

kehte-ayak e-kiskinohtahikoyahkik (*As the Elders Guide Us*):
An Indigenous Knowledge Symposium

Report

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Presented to Adult Learning Knowledge Centre

March 2009 has been identified as the United Nations' International month in celebration of Indigenous languages. On the dates of March 27 and 28, 2009, a symposium designed to bring together Indigenous Elders, academics, language educators, and policy makers, in order to disseminate a research study of *'How Indigenous Knowledge informs Indigenous language certification in Alberta'* was delivered at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta. Taking Action for Indigenous Languages was the theme of the symposium and showcased the Eminent Scholars of Red Crow Community College as an indigenous based adult learning system. In the province of Alberta, nine indigenous languages are spoken and organizers ensured that each of the languages was represented by Elder delegates. A key priority of this symposium was to facilitate regional language planning based on the findings of the research study, as well as highlighting the role of Elders as vital to the continuity of indigenous language transmission. Partners in this knowledge exchange project included the Red Crow Community College and the Indigenous Language Instructors' Certification Working Group comprised of representatives from three universities and six colleges in Alberta. The symposium was strategically scheduled to immediately follow the Treaty Seven Educational Leadership symposium (March 26 and 27, 2009) also hosted in Lethbridge, Alberta and to reflect the UN celebration of indigenous languages.

This knowledge exchange addressed two research priorities identified by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre, the learning needs of seniors and the role of mentors. Seniors' were a focus of this project as the Indigenous Elders/ Eminent Scholars are recognized within Indigenous Knowledge systems as carrying the responsibility of passing on Indigenous Knowledge to each successive generation. The Elders/ Eminent Scholars were welcomed into the western learning environment and considered the final results of a western academic research project. The research report was based on a collaborative inquiry of how indigenous knowledge informs the design of an Indigenous language instructors' certificate in Alberta. The research was a joint project conducted by the Blue Quills First Nations College and the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute at the University of Alberta and was funded by the Canadian Council of Learning.

To organize and deliver the symposium, the planning committee conducted twelve teleconferences and communicated via emails. The symposium registration numbers included 184 participants. AdLKC and other sponsors were appropriately acknowledged in the symposium proceedings and the news release. Based on the positive responses reflected in the symposium evaluation, it was successful in meeting its main objectives (see attached evaluation summary). A summary webcast of proceedings has been produced and is being made available for posting on First Nations Colleges' and university websites featuring the keynote presentations and Elder sessions.

Symposium Proceedings

We need to invest our resources. If we are going to bring back our language, we have to invest. We need to extend Blackfoot to the parents

and invest in Blackfoot radio. It's not too late. We still have a lot of speakers.... We've talked about it long enough. We need to take action. Fifty years from now, they are going to blame us for not doing something. We can master both (Andy Blackwater, Eminent Scholar).

One outcome of this symposium was the regeneration of traditional knowledge inherent in language and cultural practices as a protective health factor for Aboriginal people, particularly seniors. This outcome was stated as, Elders and participants will experience increased self-fulfillment and aspirations to transfer ancestral knowledge and language. According to the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (n.d.), culture is an expression of individual and collective identity of indigenous people serving as a foundation and "its erosion can adversely affect mental health and well-being, leading to depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and even suicide" (Kirmayer, Brass & Tait. 2000). Language is embedded in the culture of indigenous peoples and is expressed within a milieu of social and land-based ceremonies, songs and stories. Herman Yellow Old Woman, a Siksika Nation Council member stated, "The responsibility is on us; as a speaker it is our responsibility to teach and if it is a non-speaker it is our responsibility to learn. It would have to be a political thing to lead our tribes in language preservation, now that I sit in leadership at home; we make it [language] a priority."

As a result of the enforcement of colonial systems and legislation, indigenous peoples' cultural and language foundations have been disrupted, unsettled, and imbalanced which has had serious implications on indigenous health and well-being. An Elder lamented her experience in the Indian Residential Schools when she shared that, "Today, our youth do not understand and we can't translate into English as there is no equivalent. Indian Residential School made it difficult for me." The symposium provided an opportunity for indigenous Elders to be valued for their capacities as language and cultural knowledge keepers as captured in the statement made by an Elder in the evaluation, "Believing in myself, that I am a worthy member of my race and my being as the Creator's child. Thank you for opening who I am as a Cree woman." Similarly, another Elder stated, "the topic was so meaningful and relevant."

