**Tháıdene Yatı Hóneneltën (Ancestral Dene Language Pedagogies) —**

**Dene Dedlıne Yatı Acquisition, Revitalization and Reclamation**

by

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with contributions and review by Dene Yatı holders and learners

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## Acknowledgement

To Tu Nedhé and Denendeh, for the ancestral connection to the languages of my lineage…

to Eileen Beaver, the respected Dene Dedlıne Elder guiding this collaborative work…

from Lynn Napier-Buckley to Ethiba Tło'aze, and all of the unnamed Dene and Métis women…

from Trudy King, who made sure those involved in Denínu Kué received their transcripts, honoraria and kerchiefs — to the Elders and knowledge holders sharing their words — including Ron Beaulieu, Tom Beaulieu, Elizabeth (Sabet) Biscaye, Arthur Beck, Catherine Boucher, Snookie Catholique, Nadine Delorme, Denise McKay, Henry McKay and Tommy Unka…

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to Dorothy Desjarlais and Mary Cardinal…

*thá huná.*

**Eileen Beaver — Elder/Mentor**

I was born in Yellowknife in 1955 as a Dene, Treaty Indian #83. My mother is a Dene and Cree descent from Roché River. My grandfather, Samuel Simon, is Treaty Dene — a mixture of Raw Caribou Meat Eater and Copper Indian descent. My grandmother, Margaret Beaulieu–Simon, is Métis born (French and Cree) descent from Northern Alberta near Fort Vermillion area. My stepfather, Joseph Jerome-Perrault — a Treaty Dene Copper Indian and Sarcee — is from Roché River. His father is Sarcee. My surrogate father is French and Irish descent.

I spoke Dene Dedlıne, Gaelic, French, Cree, Michif and Latin until I learnt English at about eight years old. We moved from Roché River to Fort Resolution when the local school burnt down. It was either move or send the children of school age to residential school when the truancy officer came to Roché River — under the federal Indian Act, all Treaty children of school age must attend school.

My grandparents and family decided Fort Resolution was the best choice to move to, so I could attend Day School and so my mother and aunt could be near the hospital.  In Fort Resolution, my grandparents forbid me to use my Aboriginal languages in school and I needed to learn English. I had to speak English or French in town and Latin in the Catholic Church.

At the age of thirteen, I was sent to Fort Smith to attend Residential School in the fall of 1968. At the age of sixteen, I fell in love — and later married Henry Beaver at the age of eighteen. We have five living children and eight grandchildren. I almost lost my Aboriginal languages. I married into a Cree family and was able to understand Cree until my in-laws went onto the Spirit world. However, I continued to live in both cultural ways with the understanding that both Dene and Cree customs were now my children's heritage. I made it my life's work to help in any way I could to keep the Dene Dedlıne ("T") and Dene Sołine language alive, and make myself available when I am asked, for the language to be rekindled. I therefore am asked to help and be a part of many projects, such as this one.

I am Dene/Cree Treaty-born with Métis descent. I am a born Treaty Indian and Metis descent on my grandmother lineage side. I am a member of Salt River First Nation #195 in Fort Smith under my husband Henry's Treaty number.

## DISCLAIMER

Without a uniform orthography or agreed upon spellings, multiple different spellings of Dene Yatı words and concepts are included in this work. As spellings are not be agreed upon by the knowledge and language holders from different communities, an effort has been made to ensure spellings are agreed upon by the specific knowledge and language holder sharing their words.

# ABSTRACT

Dene Dedlıne Yatı is an ancient Dene language which has been minimally addressed by linguists outside of reference to /t/-dialect Dënesųłįné. Like most Indigenous Peoples on this continent, Dene Dedlıne face ongoing shifts impacting connection to lands and languages. This work prioritizes the voices of speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition, revitalization and reclamation which is specific to Dene learning Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé. Interviews were held with Elders, knowledge holders and learners from Tu Nedhé who distinguished Dene Dedlıne Yatı through its historical paths, addressed the catalysts of trauma against Dene Dedlıne lands and languages, and provided solutions to reversing language shift as voiced by Dene Dedlıne. These interviews also resulted in recommendations to federal, territorial and Indigenous governments; communities, such as schools and resource developers; and to the family unit, including speakers, learners and the family itself. This collaborative work illustrates the importance of Dene-led Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition, revitalization and reclamation programming in Tu Nedhé.

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# GLOSSARY

**Ancestral –** The term "traditional," as traditional knowledge or traditional connections may be viewed by Dene communities as contentious for framing Indigenous epistemologies as a form of past-tense heritage. "Ancestral," instead indicates these as shared through generations, noting that each are ongoing processes in the past, present and future.

**Dene** – The Dene word for "people". Dene and Diné languages are within Na-Dene, the most widely spread Indigenous language on this continent. Linguists may refer to Dene languages as within the Athabaskan language family. However, as Athabaskan is a non-Dene term, and Na-Dene is too broad of a language family, Dene Yatı will be used to referred to both Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dëné Sųłıné̉ Yatıé — replacing the word Chipewyan, itself a nêhiyawêwin (Cree) word.

**Dene Dedlıne Yatı** – The /t/-dialect of Dene Yatı, spoken in the southern regions of Tu Nedhé in Denendeh. Dene Dedlıne Yatı is the language of the land for the southern area of Tu Nedhé (Big Lake, colonially known in English as *Great Slave Lake*), including Tthebáchághe (Beside-the-Rapids, colonially known in English as *Fort Smith*) and Denínu Kué (Moose Island, colonially known as Fort Resolution). Dene Dedlıne Yatı, along with Dëné Sųłıné̉ Yatį́, are in the Dene Yatı language family. However, speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı regard the Dene Dedlıne Yatı as the ancestral language.

**Denendeh** – the name of the region of where the giant fell from the stars, and where northern Dene have lived for many millennia. The name of Denendeh had been decided by Dene Zhatıe during the signing of Treaty 8 and 11. The word Denendeh, in Dene Zhatıe, means 'Land of the People.' The imprint of the giant's body makes up Denendeh, where Dene live. The boundaries

of the giant's body include what is now colonially referred to as Alaska, Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, and northern parts of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. A massive region, the giant's head in the southeast includes Tu Nedhé, and beyond through his hair. The arms then follow waterways and mountains toward the northwest, include areas leading up to Łídli Kué, while his body follows North to Aklavik, while his legs flow nearly along the northwest coast, including areas lived upon by the Dinjii Zhuh (Gwich'in), and then bordering, but not including, Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit lands along all of the arctic coasts. The feet of the giant then become the Vancouver Islands.

**Tu Nedhé –** the Dene Dedlıne Yatı word for "Big Lake," which is referred to colonially as the Great Slave Lake. Tu Nedhé rolls onto the shores of the communities such as Łutsel K'e, K'atł'odeeche, T'éschelá (Dettah), Bescho Kué (Behchokò̜), Hátł'odesche (Hay River), Beghúledesche (Yellowknife), Denínu Kué (Fort Resolution), Yałtı Nedhé Kué (Fort Providence), and Tache (Fort Reliance) and — importantly — Ɂastò̜desche (Rocher River) (SSDEC, 2012).

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I am taghe-t'ıné — a Dene and nêhiyaw Métis — from Tthebáchághe in Denendeh. I am also a member of Northwest Territory Métis Nation. One of the languages of my lineage, and of my ancestral footsteps, is Dene Dedlıne Yatı. As a taghe-t'ıné academic working to support my home language, I am an insider-outsider in this collaborative work.

Eileen Beaver is the Elder, knowledge keeper and fluent speaker of Dene Dedlıne Yatı who is providing guidance and mentorship in this capstone project. Eileen is from Ts'ǫ̀desche (Roché River). She married and lived in Tthebátch'á (Fort Smith), Hakëth Nene (NWT). She is a member of Salt River First Nation #195. As a Dene Woman of the north, and academic working to support her home language, she is also an insider-outsider in this collaborative work. Eileen Beaver provides the preferred orthography in this collaborative work.

**Dene Dedlıne Yatı**

Dene languages are inherently place-based, carrying with them millennia of legacies with the land, with idiosyncratic knowledge of their ancestral footsteps in a region. For many millennia, the many various Indigenous Peoples around Tu Nedhé knew and spoke multiple languages fluently — including Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Eileen Beaver says there used to be thousands of Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers in Denendeh, particularly around Tu Nedhé. Today, Eileen Beaver guesses there are only between 300-600 fluent Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers, though the number declines each year (Personal Conversation, 2019; Statistics Canada, *2016 Census: Treaty 8 — Northwest Territories,* 2016).

Dene Dedlıne Yatı is the Dene language spoken in southern Tu Nedhé and across southern Denendeh. In Tu Nedhé, Dene Dedlıne Yatı opens up concepts and ancestral knowledge unavailable in English, French, nêhiyawêwin, or other non-Dene languages. In the last century, however, effects such as residential schooling, day schools, the '60s scoop, colonization, and industrial development have disconnected Indigenous Peoples from their land and their ancestral land-based languages (MMIWG, 2019; Spyce, 2009).

Although Na-Dene is the most widespread of the Indigenous language families (Dene Languages Conference, *Welcome*, 2019), Dene Dedlıne Yatı has very few resources and is without adequate public representation. Like most global Indigenous languages, the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı is currently challenged. In Tu Nedhé, instructors and teachers have been creating resources for learners in grade schools in the Northwest Territories in collaboration with the South Slave Divisional Education Council, though there remain few publicly accessible resources acknowledging Dene Dedlıne Yatı or supporting its acquisition.

### *History and connection to land and community*

Dene Dedlıne Yatı is a northern Dene Yatı within Na-Dene, the largest Indigenous language family across the continent. Dene Dedlıne Yatı has thousands of years of history and connection to land in Tu Nedhé. It was one of the languages spoken by Ethiba Tło'aze — the mother to Francois Beaulieu II and an ancestor of mine. Dene Dedlıne Yatı is even the current first language of several high-level politicians in the Northwest Territories. When Dene were forced into municipalities following the treaties, Dene Dedlıne Yatı thrived in Ɂastɔ̀desche (Rocher River), though community members of Rocher River were forced to move following a school fire in the mid-1900s.

Consequential to adequate language support, linguists have historically combined Dene Dedlıne together with Dëné Sųłıné into the incorrectly labelled language category "Chipewyan." Chipewyan, itself, is in fact a word in nêhiyawêwin (or Cree). Because of this broad bundling into the Chipewyan term, there is limited public data confirming the current number of Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers (GNWT, 2018; Statistics Canada, *2016 Census: Treaty 8 — Northwest Territories,* 2016). However, a priori community knowledge expresses that Dene Dedlıne Yatı is now spoken mostly in communities such as Denínu Kué (Fort Resolution), Tthebáchághe (Fort Smith) and Łue Chok Tué (Cold Lake, Alberta) (Personal interview, Eileen Beaver, 2018). Following government-enforced diaspora into municipalities, Dene Dedlıne Yatı was spoken most often in ʔastǫ̀desche (Rocher River), and in other municipalities across other colonial provincial borders. Following the forced relocation moving Dene away from ʔastǫ̀desche in the 1960s, the language would find itself again displaced across several communities in southern Tu Nedhé.

Dene Dedlıne and Dëné Sųłıné are closely related within Dene Yatı. Because of this, Dëné Sųłıné will also be considered in this collaborative work identifying Dene epistemologies. However, because this collaborative work focuses on Dene Dedlıne revitalization and acquisition, the voices of speakers and learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı will be prioritized.

*The role of federal, territorial and Indigenous governments*

This collaborative work follows histories of federally-sanctioned governmental frameworks interfering with Dene Yatı and Dene ways of being. Recognizing this, Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories have both passed languages acts specifically for Indigenous languages, although the territorial legislation is more thorough (Government of

Canada, 2019; Department of Justice, 1988). These governments then determine funding delineation. While either government prioritizes language goals and deliveries differently, regional Indigenous nations in Tu Nedhé also currently receive territorially-delivered funding to support Indigenous language revitalization in the languages of chosen by leadership of those nations (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2018). This has led to mixed results from Indigenous communities and community members, with some regional Indigenous nations choosing not to acknowledge the language, and others working with speakers of the language from nations to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition as leadership from their own nation has chosen not to.

## Collaborative Work Purpose

As a rule, this work avoids calling itself research, to instead prefer the term collaborative work. The purpose of this collaborative work is to determine how Dene epistemologies support Dene Dedlıne reclamation, revitalization and acquisition in Tu Nedhé. The collaborative work conducted through this capstone project responds to a gap in scholarly literature and public frameworks which benefits from and supports Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition — as voiced by Dene. This historical, pedagogical and epistemological discourse is informed by past and ongoing ethnolinguistic contexts and power relations, each recognized as further catalysts impacting Dene worldviews, ways of being and language transference. The results of this collaborative work include recommendations from Dene supporting reclamation, revitalization and acquisition of Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

**Collaborative Work Questions**

To determine a foundation for supporting Dene epistemologies for Dene Yatı, this collaborative work asks:

- What is the current state of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

- What are the epistemologies supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

- Which factors affect the learning of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

- What are the recommendations from Dene Dedlıne to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı?

**Collaborative Work Strategy**

This collaborative work prioritizes the voices of Dene in an open conversation around Dene Dedlıne Yatı. A literature review provides the foundation for understanding Dene Yatı within Na-Dene, Dene Dedlıne within Denendeh, and the historical and ongoing catalysts of language traumas against Dene Dedlıne. The outset of this research recognizes the role of federal, territorial and Indigenous governments in Dene Dedlıne Yatı shift.

The Indigenous Research Methodology focuses and prioritizes Dene interaction over institutional involvement. Those who shared their words have had several opportunities to review their words as they are used in this capstone project. These conversations, following their review and approval of their words and the whole of this capstone project, informed this resultant collaborative work. The lack of recognition, for Dene Dedlıne Yatı specifically, has conversely led to a lack of resource development and support. This work seeks to distinguish Dene Dedlıne Yatı, identify other catalysts of language shift, and provide supports for Dene Dedlıne Yatı as based on community voices.

**Summary**

This collaborative work recognizes the need for acknowledgement of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, enriching the discussion around the contextual histories which have affected Dene Dedlıne Yatı vitality based on Dene pedagogies, and recognizing the deviations from Dene ways of teaching Dene Yatı. Those who shared their words also made recommendations for recognition and supports for ancestral Dene Dedlıne pedagogies at the federal, territorial, Indigenous government levels; as well as for communities, schools, resource developers; and families — including speakers and learners.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review looks to resources addressing Dene Dedlıne; gathered materials produced and published with, by, and for Dene authors, academics, and knowledge holders; and reviewed documents, articles, and theses from linguists observing Dëne Sułiné Yatį́, the closest related language to Dene Dedlıne Yatı. A resource was considered eligible for inclusion in this literature review through the following criteria: works by Dene authors, with Dene voices and worldviews; community language learning resources addressing Dëné Sułiné Yatį́ acquisition in Denendeh, and particularly Tu Nedhé; and peer-reviewed academic articles from linguists addressing Dene Yatı. This literature review has not yet observed digital or analog in archives or databases addressing or including Dene Yatı. However, conducting this literature review reveals a massive lapse in publicly available supports specifically for Dene Dedlıne Yatı within Dene Hóneneltën, or Dene ways of teaching. There is also a lack of morphophonemic or linealogical histories of Dene identifying the historic and present linguistic continuum of Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

**Structure of literature review**

This literature review is presented in four sections, with each section addressing Dene Yatı and Dene Hóneneltën. The first section of this literature review recognizes how Dene Yatı, spoken by Northern Dene, holds inter-relations with the Na-Dene language family — using maps to illustrate this point. The second section then looks to ancestral Na-Dene ways of being and perspectives on learning. The third section acknowledges the factors which are either supportive or detrimental to the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. This literature review then concludes with a summary and the next steps pursued in this community collaborative work.

**Dene Dedlıne Yatı — The inter-relation in Na-Dene**

Na-Dene is the most broadly spread Indigenous language family on this continent, while Dëne Sųłiné is "one of the most numerous and geographically spread" Indigenous languages on this continent (Holden, 2013, p. 1; Rice, 2009). The Na-Dene language family includes Dene Yatı and many other Dene languages in the northern hemisphere in Denendeh, as well as the Diné languages among the southern part of this continent (Sapir, 1915; Holden, 2013). The word, Dene Dedlıne Yatı, directly translates to the "Old People's Language" (SSDEC, p. 8).

Academic linguists have historically favoured referring to Dene Yatı as Athabaskan, Athapascan, Athabascan, Athapaskan, or from Athabasca — although Dr. Sally Rice, a non-Dene linguist working with Dene Yatı, has indicated that there is no consistent spelling of the term, and suggests avoiding the term altogether (Sapir, 1915; Rice et al., 2002; Rice, 2002; Yantz, 2005; Rice, 2009, p. 109; Holden, 2010; Rice, 2011; Holden, 2013; Snoek, 2015; Saxon, 2016). Often, Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dëné Sųłiné Yatıé are misclassified together as Chipewyan (Sapir, 1915; Rice et al., 2002; Cook, 2006), although Dene Dedlıne Yatı is the /t/-dialect language variance. Both terms — Athabaskan and Chipewyan — are drawn from nêhiyawêwin, the language known colonially as Cree. Gregory Younging was a nêhiyaw author whose work continues to inform Indigenous journalism and media-making. With respect, he has passed in the duration of writing this capstone project. Younging notes the term Athabaskan is drawn from the /Y/-dialect pâskwâwi-nêhiyawêwin word, *ayapaskaah,* "meaning 'place of rolling terrain' (or 'uneven terrain')," and the word Chipewyan is from the nêhiyawêwin word "*ociipweyen,* meaning 'pointed skins,' which refers to how the Dene Peoples prepared hides" (Younging, 2018, p. 88), or "cipiwiyanô," for pointed people, "Because our face was not round like the

Cree; rather our chins were of a point. Not only that, our parkas were pointed at the tip of the hood — the waist, down to below our bum, and in front. Our moccasins and winter gear was with a point in the front as well.  This is why the Cree and Ojibwe people called us Chipewyan" (Eileen Beaver, 2020).

Edward Sapir is a globally-renowned linguist. He refers to the collective Dene and Diné languages as Na-Dene, though the term Na-Dene or Dene language had been used by Dene prior to contact (1915; Personal Conversation, Eileen Beaver, 2020). Sapir proposed that the Na-Dene language family includes Dene Yatı languages, referring to them then as "Chipewyan." Na-Dene language family includes Tlingit, Haida, Natinixwe (or Hupa), Naabeehó (or Navajo), Gwich'in, Tse'khene (or Sekani), Ahtna, Koyukon, Tłįchǫ, Apache and many others (Holden, 2013; Blair, 2002; Gallatin, 1836; Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2018, p. 3).

Dene Dedlıne Yatı is an ancient language within Dene Yatı, and is mostly spoken in Tu Nedhé in Denendeh (Personal conversation, Eileen Beaver, 2018). Tu Nedhé is the region of land and water which makes up the hair of Denendeh, although it is known to some for its legislative jurisdiction Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, which also includes the colonially-known South Slave region of the Northwest Territories. Tu Nedhé includes Tthebáchághe and Denínu Kué, known colonially as Fort Smith and Fort Resolution. Another community in Tu Nedhé, Ɂastǫ̀desche, known colonially as Rocher River, was previously a municipality within Tu Nedhé before the school burned down in the mid-1900s. The school would go unrepaired, forcing the community to move inland to municipalities with road access.

Dëne Sułıné Yatıé and Dene Dedlıne Yatı are both Dene Yatı in the north, and share many similarities. Dëne Sułıné Yatıé is an extant of the language continuum from Dene Dedlıne

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Yatı (Personal conversation, Eileen Beaver, 2019; Personal conversation, Josh Holden, 2019). Josh Holden, a non-Dene linguist who has contributed exhaustive academic and linguistic work benefiting Dëne Sųłiné Yatıé language revitalizationists, writes, "dividing Dene peoples into mutually exclusive nationalities and languages is complex and probably a bit artificial" (Holden, 2013, p. 2). In conversation with Holden, he mentions preferring the term "language continuum" of languages in contrast to division through outwardly-imposed language dialects, and that those clear delineations in languages or dialects maintain artificial and colonial borders (personal conversation, 2019).

*Dëne Dédlıné Yatıé: Ɂerehtł'íscho* is one of the more recently developed Dene Dedlıne *Yatı* dictionaries, which had been published by the South Slave Divisional Education Council (2012). This dictionary sees partnerships with Elders, including Lawrence Fabien, Denise McKay, Tommy Unka, Freddie King, Christine Fabien, Henry Calmut, Harvey Mandeville, and Mary Jane Beaulieu. The production of the book is advised by Dr. Eung-Do Cook, who wrote one of the most prominently referenced Dëné Sųłiné Yatıé dictionaries (Cook, 2004; Cook, 2006).

In its preface, the authors and Elders recognize Dene Dedlıne as the ancestral Dene language of the region. The introduction states:

> From the onset, the elders insisted on two conditions. They first asked that all meetings be held in the school so that the students and youth of the community could see and be a part of this important project. The elders realized early that by involving the youth, there would be greater acceptance and use of the Dëne Sųłiné language within the group. The second condition was that we make every effort to preserve the old words of the elders – Dëne Dédliné – the original Chipewyan. Out of respect for the elder's wishes and as a testament to the work they did, Dëne Dédliné Yatıé became the working title for this dictionary.

(SSDEC, 2012, p. 8)

***Statistics on Dene Dedlıne Yatı Speakers***

The accuracy of Statistics Canada is itself questioned by Indigenous Peoples, academics and representative groups (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). Where the federal government historically used census information from Indigenous communities to enroll Indigenous children in residential schools, there is now a culture of distrust and push for Indigenous communities to have their data collected. Instead, communities are preferring sovereignty over their own information through the OCAP® principles (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). However, the latest data from Statistics Canada indicates 13,005 people reported speakers of Dene or a Dene language (Statistics Canada, 2017), while 3,500 people specifically report "Chipewyan (Denesuline)" ancestry (Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Population Profile,* 2016). There are noted semantic challenges in this Statistics Canada data. Within the self-identification category of "*Aboriginal or non-aboriginal ancestry,"* Dene is available as an option (ibid.) — however, this broad family excludes the many families within Dene. Some large families are available as, Gwich'in, "Tlicho", Tlingit, and "Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee)," but these are then not included in the larger Dene family (Statistics Canada, *2016 Census: Treaty 8 — Northwest Territories,* 2016). As another further note, the word Sarcee — available as an option by Statistics Canada as "Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee)" — is meant as an option for Tsuut'ina Dene to self-select, but is a carried over slur from the *Niitsitapi,* who are themselves colonially known as the Blackfoot and who are not Dene.

The last Statistics Canada dataset for the Northwest Territories indicated that of those living with the Treaty 8 region within the Northwest Territories, there are "430 Chipewyan

(Denesuline)" Dene in the region (Statistics Canada, *2016 Census: Treaty 8 — Northwest Territories,* 2016), with 230 people within the region self-reporting speaking Dëné Sųłınë̌ as a mother language (ibid.), although Dene Dedlıne Yatı isn't yet recorded. Regions within this dataset include the municipalities of Fort Smith and Fort Resolution, which have the highest likelihood of Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers, and are within the colonial boundaries of the Northwest Territories and Treaty 8. There remain reasons to challenge or question data from Statistics Canada, including the lack of distinguishment between Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers from Dëne Sułıné Yatıé speakers.

Compared to the 3,500 recorded Dëne Sułıné Yatıé speakers regionally from across Denendeh (Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Population Profile,* 2016), Dene Dedlıne Yatı is thought to have 300-600 speakers, and generally live in, or are from, Tu Nedhé (Personal communication, Eileen Beaver, 2019). As a result of this difference in speaking populations and a smaller geographic land area, Dene Dedlıne Yatı does not have as many language supports as Dëne Sułıné, and learners of Dene Dedlıne often rely on resources for Dëne Sułıné Yatıé while not having Dene Dedlıne Yatı specific supports.

### *Maps including Denendeh, Dene and Dene Dedlıne*

The following maps are included as a visual aide in observing the various factors affecting Dene Dedlıne in Tu Nedhé. Some of the maps included are created by Dene to reflect Denendeh, while others address languages in the region, or otherwise refer to colonization, land displacement, parks in which Indigenous Peoples were removed, treaties, and residential schools.

Other maps around the region which address Dene displacement may include mining, agriculture, damming, oil and gas development, and other industrial projects.

There are examples of decolonial uses of maps, including the first and third example; the rest of the maps illustrate an overlap of various influences impacting the vitality of Dene Dedlıne within Denendeh and Tu Nedhé. There is not yet a publicly available map illustrating the whole of industrial development projects across Denendeh. However, Denendeh and Tu Nedhé are directly affected by oil and gas projects, gold and diamond mines following the Klondike gold rush, changes in depth of traversable waters because of hydropower projects, overharvesting as a result of the fur trade, the extinction-level bison cull of the late 1800s, removal of Indigenous Peoples from lands to make room for national parks, political and municipal boundaries, the numbered treaties, modern treaties and self-government agreements, and residential schooling (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, 2018).

**Figure 2.1**

*A Map of Denendeh*
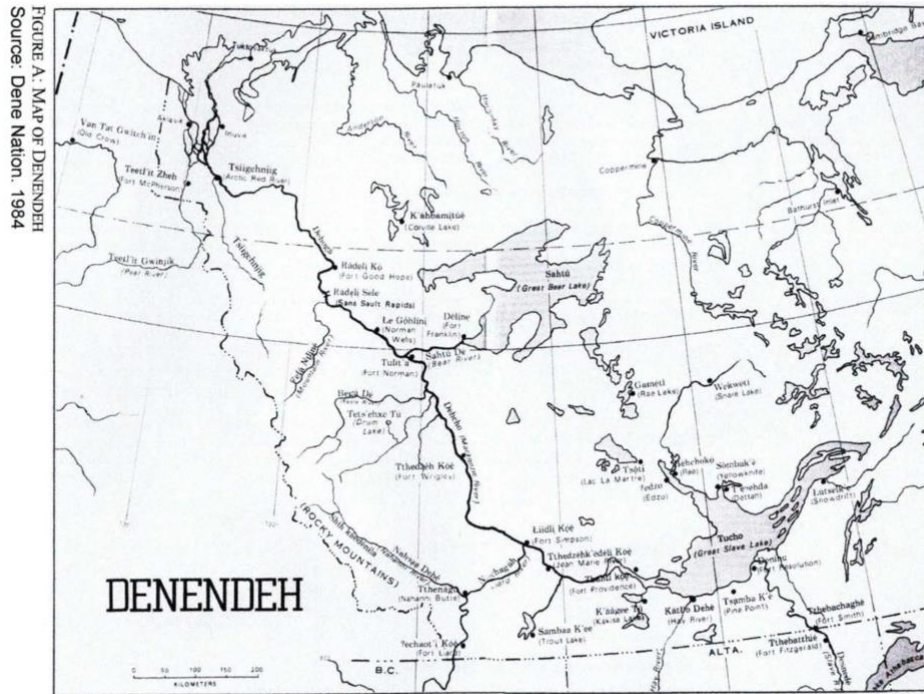


(Dene Nation, 1984)

This first map, provided by the Dene Nation, describes Denendeh, although these boundaries are within the colonial boundaries of the Northwest Territories. This is because Dene Nation only represents Dene who live within the colonial boundaries of Canada. Denendeh, and the Na-Dene language family, extend past this assertion of Denendeh.

**Figure 2.2**

*Map of Northern Dene ethnolinguistic groups*



(Cannon, 2019)

This second map, developed by non-Dene scholar Chris Cannon and verified across other

Na-Dene language maps, outlines the linguistic paths of Na-Dene languages based on where

Dene live. This map is far closer to the outline of the giant's body than the first map. Na-Dene

languages, which make up Denendeh, extend past the colonial boundaries of Canada, deep into

the arctic. The entire northern coast, however, is Inuit Nunangat, or Inuit homelands.

**Figure 2.3**

*Combined trails of 600 hunters from 26 Dene communities*



(Dene Nation, 2016)

This digital Dene Mapping Project identifies the current trails used by Dene hunters, who are within the colonial hunting boundaries of Canada, through graphic-information systems by Dene hunters and trappers. This is a project ran by Dene Nation based out of Denendeh, but within colonial Canada. These paths also follow the ancestral homelands of the giant who remains as he fell from the sky. The bottom-right of the above map represents the giant's hair,

while the top-left of the above map would be his knees. This encompasses the paths of speakers of Dene Yatı, and the Na-Dene languages of the north. Dene Dedlıne is spoken in the bottom right of this map, through the trails across Tu Nedhé.

**Figure 2.4**

*Map of the Indian Tribes of North America, about 1600 A.D. along the Atlantic, & about*

*1800 A.D.*



(Gallatin, 1836)

Gallatin publishes this *Map of the Indian Tribes of North America, about 1600 A.D. along the Atlantic, & about 1800 A.D.* (1836), which is one of the earliest colonial maps identifying Na-Dene languages. The names of Indigenous Peoples are consistent with historical misnomers — what Gallatin labels the Athapascas in pink on the top-left of this map shows where Dene Yatı, as a language family, is spoken. Like many early map-makers, linguists and translators of Indigenous languages, Gallatin favored the assimilation of Indigenous Peoples. He was known to have referred to Indigenous women as "slaves and beasts of burden" (Ridge, 1826, p. 85). Like most maps of Denendeh, its borders are stopped artificially within the colonial boundaries of Canada.

**Figure 2.5**

*Official Languages Map of the Northwest Territories.*
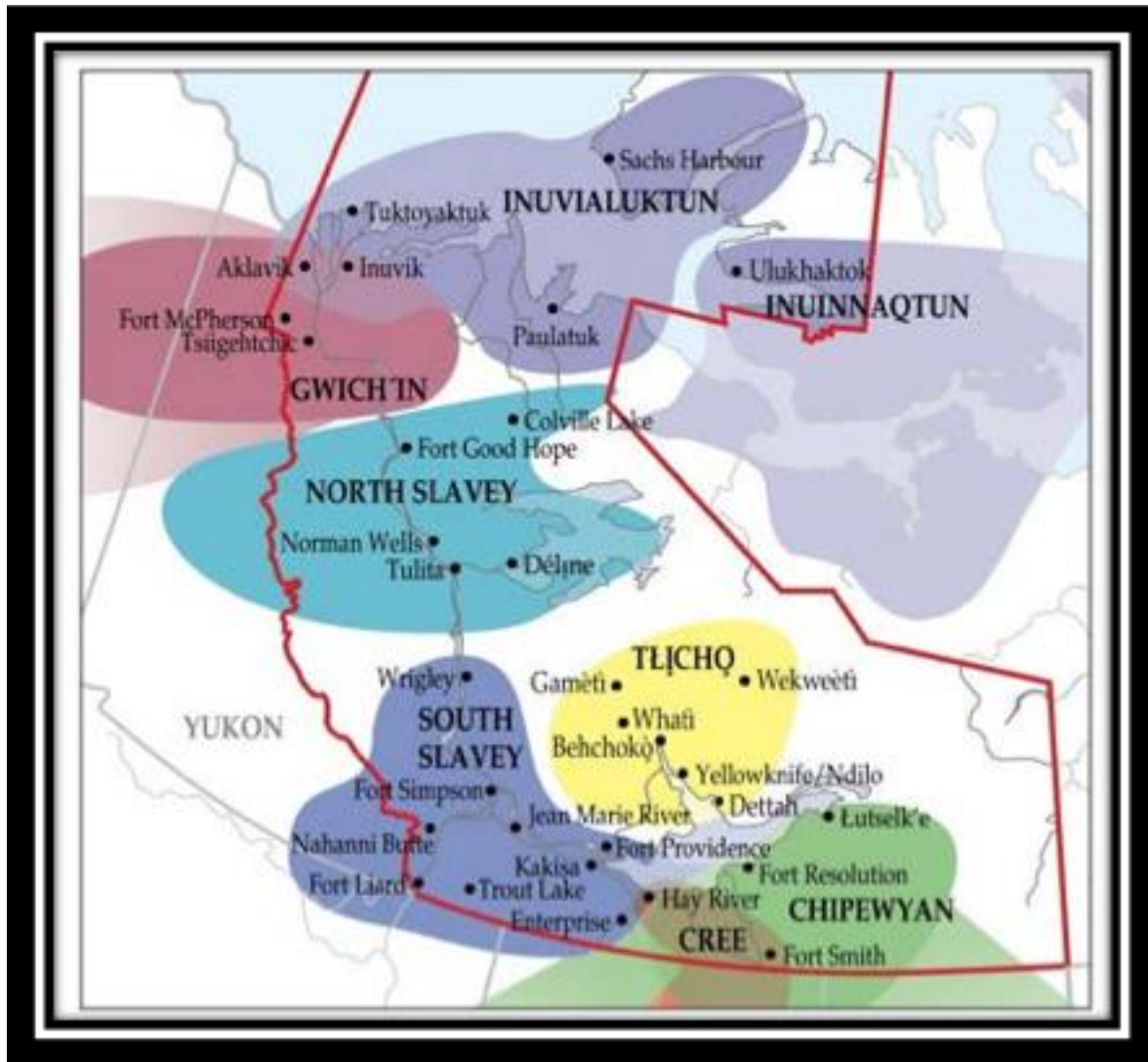


(Gullberg, 2018, p. 24)

This map shows which Indigenous languages, and more specifically, where Dene Yatı is

spoken within the colonial bounds of the Northwest Territories (Gullberg, 2018; Department of

Education, Culture and Employment, 2018). The Government of the Northwest Territories, or

GNWT, recognizes 11 official languages in its boundaries, of which they are obligated to

provide supports for those languages (ibid.). The language labelled Chipewyan in this image

refers to both Dëne Sųłiné and Dene Dedlıne, although Dene Dedlıne is most spoken in what is

referred to colonially as Fort Smith and Fort Resolution, while Dëne Sųłiné is more often spoken

in Lutselk'e (Personal Conversation, Eileen Beaver, 2018). The territory is now obligated to

provide support through the GNWT's Department of Education, Culture & Employment, or

ECE, for funding and resources for Indigenous language programming. This funding is delivered

to various Indigenous nations representing Indigenous peoples and spread across the territory to

support Indigenous language instructors in K-12 schools (Department of Education, Culture and

Employment, 2018).

ECE has recently formally recognized Dene Dedlıne, noting:

> Chipewyan speakers may refer to Chipewyan itself, or one of its dialects/sub-dialects, by the terms Dëne Sųłıné Yatıé, Dëne Dédlıné Yatıé, Tthetsánót'ıné Yatıé, K-dialect, or T-dialect. By proportion of all territorial Chipewyan speakers, most live in Yellowknife/Ndilǫ (30.2%), Łutselk'e (26.2%), and Fort Resolution (19.0%). Chipewyan is also spoken in parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

(Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat, nd.)

Steven Nitah reviews the GNWT's policies in his 2002, *One Land — Many Voices* report

(Nitah, 2002). Nitah had been the Chair of Special Committee on the Review of the Official

Languages Act, which passed in 1984 (ibid.). The special committee had been tasked to respond

to the effectiveness of the Official Languages Act, and relied on historical information,

knowledge of languages, and public comments. This work provides descriptions of factors

affecting Indigenous language loss, as well as the historic policies in the NWT and the

community-proposed solutions leading up to 2002. Nitah's work starts by acknowledging the

1969 Official Languages Act of Canada, then the GNWT provision of Indigenous language

programming in schools throughout the 1970s (2002). Since this review in 2002, there have been

several provisions to Indigenous language revitalization across the NWT, though this work

provides historical context of the respective governmental decisions around Indigenous language

supports in this literature review. Nitah's paper indicates that at the time of publishing in 2002,

"approximately 76% of Aboriginal people aged 45 years or older speak their (Indigenous)

language. These rates differ for each of the official Aboriginal languages" and community-to-

community (p. 4). As 15 years have passed since Nitah published this report, the percentage of

fluent speakers of Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories has dramatically decreased

(Statistics Canada, 2016).

**Figure 2.6**

*Pre-1975 Treaties of Canada.*
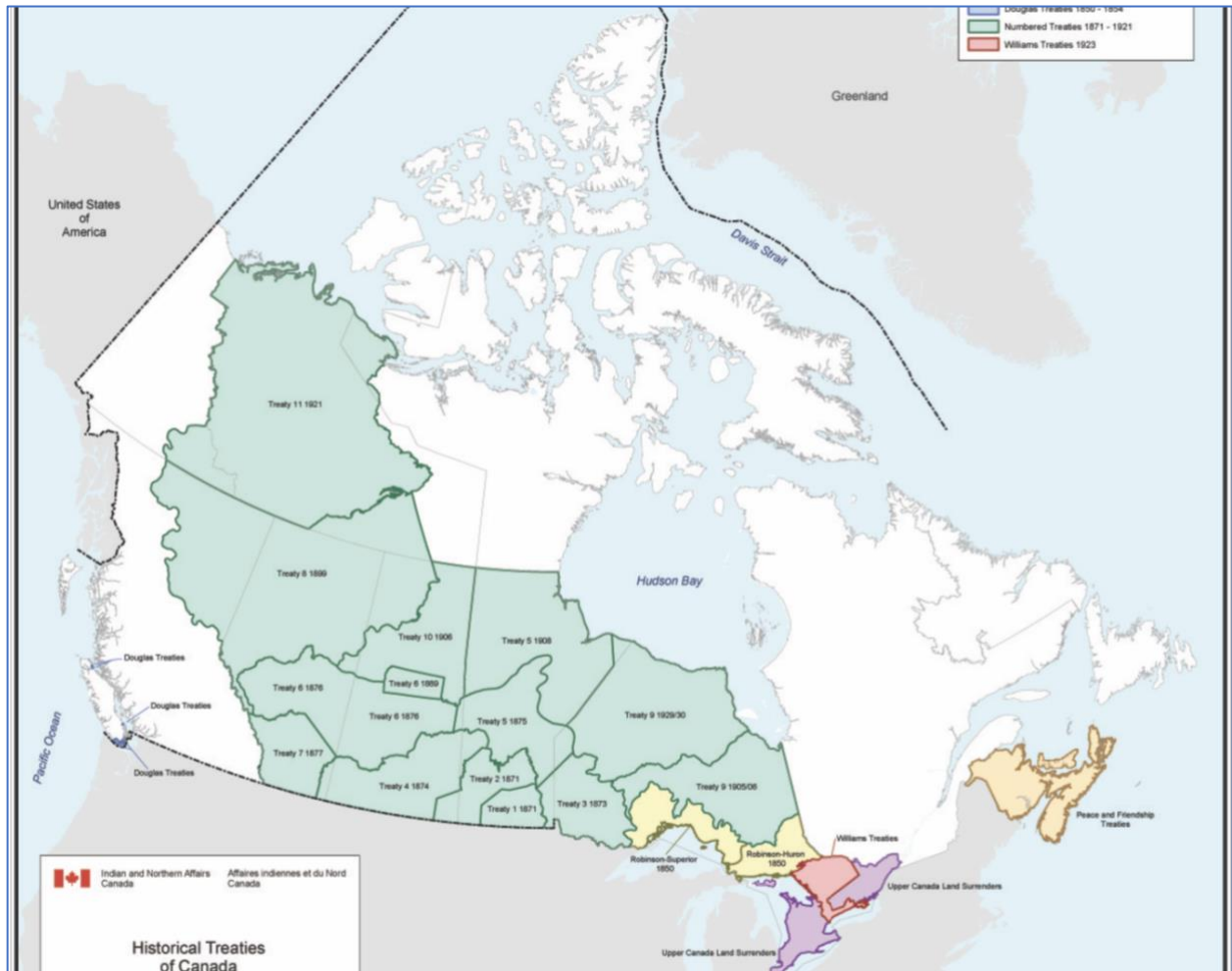


(Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, nd.).

This map, as presented by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, demonstrates the areas

which are within the numbered treaties of Canada. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 would

designate Britain as the only colonial nation which would be given priority to sign treaties with

various Indigenous nations, as recognized in Canada's Constitution Act (Government of Canada,

1982). This map provides the numbered treaty areas and years in which the Government of

Canada, then the Dominion of Canada and still then under British colonial rule, divided up lands into treaty boundaries for which to move Indigenous Peoples.

