



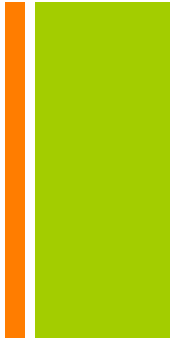
Student Perspectives on Mi'gmaq Language-Learning through Multi-Modal Teaching

A Community-Linguistics Partnership

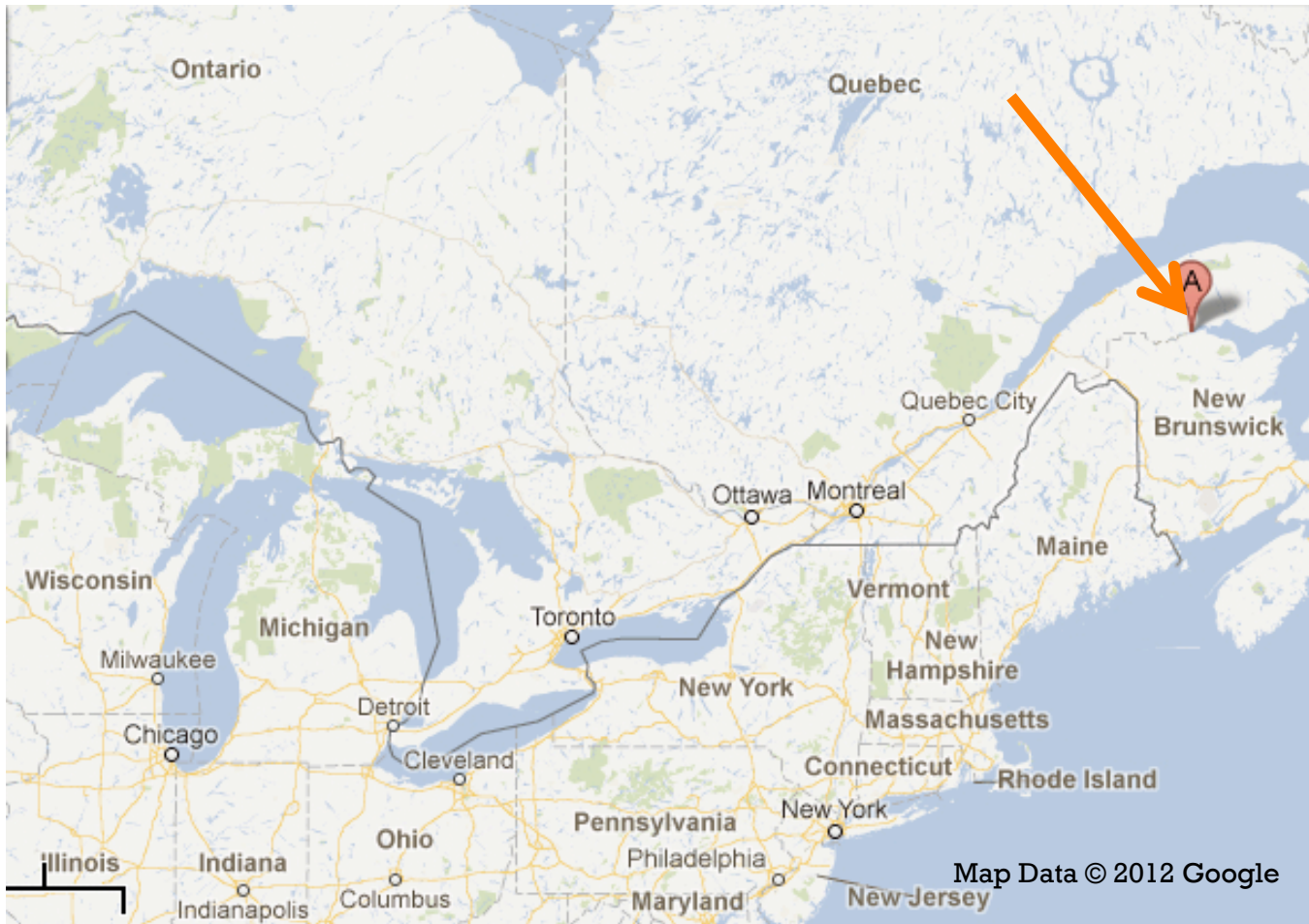
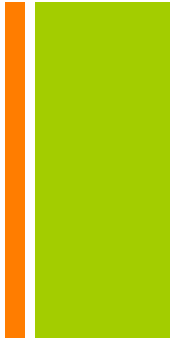
Carol Little, Elise McClay, Sarah Vicaire, Mary-Beth Wysote et al

