



2024

SILR Annual Report



SILR

**SUPPORTING
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
REVITALIZATION**
SILR.CA

Executive Summary

aaniin!

As Executive Director of the Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR) initiative, I am proud to reflect on a transformative year of remarkable growth, collaboration, and community celebration.

Guided by relational accountability and respect for Indigenous sovereignty, our work honours the connections between land, language, culture, and identity. With the wisdom of our Advisory Council and the dedication of our partners, we remain steadfast in advancing pathways for Indigenous language revitalization. In 2024, we strengthened our commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and supported UNESCO's Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032).

Milestones this year reflect the dedication of Elders, youth, educators, and communities. Programs like Braiding Stories to Live By and the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership have empowered youth through intergenerational learning. The 25th anniversary of the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute celebrates 25 years of language revitalization through its summer school program. As new projects continue to emerge in our SILR journey, I am thrilled to walk alongside so many remarkable Indigenous leaders in Canada.

Research initiatives, such as *The Search for Wellness Through Ancestral Languages*, emphasize Indigenous data sovereignty and the ties between language, healing, and well-being. These projects showcase the transformative power of community-centered, relational research rooted in Indigenous knowledge.

Looking to 2025, with support from the BHP Foundation, SILR remains steadfast in our responsibility to create safe, inclusive spaces where language, identity, and belonging can thrive. We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to this shared mission as we strive to honour and celebrate Indigenous languages as living expressions of culture, identity, and intergenerational strength. We will create a future where our languages flourish with pride and confidence.

Miigwetch!
Pamela McCoyJones

Acknowledgements



SILR Advisory Council from left to right: Doreen Frencheater, Edna Elias, Lyndon Aginas, Lynda Minoose, Molly Chisaakay, Elmer Ghostkeeper

We honour the land on which we stand as the traditional territory of Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, and Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe nations; lands that are now known as parts of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 and homeland of the Métis. We recognize and acknowledge Indigenous values, traditional teachings, ways of being, contributions, and historical inequalities. We respect the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit nations.

The University of Alberta has embarked on the Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization initiative as a step toward reconciliation. A fundamental aspect is the establishment of an External Advisory Council whose purpose is to ensure community voice and guidance are present and that the overall project remains aligned with community needs. Underpinning this project is an explicit recognition that Indigenous communities have sovereignty over their language preservation and revitalization goals, programs, and data.

Gratitude and appreciation for previous and current staff's work, resiliency, and passion for revitalizing Indigenous languages are commendable and acknowledged.

Table of Contents

SECTION ONE



SECTION TWO



SECTION THREE



Our Approach	5
Impact Statement	6
Indigenous Evaluation Framework	7
Promising Practices	9
SILR Partner List	10

Connecting	12
Speaking	17
Teaching	19
Learning	21
Leading	23

Feature Story	29
Overcoming Barriers	30
Looking Ahead	31
Financial	32

Section One

SILR is rooted in the belief that language is central to healing within Indigenous communities, as highlighted by Elder Molly Chisaakay of the dene tha', who noted, "language is the root of a lot of healing that needs to happen" (External Advisory Council, April 30, 2024). SILR's goals reflect this understanding, focusing on fostering cultural pride, community belonging, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The SILR Framework, developed with advisors, uses the metaphor of a tree to symbolize the interconnectedness of language, culture, and land, reaffirming the project's commitment to revitalizing Indigenous languages in homes, schools, and workplaces, and on the land.

(SILR Mid-term Evaluation Report 2024, p.19).



Our Approach

Amplifying Indigenous Language Revitalization

Vision

SILR envisions a future where Indigenous languages in Canada are healthy, vibrant, and widely used across generations and in various domains such as homes, schools, workplaces, and on the land. Indigenous language revitalization ecosystem in Canada is a multifaceted and complex endeavour targeting the preservation and rejuvenation of Indigenous languages. This ecosystem underscores the significance of language as a vital component of culture and identity and recognizes the urgency of its preservation.

SILR Approach

- **Community-centred** - Work with partners in different communities to define their unique notions of community and ensure effective engagement and participation.
- **Adaptive Language Programs** - Modify and expand language programs to support the use of Indigenous languages in multiple domains.
- **Research and Wise Practices** - Capture and broadly share research and wise practices across program and policy spaces.
- **Cultural and Contextual Understanding** - Recognize and collaborate with diverse Indigenous communities, communities not residing in a particular place, and community organizations/businesses such as schools, translation firms, and NGOs.

Areas of Focus

Language revitalization programs and activities focus on the following:

- Individuals have the support to gain confidence and proficiency as Indigenous language speakers and language teachers.
- Effective models, practices, and tools are developed, shared, and used by Indigenous Elders, parents, and instructors to promote the speaking of Indigenous languages.
- Language programs are adapted and expanded to support the use of Indigenous languages in multiple domains (homes, schools, workplaces and on the land).
- Research and wise practices are captured and shared broadly across program and policy spaces.

Impact Statement

Impact Goal

The SILR vision is to integrate effective language revitalization approaches and tools into community and educational policies and practices. Our long-term goal is to transform and strengthen the capacity for Indigenous-led language revitalization by increasing skills, shifting attitudes and behaviours, and supporting community-driven systems and investments in revitalization efforts.

Initially, the SILR project aimed to impact over 1,000 youth, 2,000 students, 400 teachers, 100 language speakers, 1,500 gathering participants, and facilitate 30 community-centered collaborations by 2026.