Dene Dedlıne Yatı is spoken around Tthebáchághe, or Fort Smith and Denínu Kų́ę́, or Fort Resolution — of which both of those municipalities are within the bounds of Treaty 8. Treaty 8 — the largest treaty area signed in Canada — was signed on June 21, 1899, with adhesions to include further land areas in 1900, 1910, 1911, 1914, 1915, the 1930s, and 2000 (Tesar, 2016). The boundaries of Treaty 8 were designed around navigability to the Klondike and further mining prospects, along with what area could be covered by travelling in one summer (Millard, 1986; Tesar, 2016). This followed the discovery of oil, gas, gold, diamonds, and other minerals in the area now known as the Northwest Territories, and after the Klondike gold rush of 1897-98 (Department of Agriculture, 1887; Madill, 1986; Tesar, 2016; Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, 2018; Potyondi, 1979).

Following its signing, Treaty 8 was nearly immediately breached by Canada through infractions and violations against Indigenous Peoples, and in which the government failed on making promised payments to Indigenous groups while simultaneously passing laws limiting hunting through the Migratory Birds Act of 1916 and the Game Act of 1917 (Millard, 1986; Tesar, 2016). Further violations of the treaty were exposed by the Nelson Commission of 1959, in which meetings were held with Indigenous communities to discuss post-Treaty land credits which has not yet been distributed to Indigenous nations (Nelson Commission, 1959). This commission would initiate the comprehensive land claims, or modern treaties.

**Figure 2.7**

*Residential Schools of Canada.*
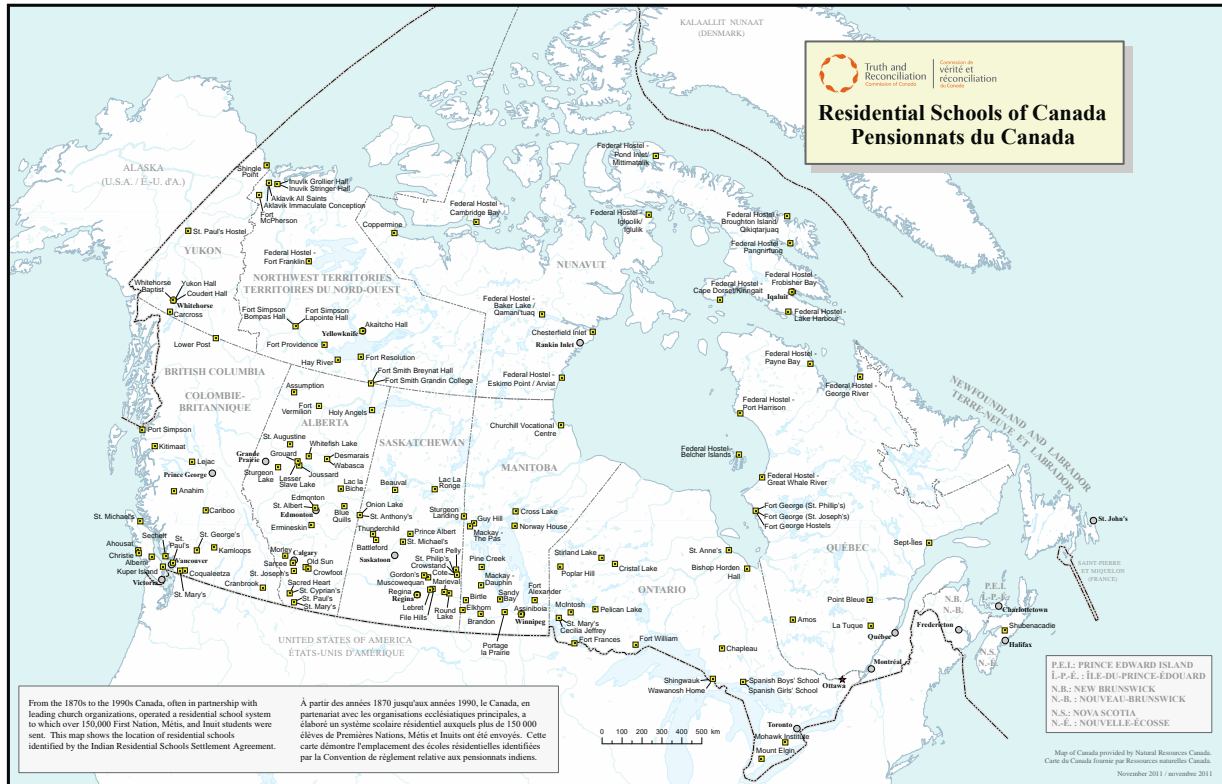


(Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission published this map to pin point each residential school in Canada recognized within the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011). Residential schools within the region of Tu Nedhé included Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, Hay River Residential School in Hay River, Fort Resolution Residential School in Fort Resolution, Breynat Hall and Grandin College in Fort Smith, and Holy Angels Residential School in Fort Chipewyan (ibid.). The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls would also indicate recognize residential

schools as having six "applicable law(s) for genocide" (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Further, the TRC would note that residential schools often entailed physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuses, each a factor affecting language loss — amounting to what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would qualify as "cultural genocide" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011, p. 1, 133, 153,).

**Figure 2.8**

*Regional context of Wood Buffalo National Park.*
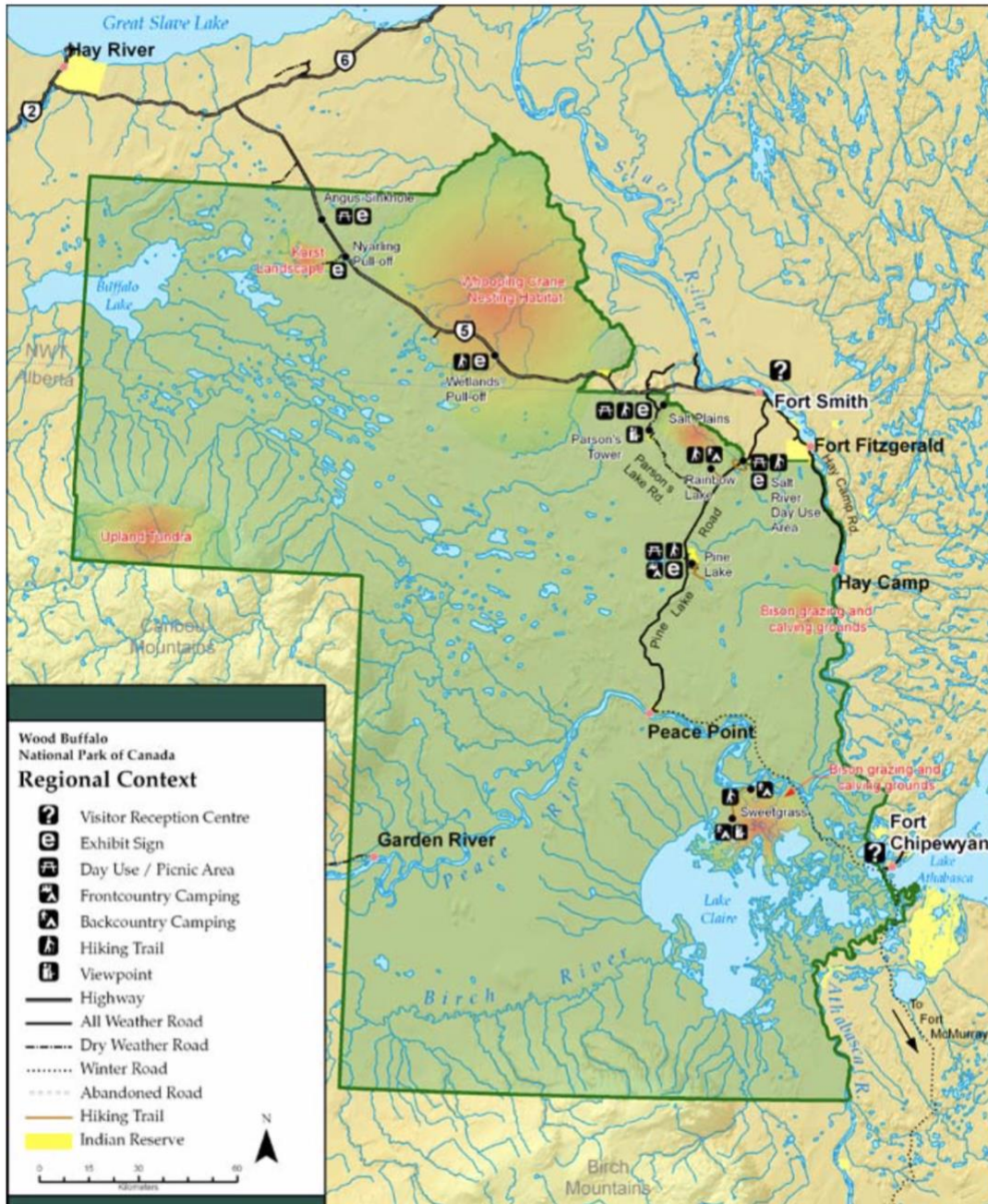


MAP 2. Regional context of Wood Buffalo National Park.

(Parks Canada, 2010, p. 4).

This map presents the context for Wood Buffalo National Park, or WBNP. The park was officially signed in 1922 (United Nations, 2019), though the massive land area had been staked for claim by for resource extraction by John Franklin since his arrival to Fort Chipewyan on March 26, 1820 (Potyondi, 1979, p. 33). That Franklin Expedition would further support resource extraction in the area. As Barry Potyondi notes in the Potyondi report, "The decades of change after 1821 contrasted sharply with the stability of the fur trade period and set the stage for unparalleled economic development in Athabasca…. The agents of change were northern explorers, missionaries, and government scientists" (p. 32). The specified year 1821 reflects "the merger of the two major (fur trading) rivals, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company," and with it the compromise of Indigenous prosperity through the fur trade (RCAP, p. 130, 1996). The North West Company is and remains the operator of Northern Store / NorthMart — which holds a store in nearly every community in Denendeh (North West Company, 2020).

Currently, two national parks exist in the ancestral homelands of speakers of Dene Dedlıne, though many more national parks interfere with Dene lands in Denendeh. Referring back to the Dene Mapping Project (Dene Nation, 2016) the most southern-right end of these trails are also around WBNP, while the dense concentration of pathways in the southern-right of the Dene hunters' paths leading up would head towards what has now been negotiated as Thaidene Nëné National Park. National Parks have each had their own impacts on Dene Peoples relations with their own land, of which that history is reflected in Parks Canada's own communications (Tait Communications and Consulting, 2017).

The land within the boundaries of WBNP has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1983, and is now considered threatened and endangered (UNESCO, 2019).

The WBNP UNESCO report responds to World Heritage Committee Decision 41 COM 7B.2, made in 2017, addressing the vitality of the several endangered species within park boundaries. The process of developing their second report is different from the initial outset of the formation of WBNP, as Indigenous Peoples are consulted and involved (UNESCO, 2019). More still, spiritual relation to the species and lands are now considered, and WBNP deliberately includes "Indigenous partners and stakeholders," of which Indigenous Peoples' ancestral knowledge and kinship with various species and the animals are included (Parks Canada, *Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site Action Plan*, 2019, p. 62). This strategic assessment, outlined in WBNP's action plan published by Parks Canada, relied on information provided from "representatives of Indigenous groups (leadership, knowledge holders, land-users, and advisors)" (p. 16) and includes Dene ways of living in the Peace-Athabasca Delta — one of the world's largest freshwater deltas, by looking to its wetland habitats and the effect of hydropower. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, identifies several factors affecting the vitality of the land in WBNP. The 2019 results list:

> management systems/manage plan, mining, oil and gas, other climate change impacts, water infrastructure, other threats, lack of engagement with First Nations and Metis in monitoring activities and insufficient consideration of traditional ecological knowledge

> (UNESCO, 2019).

While past UNESCO reports have also included:

> urban pressure, road construction, existing and planned hydroelectric dams, such as Site C, Alberta oil sands mining, climate change, lack of adequate and comprehensive environmental monitoring, lack of engagement with First Nations and Métis in monitoring activities and insufficient consideration of traditional ecological knowledge, cumulative impacts

(UNESCO, 2019).

UNESCO has since given Canada the deadline of December 1, 2020 to report on the progress (UNESCO, 2019).

A park within a park, Kitaskino Nuwenene Wildland Park, is a 161,880-hectare Indigenous protected area which extends into WBNP (Alberta Parks, 2019). The project started in December, 2018, and the park officially formed in March of 2019. It was initially proposed by Mikisew Cree First Nation as a response to one of UNESCO's 17 suggestions to improve the conditions of the park area (ibid.). This improved relationship in the establishment of parks would allow for better conditions for the survivability and ongoing relation with the land by members of Mikisew Cree First Nation.

**Figure 2.9**

*Thaidene Nëné National Park Reserve and Territorial Protected Areas.*
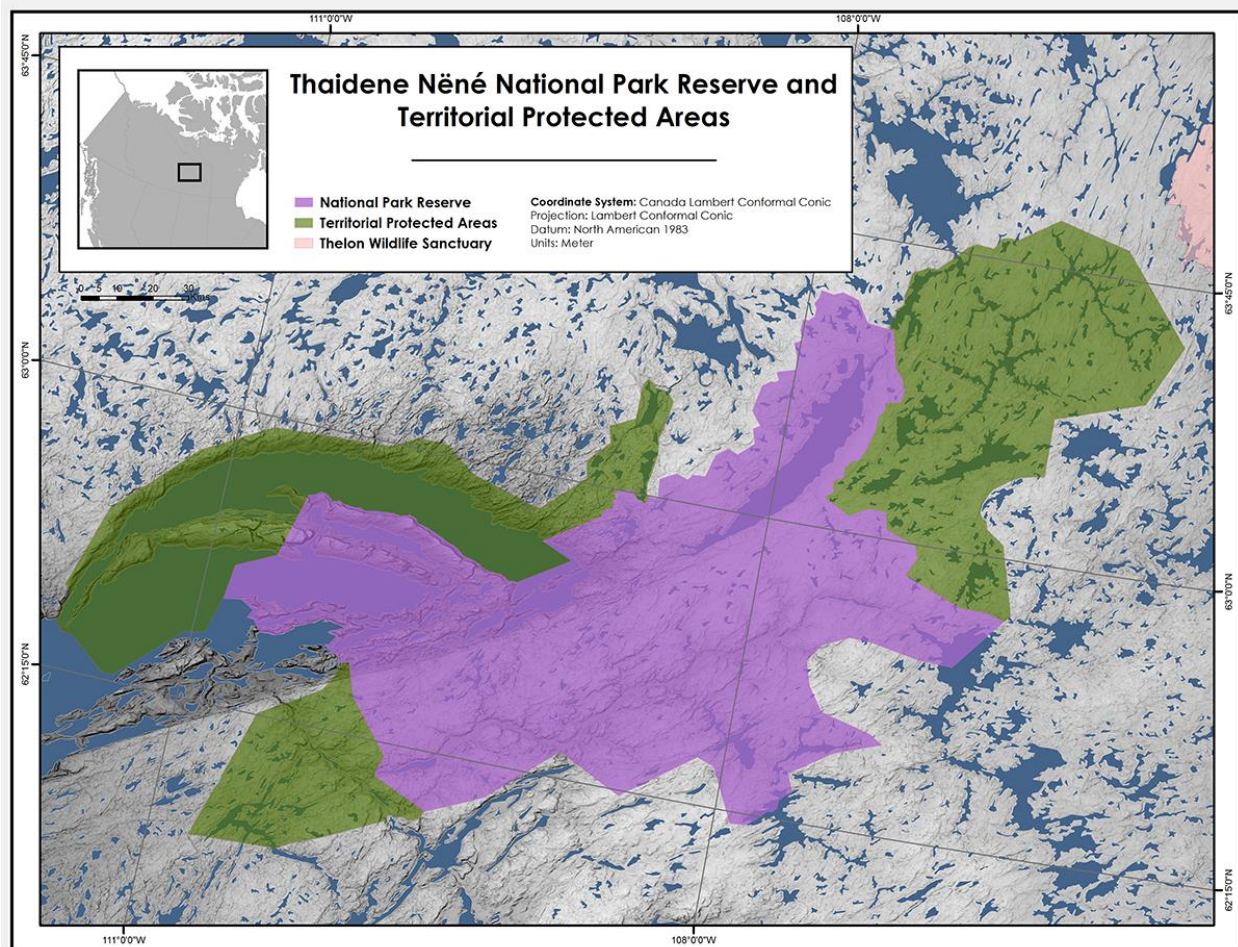


(Parks Canada, 2019)

Thaidene Nëné translates into "Land of the ancestors" in Dënesųłiné (Tait Communications and Consulting, 2017). Thaidene Nëné is the newest national park within Canada, signed into legislation August 21, 2019, although discussions around forming the park started in 1969 (Parks Canada, *Thaidene Nëné National Park Reserve and Territorial Protected Areas*, 2019). The area was officially signed as a park between the Government of Canada, Government of the

Northwest Territories, Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Deninu K' µé First Nation, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and my own nation, Northwest Territory Metis Nation. This park was initiated by Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, and has been further developed with inclusion and consideration of other Indigenous nations and peoples of the region. In this way, subsistence hunting and harvesting rights are guaranteed for Indigenous Peoples (Tait Communications and Consulting, 2017).

### *Dene Hóneneltën – Dene Ways of Teaching*

While Na-Dene speakers across the continent share spiritual, ceremonial and linguistic connections, there are many pragmatic differences between the northern Dene and southern Diné — often related to regionally-specific environments. This literature review focuses on Dene Yatı, or northern Dene languages, while recognizing similarities among Dene pedagogies and epistemologies. This literature review then identifies preferred ways of teaching and learning Dene Yatı by northern Dene.

Dene have been written about by foreign ethnographers and linguists since the late 1800s, though often without consent or without the willful inclusion of Dene representation, voices, and epistemologies. These early publications were often by reverends or priests, such as Father Petitot and Reverend Father A. G. Morice. As such, early linguistic and cultural classifications inhibited religious imperialism (Petitot, 1876; Morice, 1889; Morice, 1890; Morice, 1917) and not Dene epistemologies. Within these religious contexts, Father Petitot and Reverend Father Morice present the first two publications of Dene writing and language — setting the precedent of current language classifications. This religious context, concurrent with Canada's residential

schools, provides a foundation for understanding federally-sanctioned genocidal tactics currently affecting Dene Dedlıne Yatı fluency.

Chartrand's work, along with several other publications around Dene epistemologies written by non-Dene, looks to Marles' Master's thesis around Dene use of medicines and plants (Chartrand, 1984; Uprety et al., 2012). Marles (1984) published *The Ethnobotany of the Chipewyan of Northern Saskatchewan* around northern Dene, but without crediting Dene of the region. While this would prove an invaluable resource to Dene looking to printed texts on Dene medicines, this research was again conducted by non-Dene, and excludes interviews and accreditation to specific Dene. Shortly after, Hanks and Pokotylo produced *The Mackenzie Basin: An Alternative Approach to Dene and Metis Archaeology* (Hanks and Pokotylo, 1989). This work identifies the strength of the moratorium on archaeological studies done in the Mackenzie Basin, a region within Denendeh, following the Berger Inquiry's published opposition to industrial development along the Mackenzie Basin (ibid., p. 141). Following this 10-year moratorium, Dene and Indigenous Peoples of the region would develop their own research protocol when working with researchers from outside of the region towards a more collaborative approach (ibid., p. 142). This research would further inform the value of Dene place-names through an ethnogeographical method. This research would also identify hours of language tapes which were being held at the Dene Cultural Institute (ibid., p. 145), none of which are used in this literature review.

Similar research would be followed up two decades later by Leslie Main Johnson (2008). Johnson would identify traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as surfacing in research predominantly around the environment and TEK's application, though she notes, "Almost

nothing has been written about plant habitats from an ethnoecological perspective" (2008, p. 147). Johnson's research methodologies included "both interview and field methods for gathering ethnoecological data," while recordings were made through photographs and video, and consent had been gained by researchers through oral and written consent by Elders and knowledge holders (ibid., p. 148). Coincidentally, Johnson also refers to Dene language within the text, such as noting meadows are often written with reference to the word, *tło*, meaning "grass" (ibid., p. 149). The rest of the article tends to include many languages within the Na-Dene language family, and even refers to Dene medicinal origin stories, but does not specifically refer to Dene Dedlıne Yatı as the language for these words within the Na-Dene language family (Johnson, 2008, p. 152-154).

**A critique of George Blondin's Dene Laws.**

George Blondin's Dene Laws (SEE APPENDIX A) are a collection of nine rules which are reprinted and repeated in nearly every classroom in the Northwest Territories (SSDEC, 2018). Blondin developed these laws after publishing *Yamoria the Lawmaker* in 1997, and the laws have since been referenced in academic papers with regard to the ways of being in the Northwest Territories (Chartrand, 2018). George Blondin originally presented these laws as legends in story book form, as contracted by the Government of the Northwest Territories to produce these laws to be applied across the territory (Blondin, 2000, p. 59).

These nine Dene Laws are not Dene spiritual laws, but those poised in the 1990s to regulate schoolchildren (French, 2015). These stories would generally have taken literal days to share in the past, but are presented palatably for reading by grades K-9 (Blondin, 2000, p. vi – vii). Some stories are short-form of ancestral stories shared for many, many generations, while

other stories are relevant to the time of his writing. Story topics include "developing Dene

skills," "birch bark canoes," "discovering our Dene talents," "Spirit of the Land," "Self-

government," and the stories address colonization as the "arrival of Non-Dene" (ibid.). While

each story is short, it does willfully reference land-based pedagogies and ways of being more

than a linguistic analysis of Dëné Sųłıné̈ (ibid.). Although these laws are drawn from short-form

stories of Yamoria, the Creator (Blondin, 2000), the laws themselves are published outside of

Dene pedagogies. None of Blondin's Dene Laws relate to creation, and exclude mentions of the

land, animals, and relational aspects of Dene ways of being. These Dene Laws would be

translated into Dene Dedlıne by Indigenous language experts working with the South Slave

Divisional Education Council (Boucher, 2018).

Recent research around Dene epistemologies excludes involvement from Dene while

writing about Dene laws. Chartrand (2018), for instance, recognizes  Dene laws as precedent to

this land and pre-existing colonization while simultaneously identifying that those interpreting

Dene laws for their research around incorporation Dene laws text are non-Dene. While Chartrand

identifies the homeland of the Dene as Denendeh, he simultaneously commits to his role with

caution as a non-Dene scholar. That is, the subject of Dene laws, when published in scholarly

research by non-Dene, is usually done through an explicitly identified lack of consultation with

Dene prior to publication and distribution about Dene materials. Notably, their research

publishes ancestral stories, while also imbuing George Blondin's nine Dene Laws (Chartrand,

2018).

**Dene relational pedagogies and epistemologies.** This literature review recognizes a

lapse in language revitalization supports specifically supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı, as well as a

lack of pedagogical language acquisition supports for Dene Yatı Hóneneltën based on Dene

relational epistemologies. Dene relational epistemologies are often described through land-and-environment based relationality (Coulthard, 2014; Lamothe, 1993; Preston, 2009; Yantz, 2005; Blair, 2002). This is expanded on through what perhaps the most published Dene theorist, Dr. Glen Coulthard, calls the *grounded normative* (Coulthard, 2014). In his doctoral thesis, *Red Skin, White Mask*, Coulthard defines the grounded normative as "the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time" (2014, p. 13). His thesis draws from, and expands on, two key theorists — both Franz Fanon and Karl Marx — to challenge colonial politics and to plant ideological seeds of revolution.

Prior to publishing his dissertation, Coulthard establishes the connection to land and place, writing:

> Over the last 60 years it has become apparent to numerous people within our communities that the organizational imperatives of colonial-capital accumulation has signified an affront to this place-based understanding of what constitutes proper relations – relations between people, relations between humans and their environment, and relations between individuals and institutions of authority.

> (2010. p. 81).

Coulthard writes of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in the 1970s to elaborate on the interplay of land, connection and the interference of capitalism. The inquiry raised broad points around land-based relationships of Dene, and points to that resource as further pursuit of Elders perspectives. Coulthard's quote of Philip Blake (Coulthard, 2010, p. 81-83) describes the interplay further. While Coulthard's article does not specifically mention language, it does expand on the place-based epistemological way of being in the face of colonization.

Ultimately, each resource addressing Dene experiences and involving Dene communities confirms Dene as relationality as ceremonial, spiritual, and inherently connected to the environment and its inhabitants (Yantz, 2005; Preston, 2009; Marles, 1984; Walsh, 2015; Holden, 2013). This can be seen further through spiritual connection to the land, communication and dreaming, fasting, creation and birth of the process in being Dene, and land-based laws (Lamothe, 1993; Holden, 2013).

Describing a community-oriented response to inform the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Lamothe writes, "the elders involved in the traditional teaching methods workshops returned again and again to the recommendation that to be able to educate people to the Dene way of life, learning centres would have to be established on the land, where the leaders would re-introduce the Dene methods of teaching" (Lamothe, 1993, p. 41). These methods of teaching are directly related to Dene epistemologies, while self-determination in relation to the land connects Dene methods of teaching.

Preston, a non-Dene academic, published a dissertation recognizing Dene reconnection to the land as an act of sovereignty and self-determination. This work further acknowledges Dene relation to land, the support of community-based economics, the impacts of sovereignty, and the impact of the Ekati diamond mine on the environment, caribou and people of Łutsël K'é (2009).

John Hansen and Rose Antsanen write as Cree-Danish and Dene-German scholars both living in Northern Manitoba. This study, one of their many co-authored papers, looks to Indigenous epistemologies of resilience, and the prevalence of resilience among Indigenous ways of learning, itself "challenged by a history of colonialism and Eurocentrism" (2016, p. 1). In section three of their paper, Hansen and Antsanen describe how they conduct the semi-structured

interviews around protocols and ceremony held with nêhiyaw educators and Elders when in "discussion of how to reclaim and incorporate components that support resilience as part of formal and informal education systems in the modern context of Cree and Dene communities" (p.1). Hansen and Antsanen conclude their research with recommended changes to policies (p. 14).

**Linguistic research, observances and analyses.** Non-Indigenous linguists have conducted work or research on Indigenous languages since the beginning of colonization, sometimes with the goal of supporting Indigenous language revitalization (Seward, 2013; Sapir, 1915). Early continental examples include the 1663 production of the Eliot Bible, the first bible published in North America, published in Wômpanâak, the Wompanoag language (Seward, 2013). Early catechisms are excluded in this work looking to Dene Yatı linguistic research and observation, instead privileging work by linguists addressing Dene Yatı. Notably, early catechisms and early linguistic work excludes Dene pedagogies for Dene Yatı acquisition.

Many examples of linguistic work around Dene Yatı look to morphologies (Sapir, 1915; Blair, 2002; Rice et al., 2002; Rice, 2002; Holden, 2010; Rice, 2011; Holden, 2013; Saxon, 2016), morphosyntax (Jonk, 2009) and morphophonemics (Cook, 2006; Flynn, 2008; Snoek, 2015). Linguists above have consistently categorized Dëne Sųłiné together with Chipewyan, or as an Athabaskan language, and exclude Dene pedagogies. These works are often presented for academia, and linguistic jargon used may potentially render the works inaccessible as a resource to learners of Dene Yatı. As a note in accessing these resources, published research around Dene Yatı often remains behind an academic paywall, is presented in English through technical and specialized linguistic verbiage, and favours tools and publishing in English, through digital

technologies and non-natural environments to access those supports which are predominantly set in English. These linguistic works do, however, include partial lexicons.

The common theme of research by linguists looks to Dëne Sułiné as complex, as it is both polysynthetic and multitonal. As a polysynthetic language (Holden, 2010; Holden, 2013; Rice et al., 2002; Rice, 2018; Saxon, 2016), Dëne Sułiné uses prefixes and suffixes around a root verb word to say with one word what English might say in a sentence. Edward Sapir, an early and renowned linguist, writes:

> The typical Athabaskan verb may be analyzed as consisting of: adverbial prefix (including original noun stems, local postpositions, petrified demonstrative stems of chiefly objective reference, and certain other elements which do not occur in other connections) + objective pronominal prefix + demonstrative element referring to subject of verb + "first modal" element + "second modal" element + pronominal subject + "third modal" element + verb stem + temporal-modal suffix + syntactic suffix (these are best considered as enclitic particles). Any of these elements but the stem may, in a particular form, be missing; two or more of the same general type may be exemplified in a single form. The order of elements as given above varies slightly for different dialects.

> (Sapir, 1915, p. 540)

Dëne Sułiné is also multitonal, in that it uses high-tones, low-tones, and glottal stops in its pronunciation, which requires far more of the mouth to pronounce (Gessner, 1999) — addressed in what linguists would call morphophonemics (Gessner, 1999; Flynn, 2008; Cook, 2006; Rice, 2002).

Josh Holden is a non-Dene linguist whose work focuses on Dëne Sułiné. He is also likely the most published author writing about Dëne Sułiné. Holden's doctoral dissertation, which presents "a systematic lexical semantic study of Dëne Sųłiné," follows a Meaning-Text Theory perspective looking to semantic lexicography (2010, p. v). The Aboriginal Healing Foundation

would provide him with office space to conduct his work, while Dene Elders living in Dillon

would insist on providing their further insight and contributions to his research, despite already-

depleted funding (Holden, 2010, p. 3). In his thesis, Holden "finds significant differences

between Dëne Sųłine and English at all levels" in his summary (Holden, 2010). Since the

publication of that doctoral thesis, Holden has since used semi-ethnographic interviews in Dillon,

Saskatchewan, through a snowball data collection strategy to publish one of the most exhaustive

books on Dëne Sułiné morphology and lexicons (Holden, 2013, pp. 24-25). Holden describes

this work as informal, self-published pedagogical work designed to be used by Dene teachers in

language planning efforts, though he makes a concerted effort to publish specific land-based

concepts which are otherwise at risk of being lost (2013, p. XII). Holden recognizes that the

book cannot serve as a replacement for oral knowledge and means of sharing (2013, p. XIII).

Holden would later work at University nuhelot'įne thaiyots'į nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills in

support of Dëne Sułiné language acquisition programs.

### *Factors affecting Dene Dedlıne Yatı Vitality in Tu Nedhé*

The vitality of non-Dene Indigenous languages on this continent has been affected by three

main catalysts, which are colonization, capitalism, and Christianity (Whiskeyjack and Napier,

2020). Through the process reviewing materials for this literature review, and for the literature

review above, it has proved evident that Dene Dedlıne language loss is a direct result of

colonization (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010), in the removal of Indigenous Peoples

from their lands and subsequent diaspora (RCAP, 1996), exploitation of Indigenous knowledges,

and the forced imposition of Treaties 8 and 11 (Smith, 1999; Lamothe, 1996); Capitalism, as

conducted through resource extraction by various industries has subsequently displaced of

Indigenous Peoples — including Dene — in favour of industrial projects (Parlee, 2015; Spyce, 2009), the government-sanctioned fur trades and hunting (Taylor and Friedel, 2011, p. 815), and the Anglophonic bias in the conduct of work and participation in economies (Hernandez et al., 2015, p. 8, 9; Smith, 1999, p. 2); and Christianity, through religious and ideological imperialism as a catalyst for trauma upon Indigenous language transmission, as religious influence co-opted Indigenous languages to develop early linguistic catechisms for religious conversions, and carried horrific abuses through residential schooling as enabled by the Government or Dominion of Canada (Lamothe, 1996; Perrault, 1857; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011).

A commissioned report around Dene language vitality in the NWT, Hernandez et al. mention the problems faced around the revitalization of Arctic Dene languages. Notably, three out of the four authors of this commission are Dene women. The commission finds three themes of current situations affecting Dene language vitality, which are Indigenous dimensions; Regional, State or Territorial dimensions; and Federal dimensions (Hernandez et al., 2015). These are included in the appendices, along with the commission's proposed solutions (SEE APPENDIX B). Their work also sees Indigenous languages as recognized as Official Languages by the Government of the Northwest Territories with subsequent funding (GNWT, 2018) — "however, there is no mechanism to monitor progress, making it difficult to gauge the effectiveness of programs" (Hernandez, 2015, p. 10). In informing the urgency of Dene and Inuit language revitalization and acquisition, Hernandez et al. also note, "In Arctic Canada most of the fluent speakers are Elderly" (2015).

**Respective Indigenous language legislation.** Of Canada's provinces and territories, the Government of the Northwest Territories took the initiative in officiating Indigenous languages

through their NWT Official Languages Act (Department of Justice, 1988). The GNWT now recognizes Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̨chǫ as official languages, in addition to English and French (ibid.). As Dene Dedlıne Yatı is considered with Dëné Sųłıně̌ Yatı́ in the Chipewyan delineation, there remains little data, and further, limited supports, for Dene Dedlıne Yatı. However, the Government of the Northwest Territories has formally recognized Dëne Dédlıné Yatıé as a language, on their website and in their recently published languages curriculum (Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat, nd.; Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2020). As the Government of the Northwest Territories has a mandated commitment to providing territorial services in Indigenous languages and supporting language instruction within Chipewyan, they are one the few distinguishing between the two Dene Yatı.

The GNWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, provides funding intended to support Indigenous language revitalization programming through the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat (Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2018). Funding provided by ECE through their Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat is allocated to various regional school districts, as well as to First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments, referred to also here as Indigenous governments (ibid.). Denínu Kué (Fort Resolution) and Tthebátch'á (Fort Smith) are the regions within Tu Nedhé with the most fluent Dene Dedlıne speakers (Personal conversation, Eileen Beaver, 2018). Both of these regions are within the jurisdiction of multiple Indigenous governments responsible for the production of Indigenous language programming — including Akaitcho Territorial Government, or ATG; Kátł'odeeche First Nation in Kátł'odeeche; Salt River First Nation, or SRFN; and my own nation, Northwest Territory Métis Nation (NWTMN). The bulk of funds dedicated towards

language programming are delivered from the Government of the Northwest Territories to both ATG and NWTMN (GNWT, 2018). Notably, ECE has recently develop a languages curriculum for K-12 students for graduated language learning, which prioritizes land-based learning (Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2020).

While the GNWT provides the richest financial and organizational commitments to Dene Dedlıne Yatı in the region, recent national and international policies have been developed with the intention to support Indigenous language revitalization as a whole. Canada has historically developed policies to federally sanction cultural genocide through residential schools and forced diaspora (MMIWG, 2019; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 1-3; United Nations, 2007, p. 5). In 2007, the United Nations provided several articles in its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, related directly to languages (United Nations, 2007). Canada has yet to formally implement UNDRIP (House of Commons, 2018).

The Government of Canada has, however, recently passed the Official Languages Act in 2019 as An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages, providing provisional federal support which has not yet been determined (Government of Canada, 2019). Canada's House of Commons has now passed the Indigenous Languages Act (House of Commons, 2019). This act was simultaneously discussed with Bill C-262*, An Act to implement UNDRIP*, which did not pass (House of Commons, 2018).  As noted by Sheri Benson, Member of Parliament during the third reading of Bill C-91 at the House of Commons meeting on May 2nd, 2019, a Dene Yatı speaker was not allowed to speak their language in the discussion of Bill C-91 (Benson, 2019).

The Indigenous Languages Act legally "establishes the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages," which among many things — commits to "supporting the efforts of

Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages" and "undertaking research or studies in respect of the provision of funding for the purposes of supporting Indigenous languages and in respect of the use of Indigenous languages in Canada" (Government of Canada, 2019). While consultation processes for the now-passed federal Indigenous Languages Act are being held at the point of publication of this collaborative work, there remains public and private skepticism over the jurisdictional issue of whether Indigenous languages should be the responsibility of a federal government — several Indigenous representative groups and individuals expressed concerns around the delivery of supports for reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining, and strengthening Indigenous languages, and how those funds are delineated (Palmater, 2019; Fraser, 2019; ITK, 2019; BCAFN, 2019).

**Summary and conclusion: Collaborative work moving forward**

While there are existent or developing policies around Indigenous languages from federal, territorial and Indigenous governments, the vitality of Dene Yatı is still in decline. There are no references by linguists acknowledging Dene Dedlıne Yatı, although linguists do identify differences between /t/-dialect and /k/-dialect Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́. Where Dene languages are learned in place, Dene Dedlıne Yatı is specific to Tu Nedhé. There are other areas of /t/-dialect speakers, though they refer to their language as Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́. Tu Nedhé has faced ongoing catalysts of language trauma which have directly and indirectly impacted the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı and connection to lands within Tu Nedhé. Nearly all public Dene Dedlıne Yatı materials and resources are produced in partnership with fluent speakers and knowledge holders through regional language education programs, by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, as delivered through the South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC),

Akaitcho Territorial Government's Indigenous Languages Program, and Northwest Territory Métis Nation's Indigenous Languages Program. Along with a lack of publicly available resources, immersive place-based Dene ways of learning have not been generally accessible or available to learners.

This literature review is limited in that it does not include Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources or games which were produced by teachers or resources developers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. This literature review notes Dene have been written about by non-Dene academics, there is a richer and more comprehensive perspective in Dene authorship about Dene. The literature identifies the strengths in Dene epistemologies as relating to the land, botanical medicine, animal migrations, and total ecologies, while simultaneously noting a lack of resources supporting these Dene epistemologies.

This collaborative work fills the gap in literature in which Dene Dedlıne Yatı is not specifically acknowledged within Dene Yatı in academia. This work also identifies Dene ways of learning supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition, revitalization and reclamation. Further, this work proposes policies related to the federal, territorial, and Indigenous governments delivering language funding in Tu Nedhé. This collaborative work is a needed response to the historic exclusion of Dene from their own education programming. As Canada and its provinces or territories determine the future of Indigenous language programming through pan-Indigenous applications, this collaborative project works with Dene Dedlıne to address the tools and frameworks for Dene to deliver their own Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming and materials which respond to Dene epistemologies and pedagogies on the land for which they hold language-based ancestral knowledge.

## CHAPTER III: COLLABORATIVE WORK DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This collaborative work intends to decenter academic publishing power from me as a researcher to instead use this capstone project as a platform for Dene speakers, teachers and learners to share their experiential insights towards Dene Yatı acquisition. While research on Dene language revitalization occasionally posits Dene worldviews and ways of being, that work and knowledge needs to appropriate favour Dene Dedlıne Yatı instruction. This work further calls for implementing the identified epistemological needs of Dene in support of Dene Dedlıne pedagogies and acquisition by centering and sharing the voices of Dene Dedlıne knowledge holders and speakers regarding pedagogies for teaching Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

This work was conducted through an Indigenous Research Method guided by Dene protocols of respect to each other and to the knowledges shared, while also informed by protocols within the Community-Based Participatory Research, or CBPR, approach (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Castleden, Morgan and Lamb, 2012). This collaboration is inherently guided through a postcolonial Indigenous Critical Indigenous Theory lens (Kolopenuk, 2020), through a Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA (Catalano and Waugh, 2020). Speakers and learners shared their words through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, and had an opportunity to review their words. After their approval, their words were then themed into bundles through a critical discourse analysis favouring Dene pedagogies and which identifies effective Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming, materials and resource building as voiced by Dene. After this word bundling as discourse analysis, this capstone project was then shared with knowledge holders for review, for potential editing and approval prior to submitting this capstone project for review by the examining committee.

**Theoretical Contexts**

This collaborative work is guided by three theoretical contexts: Dene epistemologies from Northern Dene (Hansen and Antsanen, 2016; Coulthard, 2014), and as voiced by the communities and community members involved; a Critical Indigenous Theory foundation, as initiated by nêhiyaw scholar Jessica Kolopenuk (2020) and Māori scholar Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012); and insider-outsider foundation through an Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM), as drawn from the works from both Māori scholar Dr. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and nêhiyaw scholar Dr. Margaret Kovach (2009).

*Dene epistemologies*

This collaborative work centers Dene epistemologies by prioritizing community transgenerational ancestral Dene knowledge, language and cultural transmission. These Dene epistemological methods may include storytelling, ceremony, medicine, drumming, music, dance, song, hand games (Neyelle, 2018); stewardship and relationships with the land, water, stars and caribou (ibid.); as well as means of travel, hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting medicines, plants and berries through kinship relations which are ancestrally and inherently connected to the land (Hansen and Antsanen, 2016; Spyce, 2009; Marles, 1984; Coulthard, 2014). Contemporary Dene epistemologies may also include creative uses of digital and non-digital technologies, as addressed in the results of these community conversations. Digital pedagogies have been considered by collaborators — either Elders, teachers, teachers or learners — and will be considered according to teaching and learning processes.

