Enacting Hope through Narratives of Indigenous Language and Culture Reclamation

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Enacting both hope and change is an intergenerational process. For this reason, we are intentional in highlighting the narratives of emerging Indigenous scholars who are resurfacing language, cultural practice, and identities which have been suppressed by colonization and forced assimilation. Their narratives further portray successes and challenges in setting Indigenous research agendas that interrupt the colonial legacies of Western academic institutions. Chew (Chickasaw) speaks to the process of utilizing a culturally-grounded research methodology which creates space for community members to envision a future for their language. Sobotta (Nez Perce) reflects on the transformational process of teaching and learning the language through stories which reveal Indigenous knowledge. LeClair-Diaz (Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho) shares a personal journey of navigating Indigenous identity in academia. Contributing commentary as scholars in different stages of their academic careers, Stevens (San Carlos Apache), Anthony-Stevens (Euro-American), and Nicholas (Hopi) weave together the stories of hope by highlighting interconnected enactments of resistance and resilience. This commentary confronts assumptions of homogeneity of Indigenous peoples while also searching for common themes to advance decolonizing agendas across Indigenous and non-Indigenous positionalities.

As scholars working at the intersection of anthropology and education, we situate our work amongst a burgeoning mass of critical, Indigenous-led scholarship that counters damaging research that portrays Indigenous peoples—and their languages—as deficient, broken, and conquered (Tuck). While acknowledging the endemic nature of colonization, this body of scholarship underscores complexity and self-determination in its consideration of how Indigenous communities enact language and cultural continuance. This essay emerges from five years of gatherings at the American Anthropology Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, where all six authors have participated in roundtables and panels focused on decolonizing research methodologies for Indigenous education. In our collective journey, we have continually returned to the centrality of narrative to Indigenous research and practice. To this end, we emphasize the vitality and efficacy of reclamation work by bringing into focus narratives of persistence and

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optimism in Indigenous language and culture reclamation and education. Collectively, we theorize hope through personal narratives and embrace hope as an essential conduit between thought and action, belief and practice—a significant source of power in Indigenous cultural preservation. In a larger context, our interconnected experiences of living hope through counter stories and the reclamation of ancestral wisdom and knowledge factors centrally in mobilizing decolonial futures in Indigenous education.

The process of selecting and sharing our own narratives is an enactment of survivance: of presence over absence, a performance of the academic transformation for which we advocate (Vizenor 1). Notably, as we have come to understand through our work together, academic transformation(s) necessitate careful consideration of the roles of and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborators. Meaningful collaborations do not merely incorporate Indigenous frameworks, but center them, thereby operationalizing spaces of hope in negotiated, brokered, and situated ways which tend to ethno-historic contexts of power (Anthony-Stevens 89). Both individually and collectively, all of us, the aforementioned authors, speak powerfully to themes of negotiating identity through language and culture reclamation, alliances that attend to power imbalances and the agency of being as hope. It is our understanding that the process of telling and listening to stories of Indigenous presence and persistence allows us to become whole in them. We choose not to italicize Indigenous languages so as not to mark them as Other in the narratives and discussion.

1. Hope at the Center of Language Revitalizing Pedagogies

We work from a theoretical stance that conceptualizes hope as central to language reclamation and emphasizes "the self-determination and inherent sovereignty" of Indigenous peoples in language reclamation work (Brayboy et al. 424). We follow Miami scholar Wesley Leonard's theorizing of language reclamation as a social process of reclaiming "the appropriate cultural context and sense of value that the language [and cultural practices] would likely have always had if not for colonization" (141). In this way, language reclamation encompasses, but is also distinct from, projects of language revitalization or documentation, which respectively focus on increasing the number of speakers of a language and creating language materials and resources. Language reclamation, in turn, is not so much about the language itself but "people

'doing language' together in meaningful ways" to ensure what Acoma writer Simon Ortiz calls language and cultural continuance (Fettes 303-4; Ortiz). Nurturing hope becomes an act of resistance intricately linked to processes of reclamation. In the same way that language is living and nurtured through relationships, we treat hope as embodied and relationally enlivened in Indigenous language and cultural education. As Quechua scholar of critical pedagogy Sandy Grande reminds us, we are not conceptualizing the "future-centered hope of the Western imagination," but the hope "that lives in contingency with the past" and "trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors as well as the power of traditional knowledge" (28).

