Language Revitalization in Treaty 7 Territory:
The School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures, and Cultures’ Responsibility to the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina Communities

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many people who have shared their knowledge and perspectives with us through interviews, consultations, and conversations conducted in the preparation of this report.


Isniyes to consultants from the Stoney Nakoda Nation: Tyson Crawler, Tina Fox, Trent Fox, and Cherith Mark.

Siyisgaas to consultants from the Tsuut’ina Nation: Steven Crowchild, Valerie McDougall, and Bruce Starlight.

Thank you to our colleagues Dr. Sonya Bird (University of Victoria), Dr. Strang Burton (University of British Columbia), PEPAKIYE Ashley Cooper (WSÁNEĆ Nation, LÁU,WELNEW Tribal School), Dr. Alexandra D’Arcy (University of Victoria), Jessie Fiddler-Kiss (Calgary Board of Education), Dr. Darin Flynn (University of Calgary), Dr. Inge Genee (University of Lethbridge), Dr. Donna Gerdts (Simon Fraser University), Dr. Bryan Gick (University of British Columbia), Dr. Peter Jacobs (Squamish Nation, Simon Fraser University), Tiffany Śwxeloselwet Joseph (WSÁNEĆ Nation, LÁU,WELNEW Tribal School), Dr. Marie-Odile Junker (Carleton University), Gerry Lawson (Heiltsuk Nation, University of British Columbia), Elise McClay (Simon Fraser University), Leeanne Morrow (University of Calgary), Dr. Elizabeth Ritter (University of Calgary), Dr. Trish Rosborough (Kwakiutl Nation, University of Victoria), Dr. Leslie Saxon (University of Victoria), Dr. Nicholas Welch (University of Toronto), Dr. Lorna Wanosts’a7 Williams (Lil’wat Nation, University of Victoria), and Dr. Martina Wiltschko (University of British Columbia).

We are grateful also to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calgary for financial support to fund these consultations.

Nitsiko’tahsi’taki, isniyes, siyisgaas, and thank you to all for sharing your insights and wisdom.
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Bliss & Breaker, p. 2
1. Executive Summary

“One thing that’s really critical for the sustainability of our Indigenous cultures is the language. It’s language that holds our knowledge systems, our kinship systems, our relationship to the lands, our ceremonial protocols. We do not have a generation to carry the language. If you’re going to indigenize education, Indigenous people have to have the resources to be able to have the language sustained in its authenticity.” -- Betty Bastien, retired University of Calgary Associate Professor and member of the Piikani Nation (quoted in Meyers 2017)

The land and territory that the University of Calgary occupies boasts incredible linguistic diversity, as it is home to three very different languages and communities, the Siksika Blackfoot, the Stoney Nakoda, and the Tsuut’ina. As with other Indigenous communities across Canada, the languages of these communities are under the threat of possible extinction due to the harmful effects of Canada’s residential schools and other colonialisit policies and practices. This threat has far-reaching consequences, and language revitalization efforts are under way within communities, universities, and other institutions across the country. In alignment with the University of Calgary’s Eyes High Strategy, Indigenous Strategy, and Energizing Arts Strategic Plan, and consistent with the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this report outlines ways in which the University of Calgary’s School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures (SLLLC) can build partnerships with Treaty 7 communities to better support their language revitalization efforts. The research for this report was conducted through a series of consultations with Elders, teachers, and other stakeholders in the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina communities, and by documenting their knowledge and perspectives of language revitalization needs and challenges, we are able to advance recommendations for how the SLLLC can fulfill an important role in Treaty 7 language revitalization. In particular, we recommend that the SLLLC (i) develop community-based training programs in language revitalization specific to Treaty 7 communities, (ii) establish itself as a research hub for community-led and community-engaged research and documentation of Treaty 7 languages, and (iii) develop partnerships primarily with Treaty 7 communities, but also with other academic units and other institutions including the University of Lethbridge and the Calgary Board of Education to offer sustainable and interdisciplinary programming.

2. Situating Ourselves

One of the key themes across Indigenous research methodologies is contextual reflection, or the obligation that researchers situate themselves and those with whom they are collaborating in the research (Drawson et al. 2017). This contextual reflection allows researchers to describe the perspectives and relationships that define their work. In what follows, we introduce ourselves as a means of situating ourselves in this current project.

Heather: Oki, nitaaniko Otskaapinaki. My Blackfoot name was given to me by late friend and teacher Tootsinam Beatrice Bullshields of the Kainai Nation. I was born and raised in Mohkinsstsis (Calgary) and I am the granddaughter of Scottish and British immigrants. I am proud to call the University of Calgary my alma mater; I completed my BA Honours in Linguistics in 2003 and my MA in Linguistics in 2005. My interest in the Blackfoot language began in 2003, when I was introduced to Siksika Elder Rachel Ermineskin in the context of a Field Methods class as part of my MA coursework. Since that time, I have continued

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1 The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. This report focuses on three Treaty 7 communities; along with the recommendations outlined in this report for these communities, we recommend that the SLLLC seek to undertake consultation with members of the Métis Nation as well.
working with Rachel and other members of the Siksika and Kainai Nations on Blackfoot language research and documentation. I completed my PhD at the University of British Columbia in 2013, and undertook a SSHRC Postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Victoria in 2014. I am currently a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Victoria and an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia. My affiliations in British Columbia allow me to learn and benefit from the knowledge and expertise of world leaders in Indigenous language revitalization, and my deep connections in Alberta allow me to apply that knowledge in a Treaty 7 context.

Noreen: Oki nitaano Ikino’motstaan. My Blackfoot name means ‘slow victory.’ I am an Elder from the Siksika Nation, a Beaver Bundle Member, and a Member of the Prairie Chicken Society. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Canadian Studies from the University of Calgary. I am a fluent first language speaker of Blackfoot. I have taught Blackfoot language courses for the University of Calgary and have collaborated with linguists on language research and documentation projects for over fifteen years.

3. Background

3.1. Motivation for this Project

In their 2015 report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada documented the legacy of Canada’s residential school system and detailed 94 Calls to Actions for Canadian governments and institutions to implement as a first step towards dismantling racist and colonialist structures that supported this system. Eight of these Calls to Action specifically address language, and the banning of Indigenous languages within the residential school system was at the root of what the report describes as cultural genocide.

The report has been acknowledged by and governments and institutions – including universities - across the country, and many are committed to change and have taken steps towards implementing the Calls to Action. Regarding language, in December 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the Federal Government’s commitment to developing legislation to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages in Canada, and in July 2017, Education Minister David Eggen announced an increase in funding from the Alberta Provincial Government to support education and training for teachers to teach Indigenous languages in the province.

At the University of Calgary, various strategic initiatives align with the Calls to Action of the TRC. The Eyes High Strategy grounds its international reach in a commitment to serving and engaging with local communities, including Indigenous groups in and around the Calgary area. The Indigenous Strategy Task Force was called together in 2016 to develop an Indigenous Strategy that is “appropriate and thoughtful in its response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s ‘Calls to Action’.” The Task Force consulted widely through a series of community dialogues, including a Traditional Knowledge Keepers’ dialogue that focused in part on language. In Fall 2017, the Indigenous Strategy was revealed, and included a recommendation to “create a Centre for Oral Traditions and Languages as a platform for research and learning, and to ensure that all students have opportunities to preserve traditional Indigenous languages.” The Faculty of Arts’ “Energizing Arts” Strategic Plan includes continuing a journey towards decolonization and indigenization, part of which includes “build(ing) meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities within and beyond the Treaty 7 region.”

Couched within the framework provided by the Eyes High Strategy, the Indigenous Strategy, and the Energizing Arts Strategic Plan is the commitment held by the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures
and Cultures (SLLLC) to support the revitalization of the Indigenous languages of the Treaty 7 territory. This report represents a first step towards developing new community-university partnerships to support training and research in language revitalization. Consistent with the Indigenous Strategy Task Force’s methodology of community dialogues and their observations about the necessity of Indigenous communities having “authentic involvement in decision-making processes,” we have consulted with stakeholders in three local communities – Siksika, Tsuut’ina, and Stoney Nakoda – and the results of these consultations form the foundation of this report. Our methodology is detailed in section 4; for now, it suffices to say that our findings reflect the perspectives of language activists and educators, Elders, and other knowledge-holders from these three communities.

3.2. The Importance of Indigenous Language Revitalization

Canada is home to 87² Indigenous languages from 12 language families, all of which are endangered to some degree (Moseley 2010). Residential schools, in which children were often punished for speaking their languages, are in part responsible for language loss and endangerment in Canada, but it is also through a systemic and sustained lack of infrastructure and support that Indigenous languages have failed to thrive.

Why is language endangerment an important issue? Anderson (2010: 3) notes that “when a language dies, a world dies with it, in the sense that a community’s connection with its past, its traditions and its base of specific knowledge are all typically lost as the vehicle linking people to that knowledge is abandoned.” Language loss is catastrophic to a community’s culture and traditions. Moreover, as emphasized in 2015 TRC report, the loss of Indigenous languages is not only a problem for Indigenous communities; it is a problem for all Canadians. Norris (2013: 197) argues that “these languages reflect a diversity of distinctive histories, cultures, and identities, linked in many ways to family, community, the land, and traditional knowledge.” This diversity is a hallmark of the Canadian identity.

