

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



SILR

**SUPPORTING
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
REVITALIZATION**
SILR.CA



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Executive Director Message

Aaniin,

As we gather to reflect on the progress made within the Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR) project at the University of Alberta, I am delighted to share with you the highlights from SILR's 2023 annual report. This message is not just a summary of achievements; it's a heartfelt expression of gratitude to our dedicated community and collaborators.

The SILR project has undergone significant transformations since its inception in 2021, and this journey has been shaped by the collective efforts of our community and collaborators. Together, we have navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and, most importantly, contributed to the revitalization of Indigenous languages in meaningful ways.

The 2023 annual report showcases the impactful changes we have made to the initial project plan. The Theory of Change (ToC) has been updated to reflect the evolving landscape of Indigenous language revitalization. This not only underscores our commitment but also highlights our ability to adapt to the dynamic nature of this important work.

Our core areas of focus—connecting, speaking, teaching, learning and leading—have been instrumental in shaping the anticipated outcomes of the SILR project. Each area plays a crucial role in the holistic approach we take toward Indigenous language revitalization. The report details the progress we've made in each of these domains.

We are thrilled to announce a transformative expansion of our program in 2023: "Living in the Language." This initiative goes beyond the confines of colonial definitions and embraces a dynamic understanding that language-learning is intricately interwoven with culture and land. This shift is not just a change in perspective but a commitment to a more comprehensive and inclusive approach. By recognizing the inseparable connection between language, culture, and land, we are moving forward in our appreciation and understanding the language revitalization in community.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each member of the SILR team, our advisors, committee members, university community and our valued community-driven collaborators. Your dedication, passion, and unwavering support are the driving force behind the success of SILR. Together, we are making a difference not only in preserving Indigenous languages but also in creating an environment where they can flourish.

The developments within the SILR project are not just milestones; they are exciting steps toward transformative methods for building capacity in Indigenous and community-led language revitalization. By reclaiming, collaborating, and developing sustainable approaches, we are collectively contributing to a future where Indigenous languages are not only spoken but thrive vibrantly within our communities.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and collaboration. It is an honor to work alongside each of you.

Miigwetch

Pamela McCoy Jones

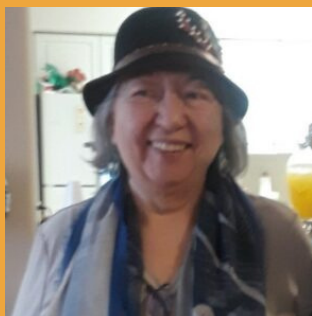
Acknowledgement

SILR supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and acknowledge that post-secondary institutions have an important role to play in Indigenous language revitalization.

We honor 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 part 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 and respect 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. A fundamental aspect is the establishment of an External Advisory Council whose purpose is to ensure community voice and guidance is present, and that the overall project remains in alignment 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.

The SILR team, University of Alberta, and Advisory Circle member offer heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Millie Kuliktana, who passed away on January 9, 2023, and fondly remember Dr. Betty Bastien, who left us on May 9, 2023. Both women were dedicated to Indigenous education and language revitalization. Their profound contributions stand as lasting inspiration, and their legacies will undeniably shape the progress in advancing Indigenous language development and education.

Mary Cardinal-Collins	Edna Elias	Molly Chisaakay	Doreen Daychief
			
Lynda Minoose	Isabelle Kootenay	Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper	Lyndon Aginas
			

Amplifying Indigenous Languages Revitalization

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, SILR aims to support Indigenous language sovereignty through community-led initiatives that protect, preserve, promote, revitalize, transfer, strengthen, and sustain languages. SILR also acknowledges the United Nations General Assembly's proclamation that the years 2022 to 2032 mark the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, which aims to draw global attention to the critical status of Indigenous languages around the world. Further, SILR recognizes Indigenous language rights as inherent in Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 and the Indigenous Languages Act (2019), respecting Indigenous languages and international human rights, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous language revitalization ecosystem in Canada is a multifaceted and complex endeavor targeting the preservation and rejuvenation of Indigenous languages. It requires commitment from individual dedication to government support, where all are working together to preserve and revive Indigenous languages. This ecosystem underscores the significance of language as a vital component of culture and identity and recognizes the urgency of its preservation.

In the following pages, you will find a comprehensive overview of the transformative journey we undertook in 2023 to advance Indigenous language revitalization. This report highlights impactful changes, realigned goals, and the progress made within our core areas of connecting, speaking, teaching, learning and leading. As we delve into the details, we invite you to celebrate the achievements that are not just milestones but significant strides toward reclaiming, collaborating, and developing sustainable methods for Indigenous language revitalization.



At a Glance

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Section One

Theory of Change

The SILR Theory of Change (2023) 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. This vision is supported by integrating appropriate language revitalization approaches and tools into community and educational policies and practices.

