



mâdawô-wîcihitowin
2026 SILR Gathering
All People Helping Each Other

Evaluation Report



SILR



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**



Written and developed by Indigenous Insights Collective, June 2026, for internal reflection and guidance of the Supporting Indigenous Languages Revitalization project at the University of Alberta.

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From left to right: Indigenous Insights Collective's evaluation team (Taylor Wilson, Gladys Rowe, Lana Klok) and SILR's Executive Director Pamela McCoy Jones.

Evaluation Methods

Evaluation Goals

The Indigenous Insights Collective (IIC) continues to walk alongside the Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR) project to support evaluation of their past and current presence, and to guide future decision making to ensure responsiveness to community-led priorities. For the SILR gathering IIC designed evaluation engagements with the goal to:

- Generate data on who attends the **SILR gathering**, what their experience is like, and collect feedback to improve upcoming gatherings.
- Surface and honour stories to capture the **impact of language revitalization**, both in relation to personal growth as well as across relationships.
- Share **SILR's project journey** and invite attendees to reflect on SILR's current presence, and to invite dialogue to shape SILR's future based on community priorities.

Setup

IIC designed diverse evaluation engagements enabling attendees to participate in a way that felt most accessible to them. This setup generated varied results including written data, visual feedback and collages, and oral stories which were translated into both quantitative statistics and qualitative insights. In total 224 engagements occurred at the five engagement setups.

Gathering Survey

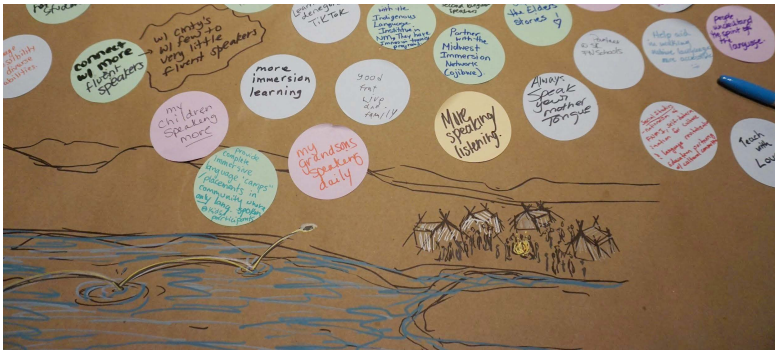
- **Responses:** 99 (21.2% of attendees)
- **Setup:** Digital, Paper (Available at Gathering and sent post-Gathering)
- **Focus:** SILR Gathering and attendance
- **Core Question(s):** *Who is here? (descriptive statistic baseline) What happened? (gathering experiences and immediate outcomes)? What is emerging? (sustainability signals/sensechecking)*
- **Quantitative and Qualitative Data:** gathering consistency, participant profile, gathering reflections and feedback

Pre-Conference Sharing Circle

- **Participants:** circa 60 (12.8% of attendees)
- **Setup:** Chairs in circle, opening ceremony by Pamela, flips and stickies for reflection
- **Focus:** Language Revitalization and future SILR project
- **Core Question(s):** *What might SILR do to clear the path for Language Resurgence?*
- **Qualitative Data:** Community-led stories, Ripple effects, Future impact potential SILR

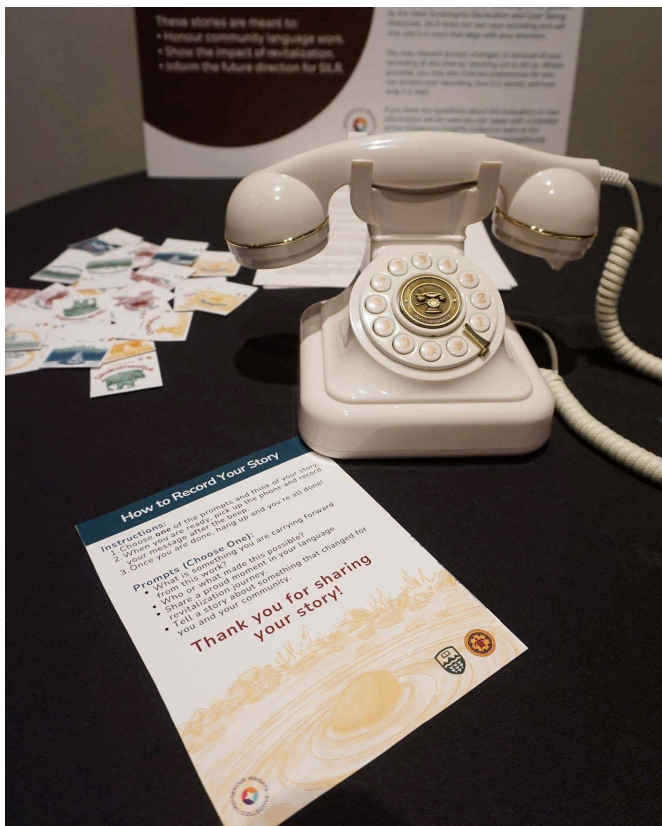
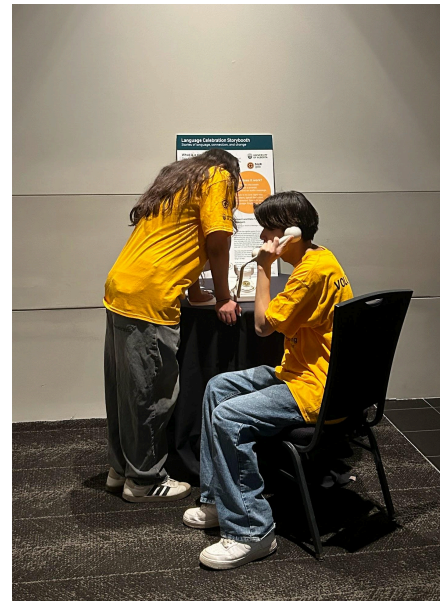
Collective Artwork SILR in Transition

- **Overall responses:** 49 (10.5% of attendees)
- **Setup:** Three informative posters about SILR's journey (reconciliation, revitalization, resurgence) and questions, brownpaper with visual, writing and collage materials
- **Focus:** SILR project (past, present and future)
- **Core Question(s):** *Where has SILR been and how has it evolved? What relationships, efforts, and conditions made this work possible? What feels important to carry forward?*
- **Quantitative and Qualitative Data:** Identity and positioning SILR, strategic direction and ecosystem mapping



Language (Revitalization) Storybooth

- **Participants:** 16 (3.4% of attendees)
- **Setup:** Informative poster, prompts and telephone recorder
- **Focus:** Impact of Language (revitalization) on community
- **Core Question(s):** *What has been made possible through this work? What moments are people most proud of in their LR journeys? What has changed, grown, or emerged through LR? Who or what helps make it possible?*
- **Qualitative Data:** Auditive stories about and in Indigenous Languages



Kitchen Table Talks

- **Participants:** NA*
- **Setup:** Selection of Story Seeds card deck, timers and conversation prompts, table and four chairs
- **Focus:** Language Revitalization and SILR evaluation framework/promising practices
- **Core Question(s):** *How do different generations experience and connect to language? What do we learn from each other when we take time to sit and share? What feels important to carry forward for future generations?*
- **Qualitative Data:** *People didn't participate in the setup as the design intended, however people did express interest in the card deck as a community-engagement tool.

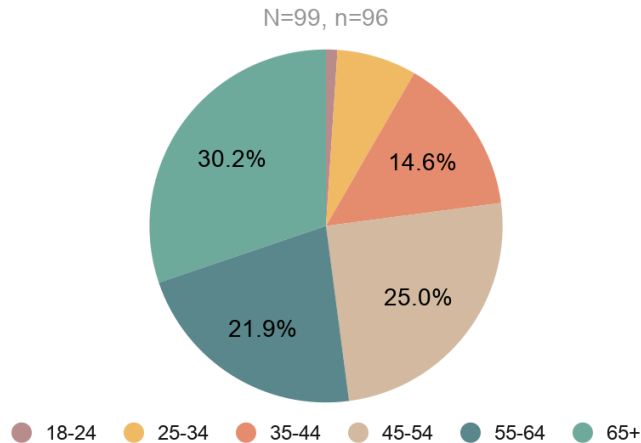


Gathering Attendees

The 2026 Gathering exceeded projected participation expectations, demonstrating continued growth and strong community interest in language revitalization. While the Gathering initially projected attendance at 400 participants, 537 registrations were made, with the Gathering ultimately welcoming 467 attendees.

