

We Stand Strong in Our Knowledge

Seeking Meaningful Entry Points
to Indigenous Language Revitalization
at the University of Guelph

Aleksandra Bergier & Kim Anderson

SUMMARY REPORT
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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of the literature review of Indigenous language revitalization initiatives across Canadian universities and the qualitative research we conducted on campus to learn about the current Indigenous language learning needs and challenges, embedded in identity-relevant stories voiced by the University of Guelph community. Our research methods included interviews with twenty-five campus community members, sharing circles as well as participant observation and audiovisual documentation of land-based and art-based workshops combined with Elders' teachings and attended by a total of thirteen participants.

Key Findings

The current landscape of Indigenous language delivery across Canadian universities encompasses a rich, wide-ranging array of initiatives in programming, research and training. It does, however, include relatively few diploma programs and our literature review reveals a growing need to pursue immersive contextual practices and support Indigenous language teacher training in higher education.

The general response of the University of Guelph community members to Indigenous language learning was very positive, although some participants questioned the capacity of academic institutions to deliver culturally safe and contextually rich Indigenous language education. This finding points to the need for university supports in three key areas: creating land-based teaching spaces, hiring culturally-knowledgeable language instructors with an ability to express a community-based, rather than an academic understanding of the language and nurturing partnerships with Indigenous communities that already offer similar programming.

The main challenge impacting access to language learning, as perceived by Indigenous participants, was dealing with historic trauma, shame and vulnerability associated with not speaking Indigenous languages or not speaking them well enough. Other difficulties, listed by both Indigenous and settler community members, had to do with the lack of an established group of language keepers available to teach on campus, limited recognition of Indigenous languages as academic vernaculars, time constraints and the overall academic, teaching and service workload, deciding which Indigenous languages and writing systems to prioritize in terms of delivery and visibility, limited access to land-based learning opportunities, lack of clarity around potential allocation of institutional funding to Indigenous language learning and anticipated defensive reactions to Indigenous language development.

Recommendations

Participants' contributions revealed a number of recommendations for educational strategies, learning environment and institutional changes:

Strategies for learning Indigenous languages

- Creating a learning continuum with curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular components encompassing an abundance of entry points to language: immersive and seasonal learning opportunities including the creation of a students' "immersion house", Indigenous language foundations course, hands-on workshops, storytelling sessions, learning about place narratives, weekly vocabulary updates, online tools, classroom learning, volunteering and service in Indigenous communities among many others.
- Combining the credit system with a flexible, non-penalty learning model that accommodates different personal capacities and varied levels of readiness for knowledge intake.
- Expanding and diversifying the language delivery base by creating partnerships with universities, colleges and organizations that already offer courses in different Indigenous languages.

Learning environment

- Creating a trauma-informed language environment where learners feel safe to share personal vulnerabilities if they so choose.
- Prioritizing the access of Indigenous people to some of the spaces dedicated to language transfer and particularly to the healing, ceremonial spaces.
- Building a community of practitioners – an egalitarian circle of learners holding different pieces of language wisdom with access to a land-based teaching lodge and Indigenous pedagogical tools.

Institutional changes

- Normalizing language use in different institutional domains (street signage, office and building labeling, including Indigenous vocabulary in opening remarks, ceremonial spaces and social media).
- Recognizing the Indigenous language training as part of the professional development reimbursement for Indigenous professors and professionals highly invested in supporting indigenization activities.
- Including Indigenous language and knowledge components in curriculum across the university's academic programs.
- Approving Indigenous language courses as electives across all colleges and departments.
- Making second language acquisition – with an option to choose an Indigenous language – a requirement to enter PhD studies.

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1. Introduction

Many decolonization efforts embrace the transfer of ancestral languages as a means of healing from intergenerational trauma and one of the most significant markers of Indigenous knowledge rejuvenation. However, little is known about how these processes can be articulated within a more specific paradigm of university indigenization and how they can remediate the feeling of alienation, cultural incompetency, linguistic insecurity and other identity-related challenges experienced by many Indigenous students within an urban academic environment. This SSHRC funded research project, entitled “We Stand Strong in our Knowledge”, examined pathways in Indigenous language-in-culture revitalization that may offer campus and interested community members learning opportunities, allowing them to feel a sense of pride, ownership and belonging around what they do know, rather than what they don’t.

