"Walking in Two Worlds" in the Plurilingual Classroom: Learning from the Case of an Intergenerational Project

Avril Aitken and Loretta Robinson

Abstract This chapter considers the importance of plurilingual pedagogies to First Nations through the case of a remote community school in Canada, where students enter Kindergarten with a strong oral use of the Indigenous language, Naskapi. Using the example of a Grade 3 intergenerational project involving grandparents, the authors illustrate how teachers created spaces for translanguaging and employed critical literacy approaches as students produced identity texts in multiple languages. Over the course of the project students began to take ownership of their learning of English; they experimented with ideas, took risks, engaged in peer mentoring and showed signs of developing metalinguistic awareness. As they began to create their own strategies for learning English, they revealed a confidence and resourcefulness that countered broader deficit discourses in the school. With the project, the teachers disrupted the predominance of monolingual practices, fostered teacher and community collaboration, and drew attention to how language, culture, power and identity intersect in the school setting. While projects such as the one described in this chapter may not lead to immediate changes in how Indigenous language is characterized by all within the school, it brings diverse stakeholders together to observe, discuss and celebrate what can be accomplished when students' plurilingualism is centered.

Keywords Critical literacy · Translanguaging · Indigenous language revitalization · Plurilingualism · Dual language identity texts · Naskapi language

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1 Introduction

> The whole community is a classroom every day. There needs to be an understanding [that] whatever you bring into the classroom must connect or come from the community.
>
> – Member of the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, commenting on what teachers need to appreciate, when teaching Naskapi children (Aitken & Robinson, 2017)
>
> We need to make progress on the revitalization and the recovery of our original languages, our Indigenous languages, the languages that define our nationhood, they shape our thoughts and ideas, they are connected to ceremonies; ceremony – language, language – ceremony. They describe our relationship to the world and our worldview. Everything around us, how we see each other, everything that is sacred. Our young people walk in both worlds…You need both to walk in balance.
>
> – National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Perry Bellegarde commenting on the Canadian Government announcement in 2016 of an Indigenous Languages Act (Pedwell & Kirkup, 2016)

The significance of language for First Nations peoples' cultural identity is central to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2008), as the health of Indigenous languages is linked with spiritual, social, and emotional well-being for individuals and communities (Battiste, 2002, 2013; Deer, 2011; Guèvremont & Kohen, 2012; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). With speakers of Indigenous languages in Canada declining (Guèvremont & Kohen, 2012), there is an increasingly urgent need for actions that support members of a speech community in all aspects of daily life, through policy and practice (Little Bear, 2009; Penfield & Tucker, 2011). This chapter considers the importance of plurilingual pedagogies to First Nations communities through the case of a remote community school in Canada, where students enter Kindergarten with a strong oral use of the Indigenous language, Naskapi.

The metaphor of "two worlds" has long been used to capture the space and differences between knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples and institutionally supported, Euro-dominant, normative ways of knowing and being (Styres, Zinga, Bennett, & Bomberry, 2010). While the binary division focuses on the gap, the expression of "walking" in the two worlds has been taken up by Indigenous authors and researchers to capture the lived experiences of negotiating that gap (Brass, 1987; Polite, 2014). The use of the metaphor for education has been challenged by some, who suggest that it does not reveal the complexities of meaning-making that Indigenous people experience in classrooms (Henze & Vanett, 1993). This chapter provides insights into Indigenous students' meaning-making processes, when English becomes the medium of instruction, and underlines the significance of plurilingual pedagogies for learners' identities. We draw on observations of translanguaging in a classroom where plurilingualism is honoured and where critical literacy practices and identity texts are used (Cummins, 2005; Cummins et al., 2005; García & Li, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Montero, Bice-Zaugg, Marsh, & Cummins, 2013).

As researchers and educators, we bring a shared commitment to supporting practices and policies that ensure schools contribute to student success, community

autonomy and the essential place of Indigenous languages in the classroom. Loretta Robinson is a member of the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach who *walks in both worlds;* Avril Aitken is a Euro-Canadian settler, who has collaborated with the Naskapi Nation for 35 years, the first 16 of which were spent teaching in the community. In the years since Avril's departure, she has documented the ways the school-based team has attempted to use a participatory approach to shape changes to Naskapi language policy and practice and has served as a critical friend, participating in dialogue virtually or through several yearly trips.

