Indigenous Languages Retention & Revitalization

Compendium of Poems: FOUND POETRY

Wake up. Cries Mother Earth

By way of Lightning the Creator will offer light for people to see;
to see that the Heart of Mother Earth is crying
Crying for the languages of the people
For it is only when people Wake Up,
the Mind, Spirit and Soul will heal and connect as one

K. Auger

These poems were written as part of
EDEL 412: Teaching Language Arts in
First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Contexts
Winter 2013

Edited by Heather Blair,
Jacqueline Filipek & Martin Zeidler
These poems represent the personal, professional, and passionate thoughts of a group of preservice teachers who reflected on the state of Indigenous language loss in their homes, communities, and schools. They ring clearly of a call to action and also speak to the profound loss of languages.

This “Found Poem” activity was part of an online course, EDEL 412: Teaching Language Arts in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Contexts, where the students became informed about the local and timely issue of Indigenous language and cultural identity. The students watched several language-preservation videos, read articles by many authors on the topic (see references at the end of the compendium), and worked to frame and articulate the levels of personal, spiritual, historical, and educational repercussions where language and identity converge. The students then compiled this gleaned information into their own personal ‘found poem’: a collection or collage of significant phrases, words, and images from the readings and videos that resonated with them. As part of this online class, they worked through their poems in a writer’s workshop and read and gave feedback to each other on their poems in a small online discussion forum. They received feedback from their instructor and the teaching assistants and then revised their poems to send to a small new online group of their classmates for further input. The authors then decided on the final form and content of their individual poems and voluntarily submitted them for this compendium.

From our perspectives as instructor and teaching assistants, we believe that these poems work very well to distil the essence of both Indigenous identity and language and the classroom-teacher-to-be impressions of that, as seen through the eyes of this group of northern preservice teachers, into rather moving and powerful expressions that can be read from several levels. We hope that in reading these poems, you find a space where they resonate with you as well.

Part of the professional side of teaching practice requires us all as teachers to be aware of and sensitive to the culture of our students. This is an especially vital task in the area of language and literacy, particularly with young learners. In these formative years, the use of and access to a variety of languages, both at school and in the community, have been evidenced as very strong predictors of cognitive and academic achievement. However, across the world and in our country, the languages and cultures indigenous to this geography have lost their vitality through oppression, assimilation, and subsequent marginalization by the powerful political, religious, and education forces and the effects of Canadian colonialism. In turn, and especially in communities such as those in which these preservice teachers will soon be working, substantial language shift has occurred over the past decades as extended families gradually lose access to their Indigenous heritage through both choice and lack of exposure and, consequently, to the roots of their cultural identity. These found poems speak to that history and personal loss as they demonstrate a voice for a renewed awareness and effort for language revitalization.

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A Gradual Death

Where oh, where have you gone?
Why is it that not many of our people know how to speak their mother tongue?
Is there something wrong?
There must be something we can do to keep you, and pass you to our young,
Is this a gradual death?
Our younger generations are lost without you.

Charlene Anderson

Natural Order of the Creator

We are Cree speakers, it is our identity, and it is who we are as people.
Culture, community, challenge, creator, Canada,
And we will continue.
Oppression of language, we must save.
We shall, protect, preserve, promote, and practice.
We must survive, support, work together,
and save.
May that be the truth!!!

Debra Anderson

Every Aboriginal man, woman, and child must know

Expression of culture,
Who we are as a people
Our own human reality

Our language

Each family, each community, and each nation must keep

Our unified mind, spirit, and soul
The ultimate symbol of belonging
Our identity and vitality
The natural order of the Creator

Our language

Government and the churches must acknowledge

Their responsibility
For oppression
Destruction of identity
And a unique worldview

Our language

Our new generation must celebrate

Reality, not ideological distortions

Perseverance, not survival

The robin, not the seagull

Noise, not silence

Our language

We must take the time to know

Our greetings, our curses

Our wisdom, our praises

Everything we are

Everything we will become

Ourselves

Tyler Anderson

“Something Ordinary”

He was not one for tears

The circle of courage is his foundation

Language reflects the most important aspect of his life

He recognizes the pitfalls of his lost culture

The hunger for his inner spirit to awaken is his new passion

“Can’t run away from who… [he] really [is].”