The long-term impact goal is to transform and strengthen the capacity of Indigenous-led language revitalization. This involves increasing skills, shifting attitudes and behaviours, and supporting community-driven systems and investments in language revitalization. The program aims to impact over 1,000 youth, 2,000 students, 400 teachers, 100 language speakers, 1,500 gathering participants, and engage in 30 community-centered collaborations by 2026.

The Theory of Change for the SILR project is a holistic and inclusive journey that recognizes the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures in Canada. It is a journey that respects the past while looking towards a future where Indigenous languages flourish in every aspect of life. Through a collaborative, community-driven approach, the project seeks to empower Indigenous communities by respecting their unique cultural identities and needs. The pathway is not linear but rather a responsive and evolving process that adapts to the changing landscapes of Indigenous languages and communities.

In practice, this means engaging deeply with various Indigenous partners and communities, understanding their specific contexts and definitions of community, and co-developing tools and approaches that are culturally sensitive and relevant. It involves nurturing spaces where Indigenous languages are not just learned but lived – in homes, schools, and community gatherings. The program's success lies in its ability to facilitate a shift in attitudes towards Indigenous languages, seeing them not as priorities of the past but as vibrant and essential elements of contemporary life and future aspirations.

Ultimately, the Theory of Change for the SILR project embodies a journey of reclamation, revitalization, and celebration of Indigenous languages, contributing to the broader goals of reconciliation and cultural preservation in Canada.

SILR Process

Connecting

Supporting safe spaces for healing, belonging, and cultural pride

Speaking

Increasing the use of Indigenous languages

Teaching

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

Learning

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

Leading

Leaders in education systems are encouraged to advocate for and influence language revitalization

SILR

Approach

Community-Centered Approaches

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 Best Practices

Capture and broadly share research and best practices across program and policy spaces.

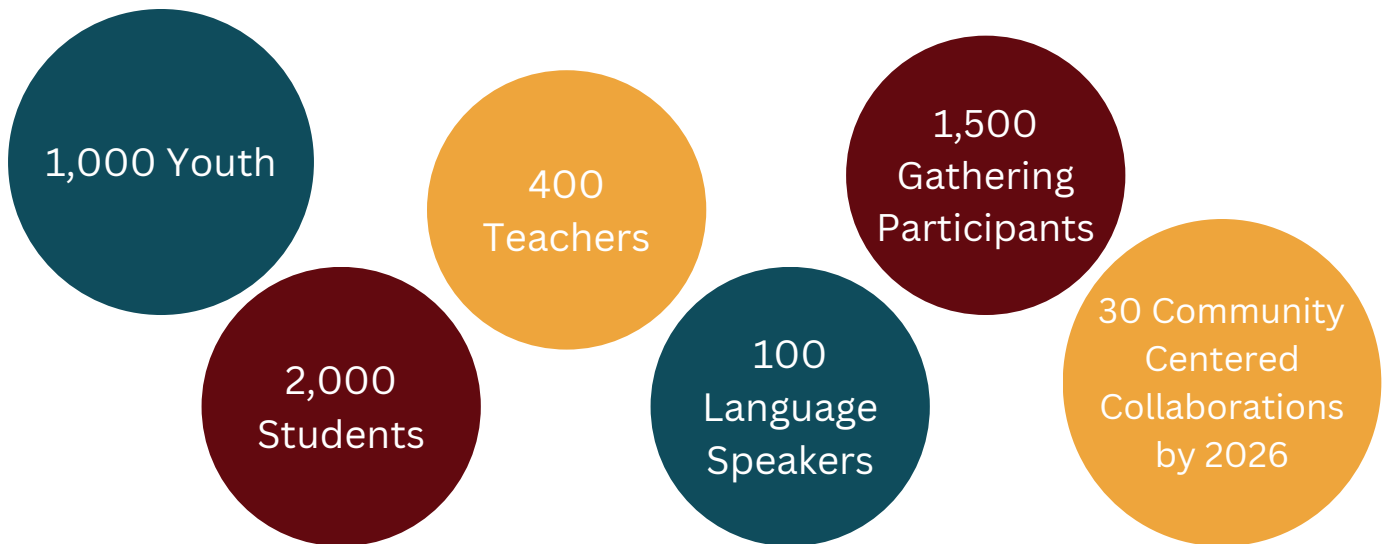
Cultural and Contextual Understanding

Recognize the diverse nature of Indigenous communities, including those not residing in a particular place or those like Tribal Colleges and collaborative organizations.

Impact Statement

Transforming and **strengthening** the **capacity** of **Indigenous-led** language revitalization by increasing skills, shifting attitudes and behaviors, and supporting community driven and system investments in language revitalization.