+ Outline

- Contextualizing...
 - the community and course
 - the linguistic involvement
 - the students and linguists
- The course
 - Defining the multi-modal approach
 - Attitudes of teachers and students
 - Advantages and disadvantages
- Linguists' contribution to project
 - Lesson plans & Documentation
 - Meta-linguistic explanations
 - CAN 8
- How this program may be implemented elsewhere



+ Listuguj, Québec





The Community, the language

Mi'gmaq in Listuguj

- Listuguj is a Mi'gmaq reserve on the border of Québec and New Brunswick.
- Mi'gmaq in Listuguj is now mainly spoken by elders, to elders
 - Partly due to a history of linguistic imbalance from residential schools, often speakers are hesitant to speak to younger generations

The LED Language Course

- Taught by two native speakers
- Inspired by methods from Stephen Greymorning (University of Montana): it is semi-immersion, using pictures instead of word-to-word translation
 - See Sarkar & Metallic (2009) for more detail
- LED offers it not as part of a credited course, but rather as an optional self-improvement class (sometimes included in the students' job hours)



+ Linguists' involvement

- Why this language?
 - Indigenous; Endangered; Rich area for research
- How did this involvement come about?
 - Fall 2011: **McGill Field Methods course** (co-taught by Dr. Jessica Coon, Dr. Michael Wagner) hired a Listuguj-born PhD student as the consultant
 - Collaboration required a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between university and community
 - in Dec. 2011, the McGill class presented their material (a wiki maintained throughout the course) to the Listuguj Education Directorate
 - Listuguj Education Directorate approved of the class wiki and later approached linguists involved in the course to consult on language programs
 - Connection grant
 - CAN 8 and grant (Heritage Canada/Aboriginal Language Initiative)





Background on us as students

Carol & Elise

- No Mi'gmaq family background
- Studied Mi'gmaq in an academic capacity for 1-2 semesters
- Wished to expand knowledge of the language and aid in revitalization efforts
- Employed to document classes and create a virtual language class (more on these later)

Sarah

- Grew up in Listuguj, attending university now with aspirations to be a teacher
- Mi'gmaq Background:
 - Father and Grandmother spoke fluently spoke it, but I wasn't fully invested in learning and felt too shy to try.
 - Was nervous taking the course; expected beginner status to hold me back

Mary Beth

- Grew up in Gesgapegiag until grade 2
- Exposed to Mi'gmaq in younger years in Gesgapegiag
- Mother non-speaker but understands
- Father is fluent Mi'gmaq speaker, didn't learn English until he went to school
 - However mainly speaks English now
- Took course to learn more



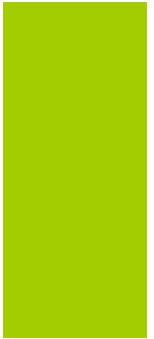
The Summer 2012 Mi'gmaq Course

Logistics

- Picture-based
- Two teachers speaking to each other as well as to students
- 1.5 hours, 4 days/week, 10 weeks
- Moderate class size (10-20)
- No formal marking

Summary

- Multi-modal teaching
- “No-pressure” atmosphere
- Peer-to-peer/Horizontal learning is encouraged
- Students’ autonomy is respected

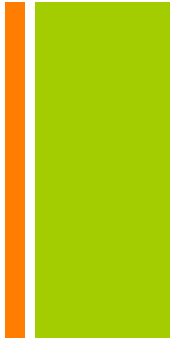


+ The Mi'gmaq Course: What defines “multi-modal”?





