Learning Through the Music of our People

An Anishinaabe Language Resource
Acknowledgements

She:kon

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Indigenous language literacy and learning is an integral component of the ONLC programs as they are the foundation of Indigenous identity. This language song booklet is done in the Anishinaabe language and includes three songs—a traditional song, a children’s song and a contemporary song, all used by the Anishinaabe.

I would like to first thank our summer students (2017), Josh Miller and Davis Jacobs who worked together with a collaborative effort along with Kevin Martin (Bubba) to organize, write and design this booklet. Thank you to our translators and singers, Aaron Dolson and Brandon Sickles—traditional song, and Helen Roy for the use of a children’s song and a contemporary song from her cd's.

Also thank you to Shane Powless of Thru the RedDoor and Simon Hill for the assistance in putting the cd’s together.

This learning language song book has a cd that will accompany it.

Language learning is meant to be fun, enjoy!

Nia:wen,

Michelle Davis
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
# LEARNING THROUGH THE MUSIC OF OUR PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

By Josh Miller

Music can be used as a teaching tool when it comes to learning language. Research has shown that musical sounds have been around since before the human language was developed (Henriksson-Macaulay, web). Music has grown to be one of the most common ways that we communicate and express ourselves whether we are playing it, singing along or listening to our favourite genre.

“Research from the University of Edinburg found that adults who sang words or short phrases from a foreign language while learning were twice as good at speaking it later”. (Gray, web). Professor of Neurology at NYU School of medicine, Oliver Sacks, demonstrated in 2007 the strong link between music and memory showing that music can be used in triggering memory recall in areas of learning language such as vocabulary, phrasing and pronunciation.

But, how does this relate to Indigenous peoples? Oral tradition is an integral part of Indigenous history, it is the purest form of story telling and entertainment. The songs have meanings as well as purpose whether being used for ceremony, entertaining or giving thanks. Language and culture are so richly intertwined music plays an important part in Indigenous language
learning.

Today, with music evolving Indigenous artists are connecting the roots of the people as well as the different generations to mainstream music through contemporary, traditional, rap/hiphop, the blues, pop or rock n roll.

Overall there is no denial of the benefits that music has on learning languages. The tradition of Indigenous peoples and the correlation of the music and the spoken language gives us an example that opens up perspective on not only the culture but, the capabilities of using music as a tool to learn something new.
FORMS OF MUSIC

Throughout the Anishinaabe culture there are many different ways to use the language of song for different purposes. Song is used in Ceremony, and for social/powwows where the purpose is to gather, dance and have fun, or contemporary songs mixing both mainstream and the language of the Anishinaabe together.

Ceremonial songs - Music is used for forms of healing and giving thanks, among other things. These songs were given to the Anishinaabe specifically for ceremonial purposes or medicine rituals and have been passed down through the generations.

Social/Powwow songs - These songs are used in the social aspect, in gatherings big and small that bring people together for the purpose of not only dancing and socializing but as well as to have fun and meet new people. Social songs consist of traditional songs used for many generations and of new songs composed and sung in Anishinaabe languages.
Children's songs - Children’s songs are used as amusement or to calm an infant or child and may have a learning message within the verses. Children's songs may be traditional songs passed from one generation to the next or they may be contemporary mainstream songs translated into Anishinaabe languages. Many of these songs are used in the school setting and are an excellent recourse for learning traditional languages.

Contemporary songs – Contemporary songs are mainstream songs translated into Anishinaabe languages and are used to express culture through the new forms of music such as rap, blues, rock n roll, etc. It mixes both the language and different styles of music.
Helen Roy, Anishinaabemowin Language Teacher, Singer, Translator, explains translating between the English and Anishinaabe languages for the children’s song and the contemporary song used in this booklet:

“The translations in these songs are not literal to the English words but are representative as to the meanings that the songwriter intended. English figures of speech and ambiguities (and English is full of them) shouldn’t be literally translated. If you take their literal meaning in English, they are nonsense, such as, “up the road a piece” or “That’s the cat’s pajamas”. It is up to the students to look at the words and discuss the with their teachers or fluent speakers to find out what is actually being said rather than literally translating what they see written, as in “iwi tikaa’ for “That’s cool”.

CHILDREN’S SONG

N’OOKOMIS ENDAAD

N’gashi, n’ookomis na gwa e-odaad ndaa-b’baa-izh
My mom, could I go to grandma’s house?

Gichi-zhaa’aazhi gaa-waabimagiba
It’s been a long time since I saw her.
Aaniish waa-nji-izhaa-yin g’ookomis endaad
Why do you want to go to Grandma’s house?

Minowedaagwad n’ookomis endaad
It’s fun at Grandma’s house.

N’bishigendaaan n’ookomis endaad
I like it at Grandma’s house.

N’gichinendam wiijigendawag endaad
I’m happy when I live with Grandma

Miinwaa aapiji nda-zaagi’i’aa
And I love her very much

Aaniish e-nji-pshigendaman
g’ookomis endaad
Why do you like it at Grandma’s house?

