

# OERs and Indigenization in a Japanese Language Class: Introducing Ainu Culture to Japanese Language Students

Nina Langton

UBO OER Grant Program

## Purpose

The UBC Strategic Plan of 2018 identifies Indigenous Engagement as a significant area of transformational potential. How can this potential be harnessed in a Japanese language class? The purpose of this OER is to bring the commitment to reconciliation into the Japanese language curriculum by introducing students to the Ainu Indigenous Peoples of Japan.

## Process

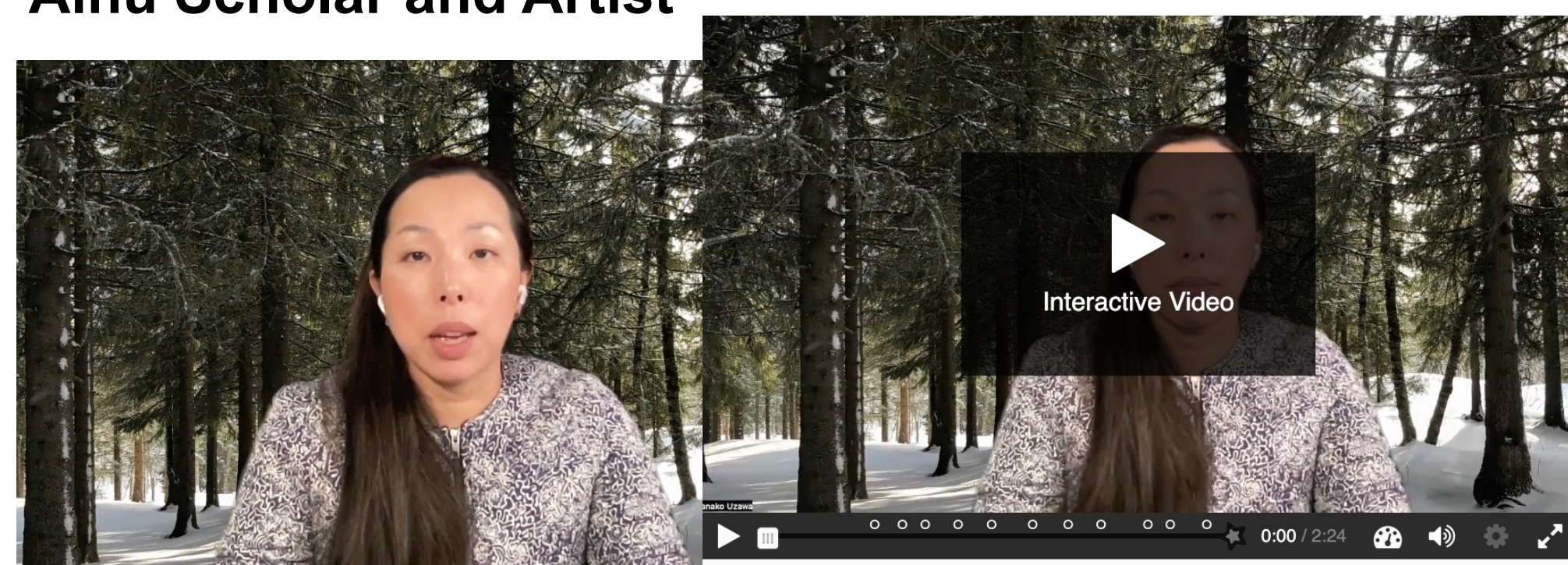
- Instructor establishes relationships with Ainu collaborators and Sylix advisors
- Establish Pressbooks account through BC Campus Open Ed
- Instructors and Undergraduate Academic Assistants research, write, record and illustrate learning modules focusing on Ainu history and culture (currently 35 modules)
- Instructor creates vocabulary, kanji, grammar, reading and listening comprehension activities for each module using H5P (currently 71 exercises)
- Instructor creates modules that focus on Ainu voices telling their own stories (newspaper articles, traditional stories, YouTube videos)
- Content experts check material
- OER promoted at conferences
- Instructors and students from UBC and other institutions freely use the OER, improving linguistic abilities while gaining insight into Ainu worldview
- Publish textbook on UBC OER Collection

## Indigenous Voices



Ainu Language Class  
YouTube channel  
Created by  
Maya Sekine

Kanako Uzawa,  
Ainu Scholar and Artist



みなさん、こんにちは。アイヌ語ではイランカラブテ！  
私の名前は、鵜澤加那子と申します。私の出身は北海道平取町二風谷です。

## H5P Learning Objects



Drag and drop words/images



Memory / matching game

「イカライカラ」は日本語で何と言いますか。

Your answer

Fill in the blank

## Impact

- Total Visits since June 2023 = 620
- Unique Visits = 373
- Page Views = 2,011
- (includes UBCO and external learners and instructors)
- UBCO JPST 200 students used 6 different modules on Ainu history, culture and lifestyle
- “I knew very little about the Ainu people going into this class but I loved learning more about Japanese ethnic groups.” JPST 200 student
- “I think it’s really necessary to talk about the Ainu. It made me realize there are different cultures within Japan.” JPST 200 student
- Page views by instructors and learners outside UBCO in Japan, United States, Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia
- Hokkaidō University Global Station for Indigenous Studies and Cultural Diversity Fellow: “I would love to share the resources with our GSI network, which features scholars from all over the world.”
- University of Toronto instructor: “I am using your website. Students say it’s easy to read because the word meanings are displayed on demand.”

## Challenges

- Using authentic voices in a lower-level language class → extensive need for scaffolding without simplifying or ‘speaking for’ the subject
- Student buy-in for some aspects of content
- Finding appropriate open access graphics, videos and texts for specific content
- Creating indexes in Pressbooks
- “Finishing” the project – open-ended

## Future Directions

- Create more active, rather than passive, exercises for language learning
- “Asking me to read ten articles is not as good as asking me to write one myself.” JPST 200 student
- More student participation - contributions to Pressbooks website (class assignments, paid work)
- Bring local Indigenous teachers into conversation
- Inclusion of Indigenous pedagogy (relational, holistic, kinesthetic, place-based)
- “...there are many similarities between the situations of the Ainu and the Aboriginal people of Canada. In my opinion, if the two can be connected, Canadian students can better understand the Ainu people.” JPST 200 student
- Encourage reflection on sensitive subjects in an open but non-threatening manner
- More inter-institutional instructor collaboration, peer review and sharing

## Reference / Bibliography

1. Antoine, Asma-na-hi, Mason, Rachel, Mason, Roberta, Palahicky, Sophia & Rodriguez de France, Carmen. 2018. *Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers*. Victoria, BC: BC Campus. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers>
2. “Shaping UBC’s Next Century”. 2018. [https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2018\\_UBC\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Full-20180425.pdf](https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2018_UBC_Strategic_Plan_Full-20180425.pdf)
3. UBC Okanagan Indigenous Engagement. Accessed April 27, 2022. <https://ok.ubc.ca/about/indigenous-engagement/>

## Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this project provided by the UBC Okanagan Open Education Resources Grant Program.