Beyond issues of culture, heritage, and identity, there are economic reasons to preserve Indigenous languages. Aleksy-Szucsich (2008) argues that linguistic diversity can lead to higher levels of creativity and innovation, yielding greater economic development over time, and Mühlhäusler and Damania (2004) argue that the loss of Indigenous languages means the loss of ecological knowledge that can be deployed for environmental management, weather forecasting, and pharmaceutical production (see also Gorenflo et al. 2014 on the correlation between linguistic diversity and biodiversity).

Perhaps one of the most striking reasons to be concerned about language endangerment is the correlation between language vitality and community health. Language loss has been linked to high rates of youth suicide (Hallett et al. 2007) and diabetes (Oster et al. 2014) in Canadian Indigenous communities, and conversely, Indigenous language use has been shown to have positive effects on health and well-being in some communities, correlating with reduced rates of smoking, alcohol, and illicit drug use, as well as other health and wellness measures (Whalen et al. 2016; Jenni et al. 2017). McIvor et al. (2009) cite language as a ‘protective factor’ in Indigenous communities, as something that builds resilience, serving as a buffer to the negative effect of health risks and at times able to prevent risk factors altogether.

In short, there are numerous and far-reaching consequences to language loss. However, Indigenous communities worldwide have undertaken numerous language reclamation and revitalization initiatives. Hawaiian and Māori are often cited as international success stories, having gone from a state of critical endangerment to a much more robust and stable situation (e.g., Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Hinton 2003).

2 Langlois and Turner (2014) report the number of languages to be around 60, based on the 2011 Statistics Canada Census of Population; the complications in obtaining an exact number is related to issues of what constitutes a unique language (versus a dialect of language), and other factors (see Patrick 2013 for discussion).
British Columbia is viewed as another world leader in the language revitalization movement, with numerous programs and initiatives to support its 34 Indigenous languages, many of which are critically endangered. A testament to these efforts is a rise in the number of second language learners of Canadian Indigenous languages (Norris 2013), and a rise in the number of semi-fluent speakers in BC (Gessner et al. 2014).

3.3. The Role of Universities and Linguists in Language Revitalization

The TRC makes the point that “the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.” Nevertheless, universities can play a critical role. They are called upon directly by the TRC to “create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages,” and beyond language learning programs, they can also train and support Indigenous people in how to design and implement language revitalization programs and initiatives within their communities. Models of successful university programs serving Indigenous communities in language revitalization can be found across the country and particularly in British Columbia; some of these will be discussed in section 5.4.

Brophey & Raptis (2016) note:

“For many years, Indigenous peoples have told stories of researchers taking information and/or artifacts for their own purposes only and not for the benefit of the communities. As a result of these kinds of experiences many Indigenous people do not trust non-Indigenous researchers and can feel betrayed by the research process. This feeling of betrayal is an example of the damaged relationships that can result from research that does not respect Indigenous ways of knowing and a community’s established protocols and procedures.”

Contemporary linguists (and other researchers working with Indigenous communities) have inherited a legacy of our predecessors who have not always engaged in ethical research practices. However, in the field of linguistics, there is a move towards community-based scholarship, with research being conducted with, by, and for communities, rather than on and about communities (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). Many communities acknowledge that there are roles that non-Indigenous allies with linguistic expertise can play in community-based language revitalization, but ultimately the decisions about how to proceed and who bears what roles and responsibilities are necessarily those of the community members themselves (Gerdt 1998). As awareness is raised about the importance of Indigenous language revitalization, more Indigenous people are becoming specialists in their languages and in linguistics (Gerdt 2017). The best ways for universities to support language revitalization is to train non-Indigenous researchers to be good allies (Brophey & Raptis 2016), and to provide increased opportunities for Indigenous researchers to carry out this work.

3.4. Treaty 7 Communities and Languages

Treaty 7 was signed at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 by five First Nations: Kainai, Piikani, Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina. The first three of these are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, along with the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. As the University of Lethbridge is already working in collaboration with the Kainai and Piikani on language revitalization initiatives, we have focused in this project on the Siksika Nation.3 The three Nations with whom we consulted (Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina) are diverse -

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3 See section 6.3.3.1 for a discussion of how the two universities can together support Blackfoot-speaking people in Alberta.
politically, culturally, linguistically, and in terms of their language revitalization needs. In what follows, we provide some basic demographic and linguistic information about the three groups.

3.4.1. Siksika

There are approximately 6000 members of the Siksika Nation, located 100 kilometres east of Calgary. Of the 3479 people reported as living on reserve, 690 (or 19.8%) report Blackfoot as their mother tongue, and 230 (or 6.6%) report Blackfoot as the language spoken most often at home (Statistics Canada 2017a). These small percentages reflect the fact that few (if any) children are acquiring Blackfoot as a first language, and most of the speaker population is 60 years of age or older (Russell and Genee 2006). The Blackfoot language is classified as “shifting,” a rating of 7 out of 10 on a scale of language endangerment (with 10 being extinct), according to the Ethnologue (Simons et al. 2017), the most comprehensive catalogue of the world’s languages. Shifting languages have a sizeable population of speakers but do not exhibit intergenerational transmission, suggesting that they will fall to extinction when the current population of speakers passes on. Language revitalization is a pressing issue, but with the exception of a small number of younger second language learners, it is largely the Elders and fluent speakers who are actively involved in revitalization efforts. Blackfoot, an Algonquian language related to Cree and Ojibwe, poses challenges for language teachers, as curricula and teaching methods tend to be based on those developed for more widely studied languages. Blackfoot, meanwhile, is richly polysynthetic (Bliss 2013), with a very different organizational structure than French or English, requiring different teaching strategies (Kell 2014).

3.4.2. Stoney Nakoda

The Stoney Nakoda Nation located west of Calgary consists of three bands: Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley. Of the 3713 people living on the reserve, 2105 (or 56.7%) report Stoney Nakoda as their mother tongue, and 1455 (39.2%) report Stoney Nakoda as the language spoken most often at home (Statistics Canada 2017b). These numbers reflect a speaker population that is, on average, younger than that of the Siksika; community members advise us that most people over 30 can speak and understand the language. However, children are no longer learning the language at home and there is a paucity of resources for teaching the language in schools. The Ethnologue rates Stoney Nakoda as 6b or “threatened,” meaning that it is used for communication within the community, but the number of speakers is declining (Simons et al. 2017). Stoney Nakoda is the only Siouan language Indigenous to Canada, and it is the most divergent in the Siouan family (Parks & DeMallie 1992). The language is under-documented, which poses a challenge to language teachers in need of resources. Much of what we know about the linguistic structure of the language comes from research conducted at the University of Calgary (e.g., Bellam 1975; Cook & Camille 1991; Erdman 1997; Mills 2000).

3.4.3. Tsuut’ina

The Tsuut’ina Nation is adjacent to the southwest city limits of Calgary. Of the 1645 people reported as living on reserve, 40 (2.7%) report the Tsuut’ina language4 as their mother tongue, and nobody reports it as the language most often spoken at home (Statistics Canada 2017c). These percentages qualify Tsuut’ina as the most endangered of the three languages covered in this report; it is classified as “8b, nearly extinct” by the Ethnologue (Simons et al. 2017), and the percentage of speakers within the community is well below the national rate of 22.4% of First Nations people (or 44.7% of First Nations people living on reserve) who

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4 In the 2016 Census, the Tsuut’ina language is referred to by its former name Sarcee/Sarsi.
can conduct a conversation in an Indigenous language (Langlois and Turner 2014). Despite – or perhaps even in part as a result of⁵ – these troubling statistics, the Tsuut’ina Nation has been making great strides in their language revitalization initiatives. The Tsuut’ina Gunaha Institute is developing and providing various programs to its community, as will be discussed in section 5.1. Tsuut’ina is an Athabaskan language, related to languages including Dëne Sųłiné (or Chipewyan), Tlíchǫ (or Dogrib), and Navajo. Characterized by linguistic features such as lexical tone (similar to e.g., Chinese languages) and complex noun declensions, Tsuut’ina is linguistically very different from Blackfoot as well as from Stoney Nakoda.

3.5. The Research Question

How can the SLLLC and the University of Calgary more broadly collaborate with local Indigenous communities (Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina) to support language revitalization? In what follows, we detail the methods we followed to answer this question, and then present our findings and recommendations.

4. Methodology

Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2007, 2008) argues that one of the key tenets of an Indigenous research paradigm is relationality; our ideas are developed via the relationships we have with others, and are only interpretable in the context of those relationships. In the spirit of working within this paradigm, we have adopted a research methodology for preparing this report that honours our relationships, both with Indigenous community members in the Treaty 7 territory, as well as with others within our circles who are experts in Indigenous language revitalization and related issues.

Regarding the former, we held a series of consultation meetings with three communities – Siksika, Tsuut’ina, and Stoney Nakoda. For each group, a liaison from within the community provided advice on who should be invited, when and where the meetings should be held, and what protocols should be observed. Thank you to liaisons Noreen Breaker (Siksika Elder), Trent Fox (Stoney Nakoda language instructor and University of Calgary PhD student), and Steven Crowchild (Director of the Tsuut’ina Gunaha Institute).

