MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA



PURSUE A CAREER IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

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INTRODUCTION TO ILR

This booklet is intended to provide information on the field of Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR). It is meant for anyone learning about ILR for the first time and for people who are interested in pursuing a career in language revitalization. This booklet was written by Métis Nation British Columbia's (MNBC) Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Language (CHL). The language team within CHL works on Michif language revitalization through documentation, grant offerings, learning programs, and resource development.

WHY REVITALIZE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES?

Indigenous languages are deeply connected to the communities who speak them. They can hold a culture's oral histories, traditions, songs, and stories.[1] Indigenous languages can carry distinct worldviews, spiritual beliefs, values, relationships, and traditional ways of knowing.[2] Those who speak an Indigenous language often associate their language with their cultural identity.[3] Indigenous languages are foundational to language and cultural reclamation efforts and revitalizing them is crucial.

As an introduction to Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR), this booklet explores:

- What the field of ILR is
- Why ILR matters
- Education opportunities related to ILR
- Available careers within the field

This booklet also includes case studies from four individuals working in ILR and additional resources to support your learning.

WHAT IS ILR?

Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR) refers to the ongoing efforts to reclaim, strengthen, and revitalize Indigenous languages. According to UNESCO, 75% of Indigenous languages in Canada are endangered.[4] Some of these endangered languages, like Michif, are only spoken by a handful of people, primarily Elders.[5] Current ILR efforts are helping ensure these languages are passed on to future generations.

Although relatively new, the field of ILR is diverse. The work involves restoring, promoting, and sustaining Indigenous languages that are endangered, marginalized, or sleeping.[6] It includes relationship building and maintenance with speakers, Elders, and communities; language documentation, language programming, community efforts, and policy development. These combined efforts work towards bringing the languages into use in daily life, education, media, and governance. Achieving revitalization goals can take generations of sustained efforts. It requires the dedication and commitment of many Elders, speakers, experts, learners, and communities. By forming strong relationships, supporting individuals and communities, and maintaining cultural continuity, those working within ILR can see a language move towards a revitalized status.



WHAT IS MICHIF?

Michif refers to the languages created and spoken by Métis people. There are three different Michif languages, commonly referred to as **Northern Michif, Southern Michif, or Michif French.** The Métis Nation is working hard to revitalize Michif.

To learn more about Michif, visit: ameliadouglasinstitute.ca

WHAT DOES A CAREER IN ILR LOOK LIKE?

ILR work brings together people with a wide range of skills and expertise. Indigenous language speakers, linguists, educators, community leaders, and passionate individuals all work towards revitalization together. ILR efforts happen in homes, communities, educational settings, workplaces, and governments. No matter your specific role, everyone helps to support the revitalization, preservation, and protection of language.

It is important to remember that being fluent in an Indigenous language is not required to have a successful career. This misconception may be one of the biggest perceived barriers for people who are interested in the field of ILR. Many people feel that they need to be fluent in an Indigenous language to make an impact, but that is not the case. While learning the language you are working to revitalize may be crucial to certain roles, fluency is not expected.

ILR offers many different career pathways. While one person may spend their time documenting a language with speakers, another may develop language curricula. There are opportunities for writing and managing grants or coordinating various programs. Some careers work directly in communities, while others contribute from positions in governments or educational institutions. No matter what career someone has, or where they work from, various roles often work together on certain revitalization projects.

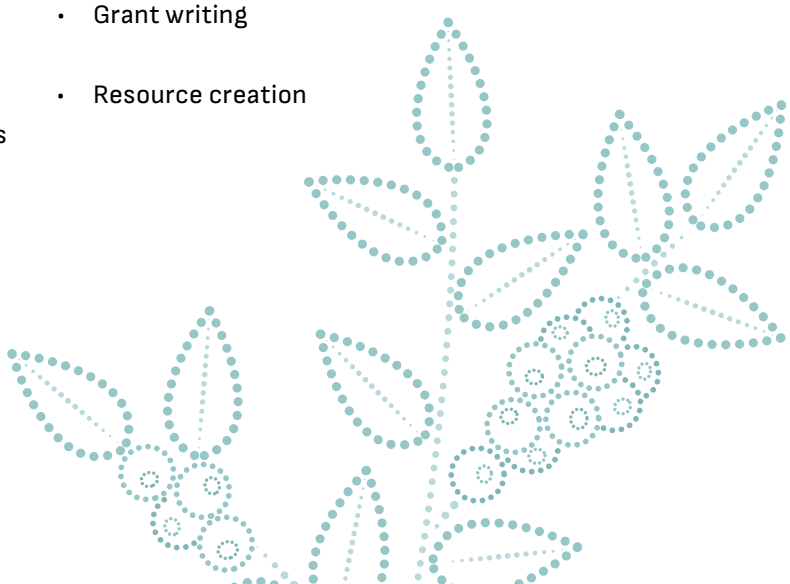
Revitalization projects may include a mix of field and administrative work. Many roles within ILR involve a combination of both. Field work involves directly working with speakers and communities, often in their home, in a community gathering space, or in another public setting. Field work may also take place virtually through platforms such as Zoom.

Field work often includes:

- Language documentation
- Recording with speakers
- Transcribing
- Translating
- Consultations with communities
- Coordinating or attending language events and conferences
- Facilitating or teaching language lessons or workshops

Administrative work is equally important to successful ILR efforts. It focuses more on administrative processes that support field work or other ILR work and may or may not require direct contact with speakers or communities. This might include:

- Research
- Language planning
- Lesson planning and development
- Curriculum development
- Grant writing
- Resource creation





WHY IS COMMUNITY IMPORTANT TO ILR?

