Sustaining Indigenous Languages
Looking Back, Looking Forward

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In the past decade or so, the endangerment of many of the world's Indigenous and other minority languages has begun to percolate into the public consciousness, becoming part of the wider debate about cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability. The United Nations declaration of 2019 as the *International Year of Indigenous Languages* (en.iyil2019.org) can be considered emblematic of the rise in global awareness of the threat of language extinction. Popular press articles about language endangerment are becoming more common, and local papers often comment on initiatives to revitalize or maintain Indigenous languages of a specific group or territory. In addition, social media groups promote and support individual language communities and provide a means of connecting speakers living outside their communities of origin. It is becoming clearer all the time that language maintenance has many benefits in addition to the preservation of unique ways of seeing the world, including mental and physical health benefits (Biddle and Swee 2012; Hallett et al. 2007; Whalen et al. 2016), community benefits (Romero-Little et al. 2011) and educational benefits (Huffmann 2018; Luning and Yamaguchi 2010; Reyhner 2017).

Indigenous language communities and linguists working in Indigenous language documentation and related fields have been aware of the threat to Indigenous languages for several decades. Passionate writings calling the linguistic community to action emerged as early as the 1990s (Crawford 1998; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; Hinton 1997; Krauss 1992), but, like the climate scientists who long warned of a looming crisis, linguists and language activists have struggled to be heard. So, while the general public is only now becoming more aware of the threats to linguistic diversity, the affected speakers and researcher communities have been trying to address these ongoing threats for at least three decades.

Today, many endangered Indigenous languages are at a crossroads. In Anglophone North America, as in many other parts of the world, Indigenous languages are increasingly spoken predominantly by older generations. Majority languages dominate educational, social, and economic spaces as a result of colonial histories and expanding economic globalization. As a consequence of increasing shift to dominant languages, fluent speakers often have limited opportunities to pass on what they know to younger community members, and children do not hear their ancestral language around them in the home and in the community. Even when fluent speakers still live in the community, age differences and generational gaps mean that children and teens often have only limited opportunity to interact with them. If they do interact, opportunities to use the ancestral language may not be taken, since it is just much easier to revert to the shared majority language. It can be a difficult task for elderly people to change the habits of many decades, and there may be trauma involved that complicates such efforts even more.

The next few decades will determine whether the downward trend can be turned around and new functional roles be established for some languages within the community. However, the effort to revitalize or stabilize Indigenous languages in the Americas (and elsewhere) is met with formidable challenges. To understand whence these difficulties arise, it is important to examine not just the historical origins of the present state of the languages, but also the aims and hopes of those trying to revitalize, stabilize, and reclaim. So, what does language revitalization involve?

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Language revitalization and maintenance is a field of practice concerned with the continuity of sets of communicative practices in cultural groups. Crucially, language revitalization depends on changing behaviours. It therefore encompasses aspects of knowledge generation and reclamation as well as social and political dimensions. Languages and the ethnolinguistic communities they are associated with that are currently undergoing revitalization and maintenance efforts may be in their particular situations for many different reasons. They may have suffered the ravages of colonialism, they may have been repressed or neglected, or they may have lost functional ground to other dominant, more economically profitable means of communication; in many cases all these circumstances apply simultaneously. Before going on to outline some ideas of what language revitalization entails, we briefly examine each of these dimensions.