We might say that our shared journey began at the point when Avril first arrived as a novice teacher, soon after Loretta's birth. Since that point, many experiences have followed, including a period in the mid-2000s when we were both at the School of Education of Bishop's University. The Grandparents literacy project described in this chapter began to unfold after Loretta graduated from Bishop's and returned to Kawawachikamach to teach Grade 3. The move brought the two of us together once more. Avril was working with a small teacher team on questions about writing practices, through modelling the process of classroom inquiry (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Shagoury & Power, 2012). Loretta joined the team and as Avril was only present in the community several times a year, Loretta took over team meetings. While the purpose of that small project was to increase teachers' understanding of students' writing when English is first introduced to Naskapi speakers as a medium of instruction, a more global goal was achieved. That is, the team members became accustomed to the practice of using systemic inquiry to address classroom-based questions. The Grandparents literacy project, which is at the heart of this chapter, is rooted in efforts to use a systemic and structured action research approach to better understand the impact of plurilingual practices for Naskapi students (Jaipal & Figg, 2011; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Nussbaum, 2017; Zeichner, 2002). It was one piece of the larger puzzle (and ongoing project) of how a small team within a school might create an environment where an Indigenous language might flourish.

2 Language Policy and the Struggle to Secure the Place of Indigenous Languages in Schools

The 1970s *Project for the Amerindianization of Schools* was Québec's first large scale policy-based effort to act according to UNESCO's 1953 affirmation for the use of Indigenous languages as a medium of instruction (Burnaby, MacKenzie, & Salt, 1999). The project was initiated by the provincial office of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, following the publication of the National Indian Brotherhood's (NIB/AFN) seminal 1972 text, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (Burnaby, 1997). The NIB document argued for the imperative of Indigenous autonomy in education. More recently, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2008) has reaffirmed that "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages, oral traditions, histories, philosophies, writing systems and literatures" (p. 7). While the use of

an Indigenous language has been increasingly recognized as a basic right, the reality for many Indigenous peoples is that this goal continues to be compromised through the effects of colonization, hegemonic power, and related policies (Kawharu, 2014). In Canada, forced residential schooling for Indigenous children[1] is a vivid example of assimilationist policy with tragic ongoing effects, which include language loss (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is not the first to call on the Canadian Government to provide equitable resources and support to First Nations schools for the promotion of Indigenous knowledge and teaching (Ball, 2007; Battiste, 2002, 2011; Deer, 2011; TRC, 2015). Such calls highlight Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, values and experiences, "all of which," as Battiste (2002) notes, "have been systematically excluded from educational institutions" (p. 4). This exclusion is influenced by the absence of legislation to protect Indigenous languages, despite Canadian laws and policies on multiculturalism and bilingualism (Galley, 2012).

In Haque and Patrick's (2015) analysis of language policies in Canada, the authors illustrate the damaging impact of colonialism and point to the gap between legal protections for English and French and Indigenous language policies. They argue that Canada's positions on bilingualism and biculturalism "have come to be constitutive of structural and institutional racism" (p. 29). While some hope has accompanied the announcement of an Indigenous Language Act – recently made by the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau (Pedwell & Kirkup, 2016), as Hornberger (1998) explains, legal and policy changes must be followed up with financial and institutional support. Further, if funding is made available, and if success measures are linked to such funding, the measures must be defined by Indigenous peoples, not by others (Haque & Patrick, 2015). In the meantime, Indigenous communities in Canada (and abroad) will continue to use creativity, ingenuity, innovation and fierce determination to preserve and revive their Indigenous languages (Deer, 2011; McIvor, 2009).

2.1 An Example of Small Scale Local Determination

Determination is evident in the efforts of the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach (NNK) to preserve their language and foster Naskapi literacy. The remote community, Kawawachikamach, located in north-eastern, subarctic Québec, is where just under 700 of the approximately 1000 registered members of the Naskapi Nation live (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2015; Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikmach, n.d.). The principal language is Naskapi, which is spoken by all Naskapis, but less

[1] For over 100 years, until 1996, the Canadian Government maintained residential schools for Indigenous students to solve what the government called the "Indian problem." Children were forcibly taken, often at a critically young age, to live in custodial institutions. Residential schooling was the "central element" (TRC, 2015, pp. 1) of systemic legal processes that focused on "dispossession and dismantling of Aboriginal societies" (TRC, 2015, pp. 258).

frequently written. Notably, the most fluent and capable readers are the Naskapi elders "who learned to read it in the context of family, church and traditional life" (Jancewicz, 2013, p. 2). English is also used by organizations in the community, and many Naskapis speak French and Innu, the latter of which is the language of the Innu Nation of Matimekush-Lac John, who live nearby. Naskapis preserve many aspects of their traditional way of life and culture and seek to sustain it, while engaging in economic development (Klinck et al., 2016). As a result of the World Wide Web and satellite access to television, movies and social media, English has an increasing presence in the lives of Naskapi students who live in Kawawachikamach, which is not accessible by road.

The community school, Jimmy Sandy Memorial (JSMS), is under the jurisdiction of the Central Québec School Board (CQSB), located in Québec City, approximately 1000 km south of Kawawachikamach. The CQSB involvement in school operations is a provision of the *North-Eastern Québec Agreement* (NEQA) (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1978), which arose from the contemporary land claim in which the NNK was involved. The school serves approximately 250 students from pre-kindergarten up to Secondary 5 (Grade 11). At JSMS, a Naskapi medium of instruction program became a reality in 1997 with the initiation of the Naskapi Curriculum Development Project (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010).

