

## Crippled Two-Tongue and the Myth of Benign Translatability

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**Abstract:** This is an Anishinaabemowin (a.k.a. Ojibwe language) translation story. A story concerning the disabling consequences of Eurocentric translations through the process of redaction, reduction, and refraction of meanings. This story includes baby birds covered in faeces, Ships of Empire, a swamp, an Oracle, a Crippled Two-Tongue, a Tradish Nish, a fraudulent credit card, and one giant animal called Anishinaabemowin that everyone wants to eat but no one wants to share. A story of forced dislocations and the startling journey to re-articulate all the parts of the language. Disclaimer: some baby birds were narratively harmed in the making of this article, but in the end they turn out fine.

**Résumé :** Il s'agit d'une histoire de traduction de l'anishinaabemowin (autre nom de la langue ojibwe). Une histoire au sujet des conséquences annihilantes des traductions eurocentriques produites par des choix de rédaction, de réduction et de réfraction du sens. Dans cette histoire, on parle d'oisillons couverts de fientes, de navires de l'Empire, d'un marais, d'un oracle, d'un personnage à deux langues boiteux, d'un *Tradish Nish*, d'une carte de crédit frauduleuse et d'Anishinaabemowin, un animal géant que tout le monde veut manger, mais refuse de partager. Une histoire de dislocations forcées et du voyage surprenant vers la réarticulation de tous les éléments de la langue. Avertissement : lors de la rédaction de cet article, quelques oisillons ont été victimes d'entorses narratives, mais sachez qu'à la fin, ils se portent tous à merveille.

**Resumo:** Este trabalho é um relato sobre a tradução do anishinaabemowin (também conhecido como língua ojibwe) e acerca das deformações que as traduções eurocêntricas causam através dos processos de manipulação, redução e refração de significados. O relato inclui filhotes de pássaros cobertos por fezes, Navios do Império, um pântano, um Oráculo, um Aleijado Picareta, um Velho Anishnabe, um cartão de crédito clonado e um animal gigante chamado Anishinaabemowin, que todos querem comer, mas ninguém quer dividir. Uma história de deslocamentos forçados e a incrível jornada para rearticular todas as partes da língua. Aviso: alguns filhotes de passarinhos sofreram danos narrativos na escrita deste artigo, mas passam bem.

**Resumen:** Este es un relato en anishinaabemowin (también llamada lengua ojibwa). Se trata de una historia sobre los efectos incapacitantes que las traducciones eurocéntricas ejercen a través de procesos de redacción, reducción y refracción de sentidos. En este relato figuran polluelos cubiertos de heces fecales, buques del Imperio, un pantano, un Oráculo, un personaje lisiado de lengua bífida, otro "tradicional Nish", una tarjeta de crédito falsa, y también un animal gigante, llamado Anishinaabemowin, al cual todos quieren devorar entero y no quieren compartir. Es una historia de dislocaciones forzadas y del asombroso viaje hacia la rearticulación de todas las partes de una lengua. Advertencia: en el curso de la redacción de este artículo unos cuantos polluelos sufrieron heridas narrativas pero al final salen bien librados.

Apane a'aw Nenabozho gii-pabaamose gii-ayaad omaa. Mii dash o'ow anibabaamosed gaa-izhi-miikawaad onow binisiwan, onow gii-naganaawaad omaamaayiwaa omaa. Gaa-izhi-gagwejimaad. "Aaniish giinawaa ezhinikaa zoyeg," ogii-kakwejiman a'aw Nenabozho. Mii dash, ogii-nisidotaagoon i'iw ayaawid. Mii dash gaawiin ogii-nakwetawaasiigoon onow binewan. "Gaawiin gi wii-pooni'isiinooninim. Aaniish ezhinikaazoyeg?" Mii dasg binisiwag gaa-izhi-inaawaad, "Bine indizhinikaazomin"oon. Inashke niin niizhing indizhinikaaz. Mii i'iw bezhig, Nenabozho indizhinikaaz. Miinawaa dash Bebaamosed gaye in

dizhinikaaz.” Oon.” Gawwin ogii-nakwetawaasiigoonaan Nenabozho. “wiin damawishin ezhinikaasoyan. Niizhing akina awiia adayaanaawaa izhinikaazow inan,” ogii-inaan Nenabozho. Mii dash iniw binewan, “Gawigoshko’iweshiinh in dizhinikaazomin gaye nannawind,” gii-ikidowag. Sate! Gaawiin giin. Onzaam sa go gibi-wiiji’ininim,” gii ikido a’aw Nenabozho. Mii gaa-izhi-zhaagode’enid gaa-izhi-miiziinaad onow sa binisiwan. Mii dash gaa-izhi maajaad a’aw Bebamosed<sup>1</sup>. (Treuer 174)

