

## Power and positionality: A case study of linguistics' relationship to Indigenous peoples

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**Abstract.** The western scientific tradition has an exploitative, damaging history with Indigenous peoples and while not partaking in kidnapping and grave robbing, linguistics has been employed in justifying acts of genocide. Modern-day linguistics, notably within theoretical and documentary subdisciplines, takes an ahistorical and scientific approach to its own relationship to Indigenous peoples and languages. The discipline does not acknowledge or engage with the problematic aspects of its history and current practices outside of discussions within sociolinguistics. This paper presents a case study of the relationship between linguistics and the Ojibwe people to demonstrate that it is essential for all linguists to address both their own positionality and the historical legacy of linguistics in their linguistic research. I offer several suggestions for how individuals and institutions may begin to address these issues in their research practices and in the norms of the discipline.

**Keywords.** race; Indigenous language; language endangerment; language reclamation; Ojibwe; Anishinaabemowin; Nishnaabemwin; colonialism; decolonization; history of linguistics; ethics; missionary linguistics; SIL International; positionality; diversity; inclusion; intellectual property

**1. Positionality.** I begin by positioning myself both in relation to and within the field as a way to model one of my suggestions for accountability in linguistics. My name is Mskwaankwad Rice and I am from Wasauksing First Nation. I am studying linguistics for its utility in understanding the intricacies of how languages function and I seek to apply this knowledge to Ojibwe language reclamation efforts. I am a generally Indigenous-coded, cisgendered male of Anishinaabe and Eurocanadian heritage and this results in a range of social interpretation of my ethnicity, identity, and experience. I am cognizant of the implications of this as a person of both a colonized population and descendant of settlers benefiting from Indigenous displacement.

**2. The landscape and case study.** There is a general lack of discourse around race in our field outside of sociolinguistics and in fact it is a habit of theoretical and documentary linguists to ignore the issue altogether. More recently, however, an important discussion about race is emerging in the field. Charity Hudley et al (2018) note that linguistics has not addressed the issue while other disciplines have, and, among other suggestions, call for an LSA statement on race. Subsequent to this call, a statement was issued in 2019. Leonard (2020) and Gaby and Woods (2020) discuss the issue from an Indigenous standpoint and illustrate how linguistics' relationship to Indigenous peoples reflects colonial norms. Linguistics can do harm to Indigenous peoples, for example, in assuming authority and ownership over Indigenous linguistic data, as will be discussed below. Linguists must also be cognizant of the effects of colonization and linguisticicide to avoid traumatizing or re-traumatizing Indigenous communities they may work with. In addition to critically examining our linguistic research practices, we must also question how we know what we know about particular languages. As I will show for Ojibwe, and as is the case

with a great number of other Indigenous languages, this question involves contending with the historical harms and modern-day legacy of missionary linguistics.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to holding a historically extractive relationship, linguistics has been utilized as a tool for the harmful practice of attempting religious conversion of Native peoples. Taking Ojibwe<sup>2</sup> as an example, it is often noted that there is a long history of the linguistic study of the language. What is not as often, nor as critically, reflected upon is that these earliest European investigators were missionaries. The Slovenian Roman Catholic Bishop Frederic Baraga produced the first major linguistic works examining Ojibwe and his explicit goal in doing so was for the conversion of the people to Christianity:

My principal intention in publishing this Grammar is, to assist the Missionaries in the acquirement of the Otchipwe language and its kindred dialects, as I know by experience how useful it is the Missionary to know the language of the people whom he is endeavoring to convert to God.<sup>3</sup>

The very mission to convert Indians is rooted in complementary assumptions of the superiority of European religion and inferiority of Indigenous spirituality and ways of life. Baraga's view of the language itself is illustrated when he states that the "pluperfect, and the imperfect tense, are not so sharply distinguished in Otchipwe, as they are in English, or in other civilized languages."<sup>4</sup>

The idea of white/European superiority was carried by other missionary linguists such as the Reverend Edward Wilson as illustrated in his Ojibwe manual for missionaries (1874):

It seems a marvellous thing, indeed, that these poor ignorant Indians, with no knowledge of literature, or the general principles upon which languages are based, should have handed down so complex a dialect as the one before us, with all its multitudinous inflections, affixes, and prefixes, from one generation to another.<sup>5</sup>

Wilson also noted that the language, "in common with those of other Indian tribes is not a written one, and, though by some considered musical, is very deficient in phonetic elements."<sup>6</sup> The modern linguist knows that the range of a language's phonological inventory is no indication of its (and by extension its speakers') worth.