Therefore, as educational philosopher Paulo Freire writes, "hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice… in order to become historical concreteness" (Freire and Freire 9). For Indigenous scholars, hope is the outcome of "our experiences, struggles, anxieties, fears, conflicts, and efforts […] in our 'everyday practices of resurgence' […] to strive for reconnection after disconnection, misunderstanding, and miscommunication" (Aikau 657). In this way, hope within the context of Indigenous language and culture education is a predisposition to action outside of constraints imposed by settler-colonization and a commitment to responsibility and reciprocity to community. Self-definition cannot be separated from relational existence, such as spiritual questions of who we are as peoples and the "inward- and outward-looking process […] of re-enchantment, or ensoulment" (Grande 74).

This is the hope that is conveyed through each individual narrative—as well as when the narratives are considered together in this essay. Emerging Indigenous scholars Chew, Sobotta and LeClair-Diaz offer unique understandings of hope informed by differing personal, familial, and community contexts. Their stories, as Lumbee scholar Bryan Brayboy writes, "are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (430). The telling of these personal narratives is a critical act of reclamation in itself because colonization has sought to rob Indigenous peoples of their voices. Thus, Indigenous narratives, "whether blunt or subtle," as Plains Cree Métis writer Emma LaRocque asserts, act as "protest literature" speaking against struggle and the processes of colonization (xviii). These narratives connect the word to the self to reclaim voice and identities as whole and complete people. Our narratives "share our humanity—over and over again" (LaRocque xxvii).

As scholars who work at the intersections of educational research and sociocultural/sociolinguistic studies, our narratives are unified by critical culturally

sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies (CSRP) as expressions of sovereignty and educational practices; CSRP reclaims that which has been disrupted and displaced by colonization (McCarty and Lee 103) and dedicates non-homogenizing attention to local communities' expressed interests, resources and needs. As an applied framework to think about knowledge transmission, CSRP includes attention to "asymmetrical power relations and legacies of colonization" in contexts of community driven Indigenous language and culture education (McCarty and Lee 8). Critical recognition of ethno-historic context and subjectivities explores ways that narratives can recognize "the multiplicity of relationships across and through culture, history, and location" in a holistic, rather than a fragmented way (Justice 21). We propose that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people benefit from processes that support narratives crossing geographic, disciplinary, and membership borders. Furthermore, these crossings enable us, as co-authors, to enact relationships across difference as well as bring into relief distinct epistemologies and histories that define our differences.

In the following sections, Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz share their narratives of language and culture reclamation as hope and allow us to look both inward—understanding the unique contexts in which this work takes place—and outward—putting narratives in conversation with one another to better understand the significance of Indigenous narratives as pathways and practices of the broader goals of decolonization. The narratives are followed by commentary by Stevens, Anthony-Stevens, and Nicholas, who blend the personal and scholarly to extend our stance of restorying Indigenous narratives in ways that recognize the power of relationality and respect the distinct differences among the roles we each play in Indigenous-led language and culture reclamation. In this way, across our contributions, we trouble the distinctions between personal narrative and academic commentary/scholarly writing.

3. Chew's Narrative: Researching for Hope

Chokma, saholhchifoat Kari Chew. Chikashsha saya. I was twenty-years-old and an undergraduate when I first learned to use my language, Chikashshanompa', to introduce myself as a Chickasaw person. By that point in my life, I had said these same words many times in English— "Hello, my name is Kari Chew. I am Chickasaw."—but they always felt empty, void of connection to the people and places from which I came. Speaking Chikashshanompa'

grounded me in a deep sense of kinship, both to my ancestors and to generations to come. I felt responsibility to care for and learn my Indigenous heritage language and, as a result, began to re-envision the purpose of my pursuit of higher education. I went on to graduate school, first pursuing linguistics so that I could understand what academics had written about my language, and then education so that I could teach other Chickasaws what I had learned.