Dr. Glen Coulthard, a revolutionary Dene theorist (2014) presents several examples of Dene pedagogies through the Critical Indigenous Theory which present further understanding, culture, historical, and present context around factors directly affecting Dene Yatı language presence and fluency. Coulthard (2014) positions Dene epistemologies through a lens also informed by the seminal works of Karl Marx and Franz Fanon. Ultimately, the work conducted by Coulthard (2012) looks to "land-as-resource central to our material survival; land-as-identity, as constitutive of who we are as people; and land as relationship" (p. 62). Because of this, Dene epistemologies and pedagogies centering the land for learning Dene Dedlıne Yatı are considered necessary in this collaborative work.

### *Critical Indigenous Theory*

Critical Indigenous Theory, as an approach, is similar to critical theory in that it decenters the institutional structure maintained by proxy of settler-colonialism, even in challenging the power relations associated with publishing post-secondary institutions (Kolopenuk, 2020). Similarly, this work seeks to decenter power relations from my role as researcher instead to co-collaborator through Indigenous Research Methodologies. In both approach and methodology, steps have been taken to ensure communities are involved throughout the process of collaboration, through community protocol and processes which provide spaces for knowledge holders to continually offer or withdraw consent, and to review their words in this work several times prior to this capstone's review by the examining committee.

On the critical pedagogy of decolonization, Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes:

> A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the

> Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *re*writing and *re*righting our position in history.

> (Smith, 2012, p. 28)

Tracey Lindberg, a nêhiyaw-Métis lawyer and scholar and member of Kelly Lake Cree Nation, provides a groundwork for Critical Indigenous Theory, in her doctorate of law dissertation, Critical Indigenous Legal Theory (2007). Lindberg writes that one must develop their own Critical Indigenous Theory, in order to "rejuvenate, continue to teach and re-teach the fundamental principles of Indigenous values, laws and understandings so that there is fluency and open discussion… we need to take care to not confuse humility with silence…" and develop "the capacity for critical thought grounded in places that are balanced and where reciprocal relations based upon philosophies and the language of respect and rightful relations is fluent" (p. 115).

In this same way, this collaborative work seeks to affirm Dene Dedlıne identity and language against years of imperialism imposed by linguists, governments and institutions by providing a platform for Dene to identify the issues and narratives which most appropriately respond to the issue of revitalizing Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

### *Indigenous Research Methodology*

Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) relies on relational reciprocity with the communities partnering in collaboration on a project — research or otherwise (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Castleden et al. share that work within the Community-Based Participatory Research, or CBPR, methodology prioritizes bi-direction collaboration, co-learning, and co-creational information dissemination to those who contribute to the work (Castleden, Morgan and Lamb, 2012). Where CBPR deters from extractive research, and instead posits collaborations as with, by and for the community, this work is also held in the Dene protocols from which the words are from, through IRM informed by CBPR. This approach identifies co-creational approaches, particularly with my community, with the intent of in offsetting the power imbalance typically held by the University of Alberta or the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Indigenous Research Methodology, as guided by my speakers and learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, identifies co-creational approaches which aide in offsetting the power balance typically held by myself as the researcher, or institutions associated with publishing, such as the University of Alberta or the Government of the Northwest Territories. This collaborative work is guided by an Elder and language instructor of Dene Dedlıne Yatı — Eileen Beaver, a respected Tthebáchághet'ıné. She has helped me understand my dual role as a taghe-tıné academic. Through collaboration with Eileen Beaver and other Dene Yatı speakers and learners, the design of this capstone project focuses the platform away from "my research," instead towards "our collaborative work." Instead of producing research on Dene, this collaborative work responds to a literature gap and proposes a framework and solution for Dene Dedlıne Yatı learning as voiced by Dene.

nêhiyaw scholar Dr. Margaret Kovach writes of insider-outsider research, and requiring approval from those community members before publishing works. Kovach writes:

> We all carry our own experiences and knowing about our culture, and while we can share some general insights with each other we are also outsiders. In terms of the power dynamics in the researcher and collaborator relationship, the power of the researcher is in communicating his or her own interpretations of the teachings. To mitigate this power differential, to value the relationship and be congruent with the methodology, collaborators had final approval of their contributions.

> (Kovach, 2009, p. 51)

In a way which rings true for this collaborative work, Tuhiwai Smith writes:

> There are also protocols of respect and practices of reciprocity. The relatively simple task of gaining informed consent can take anything from a moment to months and years. Some indigenous students have had to travel back and forth during the course of a year to gain the trust of an individual elder, and have been surprised that without realizing it they gained all the things they were seeking with much more insight, and that in the process they gained a grandparent or a friend.

> (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 229)

**Collaborative Work Design and Method**

This collaborative work looks at Dene epistemologies as informed by an Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) and guided by a postcolonial Indigenous Critical Indigenous Theory approach. Interviews with Dene Dedlıne speakers and learners were held through semi-structured, one-on-one environments. Consent, along with collaborative and purposeful dialogue guides each aspect of this collaborative work (SEE APPENDIX C). This collaborative work had been approved through processes through both the University of Alberta's Alberta Research Information Services, or ARISE, (SEE APPENDIX D), as well as the Aurora Research Institute's Portal for Online Licence Applications for Research, or POLAR (SEE APPENDIX E).

A non-Indigenous academic might conduct this work with an applied ethnolinguistic approach through a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method. Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack instead recommended methodologies which center and position a community-first approach in her guidance with me as her Graduate Research Assistant, as well as in her role as my capstone supervisor. Further, Dr. Martin Guardado opened the possibility of avoiding the historical connotations of ethnographies, to instead hold this project as collaborative work with/by/for communities. However, as this is research collaborated upon with, by and for my home Indigenous community, this is done instead through an insider-outsider Indigenous Research Methodology, lightly informed by a focused ethnolinguistic method through a Critical Indigenous. Theory approach, with the words of knowledge holders "bundled" (Wemigwans, 2018) into themes through a Critical Discourse Analysis.

***Collaboration with Indigenous communities and people.*** As an insider-outsider Indigenous person working with my community, collaborating on an academic project means dedicating myself to several commitments to myself, communities, individuals and the land. It could mean beginning conversations in ceremony, such as smudging throughout this process; including specific Elders who are appropriate for the project to ensure this work is done respectfully and well for the community; including those Elders, speakers and learners in reviewing and approving their own words once those words are transcribed; compensating Indigenous knowledge holders fairly for the time, words and experiences; providing a translator if needed, and compensating them appropriately for their expertise; most importantly, checking in with those who shared their knowledges before providing this piece to an examination committee, to ensure the words of those who shared them are representative of their thoughts; and lastly, sharing all published works back with communities. To do this means remaining patient with the

process and maintain enduring respect for those knowledge holders various, while simultaneously remaining with the boundaries institutionalized research and academic approaches to still prioritize voices of Dene who shared their time and words.

For those linguists and academics developing partnerships with Indigenous communities outside of their own community, a collaborative partnership might mean reaching out to nation leadership; establishing and paying Elders and youth to contribute in an Elders' and Youth Advisory Council; developing terms of agreement with the community, with clear respect to the Indigenous community's ownership over Indigenous intellectual property and their own words; ensuring the community has their own copy of any research or materials gathered or published with, for, or about the community; and inviting community members to participate in academic panels beside, or instead of, the published media-makers and academics.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that this collaborative work seeks to answer are:

**RQ1:** What is the current state of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

**RQ2:** What are the epistemologies supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

**RQ3:** Which factors affect the learning of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé?

**RQ4:** What are the recommendations from Dene Dedlıne to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı?

Those involved in carrying out this collaborative work may also identify topics which had not yet previously been questioned, considered or included. This collaborative work is meant

to provide support work for Dene Dedlıne Yatı instructors and learners to identify the specific challenges around language learning and instruction. Knowledge holders further respond to federal and territorial jurisdiction around Indigenous languages, leveraging legislation towards community-based Dene solutions responding to the decline in Indigenous language vitality. Further, keeping an open-ended nature to asking these questions within Indigenous Research Methodology allowed for fluid and organic conversation and collaboration, with room for elaboration and for conversational responses which draw from conversations to fill gaps in topics not yet discussed by those sharing their words through interviews. Respectively, these questions guide the process of identifying the pedagogical and epistemological needs of Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners and instructors, and the process of answering these questions requires careful and deliberate avoidance of extraction of sacred ancestral knowledge as carried by Dene knowledge holders.

*Sampling Strategy — Knowledge Holders*

This community-based work necessitated purposeful sampling. This meant deliberation in building rapport and collaborating with Dene Dedlıne Yatı instructors and learners through protocol, with the intent to work with Dene Dedlıne language learners and instructors until saturation was reached for this collaboration — and, frankly, well after the duration of this project, as these relationships would need to be sustained for my own learning. I did not know how many Dene Yatı learners or speakers to interview at the outset of this collaboration, although the process eventually revealed itself in answers to different approaches to Dene pedagogies and epistemologies for language learning.

**Table 4.1**

*Participant Profile*

| Parameter | Qualifier | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Familial Role | betsíe (their grandfather) | 6 |
| | betsoné (their grandmother) | 6 |
| Age | 35-45 | 1 |
| | 45-55 | 4 |
| | 65-75 | 5 |
| | 75-85 | 1 |
| | 85-90 | 1 |
| Location | Denínu Kué (Fort Resolution) | 9 |
| | Tthebáchághe (Fort Smith) | 1 |
| | Łutsel K'e (Lutselk'e) | 1 |
| | Beghúledesche (Yellowknife) | 1 |
| Dene Yatı Fluency | Semi-fluent or learning | 1 |
| | Moderate Speaker | 1 |
| | Fluent speaker | 1 |
| | First language speaker | 9 |
| Educator Status | Never taught Dene Yatı | 4 |
| | Occasionally taught Dene Yatı | 4 |
| | Taught Dene Yatı for years | 4 |
| Dene Yatı | Dene Dedlıne Yatı | 9 |
| | Dëné Sųłıné̃ Yatı́ | 3 |

*Note: While not everyone included is a grandfather or grandmother, the terms betsíe and betsoné are used for those who will be either future grandmothers and grandmothers.*

I involved knowledge holders in a range of demographics and contexts, though all of those who shared their words are from Tu Nedhé, as Dene Dedlıne Yatı is primarily spoken in the southern end of Tu Nedhé. Demographic variance attempting to find a broad spectrum for age, gender, proximity to Tu Nedhé, variations in fluency and role in teaching Dene Yatı — while still drawing upon further collaborators through a purposeful snowball sampling strategy

(SEE APPENDIX F). Actively accounting for this diversity allowed for rich and diverse knowledge sharing around Dene-led Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming and resource-development. Those who contributed their words were Dene Dedlıne instructors or fluent speakers, all above the age of 18, and were willing to have their suggestions towards the means of reclamation and acquisition, particularly with regard to Dene Dedlıne Yatı. This collaborative work includes the voices of twelve Dene — eight who are fluent speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı/ Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, three speakers of Dëné Sųłıně̆ Yatı́, and one learner of Dënedédlı́né Yëtí. Each person who shared their knowledges received an honorarium of $250 and a kerchief which could be used for harvesting, berry-picking, or covering one's face during COVID-19. Honoraria were funded by the Indigenous Languages Program of the Northwest Territory Métis Nation.

Those who shared their words and voices were mostly emerging Elders who grew up speaking Dene Dedlıne Yatı as a first language, and have taught the language in an instructional capacity and who were previous instructors of Dene Dedlıne Yatı/Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, whether formal or informal. Those who shared their words and voices also included Dene public officials within Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh electoral district; one learner of Dënedédlı́né Yëtí; instructors and language managers for Dene Dedlıne Yatı; and a speaker of Dëné Sųłıně̆ Yatı́ who previously held the position of Official Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories. Most of those involved in this work grew up on the land, in either Rocher River or Taltson River, and most now live in Denı́nu Kué (Fort Resolution).

**Data Gathering Strategies**

This work was done through informal, but recorded semi-structured interviews held with Dëné teachers and learners in Tu Nedhé. Those who chose to share their knowledge were mostly from communities in Tu Nedhé, and were speakers and teachers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

*Semi-structured qualitative interviews*

I conducted interviews with Dene Dedlıne speakers, learners and teachers over the phone, and in English with the option of providing a Dene Dedlıne Yatı translator. The interviews lasted between half an hour to two hours. While English is the most spoken language in the region, and all interviews were held primarily in English, translations were confirmed with speakers and writers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. There were varying accounts as to how Dene Dedlıne Yatı should be spelled. Those who shared their words were invited to review the inclusion of their words in this collaborative capstone project before this capstone project went to the examining committee. I held all of these interviews within view of trees in my vehicle, which acted as a sound booth.

The relaxed format of semi-structured one-on-one interviews allowed for reflexivity in redefining the work's scope, needs, and questions, while also allowing room to expand on certain topics and themes as they emerged in this the collaborative work. I recorded the interviews, transcribed them and returned the transcripts to those who shared their words. The recorded interviews will be held in an external hard-drive for five years following date of acceptance of this capstone project. Consent for participation is an ongoing process, established through an invitation to participate, recorded over the phone for sake of institutional ethics. Those who shared their interviews maintain sovereignty over their words as exercised through their

ownership, control, access and possession, or OCAP® (First Nations Centre, 2005). That is, those involved have been sent their words with multiple opportunities to review, edit or withdraw sections or the entirety of their interview and their words in the context of this work before it was submitted. Knowledge holders each keep transcribed copies of all of their own independent copies, as maintained through OCAP® (ibid.).

**Critical Discourse Analysis Technique**

This collaborative work identifies themes and patterns around Dene Dedlıne instruction and acquisition through the bundling of patterns, themes and words emergent in interviews. I applied a Critical Indigenous Theory approach, as proposed by both nêhiyaw scholar Jessica Kolopenuk (2020) and Māori scholar Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), but conducted through Dene relation and kinship. Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA, fits within Critical Indigenous Theory as CDA pursues the "extension to non-verbal" communication by identifying the institutionalized structures or forces which continually impact language vitality (Catalano and Waugh, 2020, p. 3). In the same way Critical Indigenous theory makes room for CDA, CDA fits within the field of Critical Applied Linguistics — CDA looks to speech as it occurs naturally, as larger units of complex language acquisition, while going beyond the study of language through grammars and instead through an observance of the institutional structures in play which translate those observances into recommended actions (Catalano and Waugh, 2020, p. 248-252).

As a theoretical framework, Indigenous Critical Theory invites this CDA through critical applied linguistics (Catalano and Waugh, 2020, p. 248), as there are explicit references to the systemic relations of colonial institutions as catalysts against language vitality, thereby

necessitating this work to be carried through a critical applied linguistics method (ibid.),

simultaneous to Dene-oriented Indigenous Research Methodology.

*Critical Discourse Analysis of the semi-structured interviews*

First, I returned the transcriptions of the recordings to those who shared their words.

Following the review, editing and approval from the Dene Dedlıne Elders, speakers, teachers and

learners, I applied a critical discourse analysis to recognize patterns of thought responding to

Dene Dedlıne Indigenous language acquisition, reclamation and revitalization as related to

dynamics of power structures which affect the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Second, I found

phrases, words and concepts which respond to the critical insights expressed by knowledge

holders. Third, I bundled these words into themes recognizing an understanding of the pertinent

and emerging discussions around Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition, reclamation and revitalization

and returned the words back to knowledge holders for their review again. The concept of

bundling, or treating these words as digital bundles, is drawn from Dr. Jennifer Wemigwans,

Anishinaabekwe scholar who proposes community-minded and directed solutions to "produce,

develop and think about the work that Indigenous Knowledge (in digital spaces) is doing…. to

think about the custodianship and eventual transfer of (one's work) as a digital bundle for the

next seven generations" (2018, p. 225).

Conducting either a discourse or content analysis leaves data or research open to

subjectivity and multiple plausible interpretations. To counter the potential for interpretivist

subjectivity around codification strategies and validity, I have shared the transcribed interviews

with collaborators, thereby ensure the integrity of their words and intent. Each of those who

shared their words were invited review, edit or withdraw their involvement in this capstone

project before this piece was submitted for examination. Knowledge holders were encouraged to review their words in this work, particularly in Chapter IV: Word Bundles and Discussion, as well as Chapter V: Recommendations: Policy, Community and Family Unit.

*Validity and Reliability*

Prior to publication, this collaborative work had been reviewed by each Elder, fluent speaker and knowledge keeper who shared their words. The words also came from multiple communities — including Fort Resolution, Yellowknife and Fort Smith — until saturation had been reached. More than five different First Nations and Métis governments were represented in this research. Importantly, the results of the research have been reviewed by each of the Elders and knowledge holders who have shared their words.

**Summary of Collaborative Design and Methodology**

This collaborative work is deliberately designed to respond to a lack of inclusion, collaboration and participation from Indigenous Peoples around the development of their own Indigenous language programming and resource-development. As Canada, its provinces and governing Indigenous nations hold jurisdiction to provide supports for the future of Indigenous language programming, this collaborative work positions Dene frameworks from Dene Dedlıne to determine the frameworks, tools and techniques for effective Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition, revitalization and reclamation. These questions respond to the decline in speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı by proposing land-based Dene epistemologies and pedagogies in the region through which the languages hold ancestral knowledge and connections.

## CHAPTER IV: WORD BUNDLES AND DISCUSSION

I have a deep sincerity and respect for the words shared in each discussion with these Dene knowledge holders. Most of those who shared their voices were consistent in addressing four emergent themes: they distinguished Dene Dedlıne Yatı as an Indigenous language which is facing decline; they identified tháıdene yatı hóneneltën (ancestral Dene language pedagogies) as the best methods for teaching Dene Dedlıne Yatı; they identified the catalysts and patterns of traumas which — historically and presently — impact the vitality of the language; and they made recommendations supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı revitalization around federal, territorial and Indigenous government policy, as well as for resource developers, communities, families and individual speakers and learners. Recommendations are available in the next chapter.

**Background of Knowledge holders**

Knowledge holders involve Elders, speakers, teachers and learners of Dene Yatı, with a focus on Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers. Eileen Beaver is the Dene Dedlıne Elder guiding this collaborative work and providing her words as an Elder-mentor and fluent speaker. She has been involved in this work her whole life and has invited me into her life as family prior to this capstone. Denise McKay and Henry McKay are both Elders and fluent speakers who grew up on the land in Rocher River, speaking Dene Dedlıne Yatı as a first language. Elizabeth (Sabet) Biscaye, a Special Advisor to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in the Northwest Territories, has provided many resources and continually mentors in Dëne Sųłıne. Catherine Boucher, a Tetsǫ́t'ıné (Copper Dene) Elder who grew up on the Taltson River and has developed Dënedédlį́né Yëtí resources using the schwa-/ë/. Ron Beaulieu is semi-fluent in the language and is often out on the land or providing consultancy work to many nations and

governments. Tommy Unka and Arthur Beck are Elders and friends who each grew up in Rocher River who are also both interpreter-translators for the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and have both taught the language on the land or in the classroom and participate in negotiations on behalf of their governments. The previous MLA for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, Tom Beaulieu, is a fluent speaker of Dene Dedlıne Yatı and is involved in this research. Snookie Catholique is another speaker of Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́, who is from Łutsel K'e and previously held the role of Official Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories. Nadine Delorme is the learner of Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, who has dedicated herself to reconnecting to her language. A small number of participants have chosen to remain anonymous, while most said they wanted to be identified by name and nation affiliation. I hold each of these people with a high degree of respect for each of their own contributions and words, and personally view their knowledge as richer than any academic degree.

**Word Bundles**

More than 40,000 words were recorded and dignified as word bundles, organized into themes below. In conversation, these words came with laughter, confession, relief and even duress and caution. Most themes came with consensus, while some were contrasted. While points raised by speakers are not quantified, they are reflected as opinions held by a majority, or most, which was more than half, closer to three-quarters of those who share their words; several, or a few, in which up to five knowledge holders expressed the same thought; or some, in which two or fewer knowledge holders raised a point. Some opinions were only expressed by speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, while other opinions are expressed by speakers of Dene Yatı as a whole. While most of the points and contexts are in agreement, there were several matters with distinguishably

contrary results, including discussions around the use of the schwa-/ĕ/ or the appropriateness of the Dene Laws and education models, such as the Dene Kede, in supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition. Each knowledge holder has had an opportunity to review the inclusion of their words below and make edits to their words as necessary, although this capstone project privileges orthographies from Eileen Beaver and the Dene Dedlıne Yatı dictionary (SSDEC, 2012).

### *Dene Dedlıne Yatı*

Eileen Beaver, the Elder guiding this collaborative work, shares, "The land gives you your language." Nearly all Dene Dedlıne expressed the significance and severity of distinguishing Dene Dedlıne Yatı from other Dene languages. Dene Dedlıne Yatı speaking knowledge holders and learners distinguished Dene Dedlıne Yatı in historical, local and temporal contexts, as well as in its distinctive worldview and language status.

**Place and History.** Place and history are significant in understanding Dene Yatı languages and way of being. Each knowledge holder reaffirmed that Na-Dene languages come from the land. This section addresses Na-Dene languages on this continent through the last several hundred-thousand years, leading to the specific importance of Rocher River and Taltson River for Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

*Na-Dene Languages (~500,000 B.C. — Today).* Na-Dene languages include Dene and Diné — groups of Indigenous Dene split between North and South across this continent. Many knowledge holders shared their insights into the contextualities between Na-Dene languages.

Eileen Beaver provides the understanding of what her father shared with her:

> Think of it as a tree. Na-Dene are the different trees, with Dene languages as the roots, Dene Yatı as the body of this tree and Dene Dedlıne Yatı as one of its many, many branches.
>
> Dene. Na-Dene was actually referred to before contact…. Dene is the nation, People. And then from there, you've got tribes. Different tribes, but all within. I guess it's the same as saying Athabasca and Algonquin…. We speak Dene Yatı, the Dene language…. They have Taltheilei Narrows, they have Caribou Eaters, they have Dogrib, Tłıchǫ, they have Slavey, they have South Slavey, they have Hare, they have all these ones. Those are all the branches of the Dene language.

Snookie Catholique, along with many Dene and knowledge holders, has visited Diné across the southern part of the continent in ceremony and relation.

She has found familiarity between Dene and Diné language groups:

> Some of the words that they use are different than ours…. The same with the Navajos. Like, for them, 'tłi,' which is 'dog' to us, 'tłi' is 'horse' to them…. And what I found too, what I just had to chuckle at, was that word 'grass,' 'tło'. And like, the Navajos use it, the Apaches use it, the Carriers use it, we use it. These are all the Athabascan (Na-Dene) speaking language groups and we all say 'tło'.

On the influence of the Diné languages on other Dene languages, Arthur Beck says Tłıchǫ's /k/-dialect is influenced from /k/-dialect Apache languages. He adds, "They came up a few hundred (thousand years) ago, because as the ice melted, they moved North, you see? Following the animals."

***Dene/Diné Separation Story (~300,000–~100,000 B.C. — today).*** Knowledge holders illustrated how Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dëné Sųłıně Yatį́ are spread across the continent following the migrations of the ice ages. The Dene/Diné separation story is told in many ways by many different Dene languages and communities. The common factor among Na-Dene is the great separation between Na-Dene, splitting the northern Dene and southern Diné.

Arthur Beck shared the historical context through the Dene Dedlıne perspective, addressing how both the /t/- and /k/-dialect of Dene Yatı follow migration through the ice ages. He has seen multiple moccasin impressions upon the solidification of once molten lava from when volcanoes used to be active in Tu Nedhé. He says Dene have lived through several inter-glacial periods, each occurring every hundred thousand years or so. He says the /t/-dialect, Dene Dedlıne Yatı, came up from the center of this continent, separating from Diné when two brothers got in a fight for leadership after their father, who was Chief, had died. Diné stayed south as farmers and ranchers while Dene went north following the buffalo, steadily migrating with the flow of the melting ice during one of the recent inter-glacial ice ages in the last two-to-three hundred thousand years. There are, of course, other variations on this famous separation story, dependent on the communities you ask. Following the split, Dene Dedlıne, or /t/-dialect followed the bison, whereas Dëné Sųłıně̆, or /k/-dialect followed the caribou — hence the Dene Dedlıne Yatı name for Dëné Sųłıně̆, *Ɂetthéndéle,* or "Caribou Eaters."

Arthur continues, noting that during the multiple ice ages, there was one massive lake made up of what is now referred to as Lake Athabasca, Great Bear Lake and Great Slave Lake (Tu Nedhé). Glaciologists refer to this as a superlake, Glacial Lake McConnell. This glacier is what caused the eskers and islands to have the long end running east to west. This understanding of glacial flow allows for Dene to not get lost in the barrenlands or around the Simpson Islands.

On the history of the Dene separation, Arthur adds:

> And also, the way the ice came, I think we had ice pass over us three different ways, but the one that did the most damage, and pushed all that dirt up on Cameron Hills and all that stuff, and made Cameron Hills what it is — while the ice pushed all the dirt and soil and whatnot, it also carved the rocks in the Simpson Islands area. So, the islands are shaped, they go from east to west. All

the islands go east to west, the long way is east to west, the narrow way is north and south of the island. So, the islands are all… that's because of the Ice Age. The ice pushed over.

Tommy Unka also mentioned the stories of the language predating the Ice Age, referred to by his grandmother as the "big ice."

> So, I'm sure her stories were a long, long, long time ago. But as far as we know, we've always had that language. I don't think it went too far from the area. It came with the area. And we're still in an area, no matter how fragmented it could be right now, the language I'm talking about now, we're still using the old Dene Dedlıne language.

On the presence of Dene during active volcanoes in the area since the Ice Age, Arthur adds that there remain airholes from volcanoes that keep the ice from freezing. He mentions they happen all over Simpson Islands and Taltson River area:

> … by my father's cabin you could see where the rock was still not solid, where somebody walked over it and there's moccasin tracks. And they sunk in, about, oh, I'd say, two and a half inches footprint walk across a rock. And another place is… (near) Yellowknife, across at Burwash. When I was there in 1978, I had my dogs, so I tied my dogs across from the city on the rock point there, and I had nets there and I was feeding my dogs working for the city after work. And I was walking the rocks and I seen the same thing there, where there was moccasin tracks, and they looked like that one….Yeah. And so, this country's amazing.

Snookie Catholique also mentioned the hundreds of thousands of years involved in the Dene and Diné separation and reunification, as shared by Dene and Diné. Snookie mentions several different references throughout the ice ages, as agreed on by Dene.

She says:

Hearing the stories from one of the Navajo — yeah it was from Arizona — and they were saying that Window Rock has special meaning to them because that is where — after the Ice Age — that was where the people came out of.

And I was talking to Eddie, Eddie Erasmus from Behchokǫ̀, and we were talking about languages and I didn't tell them about this Dene reunification, and he said, 'Our language evolved over years' and all this. And he said… back in Ice Age that's where the people went underground meaning they went under the ice, because that was the only way that they could survive. And now, he said it's around Russell Lake and that's where they have their annual gathering every year, it's right there and you can drive in there….

I think it was Bruce Starlight, actually, was telling me that he remembers his grandparents telling him about stories about how our people separated, and the Earth was starting to warm up then, and things were starting to melt. This was after the Ice Age. And, part of the ice broke and the people that were on the other side were floating away, and then the ones left on this side stayed on this side….

I mean that other story from the Apaches of how they remember hearing those stories too….

Snookie highlights the significance of the recent Dene Reunification event which brought together Dene and Diné — both Na-Dene. The Dene Reunification event had been prophesized for thousands of years, "And there's even old Legends," she says. "And this is one of the things that we were talking about, that was one of our main focus of our meeting when we met in Tsuu'tina Reserve — to bring all the Dene together. That was in October of last year, 2019."

*Municipalities, including Rocher River / Taltson River.* Rocher River, or Taltson River area, were the municipalities with the highest concentrations of Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers. This existed until the mid-1960s. Agreement on dates varies, but consensus among knowledge keepers was that the school in Rocher River burned down before 1960, and the Hudson Bay Company and local store shut down before 1965. Most knowledge keepers shared suspicions that the school was deliberately burnt down by a school official to make room for the Taltson Dam.

Eileen Beaver's grandfather grew up in Rocher River. On the richness of language and locality, she says:

> All the (Dene) from Roché River area are Dene Dedlıne…. My grandmother was Cree and French Métis, and my Grandfather was Dene, and they lived in Roché River which was a Dene community. But in that community, there were also Yellowknives. There were also, what do you call it, Copper Indians? And they were Dene too, just with a different accent and that. There were also Caribou Eaters, ʔetthéndéle. So, all of these languages were being used, so it wasn't unnatural, especially around when languages were being spoken, because during the fur trading days, it was common for each person to speak more than four or five different languages.

Denise McKay, who also grew up in Rocher River, says of her time in school, "The school burnt down, they never rebuilt it. So, everybody had to move to Fort Res(olution) for school. In 1949 they built a school there…. I used to go to school there. They should have just rebuilt the school, you know."

Henry McKay also grew up relatively in the area of Rocher River. He adds:

> Like I said, time back then it wasn't easy. And then when I go to visit people in their houses some people were still staying in tents when I was raised. You'd go see the Elders, and go visit people, just talking nothing but Chip, there was no English. They were talking in French too, sometimes.

Ron Beaulieu, who did not grow up in Rocher River, also adds to the context and history of the disbandment of the Rocher River community based on what he has heard:

> My ancestors are not from Rocher River. I'm from Beaulieus — you know, Salt River, Fort Smith, Fort Fitzgerald, Wood Buffalo Park, Fort Resolution. My understanding is that it's the government that shut down that place. They had intentionally burnt school, I think it was the principal, through word of mouth out of the Rocher River people that you talk to. Since the school burnt, they just distributed the people, and some went to Yellowknife, some Dettah, some ended

up here in Res, some Łutsel K'e, they just dispersed them.

Tom Beaulieu, previous MLA for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, grew up in Rocher River. He explains the story from the contextual history of the time and the consequential impacts of removing Indigenous Peoples from their homelands:

> What happened was, they had wanted to build the Taltson Dam, okay…. There was a group of people right on the river, right… close to the mouth, six miles from the mouth of the Taltson River, that dumps into the Great Slave Lake. There's a little river that shoots off the Taltson, referred to as Rocher River, and the community was built there. In 1960, the school burnt down. My mother was there trying to go up there with all the other young people.... They had their pails and everything ready, they were gonna throw snow on that little small fire. And the teacher was in the way, saying, 'It's too dangerous, don't do it.' He just kept running in front of them until the fire got out of hand, and he stepped aside. Right. So, the school was gone. They took the education system away, right there, from the people. Then, by 1964, this happened quickly, by 1964, every person that wanted their kid to get an education in that time, remember I was talking to you about that before, they wanted to get an education, so they moved into community — and one generation died. So, what that means is that there's a generation caught between education and trapping.
>
> And when they made it difficult to trap because they removed them so far from their traditional lands to Fort Resolution or Yellowknife. Many of them, the ones in Yellowknife, died on the streets. But the ones here, they existed, raised families and stuff, like, even though they were educated, low-income people, right. That was Rocher River. As soon as the people moved out of here, around 1964, the dam was built. And now they have mercury in the fish, but acceptable levels.

Tom Beaulieu adds that he brought up compensating the people of Rocher River several times during his time with the Legislative Assembly.

**Worldview.** All of those involved expressed a difference in worldview between Dene Yatı compared to ways of thinking in colonial languages. They noted that the worldview is different in Dene language.

Ron Beaulieu believes you must teach people in their language for them to have their identity, saying, "It's the very first thing. You gotta teach them their language, and then they'll know who they are and where they come from."

While this can be shared through Dene transgenerational remembrance, Dene are now forced to educate through colonial institutions. Nadine Delormes says this colonial worldview has been asserted onto hers, "Others (trying) to impose what our worldview is on ourselves from their worldview, and it's like, 'No, no, that's not how it works.' I have my own worldview — and mine is very different."

In a similar way, this language and worldview allows for interspecies communication. Arthur expands on this and the relational impacts on kinship through speaking Dene Yatı:

> Back in the day, they say, animals and people used to communicate, but the people lost communication with the animals. However, the animals didn't lose it yet — the language — they say. And I can't believe it, but I believe it because [sighing] I ran into a bear, and I didn't want to kill him. But I told him, if you don't leave that I was gonna shoot him, and I was gonna kill him and I was going to eat him. And I told him that, in my language. And to me, it's just like he shook his head no, and just went away. So, I don't know, but it really, really buggered me up there, but we both went different ways. Of course, I kept an eye on him [laughing].

***Differences from English — concepts and translations*.** Knowledge holders agree that Dene Yatı and English are critically differences in their worldview.

Snookie Catholique asserts that we must make this clear. "We really have to explain the fact that our language and English language do not even come close… We can't understand it. Like I said, the meanings, you know, and you just see so much clearer when you speak the language."

Ron Beaulieu agrees, saying, "You think different in your mother tongue, ah. In English, too, you think different, ah. If you're actually out in the environment, it's a totally different thing again, too. Like you said, you're not sitting between four walls. It's better to be out on the land."

Eileen Beaver agrees, saying that Dene words and concepts are within each phoneme and that the language paints a picture of meaning through each phoneme. As an example, Eileen describes the word hurélyą:

> If you asked even a fluent speaker exactly what hurélyą means — it's very hard to describe in one sentence, or in one word. You can try, you know, using a lot of these highfalutin English words and stuff, but it still would not fully comprehend everything. Because when you're saying hurélyą, as soon as a person says hurélyą, you're looking at the total environment: the sun is shining, it's nice and warm, there's a little breeze, you can hear birds chirping, you could hear kids laughing, you can hear people talking, fire crackling. It's just absolutely beautiful, like amazing — it's happy, good and happy.
>
> My brother once, at the door, once asked me, how do you really say "Good morning." And I said, well, in school when I'm teaching it, I say "K'abįdene nezǫ," but really you should be saying "K'abįdene hurélyą." It's like, the whole energy is just in sync, and it's just beautiful, there's not one negative picture or energy, you know what I mean? And that's what you see or that's what you feel, just the word alone when you understand the word, just reading that words alone or hearing it, it brings happiness to you.
>
> But you can't really, like, you try to describe it, there'll always be a little piece missing. You can't say it's a gorgeous day, because the elements and the essence are missing in that. You know, how gorgeous is it? What is gorgeous? But if you're saying the word hurélyą, immediately you're feeling the energy of happiness….

She continues, adding that the importance of those words is even different in humour in Dene Yatı and that Dene jokes and stories lose meaning in English.

Many language holders agreed, mentioning that English itself is viewed as the backwards language compared to Dene Yatı. Tommy Unka believes that differences in language lead to Dene starting to hunt differently:

> I can speak English, or I can think in Chipewyan, and I always laugh at the English side of my way of thinking, because it's so stupid… as opposed to the Chipewyan, the Dene way of looking at things, right, because we look at things in, in a kind of holistic, circular, everything is kind of a unit. And the white men world is so fragmented, they're still trying to figure it out, you know.
>
> And now, even the kids are learning to hunt differently because of that, because they don't have that language, they don't have the name places they don't have the name of the seasons, when the animals are about… So, we looked at the land differently, you know, we know that it's a provider….

Arthur Beck discusses adapting words from English into Dene Dedlıne Yatı:

> Like TV, for example. We never had TVs. So, there's no name for TV in our language. We had no electricity, so there's no name for electricity. But what we do is we, we try to describe it as the best we can. And we do…. Like say, for example, I talk about a power line, in English, that rope, that power line, has fire in it. You see, makes fire, sparks — electricity. So, in our language, we say, a rope that that sparks fire — tł'ul yéltail kúntí, a rope that sparks fire…. Which is fire in the line, if you break it down in English…
>
> And a lot of times, too, they (English speakers) had to say about 10 words to say something. We could say something it in about three or four words, the same thing — that's a difference there too.

Tom Beaulieu says, "So, in order to not think that way, (Dene Dedlıne Yatı) must become the predominant language in your life in order to start to think in Chipewyan. And it is easier to think in Chipewyan when you're in the bush [Laughing]"

*Transgenerational Remembrance.* Knowledge holders mentioned ancestral knowledge stories aside from Na-Dene stories through the ice ages and the Dene reunification prophecy.

Ron Beaulieu mentions hearing about the year without a summer (1816) from his Elders:

> I used to sit down with Elders, and… (they mentioned) a long time ago, there was no summer one year. As I studied in school, I found out that was true, but that was a few hundred years ago, but the history was passed down. And he was talking about stuff like that. And what these other guys were saying is exactly what I seen documented. It was from hundreds of years ago. They knew it — verbal history.

Snookie Catholique ties Dene transgenerational remembrance back to the contrast against English ways of thinking and into a part of Dene identity. Snookie says:

> (Dene Yatı́) is a peek into the past, and you can't do that with English. Like you see so, so much more, just by understanding. I mean, first of all, like, you begin to understand who you are. We have so many young people that are lost today because they don't know who the hell they are.

Nadine Delorme says that this transgenerational remembrance is also alive in the land-based skills passed down through her ancestors, as carried through the Delorme lineage.

> That's something I can talk about with you is genetic remembrance. It's there. Because when I came here, I had learned of the reputation of the Delorme hunters and sharpshooters like my grandpa…. I was like that, just a natural. So, I take great pride in being able to follow in my ancestors' footsteps as a hunter.

***Dene Law v. Colonial Laws.*** Several knowledge holders mentioned that Dene now live with two sets of laws — and that these laws are each distinctive to either Dene or colonial ways of thinking. In this respect, Dene law is different from Aboriginal law, in that Aboriginal law deals with Section 35 Aboriginal government structures — a term and concept validated in a supposed nation-to-nation relationship with federal Canada. Section 35 Aboriginal or Indigenous governments refer to formal government structures imposed through the Indian Act. Inversely, Aboriginal or Indigenous governance refers instead to ancestral Indigenous governance systems

predating contact with colonizers. Further, Dene Law is distinctive from the Dene Laws as proposed by George Blondin, referenced previously in the literature review and later as its own word bundle within recommendations for the South Slave Divisional Education Council.

Nadine describes her journey negotiating these laws, saying, "We're interpreters of two different worlds. We've had to live within two different worlds. There's the colonial world, and then the Indian world, and then there's the law — the law world that has total control, and is separate from those two other issues."

Where colonial law becomes a matter of federal, territorial/provincial, or municipal jurisdiction, Dene law relates to the interaction and well-being with the holistic environment together in Denendeh. Arthur Beck provides context around the difference between the two law systems:

> I live under two laws. The only difference between the two laws — the Dene law, you make a mistake and you get corrected, you know, and you get shunned if you did something really bad… whereas, federal law they don't tell you nothing, just throw you in the fucking cage and starve you, and then they keep you there for nine months and you're supposed to be rehabilitated, so they're not rehabilitated, nothing. That's the big difference in between the two laws.
>
> The Dene Laws is all about Earth, Mother Earth, Mother Earth and the plants and all the things that live on it — because we gotta live on it, side by side and synchronize together, you know, because as far as the Aboriginal people are concerned, all animals understand our native language.... There's stories about the giant, and the wolf, and the bear, and where they were in sync with the humans. We were side-by-side almost, we lived with them....
>
> Yeah, so ours is different, our Dene Laws is more to protect the environment, the plants and the animals for the future generations and now, and that's what it's really about. And, of course, help you help your neighbor and help your brothers, and all that stuff. And (the land) is the most important thing.

**Distinguishability.** Most knowledge holders were careful to distinguish Dene Dedlıne Yatı from Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́. While several language speakers refer to both dialects together Chipewyan, they also identified that Chipewyan is itself not the Dene Yatı word for the language. Most referred to Dene Dedlıne Yatı as /t/-dialect Chipewyan. Notably, speakers of Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ said it is more important that Dene learn any Dene Yatı in their region if they are not able to connect to the Dene language of their lineage and locality. Dene Dedlıne knowledge holders mentioned that /t/-dialect is the ancient dialect, and illustrated the differences between /t/- and /k/-dialect while addressing the vitality of specifically Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Denise McKay, who worked on the Dene Dedlıne Yatı dictionary, confirms this, saying "I'd rather call myself Dene Dedlıne. When we make the Chipewyan Dictionary, we just call ourselves Dene."