So he “creates something new… [by] engaging in a personal voyage of self-discovery”

Now “listening to voices of experience was [his new] way of learning.”

He believed it was important to seek out the knowledge to “Study [him]self”

It “was a big revelation. It was unique. It was five times more interesting than anything [he] had studied before”

“In addition to listening with respect” did he learn that his Indigenous ways of knowing were not lost at all but only slumbering.

Cindy Auger
Wake up, Cries Mother Earth
By way of Lightning the Creator will offer light for people to see;
to see that the Heart of Mother Earth is crying
Crying for the languages of the people
For it is only when people Wake Up,
the Mind, Spirit and Soul will heal and connect as one

Karen Auger

Taken Away

I question why we were taken away.

We lost our language

We felt so much pain.

Suffering a never rending game.

How do we overcome this battle?

We must find renewed strength,

They say hold on to hope and let go of the past.

But first we must find our identity

In hope of finding ourselves.

Doreen Batchelor

Lack of appreciation,
Lack of understanding,
Lack of preservation,
Language is fragmented.
WE ARE FRAGMENTED.
Revitalization is necessary
There is hope.
We can be whole again.

Alisha Batsone
The Missing Piece of Me

Greetings and welcome,
To my own personal journey
The revival of my homeland

Nearly extinct,
Our Aboriginal language
What happened to us?
Who am I?
A “worthless person”
One who has forgotten my history and language

Never spoken in our house
Ashamed?
No, simply...
Not knowing

Our worldviews
Embedded in our language
What were these?
I wanted to know.

I saw myself,
Reflected in a group
At home with them,
Learning to become teachers

Our language was
Deeply interconnected and embedded
Began my odyssey,
Back to me

Cassandra Bensch
Language, a resource infinitely important
Language, dying in so many forms, in so many places
Domination over indigenous languages
Linguistic genocide
Multiculturalism, the greatest living myth

Chelsey Bonnet

Language Death…. Why?
Differentiation of power
One language is dominant
ENGLISH
The other is subordinate
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE
Suffocation; control and power
Educational institutions
Residential Schools
The movement to obliterate the indigenous languages
“Sorry, I don’t understand what you’re saying”
Languages are lost due to
ASSIMILATION!

Charlene Cardinal

Preservation

One word languages.
We as a family, community, nation
create a culture.

We as a family
redevelop, recreate.
It is time to wake up!

Teach, research, respect.
We must work together and
most importantly inform.

We have one world, one life;
honour the languages
and they will last.

Christine Cardinal
The Cree People

Long Ago in a Land full of Beauty
There stood a Tribe all Humble and Peaceful.
They Lived so Free, so Full of Life
These were the Cree, They are my Tribe.
Then came the French, the Europeans and the Rest.
No longer Useful to the Newcomers that came; onto the Reservations, the Cree were caged.
Movement forbidden without a Government Pass. Freedom was gone, the Spirit was broken.
Children being forced into Residential Schools no Matter how much they Cried,
The once Peaceful Life; gone forever except in the Mind.
The Cree tried so Hard to Negotiate,
but Government just Turned their Backs.
The Language began to get Weaker and Weaker
and the Culture, once Strong, it started to Crumble.
The Elders and Men refused to let it all Happen.
They began to stand up for the Rights of the People,
and for the Protection of their Children and Women.
Every move they Made became Scrutinized by All.
The Cree would not Buckle, They would not Die.
But Western societies Whip continued to come Down
Although life for the Cree was Hard and already a Struggle.
Today, the Cree, wounded and all, have Started a Whisper
“It is Time for us all to Rise, take Back what was Lost.
Our Languages and Culture which once was a Way of Life.
We are the Cree People. The Creator would not want us to Fall.
*So take back that Language, the Culture and Spiritual Law.*