At the time of the project's inception, students began English pre-kindergarten with little or no familiarity with the language of instruction; 30-minute blocks of Naskapi language classes were offered approximately four times weekly to students in the primary grades, beginning in Grade 1. An informal analysis of students' Naskapi literacy, classroom practices, and community language use in 1996 showed that students often worked with isolated word lists and were not expected to use writing to communicate personally meaningful messages and ideas. The written language was rarely used in the community for personal communication; most visible uses of the written language were connected with translation of scriptures or government documents. Given that students were not expected to learn to read and write fluently, their inability to recognize the syllabic sound-symbol system after many hours of Naskapi classes was not a concern to many (Aitken, 2010, March). Since the inception of the Naskapi Curriculum Development Project in 1997, a school-based team has collaborated with community members, organizations and Elders to implement a Naskapi-only program for the first four years of schooling, and has promoted language and culture classes in upper elementary and secondary.

> Early on, the school-based team drew inspiration from the 1972 position of the National Indian Brotherhood (National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations):
>
> It is generally accepted that pre-school and primary school classes should be taught in the language of the community. Transition to English or French as a second language should be introduced only after the child has a strong grasp of his own language. (p. 15)

Literature on Indigenous language and education at the time of the inception of the Naskapi-only project was also fundamental to the shape of desired changes in school practice (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986; Burnaby, 1982, 1985, 1996; Clarke & MacKenzie, 1980; Cummins, 1986, 1989, 1993; Wright & Taylor, 1995). Initial goals included acknowledging the fundamental importance of language to student

identity and school success; increasing the place and use of Naskapi language in the school; understanding approaches to literacy learning given the distinct features of the languages spoken in the school; and better reflecting the community context, concerns and desires. Over the years, efforts have included material creation, piloting and adaptation; experiments with technology for learning; archiving digital evidence of Elders and community practices; supporting teachers; and other acts of advocacy. These initiatives are carried out through small-scale structured inquiries.

A degree of local control of curriculum is one of the provisions of the NEQA (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1978). Notably, the passing of the Cree-Naskapi Act in 1984 provided for an even greater degree of autonomous governance and self-direction than is achievable by most other First Nations (Isaac, 1991). However, there are policies in place in the school that appear to diminish the potential of autonomy. One example is the required Management and Educational Success Agreement (MESA), detailed in Québec's Education Act. Until recently, MESAs were compulsory for Québec school boards, and given that JSMS falls under the jurisdiction of the Central Québec School Board, a school-produced MESA has been viewed by school administrators as an obligation. A MESA was expected to show how an individual school's local targets for student success will align with the school board's objectives and strategic plan, as well as the goals of the Ministère de l'Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur (MEES, 2017). The framework for MESAs explicitly centers success and achievement in the two languages of a bilingual Canada. With the hegemonic power of language policies at play (Haque & Patrick, 2015), the dominant languages are favoured, which diminishes opportunities to discuss the place of Indigenous language in the school (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010; Fyn, 2015; Robinson, 2015, 2017). In taking a look at the key documents, we noted that one goal of CQSB's 2013–2017 Strategic Plan to is improve "the mastery of English Language Arts and the quality of French" (Central Québec School Board, 2013, p.11); further, we noted the absence of any references to the distinct nature of the Naskapi community. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that *Naskapi language literacy* is not mentioned in the JSMS MESA (JSMS, 2013), despite its prominent place in the early years, and despite its impact on further literacy learning in the other languages in the school (Cummins, 2000, 2005). This omission and the mismatch between the school policies and the work of Naskapi teachers in the early grades are described in more detail elsewhere (Robinson, 2017).

2.2 A Word on the Language

It is worth noting some of what makes the Naskapi language distinct from English. Naskapi began as an oral tradition and while it can be written using the Roman alphabet, a syllabic orthography is used for all efforts to preserve and standardize the language (Jancewicz, MacKenzie, Guanish, & Nabinicaboo, 2002; Jancewicz, 2013; MacKenzie & Jancewicz, 1994). Thus, students are introduced to syllabic orthography in the early years and any texts used in the school are produced using

