The Experience Of Northern Secwepemc Losing And Relearning Their Language

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Abstract

By 1991, the Northern *Secwepemc* had lost approximately 80% of their capacity to speak their language, *Secwpemctsìn*. For 110 years, the Canadian government successfully silenced *Secwepemctsin* in the community of *T'exelc* by instilling feelings of shame and fear for speaking *Secwepemctsin* at the St. Joseph's Mission and Sugar Cane Indian Day School. This study used a qualitative exploratory and descriptive research approach to capture the experience of the Northern *Secwepemc,* specifically, the *St'exelcemc* in losing their language, how those experiences affect the process of relearning the language, and specific strategies for relearning the language. Three research questions guided the process. I interviewed four *St'exelcemc,* Group 1 (63 and 65 years of age) and Group 2 (47 and 52 years of age) who experienced losing their language and were in the process of relearning it. I used qualitative content analysis to analyze my results and develop them into themes. The participants' experiences were found to be similar to those described by Haig-Brown (1988), Chrisjohn (1991), Ignace, Hinkson, and Jules (1998), and Kirkness (1998). Two significant findings emerged: punishment, instilling fear, and shaming, has the power to silence language; and there is a willingness and need to go back to traditional *Secwepemc* methods of teaching language which are more successful for Indian people. Therefore, social workers must recognize and address the trauma that suppressed the language; Educators must recognize the "keepers of the language and culture" method to relearn language and incorporate it into the academic system; *Secwepemc* leaders must confront the marginalization of their community members by taking the information gathered here and address the severe limitations imposed on *Secwepemctsin* by current Indian language education policies and funding.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the *Spi7uy Sqweqwlut.s* Language Chapter for their valuable contribution and thank them for their tireless efforts to save *Secwepemctsìn*. I would also like to dedicate this study to the youth of *T'exelc* who are striving to learn the language.

> *Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this bill.*
>
> —Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1920

> *Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him, the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being.*
>
> —*Indian Control of Indian Education*, National Indian Brotherhood, 1972

Chapter 1: Introduction

The endangerment of *Secwepemctsìn*[1] (Shuswap language) is but one legacy of the colonization of the *Secwepemc* (Shuswap people) by the Canadian government. Yet it is the most important, given that language loss has been shown to greatly affect the social, political, economic, and spiritual fabric of a society (Bernard, 1992; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Cummins, 1995; Fettes, 1997; Fishman, 1996; Kouritzin, 1997; Oxford, 1982; Pan & Berko-Gleason, 1986; Schecter & Bayley, 1997). The Elders have always told us that if we lose the language, we lose the culture and our very being (Kirkness, 1998). Similarly, according to Fishman (1996), language is the mind, spirit, and soul of a people, and every effort must be made to protect, preserve, promote, and practise it. He asserts that when a language is lost, people are deprived of one of the major assets of cultural identity. Ignace, Hinkson, and Jules (1998), in summarizing the importance of maintaining and reviving British Columbia Indian[2] languages, reported that the ability to speak one's language has a positive impact on personal and collective self-esteem, identity, and sense of cultural belonging. Thus, language and culture are closely connected, and the loss of language will result in the loss of a unique and immensely

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[1] *Secwepemctsìn* is a form of expression that describes the connection of the people to the land and describes in detail the ceremonies and culture of the *Secwepemc* (J. W., an Elder from T'exelc, personal communication, fall 2000).

[2] *Aboriginal* is a legal term referring to the Indian, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada. *Indigenous* collectively refers to the original people occupying a country. I prefer to refer to the Indigenous peoples of Canada first by their traditional names, in their own languages, and second by the term *Indian*, which I personally am comfortable with, although other terms (e.g., Native, First Nations) may be more politically correct.

valuable part of Indian heritage. This is often referred to in Latin America as "acculturation"—in other words, cultural genocide (Hoogshagen, 1987).

The Need for Research into the Loss and Relearning of Secwepemctsìn

There are several reasons why research on the loss and relearning of *Secwepemctsìn* is important—academically, professionally, and personally. First, despite the efforts of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society/Simon Fraser University to promote *Secwepemctsìn*, the 1991 Indian Peoples Survey (APS) revealed that the Northern Secwepemc had lost their language capacity by approximately 80%.[3] The APS reported that 25 out of 115 adults spoke an Indian language in the community of *T'exelc*, representing approximately one third of the band population. By winter 2002, there were approximately 19 adult speakers still living on reserve (based on personal observation), with ages ranging from 40 to 96 years. This qualifies *Secwepemctsìn* as an endangered language (Assembly of First Nations, 1992), and every effort to understand and regenerate it is important.

Second, the research is important for me as a social worker because of the potential implications of the language in the reconstruction of the social and political organizations of the Northern *Secwepemc.*

Third, the project is important to me personally because of my own experience of losing and relearning *Secwepemctsìn.* Language policy in effect during the years I attended grade school (1962–1964) forbade Native languages to be spoken in both residential and day schools (Kirkness, 1998) and the community (Davey, 1948). I believe

[3] The accuracy of the APS (1991) has been questioned because of the low number of respondents in the survey (Kirkness, 1998).

this to be the main reason why I lost the ability to speak my language. I recall my fear of authority (particularly teachers) in relation to the use of *Secwepemctsìn*, and the confusion resulting from learning *Secwepemctsìn* and English simultaneously. I recall one of my siblings being shamed by the teacher for mispronouncing English. Additionally, I recall my mother's fear of continuing to speak to us in *Secwepemctsìn* once we began school. Relearning my language has been a difficult journey.[4] Finally, I am interested in the experience of others living on my reserve who have lost the ability to be fluent or remember their language, and are attempting to relearn it. I am interested in exploring their strategies for relearning, to find out what has helped them achieve their goals, and to pass this information on to others who wish to regain their language.

T'exelc

In the early 1800s, the *Secwepemc* territory covered 50 kilometres west of the Fraser River across the interior plateau to the Rocky Mountains. There were about 30 *Secwepemc* bands, with a total population of about 7,200. Fourteen of these, known as the

[4] Of 13 children in my family, eight attended residential schools. Five started at the St. Joseph's Mission, two of whom were later transferred to the Kamloops Indian Residential School, two others of whom were transferred to Prince George College, with one remaining at the mission. Of the other three who attended residential school, two started at the Sugar Cane Indian Day School and were transferred to the St. Joseph's Mission in Grade 7, while the other went much later. Three of the youngest children started at the Sugar Cane Indian Day School and were later integrated into the white school system in Williams Lake, as per the integration policy introduced in the early 1960s. (Two children died during childhood.) Of the eight who attended residential schools, the three eldest remained fluent in Secwepemctsìn, the next two lost the language, the next one remained fluent, and the remaining three had varying abilities to speak and understand the language. Of the three children who attended the Sugar Cane Indian Day School, one refused to speak the language, and two began actively relearning it (one of these has since died).

Slemxùlexamuc, inhabited and controlled the Fraser River from High Bar to Soda Creek, including Clinton (Furniss, 1999; Teit, 1909). Teit (1909) called these *Secwepemc* "the Fraser River Division"; they now refer to themselves collectively as the Northern *Secwepemc.*

One of the five Northern *Secwepemc* bands is the *St'exelcemc* (the people of fish-charging-at), a large band, formerly living in seven villages, principally around Williams Lake, with some wintering along the Fraser River down to Chimney Creek and others up the San Jose Valley (Teit, 1909). The band was reduced to a population of 120 by the smallpox epidemic of 1862/63.

In approximately 1863, one of their settlements, at Comer's Ranch, was pre-empted by Thomas Davidson, to whom the *St'exelcemc* Hereditary Chief William gave permission to build a cabin and cultivate a garden, and the Indians were forced to move to one of their hunting grounds, 12 miles southeast of Williams Lake, near the San Jose River. In 1869, this land was pre-empted by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, for the purpose of building the St. Joseph's Mission, a boarding school intended for white and "half-breed" children but subsequently opened only to Indian children (Thomas, 1950). However, the Indians stayed on the land until 1881, when they were finally granted a reserve, two miles northeast of the mission. The reserve was called "Sugar Cane" on account of the tall grass that grows there. Elders recall a section of the reserve where many of the people lived being called *T'exelc* (personal communication with J.W., 2002). This is the name that the Indians are now reverting to, and the name I prefer to call this reserve. The people of *T'exelc* call themselves *St'exelcemc.*

The Research Questions

In this study, I use a qualitative exploratory and descriptive research design to examine the loss and potential revitalization of language. The goal of the research is to capture the experience of the Northern *Secwepemc* in losing and relearning their language. The questions addressed within the study included:

1. What are the experiences of *St'exelcemc* in losing their language?
2. How does the specific experience of losing *Secwepemctsìn* affect the process of relearning the language?
3. What are (or have been) Your Strategies for Relearning Secwepemctsìn?

Epistemology Underlying the Research Design

Epistemology is defined as the study of, or theory of, the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity (Chisholm, 1989). European exploration, conquest, and colonization of lands beyond Europe brought Western science to those lands and their inhabitants. According to Ladrière (1977, p. 14), in parts of the world where Western science is experienced as a relatively new phenomenon, the interaction of science with culture "has taken a more violent form and the disintegrating effects have been much more sharply experienced." Ladrière (1977) explains:

> There has been, on the one hand, a disintegrating effect on traditional values and forms of representation, and, on the other hand, a progressive integration into the dominant culture…of the scientific mentality—the values, content of knowledge

and patterns of action which underlie scientific practice and are formed by it. (p. 12).

From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I live and practise, colonial education designed for indigenous peoples uses Western science and scientific research as the channel to modernize and supplant indigenous culture (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Colorado, 1988; Smith, 2001). The West judges the rest of the world by its own measure of choice, Western science and Western technology has used education to enforce change on those societies found deficient. As Smith (2001, p. 1) candidly points out, the word *research* "is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary."

In the 1990s, however, non-Western as well as Western scholars have begun to formally and overtly resist the imperial Western attitude toward indigenous knowledge. As a result, new epistemological perspectives, such as multiculturalism (Stanley & Brickhouse, 1994), post-colonialism (McKinley, 1997), and post-modernism (Lyotard, 1995), arose to challenge the conventional Western wisdom on the relationship between science and culture.

Indian Knowing

Krupat (1996) and Nabakov (1996) maintain that the epistemology of many Indian peoples allows for the validity of mythological knowledge and for forms of empirical understanding often discounted in a objectivist world that defers to scientific authority. According to Kirmayer, Brass, and Tait (2000, p. 9), "the value of myth and storytelling can be readily appreciated in terms of mental processes of making meaning

and coherence"; additionally, myth and storytelling are "symbols of identity that circulate among Indian peoples, providing opportunities for mutual understanding and participation in a shared world." Whereas Western scientific knowledge is predominantly text-based, traditional Indian knowledge is passed from one generation to another through oral traditions and observation of activities. Communication between generations and between families (e.g., through language, storytelling, and rock paintings) is integral to this way of learning and knowing.

To try to fit our beliefs into the English language and frame of mind is to apply Eurocentric thinking to them. The way I have learned about most anything as a *Secwepemc* has been through listening to the stories of the Elders and observing what they do. If you ask them a question, they will answer you indirectly with a story. What you do with that story and its message is your responsibility; the Elder has fulfilled her responsibility just by telling you the story.

My Theoretical Stance

The way I view the world does not fit with any theoretical paradigm that I have studied throughout my Western-based social work education. The closest connections I have are with social constructionism and critical theory, particularly their locating sources of domination in actual social practices, presenting alternative visions of life free from domination, and translating them into forms that are intelligible to those who are oppressed in society (Mullaly, 1997).

My world view is more specifically defined by the one described by the Native elders, spiritual leaders, and professionals of various Native communities in North

America, which connects the Indigenous peoples with the earth and which is holistic, in that all things in their world (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) are connected, including the language (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1985). In this sense, language can be seen as one of the symbols that provide meaning for the people (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1985). *Secwepemctsìn* expresses so much more than English. For example, *Secwepemctsìn* describes the connection of the people to the land, who has responsibility for that section of land, and how it is used. *Secwepemctsìn* also describes in detail the ceremonies and culture of the *Secwepemc* (J. W., *St'exelcemc* Elder, personal communication, fall 2000). The language is also my identity, the way I want and need to express myself. For example, my first *Secwepemc* name, *t.susu`su7.s,* means "she beads" and it describes who I am: the Elder who gave me that name said it described what she saw me doing, what I am always doing, and what I love to do. The Elder said that this is the old way people received their names and that they could have more than one name in their lifetime; people are recognized for their nature, how they behave, and the skills they have (J. B., *St'exelcemc* Elder, personal communication, summer 1990).

The creation story.

My world view is also greatly influenced by the Creation Story of the *Secwepemc*, as related to me and some of my siblings by our mother in her stories. The Creation Story of the *Secwepemc* begins at the beginning of time. The people who inhabited the earth had characteristics of both men and animals and were called *speta'kui* (the animal people). Some were cannibals and others were transformers, such as the Old One, *Sek'le'p* (Coyote), *Ca'wa, Sa'memp, Kokw'lahai't*, and *Lee'sa* (Teit, 1905). The Old One

was the Chief of the ancient world and traveled in the form of an old man, but sometimes changed his appearance. He was all-powerful in magic. Among many other things that he did to establish the world of the *Secwepemc*, the Old One gave them methods of communication: he gave them the ability to build "coyote rocks," which identified their territorial boundaries, and to make rock paintings and carvings; and he gave them sign language, and finally the gift of their language, *Secwepemctsìn,* with which to teach through the telling of stories (Teit, 1905). The Creation Story has been passed down through the generations of the *Secwepemc* to help them know who they are. As a *Secwepemc*, I view the Creation Story as a true account of how the *Secwepemc* came to be.

Restoring Secwepemc *Dignity and Linguistic Integrity*

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) assert that understanding the difference between Indigenous languages and world views, and Eurocentric languages and world views, is directly tied to restoring Indigenous dignity and linguistic integrity. But in order to understand the differences between the two, you have to understand both. This research is an attempt to help restore *Secwepemc* dignity and linguistic integrity, by contributing to the understanding of *Secwepemctsìn* , how it has been transmitted through the ages, and how we almost lost it and are getting it back.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with a brief exploration of language development to examine how a language is normally acquired. Next, I investigate the research on language shift or loss to consider possible frameworks for assessing the decline of *Secwepemctsìn* (Aitchison, 2001; Chomsky, 2000; Landar, 1966; Reich, 1986). I then examine the effects of language policy specific to the Indian residential school era and child welfare system past and present, as a way of situating the research questions within the broader socio-political context of cultural genocide (Best, 1995; Chrisjohn, 1991; Furniss, 1992; Haig-Brown, 1988; Johnston, 1983; Loseke, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Finally, I review efforts of the Northern *Secwepemc* to revive their language by examining linguistics and other known strategies for the revitalization and retention of language (Armstrong, 1990; Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998; Kirkness, 1998; Kuipers, 1974; Teit, 1905).

Language Acquisition

While traces of language use and understanding can be found in young children, other aspects of their development seem to be in a far more primitive state (Elman, 1993). And normally, children acquire remarkable linguistic abilities in just a few years.

According to social constructivist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1985), cognitive skills and patterns of thinking are not primarily determined by innate factors, but are the products of the activities practised in the social institutions of the culture in which the individual grows up. Consequently, the history of the society in which a child is reared

and the child's personal history, are crucial determinants of the way in which he or she will think. In this process of cognitive development, language is a crucial tool for determining how the child will learn how to think, because advanced modes of thought are transmitted to the child by means of words (Thomas, 1993).

Whorf (1956) proposed that the language we speak affects the way we think. According to Whorf, the categories and relations that we use to understand the world come from our particular language, so that speakers of different languages think about the world in different ways. Language acquisition, then, is learning to think, not just learning to talk. In Whorf's view, language differences mold the thought of their users. Hence language differences play a powerful causal role in cultural diversity. In Decolonising the Mind, Ngugi posits that language and culture are inseparable:

> [A] specific culture is not transmitted through language in its universality, but in its particularity as the language of a specific community with a specific history. Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries. Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other....Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world....Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (pp. 15-16)

Language Shift/Loss

Renowned sociolinguist and expert on endangered languages Joshua Fishman (1991) described in his landmark book *Reversing Language Shift* a continuum of eight stages of language loss. These stages are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Stages of Language Endangerment

Stage	Description
1	Some language used by higher levels of government and in higher education
2	Language is used by local government and in the mass media in the minority community
3	Language is used in place of business and by employees in less specialized work areas
4	Language is required in elementary schools
5	Language is still very much alive and used in the community
6	Some intergenerational use of language
7	Only adults beyond childbearing age speak the language
8	Only a few speak the language

Note. Adapted from "Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages" in Fishman (1991, pp. 88–109).

Fishman notes how the emphasis on individual rights in modern Western democracies takes away from the recognition of minority group rights. He believes that the key to minority-language preservation lies within families. They must have the ability to pass the language on from one generation to the next. Government policies and laws

may provide incentives to preserve language, but the responsibility lies with the family. Fishman (1991) writes, "The road to societal death is paved by language activity that is not focused on intergenerational continuity" (p. 91).

Fishman provides a reasonable framework for assessing at what point a language is threatened. But can a language be "murdered"? The answer to this question, unfortunately, is *yes*. Genocide of language communities occurred with the Tainos in the Caribbean, the first peoples to be encountered by Columbus—and a number of others since that time. Among the most famous is the Yana, who were systematically hunted down and killed by California settlers in the late 19th century (Veltman, 1983). More often, however, languages die in a more obscure and gradual manner, through the assimilation of their speakers into other cultures (Aitchison, 2001; Landar, 1966; Reich, 1986).

The first stage of "language murder" is a decrease in the number of people who speak the language. Typically, only isolated pockets of rural speakers remain. The first generation of bilingual people is often fluent in both languages. The next generation becomes less able to speak the dying language, because the old people do not use it with the next generation as often as they could; the younger generation lack practice, with the old language used on fewer and fewer occasions. Finally, the few remaining speakers are "semi-speakers." They can still speak to one another in the language, but they forget words for things, get endings wrong, and use a limited number of sentence patterns (Aitchison, 2001). For example, many *Secwepemc* mix *Secwepemctsìn* with English because they cannot remember full words or sentence patterns, or because English is easier to use when speaking to someone who has difficulty understanding *Secwepemctsìn.*

Secwepemctsìn and Language Shift

What has happened to *Secwepemctsìn* seems to fit the pattern of "language murder." In 1990 and 1991, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) conducted a survey to study First Nations language maintenance or decline in reserve communities in Canada. Of approximately 600 communities, 171 participated in the survey. The results were published in the reports *Towards Linguistic Justice for First Nations* (1990) and *Towards Rebirth of First Nations Languages* (1992). The survey found that 21 First Nations (12%)—none in British Columbia—have flourishing languages (where over 80% of all age groups are fluent in the language, with many able to read and write the language). Thirty-one First Nations (18%)—two in British Columbia—have enduring languages (where over 60% of almost all age groups are fluent in the language). Forty-eight First Nations (28%)—10 in British Columbia—have declining languages (where at least 50% of the adult population and a lesser percentage of young people are speakers of their language). Fifty-two First Nations (30%)—20 from British Columbia—have endangered languages (where less than 50% of the adult population speak the language and there are few if any young speakers, or, although over 80% of the older population speak the language there are no identified speakers under 45 years old). Nineteen First Nations (11%)—five in British Columbia—have critical languages (where there are fewer than 10 speakers, or there are no known speakers living in the community) (AFN, 1992).

Additionally, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada, 1996) compiled statistics based on the 1991 Canada census, which asked whether a person had an Aboriginal language as a mother tongue and whether this language was used in the

person's home. The Royal Commission tabulated its data by language family rather than by community. In British Columbia, while more than a million people claimed Indian ancestry, only 190,165 claimed an Indian language as their mother tongue, and only 138,105 reported using their language in the home. The Royal Commission identified this discrepancy as a language shift, because a language that is no longer spoken in the home cannot be handed down to the next generation (Canada, 1996).