Nda-naadamawaa pkwezhigaansan zhi’aad
I help her when she makes cookies

Nda-naadamawaa kitige-d kitigaaning
I help her plant her garden

Nda-bzindawaa dibaajimotawid
I listen to her when she tells me stories
N’gikendaan aapi ji zaagi’i’id
I know she loves me very much

Wegnesh waa-anankii-yin g’ppkomis endaad
What are you going to do at Grandma’s house?

Nga-niboobiike-me wii-wii-wiisini-yaang
We’ll make soup for our eating

Animoons nga-wiidookawaa agojiing
I’ll play with the puppy outside

Bekaa nga-iyaa n’mishomis nibaa-d
I’ll be quiet when my Grandpa sleeps

Miinwaa aapi ji nda-zaagi’i’aa
And I lover her very much

Wegnesh waa-anankii-yin g’ookomis endaad
What are going to do at Grandma’s house?

Odaawegamigong nga-izhaa-mi n’ookomis
We’ll go to the store, me and grandma

Shki’mkizinan nga-ayaamaag ge-biiskamaanh
She’ll buy me a new pair of shoes

E-mkswaandegin n’bishigendaanan
I like the red ones
N’gikendaan aapiji zaagi’i’id
I know she loves me very much

Anniish waa-nji-izhaa-yin g’ookomis
Why do you want to go to Grandma’s house?

N’gikendaan aapiji zaagi’i’id
I know she loves me very much

Miinwaa aapiji nda-zaagi’i’aa
And I love her very much

G’zaagi’in n’ookomis
I love you my Grandma
TRADITIONAL SONG

This traditional song was performed by Aaron Dolson and Brandon Sickles. This song was shared with them by a Sagkeeng First Nation Elder, who gave permission to share the song with us.

WaNishkaan
   Wake up/get up

Anishinaaabe
   People

Binshke-Gosha
   contrary word/filler word

Binoojiinyag
   Children

Gitimaagozi
   Poor/suffering

Repeat 4X

ABOUT THE BIG DRUM
with Aaron Dolson and Brandon Sickles

The drum used in this traditional song is named Pathfinder and the name comes from their teacher. This Big Drum was built with permission from Peter Linklater from Sandy Lake, Ontario. Aaron met Peter at the healing lodge when he began his healing journey. He was taught to follow protocol, do things the way they
were taught, that it is not theirs to change, and to share what they have been taught. The Drum stick used is contemporary and made out of fibreglass.

Both Aaron and Brandon share their teachings of the drum and how the drum stick came to be. Aaron shared that a woman went to the Creator’s world and came back with the gift of the drum and told the men to put down their guns and stop fighting and to pick up the drum sticks as they would replace their weapons. Brandon also shared that he was taught on how to conduct himself around the drum, treating the drum with respect, they wrap their drum in a blanket when it is not being used. The stand of the drum are the warriors holding up the drum and they would treat the drum the way you would treat your grandmother.

The honour beats use the 4 directions and some will change to 7 beats which could be for the Seven Grandfathers. This can be different at a powwow. The Drum has a spirit, it is alive and we were taught to feed our drum four times a year. It is a big responsibility to look after the Drum such as having a good mindset, good environment, along with good intentions. From what we have been taught, if we abuse the drum and don’t respect it, the women have the right to come and take it. Aaron and Brandon share that they will smudge themselves and the drum to help clear the air of themselves and the drum.
CONTEMPORARY SONG

Many Indigenous musician/artists and language learners are taking popular contemporary songs, we here on the radio, and translating them into their Indigenous languages. This connects the generations through mainstream music and promotes awareness of the language.

HALF AS MUCH

This song is an original by Hank Williams Sr. The version in this booklet and on the accompanying CD has been translated in the Anishinaabe language and is sung by Helen Roy.

Giishpin zaagi’imba aabta mnik e-zaagi’inaa
If you love me half as much as I love you

Gaa gdaa-niiskaadendami’isii aabta mnik e-doodawiyin
You wouldn’t worry me half as much as you do

G’mimo’doodaw pii gaa gwaya bmi-iyaasig
You’re nice to me when there’s no one else around

Gda-gchi-maamiikwaash wii-goopajiwiyin eta
You only build me up to let me down

Giishpin mesini’imba aabta mnik e-mesini’inaa
If you missed me half as much as I missed you

Gaawiin gdaa-aapadendisii aabta mnik e-doodaman
You wouldn’t stay away half as much as you do

N’gikendaan gaa wiikaa maanda ndaa-zhi-niboodewizisii
I know that I would never be this blue

Giishpin eta zaagi’imba aabta mnik e-zhi-zaagi’inaa
If you only loved me half as much as I love you
INSTRUMENTS USED

SHAKER

The Shaker is an important part of Anishinaabe culture. It is said, in some Anishinaabe Creation Stories, to be the first sound heard at the beginning of Creation. Traditionally made from dried gourds with wooden handles attached, the seeds inside the dried gourd make the shaker sound. The shaker is also made with birch bark strips with hide over the cylinders, sewn with sinew and a wooden handle attached.