In 2024, SILR exceeded its original impact projections, demonstrating our ability to drive meaningful change in Indigenous communities. Moving forward, our updated impact goals by 2026 include:

- Engaging over 1,000 youth and 2,500 students
- Increasing the involvement of 400 teachers and 200 Elders/knowledge keepers
- Supporting 2,000 gathering participants
- Facilitating 50 community-centered collaborations

2021-2026

1,000 Youth	2,500 Students	400 Teachers
200 Elders/Knowledge Keepers	50 Community-centered Collaborations	2,000 Event Participants

Indigenous Evaluation Framework

In 2024, Indigenous Insights conducted a mid-term evaluation of SILR using an Indigenous evaluation framework. This approach, aligned with SILR's vision, helps assess progress, reflect on insights, and guide decision-making. Grounded in Indigenous values like relational accountability and respect, the framework disrupts Euro-Western evaluation models by prioritizing Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and community well-being. Key principles include:

- Sovereignty & Self-Determination – Communities define success and co-develop evaluation processes.
- Relationality & Community-Driven Approaches – Rooted in Indigenous worldviews, ensuring sustained relationships.
- Storytelling as Data Collection – A qualitative method honouring knowledge-sharing traditions.
- Strength-Based Evaluation – Focuses on resilience, healing, and positive outcomes.

This culturally responsive framework ensures that SILR's challenges and successes are meaningfully documented for learning and growth. To illustrate SILR's approach, Indigenous Insights co-developed with the SILR team, a tree image showing the interconnected relationships between the project's strategies and outcomes. This visual metaphor (on Page 8) underscores how SILR's work branches out to address diverse community needs, rooted in strong, relational foundations. This evaluation emphasizes the "how" and "why" of SILR's success: its grounding in interconnected relationships, its responsiveness to community leadership, and its commitment to fostering lasting impact in Indigenous language revitalization.

The evaluation framework, developed by Indigenous Insights in collaboration with project members, emphasized relational accountability, reciprocity, and cultural respect. It combined participatory methods, thorough data analysis, and active partner engagement to ensure alignment with cultural protocols and project goals.

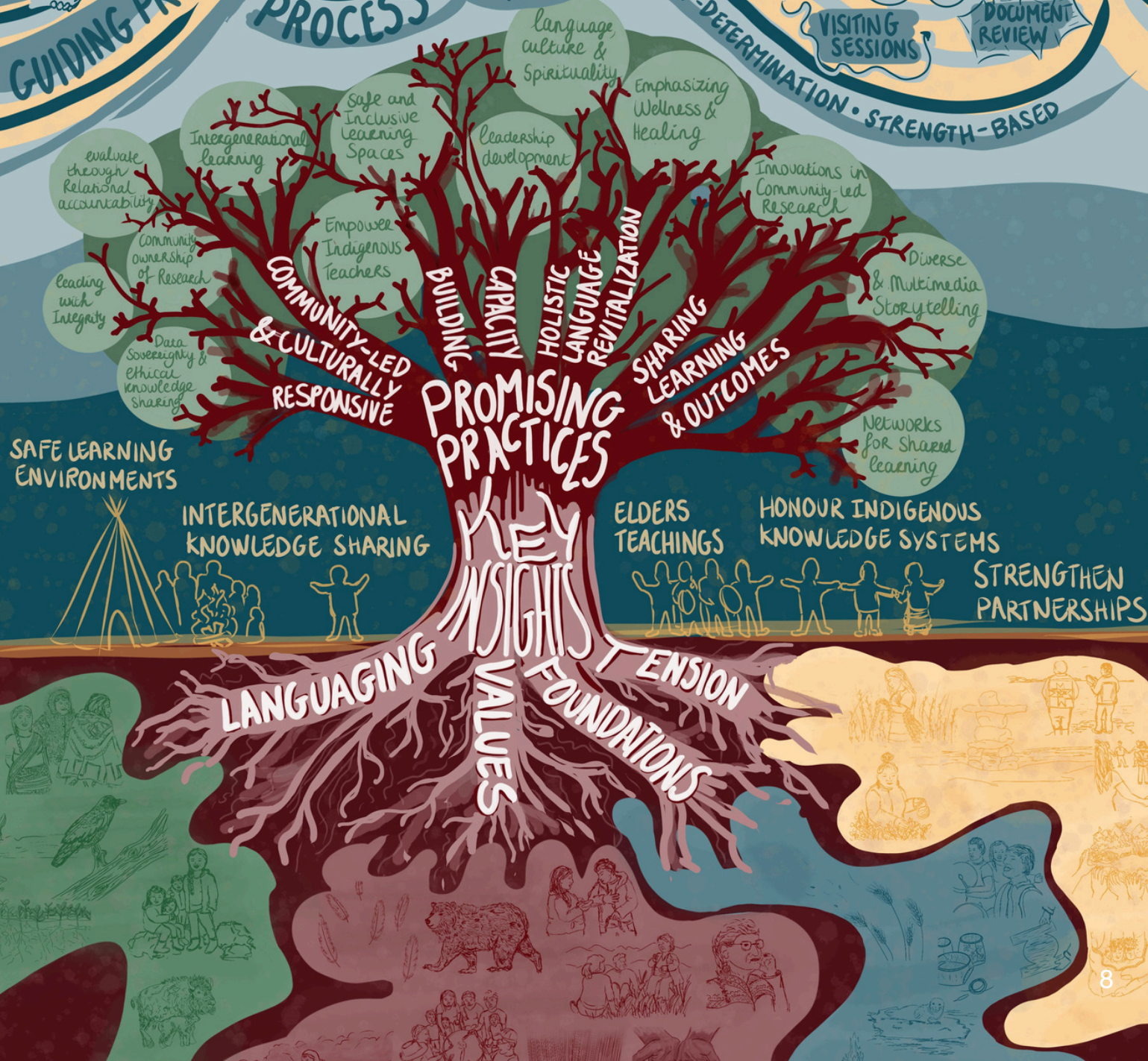
Evaluation Methods

- Interviews: Ten one-on-one conversations captured detailed narratives and insights.
- Visiting: Over 15 informal visits facilitated deeper understanding and connections.
- Conversation Circles: Five group discussions engaged key stakeholders, including research teams, steering committees, and students.
- Metrics Analysis: Key performance indicators were analyzed to assess the project's impact.
- Document Review: Reports, surveys, and feedback were reviewed to evaluate progress and outcomes.