Two⁶ meetings with Siksika community members took place on June 14, 2017 at the Siksika Resource Development Limited Centre. Including the authors of this report and Dr. Elizabeth Ritter, Interim Director of the SLLLC at the time of the meetings, eight people were in attendance at each meeting. Follow-up meetings were held on August 15 and 16, 2017, and feedback to the authors have continued via email, phone, and in-person conversations throughout August and September 2017.

One meeting with Tsuut’ina community members took place on June 13, 2017 at the University of Calgary’s Native Centre. Including Dr. Bliss, Dr. Ritter, and Dr. Darin Flynn, Division Chair of Linguistics, five people were in attendance, and others who were unable to attend sent written comments. A follow-up meeting was proposed, but has not been conducted.

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⁵ Anecdotally, we have observed that linguistic communities with very few numbers of speakers tend to be more cognizant of and/or motivated to pursue language revitalization efforts.
⁶ Due to the large numbers of people interested in attending from Siksika, two sessions were held in June to facilitate a more intimate dialogue.
Finally, one meeting with Stoney Nakoda community members took place on September 18, 2017 at the Morley Community School. (Attempts to schedule an earlier meeting were unsuccessful due to community events.) Including Drs. Bliss and Ritter, six people were in attendance.

All invited guests received an invitation and agenda in advance of the meeting, and in accordance with traditional protocols, all participants received a gift, which included a braid of sweetgrass and a cash honorarium of $100 CAD. Initial meetings followed a format that included (i) introductions, (ii) brief presentations by Drs. Bliss and Ritter to explain and contextualize the purpose of the meeting, and (iii) discussion amongst participants. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed, with recordings and transcripts made available to participants following the meetings.

These consultation meetings are one part of a two-pronged approach to this research, with the other part consisting of surveying relevant literature and programs, and consulting with experts involved in Indigenous language revitalization initiatives in Treaty 7 territory and beyond. The objective was twofold. First, we wanted to know what has and is being done in Southern Alberta so that the SLLLC can complement these efforts rather than re-invent the proverbial wheel. Second, with the understanding that British Columbia is amongst the world’s leaders in the field of Indigenous language revitalization, we wanted to learn from their successes and see how their good work could be adapted or customized to the current context. A condensed version of this survey was presented in the consultation meetings with the three communities, in the hopes that it may spark ideas for how the SLLLC may support their own language revitalization needs.

5. Findings

In this section, we present the findings of our consultation meetings and surveys. The data is organized into categories, identifying key themes and common threads, and is presented via summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes.

5.1. Language Revitalization in Treaty 7 Communities

It is important to begin by acknowledging the good work that is being done in all three communities towards the reclamation and revitalization of their languages. A strong testament to this work is the fact that the invitations to our consultation meetings were received with interest, and many people participated and/or sent their feedback. The people who chose to participate in the meetings and share their thoughts with us represent a diverse cross-section of people in the communities including Elders, education administrators, language teachers and learners, language activists, museum staff, and others. Their commitment to language revitalization is evident in their impressions of the consultation meetings:

Mildred Three Suns (Siksika Elder): We are here to preserve the language, we need to focus on that, as language intertwines with lots of other stuff.

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7 Although, in our understanding, it has not been the practice of the University of Calgary to give cash honoraria at the time of an event, our consultations with Elders revealed that this was a necessary part of protocol. In the Indigenous cultures of Treaty 7 territory, it is considered offensive to delay payments of honoraria, or to pay honoraria by cheque or money transfer. We have followed the advice of the Elders throughout the consultation process and strongly urge the University to revise its payment procedures to honour Indigenous protocols.
Cherith Mark (Stoney Nakoda Community Literacy Coordinator): *The talk of language revitalization is slowly coming up ... There are people here who are working on the language. We’re just hidden; we’re busy doing the work.*

Steven Crowchild (Tsuut’ina Gunaha Director): *I’m looking forward to where all this is going. In the meantime, we are not really going to wait around too much. We are going to keep going with what we’ve been doing. We appreciate any support we can get from the University of Calgary and the academic community.*

Moreover, participants reported on some of the projects ongoing in their communities. Fred Breaker (Siksika Elder) noted that younger members of the societies, including the Horn Society\(^8\), are making active efforts to learn Blackfoot under the guidance of more senior members. Waylon Black (Siksika language learner and activist) described the language lessons he developed and distributed to every home on the reserve. A language app with Blackfoot vocabulary has been developed by Old Sun College and is available online. Conversational phrases are also available online, recorded by Noreen Breaker for the Algonquian Linguistic Atlas (www.atlas-ling.ca). Blackfoot language classes are offered for adult learners at the college, and for children of various ages through the Siksika Board of Education and Strathmore High School. Blackfoot-speaking Elders participate in the community’s Headstart Program (for preschoolers). This list is not exhaustive, but reflects some of the projects discussed in our consultation meetings (see also Mills 2011).

Regarding Stoney Nakoda projects, the language has been taught at the Morley Community School for over 20 years. Just recently, the Stoney Education Authority released a Stoney Nakoda language app, containing 500 vocabulary items. Cherith Mark described it as a multigenerational and evolving project that involved the collaboration of various stakeholders in the community.

As for Tsuut’ina, under the directorship of Steven Crowchild, the Tsuut’ina Gunaha Institute is an organization dedicated to language revitalization in the community. It has been developing and piloting programs, such as a Mentor-Apprentice Program and a Language Nest,\(^9\) and has worked with the Nation’s administration to implement a salary grid that awards participants in such programs (as well as postsecondary programs that support language learning) with pay raises for their language learning. The institute also works with the Tsuut’ina Board of Education to implement language learning programs in the schools. Valerie McDougall (Director of the Tsuut’ina Board of Education) noted that language instruction in the schools have increased from once per week to 40 minutes every day, and that language is being brought into other courses as well. She commented, "*Our goal is that we will be in full immersion, that all we do is talk Tsuut’ina. We have 400 students in our Nation’s schools, and our goal: we will have all of the students speaking Tsuut’ina.*"

### 5.2. What is Needed

Although in all three communities, efforts are being made towards language revitalization, those interviewed acknowledge that those efforts aren’t enough; more is needed. This sentiment is best expressed by some of the Siksika Elders we interviewed:

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\(^8\) The Horn Society is a prestigious ceremonial society associated with the Siksika Sundance.
\(^9\) The Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP) pairs fluent speakers with learners for a concentrated period of structured language immersion (see Hinton 2001; Virtue et al. 2012). Language nests are immersion programs for children aged 0-5 years (Parker & Gessner 2014).
Eileen Black-Goutier (Siksika Elder): I, myself, I truly believe our language is almost dead. If we don’t do anything more to revive it, it is going to die. I can see it dying, already see it. Little kids don’t speak Blackfoot.

Evelyn Weasel Head (Siksika Elder): There’s a big gap in there, (due to) residential schools. We went to residential school, and a lot of them lost the language; we were punished because of the language. The ones coming up, they lost out. It would be nice if you would come back to the younger people too. They’re the ones to help, not us; they don’t know the language.

Fred Breaker: When Indian Affairs came, when the first schools started in 1885, the very first thing we were told, was that we couldn’t speak Blackfoot. We need to turn the tables now and say to the kids, ‘Hey, you can’t speak English.’ Those are things I am seeing in the future. But we need help, support ... We always end up against the wall saying, ‘Well there’s no funds, no technical help.’

Beyond these general comments, those we interviewed also discussed specific gaps in their language revitalization programming. Although each community faces its own unique challenges, overlap between these challenges speaks to the need for localized institutional support for language revitalization in Treaty 7 territory. A common thread throughout all our community consultations was the importance of capacity-building. Institutional support is desired and needed, but should be implemented in such a way that it enables community members – and youth in particular – to carry on this work. In what follows, we discuss the gaps in language revitalization programming identified through the community consultations. They are organized into the following categories: language planning, language documentation, language archiving, and training in these and other areas for community members.

5.2.1. Language Planning

Language revitalization is a complex endeavor, with lots of different pieces to be woven together. Linguistic communities need thorough language documentation to preserve the language for future generations and from which to build pedagogical materials, and they need sustainable and effective strategies for archiving language materials. They need educational programming and resources, for children young enough to acquire the language natively, and for older youth and adults who can teach and transmit the language. They need to make decisions around language policies, the interplay between orality and literacy, how to incorporate technology, and how to engage the youth. Developing a plan with short- and long-term goals is crucial (see Hinton & Hale 2001). One particular Elder expressed this in terms of needing the community to develop a ‘system’:

Fred Breaker: I really think that in order for us to really preserve the language we need to develop a system where gradually and into the future ... we should be able to slowly move (the community) to 100% Blackfoot speaking, so that way our kids will start learning at a level where they’re just preschoolers and then they’ll go into K-12. And all of that needs developing.