In the summer of 1995, a committee of seven Elders, with linguist Marianne Ignace as a facilitator, carried out research on the state of the *Secwepemctsìn* in seven southern *Secwepemc* communities. They wanted to find out whether and how the local school district should improve its delivery of *Secwepemctsìn* programs. Furthermore, the team wanted to know to what extent the people they interviewed actually knew and used *Secwepemctsìn.*

The team held hearings with Elders, speakers, educators, parents, chiefs, councillors, and others in each of the communities, which had populations ranging between 80 and 800. They tallied the number of speakers in each community in four categories, and found them to be remarkably consistent among the Elders of each community and from community to community. First, "fluent speakers" were identified as those who could carry on and understand a conversation in *Secwepemctsìn* for as long as the situation required, with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation that was acceptable to the audience and the Elders. Second, "fluent understanders" were people who could follow the details of a conversation, but who could not speak the language save for a small number of words or phrases. The third category included individuals who understood the gist or fragments of spoken Shuswap, but who could say only a few

words. Fourth were those who basically had no knowledge of the language, save for a few words.

The team found *Secwepemctsìn* to be in a much worse state than both the 1990/91 AFN survey and the Royal Commission on Indian Peoples survey showed. The *Secwepemc* Elders' assessment showed *Secwepemctsìn* to be an endangered language, and in some of our communities, it was in a critical state, while in one community it was extinct. It was found that on average only 3.5% of the people in the communities surveyed were fluent speakers. Further, almost all fluent speakers were in their fifties or older, and even those who can speak the language often do not use it in the home, especially with younger generations; almost no children are being raised speaking the language in the home; and (with the exception of an immersion program that was started in one community a few years ago), school programs had not produced proficiency or fluency in the language, and had not resulted in the use of the language, except for a few words, among younger generations (Ignace, 1995).

In 1996 and 1997, Ignace asked Elders and speakers from other *Secwepemc* communities to total the number of fluent speakers in their communities, with very similar results (Ignace, 1998). Ignace found that many Indian language teachers and Elders throughout British Columbia who now speak and teach the language had lost their command of the language for decades, usually as a result of the trauma of the residential schools. Many spent long years of hard work relearning the language. Some relearned the language as young adults after returning home from residential school by having to interact and communicate with speakers of the language. Others improved their fluency by speaking the language at ceremonies. Some individuals had to use their language

because they inherited a social position. Some have relearned their language with the help of courses and by having Elders as mentors with whom to practise. Sadly, Ignace believes that "younger Elders who are replacing their own parents and grandparents as fluent speakers, are in many cases less fluent than their parents and grandparents, since they were raised less in the Indian language and more in English" (Ignace, 1998, p. 14).

There is little doubt that the key factors involved in the loss of *Secwepemctsìn* are the cultural genocide effects of the once-repressive rule of the Department of Indian Affairs, English-or French-only policies of the residential school era and beyond, and the devastating impacts of the child welfare system (Armstrong, 1990; Assembly of First Nations, 1992; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Burnaby, 1982; Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 1997; Fettes, 1997; Fettes & Norton, 2000; Grant, 1996; Haig-Brown, 1988; Ignace, 1998; Ignace, Hinkson & Jules, 1998; Johnston, 1983; Kirkness, 1998; Kuipers, 1974; Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, 1985; Smith, 2001).

Language Shift Under the Repressive Rule of the Department of Indian Affairs

Before contact with Europeans, *Secwepemctsìn* was influenced to some extent by the *Tsilhqot'in* (Chilcotin), Southern Carrier, *Stètlemc* (Lillooet), and Cree Indians. *Secwepemctsìn* underwent further minor changes after European contact, during the fur trade era and the Cariboo Gold Rush, when "Chinook," a pidgin[5] trade language, was introduced, and *Secwepemctsìn* incorporated some Chinook and French words into its vocabulary (Teit, 1905). However, the change in *Secwepemctsìn* was not very significant. In 1858, mainland British Columbia became a British colony (Furniss, 1999). By the

[5] A pidgin is frequently described as a marginal language used by people who need to communicate for restricted purposes, such as on trade routes (Aitchison, 2001).

early 1860s, Governor James Douglas and other government officials believed that the only course for Indian peoples' survival was through their gradual "civilization" and assimilation into mainstream colonial society through the adoption of Christianity and agriculture (Furniss, 1999; Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirkness, & Selkirk Bowman, 1992). In 1876, existing Indian laws were consolidated into legislation known as the *Indian Act*, which gave government officials the power to control virtually all aspects of Indian peoples' lives: replacing hereditary chieftainship systems with elected band councils (Tobias, 1983), outlawing spiritual and governmental practices with the Potlatch law (Furniss, 1999), and ensuring language and cultural suppression as the basis for future directions in policy for Indian Education in British Columbia (Haig-Brown, 1988; Prentice & Houston, 1975).

By 1880, a separate government bureaucracy, to be known later as the Department of Indian Affairs, was created to oversee the implementation of the *Indian Act* and to manage Indian matters (Furniss, 1999; Tobias, 1983). In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, stated clearly the idea that Indian cultures as such were to be eliminated:

> Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this Bill (Titley, 1986, p. 50).

Language Shift and the Residential Schools

With this legislation and policy in place, the government systematically set out to destroy Indian cultures and languages. In 1894, the *Indian Act* was amended to empower

Indian agents to remove any school-aged child from his or her home to fill the residential schools. Until 1960, it was mandatory to send *Secwepemc* children to the St. Joseph's Mission (Chrisjohn, 1991; Furniss, 1992; Haig-Brown, 1988). Some parents agreed that residential school education would benefit their children; however, most were extremely reluctant to hand their children over (Furniss, 1999; Haig-Brown, 1988). If there was resistance, family allowances were cut off or the child was transferred to the Kamloops Indian Residential School or other residential schools. RCMP officers assisted Catholic clergy in enforcing the children's attendance (Haig-Brown, 1988; Furniss, 1992). Speaking *Secwepemctsìn* was forbidden in residential schools, at the Indian reserve day schools, and in the communities of the *Secwepemc*—again under the threat of elimination of family allowances (Davey, 1948).

Furniss (1992, 1999) describes the descent of the Northern *Secwepemc* from a strong, organized nation into a state of dependency on the Canadian government. Additionally, Furniss (1992) details the horrors of the St. Joseph's Mission in terms of suppression of language and culture. The St. Joseph's Mission was established in 1867 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the San Jose valley, only two miles south of *T'exelc* (Furniss, 1999).[6] Northern *Secwepemc* attitudes toward the church have been complex

[6] Another factor in the loss of language of the *St'exelcemc* was the placement of the St. Joseph's Mission two miles south of Sugar Cane Reserve. Originally, the *St'exelcemc* were moved from the Glendale area (now a suburb of Williams Lake) to the St. Joseph's Mission site. Then the people were moved from that site to Sugar Cane Reserve to make way for a school for Indian students. Finally, the *St'exelcemc* children were removed from Sugar Cane Reserve back to the mission, where their languages were forbidden (Grandider, 1981; Thomas, 1950). I believe the closeness of the St. Joseph's Mission made it possible for many of the first Indian students at the mission to come from Sugar Cane; the influences of the missionaries were therefore longer lasting for the *St'exelcemc*. Not only that, but the people were

and varied, ranging at times from enthusiastic support to complete rejection of the missionary program (Furniss, 1999). One of the most important ways that the Indian agent exercised his coercive powers against the *Secwepemc* was through his support for the St. Joseph's Mission. It was a central premise of both the Indian Affairs Department and the Christian missionaries that in order for assimilation to succeed, Indian children would have to be removed from the "destructive" influence of their families and communities for lengthy periods of time. Students would be located far from their home villages, in large, centralized institutions where they would be taught basic academic skills; Christian values and morals; and agriculture, trade, and domestic skills, in preparation for their entry into non-Indian society (Furniss, 1999).

In *Secwepemc* communities, children learned values and beliefs, how to behave, and how to live off the land, by observing and imitating adult behaviour and by listening to stories (Furniss, 1992; Manuel, & Posluns, 1975; Ridington, 1990; Rushworth, 1992). These stories conflicted with both the missionaries' language and method of teaching.

My grandfather was one of the first students at the St. Joseph's Mission. He grew up in a time when morals and behaviour were taught according to the Coyote stories, the Creation Story, and stories of how animals behave and act as messengers. He passed those stories down to my mother in *Secwepemctsìn*. She in turn told me these stories in English, which resulted in the content of the stories becoming disjointed and lost in translation.

The first group of Indian students arrived at the St. Joseph's Mission (the mission) in 1891. Between 1891 and 1985, several generations of Northern *Secwepemc*, Southern

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already suffering from being displaced and were vulnerable. Additionally, Williams Lake is seven miles north of Sugar Cane Reserve, and I believe this strongly encourages the speaking of English.

Carrier, and *Tsilhqot'in* children were sent to the mission. Furniss reported that students typically stayed for 10 months of the year, during which they were allowed little or no contact with their families (Furniss, 1995; 1999) and were subjected to a strict regime of discipline in which public humiliation, beatings, and physical punishments were used to achieve and maintain submission (Furniss, 1992, 1999). Childrearing and education practices in the residential schools were different from *Secwepemc* practices, in that students were expected to accept the authorities' word without question (Furniss, 1992). As a result, my mother taught us never to ask questions of priests, teachers, or anyone else with white skin (who would automatically be considered an authority).

Only children who, like my mother, were considered to be infirm or physically unhealthy, were rejected, because they could not provide adequate assistance with chores. According to my mother, the core of the education provided at the mission was religion, and doing chores was a way to learn ranching, sewing, and cooking skills (A. S., personal communication, 1985). She also learned only very basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills at the mission; however, in spite of her efforts to improve these skills on her own, in later life she still needed the assistance of one of my siblings in everyday activities requiring them (N. S., personal communication, December 21, 2004).

Haig-Brown's (1988) study, published as *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School,* primarily presents *Secwepemc* perspectives of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. However, her findings can be generalized to the St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake, because some Northern *Secwepemc* students in the 1950s and 1960s also attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Haig-Brown's work is also

the best description of *Secwepemc* students' experiences of resisting language policy, and retaining or regaining the ability to speak their language. Haig-Brown (1988) found that:

> ...the Oblates began their attack on the Native languages during the children's first days at school, and continued to escalate the conflict with those who did not cooperate in abandoning their language. For the children who spoke only Shuswap on their arrival at school, the first days were ones of gibberish, because older children were not permitted to speak the language and few supervisors ever spoke Shuswap. No transition time in which they might reach some understanding of the system before being asked to learn a new language was allotted. (p. 51)

However, some students recalled that there was an interpreter assigned to students when they first arrived, to help them learn English (Chrisjohn et al., 1997; Manuel, & Posluns, 1974).

The children were not only expected to learn English; they were also exposed to a third language in church—Latin (Haig-Brown, 1988). In *Secwepemctsìn* classes that I took part in 1995, in Williams Lake, former students from the St. Joseph's Mission discussed how the Latin songs and prayers had affected the way they spoke their own language, and how these changes in intonation were passed on through the generations, particularly in prayer.

Haig-Brown (1988, p. 109) reported three effects in the first generation of students attending KIRS. First, some students maintained partial knowledge of their language; second, some retained fluency if they started school at age 9 or 10; and third, some regained fluency after becoming aware of the significance of language to culture.

These students needed some time to readjust to speaking *Secwepemctsìn* when they returned home. Haig-Brown found that the second generation of students attending residential school frequently did not speak their language.

Moreover, Haig-Brown also found a secondary effect on language, which was that although punishment did not eradicate the language from those students, many of those students never taught their children to speak *Secwpemctsi`n*, either because they were trying to help their children avoid punishment or because they were influenced to believe that *Secwepemctsìn* was unimportant (pp. 110–111).

I found Haig-Brown's findings on the second generation—that they frequently did not speak their language—compelling. Haig-Brown did her study in 1988, primarily with second-generation Southern *Secwepemc* students who attended residential school in the 1920s. My grandfather was a first-generation Northern *Secwepemc* student who attended residential school in about 1895, while my mother falls into the category of second-generation student, having attended in the 1920s. Both retained their language, as did many of my mother's siblings, although two of my mother's siblings informed me that they were not totally "fluent" (L. P., personal communication, 1990; C. M., personal communication, 2000). To me, therefore, it appears that the Northern *Secwepemc* second-generation students retained their language to a greater extent than the Southern *Secwepemc*. This was further substantiated by Kuiper (1974).

One student commented that "it took about three or four years…to get away from that embarrassment of speaking it on the street….They just about brainwashed us out of it" (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 109). Another student who has returned to his language recalls:

> Most of my Shuswap was learned from birth to the time I come to school....And I left the language until 10 years ago. That's roughly a period of 30 years when I didn't have the language spoken. I spoke intermittently with some Elders but when I returned to the language I had no difficulty at all. I'm fluent. I was fluent when I was 8 and I teach the language now. (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 110)

Public humiliation was part of the indoctrination process, serving as a control even after *Secwepemc* people were no longer under the direct influence of the residential schools. Some people did not manage to resist these controls. One former student recalls:

> They told you when they came back.... "You can't speak Indian; you got to speak English. If you speak Indian, you get whipped." It took them a long time to get it out of me. And to this day....I speak some words...but I don't speak it fluently. I used to be able to speak it fluently before I went to school. (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 110)

The same student then described her recent attendance at a spiritual sweat ceremony in which she could temporarily speak *Secwepemctsìn* fluently. Haig-Brown raises the possibility that the psychological controls developed by the school still prevent this student from speaking the language. Additionally, Haig-Brown surmises that if this is the case, then the possibility also exists that some key, perhaps therapy aimed at understanding the system that "got it out of her," might enable her to speak the language again.

Haig-Brown (1988) reports that by the last few years of the residential schools' operation, almost all arriving students had prior knowledge of English, and in some cases had never learned their own language.

The following testimony summarizes very clearly the erosion of the language that occurred in the Kamloops area:

> When I learned my Shuswap, we lived as a total family unit. Previous to 1938, there was not much moving about outside of the reserve area....When I came to school...The Shuswap language continued to be spoken whenever they [the family] got together but as we gained more knowledge of the English and because of ranching out, [working in] logging camps, they moved gradually to speak more English. And then when we all came home, I could see the switch into English as we started to move through the years...They would slip into Shuswap whenever an elder would come who had not left the reserve and they would just flick back and forth in that way....That happened in our family and I think that happened in a large number of other families. (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 83).

I believe this experience can be generalized as well to other Indian communities, including the Northern *Secwepemc*.

Investigating the residential schools.

Haig-Brown concluded that resistance by both parents and students occurred as a result of mandatory enrollment of Indian children. However, she did not report on any legal investigation on behalf of the *Secwepemc* regarding the treatment of the students at KIRS. On the other hand, despite improvements at the St. Joseph's Mission, the Department of Indian Affairs conducted three separate investigations into the reasons for children running away from the St. Joseph's Mission. Allegations that students were being poorly treated, underfed, and subjected to excessive physical punishment were

dismissed (Furniss, 1995, 1999). The government investigators regarded the complaints simply as proof that the "wild Indians" needed to learn discipline, and proof of the need for children to be "civilized" through the residential school program (Furniss, 1995, 1999).

By 1991, the Northern *Secwepemc* were exploring the long-term psychological and social consequences of the residential school's assimilation program, which included loss of language and culture, and high rates of alcoholism, suicide, sexual abuse, low self-esteem, family breakdown, and dependency on others (Cardinal, 1969; Furniss, 1995, 1999; Johnson, 1988; Manuel & Posluns, 1974; Sellars, 1991; Willis, 1973). Together, the Cariboo Tribal Council (CTC) and Roland Chrisjohn (1991) undertook a formal study in response to the personally and socially painful process of legally resolving some of the charges arising out of the St. Joseph's Residential School incidents. Chrisjohn's study, *Faith Misplaced: Lasting Effects of Abuse in a First Nations Community,* looks at four CTC Bands: *Esk'et, Tsq'esce`n', Xatsu`ll,* and *T'exelc.* Chrisjohn's team interviewed a random sample of people from the four communities and questioned them about their school experiences. The sample included students who had never attended residential school, and a comparison was made between those who had attended residential school and those who hadn't.

Chrisjohn (1991) reported many personal accounts of residential school–related experiences bordering on (and sometimes passing into) the realm of physical torture, such treatment often being rationalized as discipline by those inflicting it. Surprisingly, Chrisjohn (1991) reported that residential school students indicated that their school experience had a greater positive influence on their feelings about Indian culture and their

own Indian identity than did non–residential school students. Chrisjohn (1991) supported Haig-Brown's findings that the cultural suppression experienced in residential schools might help explain the current interest in rediscovering and developing Indian culture in these communities.

In a report released at the First Canadian Conference on Residential Schools, in 1991, the phrase *Residential School Syndrome* (RSS) was used. Chrisjohn (1991) expressed concern about this phrase, saying that it contains an element of "blaming the victim" and that it simply isn't true that people who attended residential school are distinguishable in the long term from those who did not. Instead, Chrisjohn likens residential school experience to a nuclear explosion, with the blast damaging some more directly than others, but with fallout affecting everyone. Chrisjohn (1991) believes that:

> RSS sidetracks all interested parties in a variety of confusing ways, disabling those who are supposed to be suffering from RSS by exonerating them from personal responsibility as well as labeling them with some form of mental illness. With everyone talking about people suffering from RSS, no one addresses the genocidal nature of residential schooling, the immorality of forced religious indoctrination, or the arrogance and paternalism that permeated the system. (p. 183)

Chrisjohn's research project was undertaken around the same time Furniss was writing a history of the St. Joseph's Mission for the Cariboo Tribal Council. But despite these initiatives, there has been little support for charges of cultural suppression at the residential and day schools. Neither have any criminal charges been laid or civil action been taken against the Roman Catholic church clergy or the federal government by any

band member from *T'exelc*. However, criminal charges have been laid and civil suits launched involving other students at the St. Joseph's Mission. In 1989, Father Harold McIntee pleaded guilty to numerous counts of sexual abuse and indecent assault of students at the mission[7] (Fournier & Crey, 1997). In 1991, Brother Glen Doughty pleaded guilty to many counts of sexual and indecent assault at the St. Joseph's Mission. Also in 1991, Bishop Hubert O'Connor, former principal of St. Joseph's Mission, was charged with sexual abuse and indecent assault. Civil suits have since been launched against Bishop O'Connor, as well as priests, nuns, and others at other institutions and from other orders and organizations (Fournier & Crey, 1997). None of these cases included cultural losses such as language, because of the difficulty of proving them.

On June 13, 2000, in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Charles Baxter Sr. and Elijah Baxter filed a $12 billion class action suit against the Attorney General of Canada seeking redress for abuse in residential schools for the period in which they attended residential school (1920–1996). The suit was regarding claims for the destruction of their cultural and family relationships, as well as for neglect, and sexual and physical abuse. The Government of Canada was cited as having planned the project of assimilation and overseen the operation of the residential schools. The Baxters, from Northwestern Ontario, were victims of a range of serious cultural, mental, physical, and sexual abuses, and their families have suffered intergenerational affects from these abuses. The Baxters are seeking compensation on behalf of survivors and their immediate family members for

[7] As a researcher I was directed to request permission from Father McIntee to view archival records of correspondence between the government and the Roman Catholic Church. This restricted access, particularly with the point of contact being this particular priest, is ironic and leaves me wondering about the long reach of government in keeping the lid on cultural suppression.

pain and suffering, loss of employment opportunities, and impact on quality of life, as well as punitive damages (Thomson, 2004). This case has opened the door for *St'exelcemc* survivors of the residential schools to join in the class action suit.
In August 2004, at its annual convention, the Canadian Bar Association passed a resolution that the federal government provide for an "automatic base compensation for loss of language and culture and for minor physical and sexual abuse" for those students who were affected at the residential schools. The government did not respond (The Vancouver Sun, 2004).

Language Shift and International Language Policies Adopted in Canada

Grant (1996) not only supports Haig-Brown's conclusions, but goes further, suggesting that Canada modeled its Indian language policy on the United States' policy, which sought language shift through no program at all: in other words, simply placing the children in classes where they received all their instruction in English, regardless of their own language. This method, now known as submersion, was also the primary method of achieving language shift in China (Fincher as cited in Reich, 1986), Belgium (Bustamante et al. as cited in Reich, 1986), New Zealand and Australia (Benton, 1978), Sweden (Skutnabb-Kangas & Tonkmaa, 1976) and many other countries (Reich, 1986). Submersion of *Secwepemc* children in classes with English as the spoken and written language assisted in the acculturation of those children, and the destruction of *Secwepemctsìn*. I believe that this was a very deliberate action undertaken by the Canadian government in its assimilation policy.