During my graduate studies, I came to recognize that the ways in which Indigenous people talk about their language(s) differ drastically from how academia and the public portray Indigenous languages. With fewer than fifty elder fluent speakers, Chikashshanompa' is typically classified as *severely endangered* by schema designed to measure the health of languages and disruption in their use. These classifications tend to be based on the enumeration of fluent first language speakers. While it is true that emerging generations are not currently acquiring Chikashshanompa' as a first language, a growing number of youth, adults, and elders have committed to learning, teaching, and speaking the language. Their efforts seemed to go uncounted for within those dominant discourses focused on loss and endangerment. Seeking to better understand the phenomenon of language reclamation from a community perspective, I began researching the motivations of Chickasaw people to engage in language reclamation efforts and how their commitments were sustained over time.

Because I am a Chickasaw person and language learner myself, this research was inherently personal and required me to use a protocol which embraced—rather than erased—my cultural identity and personal relationships with other Chickasaws involved in language work. To this end, I utilized a culturally-informed methodology, put forth by Chickasaw citizen Lokosh (Joshua D. Hinson), that was "rooted in place, built on relationships, and sustained over a period of time" (Guajardo, Guajardo, and Casaperalta 8). Called Chikashsha asilhlha', or "to ask Chickasaw," this protocol guided me in how to ask in a way that was humble, transparent, reciprocal, and careful. A key feature of my methodology was a process of co-creating story with participants through in-depth interviews. These stories told of the elders' strong desires to ensure Chickasaw continuance through teaching the language to others, the parents' sense of responsibility to pass the language to their children, and the youth and young adults' yearning to speak Chikashshanompa' as they developed consciousness of their Chickasaw identity. Collectively, these stories conveyed the potential for the rebuilding of intergenerational relationships, and, thus, the continuance of the language.

One especially powerful story was that of Hannah, an elder fluent speaker, Amy, a language learner, and Amy's infant daughter. I first met the three, who were participating in a Master-Apprentice program, in the summer of 2010 at the Chickasaw Council House Museum in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Amy had come to spend time with Hannah speaking the language, and the pair allowed me to interview them beforehand. Surrounded by Chickasaw artwork and historical artifacts, Amy sat next to Hannah, tending to her child. It was a portrait of possibility: three generations of Chickasaws coming together to speak and to learn Chikashshanompa'. As we talked, Amy shared her desire for both herself and her daughter to know their heritage language.

Over the course of several years, Amy and Hannah continued to build their relationship through their shared language reclamation journey. In 2014, I spoke with the pair again to learn how their story had developed. "Building the relationship and building knowledge have both been good," Amy reflected. "Hannah and I have gotten to be good friends [and my daughter] thinks of her as another grandma." Hannah, Amy, and Amy's young daughter shared a special bond around the goal of restoring Chikashshanompa' as a family language, and their story is one of hope. Hannah asserted, "[Speaking the language] is what I'm supposed to be doing… No matter what, I just keep going." It is because of Hannah and other fluent speakers' persistence and willingness to teach others—and younger generations' commitment to learn—that Chikashshanompa' will keep going, too.

4. Sobotta's Narrative: Learning and Teaching the Niimíipuu Language through Story

In twenty years working for the Niimíipuu Language Program in Lapwai, in north central Idaho, I have seen many wonderful elders, who spoke Niimíipuu as a first language, pass on. With few remaining speakers, there are challenges to teaching and learning the language. As a language teacher, I often wonder how the Niimíipuu Language Program will continue to teach the language with no remaining fluent elder speakers. Through my work as a language teacher and my graduate studies at the University of Idaho, I have focused on my vision to teach and learn nimipuutímt (the People's language) through niimíipuum titwáatit (the People's stories). Niimíipuu stories need to have life breathed into them. In turn, the stories breathe life back into the people through their lessons of wisdom and guidance.

As a child, I heard Tim'néepe, the Niimíipuu creation story told by Niimíipuu storytellers. A deceitful Monster swallows all of the Animal People, including Coyote. Coyote foresees the future and wants the best for the Human Beings to come. Eventually, Coyote conquers Monster and escapes with the Animal People. Coyote then created the Niimíipuu with blood from the heart of Monster. The teachings of this story have unfolded over time and have come to guide my work.

As a teacher, I, like Coyote, want the best for my students as they grow into strong Niimíipuu. This is why I along with other Niimíipuu educators exercise sovereignty and self-determination to use our traditional stories for literacy instruction. The stories support our students' education as Niimíipuu in ways that the prescribed readings of the Western public-school system cannot. Through niimíipuum titwáatit, Coyote reawakens and is called upon to teach new lessons to the students. Coyote's powers are released when the listener becomes ready to receive the lessons gifted through the story. The stories continue to unfold throughout the students' lives as they reveal new lessons. In this way, the stories sustain the Niimíipuu knowledge system.