Another deliverable was a five minute webcast which highlights the successes of the symposium starting with the opening keynote speaker, Andrea Bear Nicholas, who is Maliseet from Tobique, New Brunswick. She spoke about legislation, policy and international rights to mother tongue medium of instruction and the importance of Elders' contributions as language keepers. An Elder response on the evaluations noted the following statement, "Excellent. We need this balance of academic information with the Indigenous thought." Another Elder wrote, "Enjoyed the talk since we often forget that our mother tongue usage is essential in learning and teaching language."

The Saturday morning keynote address was given by Dr. Barb Laderoute, a Metis from Gift Lake in Alberta, who spoke about contextualizing language learning. She gave many examples of what this entails and how educators can reflect upon and regenerate their own parents' and grandparents' ways of teaching language. "Youth today did not grow up with culture and language so it doesn't interest them," was stated by an Elder to frame

the current situation of the urgency to create a better learning environment for learners. Alfred (2004, p96) notes that “there is enough knowledge, and enough analyses of the situation, but a desperate lack of action on what we have learned” and Dr. Laderoute’s presentation made it clear that action is within everyone’s capacities. Georgette Fox, the Elders’ Coordinator at Red Crow Community College later commented that,

Teaching the language has to be a community thing with support at every level. Our people didn’t have the opportunity to read and write in Blackfoot. When my grandson graduated he won an award from his Blackfoot 30 class yet he cannot speak it. I was happy this morning when the session was on immersion because I believe that it is a better way to learn our language.

The afternoon featured Narcisse Blood, an Eminent Scholar and Ryan Heavy Head, the Blackfoot Studies Coordinator at Red Crow Community College. They provided radiant examples of the significance of Indigenous relationships to the land, sky, waterways, plant and animal life in their keynote speech. The picturesque scenes of their southern territory in Alberta and Montana provided the background to their presentation and they treated the audience to the beauty of the Blackfoot language in prayer. Elders’ comments on the response sheet included, “Excellent example of Indigenous research and how language, culture and the land are connected” and “Your work is very important and keep on doing the work you are doing.”

During each of the break out sessions, Elders and Eminent Scholars convened together to discuss language revitalization purposefully within family and community contexts. Some examples shared by Elders are as follows:

As Elders we:

- support our children and grandchildren to retain the language - we don’t expect them to speak our language; we are not putting that expectation, we don’t say it out loud. We need to make them feel proud of their language and heritage, we need to encourage them
- are proud; my grandson’s desire to speak Blackfoot is based on purposeful participation in ceremony and the societies, these activities speak to him, he also uses hand signage
- recognize that language should be taught at home from day one through the school year
- have to ensure that our actions are consistent and children can be exposed to the [Cree, Blackfoot, any Indigenous] language - try hard, don’t quit, don’t be afraid
- know that the younger they are, the quicker they pick it up and they have the right pronunciation
- know that body language speaks to you
- must not laugh at them when they make a mistake - hurts/ disappoints and they will not want to speak; try to support or simply correct them
- realize that kids, they try hard to speak
- can teach through technology, i.e. texting

- know that cell phone use amongst our youth is well developed as is all other technology. We need to tap into technology. We need to make DVD's and video recordings in Blackfoot language and create popular types of programs for children.
- realize that Blackfoot has interesting humour - dialogue for age appropriate groups
- tend to shorten our language we need to be aware for our learners
- have responsibilities, speaker to teach and non speakers to learn
- require the political will to have our language as a priority
- need to speak our language if we are together and we understand
- are of this land; we are not the second language
- can develop popular video programs in Blackfoot, i.e. the Friendly Giant example
- reminisce of our youth when we would visit each other, we would tell stories and we would laugh
- were told in the past that in the future we will be embarrassed of our language; now, the greater fear is to lose the language
- understand that families in towns/cities need more facilities and resources as these families want their children to learn about culture and language
- know that having two different languages is gratifying.