The racist belief of the inferiority of Native peoples is exemplified in the following quote by Chrysostom Verwyst, another who missioned in Ojibwe country in the 19th century:

A careful study of the Chippewa language has brought the writer to the conviction that the Indians belonging to the Algonquin family of nations must have

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<sup>1</sup> This issue is discussed in Rice (2022) more specifically in relation to Algonquianist linguistics, and the current paper is an expansion to linguistics generally.

<sup>2</sup> While the term 'Ojibwe' is practically exonymic among some dialects and communities, it is used in common English discourse about the people and language. Anishinaabe and Nishnaabe are common endonyms. 'Nishnaabemwin' is used in this paper referring to language as it is in my home dialect. Terms such 'Native' and 'Indian' are also used for North American Indigenous people generally as this is colloquial practice among many of my people.

<sup>3</sup> Baraga (1878: vii).

<sup>4</sup> Baraga (1878: 98-99).

<sup>5</sup> Wilson (1874: 31).

<sup>6</sup> Wilson (1874: iv).

attained to a high degree of civilization at a remote period of time and that their subsequent lapse into barbarism was due to incessant wars and migrations. Our opinion is based on the following reason: A nation's language is a true and reliable index of the mental capacity and intellectual status of its people. A barbarous, mentally undeveloped race cannot originate a systematic, philosophically regular, grammatical language. I think this needs no proof. Now, any one who has a grammatical knowledge of the Chippewa language, will concede that it is wonderfully systematic, regular, euphonic, plastic, and expressive. It must, therefore, have originated with a people mentally well developed.<sup>7</sup>

By Verwyst's own logic, an inferior people cannot have a sophisticated language and he thus invents a justification for that which he sees in Ojibwe. While there is a tendency in the current era to disregard the racism of such historical sources as merely outdated products of their time, these views had great impacts that last to this day.<sup>8</sup>

**3. Effects of these racist conceptions.** In his 2015 book *Native Tongues: Colonialism and Race from Encounter to the Reservation*, Historian Sean P. Harvey explains how concepts of language and race in colonial North America informed and justified assimilationist and genocidal efforts of colonial governments noting that "U.S. officials based their efforts to extinguish Native languages on a century of increasing philological knowledge that blended notions of descent and intellectual difference."<sup>9</sup> Missionary linguists such as Baraga et al upheld the white supremacist view of the inferiority of the Native mind, noting deficiencies of their "uncivilized" languages as evidence.

We thus cannot represent these early sources as neutral in our modern linguistic research since the racist ideals they were built upon and that they espoused directly supported genocidal colonial projects carried out against Indigenous peoples. One strategy figuring prominently in this regard is forced assimilation by way of the Indian residential/boarding school programs carried out in the USA and Canada, which have had a devastating and lasting impact upon Native communities to this day.<sup>10</sup> The explicit goal of this system was the eradication of Indigenous culture and lifeways by removing children from their homes and communities to undergo a program of assimilation at the school. With very rare exceptions, a tenet of this process was the absolute suppression of Indigenous language use. Aside from its impact in a linguistic context, the very program of missionizing was damaging to Indigenous peoples and communities.

The 2015 summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada notes that the presence of the missionary in colonial times helped to justify both the expansion of European empire and the destruction of people refusing to capitulate.<sup>11</sup> Apologists today speak of the "good" done by missionaries and the TRC notes that "[a]lthough missionaries

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<sup>7</sup> Verwyst (1900: 2).

<sup>8</sup> DeGraff (2005) describes the Eurocentric ideals that gave rise to the enduring hypothesis of Creole exceptionalism, and he importantly highlights the sociological implications of it. Walkden (2021) notes how conceptions of race in early linguistic literature can impact what might otherwise be deemed an innocuous discussion of theoretical syntax and that point is noted below.

<sup>9</sup> Harvey (2015: 15).

<sup>10</sup> Other historic and contemporary policy should be noted here, such as programs of forced removal and the establishment of the reservation system in the 19th century, as well as the continued over-policing of Indigenous communities and disproportionate apprehension of Indigenous children by social authorities in the modern day.

<sup>11</sup> TRC (2015: 48).

often attempted to soften the impact of imperialism, they were also committed to making the greatest changes in the culture and psychology of the colonized,” and this was realized by disrupting “relationships to the land, language, religion, family relations, educational practices, morality, and social custom.”<sup>12</sup> The harm done by missionaries in their linguistic work is only one of many contexts that these agents of change operated within.