Language Shift and Child Welfare Apprehensions

When the residential and day schools were not successful in completely destroying *Secwepemctsìn* and the culture of the *Secwepemc,* the government continued its efforts in the 1960s through its child welfare policies. In 1947, the Canadian Welfare Council and the Canadian Association of Social Workers argued that Indian children who are neglected lack the protection afforded under social legislation available to white children in the community, condemned the internment of any Indian child, neglected or not, in residential schools, and condemned the practice of adopting Indian children without the legal and social protections available to white children. The brief also condemned the practice of adopting Indian children as loosely conceived and executed. In response, in 1951, the federal government amended Section 88 of the *Indian Act* to stipulate that all laws of general application in force in a province should apply on reserves, unless they conflict with treaties or federal laws. These amendments effectively delegated the responsibilities for Indian health, welfare, and education services to the provinces, although the federal government remained financially responsible for status Indians. The number of Indian children made legal wards of the state quickly ballooned (Fournier & Crey, 1997). In British Columbia, in 1955, there were 3,433 children in care; it is estimated that 29 of those children were of Indian ancestry—less than 1% of the total. By 1964, 1,446 children in care were of Indian ancestry, a jump to 34.2% of all children in care, or about one third. This was a pattern all over Canada (Johnston, 1983).

There is not much information about these children. However, there is little doubt that complete removal of a child from a home where *Secwepemctsìn* was the predominant language to various homes where English was the predominant language, for the duration

of childhood, would invariably render the child incapable of speaking *Secwepemctsìn* (Aitchison, 2001; Reich, 1986). Johnston (1983) wrote:

> In time it became obvious that education was not the only objective of residential schools. Stories of Indian children being beaten for speaking their own languages seeped into the public consciousness and, eventually, began to discredit the residential school system. Gradually, as education ceased to function as the institutional agent of colonization, the child welfare system took its place. It could continue to remove Native children from their parents, devalue Native custom and traditions in the process, but still act "in the best interest of the child." (p. 24)

Wayne Christian, Chief of the *Spallumcheen* Band (Southern *Secwepemc*), was one of the organizers of the Indian Child Caravan that staged a protest in front of the Vancouver home of then British Columbia Minister of Human Resources, Grace McCarthy, in 1980. They demonstrated their concern about the frequency with which provincial child welfare officials removed Indian children from their own families and communities and placed them in non-Indian foster and adoption homes. Christian was committed to the cause because of his personal experience of being apprehended and placed in non-Indian foster homes. Christian returned home at the age of 17 and found his younger brother struggling to determine his cultural identity, torn between two cultures and not able to find a place in either, and eventually committing suicide. Christian believes his brother's death was the result of his treatment by the child welfare system. The *Spallumcheen* essentially lost an entire generation of its children to the child welfare authorities (Johnston, 1983).

Not much is said about alcoholism as a symptom of the powerlessness of Indian people who are denied the right to self-determination, but much is said about the connection between alcohol and child apprehensions. Nor is much said about the apprehensions as primarily the result of the cultural clash between Indian people and social workers' white, middle-class standards (Johnston, 1983). Fournier & Crey (1997) reported that adoptive families were encouraged to treat status Indian children as their own, freely erasing their cultural birthright, and when a child was bounced from home to home in the foster care system, a child's tribal identity became lost altogether. Bridget Moran, a British Columbia government social worker during the 1960s, reluctantly concluded, "the welfare department which employed me was the biggest contributor to child abuse in the province" (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 86). Fournier & Crey (1997) indicated that "the mid-twentieth-century abduction of aboriginal children greatly compounded the spiritual and cultural losses suffered by First Nations people in the time since contact" (p. 92).

When former Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart made her historic apology to the Indian peoples of Canada on January 8, 1998, she singled out the residential schools as the most reprehensible example of Canada's degrading and paternalistic Indian policies. Though none would disagree with Stewart's condemnation of the residential schools, some wondered why she didn't also apologize for the equally assimilationist strategy that followed immediately in the schools' wake: the widespread adoption of Indian children by non-Indian families in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, commonly referred to as the "Sixties Scoop."

In 1982, the Manitoba government ordered a stop to all out-of-province adoptions of Indian children, and appointed Associate Chief Judge Edwin C. Kimelman of the Provincial Court, Family Division, to head an inquiry into the child welfare system and how it affected Indian people. In his final report, *No Quiet Place,* Chief Judge Kimelman (1985) concluded that the Indian leaders were right: the child welfare system was guilty of "cultural genocide." According to the United Nation's draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 1993), Justice Kimelman's description of the Sixties Scoop as cultural genocide is accurate: "Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct people with guarantees against genocide or any other act of violence, including the removal of indigenous children from their families and communities under any pretext."

The experience of children in care who were removed from home or community where the language may have been their traditional language has not been fully researched by anyone in terms of language loss. However, research on genocide of language communities by Veltman (1983) shows that a language can be "murdered." This may well have been the case where Indian children were removed and placed in non-Indian homes, particularly for long periods of time.

Language Acquisition, Retention, and Loss

Ignace (1998) suggests a correlation between what linguists know as the "language acquisition phase" and the degree to which Elders and other adults retained their language after the residential school experience. Those who were sent to the school at a very young age (e.g., 5–6 years old), had acquired their language to a lesser degree than those sent to the residential school at age 10–11, because by 10–11 years of age, a child's language acquisition of grammar and the sound system is nearly complete (p. 9). This may, in part, explain the varying degrees to which siblings retained their Indian language speaking abilities.

Ignace (1998) reports that many of the Indians who attended residential schools after learning their Indian language did not entirely lose their ability to speak the language, but the residential schools had major consequences for future generations and all efforts at revitalizing Indian languages. Among the impacts that continue today are first, as the first generation of residential school students became parents, they raised their own children speaking English and thus broke the pattern of the intergenerational transmission of their Indian language; second, those generations of Indians who learned or acquired their language as young children before being forced to attend residential schools carried the burden of humiliation and shame for a lifetime for speaking their language and being punished for it. Many still feel shame when speaking their language and others never try to relearn it. As a result, there is a tremendous amount of emotional and psychological trauma and baggage from which Indians have to heal and continue to overcome as they try to speak their language.

According the Fishman (1991), when a child is placed in a new language environment, unless the family stubbornly continues to speak the child's first language every day, the child will apparently forget that language within a short time. Evidence of this is provided by reported cases in which a person who had normal language ability temporarily lost that ability when totally isolated from the company of other humans. In 1704, for example, Alexander Selkirk, a 28-year-old Scottish sailor (the inspiration for Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*) was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez, off the Coast of Chile, for attempting mutiny (Reich, 1986). He was left with a chest of supplies, which included a bible and another book, for four years and four months. Captain Wooles Rogers wrote in his diary, "At first coming on board he had so much forgot his language for want of use that we could scare understand him, for he seemed to speak his words by halves" (Reich, 1986, p. 35). Selkirk told an interviewer that he had regularly recited prayers aloud "in order to keep up with his facilities of speech" (Reich, 1986, p.35) However, he had "almost entirely forgotten the secret of articulating intelligible sounds" (Reich, 1986, p. 35).

That an unused language tends to be forgotten is well established—how completely it is forgotten is another matter. Cases of aphasia (an organic condition caused by brain damage, often following a stroke, in which there is loss or impairment of the ability to express oneself or to comprehend spoken or written language) among bilingual and multilingual individuals provide evidence that disused languages are not forgotten: in some cases, a language that hadn't been spoken for years was recovered first (Charlton as cited in Reich, 1986; Reich, 1986). Interestingly, my mother, who had Alzheimer's disease, gradually lost her memory and her ability to speak the English language, over an

18-year period, and in the last stages of her disease preferred to be spoken to in *Secwepemctsìn.* Thus began my journey in earnest to relearn my language. When I mentioned this oddity to a few nurses and care aides, they responded that this was not unusual among their patients, and that many Elders in care suffering from diseases that affected their memory often had sharp memories of their first language, while some even reverted back to that language, as was the case with my mother (personal communication with unidentified nurses and care aides, Deni House Extended Care Unit, 2000).

A former student at the Kamloops Indian Residential School provides more support for the notion that a language learned in childhood remains buried in the mind:

> There are a lot of words I haven't said yet, but it's in my computer [brain]. I found that out last year: I never said *Sl'gh gee* [unknown word] and yet I know it. I never said it through my mouth....There's a lot of words in there I haven't said through my mouth yet because those were put in when I didn't need to use those words. Now as an adult I need to use them. (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 110)

Secwepemctsìn and Linguistics

Research on *Secwepemctsìn* would not be complete without addressing linguistics, not only because it is the scientific study of a language, but also because it has been the foundation for *Secwepemctsìn* curriculum development.

The Northern *Secwepemc* language belongs to the Salish language family. It is distinguishable from the Southern *Secwepemc* dialect through its use of reduplication (linguistic term referring to doubling up of the first part of a word) of the first part of a noun or verb in reference to self and in pluralizing the words, such as hand (*kelc*), my

hand (*ren ke`kelc*) (doubling up of *k*), hands (*kelke`lc*) (doubling up of *kel*); some tones and pitches are different; and there are different words for certain names, places, and things. To a Northern *Secwepemc* speaker, it sounds like some words aren't finished in the Southern dialect, because some Southern speakers drop the reduplication. In addition, each reserve community has its own dialect, and individual families may also have their own dialect. Some communities speak *Secwepemctsìn* faster or slower than others (J.W., personal communication, February 17, 2002). However, linguist Aert Kuipers (1974) reported that of the reserves he visited in the North (Western Shuswap as he referred to them) and the South (referred to by Kuipers as Eastern Shuswap), only the dialect of Chase showed significant deviations requiring a separate overall description. This divergence may be a result of the time that has passed since Kuipers' research. Although I could have researched both Northern and Southern *Secwepemc*, the differences are substantive enough that I decided to study only the Northern *Secwepemc*.

James Teit (1909) was the first ethnographer to record *Secwepemctsìn* using phonetics. He contracted with the anthropologist Franz Boas in the early 1900s to study the lifestyle of the *Secwepemc*. His main informants were *Sixwi`lexken* (Northern *Secwepemc*) and George *Sisiu`la'x* (Southern *Secwepemc*). Around this time, Teit also recorded, in more detail, the Thompson Indians, whom he asserted were very similar in custom and somewhat in language to the *Secwepemc*. As a result, Teit did not record as much detail on the *Secwepemc,* assuming that it could be cross-referenced with the Thompson (Teit, 1909).

In 1953, Kuipers visited the Canim Lake Reserve (Northern *Secwepemc*) for 12 days to help an anthropologist record plant names. He returned to do field work with the

Secwepemc in the summers of 1968 through 1970. Kuipers (1974) had informants from the reserves of Canim Lake *(Tsq'escen),* Alkali Lake *(Esk'et),* Dog Creek *(Stswe`cemc),* and Sugar Cane Reserve *(T'exelc).* A fair amount of vocabulary was collected and some basic paradigms were worked out. Kuipers (1974) recalls:

> On the Reserves known to me, Shuswap was spoken with various degrees of fluency by the members of the older and middle generations. Many people in their twenties understand but do not speak the language. Most of the youngest generations know only English. (p. 7)

Kuipers (1974) also noted that, except for a 32-page lithographed pamphlet by LeJeune (1925), no monograph on *Secwepemctsìn* had been published. Kuipers found *Secwepemctsìn* particularly interesting because of its phonetic-typological similarities to Proto-Indo-European. By 1974, Kuipers had assisted May Dixon and David Johnson in developing a practical Shuswap alphabet and accompanying language tapes (Kuipers, 1974). Although the linguistic terms are confusing to a lay person, an Elder suggests that linguistics are important for non-speakers (or those relearning their language) learning grammar—because in speaking the language in general, speakers do not normally take the time to explain grammar or the structure of the language; they just speak it (J. W., Elder, personal communication, September 1, 2002).

In 1974, from October 28 to November 1, an Indian language workshop was held at the longhouse in Williams Lake, with 20 participants from the Southern Carrier, *Tsilhqoti`n,* and *Secwepemc* bands. Outside resource people included linguists, language teachers, and curriculum development specialists from the University of Victoria, University of Washington, and Fort St. James and Burnaby, British Columbia. The

workshop was organized by the Fish Lake Cultural Education Centre of the Cariboo Tribal Council (then representing all three nations), and the Native Indian Teacher Education Program in Williams Lake. Highlights of the week included a panel discussion by the linguists on how practical writing systems are developed, group discussions on "Why preserve or teach Indian Languages?", and lectures on how to approach language teaching (Wild & Rathjen, 1975).

Wild and Rathjen (1975) prepared *Write On*, a collection of lectures and language projects from the four-day workshop, for the Cariboo Tribal Council. Rathjen states:

> In Shuswap communities only older adults now use the language and, while school children have a small Shuswap vocabulary, they do not understand the language when they hear it spoken; their "native" language is now a local dialect of English. (p. v)

Wild and Rathjen suggest that the policy forbidding students to speak their own language, and the practice of leaving fluent students to adapt to English on their own, has resulted not only in language loss, but also in a legacy of students who have difficulty with both languages, in turn resulting in a high high-school drop-out rate.

Wild and Rathjen (1975) recorded a population of Northern *Secwepemc*, Southern Carrier, and *Tsilhqotin* from the Cariboo Chilcotin region who regard language loss as a non-issue and consider using the English language as the way to go for the future success of First Nations people. However, the *Secwepemc* Language Committee developed out of the workshops and meetings that contributed to "Write On."

In terms of language structure, Gardiner (1998) investigated the position of subjects, verbs, and objects in sentences and the various ways in which the language

incorporates interactions of subject and verb in *Secwepemctsìn.* Like other members of the Salish family, *Secwepemctsìn* is a verb-initial language with a preference for verb-subject-object order in texts and subject-verb-object order in speech. However, *Secwepemctsìn* is notable for allowing multiple nominals (something in name or form only) to precede the predicate (the clause or sentence that expresses what is said of the subject) (Gardiner, 1998). For example, in *Secwepemctsìn*, I could say, "I am working," "you are working," "he is working" (with no differentiation between gender), "we are working," "we, not including you, are working," and "you folks are working"—all using the root word, *elk*, which means to work, with a nominal attached (e.g., *elk-s* for "he is working," *elks-t* for "we are working").

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) explain further: Indo-European languages and worldviews are based on nouns, and most Indian languages are not. Philosopher Owen Barfield, in his theory of the origin of languages, calls the verb-centred process the "original participation" (as cited in Battiste and Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 74). Barfield states that in the preconscious stance, language evokes and pulls forth from the manifesting realms into the manifest real, rather than merely referring. When people speak from this view, their oratory and writings sound like poetry and you can see and feel what you are talking about. A noun-based system, in contrast, takes the "it-ness" of things for granted and causes people to be careful when they speak. In a verb-centred process, one has a healthy respect for silence, an acknowledgment of the presence of manifesting (p. 74). There is a *Secwepemc* saying: "Be careful what you ask for; you might get it." This means that as you are speaking you may be predicting the

future. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson call this approach, from an Indigenous perspective, a sacred or medicine way of language.

In contrast, Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000, p. 74) suggest that "the modernist Eurocentric worldview insists that there are numberless ways in which objects and events in the world might be classified: it is the convention of naming that determines the classification rather than any perceived qualities in the objects or events themselves."

These differences between *Secwepemctsìn* and English make relearning *Secwepemctsìn* very difficult unless the person understands that there is "life" in the language. Furthermore, to learn *Secwepemctsìn* from an English and/or linguistics perspective is to destroy the essence of the language. For example, the correct way to greet someone in the morning is *tsucw ri7 nucw*, which means "so you survived the night," because many *Secwepemc* did not survive the night due to their circumstances. Linguists and educators have changed the greeting to an English form *le7 te swenwen*, which means "good morning," to conform to the English language. This change in translation loses the history and meaning of the greeting.

Socially Constructing Indian Language Loss as a Social Problem

According to Spector and Kitsuse (1977), social constructionism helps to determine what is or is not a social problem. A social problem is something that has been constructed through social activities. Spector and Kitsuse (1977) use the term "claimsmaking" to say that it does not matter whether the conditions exist; it matters only that people make claims about them. "Claimsmakers" shape our sense of what the

problem is and choose to focus on particular aspects of the condition. "Naming" is one way a claimsmaker represents a social problem, characterizes its nature, and presents an argument for the problem to be understood from a particular perspective. This perspective locates the problem's cause and recommends a solution, such as funding and other resources to rectify the problem, and may suggest questions for further research (Best, 1995; Spector & Kitsuse, 1977).

For example, Armstrong (1990), Burnaby (1982), Fishman (1991, 1996), Ignace (1999), and Kirkness (1998) are among many other language researchers, Indian Elders, and students who have socially constructed the loss of Indian languages as a social problem by claiming that the loss of a language affects Indian identity and self-esteem; focusing on language suppression as the primary method of cultural genocide; recommending research into Indian language loss; and recommending various methods and resources (including funding) for stabilization, promotion, revitalization, and maintenance of Indian languages. These scholars and people from Indian communities have challenged their audience to think differently and take more personally Indian language loss. Researchers in particular have argued that to think about Indian language loss from an objective (non-personal) point of view is to minimize, or even ignore, the subjective (personal) nature of the problem. Their approach is similar to that of the women's movement in the early 1970s, which used "consciousness-raising" groups to challenge traditional, taken-for-granted assumptions about women's place in society (Best, 1995; Spector & Kitsuse, 1997).

Secwepemctsìn Revitalization Efforts

Despite linguistic recordings and studies of *Secwepemctsìn* by "outsiders" (Smith, 2001), in the fall of 1985 the Northern and Southern *Secwepemc* recognized that the loss of their language was still occurring. They made a commitment to preserve the language. The chiefs of the 17 *Secwepemc* bands signed a declaration on August 20, 1985 that reads, in part:

> The following Shuswap Bands representing the Shuswap Nation declare to work in unity to: Preserve and Record – Perpetuate and Enhance our Shuswap Language, History and Culture by...ii) Recording and documenting the Shuswap language to the fullest extent possible...v) Developing a curriculum project that imparts to primarily, Shuswap students practical technological knowledge, Shuswap history, culture and language....(*Secwepemc* Cultural Education Society, 1985, p. 1)

The *Secwepemc* Cultural Education Society, established in 1982, coordinates and implements the mandate of the Shuswap declaration by providing the *Secwepemc* Nation with language programs and cultural education. It delivers (in affiliation with Simon Fraser University) the *Secwepemc* Language Teacher Certificate, which focuses on linguistics and immersion. Marianne Ignace, previous academic coordinator of the program, has concluded that the present curriculum and classroom teaching are not enough to make participants become fluent. In order to become fluent, a person needs a program that combines curriculum, mentoring, immersion, and study on his or her own time (M. Ignace, personal communication, October 3, 2002).

In 1997, the First Nations Education Steering Committee's (FNESC) Indian Languages Subcommittee contracted the SCES in Kamloops to undertake a study and make recommendations on training, education, and certification needs for Indian language teachers in British Columbia, and to deliver a workplan and proposal for resourcing identified future Indian language teacher education programs. The Northern and Southern *Secwepemc* took part in this study. Ignace, Hinkson, and Jules (1998) found that both public schools and First Nations expressed a critical shortage of suitably qualified Indian language teachers, and urgently recommended Indian language teacher training and education. The skills that are required are classroom management, literacy, curriculum design and use, organization, communication, Indian language linguistics, and teaching methods and strategies suitable for Indian languages (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998).

Standard Approaches to Language Teaching in Canada

In British Columbia, the official standard approach to Indian language teaching makes it difficult to stabilize, promote, revitalize, or maintain *Secwepemctsìn.* In comparing language priorities between French as a Core Language program and *Secwepemctsìn* as a Language Enrichment program, *Secwepemctsìn* falls far short in regards to funding, curriculum, and class time. This is because in public education system polices since 1998, language courses fell into two categories: Core Language programs (Second Language Policy) and Language Enrichment programs (those that fall outside the Second Language Policy). The Second Language Policy states that all students are expected to achieve proficiency in one of the official languages of Canada, English or

French; all students, especially those of Indian ancestry, should have opportunities to learn an Indian language; English and French will be taught as first languages, and all other languages will be taught as second languages; all students must take a second language as part of the curriculum in Grades 5–8; local school boards will choose which second languages will be offered; and core French will be taught if the school board does not offer an alternative (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998, pp. 13-14).