Lorraine Cardinal

We Must Bank **OUR LANGUAGES**
We Must Raise the Consciousness Level of **OUR PEOPLE**
We Must Mobilize **OUR RESOURCES**
We Must **PROVIDE** Training and Certification
We Must **DEVELOP** a Comprehensive and Appropriate Curriculum
We Must Engage in **MEANINGFUL** Research
We Must **INFORM** Public Opinion
We Must **ELIMINATE** Artificial Boundaries
We Must Press for Aboriginal Language **LEGISLATION**
We Must **WORK TOGETHER**
We Must **CAPTURE THE PUREST** oral forms of our languages to ensure that they will be available to **FUTURE GENERATIONS**
Every effort must be made to **PROTECT, PRESERVE, PROMOTE, and PRACTICE** our Indigenous/Aboriginal languages

**OUR LANGUAGES** is an inherent **RIGHT**, a treaty **RIGHT**, a constitutional **RIGHT**, an Aboriginal **RIGHT**, and a human **RIGHT**

Melissa Cardinal
Without Language:

I have no **identity** it has been taken away
I have no **history** it has been lost
I do not know where I belong I feel so alone
Where did I come from?
I need **culture** and it is diminishing
Is there **courage**? Its fading away
What **attitude** will make a difference?
Can I seek **wisdom**? My elders inform me
What is my **purpose in life** I still struggle with this daily
Where do I **begin**? I cannot find my way

Nancy Cardinal

**Hello? I've Lost My Language**

Hello? I've lost my language

Was the loveliest of them All

An European of whites Attacked Suddenly,

A large new language scares the old away

Frightened and Lost

I decided to take it BACK

Do I have a Voice?

NO!

Now would be the right time to Fight

Because I can shout!

Need My Language

BACK!

Priscilla Cardinal
We Paid The Price

Attitudes
Suppressed
Fumbling insecurities
We paid the price

Dislocation
Haphazard
Losing direction
We paid the price

Culture
Relationships
Frozen traces
We paid the price

Tradition
Failures
Intellectualized abstraction
We paid the price

Every language grows, every culture changes
Relationships change, relationships grow
The way of thought, the way of valuing
The spirit of the people

Kinship
Brothers and sisters
Holiness
life

They bond they build,
They laugh, they fall

Revive
Entrusted
Versatility, formality
We paid the price
This story is about my own personal journey

My story aims to get at what it means in the life of one ... person to participate in the revival of a(n)... Aboriginal language

I am learning it is the responsibility of each and every one of us

To know what it means for us personally to be committed to the renewal effort

I look back in time to my own childhood, to my family

What happened to us?

Why are we in the state that we are in?

What happened to our language, our culture, our traditions?

Who am I?

Who can tell me who I am?

How can I know who I am?

I came to discover that

This state

Was a deliberate government effort to eradicate any trace of my identity as a ... person

How soon we learned that words (could) hurt

My siblings and I ... were taken to a faraway land

The place was cold; the language(s) were French (and English)

My siblings and I often talked about the fond memories we cherished of our “home”

Lakes and rivers, of the wild flowers, berries,

A place where there were wild strawberries

At home, my Dad

Told us what it meant to be “Real Indians”

I guessed that being “Real Indian” was different from being just Indian.

I knew that he meant that we should be proud to be Indian

But that in public we should know that to be Indian was to be disdained

At home I felt proud and distinct...to be real

Throughout my adult life I wanted to know everything about this place

Where a worthy person

Knows her history

“The key to this knowledge is in the language,” the Elders would say

“in the stories and in the land”
And what might that mean I wondered
I once tried to learn...by listening

The Elders said, “The language is central to our identity...the land is our culture...and our worldview is embedded in our language”
These ideas were challenging for me to understand, not having much exposure to our language, our culture, or our “worldview”
What were these?
How can I know these?
I wanted to know

Suddenly I saw myself reflected in this group in a way I had never experienced before
My classmates knew who I was by my relations
I felt at home with them, their humor,
I was inspired by what they were doing; they were learning the language so that they could become teachers of the language
All but one was female
This class inspired me