**4. Implications of racism in academia.** Relationality and power are thus key to the present discussion. The paternalism exhibited in religious missionary efforts is symptomatic of European white supremacist doctrine that is reflected in academia and in linguistics. Leonard (2020) and Gaby and Woods (2020) highlight how linguistics maintains a position of power over Indigenous peoples and there are numerous instances of this across Indian country. The case of Frank Siebert and Penobscot is an example of a case in which an individual became a self-made authority on a language and moreover effectively came to own the language through US copyright law in having written it down.<sup>13</sup> Upon his death his extensive notes and materials were willed to the American Philosophical Society and today with no remaining L1 speakers, the Penobscot nation faces difficulty in accessing their language both physically and also due to the esoteric orthography employed by Siebert.<sup>14</sup> Huisken (2013) discusses how missionaries among the Dakota in the 19th century used the Dakḥótiyapi language to further their academic careers alongside their mission of Christianizing and assimilating the Dakota people.<sup>15</sup> Notions of white superiority are at the base of this tradition of linguists assuming authority over Native peoples and languages for their/the field’s benefit at the expense of said peoples and languages themselves. There is in fact a paternalistic sense of obligatory right to possession by white academia.<sup>16</sup>

This phenomenon is common in linguistics in regard to Native languages and extends to academia generally in its exploitation of Indigenous knowledge, property, and even bodies. Such practices are not relegated to history, and Reardon and TallBear (2012) cite among other instances a case in which Arizona State University (ASU) misused blood samples collected from Havasupai people.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the fact that the samples were collected without informed consent, researchers doubled down on their actions, arguing that they had a right to hold and utilize Havasupai DNA to advance science: The authors state: “What is notable for our analysis is not that population geneticists distributed Havasupai DNA to non-ASU researchers without informed consent but that once this was pointed out, researchers still adamantly defended their right to engage in this practice.”<sup>18</sup>

The necessitation of the USA’s Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) speaks to the history of colonial abuse of Indigenous peoples. It is pertinent to the

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<sup>12</sup> TRC (2015: 48).

<sup>13</sup> Gregory (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Gaby and Woods (2020) note that metalanguage creates barriers to accessing linguistic material. This is relevant when linguists work on Indigenous languages and consequently make the outputs of their work inaccessible to community members.

<sup>15</sup> The *Language* discussion of SIL International is relevant here, as is the fact that key figures in early American linguistics benefited greatly by using data from Indigenous languages gathered by missionaries.

<sup>16</sup> Such a presumption completely disregards guiding principles of ethical research practices involving Indigenous peoples. Literature on this subject refers to ‘R-words’ and terms such as ‘relationship’, ‘responsibility’, ‘respect’, ‘reciprocity’, and ‘rights and regulations’ are employed in this discussion. See Snow et al (2016), Holton et al (2022), and Leonard (2021) (among many others) for elaboration on this topic.

<sup>17</sup> Reardon and TallBear (2012: 238).

<sup>18</sup> Reardon and TallBear (2012: 238).

present discussion for this reason and also in regard to debate around the act. Watkins (2004) discusses the inadequacies of NAGPRA and cites the famous case of dispute over the origins of a deceased Indigenous man dubbed *Kennewick man* after the location where he was found. Analysis showed that the man had lived over 9000 years before present (BP) and his remains were contested by local Indigenous nations and scientific authorities. The latter sought to disprove any connection between the ancestor and the former as this would lift NAGPRA protection and allow for ready scientific analysis of the remains. Though relevant for a myriad of other reasons, I cite the case to highlight debate around the issue and specifically the notion that white academic and scientific bodies have a right of authority over Native peoples. This was reflected in news, opinion, and academic articles on the matter and Crowther (2000), for example, argues that application of NAGPRA may “severely limit scientific discovery that could benefit all people.” This strongly parallels the Havasupai/ASU case and has at its base the white supremacist notion of Indigenous inferiority/European superiority manifested in the belief that Euroamerican science not only trumps Indigenous rights but also does so in a paternalistic manner of knowing what’s best for the Indian.<sup>19</sup>

Linguistics, like other disciplines in western institutions, has demonstrated the belief in a right to possession for the good of white academia and justify this position arguing that it is for the good of Indians in general.<sup>20</sup> In particular, this belief propagated the era of ‘salvage linguistics’ in the early 20th century. At this time the burgeoning field took it upon itself to fervently record and document Indigenous languages under the ‘vanishing race’ trope popular even in scientific fields, assuming that Native American peoples, cultures, and languages would soon be extinct. Writing from outside of linguistics, Wajsberg (2018) discusses this era and highlights how much the discipline owes to Native American peoples. Importantly, he states that his dissertation “invites a critical intervention within the history [of] linguistics to re-encounter the science’s disregarded past and re-think its shared responsibility toward Indigenous communities in the present.”<sup>21</sup> One of the main goals of this paper is to make the case that linguists in all sub-disciplines must engage critically with the historical context of our field.

