



2023 SILR GATHERING REPORT

Overview

The Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR), an initiative at the University of Alberta, hosted a one-day Indigenous Language Gathering in Edmonton, Alberta on March 31, 2023. It was an honorable day as it coincided with [National Indigenous Languages Day](#) and in support of the [International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032](#).

The 2023 Gathering was successful in showcasing Indigenous language leaders, educators, learners and advocates to elevate Indigenous Language Revitalization in education, to increase language speakers and learners and to also create a network so that resources are showcased, shared and effective in revitalizing Indigenous languages.

The key objectives for the 2023 SILR Gathering include:

- ❖ Exploring the connection of mind, body and spirit in language, land and culture
- ❖ Raising awareness on the importance of language revitalization
- ❖ Sharing language learning and teaching strategies and resources
- ❖ Establishing connections and networks

This report will be used to present the demographics and key messages from 1) Conference Surveys and 2) Breakout Session Evaluations. In brief, the report entails the future need for more Indigenous Language gatherings, more diversity in Indigenous languages, community networking, resource sharing and most importantly, the hunger that lies in individuals and groups to revitalize Indigenous languages.

The individual and collective of leaders in the Indigenous language community were featured and highlighted at the event, examples include:

- ❖ Dr. Jessie Sylvestre, the Gathering's keynote speaker, who presented on *Land is Medicine, Land is Healing, Land speaks to us*.
- ❖ Dr. Kevin Lewis, the Gathering's Master of Ceremonies and a he presented on *kâ-nêyâsihk mihkiwahpa Centre of Excellence- Cree Language Immersion Land Based Program*
- ❖ Dr. Belinda Daniels, who presented on her *nêhiyaw language immersion camp*
- ❖ Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper, an esteemed Elder member of SILR's Advisory Council who presented on *Sounds Create Your Worldview: challenging the use of Roman Orthography or the English alphabet in learning Indigenous languages. Consider what is lost in the process of translation. Exploring how sound creates Indigenous worldview*.
- ❖ Cameron Adams, a young man of ininiw-Anishinaabe and French Canadian with Scottish and English ancestry from Gimli, Manitoba. Mr. Adams was well versed and presented himself as a leader amongst the youth panel.



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Methodology

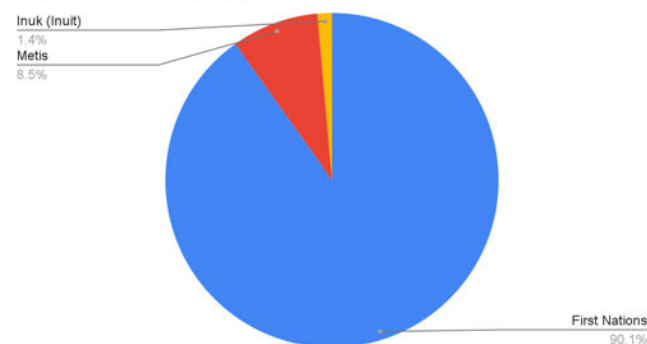
The information gathered for this report was from 76 individual surveys and 338 feedback [forms](#). The surveys that were submitted give a snapshot of the demographic information on who was in attendance at the 2023 SILR Gathering, such as: Indigenous identifiers, age groups, gender, and the number of attendees interested in learning an Indigenous language(s). The feedback forms gathered have provided and will continue to provide future insight to SILR's future gatherings.

This information assists in the process of planning future gatherings, establishing community networks and identifying the capacity building that is needed for Indigenous Language(s) revitalization to occur.

Key Findings

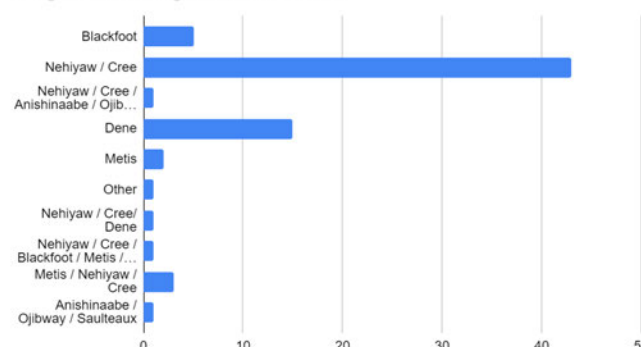
- ❖ There were 214 participants that registered for the 2023 SILR Gathering, these are the percentages who identified as Indigenous
- ❖ 35% of the responses are from participants who attended the 2023 SILR Gathering
- ❖ Diagram 1 90.1% First Nations, 8.5% Métis, 1.4% Inuk in attendance