Would you believe me if I told you that the story written above is about baby birds who get defecated on by our First Teacher right after the birds translate their name for him? Why would I put a story like that in a translation article? Because that’s what is happening with my language. Innocent birds getting translated on.

In the story, a benign entity encounters the baby birds and then covers any meaning the birds might wish to express in the moment (an inter-relational orientation to an ever-changing reality) in a foreign substance. This benign entity then continues about his day without any concern for the consequences. But there are consequences. And they are not benign.

The story about the baby birds continues with a startling intervention by the mother bird. She is able to provide viable alternatives to the situation and remove all foreign substances from her children. But rather than telling you what those alternatives are and how to do it, I am going to tell a story about just one word. A story about how I came to understand this one word the day that I wrote this article, and what that word motivates me to consider in my situated, inter-relational contemporary social environment so that I can do what the Elders ask of us: to be skilled knowers of our environment. After all, isn’t that the point of translation?

I am translating the name of those baby birds. The name that got them into trouble: Gawigoshko’iweshiinh.

Marie Battiste and James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson talk about *illusion of benign translatability* as the assumption that Indigenous languages can be explained, defined, categorized and documented using Zhaagaanash<sup>2</sup> worldview without any significant alteration. They ask:

How can governments and scholars assume that differently constructed worldviews, such as those available with Indigenous languages, are not only translatable into English or French, but translatable without substantial damage or distortion? (Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 80)

The illusion of benign translatability assumes both that there is a stable centre from which the “truth” of a concept and its signifier are defined through Eurocentric perceptions, and that English linguistic nomenclature is a harmless and satisfactory vehicle for Indigenous language transportation. Instead, it is another kidnapping, “its ships of flight repeating what the Ships of the Empire have always done—taking cargo,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the opening segment of a story told by Zhaawanoowinini (Collins Oakgrove) from Miskwaagamiwi-zaaga’igan and lovingly written down by his student Antone Treuer in *Living Our Language*.

<sup>2</sup> Zhaagaanash in the dictionaries is translated as European, British and Irish and is often used generically to denote “non-Indigenous” peoples. However, there are many stories and teachings about this word. One story is that the first root word “Zhaa” comes from the word “Izhaa”, meaning s/he is going to a certain place and “naash” has to do with emerging from the waves. So Beings who traveled those waves. This is but one of many stories that is not documented in dictionaries. It might be your story, or maybe there is another, equally meaningful story.

human cargo, particularly peoples whose communities and places of birth have been ravaged by Empire Occupation—into yet another servitude” (Itwaru and Ksonzek 14). The word “translation” means to “carry across, to carry over” and a root meaning for translation was “conquest” (Kiberd 624). In the case of benign translatability, the “Ships of Empire” hold cargo boxes constructed of Eurocentric typologies (word classifications); the shipyard documents the contents only as they fit; the humans receive low-context parcels that cannot and do not nourish vitality.

Today, English-Anishinaabemowin translations are damaged goods; damaged in the “carrying across” the colonial historic trajectory, damaged in the handling along the way, and damaged upon arrival at the final destination: pedagogical spaces for second-language acquisition.

### **Damaged Goods: Mii gaa-izhi-zhaagode’enid gaa-izhi-miiziinaad onaw sa binesiwan**

Anishinaabemowin was kidnapped in its transportation from Anishinaabeg sources of knowing to Eurocentric containment. A process that “restructured, often violently, the world of the colonized, and birthed new concepts, images, words and practices...” (Loomba 88). Translation, as a means to impose cognitive imperialistic authority, became a process of displacement and dislocation<sup>3</sup>.