Interwoven with the issue of language planning is that of standardization. From all three communities we heard that the languages were traditionally oral but are today being written as well, for various reasons including the need to mirror literacy practices in English language education and the desire to use technology to engage youth. With the introduction of writing comes the question of if and how the written form should be standardized. What orthographic conventions should be used? How should words be spelled? Who decides? These are complex questions to which the answers vary depending on sociocultural and linguistic factors (see, e.g., Saxon 1990; Baraby 2003). In the Siksika community, many Blackfoot speakers and learners struggle with writing systems that have been developed (e.g., for the dictionary and grammar, see Frantz 2017, Frantz & Russell 2017), as well as with the lack of consistency, as Frantz’
orthography is not the only one in use. Mildred Three Suns admitted, “Even though I’m fluent in Blackfoot, I understand Blackfoot, I can’t read it.” Edith Breaker, a language teacher for the Siksika Board of Education, shared Mildred’s concerns, confirming that reading and writing Blackfoot is difficult, in large part because the spelling is not reflective of speakers’ views on the language, and is not consistent.

5.2.2. Language Documentation

Language documentation is a sub-field of linguistics concerned with compiling and preserving primary linguistic data, as well as interfacing between primary data and analyses of that data (Himmelmann 2006). Linguistic data that falls under the guise of documentation includes dictionaries, grammars, texts and recordings of songs, stories, conversations, and so on. The need for documentation was expressed in our meetings with all three communities, and for various purposes. Tsuut’ina Elder and language revitalist Bruce Starlight expressed the need for a teaching grammar, based on linguistic principles but made accessible to language learners. Stoney Nakoda language teacher Tyson Crawler also expressed the need for pedagogical materials, stating that written resources for his language are scarce and literature development is necessary. Both Stoney Nakoda and Siksika consultants shared their visions for a digital dictionary, not only as a product that could be used by teachers and learners, but also a vehicle to engage learners in language revitalization through its production. Teachers with the Siksika Board of Education and the Stoney Education Authority felt that involving their students in the creation of a digital dictionary would help with language learning, and would help them make valuable connections between language, culture, community, and technology.

5.2.3. Language Archiving

A key aspect of language documentation is language archiving. Both physical and digital records of linguistic data need to be preserved in a secure, sustainable, and ethical way. Questions of security, ownership, and access are all pertinent. Communities are understandably wary about trusting institutions to archive their materials (e.g., Lawson 2004). Traditional notions of copyright and intellectual property rights are not necessarily compatible with the collaborative practices and community-oriented outputs associated with Indigenous language documentation, particularly in the digital era (Bliss et al. 2017). However, amongst the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina people we consulted with, there is a consensus that these challenges can and must be faced so that they can benefit from the expertise and resources of professional archival institutions, such as the University of Calgary Library. Trent Fox relayed an incident about a recent flood that damaged and partially destroyed some on-reserve language archives, and Tina Fox (Stoney Nakoda Elder and language revitalist) described a collection of cassette tape recordings from 1972 by monolingual Stoney Nakoda speakers that should be digitized to be preserved. Both of these stories point to the necessity of establishing good archival practices. Fred Breaker and Mildred Three Suns expressed a desire to create an archive on-reserve, with the support of archival experts, but acknowledged that this was a longer-term goal, and that a feasible short-term plan may be to archive language materials at the University of Calgary Library.

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10 There is a Blackfoot dictionary in print (Frantz & Russell 1989, 1995, 2017), and a digital version is being developed by Dr. Inge Genee and colleagues at the University of Lethbridge (https://blackfoot.atlas-ling.ca/). However, Siksika community members feel that the dictionary does not include enough Siksika content to adequately reflect their dialect. Dr. Genee works primarily with the Kainai and Piikani communities, but is open to partnerships that would enable Siksika content to be developed (see section 6.3.3.1 for discussion). Not only would this expand the documentation record, but it would also give us a better understanding of variation between Blackfoot dialects (see Genee et al. 2017).
5.2.4. Training

Steven Crowchild: “I think where we need the biggest help is to build capacity for our staff to effectively teach the language ... Capacity building, training: this is definitely how the University of Calgary can help. Training our people to be linguists, or effectively build archives, but more importantly teaching and learning strategies. That’s essential.”

The sentiments expressed by Steven Crowchild in the above quote were echoed amongst participants from all three groups we consulted. Language planning, documentation, archiving – these are all needed, but crucially, community members need training and support to carry out these endeavors within their own communities.

The University of Calgary’s Faculty of Education partnered with the Tsuut’ina Nation in 2011 to offer a one-year certificate program in Tsuut’ina language and culture. The goal of this program is to train people to teach the language, and this is certainly needed and welcome – not only for Tsuut’ina but also for Siksika and Stoney Nakoda, for whom similar programs do not exist. However, Steven Crowchild makes the point that teacher training is not all that is needed to build capacity in his community for a successful language revitalization program. Language revitalization requires a specific knowledge and skill set, one that encompasses aspects of various fields, including linguistics, library sciences, and language pedagogy. Teachers and learners of endangered Indigenous languages face unique challenges that are different from those of more mainstream languages (Hinton 2011), and language revitalists need training that is tailored to their work.

Cherith Mark expressed the need for more Stoney Nakoda language teachers in her community, and stressed that they require training specific to language revitalization: “We have an abundance of semi-fluent and really fluent speakers, but what we don’t have is the theory aspect of teaching and revitalizing the language. Especially the three of us here [Tyson Crawler, Trent Fox, Cherith Mark], we grew up speaking the language at home. Nowadays, the kids aren’t learning the language at home; they are learning it at school. So how can we best support our students when our teachers don’t have that background, that theory?”

Steven Crowchild emphasized the urgency of the situation, as the number of fluent first language speakers is small and in decline. He commented, “It feels like a waste of time to be sitting in [education] courses and putting in that energy, same with a business degree. So I’ve been looking around for courses, not just for myself, but also for our young staff.” He pointed to the language revitalization programs at the University of Victoria as an attractive option, were it locally available. Valerie McDougall (Tsuut’ina) and Tina Fox (Stoney Nakoda) also pointed to the University of Victoria Indigenous language revitalization programming as a viable model.

Steven Crowchild: If there was something offered at U of C that was virtually the same as that program, I know it would be beneficial for Tsuut’ina, and I’m sure if asked, it would be beneficial to other communities as well, because the work we do is really specific, and looking at the course outlines and the whole program, it is really ideal...if this was offered in Calgary, I would be enrolled right now.

Valerie McDougall: I agree with Steven, offering those classes here, I would be interested in taking those classes too. It would be beneficial not only to our staff but other community members as well.

Tina Fox: This is what I would like to see ... Is it UVic that has that diploma or certificate? Yea, I’d like to see that brought here for our people.

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11 The University of Victoria programs are discussed in more detail in section 5.4.2.
Success in language revitalization entails engaging younger generations, who don’t speak the language (yet) but need to understand the significance of language loss in their communities. Fred Breaker made the point that education and training in language revitalization can and should start earlier; youth wanting to help their communities should know about language revitalization as a path forward. He commented, “When I was going to high school, the only thing that was told to me is that I could come back to help as a teacher or a social worker, but there are things you could do other than that, to help the community itself. Language revitalization is one of them.”

5.3. Barriers to Success

In the preceding section, we outlined some of the gaps in the language revitalization programming in the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina communities. In this section, we describe some of the challenges that these communities face in trying to fill these gaps.

5.3.1. Lack of Local Training Opportunities

Métis lawyer and writer Chelsea Vowel refers to reserves as “linguistic homelands,” noting that, for many Indigenous people, “moving away from the reserve often means language loss and subsequent loss of culture and identity” (Vowel 2016, p. 266). Particularly for those involved in the “front lines” of language revitalization, it is crucial that remain closely tethered to their home communities to work with speakers and learners. These commitments can leave Indigenous people at an educational disadvantage, as there is a paucity of local training opportunities. The need for in-community training in language revitalization was expressed by many in our consultations:

Steven Crowchild: Me, I don’t have the luxury of going out there\(^{12}\) for a few years, because I’d be leaving my work, well, my family too. I’ve tried to go full-time university and a lot of it really stalled and lost momentum with what we’re doing. So I know I need to stay put for a while.

Valerie McDougall: That’s why we would like to have it on reserve, because people are able to just draw in to the adult learning centre. We are then helping the Nation in terms of the language, doing it there instead of going OUT of the community. Why not offer a course, this program, on the reserve, right in our own environment? Our Elders are already there, everything.

Cherith Mark: Myself, I’m actually having to look at other universities to see who can better support my needs. Unfortunately, I haven’t seen anything at U of C, so that’s why I have to go to U of A. I am actually having to GO somewhere. I would love for them to come to me, for it to be closer.

Mildred Three Suns: Why isn’t there a facility on the reserve where it’s all Blackfoot, whatever you want to learn in Blackfoot, instead of, like, going to the high school? A facility, a separate school that would teach only Blackfoot, even for the adults who have lost the language, they can go back over there and get some kind of knowledge from it.

\(^{12}\) Here Steven is referring to the University of Victoria, which offers programs in Indigenous language revitalization. (See section 5.4.2).
5.3.2. Lack of Funding

Related to the problem of lack of local training opportunities is the problem of lack of funding. Valerie McDougall emphasized that on-reserve training programs could help address the funding gap: “Why we would offer it on reserve is the barriers of funding. We have students who go to postsecondary school, but they don’t last very long because of funding, because of childcare, travel, all those things, so they’re not successful because of that.” Steven Crowchild also commented that some programs are prohibitively expensive: “We’ve looked at bringing out the Community Linguistics Certificate13, and maybe we could apply for a grant or something. The cost of tuition is really high to offer it on reserve, that’s one of our barriers.”