The Mi'gmaq Course: Atmosphere of the Classroom

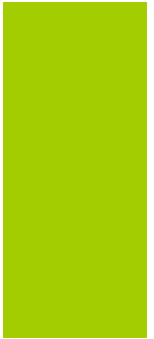


- Caring and committed teachers
 - Team of two teachers

- Student-guided curriculum encouraging horizontal learning
 - Teach what students want, allow them to determine what is relevant to them
 - Breaks down the hierarchy of teacher > student, explicitly values the students' knowledge

- Mutual respect
 - Learning happens at a pace determined by the students
 - If a student wants to leave, they are free to do so; this places the student's priorities in their own hands
 - Personal connections between students' lives and teachers' were encouraged

+ Aspects of the method and its advantages and disadvantages



Method aspect	Disadvantage	Advantage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Fluid and student-driven curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In-class tangents when students' goals are not identical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Students learn from each other as well as from teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Absence of formal marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Prevents course from being able to easily give its students institutionally-recognized credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Relief of academic pressure, allows students to do more self-assessment and self-motivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Picture method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Less concentration on Mi'gmaq text, leaving a gap in students' knowledge of orthography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Enables students to be comfortable speaking, avoids confusion with still-developing orthography, eliminates pronunciation bias from the spelling

+ Outcomes of the course

Linguists

- Learned how to communicate in a language we had previously only analysed
- Helped document and digitize the material

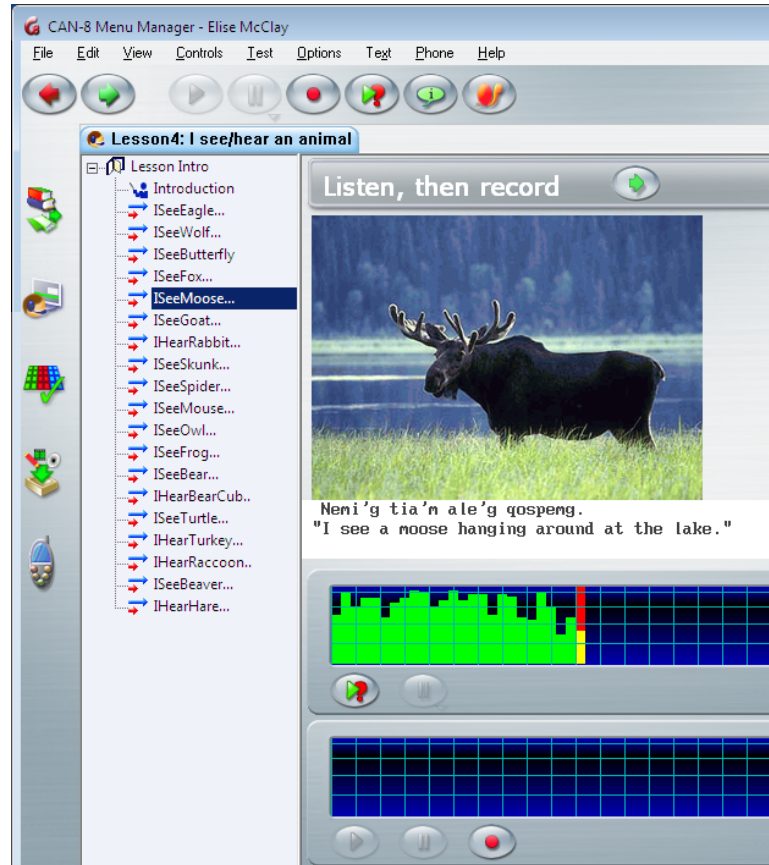
Students

- Sarah:
 - Begin to converse with my father in Mi'gmaq
 - More open to teaching me now that I have shown initiative
 - Regained a piece of the Mi'gmaq culture
- Mary Beth:
 - Speakers started speaking to me in Mi'gmaq since the course

+ Linguists' contribution to the Mi'gmaq courses

In addition to learning Mi'gmaq...

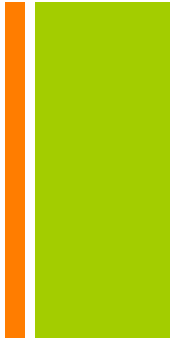
- Lesson Plans
- In-class “meta” explanations
- Documentation of the language
- CAN 8 language-teaching software



Screenshot of CAN 8

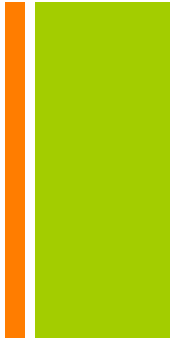
+ Lesson Plans

- Teachers had not previously documented the contents of their classes, due to the spontaneous nature of the course.
 - Education Directorate was interested in having a record that could be a resource for other teachers.
- Over the summer, a linguist/student documented 2 classes:
 - Morning class of post-secondary students
 - Afternoon class of high school graduates
- In-class notes contributed to ad hoc lesson plans which may now be used by other teachers of Mi'gmaq
- Lesson plans were also used for providing structure to the digital language program (CAN 8)