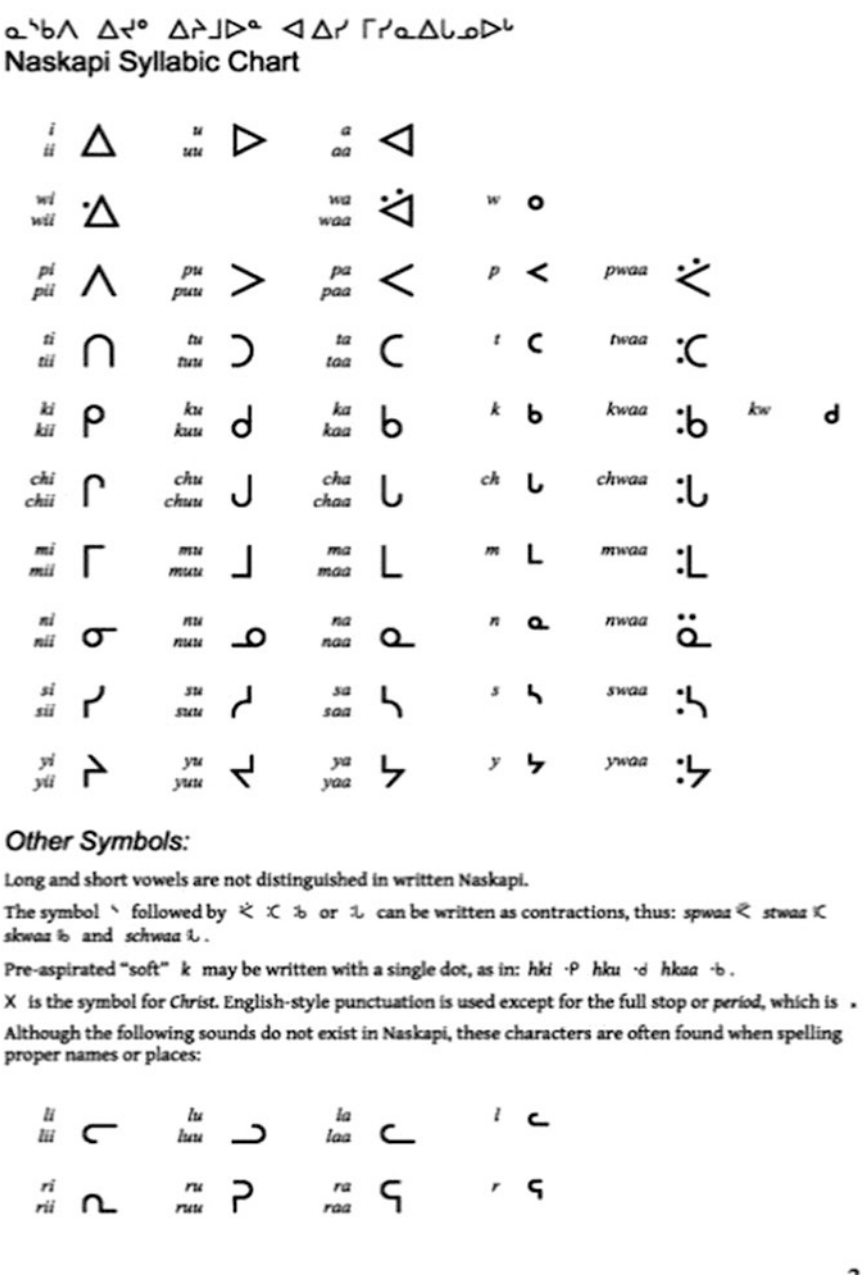

Fig. 1 Naskapi syllabic chart (Reproduced from http://resources.atlas-ling.ca)

syllabics (See Fig. 1). An additional difference, as Jancewicz (2013) explains, is that the classification system familiar to English and French speakers does not apply. Unlike English, which strings words together, a Naskapi word has a core semantic meaning that can be modified through additions or changes to the core (Jancewicz, 2013). The result is that one word may be long and may express a set of ideas, for example, "iiyuupaakwaasikiniihchaaw [she/he makes bannock]" (Algonquian Linguistic Atlas, 2016). In considering the significance of this, a community member commented,

> One word in Naskapi has a large description, but [if] you want to say it in English, you must use the exact description for everything…We know what it means in Naskapi…but with that one word. That's what I noticed when we were taught for that one word, [but] in English you can say it in many ways [using many interchangeable words]. (Aitken & Robinson, 2017)

Community members have spoken of the challenges for their children, who are students at the school. One commented, "When you ask the student to elaborate, for example to write in English, the students will say 'No, that's it.'" (Aitken & Robinson, 2017). In a context where language policy privileges English, and where many of the non-Naskapi teachers stay for short periods of time without showing curiosity about the language, it is not unusual to hear teachers interpret this phenomenon though a deficit lens, as a problem of student ability. Equally, it is not unusual for questions and comments about the value of the use of Naskapi for the first years of schooling to go unchallenged in the school (Robinson, 2017).