Dislocation occurred across a historic trajectory of cultural genocide (referenced here along Ende’s *Neverending Story*): first, across the violent despoiled terrain of manifest destiny, where the main purpose for translation has been Christian indoctrination of the “savages” for their speedy disappearance or mercantile resource extraction until there is nothing left. Then, through the Swamp of Sadness that was the residential school linguicidal pogrom, where the residual despair of survivors continues to produce staggering rates of suicide, depression and other coping mechanisms. Finally, the dislocated language arrives just before complete destruction at the Oracle—the pinnacle of knowledge—as a specimen of study by anthropologists and linguists of the colonial academy. And, to save Anishinaabemowin, the language must get past those oracular “gateposts of speech” (Itwaru and Ksonzek 22) to arrive at a place where translation becomes real naming that saves us from our self-destruction.

Benign translation is not a *Fantastica* (Ende) that returns the colonized world to its pristine past. Benign translation is a delusional gaze that looks to Europe for meaning—this is “the gaze of dependence...the literary induction of domination” (Itwaru and Ksonzek 24)—all-consuming in its nothingness. Today, based on the factors presented by Mary Jane Norris in her analysis of Statistics Canada data on Indigenous languages, there are more Anishinaabemowin second-language learners than mother-tongue speakers. Anishinaabemowin second-language learners don’t learn from the ever-aging mother-tongue speakers, they don’t learn in high-context family networks and social spaces: they learn from the kidnappings (translations) delivered through the colonial historic trajectory and arrive in low-context Eurocentric pedagogical spaces. No matter how many documents and dictionaries are created, no matter how many thirty-minute classes with memorized noun lists, no matter how good language documentation looks on paper, the result is language erosion into non-existence. It is an erosion into non-existence because it was never the language that

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<sup>3</sup> Dislocated even now, in a colonial paradox where I must speak about resistance in the language of the colonizer.

was lost—it was our forcible displacement from it. We are the ones who are lost in translation. The “we” in this erosion are Indigenous people, still reeling from the effects of genocide, still coping with a range of social and health disparities, still dealing with the ethnostress of being the “Indian Problem”. We are the survivors of residential schools, where we were not only denied our own language, but also subjected to the forcible stultification of development as a result of not being taught adequate English—what Lee Maracle calls being a “Cripple Two-tongue” (Maracle 65). This disablement has no causal relation to a pre-existing physical impairment but is rather a *social condition*, a consequence of oppression (Oliver).

The Crippled Two-tongue is constructed as the “Flawed body”, frozen in the ancient past, unable to cope with modernity (Razack 372). The Crippled Two-tongue is the one who don’t speak good English an’ don’t speak much Indian, ya know, eh? Collectively, the Crippled Two-tongue is the embodiment of the *Indian Problem* that plagued colonizers since the Gradual Civilization of the Indians Act reproduced through numerous progeny legislation: the Indian as flawed, unnatural and disabled. The result is that “Aboriginality is often viewed as a disabling ‘condition’” (Razack 372). To be a problem is to be rejected, to be rejected is to not fit within the parameters of the “normate”—that category of people, unmarked by any stigma, considered the “definitive human beings” (Titchkosky 214).

Even though the Crippled Two-tongue is a consequence of the disabling factors of colonial oppression, it is treated instead as a problem located within the individual to be administered, not by medical doctors, but by the colonial pedagogical institutions of schooling. The treatment: *reduction, redaction and refraction*, through the illusion of benign translatability.

### **Reduction: Looking to Europe for Meaning**

Every definition in any “Made in Eurocentrica<sup>4</sup>” Ojibwe–English dictionary is oriented towards a reality that does not come from an Anishinabe-eshinaamowin (Ojibwe worldview). Instead, *dictionarying* Anishinaabemowin is normalized as a legitimization of Eurocentric worldview, while any other possible Anishinaabemowin existence is rejected. *Dictionarying* Anishinaabemowin has “deluded Indigenous peoples into thinking that Eurocentric languages and worldview are a shared heritage and are complementary to their languages” (Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 81). This delusion is disabling in its consequences, stultifying thinking capacity beyond hegemonic discursive domination, including our orientations to, and normalization of, Eurocentric linguistic authority. *Dictionarying* Anishinaabemowin disables access to Indigenous-centred language acquisition and culture-based linguistic integrity.