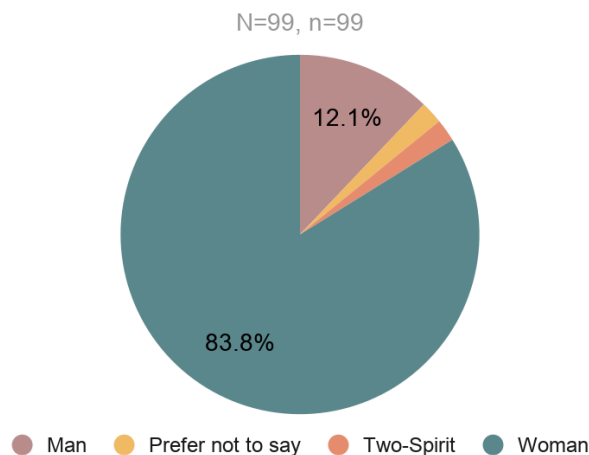
Who was present at the Gathering?

Age of 2026 SILR Gathering Attendees



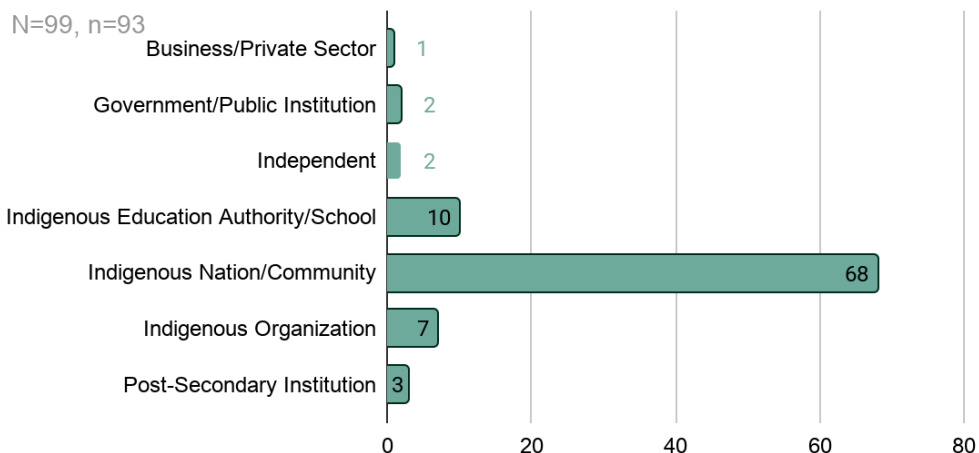
The Gathering drew a strong intergenerational audience, with the largest respondent group being attendees aged 65+ (30.2%), followed closely by those aged 45-54 (25.0%) and 55-64 (21.9%). Essentially 77.1% of attendees were over the age of 45. This distribution highlights the role older generations and Elders continue to play in language revitalization. Through observations from the Evaluation and SILR teams at the Gathering, the age groups under 44 years old were present at the conference, yet survey responses rates were low.

Gender Identity of 2026 SILR Gathering Attendees



Most respondents identified as women (83.8%), with smaller representation of men and Two-Spirit attendees. The gender distribution at this year's Gathering reflects the significant leadership and participation of women within Indigenous language revitalization spaces. During the Pre-Conference Workshop, it was noted by an attendee that she appreciated that there were men present at the Gathering and would like to see more men participating in language revitalization.

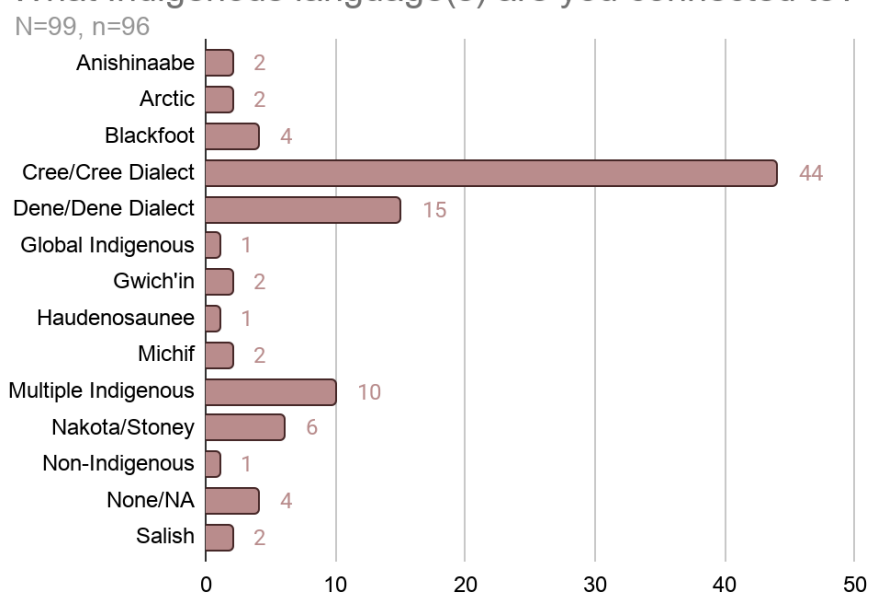
What community, Nation, or organization do you represent?



Most respondents identified themselves as representing an Indigenous Nation or community (68), with additional representation from Indigenous education authorities, schools, and organizations (17). Other respondents identified as representing post-secondary institutions, government or public institutions, and the business or private sector. Independent respondents either put “individual” or “myself”. The findings reinforce that the Gathering was heavily community-driven while including institutional and organizational partners.

Connection to Indigenous Languages

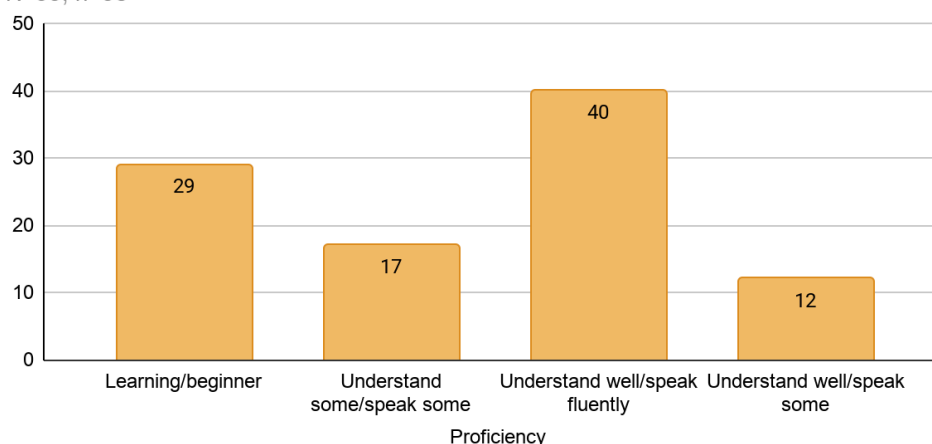
What Indigenous language(s) are you connected to?



Cree/Cree dialects represented the largest language connection among respondents (44), followed by Dene/Dene dialects (15). Notable in the surveys was the number of respondents who clarified which dialect of Cree or Dene they were connected to, showing the importance of distinction within languages in addition to between them. The respondents' Indigenous language connections reflected the Gathering's geographic language connections, with many being languages local to the Gathering's location. However, representation from out of the region was notable, from other provinces and globally.

How would you describe your Indigenous language proficiency?