The field of ILR is community-focused. Many roles within ILR involve working closely with Elders, language speakers, language learners, educators, and community members. These roles require forming and maintaining relationships that are built on respect, trust, honesty, caring, and accountability. People working within the field of ILR tend to know one another in some respect and recognize the importance of their working and personal relationships. Relationships are the foundation of both a thriving community and successful ILR efforts.[7]

Language and community are intertwined,[8] so it is essential to involve members of a language community in ILR work. Community priorities should guide revitalization efforts because in community is where a language thrives and is revitalized.[9] Nurturing a language community is just as important as nurturing the language itself. Successful ILR efforts are grounded in community perspectives and cultural practices.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ILR

This section explains why Indigenous languages and ILR are crucial to the culture, identity, health, and healing of Indigenous people and communities, and why this is a critical time for ILR efforts.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

Language, culture, and identity are deeply interconnected, with each having a strong influence on the others.[10] Language may carry the knowledge, stories, songs, rules, beliefs, practices, and histories of a people.[11] Many learners describe that learning their ancestral language changes their worldview.[12] The language helps them see the world as their Elders see it and how their ancestors saw it. Language learning can strengthen the learner's connection to their culture and their sense of identity, belonging, and distinction. ILR efforts support this by helping people reclaim their languages and by providing opportunities for language learning.

LANGUAGE RECLAMATION AND HEALTH

ILR can have meaningful impacts on health. Research shows that reconnecting with their ancestral language results in improved health outcomes for Indigenous peoples.[13] Research has found associations between Indigenous language continuity and positive health outcomes, including lower rates of diabetes and youth suicide in some communities.[14, 15] Those who have started learning their ancestral language and reconnecting with their culture report being happier, more involved in their community, and having closer relationships with their Elders.[16] ILR initiatives help support these outcomes by providing communities and individuals with the skills, education, support, and funding they need to reconnect with their languages.

LANGUAGE AND HEALING

The work taking place with community ILR movements is important because it can foster healing, strengthen community connection, and deepen cultural identity.[17] Many individuals, language speakers, and communities have experienced the lasting impacts of colonial policies, including language suppression and discrimination. Supporting people as they reconnect with their language and culture can be deeply meaningful and healing for those involved. Many people within the field of ILR credit speakers, Elders, and communities as their greatest inspirations for getting into and continuing with ILR work.

TIMING IS CRITICAL

This is a crucial time for ILR movements. First-language speakers of the languages are aging and will not always be here to share their knowledge. The field of ILR needs passionate and dedicated individuals to learn and carry on the good work that has been done so far. Ongoing ILR efforts are laying the foundation for Indigenous languages to be passed on to future generations. However, much work remains to be done to improve the health of endangered languages and reverse language shift. Passionate and dedicated individuals have an important role to play in ensuring languages thrive for future generations. Any contribution an individual can make, large or small, matters and helps support revitalization.



ILR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

This section includes information on whether formal or community-based education is required when pursuing a career in ILR, funding that may be available to those who pursue formal education, and education opportunities that are available in B.C.

IS FORMAL EDUCATION NECESSARY?

While a formal post-secondary education is recommended when pursuing a career in ILR, it is not always necessary. Many speakers and individuals who are experts in ILR do not have formal post-secondary educations. They developed their expertise by gaining experience working in communities and improving their skills. Both formally educated and community-built experts play key roles in revitalization.

A formal education can provide valuable skills, knowledge, and perspectives that will aid you at the start of your ILR career. It can also open the door to additional employment opportunities as many ILR positions look for specific disciplines or levels of education. A list of potential academic disciplines for those interested in ILR is provided on page 13. A background in linguistics or ILR is not always required for a successful career. Skills gained through other fields and experiences can still provide you with the knowledge to meaningfully contribute to ILR.

Examples of other skill sets that may support ILR efforts include:

- Photography and videography expertise can support language documentation and recording efforts.
- Programming and coding skills can support the digitization of Indigenous language text resources.
- Project management experience can be applied to lead ILR projects from the planning stage to the project's completion.
- Community engagement training can directly support ILR work and consultations in communities.
- Communications expertise supports effective communication and engagement between communities, organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Planning skills can support in language planning.

Community-built experts can gain the knowledge and skills needed for a successful ILR career without attending a post-secondary school. Volunteering or working with your community or Nation on language learning initiatives is a great first step. Attending Indigenous language classes is a great option as well. These experiences can create opportunities to learn firsthand from speakers, other students, ILR experts, consultants, and other support members committing their time to revitalize language. Mentors often have the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to create experts in ILR. Finding a mentor and learning from them can be just as valuable as a formal education.



EDUCATION FUNDING

The following is information on educational funding that may be available to support those interested in pursuing a formal education for ILR:

TYPES OF FUNDING FOR STUDENTS

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Scholarships and other financial awards are typically non-repayable and merit-based, awarded on academic and personal achievements. Scholarships and awards are available through organizations such as StudentAid BC and educational institutions and can also be found through online searches. You will need to research to find those that you may qualify for. Do not assume you are ineligible. Review eligibility criteria carefully and apply for as many as you can. There is still a chance that you may be awarded the funding.

GRANTS & BURSARIES

Grants and bursaries are need-based, non-repayable financial aid. Like scholarships, there are various sources that offer them. Look for them in the same places that offer scholarships and awards, as they are often posted together. Certain grants are automatically included in student loan applications. Continue searching throughout your education, as new funding opportunities become available each year. Like scholarships, apply for as many as you qualify for. Grants and bursaries are one of the best sources of funding for students with demonstrated financial need.

STUDENT LOANS

StudentAid BC provides student loans to eligible students in B.C. to help with the cost of post-secondary education. Most student loans are provided by both the provincial and federal government. Canada student loans from the federal government will be automatically combined with provincial student loans. This means you only need to apply for student loans from StudentAid BC to receive both. Provincial student loans from B.C. and federal student loans are both interest-free. Repayment Assistance Plans may also be available to help reduce monthly payments after you graduate.



