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Language Revitalization, Cultural Creation, and the Tlingit *Macbeth*

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Translating Shakespeare requires textual compromises no different than those required by the process of producing or editing the text in English; these activities take us closer to or further from the imagined Shakespearean “original”, though none will ever actually take us *to* the unrecoverable “original”. Recognition of this opens the text to many productive possibilities, particularly in relation to the act of cultural creation. This paper considers a specific production of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, produced by Alaska’s Perseverance Theatre at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in March 2007, in which the construction of a new cultural product – in this case, a *Macbeth* translated into the social and linguistic setting of an indigenous, pre-contact Tlingit society – became part of a process of language revitalization through the act of cultural adaptation.

Perseverance Theatre’s *Macbeth* demonstrates that the linguistic strategy of language recovery may be attainable through importing an iconic text from an hegemonic language and culture and claiming it for the threatened language. This inquiry examines several specific translational tactics the Tlingit *Macbeth* deployed, with the objective of considering the project as one potential methodology for generating linguistic life for an endangered language and reversing language shift. Simultaneously, translational comparison at the cultural level can help demonstrate how the Tlingit *Macbeth* operates as a two-way force in cultural creation, informing the source (Shakespeare) as much as the target (Tlingit).