We hope that our findings will provide the University of Guelph as well as other academic communities and education stakeholders with tools and guidelines to jumpstart Indigenous language movements on campuses with little or no Indigenous language activity. We also hope that the material created during our Anishinaabemowin workshops will start the participants on the language learning journey, encouraging them to draw upon their existing strengths and resources such as personal knowledge and interests, kinship networks and connection to land. Finally, we expect the outcomes of this research to better our understanding of the intersections between ancestral languages and multifaceted expressions of contemporary urban Indigenous identity in Canada.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Objectives

In spite of cultural loss and other challenges faced by Indigenous people while they strive to hold on to a strong and positive sense of self, urban environments create unique opportunities for strengthening of Indigenous identity, nation-to-nation relationship building as well as Indigenous knowledge and language transfer. This potential is increasingly appreciated by members of university communities, as demonstrated by the findings of a study on Indigenous students' mental health: "For people who don't have the culture, the university and the college become a place where they may have their first experience of culture (...) they begin to have a grounding in who they actually are. They begin to understand their lives from their identity (...)"(University of Guelph, n.d., p. 4).

The present research explores the potential of a university campus as an urban space that can contribute to a positive Indigenous identity construction, reinforcement and retention. Building on *Wahkotowin* – a Cree concept denoting the act of being related to each other and all things in creation (Anderson, 2011) – we proposed to examine how the contextual interplay between different components of the everyday good living (e.g. kinship, community responsibilities, visiting spaces, the role of Elders, reciprocity, self-care, land-based practices) can potentially serve as a multitude of entry points to nurture community-driven Indigenous language transfer activities and remediate a sense of linguistic insecurity/cultural inadequacy among the learners. At the core of our research project is a meaningful engagement with the university community, aimed at defining concepts, spaces, responsibilities, relationships and tools that could potentiate language revitalization at the University of Guelph and mobilize the potential neo-speakers around Indigenous languages movement on campus. The project addressed the four main objectives:

1. Examining the existing or upcoming Indigenous languages initiatives within the specific context of the University of Guelph and across other Canadian universities.
2. Exploring the needs and challenges of the University of Guelph community members in relation to Indigenous language transfer.
3. Building on diverse identity expressions, kinship practices, knowledges, responsibilities and strengths articulated by the community members in order to delineate trauma-informed entry points to Indigenous language revitalization and reinforce a sense of cultural continuity.
4. Exploring the potential of Indigenous relational concepts to foster intercultural engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and advance reconciliation on campus.

2.2 Methodology

Our project comprised a review of scholarly and grey literature on Indigenous language revitalization across Canadian universities and research on the University of Guelph campus about Indigenous language learning needs and challenges within an academic setting.

The study applied a qualitative research paradigm as well as Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai, 1999; Wilson, 2008). The research methods included semi-structured interviews with twenty-five campus community members as well as participant observation and audiovisual documentation of land-based and art-based workshops, and sharing circles combined with Elders' teachings, and attended by a total of thirteen participants. These workshops included a walk around campus that allowed the participants to explore place names and create personal language bundles related to familiar campus buildings/spaces, and a visual storytelling activity with the use of a collaborative art piece created by the University of Guelph students.

We recruited the workshop participants by sharing the information about the research on campus bulletin boards and through our professional networks. The interview participants were invited via emails using publicly available contact information.

The project engaged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members: students, faculty and staff members as well as Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers involved in partnerships and projects with the university.

Interview and workshop recordings were transcribed, imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software and analysed via thematic coding.

3. Summary of findings

3.1 Indigenous language initiatives at other Canadian universities

3.1.1 Preservation of original languages as a vital component of academy indigenization

More than 70 Indigenous languages belonging to 12 language groups are currently spoken across the country (Statistics Canada, 2017). Only a few Indigenous languages in Canada remain relatively strong and most of them face the risk of disappearing (Brittain, 2002; McIvor, Napoleon, & Dickie, 2009; Shaw, 2001). Universities play an important role in influencing Indigenous and minority languages' vitality. While Indigenous languages are not legislatively recognized as official languages at a federal level in Canada, their inclusion in a major institution like a university helps raise their prestige and status. The creation of an inclusive campus environment where Indigenous languages' use and visibility is normalized and where they're acknowledged as valid academic vernaculars is a fundamental step in this process.

Post-secondary institutions are increasingly pursuing Indigenous language education strategies based on immersion and mentor-apprentice method in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Several Canadian universities employ partial immersion as a method of Indigenous language transfer and/or highlight the value of place, context and oral traditions in culturally grounded education. These approaches frequently combine theoretical courses (e.g. second language acquisition theory or overview of successful language revitalization methods) with Indigenous language classes, summer immersion camps and practices reflecting the contextual environments in which ancestral languages have traditionally thrived (McCue, 2016; Rudin, 2016; Sterzuk & Fayant, 2016).