***Dene Dedlıne Yatı — the Ancient Language*.** Dene Dedlıne knowledge holders shared that this dialect of Dene Yatı is the ancient dialect of the language, noting that the language itself came with the land following the last ice age.

Asked how long Dene Dedlıne Yatı has existed in the region, Ron Beaulieu, land-user and speaker of the language, says:

> Ever since we existed. But I imagine it changed a bit, overall, through the centuries, ah. You know, it breaks off, and they turn into, probably Slavey, and Dogrib… and whole other linguals. But we were all one, at one time. But when you break apart geographically, for long distances over long periods of time, things evolve, they change, even language.

Eileen Beaver shares how grandfather explained the language to her, and of the significance of Dene Dedlıne Yatı representation:

'The original Dene language,' he said, 'we speak it. So, we say Dene Dedlıne,' he said. 'People would say, like, he explained with the word 'tu' and 'ku.' Because a lot of people, he said, they were Dëné Sułiné, they would actually have the /k/-dialect.' But I was finding, when I was doing transcribing, that a lot of people who were Dëné Sułiné, they would actually have the /k/-dialect. A lot of people in the /t/-dialect are now calling themselves Dëné Sułiné too, because, throughout time when it was going, it was promoted more as Dëné Sułiné than Dene Dedlıne. It only started being promoted with the language Dene Dedlıne when we started saying it at schools, when we're saying that the /t/-dialect, no, that's the Dene Dedlıne language. We're almost losing it. That's why we're adamant when saying Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Dedlıne means original. Dene Dedlıne Yatı, the original people's language.

Catherine Boucher agrees, mentioning the rarity of hearing Dënedédlı́né Yëtí. Talking of hearing Dënedédlı́né Yëtí mentioned in public, Catherine says, "Oh my goodness, at least they know there's two Dene languages now. Before they used to say only Dëné Sułınë́ now… up there. You know, my grandfather always told me — and he spoke Dënedédlı́né — that there was another language that said Dëné Sułınë́, so. And they call it Chipewyan."

Ron Beaulieu agrees that the vitality of Dëné Sułınë́ Yatı́ has affected the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. He says, "They say they're Chipewyan speakers. They are, yeah, but a different dialect than here. Yeah, because they're stronger in their language, so you have them on the board, but they speak different Chip than here."

Nadine Delorme, an active learner of the language with Catherine Boucher, says she tried to follow the root derivations of Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, and believes Dënedédlı́né Yëtí is the original derivation and dialect. "Yeah, I believe our language was the original derivation. It's the source, and that everything else was interpretive…. I see it as this: my language was the base, ancient language, and the others are dialects of it. Based on region, based on biodiversity, we have a lot of that."

*/t/-dialect compared to /k/-dialect.* The immediate difference addressed by speakers of both Dene Dedlıne Yatı (/t/-dialect) and Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatį́ (/k/-dialect) speakers is the letter dialect. The example shared by most knowledge holders was around the word water; the Dene Dedlıne Yatı word for water is "tu" while the Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatį́ word for water is "ku."

Those involved also agreed that there are now speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, Yellowknife, Hay River, former Rocher River, northern Manitoba, Cold Lake, Buffalo Lake, Pelican Narrows, Łutsel K'e, Stoney Rapids, Fond du Lac, Lac la Biche and Black Lake. Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatį́ is more often spoken in northern Saskatchewan, northern Manitoba, Łutsel K'e, Stoney Rapids, Fond du Lac, Black Lake. Notably, some communities have speakers of both dialects, while many communities who identify as speaking Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatį́ are speaking /t/-dialect Dene Yatı.

Catherine Boucher, a speaker and language designer for Dënedédlį́né Yëtí, raises some other examples of the differences between the two dialects, noting, "When they say ice, like, you know, we say tën, and they say kën. And we say yatį́ and they say yakį́. And it throws me off sometimes because I'm so used to the /k/-dialect."

Eileen Beaver laughed when she noted how close the two dialects are. She adds context, noting that the differences in dialect lead to a deeper meaning of the word in the dialect and patience when speaking with other speakers of Dene Yatı:

> So, when they say 'ku' for water, and I say 'ku,' I'm (thinking) 'Okay, Let's go.' And then, when I'm saying 'tu,' I'm saying, water, I'm saying 'ku,' I'm saying okay. And there's an /n/-dialect down towards Manitoba, they say 'nu,' for water. When 'nu,' actually in my language, means island. So, I just recognized, and once they realized I'm from up edza néne, like, in the North, and I'm speaking this

way, we respect each other, and we just continue on conversing like that.

She also mentions that those in other Dene Dedlıne Yatı speaking communities have different uses of land and culture, respective to their own recent histories of diaspora, migration and farming.

*Vitality of the language.* Those who shared their knowledge agreed that the health of Dene Yatı is challenged. Some knowledge holders have shared that they do not see the language as being able to be fully revitalized, while others have said we must act now in order to revitalize it. Eileen Beaver estimates that between all of the communities where Dene Dedlıne Yatı is spoken, there are roughly 300-600 speakers. Among those who shared their words, Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ is regarded by most as having a higher chance of vitality than Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Two speakers also referred to Dënedédlı́né as either "a lost tribe" or "a lost generation," following the diffraction of Rocher River. Catherine Boucher says, "So, we're all scattered, just like a lost tribe. That's the way I look at it." Tom Beaulieu adds to this, saying that the generation which likely had the strongest vitality for revitalization is the generation from Rocher River, "back then, when the language was still strong."

Tommy Unka shares that there is hope in speaking with the knowledge holders:

> A lot of the old languages are kind of going away. I have discussions with my friends who speak fluent Chipewyan, and we're seeing a lot of that old stuff of our grandmothers is going away.... I wouldn't say it's totally lost, the language, you know. There's still a lot of the holders, I'll call them holders, like myself and a few other people that are still maintaining life on the land and talking the language…

Ron Beaulieu expressed his concern that the generation he is a part of what may be the last generation to grow up speaking it as a first language:

> Yeah, now they're trying to revitalize the language after the language was almost gone…. I hate to say it, but. Yeah, I don't speak it fluently, but my generation is the last one, I think. Because there is some that speak it fluently. But, after them, even their own kids don't speak it…. we're a dying breed, I guess.

*Dene Hóneneltën — Ways of teaching Dene Dedlıne Yatı*

Those who shared their words identified two methods for learning the language: through on-the-land programming with various degrees of immersion, or through classroom-based education through various degrees of immersion. Most of the knowledge holders say they grew up speaking Dene Yatı as a first language on the land in their home community. Most who shared their words said that the land is the best venue for learning, and provided contextual situational tips for learning Dene Yatı when one is not on-the-land.

**Dene Ch'anie: The Dene Way.** Many of the knowledge holders discussed teaching the language through Dene Ch'anie, or the Dene way. This way of learning is environmental and holistic and relies on a whole-community level of immersion. In this way, Dene Ch'anie maintains deep ancestral connection between Dene language, identity and land. As a note, Dene Ch'anie is sacred and will not be addressed in very specific detail outside of language learning through the Dene Way.

Denise McKay shares the significance of learning the language through the Dene way growing up in the bush, near or in Rocher River:

It's my first language. I grew up in the bush, I was raised in the bush. Dene Way — you have to make fire in the morning, you have to heat up water to wash your face, you gotta cook breakfast. No fancy bacon and eggs, it's gotta be meat, or rabbit, or what you got, drymeat. People lived hard ways a long time ago — you eat good, you know, live on the land…. You have to bring wood in, or else bring the water, you gotta know how to get water, a little hole in the ice. That's a hard way, a long time ago. We all worked, seasonal.

They could learn in the bush, too. 'Cos they gotta know the way, too, you know, how us we were raised and that stuff. If they're broke down or something, they got to know what to do. Some of them, they don't even know how to make fire in the bush yet. I see that, other kids are like that. They take it too easy on the kids nowadays, people. Us, we weren't like that, we mostly just stayed in the bush. And you gotta work hard, all the time…. And then, you set rabbit snares, the more you visit, you get rabbit. You're not gonna go hungry if you stay in the bush.

Denise McKay laughed when she admitted during the interview that, at 85 years of age, she is feeling lazier.

Ron Beaulieu also ties together culture with the language and the land, saying the best way to teach Dene Yatı is "taking the kids out on the land and doing cultural things with them, and at the same time using the language and explaining to them how you do certain things, and how you say it in your language."

On Dene ways of orientation, Sabet Biscaye shares that she is quite saddened at the generational loss of understanding constellations in Dëné Yatí. "We have language for constellations, but nobody uses it anymore because people aren't out on the land using the constellations for guidance. So, a lot of that has been lost," she says.

Tommy Unka shares his grandfather's thoughts on Dene Ch'anie as being inherent within the language, saying:

And, like my grandfather used to say, it's the language of the land. So, you gotta respect that language, you know, knowing that language, he said, you're gonna survive on that land… And if you don't have your language, man, you're not going to retain too much of your culture…. That's what my grandfather said, you know, you got to have your language. If you don't know your language, Dene Ch'anie's got nothing to do with you. Because our culture…. it has its own language. That's not there anymore.

***Kinship and Connection with the Language.*** Some knowledge holders shared that it is easier to learn Dene Yatı through historical and ancestral connections which give "a foundation for the language" (Personal communication, Eileen Beaver, 2020).

In providing mentorship to a learner, Sabet Biscaye notes that she is more easily able to discuss kinship with someone who holds relations in the community:

> We talked about things that were personal. So, we first started off by talking about our family members — like my mother, my father, going through, we did a family tree… she's got two little children of her own, so also talking about that.
>
> I think the other thing, the advantage, and I think I need to qualify this — I know her family. I grew up in Rocher River, and her grandmother, and her family, and her father — they grew up in the same place. So, there's a lot of history, and family history, that we were able to draw upon. She was very interested in some of the stories and some of the cultural teachings, so, some of it went beyond just teaching the language. It also was about teaching the history of her people, and also of the cultural teachings. Where, if somebody who might not have had that history, it might take them a little bit longer to get what I was trying to say. So, that helped make a difference.

Catherine Boucher also suggested relying on familial relations and connections for learning individual sentences to practice when thinking of each person in the family:

> You have all these different people like, you know, your brother, your sister, your auntie or whatever. So, what I did was, I wrote each family member, one or the other, like my aunt is berry-picking sąk'ıe jıe łą, or seʔe tabı́ł xenelkí my uncle's gone for nets. You know, like that, instead of just using just one word, like I made a sentence of each. There's another one here: my son is fast, sedëneyuaze nátła.

> My grandmother's fleshing a moosehide, setsuné denídé ʔıghol. All these are different. There's another one here. Sechële'aze beghą súdi, my little brother is hilarious [laughing]. Like that.

***Experiential and relational land-based immersion.*** Dene Ch'anie is learned through ancestral and relational experiences with the land through the language, which is supported by communities and speakers in an immersion environment. In this way, experiential land-based immersion programming, from birth, offers the best way to learn Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dene Ch'anie. In a situation where one is not able to support experiential land-based immersion since birth, knowledge holders recommended supporting long land-based immersion bush camps which take place across all of the seasons.

"Take them in a bush, the best place. We got a culture camp right across from here at the island. It's just a drive away," says Henry McKay. He continues, noting the importance of gradual immersion:

> You might have to maybe go up there in the summertime, take the kids in the bush, stay with them. Bush camp, where they talk mostly Chip. Say most of the things in Chip, if you ask for something, you say it in Chip. You start 'em like that and show 'em how to do stuff. That's the way I learned how, in the bush. I learned how to do snare, hunting, all that. Everything, you could say it only in Chip, ah. But in town like this, it's not going to be easy to train 'em how to talk Chip. Maybe spend a couple of months in the bush, straight, and just talk straight Chip to them. Do stuff like that. Maybe I think it would work that way.

Arthur says he taught young learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı through on-the-land experiences and reiterates that gradual immersion through experiential land-based immersion is the best path towards Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition:

> For example, youth — what I was doing with the youth, when the culture camp hired me to go and teach youth to fix nets, set nets, and clean fish and all that.

Well, each species that I caught… and all the youth that were in the boat, I made them say it in our native language — for every fish, and even the gills, the fish parts. But I didn't want to hit them too much, with too much too soon. I only get the head and the tail and a couple of things in the language. I didn't want to go to detail because it'll confuse them…. It was really good because as I was running nets, as the fish were coming up, those kids were screaming in this native language what kind of fish it was [laughing]. It was it was kind of exciting. They were kind of excited-like, to see the next fish, so they want to be the first one to say it in their language.

And they're doing it. You're talking the language, but you're also showing them how to do it and what you're doing. Because those youth that I took out and show them how to set nets and stuff, they will remember that forever. And if they have a net, they're living on Great Slave Lake, or any body of water that's in Northwest Territory that's flowing, they'll always eat.

Tommy Unka explains how he learned the language, as well as the frustration he had in teaching the language in a classroom as opposed to a land-based learning environment:

Everything about my language was with the land, and had to do with the land, and being on the land and stuff like that. So, you know, teaching, for me, I have a hard time. I did teach a little bit in the language, in class as a substitute teacher and stuff like that. And teaching them the alphabet, blah, blah, blah, in the classroom environment, with a little picture of a little flower and little picture of this. For me… I would rather be out in the open, or you're looking at a flower, you're looking at a tree and naming all the different parts and the kids are holding it in their hand and smelling it, whatever. You know, for me, that was the way I learned about the names of flowers and rivers and whatever, you know, and that was part of the tool that we use to get to where I was with my language. And that was very invaluable too, the way my grandfather taught me that language on the land, you know, in the rabbit snares, or going for nets, or hunting in the delta, stuff like that, you know, hunting muskrats — and my language developed… from the activity, also — not so much sitting at home, and doing whatever ǫ ę į ą [enunciating vowels].

Tom Beaulieu also addresses the challenges with teaching a land-based language in a classroom. He says Dene Yatı needs to be taught through immersion, as it "is language of necessity and it's very difficult for it to be taught in school because it's situational." He also mentions that it is difficult to revitalize the Dene Yatı if the language is viewed as unnecessary:

Because it becomes unnecessary — as much as I hate to say that, the language becomes unnecessary. So, even today, you and I, if we both were to communicate in Chipewyan, that's what we'd be doing — (hunting on-the-land)….

So, like, if you and I are hunting in the bush, then I teach you the language…. Because it's a language of necessity. I like to say there's no if, ands or buts — they only use words that are essential for survival. But when you go in the bush, you learn the essential words of hunting, and like I said, our language is a language of survival, so those are the places where people have picked up the language.

On the topic of teaching the Dene Way, Catherine Boucher adds, "We never know what's gonna happen to the world — so survival skills, right?"

*Dene Calendar: Moons and Seasons.* On Dene relationality with the land, several knowledge holders mentioned that land-based learning — whether through Dene Ch'anie or through the classroom — must be seasonally-oriented. Dene seasons expand past four Eurocentric seasons to include parts of spring, winter and fall related to the traversing ice.

Eileen Beaver was clear on prioritizing the Dene calendar, which are related to either hunting or harvesting:

So, you had to do something with them, whether talking about the birds coming back, or you know, like, the early springtime, or the late spring thaw. You know, learning different words of the snow, and haluka, early spring, why it's called haluka because it is getting warmer but still cold enough that everything freezes overnight, and then it thaws and freezes, and that ice forming in early spring is called "Haluka." Also like the different stages of the river, on this ice how it breaks on the ice and stuff. It doesn't just break up one day and then it's gone. There is a process happening during a spring thaw. The calendar of each month will describe the months' activities or animals' action, like certain patterns. Łuk'e is the official word for Spring-time but it actually means 'fishing camp season'. And so, the students — they're learning both the men and the women's calendar at the same time.

***Hunting, Harvesting, Trapping, Setting Net and Transportation.*** Many knowledge holders shared examples and stories of Dene Ch'anie which include Dene ways for hunting, medicine harvesting, setting net or fishing, and transportation by dog sled. Knowledge holders also shared that the land was plentiful, and you could not starve where the land was treated with respect. Knowledge holders shared that because of their diets and way of being, Dene used to live a lot longer. Nearly every animal in the region — except for a few specific birds — could be eaten. These days, people are less likely to eat bear, and have noticed that there are more diseases and worms in the animals, fish or birds they hunt or harvest. Nearly every Dene household has different plant medicines, and Dene Yatı language holders who recommended language learning on-the-land shared the differences in nature of various plant medicines.

Henry McKay also noticed this difference in hunting, saying there was a whole-community approach to sharing parts of the animal after a hunt, that people only took what they needed and didn't waste any parts of the animal. "Even the bones and everything used for something," he says.

Nearly all of the knowledge holders involved have travelled by both sled dog and skidoo. Henry McKay continues, sharing how he used to travel by dog team:

> I used to have six, seven (sled dogs). I never hitched 'em up like they do nowadays, string and all that. When I had 'em, it used to be one line. Just one straight line, they would go in, in a big, heavy leather harness. They had a big canvas sleigh, too. But them, they used to, as light as you can, your blanket, pretty well, your ax, whatever you'll need out there, all your life stuff. And dog food, too — you gotta carry a lotta fish around, because they gotta eat, huh. They're out there for about three nights. You gotta take about 30 fish. That's heavy. The dogs, they used to be okay. They used to pull almost one buffalo when they were in shape, those dogs, in the sleigh.

Knowledge holders also shared that Dene way of life and transportation ensured survival — not only of oneself, but of one's culture, language and way of being. Transportation includes travelling by dog-team and sleigh, snow-shoe and canoe.

**Instructional Pedagogies.** Where Dene Yatı cannot be taught through Dene Ch'anie, or by any combination of methods within Dene Ch'anie or experiential land-based immersion, then knowledge holders recommended focusing on instructional aspects of linguistic learning — such as starting with verbs or vowels and learning through writing.

Responding to the title of this capstone project, and providing an example of instructional pedagogies through verb conjugation through vowel differentiation as published on a written platform, Eileen Beaver says:

> Dene Dedlıne Yatį Hóneneltën, teaching them the original language. Hóbenestën means I am teaching them, they're being taught, Hóseneltën means they're teaching me. Hútsineltën means they are teaching to you. That's again verb conjugation, in the word that changes with that verb. The root word is hóneltën. So, Dene Dedlıne Yatı hóneneltën, they are teaching you Dene Dedlıne Yatı. And if I say hóneneltá, it means they have taught you.

*Verb morphologies, conjugation and tense.* Dene Yatı are oriented around verbs and actions. Knowledge holders involved in this collaboration have expressed that the best way of learning Dene Yatı is through the experience of doing, particularly in Dene ways of being, in which those ways of being are communicated through verbs. Those knowledge holders have expressed the complex elements of verb conjugation. As noted in my collaborative work design and method, this research does not provide a substantive or comprehensive illustration of Dene Dedlıne Yatı verb morphophonemics or syntax, as conjugation was only briefly discussed without developing a linguistic analysis. The range of posed letters in Dene orthography which

are consonants or vowels differed between each person. Along with this and the discrepancy

between the use of the schwa-/ë/, there are somewhere between 61 and 66 different vowels and

consonants used in the Dene Dedlıne Yatı alphabet. Eileen Beaver says there are more than 250

morphemes in Dene Dedlıne Yatı, mentioning that communities use the term drag-vowels,

double-drag vowels, and triple-drag vowels.

Arthur Beck reaffirms the focus to verb-oriented learning:

> There's a few thousand verbs in our language. I don't know what you call it in English, but there's a lot of different sounds and things in words that we play with, that we use…. It's an amazing language, because it's one of the hardest languages. And it's so close, the words are so tight and so close, all you do is put a word in front of the certain word or behind it, and it means a totally different thing. So, it's really kind of a complex language. People are trying to learn a language say it's the hardest language to learn.

Where each morpheme is integral to the language, Eileen Beaver addresses the

importance of the range of adverbial prefixes as participles:

> That was the thing I had to come up with, too, when I start teaching, was verb conjugation — because our language is very verbal. The one word that changes in the verb says whether it's first-person, second-person, third-person, or fourth-person, or whether it's single or plural, or whether it's a couple, or up-to-three people or three-or-more, and it's just by how the word changes within that verb, and whether it's past or present too…. So, that was one of the things that I really found I had to grasp to teach in order for a person not only to always speak in third-person — because that's what you were teaching, was just third person all the time. So, I had to teach them to be able to be comfortable to work in first-person, in second-person, and in third-person.

As an ongoing teacher and language mentor, Sabet Biscaye agrees. She shared an

example of adverbial prefixes for a noun which moves away from the third-person participle,

which is generally ubiquitous in Dëne Sųłıne learning resources:

One of the things that I did with (my mentee) also was, early on, spend some time teaching her about the characteristics of the language. You know, for example, first-person is usually *se-*, second person would be *ne-*, third person would be *be-*, which is the words in a pattern she could identify with. And then we would talk about things, like, my hand. It would be selá, my hand; nelá would be your hand; and belá would be his or her hand, third-person. So, going through that, talking about that, and then the whole thing about singular, dual, and plural. In the Indigenous languages, it's not like English where you have singular, one; dual, which is two or more; or plural — but in the Indigenous languages, you have singular, which is one, but then you also have dual, which means two people. So, if I were to say shítı, the listener would automatically know I'm talking about two people, even though I didn't say how many of us our eating. If I say 'shéstı,' the listener knows automatically that I'm saying that I am eating, but if I say 'shílyı' the listener knows I'm talking about three or more people. So, those types of characteristics I would review and cover with her. And it would help her to grasp, and she was able to formulate… (and) so it would help her with her learning, too.

*Vowels, tonals, nasals and diphthongs.* In Dene Yatı, each morphemic discrepancy can lead to a misunderstanding or miscommunication. The specific pronunciation and orthography of Dene Dedlıne Yatı is a sensitive topic to many. The first part of this section briefly addresses vowels, tonals, nasals and diphthongs. As a note, there are multiple different agreed upon spellings, and spelling conventions vary across different communities. Each vowel has its regular pronunciation, and its tonal and/or nasal morpheme. Respectively, there are between 25 and 30 vowels in Dene Dedlıne Yatı, and each can be combined into drag vowels.

**Table 4.2.**

*Dene Dedlıne Yatı vowels [excluding diphthongs and most long-, or drag-vowels]*

| Low-Tone No Nasal | Long-Vowel No Nasal | High-Vowel No Nasal | Low-Tone Nasal | High-Nasal Vowel |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | aa | á | ą | ą́ |
| e | ee | é | ę | ę́ |
| ë | ëë | ë́ | ę̈ | ę̈́ |
| ı | ıı | í | ı̨ | ı̨́ |
| o | oo | ó | ǫ | ǫ́ |
| u | uu | ú | ų | ų́ |

Vowels: a, aa, á, ą, ą́; e, ee, é, ę, ę́; ë, ëë, ë́, ę̈, ę̈́; ı, ıı, í, ı̨, ı̨́; o, ó, ǫ, ǫ́; u, uu, ú, ų, ų́

Low-tone: a – e – ë – ı – o – u

Long-, or drag-vowels: aa – ee – ëë – ıı – oo – uu

High-vowel, no-nasal (accent ague without an ogonek): á – é – ë́ – í – ó – ú

Nasals (ogonek without accent ague): ą – ę – ę̈ – ı̨ – ǫ – ų

High nasals (accent ague and ogonek): ą́ – ę́ – ę̈́ – ǫ́ – ı̨́ – ų́

Several knowledge holders and teachers have said that vowels — including their tonals, nasals and diphthongs — should be taught first. Catherine Boucher shares a few recommendations on making vowels accessible to English language learners:

> For me, the start would be the pronunciation of each vowel…. There's five or six vowels. I noticed the vowel sounds are very important. I noticed the /a/ sound is like 'raw.' 'Raw/ would be a better word. The /e/ would be 'bet'. /i/ would be 'see', like when you see something. The /o/ is 'toe'. The u is like /uu/ or /oo/ is like 'snooze.' /ë/ sounds like 'up.' There's a lot of vowels…. You see, those two vowels between /e/ and /ë/ — they're just about the same.

Catherine Boucher explained how Dëné diphthongs are a combination of vowel sounds together. Notably, learning tones, nasals and diphthongs would need to be done through a format outside of the scope of this capstone:

> Because you have the diphthongs with it too — aı, úe, and íu. /aí/ it sounds like 'eye.' And then úe and íu. And so, you have all of these vowels, and they all have 48 different sounds, so it's really complicated for some people who don't know it.
>
> So, I gave them the vowel sounds and they went home, and I told them to practice that. And you know, when we say nake, it means number two, and they have náke. You know, so for me, it's written in different.

On her use on the difference between uses of the schwa-/ë/, she says, "It's a schwa-/ë/, and they got it mixed up. Nę́dëné — it's a high-tone, schwa-/ë/; dëné, dë is a schwa-/ë/; and the /né/, né, Dënę́, it's a high tone schwa-/ë/."

***Consonants, sharps, glottals and the bar-l /ł/.*** There are 36 consonants, which are agreed upon for both Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dëné Sųłınë́ Yatı̨́. These exist as single-consonants, or combinations of either double-consonants or triple-consonants. Sharp consonants /'/ indicate a quick end to the syllable. Glottal stops /ʔ/ indicate a quick throat hesitation. A bar-l /ł/ indicates holding one's tongue to the roof of their mouth while breathing out and voicing an /l/.

Consonants: b, ch, ch', d, dh, ddh, dl, dz, g, gh, h, j, k, k', kw, kw' (or ku, ku'), l, ł, m, n, r, s, sh, t, t', tł, tł', ts, ts', th, tth, tth', x, y, z, ʔ

Single-consonants: b, d, g, h, j, k, l, ł, m, n, r, s, t, x, y, z

Double-consonant: ch, ch', dh, dl, dz, gh, kw, kw' (or ku, ku'), tł, tł', th,

Triple-consonants: ddh, tth, tth'

Sharp-consonant: ch', k', kw' (or ku'), t', tł', ts', tth'

Glottal: ʔ

Eileen Beaver provided the consonants in Dene Roman Orthography for review. Eileen says, "You know the English alphabet's only 26 – that's including the vowels. But, our sounds and symbols were different… but, we didn't use all of the (English alphabet characters)."

Catherine Boucher also provided recommendations for learning the pronunciation of words with triple-consonants:

> … the glottal, the ł, the ddh. Like, ddhe, like your mouth. Nedhá, your mouth. Nedhá, your mouth, and then they have ddh, or nuniddhër, you see, and then there's one, ʔedhẽr, like your liver. All that you're gonna learn, how to pronounce them. /dh/ and the other one is /ddh/. That's a consonant. nániddhẽr, and then nádhẽr, see that's one /dh/. And then you got the ł, just like an /l/ and an /h/ — trying to say that together. Then you got your tł, tłe, tł'….

***Literacy in Dene Roman Orthography and Syllabics.*** While there are very few speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, there are even fewer people who can write the language in Dene Roman Orthography, and even fewer still who can write Dene Dedlıne Yatı in syllabics. Knowledge holders and speakers suggest that maybe 1% of Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers, or about six, know how to write in the language. However, knowledge holders involved in this work suggest syllabic orthographies as one of the best methods for new learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Eileen Beaver shares that there had been a reluctance by educational institutions and divisional education councils in teaching Dene Dedlıne Yatı through syllabics. She says that the use of Dene Roman Orthography allowed Dene Yatı educators to bridge the "gap between the youth and the Elders (who could not) stop and speak with each other":

> They were saying, at that time, they were saying that syllabics would be too hard to teach because we didn't know how to teach it, we didn't know how to read and write in it as teachers, and they were just putting this Roman Orthography together, and they didn't have the time or didn't know if we could ever learn it, because sometimes it's a guessing game, they told us. And it is, sometimes the words are a guessing game on that, because you'll read it, and if you're saying the wrong word, then you're saying a totally different meaning of it. So, they didn't want us to confuse the students any more than we would be confused trying to teach it….
>
> But, also what I've found too is that when I took the syllabics, and taught them syllabics — how to read and write in syllabics — they grasped the language, especially the orthography. They grasped it far faster than when they were learning with the Roman Orthography symbols and sounds.

Sabet Biscaye agrees with Eileen Beaver, noting her mentor was more easily able to learn the language coadjacent with literacy, "But, I should clarify that because she took notes, and she was literate in the language, she was able to take notes and refer back to them and it helped to retain it a lot better."

Referring to the limited time she has with the last generation of fluent speakers who are able to write the language, Nadine Delorme says, "So, I guess the other thing is rewrite history. Yeah. That's actually what my dream is to do — I call it reformation. But it's also rewriting or writing the wrongs."

*Catalysts and patterns of Language Traumas (1500s-today)*

Most of the knowledge holders shared words which either casually or pointedly addressed catalysts and patterns of trauma against the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. As the language and the land are intrinsically connected, catalysts and patterns of trauma against Denendeh's biodiversity simultaneously impact Dene Dedlıne Yatı. These sources of language trauma are divided into two headings. The first section looks to the land, as either diaspora and ecocide of Dene Dedlıne and Tu Nedhé within Denendeh. The second looks to language, and effects of linguistic imperialism against Dene worldview. Recommendations provided by community members on the community ways to revitalize Dene Yatı are provided in Chapter VI, the recommendations section of this paper.

**Land: Diaspora and Ecocide.** The following word bundles identify the external impacts directly affecting either Dene Dedlıne or Tu Nedhé. While affects against Dene Dedlıne or Tu Nedhé also inherently impact Dene Dedlıne way of being, the following focuses more on the diaspora of Dene and environmental impacts directly affecting Tu Nedhé and their impact against language. Linguistic oppression and imperialism will be focused on later in this theme of catalysts and patterns of language traumas.

*The fur trade, mining and colonization (1500s – today).* Direct impacts against the vitality of Tu Nedhé can be sourced to the mid-1600s with the arrival of the Coeur de Bois and then later the Hudson Bay Company. Old Man Beaulieu, a Métis navigator, would arrive in the region in the late 1700s. The Hudson Bay Company would establish Fort Resolution as a trading post in 1821, becoming the first trading community in the Northwest Territories. The Dominion of Canada would seek legitimacy from the Crown in 1867.

Eileen Beaver provides the precedent history and context of colonization, treaty-making and the fur trade in the region, saying

> But then, they've been here. Down here, the 1500s, they've been trading in the Hudson Bay area there, by the ships, for over so many hundreds of years, and then they went to trade on land in the 1600s. And before then, they had, what, the Spanish and they had Columbus…. At one time, a wooden nickel was a currency. In the fur trading days, they started with a beaver. Beaver was currency. Then they also had, you know, big bank notes. And I guess it must have been a debt or an IOU type of thing, and they also had wooden nickels. And that was found in this part of the world, in the 1600s, 1500s. That's from the Queen, and all of them wanted all the beavers, blackbears, and weasels….
>
> Everybody talks about Residential (school) days and that, but they tend to forget that in the late 1600s to the early 1700s, we were already dealing in fur trading with the Hudson Bay Company….
>
> And then 1800s and then, they were still trapping and trading,  so people spoke the many languages….  And then the Beaulieus came from Old Man Beaulieu, he had nine wives — the old man Beaulieus worked with the Hudson Bay Company…. So, he came with the Couers de Bois, and some of them started working with the Hudson Bay Company. In fact, Old Man Beaulieu got in a fight, he was battling with the Hudson Bay Company….
>
> There was the Hudson Bay Company and the Couer du Bois, the French. They travelled, and that's when the Queen and the King, King Louis and them, they started making treaties. They made over 300 treaties in that area before they started the Numbered Treaties, 1-11.

*Indian Act (1876 – today).* Only a few knowledge holders spoke about the significance of the treaties as it relates to land relations between Dene in Denendeh.

Eileen Beaver addresses the impact of the Indian Act on matriarchal Indigenous societies:

> We call it democracy and we criticize (other nations) but really, are we (Canada) any different? Right from the Indian Act, they've been attacking women. They've been trying to kill us Indians off. We're a matriarchal descent — like, we're all matriarchal. And, if you really look at it — you look at that Indian Act, everything in the Indian Act — we're attacked and demeaned, and it lowers women to a

>White, patriarchal society, where their women were just playthings and prizes and that. So, you look at all that, and it's just amazing.

As a Dene Métis, Arthur Beck recognizes the failings of the Indian Act, noting how the Indian Act legislation allows jurisdiction over Indigenous Peoples by non-Indigenous people:

>Well, you know, the Indian act — we're classed as halfbreeds, us Métis.

>But that Indian act is sort of a guide for us and First Nations. That Indian Act has to be relooked at, and it has to be established by the people — the Aboriginal people have to work on that Indian Act. You know, people in Ottawa don't know how we live, don't know the terrain, don't know anything about us, yet they're making an act for all of us to live by. That's why it can't work. It's not made for our people, the act. The act is made for a federal government to take over, take over the whole country.

*Treaty 8 (1899 – today).* The last signature for Treaty 8, before its adhesions, would be signed in Fort Resolution on July 25, 1899. Arthur Beck, whose great-grandfather signed the treaty, says Dene did not speak or write in English and the interpreters miscommunicated the intention of the treaties when they translated it into Dene Yatı:

>And the treaty that was signed was supposed to be a peace treaty, according to our Elders. Because my great, great grandfather signed it, and my grandfather was telling me that it was his grandpa that signed the treaty and he was there, witnessed it. And that treaty was not — First Nations never ceded and surrendered any land in the talks. But, see, our people didn't know how to read. And they had the Roman Catholic priests interpreting for them. But then if you look at the Roman Catholic priests, they're paid by the federal government to pull us savages out of the bush and turn us into regular citizens, you know. So, that has to be corrected.

With the treaties came the imposition of borders. Sabet Biscaye adds that this containment is a catalyst of diffraction between Indigenous Peoples and their language. She says, "The other thing, is also the borders — the borders that have been imposed on Indigenous People have also led that to this." Fort Smith was initially established as a trading post in 1874, while

Rocher River would establish one in the 1920s. Yellowknife formed in the early 1930s around gold mining. While there are only two reserves in the Northwest Territories, treaties were used to force Indigenous Peoples of the region into municipalities and residential school, addressed within the linguistic imperialism and oppression section of this theme.

***The Diaspora from Rocher River and the Role of Municipalities (1955 – 1975).*** Tom Beaulieu strongly recommended reviewing the 20-year window between 1955 and 1975 to identify the sources of language diffraction. The school in Rocher River would burn down in the late 1950s, followed within the decade by the closing of the Hudson Bay Company trading post and the local store. Pine Point, a lead and zinc mine, would form in the 1960s. Hay River would be incorporated as a municipality in the mid-1960s. Yellowknife would become the capital of the Northwest Territories in 1967. Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife would grow to be among the largest municipalities in the Northwest Territories. While Fort Smith has more than 2,000-people, more than 1,300 have Indigenous ancestry; Hay River and Yellowknife both have predominantly non-Indigenous populations (Statistics Canada, *2016 Census: Treaty 8 — Northwest Territories,* 2016).

Colonization depended on diaspora of Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral territories. Following the forced move into communities, many knowledge holders shared that the following impact on Dene Dedlıne Yatı came with the government forcing people out of Rocher River. Respectively, the diffraction of Rocher River would be followed by a decline in the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Tom Beaulieu provides the context around the history and its foundation of colonial intent:

By 1975, most of us weren't talking Chipewyan anyway. Okay, so do that, I think that's essential. So, when you're talking to people, you know what happened, you know what they did, you know how they tried to colonize, how they tried to take the language away. You'll know all that. If you go way back, you're gonna be telling the residential school story. So, I don't want you to do that, because it's gonna take the whole piece away.

They didn't allow it to be spoken to people, they had to learn English to communicate, they didn't want them talking about them, and it went on anyway, and there was many of them, many levels, many small people there with no supervision, or anything like that, and they ended up talking to each other. So, their language (Dene Dedlıne Yatı) survived through that. Okay, so, even though people pounded down residential school, and they did everything to people's culture and everything like that, they didn't have a good strategy to get rid of the language.

But, around 1960 or so, their strategy improved, right? That's when Alberta… When you do the history, don't forget about when Alberta went in. Don't forget, we're talking about redneck country, hey? You know, so you got to figure when, and that's when this really aggressive approach to the language, to terminate the language, turned — and a whole bunch of people went that way. And a bunch of us stayed straight….

And if you ever have any documentation, like how many people spoke, what was the percentage, and just pick the key communities, Fort Resolution, Tthebacha, Fitzgerald, even, has a lot of Dene Dedlıne people. It's mainly concentrated there, these three communities. And if you go, and connect with down south, it's there too. But this is where you need to concentrate on, and you'll see where the language turned. It's very apparent in Res. In Fort Smith, you'll see what happened, is that it was a mixed population. You know, here we had maybe 5% non-Indigenous. In Smith, that was about 40%.

They were already starting. Like I said, you go back to '55, by the time the Rocher River people arrived here, the Alberta government was probably trying to turn the language off, and they were being pretty effective.

Catherine Boucher moved from Rocher River to Fort Smith to attend residential school:

So, they moved us here, and it was culture shock, because none of the kids ever spoke Chipewyan, like I thought us in Rocher River, when we came back from school at Breynat Hall, go back over Rocher River, we would hear the language spoken there, but coming here it was different — no kids spoke it. They're all my age…. and they changed all that.

When the Government of the Northwest Territories dedicated Yellowknife as their

governing capital in 1967, more people came to the municipality until it was incorporated as a

city in 1970. Henry McKay agrees with the point made by Tom Beaulieu, and elaborates on the

change in animal populations by the influx of non-Indigenous People to Yellowknife:

> I used to kill buffalo, moose, caribou. There was lots of caribou around here, now
> they're all gone. There's no more. You gotta go, what, about a thousand miles,
> 500-miles to go for caribou now. These days, there's not as much anymore — as
> soon as Yellowknife became a city. People came here. Everybody killed them
> nowadays in Yellowknife. There's lots of people, it's a big city now, about 20,000
> people.

At the same time as the rise of the City of Yellowknife, Pine Point would grow as another

mine-dependent municipality. Pine Point would exist as a municipality between the early 1960s

until the mine closed in 1988. Denise McKay and Tommy Unka draw connections with Pine

Point, illustrating significance around the move of Dene Dedlıne to communities which are

predominantly non-Dene.

Tommy Unka echoes sentiments around language diffraction starting with the 1960s, and

recognizes the compounding impact on generational language transmission, saying:

> Because back in all around the mid-'60s and that, the language just started
> shifting. The road to Pine Point came in and everybody was talking English and
> stuff like that. And there's one group of — one generation, maybe two, maybe
> even three generations — of people that don't even speak their language, mostly
> because of influence from Pine Point, and television came, you know, Sesame
> Street was on, and all kinds of stuff like that was happening. So, the language
> kind of shifted now, it was kind of pulling more words in the English, you know,
> people were starting to use more of English language at home. And so that kind of
> shifted the language away from the usage at home. Like, when we were kids, we
> spoke nothing but Chipewyan at home. So now, the young kids are not teaching
> their kids, of course, because they were not taught also. And maybe the generation
> before them were not able to speak also, because it started shifting way back in
> the '60s. Then the outside influences were happening here in Fort Resolution, like

> the Pine Point mine next door. You know, when I first went to Pine Point, there was 2500 people in there already. We didn't expect what we saw. You know, we thought this was a little mining town with a few little log cabins. No, they were paved streets, residential areas, bunk houses, big stores, bars and everything like, 'Whoa, this is gonna be fun'. But we didn't really realize the impact that had on our people — environmentally, socially. Everything else that comes with a mine [laughing], so our language kind of, it was almost like put on hold, you know?

Denise McKay adds to the point around the influence of Dene Dedlıne moving to non-Dene municipalities, saying:

> The reason why — we stayed at Pine Point (for 21 years), nobody speaks Chipewyan there. My husband was working there, so the three youngest, only us, we would talk Chip with them, but hardly other people to talk Chip with. So, they understand but they don't speak. My husband retired in '83. No Dene out there.

She contributes by adding that this issue is amplified when Dene Dedlıne move south to larger cities, adding, "My two girls they live in Edmonton. There's nobody speaking Chipewyan there."

