perfect interpretation depending on the verb (spoiler: telicity!)
  - Cross, Tehokwiráthe, Terrance Gatchalian, Willie Myers, Katya Morgunova, and Ro’nikonhkátste Norton (2024). ‘Lexical aspect and the stative present in Kanien’kéha.’ *Proceedings of WSCLA 24*.
- The “reversive suffix” can mean either to *undo* or *stop* doing an action (spoiler: telicity again!)
  - Benedict, Arihwí:saks Colin, Terrance Gatchalian, and Willie Myers (to appear). ‘Repetitives, Reversives, and On-going telic events in Kanien’kéha.’ In *Proceedings of CLA 72*
- Kanien’kéha has 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperatives!
  - Myers, Willie and Mittelstaedt, Wíshe (to appear). ‘First, Second, and Third Person Imperatives in Kanien’kéha.’ In *Proceedings of CLA 72*.

# Challenges

- Finding time for meetings, working together, scheduling
- Building and maintaining trust given wider colonial/extractive research context
- Thinking about equitable outcomes of research
- Administrative:
  - Grant applications & reports
  - Getting funding to the right places & related paperwork

## *Directive for ethical and collaborative Kanien'kehá:ka language research*

Date of last review: November 21, 2023

**Rationale:** As collaborations between McGill-based linguists and Kanien'kehá:ka community members grow — including Kanien'kehá:ka members of the McGill Linguistics Department — the goal of this document is to layout a framework outlining what is needed in order to conduct language research in a mutually beneficial and ethical way, and to create sustainable collaborations among university- and community-based language professionals. This document is intended to serve as a community-facing document, in addition to the regular Research Ethics Board process at McGill University. These principles are meant to align with policies of McGill University's Research Ethics Board and the Kahnawà:ke Education Center as well as the expectations of individuals and institutions within the Kanien'kehá:ka community such as the the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.



Some of the group at WSCLA 2024

# Kanien'kéha Resources

Resources for Kanien'kéha language learning and documentation



Welcome! This page hosts resources for the Kanien'kéha language created by members of the [McGill Linguistics Department](#), in collaboration with Kanien'kéha learners and speakers.

# Ensuring wider accessibility: [www.kanienkeha.lingspace.org](http://www.kanienkeha.lingspace.org)

## Research output

This page contains handouts, posters, and papers resulting from language research and documentation work with Kanien'kéha. Click on the table below for details about each document, including author names, titles, and topic tags. Many of these materials were created for a linguistics audience, but contain either an accompanying “Guide” or an “Appendix” at the end with an accessible summary (for less linguistics-oriented work, see the [Resources](#) page). Contact the authors with any questions!

