



Office of the Commissioner of
**INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES**

Laying the Groundwork for the Fluency and Immersion Teacher Education Roadmap

*An Environmental Scan and
Literature Review*

Towards a roadmap for (ILITT)

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1. Introduction and Overview

Despite the numerous well-attested benefits of Indigenous language immersion education, less than 2% of Indigenous children in Canada are enrolled in K-12 Indigenous language immersion education programs. A shortage of qualified and certified Indigenous language immersion educators is often cited as the biggest barrier to implementing school-based Indigenous immersion programs.

This report demonstrates the need for Canadian postsecondary institutions to partner with Indigenous communities to develop and deliver accredited Indigenous language immersion teacher training (ILITT) programs, and it outlines the key components of what a successful ILITT program looks like. We begin with a discussion of the benefits of Indigenous language immersion (section 2), and then we outline the unmet demand for ILITT programs through an analysis of existing postsecondary Indigenous language programs in Canada (section 3). We highlight programs that approximate an “ideal” ILITT program (section 4) and detail an analysis of effective strategies in ILITT programming, drawing on published literature on ILITT programs around the world (section 5). We discuss the roadblocks that have prevented communities and institutions from developing ILITT programs (section 6), and we conclude with key recommendations that can help ILITT move forward in a good way (section 7).

Two major methodologies informed this report: an environmental scan of accredited postsecondary language programs in Canada (conducted May-October 2024), and a literature review of academic and grey literature on Indigenous language immersion teacher training (conducted May-July 2024). Appendix A details the scope and methodology of the environmental scan, and Appendix B provides a list of programs in the scan. Appendix C details the scope and methodology of the literature review, and Appendix D provides the bibliography for the literature review.

2. Rationale for ILITT

This section outlines the reasons why developing and implementing Indigenous language immersion teacher training (ILITT) programs is an urgent priority. We begin by defining immersion education (2.1) and summarizing the case for schools as an important domain for language revitalization (2.2). We

then outline evidence on the benefits of school-based language immersion, which include improvements in students' language proficiency (2.3.1), as well as high levels of academic achievement (2.3.2), a sense of culture and identity (2.3.3.), and cognitive and intellectual development (2.3.4). Unless otherwise noted, all references cited in this section are listed in the literature review bibliography in Appendix D.

2.1. Defining Immersion Education

Language immersion is a method of instruction in which a school curriculum is delivered through the medium of a language that is not the first language of the students. It is fundamentally different from language education, in which a language is taught as a subject within a larger curriculum. Immersion education is also sometimes distinguished from bilingual education, in which some of the curriculum is delivered in one language and some in another.

Immersion education has long been recognized as an effective strategy for Indigenous language maintenance or revitalization. And many jurisdictions around the world have formal definitions for what constitutes Indigenous language immersion in education. For example, the Welsh Assembly Government defines a school as a Welsh-medium (/immersion) school if more than half of subjects are taught wholly or partly in Welsh (see Lewis 2008). Meanwhile, in Basque Country, three models of schooling are recognized: Spanish-medium schools with Basque taught as a subject, Basque-medium schools with Spanish taught as a subject, and bilingual schools which provide half instruction in Basque and half in Spanish (see Arzamendi & Genesee 1997; Cenoz 2008). Similarly in New Zealand, Māori immersion (or Māori-medium) education is formally defined as primary or secondary schooling in which students are taught all or some of the curriculum subjects in the Māori language at least 51% of the time (see Lee-Morgan et al. 2019). This is distinguished from bilingual education, which offers some curriculum instruction through the medium of Māori, but it is less than 51% (May & Hill 2005).

These examples highlight the fact that, while educators agree that Indigenous immersion education is defined as instruction delivered through the medium of an Indigenous language, there is variation with respect to how the Indigenous language is balanced against the dominant language. In other words, there are various ways to implement immersion education, and Indigenous communities need to have authority to decide how immersion can work best for them (see, e.g., Coates & Leech-Ngo 2016; Hornberger & De Korne 2018).

2.2. Schools as a Space for Language Revitalization

Schools are historically assimilative spaces, and some Indigenous language activists argue that bringing Indigenous languages into school settings can shift responsibility away from the primary domains for language revitalization – the home and community. However, as McCarty & Nicholas (2014) point out, schools are a required mainstay of contemporary society, and in many places

across the globe, schools are a space where children spend considerable time. As such, it seems an opportune choice to deploy schools as one domain among many for language revitalization to take place.