***Environmental Impacts Against Vitality of the Land, Beings, and the Water.*** Most of the knowledge holders have mentioned that in some way, the emergence of cities leads to the decline in populations and health of human and non-human species which had lived in relational kinship for many millennia. The most common example, raised by about a third of the knowledge holders, was that Dene Dedlıne are now reluctant to eat bear meat since bear have been eating from municipal landfills. Some knowledge holders have shared that the decline in the health of the land leads to a decline in the health of the Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Arthur Beck, who said he would still eat bear, provides the context around eating bear and killing them to prevent further bear attacks, of which there had been one hospitalizing bear attack in Hay River the day before the interview:

We ate bears back in Taltson River. Bear was like moosemeat for us, too — we ate them both. But once the people came to town, they seen the bears in the garbage dumps and whatnot, they stopped eating them, the people. So now the bears are plentiful, they're starting to eat people — it's backwards. They're trying to change things around again, and we have to send them out because they are also hard on our moose and caribou populations, and they go after the calves, hey, so we gotta straighten that out.

On eating bear, and discussing pollution on the land in the waters, Denise McKay says:

Now, I don't eat bear. There's so much dirty things, so I don't. If I'm hungry maybe I will, but I don't eat it now anymore the way they eat it now. At the dump they're eating garbage, and that, ah. Before, it used to, it never used to be like that. People used to take care of the land. They don't throw garbage away. I seen lots of garbage.

Me, when I see something, I want to take a good look, in the liver and the meat too. One time, my husband killed a duck, boy it was just ever fat — one, two of them —  I fixed it, I singed it, and I cut one up and put it in the water. The second one, oh my goodness, in between their meat, just white. Just, like worms. That's why it's good to take a good look at something before you cut it up, you know, the liver. Even the rabbits, sometimes, the liver's no good, so you just throw it away. It was good all the time, a long time ago. People are not trying to take care of their land anymore. You go, somewhere we wintered, where we used to make fires, sometimes they'd just leave garbage around like. They cook steak, and there's the tray, and they don't throw it away, it's just laying around. It makes me mad, you know. You gotta take care of your land, too….

On traversing the water, Denise McKay adds:

Me and my husband, we used to go to Jean River. You know, sometimes, you know, plastic might just float down the river. They threw their garbage in there, so this is not very nice…. Like I said, pollution, you don't take care of the land. Garbage, they shouldn't throw garbage in the water like that.

Henry McKay has also noticed increasing pollution and hunters who have discarded or wasted wild meat by not hunting the Dene way. He adds that the water which he is used to drinking is no longer potable, saying "I have to carry my own water too now, when I go out in

the bush. I can't even drink that water out there, and they buy it. I tell them those guys that they

should be buying my water [laughing]. There's no answer for that." Henry elaborates on the

significance of disrespectful hunting practices and pollution as the catalysts of population and

health declines in non-human species. He also draws connections between the vitality of the land

and the vitality of the language:

> I used to eat everything on the land, except the bear. I used to eat it, I used to love it but I don't eat it no more because I seen them eat plastic and everything from the dump, huh. So, I quit for how many years now. The only thing, it's 'cos I don't like what I seen them eating — they're meat eaters at the dump.
>
> They built the road, and everything changes, we got power in. It's not like before and everything's so easy and all that.… So, it's not like before. Like I said, I used to go for wood, too, with dogs. There was caribou all over in the wood camp. And they just take what they need before. Not like now. There's no respect for anything like that anymore. I think they're wasting quite a bit, too. I seen the moose killed one time, pretty well just a quarter was taken out of it, but they left the backbone, all that, the head, some ribs was left behind.
>
> Because I go in the bush, hunting, I used to take some bannock and stuff like that, and go out, and depend on the land, and live off the land. Sometimes, I just take off, way back. I don't go very far, I shoot about three or four ducks, and I got my food with me already. And now, I go about halfways to Smith — it's quite a ways from here to Smith, by the Slave. And I hadn't shot a duck! Nothing. They're doing something. I know a whole bunch died in McMurray — tar sands or whatever, pollution, oil spills and all that. I seen it on TV on the news one time. There was a whole bunch died. As far as that, there's less moose I guess. And now, there's hardly any ducks. You pretty much have to bring candy or something if you want to go [laughing]. It's crazy, you'll starve out there now. Even the animals are going to disappear. The Elders used to say it's going to get worse down the road. I believe them — it's getting to that now. Maybe you'll be okay, but your kids, and your kids' kids, they're not gonna have it good. There'll be nothing for them. They'll be starving by then. I'm starting to believe that now, from what I see going on.
>
> I look at my moose here, I used to get pretty well. Some people, for moose hunting, they've gotta go down to Alberta, some of them gotta go a long ways for that too now. We used to have all kinds across here, all over-filled way back. Every year is getting less, less, less, less. It's the same thing, the language and the land — it's happening at the same time.

Many Elders in the years have recognized that the traversability of the water was limited as the water was very low. Eileen Beaver elaborates on this, placing blame on polluting and environmentally damaging industries, lead to declines in populations and health declines in non-human species:

> Like, the water's coming back up. For how many years our water was very low. It was like that for so many years, we thought it was a natural process. Now it's coming back up again. My son was telling me the other day that one day he could hear honking, honking all over. He looked around, he thought there was vehicles and that. He looked, nothing. He said he went out looking, and he looked up, and he said there was at least thirty-thousand geese that was up right over Fort Smith. You know. And I said — 'you know, a long time ago, fifty years ago, even sixty years ago, we used to have that. Sometimes it used to take two, three days for even the caribou to go through Fort Smith here. I bet there was a lot of people that thought it was the end of the world because all of a sudden there was so much geese. You know, the water was so pure that you could see right to the bottom'. In this last fifty, sixty years, the water went shallow and it's just been murky, even on this big river here. From all the development all over — it's industry.

Tom Beaulieu also comments on the effects of the water from the Taltson Dam, remembering a story from his childhood after the dam was built and how it affected water routes:

> So now, the biggest issue with Taltson Dam — I opposed the Taltson Dam, by the way — the only issue with the Taltson Dam is that they release water in the wintertime. I said (to a politician opposing compensating the people of Rocher River for the damages), nature doesn't just come kill all this muskrats, and beaver every few years, I said, 'Come on — give your head a shake,' I said. 'There's a little piece of the beaver lodge sticking out. Of course, they're dead.'
>
> Around mid-1970s, my cousin was 9 years old at the time, we went with my grandfather to a place called Stony Point, which is basically what the Taltson River dumps into, a bay called Gadet Bay. Taltson Bay, too, but Gadet Bay is the big one, very shallow. So, there's a thousand of muskrat dead on the ice, 'cos they went through, it got flooded, and as the ice was thawing from the top, there was muskrats just popping up all over. (It froze or flooded the) push-ups. So, what happened was, of course, they were on the shore, they're even, you know… Sometimes they get a natural flood, they'll take off and move in with the beaver, mind their own business, and it's okay. But, you know, when it's not mother nature but a disaster, all of a sudden (it opens) in the Taltson Dam near Fort

Smith. And by the time it hits (somebody's) camp, it's a flood. (This person) has boats on the shore. That water was right over it, in the wintertime.

**Language: Oppression and Imperialism.** While knowledge holders identified Dene relationality to land, they also proposed catalysts and patterns of language traumas which relate more specifically to language. The immediate topic identified by most knowledge holders was the impact of residential schools and its role in colonization and its resultant linguistic imperialism and influence. Several knowledge holders discussed the colloquial 'marsicho' as an example of linguistic influence from French. Knowledge holders addressed the health of communities, families and individuals, the issue of fluent language speakers not being valued for their knowledge, and the role of homogenizing Anglophonic technologies.

Eileen Beaver introduces the convergence of these catalysts:

There are so many interruptions through the years — through residential (school) days and all that — where languages were attacked. At one time, we just said Dene Yatı. Dene Yatı. And then, when the people started losing their language and not using it, they started speaking with different accents and that, and not using the old words — like they were speaking differently.

*Residential Schools, Convents and Day Schools.* Nearly all of those who shared their words mentioned the impact of Residential Schools, Indian Day Schools and convents as sources of language trauma for Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Tommy Unka says the missionaries who were federally funded to try to assimilate Dene Dedlıne, saying, "Missionaries were of course contracted by the government to, to do away with the languages and everything, eh, so they had the initial kick at it first, hey. So, a lot of (assimilation) to do with religion thing."

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Elaborating, Ron Beaulieu says residential schooling has been a catalyst in the diffraction between Indigenous Peoples and their identity:

> But Fort Res, too, you gotta realize, they were one of the first communities that dealt with the Roman Catholics through colonization. They had a big residential school here, ah. One of the earliest residential schools. We had a big TB hospital here. Patients from all over were here. There was a big convent, they used to call it…. You know, like my mom spent fifteen years in there. Lots of them Elders have spent years in there. So, now we're the product of the residential system. Some people, they don't even know their own identity here.

Arthur Beck adds that the residential schools removed Dene Dedlıne from the land, and nuns beaten Indigenous Peoples for speaking their language:

> Well, we know that the language is in trouble, because of residential school, they pulled everybody out of the bush, away from their parents. And when they were in the residential schools, and the schools here, and federal schools, we were strapped for speaking their language. So, a lot of people shied away from it, and language, they were taken away from their parents, where the parents spoke the language at the time. So, they lost the language in the residential schools. And now they become parents, those people that lost their language.

Denise McKay shares some of her experience with the nuns at residential school, and how she still carries her language:

> Years ago, in the convent, you go in the convent, you know, you can't speak your language. They get mad at you. But it's pretty hard, too. I don't speak English when I go to the convent. It's pretty hard. They're mean, the nuns are mean, you can't speak your own language. They get mad at you. But it's pretty hard, when you don't speak English you know. Could have nothing else, but you gotta talk your own language, Chipewyan.

Snookie Catholique adds that her family all went through residential school, and she remembers her father's words about the consequences:

> Well, that's not hard to find out that — residential school. My family survived, like us, we were all residential school long-term students. Like me, I was eight years, and my father always knew that, and he always mentioned it all the time, He said, 'Things are going to ruin… Our lifestyle is going to ruin, because of the residential school.' He didn't call it residential school — denexare kuę́, which is like the building of nuns.

Ron Beaulieu remembers being demonized for speaking Dene Dedlıne Yatı:

> Everybody has their weakness — me, it was the language, I guess. And when I went to residential school, I couldn't speak it there either. I was in Fort Smith, in Breynat Hall and Grandin College, and by then I was older and I was away from the other students that spoke it — and nearly everybody spoke English.
>
> And in the younger years, even in Fort Res, I wasn't allowed to speak my language in school. They said to me I was speaking the Devil's language when I'd speak Chip by accident. That's why I'm not fluent in my language anymore, you know. I speak English, but I understand it. They even changed my way of thinking, because I don't think in my language no more. But I still understand when Elders sit around and talk, I sit there and listen to them. If I try to speak it though, I have trouble. I speak the word, but it takes time to think of what to say next. It doesn't just come normal, as it should.

Tom Beaulieu, who also attended residential school, says of his time there and after:

> They tried to kill my language. I wasn't allowed to speak it and I couldn't speak English, so I had lots of trouble fighting with the nun. And my friend that was there to teach me English was not allowed to learn Chipewyan. And I said that, you know, they successfully tried to eliminate our culture and our language. I said they were very highly successful. The teachers and nuns in the federal day school were highly successful in trying to take the language from us, because they didn't consider it a language, right. So, what had happened was that, for the most part, they succeeded — except they weren't successful with me. I'd indicated that, but what they did do to me was that they changed my thinking. So now, instead of that being my language throughout my life, it became a tool.

*Colonization of Language, Worldview and the Self.* Many knowledge holders did not separate the impacts of colonization from the impacts of residential schools with regard to each and their influence on Dene worldview.

Tom Beaulieu explains:

> And that's what the colonizers did to us. They turned our language into a tool. If they couldn't beat it out of you, and I'm not saying that they physically tried to beat the language out of me, if they couldn't beat it out of you, if they couldn't drive the language away from you, they did enough damage that you only viewed your own language as a tool — that your first language was only a tool now. That's all it is for me today. Unfortunately, right? A working language. And if you were lucky enough to speak an Indigenous language, then that becomes a part of your tools to help you do your job better, right….
>
> Well, they handed the fricken education system over to Alberta, you know? Did you know that? April 1st, 1969, they devolved education to the GNWT — that's why all these Day Schools were before that — Day School compensation, all that, 1969… But those guys didn't — it was them, but the federal government didn't teach it themselves. They hired Alberta, Alberta expanded their borders, and they hired teachers, and sometimes they were nuns.
>
> So, they hired teachers, but there's no way. They weren't trying to develop the language, right, because, remember I told you, they were successfully knocking the language out of our people? They weren't successful with me, I was saying, but they made me use it as a tool now, instead of a language, right?... The federal government didn't know what to do, so they handed it off to Alberta….
>
> The federal government passed all the responsibility off for compensation, even though they had the contract with to Alberta…. I would have had to have dealt with the feds, but they washed their hands of it. Right? That compensation for education and stuff — now the federal government's taking responsibility and they're paying out the people that were abused in the school.

Tommy Unka adds that Dene are now distracted from their language and its teachings:

> Well, yeah, you know, it kind of comes from that colonialism that was kind of shoved down our throats there…. You know, people are distracted away from their culture, their language and their way of providing for their family on the land and stuff like that — that's all kind of gone. You know, a lot of it is used improperly, but that's through the teachings and stuff like that, and sometimes it's subject to ridicule and stuff like that, but people are disrespectful all over the place. It's still there, but it's not too important to people right now. It's like, something on the floor that you kicked aside when it gets in your way and stuff like that, because you're not able to use it, you know. So, that that's where it's at right now.

Henry McKay adds that since the treaties, colonial governments have not viewed Denendeh as Dene land:

> 'My land, my land, my land,' I say, but I don't own nothing, I know that. You know, I found that out the other day — that's bullshit. Even the one I'm staying on now don't belong to me, they told me [laughing] — the government. They started a hamlet here and everything, and they own everything — Treaty land, mission land — the government took everything. We're fighting with them, but that's what they said. I'm worried. I got a big house, and the government's gonna have my land and my big house if anything happens to me or my wife. Right now, they're fighting about that.

Reflecting on colonization's intentional diffraction of Indigenous identity, Snookie Catholique says, "Because there was so much taken away from me through colonization, residential school and all this, and it will try to replace with something that was not me."

Ron Beaulieu adds that the ongoing impacts of colonization have affected the next generation's willingness to learn, and the willingness to speak from those who hold the language:

> The interest is not there for them to learn it anymore. Like, why is that, I wonder. Maybe that's the problem we got to look at — colonization, I guess. Nobody wants to speak Chip anymore. It's better, I guess, if they learn it as a little toddler at home. Nobody that I know of speaks Chip to their little kids anymore. Like, in Fort Res, the youth don't speak the language anymore. My generation is probably the last….
>
> But I was kinda annoyed, last summer I was down there. These Elders were sitting around drinking coffee and they were all speaking their language, telling stories, laughing — and then one of the workers that works there, the facilitators, came in there and told them, 'Hey, quite speaking Chip when you're around here'. And you don't tell anyone to stop speaking their language. It's very rude. So, I noticed after that, when the girl comes in the room, and they're all talking, they just kinda quiet down. They don't say much when she comes in like that. It's colonization there, showing itself, oppressing.

Nadine Delorme adds that colonization has affected Dene reciprocity, saying:

There's more involved because it needs to be reciprocal, and that hasn't happened a lot in our communities. I think the colonial construct had its way with our reciprocity with each other…. Reciprocity, when it's been gone for a generation, is really hard to do.

***Linguistic Imperialism, Influence, Mixing and Shortening.*** Another theme addressed by most of those who shared their words relates to linguistic imperialism, influence and mixing of English, French, nêhiyawêwin (Cree) and Wıılıı̀deh-dialect, as well shortening of Dene Yatı.

Several of those who shared their words said that Dene used to speak multiple languages — usually between three and six — although, Dene Yatı vitality is challenged by Anglophonic imperialism. Aside from English, which is nearly ubiquitously spoken across Tu Nedhé, knowledge holders shared that many of the residential school nuns were French, and that French is now present in many Dene Yatı dialects.

Nadine Delorme suggested that outside influence detracts from the secularism of Dene teachings and language:

> Maybe the more remote the community is, the more secular the language can become, the more secular the teachings can become, and it doesn't become about outside influence. Whereas this (Fort Resolution) is the oldest community in the NWT, so there's been a lot of linguistic influence over the last 300 years.

A knowledge keeper who preferred to remain anonymous says:

> I really find that our language, you'll get a lot of influence from the missionaries — so, this is my take on it. You'll find a lot of French mixed into a language, especially in our community in Denínu Kué.
>
> Yeah — I'll just give you a couple of examples of, you know, I remember, like, when you grew up in the bush, you're going to land with your parents or grandparents, and they described things like, you know, what we talk about?... And they mentioned things like shells, when you may grab, like, like, gun shells.

It's lígardús. And when I look back on it, it's like lígardús, that's means hammer in French, or they we talk about cards, and you they speak about the suits on the cards, they get it, le trèfles, le carreaux, you know, those things.

Arthur Beck adds that French lexical influence came with trade of salt and tea:

There's a lot of things there's a lot of different things in there too. The reason is French in there was a French people brought us salt. They sold us salt, they sold us tea. So, we use their name because they sold the tea, you know, lıdí. But that's a part of our it became part of our language because we were our people were buying stuff from the traders and they had to tell us a name, that's what we bought. Like, for example, lıdí. You know, tea, lıdí, so our people use that lıdí now. Because that's what they were told what the name of what whenever they bought was, lıdí. So, there's French in there, there's a little bit of everything in there. There's some English language starting to come now.

Ron Beaulieu has recognized the influence of the French, as well as the presence of nêhiyawêwin and Michif. None of the knowledge holders said that speaking multiple languages was an issue, but just that certain languages and cultures have had their confluent impacts:

Even they just had French, mixed French and Chip, and English. But Fort Smith, it had Cree in there, too. Cree people. My mother's from Providence, and she used to speak, what do you call that other language there, it's sort of a slang French — Michif. Lots of people used to speak that around here, I remember that when I was a kid. I used to hear all the Elders speaking it. I didn't know what it was. I thought it was French, but later on I learned it was Michif.

Eileen Beaver, whose husband is nêhiyaw, laughs when she shared that nêhiyaw used to steal Dene women:

But here, up North, the Cree call themselves Dene too. They're in the Dene territory. They're nêhiyaw, but they also refer to themselves as Denehahén, because they live on the Dene cultural land. Because the Crees came from the South, hey, through the fur trading days — when you used to come steal our Chipewyan people [laughing].

It should again be noted that the influence of most other Indigenous languages was welcome. Denise McKay even adds that she wants her grandchildren to call her kôhkom, the nêhiyawêwin word for grandmother, or Setsoné, the Dene Dedlıne Yatı word for grandmother:

> 'Ɂédlánet'é setsoné?' She's asking, 'How are you today, Grandma?', you know? Setsoné now, but it's kôhkom in Cree, ah. We used to say my grandmother is kôhkom in Cree, ah. Kôhkom and mosôm. I want them to call me kôhkom. Yeah, because I didn't want them to call me granny, because my great-grandchildren, they can call me granny, but my grandchildren, I want them to call me kôhkom, Setsoné.

However, a new dialect, Wıìlıìdeh, is being pushed by a local regional government and is generally not well-received by speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Catherine Boucher and Arthur Beck have both mentioned to Wıìlıìdeh language coordinators or Indigenous government leadership to represent Dene Dedlıne Yatı instead of Wıìlıìdeh.

Catherine Boucher explains the difference:

> They're trying to pull in this Wıìlıìdeh. Wıìlıìdeh is using our high tones and nasals, and it shouldn't be that, that's Dogrib. You know, I know the difference. Some of the words, when I asked, 'Beghúledesche ha k'ëth Ɂelátéra?' Beghúledesche means Coney River. And then everybody thinks it's Yellowknife. You know, even the history of that's wrong. But anyway, she didn't know what I meant. I meant, "How's the weather out there in Yellowknife?" Because we call it Beghúledesche, and they're using Yellowknife….
>
> It seems like Akaitcho's not going to do nothing. How many years I tried, too? And they said Wıìlıìdeh's the dominant language. I spoke to some band leadersand I asked them what's the dominant language here, and they told me Wıìlıìdeh, and I said no, Coney River is not our dominant language. They just looked at me because that's what it means for me. Coney River. ɁEkécho (Akaitcho) never spoke Wıìlıìdeh. He spoke Dënedédlı́né, like this language here we're speaking about.

Arthur Beck asked the same question, using the same contextual understanding of the word Wıìlıìdeh:

> That Wıìlıìdeh language you heard that they're trying to come up with this new language? There's no such language as Wıìlıìdeh. What that means, Wıìlıìdeh, means beghúledes, it means Coney River, in our language. And Coney, in our language, is beghúle, the fish with no teeth. That's the proper name in our language. When I break it down to English, beghúle, the fish with no teeth.
>
> There's no such thing as Wıìlıìdeh. What they're doing is speaking Dogrib, Tłıchǫ — they're speaking Tłıchǫ. And there's a little bit of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in there, so they have a little bit of ours in their language, and they have Dogrib, and they're really stronger to the Dogrib. And there's no such language as Wıìlıìdeh. And they don't like when I tell them, but I told them, Wıìlıìdeh's not a language, it's a place. And that's how the Dogrib say, beghúle, they say Wıìlıìdeh, that's how Dogrib's say 'fish with no teeth'. Even in your language, beghúledes, what does that mean in your language? Beghúledes? What does that mean in your language? Coney River, they said. Well, there you go [laughing]. It's not a language, it's a place. There's no such language. They're trying to create their own little language, which is wrong, because there's French in there, there's Dene Dedlıne in there, there's Chipewyan in there, there's a little bit of Slavey, and Dogrib — so they're kind of just a pot of stew with their language, with just a little bit of everything in there, and they're just trying to give it a different name.

On language shortening and truncation, he adds:

> Our language is changing. I noticed that people even my age are shortcutting the language they're not saying the whole word. For example, outside you know, you're talking about the weather outside here. Right now, the proper way it is Bıít'as Ɂedlá hǫ́t'e-a?
>
> Bet'á hultá BeɁáné beyaghe hultá
> (Outside), (the weather), (the number), (is this much below or above)
>
> Now you see. That's how you're supposed to see it outside… but what's happening now, people listening to the radio stations. They go Bıít'as hǫ́t'e? do you see, Bıít'as hǫ́t'e? like for outside — for outside what? you know, but that's how they're saying it. It's 20 below for outside but the 20 below for outside of what? The tree, you know, the truck? It's not the weather.
>
> Yeah, they're not finishing the word like the way I said it. You see how long it was? You see, that's how I say it properly. You see, there, it's a big difference.

> They're changing it. So, it's changing. It's becoming a shortcut, I guess, and people are changing our language, but I correct everyone who speaks it wrong in front of me. If you're going to speak it, speak it right or don't bother [laughing].

Nadine Delorme describes the influence of Dëné Sųłıné Yatı́ on Dënedédlı́né Yëtı́:

> My Uncle Charlie (has a mural) featured in Yellowknife. There's a plaque beside it and it's in English. And then below it is, and then Dëne Sųłıné it's in. My Uncle Charlie was a Desche descendent. It shouldn't be just in Dëne Sųłıné, it should also be in our language — because if anyone's a representative of Rocher River, and what's happened to our descendants, it was my Uncle Charlie. So… that's why the artists and the committees, they pretty much just gave it over to me, because, like, you didn't ask their permission. You didn't confirm with us, with me, if I wanted that language done…. Like, you know, that's what that intellectual property rights is about — and appropriation. And if you want to do Truth and Reconciliation concerning my uncle Charlie, you better put it in his language. Because, apparently, he was an advocate for languages.

Snookie Catholique, who is Dëné Sųłıné, also notices variation across Dëné Sułiné Yatı́:

> The Saskatchewan Dëne Sųłıné, they're very sing-song, and it's very nice to listen to. Whereas with us, it's so harsh. You know, it's just been that. As long as we all understand each other. Like, Tadoule Lake, the most eastern Dëne Sųłıné out of Manitoba. They speak like they are on speed — it's so fast, and it's almost like a combination some words that they use.

Eileen Beaver says she saw the term Dëné Sułiné emerge in the 1970s:

> And then, it was just in the late 1970s when people started using the term Dëné Sułiné. Dëné Sułiné means they're like Dene. They speak like Dene, with a Dene accent, in the Dene Dedlıne terms, if you're listening for it.

Tommy Unka has seen Dëné Sułiné Yatı́ language shift in communities like Łutsel K'e, and relates the vitality of Dëné Sułiné Yatı́ compared to Dene Dedlıne Yatı:

> You know, there's a few people that are trying to revive it, you know, there's few communities like Łutsel K'e still using it. From what I knew back in the 70s, and

that, everybody spoke language in Łutsel K'e. Okay, now — maybe you're looking at 30%?

You know, so, and for Res, of course, you know, there's just maybe a little 10% of us, that are still using the language in the community, you know, it's all gone to the English language.

Because there is a lot of mixing in Łutsel K'e — there are Dogrib people, some people stem from Dogrib, some people came from the South, and they are predominantly, a lot of them came from the south, and they brought that language. So, there is there is a very distinct change happening with the language.

*The origin of 'marsicho'.* The words 'marsi' or 'marsicho' are commonly used by Dene and non-Dene across Denendeh. The word itself is used to express gratitude, and translates directly as marsi, 'thank you'; cho, 'very much'. Several knowledge holders expressed that the word 'marsi' is drawn from the French word 'merci'. They also shared that Dene Dedlıne might express gratitude by saying 'sast'íle,' meaning 'it is okay' or may give an affirming acknowledgement; alternatively, some have said others may say 'thá huná', which directly translates as 'long life,' meaning 'you will live long', although some have also contended 'thá huná' as a term of recent influence.

Tom Beaulieu's grandmother reaffirms this lack of expressions for 'thank you' or 'you are welcome':

> She said in the olden days, when she was a child — she was born in 1934 — there was no people telling stories. There was no place for it, there was no time for it. They spoke what was necessary… there's no 'thank you', you know, there's no 'you're welcome' in the Dene Dedlıne language.
>
> 'Marsi cho' is a word brought from the French. 'Marsi', 'marsi cho' — there's no thank you. If you go back before the French arrived up here, in the Dene Dedlıne language, there was no way of saying thank you. It was always assumed, eh…. If I brought you a piece of meat, and you were an Elder, I wouldn't expect you to say — nowadays, you'll say 'marsi cho,' 'marsi cho,' in Chipewyan, 'marsi cho'. But in reality, and back in the history, there was nothing. Just a good friendly nod

to the head. I'm happy, you know, I'm happy to see you. Those words actually existed, but not, there's no way of saying you're welcome. They say it's okay. 'Sastilé' is what they say.

'Thá huná', those are words that, you know, like, 'live long'.

Tommy Unka says he heard his Elders say 'thá huná' when he was a kid, hearing:

We don't have a word for thank you in our language. We don't, you know, so we adopted it. Now it's adopted more and more, and more so with 'merci', which is French for 'thank you'. But my grandmother, if you brought them, or any Elders in my time — this would be around 1958, '57, when I was a wee kid — I gave something to an elder, they said 'thá huná', which was, very simply, live long. So, it made more sense to me. Like, for me, if I was going to thank a young kid, I would out rather say live long, you know, have a good life and live long enough. So, it kind of changed that way, for one, because of there's a lot of French influence in our language.

Snookie Catholique shares that 'marsicho' is not a way of expressing gratitude in Dëné Sułiné Yatı̨:

Like, my Dad — I used to say 'marsicho,' and he said that 'marsicho' is a borrowed word from the French and the way our people used to say it was (Phonetically: boo-zhoo há'lu) which means 'Isn't that nice?' And he said, 'Maybe you should try and use that use that word instead of 'marsicho',' and I still use it, but I still say 'marsicho,' but that word is there. Which would have disappeared if he had not told me that this was the word that we used rather than 'marsicho'.

***Community, Family and Individual Wellbeing.*** Many knowledge holders have also expressed concern about the diffraction of the wellbeing of Dene communities, families and individuals from outside sources as affecting the vitality of Dene Dedlıne and Dene Yatı.

Tommy Unka says family squabbles remain unresolved, leading to disconnects across communities:

The people of our whole community was the family one, the family unit life. But now that's all fragmented, you know, it's people are fighting for this, and there's families that are feuding and stuff like that. You know, back in the old days, it was not like that. You know, when we went up town, Mom never had to worry about us, because somebody else was watching us, you know… but nowadays, it's not happening anymore.

Eileen Beaver sees youth fall into a trap of inadequate housing and water, a lack of options and a lack of education preparing Dene for their lives. She says we need to support youth by providing options and relevant life skills training:

Well, because the drugs and the alcohol is coming in, family violence is the norm in some cases because of some of that, or just because of anger management. The critical thinking that our kids are going through is how they're going to survive their weekend [laughing], you know? They're afraid of who's gonna go on a drunk, or their uncles or aunties — and it shouldn't be like that.

There's a lot of these kids from small communities, going to go for a better life, and living on the reserve, in inadequate housing and water and stuff. They want to improve that, but they need to go get education and stuff. They don't have the tools when they go out there. So, in life skills and stuff, even that, if we used that, researching things and that, and making people realize their options, they would have a better chance. And they would rekindle a lot with their place.

Like, even our young kids and that are Murdered and Missing. Suicide is the highest we have in our society, diabetes is high, obesity is high, depression is high — everything.

We're like salmon going upriver, but the salmon still gets to where they're going if they're strong. And that's where the Elders are taking us. We just became lazy in the last 50 years.

Ron Beaulieu says that these problems would not have happened if Dene had not been removed from their lands:

Because they have a lot of these trouble with the youth, and these people involved with alcohol and drugs, so the government, what they did was bring people out from the land into the communities — foreign communities all over. Now they're having problems with people, so now they're having on-the-land programs now,

to bring them back out on the land. Well, why didn't you just leave them on the land to begin with?

***Discouragement from land or language knowledge without education accreditation.***

Fluent speakers of Dene Yatı have not often had their  knowledges recognized institutionally.

Accreditation is often required to teach the language in a regional school, although most fluent

speakers of Dene Yatı have not graduated high school.

Eileen Beaver elaborates on the issue of societal discounting of Dene Yatı speakers and

Dene knowledge holders:

> You know, I go down South and I see a lot of people on the streets and that — but they have so much knowledge, and they're struggling. You take that person out of there and they know what to do in the bush. But some of them, they can't get jobs because society itself wouldn't look at your resume if they didn't graduate.
>
> But even then, if they're in the city right now — if you applied for a job, any place you apply for a job — they look at your education. Do you have secondary degree? Undergraduate? If not, do you have your Grade 12 diploma? If not, if you don't have any of those two-year diplomas, or your Grade 12 diploma, or your undergraduate degree, they just put your application way at the bottom. Even if you worked in that position for thirty years or twenty years, but if you didn't graduate, that's the first thing they look at.

***The disruptive effect of homogenizing Anglophonic media and technologies.*** Another

issue persists with the role of interruptive Anglophonic media and technologies. Most non-

Indigenous communications media and technologies necessitated a working knowledge of

English or French and detracted from the respect for land and its beings. While several Dene

have said they are concerned about more recent technologies, such as machines for hunting or

digital tools like smartphones or the internet, as they detract from Dene way of being, thinking

and relating.

Tommy Unka says digital technologies have taken away from Dene communication with animals. He adds that he is concerned about how technologies, whether digital or mechanical, have made it more difficult to hunt in a Dene way:

> Like, calling moose and stuff like that, you know — we were taught the real way to call moose, and it's almost like talking to the moose. Now, the kids are using electronic devices and stuff like that. I mean, you know, some of them are successful, and I'm sure it's good, but, you know, I can see 20 years from now, everybody's gonna have these electronic device and little hearing aids to listen for moose and stuff like that.
>
> Just like everything else — technology is going to take over traditional knowledge, or Dene Ch'anie, we call that, and that's people's culture…. Well, (technology is taking over) already, you know, we're not paddling the river no more, we're using big 200 horsepower motors and stuff like that, you know, nobody is tying rabbit snares and stuff like that….
>
> Like in the 60s, people were influenced by other stuff that was going on, you know, kids were starting to get distracted and stuff like that. And more so today… So, kind of, everything's changing. You know, the kids are really hard to pull away from their television and their little gadgetry they're playing with in their hands. They're focused on something totally not working for retaining their culture, you know, the stuff they're watching or doing on their little iPhones, I have no idea what it is, but it's certainly not good.

Henry McKay mentions the internet and games as challenging youth attention spans, especially with additions around video games and digital technologies. He added that skidoos, as a mechanical hunting technology, lead to waste of meat and a lack of community values around sharing meat from the hunt:

> And now the internet and the games — that games, they sure take a lot out of the kids. Some of them, they go home at night and they're still sleep in the morning and they go to school, you know, from playing games — that bad. That's the worst thing that ever happened. Me, my game when I was growing up was cutting wood with a handsaw and an ax….
>
> Or white fox, they'll trap white fox at the same time — they use the head for goggles. And should careful, that's why you don't see them white foxes anymore

— my dad told me that. When we go to where there was foxes, they were gone, ah. They go way out there with the dogs too. I used to go out too, I used to stay out there, three nights like that. Now, I'll go there, skidoo in a couple hours, where I used to go three nights. It's a big difference than before, stuff like that.

## Discussion of Words

Each of these word bundles either distinguishes Dene Dedlıne Yatı, addresses Dene Hóneneltën for teaching Dene Dedlıne Yatı or identifies the root and stem catalysts of traumas against Dene Dedlıne Yatı and Dene Ch'anie. Each Dene Dedlıne knowledge holder who shared their words stated Dene Dedlıne Yatı is the ancient ancestral language, and this language still has yet to see adequate acknowledgement or representation by most federal, territorial, and Indigenous governments involved. The language is also best spoken and learned on-the-land, through whole community and family immersion, in the act of hunting, harvesting or living through Dene ways of being; where there are fewer opportunities for all of these elements to happen, the focus should be on verbs, vowel pronunciation, and growing sentences with the strength of learners. The federal government initiated the worst catalysts against the vitality of Dene Yatı and other Indigenous language families, which included the forced removals and restrictions of Dene Dedlıne from the land into municipalities, and then the funding of residential schools. The impacts of language mixing, along with homogenizing technologies, discouragement and shame from language holders, and limited routes for accreditation have each provided barriers to Dene Dedlıne Yatı vitality. Mitigative solutions are recommended in Chapter V.

## Chapter V: Recommendations for Policy, Community and Family Unit

Knowledge holders proposed recommendations to policy changes around federal, territorial and Indigenous government levels. They also made recommendations for Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı learning communities and communities supporting the development of Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı resources, such as with schools, teachers and knowledge holders, and resource developers. Further, those who shared their knowledge made recommendations to family units, including households and individuals for how to "reignite the (Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı) fire." A summary of the recommendations is provided.

**Table 5.1.**

**Summary of Recommendations**

| Policy recommendations: Federal, territorial and Indigenous governments | |
|---|---|
| *Federal Government* | • Compensate the families / households of former Rocher River <br> • Pay families to learn Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı <br> • Review and renegotiate the treaties and the Indian Act <br> • Acknowledge Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı |
| *Territorial Government* | • The GNWT's Official Language Commissioner should be Indigenous <br> • Involve communities when developing their Indigenous Languages Action Plan <br> • Increase, decentralize, and open multi-tiered access to language funding <br> • Fund childcare and Elder honoraria for learning the language outside of schools <br> • Assert public use of Indigenous placenames (or name places) over colonial names <br> • Seek out and address the concerns and considerations of Dene |
| *Regional Indigenous Governments* | • Represent community languages based on populations of speakers <br> • Share cabins and camps to support learning Dene Yatı <br> • Translate and work with existing Dene Yatı materials |

| Community: Regional School Districts, Schools, Speakers and Resource Developers | |
|---|---|
| *South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC)* | • Fully-fund seasonal and experiential land-based immersion for K-12<br>• Support Indigenous language immersion more than equitably to French<br>• Dene instructors should review the relevance and application of the Dene Kede<br>• Dene should review the pan-territorial application of George Blondin's Dene Laws<br>• Accredit learning environments outside of the school year and classroom<br>• Provide a support space for learning<br>• Fund Elders and knowledge holders as guest lecturers and class helpers<br>• Represent community languages based on populations of speakers |
| *Teachers and Instructors* | • Take Dene Yatı classes outside<br>• Produce materials in syllabics and accredit learners for writing syllabics<br>• Meet learners needs by gradually increasing the complexity of sentences<br>• Make Dene Yatı learning relevant through situational learning, and even games<br>• Evaluate Dene Yatı learning through same situations and games<br>• Share resources and work with resources developers to produce new Dene Yatı materials |
| *Dene Dedlıne Yatı Speakers and Resource Developers* | • Establish a Speakers' Panel and an Elders Council<br>• Broadcast Dene Dedlıne Yatı on Community Radio and Local Television<br>• Record speakers and actively produce materials with those recordings<br>• Create a verb book<br>• Develop other digital resources and tools (examples provided) |
| Family Unit: Families, Speakers and Learners | |
| *Families with connection to Dene Dedlıne* | • Take a whole-family approach to language learning<br>• Immerse children with language speakers |
| *Speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı* | • Be supportive in passing along the language<br>• Encourage Dene learning a Dene language outside of one's own Dene ancestry |

| *Learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı* | • Seek out and use resources which are already available<br>• Use Dene fonts on phones and computers for texting and writing<br>• Reignite the fire of language and culture |
| --- | --- |

## Policy recommendations: Federal, territorial and Indigenous governments

The Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Indigenous governments are each mandated to support Indigenous languages within their regions through their respective official Indigenous language policies. While each government provides financial supports, Dene Dedlıne Yatı has often been excluded or not supported within jurisdictional boundaries.

On questioning the nature of land-based languages being decided upon by city-living bureaucrats, Nadine Delorme asks, "How paradoxical is it that we have Dene men and women who we've been in academia for 40 years say it's all about the land, but they're all in offices and in suits, instead of on the land and in regalia? That's imperialism."

### *Federal Government*

Notably, none those who shared their words mentioned Canada's call for consultations for Bill C-91 — An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages. Canada's call for consultations had been concurrent to the interview process for this capstone. Because of this lack of publicity and understanding around the federal bill currently seeking ascension, knowledge holders were not able to comment on the development of the bill itself or advise their own specific policy recommendations to that bill. There is also no available data on the number of speakers of Dene

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Dedlıne Yatı, as Canada's census records assess speakers of Chipewyan — which is inclusive also of /k/-dialect Dëné Sųłınë́ Yatı́ and which, according to those who shared their words, has far more speakers than /t/-dialect Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Knowledge holders did not explicitly recommend that the federal government measure and assess the number of speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, but rather that Dene Dedlıne be distinguished in the first place.

While many knowledge holders did share that the Government of Canada is accountable for the majority of catalysts and patterns of Indigenous language trauma, the majority of initial suggestions as to actions which the government could take come from Arthur Beck, who participates often in nation-to-nation negotiations with Canada on behalf of Northwest Territory Métis Nation. He says:

> So, the one who is really responsible for us losing our language is the federal government. They paid the Roman Catholic Church to build schools all over Canada, and pull our people off the land, and assimilate them in one spot so that the government can have access to all the land out there. They were gonna pull all the Indians out of the bush, because we were savages, and they were gonna make us into civilized people, I guess, in their eyes, which didn't happen.

**Compensate the families and households of former Rocher River.** During his time as a Member of Legislative Assembly, Tom Beaulieu says he pushed for Rocher River to be compensated by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Where the Government of the Northwest Territories has failed to adequately compensate the families forced out of their homes in Rocher River, Tom Beaulieu says the families and households need to be compensated for their forced displacement which made room for Taltson River Dam.