Research output	Last Name, First Name	Year	Area	Topic Tags	Type of Work	Venue	Link
A syntactic approach to repetitive presuppositions in Kanien'kéha	Myers, Willie	2024	Morphology, Syntax, Semantics	repetitives, pre-pronominal prefixes	Poster	NELS 55	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Allomorphic domains and overlapping portmanteaus in Kanien'kéha	Blackburn, Max	2025	Morphology, Syntax	pre-pronominal prefixes, allomorphy	Handout	CLA 72	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Allomorphic domains and overlapping portmanteaus in Kanien'kéha	Blackburn, Max	2025	Morphology, Syntax	pre-pronominal prefixes, allomorphy	Poster	CLA 72	<a href="#">LINK</a>
An operator-particle approach to again doubling in Kanien'kéha	Myers, Willie	2025	Morphology, Syntax, Semantics	repetitives, pre-pronominal prefixes	Paper	NELS 55	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Bipartite negation in Kanien'kéha	Morgunova, Katya	2024	Morphology, Syntax, Semantics	negation, pre-pronominal prefixes	Poster	WSCLA 27	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Event repetition and objectless presuppositions in Kanien'kéha	Myers, Willie	2025	Morphology, Syntax, Semantics	repetitives, pre-pronominal prefixes	Paper	SULA 13	<a href="#">LINK</a>
First, Second, and Third Person Imperatives in Kanien'kéha	Myers, Willie and Mittelstaedt, I	2025	Semantics	imperatives, clause types	Slides	CLA 72	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Glottal Party	Martin, Akwiratékha' and Miche	2025	Phonology, Morphology	tense, aspect, mood	Handout	Workshop on glottals	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Guide to “Two optional past “tenses” in Kanien'kéha	Gatchalian, Terrance	2024	Semantics	tense, aspect, mood	Handout	WSCLA 27	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Imperatives in Kanien'kéha	Myers, Willie and Mittelstaedt, I	2024	Semantics	imperatives, clause types	Handout	Rotinikonhrowá:nens	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Information structure in Kanien'kéha	Flaim, Sophia	2025	Morphology, Syntax	word order	Thesis	McGill BA Thesis	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Information structure in Kanien'kéha	Flaim, Sophia	2025	Morphology, Syntax	word order	Poster	CLA 72	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Interaction of negation and modality in Kanien'kéha	Morgunova, Katya	2024	Semantics	negation, pre-pronominal prefixes	Poster	TOM 12	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Lexical aspect and the stative present in Kanien'kéha	Cross, Tehokwiráthe, Terrance I	2024	Semantics	tense, aspect, mood	Paper	WSCLA 27	<a href="#">LINK</a>
More again readings and more again morphemes: a structural analysis of I	Myers, Willie	2025	Semantics	repetitives, pre-pronominal prefixes	Paper	SuB 29	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Niwskenehrakó:'ont (or...how to exclaim in Kanien'kéha!)	Myers, Willie	2025	Semantics	exclamatives	Slides	Iskwaníhwí:saks	<a href="#">LINK</a>

Mini *lakwarihwí:saks*  
*workshops*

# ELAN transcription workshops and Summer 2024 Transcription Project

## Format:

- Three 2-hour workshops on ELAN for transcription based on community interest
- At the end of the series, students could apply to take part in a part-time paid group transcription project during the summer
- ELAN workshops have been repeated for other community-based groups

Deadline to apply: Sunday, May 12, 2014

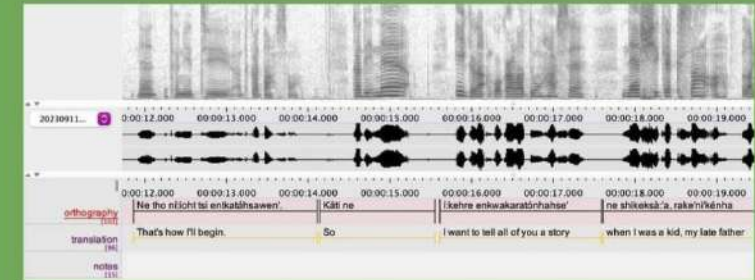
<https://forms.gle/eCrKVEko5p4vnMva6>

5 spots are left! To clarify, these workshops will be taking place in-person at the KORLCC offices in Kahnawà:ke. We apologize if this is not doable for everyone. Niá:wen!



McGill

## ALL KANIEN'KÉHA RADIO TALKSHOW TRANSCRIPTION WORKSHOP SERIES



Transcription is the process of listening to spoken language and writing down what is said. Learn how to use specific software designed to make the transcription process easier and time-aligned (i.e.: subtitles). This workshop is organized by McGill University in collaboration with the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center. Participants are expected to attend all three workshops in the series.

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- AUDACITY TO CLIP AND EDIT SOUND FILES
- ELAN TO TRANSCRIBE
- SHORTCUTS AND USEFUL TOOLS

### DATES:

WED., MAY 15, 2024 6-8PM  
WED., MAY 22, 2024 6-8PM  
WED., MAY 29, 2024 6-8PM  
@ KORLCC

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS  
SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024.**

**OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY FOR PART-TIME SUMMER JOB DOING  
TRANSCRIPTION WORK FOR KANIEN'KÉHA AT THE END!**

# Three potential benefits of transcription

- **A resource for language learners:**
  - Provide L2 learners with an accessible way to engage with material from a variety of L1 speakers on their own time
- **A searchable corpus for teachers and researchers:**
  - Provide a searchable resource for language teachers and researchers
- **Transcription as language learning:**
  - Benefits of transcription for language learning (Brant 2023): active listening required to transcribe recordings provides transcribers the opportunity to engage deeply with the material and internalize conversational patterns