FUNDING FOR MÉTIS STUDENTS

GENERAL FUNDING

There are numerous scholarships, awards, grants, bursaries, and more that are specifically dedicated to Métis students. Use websites like Indspire to help you find funding sources. When researching funding online, be sure to include the term Métis, Indigenous, or Aboriginal in your search. Some funding sources are only awarded to specific Indigenous groups, so be sure to check the eligibility criteria before applying.*

MNBC STEPS

MNBC's Ministry of Skills, Training, Employment and Post Secondary (STEPS) helps MNBC Citizens reach their goals in school, training, and work. Eligible Citizens may access up to $50,000 in lifetime funding, with access up to $12,500 each year. This funding can be used to support education and training across Canada, including programs like Indigenous Language Revitalization.

STEPS funding allows Citizens to pursue post-secondary school, short term training, and skills training that can improve career prospects. This includes programs that teach Indigenous languages, cultural knowledge, and ways to support language learning in communities. New funding becomes available each year on April 1, providing ongoing opportunities for Citizens to apply as they begin or continue their learning journey.

Métis Citizens can learn more, apply for support, and sign up for the STEPS newsletter to stay up to date at www.mnbc.ca/steps. They can also email steps@mnbc.ca for help and guidance. Staff located throughout B.C. are available to answer questions and support Citizens.

*** Funding for non-Métis people may be available in B.C. Check Indspire, First Peoples' Cultural Council, and research other potential sources to find more information.**

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN B.C.

The following disciplines, institutions, and programs are recommended for those interested in pursuing formal education for ILR:

DISCIPLINES

Some of the most common disciplines within the field of ILR are Linguistics, Education, First Nations and Endangered Languages, Indigenous Education, and Indigenous Language Revitalization itself. Each discipline focuses on a different aspect of ILR but can still provide relevant skills and knowledge for a successful career. These are not the only disciplines that are relevant to the field of ILR. However, they are the most strongly associated with ILR work. For more information on which jobs relate to each discipline, refer to the Potential ILR Careers section on page 18.

LINGUISTICS

Linguistics is not about learning to speak a lot of languages. Rather, it is the scientific study of language.[18] The main areas of linguistic study are syntax, semantics, morphology, phonetics, phonology, and pragmatics. In other words, sentence structure, meaning, word structure, speech sounds and signs, language sound systems, and how context contributes to meaning, respectively. There are many branches and subfields of linguistics, such as applied linguistics, theoretical linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Obtaining a foundational understanding of linguistics is highly recommended for the field of ILR. Many prominent members of the ILR movement have some expertise in linguistics.

EDUCATION

Education is the study of theories, practices, and policies that shape effective teaching and learning.[19] Some relevant areas of education studies to ILR include curriculum and pedagogy, educational leadership, and modern language education. Education studies can aid those looking to work as teachers, curriculum and resource developers, and language planners. The discipline of education is one of the most diverse. There are many courses, certificates, and programs within education that will provide useful skills and knowledge for ILR work.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, INDIGENOUS EDUCATION, AND FIRST NATIONS AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR), Indigenous Education (IE), and First Nations and Endangered Languages (FNEL) overlap in some respects, but each discipline has a different core focus. Below is a summary of each:

- Indigenous Language Revitalization focuses on intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages and supporting revival efforts.[20]
- Indigenous Education looks to deconstruct colonial barriers within education and educate through Indigenous ways of knowing and being.[21]
- First Nations and Endangered Languages explores the process of documentation, conservation, and reclamation of endangered Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledge systems.[22]

All three disciplines offer opportunities to study Indigenous languages and to increase your understanding of Indigenous cultures. Each provides an education that will aid ILR efforts in different, but equally impactful ways.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

There are many post-secondary educational institutions across Canada that provide an education relevant to the field of ILR. **Choosing which institution is right for you will ultimately depend on various personal factors, such as:**

- The discipline you would like to pursue
- The programs that an institution offers
- Which institution feels right for you
- Where you can receive funding
- Financial constraints
- Where you would like to live
- Family commitments
- Your commute

RECOMMENDED INSTITUTIONS WITHIN B.C.



Simon Fraser University | SFU

Simon Fraser University's (SFU) main campus is in Burnaby, with secondary campuses in Vancouver and Surrey. SFU provides a wide variety of programming relevant to ILR careers.

University of British Columbia | UBC

The University of British Columbia's (UBC) main campus is in Vancouver, while their Okanagan campus is in Kelowna. There are a wide variety of programs that UBC offers that will provide an education that can lead to employment opportunities within the field of ILR.





University of Victoria | UVIC

The University of Victoria's (UVIC) campus is in Victoria, on Vancouver Island. While UVIC offers many similar programs to the other institutions in BC, UVIC is unique in that it specifically offers programming for ILR.

PROGRAMS

Below are some recommended programs in B.C. that may lead to success in the field of ILR.* Regardless of the level of education you pursue, these programs will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to work in a good way in the field of ILR. Links to the program pages can be found in the Resources section on page 31.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization **(UVIC)**
- Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization **(UVIC)**
- Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Languages and Linguistics **(SFU)**
- Certificate in Indigenous Language Proficiency **(SFU, UVIC)**
- Graduate Certificate in Curriculum and Instruction **(SFU)**
- Graduate Certificate in Education **(SFU)**

DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

- Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization **(UVIC)**
- Diploma in Linguistics **(UBC)**
- Diploma in Applied Linguistics **(UVIC)**
- Diploma in Indigenous Language Proficiency **(SFU)**

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics **(UBC , SFU, UVIC)**
- Bachelor of Arts in Applied Linguistics **(UVIC)**
- Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization **(UVIC)**
- Bachelor of Arts in First Nations and Endangered Languages **(UBC)**
- Bachelor of Education – Indigenous Teacher Education Program **(UBC)**