Impacting More Than



AREAS

OF

FOCUS

**LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS
AND ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2023
ARE GEARED TOWARDS THE FOLLOWING
AREAS OF FOCUS:**

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 best practices are captured and shared broadly across program and policy spaces

Section Two

Connecting--Supporting Safe Spaces for Healing, Belonging and Cultural Pride

Strengthening the capacity of Indigenous-led language revitalization efforts by increasing skills, shifting attitudes and behaviours, supporting community driven initiatives and building a network of language advocates. Connecting creates a positive view of the local Indigenous language, and shows that community leaders and education systems understand the importance of Indigenous Language Revitalization. Youth are participants under the age of 20 years old. Students are a) K-12 students; or b) University of Alberta student.

Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership	Braiding Stories to Live By	First Peoples House
Participants Include:	Participants Include:	Participants Include:
236 Youth	105 Youth	288 Youth
140 Students	1,120 Students	244 Students
38 Teachers	15 Teachers	6 Language Speakers/ Knowledge Keepers/ Elders
23 Language Speakers/ Knowledge Keepers/ Elders	6 Language Speakers/Knowledge Keepers/ Elders	9 Community Centered Collaborations

Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership

The Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership is a program to help young Indigenous women, between the ages of 10 and 19, to discover/reclaim their Indigenous languages and cultures with a focus on Cree and Cree-Michif. By supporting the growth of young ladies' self esteem and a strong sense of cultural identity (learning language and cultural skills), these youth will develop their skills and abilities and be motivated to take on the challenges of leadership for their families and communities; a role that is traditionally that of women in Indigenous Nations.



Circle of Leadership

Focused on developing young Indigenous women's self-worth, pride and respect of self and others through the learning of cultural values using Indigenous languages.

YIWCL has grown significantly and quickly over the past two years, and the desire for consistent, year-round activities for youth has shown that even more growth is possible. Organizations around Edmonton have shown great interest in collaborating with us on programming for youth and young ladies, and we have seen success working with the City of Edmonton and Rupertsland so far.

The annual YIWCL summer immersion camp was in July 2023 as two separate week-long camps. The 2023 camp was held at kihcihkaw askî (Sacred Land) located on amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton). Likely, the natural setting contributed to the high number of young women in camp attendance.

Safe spaces were created by utilizing Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing like daily ceremony practice of smudging and using a circle technique and attentively listening to each participant, in and out of the circles.

To date, backpacks have been provided to youth participating in summer camps with items including Cree dictionaries, children's books, pens, notebooks, syllabic-print scarves.

Christine Buffalo, Program Support, University of Alberta

Braiding Stories to Live By

Braiding Stories to Live By (BSTLB) creates safe spaces for young Indigenous women to come together as multiple generations create a beautiful circle of intergenerational knowledge. BSTLB's services interweave Cree teachings that are provided. Deep within communities, Indigenous ways of doing is an action principle that is also extended to relationships built with public education systems. BSTLB activities are intermingled through their activities as presented in this annual report.



Braiding Stories to Live By is focused on co-creating Indigenous young women gatherings unique to each community we work with.

"Working with Elders and communities you really have to be willing to be in community. I think that just really paying attention to the importance of a strong leader, clear expectations proper protocol all the way through with the Elder... the importance of our relationship and clear expectations."

We created a variety of experiences: such as the creation of gatherings for Indigenous young women (and friends) to engage in cultural activities with knowledge keepers. For example, Indigenous Young Women's Basketball camp and Art & Wellness gatherings that took place in Fort McMurray, Slave Lake and Edmonton, Alberta.

We initiated a new activity, a physical activity, such as a youth Basketball camp held in Fort McMurray. The wholistic endeavor included teachings on the four directions and medicine wheel to teach the youth on finding balance in their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

We partnered with Girls Inc in Fort McMurray to build and develop the youth Basketball camp in order to hear what the youth wanted and to build new partnerships for the future. We will be weaving in Cree teachings and names in relation to the Moon to which the youth will connect their wellness.

(Interview with Dr. Trudy Cardinal, Professor, Faculty of Education - Elementary Education, University of Alberta)

First Peoples House

First Peoples House (FPH) has worked with the language speakers to assist in developing visual cues and images around the space for anyone including visitors to FPH to be encouraged to think about the language and how they can easily partake. Elders gather around the round table and hold immersive conversations with students who gather around them - many different levels of learning are encouraged. Students encouraged not only to speak the language on campus but also within their own homes and with their families. It is also a way of connecting them with their communities back home.



**FIRST
PEOPLES'
HOUSE**

First Peoples' House is a student service centre for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students at the University of Alberta offering programs and services to help students achieve academic success and personal growth.

Awakening the Language: First People House (FPH) is committed to awaken sleeping languages that have been waiting for them all this time. The language calls the spirit back. This is the beauty we see of the awakening within the spirit of our students. These are the prayers of our Ancestors. All of these teachings that they learn along with the language. It's the relationship that they'll have with community--once they know the language. It's a different connection that really is inspiring and it doesn't just stop here. It's when they go home, maybe they're trying harder with their families or their community members to engage in conversation. So it's almost like a ripple.