MID-TERM EVALUATION

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

BY INDIGENOUS INSIGHTS IN COLLABORATION WITH TAYLOR WILSON & LANA KLOK



Promising Practices

A promising practice is not just something that "works" but something that aligns with community values and is adaptable to different contexts and needs. It supports not only language revitalization but also strengthens cultural identity, fosters intergenerational relationships, and enhances community well-being.

(SILR Mid-term Evaluation Report 2024, p. 113).

Holistic Language Revitalization

Language learning is intertwined with cultural activities, spirituality, and land-based practices. Language camps that incorporate traditional ceremonies, drumming, and storytelling are examples. This approach views language as a living entity, not just an academic subject, fostering deeper cultural connections.

Wellness and Healing

Language revitalization promotes emotional and spiritual healing, helping communities reclaim identity and pride while addressing colonial trauma.

Leadership and Governance

The Advisory Council of Elders and Knowledge Keepers ensures that SILR's work respects cultural protocols and is community-led. This leadership model challenges traditional academic power structures.

Capacity Building

SILR empowers language teachers and fosters intergenerational learning, creating opportunities for Elders to teach youth while developing young leaders for sustainability.

Strengthening Networks for Shared Learning

Building partnerships among communities fosters shared learning, resource sharing, and collective growth in language revitalization.

Community-led and Culturally-Responsive Approaches

Indigenous communities lead language revitalization efforts, determining priorities, pace, and content. SILR supports diverse approaches, such as immersion programs and traditional knowledge integration.

Relational Accountability and Evaluation

SILR uses relational, reciprocal evaluation methods focused on community empowerment and knowledge exchange rather than quantitative metrics.

Data Sovereignty and Ethical Sharing

SILR advocates for community ownership of research data, ensuring knowledge serves Indigenous goals and remains under their control.

Safe Learning Spaces

Inclusive, safe environments support learners, allowing Indigenous youth to reconnect with language and culture without fear or judgment.

Innovative Storytelling and Research

SILR uses multimedia storytelling—films, photos, and art—to elevate community voices, share successes, and preserve cultural knowledge. Community-led research further empowers Indigenous communities to shape language revitalization.

Partner List

Partnerships in SILR unite communities, institutions, Elders, and learners to promote language revitalization through trust, generational knowledge, sharing and collaboration with internal and external groups.

Communities and Nations

Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Enoch Cree Nation
Fort McMurray
Fort Vermillion
Frog Lake First Nation
Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation
Paul First Nation
Piikani First Nation
Poundmaker Cree Nation
Sunchild First Nation
Tsuut'ina Nation

Institutions, Organizations, & Programs

Alberta Avenue Community League
Ban Ki-Moon Foundation
Canadian Commission for UNESCO
Canadian Council for the Arts
Edmonton Public Library
Endangered Languages Project
Fort McKay Youth Centre
Girls Inc Northern Alberta
Îethka Îabi Institute
Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission
Yellowhead Tribal College

Schools

Edmonton
amiskwaciy Academy
Hillcrest Junior High School
Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Chief Aranazhi School
Parkland School Division
High Prairie
Prairie River Junior High School
St. Andrews School
Slave Lake
St. Mary of the Lake School
Fort McMurray
Timberlea Public School
Walter and Gladys Hill Public School
Ecole McTavish School
St. Anne's School
St. Gabriel
Fort Chipewyan (Wood Buffalo Area)
Athabasca Delta Community School

Section Two

Implementation

By fostering inclusive and supportive environments, SILR ensures that language revitalization is not just about learning words—it is about creating spaces for healing, empowerment, and growth. These safe spaces are essential for sustaining long-term success and ensuring Indigenous peoples thrive in their learning journeys.

(SILR Mid-term Evaluation Report, 2024, p. 85).



Connecting – Supporting safe spaces for healing, belonging, and cultural pride

Language is the heart of cultural identity, and through revitalization efforts, Indigenous communities are reclaiming their stories, ceremonies and ancestral wisdom. This table illustrates the rising numbers in youth, students, Elders/Knowledge keepers, and community-centered collaborations. This year SILR’s efforts have strengthened intergenerational connections, empowered youth and deepened community collaborations.

Young Indigenous Women’s Circle of Leadership	Braiding Stories to Live By	First Peoples House
303 Youth	360 Youth	323 Students
35 Teachers	1,678 Students	9 Elders/Knowledge Keepers
18 Elders/Knowledge Keepers	66 Teachers	
9 Community Centered Collaborations	22 Elders/Knowledge Keepers	
	18 Community-centered Collaborations	

Voices Rising – Honouring the strength and leadership of Indigenous youth

Braiding Stories to Live By

Braiding Stories to Living By (BStLB) continues to foster a nurturing space where young Indigenous women connect across generations, weaving a beautiful circle of intergenerational knowledge and wisdom. BStLB strengthens its commitment to Indigenous education, community relationships, and language/cultural revitalization.

Community Gatherings and Seasonal Events

- Facilitated fifteen small, relational gatherings across Alberta: beading, Elder/cultural teachings, and sports activities are some examples
- Four Land-based Events: Including seasonal gatherings, moccasin-making workshops, and bannock-making lessons.
- These events were vital in promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- Youth Circles: Ongoing weekly gatherings for Indigenous girls, focusing on relationship-building, storytelling, and cultural teachings.