3 The Context of the Case: Grade 3

The focus of the initial planning for the Naskapi language curriculum initiative was to develop a program that would build a solid foundation of the primary language, foster use of the foundation for acquisition of the new language, and support proficiency in both (Cummins, 1989, 1993). The intent was that Naskapi be the medium for 5 years, that is, in the two pre-school years as well as Grades 1 to 3. Further, it was expected that in the sixth year (Grade 4), Naskapi would be used for between 35% and 50% of the instruction (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010). However, in the reality of progressive implementation, the years of Naskapi medium were reduced to four, to be followed by a monolingual, English Grade 3. These adjustments to the plan took place despite the project team's recommendations to school administration. The changes were attributed to organizational issues related to the challenges of resource development, parent concern and the availability of teachers.

Notably, around the same time, an extra year of English instruction was added at the elementary level, such that students would have 2 years to complete the Grade 3 provincial curriculum requirements. The expressed goal was that by the end of the second year, Grade 3E (E for Enrichment), students would have had successful experiences of reading, writing and speaking in English, while working with the content of the provincial curriculum over the extended period. Despite the hopeful

use of the term enriching, this model inadvertently constructs students as different from peers elsewhere around the province, and casts them as somewhat deficient and needing more time to catch up (García, 2009). Additionally, the common use of the expressions "transitional year" and "bridging" to describe Grade 3 also reinforces the idea that Naskapi will be replaced by English, which will serve as the academic language and the means to success (Willans, 2013).

It is also significant is that efforts to ensure that Naskapi language is taught at the secondary level have been routinely stalled (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010). The result is that English has predominated in Grade 3 and has been followed by monolingual, English-only classes with limited hours given to Naskapi language each week. Thus, while the original desire of the team was to put in place a maintenance model, conditions are such that a transitional model persists. Thus, the languages are treated as autonomous systems and subtractive bilingualism prevails in the school (García, 2014; García & Sylvan, 2011; Willans, 2013).

It is worth noting that Innu students from a nearby Nation choose to attend the Naskapi school and arrive fluent in their own language, Innu, and possibly French. This gestures to the value and potential of "adopting plurilingualism as the [school's] foundational philosophy" (Piccardo, 2013, p. 609); yet, there is a lack of interest among most school staff in the work of the team promoting Naskapi (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010). Further, policies like the MESA underscore that English language and literacy is the first priority in the school. In relation to this, staff are more likely to describe the languages spoken using a sorting hierarchy, such as first, second, third and fourth languages. Each appears to be viewed as distinct, with little discussion about literacies as practices that cross languages. With an emphasis on distinct monolingual programs within the school, the significant shift in instruction from early years Naskapi to English instruction in Grade 3 has not drawn much attention. Until Loretta was hired, the school administration chose to hire monolingual Anglophones to teach the *transitional* year group (Aitken, 2007, June). With no mentorship in place, the Grade 3 teacher would be required to independently figure out how to draw on students' existing linguistic resources, while also supporting English acquisition. In a situation such as this, with many questions unanswered, teacher-driven systemic inquiry holds much potential (Nussbaum, 2017). In the section that follows we look closely at Loretta's reflections on the context. We then describe the collaborative classroom-based inquiry, through which she designed and implemented a project that drew on plurilingual pedagogies.

4 Walking in Two Worlds: A Teacher's Reflections on Changing Perspectives Through Plurilingual Pedagogies

Despite her knowledge of the community, when Loretta began teaching at JSMS in the fall of 2008, she felt inadequately prepared to teach English Language Learners (ELLs). Like many teachers, she knew little about how students in these situations

learn, harboured misconceptions, and held false presumptions of how best to meet their needs (Pettit, 2011; Samway & McKeon, 2007). Loretta found herself on her own to cope with the challenges and find solutions. She noted that the school had plenty of resources that valued learning the dominant language, and originally had no plans to create spaces for Naskapi or Innu interactions in her class. She believed that for students to be proficient in English, she would need to expose them to English, only. This position was supported by colleagues' talk about monolingual approaches. Additionally, she heard experienced teachers devaluing the language, with comments such as, "Students are not at level"; "They will continue to fall behind if we don't introduce English earlier"; "They struggle"; "They do not do well on exams because they do not have the academic language to do exams". This reinforced her belief that using Naskapi language in the classroom was a disadvantage to students' learning.

During the first year, Loretta felt a lot of pressure to bring students to proficiency levels, based on systems and programs that were in place, school board consultant demands about what to use, and instructional policies that were dominated by monolingual instructional principles (Cummins, 2005). When seeking guidance from school administrators, Loretta was referred to the Québec Education Program, was reminded of what students needed to know by the end of Grade 3, and was given a kindergarten program designed to teach phonemic awareness. With all the systems and programs in place, she felt she little say in what or how she was supposed to teach the students. Her concerns began to mount.