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Master of Arts in Linguistics **(UBC, SFU, UVIC)**
- Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics **(UVIC)**
- Master of Arts or Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization **(UVIC)**
- Master of Arts in Indigenous Languages and Linguistics **(SFU)**
- Master of Education in Teaching Additional Languages **(SFU)**
- Master of Arts or Education in Curriculum and Instruction **(SFU)**
- Master of Education in Indigenous Education **(UBC)**
- Master of Arts or Education in Modern Languages Education **(UBC)**

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

- Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics **(UBC, SFU, UVIC)**
- Doctor of Philosophy in Languages, Cultures and Literacies **(SFU)**

*** AS OF 2026 –** Please note some programs may change over time, it is best to refer to the University's website for the most up to date information.




audio-technica



ILR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

This section shares some potential careers within the field of ILR, advice on how to choose which career you pursue, and case studies of four individuals working in ILR.

POTENTIAL ILR CAREERS

There are various career pathways in the field of ILR. Many people find the work that best suits them as they gain new experiences and try new things. It is possible to have a long, successful career in ILR with opportunities for growth and upward mobility. Below is a list of possible careers you can pursue in ILR. While this is not an exhaustive list of all opportunities, it represents some common roles within the field. Bracketed acronyms refer to the academic disciplines that may support each career, although it is important to note that education in each discipline is not always necessary, and individuals in these careers may have alternative educational backgrounds and work experience. The disciplines include **Linguistics (LING), Education (EDUC), Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR), Indigenous Education (IE), and First Nations and Endangered Languages (FNEL).**

COMMUNITY-BASED

- Community Culture and Language Worker **(ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Community Educator **(EDUC, IE, FNEL)**
- Community Language Instructor or Coordinator **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE)**
- Community Language Leader or Planner **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Community Program Manager **(IE, FNEL)**
- Language or Knowledge-Keeper Support **(ILR, FNEL)**

EDUCATION

- Cultural Education Program Specialist **(EDUC, IE)**
- Curriculum Developer **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE)**
- Educational Policy Analyst or Advisor **(EDUC, IE)**
- Language Instructor or Coordinator **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE)**
- Teacher, Lecturer, or Professor **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**

RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION

- Indigenous Language Interpreter or Translator **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Indigenous Language Protector **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Indigenous Language Transcriber **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Language Archivist **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Language Researcher or Research Assistant **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Language Revitalization Coordinator or Specialist **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Recording and Documentation Assistant **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Technical Documentation Coordinator **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**

RESOURCE, PROGRAM, & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Grant Writer **(ILR, FNEL)**
- Language Consultant or Assistant **(LING, ILR, FNEL)**
- Language Program Manager or Director **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Language Program Coordinator or Administrator **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Language Program Facilitator **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Language Project Coordinator or Administrator **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Language Resource Developer **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**
- Policy Analyst or Advisor **(LING, EDUC, ILR, IE, FNEL)**

CHOOSING YOUR ILR CAREER

It can be challenging to know what career to pursue in ILR. There is no manual that can tell you exactly what to expect in any given ILR career. However, reflecting on the questions below will help you get started. Determining what you are interested in or passionate about can help lead you in the right direction. Many successful individuals in the field of ILR followed their passions, and it led them to ILR work (see the following case study section for examples).

When considering which career or program to pursue in ILR, you may want to ask yourself the following:

- How much education do I wish to pursue?
- Which discipline do I find most appealing?
- What programs are accessible to me based on location or mode of delivery?
- What funding might be available to support my education?
- What aspect of ILR do I find most appealing?
- What Indigenous language might I be interested in learning?
- What type of skills do I already have or want to grow?
- What volunteering opportunities are available to me?
- What type of work would I like to do on a day-to-day basis? Examples include:
    - Working with speakers to document languages
    - Providing speaker/Elder support
    - Transcribing languages
    - Delivering language courses or workshops
    - Designing language programming
    - Delivering language programs
    - Developing learning resources and materials
    - Creating community language plans
    - Creating language apps and websites

After reflecting, it can help to learn from people already working in the field of ILR. They are a great way to find valuable insight and inspiration. If you are interested in learning more about other people's experiences in ILR, consider doing the following:

- Read articles, interviews, and academic papers by people from the field of ILR. Some examples include Peter Bakker, Lawrence J. Barkwell, Onowa McIvor, and Heather Souter.
- Reach out to those currently working in the field of ILR and interview them. Ask what their day-to-day activities include, what their educational path was, and what advice they might have.
- Look into career shadowing for ILR roles.
- Contact MNBC's Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Language at chl@mnbc.ca to speak to someone from the Languages Team. They can share information about their work, the types of ILR positions MNBC has, what the educational/experience requirements are, and more.



CASE STUDIES FROM THE FIELD OF ILR

The following pages contain four case studies from people working in the field of ILR. These individuals share varied but extensive experience working to revitalize Indigenous languages. One thing they all have in common is their focus on Michif language revitalization. These success stories exhibit how passion, dedication, and care fuel ILR efforts. The good work they have done and continue doing today is laying the foundation for Michif languages to be carried into future generations. While each featured individual has stories and experiences to fill entire books on their own, their answers to a few short questions should help inform and inspire those interested in ILR work.



AMY CROSS

- **Amow-piyesis iskwew (Hummingbird Woman in Cree)**
- **Proud Métis Woman**
- **Métis Cultural Facilitator & Coordinator**
- **Michif Language Revitalization Supporter**
- **Mother & Community Leader**

How do you contribute to ILR?