Collaborations and Partnerships

- The sakâw nêhiyawêwin (Woodland Cree) colouring book features original artwork by nêhiyaw artist Ashley Johansson and the text was translated by nêhiyaw speakers Yvonne Johnson and Jessie Cardinal.
 - 500 nêhiyaw Language Colouring Books were co-developed and distributed in partnership with Jessie Johnson and the Forest School program which mentors young children in culturally grounded activities.
- Cree Language Bingo: A digital resource enabling youth to engage with Cree words through technology.



"This is my heart work, my soul work. I'm giving back to the little girls like me"

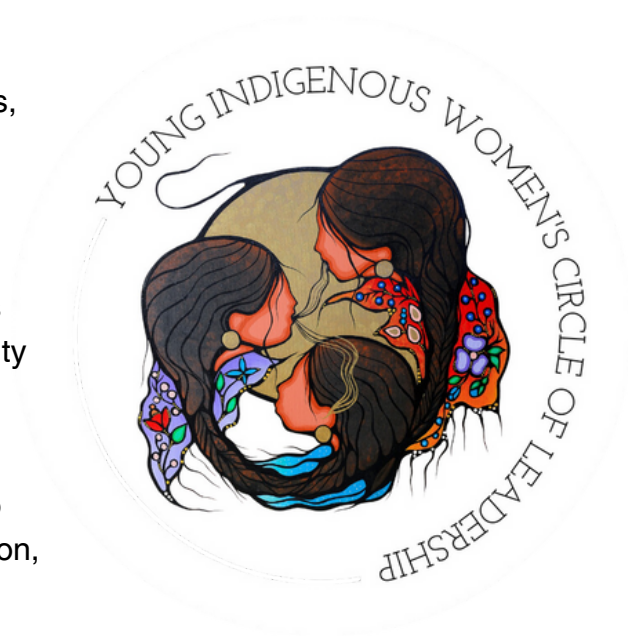
(Dr. Trudy Cardinal, Dec. 5, 2024).

Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership

Programs like the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership (YIWCL) are dedicated to nurturing young Indigenous women's self-worth, pride, and respect for themselves and others through the learning of cultural values, traditional practices, and leadership.

Impact:

- Connecting to cultural identity: Two Seasonal gatherings for young women were held at Alberta Avenue Community League in Edmonton, where cultural activities like ribbon skirt making, fish scale art, etc., were taught.
- A new safe space was created for eight young women to attend a cultural gathering in an urban setting of Edmonton, AB.
- Fifteen young women experienced various leadership skills by engaging in a traditional feast gathering in Wetaskawin, Alberta.



First Peoples House

First Peoples House (FPH) had a remarkable year honouring, preserving, and strengthening Indigenous languages. Through the collective efforts of FPH's Elders, students, and collaborators, there have been profound moments of pride, connection, and empowerment within the Indigenous student community. FPH will continue to build upon each milestone achieved, guided by relationality, respect, and resilience teachings. FPH empowers Indigenous students and communities by embedding language, culture, and self-respect into every facet of their learning journey, as well as:

- Building relationships through gatherings and dialogue.
- Promoting conversational language use in daily life.
- Developing innovative resources to support language acquisition.
- Leading: Inspiring self-respect and pride through cultural empowerment.

The First Peoples House also continued to thrive as a relational hub, fostering informal connections between students and Elders. Elders Francis Whiskeyjack and Elsey Gauthier's daily presence, offering conversational Cree lessons and cultural teachings, led to over 5,820 student interactions. Students described these moments as transformative, emphasizing the comfort, inspiration, and mentorship they received.

This year, FPH celebrated the success of the Language Box initiative, a project designed to bring language and cultural pride directly into the hands of students. For Métis Week, the Métis Language Box honoured Métis culture, while the Winter Language Box focused on Cree terms related to animals, weather, and greetings.

Impact:

- 150 boxes were distributed at a gathering attended by 250 students



Lii Mataants pi Lii Zaanfans: A Métis Children's Book Series

Initiated in 2024, this community-engaged creative project uplifts Métis women's perspectives on land, wellness, kinship, and the important place of their artistic expressions. The series aims to share knowledge, values, and teachings with future generations, ensuring Métis children grow up knowing they are sacred, valued, and deeply connected to land, culture, and community.

The books will:

- Foster kinship, critical thinking, and relational consciousness with children
- Challenge colonial narratives that separate people from land and relations and deficit attitudes
- Celebrate Michif matriarchal values, stories, and teachings
- Amplify place-based language and stories and collaborations with Elders and artists
- Capacity and community building by centering story-telling and story-making
- Create educational resources in Michif language

Through storytelling, this project strengthens Métis cultural identity and Métis methodologies that work in relation to kinship, to place and to generations of Métis wisdom.

Impact:

- Seven children's books drafted by seven Métis women authors and illustrated by Métis women
- A project mentor: Wilfred Burton, children's book educator and well-respected Métis children's book author in western Canada
- Educational training in children's literature/creative writing completed at the University of Toronto
- Four community visits completed that includes two writing workshops and visits with authors and artists in co-creative
- Michif language learning and translation with four Michif community speakers
- Collaborations with two Métis educational institutions

This initiative exemplifies the dynamic process of creating culturally grounded resources that honour Métis language as it correlates to Métis life.



Speaking – Increasing the use of Indigenous languages

On July 17, 2024, the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development (CILLDI) celebrated 25 years of impactful work in Indigenous language revitalization. The anniversary highlighted community-led initiatives and intergenerational connections, bringing together alumni, community members, and partners. It served as a reflection on achievements and a chance to plan for the future, reaffirming CILLDI's commitment to empowering Indigenous language speakers and learners while expanding its global influence to sustain Indigenous languages.