Funding is not only needed for education, but more generally for community language revitalization initiatives. Funding competitions available to university researchers are often not accessible to communities themselves, either because they require a postsecondary affiliation or because community members do not have the relevant skills in writing successful grant proposals. There is a history of university researchers securing funds for language projects, but not using those funds towards community needs. Meanwhile, community-oriented funding sources (e.g., through Band Councils, etc.) often fail to prioritize language. Trent Fox spoke of his late sister, who taught the Stoney Nakoda at Morley Community School for eighteen years with limited resources, but “through those 18 years, she could not get money out of administration to get textbooks or develop projects.”

Steven Crowchild, Trent Fox, and Morris Goutier all made the point that universities can better support their communities in language revitalization efforts by helping them access funds:

Steven Crowchild: Grants and funding opportunities need to reach the grassroots people doing the groundwork: joint proposals, academic support from the university, whatever projects are developed from these funding opportunities.

Trent Fox: How the university can support us is by helping us access the funds you’re accessing for our community.

Morris Goutier (Blackfoot language speaker and revitalist, husband to Siksika Elder Eileen Black-Goutier): Your job is to get funding, facilitate, and train.

5.3.3. Lack of Accreditation

Many of the consultants spoke of barriers that have prevented them and others in their communities from pursuing a post-secondary education. The 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission notes that there is a “backlog” of Indigenous people waiting for post-secondary education, and that, in addition to financial barriers, other barriers such as the need to heal from intergenerational trauma or confusion over institutional expectations prevent many from upgrading their education. Mildred Three Suns noted, “my biggest regret (from attending residential school) is the loss of opportunity. I didn’t have the opportunity to go to post-secondary school.” Cherith Mark said, “those who decided not to continue with postsecondary, they aren’t sure what the university is asking of us, or they’ve thought about it, but they are unsure they can do it.” Fred Breaker explained that his community-based training to become a Horn Society member required the same commitment and rigour as a university degree, yet those credentials are not counted towards post-secondary admission requirements. As noted by MacDonald 2006, “making space for

13 This is a program associated with the University of Alberta’s CILLDI Program, discussed in more detail in section 5.4.5.
indigenous knowledge systems and practices in the academy may mean making adjustments to the scholarship that qualifies as valid for promotion and credentialing purposes.”

5.3.4. Lack of Sustainability

Trent Fox: *If a group of people is working on something, we need to follow through. It needs to be sustainable.*

Members of each community shared anecdotes expressing their frustration with a lack of sustainability in language programming and support. In some cases, this is due to university researchers ‘helicoptering’ into the community to conduct their research but not to establish maintain a lasting relationship that benefits both parties (see Czaykowska-Higgins 2009 on linguist-based versus community-based research). In other cases, it is due to political structures within the communities themselves. In particular, frequent changes in band council membership and administration can make it difficult for language revitalists to develop and sustain long-term projects.

Fred Breaker: *There are a lot of times, it doesn’t come from us, it comes from the higher-ups and then it doesn’t go anywhere.*

Waylon Black: *What usually what happens when they (the Siksika Nation Chief and Council) have a change in leadership, everything is shut down. So, it’s okay for us to work with you guys, which is great, really great, but to do something through the Band is really difficult.*

Cherith Mark: *The change in administration is constant here, and its not very stable. That’s where we come to a wall. What was agreed upon by predecessors is not the vision of the current administration. And then we have to go back to the beginning. Its very time-consuming.*

5.3.5. Lack of Trust

‘Helicopter’ linguistics has not only resulted in a lack of sustainability; it has also resulted in a lack of trust in universities and university researchers. As Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) notes, the dominant model for conducting linguistic research on Indigenous languages over the last 100 years has been what she refers to as the ‘linguist-based’ model, and under this model, “speakers of the language are seen as sources of information … of interest to the linguist first and foremost as means to a linguistic end and as objects of study” (p. 20). This lack of engagement with and concern for the community and its speakers has left many feeling distrustful and suspicious of university researchers’ intentions.

Tyson Crawler: *Universities come knocking, and I’m like, where were you guys? I’m ahead of you guys, making my own resources.*

Eileen Black-Goutier: *I don’t want this to end up just a few talks here and there, I don’t want it to become a university theory, a thesis or dissertation, because they will get a degree because of our people. It’s good that you want to preserve our language, but I’m tired of people coming in to our territory and wanting our information so that they can get a degree. And then that’s it. So if something is going to be done, it has to be with a commitment. Hopefully with a goal, a year, two years, let’s see how many people are speaking Blackfoot.*
5.3.6. Lack of Youth Engagement

One of the primary indicators of language endangerment is a decrease in intergenerational transmission, the passing on of the language from older to younger generations (Simons et al. 2017). One of the harmful impacts of residential schooling is a sustained and multi-generational interruption to the transmission of Indigenous languages (TRC 2015). In most Indigenous communities in Canada, and particularly in the three that are the focus of this report, children are not learning their ancestral language as a first language. Norris (2007) notes that, learning an Indigenous language as a second language is the only viable option for many young people in many Indigenous communities, and while not a substitute for first language acquisition, “increasing the number of second language speakers is part of the process of language revitalization, and may go some way towards preventing, or at least slowing, the rapid erosion and possible extinction of endangered languages” (p. 19). In short, the impetus is on the younger generations to learn and pass on their languages.

Waylon Black: How do we get younger people interested to make them want to learn the language, what’s the motivation to learn the language for them? For those of us here, we understand that it’s our culture, our tradition, and its part of who we are, but how do we get kids or people my age to want to learn it?

Many Indigenous youth face barriers that prevent them from getting involved in language revitalization efforts in their communities. They may feel shame or embarrassment for not speaking fluently, or conversely for showing an interest in something that may be perceived as outside the mainstream pop culture, or not useful for their career development. These feelings can be complex; coupled with feelings of disinterest or shame is often an awareness about the importance of language revitalization (McCarty et al. 2006).

Mildred Three Suns: Now you see a lot of kids not having that patience, they’re not willing to listen, because there are so many things that occupy their minds.

Cherith Mark: An Elder said, ‘Our children need to walk two roads, the English road, but also their traditional road. They’re really good at walking the English road, but this road will be challenging for them, because they don’t have the language. They’re not living the culture. This is who they are, yet they’re not walking this road, and this will be a challenge for them.

One of the major concerns in that, although the language is being taught in schools, it is not being spoken in the home. Consultants spoke of the need to involve younger parents in language revitalization efforts.

Edith Breaker: They don’t use it at home. The parents are getting younger, and they don’t speak it, so the kids don’t get it at home.

Trent Fox: We do need to revitalize, because it’s in decline. People don’t speak it at home anymore.

Mildred Three Suns: We should go above the kids to bring our language back. Go to the parents. The schools are already working with the kids. That’s covered. We need to get the parents talking to the kids.

Cherith Mark: There is more stress put on the school, “Teach my kid language.” This is where we are at. Parents want the school to teach language to their child.

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14 Waylon Black was the youngest participant in the Siksika consultation meetings, and the only one who was not an L1 speaker of Blackfoot. He is a language learner and language activist who works in the museum and archives at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Centre.
Tina Fox: There are also parents who object to their kids being taught Stoney, especially those attending provincial schools.

Importantly, consultants identified the need to shift perspectives amongst younger people in their communities.

Fred Breaker: We have to make the people on the reserve understand why they need to learn Blackfoot, we need to get them to start wanting to learn Sikika, the Sikikia language. We could give awards, things like that, make them want it. Let’s turn the tables around – learn Blackfoot! You need to give incentives. Monetary incentives, maybe.

Trent Fox: Because there are so many speakers here, we were taking our language for granted for a while ... Most of the people on Tribal Council speak the language, and so they don’t see the emergency of preserving the language. There isn’t that level of support yet, but I think, talking to them, having people talk about the importance of it, we can get there.

Trent Fox: There’s this colonial mentality, where the oppressed come to believe in the superiority of the oppressor. There are a lot of people like that in this community. .... That is one of the challenges, changing that mindset. That is just a reality for us.

### 5.4. Models from British Columbia and Elsewhere

While the focus of this report is Indigenous language revitalization in Treaty 7 territory, in this section we briefly describe some successful models from other places, with a particular emphasis on programs developed with major universities. As noted above, BC is amongst the world’s leaders in the field of Indigenous language revitalization, and an understanding of how BC universities have partnered with Indigenous communities to support language revitalization will be imperative to building successful partnerships between University of Calgary’s SLLLC and the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina Nations. We also discuss the University of Alberta’s CILDI (Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute) program.

#### 5.4.1. The University of British Columbia

The University of British Columbia has developed various diverse initiatives to support Indigenous language revitalization. Rather than inventory the full range of programs\(^\text{15}\), we will point to a few examples that are particularly relevant here.