**5. Linguistics and Ojibwe today.** White institutional hegemony is relevant to the present case study of linguistics’ relationship to Ojibwe people also for the fact that *Algonquian* is a term and concept in itself. The word refers to peoples and cultures within the linguistic grouping of the Algonquian language family and is a construct of white academia. Harvey (2018) discusses Native conceptions of identity and relationship and how these differ from European norms. While Ojibwe/Anishinaabe people recognize and maintain relationships with their neighbors and relatives of similar languages and cultures, the concept of relationality is not based upon nor restricted to a linguistic affiliation. A people can be related in the absence of a shared linguistic

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<sup>19</sup> Dispute around the “race” of the man is important to note as well since it was in the interests of some to determine a non-Native American ethnicity of the man in order to sidestep NAGPRA protection. Others took the discovery as evidence of European presence in ancient America, a familiar tactic of both overt white supremacists claiming a right to ownership of land and justification of genocide, and those seeking to undermine the histories of Native American peoples and their accomplishments. The postcolonial works of Said and Fanon are relevant here in discussions of European scholars seeking to concurrently undermine non-European ancient civilizations such as those of the Americas while also seeking ownership by claiming descent from others such as Egypt.

<sup>20</sup> Moreton-Robinson (2006) describes white possession and its relation to property and power, noting the assumption of possession over Indigenous lands and peoples. This extends to not only judicio-political rights but relevant for present discussion, frameworks of knowledge in academic disciplines.

<sup>21</sup> Wajsberg (2018: ii).

relationship and conversely, those with similar languages are not necessarily considered relations by default. The subsuming of numerous cultural identities under an imposed term and concept is an example of white academic hegemony framing Anishinaabe people as merely objects of study inconsiderate of Native socio-political realities and ontologies.

In a similar vein, the practice of standardized language classification in ISO codes proves problematic for Indigenous languages that are identified and classified by exonyms imposed by colonial authorities. Sullivan (2020) and Valentine (1994) also note the inadequacies and inaccuracies of exonyms imposed upon the languages/dialects and communities of Anishinaabe people and ISO codes are based upon these terms. Authorities such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) require the use of these codes in funding applications and the like and as such reinforce the practice of imposing colonial norms upon Indigenous peoples.<sup>22</sup>

Adding to the issue of ISO codes is the fact that much work on them is and has been done by the evangelical Christian organization SIL International, which has a problematic relationship with Indigenous peoples worldwide for its missionary work. As discussed in Dobrin and Good (2009), linguists worldwide have long accepted and legitimized SIL missionary presence and utilized frameworks laid down by them, and it is necessary to now reflect upon that relationship. Missionary work is the basis of linguistics' relationship to the Ojibwe people (and to many more Indigenous groups worldwide), and this legacy is even celebrated among Algonquianists to this day. Authors refer to historical sources such as those discussed above as being of "enormous" value and credit the missionary linguists for the fact that the Ojibwe language is "well-re-sourced."<sup>23</sup> Even when not viewed in such a light, the legacy of the missionary among my people is not reflected upon critically by linguists and this history is essentially absent from linguistic discussion in general.<sup>24</sup> Algonquian linguists have also collaborated with and accepted assistance from SIL in conducting fieldwork in Anishinaabe communities, which illustrates the fact that evangelism is not critically examined today. While there is some discussion of the problematic history of missionary efforts in Ojibwe country in the Papers of the Algonquian Conference (PAC), this is in historical or anthropological papers and theoretical/descriptive linguistics papers ignore the issue. Contemporary Algonquianists themselves have also made clear their Christian faith in publications, though their motivations for working in an Indigenous community are not stated. This relates to the notion of positionality and it is discussed below as a suggestion for ways in which we as linguists can address the legacy of our discipline and sources for their impacts today.

**6. What we can do.** It is my hope that this paper has made it clear that we as linguists must critically engage with our history and sources in our descriptive and theoretical work. The Ojibwe case study highlights how the relationship between linguistics and Indigenous communities has played out and continues to be impactful today. There are a number of concrete actions that individual linguists and larger institutions can take to address the legacy of our field.