Several universities in Canada have supported studies about language revitalization needs in collaboration with Indigenous communities and established Indigenous language centres (Bliss & Breaker, 2018; Council of Ontario Universities, 2017; Green, 2017; McCue, 2016; McIvor & Anisman, 2018). Most of these institutes connect the academics, students and community members while creating a platform for community-engaged language research and learning that encompasses a wide array of activities. Examples include digitization of archival language resources, identifying best practices in teaching and assessing proficiency, training in language documentation, formal and informal Indigenous language instruction and bridging Indigenous and Western approaches to language revitalization.

A number of questions regarding the goals and priorities pursued by the universities in terms of Indigenous language revitalization are still to be addressed. For example, it remains ambiguous whether specific initiatives (e.g. creating a single language course, a resource library or an Indigenous languages research centre) are meant to grant Indigenous languages symbolic recognition and raise their status by placing them within the academic structure or if they aim to gradually build institutional strength around Indigenous languages in order to address systemic barriers and produce language speakers.

A promising line of research would be the evaluation of different approaches to Indigenous language education at Canadian universities, both in terms of their effectiveness in producing language users and their responsiveness to broader indigenization/reconciliation goals with an emphasis on the language needs of Indigenous communities. Additional studies are also needed to understand inter-sectorial collaboration for language planning with the participation of Indigenous communities, different levels of government and multiple institutions in the Canadian education system.

3.1.2 Examples of programming

Although the number of Indigenous language specialists who have secured positions in community language programs and at universities is increasing, “academic institutions have been slow to respond to Indigenous scholars’ needs for graduate programs, professorships, and professional development opportunities” (Gerdt, 2017, p. 610). These needs, and especially the call to establish Indigenous language programming, are at the heart of “ReconciliACTION” – a campaign launched by the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students Association in 2018 to ensure that the university implements the TRC recommendation to create diploma programs in Indigenous languages (Ubokodom, 2018). According to Universities Canada (2017a), more than 51% of universities offer programming in the languages of Canada’s First Nations. Based on the review of information published on the institutional websites and grey literature, this programming ranges from particular language courses, certificates, minors and majors to comprehensive language revitalization undergraduate and graduate programs. Currently, there are more than 30 languages offered through different courses at Canadian post-secondary institutions (Universities Canada, 2017b). For example, the University of Sudbury offers an Anishinaabemowin minor within an Indigenous Studies program. However, relatively few universities offer degree programs in the languages of Canada’s First Nations. Some examples include Algoma University, with a three-year undergraduate degree in Anishinaabemowin, Six Nations Polytechnic with Bachelor of Arts in Mohawk and Cayuga, the First Nations University with a Bachelor of Arts and Honours in Cree and Saulteaux and Simon Fraser University’s Linguistics of a First Nations Language Master of Arts. Lakehead University provides an Indigenous Language Instructor’s Program to offer teacher certification in Algonquian languages and St. Thomas University developed a Certificate Program in Native Language Immersion Training in 2000 in order to respond to rapid language loss in the Maliseet and Mi’kmaq communities. Another example is Nipissing University with the Teacher of Indigenous Language as a Second Language Program.

Experts from the University of Victoria note that two to three years of language immersion in a specific territory is a necessary foundation for Indigenous people to initiate their training as language teachers. After these first years, the university can play a larger role in supporting speakers as they move on to become certified teachers (UVic News, 2018). As exemplified by Kitchen & Hodson (2013), teacher candidates from Indigenous communities face numerous challenges throughout their academic pursuits. Perhaps the most significant ones are distance and the necessity to leave families in order to travel to campus combined with the struggle to maintain strong ties with home communities during their studies. Furthermore, Indigenous language learners who pursue an academic career need to acquire

both the language fluency and master linguistics theory while having to juggle multiple roles in diverse settings – teacher, activist, learner, spokesperson, researcher and politician (Gerds, 2017) – and struggling with limited funding and scholarship opportunities (Rudin, 2016).

University of Victoria is uniquely positioned within the Indigenous language delivery landscape as it offers a wide range of certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and graduate studies, including Master of Arts and Master of Education in Indigenous language revitalization. McIvor & Anisman (2018) credit the UVic’s success to the meaningful and contextually rich combination of teacher training and language learning. The university has taken guidance from Indigenous communities to map out their programs, resulting in a creation of a ladder approach, which allows the students to gradually apply Indigenous language certification towards a degree (Lewington, 2018; Liddicoat, 2018). For example, students can use a documented community-based experience in language revitalization, such as Master-Apprentice training, towards credit in the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization (CALR) program (Bliss & Breaker, 2018). UVic’s Master program is instrumental in producing teachers, leaders, scholars, oral history experts and curriculum developers committed to the future of their ancestral languages, however it is the only one of its kind in the country (Lewington, 2018).