Diagram 1 - Self Identify



- ❖ Diagram 2 58 % identified as Cree, some attendees self-identified with more than one option which shifted some of the data. Nonetheless, Cree had the “highest numbers” of attendees. Does include other attendees who were non-Indigenous “less than 1%”

Diagram 2 - Indigenous Identities



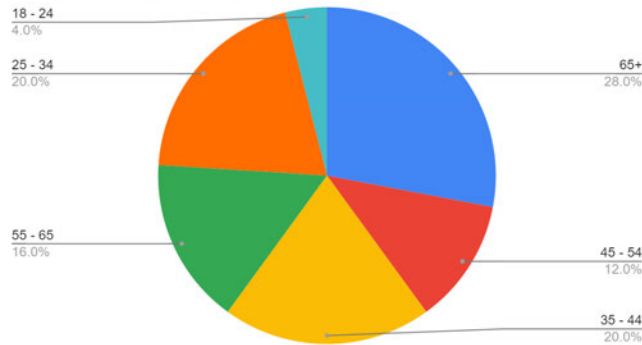


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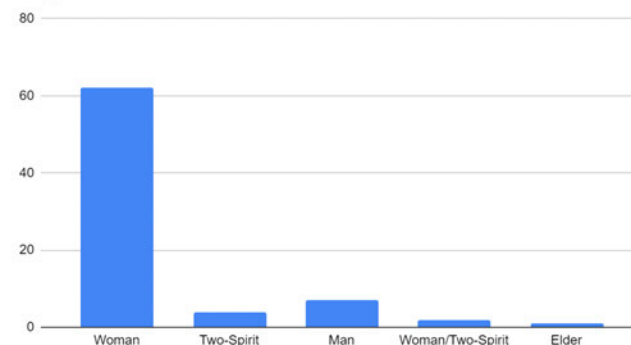
- ❖ Diagram 3 shows that 56% of the age group attending the 2023 SILR Gathering were 45 years old and up and the remaining 44% were 18 to 44 years old.

Diagram 3 - Age Groups Attended



- ❖ Diagram 4 shows that women were the highest participants in attendance at the Gathering

Diagram 4 - Gender



- ❖ Diagram 5 conveys that most attendees were well proficient or somewhat proficient in an Indigenous language. With the remainder in various language learning phases.

Diagram 5 - Indigenous Language(s) Proficiency

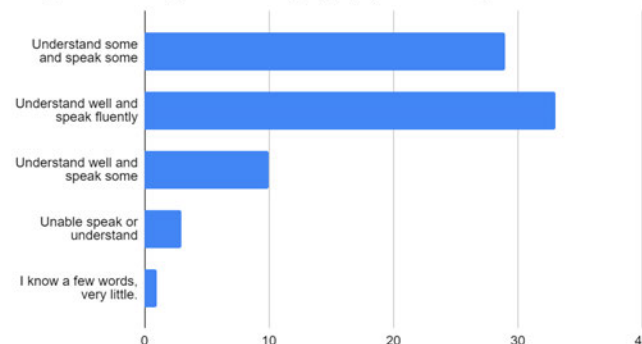




DIAGRAM 6 - INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES INTERESTED IN LEARNING

1	Nihiyawewin (Cree)	36
2	Dene	11
3	Blackfoot	5
4	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Michif	4
5	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux	2
6	Michif	2
7	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Dene	2
8	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin / Ojibwe / Saulteaux/Blackfoot	1
9	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin / Ojibwe / Saulteaux	1
10	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Dene, Michif	1
11	Nihiyawewin (Cree)/anishinaabemowin/ojibwe/saulteaux/Blackfoot/michif/Dene/Inuktitut/tsimsian/lakota	1
12	Nakota, Anishinaabemowin	1
13	Like listening to young Cree speakers	1
14	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin / Ojibwe / Saulteaux, Michif	1
15	Nihiyawewin (Cree) (Cree)	1
16	Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux, Michif	1
17	Anishinaabemowin / Ojibwe / Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Nakota, Dene, Michif, I have a passion for languages. Currently learning French.	1
18	Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux	1
19	Nihiyawewin (Cree), Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Michif	1

- ❖ Diagram 6 represents the top 5 Indigenous languages that Gathering participants were interested in learning, such as: Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Michif with a combined total Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux would be the 5th.