Awakening the Language (events, workshops) carries sacred knowledge, history and identity. Language is an opportunity to connect and reconnect with their spirit and inherently builds community capacity. Creating a safe welcoming space for students and FPH staff to gain confidence in speaking the language is a top priority.

FPH is committed to awaken sleeping languages that have been waiting for them all this time. Through the support of our Elders and Language Holders we create daily opportunities for immersion into the language within the home. The language calls the spirit back. This is the beauty we see of the awakening within the spirit of our students that we see on a daily basis.

FPH encourages not only to speak the language on campus but also within their own homes and with their families. It is also a way of connecting them with their communities back home.

(Interview with Shana Dion, Assistant Dean, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students)

Speaking--Increasing the Use of Indigenous Languages

Partnered with Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission (MESC) to provide support for the development of a Oral Language Centre in classrooms.

Delivered a 10-week nehiyawewin piko-ite ayapihkanihk: Virtual Cree Sessions

Partnered with Nehiyawe Cultural Institute to provide support for the development and the recording of two language albums by WJ and the Treaty Six Band in nêhiyawêwin. One for adults and and one for children.

Provided support for the language and culture programming at the National Gathering of Elders in Edmonton Alberta which saw more than 5000 attendees.

Continuing to build capacity alongside Yellowhead Tribal College and contributing to nation-led Indigenous language revitalization. Increasing the vitality of nehiyawewin, anishinaabemowin, i'sga l?abi

Contributing to nation-led Indigenous language revitalization and increasing the vitality of nehiyawewin, anishinaabemowin, i'sga l?abi.

Sentence Narrator Task, Photo Narrator and Photo Discussion and Recording Translation Software have been improved with over 5,000 sentences (40% increase) and 1,000 photos (9.8% increase).

Co-hosted an evening of storytelling with Joanne and Jerry Saddleback with the Edmonton Public Library on December 21, 2023, celebrating the Winter Solstice.

Partnered with Canadian Council for the Arts on the development of an Indigenous documentation toolkit.



Living in the Language

New in 2023, Living in the Language will move beyond the confines of colonial definitions, including recognizing that language-learning is intrinsically linked with culture and land. By embracing the wisdom of Elders and Knowledge Keepers, SILR is deepening its understanding of language revitalization as a dynamic, living entity that extends beyond linguistic boundaries.

The core of this transformation lies in the flexibility of the "Living in the Language" program. Now, through Community-Centered Collaborations, we are empowering communities to drive projects aligned with the diverse needs of our audience – students, young adults, speakers, Elders, and organizations. This flexible, community-driven approach acknowledges that effective language revitalization is nuanced and varies across contexts, offering tailored solutions for the preservation and flourishing of Indigenous languages.

In June, SILR staff provided facilitation and administrative support over three months and, occasionally, feast food with community organizations planning one-day immersive language events in an urban setting. "Living in the Language" represents more than a program; it shares an Indigenous worldview – It signifies a commitment to a comprehensive, culturally grounded, and inclusive perspective that reshapes the narrative of Indigenous language revitalization. As we embark on this transformative journey, SILR extends its heartfelt gratitude to the communities and collaborators who inspire and guide us, collectively forging a path towards a future where Indigenous languages are not only spoken but lived.

On December 21, 2023, in collaboration with Edmonton Public Library, SILR co-hosted a nehiyawewin storytelling session with Elder Jerry Saddleback; there were 25+ attendees. The purpose of the event was to collaborate with a community partner who holds similar values of amplifying Indigenous voices for the purpose of supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization efforts through languages and cultures activities. Collectively, we aim to bring communities together in an inclusive, safe space for Indigenous people and allies to be in ceremony together, connecting with our ancestors through language and culture. Elder Jerry shared nehiyaw creation stories where nehiyawewin was spoken and we shared a feast of soup and bannock.

Teaching--Increasing the capacity to nurture language fluency alongside Elders, parents, teachers and instructors

Improving accessibility of current and new students in summer school through online and in-person programming in 2023

Supported students financially through 62 bursaries; 22 in-person Summer School, 20 online Summer School, 20 in-community. In-community bursaries offered for the first time in 2023

Offered a total of 28 credit courses. Twenty-six returning instructors and recruited two new instructors

Partnered with the Language and Heritage Program, Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation on an innovative community-directed language revitalization program, including extensive language documentation with fluent Elders and training for community members.



Partnered with Îethka Îabi Institute to create a first-of-its-kind collection of spoken Stoney Nakoda, which currently includes over 5,000 individual recordings totalling more than 6 hours of spoken language

Delivered three custom-designed in-person training courses for Tsuut'ina language speakers, learners and teachers, co-taught by respected Elder and Tsuut'ina Language Commissioner Bruce Starlight.