The first is a program called Indigitization (www.indigitization.ca/) that is a collaboration between Indigenous communities, the Museum of Anthropology, and the School for Library, Archival, and Information Studies. The goal is to assist communities with digitizing and archiving cassette recordings, many of which contain linguistic data that contributes to language documentation and preservation. The program provides information, workshops, and toolkits to BC communities, as well as grants to support communities in digitization projects. While the program is not available to communities outside of BC, its Technical Lead Gerry Lawson has advised us that the program’s methods, technologies, and protocols are

\(^{15}\text{See https://fnel.arts.ubc.ca for research and undergraduate courses in the First Nations and Endangered Languages program, http://.php.educ.ubc.ca/ for undergraduate and graduate courses and research in the Language, Literacy and Education program, and http://linguistics.ubc.ca/research-resources/first-nations-languages for a statement of Indigenous language research within the Department of Linguistics.}\)

Bliss & Breaker, p. 18
all open access, and they would be interested and willing to work with partners elsewhere in the country to develop similar programs. Digital archiving, and the Indigitization program in particular, was a topic that was met with considerable interest at our consultation meetings with the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina Nations.

Second, UBC hosted its first “Breath of Life” Institute in May 2017 (https://bcbreathoflife.arts.ubc.ca/). The “Breath of Life” workshops began in the mid-1990s in California as a way to give Indigenous community members access to archival resources and linguistic experts in order to “breathe life” back into legacy materials and contribute to the broader goal of language revitalization. The UBC workshop was the first of its kind to be held in Canada, and it partnered Indigenous language workers (Elders, learners, teachers, revitalists) with university-based scholars for a week-long experience that combined instruction and hands-on practice in finding and interpreting archival materials relevant to language and culture reclamation. Home to the Xwi7xwa Library, the Museum of Anthropology, and various other archives, UBC was able to grant participants access to important and relevant historical records to do this work.

Third, UBC recently announced a change in its admission policies to better support Indigenous students. Specifically, it will now accept any Canadian Indigenous language taught at a post-secondary level as a language requirement for undergraduate admission (see Ge 2017). This move sends a strong message in support of both Indigenous languages and Indigenous students.

5.4.2. University of Victoria

In collaboration with other academic units and community partners, the Department of Linguistics at the University of Victoria offers various programs to train and certify students in the theory and practice of Indigenous language revitalization. The Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization (CALR) is offered in partnership with Continuing Studies at the University of Victoria and the En’owkin Centre of the Okanagan Nation. Designed to be maximally flexible to meet diverse students’ needs, courses in the CALR program are typically offered at satellite locations in or nearby Indigenous communities across Canada, including those in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Quebec, and Nunavut. There are no academic prerequisites; the program is open to anyone admitted to the university. Moreover, approved community-based experience in language revitalization (such as completion of the Mentor-Apprentice Program) can be used towards credit in the program. Instructors include permanent faculty in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Victoria, as well as other linguists and educators with expertise Indigenous language revitalization.

In addition to the CALR program, the Department of Linguistics also offers a Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization (MILR), in collaboration with the Department of Indigenous Education. This is a cohort program with students from across Canada who complete coursework on a condensed schedule in the summer months, and complete their theses or projects remotely, from their communities. The University of Victoria recently partnered with the University of Saskatchewan to offer the MILR program to a cohort – predominantly of Cree background - in that territory.

While the CALR and MILR programs are open to students from various backgrounds and working with various languages, the University of Victoria has also partnered with the WSÁNEĆ School Board to offer a Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization to students learning the SENĆOŦEN language. Offered in community, this program combines language instruction with courses in the theory and practice of language revitalization. Some of the instructors in this program are graduates of the MILR program, and graduates of the Diploma program have gone on to teach in immersion programs in the community.

The CALR, MILR, and Diploma programs are built on a foundation of many years of successful collaborations with Indigenous partners in Indigenous language research and training. In the 1970s and 80s community-based training was offered in Indigenous language teaching, in response to requests from local groups. From 2004 to 2008, the Department of Linguistics partnered with two Coast Salish communities for a CURA\textsuperscript{16}-funded language revitalization project, and many faculty in the Department of Linguistics have longstanding research partnerships with Indigenous communities in BC and beyond.

5.4.3. Simon Fraser University

The Linguistics Department at Simon Fraser University is home to the First Nations Languages Centre (https://www.sfu.ca/fnlc.html), which, through the support of a SSHRC Partnership Grant, is collaborating with 22 BC First Nations in language documentation and revitalization. A main objective of the project is to develop language apps for community learners. One of the main strengths of the Centre is that it provides a space—virtual and physical—for language revitalists from different communities to gather and share their resources and strategies, successes and challenges.

In terms of training, the Linguistics Department developed a Graduate Certificate in the Linguistics of a First Nations Language, and is in the final stages of developing a Masters program as a follow-up to the Certificate. These programs are designed to train students for careers in language revitalization, and the Masters was specifically developed as Certificate students near completion on their program and wanted to continue into a Masters program. These programs are similar in some ways to the University of Victoria’s CALR and MILR programs in that students are given training in the theories and practices of language revitalization. However, what sets these programs apart is that there are multiple cohorts, some of which are focused on a particular language. The Hul’q’umi’num’ cohort, for example, is not on-campus but in-community, and students in this program receive language instruction as well as language revitalization training, allowing students to connect their education with lived experiences in their communities. Courses are taught by a team of Elders, knowledge holders, and academic experts on the language, and are offered at convenient times to accommodate students’ work schedules (e.g., evenings, summer breaks).

The First Nations Languages Centre at Simon Fraser University has also partnered with a non-profit organization, Kwi Awt Stelmexw (https://www.kwiawtstelmexw.com/), to offer a full-time adult immersion program in the Skwxwú7mesh language. Students in this program complete 1000 hours of language immersion to receive a Certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency. The non-profit organization, whose goal is to generate new fluent speakers of this critically endangered language, has raised funds to provide financial support to students, enabling them to devote themselves full-time to the program. Students who are of Skwxwú7mesh descent and have young children who could acquire the language from their parents are given priority for funding.

5.4.4. First Peoples Cultural Council of British Columbia

The First Peoples Cultural Council of British Columbia (www.fpcc.ca/) is a First Nations-run Crown Corporation whose mandate is to support Indigenous language and culture revitalization in the province. While not a university organization, the FPCC collaborates with BC universities and researchers to develop resources and programs for Indigenous communities. They offer funding, training, and resources, and support to communities for programs such as Mentor-Apprentice, Language Nests, and Language Camps. They host a web service called First Voices (www.firstvoices.com) that allows communities to archive

\textsuperscript{16} CURA refers to the Community-University Research Alliance grant, previously offered by SSHRC. SSHRC Partnership Grants have replaced the CURA.
language data (i.e., audio recordings) on a secure site with community-specific permissions. Freely available resources include language status reports and interactive language maps for the province, as well as toolkits and handbooks to assist with grant-writing, language planning, and the like. Many of the materials and programs developed by the FPCC serve as excellent models for how community-based Indigenous language revitalization can be effectively supported by a research-based institution.

5.4.5. University of Alberta

The University of Alberta is home to the CILLDI (Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute, [www.cilldi.ualberta.ca/](http://www.cilldi.ualberta.ca/)), which hosts a two-week summer school every year for Indigenous language revitalists to acquire skills in language documentation, teaching, and literacy. The summer school courses can be used towards credit in the University of Alberta’s Community Linguist Certificate program. CILLDI also partners with Indigenous communities to host satellite workshops and courses at various locations around the world.

6. Recommendations

We recommend that the SLLLC at the University of Calgary respond to the findings detailed in the preceding section by developing programs for the dedicated and sustained support of the revitalization of the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina languages of Treaty 7.

The SLLLC is unique across Canada in that the Department of Linguistics is embedded within an academic unit alongside modern language departments. This coupling of linguistics and modern languages, as well as the infrastructure of the Language Research Centre, situates the SLLLC ideally to build capacity and support for the Indigenous languages of Treaty 7. We recommend that the SLLLC use its unique position to work towards establishing Blackfoot, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina as ‘modern languages’ at the University of Calgary, receiving the same recognition and support as Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

This proposal fits squarely within the University of Calgary’s Indigenous Strategy, and as noted by Dr. Andrea Bear Nicholas, Professor Emeritus of Native Studies at St. Thomas University, Indigenous language revitalization should be the primary objective for universities aiming to Indigenize the academy. She comments:

“If universities truly want to help indigenous peoples, they should be making more of an effort to partner with indigenous communities that need help preserving their languages. By equipping indigenous-language speakers with effective teaching techniques, they’d be giving a hand to the cause of cultural retention. The indigenization that goes ahead needs to be not something that builds the university as some sort of fount of aboriginal knowledge, but some sort of project that helps First Nations maintain what has been destroyed by the universities and education systems.” (Andrea Bear Nicholas, quoted in MacDonald 2016)

We urge that these programs be developed through the lens of an Indigenist paradigm (Wilson 2007, 2008), with the main tenet of establishing respectful relationships that honour the roles of both Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies. This work will require continued consultation with communities, including Elders, and must have as its primary objectives collaboration and capacity-building. This will entail being flexible in terms of time and space, being adaptable to changing needs, and offering programming that is land-based and community-focused, tailored to specific goals. The programs must
support work in Indigenous communities, rather than draw experts and Elders away from their communities where they are needed (MacDonald 2006).