In North America, the main cause of language endangerment is the interruption of intergenerational transmission—often through political pressure. This has resulted in two important factors: (1) communities which used to pass on their traditional languages for generations from parent (and community) to child are no longer easily able to do so, and (2) the languages so affected have taken on the special role of tools in anti-colonial resistance. The major consequence of point (1) is that new learners of Indigenous languages today are frequently adults. This fact is particularly important because adults learn languages in a very different manner than children do. One of the great efforts being currently undertaken in language revitalization in North America (and evident in the papers of this volume) involves building capacity, opportunity and resources for language learning. Unfortunately, this often has to be carried out in situations of funding scarcity, adding to the complexity of the task. Point (2) is eloquently put into words by Chief Ronald Ignace of the Secwepemc Nation who called Indigenous Languages the "bolt-cutters of the chains of colonization" in an address to the International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation in 2015. As the former objects of repressive policy, Indigenous languages have become expressions of anti-colonial resistance by the mere fact of their continued existence. But, of course, they are not just that. For speakers, semi-speakers and learners, Indigenous languages also have an emotional and spiritual connection to previous generations, to grandmothers and grandfathers and other important relatives, as well as to land, ways of knowing and being, and Indigenous identity. As so frequently expressed by the authors in this volume, as elsewhere, Indigenous languages play an important role in the constitution of ethnolinguistic identity (Henze and Davis 1999; Meek 2011).

This is one of the points at which the true complexity of the task of language revitalization becomes apparent, since individual members of Indigenous communities may feel differently about the importance of language competence as a marker of belonging. Even if the importance of language for identity is agreed upon, not every individual has the time or resources to devote to learning a second language in mid-life. This is all the more important to note in the context of the nature of many Indigenous languages of the Americas: while linguists and language enthusiasts may revel in the beauty and complexity of polysynthetic and agglutinating languages, teachers and learners coming from a background of speaking English may struggle with this unfamiliar grammatical terrain (Kell 2014).

Language revitalization is not just a cognitive and political process, it is also a social project involving the behaviour of individuals. Communities may differ as to the desire to undergo radical changes in communicative behaviour. There are factors besides decolonization, ethnolinguistic identity, and cultural pride that may go into the decision to devote considerable amounts of time to learning a language. The ability to participate successfully in the work force is one, and the

desire to partake of cultural products in the English language (from Hollywood to Hip Hop) may be another. Political rhetoric may inspire action, but the everyday lives of the people affected should serve as an equally important point of orientation. In this context, it is especially important for language activists, allies, and linguists to maintain a broad perspective of what language revitalization is, and what language sustainability might mean in the long term.

Simons and Lewis (2013) recently provided a four-tier perspective for what sustainable language use might be. They understand the term "sustainable" to refer to the long-term viability of endangered and minoritized languages. Taking a broad perspective born from many years of practical experience, they identify four modes of sustainable use: sustainable literacy, sustainable orality, sustainable identity, and sustainable history. In the first mode, they envision an ethnolinguistic community whose ancestral language is used frequently in multiple media: spoken by members in the community, used on-line, used in schools, etc. In the second mode, the language is frequently and predominantly used within the community, but does not have a substantial presence in other media. In the case of sustainable identity, the ancestral language is no longer used in most daily activities, but remains as a cultural practice for those who are interested and passionate. Perhaps closest to the "boutique languages" envisioned in Yellowhorn's contribution to this volume, the language here retains a strong connection to culture, ceremony and identity, and old texts and recordings remain accessible to the community through the presence of language keepers and experts. Finally, Simons and Lewis identify sustainable history as a mode of existence for languages. In this case, the languages are not spoken and the associated ethnolinguistic community exhibits little interest in revitalizing the language. Nevertheless, the documentary record of the language is strong enough to enable revival at any point in the future.

Taking this broad approach helps to create an environment of positive possibilities for Indigenous languages in the future, ranging from Yellowhorn's "boutique languages" (this volume) to functional diglossia and perhaps even monolingualism. The future is open. Language communities, linguists, and educators prepare to face familiar and new challenges and opportunities. At the dawn of a new decade, we take stock of what we know based on experience, practice, and scholarship since the early 1990s, consider what has been achieved, and look ahead at what we can accomplish in the years to come.