TOP 3 REASONS FOR LEARNING AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE

The most prominent responses on reasons for learning an Indigenous language were:

- 1. Learning an Indigenous language is vital to my culture and identity** **36**
- 2. To speak an Indigenous language with my children/family/friends/Elder** **34**
- 3. To be able to read books and documents in an Indigenous language** **21**
4. One or more of my ancestors spoke an Indigenous language 20
5. To speak an Indigenous language at community gatherings and ceremony 15
6. To feel more a part of the nation 11
7. Blanks 9

KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ The majority who participated in the 2023 SILR Gathering, were Indigenous (First Nations) older (45 years +) who were predominantly Cree women.



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- ❖ The balance of younger and older Indigenous women in attendance were proficient in their Indigenous languages and the younger generation had a willingness and desire to learn their language.
- ❖ The most significant reasons for learning an Indigenous language gathered from 146 responses included: 1) Learning an Indigenous language is vital to my culture and identity 2) To speak an Indigenous language with my children/family/friends/Elder and 3) To be able to read books and documents in an Indigenous language.
- ❖ The Gathering was a huge success and well received, with many positive and grateful comments regarding the event. Language speakers/presenters/teachers/linguists, the knowledge learned/shared, Indigenous youth panel, Indigenous entertainers and food were repeatedly noted.
- ❖ Future Gatherings suggestions included:
 - To diversify the language speakers along with Cree, and to include Dene, Blackfoot, Michif, Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe/Saulteaux and Nakota Sioux.
 - To continue showcasing a diverse, language speaking youth panel
 - For the next gathering to be in communities and a 2 day event with vendors and language resources available.
 - Opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback in respective Indigenous languages is desired.
 - To have Indigenous language spoken throughout the Gathering and include resources to be shared during the 2 day Gathering.

POSITIVE COMMENTARY:

"The work you are doing is very important - vital to the survival of FN. Once we lose our languages we are no longer First Nations in the true sense".

"Thank you for hosting this event. This work is so important for all indigenous people who call Treaty 6,7,8 territory home. Job well done"

"Just my thoughts. We will be stronger as Indigenous speakers if we keep these conferences to let us be heard. It has been my experience to keep the momentum going, usually the interested will keep attending. Thank you".

"Great youth panel, but if we could also showcase what the Other languages are doing with their youth. I love being Nehiyaw but it will be great to hear young Dene, Dakota, Tsuu Tina, Blackfoot, Anishinaabe or Michif speakers in Alberta"

"Would be interested in visiting communities to help promote vitalization more thoroughly. Great and informative conference. Vendors would be nice to have or even a place available with language resources"



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2. Breakout Sessions Evaluations

- ❖ 338 evaluations were submitted for the Breakout Sessions by the 214 attendees
- ❖ The highest attended sessions were Dr. Kevin Lewis with 59, Dr. Belinda Daniels with 54, Doreen Daychief with 52; breakout session details of all presenters are noted below
- ❖ Most attendees participated in the first two Breakout sessions:
 - Session 1 included 140 participants
 - Session 2 included 113 participants
 - Session 3 included 85 participants.

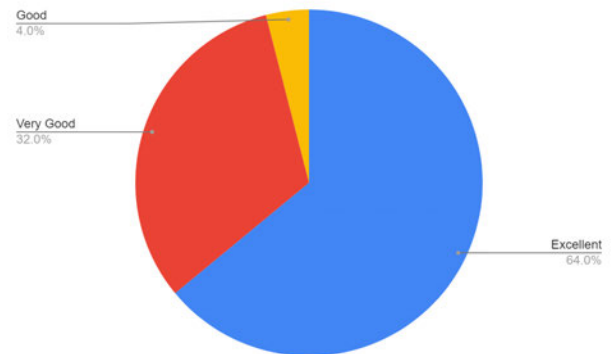
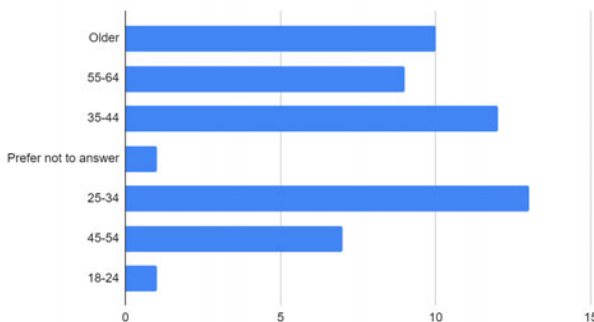
Breakout Session 1:

- ❖ 140 attendees provided evaluations on the presenters they attended. The presenters were Dr. Belinda Daniels, Wayne Jackson, and Doreen Daychief

Dr. Belinda Daniels

- ❖ 54 attendees completed evaluation of the presentation
- ❖ There was a high number of attendees that identified their roles as either students (24) and/or Teacher/Instructors (24) for the presentation

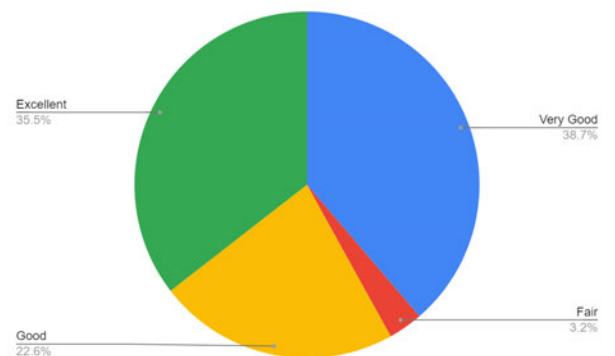
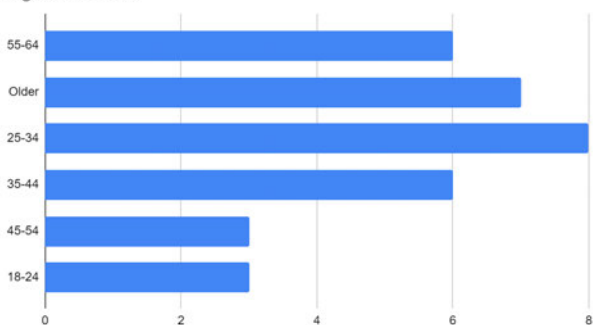
Ages Attended



Wayne Jackson

- ❖ 34 attendees provided evaluations, they were primarily, teacher/Instructors, students, community linguists and advocates

Ages Attended





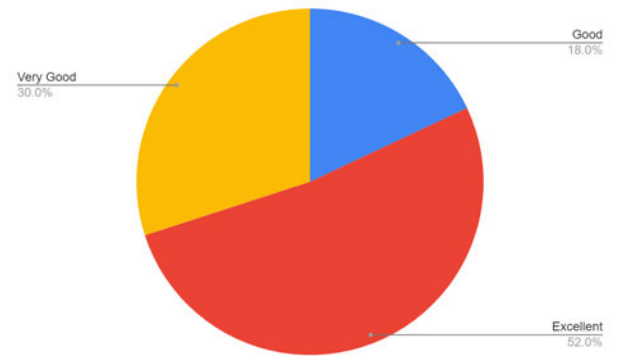
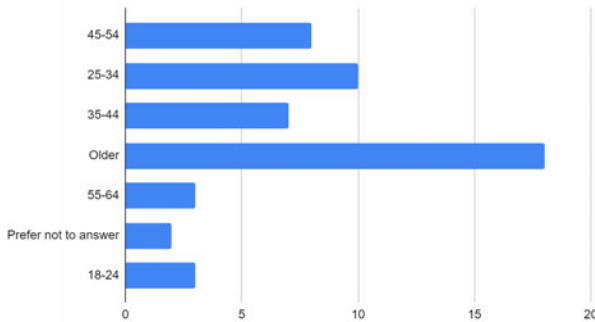
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Doreen Daychief

- ❖ 52 attendees, primarily, teacher/instructors (30), students (16) and sharing generational knowledge