Our recommendations are organized into three main categories: (i) Community-Based Training in Language Revitalization, (ii) Research Hub for Treaty 7 Languages, and (iii) Partnerships and Collaborations. Each is discussed in turn below.

6.1. Community-Based Training in Language Revitalization

One of the strongest messages we heard in our community consultations is that educational programming focused specifically on the revitalization of Treaty 7 languages is urgently needed. Communities need to build capacity to enable their members to carry their languages forward. As evidenced by the discussion in section 5.3.1, students must be able to access programming in-community, allowing them to supplement their training with lived experiences amongst speakers and learners. It must be affordable and accessible to people of various educational backgrounds. Moreover, it must be tailored to the specific needs of each of the Treaty 7 communities, and flexible enough to adapt to changing needs over time.

In terms of implementation, ongoing consultation and collaboration with community stakeholders will be required to ensure the success of these programs. Responding to consultants’ interests in Diploma and Certificate programs, we advise beginning with small-scale accreditations such as these, and then, just as Simon Fraser University has done, adapting and evolving, perhaps to offer degree programs as well, as capacity grows. The main objective of these programs will be to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to develop and implement practical strategies for language revitalization in their communities.

Regarding program content, a combination of language-specific programming with more general courses on theoretical and practical aspects of language revitalization would allow students to make connections between their own languages and broader concepts. Language-specific programming may include language classes, courses in the grammatical structures of these languages, and/or courses focused on specific topics of interest, such as writing systems (e.g., for the Siksika community, see section 5.2.1), pronunciation, etc. General programming in language revitalization may include courses on language planning, documentation, and archiving, as well as courses in language teaching and learning, with a specific focus on the unique challenges and strategies for teaching and learning endangered Indigenous languages (see Hinton 2011; Penfield & Tucker 2011).

With respect to program delivery, it is crucial that the program be designed in such a way that it meets communities’ needs for flexible and local training. Satellite locations on the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and TsuuT’ina reserves should be used to offer in-community courses, particularly those that are language-

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17 The recently revealed Indigenous Strategy addresses a need to “identify and address current challenges and barriers” to recruiting and retaining Indigenous students. Models to build off include UBC’s recent announcement that all Indigenous languages will be accepted to satisfy language requirements (see Ge 2017), the University of Victoria’s granting of credit in CALR and MILR programs for participation in Mentor-Apprentice Programs offered through the First Peoples Cultural Council. See Lewington (2017) for other initiatives Canadian universities are undertaking to support Indigenous students.

18 See section 6.3.3 for suggestions on collaborating with the University of Victoria and/or the University of Alberta to offer these programs.

19 SLLLC’s Division of Linguistics is already equipped to offer some of these courses; INDL 205 offers language instruction in an Indigenous language and has previously focused on Blackfoot, Cree, and Stoney Nakoda.
Weekend and evening courses would allow students to balance their studies with their employment, something that is highly needed, as emphasized by Valerie McDougall: “I’m trying to improve where I’m at, but it can’t entail me leaving my office. I did my Master’s on the weekend; when I saw a program offered on Fridays and Saturdays, I thought I’d give up my weekends for two years.” Intensive workshop-style courses offered over short periods of time can often be accommodated by students’ schedules, and give them the opportunity to proceed through the program swiftly. In-community courses may be supplemented by online and/or on-campus offerings, particularly for the introductory theoretical courses that will be relevant across groups.

6.2. Research Hub for Treaty 7 Language Revitalization

Concurrent with the development of training programs, we recommend that the SLLLC collaborate with members of the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina communities on a series of languages research and documentation projects that will establish the SLLLC as a research hub for Treaty 7 language revitalization. As capacity builds through the proposed training programs, opportunities for community-led and community-engaged research will flourish. However, the infrastructure for and initiation of such research can and must begin now. From our consultations, it is clear that speakers and language revitalists in the community want the support of linguists and other experts, and consultants identified a number of specific ways in which the SLLLC could help.

6.2.1. Support in Securing Funding

We recommend the following:

- The LRC should be made available to Treaty 7 partners as an institutional affiliation for the purposes of applying for Tri-Council funding, as well as linguistic fieldwork and documentation grants\(^2\)

- Seed funding should be provided by the University of Calgary to support the establishment of community-university partnerships and the preliminary development of projects intended to be funded by external sources (e.g., pilot projects, consultations with Elders, etc.)

- The LRC should offer training workshops in grant-writing and grant administration to support Treaty 7 partners seeking external funding for language revitalization projects\(^2\)

- The SLLLC should initiate steps towards applying for a SSHRC Partnership Grant to support high-priority documentation projects (see 6.2.2). The first step in this process is to consult with community stakeholders directly on this issue.

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\(^{20}\) During our consultations, we were advised that all three communities have classroom spaces that could be utilized for such purposes, such as the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Centre (Siksika) and the Bullhead Adult Education Centre (Tsuut’ina).

\(^{21}\) Sources of funding for linguistic fieldwork and documentation include the Jacobs Research Fund (http://depts.washington.edu/jacobsf/), the Phillips Fund (https://www.amphilsoc.org/grants/phillips-fund-native-american-research), the Endangered Languages Documentation Project (http://www.eldp.net/), and the Endangered Languages Fund (http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/), amongst others.

\(^{22}\) These workshops could be included in the proposed accreditation programs described in section 6.1, and/or offered independently.
6.2.2. Partnerships for High-Priority Documentation Projects

Siksika and Stoney Nakoda consultants both identified dictionary projects as key priorities, both in terms of language documentation, but also as a way to involve youth in language revitalization. As noted in the preceding section, the SLLLC could support these projects via a SSHRC Partnership Grant.

For Siksika, the objectives are to supplement the existing digital dictionary with Siksika content (see 5.2.2), and to explore issues around spelling and orthography (see 5.2.1). This project would require collaboration with colleagues at the University of Lethbridge (see 6.3.1 below). There is interest from educators with both the Siksika Board of Education and the Calgary Board of Education (see 6.3.2) to involve secondary school students in the curation of multimedia materials for the dictionary, which has the capacity to host sound files, photographs, and videos with each entry. Involving students in this way builds their technological skills, but more importantly may spark their interest in language revitalization.

For Stoney Nakoda, the objective is to begin development of a dictionary. Consultants mentioned dictionary projects for related languages (the Nakoda dialect spoken by the Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, and the South Dakota language), and expressed the need for having similar materials for teaching purposes. The community has undertaken first steps towards a dictionary by creating a language app with 500 vocabulary items. Cherith Mark noted, “We actually just created the Stoney Nakoda language app. It was actually a production of Stoney Education Authority. We had to find a way to get all three bands together, so we went through the school because we have all three bands present here, Elders, teachers. It’s a multigenerational project that took place over this past year, and this is what we came up with, 500 words... So, we just started. And I think a digital dictionary would be awesome."

6.2.3. Development of Other Research Projects with Clear Community Benefits

We recommend that the SLLLC collaborate with Treaty 7 community members to develop research projects that advance community goals towards language revitalization. The scope and content of such projects would require further consultation with community members, but one example that came up during our consultation meetings was research on language acquisition in these communities. Siksika Blackfoot language teacher Eulalia Running Rabbit advocated for this type of research, suggesting that it may help advance language teaching and learning in her community. We agree with her suggestion; the acquisition of polysynthetic languages such as Blackfoot is understudied compared with the acquisition of languages such as English and French (Kelly et al. 2014), and a better understanding of how people acquire these languages will help and language teachers and curriculum developers to improve language learning materials (also see Kell 2014). Moreover, setting up a controlled study to research language acquisition would require establishing teaching and learning infrastructure in the communities that may not otherwise be available. In other words, this research could potentially have both short- and long-term benefits; communities may benefit through their participation, as well as from the research findings. As home to both language teachers and linguists, the SLLLC is in an ideal position to support this type of research, as it requires the expertise of both parties (see Penfield and Tucker 2011).

6.2.4. Support for Archiving Language Materials

We recommend that the SLLLC and the University of Calgary Library work together to provide flexible and appropriate opportunities for communities to archive and access language materials in the forms of digital media (audio and video recordings), transcripts, field notes, and the like. Leeanne Morrow, Head of Learner Support and Engagement Services, has advised us that the Library is open to developing and
providing archival support to Treaty 7 communities in the best ways possible, and this may include advice on how to build in-community archives, and/or customized storage and access at the University Library for digital and physical data. She assures us that embargos can be put in place to restrict access of sensitive materials to certain people and/or certain communities for specified durations of time. Our consultation meetings with Treaty 7 communities revealed that community members are interested in exploring these options with the University of Calgary Library.

Moreover, they are interested in programs such as Indigitization and Breath of Life (see section 5.4.1). Communities want to digitize and preserve language data, and develop sustainable plans for accessing archival materials. We recommend that the SLLLC and the University of Calgary Library collaborate to develop similar initiatives at the University of Calgary for Treaty 7 communities.

6.3. Partnerships and Collaborations

The key to the success of the proposed initiatives will be building connections with and between various stakeholders. As noted by Siksika Elder Fred Breaker, “we need to work together to develop these things in order for this to work.”