**Pay families to learn Dene Dedlıne Yatı.** Arthur Beck adds that the government should pay families to learn their language, as they have been the main catalysts against the vitality of the language:

> The government is responsible for taking language away from the people, and the way things are nowadays, you have to work to make a living. So, the parents of the youth that are going to school now that are learning the language, that first language that come up here, Dene Dedlıne Yatı, the parents had to be taught, and they have to be paid to go into school to be taught their own language. The government took it away, they're responsible, they should pay for it. Because right now, the way it is, these parents they can't take time off and go to learn Chipewyan because they have to make a living. And so as far as I'm concerned, the government is responsible for the language they should pay, pay them to learn the language back to help the youth for generations to come. That's the only way I could see it, because what's happening here — my girls are lucky because they ask me questions and we use it — we don't use it as much as I'd like to, the language, but we use it because I understand it and speak it very well. But not all parents are like that in our area. A lot of them, I'd say 95% of our Dene people, lost our language…. So that's what's gotta happen. The government's got to keep step in.
>
> You see, so, they have to teach their parents, too, but they gotta pay 'em, they got to make it into sort of a job, like, it's gotta be a paid thing because people have to work full time, like I said, you know, to go back to school after this age to learn their own language that the government took away…. They took the language away, they should pay people to learn it back because people gotta live. Yeah, it's gonna happen right away.

**Review and renegotiate the treaties and the Indian Act.** Eileen Beaver, Arthur Beck and Nadine Delorme explicitly addressed the active harms maintained through Canada's Indian Act.

As previously noted, Eileen Beaver mentioned the impact of the Indian Act on matriarchal Indigenous societies, mentioning how the Indian Act interrupted matriarchies, and reduced Indigenous societies through attempts at colonization into White, patriarchal societies.

Arthur Beck adds that non-Indigenous people should not have jurisdiction over Indigenous people and that the Indian Act remains a tool for colonization:

> That Indian Act has to be relooked at and it has to be established by the people — the Aboriginal people have to work on that Indian act. You know, people in Ottawa don't know how we live, don't know the terrain, don't know anything about us, yet they're making an act for all of us to live by. That's why it can't work. It's not made for our people, the act. The Act is made for a federal government to take over, take over the whole country.

Nadine Delorme adds that the act itself is interpretive to those who become "wards of the state" through federal interference, saying, "But the thing is, unless you understand constitutional convention, it's interpretive. And that's what's happened. It's all just been interpreted right now. It's not based on actual policy. It's not based on actual self-identifying self-governance — we're still wards at the state."

**Acknowledge Dene Dedlıne Yatı.** The GNWT has recently formally recognized Dene Dedlıne Yatı as distinct from Dëné Sųłıné̌ Yatı́, although both are still classified as dialects of Chipewyan and are assessed accordingly. Notably, this same suggestion is made to the Indigenous governments.

Nadine Delorme says, "It needs to be acknowledged, is the number one step. There's enough language groups, and I know there's some other language groups in the NWT that are still also fighting for full recognition and acknowledgement, and implementation of whatever programs each individual group has come up with."

*Territorial Government*

Where the Government of Canada is processing a federal languages bill, the Government of the Northwest Territories has had an Official Languages Act which acknowledges Indigenous language families since 1988. The Government of the Northwest Territories dedicates funding for Indigenous languages through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, which then delivers the funds to the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat, who then delivers the funds to a language representative from regional Indigenous nations, who then determines how those funds are used. The GNWT's 4-year language plan ends in 2022, while a successive multi-year strategy is likely being constructed at the time of writing.

Sabet Biscaye has worked with resources developed through ECE, saying, "We had a few games that were given to us by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. They were designed for language learning. We found that very helpful, too."

Tommy Unka, who works as an interpreter-translator with Arthur Beck at the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, says the whole structure of current territorial policies and education has to change, while at the same time acknowledging that there is now a dearth of those speaking Indigenous languages in their home community:

> I hear a lot of the stuff going on, at the ledge, in regards to the language and the effort they're trying to make. But, like I said, I think it's — they're barking up the wrong tree, you know, they got to revisit that whole structure again, and you got to teach it, like, the best way.
>
> Their policies have to change… Everybody's pushing for that over there. The MLAs are pushing to change the policies regarding the way the language is being handled and stuff like that. But you know, it's, it's unfortunate that we have to depend on that on a colonial government like that to stand our language up again, you know. I find that really annoying at times and now we've become dependent

on the government to live our languages up. You know, we're not practicing it enough around the campfire or anything like that.

Tommy Unka also questions the delineation of funding:

> I wonder how much of that — say, coming out — what percentage gets really down to doing something, in regards to policies and stuff like that, because a lot of that money that, you know, talking about that 22 million over five years and stuff like that, how much of that really gets put into the actual work, you know?
>
> And that always sits in my mind when I hear about this money landing way up off the top of the eagle's nest, you know, by the time it hits the ground, how much of it we have left, you know, how much of it is absorbed on the way down from whoever sanctioned it up there, and then it goes to the regional offices, and of course, they're gonna, you know, shave some off and change a little bit there and that — so how much of it really comes down to the communities? Say, your three-, four-million annually, maybe you're looking at, you know, $2.5-to-$3 million that actually gets into it that gets into the programs or the policy in regards to the Dene language, you know, so, it's kind of, for me, it's uh, you know that the government talks about this much money and stuff like that going into languages and stuff like that. They have the bragging rights, of course, you know, the first ones at it, so, but when you really come down to the crunch on that, you know, there's the communities are trickled down with a bunch of little chains that are coming down. Now from the top, wherever the source is, we don't know, but a lot of the money gets absorbed within the program that should be helping the language, but it's getting absorbed within the directive itself, you know?
>
> So, you know, people say there's this much money coming in come from the top, but you know, GNWT, it's the GNWT, of course, they're gonna shave some off, and then it goes through there. And then all you know what I'm saying? Say we, Fort Res, is given $100,000 — you know, by the time it comes down, down, down, down to all the ships that are in place, we've probably been lucky if we ended up with 25-grand, you know, so it's not really working as far as money is in regards to policymaking, in regards to reviving the language in communities or, you know, encouraging the use of language even.
>
> I really don't know too much about it. And, I know how money works, though, you know, so, I don't think there's enough money in languages.

**The GNWT's Official Language Commissioner should be Indigenous.** The Language

Commissioner for the GNWT fields the complaints raised about access to language learning

opportunities and fora. This commissioner is responsible for each language recognized within the

GNWT's Official Languages Act, of which nine out of the 11 Official Languages of the NWT

are Indigenous, while the other two are English and French. Tommy Unka explains the situation:

> And I know, they're looking for a language commissioner right now, and they wanted to put in a white man. And this is happening as we speak, but there was some opposition from the MLAs, about putting a white man in charge of the Aboriginal language. So… you can see where the government is still at, you know, even with the language, you know, they don't give a toot about it, they don't care whether it ever stands up on its feet again, because they sat on it for so long — they suppressed it, they underfunded it, and they never really had any solid programs to promote the language or to retain the language, or teach properly in schools and stuff like that. That's not happening. Some communities are doing it. They took the effort to go maybe one step further and to retain the language, but straight across the board, you know, it's not happening. The kids are being ripped off, maybe but, you know, for lack of proper term, but that's the way I feel, you know — the kids are ripped off from their culture.

**Involve communities when developing their Indigenous Languages Action Plan.**

ECE's 2018-2022 Indigenous Languages Action Plan ends soon. ECE is likely currently

reviewing its current action plan, or preparing it for public delivery.

Tom Beaulieu, the previous MLA for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, recognizes that the current

Official Languages Act might allow for provisions for Indigenous Peoples of the region to

determine their own education, while noting how the funding provides for other territorial

mandates around conservation and economics:

> But, somehow, (Indigenous People) have to discover that, through the Official Languages Act, there has to be provisions in there that will allow the Indigenous People to see that their language is dying, and that they could do something about it, and the law backs them up to do something about it. And if this is the plan, then this is the plan that the people have to fund. And because it creates a little bit of the conservation environment, it's a small footprint in economics, right.

Another knowledge holder, who preferred to remain anonymous, says:

> Absolutely, and I'll always advocate for that. And yeah, you're right with the (four-year Indigenous Languages Action Plan), that it gives me a little bit of hope for the future. But like I said, in '22 when it turns out, that will actually be something we'll probably have to revisit in our legislature — and I will definitely push for more funding to help fund language revitalization.

**Increase, decentralize, and open multi-tiered access to language funding.** Many of those who spoke the Dene Dedlıne Yatı were not aware of funding resources accessible and available to them, and several have had proposals rejected by territorial and regional Indigenous governments.

As a learner of Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, Nadine Delorme says that it is difficult to continually access funding to support knowledge and language holders in a way that allows her to learn the language. She, along with Catherine Boucher, have sent several proposals for learning Dënedédlı́né Yëtí to various funding sources inside and outside the NWT, but have had little success:

> Well, one of the other things that I've observed while working in different Indigenous organizations, in the NWT, is that language money is put into the general pot, and it's used for whatever, it's actually not specifically — unless it's projects like yours — they aren't specifically allotted out. They are just put into the general funds. And then they put so many policies and mandates on, when they do do it, that of course I don't fit in those categories — even to be able to compensate Elders, or just that the Elders can be available.
>
> And maybe we should reverse the philosophy, and the thinking — is that they should have always been available, we should have always had them there, well-paid, right from day one. Not that we're now just figuring out that it should be a well-paid scenario.

Nadine adds that accessing resources to learn her language does not feel like a right or something she has guaranteed access to, saying:

> So, it's like, well, who do we challenge? Because that's what it's become, it's become a challenge. It's no longer a right — it's a challenge [laughing] in order to have the right to access it. So, I guess that's what would be involved — keep on petitioning the government, keep on researching and bringing the statistics forward as to how endangered our language actually is….
>
> So, this is this is what the real enemy to our language, besides Canada trying to interpret who we are, is the leaders don't understand the full scope of it, or they do but are too irresponsible with it, or focus too much on only one dynamic. It needs to be decentralized.

Another Dene Yatı speaking participant, who preferred to remain anonymous, says, "I think it's really important that we have a screening process and to make sure that the funds get to the proper sources. That needs to be done."

***Fund childcare and Elder honoraria for learning the language outside of schools.*** Several of those who shared their knowledge reinforce that Master-Apprentice programs — alongside a Dene way of learning — are successful for Dene Yatı acquisition.

Snookie Catholique introduces this point most directedly, stating:

> If you really want to increase the language, then start going into the homes, and find out who speaks the language in the homes, and support them to be able to remain in the home if necessary, to start to teach their youngest, their children, at a very young age, to start to speak the language.

Nadine Delorme agrees, noting that she has funding limitations, and these days people are expected to reciprocate in some way, though this becomes unsustainable for her and her language mentor. Nadine is then frustrated with a lack of available options for learning:

> There's been like two people who've reached out concerning language, but then (language mentors) kind of started making it a requirement to pay them. And I understood that concept, you know, like, paying the land, you know, you're paying for knowledge, in a sense, but being a limited '60s Scoop survivor, I can't always… provide some monetary value to my elder, and so forth. I think that's another dynamic that kind of is getting lost in translation also, is — yes, our language keepers are very valuable and should be paid very high for what they do, but it shouldn't have to be that me, a community member, should have to pay in order for an elder to share the language with me, or that I have to somehow say 'Can I take grade eight again?' so that I can access the program to learn the language.

Sabet Biscaye had been a part of the University of Victoria's Master-Apprentice program for about four months, and says that language program was quite successful, but limitations around childcare for the learner made it difficult to sustain a learning environment:

> With the apprentice, there was so much more progress she could have made if we were able to stick to our learning schedules. But, she did have little ones at home, and she worked full days — like, she worked during the day, and I worked during the day — and so there's a lot of times where we had to cancel the session because she had to go run off to look after her children, or things that she had to do on the weekend, even if we had scheduled a session on the weekend. So, if we had managed to stick with a really strict schedule, I think she would have made even more progress on her language.

**Assert public use of Indigenous placenames (or name places) over colonial names.**

The Government of the Northwest Territories has conducted several projects with Indigenous knowledge holders in which they have developed databases of Indigenous placenames. Where the term 'place names' is used to refer to a geographic region by one of its Indigenous names, the term 'name places' is used by the majority of those who shared their words in this project.

Tommy Unka describes the importance of name places when he is teaching learners Dene Dedlıne Yatı:

And it also teaches them, you know. They know where they're at geographically, the name places… I could teach the kids name places for a whole year in class. You know, so that kind of stuff should be brought back. And some of this stuff could be turned into a good project, you know, like, the name places, for instance, you could use that, you know, in negotiations and stuff like that, you know, it's all these useful things like that, but it's not happening.

Arthur Beck agrees, describing a few of the Indigenous place names which have been misappropriated into English contexts:

The only problem with that is that the white men they try to use our language in English, like for example I'll use what you know really well as Gnarling River. You know, Gnarling, I don't know if there's a word in English for Gnarling but what that means what they were trying to say in English was níyarlí — ní, means like ground, and yarlí, the water flows under it.

Níyarlí, you see. And then the White man put it together and they call it gnarling but you see supposed to be níyarlí. You see how? And Taltson, same with Taltson…

It's tọtéddhe and when they put it in English it ends up in Taltson. It's crazy. And Siskatawey Lake, just all the way up on Taltson River, Siskatawey Lake, they say it in English, ah? And its proper name in our language is deskartué, what that means is 'Lake by the River'. Because Taltson River, at the south end of big Saskatawey Lake, Taltson River runs in one end of the South End, and leaves at one end of the other side of the Lake, on the south end. So, the river just touches the end of the lake like, and the lake, most, is about a mile, mile and a half wide, where the river flows through it.

But, our language is really descriptive. Really descriptive of anything and everything, plants, animals, places is really descriptive. Like K'eschelá, you know, k'eschelá. That means poplar point. There will be a point with lots of poplar trees on it. They'll say it that way.

Or if it's a Rock Island, tthenu, it describes the island even if it's a big one or they'll say it, if it was a small one, if it's a high one, a wide one, and what's on it. A lot of times what's on the island and the way the island looks is all in the name in our Aboriginal language.

Ron Beaulieu addresses name places, saying how he hears non-Indigenous people make up their own names for places, and that those non-Indigenous names do not have the descriptors which are inherent to place names in Indigenous languages:

> Name places on the river — most of these places nowadays, like… It's like me, when I travel out on the lake on the East Arm and I use the marine radio, I hear people from Yellowknife and all these white people, they got their own name for the places that I know by traditional names — and that's not right, them making up their own names. And sometimes it's hard to understand, like, where are they, where do they really mean when they're making up their own names for a place? You know, and if we don't influence our people to use their proper names that we use through history, it's gonna change to the other society, this white society are gonna have the names, and those names are gonna be put on maps, and our people are gonna slowly lose… 'Cos every name place has a name for a reason.
>
> You know, like, even like some of our old fish camps where we go, if you go down the shore, you look in the water, you'll find some little fish you won't find nowhere else, little purple, I seen them, little purple fish, some nice little green ones. That's a fish camp, there's a reason there's a fish camp, 'cos there are fishes there you won't find anywhere else. You know, stuff like that.

On name places, Nadine Delorme says that even Rocher River is misattributed:

> And so, our name places reflect that. Except for Rocher River, like, that's a French name. Ɂastòdesche. Ɂastòdesche. It's 'desche' — a very specific way. Because I was saying it like 'day-cha' before and they're like, no, it's 'des-che'. Yeah, that's what I thought too. But yeah, there's interpretation, it sometimes can really wear and erode the language.

**Seek out and address the concerns and considerations of Dene.** Several Dene Dedlıne have said there needs to be a separate commission responding to the concerns and consideration of speakers and learners of Dene Yatı when developing policy addressing Indigenous languages.

Tommy Unka says nothing has changed since the GNWT added Indigenous languages to the GNWT's Official Languages Act:

You know, we're in the kind of funny situation right now, too, because there's no language people in schools or anything, and yet they're making an effort at trying to teach the language when there's not a (enough resources for the teacher) for one. And it kind of — kind of blows me away. So, I think the whole school system, and the way they're dealing with the language — including way up in the government, where the funds all come from — it has to be revisited. You know, people have to have a say. They should bring it to the community and say, 'This is what we're doing, what can we change?' You know, I think it needs that really bad.

You know, it's been sitting in that dirty fucking diaper there for 30 years or so. And nothing's been ever done about it, you know, the people that that were good at working with the languages, without saying names, are all gone — and stuff like that, and in change of hands, change of government, the language just fell behind. We have a token gesture, you know — the language commissioner that goes out there and bless things once in a while, and stuff like that, but they're limited, they're sitting on a little couple of pennies and stuff like that. How the hell are you going to work on a program properly if you're underfunded for one, you know, and you can't pound your message home about the importance of the language when you don't have the funds, because that's the way it's set up right now. It's not like the old days where everybody was speaking the language so the kids were immersed in it. Now, it's not happening there. So, you know, I think we, unfortunately, we have to — it goes back to the government coffers again, you know, we're underfunded —and I think they have to really see the importance of the language and stand it up again, for the people.

Henry McKay agrees, saying that we should ask the teachers, "Well, what I just said to you. If it was up to me, I would get the good teachers that talked Chip good. And maybe, probably ask them how."

### *Regional Indigenous Governments*

There are several regional Indigenous governments Tu Nedhé with speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, such as Akaitcho Territorial Government, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, or NWTMN< Deninu Kų́ę First Nation, K'atlodeeche First Nation, Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Salt River First Nation and Smith's Landing First Nation. The Indigenous governments which currently recognize Dene Dedlıne Yatı, in that they provide resources or program delivery in

Dene Dedlıne Yatı for their membership or the public, include K'atlodeeche First Nation through the Yamózha Kúé Society, and NWTMN through their Indigenous Languages Program. Akaitcho Dene First Nation, ADFN, who previously recognized and produced Dënedédlı́né Yëtí resources with Catherine Boucher, no longer produces resources in Dënedédlı́né Yëtí. Catherine now produces resources with NWTMN. Instead, ADFN are producing resources in Wıìlıìdeh dialect, which Dene Dedlıne don't acknowledge as a language.

The Indigenous government supporting the most work around Dene Dedlıne Yatı is Northwest Territory Métis Nation. Arthur Beck, a member of NWTMN, says:

> We (the Northwest Territory Métis Nation and its councils) are the ones that are taking over. We work with Dene Dedlıne, we are — and we're working with a linguist too. We got it finally — remember the band had it for a while? Well, we got it here now in Res, so we got Chipewyan, and Smith's got Cree, so we got 'em both now — we got Cree and Chip. [Name redacted] has been working with us.

**Represent community languages based on lineage of membership.** Several Indigenous nations have Dene Dedlıne membership, although they may not have recognized Dene Dedlıne Yatı as an official language of their nation. Catherine Boucher and Arthur Beck address the challenges around the language currently introduced by Akaitcho First Nation.

Catherine Boucher says Akaitcho First Nation is not producing materials in Dënedédlı́né Yëtí anymore, and that Chief Akaitcho himself did not speak the dialect now being introduced by Akaitcho First Nation. As previously mentioned, Catherine has encouraged Akaitcho First Nation to produce materials in Dënedédlı́né Yëtí and not Wıìlıìdeh-dialect. This point was seconded by Arthur Beck. Instead, Catherine now produces resources with Northwest Territory Métis Nation through the NWTMN's Indigenous Languages Program.

Tommy Unka identifies the issues of having leadership who do not acknowledge the majority language of their membership:

> We're in a kind of crazy situation, because a lot of this stuff should be coming from the leadership… We have a Chief that don't even speak the language, and he's not promoting any of his culture or anything. So, it's kind of — it's kind of a difficult situation, you know, if we had a Chief that could speak his language, he could communicate with the people properly.

**Share cabins and camps to support learning Dene Yatı.** Both Fort Smith and Fort Resolution hold culture camps each year. Those who shared their words say that they should use these camps as opportunities to teach Dene Dedlıne Yatı. However, there is local contention over who owns the culture camp space and how it should be used.

Ron Beaulieu says the culture camp helps to provide some learning and skills, but it is incomplete without the language. He says, "They have a cultural camp here every summer, where they make dryfish, dry meat, storytelling — you could have a whole thing there, and they should introduce the Chipewyan language in there too. But I guess it all boils down to money like everything else."

Catherine Boucher says she is upset seeing Indigenous governments limit the use of their own language:

> You know, and it's sad to see that [First Nations government], the Dene band here, don't use the language at the culture camp. Now, there have big, big fights on the internet here and there about the island, about what's going on — I don't know, and I never got on to it.

Ron Beaulieu agrees, and notes that fluent speakers should teach Dene Dedlıne Yatı at the culture camp:

> Well, you gotta get the right people, I guess. There's people out there that can speak good that can teach the language to kids. But, it's got to be out in the proper environment. Not in schools. Like, out in the summer, they should have camps. Like, Fort Res has a cultural camp every year, but they don't enforce, or have anybody around the camp that speaks Chip to the kids.

Henry McKay says he does not like seeing these governmental limitations stopping people from visiting the lands or holding their own cultural activities nearby:

> They put signs up on Mission Island. You can't do nothing here and there. It's supposed to be mission land. That's the place they go there every year and all that. They could go for the summer.

> Right now, it's nice out there, and they're teaching in town here in school — they could be out. Like I said, there's a camp across from here, about 20-minute drive, 15. There's a nice culture camp there, it's got everything. It's even got a big meeting room, a big room, just go there, and that's where you can run a workshop… So now, they're bringing school kids out there, where I'm talking about, right now. That last day, I think they had about 16 kids, something like that, from 7-9. And they were doing pretty good, what we were doing was pretty good. If we could carry on that way, maybe hunters and trappers can take kids out and show them how to set snare, stuff like that, on-the-land. If they learn from them, and just talk straight Chip with them out there, before the little bit of Chipewyan speaking people here disappear. It's not happening. I'm not happy with it, with the way they're doing it here.

**Translate and work with existing Dene Yatı materials.** Indigenous governments with Dene Yatı learning resources should review the materials in Indigenous languages they already have — particularly materials which were originally recorded or documented in Dene Yatı.

Snookie Catholique shares a few examples of the importance of doing this now, while there are still fluent speakers who can translate the work:

> So, our language has continued evolving, and that's what I'd say about our resource centre here at the Dene Nation. We need to do something with it immediately, because 50 years ago, in 1967 or '68 or something, when the Indian Brotherhood was created, they started to document the presentations from the

Elders from back then, during the Berger Inquiry and all that, and a lot of the words that were being used during that time are no longer being used. And so, my fear is that if we don't translate a lot of that right now, those words are going to disappear as well. You know, a lot of the words that were being used by my grandmother are not being used today — and if we don't use it, that's going to disappear too. And we've kind of replaced it with English, and our own words or whatever.

In several instances, Catherine Boucher says she has saved materials for future use and resource development, especially if someone could help design and popularize the materials:

… it's just, the duck eggs, the animals around here, the bear, the beaver, and even the rabbit. That's the kind, it's all in my language. I just thought I'll keep it, just in case maybe someday I'll use it. Because of, (Richard) van Camp! So, you know, we could get all together and we could get something going here….

Because I got it all written down in my book. Soon, we'll get it going, and always promoting a language should be striving again. Kids making their own songs, working with elders. Uh huh. That'll be cool. You know, the kids making their own songs or their own stories we could translate and all that for them. You know? That's another one too, and just make little booklets so people could start reading it.

One knowledge holder who preferred to remain anonymous says that there is no time for delaying, and that there are many paper or analog materials which still have not been digitized:

My take is, right now, you should always strike while the iron's hot, and now is as good a time as any to start bringing back, like, getting our knowledge holders involved, because we are losing Elders at a rapid pace. See, like, right now we get like, we can pull back in and digitize a lot of our language, and we need to do that now. It's funny because I was just thinking about this — because I used to work for the Dene Nation, to have a huge archive — and a lot of it's still like, on paper, you know, and it's not digitized.

**Community: Regional School Districts, Schools, Speakers and Resource Developers**

The South Slave Divisional Education Council, or SSDEC, oversees the delivery of Indigenous language programming across several schools within the area which used to, or continue to, deliver Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming. These schools include Deninu School in Fort Resolution, Joseph Burr Tyrrell Elementary School, and Paul William Kaeser High School in Fort Smith. Aurora College has occasionally provided drop-in spaces for learners and speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Recommendations have also been made to those who are speakers, and resource developers living in Tu Nedhé.

Snookie Catholique says that Dene youth should not have to choose between formal education and learning their Dene ways, saying, "I mean, it shouldn't be one or the other — it should be both. People shouldn't say, you need to go back to the land, just to off-the-land, but education is very important too, in this day in age. But trapping, and hunting, and living-off-the-land is equally important as well."

*South Slave Divisional Education Council*

Several knowledge holders shared recommendations responding to current regional education and the delivery of Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming. In the process, many people named and voiced acclaim for current and past Dene Dedlıne Yatı instructors, especially Angela Fabien, as someone respected for her teaching. Knowledge holders then voiced recommendations for regional school districts and schools to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition. They also shared recommendations for resource developers to create materials

supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı acquisition. Communities have raised concerns about the lack of K-12 immersion programming in Dene Yatı, when immersion options are available for French.

**Fully fund seasonal and experiential land-based immersion for K-12.** Most knowledge holders have expressed that Dene Yatı is best learned through experiential, seasonally-appropriate on-the-land Dene Yatı immersion environments.

Tom Beaulieu says he has not noticed significant success with the classroom as an environment for learning Dene Yatı, saying, "I'm not a firm believer that you become fluent from learning how to speak Chipewyan in school — I'm gonna sometimes call it Chipewyan because I've been doing that all my life. As far as learning Dene Dedlıne or Dëné Sųłınë́ in school, I haven't seen any success."

Arthur Beck agrees that the current format for language learning in schools isn't conducive to learning Dene Yatı:

> Yeah, they're helping the youth, yet, but you know, just, you learn it for, what, one hour in school every day? You're not gonna hold it, because it's kind of forced on you, you only use it at school, you don't use it at home so you lose it….
>
> So, and then you have to do that in all four seasons, you do the teaching of the land, the culture, and way of harvesting out on-the-land, and use both languages because all the kids understand English so you have to do the English word first. Then you do the native language, what you're telling them.

Henry McKay would like to see a Dene Yatı immersion class with their own graduation:

> But, if this from here, they'd talk a little bit. Maybe an hour in Chipewyan class, a couple of hours — they get out of there, they've forgot about it. Over there (in land-based learning environments), you can't go nowhere. And talk to them in Chip. Gahbı́ł means like rabbit snare. Stuff like that — tthęł, axe, stuff like that — dechënbes is saw. Tł'ǫbále is tent, you know.

The kids' school, I've never seen a graduation for the Chipewyan class, nothing. So, there's nothing happening, right? How are they gonna learn? They should graduate, if they go to Chipewyan class, they should have something coming out of it, I've never seen nothing come out of it in how many years now that it's been going on. They changed the teachers a couple of times. Like I said, there's nothing coming out of it, it's not working. They say there in Łutsel K'e they're talking Chip. I don't know when they've been there. Snowdrift, they call it, 'cos it's so windy. They do, they talk Chip, they talk Chip a little bit differently than us. We're pretty well related, except they're about 150-miles from here.

**Support Indigenous language immersion equitably to French.** Where experiential on-the-land immersion opportunities are not available for Dene Yatı learning through school systems, those who shared their words said that the Indigenous languages recognized in GNWT's Official Languages Act need to be treated with the same learning opportunities which are currently only otherwise available in English or French — such as immersion programming.

Snookie Catholique notices the success in French immersion programs delivered by the SSDEC, and says the same opportunity should be available for Indigenous languages:

> Well, I think it's got to be total immersion. I remember when I went to school in Fort Smith, and one of the classes that I had was French. As soon as we walked in — I can't remember the teacher's name — but he would start speaking to us in French. He had us reading French books, and pointing to certain objects in the classroom and have us repeat it — and to this day, I remember it, and I think that is key.
>
> It would be great if we had an immersion course, immersion classes for our kids, but of course, it's always going to be that — where are we going to get the money from? And French can get money — why can't we? It's just that we don't have enough people advocating on our behalf, and that's why.

Tom Beaulieu's wife teaches French immersion, and has noticed the success of the regional French immersion program when they are out in the community:

… and as we walked around the community of Yellowknife, she's running into students right from five-year-olds she taught to, right up to the kids that were thirteen years old — she was walking up to them, she's speaking French. Many of those kids spoke French totally like that. They parents of the students wouldn't speak French. So many of them would stand there looking at me, Monique would communicate to them. The program they had there was successful because they had a lot of written material that goes back for hundreds of years.

Eileen Beaver, along with several other knowledge holders, recognize that Indigenous languages do not have equitable funding supports compared to French programs in schools in the Northwest Territories or in Tu Nedhé:

And then the French group had the French immersion where they just spoke only French, and eventually they're picking it up. But that French immersion was totally supported by the government, where they come in at Kindergarten or Preschool, and they're immersed in the language — so they're speaking the language by the time that they're a certain grade. Let's say, by the time they got into Grade 7 they're able to read and write in the French language, because all of the lessons — all the work that they do, and the communication they do — is all in French within the building…. So, they expected us to be able to do that. And, we only get them, some people, we'd only get them for twenty minutes, forty minutes. There was a time I was able to get them for a full hour, and then afterwards, now, they're getting them for thirty-five minutes or so. So, you can't expect to learn. Because some weeks, you're doing three classes, so you're doing, what… thirty-five minutes, seventy, another thirty-five is 105 minutes in the week. And they expect you to come out with some kind of a program where students are able to, you know, talk right away. And, so they give the French a million dollars to do a certain type of teaching, but yet they give the language instructors $10 and expect to come out with the same result.

**Dene instructors should review the relevance and application of the Dene Kede.** The Dene Kede was introduced in 1993 with the goal of making formal education learning environments more relevant to Dene. Those who shared their words in this work have mixed opinions towards the Dene Kede, with some Dene saying we should review and revise the Dene Kede, others saying that the Dene Kede should only be taught by Dene, and others saying that the Dene Kede was for non-Indigenous instructors to make their education relevant to Dene.

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Eileen Beaver mentions that in her time as an instructor, non-Indigenous teachers would continually pass of off their version of the Dene Kede off to her:

> So, I started looking around for different curriculums in Alberta, Saskatchewan — they have some Dene curriculums, but there was still always something missing. And I didn't like the idea of following by a curriculum because then you're following a structure, and you're not really working towards the student's ability, you're working towards the student's grade level and their ability to pass, no matter how much amount of work within the grade, for culture and language and that. And it was — even the Dene Kede — was not… It was put together, but it was never worked on. It was just there.

> When I first started working, I remember [laughing] the first month that I started working in September, I guarantee you by October, I had every Dene Kede book that every teacher had — they'd dumped it on me. They weren't using it in their class, with their class instruction, they just felt that because I was the speaker or teacher, that I was the one that should be using that book. So, I started handing all these books back to them. The principal was just staring at me. I handed them all back to them, and I said, 'You look at these — this is going from Grade 7 to Grade 9. Those of you that are (teaching) Grade 7 to Grade 9, you can use these things, instead of using things like African animals and that, you can use the animals we have in the North if you need to. You can use the different cultural, language and customs and that', I said, 'You guys can go into the community and find out what types of stories we had, what took place here in this place, dating back to fur-trading days'. Maybe they won't be able to tell you what happened before fur trading, because there's so many traumas and impacts in our culture, and so many things that have made it so that we were losing our language, and we were in the process of being extinct, through the government system and the religious system, and the education system. The education system they used to teach us — I knew more about the United States than I ever did about Canada, when I went to school. It's just lately that you guys are including Northern Studies, so by the time I'm done with you guys, this school's gonna start working as a team.

Snookie Catholique says the Dene Kede needs to being followed by non-Dene. She adds, after 25 years, the Dene Kede irrelevant and does not meet the needs of Dene learners:

> Well I think you need to have, for lack of a better word, a watchdog. You know, someone that is passionate — like yourself, or me — because we make sure teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing, and sometimes that doesn't happen.

And plus, the Dene Kede, how old is it? It's quite old, and it needs to be updated…. I mean, with the information, the technology, that's being used today — incorporate that into the new curriculum. But, yeah, it's just sitting there. So, even the history of residential school is not in the Dene Kede, so that's why I'm thinking that if it's revised, polished up with some new information, some new tips and all this then maybe that will inspire interest again.

On the Dene Kede, Nadine Delorme says:

You had mentioned the Dene Kede… I would vote for 100% within our schools, but you need to have Dene teachers in there to teach it — you can't just have a teacher who came from south trying to teach them Dene Kede without learning it themselves at the same time. And that's, I think, where the government has gotten kind of a little bit wrong. Yes, I get it — teachers are supposed to teach everything and have some knowledge, but a lot of people don't when they come here from elsewhere. So, this is where I believe a breakdown in the cultural transmission occurs. And it's only happening in schools. It's not happening at Aurora College (Dene Kede is not being implemented in Aurora College).

A knowledge keeper who says prefers to remain anonymous says:

I'm always going to be an advocate for language and culture, so if we have some links to the old ways, and how it's been done in the past, and, you know, if it connects somehow to our roots, I guess, for lack of a better word, you know, I'm all for it. I'm not sure what else to say about that. But, you know, yeah, absolutely. You know, like, for like, anything involves like, language and cultures, and links somehow to our past, for sure, I'll fully support that.

**Dene should review the pan-territorial application of George Blondin's Dene Laws.**

Most of those who shared their words were either not familiar with George Blondin's Dene Laws, or confirmed they approved of it in principle but had not read them. While everyone had heard of Dene Laws, there was an indication that George Blondin's Dene Laws are not the Dene Laws lived and taught by Dene Dedlıne through Dene Ch'anie.

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Nadine Delorme says George Blondin's Dene Laws may work for some communities, but schools need to review those versions of the Dene Laws before applying them to communities:

> So, George Blondin's is just one particular point of worldview of the Dene way, and it's very specific. And when you try to ask someone here in this community, or actually anywhere in Akaitcho territory, they will just poopoo it all. So, there's a real rivalry between the Tłįchǫ and Akaitcho.
>
> So, (George Blondin's laws are) one point of view. And, from what I've observed and vehemently and diligently sought out, it does not exist here. So that's about as much as I can talk about the sacredness of the medicine perspective worldview of that.

Hearing the Dene Laws as George Blondin wrote them, Arthur Beck responds:

> No, no, that, they call it the commandments. That's out-to-lunch, that. It's just, George Blondin made it up himself. Well, George, you see what he has there. He's leaning towards the religion, okay. (George Blondin's laws) are not the same as ours then. I thought it was the same as ours, but ours is mainly, respect to animals and plants and stuff like that. It's way deeper than what he just said. Ours is for the future generations to come, and this one's about himself.

Another person who shared their words but preferred to remain anonymous says:

> Like, the Dene Laws weren't taught me in that way, you know. You've seen the 10 Dene Laws or whatever in schools, you know, like 'respect the Elders', 'go to sleep on time,' 'always be happy', those kinds of stuff you see at school. And, I mean, that's great — but I was taught certain things a little differently.
>
> Maybe I guess at some point, I guess I do have some of those Dene Laws, like, put into me, like instilled in me. But they're like, you know, I guess they put their own twist on it. At least that's what I was taught.

**Accredit Dene Yatı learning environments outside of the school year and classroom.**

Many knowledge holders agree that a seasonal experiential on-the-land immersion program

would provide the best environment for learning Dene Yatı.

Catherine Boucher says you would start the group learning throughout the year, and build

up to an school for an immersion camp in Dënedédlı́né Yëtí:

> (A language teacher told me) they started off with only four, five. And next thing
> you know, there's about a handful a year, then that doubles, and now there's a big
> crowd, she said! And then we'll try to get a place for it. Maybe we could get into a
> school for immersion in the Dënedédlı́né language

> ….

Tom Beaulieu recommends a land and language camp a few times a year, and to bring

family who speak the language into the immersion environment:

> Like, you know, they must have a lot of students. Like, that maybe two or three
> times a year, they take a group out, and spend it out there, and try to build the
> language. And they could allow parents, and it they could have parents, some of
> the parents could be there if they speak. I think that, in order for us to facilitate
> that environment, I think it will be the only way. And it seems drastic, I know it
> seems drastic, but anything short of that fails.

Snookie Catholique adds her children attend K'alemi Dene School. She says this school

goes beyond the classroom to establish community relationships fostering language use outside

of the classroom and into people's homes:

> And we just love that school because there's a lot of communication between the
> teachers and the parents, and there's a lot of community involvement. And that's
> the way it should be. It shouldn't just be, send your kid to school and then let them
> come back understanding your language — because that's not the teacher's job, it
> has to be taught at home, too.

Sabet Biscaye adds that the Master-Apprentice Program she participated in had great results, and that a type of MAP program could be implemented and accredited in high schools:

> I've learned that, I think the Master-Apprentice program was good, but it's part of the university program, so there are certain timelines and restrictions. But I've found that program more helpful. I found the apprentice was able to carry on a conversation. Even though it was a limited conversation, I was able to carry on a conversation with her at the end of our learning experience.
>
> So, I think that program has a lot of potential. It might need to be explored a little bit more. It might need to be incorporated more into a high school, or that kind of level, it helped a bit. But, I think out of all the language classes I taught, that was the one that was the most successful.

**Provide a support space for learning.** Aurora College and schools within the South Slave Divisional Education Council have occasional provided support spaces to host non-accredited, drop-in learning environments for Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Sabet Biscaye would use a space if it was available to teach Dëné Yatí, but those spaces are not necessarily guaranteed or available. She says, "I used to teach a lunch class, three days a week for adult learners who ever wanted to learn. We ran that for about six months, and the participants enjoyed it very much, but trying to come up with a meeting space is very difficult."

**Fund Elders and knowledge holders as guest lecturers and class helpers.** Several people involved shared that they believe school teachers should have the financial capacity to support having Elders, fluent speakers and knowledge holders as guest lecturers and teacher helpers.

Henry McKay believes that a single teacher instructing through the current school system's design is unlikely to teach Dene Dedlıne Yatı — and that learners will be particularly disadvantaged if the teacher is not fluent in the language:

> They teaching as a school but they, they only got one teacher and I don't know how many kids they got. I think they should have Elders working with them to teach the kids. I keep saying that and they never do. The way I'm telling you is a teacher alone can't do it, I don't think. I know it wouldn't work. It's a waste of time, the way they're doing it anyway.
>
> There needs to be a fluent Elder in the room, if the teacher doesn't know something, even if the Elder was there, just two or three hours a day, they should go there and help. If there was ever something they didn't know, they could ask the Elder, and they could pick it up from them, ah. You know, it'd be a big help for the Elders, because there's some things they don't know, and there's some things the teachers don't know. I know that. But, it's going on. We don't like it, but there's nothing we can do about it. And I shouldn't be like that.

Snookie Catholique says this same principle can apply to other topics in school, such as inviting residential school survivors when teaching about residential schools:

> Part of the curriculum as well, too — it's mandatory now that residential schools, the history of residential schools, has to be taught. And for a while there, there was a few of us that were going and talking to teachers about our own experience, so that they know that if they ever do teach it, and they are stumped, then they can call on us and we can go and talk to the students ourselves about our own our own experiences. And even then, too, there were some teachers that were just kind of rolling their eyes, like, 'Yeah, right.' You know, they don't believe this actually happened, and I don't know how people like that ever become teachers….

Ron Beaulieu says the same, noting that if Dene Dedlıne Yatı is taught in school, "It's gotta be taught at a young age. I guess, in school, by fluent speakers."

*Teachers and Instructors*

While knowledge holders made recommendations to the larger regional education district and schools, they also shared recommendations to teachers which they believe would help learners of Dene Yatı. Those who shared their words considered the venue for learning; supporting the connection to Dene languages by Dene learners who are not connected to Dene Dedlıne; producing materials for multiple subjects for immersion; teaching in syllabics; teaching and evaluating learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in environments appropriate for the language; and sharing teaching materials and resources in collaboration with a resource developer.