We are reduced.

To speaker/not speaker, as defined by Eurocentric linguistic precepts.

We are reduced.

To viable/not viable languages through statistical analysis where our human experiences are subsumed by institutional procedures and categories.

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<sup>4</sup> The illusory urban landscape of ivory towers where inhabitants exhibit a high level of displacement, individualism, cannibalistic consumerism, paranoia and the deterioration of faculties otherwise known as “academentia” (Daly and Caputi 184).

We are reduced.

To language documentation projects operationalized through the whims of colonial politics (hence the slow political death of any Indigenous-led language policy recommendations).

We are reduced.

To a state of endangerment where rehabilitation is diagnosed through Eurocentric translation of our worldview within the narrow scope of benign translatability. No matter what, it is a reduction. And being reduced in this manner means not being fully who we are—reduced to negotiating who we are with those who have the authority to accommodate us.

In accommodation, we placidly go along with language reduction to Eurocentric typologies of animate and inanimate noun classes, ignoring the fact that our entire cosmology is, in fact, *alive* (bimaatisi gema bimaataan). We go along with the notion of “verbs” rather than whole verb-phrases built into a single word; we go along with Eurocentric social constructions such as ownership, truth, honesty, good and evil as having a direct correlation to our own worldview when they do not mean the same thing. Our identities are written for us—our consciousness is created through a specific discourse and, in this case, even in our efforts to reclaim the language we risk being claimed; the way Anishinaabemowin has been shaped and defined by Eurocentric translations shapes our understanding of the world.

Second-language learners, reduced to seeking meaning from Eurocentric language kidnappings, will not achieve the kind of cultural continuity (that comes from an intact epistemological framework) needed to withstand continued cultural assaults, the consequences of which are often “disillusionment, lassitude, self-effacement and, in the extreme, death by suicide at an early age” (Hallet, Chandler and Lalonde 394). No. Instead, they are the kind of reformed and recognizable Other—a mimicry of the colonizers worldview (Bhabha 43)—produced through a body of texts that do the subliminal work of colonization, creating an Other who is safely reduced to Eurocentric categories, appeasing the anxiety of reverse colonization, while at the same time, appeasing the guilt of a colonizing society.

### **Redaction: Linguicide and the Suffering of Suffering**

The “suffering of suffering” is the process through which the pain of sufferers becomes the property of the non-sufferer (Razack 371). Suffering of suffering becomes the ethical requirement of the non-sufferer to remedy. The outcome of residential schools was the redacted Indian: a violent negation of selfhood, cultural identity and the phenomenological lens with which to understand the world. Today, the outcomes of residential schooling are increasingly perceived as a disabling condition in the individual sufferer that the non-sufferer (the colonist afflicted with remorse) has the authority to remedy.

The forcibly required orientation towards assimilation during the residential school pogrom meant, for survival's sake, we must become *crippled*—Kill the Indian in us!—and forgo the ability to speak our language or face far worse consequences, including torture, death and the loss of our children. The survival strategy, both during

residential schooling and at least a decade proceeding the closing of the last residential school, was to NOT speak our language, to hide, to censor, to cease intergenerational transmission: the redacted Indian. Passing as a placid, assimilated, no-longer Indian Indian was the only way to ensure that our children stayed with the family, that jobs could be accessed, that arrest could be avoided. Passing was the only ticket to anything above a substandard quality of life. A redacted and seemingly assimilated Indian is still last in line for the liberal race for success, however. Passing as an assimilated Indian is a survivalist choice that generations before me made—keep the language from us to protect us from the pain of stigmatization. *Indian*.

Pass as Italian, French, whatever as long as I wasn't *Indian*. Even in spaces where passing was not an option, an Indian who spoke Anishinaabemowin was a lesser person—not able to uplift to civilization. Those who could and would predominantly speak English were perceived as having a better chance at life. Censoring Anishinaabemowin transmission and speaking English was perceived as *the* ticket out of the fourth world.