Before my classes, I have the students recite a language pledge: "Nimipuutímt (the People's language) cukwenéewit (know it) hiteemenéewit (learn it) téecukwe (learn it) c'iχnéewit (speak it) titooqanáawit (the People's way of life) wiyeeléeheyn (everyday). The pledge is a way to enact Nimipuutimtnéewit 'inp'tóoqsix (taking back our People's way of speaking). I remind the Niimíipuu language students that they must speak the language to keep it alive. Over time, the students become able to tell a traditional Coyote story in the language with the aid of the pictures. I place pictures representing Niimíipuu words from the story on the classroom walls. The students rotate around the room counter-clockwise—representing the movement of the earth and the seasons—using the visual aids to help tell the story as a group. Through this practice, the students find a connection to learning which affirms their identities and allows them to uphold the responsibilities of teaching and learning the language.

The Niimíipuu have over three hundred documented stories and each represents a seed of hope. By telling the stories, we plant the seed and create conditions for Niimíipuu knowledge and teachings to grow into good things. Teaching the language through the stories allows Niimíipuu to teach as our ancestors did. Our ancestors taught from a place of hope and a vision of continuance seven generations ahead. They told stories out of love for the betterment of the

people, passing them from one generation to the next. Stories are given to us by our ancestors to teach us relationality between all things: the stories to the land, animals, plants, language, and to the people. This is why it is vital for Niimíipuu to continue speaking the language and telling the stories. I have hope that the stories will equip the Niimíipuu youth I teach to be knowledge keepers and that they will continue to carry the language and stories forward.

5. LeClair-Diaz's Narrative: Becoming a Sosonih/Hinono'ei Scholar

My mind felt hazy as I walked towards my car. I opened the passenger door and heard my husband ask, "How was your class?" I held back my tears, trying to think of how to vocalize my insecurities. I had been so excited to begin my first semester of my doctoral program. In academia, I had not encountered Indigenous professors who discussed Indigenous knowledge systems in a contemporary way until I attended my doctoral program at the University of Arizona. I realized I wanted to be part of that movement in some way. Now, I felt overwhelmed because I didn't know where to begin in connecting my Indigenous knowledge with my research interests.

My insecurities stemmed from the second meeting of my Indigenous Seminar course. Two Indigenous professors from my department visited class to speak about their research. One slide from their PowerPoint listed the term "tribal epistemologies," and I wondered to myself what that meant. The professors explained, through imagery on the slide, how Indigenous knowledge and value systems served as frameworks for their research projects. Considering how tribal beliefs could serve as a foundation for an Indigenous scholar's identity was a new process for me. During my pre-K-12 educational journey, I felt pressure from teachers and peers to stifle my cultural identity and focus on undertaking dominant cultural values in my behavior and school work. Students who did not accept and conform to these ideals were viewed as unsuccessful, problem students, or "at-risk."

My husband's voice brought me back to the present. "Amanda, what's wrong?" he asked. I hadn't realized we had left the university and were already halfway home.

"We talked about tribal epistemologies today in class, and it made me realize I don't know what my tribal epistemologies are," I said, my voice slightly catching.

"It's ok. I bet they didn't know their belief systems at first either. You have time to learn those things," my husband answered, patting my knee.

"What if that knowledge is lost? I don't ever remember anyone talking to me about Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho epistemologies," I answered.

"You'll have time to learn it. You could probably ask your mom and dad about it," my husband said, trying to ease my worries. I felt a great sense of guilt and shame. Had I not listened well enough growing up? Did this lack of knowledge mean I was not Indigenous?

The next day, I called my mother and told her about the discussion that took place in my class. She listened quietly as I asked her what it meant to be Eastern Shoshone. At the time, I was unknowingly favoring this identity because this is the tribe I am federally enrolled in. She answered that she did not know and it was a good question. My dad hopped on the phone and answered that this form of knowledge was probably lost. It was in that moment I realized that I had to try and relearn what it meant to be Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho—not only for my research, but so that I could start feeling like a whole person.

