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Rising Above: Language Revitalization in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

By Benjamin E. Frey. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2025. 248 pages. \$60.00 hardcover; \$60.00 e-book.

Benjamin Frey, a second-language speaker of Cherokee, gives a deeply personal account of his efforts to recover his mother's ancestral language and culture along with some information on his learning the German language and culture of his father's ancestors. A language activist heavily involved with Cherokee language revitalization efforts, Frey views the Cherokee language as being at the core of Cherokee identity, and that a person learning it taps into thinking in a new, better way. He sees Indigenous language revitalization as an effort at healing trauma, "the soul wound," inflicted on Indigenous people, including his mother's family, by settler colonialism.

Cherokee, like most other Indigenous languages, is threatened with only about 1,300 speakers in Oklahoma and 180 in North Carolina, the home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Using census data and interviews, Frey documents the shift of the North Carolina Cherokee to speaking English, especially beginning in the 1930s, with a resulting loss of social cohesion. In 2004, the band established the New Kituwah Academy, a Cherokee immersion school, similar to schools started by the Māori in New Zealand and by Native Hawaiians. In 2019 the band's government declared a "state of emergency" and designated fifteen million dollars for language revitalization. Frey emphasizes the need for teacher training and Indigenous language materials for use in immersion schools.

At age twenty, Frey participated in a Master Apprentice Program, spending extensive one-on-one time with a fluent speaker of Cherokee, which immersed Frey in the Cherokee language and culture. He went on to get a PhD in Gaman with a minor in linguistics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Based on his education and experience, Frey is an advocate of modern approaches to second-language teaching, describing the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, such as total physical response (TPR) and the communicative language teaching approach (CLTA), which he advocates. CLTA emphasizes that "language is for *doing* things" (62).

Frey emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to language revitalization. Revitalization efforts need to be tailored to meet local situations, and he emphasizes the imperative of building social networks that use the language, giving the example of his sponsoring an afternoon "coffee hour" that immerses attendees in Cherokee at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he teaches. Throughout this informative book, Frey emphasizes that "language is medicine, is grounding" (81) and "when you learn the language, you forge relationships. You become part of something greater than yourself" (101).

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