Delivered six custom-designed online training courses for Cree language Educational Assistants in the Maskwacîs Education School Commission to support their professional development.

Delivered two custom-designed online training courses for Paul First Nation to support the development of their language revitalization efforts.

Organized a book-writing workshop for Stoney speakers in March 2023 to encourage literacy development and creative writing among Stoney speakers and learners.

Delivered two custom-designed in-person training courses for Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation for speakers, learners and teachers, focusing on the development of skills in literacy and language analysis.

Partnered with Chief Aranazhi School at the Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation to record, transcribe and translate a series of stories from fluent Elders, totalling over 12 hours of spoken Stoney language and to assist in reviewing and expanding their Stoney language curriculum, resulting in 8 completely revised curricular units.

Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute

The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) is dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous languages through documentation, teaching, and literacy. It is a tri-Faculty initiative involving the Faculties of Arts, Education, and Native Studies. CILLDI works to support language revitalization through the annual summer school, in-community work, and research on Indigenous languages in Canada and abroad.

Protect, Preserve, Promote, Practice and Pass on Your Language

These five words (the '5Ps') are concrete acts of language revitalization at the individual and community level. Since every situation is different, we encourage our students and community partners to pursue the '5Ps' as they see fit. As an institute, CILLDI aims to be a resource for anyone embarking on the journey of language revitalization.

Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) works to support Indigenous language revitalization through their annual summer school, in-community work, and research on Indigenous languages in Canada and abroad.



"The main learning is that we need to continue to offer this training in as many places and in as many modalities as possible. The demand is urgent and growing, but the supply remains limited. The sustainability of CILLDI's program lies in its ability to grow instructor and staff capacity to respond appropriately to the demand".

(Report by Dr. Jordan Lachler, Director of CILLDI)

The 2023 Language Revitalization Summer School included, for the first time, both online and in-person courses. The in-person courses took place on campus over three weeks in July, while the online courses stretched over the full six weeks of the Summer semester. Enrollment in the Summer School nearly doubled from 2022 numbers, increasing from 79 to 147.

Due to the success of this model, we anticipate that all future CILLDI Summer Schools will include both in-person and online course offerings. It is also worth noting the heavy impact that the wildfire season had on our program this year, especially for our many students from further north whose communities were being evacuated either just before or during the time of the Summer School. It seems likely that this will be an on-going challenge for years to come, in addition to the notably bad air quality we experienced in Edmonton during July.

Year-Round CILLDI

While the Summer remains our busiest time in terms of the number of courses offered, we were able to expand our in-community course deliveries throughout the Spring and Fall. These offerings allow us to work in partnership with the leaders of the community's language program to develop custom-designed courses, tailored to their particular languages and the needs of that specific cohort of students.

In 2023, we partnered with three communities in Alberta to deliver such courses: Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, Tsuut'ina First Nation and Piikani First Nation.

Language Assessment Project

The intent of the Language Assessment Project is to: support the development and documentation of diverse models of Indigenous language assessment being used to indicate language proficiency in communities, organizations and institutions; amplify community-driven language assessment processes for Indigenous language speakers to access; and support Indigenous language assessment policy change for students to enter Bachelor of Education with advanced credit.

On December 8, 2023, SILR Language Assessment Symposium was held and began with a welcome, a circle of introductions, smudge, and drum song/dance. A paper was developed in partnership with Dr. Belinda Daniels entitled, Insights on Language Assessment and achieved the following:

- Explored current government initiatives and academic literature in Indigenous language assessment.
- Focused on the distinction between "proficiency" and "fluency," advocating for a practical approach to language learning.
- Integrated ASL into Cree language learning to enhance memory and understanding.
- Stressed the need to differentiate between language assessment for learning and language credentialing and the importance of intergenerational learning.

The symposium highlighted a collective commitment to preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages. There was a strong focus on integrating traditional methods with contemporary strategies, acknowledging the diverse needs of language learners. The discussions revolved around community involvement, cultural respect, and supportive learning environments. The participants recognized the challenges ahead but showed a unified determination to advance the cause of language preservation and revitalization.

Pedagogy and Practice: Weaving Indigenous Languages in the Classroom

The Weaving Holistic Learning Experiences through Language Programming and Culture (WHoLE) initiative connects Faculty of Education Indigenous preservice teachers and service teachers with planned engagements, community-based initiatives and professional development opportunities. The project intends to build capacity to lead and foster Indigenous language and culture learning in classrooms. Secondly, it aims to highlight and support a growing network of language learners and speakers from the University of Alberta and beyond in order to collaborate and inspire language learning.

On campus, engagement and cultural events included the Tawaw welcoming event in January 2023 engages with new and returning Indigenous students across all faculties. SILR share information on upcoming events and assisted in the language programming inviting Elders to participate. SILR staff engaged with nearly 300 hundred students in attendance.