<https://kanienkeha-lingview.lingspace.org/>

The screenshot shows the LingView Language Resource interface. At the top, there is a green header with the text 'LingView Language Resource' and navigation links for 'Search', 'About', and 'Glossary'. The main content area is titled 'Teharensákhkwa'. Below the title, there is a note: 'In the case of long utterances, it might be necessary to zoom out the browser window.' The 'Speakers:' section lists 'S1: Mary Onwá:ri Tekahawáhkwen McDonald'. The 'Show/hide tiers:' section has several checkboxes: 'Kanien'kéha' (checked), 'English' (checked), 'words' (checked), 'word translation' (unchecked), 'morpheme break' (checked), and 'morpheme gloss' (checked). There is also an unchecked checkbox for 'Show video'. The interface displays three transcription examples with timestamps and speaker labels. The first example is at 0:48, the second at 0:51, and the third at 0:52. Each example shows the original text, a translation, and a morpheme gloss.

**Teharensákhkwa**

In the case of long utterances, it might be necessary to zoom out the browser window.

Speakers:

- S1: Mary Onwá:ri Tekahawáhkwen McDonald

Show/hide tiers:

- Kanien'kéha
- English
- words
- word translation
- morpheme break
- morpheme gloss

Show video

0:48 S1: konièn:'a, í:kehre akonkaratónhahse'  
my child, I want to tell you a story  
konièn:'a, í:kehre akonkaratónhahse'  
kon-ien-'a i-k-ehr-e' a-kon-karaton-hahs-e'  
1SG>2SG-child-DIM EP-1SG.A-want-PUNC OPT-1SG>2SG-tell.story-BEN-F

0:51 S1: ne ki kenh nón:  
this is where  
ne ki kenh nón:  
ne ki kenh non  
NE this here where

0:52 S1: ne ohniare'kó:wa rón:kwe tehotténion."  
a man was changed into a great serpent."  
ne ohniare'kó:wa rón:kwe tehotténion."  
ne o-hniar-e'-kowa r-onkwe te-ho-at-teni-on  
NE N.P-snake-NSF-AUG MSG.A-person DUP-MSG.P-SRFL-change-STAT

## LingView tool for viewing ELAN transcription files

- *Pride, Kalinda, Nicholas Tomlin, & Scott AnderBois. 2020. LingView: A Web Interface for Viewing FLEx and ELAN Files. Language Documentation & Conservation 14: 87-107.*
- *Currently being developed by **Austin Kraft** (McGill)*

# 2025 Praat Workshops

- Led by **Simon LiVolsi** (McGill) and **Akwiratékha' Martin** (National Research Council of Canada), with support and input from **Heather Goad**
- See LiVolsi (McGill dissertation) forthcoming

## ACCENT IN KANIEN'KÉHA:



USING PRAAT TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION



**DEADLINE TO  
REGISTER:  
JUNE 9TH**



**SCAN HERE TO  
SIGN UP**

- ▶ What makes Kanienkéha sound like Kanienkéha and not like any other language? This workshop will focus on accent in Kanienkéha, and how a visual speech software, Praat, can help learners adjust their own speech.

▶ **INFO:**



**June 12, 19, and 26**  
6:00 - 8:00PM



**KORLCC**

2nd floor of the  
Kahnawà:ke Office Complex





**JNU Fieldwork Trips**  
Ayesha Kidwai

# Linguistics for Indigenous language study

McGill-based linguistics course with a broader audience

(Paper now available in WSCLA 2024 proceedings at UBCWPL:  
<https://lingpapers.sites.olt.ubc.ca/wscla-volumes/>)

# On campus programming

- A new course developed with **James Crippen** aimed specifically at students in McGill's small Ad Hoc interdisciplinary graduate program in Indigenous Language Revitalization
- ...but with a wider enrolment, including:
  - advanced undergraduate students in Linguistics
  - other L1 speakers or L2 learners of Indigenous languages of the Americas from other units
- Question: what would "Intro to Linguistics" look like if it were designed specifically for N. American Indigenous languages?
- Given our context, focused specifically on Indigenous languages of North America, but could be adapted based on region and student population

# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

*Dzéiwsh* James A. Crippen<sup>§‡</sup> and Jessica Coon<sup>§</sup>

26 April 2024

WSCLA 2024 @ University of Toronto

§: McGill University  
‡: Yukon Native Language Centre



# Introduction

- new course providing introduction to concepts and methodologies in linguistics focusing on issues relevant to Indigenous languages of North America
  - phonetics, phonology, syntax, and semantics
  - understanding & tracking patterns empirically, positive & negative data
- focus audience is the rapidly growing population of second language learners of Indigenous North American languages (IL2 learners)

Background

# Problems and principles

- some problems in existing curricula for IL2 learners
  - Intro classes which use English as a model language may seem irrelevant for IL2 learners
  - introductory classes often don't cover many relevant phenomena
    - complex agreement, obviation, information structure, incorporation...
  - field methods, “structure of X”, or typology courses might get to these topics, but typically require more prerequisites
- Indigenous languages are often sidelined or absent in basic classes
  - implies phenomena (thus languages!) are “exotic” and “difficult”
  - can have the effect of alienating Indigenous students

# Emphasis on *concepts* (not just skills)

- positive language ideology: fundamental equality of all languages; Indigenous languages are not “mysterious”, “exotic”, or “too complex to learn”
- anticolonialist viewpoint that linguists may take for granted:
  - formal linguistics lets us describe a language **on its own terms**, not through translation to/from a colonizer language
- basic concepts in linguistic research are tools anyone can use
  - regularity and predictability; paradigmatic structure
  - discovery procedures: model building, hypothesis testing, theory development

# Reciprocal mentorship structure

- reciprocal mentorship: pairing IL2 learners & linguistics students
  - through work on assignments and projects, IL2 learners learn linguistics from peers with similar ages & experiences
  - linguistics students learn directly about culture, language, & revitalization
- good reciprocal mentorship environments can create friendships
  - a lasting connection between a linguistics student and an IL2 learner may lead to a productive long-term research collaboration
  - long-term social benefits in spreading positive language ideologies

# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

McGill INLG 411/611

# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- first time offered in Winter 2024
- 15 total students, grad & undergrad:

	grad	undergrad
L1 or L2 speaker of an Indigenous language	3	2
no prior connection to an Indigenous language	1	9

- ... plus a few regular non-enrolled attendees



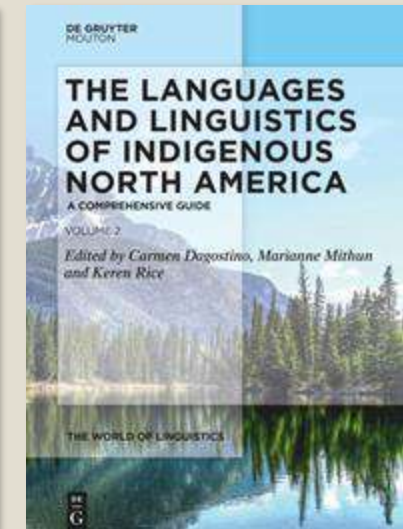
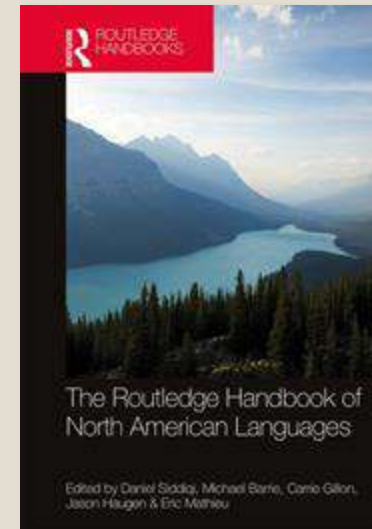
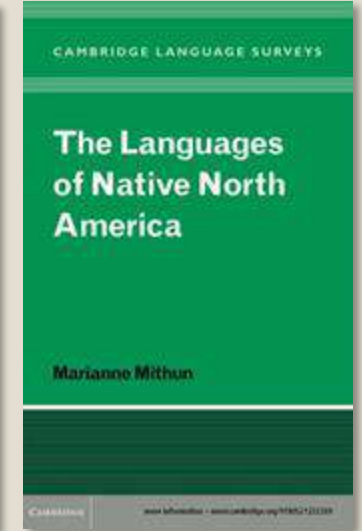
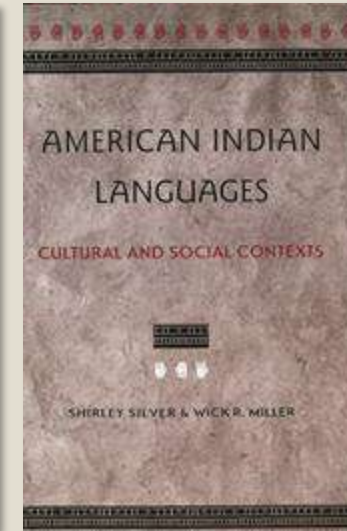
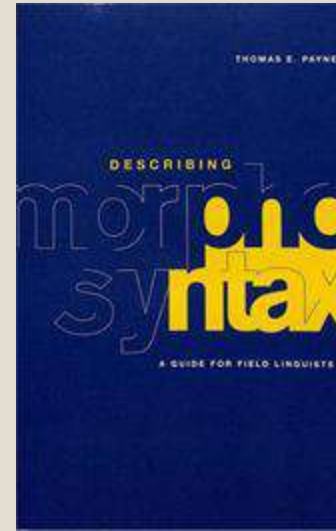
# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