N=99, n=98

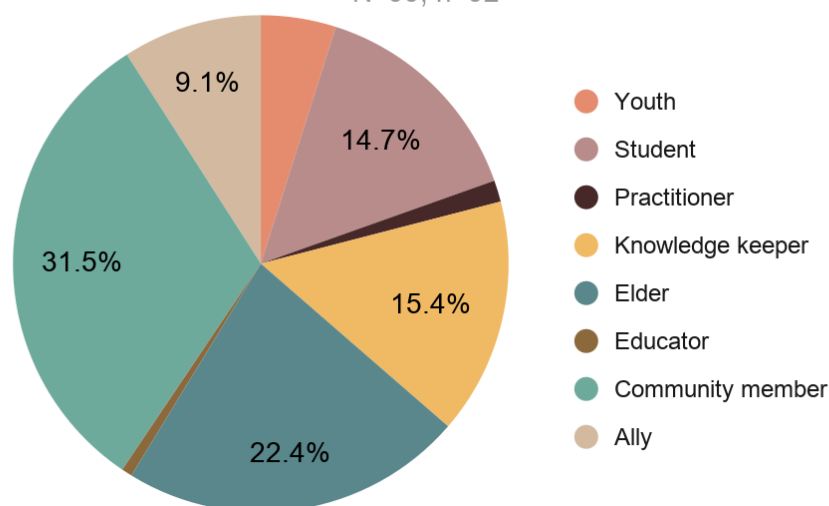


Respondents represented a wide range of language proficiency levels. The largest group identified as understanding well or speaking fluently (40), while a substantial number also identified as beginners or emerging learners (29). This reflects the Gatherings role as a space that brings together people in varying stages of their language journeys as well as an opportunity to bridge the large number of fluent and emerging language speakers.

Role and Responsibilities in Relation to Revitalization

Relationship to Indigenous Language Revitalization

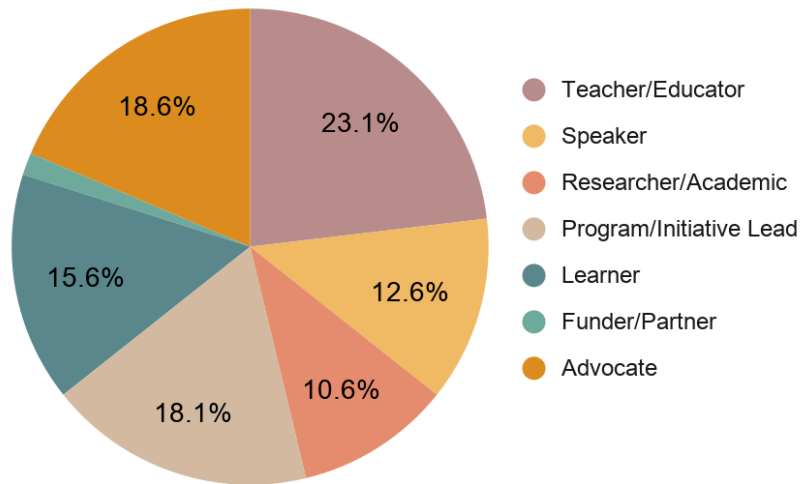
N=99, n=92



Attendees were asked what relationship they carried to language revitalization. Respondents identified a wide range of relationships to language revitalization, with community members forming the largest group (31.5%), followed by Elders (22.4%) and knowledge keepers (15.4%), then students (14.7%). Overall, this distribution reflects a diverse and community-rooted representation of Gathering attendees. This shows that respondents connect to language work in many different forms.

Role in Language Revitalization

N=99, n=88



In addition to how respondents connected to language revitalization, they were also asked what their role in it is. Teachers and educators represent the largest role category (23.1%), followed closely by advocates (18.6%), program or initiative leads (18.1%), and learners (15.6%). This distribution demonstrates that the Gathering brought together people working across educational, organizational, advocacy, and leadership roles.

After the Gathering

What actions might you take as a result of attending the SILR Gathering?

N=99, n=99



Respondents left the Gathering with a strong intention to deepen their involvement with language revitalization efforts. The most anticipated action was deepening language skills and knowledge (20.6%), followed by nurturing community-based language practices (19.1%), and expanding language programming (17.5%). Overall, the responses suggest the Gathering fostered motivation toward continued engagement, collaboration, and practical revitalization efforts.

Key Attendee Insights

Attendees were asked to share what insights they are taking away as they leave the Gathering. Many reflections spoke to the **emotional and spiritual importance of language**, with attendees describing language as something that connects people to family, ancestors, identity, and community. One attendee shared that *"our language is a spirit,"* while another reflected that *"language is our relationship to those who are here and those who have gone before us. Language is a connection to blood memory through otsig (our belly button)."*

Hope and encouragement were strong themes throughout. Many attendees spoke about leaving the Gathering feeling inspired, supported, and less alone in their language journeys. One attendee shared, *"hope! Despite all the challenges we are all putting effort into language resurgence,"* while another reflected, *"inspiration to keep moving forward. At times I am tired, and I feel alone, but I know now that I am not alone, we just need to reach out. Thank you"*. Others described the Gathering as affirming and grounding, sharing reflections such as *"I am where I am supposed to be,"* and *"this just strengthens my determination to learn my first language"*.

Many attendees emphasized the importance of **immersion and speaking language in everyday life**. Reflections often focused on language beginning in the home and continuing throughout all stages of learning and education. One attendee noted that *"language starts from the home to the classroom and extends to post-secondary advancing the Indigenous languages,"* while another shared that *"the only way we will learn our language is immersion. That's the way our ancestors learned, it was to hear it, and children learned fast"*. Attendees also encouraged one another to speak language regardless of fluency level. As one attendee explained, *"no matter what language we speak, we have to speak as little or as much as we know,"* while another encouraged attendees to *"just speak your language, even if you don't understand, you will pick it up within you"*.

Attendees frequently reflected on the **collective nature of language revitalization work**. Many comments emphasized supporting one another, learning together, and recognizing that everyone has a role to play. One attendee shared that *"we are all working together in this important work,"* while another reflected that *"we are not working alone in our language"*. Others emphasized that *"everyone supporting language revitalization needs to keep up the good work so it's normal to hear Native languages in communities,"* and that *"no matter who we are, we have a role in supporting language immersion and revitalization if we want to have a part in it"*.

Healing was another recurring theme throughout attendee reflections. Several attendees described Indigenous **languages as healing and life-giving**. One attendee shared that *"what stood out is how the language is healing. Our languages heal us,"* while another reflected that *"we feel language. We breathe it, we touch it, we hear it, we smell it, and see it"*. Others connected language revitalization to relationships, kindness, and community care, emphasizing the importance of patience and gentleness in language learning spaces. One attendee reflected that *"to preserve and share our languages without any setback, learners need patience, speakers need to be gentle."*

Attendees also spoke about the importance of **adapting language revitalization efforts** while remaining **grounded in Indigenous values and approaches**. Some reflections focused on the role of technology in supporting language learning and teaching, while others emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between communities and institutions. One attendee shared that *"the question is how to focus and explore a clear approach with the institutions, communities in collaboration and partnerships,"* while another highlighted *"our need to resort to technology to help us as Indigenous peoples to continue to teach our young the necessity to hold onto our language and culture"*.

Overall, attendee reflections described **language revitalization as ongoing, collective, and deeply meaningful** work. One attendee reflected that “*revitalization is a process. It’s not perfect, but it’s a start. Communities are doing great work, they just need support,*” while another stated simply that “*we have to do it ourselves*”.