With no mentorship for what was known as the transitional year, Loretta found it difficult to engage in meaningful dialogue with colleagues about the particular needs of her students. This was exacerbated by what she saw as a two-world divide in the school. As Naskapi, she experienced this rift in several ways. There was a lack of collaboration among the teachers along linguistic lines, and non-Naskapi teachers appeared disengaged or disinterested in what was happening in the other sectors of the school or community. She came to see this as a lack of shared responsibility for student success within the school.

Loretta followed the accepted practice of privileging an English immersion approach; nonetheless, she listened intensively to the on-going conversations between students in both Naskapi and English. She began seeing an active community of learners experimenting and using different language strategies with both Naskapi and English during literacy-focused work. Students would ask each other questions for clarification or for translation of certain words to make meaning. She found that after explaining a learning task in English using different strategies such as hand gestures and visuals, students would collaboratively reiterate the instructions in Naskapi, or would ask peers to provide clarification in their language. While Loretta was not yet in a position to name what she was seeing as translanguaging, she understood its significance for the students as learners. That is, she was witnessing students "making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 1). Hornberger and Link (2012) describe translanguaging as a "development of any of the three intersecting continua of first language-to-second language (L1-L2), oral-to-written,

and receptive-to-productive language and literacy skills, uses, and practices" (p. 267). It is through observing such development that Loretta began to reflect on what was happening when students were attempting to write in English, and wondered about the role their Naskapi and Innu languages played in these tasks (Samway, 2006). Loretta could also see that encouraging students to use all their language resources as they generated ideas and encouraging them to put their thoughts down on paper in either language, had a major impact on their success as writers (Velasco & García, 2014). White, Hailemariam, and Ogbay (2013) underline the importance of students' use of their "linguistic capital" and opportunities to help "find ways of bridging the gap between that capital and the language priorities of instruction in mainstream school" (p. 642). Loretta was intent on creating those opportunities, and like the teachers in Fielding's (2016) study, she was recognizing the significant value of her own linguistic repertoire in doing so.

Once Loretta was well established in the school, with several years of listening, observing and experimenting carried out, she decided to approach the non-Naskapi colleague teaching the subsequent grade to design a literacy project. She hoped it would draw on the strength of the students' families, involve both languages, and speak to the heart of Naskapi culture. The project that the two colleagues created was entitled *Grandparents: What Makes Grandparents Special?* They chose this topic because they believed that students would have a lot to share and would be able to make personal connections in the writing process. Loretta knew intimately the important role grandparents play in the lives of the students; within Naskapi culture, these elders are the teachers of traditional and Indigenous ways of life. Loretta believed that the Grandparents project would put students in a position to create texts that decentered the monolingual, Euro-dominant narratives so actively promoted in the school. The students' meaning making would center their relationships with Elders, people whose language, experiences and ideas were largely excluded from the formal educational context. This would contribute to a kind of transformation through learning that is associated with a practice of critical literacy (Lau, 2012). That is, the young students would see how they – individually and collectively – would be shaping what and how they learned in school, subverting both the monolingual bias and the deficit perspectives of ELLs. In what follows, we present the features of the project designed by Loretta and her colleague.

5 Grandparents: What Makes Grandparents Special?

Grandparents are seen as the knowledge keepers of the Naskapi and Innu languages, traditions and cultures. They are at the heart of the essential question of the project designed by the two teachers: *What makes grandparents special*? Pedagogically, the project centered Cummins' (2005) concept of identity texts, which he describes as "products that can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or multimodal combinations which are positive statements that students make about themselves" (p. 40). Over the course of several weeks, as students sought to answer the essential

question and were inspired by different stories in Naskapi and English about grandparents, they produced their own identity texts. They wrote about ideas that were important and relevant to them, composing personal narratives, letters, responses to text, and poetry. As Cummins et al. (2005) suggests, the identity texts allow the students' cultural knowledge and language abilities to be resources for their academic engagement. For example, one student wrote a personal narrative of his grandmother showing him how to make his very own traditional mittens. Another wrote about a camping trip with his grandfather out on the tundra. In each piece, the student gave a clear portrait of his or her experience. Molyneux, Scull, and Aliani (2016) underline that cultural knowledge and interests support the development of new knowledge and transformative learning. In the cases of these and other students, the writing showed new evidence of important qualities: focused ideas, details, and rich use of vocabulary related to culture.

Schmidt and McDaid (2015) define the plurilingual speaker "as a social actor who develops a repertoire made up of various languages and varieties of languages and different forms of knowledge" (p. 474). Throughout the project, each student worked toward production of an individual scrapbook of writing in Naskapi and English that represented the student's view of what makes one's grandparents special. Students' final products were presented at a Tea Time event where grandparents were invited to listen to students reading their own texts. In considering schools that promote monolingual practices and allocate specific hours to languages through scheduling of discrete blocks of time, Willans' (2013) comments about plurilingualism are instructive: "There are plenty of opportunities to foster a plurilingual environment of teaching and learning without stipulating exactly which languages should be learnt under which conditions" (p. 564). Such was the approach taken on a daily basis throughout the Grade 3 project on grandparents. For example, while learners engaged in discussions of the different readings early in the project, their ideas were added to a dual-language word wall (See Fig. 2). Students were invited – depending on their levels of risk taking – to use the different languages simultaneously for the writing stages: brainstorming, drafting, revising/editing, rewriting and publishing. Daily feedback was provided to students and they were encouraged to do collaborative editing, either in Naskapi, Innu or English, depending on their comfort level.