Linguists can contextualize their own position and that of the sources and conceptual frameworks that they operate within. The practice of acknowledging one's positionality is common in

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<sup>22</sup> Linguists have also imposed Eurocentric grammatical concepts upon Indigenous languages, as seen above in Baraga's evaluation of Ojibwe speakers' use of presumed pluperfect and imperfect tenses.

<sup>23</sup> As I intend to only highlight the way in which Algonquianists view our historical sources, I've chosen not to cite and single out authors of such quotes who are colleagues, mentors, and friends. I myself have uncritically utilized Baraga and other such sources in my work.

<sup>24</sup> I will also note that *Language* Vol. 85, No. 3, (Sep. 2009) included a discussion of the relationship between the discipline of linguistics and the evangelical Christian organization SIL International.

subfields like sociolinguistics but practically nonexistent otherwise, and as individuals we can explicitly position ourselves in our work, published and otherwise. Linguists have differing backgrounds and motivations for doing linguistics and it is good practice to acknowledge this for purposes of accountability since this impacts the results of our work.<sup>25</sup> This paper illustrates that the sources we employ in our work are not neutral and as such we must critically engage with them. The following is an example of a footnote one might use in a work citing Baraga:

This paper draws heavily on Baraga (1878). As a missionary linguist, Bishop Baraga's explicit motivation in his work was the religious conversion (p. vii) of the Anishinaabe people among whom he worked. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (2015) recognizes the damage inflicted upon the sociocultural wellbeing of Indigenous peoples by missionary efforts. Moreover, racist notions of Indigenous inferiority supported and espoused by Baraga and others were used in colonial governmental policy to justify acts of genocide such as the residential/boarding school system (see Harvey 2015).

Though it is not a practice of theoretical linguistics to acknowledge problematic sources, this is easy to do. In a colloquium presentation on the Parataxis-Precedes-Hypotaxis Hypothesis (PPHH), Walkden (2021) acknowledges that discussion of the PPHH in early literature involves concepts of "primitive people" and of the "cultivated mind[s] of civilized peoples", noting that "claims (in science as elsewhere) may persist because of ideology rather than merit."<sup>26</sup> Walkden thus acknowledges that historical concepts, though incorrect and outdated, continue to have an impact on our work today.

Larger institutions have perhaps more potential to significantly shift cultural norms of our discipline. Linguistics departments must teach students in all subfields about the history of linguistics and its modern impacts, and not relegate this discussion to sociolinguistics. Field linguistic training is an important area in this regard since fieldwork is conducted with Indigenous peoples. Tsikewa (2021) recognizes shortcomings of contemporary fieldwork training in ignoring Indigenous research methodologies and avoiding a discussion of ethics generally. This results in the maintenance of a linguist-centered extractive approach to fieldwork and Tsikewa makes recommendations for improving field methods training.<sup>27</sup> Submission instructions for *Language* presently contain nothing regarding positioning oneself or sources, and the LSA could include guidelines for doing this as a best practice, encouraging contributors to reflect critically on their work and the history of the discipline. Institutions such as the NSF can reassess Eurocentric conventions such as adhering to ISO codes in naming languages as requirements in funding applications. Journals dealing specifically with Native languages and peoples such as *Papers of the Algonquian Conference* and the *International Journal of American Linguistics* must be especially cognizant of not only our field's historical and present relationship with Indigenous peoples, but also how the journals themselves have (or have not) meaningfully engaged

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<sup>25</sup> Bishop Baraga himself made a positionality statement of sorts in his grammar discussed above stating his evangelical motivation for publishing a grammar of Ojibwe.

<sup>26</sup> Walkden (2021: slide 5).

<sup>27</sup> Those recommendations are: "(i) the recognition of linguistics as a discipline rooted in colonization and the implications of this for speakers/community members, (ii) the incorporation and explicit discussion of language research frameworks that include Indigenous research methodologies, and (iii) the recognition and valorization of Indigenous epistemologies via decolonizing 'language' (Leonard 2017)." (Tsikewa 2021, p. 293)

with the peoples, languages, and cultures that are their subject matter. Like *Language*, the aforementioned journals mention nothing in their style sheets/submission guidelines about acknowledging or addressing these issues. These suggestions are made in consideration that linguistics as a discipline owes a great debt for its development and proliferation to Indigenous peoples of what is now denoted as the Americas, and that these journals and larger academic institutions thrive upon lands expropriated from said peoples.<sup>28</sup>

**7. Conclusion.** On my first day as a student of linguistics, I came across a pamphlet by the LSA on endangered languages. As this is wholly relevant to my research interests, I read the pamphlet and was struck by much of its content, not least of which was a section heading reading, “What does language extinction mean for a community - *and for the rest of us?*” (emphasis added).<sup>29</sup> Coming from a community under severe threat of language loss, the heading implicitly stated that I myself was not included in the ‘us’ of ‘the rest of us,’ which is the community of linguists.