## topics covered week by week

1. introduction and ideologies about language
2. phonetics and phonology, esp. tone and uncommon sound types
3. roots, stems, and categories
4. nouns, gender, animacy, and classification
5. predication and argument structure
6. alignment and obviation
7. voice and valency alternation
8. deixis, speech acts, and person
9. tense and aspect
10. eventualities and eventuality classes (lexical aspect)
11. word order, information structure, and questions
12. modality and evidentiality
13. clause types and embedding

# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- readings included a mix of...
  - typological overviews
    - Payne 1997 *Describing Morphosyntax*
  - chapters in volumes on Indigenous languages of North America
    - Silver & Miller 1997 *American Indian languages*
    - Mithun 1999 *The languages of Native North America*
    - Siddiqi et al. 2020 *The Routledge handbook of North American languages*
    - Dagostino et al. 2023 *The languages and linguistics of Indigenous N. America*
  - research articles on specific topics

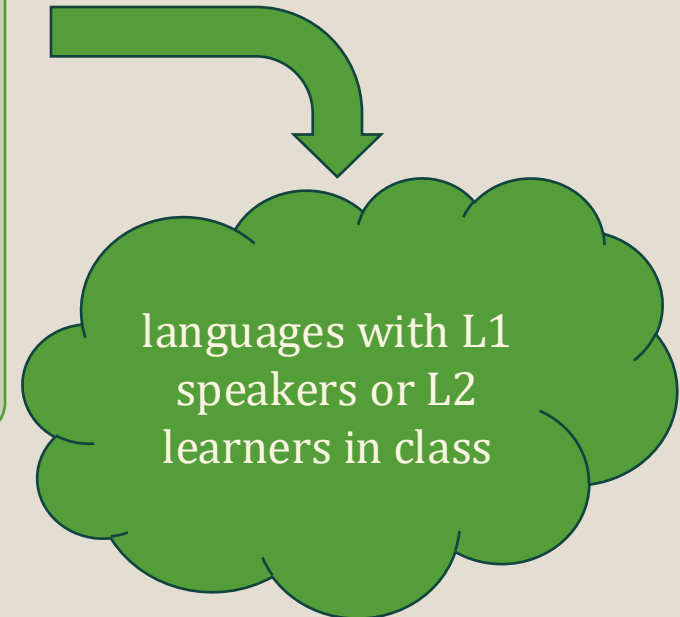


# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- students paired together and assigned a specific language
- students with limited ling. background assigned their own language and paired with ling. students
  - reciprocal mentorship structure
  - collaborate on readings & topics
  - but submit distinct work