“Our language connects us to our land” my classmate(s) told me
It’s all there, the land, the language, all of us deeply interconnected
A representation of a holistic concept that links the people spiritually to the physical world, to each other, and to all our ancestors and is expressed best through our...language
These interrelationships define our culture, define who we are as people, and in fact define our worldview
Refers to our relationship with the land, a relationship that has been evolving for at least 10000 years
The relationships in Our World,
Are defined in the language itself
Our ancient stories of creation and our oral history, or true stories, respectfully
Our stories show how the land, the language and we are linked together:
Animals, plants,
Rocks,
Possess power
The water, wind, the sun, the moon and the stars possess power, vitality and thought, and people can share in these powers of nature
And thus the relationships in Our World bound together by power
Of our shared vitality, and thought or will
Creation stories, myths, and legends involving a trickster or transformer.
“Our language connects us to our land”
“The language is central to our identity...the land is our culture...and our worldview is embedded in our language”

Maria Lucy D’Or
Mind
I am a philosopher
I will not allow for my language resource to be taken from me

Spirit
I will not allow my way of communicating to be taken from me

Physical
I am healing
I will not allow for linguistic genocide

Emotion
I am on a journey
I will not allow any language to be more powerful than mine

Cassandra Davies

No Big Deal (Really)

What is the big deal if our language dies?
It is a big deal don’t believe the white lies
The majority tried in the past
They were sure our language would not last
But we cannot ever abandon the fight
To keep our language is our cultural right!
Without our language we die too
Are ancestors, history and way of life die too!

Brenda Derkoch
Language obsolescence

Power struggles, one dominates the other
Losing identity, losing hope
Sudden, radical or gradual
Dead is dead

We are not alone
Rejuvenate the language
Preserve, record, use
Revitalize the people

Fill the mind, body and spirit
Honour Ancestors
Honour Elders, our walking libraries
Find your lost language

Barbara Devlieger

Language obsolescence for centuries,
Such loss is indeed tragic.
External political factors play the lead role,
One language is dominant and the other is subordinate.

Explorers in search of resources,
Movement to obliterate indigenous languages,
Policies were straightforward and the practices harsh,
The new language takes dominance.

Linguistic, ethnic and cultural boundaries coincide,
Attitudes and beliefs of speakers play a role in language loss.
Language reflects a unique world view and culture complex,
Language is the ultimate symbol of belonging.

Indigenous Languages.
Language Retention?
Language Retrieval?
Language Death?
Who chooses?

Elizabeth Dunleavy
Burning

Where are the strawberries?
What happened to us?
What happened to our language, our culture, our traditions?
Burning, burning, through my heart, my soul, my being.

Who am I?
Who can tell me who I am?
How can I know who I am?
Burning, burning through my heart, my soul, my being.

What are you doing?
Washing, washing, washing.
Sauvage! Sauvage!
How soon we learned that WHITE IS RIGHT!
Burning, burning through my heart, my soul, my being.

Wild strawberries tasted sweet, nameless in the innocence of childhood
I wanted to know everything about the place where there are always wild strawberries.
Burning, burning through my heart, my soul, my being.

The key to this knowledge is in the language.
Language is central to identity...the land is the culture...our world view is embedded in our language.

What were these?
How can I know?
I WANTED TO KNOW!!
Burning, burning through my heart, my soul, my being.

WOW! It’s all there, the land, the language, all and us, deeply interconnected.
Can you taste the strawberries yet?

Maxine Elter
Language Recovery

The Living organism of a community

Minority languages

Culture lost

The culture has lost its language

Odds are not encouraging for the weak

GREAT CREATOR

Purpose in life

Recognition, relationships

Minority languages

TEACH

Lap top

What am I going to do about the Language of my people?

Importance of language as an expression of culture.

Must be upheld by each individual.

Language is the mind.

Spirit, and soul of a people.

We must gather into the circle all the knowledge.

To ensure its survival.

Honour the natural order of the Creator.

From one generation to the next.

We must protect and preserve our languages.

We must capture.

The purest.

Oral forms of our languages.

For future generations.

We must.

Ensure that every Aboriginal man.

Woman.

And child knows of their oppression and oppressors.

Who stole their language and culture.

“We must especially recognize and thank.
Our Elders, Grandmothers, Grandfathers and languages teachers.
For their efforts to save our languages.
It is now our turn.
To save it for the ones.
Who are not yet born.

