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Defying Maliseet Language Death

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Defying Maliseet Language Death

Emergent Vitalities of Language, Culture, and Identity in Eastern Canada

Bernard C. Perley

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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Set in Quadraat by Bob Reitz.
Designed by R. W. Boeche.

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To my grandmother.
Your spirit lives on.

To my mother.
Wisoki-woliwon ’ciw psi-te keq.
Koselomol.

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In addition to my UWM colleagues I have had the great fortune to meet some remarkable scholars and truly generous people. I owe a great debt to Regna Darnell for her engaged and critical discussions

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on Native American languages and identity politics. I am grateful for her friendship and generous professional advice. Paul V. Kroskrity has been and continues to be a generous colleague in mentoring a junior scholar through professional development but also in engaging in critical language and cultural issues in Native North America. Frederic Gleach has been and continues to be a great friend and colleague whose unfailing support of my work is greatly appreciated. Thank you Laura Graham for your enthusiastic support of my work and the energy you bring to sharing ideas and solutions. Through the years, so many individuals have helped me explore the complexities between language and culture in Native North America. But it all started when Joel Sherzer predicted many years ago that I would be doing this work for the rest of my life. Thank you all for your continued support and friendship. Sincere thanks go to the anonymous readers of the manuscript, whose critical as well as supportive comments made this a better ethnography.

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Notes on Terminology and Orthography

Terminology

This ethnography uses the terms *aboriginal* and its derivatives interchangeably with Native American and American Indian as the context of the discussion requires. The Canadian context favors *aboriginal* and *aboriginality* to refer to the indigenous peoples of Canada. American Indian and Native American are more commonly used in the United States when referring to the indigenous peoples within its borders. Canadian aboriginal peoples also prefer the political designation of First Nation when referring to the reserves or reservations. *Reserve* is the prevalent word used in Canada, while *reservation* is used in the United States. I use them interchangeably as the context of the discussion requires. "Indian" is sometimes used within quotes or where the context requires its use for consistency. I have used pseudonyms for all members of Tobique First Nation, the only exceptions being my immediate family members. There is no logic behind the pseudonyms assigned to Tobique community members. I apologize in advance for any perceived innuendo or insult, which I promise is unintended.

Orthography

The orthographic representation in this book is inconsistent and contradictory, and it is necessarily so. In this ethnography my goal is to

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represent the ethnographic material faithfully despite apparent inconsistencies and contradictions. As an ethnographer, I find that "correct" language usage and spelling are context and moment dependent. My goal is to understand why some representations are used instead of others and why community members change their minds.

There is a standardized orthography that has been developed since the 1960s work of Teeter, the '70s work of LeSourd, and important collaborative work of the Micmac-Maliseet Institute (Francis and Leavitt 2008:40). Today the standardized orthography is gaining popular acceptance at Tobique First Nation, but during my fieldwork (mid-1990s) that was not the case. A number of orthographic representations were competing for general acceptance by the community. Most of the Maliseet texts used in this ethnography come from the Mah-Sos Elementary School language program, and therefore I use the orthography used in the classroom. The orthographic system in the school also changed, which contributes to inconsistencies in orthographic representation. Given the orthographic variety, I use the appropriate orthography when I use examples from other Maliseet language programs and their respective publications.

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