In February 1997, the Ministry of Education provided a strict language "template" to help school boards develop their Indian language curriculum, in the form of a generic Grade 5–12 Second Language Integrated Resource Package. School districts are expected to develop their Indian language curriculum out of their own minimal funds, and the courses are subject to continuous school board approval based on enrollment. *Secwepemctsìn* has Language Enrichment status, which means it must fit into the template and in most cases takes the form of non-credit or general elective courses (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998). Language Enrichment programs typically offer language instruction for 15–45 minutes twice a week, or 30 minutes four times a week. Most programs provide sessions on teaching colours, animals, numbers, and the alphabet. These programs don't provide learning outcomes and mandatory assessment strategies for student progress, whereas Core Language programs have larger funding resources and guaranteed accreditation with mandatory assessment strategies for student progress (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998).

Leading Indian Language Renewal Strategies

Kirkness (1998) sees the most common strategy for revitalization of a language as increasing the number of second-language speakers. Reversal or shift involves increasing the number of first-language speakers of a language. Language revival means bringing back an extinct or near-extinct language as a medium of communication in a community.

Two language proposals and programs have promoted these views. Armstrong's (1990) *A Community-based Immersion of the Okanagan Language* calls for a two-stage adult language immersion program intended to rescue the language. In her community-based study, Armstrong recognizes "intermediate" speakers (not fully fluent) as the most affected by the residential school stigma and other ethnostress factors. One of the decisions made by the Okanagan community was to develop intermediately fluent speakers to the level of fully fluent as a priority, through community-based partial immersion; promote a community/family natural process in language relearning; and develop a positive promotional attitude toward language. I am currently involved in this program as an intermediate speaker, working with an Elder mentor through the *Secwepemc* Cultural Education Society and Simon Fraser University.

Kirkness (1998) proposes the adoption of the *Te Kohanga Reo* model, a *Maori* Renewal program introduced in 1981 in New Zealand, which uses language nests that bring together grandparents and children. This approach is based on total immersion in language and culture, promoting learning in an appropriate cultural context, and draws on *Maori* styles of learning and teaching (Smith, 2001). The problem with the *Te Kohango Reo* model is that it leaves the parents to learn on their own. The Maori address this problem by introducing adult-based language classes (Kirkness, 1998). The *Te Kohango*

Reo model is the basis for a K–7 *Secwepemc* language immersion program operated by Chief Atahm School on the Adams Lake Reserve (Southern *Secwepemc*), which has fostered a tremendously improved level of competence in students (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998).

Ignace, Hinkson, and Jules (1998) recommend that in order to avoid language death and language shift, Indian communities in British Columbia adapt Fishman's eight stages in language planning, which are summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Stages of Language Planning

Stage	Description
8	Reconstruction of the language by recording and compiling vocabulary and expressions in dictionaries; analysis and presentation of stories and legends, life histories, songs, proverbs, and all other kinds of knowledge of the language in taped and written form, including documentation of the sound system (phonology) and grammar of the language
7	Mobilization of elderly fluent speakers to speak the language with younger people; can involve teaching literacy to elders
6	Promotion of use of the language in the family, neighborhood, and community
5	Integration of the language into the formal education system, and integration of schooling and literacy into efforts to revive the language
4	Replacement of the dominant English language by the Indian language in formal education, through immersion programs at earlier levels of schooling, and bilingual or partial immersion programs at higher levels
3	Integration of the language into the workplace, through literacy training, translation of documents, mobilization of speakers, and the creation of opportunities and occasions for using the language
2	Integration of the language into government services that have direct contact with citizens
1	Implementation of use of the language at the upper reaches of education, media, and government operations, including use as a language of instruction in Indian post-secondary institutions

(Fishman [1991], cited in *Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning in British Columbia* [1999])

Summary

In summary, the history of *Secwepemctsìn* in the community of *T'exelc*, from post-contact to the present, is a turbulent one. The language in *T'exelc* has gone through many changes. It was almost eradicated by colonialism, and is being rebuilt through the hard work of a small group of Elder language teachers and students, with the assistance of linguists. However, the underlying effects of cultural genocide continue to resurface as the people struggle to retain their language and culture.

Chapter 3: Research Design

As suggested by Riessman (1994), it is critically important to plan a method of inquiry that fits the problem statement, research context, and objectives of the research question. Consequently, bearing in mind my Indian world view, the subjective nature of the research question, and the location of the research within an Indian community, I chose qualitative research as the most appropriate scientific approach for my study. The qualitative descriptive research design of my study allows the subjective and holistic nature of the Indian world view to emerge. According to Colorado(1988), the Indian epistemology or way of knowing is a holistic and spiritual process whereby information is gathered from the mental, physical, social, and cultural/historical realms.

Methodology

Qualitative research can be defined simply as "research that produces descriptive data based upon spoken or written words and observable behaviour" (Sherman & Read, 1994, p.1). Stringer (1996) states that the qualitative research paradigm "seeks to describe the historic, cultural and interactional complexity of social life" (p. 6). Using this approach, the researcher contributes accounts that speak more fully to peoples' lived experiences. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) have stated:

> Some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experience with a phenomena....Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomena about which little is known. (p. 19)

Hence, qualitative methodology is more in tune with the culturally specific oral traditions and non-positivist epistemological world view of Indian society (Ross, 1996). According to Gilchrist (1997), qualitative research design can serve to enhance the authentic voice of the participants in the sharing of their stories, while also enriching the healing process through the detailed descriptive and narrative richness of their experiences of survival. The use of interviews (i.e., the telling of one's experiences) is in keeping with the oral traditions of Indian culture. Gilchrist (1997, p. 72) argues that Western science's "value-free" method of inquiry in quantitative research, which is a "theory down deductive stance" of the positive paradigm, is problematic for Indian communities. Rather, Gilchrist (1997, p. 72) prefers a "from the facts up exploratory" approach of qualitative inquiry for Indian communities, because it takes into consideration the values of the people.

In order to inquire into *Secwepemc*'s experience of losing and relearning *Secwepemctsìn*, I needed to locate myself in a research paradigm and select a methodology that could guide my research. It was necessary to explore a range of methodological options in order to find one that was congruent or compatible with the topic of inquiry, Indian approaches to research, and my orientation and strengths as a researcher. This chapter speaks to the outcomes of my exploration by situating my inquiry in a descriptive qualitative research paradigm.

Locating the Research in a Descriptive Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research values subjectivity over objectivity in both the subjective involvement of investigators with their subjects and the emphasis on subjective reality or

the meanings subjects give to and derive from their life experiences (Creswell, 2003). Engagement with rather than detachment from the things to be known is sought in the interests of truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative researchers acknowledge the complexities of this kind of involvement with subjects, but view the benefits as far outweighing the liabilities (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Descriptive qualitative research "involves collecting data in order to answer questions . . . about the current status of the situation under study" (Krathwohl, 1985, p. 178). Creswell (2003) states that the intention of descriptive research is to develop a purposeful, systematic, intelligent, and accurate description of some particular situation.

As such, the descriptive qualitative paradigm seems best suited to the development of greater understanding of the *Secwepemc* experience of losing and relearning *Secwepemctsìn*. It offers an opportunity to learn about not only the *Secwepemc* experience in general, but also about how *St'exelcemc* make sense of that experience—in other words, how they view it and what meaning they attach to it. Using the descriptive qualitative paradigm enabled me to develop a more direct and authentic representation of the experience and its significance for language policy.

Sample

Sampling in qualitative research is typically characterized as purposive or theoretical (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). According to Patton, the aim of purposeful sampling is to get "information-rich cases...from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the evaluation," as opposed to "gathering little information from a large, statistically significant sample"

(Patton, 1987, p. 52). The ultimate goal of this approach is to identify cases deemed information-rich for the purposes of the study (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338).

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy of unique-case selection, in which selection is based on a "unique attribute of a population" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p.82). The sample was taken purposefully from a group of *St'exelcemc* who had experienced the loss and relearning of *Secwepemctsìn*.

Sample Selection and Size

Because I know the majority of community members of *T'exelc*, I posted a notice requesting participants in various locations throughout the community (see Appendix A). I contacted interested respondents in person to describe in more detail the purpose and nature of the research project, selected participants that best suited the selection criteria, and planned interview dates according to the availability of selected participants.

During the literature review process, I had begun to feel that my personal experience would benefit my research, so I decided to become one of the participants. I recruited an interviewer to interview me, using the same questionnaire and techniques I had developed for the other participants. This second interviewer has a Bachelor's degree in First Nations Studies and has taught *Secwepemctsìn* in the Williams Lake area.

The sample consisted of four band members divided into two groups. Group 1 included a male aged 65 and a female aged 63; and Group 2 included a female aged 47 and a male aged 52.

Selection criteria.

The selection criteria for participants in this study were that they a) had previously been fluent in *Secwepemctsìn*, but had lost the ability to speak it and were attempting to relearn it; b) are members of the Williams Lake Indian Band; c) live in *T'exelc*, also known as Sugar Cane, the main reserve, located 10 km south of the city of Williams Lake[8]; and d) had attended a residential school or day school (an affiliate of the residential schools). Participants were personally interviewed prior to selection to assess their potential as participants and to ensure that they met the selection criteria.

While it could be argued that this recruitment and selection process introduced a bias into the inquiry, qualitative research requires that the participants both be knowledgeable and have an experiential awareness about the topic of inquiry, and be willing and able to critically reflect upon their experience (Creswell, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Sandelowski, 2000). The small number of participants is neither unusual nor problematic in qualitative research (Cresswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As previously suggested, what is of greater importance is the richness of the information that can be gathered from the participants: "a single subject who is rich in information is much better than a group of subjects who are lacking in information, experience or the ability to talk about and reflect upon that experience" (Garfat, 1995, p. 50).

I was looking for a small number of participants who met a specific set of criteria for participation and who had unique experiences. It was not my intention to undertake a study with generalizable results (Cresswell, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In fact, this would have been contrary to principles of qualitative research. Instead, I was looking into

[8] *T'exelc*'s proximity to Williams Lake may be a factor in the endangerment of *Secwepemctsìn*.

both the uniqueness of the participants' experiences and any connecting threads of shared experience among the participants.

Data Collection

From the outset of the study, I felt it would be challenging for participants to articulate their experiences of losing and relearning their language in a formal interview situation. I therefore used a non-scheduled, standardized conversational-style interview (see Appendix B).

In qualitative research, the main purpose of an interview is to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Kvale, 1996; van Manen, 2003). For the purposes of this study, I developed a standardized set of questions, based on my literature review and personal experience, with which to interview the research participants (Monette, Sullivan, & Dejong, 1994).

A non-scheduled format allowed for the flexibility required to form a personal connection between the interviewer and each of the research participants (Colorado, 1988; Gilchrist, 1997). The interviews were conducted between September 30, 2003 and November 13, 2003.

I interviewed the participants in a manner that was closer to "conversations with a purpose," because as a *Secwepemc* I know that oral story-telling is still the favoured way of communicating (Haig-Brown, 1988). The interview process was guided by interviewing criteria adapted from Kvale (1996). These criteria are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Interview Criteria

Interviewer quality	Description
Knowledgeable	Has an extensive knowledge of the interview theme; being familiar with its main aspects, the interviewer will know what issues are important to pursue.
Structuring	Introduces a purpose for the interview and outlines the procedure in brief. Can also answer any questions for the participant after the interview.
Clear	Poses clear, simple, easy, and short questions; speaks distinctly and understandably; uses lay terms rather than academic language or professional/sociological jargon.
Gentle	Allows subjects to finish what they are saying, letting them proceed at their own pace of thinking and speaking.
Sensitive	Listens actively to the content of what is said, hears the many nuances of meaning in an answer, and seeks to get the nuances of meaning described more fully—in other words, pays attention to what is said as well as how it is said and what is not said in order to fully comprehend.
Open	Hears which aspects of the interview topic are important for the participant, while still focusing on the main questions or issues to be addressed in the interview.
Steering	Has a general sense of what information will be relevant. Controls the course of the interview and is not afraid of interrupting digressions.
Critical	Does not take everything that is said at face value, but questions critically to make sure participants are clear about what they are saying. Remembers or writes down the important points to aide in factual checking.
Remembering	Retains what a participant has said during the interview, can recall earlier statements and ask to have them elaborated, and can relate things said in different parts of the interview to each other.
Interpreting	Manages throughout the interview to clarify and extend the meanings of participants' statements; provides interpretations of what is said, which may then be disconfirmed or confirmed by the participant.

Note. Adapted from Kvale (1996)

The conversational approach to the interview encouraged an open, interactive, reflective, and engaged discussion, which is considered to be consistent with the qualitative method of inquiry (Kvale, 1996; van Manen, 2003). Eisner (1991, p. 183) states that "conducting a good interview is, in some way, like participating in a good

conversation: listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than abstract speculations..."

I first established rapport and trust with the participant, then conducted the interview. An initial 5–10 minutes was spent reviewing the purpose and process of our conversation and reviewing confidentiality, and participants were reminded of the list of resources provided for their emotional safety. Consent forms were reviewed and signed (see "Ethical Considerations"). This helped to establish a warm atmosphere, encouraging the participant to talk about his or her experiences.

I began each conversation by inviting the participant to share his or her experience of losing and relearning *Secwepemctsìn.* A number of interview techniques were used to elicit further commentary on selected aspects of the co-researchers' experiences (e.g., probing, reflection, and particularly silence). Silence was used so that the participants could complete their thoughts undisturbed and in keeping with a "listening style" appropriate to Northern *Secwepemc* methods of teaching and learning. Many participants valued the new insights and meanings that arose in their discussions of various experiences.

Flexibility was also needed in terms of scheduling and amount of time spent on the interviews, as well as the location of the interviews. On average, the conversations lasted 45 minutes to an hour, concluding when the participant indicated that there was nothing further to add. All interviews were held in my home, which is fairly secluded, to keep interruptions to a minimum and to enhance confidentiality. Typically, the participants' closing comments acknowledged their comfort with and appreciation for being able to openly share, discuss, and reflect on their experiences with an interested and

engaged listener. Three participants made some comments after the tape-recorder was turned off; these were therefore noted, but not taped, for addition to their interview transcripts. For weeks after the interviews, during casual and chance encounters, three of the participants added further information that supported their interviews; however, it seemed that this was more to provide closure for the interviews and to vent their anger at the genocidal practices of the Canadian government, than to provide anything new. The individual interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed in a timely fashion. A practice session had been held to check the audio equipment and interview format, and adjustments were made. Notes were also taken during the interviews to record and clarify non-verbal responses (Mason, 1996).

As a researcher, when reviewing the transcripts and describing phenomena, I relied on my own perceptions, inclinations, sensitivities, and sensibilities (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Giorgi, 1992; Wolcott, 1994). For example, while I took into consideration the point of view of the second reader (an Indian social worker who reviewed and analyzed the interviews), I described events from my own perspective, taking care to be sensitive to the participants' feelings.

I continued to review literature relevant to my research topic throughout the project to provide background for the research. The material enhanced my ability to prepare appropriate and useful interview guides and to avoid redundancy or overlap with other projects (Erin & *Vuntut Gwitchin* First Nation, 1999).

Data Analysis

For Guba and Lincoln (1981), qualitative modes of analysis provide ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes in qualitative data. Meaningfulness is determined by the particular goals and objectives of the project at hand: the same data can be analyzed and synthesized from multiple angles depending on the particular research or evaluation questions being addressed.

In analyzing the data, I restricted myself to the three research questions (Merriam, 1998): What are the experiences of *St'exelcemc* in losing their language? How does the specific experience of losing *Secwepemctsìn* affect the process of relearning the language? What strategies are there for relearning the language? I used a descriptive content analysis method of data analysis, which is less interpretive than "interpretive description," because I did not want to move far from or into the data. I described what I heard in the words of the participants accurately, in proper sequence (descriptive validity), and in simple, everyday language (Maxwell, 1992). Additionally, I ensured that the meanings attributed to those events by the participants were kept accurate (interpretive validity), bearing in mind that the data was filtered through my personal perceptions (Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997; Sandelowski, 2000). According to Sandelowski (2000, p. 338), qualitative content analysis is "a dynamic form of analysis of verbal and visual data that is oriented toward summarizing the informational contents of that data." Unlike quantitative content analysis, where a researcher systematically applies a pre-existing set of codes to the data, in qualitative content analysis, codes are systematically applied, but the codes are developed from the

data itself over the course of the study. Additionally, qualitative content analysis is reflexive and interactive, as researchers continuously modify their treatment of data to accommodate new data and new insights about those data (Sandelowski, 2000). Thus, in analyzing the data I used the term "meaning units" rather than "codes" or "categories," as this term better reflects the qualitative method of descriptive analysis and more accurately fits my philosophical orientation in doing the research.

The content analysis comprised four steps. First, I listened to the tape recordings and read and reread the typed transcripts several times. Second, I highlighted the meaning units that seemed particularly revealing about the topic under investigation. Third, I reflected on the meaning units and clustered them into initial sub-themes. Finally, I reflected intensely on the sub-themes, which were than combined to form broader essential themes.

Investigator triangulation was used in the form of a second reader (Patton, 1990). A *Secwepemc* social worker undertook an analysis of the interview data in the same manner as described above to increase the methodological rigour of the study. I compared our analyses and found only slight variation in themes, which I describe in Chapter 4.

Data Representation

The findings for each of the sample groups are presented in Chapter 4 in the context of the three interview questions. Extracts from the transcribed text have been selected to illustrate each essential theme. Each transcription extract is referenced with a code number representing the various co-researchers who participated in the study, and I used tables to summarize my findings.

Ethical Considerations

The research proposal describing my study was approved by the Williams Lake Indian Band (see Appendix C) and by the University of Northern British Columbia Human Research Ethics Review Board.

The research was undertaken with informed consent. I developed an informed consent form, which was approved by the Williams Lake Indian Band, and signed by all participants (see Appendix D). The form indicated the voluntary nature of participation in the study and informed the participants that they could withdraw at any time without penalty or need for explanation (Mason, 1996; Smith, 2001).

In addition, before the individual interviews, each participant received descriptive written information about the research and verbal information about the inquiry and review process; they were then given a chance to ask questions about the process. I assured the participants that I would take all steps to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity, as outlined in the consent form.

Safety and Well-being of Participants

Personal interviews were conducted before the interviews with the participants to assess their suitability for participation in the study. I provided participants with a list of counselling resources. I also protected my own emotional health and safety by sharing my concerns with my thesis committee members and using the counselling resource list. This was necessary because the project itself was emotionally more difficult than I anticipated.

Dissemination and Evaluation

Project information was posted when participants were being recruited. Additionally, I informed the Williams Lake Indian Band Council of the purpose of the research, and obtained their consent for conducting the research at *T'exelc*. A final report will be submitted to the Williams Lake Indian Band.

Special Considerations

As a researcher in my own community, I had several concerns. First, I was concerned about the number of available participants in *T'exelc* for research purposes, and considered approaching the Cariboo Tribal Council for consent to interview in the other communities. However, this was not necessary because the participants interviewed provided enough information.

I was also concerned about previous researchers' reputations as untrustworthy (Smith, 2001). My reputation in the Northern *Secwepemc* territory is as a trustworthy community member who successfully manages dual roles, as I have worked on various research projects, as both a coordinator and data collector.[2] I hoped that my reputation was secure enough to allow me to do the research.

Furthermore, I was concerned about being perceived as being biased, because I participate in an Elder Mentorship Language Program and sit on the Northern *Secwepemc* Language Committee, and I intend to continue both of these activities in order to relearn

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[2] I have served as Cross-Cultural Communications Project Coordinator in Health for the Cariboo Friendship Society, Williams Lake, B.C., 1992–94; ethnobotany data collector for the Williams Lake Indian Band, 1995 and 1996; and author of a detailed work plan for a Northern *Secwepemc* Justice Centre research project for the Cariboo Tribal Council and the Law Society, 2000.

Secwepemctsìn. To minimize bias, I recorded my assumptions in a reflective journal and kept an open mind about what the participants said, taking care not to influence them in any particular way.