It is very clear that collaboration and community are key in all efforts to support Indigenous language maintenance, revitalization and reclamation: only by finding new ways to collaborate and include the widest possible array of practices, viewpoints, and expertise will we be able to safeguard Indigenous languages for future use within and beyond their communities. Collaboration is needed between Indigenous language communities and academic communities but also between specialists in several academic fields, between speakers and learners, between teachers and students, between generations, and between people who may not live in close proximity to each other. The contributions in this volume all have collaboration and community as a central concern. Despite their focus on languages and communities in Anglophone Canada and the United States, they therefore have relevance to Indigenous minority-language contexts in other parts of the world as well.

In working to support the maintenance, revitalization, and reclamation of endangered languages, Indigenous language communities and academic specialists have been collaborating to develop successful strategies for pooling and sharing resources, knowledge, skills, and expertise. A recent development has been a renewed interest in best practices for community collaborations. While there are different models for collaboration in different contexts, there has been a general

shift toward ensuring that projects are more in line with stated community goals (Bischoff and Jany 2018; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Hermes 2012; Leonard and Haynes 2010; Mosel 2006; Rice 2010, 2011). Despite best intentions, not all collaborations are successful, and we still have much to learn in order to do better in the coming years (Leonard, this volume).

Two recent trends offer hope for the future. First, the language community and the academic community are increasingly beginning to overlap, as more and more Indigenous linguists and other Indigenous scholars enter academia, and more and more young linguists and educators embark on intentionally collaborative work early on in their careers. In the past, non-Indigenous linguists often stumbled upon language revitalization in the context of other, more purely scholarly work such as language documentation and description (Genee and Junker 2018; Junker 2018). Non-Indigenous educators were often not attuned to the needs of Indigenous language communities until serendipity put them in front of students who come to school speaking languages not supported by the school system. **Jon Reyhner**'s contribution recounts his first teaching job on the Navajo Nation in the early 1970s. Completely unprepared but willing to learn, he embarked upon what became a long and distinguished career in education with a special focus on Indigenous education and Indigenous language revitalization. While such situations are certainly not unheard of today, postsecondary institutions, governments, and education authorities are beginning to make attempts to address these lacunae. For instance, in many provinces in Canada, teachers in training are now required to take at least some introductory course work in Indigenous Studies, so that they are not completely unprepared to meet the needs of Indigenous students.

A second hopeful trend for the future is that partners in collaborative projects increasingly engage in a more explicit prior process of language-ideological clarification (Kroskrity 2009; Kroskrity and Field 2009) before embarking on new work. Ideological clarification helps to bring to the fore any differences in basic assumptions, insights, concepts, epistemologies, goals, and expectations that have the potential to derail collaborations if not addressed both early on and on a continuing basis throughout the collaboration. Resulting collaborations are based on a firmer footing of mutual respect and understanding and thus have a better chance of being successful and sustainable.

As a member of both the linguistic and the language community, Indigenous linguist **Wesley Leonard** is in a unique position to address the intersection between Indigenous and scholarly communities in collaborations intended to benefit Indigenous languages. His contribution describes the constructive involvement of non-Indigenous researchers in helping bring the myaamia language back into the community after a period in which it had been labeled extinct. Collaborations between Indigenous and academic communities can be very fruitful, but the partnership may sour when, in the view of the Indigenous partners, the perspectives of outsiders end up determining the research agenda (e.g. Rice 2006). Leonard argues that linguists should practice reflexivity regarding their positionality as linguists. Linguists who are not community members should aim to share their full knowledge as well as the basic tenets of linguistics with their partners, rather than just partial information about their work. Misunderstandings can be avoided by having all partners in a collaboration engage in a process of ideological clarification before and during the work (see also Miyashita et al., this volume).