My journey toward reclaiming my identities and epistemologies has drawn me to my languages, which are central to fully understanding Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho ways of knowing. I enrolled in the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI), a summer program in my department, to study my tribal languages and how to revitalize and promote their use. I learned about linguistics and language-teaching methods for Indigenous languages. My cumulative project was to model a twenty-minute immersion lesson in my chosen Indigenous language. Most of the Indigenous students in the program selected their single Indigenous heritage language but, for me, the choice was not so simple. Which language would I pick: Eastern Shoshone or Northern Arapaho? I felt pressure to choose only one language to study, and in doing so, it seemed I was privileging one part of my identity over the other. I learned from this experience that, when I acknowledge the intersectionalities of my identities rather than compartmentalize them, I can find strength and power as an Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho woman scholar. Being able to reconnect with my tribal language, I was able to define my identity as an Indigenous woman scholar in a new, transformative way. The commitment to incorporating my tribal languages into my research and actions as an Indigenous woman scholar helps me to connect "understandings of the past" with my

comprehension of being an Eastern Shoshone (Sosonih)/Northern Arapaho (Hinono'ei) woman scholar in today's world (Grande 250).

Now in the fourth year of my doctoral program, I continue to explore my identity and develop my voice as a Sosonih/Hinono'ei woman. Conceptualizing my identities as fluid, interwoven, and interconnected has helped me bridge my Indigenous knowledge to my academic work. I cannot separate my identities into binaries or break these two knowledge systems apart. The struggle of reclaiming and reconnecting with my tribal epistemologies will be a lifelong journey—and a challenging one particularly because the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho were traditionally enemies. Contemporary Shoshone and Arapaho families in my community have intermarried and passed on both tribal epistemologies to younger generations—in this way I am not alone and have an important voice. Reconnecting with my tribal epistemologies has meant centering the memories and values passed to me by my maternal grandmother, parents, and extended family. These teachings have stayed with me and influence me as a source of hope—the thread that connects me across generations to my parents, my grandmother, and my other family members. As long as I keep these teachings at the forefront in my personal and professional life, I have hope that I can stay true to myself as a Sosonih/Hinono'ei scholar.

6. Commentary

In the ensuing commentary, we weave the narratives of Stevens, Anthony-Stevens, and Nicholas together with those previously presented as an additional layer of complexity. Stevens, Anthony-Stevens, and Nicholas's narratives highlight the crosscutting ways that Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's narratives embody a predisposition to action which decenters settler-colonization and demonstrates commitment to responsibility and reciprocity to community. As a counter to the Western academic genre of separating self from content in analysis of text and concept, Stevens, Anthony-Stevens, and Nicholas choose to unsettle the space of commentary. We make our positionalities transparent and embed ourselves within relational frameworks of accountability to nurture hope. Our use of the commentary space is intended to reflect our engaged stance on restorying Indigenous narratives in the context of education.

6.1 Stevens's Narrative

Like Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz, I personally experienced the usurping of Indigenous knowledge, language, and cultural systems through Western colonial practices. Growing up on the San Carlos Apache reservation, stories about Apaches were often told by non-Apaches and found in movies and books. These fictitious and romanticized accounts, told in English, placed a Western lens of vice and virtue over Apache culture and language. The outsiders who told our stories missed many of the culturally salient issues to Apaches. They instead framed our culture and language in opposition to Western notions of what is good: our Gaans—physical manifestations of mountain spirits—were deemed devil dancers and our ceremonies wicked. There is a great need to interrupt the colonial legacies of Western narratives through the telling, as Indigenous people, of our histories, narratives, and truths.

The telling of our stories on and in our own terms is an especially important practice within institutions of contention, such as schools and universities. As an adult, teaching at the same school that I attended as a child, I remember an interaction with a frustrated non-Apache teacher. She was upset that her primary students knew nothing about the "Redcoats" of the American Revolutionary War. At that moment, my own thought was that this teacher knew nothing about Mangas Coloradas (translated loosely to Red Sleeves in Spanish), one of the greatest Apache chiefs. My chuckle regarding the juxtaposing of knowledge and riffing on the color red quickly subsided as it also dawned upon me that her students were probably also ignorant of Mangas Coloradas. For this reason, the privileging of Indigenous narratives is of the utmost importance—they serve to confront colonizing forces while also giving way to the tenet of hope which facilitates the resurgence of our ways of thinking, knowing, and being.
Within Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's narratives, the strengthening of identity and longing for language are themes which resonate loudly. Each narrative enacts language and cultural continuance through being and doing (Fettes 304). Chew embraces, not erases, Chikashshanompa', despite the widely-accepted designation of the language as being severely endangered; at the same time, she positions language use and revitalization within a hope-based paradigm, rather than a deficit one. Her example of multiple generations engaging with the language demonstrates there is the hope "that Chikashshanompa' will keep going, too." It is this same audacity of hope that compels Sobotta's Nimipuutimtnéewit 'inp'tóoqsix.