3.2 Findings from the qualitative research conducted at the University of Guelph

3.2.1 Current Indigenous language initiatives at the University of Guelph and beyond

The University of Guelph began offering its first Anishinaabemowin introductory language course in fall 2019. Nested in the School of Languages and Literatures, this initial offering may potentially be a starting point for a future minor or major provided that there is institutional capacity for Indigenous language research and delivery. An Indigenous language component might also be incorporated into a new Indigenous Environmental Stewardship major at the U of G. The Aboriginal Resource Centre was recognized as an important community hub that facilitates connections between students, Elders and language keepers. It also houses a resource library on a variety of topics including Indigenous languages. The participants identified no other specific Indigenous language initiatives within the University or in the City of Guelph.

The following Indigenous language education initiatives in Ontario and the neighbouring post-secondary institutions came up in our interviews:

- Mohawk and Cayuga Bachelor of Arts programs at Six Nations Polytechnic. There are introductory language courses offered for visiting students on letter of permission from their home universities.
- A two-year adult immersion program offered by Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa (Our Language Society) on the Six Nations of the Grand River territory.

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- Indigenous Language Instructor's Program (Algonquian languages) at Lakehead University (Thunder Bay).
 - Introductory, intermediate and advanced Anishinaabemowin and Cree courses, and the Anishinaabemowin immersion course at the University of Sudbury.
 - Three-year undergraduate degree in Anishinaabemowin at Algoma University (Sault Ste. Marie).
 - Anishinaabemowin online course at Conestoga College (Kitchener).
 - Algonquian languages, Delaware and Mohawk courses at Western University (London).
 - Mohawk course at the University of Waterloo.
 - Anishinaabemowin and Mohawk courses at Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford).
 - Anishinaabemowin, Cayuga and Mohawk courses at Brock University (St. Catharines), Certificate in Aboriginal Adult Education or Aboriginal Language.
 - Anishinaabemowin and Mohawk courses at Trent University (Peterborough).
 - Certificate in Indigenous Languages and Cultures at Queen's University with courses in Mohawk, Inuktitut, and the Anishinaabe languages (Kingston).

In terms of speakers who could be potentially approached to support learning activities and language revitalization, the participants pointed to the Elders collaborating with the Aboriginal Resource Centre and specifically Rene Meshake who is a fluent speaker of Anishinaabemowin. They also suggested reaching out to the Knowledge Keepers from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Other potential points of contact included Tom Deer (Language Program Coordinator at the Six Nation Polytechnic), Owennatekha, Brian Maracle (Mohawk language teacher and founder of Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa), Mary Ann Corbiere (Associate Professor and Anishinaabemowin teacher at the University of Sudbury) and Berdina Johnston (Elder and Anishinaabemowin Language Keeper of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation).

3.2.2 The value of Indigenous language learning within an academic setting

This university in the last ten years has embraced many things beyond advancing knowledge. So when we think about embracing mental health, wellness, work/life balance, it seems that as part of that larger trend towards being a little more open minded as to what constitutes a full life of an academic or a student, it would be absolutely appropriate for us to be also thinking about Indigenous languages (Research participant, 2018).

The vast majority of interview participants thought it was important for the University of Guelph community to acquire an understanding of Indigenous language/s at least to some degree. Reasons for this included honouring the commitment to reconciliation and decolonization, nurturing personal and professional interests, acknowledging the value of

linguistic and cultural diversity, accessing different worldviews and an opportunity to connect/reconnect with the land, one's cultural identity and/or responsibilities. A number of participants, however, raised concerns about cultural appropriation and the suitability of academic institutions as sites of Indigenous language revitalization.

These participants questioned whether the universities truly had the capacity to create authentic, culturally-safe environments for learners to study and use Indigenous languages as land-based and holistically embedded in Indigenous ways of being and knowing. The need to engage in proper consultations with Indigenous people prior to implementing language initiatives was considered of fundamental importance.

3.2.3 The role of Indigenous language acquisition in asserting identities, responsibilities and kinship: meaningful entry points to learning

My parents grew up speaking a lot of different languages. As a result, I know English, French, Latvian, Spanish, Latin, but it really seems like I'm missing a part. I'm from Nipissing First Nation – I should speak Ojibwe. And that way, if there are other Indigenous language speakers you can connect with them on a deeper level (Research participant, 2018).

The Indigenous campus community members differed in the extent to which they viewed ancestral languages as an essential manifestation of their identities. Some individuals perceived Indigenous language acquisition as fundamental to personal cultural reclamation and advancing Indigenous futurities while others saw it as complementary to their firmly established and celebrated identities. Other participants preferred to engage in other, seemingly less intimidating aspects of Indigenous culture such as art.