Impact:

- A partnership with the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation supported nine fluent Stoney speakers working 20 hours a week to create a substantial Stoney language corpus. Using Dragons Gold software, the team recorded over 70 hours of spoken Stoney, encompassing 16,000 sentences and 14,000 photo descriptions. These recordings are securely stored in a searchable database, and ongoing efforts are being made to transcribe them into written Stoney.
- CILLDI collaborates with Carleton University to streamline transcription using Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology. Promising advancements are anticipated soon.
- In August 2024, CILLDI resumed its partnership with Îethka Îabi Institute (ÎÎ) in Morley to document Stoney Nakoda as spoken in that community.
- The team strengthened its 17-year partnership with Oroha, Solomon Islands, documenting stories, cultural practices, and ecological knowledge from 30 speakers. This effort resulted in 24 hours of recordings and expanded the Oroha dictionary from 3,000 to 4,500 entries, refining species and cultural item identification.
- The Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation and the Piikani Nation highlighted young learners' progress with Elders toward language fluency. In Alexis, the Community Linguist Certificate (CLC) program saw 14 students complete three courses, with more planned for 2025. In Piikani, nine of 15 students completed their CLC in Spring 2024. A new cohort of 15 began in Fall 2024, set to finish by Summer 2026.

Living in the Language

The **Living in the Language (LiL)** initiative revitalizes Indigenous languages through community collaboration and innovative projects, fostering cultural pride and resilience. Launched in 2023 with four projects, LiL grew to support nine projects in 2024, with several continuing into 2025.

Coffee and Cree Launched the inaugural season of an Indigenous radio program dedicated to promoting nehiyaw language learning, broadcast on three stations across Alberta.	Enoch Cree Nation A two-year commitment to support language revitalization planning and development.	Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation Funding for a land-based language and culture camp, creating an immersive learning experience in Dēne Sų́líné for youth and community members.
Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission (MESC) Supported the printing of 300 at-home nehiyaw learning kits for families.	Peigan Board of Education Support for the development of K - 12 land-based language learning plans and 40 Blackfoot Language Kits.	Sunchild First Nation A two-year initiative focusing on Nehiyaw language preservation through community planning and governance projects.
		
<i>The Polyglot Magazine launch. Dec. 6, 2024</i>		
The Polyglot Magazine Amplified Indigenous language revitalization through two arts-based workshops and a <u>special magazine issue</u> showcasing Indigenous languages and arts, featuring 12 languages.	Walter Gladys Hill Public School Hosted a fall gathering where children from Walter Gladys Hill and Timberlea Public School learned about culture and language.	Wîwîp'son Project Funding supported cultural and healing activities, emphasizing healing through language.

Teaching – Increasing the capacity for Elders, parents, teachers, and instructors to nurture language fluency

Graduate Certificate in Education Studies

This past year, the Faculty of Education collaborated with the CILLDI to launch the Certificate in Educational Studies program, focusing on Indigenous Language Sustainability.

Impact:

- Four Indigenous students began their studies, with the first three courses delivered in 2024.
- Four specialized courses designed to honour and strengthen Indigenous languages

Courses include:

1. Exploring Ideologies: Investigating beliefs around language for resilience.
2. Linguistic Analysis: Deepening understanding of language structures.
3. Teaching and Learning: Utilizing traditional and contemporary methods for education.
4. Pathways to Sustainability: Empowering community-driven language revitalization.

Recruitment for the next cohort is ongoing. In 2025, adjustments will allow for a two-summer completion model.

This program aims to uphold Indigenous cultural wisdom and expand communities' capacity to sustain their languages across generations.



Comprehensive Curriculum Design and Delivery

Teaching remains at the heart of the CILLDI mission, steadfastly committed to advancing Indigenous language revitalization. With a catalogue of 18 core courses and unique offerings, CILLDI provides a comprehensive curriculum spanning Linguistics, Native Studies, Elementary Education, and Graduate Education.

Summer School

- Fourteen courses offered in both in-person and online formats.
- A total of 124 enrollments for 2024.

In-Community Connection

- Six custom-designed courses for Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation and Piikani First Nation.
- Topics tailored to community needs, with 188 enrollments recorded across all CILLDI courses.

Community Linguistic Certificate (CLC)

- A cornerstone of CILLDI’s offerings since 2007, the CLC program comprises of six linguistic courses. It equips learners with foundational knowledge in phonetics, syntax, and language revitalization strategies.



SUMMER SCHOOL	IMMERSION	COMMUNITY LANGUAGE TRAINING
181 New Students	5 New Students	54 New Students
12 Teachers	2 Teachers	54 Teachers
1 Elders/Knowledge Keepers	5 Elders/Knowledge Keepers	1 Elders/Knowledge Keepers
	1 Community-centered Collaborations	6 Community-centered Collaborations

Learning – Undertaking research, acquiring knowledge, and sharing evidence and wise practices on language revitalization

Resource Development

Over the past year, the SILR research team recognized the urgent need for language documentation in Indigenous communities and addressed the lack of access to equipment and training.

Collaborating with the University of Alberta, they created hands-on training opportunities for six Indigenous community members. Participants attended two 2-day sessions through the Collaborative Documentation Pilot Project, receiving knowledge, tools, and technology kits for language preservation.

This training is important to us, to me, because it will help us regain our language, our identity, and a sense of who we are, even though residential school and 60 scoop happened and took away from us. We can now get to reclaim our language and teach it. It may not be the way our parents would have taught us, but with the modern technology and great instructors, I think we have a good chance to relearn.

(Anne Catholique, participant of SILR Documentation Pilot Project, Dec. 12, 2024).