The reclamation of the peoples' way of speaking—despite the decades of Western schooling prioritizing English—allows Sobotta to rightfully recognize that the stories are individual seeds that she is nurturing through her classes. If we are able to incorporate lessons that prioritize Indigenous ways of doing, it may very well lead to events such as LeClair-Diaz's reclaiming and reconnecting with Sosonih/Hinono'ei epistemologies. The initial insecurities felt by LeClair-Diaz as a doctoral student learning about epistemologies is vividly relayed through her story. It is not difficult to situate this insecurity against the hegemonic forces of schooling that for hundreds of years have stripped the recognition of Indigenous culture and language. However, it is the realization of hope that allows the seeds of Sosonih and Hinono'ei to germinate and take root.

These narratives, reflective of lived experience, are models of sustaining and revitalizing Indigenous pedagogies of hope and research which, as Smith claims, talks back and up to power (226). It is the way in which Indigenous people can reclaim our stories as valid and useful—not only for ourselves but also within the cultural diversity of our lived reality. We hope for stories, not filtered through the lens of the colonizer, but firmly rooted in our epistemologies, aspirations, and languages.

6.2 Anthony-Stevens's Narrative

I grew up in the occupied lands of the Potowatami, Peroia, and Miami (among other Indigenous peoples), in a region often referred to as Chicagoland (Midwest, U.S.). As the great-grand-daughter of second-wave, Industrial-era European settlers, my early life enveloped me in a malaise of Indigenous erasure, both material and discursive. While names of rivers (Calumet and Chicago), locations (Wabash and Skokie), and structures occasionally maintained distorted Euro-interpretations of Indigenous place through Indigenous languages, the environment settlers recreated bore little resemblance to its first peoples' relationship to the land. Tuck and Yang write, "In order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there" (6). In Chicagoland, Indigenous narratives were told as static or made into ghosts under concrete, factories waste, and brick bungalow homes. As an adult, I am a wife and in-law within an Indigenous family, with whom I birthed two beautiful daughters. The unsettling incommensurability of colonial and Indigenous realities rattle my home and

render my identity uneasy. In the context I can now name as settler colonial, Indigenous narratives are urgent and radical anecdotes to the settler oversimplification of our contemporary realities. As a non-Indigenous collaborator, my commentary highlights my own need to learn from Indigenous narratives of hope and to move beyond superficial recognition of the ontologies of Indigenous frameworks.

The relationships described by Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's narratives highlight intersectional encounters with self in/with community, which are necessary reclamations of wholeness within institutional realities. The three emerging scholars remind me that denaturalizing my own narrative of place is paramount to troubling the social amnesia of Whiteness that obfuscates institutional colonization and racism. Indigenous narrative, as reclamation scholarship, constitutes a space outside of settler colonial binaries and conceptualizes social positionings within complex stories and complex personhood (Gordon). That is to say, the stories people tell about themselves, and their social worlds intertwine with current available narratives and imagined futures. Telling and retelling Niimíipuu stories in spaces of colonial literacy instruction, as described in Sobotta's narrative, invites contemporary youth to find a connection to learning that affirms their identities, a recognition of complex personhood in globalizing times. Language reclamation, as seen in each narrative, brings complex personhood into relief and underscores contemporary persistence as acts of both inward and outward resurgence. Prioritizing Indigenous narratives, by and for Indigenous peoples, furthers what CSRP refers to when it asks settler institutions to pay attention to "asymmetrical power relations and legacies of colonization" in contexts of community-driven Indigenous language and culture education (McCarty and Lee 8). Such a connection between theory and practice instructs non-Indigenous people to stop naming and to listen.