The settler participants viewed picking up some language as part of their responsibilities in terms of relationship building with Indigenous people, understanding of the land and Indigenous teachings, but also as a significant upgrade in their work as instructors who share Indigenous content. More broadly, a number of settler participants brought up the notions of equal recognition and respect for human diversity. Within this context, exposure to different languages was viewed as a foundation for authentic acknowledgement of another human being.

The campus community members brought forward several, personally meaningful entry points to Indigenous language learning:

A sense of connection

Indigenous Elders, staff, faculty and students recognized Indigenous languages as connective tools based on oral sharing that allows for an enriched human existence and reflects the "relationship to" and "responsibility for" rather than the "power over." Several participants expressed the desire to nurture the Indigenous part of their identities through language in order to "connect with other speakers on a deeper level", "be able to communicate in a more meaningful way", "better understand the complexity of our

teachings”, “connect with a missing piece” or “connect with one’s hidden/forgotten/unknown side.”

Land

The value of creating ceremonial grounds on campus – a site where language and storytelling could be practiced in a land-based context – was brought forward by several Indigenous participants. A number of non-Indigenous participants asserted historical and contemporary understanding of place and forging land stewardship through the lens of Indigenous languages as a significant part of their responsibilities as settlers and as (future) parents who intend to raise their children with a deep understanding of kinship and reconciliation.

Personal and professional interests

Examples of interests brought forward as meaningful entry points to Indigenous language learning included linguistics, the use of Indigenous languages as academic vernaculars, Indigenous food culture and food sovereignty, art and music, community-engaged scholarship, meaningful incorporation of Indigenous content in the classroom, Indigenous holistic perspectives on health and wellness, exercise and fun activities (e.g. language hikes), intergenerational learning – learning Indigenous languages with Elders, youth and family.

3.2.4 Challenges impacting access to Indigenous languages

Many times in our lives as Indigenous people we feel dispossessed. We're embarrassed and we're ashamed because we don't know our language and our lands, but all we need is a few words in our bundle or a few plants or a few medicines and that's such a rich way of going forward (Research participant, 2018).

Trauma and Indigenous language learning

For many Indigenous people, learning an Indigenous language may bring up painful memories associated with family history and the legacy of residential schools. Today, aspiring learners often feel embarrassed, dispossessed and judged for not speaking their language or because they don't speak it fluently. The Indigenous staff and faculty noted that there is a great deal of emotional labour and healing that often needs to happen prior to embarking on a language learning journey.

A network of language keepers available for teaching has not been established yet

One of the primary challenges, identified by the majority of participants, was creating a network of language keepers (instructors, Elders, language activists, researchers, storytellers, guest speakers) who are available for teaching and language supports on campus and who can effectively integrate language instruction with Indigenous pedagogical approaches. According to several community members the accomplished teachers and community practitioners should be employed as full-time faculty at the university regardless of having typical academic credentials.

Navigating the diversity of Indigenous languages

Most campus community members recognized that the priority in terms of teaching and revitalization should be given to the Anishinaabemowin and Ogwehoweh languages because these languages have been traditionally spoken throughout the territory the university is situated on. However, they also acknowledged challenges related to deciding which Indigenous languages, language varieties and writing systems should be prioritized in language visibility and learning initiatives on campus.

Indigenous languages are often not recognized as valid academic vernaculars

Some Indigenous participants noted the lack of authentic acknowledgement of the use of Indigenous language vocabulary in the academic work. These participants thought that the University of Guelph should support and encourage learners who wish to meaningfully apply Indigenous languages in their research, theses and programs of study.

Language funding

The participants thought it was necessary to clarify whether there is institutional commitment to support Indigenous language development on campus and what kind of funding resources are available or might be secured for language projects.

Time constraints and academic workload

Most participants associated the process of learning Indigenous languages with hard work, dedication and considerable time investment – a difficult task especially given the lack of exposure to these languages in everyday life on campus. Challenges related to time constraints and limited availability to engage in language activities due to the academic workload were brought up repeatedly.

Learning context

Limited access to a culturally grounded, action-oriented and land-based learning within an academic context was emphasized by a number of participants, including Indigenous Elders who support the campus community in multiple ways. The Elders spoke of the value of oral traditions and expressed the need to create a space on the land to facilitate a rich, hands-on contextual environment where Indigenous languages can come alive and shape lived experiences.

Potential pushback against language revitalization and indigenization initiatives

A number of participants articulated concerns around cultural safety and anticipated defensive reactions and/or racially tinged attitudes that may arise in response to language education and allocation of institutional resources to this and other Indigenous activities on campus. They often attributed the potential for these harmful attitudes to emerge to the perceived misinterpretation of the term “indigenization” and the absence of an ongoing dialogue around reconciliation that would facilitate a better understanding of this complex and multi-faceted process.