The Elders' session lasted throughout the day as the dialogue was intended to provide closing remarks to the larger audience. Elders moved amongst the other concurrent workshops as well. The Elders' Fireside Chat concluded the symposium event and three representatives from the Elders' session provided a brief synopsis of their deliberations.

Challenges of the symposium were addressed quickly and in the best possible ways as two unforeseen and unfortunate incidents that could have marred the impact of the symposium were effectively quelled. The Friday evening venue was changed from SUB to Atrium, an accident involving an Elder occurred just prior to the opening invocation and the banquet event was interrupted by five university students who were disruptive and disrespectful. The university President gave a generous apology on behalf of the university to the symposium delegates. The apology was accepted by Blackfoot Eminent Scholar, Narcisse Blood. The disruptive students were identified by security camera, detained and have been disciplined in accordance with university policy. The Elder who fell, spent the night in hospital under close observation and was released the following day.

Immediate and intermediate results on seniors' learning were generally positive in that symposium delegates have recommended that the province-wide symposium continue as an annual event. Wherever it is feasible, the event should be hosted on reserve as one Elder respondent noted the following, "The symposium should be presented in the communities where all the presenters come from. I did not feel any connections of what I was expecting." Previously, Blackfoot language symposia were held in conjunction with the Treaty Seven Leadership symposium and the Elder expected a similar experience of exclusive Blackfoot language. Another Elder stated a similar sentiment in the evaluation, "Use an Indigenous community or sacred site for location of the next language conference."

Elders' involvement will continue as a viable feature of future symposia. Elders guide Indigenous language revitalization efforts through their exemplary efforts and support. An immediate result was to reconvene a circle with the Elder participants to gauge their perspectives and learning experiences shortly after the conclusion of the knowledge exchange. This circle was to inform the webcast. At the conclusion of the lengthy day, it was decided to forgo this aspect and to attribute the webcast to the knowledge exchange proceedings. An Elder at the event offers the following conclusive statement,

I always feel rejuvenated when I am around Cree and any First Nations language speakers. The keynote speakers were awesome and their topics were appropriate and timely. Now it's time for us to act!

References

- Alfred, T. (2004). Warrior scholarship: Seeing the university as the ground of contention. In D.A. Mihesuah & A.C. Wilson (Eds.), *Indigenizing the academy: Transforming scholarship and empowering communities* (pp. 88-99). Omaha: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kirmayer, L.J., Brass, G.M., & Tait, C.L. (2000). The mental health of Aboriginal peoples : Transformations of identity and community. *Community Journal of psychiatry*. 45(7).
- National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (n.d.) Culture and language as social determinants of First Nations, Inuit and Metis health. Fact Sheet.

Appendix

I. Elders' Session Participants

1. Theresa Whiskeyjack, Saddle Lake
2. Julius Delaney, Kainai
3. Lena Russell, Kainai
4. Gerry Red Bear, Sunchild
5. Ruby Big Child, Sunchild
6. Martin Heavy Head, Kainai
7. Herman Yellow Old Woman, Siksika
8. Ken Standing Rock, Rocky Boy, MT
9. Alvine Eaglespeaker, Siksika
10. Lucy Wright, Siksika
11. Allan Prairie Chicken, Eminent Scholar, Stand Off
12. Georgette Fox, RCCC Elders' Coordinator
13. Lauren Calf Robe, Siksika
14. Andy Blackwater, Eminent Scholar, Kainai
15. Pam Heavy Head, Kainai
16. Jean Okimâsis, Regina, SK
17. Irene Carter, Onion Lake, SK
18. Mary Rose Dryneck, Behchoko, NT
19. Rosie Redcrow, Eminent Scholar, Kainai
20. Frank Weasel Head, Eminent Scholar, Kainai

II. Elders' Representation of Nine Language groups:

1. Sykes Powderface, Nakoda
2. Judi Jacobs, Tsuut'ina
3. Shirley Cardinal, Dene Suline
4. Gerry Redbear, Anishnabe/Cree
5. Lorraine Cardinal, Sakaw Cree
6. Louis Soop, Blackfoot
7. Theresa Whiskeyjack, Metis/Cree
8. Ray White, Plains Cree
9. Mary Rose Dryneck, Dene

**Alberta Provincial Indigenous Language Symposium
Taking Action for Indigenous Languages**

SYMPOSIUM EVALUATION (50 respondents)

I am a: 17 Teachers/Instructors; 4 Administrators; 6 Students; 4 Parents; 13 Elders; 4 Other (1 Language Activist, 1 Consultant, 2 did not identify)

Please indicate, by checking the appropriate category, your opinion of the following statements.