Ages Attended



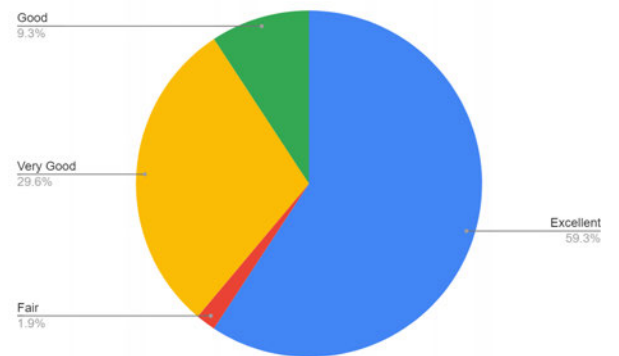
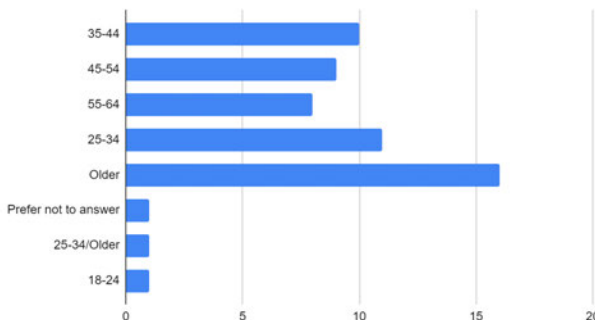
Breakout Session 2:

- ❖ 113 Gathering participants submitted evaluations for Dr. Kevin Lewis (59) Sherryl Sewepagaham (26) and Dr. Jordan Lachler (28) were also well received

Dr. Kevin Lewis

- ❖ Teacher Instructors, students, advocates, Elders were the highest numbers of various roles that the attendees identified with. This is also portrayed in the age group chart below.

Ages Attended





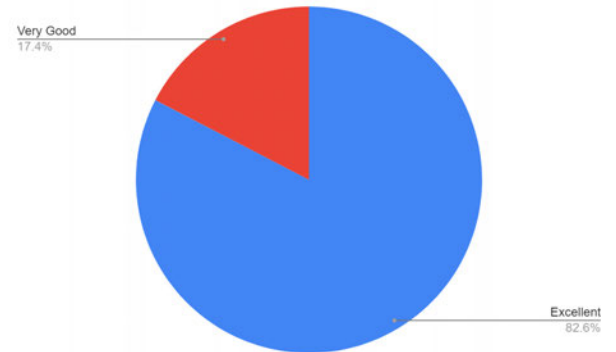
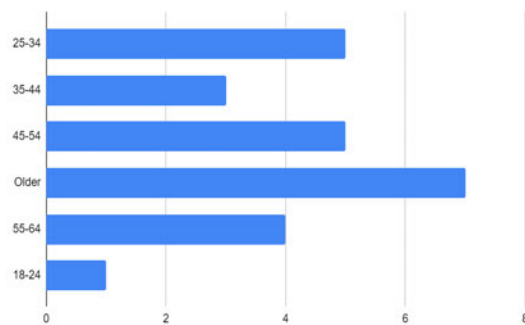
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Sherryl Sewepagaham

- ❖ The highest identifiers were students and advocates
- ❖ The Elders were in high attendance and excellent feedback was shared

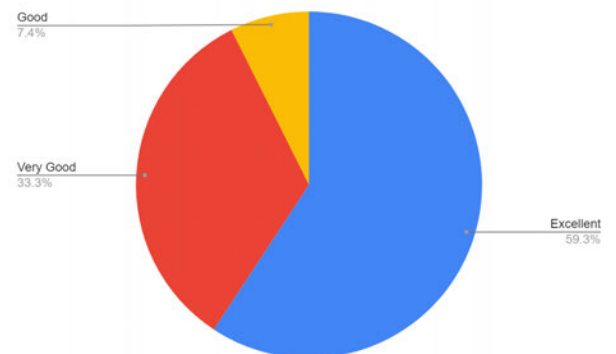
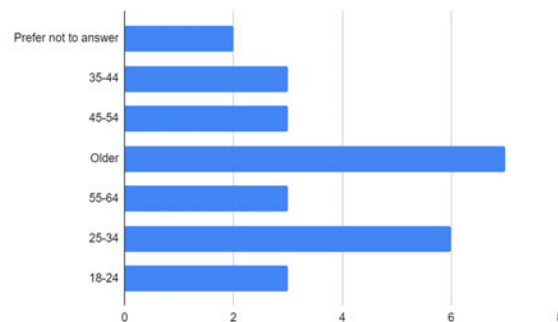
Ages Attended