Together, the reflections suggest **attendees left the Gathering with renewed hope, stronger connections, and a continued commitment to supporting Indigenous languages in their homes, communities, and everyday lives.**



Stories of Language Impact

The Storybooth recordings captured deeply personal reflections about the impacts of Indigenous language revitalization on individuals, families, and communities. Across the stories, attendees spoke about **reconnecting with language after generations of disruption, finding renewed purpose and identity, strengthening relationships with family members, and carrying language forward for future generations.**

Several storytellers reflected on the **intergenerational impacts of residential schools** and the **ways language loss affected their families**. One attendee shared that although her father was a fluent Cree speaker, “*as a survivor of the residential school, he decided that his children were not going to be stupid so he didn’t teach us how to speak Cree*”. Now learning Cree herself at age 57, she described her hope of passing the language on to her grandchildren. Another storyteller recalled how speaking her language surprised her mother, who had been made to feel ashamed of it, and explained that moment inspired her to continue learning and eventually become a Cree teacher.

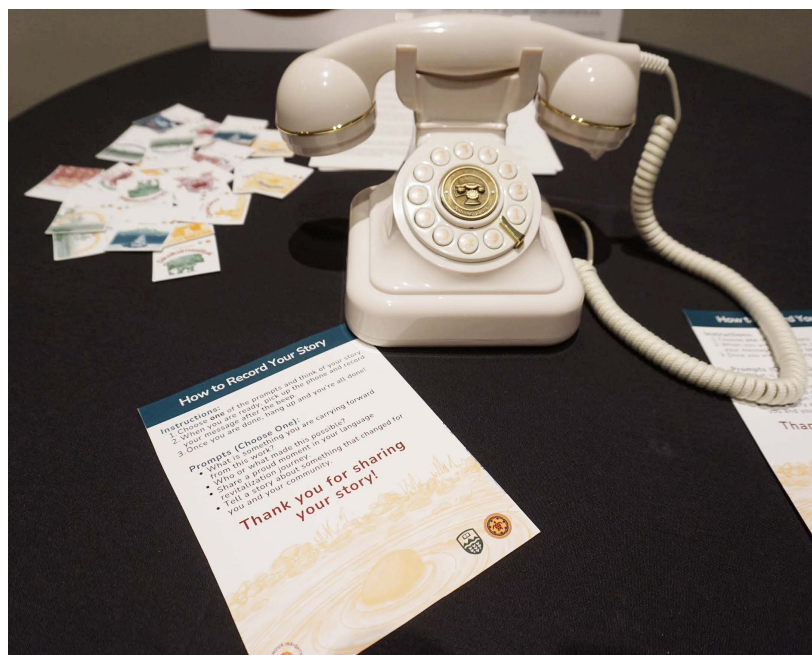
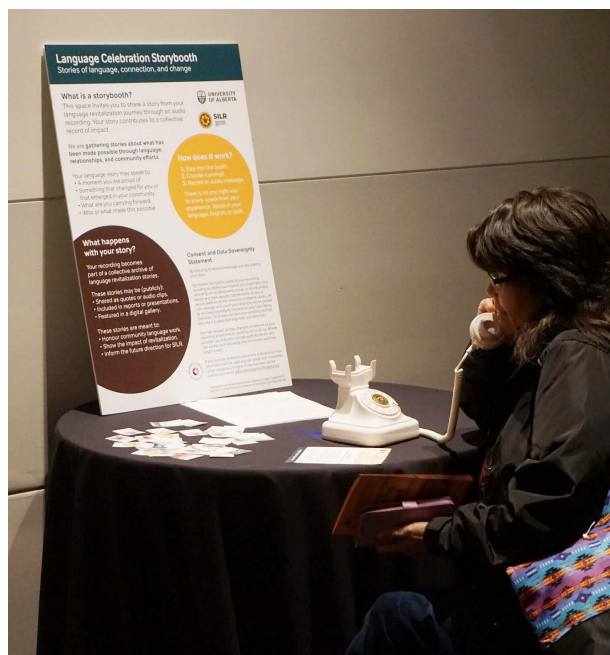
Many stories emphasized **language as a connection between generations**. Attendees frequently spoke about parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren as both the **motivation and the purpose behind their language journeys**. One storyteller shared that she continues language work in honour of her late father, explaining that she wants her grandchildren and his great-grandchildren “*to continue holding onto that so we don’t ever lose that*”. Another reflected on realizing that she had not taught her children their language because she believed Western education would provide better opportunities and now hopes to reconnect four generations of her family through language learning.

Stories of **personal achievement and language learning breakthroughs** were also common. One storyteller described an emotional moment after spending years in a mentor-apprentice program. After listening to two fluent speakers converse throughout an entire day, she suddenly realized she had understood everything they had said. Reflecting on that experience, she recalled, “*I actually understood everything they were talking about, like everything. I just had goosebumps*”. That realization eventually contributed to her becoming a language instructor herself, demonstrating how language learning journeys can evolve into leadership and teaching roles.

Language was also described as a **source of healing, identity, and belonging**. One storyteller reflected on receiving the teaching, “*when you are lost return to who you are*”, which inspired them to reconnect with family, community, and language after years of feeling disconnected. Through those relationships they came to understand that “*keeping the language is what keeps us alive*”. Others spoke about language as a **daily practice rooted in prayer, humility, kindness, and giving**. One storyteller explained that praying in Cree and speaking words that remind them of humility and kindness are important ways they maintain both language and identity as an intergenerational survivor.

Attendees also shared stories about the **many different ways language is being carried forward today**. One mother spoke proudly about her daughter learning Cree through music and Cree hymns, explaining that she is “*proud of my daughter for attempting to learn Cree and doing it in a way that she loves.*” Others described the **importance of immersion, land-based learning, teaching, storytelling, and recording Elders' knowledge**. Language revitalization was not presented as a single pathway, but as something taking place through classrooms, conferences, homes, music, community programs, and everyday life.

Several storytellers also reflected on the importance of gatherings like SILR in sustaining this work. They described **conferences and language programs as sources of motivation, encouragement, and practical learning**. One language teacher explained that hearing the stories of other educators helped remind them that “*we're doing the best we can*”, while another noted that gatherings and workshops over the past decade had motivated them to continue learning, teaching, and speaking their language.

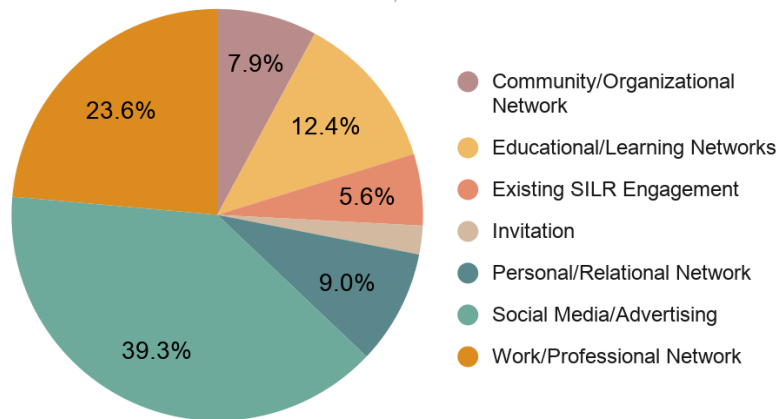


The 2026 Gathering

Coming to the Gathering

How did you hear about the SILR Gathering?

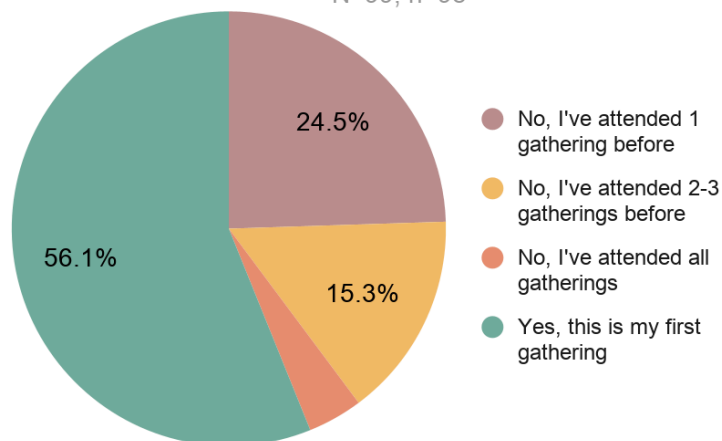
N=99, n=89



Respondents learned about the 2026 SILR Gathering through several methods. The largest source of outreach was via social media and advertising (39.3%) which included platforms like Facebook, emails from SILR and academic institutions, and advertisements on various institutional websites such as the University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, and University of Augustana. Followed by this were several word of mouth networks such as through attendees communities, local organizations, education or learning spaces, work, and personal relationships. With several attendees stating they heard about the Gathering from their relatives. Overall, this distribution suggests that SILR outreach is occurring through digital communication and strong relational networks.