Sharon Gambler

IDENTITY
Indigenous people
Ancestral languages, mother tongues, traditions, knowledge, creator
Heart
Spirit
Family

IDENTITY
Government
Authorities, institutions, boundaries
Oppression
Distortions
Brainwashing

IDENTITY
Indigenous people
Ancestral languages, mother tongues, traditions, knowledge, creator
Belonging
Culture
Language

IDENTITY
Government
Authorities, institutions, boundaries
Demise
Extinction
Isolation

IDENTITY
Indigenous people
Ancestral languages, mother tongues, traditions, knowledge, creator
Sharing, transmitting, singing
Language
Through Culture

IDENTITY
Government
Authorities, institutions, boundaries
Residential schools, Indian Act, Political
Weakening
Languages
IDENTITY

Indigenous people
   Ancestral languages, mother tongues, traditions, knowledge
   Man, woman, child
   Save
   Future generations

IDENTITY

Government
   Authorities, institutions, boundaries
   Time to
   Support, revitalize, respect
   Indigenous languages
   Aboriginal people

IDENTITY

Language an Expression of Culture

People

Individual       Family                             Community           Nation

Language
Mind Spirit  Soul
Culture

Protect            Preserve               Promote           Practice

Survival
Knowledge
Wisdom
Energy

Tara Gauchier

Jacqueline Geddis Genoway
What have become of our language, our identity and our culture?

Language rapidly diminishing
We must prevent extinction... replacement... and language death

How?
It must be saved
We are powerful
This is our identity

Our language will not be in jeopardy...
We are unique... it is our expression and communication
It will not be replaced... it will be valuable and visible

Just you wait and see!

Chantal Gill

Language Loss

When
our language
is lost What will
we do? We cannot
afford this Can you? If
it is truly lost What will it
cost? If this is the question by
Fishman What will you possibly tell
him? Will you tell him the greetings are
gone, Or will you tell him it’s the curses. What
about all the prayers, the wisdom and verses? Will
it be an entire way of life or thought? Can all this be
possibly bought? No. If it is lost We will not afford
the
cost!

Deborah Gladue

Erosion of Language

Language is something everyone needs
Without it, our spirit will starve
We become weak, faint and live aimlessly
Without language, our self-esteem weakens
Without it, our courage is misunderstood
Without language, we can no longer look confidently at the world
We turn inward and begin to feed upon other personalities
And little by little, we destroy ourselves
With it, we are unique
With it, we walk with pride

With it and with it alone we are able to sacrifice for others.

Rita Gullion
Indian Act has destroyed Our identity: “stole” Our languages and cultures they are weakening Our People.

The government and the churches need to acknowledge their responsibility in the demise of our languages.

BREAK the cycle; language is the mind, spirit, and soul of Our People.

We need to protect, preserve, promote, and practice our Indigenous languages to keep our languages alive.

One generation to the next we need to preserve our languages so they are available to future generations.

**LANGUAGE REVIVAL!**

Yvonne Hamelin

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**Characteristics of a Strong Language**

A strong language includes a shared understanding and one “philosophy” of the role language plays in a culture
A strong language includes shared goals, commitment and working together
A strong language includes value and an appreciation of one’s culture and identity
A strong language is taught and spoken in its purest forms by “Grandmothers and Grandfathers”
A strong language is the dominant language in a community
A strong language includes “teachers” who provide culturally appropriate teaching approaches
A strong language is practiced within different contexts with no “provincial boundaries”
A strong language is likely to have a stronger voice when it comes to the “Government of Canada”
A strong language is made up of elder wisdom and knowledge, and storytelling

Louise Houle
Through Language Our Culture is Shared

Through language our culture is shared
To honour “the order of the creator”
May produce the spark that inspires
What gives us our identity,
Expresses our unique worldview
The ultimate symbol of our belonging

Through language our culture is shared
Language is the mind, spirit and soul
Take away its greetings, its praises
Its laws, its wisdom, its prayers,
It will be lost, essentially losing a way of life

Through language our culture is shared
Get inside our language for deeper meaning
“To the very heart of the culture and spirit”

We must engage
Protect, preserve promote and practice
Make our languages living and vibrant once again
Eliminate artificial boundaries

Through language our culture is shared

Sandra Houle

Saving Our Language

Oppression
Assimilation
Steals Our Language.