Fundamental to what was realized in the classroom were learners' funds of knowledge – the rich resources of their lives outside of school (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Students had more to share with a familiar topic at the center of their work, leaving the teachers to focus on the quality of the ideas they had versus the amount they could put on paper. The Grade 3 s appeared to be taking ownership of their learning of English; they experimented with ideas, took new risks, mentored peers – revealing a confidence and resourcefulness that countered broader deficit discourses in the school (Cummins, 2005; Lau, 2012; Samway, 2006). They also appeared to increase their metalinguistic awareness, which allowed them to create their own strategies for learning English (Reyes, 2006). While daily successes were celebrated, the significance of the Grandparents project became most apparent when the final products were presented at the Tea

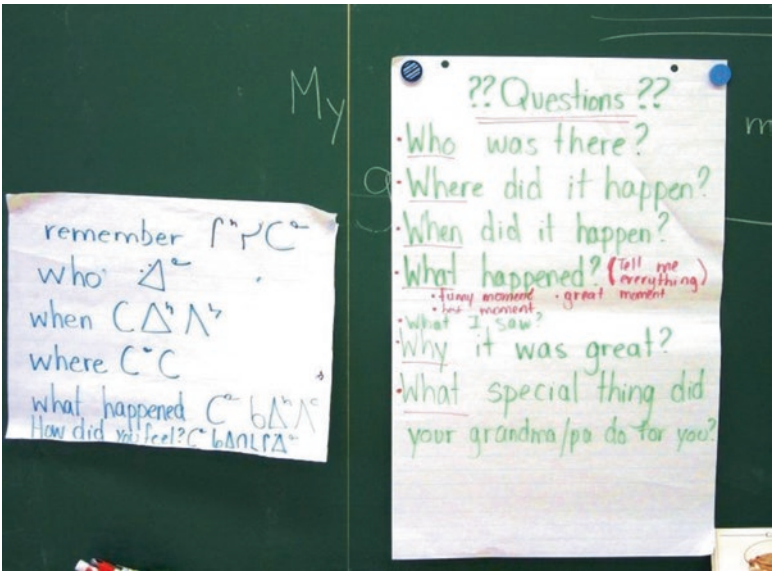

Fig. 2 Dual language word-wall example

Fig. 3 "To Grandma. I love you so much." student scrapbook

Time (See Fig. 3). Students' identities were being affirmed and there were increases in their confidence to engage in subsequent language and literacy activities.

The event illustrates Prasad's (2015) point that "dual-language identity text work provides an important occasion for teachers and wider audience members to

affirm and validate the cultural and linguistic resources" (p. 501). The grandparents of the Grade 3 students heard and witnessed their grandchildren expressing thoughts in multiple languages in what would previously have been viewed as the "English" classroom setting. Inviting them to participate in this way served to acknowledge their importance in their grandchildren's language and literacy development. Additionally, and from a critical perspective, the Tea Time event served to disrupt what had previously been a monolingual activity. That is, parents would be invited to a celebration that would focus uniquely on showcasing English language literacy. The new form of Tea Time honoured and capitalized on the plurilingual strengths of the students, who would be "accustomed to using multiple linguistic resources to negotiate meaning from an early age outside the classroom" (Willans, 2013, p. 563). In considering Luke's (2009) work about modern schooling and the production of subjectivities, Lin (2013) comments that while plurilingual practices develop plurilingual competencies, it is more importantly "also about creating and affirming plurilingual identities and subjectivities" (p. 540). Grandparents' and students' comments highlighted the significance of the affirmation that was widely felt.

This affirmation was experienced not only by the students and grandparents, but by Loretta as well, who commented on the significance of the experience for her as a teacher and a member of the community. It reinforced her appreciation of her own linguistic resources (Fielding, 2016) and underlined that Naskapi language, culture, and traditions, which are so vibrant, have a place in the classroom – and must be acknowledged by all teachers, regardless of the language they use for instruction and regardless of their own awareness of other languages used by students (Willans, 2013). Notably, the collaborator on the Grandparents project – who was teaching students in the subsequent grade – was neither local, nor a speaker of Naskapi, nor fluent in a language other than English. Yet, by privileging all languages in the class and valuing students' plurilingual identities and resources, the collaborating teacher had an opportunity to see that there are insights about language learning not necessarily within her grasp (Ellis, 2013). Additionally, she would have been able to witness the importance of her students' funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992), which may not have otherwise been recognized within the school. Opportunities like this may lead non-Indigenous teachers to begin their own journey of walking in two worlds.