3.2.5 Recommendations

Just find out what the wishes of the communities are and try to accommodate that. Who knows better than them how to best teach Indigenous languages? So we have to follow their path and that would be the best approach, instead of telling them what we think they should do (Research participant, 2018).

Collaboration with Indigenous communities

Seeking consent and reciprocal collaboration with the communities who are the keepers of Indigenous languages was certainly one of the most commonly expressed sentiments among the participants. The campus community members felt that not only was it important to consult with the existing Indigenous partners, but also to form new alliances so that they can guide the university in the process of developing language initiatives in a good way. This approach may entail supporting and connecting with the programming that already exists in the communities and other postsecondary institutions as well as giving Indigenous people the decision-making power about how the language funding should be spent.

Expanding the pool of potential hires to include the teachers who don't have typical academic credentials

Many participants argued that the suitability of Indigenous language teachers should not be determined solely by their academic credentials because many fluent speakers currently engaged in teaching do not hold a university degree. Opportunities should be given to those who feel that by sharing the language they are using their unique gifts and fulfilling their cultural responsibilities. Hiring these individuals as a full-time academic staff was considered crucial to language learning continuity. Another option to consider is team-teaching: pairing native speakers with less fluent teachers to provide mutually beneficial opportunities for enhancing language proficiency and pedagogical practices within the team.

Leveraging the existing strengths to support language revitalization

The participants identified the following assets that the university can build upon to support language revitalization:

- The work of the Aboriginal Resource Centre, the Aboriginal Student Association and the visiting Elders.
- The cluster hire of Indigenous scholars across six of the university's seven colleges.
- The relationships between the university and Indigenous communities from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Mississaugas of the Credit.
- The agricultural and hospitality expertise of the university with connections to Indigenous food security and environmental stewardship.

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- The growing interest of students to learn about Indigenous issues and participate in land-based learning.
 - The language delivery expertise of the School of Languages and Literatures.

Changes in institutional culture

The participants listed a number of broader institutional changes that need to occur in order to create conditions for successful language revitalization:

- Creating academic bridging courses for mature students and leveraging relationships with colleges to create pathways into degree studies for Indigenous people.
- Building environment that encourages a sense of pride among Indigenous learners and breaking down barriers that keep the campus community members from self-identifying as Indigenous.
- Inclusion of Indigenous language and knowledge components in curriculum throughout the university's academic programs.
- Approval of Indigenous language courses as electives across all colleges and departments.
- Gradual strengthening of institutional capacity to deliver Indigenous language courses so that they may eventually evolve into a degree program.
- A clear and ongoing message from the university's leadership about the importance of bringing Indigenous languages alive on campus.
- Fostering domains of Indigenous language use on campus (e.g. digital and street signage, labeling of offices and outdoor areas, using simple phrases and opening remarks during formal events and gatherings, the use of Indigenous languages in the university's social media).
- A long-term funding commitment to the development of language teaching resources.
- The official recognition of Indigenous language training as part of the professional development reimbursement for Indigenous professors and professionals highly invested in supporting indigenization activities.
- Making second language acquisition – with an option to choose an Indigenous language – a requirement to enter PhD studies.
- Promoting the use of Indigenous languages through the work of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs.
- Embracing Indigenous language learning as part of the wellness strategy on campus.
- Recognition of the use of Indigenous languages in the academic work (research papers, theses, assignments).

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- Incentivizing a language hub – a community of practitioners, artists and storytellers.

A continuum to learn within: curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning

I think context is a big problem because Anishinaabemowin is land-based. The word 'miikana' used to mean a dirt path through the forest. Now it's the highway 401, but I don't see any dirt there. So if we're learning Anishinaabemowin in Guelph that's why I'd like to have my grandmother's lodge there – have a little bit of context. You can imagine the forest outside when we're storytelling. I want to tell stories in Anishinaabemowin – that's context for me. It is about this stewardship of space and land again – telling the university to give us the tools and we'll do the rest. Tools like the ceremonial fire or creating a community of Indigenous and non-Indigenous talents around language, art and theatre (Research participant, 2019).

A common thread throughout our community consultations and perhaps the most prominent finding of this study was the need to establish a learning continuum with curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities that could address identity-relevant needs, goals and responsibilities of interested campus community members. Having extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities was considered important for those learners whose ability to participate in long-term courses is limited by family and community commitments. Non-formal learning options, both within and outside of the standard university hours of operation, were also perceived as more convenient and less intimidating by members of staff and administration who operate within office hours and often lack opportunities to take full advantage of programming on campus.

