



Faculty of Education

Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization:
SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT





The Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization (BEDILR) at the University of Victoria was launched in 2011 with two main goals: (1) to address the need to revitalize highly endangered Indigenous languages, and (2) to train a new generation of language speakers to teach the languages to other members of their communities. The four-year ladder program provides a foundation in Indigenous language, and skills in language revitalization strategies, and elementary school teaching. Graduates from the BEDILR program are eligible to be certified teachers in the Province of BC. The program philosophy, structure, content, and community-based delivery work together to foreground the centrality of language in the revitalization of Indigenous cultures and the healing of communities from a historical and continuing experience of colonization.

This formative evaluation, conducted in 2014, provides a snapshot of a particular ‘moment’ in the life of an ongoing program that is fluid and responsive. At the time of the evaluation, the BEDILR had been delivered in two Vancouver Island communities—WSÁNEĆ in the South Island, and the Kwakwaka’wakw communities of the North Island—as a key support to revitalizing the SENĆOŦEN and Kwak’waka/Bakwamk’ala languages respectively.

The evaluation was undertaken by Dr. Catherine McGregor. Taking an indigenist stance, it engaged students, Elders, instructors, practicum mentors and supervisors, and UVic and community planners and administrators in exploring the following key questions: How has the BEDILR program achieved its goals to prepare proficient language speakers and educators? What factors, processes, or contexts influenced the program’s success? What program elements merit greater attention or change? And which language learning and teaching strategies did students find most effective?

The evaluation affirms the program’s success in supporting many students to graduate with university credentials. Most graduates of the first two deliveries are now teaching in immersion contexts in First Nations schools or language in public schools. They are well placed to lead their communities in Indigenous language revitalization and to teach a new generation of Indigenous students and their families to become proficient speakers of their language.

The evaluation also suggests ways to strengthen the BEDILR’s effectiveness in future deliveries. It highlights the importance of further Indigenizing efforts at UVic, the Faculty of Education, and throughout the program’s coursework. It recommends more strict prerequisite requirements and continued development of effective ways to support language proficiency building within the program. It suggests refining procedures for partnership communication, student policies, and student support, and developing guides for supervising and training program supports within participating communities.

The program has already begun to address key areas highlighted during the evaluation. For example, the program now offers enhanced opportunities for a more intensive focus on building Indigenous language proficiency. The recommendation to develop core competencies remains an important outcome for the program to work toward.

The BEDILR program, unique in Canada, serves as a potent model of community-university partnership based on principles of mutual respect and collaboration. It will continue to work with communities throughout BC and across the country to revitalize and strengthen Indigenous languages and communities. As the program evolves, it will play a vital role in promoting reconciliation with, and resurgence of, Indigenous communities.