Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

EMILY COMEAU

BA (University of Alberta, 2012)

“Literacy and Language Revitalization: Leaving a Visible Trace”

Department of Linguistics

Wednesday, May 2, 2018
1:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ewa Czykowska-Higgins, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Tim Anderson, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France, Indigenous Education, Uvic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Mantis Cheng, Department of Computer Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The purpose of this research is to seek out Indigenous perspectives on literacy in Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR), and to explore the role of print literacy in ILR in British Columbia. The central research question of this study is: does print literacy play a role in language revitalization? Through qualitative interviews and an extensive literature review, this thesis explores community-based language revitalization initiatives in Indigenous communities, as described by Indigenous language champions and scholars. In international forums, literacy is often discussed in terms of development goals, functionalism, and economic success. However, literacy is “socially and historically situated, fluid, multiple, and power-linked” (McCarty, 2005, p. xviii), and it is inextricably linked to political, historical, and cultural contexts (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). This study concludes that these contexts are vital to defining the role of literacy in Indigenous communities. Every community has its own historical, political, social, environmental, technological, and philosophical context for language learning, and as such, literacy plays a different role in every community. Furthermore, the role of literacy can be expected to change over time, much like languages shift over time. This research also demonstrates that literacy, situated within Indigenous-controlled education and language initiatives, can contribute to larger goals of decolonization.