Bonjour! Hello! Tānisi! Tawnshi! Ānīn šikwa

Je m'appelle Andréa Sterzuk. Je travaille à l'Université de Régina. Je live in Treaty 4 territory and that is in the southern part of what we now, today, currently call Saskatchewan. Treaty 4 was signed at Fort Qu'Appelle, which is now a town about 45 minutes from Regina, where I live. That treaty was signed by leaders, and the leaders represented the Nêhiyawak, the Anishinabek, and the Queen. That treaty was negotiated through the medium of the English language, and it was like many of the numbered treaties throughout the Plains, the translators that served were usually Métis men, and I want to draw attention to the languages that were used at the signing of Treaty 4 - Nēhiyawēwin, Anishinaabemowin, and English because it's a reminder that there have always been multiple languages on these Plains. Multilingualism is not a new thing here.

There have been languages spoken and used in multilingual ways for a very long time in the place where I am currently a teacher educator. So I've been asked to describe what my teacher education program does or doesn't do to prepare future teachers to work with multilingual learners. So I teach in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan. Unlike a lot of programs in Canada, our teacher ed program is a four-year program. So we do have what we call an after degree program where students complete a four year BEd. and something else - a four-year degree in something else and then come to us for a two-year after degree.

But we primarily have our students in four-year programs, and what is also unique about our program is that students are part of school placements in every one of those years. So they are taking both their education classes as well as courses from other faculties and they are also completing field experiences in every year of their program. So, the primary way that we prepare future teachers to work with multilingual learners in our program is through a course called ELNG 200 Multilingualism and the Classroom. And that's a required course for all elementary education majors, which is the largest program in our faculty.

It's also a required course in the templates of several secondary majors - health education, secondary English majors, and also an inclusive education certificate that is offered as a certificate that you take after you complete your Bachelor of Education. So this program, this course has been in our program for about 12 to 13 years. It was originally called Linguistic Diversity in the Classroom. And we updated the title and the description of the course about, I think, it was three years ago.

I'm not the only professor who teaches this course in my faculty. My colleagues Dr. Fatima Pirbhai-Illrich, Dr. Barbara McNeil, they teach the course. And there are also several sessional instructors who teach it regularly, including Dr. Rubina Khanam and Dr Stacey Crooks. So the course is designed to do a few things. It prepares future teachers to develop critical multilingual language awareness. I would say that's the overarching focus. We help them to develop an understanding of language development across social contexts. We spend time thinking about
classroom instruction and how it can constitute and maintain social categories, and students become familiar with literacy and language instruction that can foster equity and justice in the classroom and beyond.

Another thing that we do in that course is there's a required eight-hour field component. So, what this usually looks like is students spend eight hours throughout the course of the semester volunteering in public schools in the city, working with students who are multilingual students. They are working to acquire, in most cases, English as a second or third language, and our students work with them usually one hour a week for a two-month period during the semester and then there's the reflection assignment that goes along with it.

Every instructor who offers the course has their own approach. In mine, students work on several assignments designed to build language awareness. So one assignment involves the study of the linguistic landscape of their hometowns or the city of Regina. Another assignment has them research the language profiles of their families and make connections between family language shift and education systems and language policy.

I was also asked to touch upon one or two key issues that I think are central to doing this work. I think the main thing that I think about when I'm working on this with my students is the history of colonialism and the ways that schools and teachers have been repeatedly positioned in ways that ask them to serve as agents of colonialism. And I think this has led to the imposition of English monolingualism in a way that makes it feel normal or mundane, and when you have that expectation or that disposition that English monolingualism is the ultimate point that people in Saskatchewan move towards, it can make it feel expected or inevitable that students who bring multiple languages into the classroom with them - that those students will eventually give up other give up their other languages and privilege English in order to fully integrate into their Saskatchewan lives.

The main issue I encounter is helping my future teachers to notice something that seems really mundane - pay attention to English monolingualism. And once we start to pay attention to English monolingualism and its presence in our lives, then I try to work towards sparking an interest in languages and multilingualism. Some students come to the classroom with that. Not every one of my students is, you know, a monolingual speaker of English. They have multiple experiences in their background, but for many of the students thinking about other languages is something new. And once we've started to pay attention to the other languages around us, then we work towards understanding what they can do to foster multilingualism in their future classrooms.

I'm looking forward to the panel discussion and to sharing a bit more about what we do at the University of Regina. And if you made it to this point, thank you all for listening. I don't remember the date, but I'll see you in a few weeks. Bye!