

An Indigenous Language and Culture Board Game?

Serious Play and Yo'eme Language Reclamation

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This article describes the development of the Yo'eme Language and Cultural Game (YLCG) as a language revitalization product and part of the Yo'eme language community's efforts to revitalize its ancestral language. It is the result of a collaboration between a Yo'eme language speaker-scholar (Barreras), who created a grassroots version of a board game to promote intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge, and a community-external scholar advocate (Kroskrity) who had worked in other Indigenous revitalization efforts for several decades. Both authors, as researchers in Native American studies and as linguistic anthropologists—a junior scholar and his senior mentor—collaboratively developed the game described here, theorized the project, and wrote this article. We will therefore normally use a collective plural to refer to this type of authorial contribution but occasionally distinguish the voice of the Indigenous author when we discuss the origin of the game or the actual playing of it in group settings, since these were solely based on his experience.

The Yo'eme (known to many outsiders as Yaqui) are a transborder Indigenous linguistic community, consisting of about 25,000 enrolled US tribal members and more than 100,000 Mexico-US descendants, located in northern Sonora, Mexico, and

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the southwestern United States. Currently, Yo'eme people continue to live in villages and in an area extending from the delta in the Sea of Cortez to the banks of the Yaqui River in Arizona to the Baboquivari Mountains and the surrounding valley near Casa Grande, Arizona, as well as in diasporic urban settings. The Pascua Yaqui Tribe, based in Tucson, is the only federally recognized Yo'eme speaking tribe in the United States. Though historical genocides, displacement, and the educational policies of the United States have promoted considerable language shift to English and Spanish, the Yo'eme language, from the Cahitan branch of the Uto-Aztecan family, still endures and is experiencing some new vitality in its rebound from language shift. Language shift to English and Spanish has reduced the population of traditional speakers to around 600 in the United States and approximately 20,000 in Mexico. Though these figures do not include so-called "new speakers" and other language learners and therefore fail to provide a comprehensive record of contemporary language vitality, they do suggest the need for interventions that would promote more transmission to younger speakers. Designed especially for youth and young adults, the Yo'eme Language and Cultural Game has been developed by members of the community, including one of the authors, as a language revitalization product and activity for the Yo'eme language community. The game deploys and transmits linguistic and cultural knowledge to gamers who must make progress through the board by appropriately answering linguistic and cultural questions to complete the game. In this article, we describe the design and development of the game and discuss the experiences of playing the game with various diasporic Yo'eme audiences. We offer preliminary assessments of its role in raising critical Indigenous consciousness and accomplishing a language ideological clarification that would resignify Yo'eme not as a "static" language used by elders in talking about the past but as a dynamic language of intergenerational communication inclusive of youth and language learners.^{1,2}

A BOARD GAME AS AN UNEXPECTED PLACE FOR AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE

When thinking of board games like Chutes and Ladders or the Game of Life, readers may imagine playful contests between family and friends. Few will associate these games with the serious worlds of Indigenous language revitalization. For many, if not most, Native nations and their citizens, maintaining an Indigenous language is an important goal for spiritual and political reasons. The Yo'eme of southern Arizona and northern Mexico regard language as a gift from the creator. In the village of Tewa in northern Arizona, all ceremonies are performed in Tewa, a language intimately indexed to spirituality, ancestral knowledge, and village identity for and by its members.³ On the political side, Native scholars such as the Arapaho linguistic anthropologist Stephen Greymorning have described Indigenous languages as critical resources in a battle of resistance against the shape-shifting "trickster" of hegemonic institutions and popular culture of the nation-state.⁴ While the attrition of Indigenous languages deprives communities of the ancestral guidance encoded in those languages, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa scholar Duane Champagne has reminded us that

the loss of Indigenous languages is also a threat to the political sovereignty of many Indigenous nations if nation-states use linguistic criteria to authenticate Indian identity.⁵ In those communities where the Indigenous language has experienced dormancy or severe language attrition, the “reclamation” of sleeping languages, such as Myaamia, or revitalizing languages like Maliseet and the promotion of efforts designed to fuel their “emergent vitalities” have been viewed as a critical means of cultural revitalization—not merely acts of decolonization but essential practices of reindigenization.⁶

INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING AND STORYWORK AS INSPIRATION AND INDIGENOUS THEORIZING

But it is also important here to acknowledge Indigenous storytelling practices as the wellspring of Indigenous perspectives on language, culture, and the vital transmission of these knowledges within communities. We value what Stó:lō scholar Jo-Ann Archibald calls *storywork*: experiential narratives that constitute epistemic, theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological lenses through which we can both practice and study language reclamation.⁷ As method, storywork provides data in the form of firsthand accounts and Indigenous values in cultural transmission as a means through which to gain insight into the significance of language reclamation in diverse communities. For instance, the Yo'eme Language and Culture Game vividly illustrates this through family stories that perpetuate the Yo'eme language, transforming the game into a novel pedagogical tool for traditional storytelling. Lumbee scholar Bryan Brayboy asserts the critical importance of storytelling: “Stories serve as the basis for how our communities work.”⁸ Paul Kroskrity also observes how Indigenous storytelling provides “narratives for moral instruction, healing, and developing culturally relevant tribal and social identities.”⁹ Archibald et al., in their *Decolonizing Research* edited collection, assert, “As a methodology, Indigenous storywork equips our communities not only to voice, listen to, and understand our stories with respect, reverence, reciprocity, and responsibility . . . but collectively to become an Indigenous research community. . . .”¹⁰ This Indigenous perspective encourages us to explore the ways in which language reclamation relates to the more encompassing Indigenous projects of resilience, cultural sovereignty, linguistic self-determination, and social justice. And toward these ends, we agree with Teresa L. McCarty et al., in their 2018 article “Hear Our Languages, Hear Our Voices: Storywork as Theory and Praxis in Indigenous-Language Reclamation,” that language reclamation is not a return to some imagined “pure” form of an ancestral language.¹¹ While storywork theories and methods do emphasize the more universally available source of Indigenous knowledge represented in storytelling, they also recognize the diversity of these traditions.¹² Rather than the one-size-fits-all model of a globalized “language rights,” we value the emphasis on the dynamic, multisited, and heteroglossic attributes of Indigenous-language reclamation.¹³ In this process, project goals and understandings of the “success” of these efforts must be locally defined, but, where possible, also externally shared according to protocols of collaboration and the circulation of “best practices.”