My biggest contribution is connecting with first-language speakers, in particular with Koohkoom Marie Schoenthal. Language revitalization is multi-layered, in the sense that it isn't just talking about Michif. It's talking about cultural connections, what it's like to be Métis, and 'who are the Métis?' For me, contributing is connecting to our language, Elders and Michif language speakers, and making sure that we present the language in the most authentic way. With Koohkoom Marie, it has been through online Zoom classes and in-person language teaching. Presenting in classrooms and building meaningful connections with youth has been an important part of my experience.

How did you first get into ILR work?

I started working at the Miywasin Friendship Center 23 years ago in Medicine Hat. We were fortunate to meet Marie Schoenthal and started what we call 'Marie's healing journey', because she was ashamed of who she was as a Michif/Métis person. My first initial work with language revitalization started when I started working with Marie 23 years ago. We have been working in language revitalization more seriously since 2018, when we started doing some online classes.

What motivates you to continue working in ILR?

My journey with Marie has been my biggest motivation. To see how proud her heart is and to see her radiating when new learners come up to her. That makes her feel happy, and it makes me feel happy, too. It's also seeing people learn and feel pride in their culture, as they learn and connect with the language. It's motivating when I see how many people have also been interested in the language and how much of a resurgence it is having.

What formal education or training have you completed?

My education is being immersed in my culture. As a Métis person, my parents started the Métis local in Cranbrook, where I live. I have worked in Indigenous education since I was 20 and have a diploma from Royal College in Outdoor

Education. My best education has been to be around Elders, community leaders, and other Métis or Michif people who have influenced my life in such a positive way.

What are some successes that you have witnessed during your work in ILR?

One of the most rewarding experiences has been witnessing Koohkoom Marie, Koohkoom Harriet, and other Elders I have worked with confidently embrace their Métis identities and share their language and culture with others without fear. It takes a long time for that to happen in some cases, so success is just having the time and patience. Being able to see how that has changed throughout my generation and Koohkoom Marie's generation has been one of the biggest successes. Being able to be a part of five successful Michif Language Retreats has also been a big success. It has been an immense pleasure to know that you have been so impactful for so many people in so many different ways.

How did you go about building and maintaining relationships with Elders and speakers?

It's about patience, respect, kindness, honesty, trust, compassion, and really listening. A lot of people want a relationship with an Elder, but they don't understand that it can take a long time to build that relationship. It takes creating a safe and culturally appropriate environment for them to be able to open up to you. Don't be scared to make a mistake and just be honest. Allow them time and space to process what's happened. Especially if you're dealing with residential school and abuse. Help them, support them, and be there for them. My biggest recommendation is just sitting, listening, and having time for them

What personal skills or traits do you think are most important for someone working in ILR?

Patience, pride, resiliency, bravery, and wanting to have a deep connection to your culture. Be patient with yourself, and give yourself a ton of grace, because it takes time learning any Indigenous language. Keep a goal in mind as well. Everyone has a different reason to learn their language and connect to their culture. Be proud of yourself for being involved in language revitalization. You may face challenges along the way, but Koohkoom Marie always says to me, "We are brave and we're trying". If you stick with it, put in the effort, and reach out when you need help, you can achieve a lot.

What is your favourite Michif word/phrase?

I really love 'maamashkaach' (awesome in Southern Michif), because of a story that Koohkoom Marie shared with us.





REID HALA

- **Linguist & Educator**
- **Non-Métis who married a Métis woman**
- **Southern Michif Learner**
- **Program Coordinator for MNBC's Ministry of Culture, Heritage & Language**
- **Father to his Métis daughter**

How do you contribute to ILR?

I have done quite a bit of Southern Michif documentation over the past six years. Formally, I was working at Métis Nation Saskatchewan (MNS) doing documentation there. Now, I have continued in that role doing Southern Michif documentation with Métis Nation British Columbia. I have also served as tech support for first-language speakers who were teaching Michif classes. I mentored a small number of people in Michif with what I have learned from speakers and Elders and have facilitated some Michif classes for community members, Métis youth, and Michif in the workplace at MNS.

How did you first get into ILR work?

I was living in South Korea at the time, and I knew that when coming back to Canada, I wanted to do my Master's in Applied Linguistics. I was an English as a second-language (ESL) teacher and I thought I could choose ESL teaching, or I could start devoting myself to Michif. I decided that Michif needed more attention because there's no shortage of ESL teachers out there. On the other hand, people championing Michif, Southern Michif in particular, are not so numerous. I saw contributing to Michif revitalization as a way of doing something meaningful. And in a way, it's also part of my own reconciliation journey.

What motivates you to continue working in ILR?

I love having the chance to speak and hear Michif. Having that as a part of my job makes it feel like it's not actually work, because there's passion, enjoyment, and fulfillment involved in it. I also love being able to see, meet, and help people who are eager to begin or continue their language learning journeys. On a more sobering note, I'm frequently confronted with this thought that, as relates to Southern Michif specifically, there might only be around 30 first-language speakers remaining at this time. That, coupled with the fact that people are spread out across the country, makes it difficult to create immersion environments, which are one of the most effective tools that you can use to revitalize a language. So, however I can contribute while Michif first-language speakers are still here, I should be doing that. If I think 30 or 40 years from now, the reality

of Michif is going to look a lot different when there's only second-language speakers and learners around. But for now, we're not quite there yet. So, there's important work to be done right here and now, which is what keeps me going.

Do you feel that formal education is necessary to have a successful career in ILR?

Not necessarily. It really depends on a person's role within the ILR movement. Formal linguistics or education training is kind of the starting point, but it doesn't stop there. There's this trickle-down effect where that formal education is filtered into grassroots movements, without those community members having to go through formal education themselves. They can still learn different methods and techniques for revitalizing their languages, without having to go through a formal education system.

What role could the field of ILR use more of?