- languages assigned:

- Kanien'kéha
  - Iroquoian
- ininīmowin
  - Algonquian
- Gitxsanimx̱
  - Tsimshianic
- Mam
  - Mayan
- Navajo
  - Na-Dene
- Inuktitut
  - Inuit-Yupik-Unangan



# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- four short assignments
  - designed to provide practice in researching and describing language
- 1. introduce the language
- 2. phonology and morphological typology of the language
- 3. nouns and classification *or* alignment and obviation
- 4. final paper proposal

## 1. Phonology

### 1.2 What to describe

In this section, describe the sounds of your language. Some questions to guide you:

- What is the basic phoneme inventory of the language? Provide tables of consonant and vowel phonemes, organized according to the IPA format discussed in class. The tables should include IPA symbols, and may also include orthographic correspondences.
- Are there certain sounds that have an uncertain status in the language? Sounds that appear only in borrowed words? Or are subject to dialect variation?
- Do you have information about the stress pattern in the language? About possible or impossible syllable shapes?
- Does the language have tone?
- If you have information about major phonological processes, you might describe these. For example, do nasals undergo assimilation? Are final vowels devoiced?
- Does the language have a standard orthography? Does it have more than one orthography in use?

Your third assignment asks you to dig into a specific topic in the morphosyntax of the language you are investigating. We suggest picking something related to either of the two topics which we (will) have covered in class: (1) **nominal classification, possession, number**, or (2) **alignment, obviation**. Your goal is to present a clear and concise description and discussion of relevant phenomena in your language, particularly one which is relatively accessible without a lot of linguistics background. If you are especially interested in writing about a different topic, please check with James and Jessica first.

# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- class sessions include lecture and problem set discussion
- languages and data beyond those in readings

## Spatial deixis

- **deixis**: linguistic expression with context-dependent reference
  - situation context: what has **happened** before a sentence is spoken
  - discourse context: what has **been said** before a sentence is spoken
    - this includes both the actual speech and the information conveyed in speech
- deictic expressions refer to persons, places, or times in the world



person  
*me*



place  
*here*



time  
*now*

- deixis for space is the *here* part of the deictic triplet: *me, here, now*

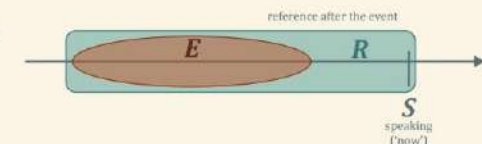
## Perfective and imperfective aspect

*E* = event time  
*R* = reference time  
*S* = speech time

- interpretation of Tlingit **perfective** aspect

- **event** of speaker etc. eating fish
  - speaker makes reference (*R*) to this event at the time of speaking (*S*)
  - the event (*E*) has already ended when the speaker refers to it (*R*)
- so *E* ends before *R* ends
  - $E \subseteq R$ : the span of time when the event takes place is within the span of time that the speaker refers to
- and so the speaker's perspective is after (outside of) the **event**

7.  $\dot{X}$ áat wutuwa $\dot{x}$ áa.  
 $\dot{x}$ áat wu-tu- wa- $\dot{x}$ áa  
 fish PFV 1PL.S STV eat  
 i. 'We ate fish.'  
 ii. 'We have eaten fish.'



# Linguistics for Indigenous Language Study

- also some practice in looking systematically at patterns in other Indigenous languages
  - exposure to other families and phenomena
  - emphasizes analytical skills
- each week ended with an in-class problem set for the topic
  - some class time set aside for collaborating at the end of week
- problem set was discussed in class the following week

## Kinship in Oneida

Oneida belongs to the Northern branch of the Iroquoian family, together with Kanien'kéha, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora, and Mohawk.