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

FEEDBACK FOR KEYNOTE SPEAKER, Andrea Bear Nicholas	SA	A	D	SD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided a convincing presentation on mother tongue medium education.	24	15	2	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided thought provoking evidence on the topic.	23	14	2	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I will use this information within my practice.	19	16	2	
Comments/suggestions for the keynote speaker				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent: keep knocking on that door that don't let you in – spread the message. <input type="checkbox"/> Great to have heard her speak <input type="checkbox"/> Your knowledge and wisdom is very powerful. Keep up the presentation in different communities. <input type="checkbox"/> I like what you said in your presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyed the talk since we often forget that our mother tongue usage is essential in learning and teaching language <input type="checkbox"/> Too many stats. We <u>all</u> know that <input type="checkbox"/> Need handouts <input type="checkbox"/> More geared to administrators <input type="checkbox"/> Not use word 'dominant' to refer to mainstream how about using 'visitors' <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent, we need this balance of academic information with Indigenous thought. 				
FEEDBACK FOR KEYNOTE SPEAKER, Dr. Barb Laderoute	SA	A	D	SD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided a convincing presentation on the power of contextualizing immersion.	32	15		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided thought provoking evidence on the topic.	34	14	1	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided strategies for integrating new practices into my current context.	24	18	2	
Comments/suggestions for the keynote speaker				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Very good ideas and information <input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps more time was needed to present questions on new practices and strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Your message is very interesting and powerful using the gift of the land <input type="checkbox"/> Good humour <input type="checkbox"/> Could the generation of those with the Indian Residential Schools of staying away from the school be part of the reason why parents aren't at the school often? <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages me to think of a fully immersion program. <input type="checkbox"/> Barb is always interesting to listen to. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Need handouts <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Regalia ought to be referred to as regalia or pwâtisimow ayiwinsa and not costumes. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent validation of this work 				
FEEDBACK FOR THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS, Narcisse Blood & Ryan Heavy Head	SA	A	D	SD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided an overview on the topic	25	13		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided opportunities for me to connect my practices to the topic	23	15		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided strategies for integrating new practices into my current context.	22	13		
Comments/suggestions for the keynote speaker(s)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> More audio- PA system for a large room <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyed their presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Agree that there needs to be more experiential learning with language learning <input type="checkbox"/> Good humour and good pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you for sharing <input type="checkbox"/> Your work is very important and keep on doing the work you are doing <input type="checkbox"/> Very informative. Need to get back that connection to the <u>LAND</u>. <input type="checkbox"/> Good humour, Narcisse. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent example of Indigenous research and language, culture and the land are connected 				
FEEDBACK FOR THE 1ST CONCURRENT SESSION: 15 (no presenter identification)	SA	A	D	SD