Finally, I was concerned about the potential for bias in having another Indian person analyze the interview data. However, I believed it was preferable to have the tapes analyzed by someone with similar experiences, rather than by someone (non-Indian) who does not understand the experience of colonization.

Methodological Integrity

Regardless of the research paradigm, it is now commonly accepted that the quality of scientific research done within a paradigm has to be judged by its own paradigm's terms (Healy & Perry, 2000). The criteria of one research paradigm cannot usefully be applied to another research paradigm (Kuhn, 1970; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Winter, 2000). Using an approach developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and others, Sandelowski (1986) shows how "qualitative research can be made rigorous without sacrificing its relevance" (p. 27). They identified four criteria for adequacy or rigour in scientific research: credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth, value, or believability of findings (Leininger, 1994). It requires that a description or interpretation of human experience be presented so faithfully that "the people having that experience would immediately recognize it..." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 30), and others can recognize the experience by reading about

it. In this study, credibility was enhanced through sharing of the data analysis results with the participants, the judicious use of illustrative quotations, and the employment of an independent second reader of the transcripts.

Fittingness

Fittingness requires that findings "fit" into contexts outside the study situation, and the audience views the findings as meaningful and applicable in terms of its own experience. It is important to point out that no claim for generalizability is made for this work, although there could be a degree of "fit" between this work and other studies undertaken with similar purposive samples and in similar settings. While the possibility of fittingness is acknowledged, the intention of this research was not generalizability, but rather to inform social policy development and to provide descriptive information about a subject in which little investigation from an Indian research perspective has taken place.

Auditability

Auditability requires that another researcher can clearly follow the "decision trail" used by the investigator, and that another researcher could arrive at the same or comparable but not contradictory conclusions, given the researcher's data, perspective, and situation. It also addresses the extent to which the research process is consistent across researchers (Benner, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, auditability was ensured through a trail of raw data, what Padgett (1998, as cited in Rubin, 2000, p. 175) refers to as an "audit trail." For example, I kept detailed records of the data collection process and analysis procedures, allowing

interested people to reference exact quotes and corresponding interpretations. In addition, I kept extensive notes during the analysis process. These notes consisted of my responses to the data, and preliminary ideas about what the data might represent in terms of sub-themes and essential themes.

Confirmability

The confirmability of an inquiry is defined as "the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher." Confirmability was achieved in this study through critical self-reflection about my assumptions, world views, biases, theoretical orientations, values, and epistemological stances (Merriam, 1998, 2000).

Limitations of the Research

Qualitative case studies are subject to investigator bias in that the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Meriam, 1998, 2000; Riley, 1963). To combat the potential for researcher bias in this study, a second reader was used, in addition to the principal researcher, to help form the case record. I introduced bias by becoming a participant; however, the intent of the research was to compare my own experience with those of other *St'exelcemc*.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

The interviews are the primary source of evidence for my research. In the interviews, participants were asked three general questions:

1.) What was your experience in losing *Secwepemctsìn?*

2.) How did your experience of losing *Secwepemctsìn* affect the process of relearning the language?

3.) What are (or have been) your strategies for relearning *Secwepemctsìn?*

In determining the essential themes, I reviewed the transcribed interviews repeatedly to identify patterns, recurring ideas, and experiences that linked the participants' view of relevant events to the three questions. I identified key words and phrases (i.e., meaning units) and developed initial sub-themes. Essential themes were then separated from the sub-themes. A concerted effort was made during this stage to reflect critically on the choices made by repeatedly holding the identified theme against the overall context of the transcribed interviews, asking: Does this interpretation fit the context not only of this particular section of the text but also of the text as a whole?

The findings are presented for each of the participant groups within the context of the inquiry aims of the three interview questions. Extracts from the transcribed text have been selected to illustrate each essential theme, including any differences of perspective or nuances within them.

Research Findings for Group 1

Group 1 participants were 63 and 65 years of age when interviewed. The 63-year-old participant was immersed in *Secwepemctsìn* daily in all activities when she was at home with her grandparents and remained fluent despite the efforts of residential school authorities to suppress the language. Later in life she began to forget some of the older *Secwepemctsìn* words because they were no longer spoken by her generation; however, she retains her fluency and is a language teacher who uses the "keepers of the language and culture" method of teaching.

The 65-year-old participant lived in a home where there was a mixture of English and *Secwepemctsìn,* and he appeared to have the highest level of fluent understanding of all of the remaining participants. When he returned home from residential school, he was immersed in both English and *Secwepemctsìn.* When he was interviewed he could converse in *Secwepemctsìn,* although he had problems remembering some words and phrases. He felt that he was not fluent in *Secwepemctsìn* at the time of the interview and that his residential school experience negatively affected his ability to remember and speak his Indian language. However, he makes a point of passing his language on to youth as a "keeper of the language and culture."

Inquiry Aim # 1: What Was Your Experience of Losing Secwepemctsìn?

Seven essential themes (see Table 4.1) emerged from the data generated by this question for Group 1. For the purpose of illustration, the themes have been separated. However, each theme is an aspect of the experience that is linked with and dependent on the other themes to reflect the experience as a whole. They are non-sequential and

dynamic and contain movement and energy (Benner, 1994: Sandelowski, 1986, 1998, 2000).

Table 4.1

Experience of Losing the Language—Group 1

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Language, learning and philosophy of traditional *Secwepemc* life passed along by the memories and actions of the Elders of the community of *T'exelc*	Traditional way of life and responsibilities of the people	*Secwpemctsìn* was spoken in all the homes that we visited...in all of our...daily activities...we didn't spend too much time at home, it was mostly out in the meadows at fish camps or hunting camps or working areas.
	Role of story-telling by Elders in maintaining a traditional way of life	*Secwepemctsìn* was spoken entirely by all members... whoever was with us...as children we listened...I can't remember ever...taking part in any of the discussions with the Elders, we all had our own jobs to do, we just listened.
Departure from traditional *Secwepemc* socio-economic lifestyles to those belonging to European settlers	Influence of the settlers—becoming multi-lingual	I was responsible for our great grandmother... she was over a hundred years old...I learned words that I have today that I don't hear anymore and it was because of her age and she...spoke probably four different languages, French, English... *Secwpemctsìn*, and Carrier...plus...the Chinook jargon that she spoke really well...she spoke to me in total *Secwpemctsìn*.

		My grandmother…spoke only *Secwepemctsìn,* my grandfather was bilingual spoke…English and *Secwepemctsìn* so…if any of the English was to be used, if the Indian Agent or the priest or anybody came, my grandfather always…spoke to them.
	Influence on *Secwepemctsìn* through greater contact with a politically dominant group	The influence and the interaction with the…larger community…in the Williams Lake area, the non-native, non-*Secwepemc* people…greater contact was being made by them, so *Secwepemctsìn* …was starting to come into lots of…erosion…the *Secwepemc*, they were becoming more…adoptive of the English language.
Cultural colonization	Oppression—instilled fear of punishment for speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	My grandfather probably was one of the first…residential school students in…1894…He said…that I was going to be expected to speak English all the time so he was preparing me for it…started teaching me English…in his own way he wanted me to know that I would get hit. A couple of my aunts they would speak to me in English because I think… they were afraid; I had an older sister and an older cousin that was going to residential school and … they always protected us

		and told us not to say anything…in our language, and…always try and speak English. Maybe I was just too afraid, maybe I was just too scared. Because the fear was already put in me before I even went to school, my grandfather put that fear in me, my aunts put that fear in me that…I had to speak English and…it was like your gonna get a lickin' or your gonna get strapped or your gonna be punished or something.
	Fear of punishment or shaming for speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	I wouldn't have used it so much because hey, why don't you speak…English, can't you speak English, or something like that, your afraid for the *comebackence* because you're [chuckle] using *Secwepemctsìn.* I guess, I'm…coming more from fear because…you would get *comebackence.*
	Punishment for speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	I recall…a backhanding from one priest…because I guess they were upholding the assimilation policies. I don't…ever remember being punished for saying anything…in *Secwpemctsìn.* But I remember a whole bunch of girls that used to be kneeling on boardwalks, the ones that all spoke *Secwpemctsìn* … I

		remember in school some… of the students had to write, I will not speak Indian again, I will not speak it.
Becoming aware of the change from *Secwepemctsìn* to English	Becoming aware of mixing English and *Secwepemctsìn* —influence of employment after leaving residential school	I became aware…say 1942, when I was four years old…my father and mother were working…at the mission and…most everyone there probably…were to speak English…they mixed it [referring to *Secwepemctsìn* and English].
	Mixing English and *Secwepemctsìn*—influence of Second World War	One of my uncles fought in the second world [war]…and he was totally immersed in the language, of English…that's when I really found the language kind of changing a little bit… I heard more and more, especially the war veterans…they started mixing the language.
	Mixing English and *Secwepemctsìn* —influence of education	The older girls, the ones who went to residential school would come back and that's when…they would speak English…and…hardly any *Secwpemctsìn*.
	Elders voicing their displeasure at the young people losing *Secwepemctsìn*	I know that old C. and Mrs. L.A., they would…once in awhile…voice their displeasure and saying that these…young …were losing [speaking of *Secwepemctsìn*]…they [Elders] were more angered that they weren't being understood or…the effort

		was not being made ...to hear [speaking of *Secwepemctsìn*]...at Sugar Cane...I began to hear it [voice of displeasure] probably around ...the mid-fifties...and I...still hear it today...I think...in the vein of anger.
	Rebellion against the language policy	I remember...one incident where a senior girl slapped a nun and fought against it [language policy], and that's the only time.
Adoption of the English language	Language went to sleep	I spoke...of the language went to sleep for me for awhile, I...didn't lose it...because even though I was away for 10 months of the year I would go home and I was totally immersed into it.
		As a girl going into my teens I started...kind of leaving...the culture. It was starting to go really by... that time; quite understandably when I further went through school was adopting the English...and of course...creating more erosion for my *Secwepemctsìn* [chuckles].
	Not speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	A lot of my cousins today don't speak the language, they used to come and visit and I knew that they spoke, spoke English all the time.
	English spoken almost exclusively at *T'exelc* in the	I would go into homes where there was total

	1960s, as compared to few homes in the 1940s	English on the reserve. When I was…a little girl… there was a few homes that I would go into and it was English that was spoken, unless my grandmother went.
	Secwepemctsìn spoken on fewer occasions	In Vancouver I went to school with a lady from Alkali…we didn't speak the language in total but we always…used it…and that's because the dominant language was always English…And then I was educated in the white schools and had to learn English…correctly.
Becoming the oppressor of your own people	A blow to leave *Secwepemctsìn* at home	The language …was almost taken away from us…being asked to leave it at home was really quite a blow at the time…[referring to residential school experience].
	"Down" time during the 1970s due to loss of *Secwepemctsìn*	The seventies…was a real down time…[upset and crying]…there's a lot of emotions…around language…I guess how it made me feel when…it was more or less taken away or…I don't know if it was taken away…just told not to use it anymore. That assimilation part was…the biggest part in…residential school…a lot of feelings around it.
	Feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, worthlessness, and anger for not being	I guess sometimes it's the loneliness, the loneliness is what hurts the most…that

	allowed to speak *Secwepemctsìn*	I'm not as good as people who speak English language. Our language… I feel that it's not adequate anymore because, can you imagine leaving the English language for 20 years and then trying to speak it again the changes that would happen. It really makes me angry, the other feeling that I have is that we weren't good enough, our language wasn't good enough, our culture wasn't good enough, our values wasn't good enough and we were totally immersed into a real foreign…value system…my *Secwpemctsìn* has been put on a back burner and it's just really given…me sort of like a worthless feeling sometimes.
	Shaming one another for the lack of ability to speak *Secwepemctsìn*	Later on…I remember some…of the girls…speak *Secwpemctsìn* and they would be laughed at…because they said the words wrong.
	Feeling embarrassed and afraid to speak *Secwpemctsin*	I think…after the language went to sleep for me for awhile I was afraid to…speak it, I was embarrassed to speak it.
	Confusion	I still don't know if I can understand …why somebody would want to…take something that was given to you [referring to *Secwepemctsìn]*…I know

		they wanted to assimilate us.
Fluency	Understanding of *Secwepemctsìn* not lost	My loss still there to a... fair extent, not my understanding...when you talk a total loss, it's not a total loss. I spoke of...the language went to sleep for me for awhile, I didn't...lose it.

Language, learning and philosophy of Secwepemc *life passed on by Elders.*

Group 1 participants remember *Secwepemctsìn* as children before the age of 5, when they lived in their home community among their families and relatives. The language was heard all day in different parts of the reserve. The primary caretakers identified by the Group 1 participants were women who generally spoke *Secwepemctsìn* and passed it on to them. One of the participants was raised by her grandparents, and *Secwepemctsìn* was spoken in the home all day long. The other participant recalls his father speaking English and his mother speaking *Secwepemctsìn.* In the early 1940s, *Secwepemctsìn* was primarily spoken on a daily basis in the community, as families were engaged in meeting family responsibilities and participating in community visits, social gatherings, religious rituals, and cultural activities such as hunting and fishing. Elders told their stories and conversed in *Secwepemctsìn* as they went about their daily activities. One participant recalled that the children just listened and learned from the Elders and their stories and conversation. The *Secwepemctsìn* at *T'exelc* was in Stage 1 of Fishman's (1991) stages of language endangerment, because although *Secwepemctsìn* was the primary language of communication among *St'exelcemc*, including those at the higher

levels of government and education within their system, the Indian language was beginning to be eroded among some of the community members.

Significantly, the first participant, who lived a more traditional way of life, remained fluent in the language, while the second participant considered himself fluent but needing assistance at times.

These findings support Chomsky's (1986) linguistic theory, which suggests that a child who is born into a community that speaks a particular language is inclined to speak that language, because the child hears his or her parents talking; the environment matters with respect to choice of vocabulary and structure.

Departure from traditional Secwepemc *socio-economic lifestyle.*

The mixing of Secwepemctsìn with English, French, and Chinook began in the mid-1800s with the arrival of Europeans and continued to 1894, when the first generation of *St'exelcemc* went to residential school, then began employment with white settlers after leaving the mission. The grandmother of one of the participants spoke French, English, *Secwepemctsìn*, Carrier, and Chinook (the trade language), a fact that correlates with the journals of the early European explorers' recollections of the knowledge of languages that some of the *Secwepemc* had during the fur trade and gold rush eras (Beeson, 1971).

One participant recalled that in *T'exelc*, around 1945, shortly after the Second World War, her uncles, who were veterans returning home, spoke solely in English. In fact, English appeared to be a novelty, as the uncles of one participant found it quite amusing to speak to his mother in English and to see if she understood. The men of the

reserve then began to work on ranches, and for them, English began to take precedence over *Secwepemctsìn*. In one participant's family, the grandfather became bilingual and took on the role of the translator for his family, while his wife stubbornly remained monolingual. Additionally, some of the students returning from residential school came home speaking English and hardly any *Secwepemctsìn*. A similar pattern of erosion of *Secwepemctsìn* occurred within the Southern *Secwepemc* in the Kamloops area around 1938, as described by Haig-Brown (1988).

Cultural colonization.

Evidence of what Aitchison (2001) terms "language murder" began to appear with the onslaught of residential school/education policies. In *T'exelc*, this was during the 1940s, as the third generation of children from *T'exelc* began attending residential school, where use of Indian languages was forbidden.

Group 1 participants were third-generation students from *T'exelc* who attended residential school. During summer holidays, one participant could comfortably switch back to *Secwepemctsìn*, whereas the other participant had some difficulty because in his home the language was mixed with English. Furthermore, one participant was really "blown away" by the fact that they were not allowed to speak their language at school. However, after some thought, she remembered being "prepared" by her grandfather and aunts to speak English when she went to school. Fear of being punished for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* at the mission was instilled in both participants by relatives before they entered school. This supports Haig-Brown's (1998) findings that some parents who had suffered for speaking Indian languages wanted to help their children avoid similar

treatment. Or it could simply point to the fact that some parents deemed speaking English as the way to get ahead (Wild & Rathjen, 1975). However, by the demeanor of this participant, who became very emotional when relating her story, I believed that her grandfather and aunts were trying to protect her.

One participant actually recalled being "backhanded" (slapped) for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* at the mission. Both participants recalled other incidents where students were reprimanded either physically or verbally for speaking their language. These participants support Haig-Brown's (1988) findings that the residential school students were not allowed to speak *Secwepemctsìn* at school and were punished if they were caught doing so (Chrisjohn, 1991).

Becoming aware of the change from Secwepemctsìn *to English.*

The Group 1 participants recalled being encouraged to speak *Secwepemctsìn* during the residential school era by some of the reserve Elders, who were second-generation students who had attended the St. Joseph's Mission. For some of these Elders, it was painful to see the language deteriorating. They were angry because residential school students were coming home speaking English and some of them did not even try to understand the Elders when they spoke their Indian language.

The participants also recalled some rebellion against the language policy. One participant recalled witnessing a girl slapping a nun as a form of rebellion, although neither participant recalled actively rebelling themselves.

This supports Haig-Brown's (1988) findings that there was resistance among some of the students for not being allowed to speak their language.

Adopting the English language.

As the Group 1 participants entered their teen years, integration and interaction with non-Indians, and Western influences, such as music, alcohol, and the media, accelerated the shift towards English. One participant claimed that "in the 1960s the whole world was going crazy!" The language of the day was English and it was important for the participants to learn this language and leave *Secwepemctsìn* behind with the old culture. She eloquently stated that "the language went to sleep."

One participant was totally immersed in her Indian language when she went home for the summer, but she noticed that other students were not. Some of her cousins came home speaking English all of the time. In fact, in *T'exelc,* English was spoken almost exclusively in the 1960s, compared to only a few homes in the 1940s. This participant began to speak *Secwepemctsìn* on fewer occasions and when she went to school in Vancouver she mainly spoke English because that was the dominant language. She did not lose contact with her Indian language because she had a friend who was *Secwepemc* with whom she could converse, or use some *Secwepemctsìn* words.

What stood out for the participants were the emotions regarding the loss of *Secwepemctsìn*. These ranged from no feelings to shame for not being able to speak *Secwepemctsìn*; profound loneliness for the language and culture; feelings of worthlessness when *Secwepemctsìn* was not allowed to be spoken; inadequacy for not being able to fully remember how to speak *Secwepemctsìn*; anger at authority figures for forbidding the language; anger at parents and other relatives for discouraging children from speaking *Secwepemctsìn*; anger at themselves for starting to forget *Secwepemctsìn*; and confusion as to why the children were not allowed to speak their Indian language.

One participant stated, "I guess sometimes it's the loneliness, the loneliness is what hurts the most."

Becoming the oppressor of your own people.

Both at the mission and when they returned home, students began shaming one another for making mistakes in *Secwepemctsìn*. Both participants in Group 1 became embarrassed and afraid to speak their language because they were afraid of being humiliated by their peers or Elders. This public humiliation of one another has been referred to by Haig-Brown (1988) as "the indoctrination process" that served as a control even after the *Secwepemc* were no longer under the direct influence of the residential schools (p. 110). One participant was left with an almost unbearable feeling of confusion as to why the Canadian government would want to take the language. Both participants learned later in life that they had experienced the assimilation policy of the Canadian government and were quite angry about this. One participant felt that the assimilation policy was still happening in a subtle manner.

Fluency.

Despite the language policy at residential school, and influences from other cultures, one participant retained her fluency, although she has some difficulty remembering some of the *Secwepemctsìn*. The other participant felt that his understanding of *Secwepemctsìn* was stronger than his ability to speak it. (I felt that his ability to speak was greater than he expressed. This feeling may result from a cultural

tendency of *Secwepemc* to humble themselves; however, in this instance perhaps he did feel humbled by his experience.)

This is consistent with the findings of Veltman (1983) and Aitchison (2001), who identified the first stage of "language murder" as the decrease in the number of people who speak their language. This is also what Ignace (1995) calls "fluent speakers" (those in their fifties or older) and "fluent understanders" (those who could follow the details of a conversation, but who could not speak the language save for a small number of words or phrases). By the 1960s, *St'exelcemc* had progressed to Stage 5 of Fishman's (1991) stages of language endangerment and by the 1970s, were quickly deteriorating to Stage 6; that is, *Secwepemctsìn* was still very much alive in the community of *T'exelc*, but was quickly moving to a situation in which there was only some intergenerational use of *Secwepemctsìn*.