Participants and instructors of the Collaborative Documentation Pilot Project. July 23, 2024

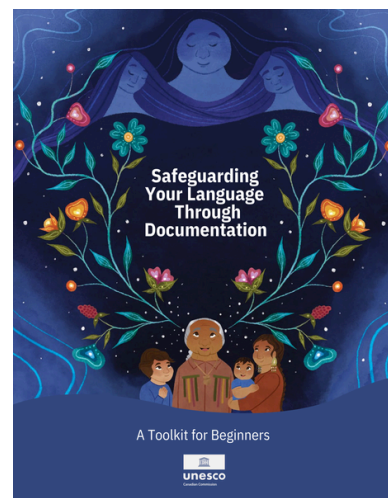
Collaboration

Safeguarding Your Language Through Documentation: A Toolkit for Beginners

Developed with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, this beginner-friendly toolkit by Aiyana Twigg (Ktunaxa/Blackfoot) offers practical steps and tools for language documentation and preservation. Designed for learners, Knowledge Keepers, and youth, it supports language reclamation at any stage of learning.

Impact:

- Supported an Indigenous graphic designer, ensuring culturally responsive design.
- 1,000 English and 500 French copies printed and distributed across Canada, expanding access to language documentation resources.



Let's Speak Cree (for a While): mahti aciyaw nēhiyawētān

Co-authored by Christi Belcourt, Belinda Daniels, and Randy Morin, this booklet introduces learners to the Cree language (nēhiyawēwin) through engaging, community-centered approaches. Rooted in language revitalization and cultural transmission, it fosters confidence in speaking nēhiyawēwin, supporting learners on their journey toward fluency.

Impact:

- 1,500 copies printed and distributed across Canada, increasing accessibility to nēhiyawēwin learning.

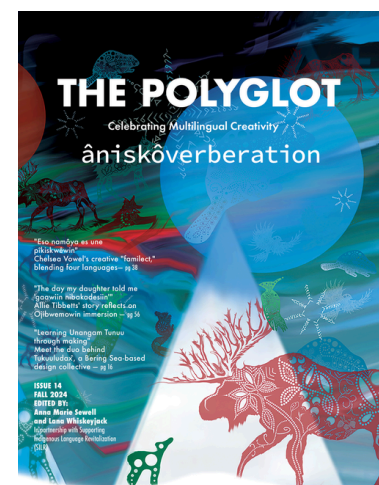


The Polyglot special issue, âniskôverberation

The Polyglot Workshops and Publication support Indigenous language learning through arts-based expression. The publication explores the vibrant voices of Indigenous languages, featuring poetry, stories, and artwork from talented Indigenous writers and artists across Turtle Island.

Impact:

- 36 workshop participants, 95 attendees at the launch event, and 150 printed copies distributed, the digital reach of 5,000 monthly readers



2024 Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization Gathering

CALLING ALL LANGUAGE WARRIORS FROM THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST TO KNOW THE TRUTH AND GUIDE OUR PATH

IN SEVEN GENERATIONS OUR LANGUAGES WILL BE THRIVING

BLACKFOOT SCIENCE IS LARGELY BASED ON RELATIONS - IT IS ABOUT "ALL MY RELATIONS"

EVERYTHING IS RELATED

THE LAND IS OUR LANGUAGE TEACHER

OUR VOICES ARE CONNECTED

OUR LANGUAGES ARE PRECIOUS

Uqauhivut amirnaqtut

LET ME FIND MY TALK

THIS VOICING IS ABOUT US AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

OUR LANGUAGE IS PRECIOUS OUR CULTURE IS PRECIOUS THEY HAVE TO BE TOGETHER

THE METAPHYSICS OF OUR PRESENT EXISTENCE LEAD US TO A COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT TO FORM THE BASIS OF OUR BELIEFS AND MODERN STRAIGHTEN ROADS AND MEASUREMENTS

OBJECTIVES BECOME INTERPRETATIONS IF WE CAN UNDERSTAND METAPHYSICS WE CAN TELL YOU ANYTHING ARE THE WAY THEY ARE

WHOSE INTERPRETATION INSTRUMENT ARE YOU USING?

RELATIONS ARE ABOUT RENEWAL

THE LAND IS OUR MAIN REFERENCE, NOT TIME

TIME AND SPACE ARE THE SAME! (THAT'S NOT NEW, WE'VE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT!)

WE NEVER KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BE ABOUT

OUR LANGUAGE IS ABOUT MORPHOLOGY AND THE NOTION OF THE PERMANENT TABLE

WE ASK FOR SUPPORT AND KINDNESS IN OUR LEARNING JOURNEY TIES ARE CRUCIAL

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE ELDERLY ARE SAYING

I WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING SAID IN CURRENT

YOUTH ARE STRUGGLING TO LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE - TO SUCCESSFULLY LEARN YOU NEED CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

MY SON LEARNING OUR LANGUAGE GIVES ME HOPE

I AM LEARNING MY LANGUAGE FROM MY ANCESTORS AND MY COMMUNITY

I AM LEARNING MY LANGUAGE FROM MY PAST TO PASS IT ON TO MY DAUGHTER

WE NEED RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT! COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUNDING! CAN-TOTAL CAMP IMMERSION! COLLABORATIONS! SHILASHIPS!

"THIS IS HARD WORK AND IT IS WORK"

THE HARDEST JOURNEY WE MAKE IS F

EVERY DAY IS A BRAND NEW DAY

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

SOUND IS ALIVE

THE CREATOR GAVE US A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING AT THINGS

THE LANGUAGES ARE WITHIN

GET OUT ON THE LAND

WE KEPT OUR LANG

WE SPEAK IN SOUNDS - THE SOUNDS COME F

OUR VOICES ARE CONNECTED

OUR LANGUAGE IS

BHP Foundation

International Impact

CILLDI participated in the following conferences globally, sharing insights on tools, methodologies, and community-based language revitalization.