Today, the norm has shifted. We have a plethora of credentialed intellectuals who affirm what our Elders have always said: cultural continuity—Indigenous languages as the central indicator—is the only way to address historic trauma and resultant coping mechanisms like alcoholism, suicide, apathy, violence (Hallet, Chandler and Lalonde 394). And so, those without Anishinaabemowin are doubly impaired with a new expectation to rehabilitate: learn Anishinaabemowin!

Now enters suffering of suffering, where language revivalists seeing the poor Crippled Two-tongue struggling to mobilize, swoop in to fulfill an ethical requirement of saving the language so we can be “mobile” again. While noble in its cause, for certainly language is the centrifugal force from which all notions of selfhood, sovereignty, belonging, identity and resiliency must pass, language revivalists got it wrong and gave us artificial props instead. The artificial props include: Eurocentric translations and grammar systems; legitimacy through Eurocentric institutions; credentialized rankings of speaker/not speaker based on how well we mimic Eurocentric translations and pedagogical practices; and pedagogical practices that do not reflect Anishinaabe worldview. The poor Crippled Two-tongue struggling to mobilize becomes dependent on artificial props that are not designed for accessing the language. Dependence on these props sets us up for a paradoxical stigmatization.

In Indian country, there is a stigma for not speaking the language. We are less than authentic, less than normal because we are victims who have *lost* our language. Sure, we will learn a few basic words and phrases to get by, repeated over and over as if this mantra of “aniin”, “howha”, shtaataahaa” will jettison us out of colonized spaces to be real “Tradish Nish”. We will pass; our few words a fraudulent credit card used to buy a little social capital in Indian country. Yet, in Eurocentrica (urban spaces where over 80% of Indigenous people reside today), even if you do speak Anishinaabemowin, there is a stigma for not achieving *legitimate* discursive practices (language classes at school or an official language certificate) and the only way out is a masquerade where we follow the course of low-context, Euro-pedagogical classrooms: after a year of intense study we learn to count from one to ten, give up because it all feels wrong and blame ourselves for the failure. The failures confirms the “pathological fragility” that colonial institutions expect of us (Razack 360). Our saviours—those who take on the suffering of suffering—say they did everything in their

power to save us from ourselves while in fact they are the ubiquitous enablers of continued linguicide.

### **Refraction: Divide and Conquer**

Ania Loomba explains that “no matter how we assess the colonial interactions, it is clear that colonialism refracted the production of knowledge and structured the conditions for its dissemination and reception” (62). This refraction—the filtering of Indigenous ways of knowing through a Eurocentric lens—separates our ways of knowing from our knowledge and, in turn, separates us from our spatial relationships (land-based epistemology through our navel relations) and temporal relationships (the ontologically interconnected web of relations that enfold future, past and present as the continued foundation to access our source of existence— *kaa tipenjikeniniwach*).

Refraction is another deterritorialization that pushes Anishinaabeg away from our sources of knowing and those relationships of *coming-to-know* and into a second-language learner’s diaspora where longing for *home*, for real connections to Elders, knowledge holders, and Anishinaabeg pedagogies are only accessed through mediatized, commodified Eurocentric packaging (books, DVDs, posters), consumed by those of us starved for home. Language resources are important, but often the translations without the high-context relationships with Anishinaabe worldview result in a shelf full of language resources and no reason to use them. Benign translatability and all the fancy new media for its transmission have not, as Aimé Césaire similarly ponders about colonialism, “placed civilizations in contact” but instead perpetuate “relations of domination and submission” (Loomba 62).

Another form of refraction was the invention of the dialectical divide where local syntactic nuances, preferred orthographies and phrase construction preferences were reiterated as *imaginary* boundaries. Linguistics divided up the language into pieces and convinced each community to preserve their own piece. It is certainly good to know where preferred orthographies, phrase constructions and syntactic nuances are located geographically, but the outcomes of this dissection resulted in communities claiming (guarding, protecting, hoarding) only one part of the whole animal<sup>5</sup> as their *own* at the expense of the rest. The big Anishinaabemowin animal was divided up and no one was interested in what the other pieces looked like.