As designers of the game, we benefited both from the support of the Yo'eme storytelling community and from the important precedents of pioneering researchers such as Elizabeth LaPensée and Christine Schreyer, who have developed culturally relevant digital and physical board games. Anishinabee and Métis media researcher LaPensée has discussed game design as a place where cultural narratives can be respectfully recontextualized in sites of Indigenous knowledge transmission through culturally responsive gameplay.¹⁴ In analyses of various games—including the Skins digital game used by Kahnawake Mohawk First Nation students and the board game the Gift of Food, designed collaboratively with various Pacific Northwest Indigenous storytelling communities—LaPensée explores Indigenous games as pathways for learning and the intergenerational communication of cultural values. Schreyer, a linguistic anthropologist, has collaborated with Taku River Tlingit First Nation community members to create a board game that emphasizes the importance of Indigenous place names as gamers acquire resources by moving through a seasonal round by “Traveling the Ancestor’s Path.” By utilizing Indigenous knowledge and aesthetics as guiding principles in the design of such board games, “people from all of these circles have roles in participating in the healing of the (language)” and in benefiting the greater community through an important and novel act of linguistic self-determination.¹⁵

THE YO'EME PEOPLE: A BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE

According to the first colonial census in 1533, Jesuit priests estimated more than 30,000 Yo'eme living within eighty villages in an area over 100 miles.¹⁶ The majority of Yo'eme lived in agricultural communities, growing beans, corn, squash, and other grains on fertile land irrigated and frequently inundated by the Yaqui River every year. Others lived in the deserts and mountains and depended upon hunting and gathering bison, deer, and javelina. Yo'eme people resisted the Spanish colonial program by defeating their military forces and driving Jesuit missionaries out of their territory by 1767. By 1826, however, the newly formed nation of Mexico began its crusade to pacify, assimilate, and otherwise regulate Yo'eme people. The Yo'eme phrase *Itom Hiak Bwan* (Our earth is in tears of pain) stems from the atrocities endured by Yo'eme people during the Mexican nation-state formation. From 1884 to 1909, battles, termination policies, massive deportations, diseases, executions, homicides, massacres, and enslaved labor reduced the Yo'eme population by at least 82 percent.¹⁷

THE YO'EME LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BOARD GAME: AN OVERVIEW

Inspired by the aforementioned gaming precedents and by Yo'eme narratives—both personal and traditional—as well as the language revitalization efforts and the needs of his own community, the Yo'eme coauthor developed the concept of a board game that could be played by school-age youth and young adults to encourage them to learn more about their heritage language and culture as they progress through the game board. This article explores the development of the game concept as well as the influence of linguistic anthropological collaboration on its design. In addition, it outlines the game's applied implementation in Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families (TANF) courses aimed at teaching Yo'eme language and culture to a diasporic community of Yo'eme heritage speakers in Southern and Central California. We view the game as both a substantive and a theoretical contribution designed to impart valued indigenous knowledge and to facilitate Yo'eme language ideological clarification as part of enhancing its members' critical language awareness.¹⁸

Briefly stated, the objective of the game is for each player to gather the cultural knowledge and resources needed to gain a deeper understanding of the Deer Dance Ceremony. Players begin with an uncostumed deer dancer and progress to the destination of their sacred mountains by answering questions on game cards about language, history, and culture. Eventually, after acquiring the ceremonial regalia through thoughtful engagement in language, history, and culture, players complete the game by learning the significance of deer dance songs and singing those that are traditionally shared within the community. Like most games, the Yo'eme language and culture game is fun to play, but since the knowledge it attempts to convey is critical for language and cultural revitalization, we regard this as a form of "serious play." This combination of entertainment and education is, of course, an acknowledged feature of such Indigenous genres as storytelling.¹⁹

ADDITIONAL THEORETICAL FRAMING

In this section, we want to present a brief characterization of some previous scholarship on Yo'eme, the lessons of best practices in language revitalization, and the role of language ideological clarification in the game's production and reception. We feel a strong case can be made for thinking that most treatments of Yo'eme have been undertaken primarily as case studies that reflect academic goals rather than those of the community. Edward Spicer's, and later Edward Dozier's, focus on "linguistic acculturation" emphasized the powerful influence of Spanish colonizers and missionaries on Yo'eme without exploring the Indigenous cultural basis for syncretism.²⁰ Both authors overemphasized the influence of colonial languages and their speakers while not properly understanding the indigenous language ideologies—their beliefs and feelings about language, specific languages, and multilingualism—and the agency of Yo'eme speakers and their communities. Carroll Barber focused on Yaqui multilingualism with Spanish and English not as an adaptive cultural resource but rather as a pattern of language loss—a transitional multilingualism that seemed to portend the demise of the Yo'eme language.²¹ Educational studies through much of the twentieth century tended to represent the heritage language as an impediment rather than a resource for the educational success of Yo'eme students.²²

Turning to best practices of language revitalization, we can distill that enormous and growing literature from the landmark *Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* to myriad case studies of languages such as Kiowa, Shoshoni, Kaska, Maliseet, Chickasaw, Irish, and Walpiri into two main ideas: 1) make traditional language forms and genres available as models through actual use and 2) prompt speakers to "push the envelope" of the heritage language by using it in new contexts, to perform new functions, and to say new things.²³

To sum up these framing remarks, we see the Yo'eme game as a resource for the development of positive emergent youth ideologies and as an alternative to what

Yo'eme scholar Octaviana Trujillo described as a limited and limiting view of the Yo'eme language by some heritage speakers:²⁴

The Yaqui language is perceived more as repository for culture and heritage in a static sense rather than an equally valid and viable medium for intellectual and contemporary social development.

We see the game as a youth-oriented way of presenting Yo'eme not just as a way of "speaking the past" but as a way of using the language in a contemporary activity that stimulates further use of the language, therefore representing a form of "speaking it into the present." Though the game is designed to convey traditional and contemporary knowledge about Yo'eme language and culture, we contend that its dynamic and interactional play provides a means for "decolonizing" the image of Yo'eme language as "static."

ANALYZING THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF YO'EME LANGUAGE SHIFT

As in many nation-states, US language policy toward Indigenous languages such as Yo'eme was informed by what Nancy Dorian has termed an "ideology of contempt" for Indigenous languages. Settler colonial schooling was founded on what K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty have described as an "erase-and-replace model" designed for the radical conversion of Native youth who were often punished for speaking their heritage languages.²⁵ But even with the passage of the Native American Language Acts of 1990 and 1992—acts designed to end discrimination against Native American languages—the twenty-first century brought no evidence that this legislative change was more than a rhetorical mirage for Yo'eme communities. In 2000, Proposition 203 hit the ballot in the State of Arizona. The initiative was designed to ban bilingual education in Arizona and to replace any second language offered with "sheltered English immersion." The proposition passed with a 63 percent voting majority in the state legislature. In defiance of tribal sovereignty, dominant language ideologies featuring both a pejorative view of Indigenous culture and assimilationist values were overtly expressed in public discourse. Cochair of English for the Children, Maria Mendoza, was quoted as saying, "I think tribal leaders should be focusing on getting their children to learn English. Why do they want to keep them as prisoners in their culture and their heritage?"²⁶

A further example may be observed in Ferne Nevitt's 1951 MA thesis analyzing a survey of socioeconomic conditions and their implications for Indigenous education in Arizona, wherein she stated:

The cultural environment of the Yaquis has retarded the children in school in the past and still does. The program of the school must be an enriching one. The teachers must assume the primary task of supplying experiences and opportunities [that] should have been the children's natural heritage in good homes.²⁷

Her survey, which was also published in her thesis, was sponsored by the Tucson Public School System (known today as Tucson Unified School District). In that

survey, Nevitt elaborated on the deficit image of Indigenous cultures that was representative of educational theory of that era.