6.3.1. Connections with and between Indigenous communities

One of the advantages of creating a research hub at the University of Calgary is that it provides a neutral space for the sharing of ideas between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies, as well as between different Indigenous groups in Treaty 7 and beyond. The important role that the SLLLC can play in facilitating these connections was emphasized in our community consultations:

Steven Crowchild: It would be helpful to have all of Treaty 7 – the people working on their languages – to discuss common approaches, common solutions, find common ground, learn from each other.

Cherith Mark: So maybe it’s about partnerships, partnering with our language brother to the north, who are far, but still having those heartlines coming together.

Determining the best courses of action for facilitating connections between Indigenous groups will require further consultation with our community partners. However, some suggestions are advanced here.

As outlined in section 6.1, some components of the proposed training programs could be offered to all participants simultaneously, either in person at the University of Calgary or online. This is one of the ways in which communities could interact and share ideas.

In April 2017, the SLLLC hosted an event titled A Celebration of Indigenous Languages in Alberta, which brought together Elders, speakers, learners, activists, and linguists for a showcase of linguistic research and revitalization work being done in and around the Treaty 7 territory. Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members were invited to share and learn about various projects, and the event created a space for dialogue and discussion amongst those engaged and interested in the revitalization of local languages. This event was the first of its kind hosted by the University of Calgary, and its success is testament to the need for connection between the different groups, and the crucial role that the SLLLC can play in fostering

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23 Here Cherith is referring to the Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, whose ancestral language is a dialectal variant of what is spoken by the Stoney Nakoda.
that connection. Outreach events, along similar lines as the Celebration in April 2017, can attract those with an interest in language revitalization to become involved; (the proposed training programs could be promoted through such events). Academic workshops and conferences would allow Treaty 7 communities to connect with each other, with other groups engaged in similar projects, and with allies with training and expertise in linguistics and language revitalization. These events could give students and graduates of the proposed language revitalization programs opportunities to share their successes. As demonstrated by the success of the Celebration event, the Language Research Centre at the SLLLC has the capacity to organize these types of events, and they are prime candidates for funding through the SSHRC Connection program.

While occasional events will create necessary opportunities for face-to-face gatherings, one of the themes of our consultations was the need for language revitalists to work and live in their communities, rather than relocate for training or other purposes. One way in which connections can be fostered and developed across communities at a distance is using information and communication technology. We recommend the SLLLC develop a website that can act as a virtual hub to connect communities, partners, and allies engaged in language revitalization projects in Treaty 7 territory. This website may include tools such as chat spaces (audio-video and/or written), blogs, and the like to facilitate communication across geographic distances (see, e.g., Bourgett 2014).

6.3.2. Connections across the University of Calgary campus

Steven Crowchild: Language revitalization requires a multi-disciplinary approach, so other faculties should be included in future efforts like this, to see how they can contribute.

Developing and administering the programs recommended in the preceding sections will require collaborate across academic units at the University of Calgary. The SLLLC can and should use its unique composition to its advantage to support Treaty 7 communities through collaborations between language educators, applied linguists, and theoretical linguists. We saw in section 5.4.2 that the University of Victoria’s language revitalization programs are offered jointly through the Departments of Linguistics, Indigenous Education, and Continuing Studies, and we advise that the SLLLC similarly pursue connections with the Werklund School of Education and Continuing Education to develop and administer training programs. Finally, as noted in 6.2.4, collaborations between the SLLLC and the Library will enable the University to provide expertise and resources to communities for archiving and accessing linguistic data.

6.3.3. Connections with other academic institutions

One of the themes identified by the University of Calgary’s Indigenous Strategy Task Force in compiling and analyzing their data was the need for reciprocal and respectful relationships, including “collaborative partnerships with schools (elementary, secondary, other post-secondary institutions) to create a through-line of support for Indigenous students.” Consistent with this theme, we recommend that the University of Calgary collaborate with other academic institutions in order to develop and implement training programs in language revitalization.

As highlighted in section 5.4. there are many academic institutions committed to supporting Indigenous communities across Canada in their language revitalization efforts. It does not make sense for the University of Calgary to re-invent the wheel, but rather we should learn from the successes of these other programs, and, as appropriate, adapt their models to a Treaty 7 context. The University of Victoria’s CALR and MILR programs have been administered at other institutions across Canada, and the University of Alberta’s CILLDI program has offered courses in various Indigenous communities around the world. We recommend
that the University of Calgary consult with these two institutions as part of the process of developing language revitalization training programs for Treaty 7 communities; there may be opportunities for the sharing of resources and/or programming.

Moreover, we recommend that the University of Calgary initiate steps with the University of Lethbridge and the Calgary Board of Education to form formal partnerships in order to support education in language revitalization for Treaty 7 communities. Each of these is discussed in more detail in the subsections below.

6.3.3.1. University of Lethbridge

Like the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge is in Blackfoot territory, but whereas Calgary is more closely situated to the Siksika Nation, Lethbridge is more closely situated to the Kainai and Piikani Nations. Dr. Inge Genee, Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Lethbridge, points to this difference in geography as forming a natural divide between the two institutions. She suggests that, in terms of supporting the larger Blackfoot community in terms of language revitalization, it makes sense for Calgary to partner with Siksika and Lethbridge to partner with Kainai and Piikani (as it already has on projects such as the Blackfoot Digital Dictionary, directed by Dr. Genee). She goes on to suggest that the two institutions should work together to provide supports in both language research and education. The Blackfoot Digital Dictionary is an example of a project in which multiple contributors are welcome; Dr. Genee is working with Kainai and Piikani speakers to curate content in their dialect, and from our consultation meetings it is clear that Siksika speakers also want infrastructure and support to create and contribute Siksika content to the dictionary. In terms of education, Dr. Genee suggests that a formal partnership between the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge would help to build capacity in the Blackfoot Confederacy, particularly at the graduate level. While there are many Blackfoot students pursuing Bachelor’s degrees at the University of Lethbridge, and a few pursuing Masters degrees, it has been harder to develop and fund appropriate degree programs at the PhD level, even though there is clear community interest in such programs, especially programs focussing on the language. However, if Blackfoot students could take complementary courses at the two institutions, this may increase opportunity and help to build capacity.

6.3.3.2. Calgary Board of Education

Just as the University of Calgary is looking to support Treaty 7 communities in language revitalization, so is the Calgary Board of Education (CBE). Contacts at CBE, spoke to the lack of sustainability in Indigenous language programs in Calgary schools. Blackfoot and Cree language curricula exist, but the courses have been offered only sporadically, and Indigenous youth are not given adequate opportunities to learn these languages in school. Part of the problem is a perceived lack of interest: low enrollments in Indigenous language programs leads to these courses not being offered regularly. One of the ways to address this is to educate and engage youth in the importance of Indigenous language revitalization.

We recommend that the University of Calgary partner with the CBE to develop secondary school programming alongside the proposed post-secondary program in order create continuity and sustainability across both levels of education and to develop capacity for language revitalization at both levels. Secondary school programming through the CBE would effectively feed into the post-secondary programming through the University of Calgary. Moreover, short-term mentorship programs (similar to ones offered at Lakehead University, see Lewington 2017) may help recruit Indigenous youth into language revitalization programs, and may make the transition to post-secondary easier. This collaboration will benefit the University of Calgary by promoting continued enrolment in the language revitalization accreditation programs, and will
also benefit the CBE, as students graduating from the University of Calgary programs will have credentials that may equip them to teach language revitalization at secondary schools. Both institutions will also benefit by sharing resources for program development, and the most important benefit of all will be increased education to support language revitalization in Treaty 7.

The Calgary Board of Education is in the beginning stages of planning for language revitalization programming, consulting with Elders and students and connecting their needs to their planning. By combining efforts, these two institutions can create a sustainable cycle of support for learners.

7. Conclusions

In this report, we have outlined a series of recommendations to develop training and research programs in language revitalization for Treaty 7 communities. Our recommendations are based on consultations with stakeholders in the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina communities, and going forward, we urge that the University of Calgary continue to consult with community stakeholders to develop these programs collaboratively. We are very optimistic that the University of Calgary can work together with communities to create new opportunities for revitalizing an immeasurably important asset: language. We conclude with voices and perspectives from the communities.

Waylon Black: I think some of what will help to bring our people back to where we belong is through the language. It will give a sense of pride, and it will help us learn more about our cultural ways. ... Back to the language, that will help to re-instill pride into the people, and that's how we will be able to carry it forward, that's how they will want to learn ... We need to keep the momentum. I have to say thank you, express my gratitude, because our college isn't doing anything like this. Our people, our organized groups, the council, isn't doing anything like this. Thank you for offering to help with your tools.

Cherith Mark: It is good that this conversation is happening now. This was looked at ten years ago, and maybe we weren't there yet. Now we are able to move forward with what it is that we need to do. And that is where we’re at right now... We just need to keep going, and we need to remember those who really did instigate, this is what we needed to do, we need to continue this. People are always telling me there is a season for things. Maybe that was not our season, maybe next year. And so I think this is really our season, we are ready.

Noreen Breaker: Right now, these are the people – us here – we are the last speakers of the Siksika language. So, it’s crucial that we do something to get this going. This is my goal, to have Siksika spoken by the younger ones.

8. References


