

# Ojibwe Revitalization at the University of Minnesota



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# Ojibwe Language

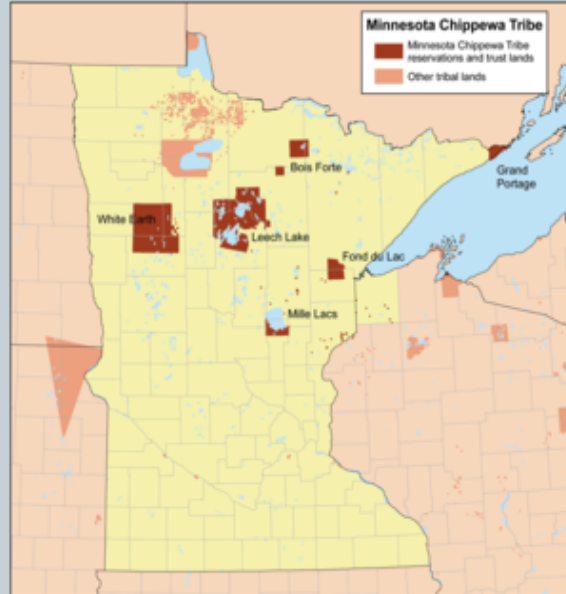


- Southwest: *Ojibwa, Chippewa, Otchipwe, Ojibwe*
  - Minnesota: *Ojibwe*
  - East: *Nishnaabemwin* (“*Odaawaa*”)
  - Northwest: *Saulteaux, Soto*
- 
- The Anishinaabemowin (“Ojibwe language”) is related to about twenty-five other languages within the Algonquian language stock and is one of the most widespread of North American languages.

# Ojibwe Language



- Ojibwe is spoken in the United States in **Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin**; and in Canada in **Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec** (Nichols 1992:v-vi)



# Ojibwe Language



- Polysynthetic language (“sentence words”)
- *Indaaggiowaabamaanaanig*
- ‘We should have went and seen them’

## Morphemes:

- *in-daa-gii-o-waabam-aa-naan-ig*
- I-should-PAST-go.and-see-DIR-we-they

# Longest Ojibwe Word



- 'Blueberry Pie'



- Miinibaashkimasiganibadagiin....

# Longest Ojibwe Word



...wesijigananimoshiwibiitoshki...

# Longest Ojibwe Word



...ganibakwezhigan.

# Longest Ojibwe Word



- *miin* 'blueberry'
- *baashkimasigan* 'jam, preservers'
- *badagiinwesijigan* 'pie'
- *animosh* 'dog'
- *biitooshkigan* 'underwear'
- *bakwezhigan* 'bread'



# Ojibwe is an Endangered Language



## Minnesota Ojibwe (Treuer 2009)

- Red Lake: 400 speakers
- Leech Lake: 90 speakers
- Mille Lacs: 150 speakers
- White Earth: 15 speakers
- Fond Du Lac: 0 speakers
- Nett Lake: 20 speakers
- Grand Portage: 3 speakers
- St. Croix: 10 speakers

Total: **688** speakers in Minnesota

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



- The university is not the usual place where language revitalization movements are hosted.
- Language revitalization movements tend to be grassroots efforts in tribal communities and reservations.
- The University of Minnesota is a “land grant” university.
- The university was built on land belonging to the Dakota nation until US government annexed their land for the use of farmers and settlers.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



- The Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities currently teaches both Ojibwe and Dakota languages.
- There are four years of Dakota language instruction.
- There are four years of Ojibwe language instruction.
- **BA in Ojibwe degree program** created to give heritage students (and non-heritage students) an opportunity to gain a high proficiency in the Ojibwe language.
- Goal of the language program is **fluency**, NOT exposure.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



BA in Ojibwe Degree Program

<http://cla.umn.edu/ojibwe>

Video Presentation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2aPJgVyMbE>

This is a video featuring our students and alumni from our Ojibwe language program.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Ojibwe is the language of the classroom**

- The Ojibwe language classes are primarily taught in Ojibwe with some use of English when teaching about Ojibwe grammatical/linguistic concepts.

## **Underwear ball**

- Students who want to ask or make a comment in English must hold the “underwear ball” (as a disincentive to use English)



# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Weekly Immersion Lunches**

- Instructors have lunch once a week with the students in the program so that students get an opportunity to either listen to the language being spoken, practice what they have learned, or both.
- Students hear the language in use.
- Students learn new vocabulary on a variety of topics.
- Reinforces their overall language learning.
- Full immersion.
- No particular topic.
- No planned activities.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Ojibwe Immersion House “Ojibwewigamig”**

- We created this program so that students can live together in an environment that is entirely in Ojibwe.
- NO ENGLISH rule in effect.
- Bathroom is the English room, in case students get too frustrated and need to communicate.
- *Classes are not enough!* The immersion house allows students to experience using Ojibwe in a variety of contexts, e.g. washing clothes, going shopping, daily chores, cooking, cleaning, arguments, etc.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Ojibwe Immersion House “Ojibwewigamig”**

- “Foreign” language houses such as this are effective in helping students become highly proficient in the target language.
- Foreign Language Housing at Brigham Young University - students report that they felt it helped their learning better than being in the country of origin.
- Normally, a native speaker of the target language lives with the students.
- We cannot do that because most of our fluent speakers are older or elderly.



# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Ojibwe Immersion House “Ojibwewigamig”**

- In BYU Foreign Housing, meals are eaten together so that conversations can be held in the target language.
- We plan to have instructors and natives speakers do a rotation for meals with the students since students will not be living with a native speaker of Ojibwe.
- We plan to have a good mixture of advanced student-to-beginning students. The BYU Foreign Language Housing program found that when there were no advanced language speakers in the house, learning was hindered.

# Initiatives at the University of Minnesota



## **Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang 'Let Speak Ojibwe in Our Own Country'**

- We partner with an Ojibwe adult immersion academy on the Fond du Lac Reservation in Cloquet, Minnesota.
- NO ENGLISH rule in effect.
- Immersion combined with grammar instruction.



# Miigwech! (Thank you!)



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Questions?

