"…the humanists have always insisted that you don't learn to think wholly from one language: you learn to think better from linguistic conflict, from bounding one language off another."
- Northrop Frye, The Educated Imagination

To deepen our understanding of the debate in the field of linguistic diversity, we have been thinking and talking about "languages" in the context of sociolinguistics, a critical approach that, among other things, examines the study of language use in its various social contexts, engages with issues of power and inequality in relation to language, and pays attention to the relations between language and society. You have, as a result, written your way into a conversation that has put you in a dialogue with others who have been talking about and/or writing, both critically and creatively, about the complexities of language in a way that invites and inspires us to defamiliarize language, that encourages us to think outside of its representational and expressive boundaries.

You recently submitted a manuscript of your piece to your in-class editor and within the next week or so you will receive her or his substantive editorial recommendations. Once you receive these recommendations, step into the final revision process and, while editing your own manuscript, please engage with the following:

- Critically reflect upon your editor's recommendations and consider which suggestions you will accept and/or reject
- Revise your piece by further developing your "argument" while keeping in mind Williams' and Bizup's key principles of cohesion, global coherence, concision, motivation, emphasis, shape, and elegance.
- Keep reading: pop on to The Electric Typewriter (http://tetw.org/Linguistics) and read through the smart, stimulating, and critically reflective essays, all of which are written in conversational style. Use them as a structural template. Let them inspire you and give you permission to play with and experiment with your own style. Notice, too, how these essays are in a conversation with language, with english(es), and that they are, like your own piece, making a contribution to the ongoing, vital, and urgent debate in the field of linguistic diversity.
- Make an appointment, if you wish, to come and talk with me about your manuscript. We can have a conversation over a cup of coffee in Treats to discuss your paper and move through any pressing questions you have about content or style.

  The paper, along with the final Meta-Editing assignment (a two page reflection – worth 10% --on a specific aspect of Editing; instructions to follow) is due between March 30 – April 4.

  Finally, here are a few quotations about language which have inspired me and my own work, quotations I like to think with when I am thinking about language:

“For each language you know, you are a different person.”
- Czech proverb

“We don’t live in a country, we live in a language.”
- E.M. Cioran

“I only have one language; it is not mine.”
- Jacques Derrida

“…writing is a flow among others.”
- Gilles Deleuze

“….there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages or tongues. Sometimes – I would even say always – several tongues. There is impurity in every language.”
- Jacques Derrida

“First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence.”
- Virginia Woolf

“When I speak Polish now, it is infiltrated, permeated, and inflected by the English in my head. Each language modifies the other, crossbreeds with it, fertilizes it. Each language makes the other relative.”
- Eva Hoffman

“For some, to find beauty is to search through ruins. For some of us beauty must be made over and over again out of the sometimes fragile, the sometimes dangerous. To write is to be involved in this act of translation, of succumbing or leaning into another body’s idiom.”
- Dionne Brand

“We invented language so we could lie to each other and ourselves.”
- Charlie Kaufman

“There are no truths, only stories.”
- Thomas King

“Language is for the other, coming from the other, the coming of the other.”
- Jacques Derrida

“Language reveals the speaker, his position in terms of class, ethnicity,

education, place of origin, gender."
- James Baldwin

"One never owns a language. A language can only be borrowed; it passes around like an illness or currency."
- Roland Barthes

"Living on the edge of two languages, living on the edge of two selves named and constructed by language, liberates the self from a monologic existence."
- Smaro Kamboureli

"From one day to another, from one page to another, writing changes languages. I have thought certain mysteries in the French language that I cannot think in English. This loss and this gain are in writing too. I have drawn the H. You will have recognized it depending on which language you are immersed in. This is what writing is: I one language, I another language, and between the two, the line that makes them vibrate; writing forms a passageway between two shores."
- Helene Cixous

"Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire."
- Roland Barthes

"I have been given this language and I intend to use it."
- Chinua Achebe

"What counts and is counted then, is what we do while speaking, what we do to each other, how we again touch each other by mixing our voices."
- Jacques Derrida

"Style becomes nonstyle, and one's language lets an unknown foreign language escape from it, so that one can reach the limits of language itself and become something other than a writer, conquering fragmented visions that pass through the words of a poet, the colours of a painter, or the sounds of a musician."
- Gilles Deleuze

I'm looking forward to reading your pieces.