Is this your first SILR Gathering?

N=99, n=98

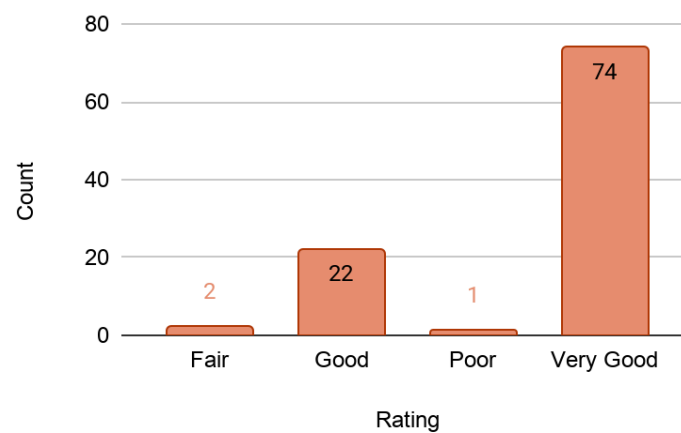


More than half of respondents (56.1%) indicated that this was their first SILR Gathering, while others had attended one or more of the previous Gatherings. This suggests that SILR continues to expand its reach and attract new attendees while also maintaining returning attendances and ongoing relationships.

Gathering Satisfaction

2026 SILR Gathering Attendee Ratings

N=99, n=99



Respondent feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 74 of the 99 respondents rating the gathering as “Very Good” and another 22 rating it as “Good”. Only three respondents selected “Fair” or “Poor”. Overall the results suggest a highly positive attendee experience and strong satisfaction with the Gathering’s programming, atmosphere, and community engagement.

What Attendees Enjoyed About the 2026 SILR Gathering

Attendees described the Gathering as **inspiring, healing, relational, and deeply energizing**. Across all engagements, attendees most frequently **highlighted the presentations, performances, networking opportunities, and the overall sense of community**. Many emphasized that the Gathering created a **meaningful space not only for learning**, but also for **reconnecting with culture, language, and one another**. As one attendee reflected, *“SILR is an authentic and essential initiative. It also creates time for sharing, it’s the most inclusive event - inviting attendees to contribute. This is special, it should continue in every iteration”*.

Presentations and workshops were among the most consistently praised aspects of the Gathering. Attendees highlighted the keynote speakers, interactive workshops, technology sessions, and practical learning opportunities as most valuable. Specific presenters mentioned multiple times including Roberta Alook, Aaron Fay, Neil Redcrow, Dr. Lorna Williams, Dr. Chuutsqa L. Rorick, Dr. Charlotte Ross, and Sterling Daychief. Many attendees also appreciated the emotional impact and practical value of the sessions, with one attendee sharing that *“there were so many good workshops and presentations that it was hard to pick which one to attend,”* while another explained that *“the people and the sessions gave me a strong meaning to do more work and assisting with the knowledge of SILR”*. Youth voices were especially impactful, with one attendee noting that *“the youth speakers were absolutely amazing and inspiring.”* Many attendees also emphasized that the sessions provided practical tools and renewed motivation they could bring back to their communities.

Stories, songs, performances, and ceremony were another major highlight of the Gathering. Attendees frequently described being emotionally moved by these sharing during the event. Performers such as Leo and Prscilla McGilvray and Alex Firethunder were specifically named as memorable. One attendee reflected that *“I love all the stories, knowledge, and songs shared. I believe everything my students heard will be utilized”*,

while another shared that they *“loved hearing how prayer, song, ceremony are so important to keeping the language alive and well”*. Others described the keynotes and performances as *“very powerful and empowering”*, explaining that *“through their work they ignite the sparks of a fire to burn brighter”*.

Networking and relationship building emerged as one of the strongest themes overall. Many described the Gathering as an important opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, build new relationships, and realize they were not alone in their language work. Attendees consistently valued being able to gather with language speakers, learners, educators, Elders, and community members from different Nations, regions, and territories. One attendee described the Gathering as a *“great opportunity to network with language speakers from each of the different regions, provinces, and territories,”* while another reflected that *“so many cool people all in one place inspiring each other on this lonely journey.”* Others emphasized the importance of connection and community, noting that *“I got to meet and learn from so many influential people. I feel honoured to have gained this experience,”* and that *“your work is essential in bringing language champions and communities together to support language revitalization.”* The Gathering appears to have strengthened both personal and professional relationships across many different areas of language work.

Attendees also appreciated the **activities and interactive spaces** throughout the gathering. Photobooths, crafts, bingo, Elder Wellness activities, Kitchen Table Talk, and the passport activity were all mentioned positively as ways to encourage participation, conversation, and connection beyond formal presentations. Attendees described the Gathering **atmosphere as engaging, welcoming, and community-oriented**, with opportunities for learning taking place both inside and outside the formal sessions.

Representation and diversity were also identified as important strengths of the gathering. Attendees appreciated hearing multiple Indigenous languages and dialects represented throughout the event, as well as the inclusion of Elders, youth, learners, and speakers from different Nations and regions. One attendee shared that *“I like how the conference was full of our people,”* while another emphasized that *“exposure to different dialects is also important, differences create fluency and understanding.”* Hearing Indigenous languages spoken openly throughout the gathering was meaningful for many participants and contributed to a broader sense of resurgence and collective momentum.

Food, vendors, and the venue were also positively discussed, particularly the variety of vendors, the atmosphere in the main hall, and the catering. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to engage with Indigenous businesses, artists, and organizations throughout the gathering space, contributing to the broader feeling of community presence and cultural celebration.

Overall, attendees consistently described the Gathering as much more than a conference. Many framed it as a space of healing, resurgence, learning, and collective motivation. One attendee shared that *“it was a healing experience, there was so much I learned from each presenter,”* while another reflected that *“I enjoyed this gathering, this is my second gathering and it makes my heart happy to see how much the languages are waking up.”* Others emphasized the broader significance of the gathering itself, noting that *“this conference is greatly needed for community”* and that *“I think that by attending this gathering, I feel the urgency to vitalize the language.”* For many attendees, the Gathering provided not only inspiration, but also practical direction and renewed commitment moving forward. As one attendee summarized, *“I can take back the tools that were shared. I’m super excited to share this with my colleagues”*.

Attendee Concerns and Feedback

While overall feedback about the Gathering was **overwhelmingly positive**, attendees also shared **constructive concerns** related to **scheduling, accessibility, venue logistics, presentation structure, and Elder care**. Most comments reflected a desire to **strengthen and refine future Gatherings while maintaining the strong relational, cultural, and community-centred atmosphere** attendees valued.

One of the most common concerns related to **scheduling and session structure**. Attendees appreciated the quality and quantity of presentations, but many found it difficult to choose between concurrent breakout sessions and noted that some sessions ran too long or started late. Several attendees expressed wanting shorter sessions, more repeated workshops, and clearer expectations about session formats. One attendee shared that they *“attended an afternoon session, was not aware it was a sharing circle, fully went into the session expecting to learn from the facilitator, but still managed to walk away with new learnings”*. Others noted that performances and entertainment were scheduled too late in the day, resulting in lower attendance. As one attendee explained, *“the performances were amazing, but no one was left to enjoy them. I think if you restructure, you’d lose less people”*. Sharing circles were appreciated, though some attendees suggested more facilitation structure, including that there should be a *“time limit on sharing circle, one person talked for 15 minutes”*.