Now, in the second-language learner’s diaspora, if your community of origin only claimed the *leg* (i.e., southern dialect), we often refuse any resources or knowledge from a community that claimed the *ear* (western dialect) or the *tail* (eastern dialect). The result of this artificial dissection is that second-language learners often avoid accessing resources and resource people from *dialects* that are not their own. There is also a tendency to repeat these artificial divisions in shaming and discouraging ways whenever a language learner attempts to speak. The most common phrases are “that is not the way we say it”, or “that is not *my* dialect”. This shuts out any further conversation, silencing the language learner to the shameful state of “not good enough” and produces an acute avoidance of any resources not from “your dialect” for fear of further rejection. In the urban diaspora, if the Elders and teachers are not from “your dialect”, they tend to be avoided. This often leads to no language

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<sup>5</sup> Patricia Ningewance once explained to me that Anishinaabemowin was a whole animal. You have to get to know every part.

use at all. We would rather starve, than use a part of the Anishinaabemowin animal that is “not my dialect”.

All parts of the language operate as a whole; if you put a mother-tongue speaker from Big Trout Lake in a room with a speaker from Manitoulin, they will speak and understand one another. Nothing is lost. In great respect for one another, wherever that *space* is located (on Manitoulin or in Big Trout Lake), local preferences are respected, not usurped or replaced. In the urban diaspora, it is possible to include everyone’s syntactic inclinations, orthographies and word preferences in creative ways, if only we used Anishinaabe pedagogies. Language presences and regional variations do not have to be displaced— it is one big language; all parts can exist as one entity.

I can learn the whole animal. I can learn to know the location of a leg and what it looks like, sounds like, feels and tastes like. At the same time, I can learn about the ears, tails—the whole Anishinaabemowin body—without losing my community’s location. I learn more about my own location when I learn about the other parts. I know most certainly that I prefer “aan” over “aaniish”, and Oji-Cree words more than any others, but when I am a visitor in our central territories, the question will start with “aaniish” and the intonation will get a little nasally.

Refraction produces more than dialectical divides. It also creates problematized spaces where even our mother-tongue speakers are delegitimized and filtered out in the translation process. I have sat down with mother-tongue Anishinaabemowin speakers and these beautiful, wise knowledge keepers spend hours talking about the socio-economic functions and nuances of a single word, and yet, only a simplified “translation”, devoid of any context, *fits* the dictionary. Anything else becomes those ‘*facts unfit to fit*’ (Gebhardt 405). The assumed “sense-for-sense/word-for-word” translation is a suppression of *difference*, where colonists are sheltered from heterogeneity and “[m]embers of the peripheralized cultures in turn are forced to ‘write for translation’, to reshape their cultural expression to meet hegemonic expectations” (Robinson 158). This not only creates, as Robinson suggests, a collective impoverishment as “diversity is gradually leached out of the world” (159) but also a filtered out Indigenous identity where Anishinaabemowin learners continually reproduce and confirm Eurocentric worldviews, “even if to do so prevents their own self-actualization, linguistic integrity, and empowerment” (Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 81). And for those of us who resist: we can only resist through the tools the master gives us. We become real troopers and march into oblivion with our fellow Nishinaabs to become Euro-certified speakers and Euro-certified teachers and then maybe get a *real* job teaching the language with the very tools that refract and reduce the language so that we too replicate the same colonial system.

Our language-teaching job becomes an active refraction of the language; a teacher certificate to teach low-context noun lists in thirty-minute segments in a particular dialect using dictionaries created by colonizers. And at the end of the day, perhaps we stare into the fire and wonder: “[W]hen does the reactivity in having to continue to find yourself in resistance to constant disfigurations, itself begin to disfigure you?” (Itwaru and Ksonzek 15).

## Here Comes the Astounding and Unsettling Gawigoshgo'iweshin

I once asked an Elder, how was our language originally transported to us? I knew it came from Spirit, but how was it transported here? How was Spirit translated into Anishinaabemowin? So, the Old Man took me to this tourist park where "Indian Culture" is written on the stone. It was an "Indians in their natural environment" exhibition, with a giant concrete slab building encasing it to "preserve its naturalness".