Reporting on New Tools in New Contexts: Methodologies for Data Collection and Community Engagement. University of Hawai'i, Mānoa. April 9, 2024.

New Words in XaadKil. Haida Language Gathering. Craig, Alaska, May 8, 2024.

Mitigating the Darksides of AI: Avenues for the Future. This invited presentation was given during a roundtable discussion at the Language in the Human Machine Era Conference in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, on September 3, 2024.

Insights from 25 Years of Co-creative Training in Language Documentation and Revitalization. Community Creativity with New Corpus Creation Tools. Recent Advances in Language Documentation and Archiving Conference. Berlin, Germany. September 5-6, 2024.

Grammars that Give Back: Creating Grammars with the Language Community and "How Do You Say This?": Tools for Community-Made Language Materials. International Congress of Linguists. Poznań, Poland. September 10-11, 2024

Towards a Theory of Skills Training for Intergenerational Language Sustainability. The University of Tromsø, Norway. September 18, 2024.



National & International Collaborations:

- Ban Ki-Moon Foundation
- Canadian Commission for UNESCO
- Endangered Languages Project

Research – Leading New Directions in Knowledge Mobilization and Data Sovereignty

The SILR Research study acknowledges and honours the collaborative efforts of Indigenous communities, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, Language Speakers, and researchers who have dedicated themselves to revitalizing and preserving Indigenous languages. The journey is about safeguarding sovereignty and exploring the connections between language use and Indigenous well-being (body, mind, spirit, and emotion).

- **From Knowledge Gathering to Knowledge Sharing:** Engaged in innovative Indigenous methodologies and analysis through sharing circles and creating research output beyond written text– through video and pictograph. The overall approach is rooted in Indigenous storytelling traditions and foster deeper connections between the research team, the research process and community members.
- **Pictographic Representation:** Led by Indigenous artists and guided by Elders, the findings were collaboratively interpreted and documented as a pictograph and video —a modern representation rooted in traditional practices. The the video and pictograph, serve as an invitation to connect with and learn one's Ancestral Language to begin path to a lifelong journey of learning, practicing and experiencing a good life (wellbeing - mind, body, spirit and emotions) that is interconnected to the land, ceremony, all our relations and a continual praxis of agency.
- **Data Sovereignty:** SILR's Research Indigenous Advisory Council members asked the SILR Research team to establish new international standards by making Indigenous data sovereignty a core practice. In response, a landmark Data Sovereignty Declaration and Care Taking Directives was developed that wove together the unique responsibilities of the research participants, Principal Investigator, and the University of Alberta Library and Museums. The agreement ensures participants retain control over their linguistic and cultural data in perpetuity and rises above colonial law (*Copyright Act*). Therefore, it also illustrates one way in which post-secondary institutions can decolonize their data policies and practices like the University of Alberta is now seeking to do because of this aspect of the study. As a result, Frog Lake First Nation is using an adapted version of the Agreement to protect recordings of their Elders and Ancestral Speakers.

In my own personal wellness journey in relation to this project... it has helped me to reflect and strengthen my understanding of my own identity as an Indigenous person. This has been a very important journey for me to understand what it means to be Dene born and living outside of the territory and my community in the North. I understand that I belong to these territories, and those of the North. At this same time, this journey has inspired conversations with people who have shared with me that the Dene peoples historically travelled throughout the lands on Turtle Island. I have come to understand one of the reasons I feel so connected when I go to the mountains in Jasper, or down South, a concept known as blood memory.

(Crystal Wood, SILR Graduate Research Assistant, personal communication, Dec.18, 2024).



Guided by Elders, the research findings were collaboratively interpreted and documented as a pictograph, 2024.

Non-Traditional Knowledge Sharing Practices

It was important for the SILR research team to reimagine ways in which to engage in knowledge sharing practices that were meaningful and accessible for community. Below are the core impacts that were the direct result of this unique approach that moved beyond peer reviewed publications.

Innovative Educational Resources: Five educational resources were co-created with Elders, transforming the teachings in each of their research interviews into accessible learning materials for educators and students. These resources connect language learning with well-being and cultural resilience.

Training Initiatives: Technology workshops were designed to transfer the skills that the research team developed during the research study to community members that are looking to digitally document their Ancestral language speakers. Two 2-day training sessions equipped community members with recording and editing skills, enabling the documentation of ancestral languages via video.

Findings video: The findings video weaves together the pictograph and the voices of Ancestral Speakers to provide a visual and orature presentation of the findings. This presentation of the findings ensure that the participants' teachings are authentically shared. The video also serves as a bridge for Indigenous youth and community members to reconnect with their ancestral languages and begin a lifelong journey of experiencing well-being (body, mind, spirit, and emotion).

Archival Innovations: Research materials were archived with the University of Alberta Library and Museums using cutting-edge technologies to ensure accessibility for future generations while honouring data sovereignty.

Section Three

Lessons Learned

Healing through language is also intertwined with the revitalization of traditional practices and cultural teachings. As language is reawakened, it brings with it ancestral wisdom embedded in the words and expressions that convey teachings on living well, respecting the land, and maintaining harmonious relationships.

(SILR Mid-term Evaluation Report 2024, page 34).



Story-telling

The stories also emphasize that being accountable to relationships means honouring the teachings passed down through generations. Elder Lynda Minoose reflects on how her mother influenced her as a storyteller: "My mother was my biggest influence in my life. And I learned everything from her. All the stories. I'm a storyteller now, and that was because of her. She was a storyteller" (April 30, 2024). Elder Lynda's reflection shows that relational accountability involves recognizing and respecting the lineage of knowledge. Her storytelling is not just a skill; it is a responsibility to her mother and her community, ensuring that the stories remain alive. This accountability helps sustain cultural practices as part of the larger goal of language and cultural revitalization.