Supporting in-service teachers and Indigenous liaisons in the community began with the development of the five Indigenous Language Sharing Series (ILSS) and five Student Workshops with more than 95 participants attended the ILSS and student gathering sessions. All presenters shared their lived experiences, language and culture programming, and resources reflective of the Nehiyaw (Cree), Nakota-Sioux, Michif, Dene Tha, Denesuline, and Anishinaabemowin languages. The sessions were a combination of in-person and hybrid delivery; recorded and edited through digital resources with an accompanying educational resource, including planning tips.

In community, BSTLB has initiated partnerships with Fort McKay Youth Center and four schools/organizations in Fort McMurray (St. Anne's School, Timberlea, and Walter Gladys Hill and Girls Inc Northern Alberta). In select school, high-school credit course opportunities have begun.

Section 3

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

Indigenous Languages Environmental Scan

The Indigenous Languages Environmental Scan has been developed and provides an overview of research locally, provincially, and nationally to determine the current state of initiatives to preserve, promote, and revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada. The environmental scan examined language acquisition strategies, programming, funding, technology, resources, training, and professional development. The environmental scan targeted regional and national Indigenous languages with a focus on Cree, Dene, Stoney, Blackfoot, Michif and Inuktitut. Findings were grouped into themes and recommendations were drafted for consideration. Many Indigenous languages are at risk, endangered or vulnerable. Indigenous language revitalization efforts vary due to the needs of the community or language group, and access to fluent language speakers, resources, and funding. Capacity building, sustainability (fiscal and human resources), accessing and leveraging technology to support revitalization efforts, partnerships, early learning, fluent Indigenous language speakers, and community-led language initiatives are imperative to sustain, preserve, promote, and revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada.

Indigenous Language and Learning Video Series

The Indigenous Language and Learning Video Series (ILLVS), consisting of Elders, Knowledge Keepers and experienced Indigenous language educators who have shared their gifts, knowledge, experiences, and insights on revitalizing Indigenous languages. Each video is 30 - 60 minutes in length consisting of learning or teaching planning tips and recommended resources that best represent different language revitalization topics, activities and initiatives, such as: personal stories; traditional teachings and learning practices on language revitalization.

Themes related to Indigenous language revitalization activities include the inherent and sacredness of Indigenous languages, cultural values and traditions, teachings and learning practices, language immersion programming/school-based language programs, and land-based learning. The video series is intended to:

- Provide pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and language instructors a deeper understanding of preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages in the home, school, community and on the land.
- Listen and learn from language warriors who are making an impact on their Indigenous language revitalization activities with their respective families, communities, or current workplaces.
- Assist teachers and instructors with the language teaching and learning activities and resources utilizing digital videos for their individual learning situations

Towards Indigenous Language Revitalization: An Informative Resource

The Towards Indigenous Language Revitalization: An Informative Resource to inspire the learning journey has been developed and is intended to complement the many reclamation and revitalization actions across Canada. As a tool, the curated resource and information are for Indigenous Peoples and organizations, including communities, language teachers, and education systems engaged in efforts to preserve, protect, revitalize, and sustain Indigenous languages.

Leading--Leaders in the education systems advocate for and influence language revitalization and have the knowledge to improve language programs

Program Development

The key to long-term sustainability for Indigenous languages lies in the ability of individuals and communities to protect, preserve, promote, practice and pass on their languages to the next generation. The Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies - Indigenous Language Revitalization - provides students the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous language communities in Canada and around the world, as well as the strategies that can support the intergenerational sustainability of those languages. The courses offer a blend of theory and practice, weaving together Indigenous knowledges and worldviews with the latest research on practical approaches to sustaining Indigenous languages in the home and community. These courses will be offered in conjunction with the CILLDI Summer Program. In this new program, students will:

- increase their understanding of Indigenous cultural and linguistic resilience
- expand their knowledge of successful community-specific language revitalization strategies
- identify specific challenges to revitalization in their own communities
- adapt revitalization strategies to the specific circumstances surrounding their own languages and communities
- learn new ways to support language vitality in all spheres of life

Networking

On March 31, 2023, we hosted a one-day Indigenous Language Gathering in Edmonton, Alberta. 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 SILR 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 included:

- 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

Research

In 2023, the research team has worked on conducting a systematic literature review and searching study. Both projects are community-driven and designed to identify and understand the ways in which knowing and speaking one's own Ancestral Language fosters well-being (mind, body, emotions, spirit). By taking this approach, the research team is able to use Mi'kmaw Elder Alberta Marshall's Guiding Principle termed Two-Eyed Seeing. "*Etuaptmumk* is the Mi'kmaw word for Two-Eyed Seeing and...refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing...and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffrey, 2004).