Inquiry Aim # 2: How Did Your Experience of Losing Secwepemctsìn Affect the Process of Relearning the Language?

Two themes emerged from my findings on this question for Group 1. They are set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Effect of Language Loss on the Relearning Process—Group 1

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Replacing feelings of shame and fear of speaking *Secwepemctsìn* with feelings of pride and responsibility	Fear of speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	I think during, after the language went to asleep for me, for awhile I was afraid to, to speak it, I was embarrassed to speak it; I still am really embarrassed sometimes...when there's certain people I know that are going to correct me then...I'll revert to English and save myself embarrassment.
	Feelings of embarrassment and shame	I'm afraid to say, I'm...too *seme7* [White] [chuckles], too...highly English speaking type...but if I get some people more to understand where I'm coming from, they won't be so critical of me...to my lesser usage of *Secwpemctsìn.*
		Like so many of us are nowadays, I am afraid to go somewhere, to show [chuckles] my shame for loss of... *Secwepemctsìn.*
	Desire to regain pride	When I see people my age, or people that I know that speak the language, I can't tell you the pride [choked up] that I have in that person. It just brings me so much...closer to them, I feel like we're a real team, you know, that we belong

		with one another, and it's... just like a spark of energy and goodness and everything into it. I want to regain my pride and my identity, *Secwpemctsìn.*
Re-establishing traditional roles as keepers of the language and culture	Concern for future generations	I'm afraid that the younger set...will say...why should I...and I want to help them pick up, not just the language, pick themselves up, along with that pride in its usage.
	Desire to pass on *Secwepemctsìn*	I'm going to give it to the [chuckles] younger set I guess if I can, not *if* I can, whenever I can; it's for us, you and I, incumbent on us older ones...[hitting the table]...hey, this we need to bring back because we... [hitting the table]...I'm saying who I am.
	Desire to save *Secwepemctsìn* from extinction	I want to teach it, I want people to hear it all the time...because I know that it could become extinct.
	Thinking in English	English was so dominant in my life that it is just really hard to switch from that into... *Secwpemctsìn*; one wants to override and that's the English language.
	Impossibility of escaping English	We go through a lot of literature and...English through the media and papers...that causes a lot of interference...[chuckles] one wants to override and

		that's the English language.
	Power of mass media to influence language	The media and other English influences make it harder to relearn.
	Conflict between fluent Elders and educated younger generation	The older ones who really understood it...conflicted...with the... younger supposedly educated types coming up...because they couldn't understand English, and you couldn't understand the depth of their *Secwepemctsìn*.
	Difficulty finding people to speak to in *Secwepemctsìn*	I don't think it's relearning, I think what it is...[is] finding people to talk to.
	Apparent fear of speaking or inability to speak *Secwepemctsìn* among men	I'm not sure if they don't want to speak the language...a whole bunch of us can...babble away in our language...but the men kind of sit back, that's just my observation.

Replacing shame and fear with pride and responsibility.

The participants' desire to reawaken the language arose as they entered late adulthood. Both participants claimed that they had never completely stopped using the language; however, it had been at least 20 years since they had used the language fully and on a consistent basis. Haig-Brown (1988) had a similar finding on language usage among some Southern *Secwepemc*.

Both participants recall employment as an incentive to start using *Secwepemctsìn* once again and both experienced some difficulty with feelings of shame and embarrassment because they were afraid to make mistakes in front of their peers or Elders. The sense of loss of the language for these participants was acute, and was an incentive not necessarily to relearn but just to begin using the language again.

Both participants felt that *Secwepemctsìn* had fallen into disuse because of the assimilation policy that forbade the speaking of it; changing times, including the replacement of cultural materials with Western materials; and *Secwepemc* Elders values, which encouraged the speaking of English because it is respectful to speak so that everyone understands. Both felt that "something was missing" or that they wanted to get their identity back, in addition to wanting to regain self-pride, reduce feelings of inadequacy, and address concerns that the children would not learn *Secwepemctsìn* and that the language could be lost altogether.

These findings are consistent with the findings of other research (Cardinal, 1969; Chrisjohn, 1989; Barman, Hebert, & McCaskinn, 1986; York, 1990), in which the residential school experience actually had a positive influence on former students' feelings about Indian culture and their own Indian identity, which might help to explain the current interest in rediscovering their culture.

Re-establishing traditional role as keepers of the language and culture.

Both participants in Group 1 were concerned about the social and political implications of losing their language. In particular, they felt that if they lost their language, they would lose themselves, and the community would become just another

part of Canadian society. In particular, they both felt a sense of responsibility once they were recognized as the "Elders" of *T'exelc* and therefore the "keepers of the language and culture." That is, they are now held responsible by their community for passing the language and culture on to the next generations.

They both felt the desire to teach *Secwepemctsìn* to the younger generation and save their language from extinction. This is not as easy as it sounds, because both participants had begun to think in English, that language having become so dominant in their lives, and with the mass media so overpoweringly present in the English language. It was hard for them to switch freely from English to *Secwepemctsìn*. They also encountered the same situation their Elders had, which was that the younger, educated types, and even their peers, could not understand the depth of their *Secwepemctsìn,* and it became harder and harder to find people to speak to in their language. An appearance of fear or inability to speak *Secwepemctsìn* seemed to be more prominent among the men of *T'exelc,* who would just sit back and not take part in the conversation while the women were conversing in *Secwepemctsìn*.

It appears that by the late 1970s, *St'exelcemc* had reached Stage 7 of Fishman's (1991) eight stages of language endangerment, because only adults beyond child-bearing age spoke *Secwepemctsìn.* Furthermore, *St'exelcemc* were also in the first stage of what Veltman (1983) and Aitchison (2001) termed "language murder." This is illustrated by the fact that one participant is bilingual, whereas the other participant became less able to speak *Secwepemctsìn* because the Elders did not use the Indian language with him as often as they could have. *Secwepemctsìn* was not yet "murdered" but had "gone to sleep." The *Secwepemc* were one of 20 British Columbia First Nations to gain the status of

having an Endangered Language (AFN, 1992), where less than 50% of the adult population speak *Secwepemctsìn* and there are few (if any) young speakers, or, although 80% of the older population speak *Secwepemctsìn*, there are no identified speakers under 45 years old.

Inquiry Aim 3: What are (or have been) Your Strategies for Relearning Secwepemctsìn?

The data on this question for Group 1 revealed two essential themes, shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Strategies for Relearning Secwepemctsìn—*Group 1*

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Taking responsibility for beginning to relearn and start speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	Using formal resources	Listening to tapes...in *Secwpemctsìn.* I'm still going to be taking, taking courses, I'm...gonna go beyond immersion. I really became involved with the teaching of the language in 1983; in about 1990...I began taking linguistic courses through Gonzaga University.
	Building self-confidence to speak *Secwepemctsìn*	I'm still doing some self talk...I'm coming from more of a place of practice, myself; I'm getting to know...the basics. In the *Secwepemc* paper like the one from Kamloops, I'll read it first of all

		because…I can recognize how these things are…pronounced. So I… more or less pick my way through it.
	Use of a mentor	Because I worked in the schools…a mentor, a colleague and her and I would…immerse ourselves in the language…and we do whatever we want and we say whatever we want.
Taking pride in being asked to take on the Elders' role as "keepers of the language and culture"	Becoming recognized as Elders, and as "keepers of the language and culture"	When I'm asked to do prayers or something and I always think, you should ask the Elders…and then I feel embarrassed…I would because that's for gift to me, I don't want to say no, it's special, the creator gave it to me.
	Story-telling	What I'd really like to do…with the Treaty team… is to tell them…a short story just so that they are listening and…so that every meeting that I go to that I give them something.
	Responsibility for bringing back *Secwepemctsìn* to reclaim our identity as *Secwepemc*	It's for us, you and I, incumbent on us older ones …[hitting the table]…hey, this we need to bring back because we…[hitting the table], even that if I go to meetings like the other one in town and they ask me for a prayer…or some meeting somewhere if I want to *Secwepemctsìn*. I'm saying who I am.
	Giving *Secwepemctsìn*	I want to bring back

	away	[chuckles], I want, I need, there's something I have to, I'm not going to keep that, I'm going to give it to the [chuckles] younger set, I guess if I can, not *if* I can, whenever I can.
	Teaching *Secwepemctsìn*	I want to teach it, I want people to hear it all the time.

Taking personal responsibility for relearning Secwepemctsìn.

Both participants took personal responsibility for relearning or regaining their ability to speak *Secwepemctsìn* by listening to tapes developed by Dr. Aert Kuipers and Elder May Dixon (1975). One participant began taking language courses, while the other participant thought about doing so and began practising reading *Secwepemctsìn* from a *Secwepemc* newspaper. Both participants had to build their self-confidence for speaking by practising speaking to themselves and later immersing themselves in *Secwepemctsìn* with a mentor.

Taking pride in the role of "keepers of the language and culture."

Both participants were surprised to find themselves to be considered Elders at 63 and 65 years of age. They were surprised, afraid, and proud to be asked to speak and pray in *Secwepemctsìn* at gatherings. One participant expressed this expectation and her ability to speak *Secwepemctsìn* as "a gift to me, I don't want to say no, its special, the creator gave it to me." She also expressed the desire to pass on the language through story-telling. Both participants felt deeply the responsibility for passing *Secwepemctsìn* on as a

way to reclaim *Secwepemc* identity. The desire to "give away" the Indian language by teaching it to younger people was also expressed. Giving and sharing is a cultural practice of the *Secwepemc*, in which to give is to receive—as you are giving something away, you are also receiving a benefit, and may receive something in the future, whether or not you are aware of it. The benefit here would be the long-term survival of *Secwepemctsìn* and thus the sense of identity and pride. The desire of both participants to fulfill the role of "keepers of the language and culture" is an illustration of Fishman's (1991) belief that the key to minority language preservation remains in the intergenerational transmission of the language rather than in government policies and laws.

Research Findings for Group 2

Group 2 participants were 47 and 52 years old. The 47-year-old participant probably had a lower level of understanding of *Secwepemctsìn* than the Group 1 participants. She grew up in a home where English and *Secwepemctsìn* were mixed, and the languages were mixed in the community of *T'exelc* as well. She felt that she had been fluent in *Secwepemctsìn* as a child because she heard the language on a daily basis and could follow commands. At the time of the interview, she was able to speak short phrases and had a large vocabulary as a result of relearning, but she felt that she was still not fluent in the language.

The 52-year-old participant grew up in a home where English was the language spoken, but spent a lot of time with grandparents who spoke to him in *Secwepemctsìn* on a daily basis. He retained a lower level of fluent understanding than the Group 1

participants and the other Group 2 participant; he could remember many words and short phrases if they were spoken to him. He felt that he was not fluent in *Secwepemctsìn,* but that it would be easy for him to relearn if he found the time to do so.

Inquiry Aim # 1: What Was Your Experience of Losing Secwepemctsìn?

Four essential themes emerged from the data on this question for Group 2, and are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Experience of Losing the Language—Group 2

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Traditional *Secwepemc* language, learning, and philosophy passed on through the actions and memories of the Elders from *T'exelc*	Listening to and learning *Secwepemctsìn* by performing traditional everyday *Secwepemc* rituals	If my brother W. was at home...often him and my mom would speak in *Secwepemctsìn* first thing in the morning...generally during my younger years when people came to visit...my mom always spoke Shuswap...And Sunday...they [referring to Elders] would go to my Granny P.'s place and they all spoke...and we had to go play outside...we couldn't go very far...we had to listen [referring to listening to them telling their stories]. When I was around my grandparents we used to hear it all day long...Anytime I was around the Elders or older

		people they spoke it all the time...my parents they didn't really speak it...my dad could understand it pretty good...my mom might have but she didn't ever try to speak it...sometimes when the kids get together and try to speak it but they didn't do a very good job of it...[laughs]...I think...your mom or J....spoke mostly Shuswap. I know that my uncles...spoke mostly English... when my mom and dad used to go out hunting and fishing we used to stay with the grandparents for weeks at a time. We used to go out camping with Granny P. and *Pe7e* T. down at the river. And he used to talk Shuswap all of the time, I think Granny P. used to pity us and talk English all the time.
	Understanding *Secwepemctsìn*	I understood...if my Granny E. would tell us to do something like... *sweti7*...and we'd have to run to the window and [tell her who is there – because she is asking who is there?]...when my brother W. used to come ...just from the tone of their voice...I really heard what they were saying...or my sister R. came to visit...they would start talking in *Secwpemctsìn* right away and then...mom would say to go make tea [in

		Secwepemctsìn]...I don't know if I just understood by the tone...if they were speaking to me they mixed the language but if they were speaking to one another they didn't. I could understand it because I could remember my Grandpa T. used to talk to us in Indian all the time and tell us to do stuff and I had no problem following directions or knowing what he wanted me to do.
Cultural colonization of *St'exelcemc* continuing in a subtle manner	Fear of punishment and humiliation for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* instilled by family members	In my dad's day they were actually punished for it, but we were just kind of discouraged; you were told not to speak it; and I know not to speak it when I know there is...[chuckle] people...of authority around; encouraged family members, especially those going to residential school not to speak it because...I think it was fear of punishment...humility and ...they didn't want their kids to experience the same thing. She [Mother] said they're going to get in trouble, if they go to school, they're going to get in trouble. So I don't want you talking to them... like that anymore...that kind of stuck into my mind for a long time.

	Never really totally spoke *Secwepemctsìn*	I recall hearing more and more English…within my own home when my brothers and sister…were home from the mission; I never really totally used the language, I always…mixed it; I think most of the time…if they were speaking to me they mixed the language. Maybe a short period I might have completely stopped…I wouldn't even say that because…after getting out of high school and visiting the grandparents….they used to continue the language…older population used the language quite a bit.
Not hearing *Secwepemctsìn* all the time	Mostly English spoken by everyone	My mom and dad used to speak mostly English and I really lost contact with the Shuswap language when I went to residential school because over there they really disapproved of it. Everybody was starting to revert to English; if I went to visit them [the Elders] alone, they would speak to me in English first; a lot of the difficulty has been that I didn't hear it all the time.
	Wanting to fit in by speaking English	I guess wanting to fit in with the school population; a lot of people kind of just said well Shuswap doesn't fit here so I'm just going to use the English language.

	Influence of alcohol	Not only residential school but alcohol I think was another one that really killed our language. When the people really started drinking...then I didn't hear it [*Secwepemctsìn*]... as often.
	Death of Elders	And the old people started dying off, then I didn't hear it [*Secwepemctsìn]*...as often.
	Ease of understanding English because everyone speaks it	My mom...between when I was 5 and 10 that she started kind of really more using English... I don't really know how it made me feel. I never thought about it...I guess it probably made things a little bit easier because then you...understand everything they are saying.
	Feeling left out	I felt left out of the conversation.
	Envy of those who could speak *Secwepemctsìn*	All those they really speak in their language...I really envied them and...possibly that's what made me start wanting to learn.
	Feeling of loss	I know when we went to Adams Lake, this Elder lady got up and she addressed...our group...she just totally spoke *Secwepemctsìn* all the way through, I was really impressed by how she could speak and could remember our grandparents speaking

		the same way all the time and I not to be able to understand you know totally what she was saying...I was feeling...lost and...kind of...that there was something missing that...you have lost and that you wish you could have it back.
Standing up for *Secwepemctsìn*	Grandparents wanted us to learn *Secwepemctsìn*	Some of them [grandparents] were stubborn; they just repeated over and over in Shuswap what they wanted you to do until you figured it out, understood it, that's the way I learned. T. [grandfather] used to seem to refuse the English, as [much] as possible...It seemed like he wanted you, wanted you to understand the language.
	Rebelling	We used to rebel and use the language anyways, whether we were supposed to or not [referring to residential school]. When the opportunity arose, and I know not to speak it when I know there is, ah [chuckle] people...of authority around, the ones that say you can't...speak it, then I wouldn't do it around them. But you know we'd get together sometimes as kids and then just use, you know, the Shuswap terms...or descriptions when we were

		out playing. But I think by them doing that [referring to those in authority discouraging the speaking of *Secwepemctsìn]* it just made us a little more rebellious, and back in those...we would mock the system, we just went out and spoke it anyway. We made sure that they couldn't hear us doing it, and talk about the establishment or the people that were in charge in the *Secwepemc* language. [chuckles] Kind of make fun of them.
	Brothers stood up for *Secwepemctsìn*	Who argued against it [language policy] was my brother W....I don't recall anybody else ever saying...we have to talk to them, we have to keep talking to them, but he did. Sometimes also my brother R. 'Cause he was really fluent...that stood up for the language. So once I became aware that we were losing the language and that I didn't know it, I used it as much as I possibly could. At the residential school... I don't think I ever...went totally not using the language...we used it sparingly but we still used it. When I found out it

		[*Secwepemctsìn]* was outlawed...that's when I thought...the government is not going to do that to me, they are not going to take anything away that...belongs to me.

Language, learning, and philosophy passed on by Elders.

Both Group 2 participants heard *Secwepemctsìn* on a fairly consistent basis up until they were about five years old. The youngest participant heard the Indian language more often because her parents and oldest siblings were fluent and often spoke it at home. The older participant heard *Secwepemctsìn* on a more consistent basis with his grandparents, but not so much in his own home, as English was the language used there. The younger participant recalled weekly Sunday visits to her grandparents' home, where a group of Elders—all women—visited and told stories in *Secwepemctsìn.* The children were expected to play nearby and listen to the conversation and stories, but they did not take part in the conversation. The older participant recalled spending weeks at a time at his grandparents' home while his parents went hunting or fishing. He and his siblings also camped with their grandparents at the river during fishing season. During this time his grandfather spoke entirely *Secwepemctsìn,* while his grandmother spoke English.

Both participants felt that they understood *Secwepemctsìn* during this time, because they could follow commands, through both the words and the tone of voice used by their Elders and parents. Neither recalls actually speaking the language on a consistent basis, and one participant acknowledged that she always mixed *Secwepemctsìn* and English when speaking. Both recall being spoken to in *Secwepemctsìn* and answering in English.

Cultural colonization of St'exelcemc continues in a subtle manner.

The older participant recalled that when he was a residential school student his parents and other relatives discouraged him from speaking *Secwepemctsìn* for fear that he would be punished or humiliated by authority figures if he did so. When the youngest participant began attending the Sugar Cane Day School, she heard an argument between her brother and mother regarding the use of *Secwepemctsìn.* Her mother had decided to use English with the children once they started school because of her fear that the children would be punished for speaking *Secwepemctsìn.* She therefore reprimanded her son for speaking the language with his younger siblings, and he in turn became very angry and refused to discontinue speaking *Secwepemctsìn* to his siblings. This argument instilled a fear of using *Secwepemctsìn* in the participant.

The older participant recalled opposing the policy forbidding *Secwepemctsìn,* with other residential school students, by continuing to use words that they knew. Residential school affected the participant who went to the Sugar Cane Day School because her older siblings came home speaking English. However, four of this participant's siblings remained fluent and at least three of them continued to use *Secwepemctsìn* when speaking to their mother. Use of the language did lessen in the home over time, despite two of the male siblings' determination to ensure that the language not be forgotten.

Not hearing Secwepemctsìn all the time.

As time went on, *Secwepemctsìn* was heard less and less, perhaps with the passing on of the Elders. Everyone was reverting to speaking English and Elders would speak in

English first when speaking to one participant, even though they knew that *Secwepemctsìn* was spoken often by her mother.

Alcohol also helped "kill the language," as one participant remarked. In the context of the government's cultural genocide policies, alcohol abuse can be seen as a result of children being taken from their parents and forced to attend residential school, and the consequent loss of their language and culture. At the same time, however, alcohol abuse contributed to that loss of language and culture. This helps explain contradictions that arose in the interviews regarding alcohol abuse and language. Participants recalled their relatives appearing to speak *Secwepemctsìn* more when they were under the influence of alcohol than when they were sober. However, at other times, when under the influence they shamed those who spoke *Secwepemctsìn* and made fun of their ability to speak the language.