(SILR Mid-term Evaluation Report 2024, page 61).



...for me as nehiyaw thinker and I as a nehiyaw person, it [searching process] strengthened the connection to who I am again, and it reminded me that Creator was so kind...But the most important part of the teaching is following those Creation stories, following those ceremonies, listening to those songs and learning that language to connect to all of that well-being because we were born gifts, our children are gifts, we are all gifts to each other and I feel we did strengthen that...We all came together to help that like the language spirit and for me it's been a real honour and a real privilege to be a part of this searching process because it's humbling and I'm full of gratitude.

(Joline Bull, SILR Graduate Research Assistant, personal communication, Dec. 18, 2024).

Feature Story: Dr. Trudy Cardinal: A Champion for Indigenous Languages and Culture

Dr. Trudy Cardinal has been an integral part of the SILR since 2021. She initially led the Braiding Stories to Live By initiative and evolved into a champion for Indigenous languages. Her passion for Indigenous education, language revitalization, and community empowerment is evident in her dedicated work as a faculty member and researcher at the University of Alberta.

A core value of Dr. Cardinal's approach is building relationships within the community. She fosters trust and collaboration, working closely with communities across Alberta to ensure meaningful engagement. Through grassroots initiatives like the Aunties Circle, she empowers Indigenous women and girls through cultural and language activities. Dr. Cardinal believes in education as a shared journey and connects schools, families, and communities to honour traditional knowledge.

She inspires Indigenous youth through programs such as the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership, providing spaces for young women to explore their identities and develop leadership skills. Her teaching and curriculum development integrate Indigenous knowledge with modern education, strengthening the connection between traditional practices and contemporary pedagogy.

The Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies program that Dr. Cardinal is part of addresses Indigenous teaching methods, enhancing understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge. Through her passion for community and dedication to relationship building, Dr. Cardinal champions the resilience of Indigenous cultures and ensures the vitality of Indigenous languages for future generations.



Overcoming Barriers, Embracing Opportunities

Advancing Indigenous Language Revitalization through Collaboration, Innovation, and Adaptability

The journey toward Indigenous language revitalization is both inspiring and complex, marked by significant challenges and promising opportunities. Among the most critical challenges are the need to adapt to the diverse needs of communities, the limited availability of resources and funding, and institutional barriers that create delays in essential processes. Addressing these challenges requires intentional strategies and collaborative approaches to drive meaningful progress.

One key opportunity lies in **empowering identity** by fostering cultural pride and self-respect. Programs that honour the contributions of Elders and Knowledge Keepers help build reciprocity and encourage deeper community involvement. Another significant opportunity is **collaborative problem-solving** to ensure adaptability in meeting the distinct needs of different communities. By maintaining relational approaches and prioritizing resilience, communities can develop tailored solutions that respect their unique contexts.

Innovative resource development is also essential, with continued funding and partnerships offering pathways to sustain efforts and maximize participation. Strategic collaboration through robust evaluation frameworks can guide evolving strategies, ensuring that revitalization efforts remain impactful and future-focused.

Finally, **addressing institutional barriers** is crucial to unlocking further progress. Aligning institutional practices with the organic and fluid nature of language revitalization can reduce delays in compensating knowledge holders and team members, fostering trust and ethical relationality. By overcoming these barriers, we can create a more flexible, supportive environment for advancing Indigenous language revitalization.

Looking Ahead

SILR's journey has been guided by stories shared, practices cultivated, and relationships honoured. Now, we face a collective responsibility to weave past, present, and future into resilient, sustainable pathways. This means amplifying community leadership, centering Indigenous voices, and ensuring Elders, youth, and knowledge keepers lead the way forward.

SILR's goals are clear:

- Sustain holistic language revitalization by connecting language to culture, wellness, and healing.
- Scale resources and partnerships to support local contexts while fostering global movements for Indigenous sovereignty.
- Create safe spaces for learning, identity, and belonging where the sacredness of language is celebrated.

Sustainability is not just about longevity but about transforming systems. It means embedding data sovereignty, ensuring ethical knowledge sharing, and reflecting Indigenous ways of knowing. It involves building capacity for educators, empowering youth as leaders, and fostering networks for community learning.

Looking ahead, SILR is committed to honouring the sacred responsibility of revitalizing languages as vibrant expressions of cultural identity and resilience. The work we carry forward ensures ancestral languages remain spoken, sung, and lived—promising the next generations a future of healing, identity, and strength.



Financial

In 2024, the BHP Foundation made a significant contribution of \$3,022,692 to the University of Alberta, reinforcing its commitment to building capacity for community-led Indigenous language revitalization in Canada through the SILR project.

At the beginning of the year, the project carried forward an opening balance of \$187,912, reflecting previously allocated but unspent funds. Over the year, total expenses reached \$2,649,943, funding key activities such as community engagement, youth-focused programming, research, evaluation, and capacity-building efforts in Indigenous language revitalization. These expenditures reflect a strategic investment in fostering meaningful partnerships, developing culturally responsive evaluation frameworks, and ensuring the sustainability of the project's impact.

By December 31, 2024, the remaining balance was \$632,548, including \$55,595 carry forward from Îlethka Îlabi Institute and \$15,982 from Alexis Heritage and Culture subgrants, for a net amount of \$560,661. An additional \$42,381 in expenses was incurred in 2024 but missed the posting deadline. This amount will still be reported for that year, reducing the final balance to \$518,280.

Moving forward, the remaining funds will support further engagement, research dissemination, and planning for future sustainability.