Dedicated learners. Lots of people say, "I want to learn the language of my ancestors", but it's hard for people to fully commit themselves to learning the language and using it in their daily lives. There are people that want it, but the difference between wanting it and doing it is the gap we are trying to bridge. A lot of communities and languages have had success. They start with a very small but highly dedicated group of individuals, and it grows from there. I see that as the starting point. The biggest challenge is finding or creating that small group of dedicated individuals in certain contexts.

Do you need to be Indigenous to pursue a career in ILR?

No, just look at me. I'm in a bit of a different boat because I'm married to a Michif (Métis) and our daughter is Michif. That said, ILR movements across Canada are in constant need of support and people who are willing to do the necessary work. Even if you're an outsider, there are still ways that you can contribute. I would say that if non-Indigenous folks are inspired to offer their time and abilities to language revitalization efforts, that is part of reconciliation.

What would your #1 piece of advice be for someone interested in an ILR career?

Don't delay. ILR is an area where you can never have too many helping hands. Most language communities don't have enough helping hands. We have people who are stretched way too thin trying to do way too many things because their passion runs so deep. But those people need help. There are always opportunities to find some way to contribute. Especially coming from the Michif context, we still have first-language speakers remaining. The sooner and more frequently we can draw on their knowledge and all the gifts that they have to share with us, the better.

What is your favourite Michif word/phrase?

One of my all-time favorites is 'wayawiishtamaashoo'. This is a little bit context dependent, but the way that I would use it and the way that I've heard it used means something like "go out there and do your thing", and I just really like that. I think it's also very relevant to our conversation here today.



"This is a photo of me and Brousse Flammand at a Michif language retreat back in 2022; he's holding a bound copy of my master's thesis which I gave to him after I earned my degree, as I spent a lot of time interviewing him about Michif as part of my thesis."



ZACH LOMSNES

- **Métis**
- **Southern Michif Learner**
- **Language Revitalization Coordinator at Métis Nation Saskatchewan**

How do you contribute to ILR?

I work as an Indigenous Revitalization Coordinator and the best way I contribute is learning the language myself, which I have been for just over three years. I'm learning how to be a leader in this world of Michif revitalization and sharing the language as much as I can. I also support the Elders, and not just in their language work. I support them in life as well. The work that I enjoy doing the most is documenting and recording our speakers. I think it's vital for future generations that we have recordings of authentic Michif and to understand and hear how our Ancestors and first-language speakers sound and the phrases they use. A big focus of mine is the preservation of the authentic use of the language.

How did you first get into ILR work?

I got an internship with the Métis Nation in Saskatchewan (MNS) and was paired with a good friend of mine, a linguist, Reid Hala. Learning from him put me in a position of success, as he got me to explore Michif on a deep level. Not just the language, but the history, the genesis, how language revitalization works. He helped me find out for myself, why this is important, and that's where the passion started. We practiced a lot, my proficiency was on a steady incline, and I was building strong relationships with community members and Elders that can speak Michif. After about a year and a half of being interned, MNS offered me a job, and I said yes. I thought, where else am I going to work where I like doing my job?



What motivates you to continue working in ILR?

I'm very fortunate for the opportunities I was given. To sit in spaces with language champions that have been working with Indigenous languages before I was even born. Not just Métis Elders and speakers, but speakers of all Indigenous languages in Canada. They all echo that our languages are central to our culture and identity. When you learn the language, you learn how to view and think about the world the same way that our Ancestors would have. And I think that is even more vital in the context of Métis as the world evolves and we become more distinct from each other. We need to keep our distinction and through our language is one of the best ways that we can do that. That's where a lot of my motivation lies. This work is not for us, but for the future of our nation and it's going to keep our distinction, culture, and identity around forever, and honour the relationships I've built with speakers.

What kind of education or training would you recommend that people take if they want a career in ILR?

If someone is starting university, then they should take linguistics, or ILR training at UVIC, because we do need more Métis linguists and educated Métis people revitalizing languages. The best thing you could do if you want to work in ILR is start learning the language that you want to revitalize. That's how I got into ILR. First, I started learning the language. Then I started meeting the speakers and became an engaged community member with them and that's what led me here. There is a place for both the community-built and the formally educated language revitalizer.

What are some successes that you have witnessed during your work in ILR?

I have seen a lot of success in myself as a Michif learner. I try to take the right steps, I commit, and I put a lot of time in. When the Elders are talking to each other, I can understand what they're saying. Two years ago, I might have only caught one or two words. My own proficiency improving shows me that it's possible. Another success is the sense of community that's getting built in Michif. In the last couple of years, people have been coming together at language camps and they're starting to learn and get connected to each other across the homeland. Then success as well in our speakers, seeing how inspiring they have become. If you think about their resilience, that's motivation in itself for everyone else. Their confidence has grown, they have become leaders, and people have learned to respect them.

How might someone starting in ILR become an engaged community member?

In the modern day, we have kind of lost, our Elders call it, 'the visiting way'. For me, to become an engaged community member, your first step is just to slow down and visit with people. Get to know them on a personal level. The world moves fast and it's hard to not move fast with it. From there, you make a connection, meet an Elder, ask for their phone number, and give them a call. You'll talk for hours and then you'll see them at events, and they'll introduce you to someone. But you do have to prioritize it in your life and make time to just spend in the community, talking to people without purpose, just hanging out, conversing. And be genuine, be honest. That is the biggest thing I've learned with the Elders.

Is it necessary to be learning or fluent in an Indigenous language when working in ILR?

Learning? Ideally. Fluent? No, definitely not. I'm always going to keep learning this language and I may never reach true fluency. When it comes to learning, I do think it's necessary that you make an effort to learn. Our languages are in critical states. You should be open-minded and willing to learn the language, because that shows your passion and motivation to do the work.

What is your favourite Michif word/phrase?