During this learning experience, the presenter:				
☒ Provided an overview of the session outcomes at the beginning of the session.	7	5		
☒ Provided opportunities for me to be actively involved in the learning.	8	4		
☒ Provided strategies for integrating new practices into my current context.	7	5		
Comments/suggestions for the presenter Elders: SA x 3 Not enough time – more elders – more dialogue or socialization between elders Elders: Ax1; Dx2 introductions took too long; never had enough time to find out results of issues brought up Greymorning: SA x 3 Greymorning – SAx3 I really got his teaching and admired his strength in believing in one's language. Greymorning: SAx3 Greymorning – A-1; D-2; A-3 Not enough information Greymorning: SDx1; SAx1 Greymorning: SAx3 Wanted to hear Dr. Greymorning and was very impressed with Amber's knowledge of Arapaho. She has demonstrated that total immersion works and works wonders. #6: SAx3 Very interesting and unique strategies using an Elder to translate for a young gentleman; way of speaking was interesting. #6 Ax3 This group are doing wonderful things in their school system They are too short, we need more time #6 Ax3 I liked the story of the Sparrow and wísahkecak #6 Ax3 #6: SAx3 loved the story BQ – Ax3 BQ – SAx3 Excellent work!! BQ – Ax3 Excellent BQ – SAx2;A-3 Twigg and Wells: SAx3 Very good!!! #5 SAx3 Galileo Project is an excellent resource for all and accessible #5 SAx3 Well done, thanks to all the presenters #8 Ax3				
FEEDBACK FOR THE 2nd CONCURRENT SESSION: 15 (no presenter identification)				
During this learning experience, the presenter:				
☒ Provided an overview of the session outcomes at the beginning of the session.	9	6		
☒ Provided opportunities for me to be actively involved in the learning.	10	5		
☒ Provided strategies for integrating new practices into my current context.	9	6		
Comments/suggestions for the presenter #5, SAx1 awesome feedback #5 SAx3 Excellent presentation – nitakâhkíyihthenân ôma kê nitohtamâhk #5 Ax3 I enjoyed the pictures and thank you for the gifts. #5 Ax3 doing wonderful things at their school and their cultural centre. Good ideas. #5 SAx3 Very interesting – strategies, ideas – need more of this type of strategies. #5 SAx3 Good job – nice work in language development. #8 SAx3 Excellent Information #8 Ax3 Speaker presents positive scenario of reserve life but some us don't work for the reserve among Blackfoot or natives and are non speakers but are trying to learn the language. Think about us! To come home from work and find ourselves is almost ...our minds will not easily let go of English to learn Blackfoot. We are the forgotten until the reserve has become a client of ours in the city. #6 A-2; SA-3 #6 SAx3 #7 SAx3 Excellent !! Need to coin words for social studies (Canada) #7 Ax3 #7 SAx3 I had the opportunity to participate in creating language. #7 SAx3 Enjoyable aspect of language work. Keep up the good work, Leo! #1 SAx3 Awesome! #1 Ax3 #1 Ax3 #5 SAx3				
FEEDBACK FOR THE 3rd CONCURRENT SESSION: 16 (no presenter identification)				
During this learning experience, the presenter:				
	SA	A	D	SD

☒ Provided an overview of the session outcomes at the beginning of the session.	8	8		
☒ Provided opportunities for me to be actively involved in the learning.	9	7		
☒ Provided strategies for integrating new practices into my current context.	8	7	1	
Comments/suggestions for the presenter				
<p>#4 SAx3 Excellent Information</p> <p>#8 A-1; SA-2; D-3 Okay, now racist me suggests this be led by an indigenous person. Sorry, Martin.</p> <p>#8 SAx3</p> <p>#8 SAx3 Interesting strategies we need to follow, to help in immersion teaching to continue with strategies in teaching their classes exceptionally well thought out.</p> <p>#4 SA-2&3</p> <p>#4 SAx3</p> <p>#6 SAx3</p> <p>Elders': SA-1; Ax2 Administrators, Chief and Council, Band Workers should be proficient in native tongue. Need total immersion in order for the language to last.</p> <p>Elders: Ax3</p> <p>#1 Dx3 Give actual samples of strategies</p> <p>#1 Ax3 I enjoyed your story.</p> <p>#1 SA-1; Dx2 More information needed on methodology and the presenter's experiences.</p> <p>#1 Ax3 Good methodology. Wish I could understand the Arapaho language.</p> <p>#1 SA-1; A-2; D-3</p> <p>#7 SAx3 Session done totally in Dene Suline</p> <p>#7 SAx3 We had our entire session in Dene Suline and it was great. May we always be like this.</p> <p>#7 I was a presenter. I managed to do the whole session entirely in my language. I couldn't have done this five years ago!</p> <p>Learning the importance of behaviour, action and attitudes impact how we learn.</p>				
FEEDBACK FOR THE SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZERS				
☒ The facilities and set up were appropriate	17	13	3	
☒ The registration process was expedient	20	15	1	
☒ The symposium cost was reasonable.	17	17		
Additional Comments or Suggestions for organizers (e.g. communications, food, workshop rooms, etc.)				
<p>Use an indigenous community or sacred site for location of next language conference</p> <p>Make the symposium 3 full days and call for Mother Tongue youth/children speakers</p> <p>It was very well organized. The food was great. Workshop rooms quiet.</p> <p>A little spread out, some difficulty finding workshop rooms</p> <p>More food geared towards natives (Native food)</p> <p>Sound issue; noisy at times with set up/take down of food; cold room</p> <p>I would have liked to attend more of the sessions but because of the concurrent set, I missed some. I also noted that a number of elders had special needs and it was awkward to get around from one facility to another</p> <p>Good food, good location not so huge of a city, it wasn't very difficult to find the place. Everyone was so helpful. It should be made an annual event.</p> <p>How about bannock bread, mint tea, Saskatoon jam and stew.</p> <p>Everything was good.</p> <p>This was too much confusion with events the first evening.</p> <p>I went to the wrong site Lethbridge Lodge and caught a ride to the U of L.</p> <p>Great organization in spite of the location being moved on the first day.</p> <p>One thing, where were the writing pads and bags to carry and write stuff down?...the volunteers deserve all the credit.</p> <p>Parking – distance. Audio not good on Saturday, PE 250.</p>				
REFLECTIONS ON MY LEARNING				
During this learning experience:				
☒ I increased my knowledge of language revitalization promising practices.	21	14	1	
☒ I was able to network with other language advocates and made new contacts.	24	11	1	
☒ I was able to reflect on my attitudes and beliefs about language revitalization.	21	15	1	
<p>A key change that I will make in my practice as a result of the symposium is</p> <p>Excellent - validation, new strategies, resources</p> <p>Use more language and be kinder to the visitor in my work place and attempt to educate if they will listen</p> <p>live my language</p> <p>Become more actively involved.</p>				