**Take Dene Yatı classes outside.** As has been consistently voiced by all of the knowledge holders, Dene Yatı are best learned on-the-land. Those who shared their knowledges also said, where possible, teachers should take learners into an environment which supports land-based Dene ways of being:

Tommy Unka, who has been a Dene Dedlıne Yatı teacher, says:

> The Chipewyan language is a very complex language, to begin with. It's good to know what what's the basis of it, like the verbs and the vowels and the alphabets, and all the different signs that go with this, you know, that make up the language. But —sure, you can do that — but I think you should also take them into a situation where they can learn on-the-land and stuff like that for a whole week. You know, just a language kind of immersion program, or something that the little kids can go out there, and go camping and stuff like that, you know, how to help. By teaching them all the different parts of nature, you know, the willows, the trees, the rivers, and all these different little things they should learn about the land.
>
> I didn't like that colonial way of teaching the language, you know — because it is colonial way, sitting in the classroom and stuff like that. And it stops right there. They have that one hour, and it doesn't go anywhere from there — they're on to the next class, to the arithmetic or whatever. But it's just that little, small little window — they're not expanding it into the real-life situation, they're not able to

use it properly. So, they're not allowing, they're not creating, avenues for the kids to utilize the language properly. You know, for me, it's just a token gesture, the way they're teaching it, you know — it's just to say that we've done it. But they're not encouraging how to use the language.

Sabet Biscaye also recommends the same of Dene Yatí teachers, saying:

> Where you can, take it out of the classroom — and when I say, 'where you can', because I know from having been a teacher that there are a lot of restrictions, and I think there are more restrictions now than what we had. But, with the school, for example — there's no reason why they cannot set up a little camp on the school grounds where that becomes the site of where they teach the language.

Sabet Biscaye also suggested going grocery shopping, and advised taking field trips or going to outside environments with her language mentees:

> We also did some very fun exercises. We tried to take it out of that artificial learner environment. (The mentee) would come over three days a week for lunch, sometimes four, and then we would schedule evening sessions too. For example, grocery shopping. That was a real fun activity. She has to go grocery shopping, she got little ones, so we said okay, let's go. So, we had to do her grocery shopping, so again, we reviewed, and we did our grocery shopping, and we had a lot of fun. Just through trying to explain this and that, she understood all the words — not just big or small, in terms of the size and all of that, so it was really good.
>
> We also went to the museum one Sunday and spent a couple of hours at the museum. And again, just only talking in the language, staying in the language the whole time as we're going through, and through repetition. Like, the hat, the word for hat. You know, we'll see a hat someplace, and I'll say "ts'ah," and then we'll go and see a hat another place, and I'll say "ts'ah." So, at the end, she knew what "ts'ah" was. And, you know, some certain things like that.

Eileen Beaver, who taught Dene Dedlıne Yatı for several decades in schools, says:

> It's actually right on the wall, the objective and the words and that, the words that they were gonna be working with for that lesson, and their unit plan and stuff, 'cos you've got to work with all of those things. So, when we bring them outside, they don't have that, because we're teaching them through the SMART teaching,

but when we go outside, and when we have class outside this time of the year (May), all of our classes can be outside. You know, we bring them back in, we take them to their classes, we go back out, we go down to the river, we go into the trees, and we go walking around, and they're learning the different words — of grass, of roads, the sky, and birds — and whatever, when we're sitting and telling stories in the circle. So, we try to make it that the teaching environment is not only in the classroom setting.

Eileen has even taught mathematics in Dene Dedlıne Yatı, adding that speakers have lazier speaking over the years. Because of this, she says you have to teach the language in full:

> The Elders always say, 'If you're gonna teach, you teach the language in the full form, not the half form,' you know, using the full form of language. Say, you're teaching numbers, for example. You don't just say Ɂįłá, you know, like the slang. You say Ɂįłághe. Or, for seven, like is 'five-plus-three-minus-one'— Ɂełáísdıghı. And, you know, Ɂełk'étaghe, Ɂełáísdıghı, and Ɂełk'édıghı. But they cut that down, they would say k'étagh, łáísdı, k'édı. And that's okay, because you understand what they're saying, that's numbers. But really, when you're saying, for the numbers six, you're saying Ɂełk'étagh, you're actually saying 'two-times-three,' 'three things on top of each other.' Like, they're saying 'two-times-three', and you have it, that's six. And then for seven, you're saying 'two-times-four-minus-one', Ɂełáísdı. You're taking one away from two times four, so it's seven. And then, with eight, you're saying Ɂełk'édı, 'two-times-four'.
>
> When you're saying six, seven, and eight, you're saying, they have two at a time, and subtraction. Ɂełáísdı, that's two times four minus one, that's really what you're saying in the long form. But for the short form, or lazy speak, they would say, k'éta for six, and łáísdı. Instead of saying dıghı — dıghı means four, and they would use the word dı. A lot of words have the lé, ghe at the end, and they would just chop that off.

**Produce materials in syllabics and accredit learners for writing syllabics.** Several knowledge holders have shared that the use of syllabics is more successful for Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners to acquire the language, as indicated in Chapter IV.

Snookie Catholique phrases it the most eloquently when she says:

I'm fluent in that now, I can speak it. I mean, I could write it, and I could read it. And so that's where I started and that, you know, forced me to learn what words, how to say these words and write it, because our next step in that role was we had to translate a lot of these Hansards that were coming out of the Legislative Assembly, reports and all that, and also we had to write all those, which meant that I really have to learn my language [laughing] And that was how it began, you know, so, I mean, I speak it now — but that's what it took. Yeah, and even our written system is not encouraged, is not promoted. There needs to be incentive for it, if we want our young kids to learn. Like, even if it's credits, like what they're doing in Fond du Lac.

**Meet learners needs by gradually increasing the complexity of sentences.** A common issue for teachers and learners is that it is difficult to assess learners' strengths along the way, and to meet a class on that level. A majority of those who shared their words say that a total immersion environment will push people to learn the language out of necessity.

Catherine Boucher believes that communicating with complete sentence structures with verb conjugation allows for better learning around noun identification, saying "But (the teacher) needs to make sentences. So that we, you know, I want them to not just learn how to read them, but you know — sentence structures, and how to have a conversation, you know, things like that you could practice, because it's all about verbs and verb conjugation."

Sabet Biscaye says that this process is easier with mandatory immersion periods, as she does with her language mentees through the Mentor-Apprentice Program:

So, the format of this — we spend about the first fifteen minutes talking about what you're gonna be talking about in this language lesson, and agreeing on the review. So, they had some phrases that need to be taught — things like, 'Can you say that again?' or, 'How do you say this?' or, little phrases that all the apprentices were taught. So, that's the kind of communities where there are teachers. And then for the next twenty-minutes to half hour, we're supposed to switch completely into the language. And initially, I thought, 'Oh, that's going to be hard,' but I didn't find that a problem actually, in fact, I got into it and I think that was the difference in the success of this was the fact that myself and her, we

were both able to get into it. I did not use English at all in that half hour time frame. And then afterwards, after that half hour, then I was able to go back and answer stuff that I needed to clarify — and I did, and then we'd review that. There was another group that was in the same language category, so we try to do it in a group session.

Eileen Beaver immerses learners through her storytelling, which she shares nearly entirely in English at the beginning of their learning, and then gradually tells that story with more Dene Dedlıne Yatı until it is told entirely in Dene Dedlıne Yatı:

> I also told stories — lots of old-time stories. And I'd tell it in English, and then from there, I'd start putting in the words of Dene in the story. By the time I finished telling that story for the umpteenth time, that story I could tell all in the language — and the students would understand. But if I told them, and I asked them — following the SMART learning methods in the school, and I'd ask them one part of the story, and I'd ask them a question, like 'How come this happened?' and then they'd know it was part of the story, so they'd listen. Sometimes it would take a while, but then they'd realize that they're also learning more words. So, I was able to do that, and the kids started liking it.

**Make Dene Yatı learning relevant through situational learning, and even games.**

Where speakers of the language have seen a definite decrease in speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, they have noticed that young learners of the language are more likely to identify nouns, colours or numbers, but have trouble speaking Dene Dedlıne Yatı in context.

Henry McKay says the lack of ability to interact with youth situationally makes it difficult to speak with young learners in the community:

> I talked to them in Chip, and they don't even know what I'm talking about. 'Ɂédlánet'é?' I tell them, 'How are you?' They don't know. But they know numbers and colors. That's about it. And really, it's nothing, that. The main thing is to talk to an Elder, just about what I said there, 'How are you?' stuff like that. That's the one that should come first. I don't know why they're not... Nobody's talking Chip. But not colors and numbers. That should come last. They're not learning. Not really many people speak Chip, not a lot of people talking Chip

around here, because the language is disappearing.

Sabet Biscaye says that learning the language requires an engagement more personal than the classroom. She also recommends bringing games, such as card games or board games, into that learning environment as they require communicating, adding or thinking in the language:

> You can't teach the Indigenous languages the way, necessarily, you teach elementary skill — for example, colours and all of this. It's a different thing, it's personal.
>
> And then, a lot of times, in the wintertime, 'cos it was really cold in the wintertime [laughing], we took advantage of that and would talk about the weather, things to do with the weather. And the greeting would be, you know — when we came in, we had to do all the greeting in our language — so she'd come in, I'd say, 'Ɂédlánet'é?', she'd say 'nezu̧' or whatever, and then towards the end, she'd say nék'áth Ɂedza which means it's cold outside, and things like that, because we talked about, all these different things, and she was able to retain that because we made it relevant to her.
>
> Like, there's playing cards that we would use to play Go Fish. And then there's another game that Jordee bought from the store, that we modified and we used…
>
> And then different body parts, for example. We used some of the teaching resources that Education, Culture and Employment had, so we used playing cards, for example, that we used that showed different family members, and we would use that to Go Fish, and we would do that all in the language. So, she would say, "Do you have any setsoné?" which would be "my grandmother," and we went through. And even that, we would agree whether it was first-person, second-person, or third-, because they're different.

Snookie Catholique says these same learning environments can be applied and brought back in the home. She says the classroom is not the right environment for learning Dene Yatı:

> I know that my kids, when they want to learn words, they will remember those words, you know, like they know 'Tsą̧ba saı̧Ɂá,' which means 'give me some money.' So, they are very selective in the words that they need to know because they know that they can, like, approach their grandparents and say that word to them, and they will understand it.

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But, again, you know, it's, what he's teaching people is teaching how to speak some words. Maybe give them the ability to communicate the basic stuff. And because the situation is so different, right, they're in the school, and they communicating with other people their age. They're not, out-of-necessity, having to speak through a full-immersion with somebody in the bush.

Tom Beaulieu agrees, adding that those situations would be hunting, trapping, making drums, or other environments

It depends on what your situation is, how well you're able to communicate in the language, right? So, you've got to build that situation — so, all the kids are gonna build drums. But then, they all speak about it in Chipewyan. Right?

But the kids seem to learn really well under a situational type of education. So, I'd say, allowing them how to say it in tools, but allowing them to bring the classrooms into situations, as opposed to sitting there learning how to write it on a wall. I mean, there's gonna be, now, because the writing of it.

Eileen Beaver describes one fun way in which she tested a learner's growth — by pretending to be an Elder who does not speak English and needs help at the grocery store:

They made a whole scene, as if they went to Kaeser's store, and they were all working in Kaeser's store — but it was in our class. And, me as an Elder, I come in — not speaking any English, I can't read or write in English — I only spoke in Dene and understood Dene. So, I go in and look around, and one of the workers would come up to me and ask if they could help me, in Dene, and it was more for advanced and for proficient speakers.

And they would ask me, and help me and stuff. They asked me what I wanted, so I tell them I needed a loaf of bread, two pounds of butter, a pound of lard, twelve apples, and five bananas — just, you know, random. So, they would take me around, and they would tell me if there's like, you know, those yellow apples, green apples, red apples and that, they would ask me what colour apple I wanted, and I'd tell them what kind I wanted, or what I didn't want and that. Like, bananas, they asked if I wanted the older bananas or if I wanted the green, newer, fresh ones. A loaf of bread, they would ask me if I wanted the thick slices or the thin slices, so they were learning shapes and sizes and stuff, too. All of this was prior knowledge, before they make that store.

**Evaluate Dene Yatı learning through same situations and games.** Where Dene Dedlıne Yatı is best learned on-the-land, teachers can still provide appropriate alternative situational learning environments without having to take youth on-the-land. Dene Yatı teachers recommended using those situations to meet the growth of Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners.

Eileen Beaver continues describing the Elder-in-a-store situation, and says she once used that situation to assess learner's growth in the language:

> The end result is always the assessment, and that's what they did. The whole thing. And they'll do a person up in front, and she would tell me how much each item would cost, and she would add it up in Chip, and at the end she would tell me the total, and I would give them less than what the total is, and they would tell me then if I had enough, or if I didn't have enough, or if I would give them way too much, they would give me back my change, but they had to count it in Dene. And then, they would pass me up, and they'd walk me out to my vehicle, which was a desk and a chair, and they would put everything in there, and they would tell me nanest'į lasá, and that would tell whether they passed or needed more work. So, they were using it within the community.

Sabet Biscaye says that you can design or play games with learners at the beginning of the language lesson, with goals for the end result. She says you can use this as a way to guide learners with your expectation of their progress during that lesson:

> We did an assessment at the beginning, and there's this one game that we use… and we have a landscape picture and a number of animals and objects and things like that. In the assessment, I would name something and instruct her to put it here and there, and I think maybe she got one right. When we were finished, we wrapped that up by going through that, she got everything right — in terms of the names of the animals or the object, where to place it, for example, positioning. So, if in the landscape, we have things that has water, has a shore, and has rocks. For example, if I say, "Put the owl on the shore on the rock," she was able to do that. She was able to carry out all the instructions as she was told to do. That was a very good measure of the progress that she has made.

Eileen Beaver also provides the most comprehensive means for stewarding the process

and staging the growth of language learners:

**Table 5.2**

*Evaluating and Supporting Dene Dedlıne Yatı in the classroom.*

| Phase | Level | Experience | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Novice | 1 | Never heard the language before in their life | |
| | 2 | Heard people talking in the community, but not within their own family structure | |
| | 3 | Heard the language in more close environments, such as in their home or with their family, but do not speak it | |
| Beginner | 1 | Heard the language with a small bit of pronunciation | Make simple sentences |
| | 2 | know the orthography and can enunciate the alphabet | Tell time, learn how to count |
| | 3 | Can enunciate between diphthongs, tones, nasals, sharps, and the glottal stop. | Say when it is and what season when asked |
| Intermediate | 1 | Can read/write with resources; can apply land to language | Play card games or other games; can track/identify footprints |
| | 2 | Can add written tones, sharps, nasals and grammar to sentences; can write/speak small sentences | Can make a puppet show, or re-tell stories using local animals |
| | 3 | Can converse with classmates / others | Answer questions with who, what, where, when, why and how many |
| Advanced | 1 | Can help a learner through the beginner phase | Support learners through their pronunciation |
| | 2 | Can help a learner through the intermediate phase | Will work with learners supportively through their writing and speaking |
| | 3 | Can listen to and support other learners in their own growth | Will converse with other learners casually and supportively |
| Fluent | | Can use root words and phonemes to create words | Can use one Dene Dedlıne Yatı word to say what would take an English sentence |

(Eileen Beaver)

Describing the above metric, Eileen says that each learner and lesson starts at beginner, and may grow to intermediate, or up one stage, in just one class in that lesson or topic. Eileen recommends applying this as an ongoing metric for each different lesson cycle.

**Share resources and work with resource developers to produce new Dene Yatı materials.** Many teachers and language managers have developed, or are in access of, raw records and/or underdeveloped language learning materials. Knowledge holders say these can be shared with resource developers to produce language learning materials.

Catherine Boucher says she has resources of vowels to read the language, "We'll do something about it, and then we'll just distribute it to our members. Yeah — we'll start from there. It'll get somewhere — it's not going to just be all in one little pile here."

In her time as a journalist, Snookie Catholique saw examples of successful Dene Yatı programs in Fond du Lac, where advanced learners can develop resources for beginning and intermediate learners of Dene Yatı:

> I mean, I thought it was so amazing, because they gave credits for speaking the language and how it worked was the only gave credits for speaking the language, and they only gave credits to the high school students. So, the high school students gain credits by creating booklets. It could be on anything, but it all had to be written for that grade group and so this was used by the teacher for that group. And so, like, a Grade 12 student could be writing a story about the Separation, but at kindergarten level, and that's what they were being graded on. And I thought that was fascinating, like, it not only helped to maintain our culture through stories, because the high school students had to work with the Elders for a story, translate that — back then, it was just translated verbally, and written in Dene, and then it was corrected by somebody that was fluent in the language, made sure that there were no errors, and high-tones, low-tones, nasals were all in place, and then it was approved to be used as a resource material for other grade groups. Yes, because it was evolving, so as the kindergarteners moved onto other grades, and into high school, they had to do the same thing.

Eileen says all of the language resources, games, books and other materials are gathered can be used to inform a curriculum:

> … And we met twice a year, and we took out the five-year-plan, and we developed a ten-year-plan, and we looked at all the resources we had, which was barely any, and anything and everything we did, we did in English and then we translated, transcribed, or used it within our languages. We started developing books in the languages, started translating books, started making games, and then we also worked on the possibility of having a curriculum.

### *Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı Speakers and Resource Developers*

Knowledge holders expressed the need for Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı speakers and resource developers, or those who can develop or produce language materials to collaborate now, especially while there are fluent speakers of Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı who grew up with it as a first language. While experiential on-the-land immersion programming can be available in communities with for learners who have access, resources which are digitized or printed can be available for learners to practice independently in homes, classrooms, or when learners are outside of the regional Dene Dedlı̨ne Yatı speaking community. Many of these resources can be gathered, developed, recorded or produced in collaboration, and those doing documentation or resource development should be supported in their work and efforts. While some ideas are listed here, the possibilities for resource creation are seemingly infinite.

Sabet Biscaye says language champions and resource developers need to work together:

> So, often, how well a language does in a given community or an organization often depends upon champions. But, the only thing is that if those champions move on or pass on, then that momentum is lost. So, we need to have everybody making an effort. And, I think, you know, everybody working together — making sure we have resources, making sure we're supporting.

**Establish a Speakers' Panel and an Elders' Council.** Knowledge holders suggested that a Dene Dedlıne Yatı / Dënedédlı̨né Yëtí speakers' panel could include all of the communities in which Dene Dedlıne Yatı is spoken. While speakers could ensure accuracy of language learning resources, an Elders Council could be established to ensure resources and programming respond to language fluency and connection across the region.

Among many suggestions, Catherine Boucher proposed this suggestion establishing a panel of speakers who can be drawn upon to involve in language projects, and that there should be a regional language council:

> We can have an Elders' panel just for the language. You know, just so this way we could have it here or Fort Smith or Hay River, you know, some people like, say, five people, six people from each community, I don't mind. We could have one fluent speaker, one writer and one proof reader to go along, so that way, everybody knows how it's written. That's what I want to do. You know, 'cos like [name], he understands Chipewyan really, really good. Once it starts narrowing down, it's hard to do nothing up here, but… we should form a group from each community. Like, you have some in Hay River, some Elders there, you got some in Fort Res, Fort Smith, Hay River— put them together. Let's have a meeting about our language here. You know, we need to get all these people that know how to read and write — and then show them off, like. We'll get going and you too, you're gonna learn a lot.
>
> Maybe you have about one or two speakers. That's about it. Old ladies, just a couple of them speaking the language in a tent — that's it. But it should be at every venue. Yeah, we'll have something like an elder sitting up there that speaks the language really good. Or even have a regional one like you know, cause there's two different Dene languages. You know, that promoting — just keep promoting.

Sabet Biscaye, who lives in Yellowknife, remembers the Elders who were involved in the Fort Resolution Chipewyan Language Advisory Group, and acknowledges their role in the loss of the language in their community. She says:

The Elders shared that back then they thought their children would benefit most if they learned to speak English, because it was the new way.  This was during the time when the Akaitcho Territorial Government first started managing the Chipewyan Language Program. The Elders pushed for speakers to take responsibility for language learning…

One of the things, we used to work with an Elder Advisory Group in Fort Resolution when we had the language program there. The Elders said we know our language is lost here, our kids are not speaking because of us, we need to accept responsibility for that, and we need to help.

**Broadcast Dene Dedlıne Yatı on Community Radio and Local Television.**

Knowledge holders suggested that there are radio and television programs in the area which are available in Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ but not for Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Those who shared their words suggested speaking Dene Dedlıne Yatı on the radio, providing voice-over dubs for broadcast programming, or filming creative segments or shows in the language which can focus more on Dene ways of hunting or harvesting.

Nadine Delorme has heard Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ on the radio, but not Dënedédlı́né Yëtí, saying she believes representation will follow recognition. "I just haven't heard anyone speak it enough on a regular basis, except on the radio — and even then, on the radio, it's not our specific ancient language. So, acknowledgment is step one, I guess," she says.

Catherine Boucher has submitted proposals to multiple funding sources, but many of them have been rejected. One of them was to work with community radio:

We were supposed to get to try to get to the radio going, we're supposed to try to get classes going. I just think there's no movement yet. What needs to happen? I think we, maybe, we're gonna need to make another proposal [laughing].

On filming or broadcasting, Catherine adds:

> We could have, you know, Muppets, some of us could talk to you. Even just to have Muppet shows, some of could talk Chip and have Muppet shows, even just to say the vowels, you know, different greetings or whatever we could think of.

Sabet Biscaye says she has seen overdubs in Dëne Sųłıne Yatı́ on APTN in the southern dialect of Dëne Sųłıne. She also questions why there is not a stronger relationship between southern-dialect Dëne Sųłıne speakers:

> I watch APTN a lot, and sometimes they have really good translations. So, I was watching an episode of, it's called *Skindigenous*, and it's about the art of tattooing. There's one program there where the Dëne Sųłıne, translation was provided, and the lady who was doing it was obviously from the Dëne Sųłıne group down South. She had really good translation skills doing the voice-over — and it was really good. But why don't we here in the North have a good relationship with our neighbours down South? Why aren't we interacting regularly?

One participant, who preferred to remain anonymous, says Dene Dedlıne Yatı records and digital databases should be maintained, although this person puts a particular focus on environments in which the language is spoken for hunting, harvesting, trapping, setting nets or other land-based activities:

> It's very important that we keep records, digital records of our language — of a lot of the way we do things right now, because I think it's one of the best ways to pass on our knowledge and to speak it. And certainly, speak the right way, show how we did things…. I'd love to see someone like, for me, the way I'm visiting us, I'd love to see like a Dene Dedlıne or a Dëné Sųłınё recording of an Elder, like, you know, skinning a rabbit, skinning everything in Chipewyan, and showing how to do it. Checking snares, you know, checking, like, the nets, going out and finding good harvesting areas and learning how to hunt. And then, you know, walking through that, and then having some of those things captured. That would be beautiful. I'd love to see that.

**Record speakers and actively produce materials with those recordings.** Knowledge holders shared that having an audio recorder and working with a resource developer would allow speakers of the language to actively record what they feel needs to be recorded. Many of the language holders involved did not have a physical recording device, or did not have the training to properly edit or produce a recording. Knowledge holders suggested that those materials could be gathered, and those recordings could be adapted into learning materials.

Nadine Delorme says dynamics which exclude some and privilege others from creating or accessing language learning resources can be mitigated if recordings and resources are openly available. Along with supporting the speakers' council, she says:

> Maybe that's it, is to define also the language speakers that are here, acknowledge and define who they are, at this time. Because, wow. And some of them, I don't, like — you know, Res is Res, and there's that dynamic, but it doesn't detract from the fact that they have awesome knowledge and that it needs to be recorded. And if it's that I can't, or other people can't directly go to them because there are those kinds of issues, but at least if it's recorded and interpreted and implemented, and that the base part was there, well at least then everyone's acknowledged, right, whether they're likable or not [laughing]. But at least if we can record it, then, yes, these are the obstacles and maybe someone can figure out how to get past it.

Denise McKay agrees that recordings, referred to in the interview as tapes, could be used to help language learners to access learning at any time, and that these recordings should also include songs. She also mentions she had a recorder but seems to have lost it

> I think it'd be better if you made a tape with them and record it. It would be the best. Like I was saying, maybe a tape would be more better. Anytime, they could listen to it. But school, it might be a couple hours to go to school. I think it's important to me, because, you know, like I said, you put it in a tape, you put it in, you listen to it.

Denise provides an example of how these apps could be used to add prefixes and qualifiers, saying:

> Okay, let's say my eyes, so I'll say it in English, my eyes, now I'll say it in Chip. Se-naghé, 'my nose', Se-tsı̨, you know? You'll learn fast that way I think. And then, I said, Senaghé, that's 'my eyes', ne-naghé, that's 'your eyes'. Setsı̨, 'my nose', netsı̨, 'your nose', see? My hand, you know 'selá', your hand, 'nelá'. That's what I mean, if you make a tape like that, it'd be easier, I think. That's what I'm thinking.

Eileen recommends making the recordings relevant and produced onto different formats, as people have varying availabilities for language learning and this allows for people to communicate with other speakers in the community in a variety of formats:

> You know, like, grab things that kids are familiar with, put the language in, make it fun, make it easier to learn. Maybe put some on CD-ROMs. Like, I was asked by a couple of truckers, when I was teaching at the Arctic College here for Adult Ed at night, and they couldn't make it to class. And he said, 'You know, if they had just those Dene words to learn, and they put it on a CD, and I'd throw it into my CD player, I could hear the language. I could learn basics.' What do you call that, Rosetta Stone? Like a Rosetta Stone, where they're learning languages, but making it all in Dene. 'Let's say you're going into a restaurant, and I wanted to order a hot hamburger, with chicken or something like that, and let's say you're going down the road, and I want a coffee, and I'm just saying these things,' he said, 'if I could learn to say stuff like that, I can go home and I can talk to my wife. My wife can then teach me how to say even more,' he said.

**Create a verb book.** Knowledge holders agree that most Dene Yatı words and ways of thinking focus on verbs, and they are often taught in the action of doing that verb. While there is a dictionary produced by the South Slave Divisional Education Council in collaboration with Dënedédlı̨né Yëtí speakers and Elders, there are few verbs in that dictionary. Knowledge holders have agreed that Dene is more of a verbal language, and that you would generally learn alongside doing those actions, which is learned differently than the nouns, colours and numbers.

Catherine Boucher says these verbs would need to be discussed within qualifiers and other root words:

> You know, another thing I was thinking of, is even trying to get a verb book going, with all the verbs we could think of, because it's very complicated. Like even to say, the néta, néte, needdha. You know, all these, whether it's first-person, second-person or, you know, three-person, something like that, single, plural or whatever. So, all that we could do, this, just to get it out to people so people could start reading it.

**Develop other digital resources and tools.** Materials, along with instruction, should be accessible to meet growth in speaker fluency. While this collaborative work does not provide an exhaustive list of possible resources to create or develop, knowledge holders recommended the following specific mentions of resources. In this way, those who are knowledge holders may not have the applied skills to develop these same materials or resources from their recordings, but could be willing to collaborate to develop recordings and notes into learning resources.

Tommy Unka, along with other knowledge holders, agreed that English-dominant digital technologies and broadcasting has been a catalyst in Indigenous language decline. He also believes the same platforms are simultaneously ubiquitous enough for language learning, saying, "Yeah. Technology could play a big role in that, because, you know, granted, it's there already, it is in the kids' hands. You know, so maybe we should use it properly."

Eileen Beaver also mentions how Dene are not passing stories on in the way they used to, and that technologies can help meet that knowledge transference at the learners' level. She also says that Dene should be the producers in these technologies:

> I can't do the technical stuff [laughing], I need people around me that can do technical stuff. Now, technology's going through that. We can use the same

things — and make it so that it's educating, and keeping our language, history, and culture, on our own terms, and developed by our own people that are using the language and the culture, and even stories.

A lot of stories are being lost. Every time we lose an Elder, we lose a thousand to two-thousand libraries — books and knowledge. You don't realize how deep of an impact a person has, or the knowledge they have, that we're losing. Sure, not everything is recorded and that, but… At one time, when they told stories, we told our stories, our kids told our stories, and we told stories about the past, y'know, legends, stories that happened, and stuff like that. And even that we're losing, you know. Lots of stories. Our kids, we've taught them not really to speak, and then we expect them to be leaders.

***Videogame (Dene Quest/Trapping).*** Just a few of those who shared their words

mentioned that a game could be produced. They say this game would include interaction with

environment through Dene activities and harvesting practices and could gradually increase to

complex Dene Yatı immersion by the end of the game. Activities might include setting net, duck

eggs, identifying animal tracks, or other interactions related to Dene way of being.

Eileen Beaver introduces the topic, saying young learners can help with game

development. She mentions that her son already has a suggestion for a title for a game:

> You know, when you asked me, what would be the best way to teach — Nowadays, because kids are always in games, what do you call it, videogames and technology. If we actually Start developing programs where it starts in English and that, and then eventually they'd be playing within the language without even realizing they're speaking their language. And you know, you can get a lot of these young people who would then want to graduate in going into engineering, or technology, or computer technology and stuff, and start learning to develop games, or to do things, games for their community. My son was just saying, you can start by calling it the Dene Quest. Just like, all these other ones, things like Minecraft and all that. A lot of times, they're running and that, but they could be saying something in that language. And when they're jumping or they're shooting, or something, you know, "Watch out!" and just little words that keep popping in and out. And when they come into this building, as they're going into the next stage, they could have English going into it, just starting with English, but eventually they're saying it in all Dene at the end. Whereas the person coming in is just learning or hearing what they're saying, but because they're hearing it

and that, and they start to understand it, because eventually, towards the end of the final quest or something, it's all in Dene, and they wouldn't even know it's in Dene.

Catherine Boucher adds that a game like this would need to focus on Dene ways of being, including hunting and harvesting:

> We should make a little (video) game of how to set rabbit snares, and show the cultural stuff. And I remember a lot of things that I've done when I was a kid — that's why I wrote little stories about it. Found a whole bunch of eggs from duck eggs.

One knowledge keeper, who preferred to remain anonymous, says Rosetta Stone, or games which evaluate learning, would need to detect Dene morphophonemics or response back from the speakers of the language:

> Like I said, our language is endangered. I have no doubt about it. The one thing that would definitely help preserve language that would be digital recordings, using things like Rosetta Stone, like you can find a way to link in, or like Rosetta Stone type of app where you can help people speak languages. And it'd be one of those ones where you need feedback. Like if you speak into because we do have AI technology. Now we do have a lot of technology to speak — if we say your language, if you're not pronouncing it right, it would give us a rating feedback. That's what it does. If we had that for Dënedédlįné or Dëné Sųłıněˊ that would definitely help. It would have to detect the tonals and glottals. That's exactly, exactly it. You know, the ł s. Like, you know, you say tłes, that's fuel.

***Maintain an online dictionary with conjugation and representative sounds.*** While knowledge holders shared that they appreciate the dictionary which is currently available from the South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC, 2012), they also mention that the dictionary does not assist with the polysynthetic prefixes and suffixes used to speak Dene Dedlıne Yatı. The dictionary, while free online, could also be uploaded online database, says Arthur, so that it can be continually updated.

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Catherine Boucher says the dictionary would need to come with a pronunciation guide for each morpheme in Dënedédlı́né Yëtí:

> Even the dictionary they had made, it doesn't tell you how the vowels sound. It just gives you the vowels, that's it. Like, what I just said to you how each vowel sounds right? They don't, they never had that in the dictionary. People were coming to me asking me how it's read.

Arthur Beck describes how an online dictionary database could be added to or fixed:

> What has to happen is, we have a font, and we're going to have to have a dictionary that's right on the website that our youth can plug into any time, because our youth are all into technology, ah? So, you have to have a dictionary out there. The dictionary that Tommy and them made here, that's a really good one. If that was on the website, that people can plug into, that would be right one. But I read it after, and I corrected them on about six to seven different words in there, which is not proper, only after the books published I seen it. So, I laughed, too bad (they) didn't bring it to me first, he says. But there's about five or six mistakes, not many.

***Use and Record Video Chat Services to help with Distance Learning.*** While video chat services have been used for distance language learning, it is possible that issues related to internet access in the Northwest Territories may limit reliability or access to video chat services.

Sabet Biscaye describes how video chat services are still being tried as reliable platforms and spaces for learning Dëne Sųłıne Yatı́, saying "We're going to try to do language instructions through Zoom for people that might be interested, just to try it out, just to see if it works." Sabet has encountered issues in coordination with learners but wants to start a distance learning room.

***Recordings/Covers of Modern Songs.*** While knowledge keepers discuss songs in several contexts, such as Dene drum songs or contemporary music, songs will be discussed in this word bundle in a way which encourages learners to create their own songs in Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

Denise McKay recommended recording songs, including drumming, and reaffirms her belief that Dene would acquire the language easier through music, saying, "You know, right away, they know how to sing, when they listen to tape and stuff like that. It's the same thing, they learn what it means. Like, even learning how to talk."

Catherine Boucher says she has already started with nursery rhymes and songs for holidays (SEE APPENDIX G):

> Like, one-two — buckle my moccasins.
>
> Ła nëke —Se këlke dełchéth.
>
> You know, 'I tied my moccasins'. I switched it to the Dene-like. And another one I wanted to do was the Christmas songs. Like I said they had, they had a conference going on in Yellowknife, and these people from St. Albert University. They worked on Dëné Sųłıně̃ — well, they got Little Drummer Boy, Silent Night, all that in the Dëné Sųłıně̃ language. But we could transfer all that into Dënedédlı̧́né language, and we could have Christmas CDs going. Sure, that's another one!

## Family Unit: Families, Speakers and Learners

Those who shared their words identified several ways in which families, speakers and learners can support language learning. Knowledge holders in this project reinforced strongly that language learning starts with the family at home, and many of those in the community who can speak their language are not speaking Dene Yatı with their family in their households and communities. Many of these suggestions come with the expectation of time of Elders, knowledge holders and language holders, while those same people who can speak the language often report being busy or being out on the land.

*Families with connection to Dene Dedlıne*

Most knowledge holders say that they learned the language in their family and in their communities. They have recommended strongly that if Dene Dedlıne Yatı is to be revitalized, families need take on language learning. They have also said that these families should support immersive environments for language learning, such as encouraging them to spend time with fluent speakers.

**Take a whole-family approach to language learning.** Those who shared their words recommended connecting people to speakers in their family, encouraging language learning as a whole family unit and even introducing the language into households by learners who are learning the language in school or immersion programs and then encouraging their relatives. Many of the knowledge holders say without a whole-family approach to learning Dene Yatı, learners will not have opportunities to speak with family at home.

While many knowledge holders shared this recommendation, Tommy Unka is the most assertive in his push and encouragement towards family units:

> Some of the languages maybe the parents can learn also, as a unit or something like that. Like, right now, it's hard. It's hard to teach kids again, the language, when their parents are not even speaking the language themselves. They don't know the language. I think we have to go, you know, deeper than that. It's a funny situation, because the parents don't speak the language. The kids, of course, don't speak that language, also. So, are we gonna teach the whole family unit how to speak that language again to pick it up? Is that the best route to go, or are we going to go hardcore at school with the younger ones? And then we have a gap where the parents don't understand the kids again. You know what I'm saying?
>
> You know, it's unfortunate that we really don't have an outlet because if you're going to teach the kids, I think that the whole unit has to be taught, meaning, you know, the parents and the rest of the kids in the family — instead of, you know, teaching one little six-year-old at the school.

It's totally out of this world for them, because the language is just totally alien, nobody's using it much in the community so they don't hear it this often, especially at home — and it's kind of saddening because it's a beautiful language…. You know, some of those kids are picking it up, granted, but what are they going to do with that, because they got nobody to practice it on. Nobody is using the language or encouraging the use of the language….

It's the education system (not the teachers). They don't see seem to see that you got to teach the whole unit, as opposed to just teach the little grade school students over there. You're not trying to make half the effort trying to revive that language…. because the kids are not able to use that language properly at home. Why just teach little kids, you know? It'd be a shame if you were just teaching one little kid in the family to speak in the language, and he's not able to use it.

Tom Beaulieu introduces this point as well, saying, "I think they (teachers) are gonna have to be given the opportunity to reach out to families, and to make that a meaningful part of the education, too."

Arthur Beck agrees, saying that without someone to speak to, learners will not have an opportunity to speak the language:

And I'm teaching the youth — like I said earlier, teaching just the youth in the school is great. But who are they going to speak to? Because they can't speak to their grandparents, because some of them, most of them, their grandparents are gone now. But what has to happen here, what is missing is like, for me, I was lucky because I had my mother that spoke the language and my father, that spoke the language good. So, I got to use my language, more than most children my age. So that's the reason I held on to my language, so what we have to do now is we have to not only teach children, we have to teach the parents how to speak.

**Immerse children with language speakers.** Alongside encouraging a whole-family approach to language learning, several knowledge holders recommended that learners should be immersed with relatives who are already fluent speakers, and that most parents these days are not able to speak the language fluently in immersive environments to their children. Most who shared their knowledge recommended that fluent speakers should speak the language to young

people. A few knowledge keepers had recommended or are already working on programming

and access for adult language learners.

Consistent with other knowledge holders who shared their words, Henry McKay says

communities should encourage Dene youth to learn Dene Dedlıne Yatı. When asked what does

he feel is the best method for teaching the language, he says "How do I feel? I feel like to teach

the young kids the language, the best way is to teach them while they're small growing up, that's

the way I learned."

Tommy Unka elaborates around the importance of the whole-family approach, sharing

that nearly all of those who speak fluent Dene Dedlıne Yatı grew up in immersive community

and family environments with fluent speakers:

> The younger ones were more successful, because they're young, and they're still relatively empty-headed or something like that. So, you could put a lot of stuff in into their head when you're very young like that. So, I found that the young kids were easier to keep the language and stuff like that than it is for an Elder. Especially today, with all so much distraction with all the electronics and stuff like that. You got to learn that language at home and what-not so, saying that, you know, you're gonna learn that at home, for sure, but a lot of the younger people that are head of their own households and stuff like that don't even speak that language.
>
> Today, as an Elder, I could say that, because that's my first language was the Chipewyan language. And now, it took me a little while, of course, to learn to learn the English language, which is my second language now. But I was taught at an early age. It was our language, I was not taught the language and just, I just grew with it. You know, it wasn't like I needed to learn Chipewyan, that was my language, I had no other choice — if I didn't speak it, I didn't have language per se. So, I wasn't taught the language, I had to live it. I have to use it. You know, every way I can…. You know, my language is always number one to me, as a person, as a survivor on the land. The land has its own language, of course. So, I learned all of that at an early age.
>
> And I was very fortunate. My mom threw me out at seven years old and I lived with my grandfather, which was just tremendous because he spoke nothing but

> Chipewyan. So, I was his bookkeeper. I was his little gopher. I ran around, cut food for him, brought wood in. I work with my grandfather, but he taught me a lot of stuff about the language because he spoke fluent Chipewyan which was kind of like what my grandmother spoke.
>
> Like even my mom used to say, you got to learn that language at home at an early age. And we heard nothing but Chipewyan at home, I was fortunate to learn that way. Because my grandparents didn't speak English, so I had a good opportunity to immerse myself in that language.

Denise McKay says there are fewer speakers today because people are not speaking to their children in the language. She has noticed generational declines in language fluency:

> Mostly older people speak Chipewyan in town here. Old people in the town here are Dene. But nowadays, there's hardly anybody talk Chipewyan to their kids, grandchildren. Now, hardly anybody — we're losing our language, you know. And me, like a long time ago, everybody speak Chipewyan. Now, hardly, people talk their language. These kids, they're losing their language now. Because, right here, some people, they don't speak Chipewyan with their kids. They're losing their language with their kids nowadays. Me, I used to talk Chip with my kids. They understand. The younger ones, they hardly speak their own language, but they understand. Well, me, I talk Chipewyan with them, but there are parents that don't, so it's pretty hard for them to learn, you know. Me, when I was raised, everybody spoke only Chipewyan — nobody spoke English, no nothing about English….

### Speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı

In lieu of census data available on the number of speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, Eileen Beaver estimates that there are between 300-600 speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Nearly every knowledge keeper recommends that learners should immersed with speakers of the language. Knowledge holders recommend that speakers be supportive and patient with Dene Yatı learners, and that they encourage Dene language learning outside of one's own immediate Dene ancestry.

**Be supportive in passing along the language.** Those who shared their words say those who are speakers of the language need to take initiative in passing along the language.