Kiiyapitch ni pakitatamoon. That means, "I'm still breathing". It's kind of like a funny reply to "Taanishi kiiya?" In English, it's like, 'well, I'm not dead'. It's kind of like that. I'm still breathing. That's probably my favorite one. I think it's funny and it's kind of longer. So, it is good pronunciation practice trying to roll that one out.



DALE MCCREERY

- **Métis from Hazelton, British Columbia**
- **Lives in Bella Coola, British Columbia with his family**
- **Learned Michif from Elders Grace Zoldy, Harvey Pelletier, Verna Dimontigny, Norman Fleury and was mentored by Heather Souter**
- **Teacher of Nuxalk and Michif, with 20 years of experience in language teaching and documentation**
- **Holds a PhD in Linguistics**

How do you contribute to ILR?

Currently, I'm teaching Michif through MNBC and the University of Winnipeg. I'm producing apps and working on a project with MNBC to create easy reading stories to be used to support curriculum for learners. I'm teaching an adult class, and then I teach grade 2 to 12 in alternative education courses at a school, as well as make all the curriculum for it and do all the curriculum design. In the past, I've done a lot of language documentation and training people to do language documentation. I spent time figuring out the best way to give people foundational skills in interviewing and in language learning so that they can learn through doing the work, which is one of the best ways to do it. I've spent several hundred hours doing interviews in Michif, Southern Tsimshian, also called Sgüüx̱s, and then many more hours than that in Nuxalk for about a 10-to-12-year period.

How did you first get into ILR work?

Before ILR work, I got into language learning and teaching. I developed an interest in my family's language, Northern Y dialect Cree. I also started learning Irish and Spanish and had an interest in Gaeilge. I went and taught ESL in Russia and Korea for a few years. Back when I was 15 or 16, I heard Peter Bakker being interviewed on CBC radio about Michif. I was really fascinated, as was all my family, to hear about a language of our own. At the end of my first year doing my Master's in 2008, I saw that there was going to be a Canada-wide Michif Language Conference, and I decided to go. While there, I met Verna DeMontigny, Heather Souter, Nicole Rosen, George Pelletier, and a bunch of other older Michif speakers. They mentioned a mentor-apprentice program and using it as a tool to make me a speaker and to create language documentation resources. That moment right there, I said yes. That was how I got into it. From there, Heather mentored me very heavily, telling me, "These are the things to learn. These are the things to do". Basically, did all the things for me that I've tried to do for other people since and I just kept at it from that point on.

What motivates you to continue working in ILR?

The main thing that motivates me is the relationships and because by teaching language, you are helping people build relationships in your modeling. It's my way to be a part of healing and helping people become strong, agentive individuals who can confront the world on their own terms from a position of power and understanding. For me, the way that I use language teaching is to help young people in particular build strong and healthy identities that will fit them for facing the world in a changing climate. Connect them, ground them, and give them the tools to adapt and grow. It's my belief that if done right, language revitalization is a very powerful tool for equipping people to live happy, healthy lives and pass those skills on to the next generation.

What formal education or training have you completed?

I did an undergraduate degree in English literature. That grounded a lot of my approach to the world in that I'm always trying to figure out what people are saying rather than trying to tell them what they are saying. It's a very useful set of skills, listening skills, thinking skills, engagement skills, interpretive skills, that become very handy when you go into language work. You have to be able to cut off your preconceptions and try and understand the world from another person's point of view. Then, I did a Master's in linguistics through the University of Victoria. Then, a PhD in linguistics from the University of Victoria on best practices in Indigenous languages, revitalization.

What work (career/employment opportunities) have you done in ILR?

I have worked doing recording, transcribing, curriculum development, language planning, lesson development and planning, and material development. I was a project coordinator for BC Language Initiative grants. I've done grant writing and have run evening courses with small grants or just for free for years. I have done teaching at the university and local community college level, as an elementary and high school teacher, as well as doing a combination of language and curriculum integration work. And then I've worked in an early childhood educator context, being a speaker/Elder/coordinator/ developer within a language nest with four-year-olds.

How did you go about building and maintaining relationships with Elders and speakers?

Step one, I was introduced to them by somebody that they knew, respected, and trusted. Step two, I trusted them, respected them, learned what they cared about, and then cared about the same things. In many respects, part of it was being a good friend and supporting them, but a big chunk of it was the fact that they also felt a burden for what needed to be done. I respected that desire and supported it as best I could. I went as a guy in his mid-twenties, and I lived in their houses for months on end. I traveled to Manitoba and just stayed in people's campers or slept in my car. They were trusting me, so it was definitely a two-way street. When it comes to maintaining relationships, regular phone calls, visits, keeping people apprised of what's going on, telling them about my family, and being very clear that the relationships that I am making are not clinical in any way. They are real.

What would your #1 piece of advice be for someone interested in an ILR career?

Relationships, relationships, relationships. I value my relationship with you just as highly as I value my relationship with, say, Grace Zoldy, who taught me. You are another person within the community that we are building and the work we are doing. The strength of my classroom depends upon the strength of the relationships that I maintain, that I'm introducing my students to. If I am saying, "I want you all to learn the language", I have to model that this is what it looks like when I speak with other people involved in ILR. This must be a place where we respect our Elders, each other, our shared goals, and we have to transfer those ways of respect to our peers.

What is your favourite Michif word/phrase?

Probably the one that I like is favorite for the absolute wrong reasons. Some of our Elders are pretty tongue-in-cheek at different things and I love that way of going about things. In the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Cree Dictionary, Ida Rose Allard or Patline Laverdure, one of them put in, "Kaaya ta laang piikishkwee!" - "Don't speak your language!".