Need Total Immersion for the language to not be lost.
 Contact with Blue Quills and Sunchild e-learning
 Contact with Blue Quills and Sunchild e-learning; share strategies and methodologies to further the Cree language; conference to continue
 Practice in my Cree language. Be proud of my language and identity.
 Continue promoting my mother tongue.
 Do my utmost part on revitalizing our language.
 Encourage our co-leads to speak fluent Blackfoot.
 I'll try harder to speak my language.
 To keep on teaching.
 Will do more research on language acquisition and methods.
 I learned and incorporated some pointers into my practices.
 We need to add more real people from the Blood especially people who are the real people not phonies who brag about what they do which is nothing.
 Put more effort into not getting caught up in the 'rat race' and make daily effort in teaching language.

What I need to support my further learning on this topic

I need a plan to help me know what role I can play as a language carrier
 Increase my fluency in my language.
 Need support from administrators, from Chief and Council, from federal government.
 Materials from Dr. Greymorning
 Research Dr. Greymorning's materials
 To understand the different cultures of some Aboriginals
 Believing in myself that I am a worthy member of my race and my being as Creator's child.
 For me, I want to further my ability to read and write our language.
 I would need to continue our language (Cree) and motivate to write.
 More technology support within the classroom setting.
 We have to keep making a conscious effort to use our languages every day.
 Contacts; more awareness and attending workshops like this.
 Participate in more language conferences.
 For everyone to speak our language.
 Keeping communicating my gift of language in my community.
 Is to visit other communities to see how they operate.

MY OVERALL IMPRESSION:

41 - I was satisfied with this symposium because
 who we are
 Extremely satisfied! It was fantastic to learn of the First Nations post-secondary institution and of so many immersion programs in this area. The emphasis on immersion was extremely encouraging.
 The location was difficult to find. The directions were confusing.
 Our people are very understanding with all the good work by the organizers.
 Too cold in room and noisy
 Excellent, keep it up
 Perhaps more signage and support with rooms i.e. map of the rooms provided
 It inspired me to continue with the work I am doing.
 There was a lot of different speaking native peoples to provide us of how to utilize our language with activities
 Thank you for opening who I am as a Cree woman.
 Oral language for me it works for me. I am a storyteller, teacher.
 It provided information on strategies that could be utilized for teaching.
 Benefit in more teaching methods
 Learned so much from each presenter.
 I always feel regenerated when I am around Cree/ any First Nations language speakers. The keynote speakers were awesome and their topics were appropriate and timely. Now it's time for us to act!
 it's given me where to go and how to begin language immersion.
 There was a recognition for the need for it and it happened!
 This was the first language symposium I went to.
 The topic was so meaningful and relevant.
 It was a good learning experience.
 It was well organized with a great variety of topics and including many different communities throughout Canada, including different languages.
 very interesting to bring in another culture, mainly the Cree to share their ideas, strategies. We need to hear more of other peoples instead of hearing about the same thing over and over again especially