DRUMS

The Anishinaabe describe the sound of the drum as the heartbeat of the people. Made from natural elements, such as wood and animal hides, it is considered to have a spirit. There are different kinds of drums, the hand drum, the big drum and the water drum, and are used for specific functions. Drums are treated accordingly with a high level of respect.

Hand Drum—Rawhide stretched over a wooden hoop and is laced and tied together on the reverse side. The drummer/singer can control the pitch and sound of the drum by putting pressure on these ties as the drum
is held. The drum face is often decorated. Drum sticks that accompany these drums are made of bone or wood. The hand drum is sometimes referred to as “moccasin game drums”, used during that game.

**Big Drum**—Is a recent introduction into Anishinaabe culture. The Big Drum is a large drum made from wood with animal hide stretched over the top and is suspended on curved stakes off the ground. This drum is often decorated and used for ceremony or social dancing, often seen at powwows. The Big Drum usually has 2 or more singers/drummers at the same drum.

**Water Drum**—“Mitig’wakik” ceremonial drum. A small wooden kettle drum made by hollowing out a small basswood log, with a deer hide stretched over the top. Water is put inside to adjust tone. The water drum is used primarily in ceremony, therefore, pictures of the water drum are frowned upon.
The sound of the flute is considered to be the sound of the wind and is associated with love. It is played by young men in courtship. This instrument is made of cedar, ash or sumac wood and is played by blowing air into it. It has six finger holes.
ABOUT THE SINGERS/TRANSLATORS

Aaron Dolson and Brandon Sickles

Aaron and Brandon have been signing together for about 10 years with the drum name Pathfinder.

Aaron Dolson is the lead singer for Sundance in Chippewa. Being sober for the last 13 years, he changed his life and was drawn to the big drum. He started to sing when he had the opportunity to learn songs, singing with kids in the London, Ontario area. Aaron is a proud father of 3 children, from the Muncey Delaware Nation and currently works as a Family Counsellor at Wulaawsuwiikaan Healing Lodge in Muncey, Ontario. Aaron doing from line work in the community since 2008 when he started his own healing journey as well. Aaron continues to sing songs, primarily ceremonial and is happy to share the song that was given to him to share with the people.

Brandon Sickles is 23, Bear Clan, Oneida Nation of the Thames. Working as a Laborer, certificates and working with chemicals. He has traditionally been in the Sundance family for the past 6 years and has been
singing most of his life, mostly traditional songs. Brandon has been involved with healing and wellness throughout his life and strives to be a good person. Brandon has a partner and is happy to be a step-dad to her 2 children.

**Helen Roy**—Anishinaabemowin Language Teacher, Singer, Translator, Language Consultant, Author, Public Speaker, Emcee

Caroline Helen Roy Fuhst is a member of the Wilwemikong First Nation. Helen learned Anishinaabewowin in an immersion world, she was 10 years old when she first heard English spoken. As a survivor of the residential school, she remembers being physically abused every day for using her native language. She remembered what her Grandmother told him when she left for school, “gegwa gawayabagidinaake wii-daapinamaag debendaman” (“don’t let anyone take what belongs to you.”), not fully realizing that her Grandmother was talking about her language. This has been a compelling force in her life.

Helen attended Lakehead University Native Language Instructor’s Program in Thunder Bay, ON and was a primary instructor for the Bay Mills Community College’s Nishnaabemowin Pane Immersion Program. She has a retiree from teaching at Michigan State University where she initiated several
events with language components. Helen is an author and continues to develop and produce materials for teachers in classroom. Her resources are available for purchase at her website: http://www.helenroy.net/. About eight years ago, Helen, along with her husband David, started recording song in the language. They have a variety of resources in book and audio, cd form available on Helen’s website.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Josh Miller

Josh was raised on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. He is 20 years Old and is Turtle Clan of Cayuga Nation. Josh attended Jamieson elementary/JC Hill through his elementary schooling. Josh graduated from Mckinnon Park Secondary School in 2014 and is currently enrolled in Mohawk College for Police Foundations. He is mostly known in the community for his time spent on the lacrosse floor with The Six Nations Rebels as well as competing at the National and World level. Josh is very active off the floor helping with camps, volunteer work for Keely Louise Hill Foundation and even doing some student work with the local police force.
Davis Jacobs

Davis is an Oneida, Turtle Clan of the Six Nations Grand River Territory. He is 19 years old, a graduate of Hagersville Secondary High School and will be attending Mohawk College in the fall of 2017. Davis has been around the Mohawk language throughout his life and attended Kawenni:io/ Gwenni:yo Private School, a Mohawk/Cayuga language immersion school, from grades JK to 8.
References


This workbook is intended to be used with the accompanying cd.

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