In engaging in collaborative work, non-Indigenous academics often underestimate the additional work and effort required from Indigenous collaborators in such partnerships. Many Indigenous scholars face challenges qualifying for and entering academia. Once they are there, they often continue to fulfil a range of outside community commitments, which may interfere with their ability to

prioritize their academic work. Collaborating to find ways to address these circumstances is important for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and for academia as a whole, if it is serious about working toward reconciliation and decolonization. In order to be able to function in academia, many Indigenous scholars must first heal from negative experiences associated with Western education systems and methods, including personal or family experiences with the Canadian residential school system or analogous boarding schools in the United States (Haig-Brown 1988; Miller 1996; Peltier, this volume; Royal Commission on Aborigial People 1996; Milloy 1999; Makokis 2009; Thielen-Wilson 2012). Questions of identity also loom large for many Indigenous scholars. As **John Hunt Peacock** describes in his contribution, some Indigenous scholars don't even know they are Indigenous, as their families may have hidden their Indigenous roots in part to spare their children the harms associated with a Western education. In his case, this resulted in him entering the field as a non-Indigenous scholar, and only later uncovering his Indigenous ancestry.

Once Indigenous scholars are in academia, they often find themselves investing large amounts of time and effort in transforming their workplace into a safe space for Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledges. Indigenous academics also often end up paying the so-called "equity tax" (Henry et al. 2017) when their academic institutions disproportionately call on them for service work in efforts to meet stated or unstated equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) targets. Finding constructive ways to use the intersectionality between Indigeneity and academia for the benefit of the integration and protection of Indigenous ways of being and knowing is an ongoing concern for Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics (Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 2000; Battiste 2008; Little Bear 2009; Gaudry and Lorenz 2008; Medicine 2001). **Sharla Peltier**'s contribution reflects on how she became a scholar by infusing her Indigeneity as an Anishinaabe woman into her work on a daily basis. The relationship to language, land, family, and community is central in the Indigenous research paradigm that she applied to the "lived decolonization process" that became her doctoral research. It is crucial for academia to find ways to create space for such projects, if we want to be able to educate and recruit the growing number of Indigenous scholars who will be needed in our universities in the coming decades.

Exchange of ideas, experiences and wise practices between those involved in Indigenous language work is crucial for the success of these efforts. Over the past several decades, a number of collaboratively developed and hosted academic and community gatherings have emerged. They regularly bring together Indigenous language activists, speakers, teachers, learners, and linguists to receive training, share research and discuss experiences and best practices.

The *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium* (SILS) has been held annually in different locations across North America since 1994. The annual conference of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL), an international organization, has been ongoing since 1998. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has been hosting the biennial *International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation* (ICLDC) since 2009. In Canada, the *First Nations Language Keepers Gathering* takes place annually at the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, based in Saskatoon. Organizations such as the *American Indian Language Development Institute* (AILDI; McCarty et al. 1997; Ozbolt 2010), the *Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute* (CILLDI; Snoek 2011), the *National Breath of Life Archival Institutes* in California and Washington, D.C. (Baldwin et al. 2018), and *Institute on Collaborative Language Research* (CoLang; Miyashita et al., this volume) provide crucial training and resources to help promote the use of Indigenous languages in the schools and the wider community, as well as supporting language documentation and description

work. Many of these institutes also offer workshops and training on location in the community. Participants can choose to attend individual courses, but they can also earn a range of certificates and diplomas, including university degrees. This last option is important as it also contributes to the training of new generations of Indigenous scholars.

Students at such training institutes and summer schools often end up becoming teachers themselves, out of a desire to pass on what they have learned. **Heather Blair**, **Belinda Daniels**, **Noreen Buffalo**, and **Velvalee Georges** describe their experiences teaching and learning at the annual CILLDI summer school at the University of Alberta. Belinda Daniels' journey learning her Cree language resulted in her becoming a teacher; her experience as a learner is central in the development of her teaching practice. Norine Buffalo developed innovative teaching strategies for her Cree language classrooms after seeing that methods based on the teaching of Western languages were not working for her and her students. Velvalee Georges created assessment methods for the Cree language classroom that are more culturally and linguistically appropriate for Cree learners.