A Summer with the Mohawk Language

During my summer in Akwesasne, I spent a lot of time listening. Not just at work, but at home with my grandmother—my akshótha. She was loved and respected by everyone as the matriarch of our family, with nine sons and daughters with countless grandchildren. Any event, whether birthday or holiday, was celebrated at her house on the reservation, her grand-kids running around screaming for her, “Totama! Totama!” Every Sunday was a spaghetti dinner, and every Sunday, anyone who had time to spare was supposed to come visit. I hadn't been around for a few years because of university and my parent's divorce, so every day was like a family reunion. This made living on the reservation even more important. My tota was also sick and bedridden to the living room. She couldn't climb the stairs to her room or down them to get off the porch. Even walking was a task and she could scarcely pass over a door's threshold without help. She spent most of the summer resting in bed, and by the end of summer, only getting up to use the washroom and eat her morning oatmeal. That didn't stop my tota from talking though. She was always a chatty person and always had something to say, an opinion to share or a story to tell.

It was one of those days near the end of summer when my akshótha asked if I knew any Mohawk—if my dad had taught me anything. I told her that I only knew a few words from when I was really young. I knew how to say hello, “she:kon,” and say goodbye, “ó:nen,” and that I'd say to my father “konnorónhkwa” to tell him I loved him, but nothing past that. My tota sank into her mattress. Not a whole lot of her grandchildren were learning Mohawk or speaking it

outside of school. My uncles and aunts knew the language for the most part, but most didn't speak it with their children, and this was the norm for the past few generations. It was then she told me, “the death of the language means the death of the culture.”

There was once a time I thought it was uncool to be who I am. I feel embarrassed when I think back to pow-wows I never attended, smoke lodges I never cared for and family visits I didn't bother going to. It's shameful. I'm ashamed of my past decisions and no amount of apology can make up for lost time. Remission only begins with our actions, but my actions were amplified in my early refusal to learn the language. But something changed that summer two years ago. Once I gave myself the chance to understand what was happening around me and was had happened in the past, I realized how wrong I was. That summer was my chance to redeem myself, in a way, even if I wasn't happy about going to Akwesasne. I'd grown up with disdain for the reservation. I was embarrassed of where I was. I felt I was dragged from the big city, from my roommates and my public transit. Akwesasne is essentially a giant swamp in the northern region of New york state, bordering Quebec and Ontario, where there are irritating mosquitoes the size of hands, crazed bush dogs itching with fleas, and the constant fear of ticks are daily threats. The beds are generations old and food is scarce. We could barely afford a grocery run to feed everyone living under the same roof. Living on a reservation is tough—more than tough. It's unfair.

After work, I'd spend my day doing one of two things: I'd rush to the room I slept in, watching downloaded re-runs, or if no one else was home, stayed in the living room to watch my

tota, helping her out of bed to exercise or get food—however I could help. If the weather was nice, we'd sit out on her porch and enjoy the summer while it lasted. Family would visit occasionally, but usually they didn't. Everyone was always busy, either with work or their own kids. I was only ever waiting for the next morning, letting time melt away.

These summer days passing away were cathartic. The Internet was usually out and getting phone reception was a hassle, so my only company was whenever family *did* visit. Living in my tota's house that summer was me, my dad, three cousins and my grandmother herself. My dad has eight older brothers and sisters though, all of whom had a few children, some of them having children of their own. There were tons of cousins that could have came to visit that summer, but still few did. Even though so few visited, I seemed to always be catching up with someone, giving me the same usual banter, "long time no see, big city boy!" "How's school comin' along?" "Whatchya you're learnin' again?" As the summer progressed, conversations changed to "how do you like living back here for a while, huh?" and "how's the rest of the fam'? I haven't seen your mum in a while." I found that everything said has an implication. My family wasn't just asking about school, but asking about what I've accomplished, what I'm proud of. I'm not only questioned about my mother, but am being told that she's missed—that I've been missed. Even though I've never stayed on the reservation longer than a quick afternoon visit and occasionally sleepover, my family still considers every part of it my home as much as theirs. It may not be the greatest place to be, but in hindsight, it's comforting to know that it's still a place to call home.