We walked right past that building. The Old Man had to climb over the "keep out" fence and take me back into the bush. "Here is where it all really comes from," he says, and directs my attention to a tiny crack in the rock. I flatten my ear to the crack and listen. I push my cheeks against the cold stone with moss sandpapering my skin. My eyes blur from the tiny hairs of grass that push out of the crevices. I listen. The sun drifts out of focus; a ghostly old woman stands at the edge of the woods. The mist rolls ghost dancers in circular motes at the tree line as falling leaves brush through them. Everyone is there. They bubble up from the hypoxic lake where no physical beings grow. Every thing exists at once in this place. I listen to the source of our language—*nindizhigiizhwewinan*: Anishinaabemowin. It is still there, waiting for us.

### *Gawigoshgo'iweshin: Refusals*

If we want to find our way back to the language, we must refuse to be a victim needing repair, refuse diagnostic categories (pedagogical practices and linguistic structures) that explain away our inability to function as what the colonizers call "normal". Refuse to be the objectified Other who sits in the periphery waiting to be documented, decided upon, diagnosed. Refuse to "carry across" our language using Eurocentric structures. Refuse to contort our language to fit Eurocentric worldviews, and instead question the meaning of those differences.

### *Gawigoshgo'iweshin: Agitations*

The way to accomplish this great refusal is to Resist, Reclaim, Construct and Act (Anderson 16). This was the only way that Gawigoshgo'iweshin was able to turn things around in the story. Resist Eurocentric translations; they are a myth that teaches us that we are broken and repairable only through the thinking of the colonizers. Resist grammatical functionality as the rehabilitation of our language (it is a lie). *Mistranslate*. Resist resigning ourselves to the limitations imposed through translation. Go and sit with those Elders who were missed, and mistranslate to include all of their jokes and stories. Reclaim those facts unfit to fit—they are the ones that really matter (and are usually hilarious). Construct through creative retranslation. This reconstruction, this *mistranslation* leads to a certain kind of action: a conscious willingness to give up the disabling language of the colonizer.

### *Gawigoshgo'iweshin: Startling Actions*

Gawigoshgo'iweshinwag iktowag: Gida-poonitooon shaagaanoshimowin, shaagaanoshi-kikentamowin miinwaa gikinohamaagewin. Begizh gidooshkii-ayaanaanig ji-maajibizindaawaad ohowe gichi-ayaayaanig, aaniin ge-izhi-mino-bimaadiziwaad mii dahsh aahpi gaa-gii gichi-ayaayaawaach gke-wiinawaa, ji-aani-

miinaawaach onijaanisiwaanag. Gego gegoo minjiminangen gaa-maanendamo'ogowin, giishpin minjiminaman gi-gaa-aakoziishkaagon. Asemaa oombiindaagoon midakamig ji-wiiji'ig manidoowag ji-dapinang gaa-maanendamo'ogowin. Giishpin gegoo maazhichigeyin, mii-imaaj kendamani aaniin gweyak jiwgekoyigeyin. Ombikwenig giibimoseyeg, piitendamok giianishinaabeyeg miinawaa zhawenindig. Weweni bizindan kegoo giwiindamaagoowin, mii-imaaj jigikendaman aaniin gweyak jiminizha'aman iwe mino-bimaadizi. niwanishinimin ahpii niwanitoomin nianishinaabemowin. giishpin wanishinimang, gagkina maandapii daanishiwanaadakamigiziwag. Gaawin iwedi gaa-bi-ishaayaang niwii-ani-izhibiskaabiisiimin. Niwii babaa-anokiitaage apane. Apegish bimaatan Nidisihiikishiwewinan nidenendam. Wewiib aapiji gaa-wii-mino-ayaayang giishpin Anishinaabemoyang. Wewiib aapiji gaa-wii-mikanawabantamangagina gegoon enanaantakikentamekopanen.

### *Gawigoshgo'iweshshin: Painful Processes*

This process is “a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha 90). We don't have to hide the disfigurement of being Crippled Two-tongue. We don't have to be ashamed. We don't have to *pass*. Yes, we will struggle with “memory and forgetting”. Our speech might be a little odd. We can ask those Elders and traditional people not to shame us for this, to celebrate our creative understandings and different interpretations. We can be startling with our creative resistances and our ruffled reclamations. We can reconstruct meaning and action through inter-relational meaning making processes that celebrate Anishinaabe ways of being. We can be startling in our presence and we can always be presently startling with our Anishinaabemowin.

### *Gawigoshgo'iweshshin: The Little Startler*

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