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My language profile is one that isn't very extensive in any way. I grew up and still live on a farm a few kilometres north of Waldeck Saskatchewan which is about 14 kilometres east of Swift Current Saskatchewan. English is my first language and the only language that I can speak, read, and write fluently and the same goes for my only sibling, my brother, who is two years younger than I am. Over the years through the Saskatchewan school curriculum, I remember taking French classes from grade 1 to grade 9. Though taking French all of those years, I can only speak a minimal amount of french. I can introduce myself, ask someone else's name, and say how I'm feeling along with remembering a few different colours, animals, and the odd verb conjugation. I also had the opportunity to take a Cree language class in university last year. This was very challenging for me as Indigenous languages work so much different than French and English. There was a heavy focus on animate and inanimate nouns, and a very different alphabet and sentence structure. I retained very little from that class, and think a language like that is something you would really have to work at for a long time in order to become fluent in it. My community is also predominantly English speaking as well. In Waldeck from personal experience, I have not ever heard anyone speak anything other than English. I believe it would be quite a surprise to hear someone speak another language just because it is such a small community. However, in Swift Current, there is a bit more exposure to other languages that I have noticed but that is mainly due to the significantly larger population which allows for more diversity among its citizens.

My parents are not much different than I am. Both my mother and father are only fluent in English and can speak, read, and write it. I do know that they do have a bit of a different

experience than me due to the fact that some of their grandparents were bilingual. On my mother's side, I'm not real sure where my lineage comes from. I know my maternal grandfather mentioned that his family possibly came from holland, and my maternal grandmother's family possibly came from Russia. Both of my grandparents were born near Gouldtown Saskatchewan which is approximately 20 kilometres north of Herbert Saskatchewan. What I do know about them is that they did speak what my

grandparents



This is Granny and Grandpa Wiebe. They are my great grandparents on my father's side. My grandmother's parents.



Justina Zacharias passed away peacefully on January 15th, 2004 at 1:15 p.m., at the age of 83 years, in the St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. Justina was predeceased by her first husband, John Wiebe; a son-in-law; 5 brothers; and 3 sisters. She leaves to mourn her loving husband, Jack Zacharias; her children, Henry (Denise), Helen, Mary (Ben), Eva, Justina (Hank), Margaret, Paul (Anna), Linda (Byron); her 7 step-children, Allan (Linda), Delbert (Betty), Arthur (Mary), Cecil (Gloria), Ben (Heather), Barry (Carol), Teresa (Glen); her forty grandchildren; her forty-four great-grandchildren; and her sister, Helen (John P.) Dueck. Justina will be remembered for her many acts of kindness, her homemade buns, her ability to make jams, quilts and designing her own clothes. Her love of God's creatures and flowers were her treasure. Her favorite was berry-picking season, especially harvesting buffalo berries. Singing in the Seniors Trio gave her much joy. Singing and working went hand in hand for her.

This is my great grandmother, Justina Zacharias. She would be my maternal grandmother's mother.

called low german as well as English. I also know that both my maternal grandparents still do know a small amount of German such as names of different traditional Mennonite dishes but other than that they don't speak it whatsoever. On my father's side, I am blessed with a wealth of information about my family



This photo includes my great grandparents, my great aunts and uncles, as well as my grandparents on the far right.

as my grandmother's mother or my great grandmother wrote a book about her life. She was born in Southern Ukraine in 1905 and spoke German and a little bit of Russian she picked up from a girl who babysat her when she was young. My great grandfather only spoke German. When they immigrated to Canada in 1927 they didn't speak English whatsoever, but from stories, my grandmother told, they learned the language by reading comics in the newspapers as well as speaking with other people who were fluent in English. Today, my grandmother doesn't speak any German, just English which would be her primary language. Unfortunately, my paternal grandfather died in the 1980's so I never got the chance to meet him but I do know that he is of Scottish descent. I also know that his parents immigrated to Canada when his sister or my great aunt was a small child. Both great grandparents spoke English, as did my grandfather, but I am unaware if they spoke any other language.

I guess when I think about it my family has experienced what could possibly be defined as language loss. Though when I do think of the term language loss, it makes me think specifically about the loss of Indigenous languages in Canada. At one point, six of eight of my great-grandparents were fluent in German as their primary language, and specifically in the case of my immigrant grandparents, became fluent in English later on in their lives. Three of my grandparents were also fluent in German when they were younger, but that was never something that was passed onto my parents, and in turn, wasn't passed onto me. I'm not sure to what extent my grandparents can still speak German. I think if they didn't speak German on a regular or even daily basis that it would be something that would be lost over time. I wouldn't suspect them recalling very much as the only language they speak whether in public or private spheres is English. This is the same for my parents, brother, and me.

Like I have mentioned above, the only other two languages that I have learned about are french or Cree. Cree, I am very limited in my knowledge as I only took it for a semester as a language course towards my elementary education degree. I could probably say a few words, but I am not very confident in my ability. It was a very tough language to learn, especially for a beginner. Though it did really help open my eyes to why Indigenous Peoples in Canada are struggling to reclaim many of their languages due to the sheer complexity of some of them. Since this was a class I took in University towards my degree, it was something I had to pay for myself. I also learned French in elementary and junior high school. Though since I haven't been an active learner for approximately seven years now, I don't remember very much and I do remember is very minimal. Since you don't have to pay to attend elementary, middle, and high school in Canada, I would suspect that these classes would have been government-funded.

Language policy and profile have made me think specifically about ESL learners in Canada. I know that there are programs in public schools throughout Canada in order to assist students in learning English as their second language. I believe I also remember ESL classes being offered in my high school as well. But I do wonder about the services that are available to those immigrating to Canada that have no background in English whatsoever. Do they have to pay in order to access ESL classes? I took the first two semesters of the first year of my degree through a college affiliated with the University of Regina in Swift Current. When I was taking classes there, I recall seeing what I believe were ESL students, but I do wonder now if they had to pay for classes to learn English in the same way as I would pay tuition in order to obtain my degree. Is this something that would also be government-funded? In addition, are there opportunities for those coming to Canada to take french classes as it is also an official language in Canada? I also find myself wondering what ESL programs are available to those immigrating

to Canada and whether or not they are easily accessible to those looking to take them. Are online courses an option as well? These are all questions I seem to be asking myself as I am unsure of the answer. Though I would believe that the internet could be a good source for finding out information about the questions I have.

Even though Canada is a country that has two official languages, English and French, there still seems to be a hierarchy of language. This hierarchy of language is something that has been intertwined into Canadian society for many years. According to Haque & Patrick, it began with cultural genocide and the cultural assimilation of Indigenous Peoples: “These ideologies have positioned English or French as superior and indigenous languages as ‘primitive’ and as barriers to ‘civilization’ and modernity. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these ideologies were basic to the highly destructive assimilationist policies that governed residential schooling, the effects of which are still being felt today”. (Haque & Patrick, 2015). There still seems to be a disconnect and a divide between English and French even though they are both equally the official languages of Canada. This is something that has been happening for a number of years as Canada was born through colonial wars between the French and English. Even today there is tension among some French and English-speaking groups in Canada due to the same mindset of racial hierarchy that was developed years ago. (Denis, 2016). This is something that will continue to be an issue in Canada as long as this mindset is something that Canadians still believe in.

References

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