Because my grandmother was home alone without the family around, she'd occasionally

get some company from other elders. Every time they'd visit, I'd be as polite and respectful as I could and give them space to converse with each other in private (or at least as private as one can in an open living room). It wasn't until one day I came home from work and my tota and an elder weren't speaking in English, but speaking in Mohawk. I really didn't know what to do. It was just us three and I felt *very* out of place. I said "hello" and went off to do my own thing, but there was something that didn't feel right, that felt very out of place.

I never learned how to speak, write, let alone understand Mohawk. There were only the few words my father taught me and what I picked up as formality from work. Why don't I know how to speak Mohawk? I've grown up as a Mohawk Canadian, but I can barely speak a word of the language. My tongue can't sound; my mouth can't communicate; I'm mute to this life. I'm an Aboriginal who lived outside of the reservation, was brought up Christian and was taught English phonetics and grammar. No one ever said I could speak Mohawk, that I was allowed to learn, so I never really tried.

But this is where I come from. In First Nations cultures, language is pinnacle to our sense of being and it's as if I've been robbed of the opportunity to learn and speak my own language. My father told me that when he was younger, his brothers and sisters wouldn't want to hang out with him, and his mother was often too busy to teach him, so he watched TV instead, spoke English to his friends, and no one told him to do otherwise. Times were changing, and it was a build-up of government policy and different oppressive forces that kept my father from fully learning the language himself.

It's centuries of cultural deprivation that has allowed the language to dry up on the tongues of my silenced ancestors. I can only imagine how life could have been different. What would have changed had it not been for centuries of effort spent by colonial powers actively oppressing our way of life, and by association and eventual result, my way of life. The hidden influence that persisted from generation to generation. Imagining what could have been can be an intoxicating rationale though. Maybe it's a sense of entitlement for the language, though it's that same entitlement that was punished into shame by the residential school administration: eradicate the people by separating them from their own and strip away what's most important to an identity—language.

It's an isolation from the culture because I don't know the language. I'm isolated from the language because I never participated in the culture. I never participated in the culture because there were few opportunities from me to interact, that circumstances of family, historical and contemporary, and my own judgement inevitably persuaded me to turn away. Because I've isolated myself in the past, I never learned the language. It's become this vicious cycle as an "other" to Canadians and a "misfit" to the Mohawk. But now, I'm making the efforts to turn back and learn. I want to learn now. I want to participate. I want to know and be a part of the growing movement of strengthening the First Nations' presence in Canada and the US by learning to speak the language—that if I don't belong to English, then I must belong somewhere else.

Little did we know, that summer was my grandmother's last. In October, she was brought to the emergency from exhaustion. Thanksgiving and Christmas were especially quiet in

Akwesasne without our akshótha home. I was able to visit one last time with my siblings a few days before Christmas Eve. My dad dropped us off and when we came in, she was pretending to be asleep. When my siblings and I sat by and woke her up, she was with us, her eyes bright again with pride. We spoke for almost two hours, just talking. She joked, "your dad always comes visits every day, sometimes twice a day, so I pretend to sleep to make him go away so I can relax. He never stops talking!" We all laughed. I gave her a Christmas present then, but I had to leave a few days before Christmas. It was an Elvis Presley Christmas album. I called her when she opened the present and I remember her joking, "how did he know Elvis is my boyfriend?" I told her I loved her and to have a Merry Christmas. In January, we were told she'd be ready to go home by March, but she passed away in the early morning of February 9th, 2015.

From what my dad tells me, not many people come to visit anymore. We're all busy with work and school, and no one has time to make a spaghetti dinner.