The cultural and language background of the Yaquis have been great handicaps. The educators of the schoolchildren should emphasize word meaning and vocabulary development. The children need many wide, direct experiences.²⁸

This biased research was used in both policy formation and assessment of Yo'eme students in the Arizona school districts. Anthropologist Edward Spicer later summarily assessed the assimilationist objectives of these educational institutions: "School programs aimed at complete replacement of Yaqui cultural values."²⁹

These assessments were utilized as prime evidence to ban Yo'eme cultural and linguistic exchange in the classroom. All this was in the name of the betterment of Indian children and their futures at a time when Indian policy in the US emphasized assimilation, termination, and relocation.³⁰ Even though changes during the 1960s and early 1970s would bring the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, a new school of ethnographically based educational research and innovative forms of Indigenous education (like the Navajo Rough Rock Demonstration School), Yo'eme parents, though emboldened to become more vocal, still experienced a disconnection—what education researcher and scholar Karen Guilfoyle would describe as a cultural and linguistic divide between the Yaqui community and school that continued to negatively affect the students.³¹

THE YO'EME LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BOARD GAME: CREATION, RESISTANCE, LANGUAGE

Creation. As a response to language shift in his home and community, the Pueblos of Yo'em in the United States and Tórim in Mexico, Cesar Barreras and his father talked the idea of the game into existence. The idea for it began as an effort to help family members and other tribal members learn Yo'eme (*Yoem Noki*) through Facebook and YouTube platforms. It evolved into the design of the Yo'eme Language and Cultural Board Game (YLCG).³² Despite some success in teaching the language online, this format could not substitute for home or family settings. Grandparents could now share stories and provide a familiar love-filled environment that motivated their children to display knowledge through conversation and game-related tasks. Whereas the online format limited opportunities for intergenerational communication, the YLCG encourages such interplay to develop and flourish in an engaging and dynamic manner.

Indigenizing the board game format, Barreras recalled that, "From the beginning, it was clear that my father and I wanted to create a game that did not culminate in an individual winner because it would detract from the spirit of the game." This does not mean the game is uncompetitive. It is designed to encourage players to invest in both learning and displaying Yo'eme culture, language, and history to successfully complete the game. This process culminates in the acquisition of all the ceremonial attire required by a Yo'eme *maaso yeye* (deer dancer) in a journey through traditional Yo'eme territory within which players learn and display aspects of Yo'eme language,

culture, history, and traditional values. It ends when players reach the Yo'eme Bacatete Mountains with a fully outfitted deer dancer. Then the players can assist or just watch other gamers as they finish. Once everyone has completed the game, all players sing a traditional Yo'eme song, "Saila Maaso Bwika," and take a cultural oath as defenders of Yo'eme culture (*Tekia Mavetwame Yo'o Luturiapo*).

The game itself illustrates how the Yo'eme language is dynamic, since it has adapted to better serve the needs of its users. In this way, the Yo'eme language gains new life in contemporary activity--one which reasserts and redefines cultural and linguistic identities through speaking the present while honoring the past. As described by Hopi researcher Sheilah Nicholas, positive language shift occurs through a "(re)focus" on the traditional collective ideologies found in the heritage language.³³ Such a refocus provides a means for the community to "reengage" by "reconnecting" youth with the older generation, thus reestablishing critical intergenerational communication. Consequently, the Yo'eme language is reinvigorated in both a traditional and contemporary context, just as the words of the *maaso yoawa* (Elder deer dancer) state in the board game:

Inepo vatnataka weeria: I am the past

Inepo ian weeria: I am the present

Ta ket ne vichau vicha: But I am also the future.

These words convey the feelings of many gamers Barreras has observed. The game functions as a performance in which gamers feel that Yo'eme is very much alive, and that it lives in the hearts and minds of many of the descendants of the original defenders of *itom bwaian* (our homeland).

As the Yo'eme coauthor, Barreras considers himself extremely blessed to have grown up in a household that fostered the Yo'eme language. He speaks Yo'eme as a traditional speaker; it is a part of him. Barreras began sharing his knowledge of Yo'eme about four years ago. In early efforts, he created online language lessons and posted them to primarily Yo'eme public groups via YouTube and Facebook platforms (*Itom Yo'eme Noki*). Though he was interested in maintaining and teaching Yo'eme, the idea for the board game began in conversations with his father. Like him, Barreras viewed the game as an important, readily comprehensible, and interactive educational resource capable of bringing fun and cultural knowledge into Yo'eme homes. Both viewed this as something that would also eventually be used by teachers in school settings.

Playing the game involves more traditional learning than other board games. The game squares require language learning and cultural knowledge of Yo'eme traditional land and history. The sequence of moving through the board includes episodes of genocide, displacement, and Yo'eme resistance. It provides accounts of the cultural norms and values encoded in the Yo'eme language. Therefore, the activity of playing the board game provides and expresses knowledge from each of four categories of the game—language, culture, history, and resistance-resilience. Each of the categories is represented by several squares in which gamers who land on them must answer questions or perform tasks to progress through the game, collecting items for their

ceremonial outfits. Working within the constraints of this brief article, we will exemplify only two of the categories: resistance and language.

Namakasia—Survival, Resistance, and Resilience. Among the game board squares devoted to resistance and resilience, we can distinguish between what Leisy Wyman calls the linguistic survivance that Yo’eme people have created to resist hegemonic oppression by the state and the endurance of more overt settler colonial oppression.^{34,35} Recognizing this, Cesar Barreras chose *namakasia* (ancestral strength and resilience) as an example of the former to remind tribal members and all Yo’eme that since the beginning of colonial intrusion, their language and culture have been the targets of oppressive acculturation-assimilation policies and practices. One of these squares tells the story of *Itom Eskuelam* (Our School), a Pascua Yaqui tribal school that defied the odds and reshaped Indigenous education in the state of Arizona. More than just a place of learning, *Itom Eskuelam* became a site of resistance, embodying what anthropologist Audra Simpson has called Mohawk *refusal* and what linguistic anthropologist Justin Richland has called Hopi *cooperation without submission*.^{36,37} Defying state control, the tribal school rejected the State of Arizona’s standardized test requirements, which were routinely used to “determine” a student’s mental capacity. In 1981, the school secured funding from the US Department of Education to implement a Title VII-funded Yaqui-English bilingual program. This investment in heritage language education ultimately led to the creation of the Pascua Yaqui Tribal Language Policy. In September 1984, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe formally adopted the policy, enshrining it in both tribal council decisions and the constitution. The heart of the policy is as follows:

The Yaqui Language is a gift from *itom achai*, the creator, to our people and, therefore, shall be treated with respect. Our language is the foundation of our cultural and spiritual heritage, without which we could not exist in the manner that our creator intended. Education is the transmission of culture and values. Therefore, we declare that Yaqui education shall be the means for the transmission of the Yaqui language and spiritual and cultural heritage. We shall carry out our obligation to uphold the Yaqui code of ethics, which will enable our present and future generation to survive.³⁸

Not only did the Yo’eme people assert their cultural sovereignty by the creation of *itom eskuelam* (our school) but they reaffirmed their objective of promoting and preserving the Yo’eme language, culture, and tradition in their own terms.

Despite the implementation of damaging policies like Arizona’s “English-only” Proposition 203—AKA “English for the Children”—the Yo’eme people have continued to push back by asserting tribal autonomy. Today, the continuation of the Yaqui-English Bilingual Education Project is now entirely run and controlled by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, which is currently offering Yaqui as a second language for adults through the Pima Community College. The course is taught by one of the Yo’eme instructors. In addition, the tribe provides Yo’eme as a second language to preschoolers within the *Ili Uusim* (Little Children) Program of the Pascua Yaqui tribe, seeking to provide both cultural and linguistic instruction to students.