Accessibility and venue logistics were another significant area of concern. Attendees commented on long registration lines, confusing navigation, insufficient signage, overcrowded breakout rooms, and challenges related to mobility throughout the venue. Escalator and elevator issues were mentioned multiple times, particularly regarding accessibility for Elders and attendees with mobility needs. Some attendees also felt the venue itself was too large and required excessive walking. One attendee shared, *“I didn’t get into some of the events I wanted to go to due to space availability”*. Food service also generated mixed feedback, with requests for more traditional foods, diabetic-friendly options, simpler meals, and improved lunch organization.

Many comments specifically focused on the **care and prioritization of Elders**. Attendees emphasized that Elders should be better supported during meals and throughout the Gathering. One attendee reflected, *“I noticed that the volunteers ate first or were in line for food first... The Elders should have been fed first, the volunteers should have gone around with plates”*.

Attendees also raised concerns related to **representation, language diversity, and presentation accountability**. Some attendees requested more regional dialect representation and more fluent local speakers, while others emphasized the importance of screening presenters and clearly identifying speakers beforehand. One attendee commented, *“Please screen your presenters, pretty sure one was a pretendian,”* while another requested that organizers *“send out presenter bios and give attendees a list so that we all know what we need and who to contact to assist us.”* Additional concerns included wanting more Indigenous language use throughout presentations and more diverse language representation beyond dominant dialects.

Requests & Recommendations

Attendees also shared a wide range of **recommendations and requests for future Gatherings**. Many attendees wanted **additional practical resources and hands-on learning opportunities**, including language toolkits, apps, resource-sharing sessions, and land-based experiences. One attendee suggested that the *“next Gathering add things like language resources, an app, field trips to schools to check out their immersion program, and bring the land to your conference”*. Others requested more **opportunities for collaborative dialogue and community exchange**, including panels featuring language learners sharing their journeys and experiences.

Several recommendations focused on strengthening future Gathering **structure and outreach**. Attendees suggested ending future Gatherings with clearer collective next steps or calls to action, with one attendee directly recommending to *“end the Gathering with calls to action”*. Others proposed hosting future Gatherings in **different regions or provinces to broaden participation** and reach additional Indigenous Nations and organizations. One attendee suggested to *“do the conference in another province to reach other Indigenous Nations and organizations,”* while others proposed **expanding SILR internationally and building stronger global Indigenous connections**.

Attendees **also requested**:

- more youth and learner panels,
- more evening or interactive activities,
- more opportunities to attend similar events throughout the year,
- and stronger representation from fluent speakers in local regions.

Specific recommendations included inviting fluent speakers such as Ida Bull, Wayne Jackson, Joyce Wood, Mary CC, and Jason Chamakeese. Others suggested considering venues such as River Cree Resort for future Gatherings.

Many attendees also expressed interest in **practical follow-up supports and clearer communication after the Gathering**. Requests included presenter bios, links to resources, recordings, language learning tools, and more opportunities to stay connected after the event. One attendee suggested that SILR provide *“a session where people just share program ideas and things they love and have done within their families and communities”*.

Overall, the concerns and recommendations reflected a **strong investment in SILR’s future and a shared desire to continue strengthening the Gathering as a culturally grounded, accessible, relational, and action-oriented space for Indigenous language revitalization**.

SILR 2.0

Insights on Identity

Community Perspective on SILR's Identity

The Gathering was attended primarily by representatives of Indigenous Nations and communities, who accounted for more than 70% of attendees. As a result, the perspectives shared throughout the Gathering provide important insight into how community members currently experience SILR and how they envision its future role within Indigenous language resurgence efforts.

To better understand SILR's identity and future direction, two complementary evaluation activities were undertaken. First, attendees participated in a collective transition artwork activity, where 49 participants responded to the question: *What identity traits do you believe should be at SILR's core?*

Second, attendees were invited to reflect on their own role in language revitalization through the Gathering survey question: *What actions might you take as a result of attending the Gathering?*

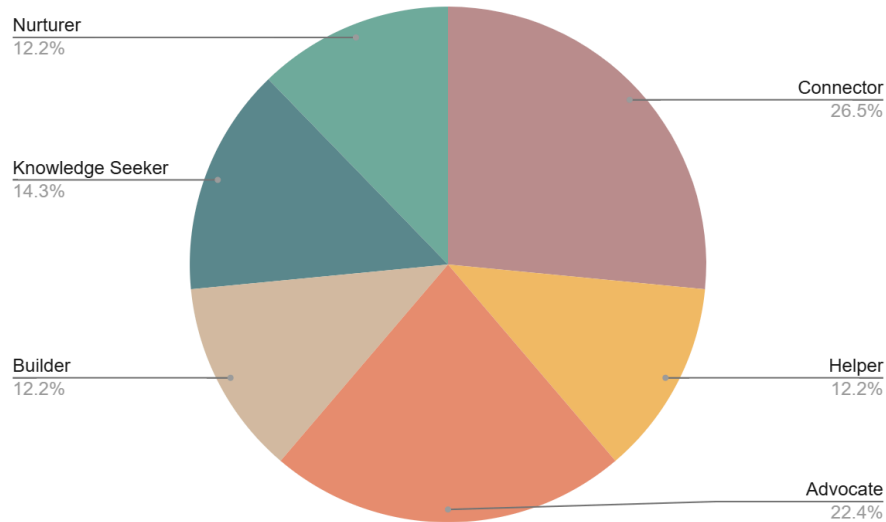
Together, these questions explored both how community members understand SILR's role and how they understand their own responsibilities within Indigenous language revitalization. This dual perspective provides insight into the reciprocal relationship between SILR and the communities it serves.

In the Transition artwork activity, attendees selected one of the six key Identity traits that they believed should guide SILR's work moving forward. These Identity traits were chosen in earlier SILR evaluation and strategic planning sessions. The results below show the number of votes per identity trait in the transition artwork, and also provides an example of the reasoning behind these choices:

- **Connector** (13) *"The foundation. It should be at the roots."*
- **Advocate** (11) *"Creating Avenues for the long run."*
- **Knowledge-seeker** (7) *"SILR building knowledge."*
- **Helper** (6) *"Putting \$. Not just services."*
- **Builder** (6) *"Community building." "Building and speaking the language"*
- **Nurturer** (6) *"Kushi work.", "Safe Spaces." and "Start at a young age."*



Each colored leaf represents a specific identity trait. Participants choose their preferred identity trait to add to the tree. A total of 49 people participated. (resource: Transition artwork)

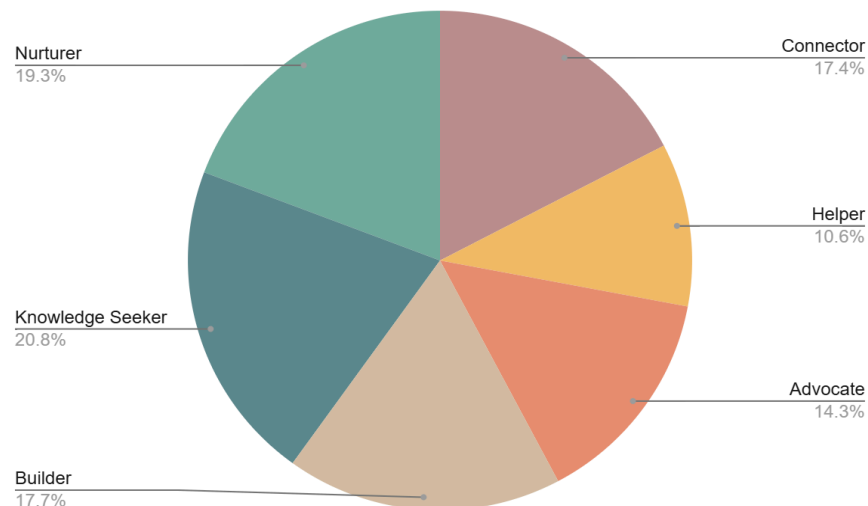


SILR Identity piechart based on attendee responses on SILR's most important identity trait. (resource: Transition artwork)

Community Identity in Relationship to SILR

The Gathering survey invited attendees to consider how they might act following the Gathering. Participants could select up to three actions that reflected what they intended to carry forward into their own language revitalization work. Each answer was derived from a specific SILR identity trait, but not directly presented as such in the survey.