Death
Extinction
Our Language is in danger.

Mind
Spirit
Soul
is embodied in Our Language

Belonging;
Our Language links one generation to the next.

Identity
Worldview
Culture
Our Language is part of us.
We need to answer the questions.
How do we revive our language?
How do we learn our language?

Elders
Fluent Speakers
The purest oral forms of Our Language.

Vitality
Stamina
Education
Of our young people is needed.

Communities
Families
Institutions
Need to work together.

Our Language is …

An inherent right
A treaty right
A constitutional right
An Aboriginal right
A human right

Our past
Our present
Our future

Our Language is us.
We are Our Language.

Carole Kamieniecki
Terminal

Disease can:

Shift ones sense of identity,

Obsolescence results in a gradual decline,

Extinction and contraction,

Erosion and reduction of a language system,

Replacement ?

Result in death?

Well to post-mortem,

What constitutes terminal stage?

Which point is retention possible?

Loss Is Tragic.

Rachel Kemp

Fewer and fewer speakers
Fewer and fewer functions
None to be immune from possibility
Our understanding of the world is lost.
Death of a language.
But… There is hope
Language is cultural identity
Language is communication
Language is politics
Language is thinking
Language is our life
We are a nation and a nation has a language

Keira Kushner
Thank you;
   for the gift of friendship, family, language, life and belonging

Relationship, symbolism and sanctity;
   That is language and culture

Kinship;
   Is who we are, who we have in our lives, we are all connected

Responsibility;
   We have a responsibility to us, our loved ones, our ancestors, our children

Action;
   Take action, speak, use your words, speak from the heart, speak from the soul, don’t stop speaking

Mother tongue;
   The language of our ancestors, our history, our land and our people, all walks of life, all nationalities

Smel á`:lh - worthy people – people who know their history;
   Do you know your history?

Skw’iyéth – slaves;
   Are we slaves to commercialism, colonialism and globalization?

S’téxem - worthless people – people who don’t know their history;
   Are we worthless because we don’t know our history, have forgotten our history or had our history ignored?

S’ólh – our, respectful, sacred;
   Language is ours, it is sacred to who we are, it is respectful of the world we come from

Téxéxw – country, land, world;
   Our world, our land, our country, our people, we are connected

Media;
   It can be our tool, it can be our strength, but it should not be the start

Start;
   Language comes from within, from the home, from the love, from the nurturing

Creating Community – “us” the people, we are the land;
   We are who we come from, our ancestors, our history, our story

What can you do?
   Be strong, believe, live and breathe the language we have been blessed to have, to live, to love, to grow and most importantly, to belong

That is our language, that is our culture, that is who we are, who we should be and who we will always be.

Brenda Kuyek
The Importance of Language

Why Our Language?
Native languages
Fumbling insecurity
Symbolic relationship
The Whole Relationship
Whole Culture
That sense of holy

What if we lose our language?
Suppressed their language
Paid the price
Individual price in every sense
“That culture has lost its language”
What does the country lose?
Authentic individuals
Comfortable with themselves

Why should we hold onto it?
All the ones who loved them spoke the language
All the endearments, all the nurturing
They know they belong together
We have something in common
Should we mourn its loss?
Woe to the people…
Who have lost their sense of holiness…
Where nothing matters…
And woe to the people who have lost a commitment…
One to the other
How can we save it?
Mother tongues are self-sustaining
In the community, in the neighborhood
Among the loved ones…
…the ones shaping the identity of the child…
That is where language lives
Your lap is part of the link
To kinship and to purpose
It is the life of the language
A sense of responsibility
For what it has given me
Love and nurturance…
Connection

Song of the people.

your understanding
attitudes
philosophy
beliefs

way of communicating
way of thought
way of life
your identity

language of the majority
oppression
disease
dying
death

language of the majority

That is not your song.