While the preceding discussion illustrates some of the basis on which the cultural content of game board squares is selected, it does not exemplify the kinds of tasks that players are asked to perform when they land on a particular square. We can demonstrate that now as we turn to an example of resistance-resilience stemming from Yo'eme persistence even when battling genocidal oppression. Shannon Speed has suggested the appropriateness of viewing Latin American states as settler colonial projects (now morphed into what Speed calls "settler capitalist" projects, as in the United States): "Latin American states are settler colonial states, though they are rarely analyzed this way."³⁹ For the Yo'eme people, as a transborder Indigenous nation spread between Mexico and the United States, this analysis has a special significance in part because it recalls a deep colonial history. Since 1543, three nation-states—Spain, Mexico, and the United States—have intruded into the Yo'eme homeland. During this time frame, the Yo'eme people have experienced wars of extermination that reduced the Yo'eme population by approximately 82 percent.⁴⁰ Struggling to survive, Yo'eme existence has been characterized by a deeply rooted defense of territory, culture, and language. As previously mentioned, the creation of the board game attempts to serve as an ideological contribution designed to impart Indigenous knowledge to further enhance Yo'eme tribal members' critical language awareness.⁴¹ This sought-after awareness will allow Yo'eme tribal members to be conscious of the historical oppressions the Yo'eme language has faced as a direct result of colonialism. In addition, it will allow for Yo'eme people to understand the underlying responsibility they have to push forth the legacy of the ancestors.

To instill a critical Indigenous consciousness among players, it's essential that the game educates tribal members about the historical oppressions that have disrupted the cultural continuity of the Yo'eme people. As such, the game strategically incorporates these historical colonial oppressions as challenges within the game play, dispersed across the board. These squares are not merely obstacles but are designed to reflect the periods of extreme hardship faced by the Yo'eme people. This setup provides players, particularly those unfamiliar with these historical events, the opportunity to appreciate the sacrifices and resistance of their ancestors and to understand the responsibility of being Yo'eme they carry forward: "to walk in the ancestor's path." To dive deeper into these lessons, see the specific questions from the game that highlight this aspect of Yo'eme resistance, listed below.

Namakasia: Resistance (sample question from intermediate level)

Due to their Indigenous heritage, the Yo'eme were targeted by the Mexican government. To which of the following places were they deported: Yucatan, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Cuba, Costa Rica, Africa?

Answer: All of the above.

Namakasia (sample question from beginner level)

During the exile, in order to return home to Arizona and Sonora, what did Yo'eme have to do?

Answer: Walk over 2,000 miles to return to the homeland.



FIGURE 1. Yo'eme namakasia: resistance.

Namakasia (sample question from advanced level)

Read and translate the following story about the Dance of the Raccoon and how the Yo'eme lost the tradition in the wars of extermination.

Hunak hakko uka goh naiki pueplota nanancha a ho'ako, bweere pahkompo ian venasi nesanuwan Chooparau yi'iwame savala Looria pahkopo yiyi'iwana inim goh naiki pueplompo. Ian kaita lu'utek amau tawala si'ime, katte humak intok a vitne. Itepo intok eme'e uusim ian katria. Huna'a chooparau yeye'eme tosali payummea kovata suma'ine nakam vewit payupuntam, kom cha'arine, wituhammea intok puhvata yoka'ine. Vichaa komimpo ket tosali payummea au suma'ine, popuntam ket kom nau cha'arine. Mampo makochiam hipu'une, sanava chikam. Mathcuu tahtia ye'ekai ansune. Mathcuu tahtia ye'ekai ansune. Wepulaikai hiva yi'ine a bwikriame intok goine. Bweheta ba'apo movektaikai kutae a vepne, senu intok vavu pu'atota bwiapo a movektaikai ket ili kutae a vevakai bwikne. Sehtul hiva ne a vichak looria pahkopo, ke yee Yukataneu toiwao.

Translation: Some time ago, when the Yo'eme pueblos lived uninterrupted, as it was tradition, great festivities like the ones we have today took place. The raccoon dance used to take place during our traditional festivities in the Yo'eme homeland. Unfortunately, today, these dances are no more; everything but the memory has been left behind. We probably will never get to see them. We the elders or you the youth, we might never get to see it again. It is said that the one

who raccoon dances dances with a white handkerchief in the head; the corners of the handkerchief are to be tied to one's ears, pointing down, and with burnt bone fragments, one will paint its face. The white handkerchief needs to be tied near the fist, while the corners of the handkerchief should also point down. The dancer will have palm tree seeds in his hands along with fragments of corn leaf. The dance will continue dancing till dawn. There is only one dancer and two singers present. Placing the *guaje* face down into the water, one of the singers will hit it with its wood. The other will place a clay plate face down in the ground and with his piece, he will hit it and sing all at once. It was last seen in a festivity around the time coinciding with our rebirth calendar aligning with the present-day Saturday of Glory, performed before we got deported to Yucatan and lost our beloved tradition.

Every time players land on one of these “resistance” squares, they will be required to “honor” their ancestors. This honoring requires a sacrifice in either a form of trading currency or a part of the deer dancer’s ceremonial outfit. Gamers will not lose by landing on these squares, but they are required to provide extra effort to recover from the setback. For tribal members unfamiliar with their ancestors’ hardships, the game provides a compelling insight into the current state of the language and the urgency of its reclamation. Conversely, for those already aware of their ancestral struggles, the game aims to ignite motivation, inspiring them and others to be advocates and defenders of Yo’em cultural sovereignty. While we have treated resistance here as it



FIGURE 2. Yo’em yoo’aturia: Language and cultural use here.

is expressed in Yo'eme history and representations within the game, there is no doubt that resistance is a critical aspect of most if not all contexts of Indigenous language reclamation. As a rhematization of group identity, the maintenance and reclamation of Indigenous languages often serve as key resources of resistance to the symbolic domination of nation-states and global settler capitalism. Thus, resistance is certainly not only a feature of the Yo'eme response but one that is quite representative of Indigenous groups on a global scale. Indigenous language communities, such as Breton (France), Catalan (Spain), Corsican, Maori (New Zealand), Manegacha (Tibet), and Sakha (Siberian Russia) suggest the ubiquity of this pattern.⁴²

Language. The second board game category that we will illustrate is Yo'eme language. As players journey through the realms of the Yo'eme language board game, each dice roll propels them from one square to the next, weaving through a path filled with cultural knowledge and linguistic challenges. A typical scenario to illustrate the game play at advanced and intermediate levels follows: Imagine a player, poised at the edge of anticipation, rolling the dice. The clatter of the dice echoes briefly before it settles, directing them to a specially designated square: the *Yo'em noki* (Yo'eme language) square. The excitement builds as the player is prompted to roll again, this roll determining the depth and difficulty of their upcoming challenge. The dice tumbles and lands on the number two, a signal that draws two distinct sets of cards into play. The player, with a focused gaze, receives a card that holds only a question—no hints, no answers, just a stark linguistic puzzle waiting to be solved. Across from them, another player assumes the role of the game authority, holding a second card. This card is the key, containing both the question and the correct answer. In a moment that blends collaboration with learning, the game authority reads the question aloud. The room fills with palpable excitement as all eyes turn to the player, awaiting a response that will demonstrate not just their knowledge of the Yo'eme language but also their ability to continue progressing in the game.

Yo'em noki: Yo'eme language (intermediate category)

Match and translate each image with its respective sentence.

Hitasa itou etehok? What's being said?

- 1) *Hu ----- taaka si kia.* A) *hu'upa* / The mesquite's fruit is delicious.
- 2) *Hume Yo'emem vachita bwiapo te -----.* A) *eecha* / We Yo'eme traditionally harvests corn in our homeland.
- 3) *Siime te Vacatete ----- saka.* A) *Kawim* / We are all headed toward the Bacatete Mountains.
- 4) *Hu ----- into ----- aa ye'e.* A) *Maaso into/and Pahko'olam* / During our ceremonies, the deer and the pascolas dance.
*For this answer to be entirely correct, both *Maaso into/and* / *Pahkolam* need to be used.
- 5) *Hu ----- si bweeka into uhyoli.* A) *Vaawe* / The ocean is so large and beautiful.
- 6) *Hu pahkopo ----- into ----- yi'vae.* A) *Maaso into/and Pahko'olam* / Our deer and pascola dancers dance with grace.
*For this answer to be entirely correct, both *Maaso into/and* / *Pahkolam* need to be used.