Activated within Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's narratives, hope is offered as a tangible, living being within our ecosystem. Hope, as powerful and fragile, helps us to name the persisting elephants in the room—settler colonial hegemony, White supremacy, and institutional racism—as threats that constrain and contort the wellbeing of hope. Naming these unsettling threats holds collaborating non-Indigenous scholar-educators accountable to the roles played in perpetuating, or interrupting, the erasure of complex Indigenous narratives. As pedagogies of hope live in relational ways, they do not make space for unexamined settler ideologies, nor do they have a responsibility to educate non-Indigenous collaborators on the structures of settler-

colonialism. The collective narratives shared by the three emerging scholars decenter settler-colonial frameworks and normalize Indigenous complexity. Their very "telling and re-telling" are centered on and perform well-being and wholeness. Non-Indigenous scholars contribute to narratives of hope by listening and taking material action to forefront Indigenous voices, methodologies, and languages, as described by Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz.

6.3 Nicholas's Narrative

I draw from the discussions of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's twenty-five Indigenous projects in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, and Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire's concept of *hope* in his *Pedagogy of Hope*, as I begin with my own story. My story is one that I often refer to as a "rude awakening" which also led to my current lifework in language and cultural reclamation. This awakening was prompted by a graduate course assignment using the genre of poetry to explore the linguistic aspects of our heritage languages, mine being Hopilavayi (the Hopi language). The "rude" awakening was that, although Hopilavayi was my first language, as a graduate student, I found myself unable to recall the language I had spoken with ease as a child; I had undergone language shift and evident cultural disconnect. However, I had the good fortune of working with AILDI professor Akira Yamamoto who planted the "hope" necessary and critical to enacting and sustaining my struggle and fight against hopelessness. In response to my anxious question, "Where did my language go?" my professor explained that my language had not gone "anywhere." Rather, he stated that my language was residing in the depths of my being waiting to be resurfaced—to be spoken again and to become a living part of my being, a "pedagogy of hope" I continue to follow and to which I remain committed.

The narratives of Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz as emerging Indigenous scholar-authors of this essay speak collectively of a similar awakening to, or critical consciousness of, the voids of connection to our origins of identity and purposes of existence (the people, places, and responsibility). In turn, each narrative, as a critical self-reflection, reveals the hope—accessing the inherent ancestral wisdom and knowledge—that resides "in each and every one of us" as Indigenous people (Freire 2). As such, each scholar-author also speaks to a researching of the wisdom and knowledge that comprise an Indigenous pedagogy of hope embodied in "the People's way of life"—titooqanáawit (Sobotta)—thus residing "in the people". This researching

has led each scholar-author back to a reconnection with community, the people, the peoples' language, and ways of knowing and being: for Chew, to community and Chikashshanompa' (Chickasaw language); for Sobotta, to nimipuutímt (the People's language) and to niimíipuum titwáatit (the People's stories); and for LeClair-Diaz, to her cultural heritage identities of Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho and their respective knowledge systems.

Moreover, Smith asserts, "to be connected is to be whole" (150). This assertion is substantiated by Chew who writes, "Speaking Chikashshanompa' grounded me in a deep sense of kinship, both to my ancestors and to generations to come," by Sobotta who tells us, "Stories are given to us by our ancestors to teach us relationality between all things: the stories to the land, animals, plants, language, and to the people," and by LeClair-Diaz who affirms, "I had to try and relearn what it meant to be Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho—not only for my research but so that I could start feeling like a whole person." This project, then, is as much one of "rediscovering Indigenous knowledge and its continued relevance to the way we lead our lives" (Smith 161) as it is one of enacting and sustaining the Indigenous struggle and fight against hopelessness—"struggle" being a mainstay of hope (Freire). While somewhat ironic that researching and embodying such struggle is being undertaken within the colonizing institutions of Western education, this mission, however, becomes one of "reframing […] the ways in which Indigenous issues are discussed," "retaining the strengths of a vision and the participation of community," and occurring "within the way Indigenous people write or engage with the theories and accounts of what it means to be Indigenous" (Smith 154-55).