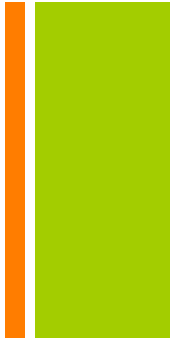
Meta-linguistic contributions



- During the class, when students had occasional questions about a particular abstract feature of the language, linguists were there to help explain
 - Sometimes there were clear moments where the linguist could help abstract from speaker intuitions to grammatical patterns that were easier for students to grasp as a “rule of thumb”
- Explanations helped students understand difficulties encountered while learning Mi’gmaq, and helped some students notice and create their own patterns within the language



Documentation of the language



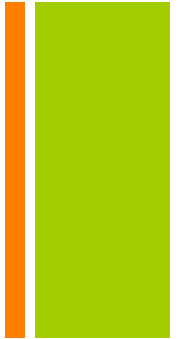
- Blog: migmaq.org
 - Progress updates
 - Research questions
 - Sharing relevant information on Mi'gmaq and language revitalisation
 - Point of contact between this project and the world

- Wiki page: wiki.migmaq.org
 - Grammatical features of the language
 - Background information

- Research
 - Linguistic work on material from Mi'gmaq
 - Useful for other linguists and community

+ CAN 8

- Supplementary software program
- Extra practice for students outside of classroom
- Reinforcement of concepts learned in class
- Available to those not able to take class, for distance learning
- Included in CAN 8, informed by the lesson plans:
 - Dialogues
 - Vocabulary
 - Some explanations about grammatical points
 - Exercises (still a work in progress)



+ CAN 8


CAN-8 Menu Manager - System Supervisor

File Edit View Controls Test Options Text Phone Help

Lesson1c: Food-Foods Vocab [eig-eigig]

- Lesson Intro
 - clam/s
 - strawberry/s
 - carrot/s
 - raspberry/s
 - raisin/s
 - onion/s
 - potato/es
 - tomato/es
 - turnip/s

Listen, then record



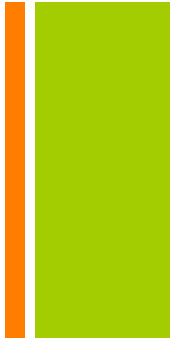
wen.ju 'sugapun... .. wen.ju 'sugapung

Example 00038

Play 00000



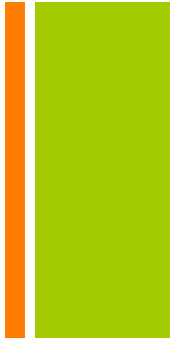
+ Implementation in other communities



- Equality
 - Equality between teachers and students
 - Students can voice opinions and educational needs freely (though not disruptively)
- Respect
 - Mutual respect
- Agency of students
- Caring and committed teachers
 - Team of teachers
- Student-guided curriculum
 - Teach what students want and what is relevant to them



Plans for the future

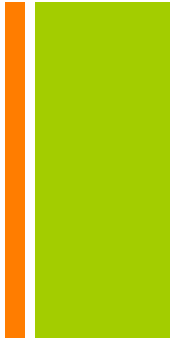


- Further dissemination of Mi'gmaq material for interested learners, speakers, and researchers
- Support for a community-based Master-Apprentice program
- Development of supplementary material for learning
 - Along with the iLanguage lab, our team has been working to develop an app to make material from CAN8 go mobile. It is still in prototype stage, but it will be able to be used for other languages and sync with linguistic corpuses on the complementary LingSync app (still in beta).
- Contact us: info@migmaq.org



Wela'lieg ms't wen!

+ References



- Sarkar & Metallic. 2009. *Indigenizing the Structural Syllabus: The Challenge of Revitalizing Mi'gmaq in Listuguj*. The Canadian Modern Language Review, Vol. 66, No. 1, September 2009 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press). pp. 49-71.
- CAN8 Virtual Language Lab. <http://www.can8.com/>
- Hinton, Leanne. 2002. *How To Keep Your Language Alive*. (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books)
 - Source of the Master-Apprentice Program