Yo'em noki: Yo'eme language (advanced category)

Please provide a translation, response, and explanation for the use of the following greeting: *Haisa maisi eme ala'eaka yeu matchuk?* Answer: *Kaave ko'okoe*. This greeting gets utilized when addressing a crowd of Yo'eme. It means *How did everyone awaken today?* The response, *Kaave ko'okoe* means, *in good health/still alive*.

Yo'em noki: Yo'eme language (intermediate category)

Provide the singular and plural response to *Lioh enchi/m aniavu*: Creator helps you/you all. Answer: *Lioh enchi(s)/enchi(m/pl) chiokoe*: Creator blesses you.

Yo'em noki: Yo'eme language (novice category)

The greeting *Ketchem allea?/Are you doing good?* is used as both an informal greeting or as part of a formal greeting: *Lioh enchi aniavu ketche-'em allea?/Creator helps you; are you doing good? What will be the response to Ketchem allea?* Answer: *Kettu'il/Everything is still good*.

The above square represents the language used in traditional and everyday instances. It also illustrates the way past and present-day Yo'eme have utilized their language as both a means of communication and as an identity marker.

PLAYING AND PERFECTING THE GAME

The learning objective of the game is for players to deepen their understanding of Yo'eme cultural knowledge each time they play. Players are assigned a *maaso yeyem* (Yo'eme deer dancer) figure to fully outfit in their *maaso tah'ori* (eight-piece regalia) found in and gathered from different sections of the board game. Rather than fostering competition, the game serves as an exploration of the multiple paths one can take to learn about Yo'eme language and culture. Though the possible paths are multiple, the game, as originally designed, presupposed that players competed at the same approximate level in terms of cultural and linguistic knowledge. However, this expectation evolved as the game was applied in larger contexts.

During the summer of 2017, Barreras was offered a position as Yo'eme/Yaqui language instructor at the Torres Martinez Tribal TANF (Tribal Assistance for Native Families) in Monterey Park by Kelly Stewart, who at the time was the officer for cultural preservation for Torres Martinez. The class ranged from mostly new speakers to moderately intermediate ones, with attendance varying between ten to thirty students. Starting that fall, the coursework progressed slowly but steadily, prompting me to introduce the Yo'eme Cultural Board Game, which had initially been developed within my family circle and had not been tested among players with diverse knowledge levels. These Yo'eme tribal members and heritage language learners traveled from across Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties to attend. The Yo'eme are among the most populous Native American tribes in Los Angeles County, which has a significant Native American population of about 170,000. Despite their varied linguistic backgrounds, all TANF students were captivated by the cultural

richness of the game and were eager to play it. Each session was marked by a loud and spirited excitement that permeated the classroom.

But how could we accommodate the many different levels of Yo'eme fluency represented by the students in the TANF class? Coauthor Kroskrity, based on his experience of working on multimedia resources for revitalization, including the CD-ROM he codeloped for the Western Mono community in Central California, suggested that this variation in knowledge could be accommodated by incorporating multiple levels into the game in a manner analogous to how an interactive CD-ROM permits users to navigate various levels of complexity according to their knowledge and interests.⁴³

Adapted to the context of the cultural board game, the introduction of distinct levels—advanced, intermediate, and novice—allows players to respond to appropriately tiered questions or prompts. This structure not only prevents the monotony of repeating the same questions in subsequent games but also encourages players to progressively challenge themselves and advance through the stages. Moreover, it facilitates game play among participants of differing skill levels, with the ultimate goal for each player being to master the advanced level, where they engage in complete immersion in the Yo'eme language. Advanced players, while primarily using Yo'eme at their level, can still interact in English when playing with novices or intermediates, making the game inclusive and educational for all. This adaptation has been particularly transformative at TANF, where every student, regardless of their initial proficiency in *Yo'em noki* (Yo'eme language), has progressed to at least the intermediate level, with many attempting advanced challenges. Those who started with a basic understanding of Yo'eme have embraced the advanced levels, finding enjoyment and value in the deep linguistic immersion that comes with each advanced question.

Another challenge with the old format of uniform play levels surfaced during the game's conclusion, when all players were expected to sing the "*Maaso Bwiikiam*" ("Deer Song") together. The significant variation in students' capabilities led to some players feeling too intimidated to sing in Yo'eme. However, this apprehension diminished with the innovative introduction of tiered participation levels, allowing players to engage in play at their comfort level. Reflecting on this change, Barrera recalls one of the last classes of my first year teaching: "All joined their voices in a seemingly unified chorus, singing the song their Yo'eme ancestors have sung since time immemorial."

To clarify the implementation of these levels, we provide an example from the game's language categories. The novice, intermediate, and advanced levels are designed to progressively build upon each other, enhancing the players' knowledge as they advance. For instance, the square dedicated to personal pronouns (see below) serves as an introductory section, exemplifying the foundational linguistic content players encounter at the novice level.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Question number three of the novice-level language category asks (in English), "What is the word in Yo'eme for I?" Answer, *Inepo*. In the intermediate level, the usage of personal

pronouns evolves, requiring the player to have more knowledge of the language. Question one of the intermediate category asks the following: “Using the personal pronoun *I*, how would you say, ‘My name is _____ in Yo’eme?’” Answer, *Inepo* (player’s name) *tea*. The advanced level continues the topic of pronouns but implements language immersion for the participant. Question number two in the advanced category asks, “You are asked in Yo’eme, ‘*Hakun empo teak?* (What is your name?)’” Answer: *Inepo* (player’s name). *Teak empo su?* (My name is _____. What is yours?). To reiterate, the example given is the first example of the language section for the squares found in the game.



FIGURE 3. Personal pronouns.

In the bustling atmosphere of the game, when a novice-level player listens to an intermediate player articulate their name—using “*Inepo*” for “*I*” and “*tea*” for “name”—the scene becomes a live demonstration of language in action. This interaction not only solidifies the novice’s understanding of these words but also introduces them to their practical application.

As the game progresses, the room resonates with the sounds of Yo’eme language. When advanced players land on a language square, their responses unfold in full sentences, offering novices a chance to hear and internalize the language as naturally spoken. For instance, when an advanced player uses the phrase “*Empo su?* (What about you?),” it not only teaches the novice the foundational linguistic structure of putting a sentence together but also how to engage in a simple dialogue, providing context for the cultural and quotidian usage of the interrogative expression “in relation to you/

what is (in relation to you).” Meanwhile, intermediate players, surrounded by the fluid speech of more experienced peers, encounter new vocabulary and sentence structures, enriching their understanding and fluency. This exposure acts as a bridge, expanding their linguistic capabilities beyond basic conversations. Thus, the classroom, as a dynamic learning environment, served as the proving ground to showcase how novice heritage language learners benefit immensely from interacting with more advanced speakers. Ethnographic observations suggest that such immersive exposure not only enhances comprehension but also significantly motivates novices to deepen their involvement in their heritage language.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE YO’EME BOARD GAME IN TANF CLASSES

In the diverse setting of the Monterey Park Tribal TANF course, Barreras had the unique opportunity to gauge the impact of the Yo’eme Language and Culture Game on learners with ages spanning from children to adults eager to connect with their heritage language. While the approach, due to constraints, merits a formal pregame versus postgame evaluation, such assessment lies outside the scope of this article. Nonetheless, the shifts in cultural and linguistic understanding were palpable and deeply encouraging. Players’ burgeoning enthusiasm was unmistakable. The joy and commitment they brought to each session signaled not just participation but profound engagement. As they ascended through increasingly challenging levels of the game, their triumphs spoke volumes about the game’s efficacy in fostering not only language acquisition but also cultural pride and self-esteem.