In the United States, the biennial Institute on Collaborative Language Research (CoLang) summer institute provides important training opportunities in community-based language documentation and revitalization. Begun as InField in 2008, it is hosted by a different institution each time. **Mizuki Miyashita**, **Richard Littlebear**, **Susan Penfield**, **Alyce Sadongei**, **Leora Bar-el**, and **Irene Appelbaum** describe how their partnership to co-organize the 2020 Institute came together in the context of the Collaborative Language Planning Project (CLPP), a larger long-term project in which language activists and linguists collaborate to support Montana's Indigenous languages. Initial team meetings revealed the different ways in which the partners see the role of documentation in revitalization efforts and the different issues that they want to address in the context of their collaboration. These differences required the partners to engage in ideological clarification, to ensure that CoLang will address the concerns of all participants and will form a firm basis for future collaborative work between universities and language communities in Montana.

In addition to larger gatherings targeting multiple languages and communities, smaller training and professional development opportunities are offered in many locations aimed at speakers and teachers of individual languages. An influential example of this is the Hopilavayi Summer Institute, which targeted teachers of the Hopi language and was offered annually in Arizona by a collaborative tribal-university partnership between 2004 and 2010. As **Sheilah Nicholas** describes, an assessment of the language situation had shown that there was a need for better teacher training and support, and the Hopilavayi summer institute filled this gap. Their approach uses Hopi philosophy and methodology, including a focus on oral immersion teaching and an approach to capacity building and professional development called *Tsaamiwisqam-Kyeekelt* (loosely translated as 'Those who lead—Fledgling Hawks'). This approach flows directly from ancestral practice and tradition and Hopi epistemology. The summer institutes proved to be empowering for participants in a variety of ways. As is also the case with the AILDI and CILLDI summer schools discussed above, some Hopilavayi students later returned as instructors. In addition to providing teachers with skills to improve their classroom practice, the program provided university-level course credits that allowed some participants to continue postsecondary education and complete master's degrees or other formal certification. But most importantly, the experience strengthened the participants' commitment to transmitting Hopi culture and language to the next generation of Hopi youth.

In British Columbia, all thirty-four First Nations language groups collaborate on matters of language and culture revitalization under the umbrella of the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC). The FPCC produces a number of freely available resources aimed primarily at B.C.'s language communities but also applicable for communities in other parts of Canada and beyond. Their series of practical handbooks (see http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Resources/) is widely used in many communities wishing to begin Master/Mentor-Apprentice Programs (Virtue et al. 2012), language and culture camps (Xway'Waat and Amrhein n.d.), or language nests (McIvor 2006). For community leaders wishing to plan a firmer future for their language, the *Guide to Language Policy and Planning for B.C. First Nations Communities* (Scott and Gessner 2013) provides guidance. **Suzanne Gessner** and **Aliana Parker** emphasize the importance of moving beyond project planning to language planning: instead of thinking in terms of short-term individual projects, it is important to consider what needs to happen before, after and around that particular project to provide long-term sustainability for the language. Enhanced community collaboration can mitigate common challenges such as lack of stable funding, discontinuity in leadership and staff, and a shortage of training opportunities and suitable resources.

Resource creation is a priority for all Indigenous language communities. Lack of suitable teaching and learning resources is a problem that hampers not only many school-based language programs but also the efforts of individuals to learn their language through self-study. In creating suitable resources, it is important for experts in language pedagogy, language structure, and Indigenous ways of knowing to collaborate with fluent speakers to create culturally and linguistically appropriate resources. Non-Indigenous linguists may need to put aside some of their own ideas in the service of creating resources that are actually accessible to the community (Bird 2011; Genee 2020). It is also important to incorporate the right kind of materials, including traditional material. **Ricky DeFoe**, **Janis Fairbanks***,* and **Margaret Noodin** worked within a team of fourteen people to create a series of educational movies in Anishinaabemowin. They collected oral stories, which were then animated to create videos that can be used for learners of different levels with the help of optional Ojibwe and English subtitles and booklets with line-by-line transcriptions and translations. The videos, based on stories representing life in the 1950s, document language use as well as important cultural practices. This project is a great example of what can be achieved with patience and collaboration, and contains important practical lessons for any community wishing to address a lack of suitable teaching resources.

Culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching and learning resources should obviously include suitable assessment methods and materials. Velvalee Georges' creation of assessment methods for the Cree language classroom, mentioned above (Blair et al., this volume), responds to this need. **Marina Sherkina-Lieber** describes a project that collaboratively creates culturally and linguistically appropriate tests to assess vocabulary and grammar in adult heritage speakers and receptive bilinguals involved in an Inuktitut Master-Apprentice Program (MAP; Hinton 1997; Hinton and Hale 2001; Virtue et al. 2012). Mainstream second language testing methods are often inappropriate or impractical in this context, due to a range of factors, including lack of literacy, large gaps between comprehension and production skills, and the polysynthetic nature of many Indigenous languages (Borgia 2009). Sherkina-Lieber, a non-Inuit linguist who is not fluent in the language, collaborated with fluent teachers and speakers to create, deliver and administer assessment materials that measure actual progress. Importantly, given large distances and time limitations, the tests can be administered by fluent speakers not trained in linguistics or language pedagogy, and rely entirely on oral assessment.

Resource creation also requires collaboration between traditionally separate academic disciplines, such as documentary and theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, second language pedagogy, curriculum studies, and library science. **Leora Bar-el**, **Megan Stark**, and **Samantha Prins** draw our attention to the need for linguists and communities working on resource collections for language revitalization to collaborate with library scientists in designing their collections. Library science provides a set of parameters that can be used to assess the usefulness of a particular collection for its intended audience, or, ideally, to help guide its creation before the collection is put together. By way of illustration, they apply these parameters to an analysis of three specific online resource collections of different scope, from a large collection with world-wide reach to a small collection aimed at one language. They stress the need for documenting user experiences to assess whether the collection structure allows for optimal use by its intended audience; the desirability of having in place explicit plans for dissemination, sustainability and long-term funding; and the need to find ways to assess effectiveness. Collaborative resource collection design can help ensure that collections meet the needs of all their target audiences.

Non-Indigenous linguist **Mizuki Miyashita** and Indigenous graduate student **Natoosi Fish** have been collaborating on several projects relating to Blackfoot word melody. Blackfoot pitch accent is very different from English stress, and learners often have difficulty acquiring the word melody naturally produced by native speakers. A study in which they collaborated with learners and speakers of Blackfoot revealed that learners who had more opportunities to hear the language outside of the classroom appeared to have better word melodies, reinforcing the importance of being exposed to the language outside of school hours. Indigenous second language pronunciation is a fairly rarely investigated topic, but an important one: if Indigenous languages are now often learned as second languages rather than as mother tongues, it is important to understand how second language learners can acquire a more native-like pronunciation.

The viability of Indigenous languages into the next few decades and beyond will no doubt be closely tied to technological development. Examples are the language learning apps and other digital, interactive and multi-media tools now available for many languages, and a growing number of digital language archives and collections, some originating as digital repatriation projects and others born digital (e.g. Baldwin et al. 2016; Begay 2013; Genee and Junker 2018; Indigitization n.d.; Jany 2009; Junker and Lucian 2007; Junker 2018). **Eldon Yellowhorn** asks whether the modern technology that has been in part responsible for the decline of the Blackfoot language could paradoxically now become an important element in its future sustainability. Artificial intelligence and robotics could help create chat bots, interactive robots, and text-to-speech technology in support of language learning.