Renita Larson

Tannisha MacKenzie
Language Death

I am losing power…power to live!
Language is power, so use it or say goodbye
Goodbye? To what? To who?
To me you say? Am I slowly disappearing?
What? language death? Tell me how please
Sudden death, speaker’s no more…it’s tragic genocide
Gradual death, younger generation leaving, walking away…
Walking away from power, power of words…power within themselves
Bottom-to-top death, domains of family, sadly…lastly in public
Political force, gives way to death of his, her, them, our language
Political power has taken away our power, power of language
Churches, schools, urbanization equals domination
Colonial powers of invasion…harsh!
To advance in life, is to be bilingual
To be bilingual, is to fall…slowly…into change
Fewer, fewer speakers, rapid change
You, I, we as speakers of our own language
May determine, if it is used or lost
Where can we use it? Oh! When can we use it?
Give me back my power to live
I choose not to die, I choose not to disappear
I choose words, I choose life and I choose the words of my mother tongue
I choose the power of the Cree language!

Rose Oar

Sudden Death
Speakers die or are killed

Radical Death
Political Oppression or genocide
For fear of identification

Gradual Death
Shift of dominant language
Bottom-to-top death
Experienced renaissance
One constant factor
Differentiation of power
Invasion
Control them

Assimilation
Missionaries
Residential schools
Language forbidden

Governance and Education
Indian control over Indian education
Fundamental relationships
Indigenous language retention

Rage, rage against the dying of the light

Amanda Paul

Language is the mind, spirit, and soul

Language is the mind, spirit, and soul
Every language has a story
An essence of meaning
Reflecting a unique worldview
When the wakeup call does come;
Will it be too late?
Take action now
It is now, our turn to save it
Change is indeed possible

Cheyanne Pawliw
The **Preservation** and Use of Our Languages by V. Kirkness, 
Provides 10 directions for us to address.

Languages are **expressed** culturally,  
By individuals, communities, nations and family.

The core of **cultural survival** is dependent on language,  
How it is preserved, not easy to manage.

**Technologies** help us to capture  
Our language for the generations of our future.

Language survival depends on **education**,  
Of how it was stolen through **oppression**.

Languages **culturally defined**,  
As a people it is **distinctly outlined**.

The **resources** we have may not be many,  
But to save the language will require **money**.

**Responsibility** lies not just on our people,  
But also on those who are most influential.

This is a **tough battle** to climb the hill,  
For teachers, this requires particular skill.

To teach our languages effectively,  
Schools, parents, elders, and communities need to take responsibility.

Rather than sitting around and complaining,  
Of a language lost, we must provide some **training**.

    Not a quick fix for you will see,  
    A **program** is needed that earns a degree.

If language is something we do not want to lose,  
Then **unity** is something we all must choose!  

Joline Pelletier
A Living & Vibrant Language

Language as a function of self-expression
Is not limited to communication;
It is politics, identity and a way of thinking.

Recognized as prestigious in form or not,
It mirrors a system of philosophy
And a vibrant understanding of the world.

The more it is used, the more it grows.
The more it grows, the more it lives.

With an increase of community planning, policies, and practice,
A traditional language will avoid a gradual death.

The onus and responsibility
Of keeping our language alive falls on us.
We can play an active role
In maintaining our language as a social process
By speaking the language in the home and community.

By working together
With action and expression,
The language will become revitalized
And so will we.

Charlene Porisky

Dying Languages
Indigenous Languages
Changing Cultural Value
Language Retrieval through Education
In depth understanding
Language Death
Language Loss
History diminished
A deep sense of Mourning
Language Genocide
The invasive act of stripping language
Ripping a cultural identity and belonging
Devastation of a people
Language is what makes us whole
Mind, Body and Soul
Without it we are and have nothing
Disappearing into the obliqueness of another culture
Fight for survival
Encourage the children to be strong
Oppression and Assimilation cannot exist if we
Fight and Stand up for what is ours
Listen to the hearts of our Elders
They are wise
Carry on the legacy of our people
Language genocide cannot occur
Remain strong, oppress the oppressors
We will not lose our language to the power of the dominant cultures

Lynette Stone
Where the Language Lives

Prejudice is Hurtful
Self-identity is Good
Extinction means Forever
Knowledge is Holistic

Who Am I?
Who can tell me who I am?
How can I know who I am?