The Research Associate and the Indigenous Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) work collaboratively with the four Advisory Council members by seeking their guidance and wisdom as the searching process moves into the knowledge sharing and translation phase. The GRAs have developed working knowledge of Indigenous research ethics, methodologies, analysis and knowledge sharing processes and practices.

The research team analyzed 70% of the 566 articles and resources and have had the honour of visiting with and recording 23 Ancestral Language Speakers (8 female and 15 male) that self-identified as a speaker of one or more of the following Ancestral Languages: Cree, Stoney Cree, Woodland Cree, Sagaw Nehiyawewin, Nehiyawewin, Sikaw nehiyawiyaw ekwa Michif, Dene Tha', Cree and Anisnabe. With the guidance of the Advisory Council members, the research team built new paths for how research can be conducted and experienced by actively centering Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.



SILR Research Team

The connection to the land and how the ancestral languages are alive and thriving within our teachings of our history and ways of knowing. Language and land is the connections of the foundation for understanding any ancestral language, because it is in the way of life and way of living for Indigenous peoples. Our teachings come from the land and the languages need to be the focus for retaining, sharing, strengthening, maintaining and enhancing the language spirit.

Joline Bull, Graduate Research Assistant

This journey has been one of transformation, as well as humbling and spiritually nurturing. I have a in-depth understanding of the importance of our ancestral languages, and will forever be an advocate to supporting our ancestral languages on Turtle Island.

Crystal Wood, Graduate Research Assistant

I think that a really important piece is that the research wasn't just about answering the research question. There was so much more to it that could never be captured in an interview or a paper that will live on with all the people that were part of this project. It will live on in each of the Graduate Research Assistants' heart. Throughout this process there were tears there was laughter, it was full of emotion and life.

Davina Rousell, Research Lead

RESEARCH PROCESS

Systemic Literature Review

In January 2021, the Research Team was formally established and asked to conduct a systematic literature review (Gough & Thomas, 2016).

Research Question

What is the relationship for Indigenous peoples in Canada between the knowledge and use of their traditional languages and their individual and communal well-being?

Research Parameters

Focus on scholarly and gray literature found within the Great Turtle Island, Australia and New Zealand.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings illustrated a significant gap in the literature. The research team decided to continue the systemic literature review and conduct an Indigenous research study to be able to more fully answer the original research question.

SEARCH PROCESS

Use of the phrase 'Ancestral Languages'

The phrase 'Ancestral language(s)' is used instead of 'traditional languages' or 'Indigenous languages' to encompass the deeper meaning of the connection of the languages spoken on the Great Turtle Island since time immemorial.

Enhanced Research Question

A research ethics application was submitted and approved for a study using Indigenous methodologies and paradigm with a revised research question, asking: In what ways does knowledge and use of Ancestral language(s) foster individual and community well-being (body, mind, emotion, and spirit)?

Visitings

Initial visitings (Gaudet, 2019) were carried out with the SILR Advisory Council members followed by additional visitings with individuals recommended by the initial participants. In total, 23 visitings were conducted.

Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings are presented as a pictograph to intentionally move the findings away from a predefined list of themes and the use of Roman Orthography.



Evaluation

Evaluation has been an important component of SILR's work and has brought about critical moments of reflection. As a result, SILR has development a more robust evaluation approach and framework document. The purpose of the *SILR Evaluation Approach* is to establish a comprehensive and culturally grounded *Evaluation Framework* for assessing the progress, effectiveness, and impact of the project. The approach is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, focusing on reciprocal learning, community empowerment, and the revitalization and preservation of Indigenous languages. SILR is committed to an evaluative approach to learning that is reflective, iterative, and responsive to the emergent learnings. It is important to the project to be able to identify, articulate, share, and celebrate the story of our work.

This SILR Evaluation Approach provides a blueprint for implementing an internal evaluation to ensure our learning informs decision-making and accountability to community and project partners. It is a living document, open to adaptation and evolution as the SILR project continues grows and learns from its experiences and engagements with Indigenous peoples and their languages.

The SILR Evaluation Approach and framework provides SILR with an iterative learning cycle that meaningfully engages in learning and evaluation in order to ensure that the project is making progress to the longer-term outcomes while also meeting the needs and priorities of the project partners. Because of SILR's commitment to this learning process, this approach will help to make visible the how of the work, and clearly articulate the importance of learning and evaluation that is grounded upon Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Section Four

Challenges/Opportunities

Data Gathering - Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of data is crucial for SILR to measure the impact of its initiatives accurately.

- Integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and culturally appropriate methodologies into data gathering processes.
- Collaborate with Indigenous communities to co-design data collection mechanisms that respect traditional knowledge systems.

Communication and Transparency - Effectively communicating the significant changes and shifts in SILR's approach and theory of change to stakeholders, communities, and partners.

