





SILR
SUPPORTING
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE
REVITALIZATION
IN ALBERTA



**UNIVERSITY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am pleased to share the summary of the 2024 Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR) Gathering.

The event began with a Pipe Ceremony each morning led by kithewayah Bob Cardinal, lighting of the Illiquiq by Myna Manniapik; drum songs by the Poundmakers drum group at the opening and closing of the Gathering.

Sandra Lamouche skillfully guided us as the Master of Ceremonies, leaving a lasting impression with her remarkable talent and humor.

Dr. Leroy Little Bear and Dr. Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams delivered powerful keynote speeches, inspiring and enlightening all attendees.

Passionate dedication to preserving Indigenous languages emerged as a central theme, emphasizing their crucial role in cultural identity preservation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

There was a strong desire for effective teaching strategies and land-based teachings tailored to Indigenous languages, highlighting the urgent need for educational resources and specialized training initiatives.

Community gatherings, cultural ceremonies, and intergenerational learning were underscored as vital, with attendees expressing interest in enhanced networking and cross-cultural sharing opportunities.

In conclusion, the 2024 SILR Gathering reflects the resilience, passion, and collective commitment of Indigenous communities to language revitalization.

Let us honour our ancestors, empower our youth, and protect the treasures of our Indigenous languages as we journey together.

Miigwetch to everyone who travelled to our gathering and I look forward to meeting with you again!

*Pamela McCoy Jones, Executive Director
Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization
(SILR)
University of Alberta*



Calling
Language
Warriors from the
Four Directions

Knowledge Sharing

- The youth panel showcased four inspirational, young individuals from diverse backgrounds whose stories and insights resonated with the attendees of the Gathering. Their narratives emphasized the critical need to enhance and back up the resources required for the revitalization of Indigenous languages.
- The SILR Advisory Council shared their wisdom during the Elders Panel presentation. Through their personal Indigenous language journeys, stories, and perspectives, they highlighted the significance of preserving Indigenous languages with love and optimism for the future.
- University of Alberta Occupational Health Therapy students and staff offered a range of on-site wellness services to 111 Elders and attendees.
- W.T. Goodspirit and the Treaty Six band were featured at the Gala, where they introduced and promoted two new albums. The albums, "nôcikiwikamikosihk (Where the Elders Dwell)" featuring a mix of language songs in nêhiyawêwin (Cree) and a Children's album "Kids Songs in nêhiyawêwin" from Wayne's Nehiyawe Cultural Institute, were highlighted.
- Through attendee contribution, a graphic recording captured a visual representation of the event. The full graphic recording is available on the SILR website at www.silr.ca.



Who Attended

The 2024 SILR Gathering had 379 registered participants, excluding vendors, exhibitors, U of A Occupational Health students, Elder's helpers and volunteers.

Based on the Gathering Evaluation and Session Feedback forms the demographic data provided will help shape future Indigenous Language Gatherings for SILR.

175 evaluations were collected and 377 session feedback forms were completed.

Findings underscored the importance of such gatherings for Indigenous Language Revitalization and the evaluation process of surveys and interviews offered recommendations for future events.

The data collected includes the following information:

- First Nations (84.8%), followed by Métis (6.4%) and Inuit (4.7%).
- Age Groups: Majority were older adults, with 34.5% between 55-65 years and 29.1% older than 65.
- Women constituted 80%, men 16.7%, and Two-Spirit individuals 1.2%.
- Over half (50.6%) of attendees were fluent in their Indigenous language, though many lacked proficiency in syllabics.
- Many attendees identified as teachers, Elders, advocates, students, and community linguists.
- 84% of attendees plan to use the information from the event in their Indigenous language revitalization efforts.



EMERGING THEMES

The following are the Gathering key findings from the sessions' feedback:

- **Youth Involvement:** Youth are crucial in ILR efforts, and technology can engage them through social media, podcasts, and interactive games.
- **Cultural Connection:** Integrating language learning with cultural teachings fosters deeper connections.
- **Interactivity and Fun:** Engaging methods like multimedia, storytelling, and games make learning enjoyable.
- **Community Collaboration:** Technology facilitates resource-sharing and collaboration within and beyond Indigenous communities.
- **Elder Knowledge:** Preserving and transmitting Elders' knowledge through digital resources is vital.
- **Challenges and Solutions:** Addressing funding, teacher shortages, and colonization impacts with innovative approaches.
- **Empowerment and Resilience:** Language revitalization as acts of empowerment and cultural resurgence.
- **Practical Applications:** Practical strategies for language teaching and curriculum development are highly valued.
- **Cultural Diversity:** Inclusivity and support for diverse Indigenous languages and cultures are essential.
- **Continued Learning and Networking:** Attendees expressed a desire for ongoing learning, collaboration, and support in ILR efforts.

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CALLS TO ACTION

The 2024 SILR Gathering added an additional question to the Session Feedback forms to gauge the learning experiences of the attendees; to hear their individual and collective voices. The question asked, “what would your Calls to Action be for Indigenous Language Revitalization?” Here are the following themes to provide insights and inspiration to the reader:

1. Uplifting Indigenous Languages: A hunger and passionate commitment to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages, recognizing their importance for cultural survival and identity.

2. Youth Engagement: Many of the attendees emphasized the importance of involving youth in language revitalization efforts, providing them with resources, mentorship, and opportunities to learn and teach their languages.

3. Community Collaboration: Collaboration within Indigenous communities, as well as with external organizations and governments, is highlighted as crucial for successful language revitalization.

4. Cultural Connection: Language revitalization is seen as being deeply connected to cultural practices, ceremonies, and traditional knowledge, with a focus on integrating language learning into cultural activities.

5. Advocacy and Action: There are calls to action for advocacy at various levels, including pushing for government funding, integrating Indigenous languages into education systems, and promoting language use in everyday life. Many of the attendees expressed a personal commitment to learning and teaching their languages, passing them on to future generations, and actively participating in revitalization efforts.

6. Accessibility: There is a shared goal of creating language resources and learning opportunities more accessible, especially for Indigenous youth and communities as well as advocating for free language courses and materials.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural Inclusion

Incorporate more cultural activities into the conference program to enrich the learning experience and celebrate the diverse cultures of the attendees.

Target Audience

Ensure organizers have the capacity and supports needed for different target groups, including Elders, educators, and rural/urban Indigenous communities. Select more accommodating venues to address space and accessibility concerns, ensuring all attendees have comfortable access to sessions and amenities.

Diversity and Representation

Include various Indigenous languages and perspectives in planning and content. Invite more diverse Indigenous perspectives, ensuring underrepresented groups are included in planning and execution.

Interactive and Practical Sessions

Increase the number of interactive workshops focusing on practical aspects of language teaching and revitalization. Leverage technology more effectively in language learning and provide additional resources on teaching strategies and land-based teachings.

Partnerships and Networking

Foster collaboration and partnerships to meet the demands and urgencies of ILR.

Youth and Culture

Embed culture in language teachings and create opportunities for youth to learn as priority in ILR.

Real-Time Strategies

Develop actionable Indigenous Language Revitalization strategies through the collective efforts of the attendees.