## Skwxwú7mesh aspect (part 1)

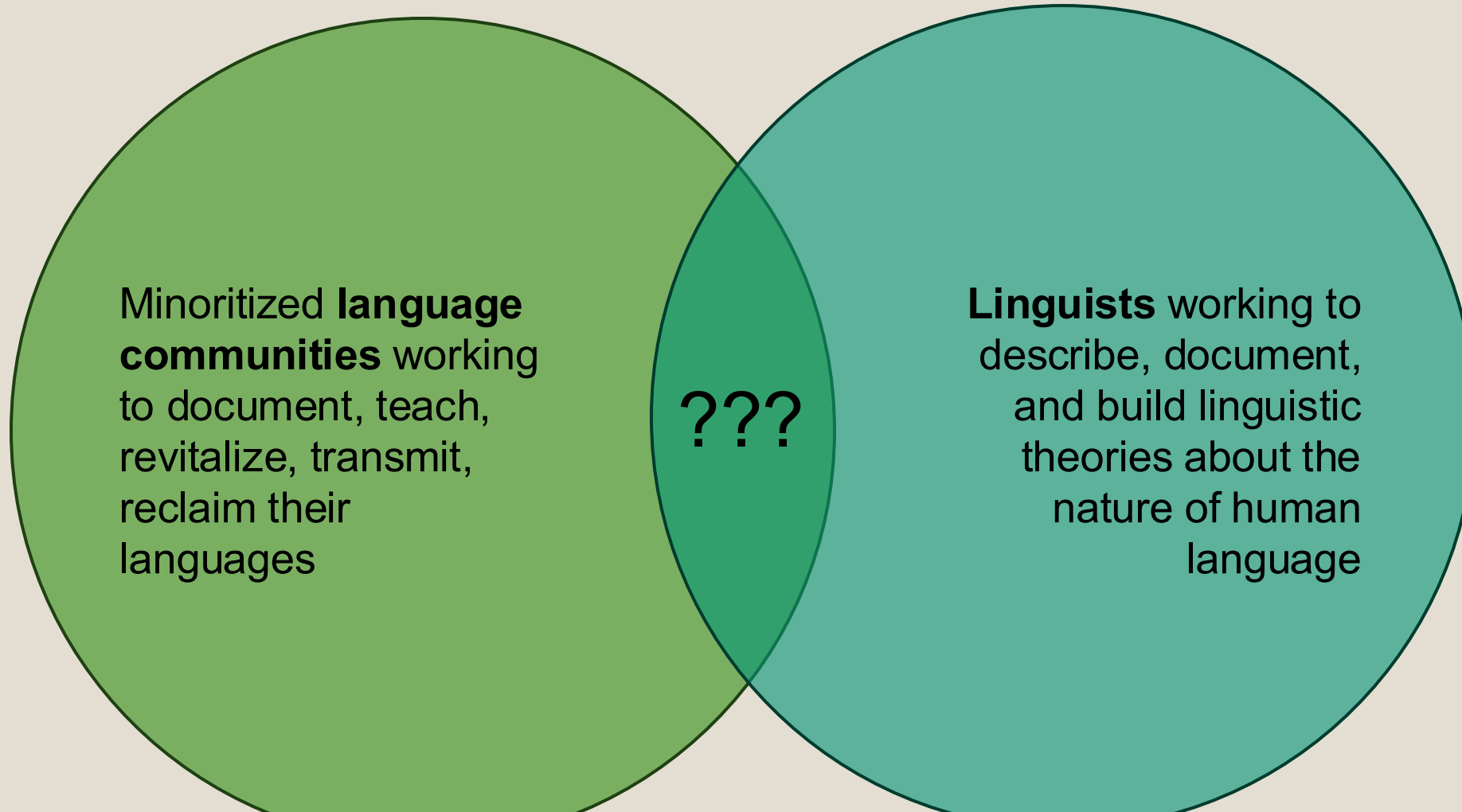
Skwxwú7mesh (aka Squamish) is a member of the Salish family, and belongs to the Central (Coast) Salish subgroup. Skwxwú7mesh is traditionally spoken in the Squamish Valley, Howe Sound, and Vancouver area of British Columbia. The language material here is from Bar-El's (2005) UBC dissertation, based on her work with eight Elders: Doris White, Eva Lewis, Tina Cole, Yvonne Joseph, Chief Lawrence Baker, Margaret Locke, Lena Jacobs, and Frank Miranda. As of 2005, they were among 15 fluent L1 speakers; there are active revitalization efforts underway.