Dr Jordan Lachler

- ❖ Teacher/Instructors were dominant attendees with students and advocates combined

Ages Attended

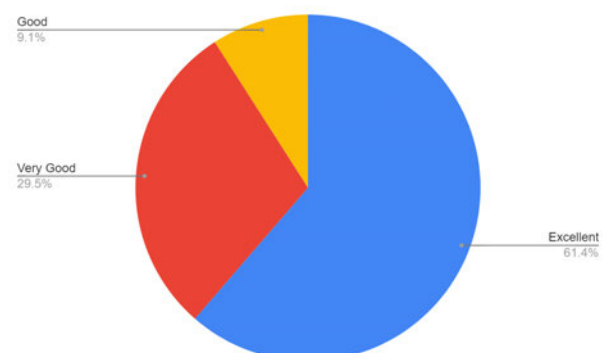
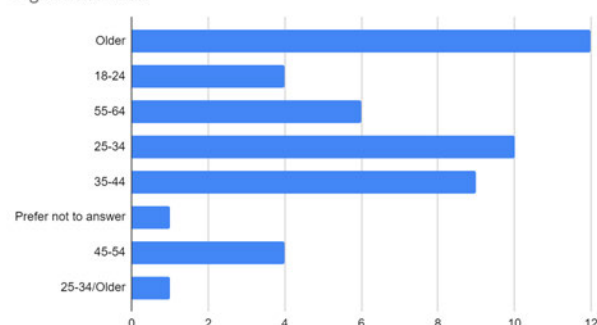


Breakout Sessions 3: 85 attendees participated in the last evaluated sessions: Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper had 48 evaluations, Myna Manniapik had 8 and Dorothy Thunder had 29.

Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper

- ❖ Elder Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper tied Dr. Belinda Daniels with (24) submissions by teacher/instructors, the range of roles were with Elders and students

Ages Attended





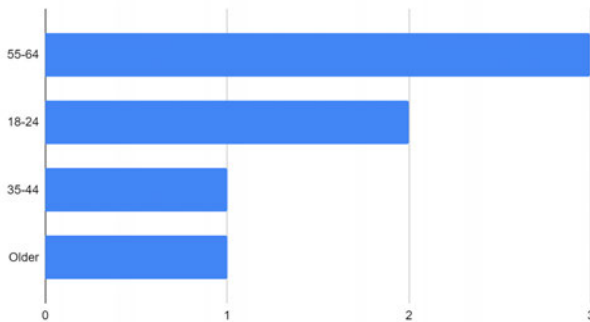
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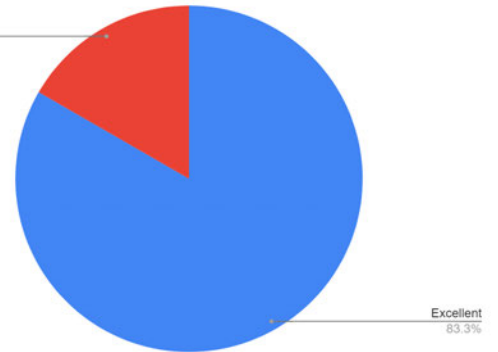
Myna Manniapik

- ❖ Students and advocates were the highest attendees for Inuk speaker Myna.
- ❖ The 55-64 year old category were highest in attendance

