

*Ron Corn:* I first go around and plow my relatives out, a couple aunties and cousins. Then I have my, I call them, brothers, you know. That's the way we say it in our language. Nematok, our friends, close friends. We do things in a good mind and a good heart and a good way. When we need that help, I guess we believe it will come to us too. What I'm doing is ensuring that the language goes a generation beyond myself. I'm gonna do that through my kids, you know.

I'm teaching Mimikwaeh the language using natural immersion. Natural immersion is you just talk about your day the way you would anything else, only it's being done in Menominee.

I decided to stay home and teach her the language, 'cause it's my last unique opportunity to be able to raise a First Language fluent speaker. I think it's hard for her to want to speak because nobody else does, you know. There's probably about eight people that speak it. We'll call it ten. She's got ten of 10,000. What's that percent? . 0001, . 0001%. That's a reality check. The language, it could die.

The idea that we're trying to preserve is a living language. Pemalesemat, it lives. So there's words readily available for everything in nature. The word for falling snow is paeqnan. The word for snow on the ground is kon. Crusted snow, wanaew, we say wanaew. The word snowflake is even different yet than both of them, we say pewaeqsew.

The beautiful thing is it's not much easier in the woods because our language is really based on what's going on out there. How do we make that transition into today's life too? We're not always sugaring, we're not always ricing. We spend a lot of days at home, in the office, on the road.

We've got to learn to express those things too, you know. The language has to make that transition if it's gonna be relevant and if it's gonna survive, you know. When I was young, my first main teacher, Waqseciwan, she was starting to get sick and forgetful, you know.

One day we were just sitting at her house, talking, and she tells me, “Now I can die,” she told me. “For 25 years,” she said, “I’ve tried to teach someone this language. Now, today, I’ve done that.”

Then she continued on in Menominee, she said, [quoting in Menominee]. She told me. She says, “You know, maybe you’re gonna be an old man, and hear these kids talking our language.” She said, “I love ya. Don’t give up.”