## Possession in Mi'gmaq

The words below are from Mi'gmaq (aka Mi'kmaq), an Eastern Algonquian language spoken in the region of *Mi'gma'gi*, which includes the Canadian Maritimes, the Gaspé region of Quebec, and northeastern Maine. The forms are presented in the Listuguj orthography, which represents the velar stop as <g> (voicing is not contrastive). Apostrophes represent long vowels; <j> = IPA [dʒ]; schwas are not represented in the orthography.

1.	ntus	my daughter	30.	ntgwitnminen	our (excl) canoe
2.	a'gu'sn	hat	31.	gmisinaq	our (incl) sisters
3.	nunji	my head	32.	nta'gu'snml	my hats
4.	e'pit	woman	33.	gwitnl	canoes
5.	gmis	your (sg) sister	34.	gtusuow	your (pl) daughter
6.	ntusg	my daughters	35.	ugmisl	his/her sister
7.	ugpitr	his/her hand	36.	gspuminu	our (incl) river
8.	uggwitnml	his/her canoes	37.	ntgwitnminal	our (excl) canoes
9.	ntuowm	my pot	38.	uow	pot
10.	*tus	intended: 'daughter'	39.	nte'pitminaq	our (excl) wives
11.	ugtusl	his/her daughter	40.	uggwitnmuow	their canoe
12.	gtus	your (sg) daughter	41.	ggwitnminu	our (incl) canoe
13.	nmis	my sister	42.	gujjuaq	your (pl) fathers
14.	gmisinu	our (incl) sister	43.	nte'pitm	my wife
15.	nujj	my father	44.	*pitm	intended: 'hand'
16.	nmisinen	our (excl) sister	45.	npitm	my hand

Final reflections



What opportunities are there for work at the intersection of these groups — especially for *generative linguists*?

# 1. Benefits of collaboration

As a generative linguist who is not a member of minoritized language community, collaborating with community-based experts has resulted in...

- more accurate and complete empirical work
- better understanding of areas of a language with interesting puzzles or that are in need of more research

Things McGill students involved in lakwarihwí:saks have expressed:

- “if it’s a puzzle to an advanced L2 speaker/language teacher, it’s probably an interesting linguistics puzzle!”
- “if I can’t frame this generalization/analysis as interesting to a non-linguist language expert, maybe it needs some more work...”

## 2. There are different ways to contribute

- As generative linguists, our primary research and interests are often not directly accessible or interesting to community-based language professionals or language learners
  - ... but many of the concepts and tools that we rely on and teach in our university-based classes are!
  - ...and finding ways to communicate the underlying puzzles and outcomes of our work to this audience has value in and of itself
- There are different possible ways to contribute and work together given shared a common interest in **better understanding how language works**

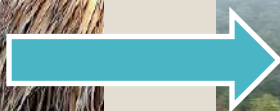
# 3. This work takes time

- Sustained relationship-building and maintenance is essential to this kind of work
  - We can't just ask: "what do you need?" or "what can I do?"
  - ... because it isn't obvious what is possible!
- It's also important to recognize that different types of contributions are going to be possible at different career stages
- Take time to learn from (inevitable) mistakes
  - I highlighted lots of positive things today, but I could give an even longer talk about things that have gone wrong...
- Even seemingly small things can have bigger impacts over time...

# 3. This work takes time



2002



2025



CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES Y ESTUDIOS  
SUPERIORES EN ANTROPOLOGÍA SOCIAL



INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE LOS  
PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

La posesión en el ch'ol de Tila, Chiapas:  
Forma y función.

**T E S I S**

PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE  
MAESTRA EN LINGÜÍSTICA INDOAMERICANA

PRESENTA

MORELIA IRENE VÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ

successfully defended earlier this month!



# Thank you!

[jessica.coon@mcgill.ca](mailto:jessica.coon@mcgill.ca)

**I am not your data**

I am not your data, nor am I your vote bank,

I am not your project, or any exotic museum object,

I am not the soul waiting to be harvested,

Nor am I the lab where your theories are tested.

**— Abhay Flavian Xaxa**



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