Yellowhorn also asks whether one way to create additional speakers would be to re-envision who belongs to the language community. By inviting so-called citizen linguists, non-Indigenous settlers and visitors now living in traditional Indigenous territory, languages like Blackfoot could become what he calls "boutique languages," spoken and studied by a group of dedicated Blackfoot and non-Blackfoot individuals who would jointly carry it into the future.

Yellowhorn's paper proposes to expand the language community with individuals who move into the traditional territory of the language. But what about members of the original language community who do not live on their traditional territory? We often think of Indigenous language communities as overlapping with Indigenous territories, but many members of Indigenous communities do not live in their home territory, having moved away temporarily or permanently to urban or rural centers for work, study, or family reasons. Modern technology

offers a means of remaining or becoming part of the language community. **Anna Logie**, a non-Inuit person in a non-Inuit urban environment, wanted to learn the Inuktitut language to strengthen her connection with an Inuit friend. She faced several challenges, notably the polysynthetic nature of the language, the range of dialects, with no single dialect regarded as standard, and the existence of two different systems of writing (one using a syllabic writing system, the other a Roman orthography). Logie chose to focus on the easiest dialect, to work with Roman orthography rather than syllabics, and to follow a blended pedagogical approach combining conversational and form-focussed learning. Such unorthodox methods can be effective in learning a language in unusual circumstances with limited access to the speaker community.

We end this introduction by stressing that efforts to support and promote Indigenous languages must include not only the Indigenous language communities and the academic communities already invested in language maintenance and revitalization, but must also be taken up by others (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015a). Among the ninety-four Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b), we find the following appeals to the federal and other levels of government and to post-secondary institutions:

> 13. We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.
> 14. We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles: i. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them. ii. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties. iii. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation. iv. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities. v. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages.
> 15. We call upon the federal government to appoint, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner. The commissioner should help promote Aboriginal languages and report on the adequacy of federal funding of Aboriginal-languages initiatives.
> 16. We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.
> 17. We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers.

Other calls explicitly refer to language as well, in the context of calls related to education, the role of the churches, and broadcasting and media standards:

> 10. We call upon the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles: … iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses. …

> 61. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal people for… ii. Community-controlled culture- and language-revitalization projects …
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> 84. We call upon the federal government to restore and increase funding to the CBC/Radio-Canada, to enable Canada's national public broadcaster to support reconciliation, and be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to: i. Increasing Aboriginal programming, including Aboriginal-language speakers …
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> 85. We call upon the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, as an independent non-profit broadcaster with programming by, for, and about Aboriginal peoples, to support reconciliation, including but not limited to: i. Continuing to provide leadership in programming and organizational culture that reflects the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples …

The phrase "culturally appropriate" occurs in several additional Calls relating to child welfare, parenting, early childhood education, health care services, and the justice system. We would argue that, to be culturally appropriate, a practice, program, or environment must also be linguistically appropriate. This entails working to provide the infrastructure that will serve to fulfil the linguistic, social, and cultural needs of Indigenous communities. Much work is under way, but much more remains to be done. Indigenous communities are doing the work, often in challenging circumstances with limited staffing and resources. Governments and post-secondary institutions will also need to respond to the Calls addressed to them. In Canada, Bill C-91, entitled "An Act respecting Indigenous languages," was passed in the Canadian House of Commons on May 9, 2019 and received royal assent on June 21, 2019; the Act also establishes the Office of Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. These responses to Calls to Action 14 and 15 are a hopeful step in the right direction, but of course the proof is in the pudding, or in this case, in the actual support provided for Indigenous languages in the years to come. An especially important point will be whether the post-secondary institutions will find ways to step up to the plate and develop the language programming called for in Call number 16.

While the TRC Report and the related Calls to Action are specifically aimed at Canadians, many of them have broader relevance in countries and territories where the histories and circumstances are similar. We therefore ask all our readers to consider carefully where they can and therefore must take personal and professional responsibility for promoting, maintaining, reclaiming, revitalizing, protecting, and sustaining Indigenous languages.

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