It is always as pleasure to visit with old acquaintances and check in on how others are doing in their efforts to reclaim their languages.

3 - I **was not** satisfied with this symposium because

There was not enough time to attend the sessions, too fast – time too short.

The symposium should be presented in the communities where all the presenters come from. I did not feel any connections of what I was expecting.

It was only a day which we don't have enough time to listen to the other sessions.

Press Release

Symposium Showcases the Best in Indigenous Language Revitalization

LETHBRIDGE, AB. (March 27, 28 2009) -- Nearly 200 First Nations language teachers, students and Elders will participate Friday, March 27 and Saturday, March 28 in the “Taking Action for Indigenous Languages” symposium to be held at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, AB. The symposium is held in recognition of March as the International month of Indigenous Languages.

The initiative for this symposium was taken by the members of the Indigenous Language Instructor Certification work group (ILIC). This provincial work group is comprised of dedicated people representing all First Nations colleges and public universities of the province, with representation from Blue Quills First Nations College, Red Crow Community College, Yellowhead Tribal College, First Nations Adult Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC), Mount Royal College, the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) – University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge and University of Calgary. Organizers believe it is important for Indigenous languages teachers, instructors, community linguists, and teacher educators to have a forum to hear the ideas of leaders in this field and to have an opportunity to present their own work. This symposium is intended to accomplish these goals and will serve to advance K-12 indigenous language initiatives in Alberta.

The symposium includes a slate of workshops for teachers, Elders and students. Keynote speakers include Andrea Bear Nicholas, the Chair of Native Studies at the University of New Brunswick, who will explain the importance of mother-tongue medium education; Dr. Barb Laderoute, Pi-Atawi Inc., who will discuss the importance of contextualizing immersion teaching; and Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavy Head, who will describe the Blackfoot research activities of the Red Crow Community College.

Other symposium speakers include Dr. S. Neyooxet Greymorning, developer of accelerated second language acquisition; Noella Eagle, President and Founder of the Dakota Language Instructor certificate program in Manitoba; and Dorothy Thunder and Mavis Sacher, administrator in charge and teacher of the Sunchild E-learning initiative, to name a few of the many educators and knowledge experts that will be delivering workshops in indigenous language regeneration, policy and planning, promising practices and research. In addition the symposium will engage participants in planning for future joint practices across the province.

Elders for the symposium are Eminent Scholars from Red Crow Community College and Elders from each of the nine First Nations languages within the province.

The symposium's sponsors are the Aboriginal Language Bundle of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium, University of Lethbridge President's Office, University of Lethbridge Faculties of Education and Arts and Sciences, University of Alberta (CILLDI), International Languages Department, Alberta Education and the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council of Learning.

For information about attending the Indigenous Languages Symposium visit the web page <https://www.uleth.ca/conreg/> or contact the local organizer, Dr. Inge Genee, 403-380-1809 or inge.genee@uleth.ca.

Symposium Snapshot:

Friday, March 27

6 p.m.: Buffet dinner followed by entertainment, Olivia Tailfeathers

7:30 p.m. Andrea Bear-Nicholas, keynote address, "Mother-Tongue Medium Education: The Good News"

Saturday, March 27:

8:30 a.m.: Opening and welcoming address by Dr. J. O'Dea, Dean of Education

9:00 Dr. Barb Laderoute, keynote speaker, "The Power of Context in Immersion Teaching"

10:10- noon: sixteen concurrent workshops

Noon: Buffet luncheon followed by keynote presenters, Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavy Head

2:20-3:10 p.m.: 8 concurrent workshops

3:15 closing of symposium