The challenges of this reclamation journey were equally profound.⁴⁴ Class member Tosali reflected on the depth of this experience: “Learning Yo’eme is not easy. I thought it was just about acquiring new vocabulary, but it’s really about adopting a whole new way of thinking and embracing a distinct culture.” For Tosali, learning Yo’eme language extends beyond words to the very essence of her Yo’eme cultural identity. Similarly, Teka, a young student, shared a personal victory: “It is very difficult for me to feel proud of myself, but now that I’m learning Yo’eme, I get excited after learning each new word. The Yo’eme game allows me to test my knowledge and makes me feel better about myself.” As Teka shared, each Yo’eme word learned is not just a linguistic gain but a building block in their growing self-confidence.

Another student, Teweli, talked about the broader social impact, emphasizing the communal bond that learning the Yo’eme language fosters: “The greatest opportunity the Yo’eme board game provides is the ability to communicate with the people who share more than just blood; they share your culture.” For Barreras, these sentiments beautifully capture the communal spirit of the game, illustrating how it serves as a bridge connecting individuals through shared heritage language reclamation and collective memory.

The use of the board game for language instruction has surpassed expectations, thanks in part to the introduction of multiple game play levels that allowed a broader range of participants to stay engaged and benefit. Without this modification, the game

might not have achieved such positive outcomes. In the Sewa family, for example, the youngest son, Yooko, captivated his classmates and won the hearts of everyone. He was born with a chronic illness that confined him to a wheelchair. Known for his vibrant energy, Yooko was a fixture in the classroom, speeding around and bringing smiles to his peers. His sister, Wai, and their mother, Ae, were also central figures, providing steadfast support. When I introduced the board game to the class, Yooko shifted from racing around to participating deeply in the game alongside his family, taking on a crucial role as a “helper.” Surprisingly, he often outshone his mother and sister in answering language questions, prompting lighthearted complaints from other players about the Sewa family’s “unfair advantage.”

This playful rivalry, an unexpected outcome of the game’s design, fostered a communal learning environment rather than individual competition. Yooko, in particular, showed remarkable enthusiasm for learning Yo’eme numbers, quickly becoming adept from one to twenty, which he proudly declared made him the best Yo’eme “mathematician.” His commitment extended to his therapy sessions, where he insisted on communicating only in Yo’eme, impressing his therapists with his progress and motivation. His sister, Wai, found a profound sense of purpose in learning her heritage language, saying, “Learning Yo’eme in a fun environment while playing a cultural game is a blessing. I might not remember everything or be the best player, but discovering my language and culture gives me a deep sense of purpose.” The engagement in the game expanded to include not just Yooko, Wai, and their mother but also their grandmother, uncles, and aunts. During my time teaching the Yo’eme language, I witnessed how a simple idea could evolve into a transformative project, offering hope and a sense of renewal to Yo’eme community members.

Alongside these promising results, there has been an emerging sense of hope linked to the game’s decolonizing and indigenizing potential—although this aspect has yet to gain significant academic attention. There’s a growing recognition of the connection between heritage language revitalization and overall health and well-being.⁴⁵ While the board game was mostly designed as a language and cultural intervention, its application has provided some early evidence of impact on health and well-being that will be briefly explored here.

For Native youth between the ages of ten to twenty-four, suicide is the second leading cause of death, resulting in a suicide rate 2.5 times higher than the national average and highest among all ethnic groups in the United States (National Indian Council on Aging statistics). To examine the emergent ideologies of Yo’eme youth, it is necessary to analyze how they have vividly expressed the impact that reengagement with Yo’eme language and culture has had on their personal lives. Experiencing the integration of Yo’eme language and culture in the game as a celebration of life is a way of improving self-image and preventing self-destructive behaviors. According to the experiences of many Yo’eme youth, these measures have provided a positive impact on both the mental and physical health of its participants. Although these are preliminary findings from an early stage of research, the positive impacts expressed through the testimony of Yo’eme youth do warrant some additional attention.

To further analyze the impacts of the game, it is necessary to examine experiences shared by Yo'eme youth in their role of language learners and gamers. Teeka, sixteen, a Yo'eme student, shared the following: "Tuesdays have become the highlight of my week. As I have shared with my therapists, participating in the language class gives me purpose and strength that I need to look forth to another day. The language is my strength." Another student, Tenku, seventeen, explained: "Through the game, I have learned that there is much more to our language than just vocabulary. The cultural part of our language, particularly when greeting one another, carries a powerful meaning for me. It teaches me that I am never alone, even when I find myself physically alone and feeling consumed. Through my culture and language, I am reminded that I have purpose, and no one can take that away from me."

These experiences, shared by some of the Yo'eme youth, as both gamers and cultural apprentices, speak to an unexpected contribution to health and well-being. The Yo'eme Language and Culture Game experience thus affirms the close relationship for youth between health and well-being and the maintenance of Indigenous identities.⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS: IDEOLOGICAL CLARIFICATIONS AND LINGUISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY

Throughout the literature on language revitalization, there is an important theme of the need for language ideological clarification. Though the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman coined the term, he did not begin to theorize it or to apply it to Indigenous communities. That task was first performed by Nora Marks Dauenhauer (Tlingit) and Richard Dauenhauer based on their experience in Haida, Tlingit, and Tshimshian communities of the Northwest Coast and, later, by Kroskrity, based on a wide variety of case studies on Native American language ideologies, as in Kroskrity and Field's 2009 *Native American Language Ideologies*.⁴⁷ These approaches view language ideological clarification as an essential process of bringing often tacit and sometimes contradictory beliefs and feelings about the heritage language (and other languages in the community's repertoire) into a more explicit awareness—akin to what has more recently been called "critical language awareness"—a consciousness about language that permits greater agency for speakers.

Though this article discusses preliminary results of a grassroots application of the Yo'eme Cultural Board Game and is not a definitive assessment of the project that rigorously compares pre- and postgame knowledge and ideologies, we feel this pilot application clearly suggests its value in promoting three positive emergent language ideologies among youth. One of the very beneficial effects on shaping emergent youth ideologies is the way it challenges preexisting habitual beliefs that Yo'eme is "static." Instead, youth definitely see the language in a more dynamic fashion, because, first, it is a medium for interacting in a live game with other players and, second, it often reconnects family members in intergenerational discourse about Yo'eme language and culture. In this context, Yo'eme is not a word list of cultural labels and cultural

artifacts. Instead, it is a resource for gaining knowledge, collaborating with others, and creating spaces for language reclamation.

A second positive effect on youth ideologies stems from the game's ability to instill critical indigenous consciousness. Tiffany Lee describes this as "an awareness of the historical and broad, oppressive conditions that have influenced current realities of Indigenous people's lives. This awareness leads to acknowledging, respecting, and embracing one's role in contributing to and transforming . . . communities and families."⁴⁸ Certainly, as described above, the game is designed to transmit critical historical knowledge of colonial oppression, imposed exile, state policies (by both Mexico and the United States) of marginalization and assimilation, and linguistic discrimination. While some of this history is already known by youthful players, most do not know all the details and therefore will experience an elevation and refinement of their indigenous consciousness and the motivation to resist external forces that would undermine community efforts to maintain its language and culture.