- Apply the Indigenous Evaluation Framework to enhance communication strategies, ensuring they align with Indigenous cultural values and communication styles.
- Foster transparency through participatory approaches, engaging partners in a culturally respectful manner.

Indigenous Evaluation Framework - Applying an Indigenous Evaluation Framework requires a shift in evaluation methodologies and a deep understanding of Indigenous perspectives.

- Develop and implement an Indigenous Evaluation Framework that aligns with the values and priorities of Indigenous communities.
- Collaborate with Indigenous evaluators and incorporate Indigenous indicators to measure success and impact.

By integrating the Indigenous Evaluation Framework into these aspects, SILR can strengthen its commitment to cultural relevance, community engagement, and holistic evaluation, thereby enhancing the success and sustainability of its language revitalization efforts. Regular feedback loops and collaboration with Indigenous communities are key elements of this approach.

Looking Ahead

Reciprocity, knowledge sharing, and transforming Indigenous Language revitalization, so communities have tangible Indigenous Language resources, partnerships, and space to develop, grow and be sustainable. We will continue to host the SILR Gathering and expand the event to 2-days, including diverse language champions from the four directions. The event will feature a youth panel and Elders panel.

Looking ahead, advancing technology in Indigenous language development will be a next step and will involve fostering collaborations between linguists, language experts, technology professionals, and strategic partners. This interdisciplinary approach, enriched by collaborative efforts, should prioritize user-friendly interfaces, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity to cater to diverse language communities, ensuring the effective and sustainable integration of technology in language revitalization initiatives.

The coming year will mark CILLDI's 25th Anniversary. In addition to a range of special events to celebrate the occasion, planning is underway to expand course offerings at the Summer School. In parallel, the Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies with a focus on Indigenous Language Sustainability will launch. Community engagement will continue through the in-community courses and we look forward to celebrating our achievements, fostering community connections, and making meaningful strides in the journey towards language revitalization.

Finance

Project	Year 3 (2023)	Projected to Dec 31/23	Variance	% Spent
CONNECTING	\$356,000.00	\$333,677.27	\$22,322.73	93.73%
First Peoples House	\$71,000.00	\$54,670.27	\$16,329.73	77.00%
Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Learning (YIWCL)	\$140,000.00	\$139,525.00	\$475.00	99.66%
Braiding Stories to Live By (BStLB)	\$145,000.00	\$139,482.00	\$5,518.00	96.19%
SPEAKING	\$594,121.47	\$572,732.84	\$21,388.63	96.40%
Intensive Adult Language Immersion (IALI)	\$354,121.47	\$354,121.84	-\$0.37	100.00%
Living in the Language	\$85,000.00	\$63,611.00	\$21,389.00	74.84%
CILLDI Community	\$155,000.00	\$155,000.00	\$0.00	100.00%
TEACHING	\$737,049.33	\$909,606.12	-\$172,556.79	123.41%
CILLDI Programming	\$386,047.50	\$565,106.30	-\$179,058.80	146.38%
CILLDI in the Community (Training)	\$175,000.00	\$159,896.39	\$15,103.61	91.37%
Language Assessment Program (LAP)	\$30,000.00	\$34,960.00	-\$4,960.00	116.53%
Weaving Holistic Learning Experiences (WHoLE)	\$146,001.83	\$149,643.43	-\$3,641.60	102.49%
LEARNING	\$588,706.53	\$389,991.00	\$198,715.53	66.25%
Community Led Resource Development and Engagement	\$398,574.33	\$267,616.00	\$130,958.33	67.14%
Indigenous Language Resource	\$125,761.20	\$110,942.00	\$14,819.20	88.22%
Technology	\$64,371.00	\$11,433.00	\$52,938.00	17.76%
LEADING	\$100,000.00	\$68,817.14	\$31,182.86	68.82%
Master of Education in Language (MES)	\$50,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$35,000.00	30.00%
Annual Gathering	\$50,000.00	\$53,817.14	-\$3,817.14	107.63%
ADMIN	\$813,549.22	\$726,692.73	\$86,856.49	89.32%
Admin, Communications & Governance	\$361,507.13	\$359,997.33	\$1,509.80	99.58%
Building Networks	\$38,300.00	\$46,409.00	-\$8,109.00	121.17%
Research Project	\$323,742.09	\$270,082.40	\$53,659.69	83.43%
Evaluation and Research	\$90,000.00	\$50,204.00	\$39,796.00	55.78%
TOTAL (BHP Foundation Project)	\$3,189,426.55	\$3,001,517.10	\$187,909.45	94.11%

*Material budget changes, include a transfer of \$130,958.33 (Community Led Resource Development and Engagement) to off-set -\$179,058.80 (CILLDI Programming).

References

Ermine, W., Sinclair, R., and Jeffrey, B. (2004). *The ethics of research involving Indigenous peoples. Report of the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre to the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics.*