Sabet Biscaye makes the strongest case for supporting learners of the language, saying speakers and learners need to stay committed to a strict schedule. She says Master-Apprentice Programs should be accredited in schools and childcare being available to learners, but also that speakers need to take responsibility for passing the language on:

> And that was really good, very interested, and she picked up on the language quite quick. You need to be committed to the process. One of the things that come with the Master-Apprentice program was the amount of progress that was made with the apprentice….
>
> We need to talk about ownership. When I talk about ownership, I've been involved in this language work for a long time, and I attended a conference last year, and I was really saddened to hear the same recommendations, the same concerns that used to be voice 10-, 20-, 30-years ago. And a lot of it is, 'the government has to do this', 'the government has to do that', you know, 'the government has to give us more money in order for us to keep our languages', and this and that.
>
> And the argument can be made that, well, we can't do that because we lost our language through the residential schools and this and that, but if we're really serious, I think as Dene people we need to say okay, this has to be a concerted effort all around. You know how they say it takes a village to raise a child, well the same thing, it takes a village to keep a language. So, we all have a role to play. Yes, the government should provide resources, and provide supports so that people can reclaim their language; parents need to make an effort to support any efforts, even if it means making an effort to try to learn the language, and use it forever, and show that the language has a lot of meaning and value to them.
>
> One of the first things we need to do is agree that people are not going to make fun of or laugh at learners when they say something wrong. And then also, teach learners, if people are laughing when you're trying to speak, don't get embarrassed, don't get shy — it's the humour that's imbedded into the culture, and into the language. That's what people are laughing at. And, if you were to ask a person who's laughing because you said something wrong, 'Are you laughing at me?' They're going to say, 'No, I'm laughing at the way you said it, because this is humorous about what you've said.' So, the Elders there have really stressed that it's important that you don't make fun of somebody who's trying to learn the

language. I think there needs to be a commitment by the learner, and by the instructor, to stick with it, and for the instructor to make it relevant, to make it personal, so it's easier for them to own it — that makes a big difference.

Nadine Delorme addressed how it feels to not have access to her language, and the challenges in finding supports from communities of language speakers:

Someone will have to teach you as you go along… And it seems I can't find any which way from any direction other than calling my Elder and saying, "Can you just talk to me?" you know, and sometimes she will. That's what it comes down to.

But we also have to address that there are people who do not want to share the language anymore. That's what I've come across. They want to say they're language speakers, but then they don't share it. But part of it is this colonial construct. I've been talking about the colonial construct for quite some time, because as a '60s scoop survivor, it was my little safety blanket of like, 'This is who I get to blame for why bad things happen to me.' But, I also realized at a certain point that it's the responsibility of our communities and nations also, and we can't just keep playing blaming Canada for imposing this or imposing that. We're sovereign nations, we're supposed to work — like this word I've used before — reciprocally with each other.

Okay, but if people don't want to teach it to me, does it mean they don't want to connect with me? Language is part of identity, and identity is part of ego. So, you know, the kind of the rejection factor happens there, which makes it harder for one to learn when it is presented, because sometimes it's like, I'll be having a really emotional day because I know what's going on in my community. And I went through a lot of deaths this year, and the only thing I've been able to do is just open up the dictionary and just interpret words. And then my husband and I will go out, and we'll go look for some for some chickens and ga, and sometimes it doesn't happen, but at least we're trying, I guess, is the way to look at it too is not to give up. I guess another dynamic of learning is don't give up. Because our elders have given up on us.

The traditional way is that we would do something reciprocal, you know, come make supper and tea, bring some meat, you know, bringing tobacco, 'Oh, I'm going out. Do you need something?' You know, that kind of thing? Not this this 'Oh, I want $500 a day.' Like, we're not imperialists [laughing].

So, to me, I was kind of taken aback a little bit by that, because I came from one worldview of openness on Anishinaabe territory where there wasn't any barriers to these things. Whereas here, because it's so controlled by the government,

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there's so many barriers, and that even the Elders are like, 'Yeah, we're gonna give you those barriers, because the government says so.' That's not what sovereignty is. So, it's also, how much do we also challenge our Elders — and language speakers, because not all of them are Elders, right.

So, it would have to be almost like we have mentors, I guess, that we can rely on and go to for responsible cultural transmission. Because, there's also the definition of like, if we had enough through Dene laws, if we had enough protocols defined, then our conversations might be very different right now, right? But because they aren't defined, that's why we're having this conversation, right. So that's my world view — it's the paradox. And I actually wrote a paper on that [laughing].

So, but, and that's the thing about this pandemic that made me worry, too is, as I mentioned — the Elders, language keepers — our communities don't have the best of health. And with pandemic here, not necessarily in the NWT, but then on this planet, it really makes our language more endangered than you could even imagine at this point. Well, I mean, I think you can imagine it, but I mean, that's for someone who's reading your dissertation one day, to understand.

Snookie Catholique agrees with the sentiment that many Elders and knowledge holders are not supportive when it comes to passing the language on, and that this discouragement personally impacts language acquisition for learners:

It's really upsetting to me, sometimes when I listen to some of the so-called Elders — I don't call them Elders, I call them old people, seniors — that are so quick to criticize the people that are trying their darnedest to revive the language. And they're in there, with their two cents, saying, 'No, that's not how you say it. This is how you're supposed to say it.' And, to me, it does not matter. It doesn't even matter. It does not matter as long as we do everything we can in our power to try and protect our language from disappearing.

Squabbling among each other — and it's that squabbling that is killing us as Indigenous language speakers. I remember when I was working for CBC still, and being on-air, and I went home one summer and met these Elders sitting outside, and went and shook hands with them and one of them was saying, like, 'You don't speak right at all,' and started to criticize the way I spoke. That's when I told them I said, 'It's because of people like you that so many of our young people are not speaking their language. Rather than telling me that I am not speaking right you should be telling me, you said this word, and this is the right way to say it.'

Like, with my grandkids with me, they're very strong in their culture, but they're very weak in the language. And how do I fix that? They know who they are and I

make sure that… they need to know immediately who they are, because that wasn't how I was raised. But I failed in the language part. And when my granddaughter tells me once in a while, 'When are you going to start teaching us?' And it's like, I don't know — when do I find time? And that's life too, we are living in such a busy time. Like me, you know, I forgotten my priorities, and they should be my priority, not here where I am sitting, where I'm trying to transfer a bunch of stuff over, as part of the work that I do.

Like, how do we do it? And that's why I'm saying, we got to find creative ways, getting our people to think that Indigenous language is cool, it's sexy and it's worth learning. And that's where 'ʔesjɪa' came from — it's cool to say that. But we need to find ways. I think that whole thinking — the younger people they think that, why do I need to learn another language when I could just speak English? But they don't understand that there are so many layers of understanding behind one word.

**Encourage Dene learning a Dene language outside of one's own Dene ancestry.**

Several of a small group of knowledge holders shared that there is a reluctance from young learners to learn one's Dene language if they are not of that particularly Dene group. Those who identified the issue said that Dene youth attending schools within the SSDEC should be encouraged to learn a Dene language of the region, even if that is not the Dene Yatı of their lineage. Eileen Beaver and Snookie Catholique have both experienced students or learners who are reluctant to learn Dene Yatı outside of their own ancestry.

Eileen says it is easier to encourage speakers of Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı̨́ compared to those with Tłı̨chǫ ancestry, although Dene would be able to speak to each other through dialectic differences. She remembers experiences working with Na-Dene learners from different dialects:

And one of the things I found — because there was so much of a game, whether a student came from Łutselk'e, Denínu Kų́ę́, or any other community, they entered into the Dene language thinking it was their language, or closest to their language.

I had some Łutselk'e students that just refused to speak when they came here, because I spoke a different dialect. I was teaching the /t/-dialect, and they came from the /k/-dialect, so they refused to listen to me. And so, I had students from

Behchokǫ̀ and Ndilǫ that came here, didn't want to listen to me because I was speaking Dene, not Tłı̨chǫ….

It's not a matter, really, of the dialect, it's a matter of understanding what they're saying. Like, if you were speaking the /k/-dialect and you said 'ku,' and you were talking about water, I would say 'tu' and you would say 'ku,' I would understand immediately that you were Dënesųłiné, that you understood it in the /k/-dialect. So, I just continue to speak in my /t/-dialect, and listen to the /k/-dialect, and we converse like that, out of respect. Like, that person doesn't tell me I'm saying it wrong, or I don't tell them they're saying it wrong — because they're not, they're saying it right.

Now, when you come into the class, and if a student doesn't understand what you're saying, and you're totally in the language, well – first of all – you're dealing with these students that are going through different stages of growth, and so their attention span is not… they were losing interest, because they didn't understand the language, or they didn't want to speak the language, or if they did hear the language, they came from the community that spoke the language, they were too shy, or they didn't want to say they knew how to speak, there were all of these other problems, and the instruction you were doing for the students was never really at the student's level.

Snookie is more assertive in voicing that as long as Dene learners are learning to speak a Dene language, they are more connected to Denendeh. She also says that speaking any Dene language is better than speaking English:

Like, with my grandchildren, I have three of them, and they're all very young — like 3, and 6, and 8. And they are learning the Wılìı̀deh dialect. And people ask me if it's okay for me that they learn a different dialect, and not our own.

And I say, it's fine. It's fine as long as we are picking up a language. Because without language, we are nobody. And explaining things, hearing things, in our own voices is a lot more meaningful than it is talking and sharing stories in English. So it's 200% better….

To me, it doesn't really matter what dialect, which language of the Indigenous languages you decide to pick up, as long as you have one. And that just means that you are the Indigenous person of this land with a language — because without a language, we aren't anybody. We're just mainstream people. And we can't communicate as well as we did. Even when my dad was alive, to hear his stories, and for him to explain the environment and how the water is, and hear the names for the ice. You know, here it's just 'ice,' but if you explain it in our

language, there are different types — the kind that you drink, the kind you don't
drink, the kind that you heard from the feet and all this, and those are more
meaningful than just saying the word ice.

About ready to disappear at any time soon, so I'm telling everybody to overlook
the dialect differences. If I say 'ku,' and the other people in Fort Smith says 'tu,'
so what, it doesn't matter. And nobody is correct or wrong in whatever way they
speak as long as they speak it.

### *Learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı*

Lastly, those who shared their words and knowledges made recommendations to learners

of the Dene Yatı. These recommendations include making use of the resources which are already

available — whether in print or digitally; communicating in Dene Yatı when you can, including

through text; and the recommendation made most strongly by Eileen Beaver — "Reignite the fire

of language and culture."

**Seek out and use resources which are already available.** There are several text or

audio resources available which do encourage language learning, though each comes with their

limitations. Several knowledge holders shared that we should develop an app for language

learning which goes through the basic nouns, although one already exists and is available for

free, which Eileen Beaver produced with the South Slave Divisional Education Council (2016).

Topics which Denise McKay mentions as wanting to have recorded are already available

in these apps, though these resources may need more attention on verbs and conjugation for

materials in this format. Denise says:

> Like, you could say, put your words in your tape, you could say maybe your head
> parts first, and then after you finish that, then your body. You know, things like
> that, they'll learn first. Then, when you finish with the body, you could learn
> animals' names, the town names, you know. It'd be easier for people. You know,

> I think it's the best way, 'cos they can listen anytime, ah? It doesn't have to be the school hour, they can learn and read about it, if they want to listen, they can listen to the music. They'll learn, and sing it right away, the best thing is that it could happen right away. Like I said, you could get a tape, they could learn like that. If you want to go to school, that's up to you.

Tommy Unka suggests an option to install apps which make it so a learner has to practice for a certain amount of time before they can use their phone or play games:

> And maybe we should have an app with languages and stuff like that, that the kids can access easily, easily, and start teaching them. maybe we should have an app for the kids where they can learn that language….

Several of those who shared their words have said that technologies and books do not necessarily reinforce being able to speak with tonals, nasals, glottals and other morphemes unique to Dene Yatı. In this way, those speakers recommended working with a language learner and using these resources when they're learning independently.

**Use Dene fonts on phones and computers for texting and writing.** Fonts for Dene Roman Orthography and syllabics already exist, and are generally available for free online or phone keyboards. Several language learners have said that it is inaccessible on some platforms, or that it can be costly, and requires technical expertise to install.

Nadine has said she appreciates communicating with other speakers Dene Yatı, even though they might be communicating in other dialects of Dene Yatı. "Accessing the Dene fonts on a keyboard. I know it's available, but not cheap, number one," she says. "But it's nice to see some of the kids when they respond back to me in a message, sometimes they'll put a couple little Dene words in there. Not our language, but Dene — at least it's Dene."

Catherine Boucher, a fluent speaker, says she needs help to install the Dene fonts on her new phone, but once she does she will text people in the language, and it would help her to build resources if she had the font installed:

> And I talked to my daughter about it and they're gonna help put the Dene font in there. Hey! So, then we could, I'll start writing to you in the Dene languages and, or even from my little booklet here every day, then get something going by the end of the year, anyways. Yeah, I'm gonna check it out. I'm gonna send you some words in the Chipewyan language, like 'Hello, and, how are you?' And you know…

**Reignite the fire of language and culture.** The biggest recommendation for learners could be categorized into what Eileen Beaver says is to "Reignite the fire of language and culture." Contextual quotes included here address the consequences of losing Dene Yatı, what needs to be done by speakers, and the importance of transgenerational language sharing.

Arthur Beck is a fluent speaker and translator. When asked if it was okay that I kept asking him questions, Arthur Beck said that you need to keep asking questions:

> No, you have to (ask questions), because you see — my language, I take it for
>
> granted — because I know everything, you gotta ask me what you want to know.
>
> Then I can tell you. I could rattle on here for days over language, but you gotta
>
> tell me what you want, 'cos that's easier for me.

As a learner, Nadine Delorme says, "The words that I have learned have given me enough healing and power and authority and sovereignty as a Dene woman to say, 'Our families are at risk, our nations are at risk — because of our language. Our land is at risk'." Lastly, Nadine shares her own motto, "Never give up — never back down. Work hard and pray."

Eileen Beaver provides further recommendations for learners, specifically saying learners need to walk in both worlds, in the steps of their ancestors and as modern Dene:

> And you tell these stories to kids, you tell these same stories to kids as they're growing up, more and more, and they also tell. And that's how our language lives — by continuing to share. Like, when I tell the story, you tell the story, people who are listening to you, you have given that gift of the story, and they in turn can tell that story, and that's how it lives in forever. As soon as somebody stops telling it, within a year or two you lose it….
>
> Yeah, because I want them to keep growing even after I die. Like, there's no point in planting seeds if somebody's not going to take over and run with it. You know, like, the beauty of it is seeing how far it would grow and grow. You know, you just plant seeds, one person thinks of something, another person thinks of another, and all these things are happening, pretty soon the language can become alive again, because people will be using it in different ways. But, procrastinating and just sitting there, just saying 'Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh,' you're not planting seeds!
>
> Because, you know, our life is changing so much. Like, we're no longer out on the trapline or in the bush and that. We're on the land, but we're in the community. We're more sedentary than ever before, but yet, we're still behind the times of communities and cities that are growing up faster in a different way, like with technology and that. If we take advantage of some of these things, we're actually educating our kids to be sharper, to live of the life of two blades. To be a sword with two sharp edges. One side you're Dene, the other side you're a modern Dene. Not saying white, because when you say white, then automatically you're living two cultures. You're living your whole identity, you're learning your identity, and you're improving on it — because that's how the Dene were. They did things to adapt and to survive. If they didn't, we would have been killed off a long time ago. We have to adapt to survive and maintain….

Lastly, Eileen adds learners need to "reignite the fire of language and culture":

> And, you know, the young people, they can reignite the fire of language and culture — not only the Dene or the Cree, but any other Indigenous language — by them getting involved. And then they have the access to Elders — to speakers and Elders — who lived the life, you know, who are interested in stuff like that, to develop that.

**Summary**

Speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı recommend policy changes at each level of government with varying degrees of accountability to Dene Dedlıne Yatı vitality, communities who can support language revitalization efforts and the families and learners. Recommendations are made to Canada which acknowledge the ongoing federal harms commissioned by Canada, and Canada's jurisdiction around languages in their current development of an Indigenous Languages Act. Dene Dedlıne call for the compensation of the families and households of those who lived in former Rocher River; where the federal government previously ran residential schools, they would now pay families to learn Dene Dedlıne Yatı; that neither the treaties or the Indian Act have been negotiated or acted upon in good faith by the government, and Canada and Indigenous communities need to review those; and that Dene Dedlıne Yatı needs to be acknowledged as distinctive and separate from Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ in order to realize the number of speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Recommendations are made to the Government of the Northwest Territories which reflect policies currently in place in the NWT. Recommendations made to the GNWT include ensuring the Official Languages Commissioner, who is responsible for the nine Indigenous languages recognized by the GNWT along with English and French, be Indigenous; that the Indigenous Languages Action Plan be developed with the involvement of Indigenous speakers and learners of Indigenous languages; funding should be accessible to the public, and not just through regional Indigenous nations; childcare and honoraria for Elders should be provided; Indigenous place names should be prioritized over colonial names; and Dene should be consulted about any policy affecting Dene Yatı. Those who shared their words also asserted that regional Indigenous governments with Dene Dedlıne membership should represent those

populations, should share cabins and camps to support Dene Yatı acquisition, and should translate and work with the existing materials they already have recorded in Dene Yatı.

Dene Yatı knowledge holders also shared recommendations related to communities which provide supports for Dene Dedlıne Yatı resource development and acquisition, including for the South Slave Divisional Education Council school district, teachers and instructors, as well as speakers and resource developers. Those who shared their words recommended that the regional education council ensure that Dene Dedlıne Yatı immersion programming is as accessible and equitable as the currently provided French-immersion program. Further, these knowledge holders say that Dene pedagogies are land-based and seasonal, and that seasonal immersion land camps will revitalize the language. Knowledge holders also suggested accrediting learning environments outside of the school year and classroom. Knowledge holders also recommended reviewing the relevance and application of both the Dene Kede and George Blondin's Dene Laws, as they are both documents developed by, or in partnership with, the regional education council. There are also limited support spaces available for learners of Dene Yatı, and those who shared their words said spaces for learning should be made available to the public. Further, those involved in those collaborative work believe that Elders and knowledge holders should be supported as guest lecturers and class helpers to aide teachers and instructors of Dene Yatı. Teachers and instructors, however, are encouraged to change the environment for Dene Yatı acquisition, such as teaching Dene Yatı outside, or encouraging situational learning or games for Dene Yatı learning. These same environments  used to teach learners should also be used to assess learners' growth in the language. Knowledge holders suggested that teachers develop and produce syllabic learning materials, either independently or with the help of students, as syllabics has the highest staying power in Dene Yatı orthographies. Teachers are also

encouraged to work with the students to gradually increase the complexity of their sentences to encourage the growth of their learners. Dene Yatı teachers are also encouraged to share resources and work with other Dene Yatı teachers, and to aggregate those resources to be shared with resource developers to produce new learning materials and resources. Additionally, those same Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers, in partnership with community supports and resource developers, are encouraged to establish a Speakers' Panel and an Elders Council; broadcast Dene Dedlıne Yatı on community radio and local television; record speakers who are sharing the language, and use those recordings to produce other materials; develop a verb book which is responsive to the verb-orientation of Dene Dedlıne Yatı; and continue to develop and produce digital resources and tools in Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

The last themes of recommendations are made around the family unit, which may include whole-families, speakers, or learners of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Knowledge holders shared the importance of immersion by communities and families, and that if Dene Yatı speakers do not have anyone at home to talk to, they cannot reinforce their language use. Knowledge holders recommended that those who are language holders be supportive in passing along and sharing the language, and that language speakers should encourage Dene learning Dene Yatı outside of their own ancestry. The last themes of recommendations are made to Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners, which push learners to seek out and use resources which are already available and accessible; to use Dene fonts when communicating by phone, computer or print; and to reignite the fire of language and culture by speaking and living as Dene speaking Dene Yatı.

## CHAPTER VI: Summary and Conclusion

Results of this collaborative work ensure Dene Dedlıne are able to voice their own expressions around Dene Yatı acquisition, revitalization and reclamation through Dene pedagogies. Knowledge holders confirm that Dene Yatı is an ancient Dene language with roots enriched from this continent through hundreds of millennia. The Dene separation sees Dene Dedlıne migrating north with the bison, when bison likely numbered in the tens of millions on this continent. Various histories and migration patterns have led to Dene Dedlıne Yatı speaking communities outside of Tu Nedhé, where those language communities are commonly referred to as /t/-dialect Dëné Sųłıně. /k/-dialect Dëné Sųłıně Yatį is more broadly represented than Dene Dedlıne Yatı, and because of this, Dene Dedlıne Yatı lacks the recognition required for an adequate resource development, language supports, public representation and appropriate programming. Centuries of imperialistic colonization, religious dogmatism and capitalistic extraction have each been catalysts in diaspora and disconnect from languages and lands, congruently impacting the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı within Tu Nedhé. Presently institutionalized pedagogies avoid the land-based Dene learning inherent to Dene Dedlıne Yatı and worldview. However, those involved in this collaborative work suggest steps which can be taken by governments, communities and individuals to ensure the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in communities, in relation to lands and the Dene self. These steps are proposed in the recommendations chapter of this collaborative work.

**Relating Words to Tu Nedhé Context**

The vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı in Tu Nedhé has been directly impacted by non-Dene. The Dene Dedlıne involved in this work view respective federal, territorial and Indigenous

governments as being accountable for the ongoing language traumas against Dene Dedlıne Yatı, in that those governments must now provide equitable supports to the healing against their mandated harms as maintained by policy of those governments. These include the governments in the region who have not yet recognized Dene Dedlıne Yatı, or who now hold jurisdiction over regional Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming.

The Government of Canada formally instituted residential schools and day schools until eschewing the responsibility of institutionalized schooling by passing jurisdiction to the territorial government in the 1960s. The Dominion of Canada negotiated treaties in bad faith, and now relies on their own Indian Act for assumed control. Inversely, Canada has recently passed their Indigenous Languages Act which is meant to revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada.

The Government of the Northwest Territories, or GNWT, already incorporates Indigenous languages into their Indigenous Languages Act. This bill then sees the territorial operation of the Indigenous Languages Secretariat, which — following devolution — delivers funds to Indigenous governments to determine their own regional Indigenous language programming. The secretariat acts as an arm of the GNWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, to fund an Indigenous language manager, and subsequent programming and projects, for Indigenous governments negotiating land claims.

Leadership for Indigenous governments are currently engaged in tripartite negotiations with representatives from the federal and territorial governments to incorporate language policies within their self-government agreements and through ECE. These nations also received funding from the Indigenous Languages Secretariat for Indigenous language programming. At least seven Indigenous governments within Tu Nedhé have populations of Dene Dedlıne and Dene Dedlıne

Yatı speakers, although access to Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources, programming and funding for community members remains limited. Knowledge holders recommend these governments take more of a clear initiative in Dene Dedlıne programming which favours Dene pedagogies and epistemologies.

The limited Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources which have been developed and produced are often done by just a few Dene Dedlıne in partnership with the SSDEC, and are produced sporadically over the years from a few Indigenous nations and regional organizations. Often, the delivery of these Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources is outside of ancestral ways of teaching and learning Dene Dedlıne Yatı. There are Dene Dedlıne Yatı teachers in schools within the South Slave Divisional Education Council, although they are appreciated. Those who shared their words in this work encouraged teachers to relate teachings more closely with the land. These knowledges holders also recommended that educational institutions accredit Dene Yatı fluency and non-institutional language programming through partnerships or learning metrics. ECE also funds and governs various regional school districts, including the South Slave Divisional Education Council, or SSDEC, which oversees jurisdiction for each school in which Dene Dedlıne Yatı is spoken. There are multiple opportunities for French language immersion programming but no options for Dene Dedlıne Yatı immersion programming. While the SSDEC continually develops physical learning resources in Dene Dedlıne Yatı, knowledge keepers expressed an interest for accredited holistic experiential land-based Dene immersion programming for Dene Yatı.

Further, the hope held by Elders and speakers for revitalization coadjacently aligns with passions from Dene Yatı learners. Knowledge holders shared that families must work together to

provide equitable opportunities for Dene Dedlıne Yatı learning in the home in the same way in which most households currently privilege English. Bringing Dene Yatı acquisition into the household is just one effort among many, but it is voiced as integral by speakers. This allows for Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers and learners to retain sovereignty over Dene Dedlıne Yatı pedagogy. Knowledge holders shared that speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı must also awaken the language in their communities, and support holistic learning environments for those who want to learn the language to support Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Work and Collaborations**

This work prominently responds to the limitations and challenges by providing recommendations toward Dene Dedlıne Yatı revitalization (SEE TABLE 5.1). However, this collaborative work is itself conducted through limitations and challenges. In writing out these limitations, this work proposes further recommendations for future applied linguistics work with northern Dene communities around Dene Dedlıne Yatı.

*Limitations and Challenges of this Collaborative Work*

Limitations and challenges related to this work start with the academic and institutional involvement of this work, including establishing myself as a credible person by Dene Dedlıne, particularly as a remote researcher conducting this work through a distance during COVID-19. Firstly, I may have been initially unfamiliar to those who would choose to join in the collaborative effort. As a researcher I may have been viewed as part of the problem contributing to interview fatigue and centuries of distrust with researchers. Additionally, if this collaborative work is positioned as research or for further publication, there is the chance that this

collaborative work may be just as hazardous as previous research if misconstrued when published. Other academical barriers could have potentially involved a misunderstanding between the heavily-entrenched academic language used in this collaborative work. A final challenge related to academic involvement responds to the ongoing experience shared by many Dene of being researched and having work done about them without their involvement or inclusion, and without reciprocity, fostering a valid distrust for outside research.

Limitations and challenges which are not related to academic or institutional involvement also relate to not being able to hold interviews in person, particularly during COVID-19. This meant not being able to hold ceremony or build rapport in person. Dene may not have represented their own fluency accurately, as either speakers or learners of Dëné Sųłıně́ Yatı́ with Dene Dedlıne Yatı, especially given limited distinguishment between the languages. Most discussed by knowledge keepers as they reviewed this work were the differences in agreed upon spellings, related to differences of dialect or variance as well as a lack of uniform spelling conventions for Dene Yatı. Some Elders and knowledge holders had limited availability,  didn't use email, were out on the land, were travelling for work, or were consistently busy. Also, interviews were not conducted in Dene Dedlıne Yatı as there were difficulties finding translator / transcriber who speaks the language and is available, and so there wasn't an option to hold interviews or translations entirely in Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Further, this work biased teachers and speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, while only two people involved were learners of Dene Yatı.

This work is also limited in that it does not provide a substantive or comprehensive illustration of Dene Dedlıne Yatı verb morphophonemics or syntax, as conjugation was only briefly discussed conceptually as opposed to didactically without developing any formal

linguistic analysis. Lastly, the region of involvement only included Denendeh communities within NWT's borders — while there are Dene Dedlıne Yatı speaking communities outside of Tu Nedhé — such as Cold Lake, Stony Rapids, Lac St. Anne, and Lac La Biche — communities outside of the Northwest Territories have not been included in this collaborative work.

***Addressing the limitations and challenges of this work.***

To counter these variables, I was clear about the collaborative benefits of truth-sharing in our collaborative work — particularly as honest answers will lead to more effective recommendations for developing Dene Dedlıne Yatı policy, programming and materials. I also addressed these barriers related to my nature as an academic by also acknowledging my historical taghe-tıné connections and respect for Dene and Dene protocols. As observed in the literature review, my approach centers the ancestral Dene laws and protocols as understood through open conversation, and acknowledging and respecting participation each person and community involved in this collaborative work. Further, this collaborative work was conducted during COVID-19, and so introductions, interviews, permissions and review had to be held remotely to limit any chance of risk of transferring a virus.

The First Nations Information Governance Centre published documents around the OCAP® Principles in 2005 (First Nations Centre, 2005), proposing principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession as elements centering First Nations self-determination in the course of project development, collaboration or research with outside communities (p. 1).I ensured the words of knowledge keepers were incorporated into OCAP®, in that knowledge keepers retain full ownership, control, access and possession of their own words (FNGIC, 2005) particularly as used in the context of this work.  That is, those collaborating in this work had

opportunities to review their words along the way, and prior to publication of this work, received

a copy of the transcript, the final capstone project, and their recording prior to publication. While

the terms are abstract, the OCAP® principles are involved in each stage, including collaboration

"from the start" (p. 3). This pre-emptive and ongoing process of collaboration ensures that the

resulting work is something that is both beneficial to the communities being worked with and for

the collaborating organization or individual. Consent is actively sought and maintained through

ongoing collaboration and involvement in words, and respected in the instance that consent is

withdrawn during the process. In this instance, consent from knowledge keepers was recorded

over the phone after an introduction of the project, their role in sharing their words, and my

commitments to the OCAP® principles when involving them in this work. Further, all published

research materials will be returned to all those who collaborated to share their words.

To ensure that the majority of those involved are speakers of Dene Dedlıne Yatı, I sought

advice from Eileen Beaver, the Dene Dedlıne Yatı speaking Elder who is guiding the work.

Where there are disagreements from fluent speakers regarding Dene Dedlıne Yatı spelling

conventions, I have sought to bias spelling conventions specific in favour of the preferred

spelling of the knowledge keeper who shared their words. Despite not being able to participate in

ceremony together, I note that Dene are always in ceremony, and I have smudged before, during

and throughout this collaborative process. For Elders without emails, I worked with a member of

the community, Trudy King, to ensure their words and honoraria could be delivered.

Where this work does not provide a comprehensive linguistic analysis of Dene Dedlıne

Yatı, this collaboration ends with recommendations that Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers partner with

resource developers, which may include linguists, to document and develop comprehensive

books or recordings around Dene Dedlıne Yatı grammars, verbs and sentences related to Dene ways of being. Future work may also include attempts to develop an agreed-upon uniform lexicography, or collaborating in developing a comprehensive Dene Dedlıne Yatı verb book. This work also concludes with recommendations that future Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming and projects measure and respond to learner fluency, and that Dene Dedlıne Yatı learners must be consulted in the process of developing programming and projects. Lastly, this work recommends that future work with Dene Dedlıne Yatı involve Dene Dedlıne from other communities, in which they are likely to referred to their language as /t/-dialect Chipewyan.

### *Recommendations for future work with Dene language revitalization*

Responding to those limitations and challenges, this work recommends that future Indigenous language work be done through similar research methodologies and through the processes maintaining effective OCAP® principles. In this way, communities are empowered to fact-check and review the stories which are shared, to increase validity and reliability of information shared. Where there are multiple distinctions of spelling or language variance, include those multiple distinctions with particular notes around regional language variance.

Similarly, future collaborative works could establish or work with Dene Dedlıne Elders' Council or Speakers' Panel, as called for within recommendations made by Dene Dedlıne. This collaboration recommends a learner- and speaker-centred approach to future resource and programming development, in which linguists and resource developers ensure the projects are done with ongoing guidance, consent, involvement and leadership of Dene. Further, these programs and projects should respond to learner fluency, and allow for graduated learning opportunities in which resources respond to increasing levels of fluency. Future work could

benefit Dene Yatı through an evaluative assessment of Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources by evaluating any available Dene Dedlıne Yatı resources, such as publicly-accessible programming, resources and materials produced by the SSDEC, language instructors, or regional language programs.

While I involve communities with historical contexts in Tu Nedhé, there are several communities with Dene Dedlıne Yatı speakers and learners. This work recommends future work with Dene Dedlıne Yatı communities outside of Tu Nedhé, in which the language is likely referred to as /t/-dialect Chipewyan. Those communities likely each have their own relevant language learning strategies, and resources available to those learners. It is possible that resources or programming in these other communities can be shared and modified as resources for other Dene Dedlıne Yatı communities.

**Conclusion**

Dene Dedlıne Yatı needs to be supported by Dene pedagogies, as determined by Dene Dedlıne in Tu Nedhé. Those who are connected to Dene Dedlıne Yatı — in order of Elder, fluent speaker and learner — must hold sovereignty over the processes which determine the vitality of their own languages. Federal governments and the interests of their institutions are responsible for the historic exploitation, imperialistic domination and assumed nullification of Dene pedagogies, of which that epistemological colonialism currently extends into Dene Dedlıne Yatı programming and resource development. Each government, organization, agency and individual in Tu Nedhé holds an interdependent role in either contributing to or detracting from the vitality of Dene Dedlıne Yatı. Importantly, speakers and learners must "keep the fire alive" so future generations speak the languages of these lands as they have been spoken for countless millennia.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

*George Blondin's Dene Laws* (French, 2015)

1. Share what you have
2. Help each other
3. Love each other as much as possible
4. Be respectful of elders and everything around you
5. Sleep at night and work during the day
6. Be polite and don't argue with anyone
7. Young girls and boys should behave respectfully
8. Pass on the teaching
9. Be happy at all times

**APPENDIX B**

*Dimensions and Solutions* (Hernandez et al., 2015)

Hernandez et al. state that the recommendations written in their policy report are intended only for the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (p. 22). However, the following dimensions, or factors limiting language fluency in the Arctic, along with recommendations or solutions to those dimensions also apply to Tu Nedhé.

**Indigenous Dimensions**

1. A minority of Arctic Athabaskan families use a Northern Dene language at home;
2. At present, too few learning environments exist for cultural Athabaskan language and linguistic exchanges between elders and youth;
3. In general, Northern Dene governments and organizations do not require the use of their Indigenous tongue as a language of work;
4. Some communities speak more than one Northern Dene language, which creates an unhealthy competition for limited resources
5. Some communities have very few Arctic Athabaskan-language speakers and are less able to attract funding and teachers; and
6. Not all Dene leaders speak their Arctic Athabaskan languages in public settings.

**Regional, State or Territorial Dimensions**

1. Not enough funding exists for Arctic Athabaskan daycare and pre-school programs;
2. Arctic Athabaskan language proficiency is not required for high school graduation;
3. There are no programs available for public service to learn an Arctic Athabaskan language;
4. Few industrial employers provide opportunities to use Northern Dene dialects as a "language of work";

**Federal Dimensions**

1. Canada's Constitution recognizes English and French as national languages, but has not given sufficient support to Indigenous languages in general and specifically Arctic Athabaskan languages;
2. English is the official language of the United States, yet numerous Indigenous languages are still a part of that nation's cultural and cultural fabric but are not actively supported by Washington;

3. Arctic Athabaskan language proficiency is not required for high school graduation;
4. There are no programs available for public service employees to learn an Arctic Athabaskan language;
5. Few industrial employers provide opportunities to use Northern Dene dialects as a "language of work."

### Recommendations for First Nations

1. Dene Leaders should begin to use their Arctic Athabaskan languages on every possible occasion.
2. Families should use Arctic Athabaskan language in the home.
3. Create learning environments for elders, youth and children to interact.
4. First Nations and tribal organizations should increasingly communicate in their Arctic Athabaskan language.
5. Negotiate with industry for the use of Arctic Athabaskan Languages in appropriate workplaces.
6. First Nations and territorial governments should collectively negotiate a new language accord with the federal government that supports Arctic Athabaskan language, as well as French and English.

### Recommendations for Territorial Governments

1. Government should develop structures to support public sector employee Arctic Athabaskan Language learning: instructors, course materials, leave with pay and financial incentives for successful graduates.
2. Provide sufficient funding for Athabaskan language programming in daycare and pre-schools.
3. Amend territorial curriculums to make Arctic Athabaskan language a requirement for high school graduation.
4. Require industry to negotiate the use of Arctic Athabaskan language in appropriate workplaces.

### Recommendation for Federal Governments

1. First Nations and territorial governments should collectively negotiate a new language Accord with the federal government that supports Arctic Athabaskan languages, as well as French and English.

**APPENDIX C**

*Consent form*

(*Note: This consent form is heavily guided by the Dialogue Circle Question Guide, co-developed between me (Kyle Napier), and Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack. This question guide was developed for the ongoing project, Connecting to the Spirit of Language*.)

We are reaching out to Dene Dedlıne language teachers and learners such as yourself to understand ways in which Dëné ways of learning affect Dene Dedlıne acquisition.

These interviews are meant to include your voice and experience around Dene Dedlıne. Your participation in this collaborative work allows us to develop a framework for revitalization and acquisition for future Dene Dedlıne programming and material development.

These interviews also rely on ceremony and protocol to ensure that you are valued and respected for their time. If you choose to contribute your voice to this collaborative work, you will be given the questions ahead of time and are encouraged to make considerations of the questions throughout the Dialogue Circle.

As language leaders, Elders and community members involved in this research, you will be able to give or withdraw their consent throughout this research process, and are actively encouraged to voice their considerations and concerns around the research.

If you, as a respected voice in this dialogue circle, would like to include something later that hadn't already been said, we welcome you to reach out to us and we will continually include your voice and experiences in a manner which you prefer.

# APPENDIX D

## *ARISE Ethics Approval*

**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**                                      **RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICE**

308 Campus Tower
Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 1K8
Tel: 780.492.0459
uab.ca/reo

**Notification of Approval**

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | April 20, 2020 |
| Study ID: | Pro00099405 |
| Principal Investigator: | Kyle Napier |
| Study Supervisor: | Lana Whiskeyjack |
| Study Title: | Tháydëné Yati?´ Hóneneltën — Ancestral Dene Language Pedagogies Supporting Dëné epistemologies in Dëné Dédliné revitalization and acquisition |
| Approval Expiry Date: | April 19, 2021 |

| Approved Consent Form: | **Approval Date**<br>2020-04-20 | **Approved Document**<br>KN_Information_Consent |
|---|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Sponsor/Funding Agency: | Northwest Territory Métis Nation |

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application, including the following, has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee:

- KN Outreach, Version 2, April 8, 2020;
- KN Questions, Version 1, April 8, 2020.

Any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to the REB for approval prior to implementation. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to recruit and/or interact with human participants at this time. Researchers still require operational approval (e.g., Alberta Health Services) and must meet the requirements imposed by the public health emergency (link to Alberta COVID page).

Sincerely,

Anne Malena, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

*Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).*

## APPENDIX E

### *POLAR Ethics Approval*

2020
# Northwest Territories Scientific Research Licence

| | |
|---|---|
| Issued by: | **Aurora Research Institute - Aurora College**<br>**Inuvik, Northwest Territories** |
| Issued to: | Mr Kyle William Napier<br>University of Alberta<br>Box 447<br>Fort Smith, NT<br>X0E 0P0<br>Phone: (587) 777-9622<br>Email: knapier@ualberta.ca |
| Affiliation: | University of Alberta |
| Funding: | GNWT - Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat<br>University of Alberta - Aboriginal Student Council<br>Northwest Territory Métis Nation - Indigenous Languages Program |
| Team Members: | Lana Whiskeyjack |
| Title: | **Tháydëné Yaʧ Hóneneltën — Ancestral Dene Language Pedagogies** |
| Objectives: | To develop collaborative community work with communities to create an academic paper which addresses the need for Dene leading their own Dene education. |
| Dates of data collection: | September 24, 2020 to December 31, 2020 |
| Locations: | Yellowknife, Enterprise, Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, Hay River, Hay River Reserve, Łútsèlké, Detah |

Licence No. 16751 expires on December 31, 2020
Issued in the Town of Inuvik on September 25, 2020

_____

Joel McAlister
Vice President, Research
Aurora Research Institute

**APPENDIX F**

*Invitation Letter to Participate*

Ɂedlánet'e-a?

My name is Kyle Napier, and I'm a Dene/Cree Métis from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. I have dedicated my life to learning the Indigenous languages of my lineage, and supporting the development of those materials and programming.

Part of this work involves supporting Dëné ways of knowing and learning in the development of Dene Dedlıne programming and material development for teaching.

As a Dene Dedlıne teacher/learner, you're invited to participate in this collaborative work which intends to develop frameworks and guidance for the further development and production of Dene Dedlıne programming and material development.

Please contact me if you are interested in joining this collaborative research.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

&mdash; Kyle Napier

[Phone number and email]

**APPENDIX G**

*"Ła Nëke —Se Këlke Dełchéth", Catherine Boucher*

Ła nëke | Se Këlke dełchéth
ta dį̨ Set'ës dárįłł xél
sǫlá k'eta dechën náiłtsį́
Łáįs dį K'edį ʔełtthį nę́la
łǫ́tą łoną K'ës ba tsó  204