Ellis (2013) draws attention to the important differences between monolingual and plurilingual teachers' perceptions of language learning. She underlines that plurilingual teachers' awareness of translanguaging and insights about their own strategies as language learners are important resources; Loretta's experience reinforces this point. We would argue that teachers who are community members and Naskapi speakers have particular privilege into students' experiences as language learners. Nonetheless, a lesson to be gleaned from this case is that valuing plurilingualism could be a foundational philosophy (Piccardo, 2014) taken up by all teachers in the school, regardless of their linguistic histories.

6 Conclusions and Implication

While the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach continues to have a strong oral use of their language, it is possible to see the impact that English instruction and English media presence have on the students' interest in their language. Against this backdrop, the Grandparents project provides insight into how students who enter the school system with foundational knowledge of their primary language can be effectively taught, guided and supported to acquire literacy skills in the medium of instruction, while continuing to value the Indigenous language. Prasad (2015) has identified five principles that support students' plurilingualism. They include viewing all learners as evolving, collaborating within and outside of the school, appreciating and structuring opportunities for creativity in academic work, planning strategically for the full use of learners' "communicative repertoires" (p. 511), and engaging students in inquiry, such that they development metalinguistic awareness and become strategic language users. Similarly, a framework proposed by Molyneux et al. (2016) includes four integrated elements, among which are "Pedagogy" and "Transfer," both of which highlight the importance of a student centered, empowering approach. Notably, the latter researchers also include the importance of positive construction of "Identity" and "Capital: where linguistic and cultural diversity is affirmed and contributes to an equitable social context that supports classroom and school cohesion" (p. 356). We believe that among the features of the Grandparents project, centering students' identity and linguistic and cultural diversity were the most significant, as the Tea Time event highlighted.

Over the course of the project, it was possible to observe the crucial role of translanguaging, identity texts and critical literacy on the development of writing skills. The project revealed that using Naskapi, English and other languages simultaneously is fundamental in shaping how students view themselves as writers. For example, the reluctance to write in English that was initially evident was diminished; within the class, students began sharing their own writing strategies; and some took on the role of closely mentoring others. These examples underline, as White et al. (2013) indicate, that the gap between language capital and the language priorities of a school can be bridged. Through such pedagogies, students can be engaged in transforming the conditions for their own literacy learning and success. Nonetheless, while the two teachers viewed the learners as evolving plurilinguals and set up conditions for relevant and personal creative expression, they did not explicitly target the development of metalinguistic awareness and cross language transfer. As researchers have indicated, such strategic awareness and transfer are essential for learners (Abiria, Early, & Kendrick, 2013; Molyneux et al., 2016; Prasad, 2015).

Loretta was hopeful that the project would have an impact on pedagogical practices across the school; however, the small scale of the inquiry and the prevailing culture of monolingual approaches influenced the reach of the work. We both, in our different capacities at the time, were lobbying the administration for professional learning experiences for all teachers in language pedagogies that acknowledged the students' languages "as part of the whole rather than as separate entities" (Anderson,

2011, p. 138). Yet, we were unable to move forward with the discussion, given what were seen to be priorities, such as learning how to apply school board approved classroom practices. These included assessing students using leveled readers and implementing literacy centers. Nonetheless, the Grandparents project was a key motivator for Loretta to complete a graduate degree. While she initially considered looking at plurilingual practices, her focus changed after she sought work elsewhere and began periodically consulting at JSMS. As she worked with Naskapi teachers on effective classroom practices, she became concerned by how dispirited they were. As a result, she chose to inquire into their perceptions of language policy and practice in the school (Robinson, 2017). In sharing the outcomes of her study, she has begun a dialogue with leaders in the community, which has put her in a position to begin to work with policy makers around school practices. She may eventually, through a very different entry point, be able to promote the kinds of pedagogical changes that she looked into through the Grandparents project.

Plurilingual initiatives such as Loretta's have educational importance for many Indigenous people who are doing everything in their power to maintain and restore their languages. With much effort needed to reverse the institutionally-driven forces undermining Indigenous language rights (Haque & Patrick, 2015; TRC, 2015), honouring plurilingualism holds much promise. As this chapter proposes, creating spaces for translanguaging, employing critical literacy approaches and using identity texts are actions that can disrupt predominant practices, foster teacher and community collaboration, and draw attention to how language, culture, power and identity intersect in the school setting. Projects such as the one described above may not lead to immediate changes in how Indigenous language is characterized by all within the school; however, such projects bring the diverse stakeholders together to observe, discuss and celebrate what can be accomplished when students' plurilingual resources are centered.

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