CASE STUDY TAKEAWAYS

There is a lot to be learned from individuals working within the field of ILR. Their experiences and perspectives can provide inspiration for those looking to aid in ILR efforts. Certain key themes emerged throughout the four case studies that highlight what prospective language revitalizationists can look to focus on as they start pursuing a career. If you are interested in a career in ILR, read through the following themes and see if any of these values resonate with you:

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

Relationships and community are at the core of each interviewee's journey in ILR. Relationships with Elders, speakers, and mentors helped them get started in ILR and serve as an ongoing source of motivation to continue their work. Through these connections, each interviewee has become a part of the revitalization community.

HUMILITY AND RESPECT

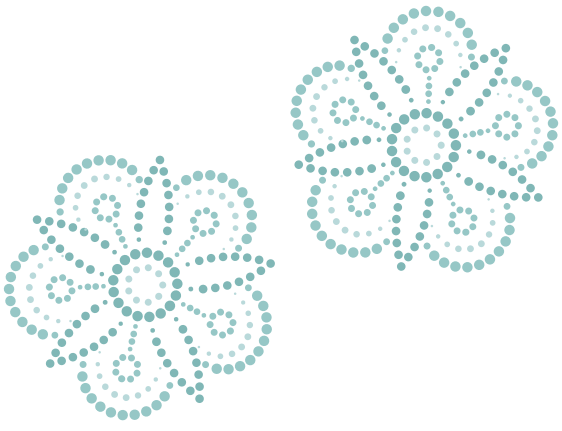
Working in the field of ILR and with Elders and speakers of Indigenous languages requires both humility and respect. Despite the amazing work the interviewees have done throughout their careers, they remain humble. They credit their success to their Elders, speakers and experts they have worked with, and those who came before them in ILR. They have deep respect and appreciation for Elders and mentors, building strong relationships with them beyond ILR work.

MENTORSHIP

Each interviewee has been mentored by an Elder, speaker, or expert at some point throughout their career in ILR. These mentors have provided unique education opportunities that cannot be found at academic institutions. They have shared perspectives, values, and deep cultural knowledge.

PASSION

Having passion for Indigenous languages and culture is a powerful asset when working in the field of ILR. Passion has helped motivate the interviewees throughout their careers. They are eager and devoted to learning the languages they are working to revitalize, exploring the ways in which people learn language, and sharing the language as often as they can.





START PURSUING YOUR CAREER IN ILR

You have reached the end of this booklet on how to pursue a career in Indigenous Language Revitalization. Now that you are aware of the opportunities that may be available to you, take some time to reflect on each aspect of this booklet. Think about what the field of ILR can offer and why it is important to you. Consider whether a formal or community-based education would be of interest. Determine what possible careers you might want to pursue and what may be required to pursue them. Reread the case studies as you reflect to gain more insight into what you may expect along your journey. Finally, check out the resources on the following pages to learn more about different aspects of ILR.

Do not hesitate to contact MNBC's Languages Team at chl@mnbc.ca if you have any questions or are looking for advice!

RESOURCES

LEARN MORE

MICHIF LANGUAGES

- **The Words of Our Ancestors**
  - www.mnbc.ca/The-Words-of-Our-Ancestors-%28digital%29.pdf
- **The Words of Our Ancestors: Pocket Guide to Michif Languages**
  - www.mnbc.ca/WOOA-Pocket-Guide
- **The Amelia Douglas Institute's Michif Languages Page**
  - ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/michif-language

LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION

- **Essentials of Language Documentation**
  - linggwistiks.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/essentials-of-language-documentation.pdf
- **Reflections on (de)colonialism in language documentation**
  - par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10314600

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION BASICS

- **A Guide to: An Act respecting Indigenous languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization**
  - www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf
- **First Peoples' Cultural Council Language Revitalization Fact Sheets**
  - fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FPCC-FactSheets-WEB.pdf
- **Keeping our languages alive: strategies for Indigenous language revitalization and maintenance**
  - netolnew.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/keeping-our-languages-alive.pdf
- **Language Revitalization: An Overview**
  - www.researchgate.net/profile/Leanne-Hinton/publication/238257647_Language_revitalization_An_overview/links/54465a970cf2d62c304db4e7/Language-revitalization-An-overview.pdf
- **Some Basics of Indigenous Language Revitalization**
  - files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED428923.pdf
- **The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization**
  - www.academia.edu/54629571/The_Routledge_Handbook_of_Language_Revitalization

LANGUAGE TEACHING

- **An Examination of Western Influences on Indigenous Language Teaching**
  - files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED445872.pdf
- **Moving Toward the Language: Reflections on Teaching in an Indigenous-Immersion School**
  - jaie.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz1681/files/463_2007_5_hermes.pdf
- **The Benefits of Second Language Acquisition and Teaching for Indigenous Language Educators**
  - www.pieducators.com/sites/default/files/SecondLanguageTeaching.pdf

ILR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

EDUCATION FUNDING

- **StudentAid BC**
  - studentaidbc.ca
- **StudentAid BC Repayment Assistance Plan**
  - https://studentaidbc.ca/repay/repayment-help/repayment-assistance-plan
- **Indspire**
  - indspire.ca
- **MNBC Skills Training, Employment & Post Secondary**
  - www.mnbc.ca/STEPS

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- **The University of British Columbia**
  - www.ubc.ca
- **Simon Fraser University**
  - www.sfu.ca
- **University of Victoria**
  - www.uvic.ca

PROGRAMS

- **The University of British Columbia**
  - linguistics.ubc.ca
  - educ.ubc.ca/programs/
  - cis.arts.ubc.ca/programs/first-nations-and-endangered-languages/
- **Simon Fraser University**
  - www.sfu.ca/linguistics.html
  - www.sfu.ca/education.html
  - www.sfu.ca/inlp.html
- **University of Victoria**
  - www.uvic.ca/humanities/sllc/programs/linguistics/index.php#ipn-certificate-in-indigenous-language-revitalization
  - www.uvic.ca/education/indigenous/index.php

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