Ages Attended



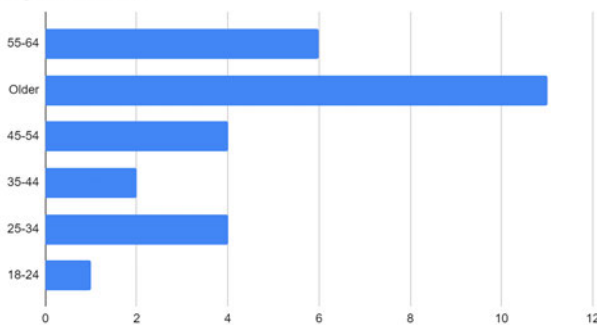
Very Good
16.7%



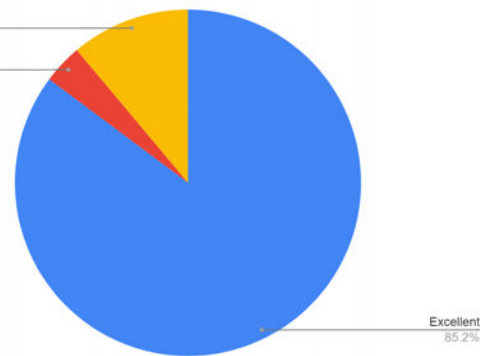
Dorothy Thunder

- ❖ Teacher/instructors, Elders and students attended, feedback stated that Ms. Thunder makes language learning fun for all roles and age groups.

Ages Attended



Very Good
11.1%
Good
3.7%





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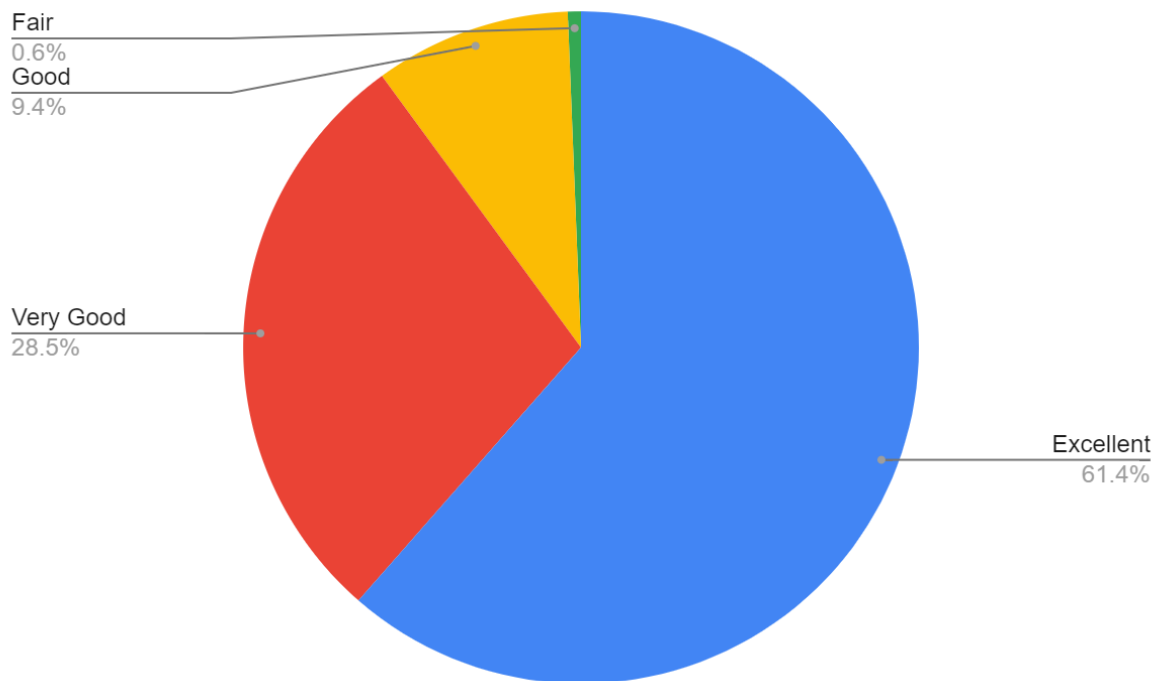
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SCHEDULE A - TABLES

Table 1 - Identified Roles in Attendance

	Belinda	Wayne	Doreen	Kevin	Sherryl	Jordan	Elmer	Myna	Dorothy
Elder	12	8	12	21	5	5	13	1	9
Youth	4	5	3	6	2	4	5	0	4
Student	24	11	16	18	11	8	14	4	8
Teacher/Instructor	24	14	30	32	8	16	24	3	10
Community Linguist	3	10	3	7	2	2	7	0	2
Advocate	13	9	11	16	10	8	11	4	5
Ally	8	6	2	6	1	3	4	1	3
Other	5	2	3	7	1	4	3	0	3

Table 2 - Overall Ratings for 2023 SILR Gathering Conference





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SCHEDULE B - 2023 SILR GATHERING PICTURES & COMMENTARY

Presenters

Dr. Belinda Daniels

Comments



"Belinda is just a thoughtful teacher, full of resources and a pleasure to listen to!"
"Love hearing that language camps work!"