Circles within circles, to reflect the interconnectedness of all living things

Storytelling, the nature of knowledge, foundations, scope and validity
The language is our Identity
The land is the culture
And our world view is embedded to our identity

Language, an expression of culture
Who we are as people
Language is the mind, spirit and soul
One of the greatest treasures of humanity

Lisa Thunder

Language as Knowledge, Knowledge as Power

Language, expression of culture
Mind, body, spirit, knowledge, wisdom, energy.
To ensure our survival,
we must protect, preserve, promote, practice.

Language

Preventing oppression
To express a unique worldview
Will preserve for future generations...

Language

Gives identity,
a way of life, way of thought, way of valuing
Without,
we are not true to the Creator.
Language

Younger generation has a responsibility to pursue, through education vitality and stamina, The objection to the demise of

Language

Current approaches, rendered ineffective Based on the old, not the best. Success lies in curriculum development and intergenerational transmission.

Language

Knowledge of tradition to understand how we learn? Oral approach may be the answer For deeper meaning.

Language

Inherent, treaty, constitutional, Aboriginal, HUMAN right. Need access to knowledge, strategies, resources To rebuild and revive

Language.

Support and accelerate, Engage in common strategy In ultimate challenge- Express our culture

Save our language. Shayla Timinsky
Disappearing languages?
Language death… as the speakers die the language dies,
Thus we are not remaining true to the natural order of the Creator.
As language gradually shifts to the dominant language,
Great treasures of humanity, expressive power, and profound understandings of the universe are lost.
Loss is tragic!

Languages are in jeopardy?
Outsiders learn indigenous language for control and power.
Churches use school to obliterate indigenous languages,
Educators discourage indigenous languages leaving Indian people stripped of power.
Policies are straightforward and practices harsh,
Language disappears resulting in political oppression and genocide!

Save our indigenous languages?
Language is central to cultural identity.
Language is the mind, spirit, and soul of a people.
Language is our life, it gives us integrity!

Trisha Vadnais

Language death
Language death, no more speakers
Language death receives world-wide attention
Language death is called sudden death.
Radical death is similar to sudden death, language disappears quickly.
Gradual death of a language is by far the best documented.
The bottom-to-top death is the last category of language death.
A unique unit of our understanding of the world and of the people in it is lost when the death of a language occurs.

Janet Yellowknee

What Are You Going To Do?
What is lost, when the culture is dislocated
That it loses the language which is traditionally associated
It loses individuals comfortable with themselves,
A Culture who are authentic to themselves
The importance of language as an expression

Of a culture who we are as people, we make the impression

Language is the mind, spirit, and soul

Of the Aboriginal people, it makes them whole

Fumbling in security when not quite sure

Encourages people to lose direction of which they were

Fighting a disease without having an idea what to do

There’s a nature of threats and dangers too

Surrounded by dominant, dislocated yet needing,

not to be envied, those cultures are bleeding

Honour the natural order of thy creator

One generation to the next we must relater

Without our Aboriginal languages we are not remaining true

Against the dying of the light of a distant view

So not start too far away,

What you need to have for everyday

Able to bear that strain, that this one language which is not yours

Let them see our language when it open up and soars

Not knowing what to do but to strengthen the old,

Which is already undergoing stress, so many told.
Do not fold up and silently steal off into the night,
Keep us from burning out, help brighten the light
The odds are not encouraging for the minds of the weak
An article of faith and commitment we seek

We are tied together in language, we belong
I owe something to it for it has been too long
Love and nurture, and reconnection to past
We are finding ourselves through language, at last

The children are bright, children live; and they play;
They laugh; they fall, they try to find their way;
We must put the life of the language back in community
And home if the language is going to be

This is where the language lives if changes can arise
Passed along only the truth, ignoring all the lies
I will pass this message on, but I am only few
What I want to know now is, what are you going to do?

Reanna Young
References