- **Nurturer (19.3%):** Support language through community, family, cultural, or intergenerational practices
- **Knowledge-seeker (19.3%):** Continue learning or deepening my language knowledge and skills
- **Builder (17.7%):** Start or expand a language initiative, project, or program
- **Connector (17.4%):** Build or strengthen relationships, partnerships, or networks
- **Advocate (14.3%):** Advocate for language revitalization in policy, institutions, or systems.
- **Helper (10.6%):** Look for funding, tools, or supports to enable language work



Community Identity based on attendee responses on their potential actions after attending the SILR gathering (resource: Gathering Survey)

Interpretation Identity Insights: Community and SILR

Taken together, the results suggest that **attendees see SILR and community members as occupying complimentary roles within a shared language revitalization ecosystem.**

Attendees most often identified **SILR as a Connector and an Advocate**, highlighting its role in bringing people together. In contrast, attendees more often described **their own roles through nurturing language in families and communities**. One area of strong alignment was the Knowledge Seeker trait. Both SILR and attendees were viewed as active participants in learning and knowledge sharing. This suggests a **shared commitment to growing understanding about what language revitalization can look like across diverse contexts.**

The Helper identity received fewer selections in both activities. However, discussions at the Gathering highlighted a continued need for funding, resources, tools, training, and capacity-building support. Rather than being viewed as a stand-alone role, the **Helper trait might be understood as something woven throughout SILR's broader work as a Connector, Advocate, Knowledge Seeker, Builder, and Nurturer.**

Recommendations

In addition to the Identity Insights, attendees also shared *recommendations on how SILR can support Indigenous language revitalization moving forward*. These recommendations were gathered through the survey response, conversations at the Transition Artwork activity, and the discussion during the Pre-Conference Sharing Circle.

Attendees were invited to reflect on who or what is at the heartbeat of Indigenous languages, how SILR might create pathways for these voices to lead, and what future ripples of resurgence they hope to see. Through these reflections, attendees identified priorities, opportunities, potential partnerships, and long-term impacts they believe SILR can help foster.

To support interpretation and planning, the recommendations were synthesized and organized according to the six Identity traits. Together, they provide insight into how attendees envision SILR showing up as a Connector, Advocate, Knowledge Seeker, Builder, Helper, and Nurturer in support of Indigenous language resurgence. A detailed summary of recommendations for each Identity trait is provided in the following sections.

Connector

Bridges people, navigates across communities and institutions, and strengthens relationships and networks.

Building and Sustaining Relationships

Attendees consistently described **relationships at the heartbeat of both Indigenous languages and SILR's work**. Many emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for people to connect, learn from one another, and share their experiences across communities, regions, and generations. Attendees encouraged SILR to continue building relationships with intention, recognizing that meaningful partnership requires trust. As one attendee shared, SILR should continue to *"hang in there"* by listening to potential partners and *"take the time to gain trust"*. Attendees also identified opportunities **to initiate, build, and nurture diverse relationships**. Suggesting a range of partners such as communities, schools, post-secondary institutions, language organizations, media organizations,



and immersion networks across local, regional, and international spaces. Suggested partnerships included [APTN](#), [Anishinaabemowin Teg](#), [Midwest Immersion Network](#) (Ojibwe), and [Indigenous Language Institute in New Mexico](#).

Bringing People Together

One of the strongest messages throughout the Gathering was the **importance of creating space where people can come together**. Attendees repeatedly described the Gathering as a place where they realized they were ‘not working alone’ and where they can learn from others facing similar challenges and opportunities. Attendees encouraged SILR to continue organizing Gatherings and other opportunities that bring *“language warriors together to celebrate and collaborate”*. These spaces were valued not only for **networking, but also for sharing stories, exchanging practical ideas**, and learning from *“best practices from the ground level”*. Several attendees expressed interest in expanding these opportunities through other **events, regional gatherings, and communities of practice** throughout the year. Many attendees also suggested bringing SILR beyond the conference by **engaging directly with communities, schools, and land-based learning spaces**. Suggestions included hosting Gatherings in different provinces, bringing programming into communities, and creating more opportunities for people to connect through immersion programs, language camps and school partnerships.

Connecting Across Generations

Attendees frequently emphasized the importance of **creating stronger connections** between Elders, fluent speakers, learners, children, youth, and families. Many highlighted the need to support **intergenerational learning** and ensure that language revitalization efforts reach people at different stages of their language journey. Attendees described youth broadly, referencing *“children and babies”*, *“town kids”*, grandchildren, and *“young people”*. Youth is often described in varying age ranges from age 15 all the way to age 35. While children (ages 0-14) and teens (ages 15-19) were frequently identified as a priority, attendees also emphasized the importance of supporting second language learners, latent speakers, parents, and adult learners (ages 20-35). **Opportunities for reciprocal learning** were also suggested, where children and teens can become language carriers and teachers within their own families and communities.

Advocate

Champions language rights, ensures visibility, and drives systemic change.

Language Revitalization as Shared Responsibility

Attendees shared how **language revitalization cannot rest solely on fluent speakers, educators, or language programs**. Instead, they described revitalization as a **collective responsibility** that requires participation from families, communities, institutions, and future generations. As one attendee reflected, language work *“cannot just rely on one or two people”*, while another stated *“we have to do it for ourselves”*. Attendees encouraged SILR to continue to **highlight the many ways people contribute to language revitalization, regardless of where they are on their journey**. This includes supporting use in homes, schools, communities, and workplaces, celebrating language success stories, and creating opportunities for people to learn from one another. Many attendees emphasized the importance of normalizing Indigenous languages in everyday life so that it becomes common to hear Indigenous languages spoken.



Supporting Systemic Change

Many attendees stressed that language revitalization **should not simply fit within existing colonial structures, but should help transform them**. This includes conversations about accreditation, language instruction, funding structures, and the recognition of Elders and Knowledge Keepers as language experts and teachers. Immersion emerged as a particularly important theme. Attendees repeatedly described **immersion as the foundation of language learning**, noting that *“the only way we will learn our language is immersion”* and that *“the way our ancestors learned it was to hear it”*. At the same time, it was recognized that pathways need to be created to help learners build confidence in using language in everyday settings, both inside and outside of formal education. Additionally, the importance of rooting language revitalization in Indigenous values was emphasized, with one attendee sharing that there is a need to *“decolonize and Indigenous”* language learning so that *“everything we do reflects our values”*.

Strengthening SILR’s Narrative

Attendees identified an opportunity for SILR to **continue sharing the stories of language resurgence, innovation, and community leadership**. Many encouraged SILR to focus on **strength-based approaches** that highlight what is working and celebrate the many ways communities are carrying language forward. Several attendees suggested that SILR 2.0 offer opportunities to reflect on **SILR’s journey, communicate its purpose more clearly**, drop the deficit and complicated language (*“Change SILR to SIL”*), and **situate its work** within the broader context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. SILR was encouraged to continue asking questions such as: *What is helping language revitalization thrive? What can be learned from successful initiatives? How can these stories be shared more broadly?*

Knowledge-Keeper

Supports learning, reflection, and knowledge sharing while bridging diverse experiences and ways of knowing.