In my first semester I came upon a sidebar in a phonology textbook that described an instance of linguists finding that a number of speakers of the Yowlumne language previously thought “extinct” still survived. This language was celebrated for its import to linguistics and phonology, and the text exclaimed “we nearly missed it!”<sup>30</sup> This reduction of a people to merely their language’s value to the discipline of linguistics struck me as my grandmother, who was the second-last L1 fluent speaker of Nishnaabemwin in my extended family and the last in my direct lineage, had recently passed on. Beyond the implications of terms such as “language death” as discussed by Bobaljik (1998), these terms also sidestep and sanitize that language “death” is realized with the death of living human beings who are/were members of community and family and who they themselves suffered in life as targets of colonial assimilationist programs meant to eradicate our peoples and languages.<sup>31</sup> The instance was another reminder of my presumed status as an ‘other’ and an object of study in linguistics/academia, rather than an agentive participant who was included in the ‘we’.

Beyond the assumption of the ‘we’ noted above there are much more striking instances of Indigenous exclusion in linguistics. As I explored historical sources discussing my heritage language, I came across those mentioned above that state unequivocally that my people are uncivilized, calling us “ignorant,” “barbarous,” and “mentally undeveloped.” This illustrates a need for us as linguists to critically center such problematic sources in an attempt to create an environment that is less hostile toward Indigenous people. My personal experience as a student of linguistics has reflected the fact that there are problematic aspects of the discipline in regard to how it views and relates to Indigenous peoples, which has compelled me to speak up about the topic, which is far outside of my main interests in linguistics.

The LSA’s 2019 statement on race emphasizes the need for racial inclusion in linguistics and speaks of addressing inequality in the field to empower and welcome people of various racial backgrounds. The LSA is also affiliated with the Natives4linguistics interest group that seeks

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<sup>28</sup> I will add that despite nearly two centuries of linguists studying Ojibwe the language has been nearly eliminated while the discipline of linguistics has thrived.

<sup>29</sup> LSA, date unknown.

<sup>30</sup> Zsiga (2013: 242).

<sup>31</sup> Terms such as “language death” imply that language loss is a natural phenomenon while in the case of Indigenous languages, these have been sought to be eradicated by colonial forces. Davis (2017) discusses the concept of *erasure of colonial agency*. As an example in the present context, the rhetoric employed in discussing Indigenous peoples and languages can be utilized to minimize the causes of language loss and suppression, even to the point of misattributing it to Indigenous communities themselves.



to enrich linguistics by promoting Native American participation in the field. Nonetheless, language in LSA documents themselves are alienating of Indigenous peoples, illustrating the fact that as of the writing of this paper, the 2019 statement has yet to be followed up with proactively. Linguistics cannot relegate this issue to sociolinguistics and continue with business as usual.

What might a true commitment to racial inclusion and ethical collaboration look like for the LSA and other authoritative bodies in linguistics? In 2022, the Australian Journal of Rural Health, Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine, and Rural and Remote Health collaborated on a statement regarding research and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, committing to name which contributing authors are Indigenous and moreover to rejecting papers “that concern Indigenous communities but do not acknowledge an Indigenous author or provide evidence of a participatory process of Indigenous community engagement.”<sup>32</sup> It might be tempting to dismiss similar standards for *Language* as impractical or unattainable, or even an impediment to scientific progress.

Institutions in disciplines like anthropology have made statements on race and on their histories in relation to Indigenous peoples but despite this fact, the debate around NAGPRA mentioned above illustrates that a necessary paradigm shift has not occurred in those disciplines. In their paper “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” Tuck and Yang (2012) discuss how common discourse around decolonization is largely performative in nature while true decolonization is a process inherently unsettling of established colonial power structures. With that in mind, I encourage all linguists to reflect upon their own practices and upon the history and structure of linguistics in order to begin the unsettling yet necessary work to address problematic aspects of our discipline and its history.

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<sup>32</sup> Lock et al. (2022: 1).

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