While such decolonizing acts contribute to positive changes in the emergent language ideologies of Yo'eme youth, playing the game also contributes a third impact by helping to reindigenize language ideologies. The cultural game affirms the importance of Yo'eme language as a gift from the creator and as a source of cultural identity. Playing the game for most youth is a powerful expression and expansion of their linked cultural and linguistic identities and provides a means to both decolonize and indigenize language revitalization.⁴⁹ Thus, the board game reaffirms the importance of the Yo'eme language as an ancestral guiding path, as "a gift from creator," and a wellspring of cultural identity. Both youth and adults utilized the board game as a "safe haven"—not to feel ashamed of their lack of fluency and cultural knowledge but rather to enhance and expand their Indigenous knowledge. Thus, the youth no longer see the ancestral language as merely speaking the past, as "static." Instead, they utilize it as a form of "speaking the present" with pride and resilience.⁵⁰ Finally, it is important to conclude by understanding this article as a collaborative language work, and to understand, following Barbra Meek, that it, like all language revitalization work, is politically shaped.⁵¹ By starting from Indigenous community-based ideas and objectives, we have used academic resources not to redirect or subvert those goals but rather to enhance and elaborate them through theoretical and comparative considerations.

NOTES

1. Tiffany S. Lee, "Critical Language Awareness among Native youth in New Mexico," in *Indigenous Youth and Multilingualism*, ed. Leisy T. Wyman, Teresa L. McCarty, and Sheila E. Nicholas (New York: Routledge, 2014), 130–48.

2. Paul V. Kroskrity, "Language Renewal as Sites of Language Ideological Struggle: The Need for Ideological Clarification," in *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance, and Lessons Learned*, ed. Jon Reyhner and Louise Lockard (Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University Press, 2009), 71–83.

3. For discussion about Yo'eme (AKA Yaqui), see Octaviana V. Trujillo, "A Tribal Approach to Language and Literacy Development in a Trilingual Setting," in *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. Jon Reyhner (Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, 1997), 10–21; Leanne Hinton, "Commentary: Internal and External Language Advocacy," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12, no. 2 (2002): 150–56. For (Arizona) Tewa, see Paul V. Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies in the Expression and Representation of Arizona Tewa Ethnic Identity," in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2000), 329–59. Note that though Yo'eme is often referred to as Yaqui in the scholarly literature, we are using the former term in deference to the culturally preferred self-reference of most tribal members. Historically, Yaqui is an ethnonym traceable to how other indigenous neighbors referred to the group. See Cesar A. Barreras, "The Yo'eme Language: The Legacy of Our Ancestors—More than Just a Form of Communication (MA thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2020).
4. Stephen Greymorning, *A Will to Survive: Indigenous Essays on the Politics of Culture, Language, and Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).
5. Duane Champagne, *Notes from the Center of Turtle Island* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2010), 161–62.
6. For discussions of Myaamia, see Wesley Leonard, "When Is an 'Extinct Language' Not Extinct: Miami, a Formerly Sleeping Language," in *Sustaining Linguistic Diversity: Endangered and Minority Languages and Language Varieties*, ed. Kendall A. King, Natalie Schilling-Estes, Lyn AFogle, Jia Jackie Lou, and Barbara Soukup (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 23–33; and for Maliseet, see Bernard C. Perley, *Defying Maliseet Language Death: Emergent Vitalities of Language, Culture, and Identity in Eastern Canada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).
7. Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).
8. Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education," *The Urban Review* 37, no. 5 (2005): 425–46.
9. Paul V. Kroskrity, *Telling Stories in the Face of Danger* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2012), 4.
10. Jo-Ann Archibald, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason Santolo, "Introduction: Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology," in *Decolonizing Research*, ed. Jo-ann Archibald, Jenny Bol Jun Lee Morgan, and Jason Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 1–15.
11. See Teresa L. McCarty, Sheilah E. Nicholas, Kari A. B. Chew, Natalie G. Diaz, Wesley Y. Leonard, and Louellyn White, "Hear Our Languages, Hear Our Voices: Storywork as Theory and Praxis in Indigenous-Language Reclamation," *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (2018): 160–72.
12. Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*, 140.
13. See Peter Whiteley's "Do 'Language Rights' Serve Indigenous Interests? Some Hopi and Other Queries," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 4 (2003): 712–22.
14. See Elizabeth LaPensée, "Indigenous Board Game Design in the Gift of Food," *Analog Game Studies* 3, no. 2 (2016); Elizabeth LaPensée and Jason Edward Lewis, "Skins: Designing Games with First Nations Youth," *Journal of Game Design and Development Education* 1, no. 1 (2011): 54–63; Christine Schreyer, "Taku River Tlingit Genres of Place as Performatives of Stewardship," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (2016): 4–25.
15. Elizabeth LaPensée, "Self-Determination in Indigenous Games," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, ed. Jentery Sayers (New York: Routledge, 2018), 128–37.
16. Information here is based on two sources: Tomás Basilio, *Arte de la lengua cabita* (Sinaloa, Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1890); and Edward H. Spicer, *The Yaquis: A Cultural History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).

17. Spicer, *The Yaquis*, 16; Raquel Padilla Ramos, *Los irredentos parias: Los yaquis, Madero y Pino Suárez en las elecciones de Yucatán, 1911* (Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2018).

18. For a theoretically precise treatment of language ideological clarification, see Kroskrity, "Language Renewal," 71–83; for critical language awareness, consult H. Samy Alim's "Critical Language Awareness," *Sociolinguistics and Language Education* 18 (2010): 205–23; Lee's "Critical Language Awareness," 130–48.

19. On the combined roles of traditional storytelling as both entertainment and instruction, see Kroskrity, *Telling Stories in the Face of Danger*; Gus Palmer, *Telling Stories the Kiowa Way* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003); Daniel Heath Justice's *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018).

20. For examples of this application of acculturation theory to Yo'eme, see Edward H. Spicer, "Linguistic Aspects of Yaqui Acculturation" *American Anthropologist* 45, no. 3 (1943): 410–26; Edward P. Dozier's "Two Examples of Linguistic Acculturation: The Yaqui of Sonora and Arizona and the Tewa of New Mexico," *Language* 32, no. 1 (1956): 146–57.

21. Carroll G. Barber "Trilingualism in an Arizona Yaqui Village," *Bilingualism in the Southwest*, ed. Paul Turner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973), 295–318.

22. Sam Brewer, "The Yaqui Indians of Arizona: Trilingualism and Cultural Change" (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1977).

23. See the first major collection of "best practices" of language revitalization in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. Leanne Hinton and Kenneth Hale (Boston: Brill, 2001). For other specific studies for the languages mentioned, see Amber Neely, "Tales of Tradition and Stories of Syncretism in Kiowa Language Revitalization," in *Telling Stories in the Face of Danger*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 90–114; Christopher Loether "Language Revitalization and the Manipulation of Language Ideologies: A Shoshoni Case Study," in *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity and Margaret Field (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 238–54; Bernard C. Perley "Contingencies of Emergence: Planning Maliseet Language Ideologies," in *Native American Language Ideologies*, 255–70; Barbra A. Meek, *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Jenny L. Davis, *Talking Indian: Identity and Language Revitalization in the Chickasaw Renaissance* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018); Colleen Cotter, "Continuity and Vitality: Expanding Domains through Irish-Language Radio," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 301–16; Ken Hale, "Strict Locality in Local Language Media: An Australian Example," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, 277–86.