Sharing the “How” of Language Revitalization

Attendees expressed a desire for **practical guidance on how language revitalization can happen** in communities, schools, families, and institutions. While there was a strong enthusiasm for language resurgences, many attendees were looking for practical tools, examples, and approaches that could help guide their work. SILR was encouraged to continue sharing knowledge about immersion, language teaching, community-led programming, and Indigenous approaches to learning. Attendees asked questions like: *What does immersion require? How can language be learned in Indigenous ways? What approaches are working in other communities?* There was also interest in resources that could support educators, parents, learners, and non-Indigenous teachers to understand their roles in supporting Indigenous languages. Several attendees also expressed their interest in practical resources, toolkits, and examples that could help translate ideas into action and support communities in their own language revitalization journeys.



The Heart of Language Learning

Throughout the Gathering, attendees noted how language learning is much **more than just vocabulary and translation**. Attendees described language as something that carries stories, relationships, teachings, values, and connection to land. They highlighted immersion, data sovereignty, kindness, respect, humour, and patience as important foundations for language learning. Attendees encouraged learners to *“respect all*

dialects,” “*teach with love*,” and “*treat everyone equally*”. Others emphasized the importance of creating **positive learning experiences** that encourage people to **continue speaking, listening and learning**, regardless of their level of fluency. Many attendees also described language learning as an intergenerational process involving Elders, parents, children, grandparents, Knowledge Keepers, and future generations. Stories, songs, ceremonies, and relationships with land were frequently identified as important ways that language is carried forward. As one attendee noted, language learning involves more than words alone, requiring attention to “*the spirit intent of the words*”.

Builder

Creates practical tools, resources, programs, and infrastructure.

Access to Shared Resources

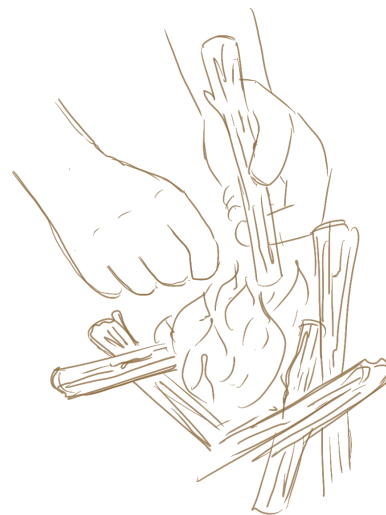
Attendees consistently expressed a desire for **accessible, practical resources that communities can use and adapt to support language revitalization**. Many envisioned **SILR as helping to create or coordinate a shared repository** of language tools, educational resources, and promising practices from across Indigenous communities. Participants emphasized that resources should be easy to access, free whenever possible, and grounded in community realities. Several attendees highlighted the need for a place where people can find Indigenous language resources from across Canada, helping communities learn from one another rather than recreating materials independently. The emphasis was not simply on creating more resources, but on making existing knowledge, tools, and experiences more visible and accessible.

Technology and Tools as Supports for Language Learning

Technology emerged as one of the **most frequently discussed opportunities** for SILR. Attendees address three key opportunities in relation to the employment of technology and development of tools for SILR to support language learning:

Accessibility for Different Audiences and Diversity in Purpose

Attendees expressed interest in practical tools that support diverse learners, including children, youth, adults, parents, second-language learners, and community educators. Suggestions included syllabics toolkits, online dictionaries with audio, language learning apps, immersion support for busy families, teaching resources, and digital platforms that promote cultural respect and Indigenous language learning. Attendees frequently emphasized that technology should serve language learning rather than replace relationships and community connections. As one attendee noted, the goal is “*to create tools that help learners and communities succeed*”. Many attendees also highlighted the potential of platforms such as YouTube, audio resources, and digital storytelling to make language learning more engaging and accessible.



Capturing and Sharing Language

Many recommendations focused on preserving and sharing language through oral and auditory approaches. Attendees repeatedly emphasized the importance of listening, storytelling, and hearing language spoken. Suggestions included recording Elders and fluent speakers, creating storytelling kiosks, developing audio-based dictionaries, and documenting stories of successful language revitalization efforts. These approaches were viewed as ways to preserve language while also making it more accessible to future

learners. The emphasis on audio and storytelling reflects a broader understanding that language carries meaning through voice, relationship, and lived experience, not solely through written text.

Exploring the Opportunities and Ethics of Technology

Attendees also expressed interest in SILR creating space for conversations about emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and digital language tools. While many saw significant potential for technology to support language revitalization, they also raised questions about ethics, cultural protocols, and appropriate use. Rather than providing definitive answers, attendees encouraged SILR to facilitate dialogue, share examples, and help communities understand both the opportunities and challenges associated with new technologies. In this way, SILR's Builder role extends beyond creating tools to helping communities navigate and shape the future of language revitalization.

Helper

Provides funding, support, knowledge, or resources so communities can advance their goals.

Encourage Collective Action

Attendees frequently described SILR as a **catalyst that helps people move from ideas to action**. Many highlighted the value of the Annual Gathering as a space where people share stories, learn from one another, and return home motivated to continue their language work. They encouraged SILR to continue creating opportunities for communities to connect, exchange ideas, and inspire one another. Several attendees suggested that future Gatherings could more explicitly support action by concluding with collective next steps or calls to action. It was noted that people often **leave SILR gathering energized and motivated**, and there may be opportunities to build on that **momentum by connecting inspiration to practical pathways for action**.



Co-create Community Capacity

Attendees identified **ongoing needs for both human and material capacity** within language revitalization efforts. Many communities continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining language instructors, supporting learners, and developing educational resources. It was also noted that some communities have graduates from language programs who do not return to teach locally, highlighting broader questions about capacity development and retention. Recommendations included supporting language programming, curriculum development, teacher training, and community-led educational initiatives. Attendees emphasized that these supports should be developed **in collaboration with communities and tailored to local realities, recognizing that language revitalization looks different across regions and Nations**.

Supporting Sustainable Funding

Funding emerged as one of the strongest themes associated with the Helper role. Attendees repeatedly discussed the challenges created by short-term funding cycles and the need for **more stable, long-term investments in Indigenous languages**. Interest was expressed in stronger advocacy for **core language funding and supports that extend beyond individual projects**. Many attendees connected sustainable funding directly to long-term language transmission, intergenerational learning, and community wellness. They emphasized that lasting language resurgence requires investments in people, programs, and infrastructure over time rather than relying solely on temporary project-based funding.

Nurturer

Creates supportive environments, honours personal journeys, and fosters relational accountability.

Learning and Growing Together

Attendees frequently described **language revitalization as a personal and collective journey that can sometimes feel isolating**. Many reflected on the **importance of connecting with others who share similar experiences, challenges, and aspirations**. Gatherings such as SILR were valued because they helped attendees realize they were not alone in their language work and provided opportunities to learn from people at different stages of their journey. There is an importance in creating spaces where first-language speakers, second-language learners, latent speakers, and community members can learn alongside one another. Several attendees spoke about the value of “*walking together, speaking together*”, highlighting how different levels of language proficiency can become a source of mutual learning and support.



Creating Immersive Learning Spaces

Attendees consistently emphasized the importance of creating **opportunities to learn language through immersion and everyday use**. While institutions, classrooms, and language nests were seen as important, many participants stressed that language learning should also happen on the land, in homes, and within communities. Suggestions included language camps, community placements, family-based learning opportunities, and land-based teachings. Language learning is strongest when it is connected to culture, relationships, and daily life. Several attendees noted that classroom instruction alone is not enough and that learners need opportunities to hear, speak, and experience language in real-world settings.

Supporting Language Transmission

Attendees proposed a variety of ways SILR could **support language transmission across generations**. Elders and Knowledge Keepers were frequently identified as central to this work, with participants recommending **stronger roles for Elders** in language programs, mentorship opportunities, and intergenerational learning initiatives. Some attendees also suggested recognizing Elders' expertise through certificates or other forms of acknowledgement that honour their knowledge and teaching roles. There was also strong support for **mentor-apprentice models, small-group learning opportunities, and community-led workshops**. Many emphasized the importance of **creating activities that engage people of all ages**, from young children learning through stories and play to adults seeking opportunities to strengthen their language skills.