"Dr Daniels made a document about how to start a language camp so Others can too. Such important and inspiring heart work - thank you!"
"Belinda shared many great tips, suggestions and inspiration for hosting our own immersion camps"

"This session has been extremely helpful because I would like to setup an immersion program in my own community and this session has given me a guide and I reAlly enjoyed it"

Wayne Jackson



"Good plan. Find a way to fund it. Immersion is needed"

"We just want to see the Immersion program take off and succeed"

"It was a good reminder to know that you don't need a degree to teach the language"

"I enjoyed listening to presenters' views and info. It is very inspiring to learn my own language. Thank god. Sookapii"

"Use direct teaching in the classroom ie ASLA but is further supported by land based experiential immersion camps during all seasons - following a seasonal calendar"

Doreen Daychief



"Very kind and welcoming words. very passionate about indigenous ways and language acquisition"

"Enlightening sessions, learned how tightly connected language, culture, spirituality, land are in Indigenous community"

"The land based workshops reminded me how integral Indigenous languages are in re-establishing connection to land and supporting cultural identity"

"Language learning is a lifelong journey"



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Dr. Kevin Lewis



"Listening to the encouragement to learn how to speak, teach the language and culture in the communities"

"Kevin's presentation was not only interesting but he kept us engaged by his storytelling. Excellent presenter"

"This was tahkaki - Great! I liked that SILR focused just on language. We need more research, community development, language camps and immersion stories"

"Absolutely brilliant and lovely storyteller"

Sherryl Sewepagaham



"Nobody except nikawiy has ever gifted me songs that spoke to my heart like this. Thank you for the opportunity to learn from you Sherryl. Kinanoskomitan"

"Loved this session, lessons that I can actually use in my classroom"

"A Lot of information. very interesting. Fun way to learn language. inclusive - Blackfoot for more participation"

"Didn't understand the language and actually can sing in her language and is excellent, excellent! Interactive and resources available"

Dr. Jordan Lachler



"Great session, helps with creating your own resources! Have been finding dialect similarities throughout Canada for Dene languages"

"Enjoyed Phrasebook teaching"

"Really good session, resources shared was really amazing, will use them and share information back home"

"Very interesting demonstration of a language app. Would be very good to utilize. Thank you. sookapii"

"Jordan is the best and a great linguist teacher! Siyisgaas"

"Thankful for the ideas of being more innovative with technology and the language"



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Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper



"Very helpful to think about how I can bring the spiritual side of language to the classroom. ay hay Excellent speaker, very knowledgeable, enjoyed his presentation"

"Just brilliant and the braiding of history, science, tradition and language"

"very comforting being amongst so many language and knowledge keepers. grateful that prayer and ceremony are so important and visible through this day. Mahsi"

Myna Manniapik



"Wish there was some more presentations from Other language groups, not just Cree"

"Even though I don't understand the language. But I can feel the spirit of the language. Myna's voice and how she speaks her language touched my heart"

Dorothy Thunder



"Dorothy's session was awesome. She has a wealth of Indigenous language and she makes Cree learning fun"

"I enjoyed the methods and resources that Dorothy shared with us, it was practical! kinanaskomitin miyo iskwew kiya"

"Dorothy - awesome facilitation - Cree instructor, use of technology - everything"

"Love your style of teaching. Blessing of the Creator on you forever"



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Jessie Sylvestre



"So amazing! It is just a very long day. May over 2 days next year. I loved it so much It was an excellent conference"

"The keynote was awesome! Excellent sessions"



"Maybe the next one could be a couple of days long. Excellent conference! only good things to say about it"

"Research, Land, Treaty, Culture, Language, Grants, Funds for Students. Emphasis on connections to land through land languages"

ELDERS & YOUTH & COMMUNITY

Connecting





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SILR TEAM & U OF A STAFF

"Beautiful, create a safe place to gather, to listen, and to learn" said a 2023 SILR Gathering Participant.