Both participants felt that alcohol abuse affected the language because their relatives were more interested in the alcohol than in passing on the language and culture. For both participants, the sense of loss of *Secwepemctsìn* was acute and they were filled with resentment and anger towards the government for suppressing the language, towards their relatives, who did not pass on the language, and towards themselves for not remembering it. They also felt left out of *Secwepemctsìn* conversations and were envious of those who could speak the language.

Standing up for the language.

The participants proudly recalled how they and their relatives and peers had rebelled against the suppression of *Secwepemctsìn.* One participant recalled his

grandfather stubbornly trying to get him to learn *Secwepemctsìn* by repeating words or commands over and over. Two of the youngest participant's brothers frankly stood up for the Indian language by encouraging their siblings to listen to it and learn it.

Both participants also stood up for *Secwepemctsìn* in different ways. The oldest participant took part in rebelling at residential school by taking opportunities to speak *Secwepemctsìn* with his friends whenever he could. He was always careful, though, to speak the language only when no one in authority could hear him and his friends. The youngest participant became aware as a teen that *Secwepemctsìn* had been outlawed and as a result was being lost. She therefore rebelled against this government policy by using the language as much as possible so that the government could not take away what was rightfully hers.

The older participant attended residential school and almost totally lost the ability to speak *Secwepemctsìn* but retained his understanding and ability to make the vocal sounds of the language. He could also easily recall words and phrases—and their meanings—as well as pronouncing them perfectly on hearing them only once. The younger participant attended the Sugar Cane Day School and was able to follow the "gist" of conversations and could respond in English or a mixture of English and *Secwepemctsìn* to people speaking to her in *Secwepemctsìn.* Perhaps both participants are at different levels of what Ignace, Hinkson, and Jules (1998) refer to as "fluent understanding," which means being able to follow the details of a conversation, but to speak only a small number of words or phrases. Both participants believe that they have the language "in their head" but have difficulty expressing themselves in *Secwepemctsìn* without a lot of assistance from a fluent speaker.

The effects of residential school on language loss appear to have continued into the third generation of the residential school era, supporting Haig-Brown's (1988) findings that children of the residential school era suffered a devastating loss of their command of *Secwepemctsìn*. This includes the reserve day school, as it also took part in implementing the policy of suppressing Indian languages. Again, the participants' interviews support Veltman's (1983) belief that a language can indeed be "murdered."

Inquiry Aim # 2: How Did Your Experience of Losing Secwepemctsìn Affect the Process of Relearning the Language?

Five essential themes emerged from the data on this question for Group 2 and are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Effect of Language Loss on the Relearning Process—Group 2

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Feelings of shame and fear of speaking *Secwepemctsìn*	Embarrassment made me really afraid to make a mistake and be laughed at	For me sometimes when I'm angry, or if I'm tired, I can't hear anything [*Secwepemctsìn]*; I wouldn't say afraid, well yeah...I was embarrassed because when I attempted to...speak *Secwepemctsìn,* it seemed like someone always laughed at me... that embarrassment made me really afraid...to use the language. So afraid to make a mistake. I was ashamed that I didn't understand it.

	There is a block there that may be feelings of fear, anger, loss	It has been the most difficult thing in my life. I'm really ashamed to say, I'm embarrassed at how difficult it has been…I've always felt like that there's a block there. And I don't know what that block is. Part of it is fear, part of it is anger. I want an easier, softer way to learn [chuckles], and a fun way to learn that's not intimidating. I feel kind of…embarrassment or shame too when I hear the language in interviews and…can't really understand it or write it and it's part of your job and …you can't do it…when you go to meetings and…Elder people…speaking the language and you sit there and get bits and pieces of it and you don't really understand what they are saying…you don't really get the gist of it, 'cause you can only understand bits and pieces of it. My grandparents had kind of brought me up education, even though it was not a kind of formal education…they were still passing on to me my heritage, my culture and the language was a big part of it and to sit there and think I couldn't do that for my own grandkids, or my own kids, feel kind of inadequate…but I can't really speak to them in my Shuswap language…really sad.

		Today looking back on it, I kind of feel lost, not embarrassed...not ashamed but more like there is something missing...I wish I knew, could speak the language really fluently but I can't, I can understand it pretty good, but...to speak in...sentences, I can't do it. I know a lot of words, that can make short little sentences, but...to sit there and converse in *Secwpemctsìn* is...really difficult for me...but...I probably could catch on with it pretty easy I think.
Becoming aware that *Secwepemctsìn* was being lost and wanting to relearn it	Envy sparking desire to relearn	All those they really speak in their language...I really envied them and that's when...possibly that's what made me start wanting to learn
	Feeling left out of the conversation	I felt left out of the conversation, and I wanted to know what they were saying.
	Employment requirements	It's part of your job and you can't do it. When I got into the research area for the Band was when I really understood that...the language was a really important part of our history. Without it...I don't think we would survive as a people.
	Fear of using *Secwepemctsìn* but doing it anyway	Once I became aware that we were losing the language and that I didn't know it I used it as much as I possibly could. I made that decision that I wanted to relearn because...I

		wasn't gonna allow the...Canadian government to take...what was rightfully mine.
	Not hearing *Secwepemctsìn* all the time	A lot of the difficulty has been that I didn't hear it [*Secwepemctsìn]* all the time.
Becoming the oppressor of your own language	Refusal of the Elders to share and teach *Secwepemctsìn*	Some of the people that I really expected that would know the language, they would say, "Oh...I don't really know how to talk that way...so I always felt like I got shut down. I remember going to visit Aunty L. and....trying to get her to talk to me...she...laughed...and...she said, "I can't speak." And she...would not speak tome...and then it occurred tome years later when we'd go there, her and Mom would...sit there and they would babble away in Shuswap. The same thing with Aunt...C., I went to visit her one time and I was telling her that I was learning and could she help me learn...and she said, "I can't...because I don't know it enough."
	Being shamed by peers and Elders	I actually took...one Shuswap class...where there was a mixture of...advanced students, beginners and...I didn't really like...that setup because the older ones that were more advanced, some of them were making fun of you

		and...laughing at you.
	Impatient teachers	I felt that the people...trying...to teach me didn't have the patience.
	Inadequate resources	The tapes didn't go far enough.
		They were teaching mostly...just basic root words, I don't think we ever got into any sentences but I think we were going in that direction.
	Using excuses to avoid relearning	I chose to go to university...although I kept trying to learn the language, it sort of went second.
		The modern day...or *seme7* [white man] lifestyle is getting in the way; I think that...one of the biggest blocks...to find time for one of the most important things in your life and that is the language.
		I'm so afraid to take linguistic classes...or to learn to write...because I don't want to change it [*Secwepemctsìn*].
Receiving support for relearning from traditional Elders	Elders who were non-critical and patient	Granny P., I don't remember her ever getting frustrated...and when she laughed it...was a kind of warm laugh and she...didn't criticize me.
		Now I have...well all of the language committee they are a mentor to me, so they always talk to me [referring to *Secwepemctsìn*] and I think that's awesome.

		T....he was working...in the court system...and so he'd...talk in Shuswap to me and I'd have to try and figure out what he's saying and try to answer him and he was very patient and he never laughed at me. And then...when we were doing the traditional use study, we brought in an Elder...twice a week to teach *Secwepemctsìn* and that was working out really well because...we were pretty much more all the same level...I think we were...learning pretty good in that situation.
Regaining *Secwepemctsìn*	Remembering words and sounds and being able to say them	I listen to the words once [chuckle] and I can say it...it's just to remember those words being said...and I could say it, there is no problem. All the sounds are there, like even those deep throat sounds.
	Receiving permission from an Elder to listen to conversations	And...just like the floodgates were open and the light went on...because before it seemed like I...couldn't hear it and then after that I started hearing it and I'd be sitting there, hearing...you gave me permission to listen into conversations.

Feelings of shame and fear about speaking Secwepemctsìn.

For these participants, the reawakening regarding *Secwepemctsìn* occurred at different times. The younger participant began trying to relearn the language 33 years ago

because she recognized that some of her peers spoke their traditional language. The older participant recognized the importance of language when he took a job that required understanding of the language.

When the participants began to try to relearn the language, they were embarrassed and afraid to make a mistake because they had experienced being laughed at for doing both. They were ashamed that they didn't understand and could only comprehend the gist of the conversation and speak words or short phrases and felt that this was inadequate. These two participants are dangerously close to *not* being "fluent understanders" who can follow the details of a conversation, but who cannot speak the language save for a small number of words or phrases. They could actually fall into a third category (Ignace, 1995)—those who understand the gist or fragments of spoken Shuswap, but who can only say a few words—except that both participants could at times follow the gist of the conversation and perhaps answer in English. In addition, both could remember words when they were spoken and felt that they had *Secwepemctsìn* "in their head."

Becoming aware that Secwepemctsìn was being lost and wanting to relearn it.

One participant spoke of feelings of jealousy and envy of peers who could speak their traditional language and wanted to be able to do so. Both participants had a person(s) in their life (e.g., grandfather, brothers) who encouraged them to use the language in early life and this may have influenced their desire to relearn the language later. Both participants felt left out of conversations, both in personal and employment contexts, and wanted to know what was being said. The youngest participant was afraid to use *Secwepemctsìn* but did it anyway because of the possibility that the language

would be lost completely. Part of the difficulty was that the language was not heard all the time by either participant, which made it harder to understand and speak. Additionally, the language was mixed with English by the time both participants were born, with a few exceptions. The younger participant expressed hostility toward the Canadian government for trying to take *Secwepemctsìn* from her and refused to allow that to happen.

Becoming the oppressor.

Despite the participants' willingness to relearn *Secwepemctsìn,* they ran into many barriers. One of these was the fact that English became the dominant language for the second generation of residential school students after they left school, so that some of those who could speak *Secwepemctsìn* did not appear to have the will, energy, or knowledge to pass it on to the next generation. Those who were expected to know the language and pass it on claimed that they did not know it. Either they forgot the language or they were ashamed to try and speak or teach it. This was expressed by the experience of one participant, whose aunts refused to teach her, yet spoke the language to other Elders.

Additionally, some of the second and third generation of residential school students who were *Secwepemctsìn* speakers appeared to have learned to shame their peers when they were trying to learn *Secwepemctsìn,* so the Canadian government no longer had to actively suppress the language. Haig-Brown (1988) described how the same thing happened in the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Overcoming feelings of shame, fear, anger, and inadequacy instilled by parents or other persons of authority made it easier for the participants to begin to relearn *Secwepemctsìn.* The experience of the younger participant (mentioned in the previous section, on Question 2), where she heard her mother reprimand her oldest brother for speaking to his siblings in *Secwepemctsìn,* may have become a mental block for the participant, because later in life, when an Elder gave her "permission" to listen to conversations in *Secwepemctsìn,* her ability to learn the language grew. The other participant felt that he had to just hear *Secwepemctsìn* without shame or fear and have a teacher who would encourage him without shaming him, and he would easily remember, as he had retained even the deep throat sounds that are difficult for non-speakers.

According to the participants, other barriers to relearning the Indian language have included the lack of readily available *Secwepemctsìn* material, and the fact that the material that was available didn't go far enough past the basics. Additionally, the participants began suppressing their own learning, perhaps in a subtle way that they did not even realize was happening, by making various excuses *not* to relearn. One participant recalled an Elder telling her that to learn the culture she must know the language, and that alcohol and drugs did not mix with this learning. The Elder also told this participant that she was trying to do too many things at once, such as trying to learn the language and culture, and going to university. The participant was advised to choose to do one thing, and chose to go to university; and although she continued to relearn *Secwepemctsìn,* that came second. She also used the excuse that she was afraid to take linguistic classes because she was afraid of changing the language. The older participant

felt that the modern lifestyle got in his way, and acknowledged that he could not seem to find the time for "the most important thing in your life and that is the language."

Receiving support from Elders and supporters of Secwepemctsìn.

The younger participant was more active in attempting to relearn *Secwepemctsìn* and had the support of many Elders and language teachers who sit on the *Spi7uy Sqweqwlut.s* Language Committee. Both participants did take language classes, but expressed a desire to have teachers who were non-critical and patient with their efforts. They both practised speaking the language with Elders or peers and language teachers.

The experience of these participants is consistent with Ignace's (1998) findings concerning Indian language teachers throughout British Columbia: that many language teachers had once lost their command of the language, even for decades, usually as a result of the trauma of the residential schools. Many of these teachers relearned the language as young adults after returning home from residential school and spent years of hard work relearning with the help of courses and by having Elders as mentors with whom to practise.

Regaining the ability to speak Secwepemctsìn.

The older participant felt that relearning the language would be fairly easy for him, as he has retained the sounds, even those deep throat sounds that would be difficult for non-speakers or those who have not grown up hearing those sounds. He easily retains words and phrases, even if they are spoken to him just once, because he can remember his grandparents saying them. He felt that he only had to hear *Secwepemctsìn* without

shame or fear, and have a teacher who would encourage him without shaming him, and he would be able to easily remember his language.

The younger participant received permission from an Elder/mentor to listen to conversations, similar to the expectation that she would listen when she was a child. She felt that her previous experience of hearing her mother reprimand her older brother for speaking to his siblings in *Secwepemctsìn* became a mental block for her to relearn or even remember *Secwepemctsìn.* Once she received permission to listen to conversations, it was if "a floodgate had opened and the lights went on" and she could once again really hear the Indian language and her ability to relearn grew.

Inquiry Aim # 3: What Are (or have been) Your Strategies for Relearning Secwepemctsìn?

Three essential themes emerged from the data on this question for Group 2, as well as a list of recommendations from the Group 2 participants (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Strategies for Relearning Secwepemctsìn—*Group 2*

Essential Themes	Sub-themes	Meaning Units
Taking personal responsibility for relearning *Secwepemctsìn*	Self-study—use of language resources	I started really working on building my vocabulary; there was...book one and book two, Kuipers and May Dixon...I started really reading...and ...made...myself a whole...stack of cards... and then I started going through...the Shuswap

		course; if I can't remember how to say something, I'll look it up in the dictionary and then I'll remember how to say it because of the stresses.
	Listening to tapes	And...now...for background, just like turning on the radio... I really love the tapes. [chuckle] I've gone as far as gone out and gotten some...*Secwepemc* tapes that ... I listen to it with my grandkids, get them to say the words hoping that they will start learning the... language that way.
	Learning to write	I started teaching myself to write...so for me...that was a godsend...to find the alphabet and the language tapes and...the books; it's a lot of self-study. I started typing out a Shuswap course...I've got up to lesson 8, which I...tape-recorded so I could listen to it when I'm driving so I'll remember the patterns and everything. And...I did a health unit [curriculum].
	Taking language classes	I took Linguistics 231... twice and the second time it was a real, more of a reinforcement...so the classes I took were basic *Secwepemctsìn* classes and mostly I was self-taught. The last time we went to class I was really

		frustrated...bored and ....so we finally said...we want to learn more than this, we want to, start sentences and...really conversation. So we went into another class and we started on that and it was really... neat...but unfortunately ...the teacher was well prepared in what she was doing, but I think it was her supervisor that come and just disrupt everything and change everything and...it just wasn't a good learning environment.
Seeking out traditional Elders to fulfill their role in passing on the language and culture	Building confidence to speak and practise speaking	Once I became aware that we were losing the language and that I didn't know it I used it as much as I possibly could. He'd talk in Shuswap to me and I'd have to try and figure out what he's saying. I sat there, I wrote down all the things I thought you guys were talking about. And...I showed it to you ...and you said "yeah that's pretty well what we were saying." And you guys were babbling away in Shuswap. What I did was I started practising some of the words. Just sort of putting it in my conversation [chuckles] as I'm going along and sometimes...I'd make mistakes and they'd [Elders] correct me.

	Listening to conversations and stories	It helps me hear conversations and …it helps me with my sentence patterns. Sometimes I have, I have a sentence pattern and it'll stick in my head and I'll use it on somebody, just to…see if they can understand me. She'll start talking to me and I'll get… so excited because "oh my god you understood me!" Or, or I'll understand her.
	Having Elder mentors	Elders, you know, like C….I talk to him and he'll talk back to me [in *Secwepemctsìn]*… when we go on a road trip. Getting after Mom all the time and…getting her to teach me some of the language. I remember talking to Aunt L. 'cause I was really trying to learn and she was another one I'd go and visit and I'd try to get her to teach me; T….he was working… in the court…he'd phone me and he'd talk in Shuswap to me and I'd have to try and figure out what he's saying and try to answer him and he was very patient and he never laughed at me. And … I did that pilot mentorship with you. This is my last Elder mentorship through that program anyways and I feel

		like I've really done a lot, really learned a lot more than I would ever have learned taking classes.
Taking on the role as young Elder and "keeper of the language and culture"	Teaching grandchildren	I talk to them [grandchildren]...use the words that I know, stop and teach them what it is or what it refers to...but I can't really speak to them in my Shuswap language, because...ah sad, really sad. I got *Secwepemc* tapes that I listen to now and then, and I listen to it with my grandkids, get them to say the words, hoping that they will start learning the words.

Taking personal responsibility for relearning Secwepemctsìn.

Both participants took responsibility for relearning *Secwepemctsìn.* They used various methods for relearning, including learning to read, listening to tapes, learning to write, and practising speaking. Both participants felt that they had never stopped using *Secwepemctsìn,* although they used it sparingly and mixed it with English. The younger participant was more actively learning than the older participant, perhaps due to a greater ability to overcome shaming by peers and Elders. She taught herself to read, write, and speak to the extent that the resources that were available allowed. She practised speaking with Elders in a work environment, or just in everyday activities.

Both participants took language classes, in which they experienced being shamed by their peers for making mistakes. The classes were a mix of beginner, intermediate, and

advanced students, and the curriculum was very basic and repetitive, with not much progress built in. Furthermore, the classes did not provide a good learning environment, because of the shaming. One participant continued with the classes despite her experience, while the other dropped out and preferred a less formal approach to relearning. One participant used current resources and retyped and taped the curriculum as a way to learn how to read and write. She also used language classes to develop other types of resources in *Secwepemctsìn,* in order to further her command of the language.

Seeking out Elder mentors.

The younger participant enrolled in a formal Elder Mentorship Program through Simon Fraser University and completed two immersion-style mentorships with Elders. The *Spi7uy Sqweqwlut.s* Language Committee language teachers also became mentors for this participant while she took classes and participated in the Elder Mentorship Program with one of their colleagues. She felt that this experience was more helpful than formal classes, because there were more everyday living activities involved and they immersed themselves in *Secwepemctsìn.* She also listened as Elders spoke and at times the Elders consciously spoke *Secwepemctsìn* so that the participant could hear and relearn the language. At times they corrected her mistakes, but they did so in a gentle, non-intimidating, non-shaming manner.

The older participant was at an earlier stage of relearning and had yet to find mentors or the time to actively pursue relearning; he had only one language teacher as an informal mentor. Both felt that informal methods were less intimidating than classes.

Taking on the role of young Elder.

The older participant listened to tapes with his grandchildren and tried to teach them words as a way of teaching and relearning himself. He could not use only *Secwepemctsìn* when doing this, so he used whatever he could.

Taking on the role of a young Elder, seeking out Elder mentors, and taking personal responsibility for relearning the language are all consistent with Kirkness's (1998) and Armstrong's (1990) belief that developing intermediate speakers (those not fully fluent) and those most affected by the residential school stigma to the level of full fluency should be a priority. Community-based partial immersion, and promoting a community/family natural process in language relearning, are approaches that would develop a positive attitude toward and promote Indian languages. Developing intermediate speakers or "fluent understanders" is also consistent with Stages 7 and 8 of Fishman's (1991) eight stages of language planning, as a way to avoid language death and promote language shift back to *Secwepemctsìn* (Ignace, Hinkson, & Jules, 1998).

Both Group 2 participants had many useful recommendations, including updating current resources to include sentence patterns; developing tapes to go with written materials; developing short stories and material for media such as videos and movies; developing and enforcing an employment policy that would make learning the language mandatory for certain jobs; and refusing to speak English and thus forcing others to speak *Secwepemctsìn.*

Alternative methods were also suggested, such as praying for the language in a spiritual ceremony, and learning the *Secwepemc* prayers, with the idea that as you learn the prayers, the prayers themselves help you learn the language, because you are praying

in and for the language. One participant said, "Some people are saying that if we really learn the prayers, we'd be really learning our language."