Freire further points out that while the hope that each individual holds is necessary, at an individual level it is not enough. The final project necessitates trans-Indigenous engagements (Allen), sharing knowledge through "dialogue and conversations amongst ourselves as Indigenous peoples, to ourselves and for ourselves" (Smith 146), across the world of Indigenous peoples that includes non-Indigenous scholar-educators. Sharing contains views about knowledge being a collective benefit and knowledge being a form of resistance (162), resilience, and persistence. This essay represents emergent Indigenous voices speaking back by writing back, what Smith refers to as "Indigenous people… writing and theory making" (150). The AAA venue, in turn, offers the reclaiming "spaces" for these voices to be heard. The scholar-author contributions to this essay represent the co-construction and publication of Indigenous scholarship of a past, present, and future that is captured in Sobotta's words at AAA: "We are

still here; we are our own natural resources" for maintaining the most reliable guide toward envisioning an Indigenous future.

7. Conclusions and Implications

Within the sociocultural study of language, localities are situated "worlds of sense" (Feld and Basso 8), experienced through placed relationships; as such, languages transport situated meanings across time and space (McCarty, Nicholas, and Wyman 51). With this understanding, we, together as co-authors, offer pedagogical and methodological orientations which re-center local languages and identities as resources for Indigenous futures. The AAA Annual Meeting venue has served as a space for us to explore Indigenous narrative as language and cultural reclamation and education. Through this essay, we push forward our work to claim spaces for Indigenous voices to be heard and find hope in the assertion that language awaits us in all spaces.

Privileging Indigenous narratives and exchanges expands the space for Indigenous peoples to clarify, as Brayboy argues, their own resources and learn from other ways of doing and knowing. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to draw upon the resources of one another and to enrich individual and community wellbeing. Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's individual narratives reflect a holding onto "ancestral wisdom[s] despite disruptions" in personal life, family, and community, which in turn provides "nourishment and sustenance" (Neeganagwedgin 326). Significantly, while the narratives have power when considered individually, new meaning is also produced when the narratives of all authors are considered collectively. A unified narrative of hope emerges and brings with it important implications for sustaining and revitalizing Indigenous ways of being and knowing. As Chew, Sobotta, and LeClair-Diaz's accounts suggest, hope is sustained through intergenerational relationships that connect the past, present, and future. Each author has experienced loss and struggle as a result of colonization and ongoing pressures of assimilation, but nonetheless has taken up responsibility to reclaim knowledge, language, and identity. This work, as Sobotta suggests, has the purpose of sustaining the next seven generations. Hope is enacted as each author upholds a responsibility to honor the teaching of the generations that came before and to share them with those who will come next.

We further learn from the collective narratives of our co-authorship that agency is deeply connected to hope. Language and culture reclamation is not about preserving language and

culture as abstract entities, but about recovering "voice, which encapsulates personal and communal agency and the expression of Indigenous identities, belonging, and responsibility to self and community" (McCarty, Nicholas, Chew, Diaz, Leonard, and White 160). As the narratives demonstrate, the project of recovering and strengthening voice occurs in a multitude of spaces: communities, K-12 classrooms, and universities, as well as within intergenerational relationships between grandparent-parent-child and even professor-student. As LeClair-Diaz suggests in her narrative, these spaces must be intersectional in order to create conditions for Indigenous peoples to empower themselves and express a voice that may be inclusive of complex personhood, including multiple Indigenous heritage languages. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, we each have a role and responsibility in claiming and shaping these spaces, but these roles are non-congruent. As Anthony-Stevens states, non-Indigenous/settler scholars have a responsibility to contribute to Indigenous narratives of hope by listening and by taking material action to forefront Indigenous voices, methodologies, and languages.

Importantly, a key implication of the narratives and commentaries is that hope, as a guiding framework, should not be understood as human-centric. The plants, animals, land, ancestors, spiritual beings, language, and stories have agency and guide the work of language and cultural reclamation. Stl'atl'imx scholar Peter Cole explores this notion, along with the power of narrative, in a conversation between an Indigenous researcher and tricksters Raven and Coyote. According to Raven, "there is a growing call from indigenous peoples academics and other interested parties […] for compelling new narratives to reshape or replace the progress narrative of modernity" (349). As Raven reminds the researcher, the narrative of progress privileges "mind over body and spirit human over non-human and more-than-human" and creates imbalance through the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges and narratives (349). When we, as Indigenous people, return to ancestral wisdom, which respects and exists in relationship with the non-human and more-than-human, we sustain a hope that is not solely reliant upon the whims of people. Ultimately, by sharing narratives, we seek to privilege Indigenous knowledge and ways of being as generators of new narratives of hope with implications for all people.

Notes

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