The participants spoke about a “circle within circle” approach to language learning with an abundance of entry points:

- Immersion.
- Master-apprentice programs.
- Language camps.
- Distance education and online tools.
- Weekly vocabulary updates and announcements.
- Translating meaningful mainstream content into Indigenous languages.
- Hands-on arts and mixed-media workshops.
- Classroom learning.
- Incorporating Indigenous language components across the university curriculum in specific thematic areas such as botany, horticulture, family structure, gender roles, etc.

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- Land-based, art-based and kitchen table-oriented activities.
 - Geocaching.
 - Learning about place narratives.
 - Elders' teachings and storytelling sessions.
 - Ceremony and celebratory spaces.
 - Intergenerational and family-oriented language learning opportunities.
 - Field trips and volunteering initiatives in Indigenous communities.
 - Engaging with family history through language.

This multidimensional teaching strategy should ideally provide solutions for a variety of learners ranging from a smaller group of highly dedicated students aiming for full language acquisition to a larger community interested in gaining a basic conversational ability or an intermediate level of language proficiency coupled with some cultural understanding. Fostering partnerships with universities, colleges and organizations that already offer Indigenous language courses was considered extremely helpful in terms of breaking down barriers for students who wish to access Indigenous language at a different institution and responding to inevitable challenges such as a limited capacity of one institution to deliver multiple courses that cover a variety of languages.

Trauma-informed practices

Trauma-informed practices that remediate a sense of dispossession and foster positive identity reinforcement among Indigenous people were recognized as an integral part of Indigenous language education. The Indigenous participants voiced the need for gentle teachers, supportive community and non-judgmental, healing environment where learners can feel safe enough to share personal vulnerabilities if they so choose. Those we interviewed frequently mentioned the stressors related to self-critical perfectionism, exam performance and the quest for fluency that they saw as firmly integrated within the Western educational paradigm. They contrasted this vision with more fun, relaxed, open-ended and penalty-free Indigenous pedagogies with multiple options to access the language in a space where every effort is appreciated and where learners aren't afraid to take chances and make mistakes.

Bringing Indigenous pedagogies into language learning

Bringing Indigenous pedagogies into language learning was considered fundamental by a number of participants and especially by the Elders. They spoke about creating an environment where learners could absorb the language the way they would have done it in their childhood – by being surrounded by the sounds of the language and eventually learning how to emulate them. Essentially, a number of participants recognized the need to move towards culture-based learning and away from pedagogies framed predominantly by the process of static labeling and the use of the metalanguage (grammar, spelling, syntax, etc.). Overall, the participants considered immersive, multi-sensory experiences hosted both off-site (e.g. language camps, cultural exchanges, weekend canoe trips, cooking events,

language walks, home placements, service opportunities) and at the university to be effective language training tools. These experiences should be offered with an option to be counted toward credits.

3.2.6 Indigenous language revitalization at a university: a significant step towards reconciliation

I think that's the best way to start reconciliation – to put people in touch and to listen to each other's stories. If that could be done, at least partially, through the language of the Indigenous people, then that would be really fantastic. Learning an Indigenous language from a point of view of an experiential, emotional and intellectual experience has no comparison and I really think it would enrich us all enormously (Research participant, 2018).

In the opinion of the participants of this study supporting language revitalization on campus is a significant step towards reconciliation and a critical priority in the implementation of the TRC Calls to Action. The act of bringing languages and cultures together was associated with increased sensitivity to the rights of aggrieved communities and respect for “otherness, in whatever form it manifests itself” (Research participant, 2018). By facilitating language initiatives, the universities create spaces for Indigenous people to reclaim the stewardship of the land, arts and culture. Acquiring at least partial competency in Indigenous languages was seen as one of primary methods of reversing the cultural and cognitive impoverishment that impacted both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

However, several participants argued that the endeavours aimed at integrating Indigenous perspectives into university education often do not go beyond superficial acknowledgment. Language revitalization within a university setting should be firmly embedded in practices and norms that address systemic wrongs and support inclusive educational environment instead of tokenism. More specifically, this means removing barriers that make it difficult for Indigenous students to use their languages during classes, in their papers and in their projects.

A number of participants agreed that Indigenous languages bring rich vocabulary and the conceptual capacity to express different meanings of healing, reconciliation, interrelationality and a sense of home. Knowledge of Indigenous languages is also key to dispelling myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings that occurred throughout the history shared by Indigenous people and the settlers. These misconceptions are often at the root of the ongoing exploitation and discrimination still experienced by Indigenous people today.