Chapter 5: Summary of the Research

My own experience of losing and relearning my language gave me the desire to find out what the experience was like for other *Secwepemc* from my home community of *T'exelc*. I used descriptive qualitative research as my method of inquiry, because I wanted to conduct the study in a way that felt closer to natural conversation and story-telling, as these are traditional *Secwepemc* ways of transmitting culture and language. I developed three research questions (see Chapter 4) to guide the process. I interviewed four *St'exelcemc* who experienced losing their language and were in the process of relearning it. I separated the participants into two groups: Group 1 (63 and 65 years of age) and Group 2 (47 and 52 years of age). I used qualitative content analysis to analyze my results and develop them into themes.

Discussion of Research Findings

The participants' stories provided information and opinions about their experience of losing their language, how it affected their relearning of it, and what their strategies for relearning were. There were three significant findings: abuse has the power to silence; there is a willingness and a need to go back to traditional *Secwepemc* methods of teaching, which are more successful for Indian people than Western methods of teaching, and specifically linguistics methods; and the totalitarian policies of the Indian residential school and the suppression of Indian languages must be recognized and addressed as genocidal practices, and the Canadian government held accountable for the devastation of Indian languages.

Abuse Has the Power to Silence

The most important thing I learned in this study was that abuse, such as punishing, instilling fear, and shaming, has the power to silence. For 110 years, the Canadian government successfully silenced the *Secwepemc* by instilling feelings of shame and fear for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* through the language policy enforced at the St. Joseph's Mission and Sugar Cane Indian Day School. This ultimately resulted in the loss of language for the participants of this study. Furthermore, oppression was internalized and then directed by some residential school students at their children. Participants experienced shame in two ways. First, they were traumatized when they were shamed and/or punished by authority figures for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* when they went to school. Then they were shamed by peers and relatives for *not* being able to speak *Secwepemctsìn,* which caused confusion and anger.

Fear entered the equation when the participants in the study were either punished or felt threatened with punishment for speaking *Secwepemctsìn* in the residential schools. Later, the authorities no longer had to instill shame and fear themselves, because the previous generations of residential school students were imposing these feelings on their own relatives. These experiences left the participants feeling afraid to make mistakes, and so in many situations they chose not to attempt to speak *Secwepemctsìn* .

Anger surfaced and was directed by the participants towards authority figures of the "government system" through blame; towards parents for not passing on the language and allowing it to be lost; and towards the self for feeling afraid to speak *Secwepemctsìn* and for losing fluency in the language as a result of not speaking it consistently. Loss was

felt deeply by all of the participants and expressed as a feeling of loneliness, like losing yourself and your own people.

However, while feelings of shame and fear inhibited all of the participants' abilities to relearn *Secwepemctsìn,* ultimately they had the resiliency to overcome these feelings and to begin relearning their language. The feeling of loss urged the participants on in the journey of relearning their language, and instilled a sense of responsibility for saving *Secwepemctsìn* by passing it on to their grandchildren. In this way, the participants and their mentors were able to critically review and recognize the language policy for what it was and then show their strength by challenging the Canadian government's suppression of *Secwepemctsìn* and continuing to use their language despite all the odds against its survival.

Importance of Traditional Secwepemc Methods of Learning

Two participants found that going back to their roots and revitalizing their roles as Elders and "keepers of the language and culture" was the best method to recall and strengthen their language speaking abilities. In their traditional roles they immersed themselves in story-telling and listening to everyday conversations. The other two participants sought out traditional Elders who passed on the language through these traditional methods. Three participants who also took language classes found them to be inadequately resourced, and as a result the classes themselves were not sufficient to produce language speakers. Rather, the classes served as reinforcement for knowledge of the language that the participants already had. However, the classes were taught as

linguistic courses, which can distort *Secwepemctsìn* into a language spoken like the English language. This distortion results in the further loss of *Secwepemc* culture.

Educators must recognize the "keepers of the language and culture" method developed by these participants to relearn their language, and incorporate it into their language courses, because it appears to be more successful than linguistic language classes. Social workers working in the field of therapy must recognize the devastation that resulted from the language policy and develop a method to address the trauma that suppressed the language and therefore the culture. As the Elders have pointed out, without the language, culture is lost, because it is embedded within the language.

This study provides a small glimpse of the healing process that is required to address the shame and fear instilled at the residential schools and day school and in the community in order for *St'exelcemc* to move forward and relearn their language. The study also shows the participants' recognition of the fact that they have to abandon the Western idea that language is separate from other areas of human activity. In doing so, the participants assisted in restoring the balance between people and nature that they had once perfected, and taking the responsibility back from linguists and other scholars to teach *Secwepemctsìn* according to their own traditional methods.

Recognizing and Addressing Totalitarian Policies as Genocidal Practice

I tried to remain objective throughout this study, because initially I was guided by my own belief that language loss is a result of the genocidal language policy imposed on Indian people by the Canadian government through the residential school system. Yet the literature review and evidence provided by the participants overwhelmingly supported

this view. It is true that language changes continually as a result of the influences of other cultures and modernization; however, this change is slower, steadier, and less abrupt than the change imposed by the language policy of suppression. Nor does natural language change appear to produce such a high level of trauma and feelings of fear, shame, and loss.

As the participants and their Elder mentors socially constructed language loss by recognizing it as a social problem and actively pursuing a revitalization of their language, they were able to strengthen their position as speakers of their Indian language. There is a need to "shout it out," as in the women's movement method of "consciousness raising," so that present and future leaders "hear the problem" and see the need for programming, policy development, and adequate resourcing in the area of Indian languages.
Those who attended residential schools lived in an atmosphere that stifled appropriate intervention and maintained a system of abuse that is no longer acceptable, if it ever was (Furniss, 1995). *Secwepemc* leaders must take this opportunity to confront the marginalization of their community members by stepping up to the plate and taking the information gathered here to assist in addressing the severe limitations imposed on *Secwepemctsìn* by current language education policies.

Limitations

I am attempting, as a form of resistance, to address the Northern *Secwepemc* history of losing our language and relearning it in an atmosphere where I feel imposed upon by Western rules, which are in turn imposed by institutions such as the university (e.g., through academic criteria and theory and the academic writing style) and the

archives (e.g., through access policies and restrictions). It is difficult, because I have had to learn yet another language (the academic language) so that scholars can understand what I have to say, where I would prefer to use simpler language so that the *Secwepemc* could understand what I have to say. It is as though the system is attempting to colonize me again through the exercise of writing a thesis, and that it is teaching me that I must be *seme7stsu`t* (or to use white man's way of thinking) in order to succeed.

I may be questioned by my own people as to whether I have been further colonized by the university and whether this will affect my ability to present my findings from an Indian world view. Oral traditions (such as the Elders' use of story-telling as a method of teaching) are a "contested history" (Smith, 2001) that I have to stand up for in the presentation of my thesis. Part of my own healing process for the loss of my language will be to acknowledge and understand the process of how it happened and to make academic institutions aware that losing a language is a social problem for the Northern *Secwepemc*.

I also have to make the academic community and the Northern *Secwepemc* aware that there are ways to reverse language loss in a manner that is beneficial for both the Northern *Secwepemc* and academic scholars. One such method would be to inform the academic community that academic criteria should value oral traditions and Indian languages, and that Indian Elders should be used to sanction academic scholarship. One example of this approach is the *Secwepemc* Language Authority, which uses Elders who are fluent in the language to assist in accreditation of language teachers.

Another limitation of the study is that in Western science there is no accurate theory or paradigm that fits my world view as a *Secwepemc* or that of the participants in

the study. I therefore chose the Indian world view as described by Bopp, Bopp, and Brown (1989), which might be challenged because it may not be an accepted theory or paradigm. However, the Indian world view is important because it presents a way of learning that is traditional and acceptable to the *Secwepemc.*

Implications for Policy

This study suggests that a significant change in government policy is needed. The government must develop a new Indian language policy that makes Indian language learning a priority in education, the community and community services. Adequate funding must accompany the policy. For example, significant government funding should be available to support language programming that uses the Elder mentor/immersion and the "keepers of the language and culture" concepts. Indian communities must be able to access these funds easily and have the freedom to develop their own teachers, materials, and resources.

Implications for Social Work Practice

In terms of clinical social work practice, there is a need to address the trauma of Indian language loss through the residential schools and other means of language suppression by government. In terms of community development, a forum is needed to develop "fluent understanders" or "intermediate speakers" to a fluency level acceptable to the community through a method that is traditional in the community. Social workers should be involved with educators to assist Elders in developing lifelong programs. Social workers can also be involved in criminal investigations, on behalf of former

residential school students, to assist in holding the Canadian government and the Roman Catholic church and other churches accountable for the devastation resulting from the loss of Indian languages.

Further Research

Various research projects could follow this one, including studies of how the trauma of the residential school experience affected the loss and relearning of Indian languages; how alcohol abuse contributed to the loss of Indian languages; how linguistics has changed *Secwepemctsìn*; how language loss fits into the greater historical context of *St'exelcemc*; and how the Canadian government and the Roman Catholic church can be held accountable for the loss of language and culture. In addition, there could be case studies of individual women as transmitters of Indian languages, and of "keepers of the language and culture" (Elder mentors and students who use language immersion and traditional story-telling and activities to relearn an Indian language).

This study supports the findings of other research projects, particularly those of Chrisjohn (1991), Furniss (1995), Ignace (1995, 1998), which showed that the suppression of the *Secwepemc* language was a specific policy of the Canadian government, supported by and implemented through the residential school system. As well, this study strongly supports the idea that this genocidal practice must no longer be minimized or ignored.

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Appendix A

Community Notice

NORTHERN *SECWEPEMC* LANGUAGE RESEARCH PROJECT (NSLP)

This NSLP is a research project to fulfill the Thesis requirement of Amy Sandy for the Master of Social Work Program, University of Northern British Columbia.

The primary goal of this research project is to identify and describe the experience of Northern *Secwepemc* losing and re-learning their language. To meet this goal I will be conducting interviews with community members from *T'exelc* on their experience of losing their language, how this experience may have affected their re-learning of the language, and to describe the methods of re-learning *Secwepemctsi`n* and their effectiveness. If you are interested in participating in the project, please contact me at the Band Office.

Appendix B

NORTHERN *SECWEPEMC* LANGUAGE RESEARCH PROJECT (NSL)

Conversation Style Questions for Key Informant Interviews

Questions, or variations will be selected from those listed below, identifying information such as a name will not be used, and persons you speak about will be identified as a parent, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, nun, priest, or teacher:

Background

1. What is your name?
2. What is age?
3. Where do you live?

***Secwepemctsi`n*:**

1. What times of the day do you recall *Secwepemctsi`n* spoken in your home?
2. Where else did you hear it spoken?
3. Tell me about your awareness that you understood the language.
4. Who were the persons (parents etc.) that mainly used the language when speaking to you?
5. Did they speak entirely in *Secwepemctsi`n*? Please explain.
6. Did they sometimes mix the languages? Please explain.
7. What age period do you recall *Secwepemctsi`n* was used in everyday conversation?
8. How old were you when you recall the language starting to be replaced by English?
9. How did that make you feel?
10. Did you understand why *Secwepemctsi`n* was not being used?
11. Did you feel embarrassed or afraid to use the language? Please explain.

12. Was there someone (nun, priest, teacher, parent etc.) who told you that you could not speak the language anymore, if so who was this?

13. Was there someone in your home or community who argued against the language not being spoken, if so, who was this (parent etc.)?

14. What age were you when you recall not using the language anymore?

15. Did you ever completely stop using any of the language? Please explain.

16. When did you start trying to re-learn the language?

17. Why did you make that decision?

18. Has it been difficult trying to re-learn? Please explain.

19. Do you understand what the barriers and difficulties have been? Please explain.

20. If you have you taken classes as a child or adult what did your studies include?

21. Can you speak, understand and write *Secwepemctsi`n* as a result of your studies?

22. Would you consider yourself now fluent in *Secwepemctsi`n*?

23. Is there another method that you think would be easier to use to learn the language?

24. Do you feel embarrassed at the level of your ability to learn the language?

25. Do you feel that there is an unknown barrier to re-learning the language?

Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview t

Phone 296-3507
Fax 296-4750

WILLIAMS LAKE INDIAN BAND

Appendix C

P.O. BOX 4
R.R. 3, SUGAR CANE
WILLIAMS LAKE, B.C. V2G 1M3

August 6, 2002

Ms. Amy Sandy
Box 4228
Williams Lake, BC V2G 2V3

Dear Ms. Sandy:

Council approved your request to do research for your Master of Social Work Thesis in T'exelc. With the approval of the Council they would like you to follow interview protocol and remain confidential to the community members.

If you have any questions I can be reached at the above number.

Sincerely,

Yvette Sellars
Band Manager

Appendix D

NORTHERN *SECWEPEMC* LANGUAGE PROJECT (NSLP)

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

This NSLP is a research project to fulfill the Thesis requirement of Amy Sandy for the Master of Social Work Program, University of Northern British Columbia.

The primary goal of this research project is to identify and describe the experience of Northern *Secwepemc* losing and re-learning their language. To meet this goal I will be conducting interviews with community members from *T'exelc* on their experience of losing their language, how this experience may have affected their re-learning of the language, and to describe the methods of re-learning *Secwepemctsi`n* and their effectiveness. You have been purposefully invited to participate in this study because of your experience with the language. The interview process will require two to four hours of your time to respond to a questionnaire.

I would like to talk to you about your experiences and perceptions and I will tape record your interview and/or write down what you say. Your interview will be transcribed and you will receive a copy of your transcription so that you can correct, add, delete or make any other changes as you wish. There is a risk that the questions may cause stress related to having to recall traumatic events such as being reprimanded by someone for speaking *Secwepemctsi`n.* To address this you will be provided with a list of counseling resources.

The benefits of this project include:

- increasing intellectual understanding;
- plugging gaps in knowledge and extending debate;
- creating awareness of the socio-political aspects of language in terms of a community;
- allowing the community to document its own knowledge, experience and values;
- supporting the communication of cultural heritage among community members;
- providing culturally appropriate resource materials for education;
- promoting the understanding of community identity and well-being;
- and assisting participants to become aware of their own issues in terms of language.

The information I collect from you: written description of the information you provide, your questionnaire form, the interview audiotape, any other documents, drawings, photographs or other works will be referred to as "Your Research Material" and will be kept confidential and used only in accordance with this agreement. "Your Research Material" will remain your property, otherwise, your signature and consent is required for use other than this project. I will store "Your Research Material" indefinitely in a fire proof locked safe, designated for that purpose within my home. If you should decide to

have this information destroyed at a later date, the original information will be given to you for that purpose. Products prepared by the researcher using "Your Research Material" are the intellectual property of Amy Sandy, Researcher.

Should you have further questions about the research conducted by Amy Sandy, you can contact Margo Greenwood, Research Supervisor UNBC, at (250) xxx-xxxx. Concerns and complaints about the research should be directed to Dr. Max Blouw, Vice President of Research with UNBC, at blouw@unbc.ca.

Please complete the attached consent form and retain copies of both your signed consent form and your completed survey for your records.
Thank you for your participation.

Amy Sandy

NORTHERN *SECWEPEMC* LANGUAGE PROJECT (NSLP)

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Consent

My signature on this form indicates that I understand the information regarding participation in the NSL Research Project and that I agree to participate as an interviewee. I understand that I am a volunteer and am free to not answer specific questions and can withdraw from the interview process at any time, without penalty. I understand that there is a risk that the questions may cause stress related to having to recall traumatic events such as being reprimanded by someone for speaking *Secwepemcts'in* (Shuswap language). Also, that I will receive a list of counseling resources to address these issues. I understand that my information will be used to compile publication and presentation materials but my name will not be used, my identity will be protected by the use of an assigned number, and others I may identify will not revealed and that the information collected will remain confidential. I understand that I will be offered a transcription of my interview to review and can receive, upon request, the final report following the completion of this project. However, the products prepared by the researcher using participant information are the intellectual property of Amy Sandy, Researcher.

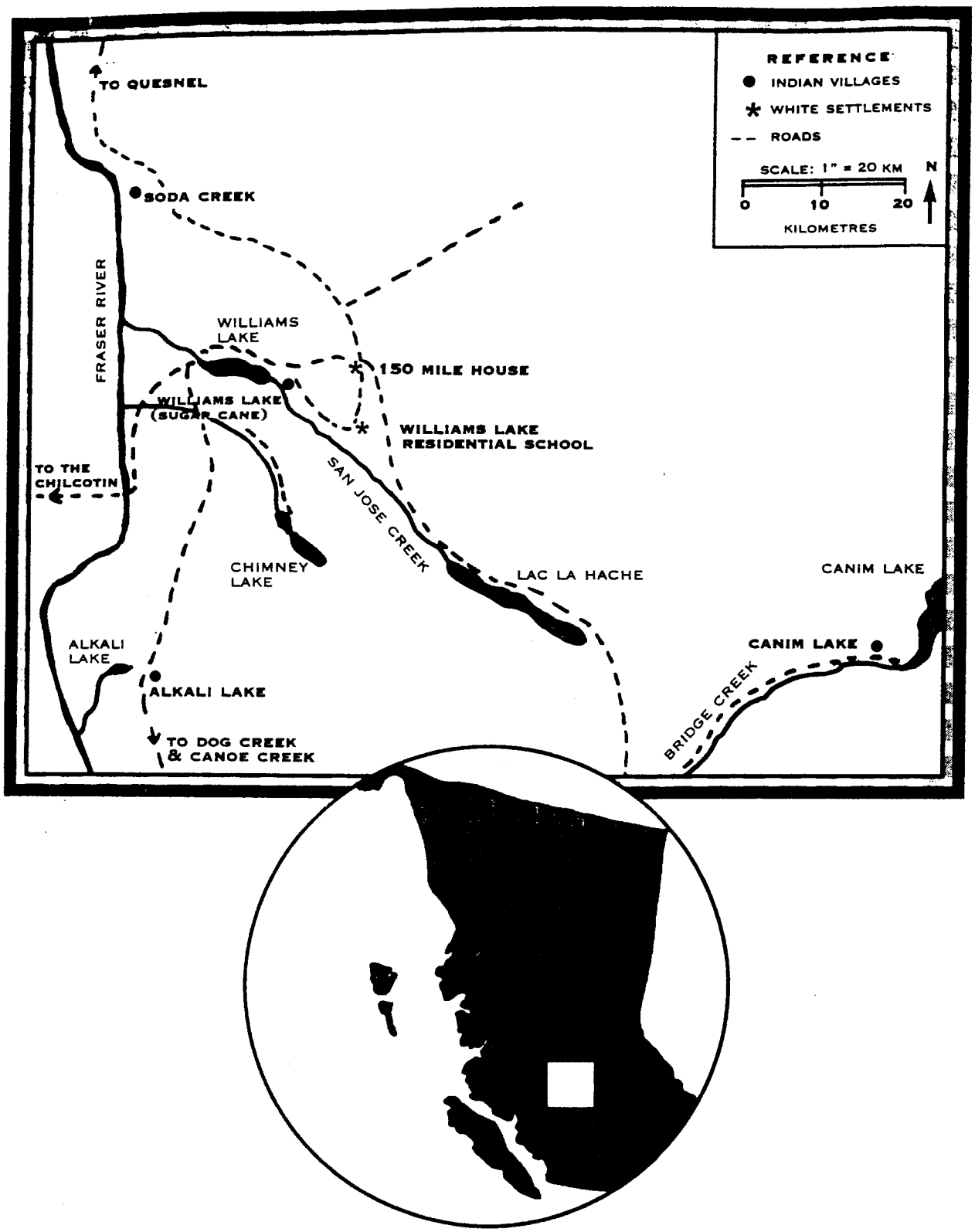
Name or Participant: _____ Date: _____
(Please Print)

Signature of Participant: _____

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E


REFERENCE
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FRASER RIVER
WILLIAMS LAKE
150 MILE HOUSE
WILLIAMS LAKE (SUGAR CANE)
WILLIAMS LAKE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
TO THE CHILCOTIN
SAN JOSE CREEK
CHIMNEY LAKE
LAC LA HACHE
CANIM LAKE
ALKALI LAKE
ALKALI LAKE
CANIM LAKE
BRIDGE CREEK
TO DOG CREEK & CANOE CREEK