24. The concept of emergent youth ideologies is developed by Sheilah E. Nicholas in "'Being' Hopi by 'Living' Hopi: Redefining and Reasserting Cultural and Linguistic Identity," *Indigenous Youth and Multilingualism*, 70–89; Octaviana Trujillo discusses Yo'eme language ideologies that construct the heritage language as "static" and inappropriate for anything but traditional activities: Octaviana V. Trujillo, "A Tribal Approach to Language and Literacy in a Trilingual Setting," in *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. Jon Allen Reyhner (Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, 1997), 10–21.

25. The "ideology of contempt" directed at subordinated communities by dominant groups is discussed in Nancy C. Dorian's "Western Language Ideologies and Small-Language Prospects," in *Endangered Languages*, ed. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3–21. For "erase and replace," see K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *"To Remain an Indian": Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006). On punishment for speaking Indigenous languages, see Jon

Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017).

26. Daniel Gonzalez, "Indians Protest Push for English," *Arizona Republic*, October 13, 2000, B1.

27. Ferne Marie Nevitt, "Educational Implications Derived from a Survey of Pascua Village and Adelanto Addition" (unpublished MA thesis, University of Arizona, 1951), 69.

28. *Ibid.*, 71.

29. Spicer, *The Yaquis*, 201.

30. See, for example, Duane Champagne, *Notes from the Center of Turtle Island*.

31. For examples of this new scholarship that better appreciated cultural differences in the classroom, see Susan U. Philips, *The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Reservation* (Long Grove: Waveland, 1983). For a treatment of a pioneering Indigenous institutional attempt to incorporate immersion, see Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-determination in Indigenous Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 2002). For the source of the quote, see Karen Guilfoyle, "Teaching Indian Children: An Ethnography of a First-Grade Classroom." (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1988).

32. Social media has proven to be an excellent avenue of outreach for teaching the Yo'eme language. Since 2015, the Yo'eme language channel in YouTube has received more than 80,000 views over a span of five years. A closer look at the YouTube analytics reveals that more than 51 percent of the viewers are between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four, another 30 percent are between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five, and more than 19 percent are over the age of forty-five. Therefore, the online platform has served as a great tool to reach Yo'eme youth and adults alike.

33. For discussion of refocusing and connecting contemporary language use with traditional practice, see Sheilah E. Nicholas, "'Being' Hopi by 'Living' Hopi," 87.

34. Like Wyman's study of Yup'ik students, here we use the concept of *linguistic survivance*, as originally developed by Gerald Vizenor in "Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice" in his edited *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). Leisy Wyman deploys this concept in *Youth Culture, Language Endangerment, and Linguistic Survivance* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2012).

35. For a deeper conversation about Indigenous *survivance* within the literature, see Rachel E. Wilbur and Joseph P. Gone, "Beyond Resilience: A Scoping Review of Indigenous *Survivance* in the Health Literature," *Development and Psychopathology* (2023).

36. *Mohawk refusal*, as used here, derives from Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice,' and Colonial Citizenship," in *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9 (2007). Simpson also deploys this concept in, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

37. *Hopi cooperation without submission*, as used here, derives from Justin Richland, *Cooperation without Submission: Indigenous Jurisdictions in Native Nation—US Engagements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

38. Pascua Yaqui Tribe, *Yaqui Language Policy for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe* (Tribal Council Resolution), Tucson, Arizona, September 15, 1984.

39. Shannon Speed, "Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (2017): 783.

40. For these statistics, see Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Yaquis: Historia de una guerra popular y de un Genocidio en México* (Madrid: Grupo Planeta Spain, 2013); Spicer, *The Yaquis*, 200.

41. Critical Indigenous awareness, as used here, derives from Tiffany S. Lee, "Critical Language Awareness among Native Youth in New Mexico," in *Indigenous Youth and Multilingualism: Language Identity, Ideology, and Practice in Dynamic Cultural Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 130–48.

42. As Michel Foucault (1978) suggests, power begets resistance; since language domination may be regarded as a profound form of Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) symbolic domination, this expression of power is recurrently met with various forms of Indigenous language resistance. While a full accounting of the global scale of such resistance is beyond the scope of this article, see examples such as Lois Kuter's "Breton vs. French: Language and the Opposition of Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural Values," in *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, ed. Nancy C. Dorian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75–89; Kathryn Woolard's *Singular and Plural: Ideologies of Linguistic Authority in Twenty-first Century Catalonia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Alexandra Jaffe's *Ideologies in Action: Language Politics in Corsica* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999); Stephen May and Richard Hill's "Language Revitalization in Aotearoa/New Zealand," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*, ed. Leanne Hinton, Leena Huss, and Gerald Roche (London: Routledge, 2018), 309–319; Gerard Roche's *The Politics of Oppression in Tibet* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2024); and Jenanne Ferguson's *Words like Birds: Sakha Language Discourses and Practices in the City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

43. See Paul V. Kroskrity, Rosalie Bethel, and Jennifer F. Reynolds, *Taitaduhaan: Western Mono Ways of Speaking* (CD-ROM) (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2002).

44. Note that the names of the students have been changed to protect their privacy and personal identities.

45. Though articles such as Leanne Hinton's "Commentary: Internal and External Language Advocacy," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12, no. 2 (2002): 150–56, provided an early indication of the importance of language revitalization to community health and well-being, this concern and value has recently become even more apparent. See Alice Taff, Melvatha Chee, Jaeci Hall, Millie Yéi Dulitseen Hall, Kawennyóhstha Nicole Martin, and Annie Johnston, "Indigenous Language Use Impacts Wellness," in *The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages*, ed. Kenneth L. Rehg and Lyle Campbell (London: Oxford University Press, 2018), 862–83.

46. As we write this, it is still somewhat rare to see discussions about the impact of language and cultural revitalization on personal well-being. While we primarily offer qualitative vignettes of learner case studies above, we've done some preliminary surveys of fifty-four participants who played an online version of the YLC board game during the COVID-19 pandemic. While a comprehensive assessment is beyond the limited scope of this article, the survey does provide a sense of learners' positive evaluation of their learning of Yoeme language and culture, with as many as 90 percent claiming a sense of accomplishment and well-being as well as a desire to continue participating. Though the survey oversampled youth and more accurately represents the responses of younger participants, Cesar Barreras also has anecdotal evidence of the health benefits of YLC revitalization activities on elders and older participants, which he expects to present in future research.

47. For Indigenous applications of "language ideological clarification," see Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer's "Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift," in *Endangered Languages*, ed. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7–98; Kroskrity, "Language Renewal as Sites of Language Ideological Struggle." See also various chapters in Paul V. Kroskrity and Margaret C. Field's *Native American Language Ideologies*.

48. Lee, "Critical Language Awareness," 145.

49. Decolonization is, of course, a major theme in the literature. See Wesley Y. Leonard's "Producing Language Reclamation by Decolonising 'Language,'" in *Language Documentation and Description*, ed. Wesley Y. Leonard and Haley De Korne (London: EL Publishing, 2017), 15–36, and Jenny L. Davis, *Talking Indian*.

50. Teresa L. McCarty, "The Impact of High-Stakes Accountability Policies on Native American Learners: Evidence from Research," *Teaching Education* 20, no. 1 (2008): 7–29.

51. Barbra Meek, "The Politics of Language Endangerment," in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Nancy Bonvillain (New York: Routledge, 2016), 447–62.