4. Conclusions

The University of Guelph took an important first step to introduce Indigenous languages on campus by launching its first Anishinaabemowin course, nested in the School of Languages and Literatures. Furthermore, Indigenous scholars, Elders, staff and allies at the Aboriginal Resource Centre have worked to offer interested community members extra-curricular entry points to Anishinaabemowin. We successfully piloted storytelling workshops and shared meaningful word bundles – relational concepts inspired by the everyday spaces where the learners live, study and work, and nurtured by their understanding of reconciliation and land stewardship. We are enthusiastic about opportunities to contribute to the academy indigenization by supporting new, exciting venues for Indigenous language delivery at our university.

Our research revealed that the general response of the campus community members to Indigenous language learning was very positive, although some participants questioned the capacity of academic institutions to deliver culturally safe and contextually rich Indigenous language education. Defining to what extent Indigenous languages should be learned was a complex task. Overall, the participants expressed that the university should offer both a pathway for a smaller group of committed learners to achieve fluency and opportunities for a broad campus community to acquire basic communication skills and some understanding of culturally relevant concepts.

When we asked the Indigenous campus community members about the entry points to Indigenous languages that are personally relevant to their identities, relationships and responsibilities, we discovered that they often differed in the extent to which they viewed these languages as an essential manifestation of their identities. Some individuals perceived language acquisition as vital to identity formation, some as complementary yet not indispensable. Those who identified as having mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry saw it as helpful to enhancing kinship with the Indigenous family and community members. Still others preferred to start the exploration of their heritage by learning about seemingly less intimidating aspects of Indigenous culture such as art.

When we discussed these topics with the settler participants, many of them talked about the shared responsibility to honour the land and its original stewards by supporting Indigenous people in language revitalization efforts. Importantly, some of the members of senior administration emphasized that the primary access to language learning should be given to individuals who self-identify as Indigenous. Without the intention to diminish the impacts of intergenerational trauma affecting Indigenous societies, several settlers also expressed acute awareness of their own cultural loss, speaking from personal history of dispossession and displacement which they viewed as a useful component of a discussion about non-Indigenous people's entry points to Indigenous languages.

Overall, the meaningful entry points to language learning from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives included the opportunities to better understand the land, nurture different professional and personal interests and access a worldview that highlights “relationship to” and “responsibility for” rather than the “power over.” We recommend that the varied interplays between language, identities and responsibilities expressed by

Indigenous and settler members of the campus community be reflected in a scaffolded, heterogeneous approach to learning – one that provides an abundance of learning opportunities and allows for building a meaningful relationship with Indigenous languages on one’s own terms.

While many participants were cognizant of the indigenization efforts made by the academia, several also noted that some endeavours aimed at integrating Indigenous languages and perspectives into university education do not go beyond superficial acknowledgment. These participants concluded that language revitalization within a university setting should be firmly embedded in broader changes in institutional culture expressed through policies and practices of diversity that can address systemic barriers, boost the status of Indigenous languages and support inclusive educational environment instead of tokenism. For example, an entitlement to a paid cultural leave and/or incorporating language education into an official upgrade and service strategy would minimize career risks for Indigenous scholars. Another vital component of this process is an ongoing campus community dialogue that forges shared levels of understanding of indigenization.

A number of participants proposed the creation of a trauma-informed, healing language environment where learners could feel safe to share personal vulnerabilities if they so choose. Another suggestion was combining the credit system with a flexible, non-penalty learning model that accommodates different personal capacities, varied levels of readiness for knowledge intake and the need to step away from learning if the circumstances aren’t right. These observations led us to the main recommendation of this study and one that has a strong potential to remediate various language acquisition challenges: the creation of a multilayered learning strategy that accommodates different levels of commitment and interest as opposed to a “one size fits all” approach. Embedded predominantly in Indigenous pedagogies, this learning continuum would encompass curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular components with an abundance of entry points to language: immersive and seasonal learning opportunities including the creation of a “students’ immersion house”, hands-on workshops, storytelling sessions, classroom learning, weekly vocabulary updates, normalizing language use in different institutional domains (street signage, office and building labeling, including Indigenous vocabulary in opening remarks, ceremonial spaces and social media), online tools, volunteering and service in Indigenous communities among many others. At the core of the strategy would be a community of practitioners – an egalitarian circle of learners holding different pieces of language wisdom with access to a teaching lodge and land-based educational tools. An Indigenous language foundations course would offer a starting point for our language journey, with options to transition into a variety of online and field-based programming. Some of the environments dedicated to language transfer, and particularly the healing, ceremonial spaces, should also understandably prioritize the access of Indigenous people. Finally, expanding and diversifying the language delivery base could be achieved by partnerships with universities, colleges and organizations that already offer courses in different Indigenous languages.

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