Moreover, reclaiming schools as spaces where Indigenous languages are learned and spoken can “transform hegemonic expectations about Indigenous languages and cultures, from loss and extinction to resilience and self-empowerment” (McCarty & Nicholas 2014; see also Reyhner 2010). Michel (2012) concurs that schools can play an important role in language revitalization but argues that school-based initiatives must be part of a larger community-based effort supported by strong leadership within the community and the family. Meanwhile, Hermes & Kawai’ae’a (2014) suggest that immersion schooling can function as a catalyst to spark community-based or home-based language revitalization efforts. In short, school-based language immersion can complement other language revitalization initiatives as part of a comprehensive community-based strategy.

2.3. Benefits of School-Based Language Immersion Education

The preceding section discussed immersion education in the context of language revitalization, arguing that school-based language immersion education can effectively fit within a larger community-based language plan. However, language revitalization is only one of the potential outcomes of immersion education. As Usborne et al. (2011)¹ note, “immersion programs can simultaneously revitalize a threatened language and prepare students for success in mainstream society.” Hermes & Kawai’ae’a (2014) discuss the “positive ripple effects” that immersion education can have for students, families, and communities. This section elaborates on those positive impacts.

2.3.1. Language Proficiency

There is widespread consensus that immersion or bilingual education provides children and youth opportunities to acquire high levels of proficiency in the language of instruction. However, language acquisition researchers contend that assessing the language outcomes of students in immersion or bilingual programs can be challenging because the social contexts of these programs create confounding factors that limit researchers’ capacities to run controlled studies (see Bialystok 2018).² Despite these challenges, there is a small pool of studies assessing language performance in immersion and bilingual education and the evidence from these studies consistently points to positive outcomes, with students in immersion and bilingual education programs performing well in language and literacy assessments in the target language (see Bialystok 2018 for a summary of

¹ Usborne, Esther, Josephine Peck, Donna-Lee Smith, and Donald M. Taylor. 2011. Learning through an Aboriginal Language: The Impact on Students’ English and Aboriginal Language Skills. *Canadian Journal of Education* 34(4): 200-215.

² Bialystok, Ellen. 2018. Bilingual education for young children: review of the effects and consequences. *International Journal of Bilingual Education* 21(6): 666-679. doi: 10.1080/13670050.2016.1203859.

English and Spanish bilingual programs in the United States and French immersion programs in Canada).

Specifically regarding Indigenous language immersion programs, Osborne et al. (2011) compared the Mi'kmaw³ language skills of students enrolled in the Eskasoni immersion program with those taking Mi'kmaw classes at an English school, and they found that the immersion students far surpassed the language-as-subject students in assessment of comprehension and production for both oral and written language skills.

It is important to note that the students in both immersion and language-as-subject programs in Osborne et al.'s study performed better in English than in Mi'kmaw. This is consistent with the results of a study by Tompkins et al. (2013), who interviewed students and teachers from Eskasoni (Mi'kmaw) and Tobique (Wolastoqey) on their perceptions of students' language proficiency. They found that there is a general lack of confidence in students' language abilities, and students want to be better speakers with more opportunities to speak their languages.

One way to interpret these findings is that, while immersion education supports language proficiency development, it cannot be the only strategy to empower language learners to acquire their Indigenous languages. As discussed in section 2.2, Indigenous language immersion education is most effective when it is embedded in a larger context of a comprehensive community-based plan for language revitalization.

Another key takeaway is that immersion teachers need more and better training to effectively support students in their proficiency development. Tompkins et al. (2013) report that teachers want ongoing training, and Simon (2019) concludes from her review of Mi'kmaw immersion education that the establishment of a Master's program specializing in Mi'kmaw immersion is a priority. This program would, in part, support ongoing proficiency development for educators, which in turn supports proficiency development for students (see, e.g., Lee-Morgan 2019). In short, Indigenous language immersion teacher training (ILITT) programs are needed to ensure that immersion education meets its intended outcome of producing new speakers of Indigenous languages.

2.3.2. Academic Performance

Parents and families of school-aged children sometimes resist enrolling their students in Indigenous language immersion programs for fears that it will negatively impact their capacities to excel in the dominant language, thereby limiting their career potential later in life (see, e.g., Bear Nicholas 2009; Michel 2012). However, there is ample evidence to the contrary; students in language immersion programs consistently outperform their counterparts in regular (monolingual) school programs.

³ We recognize that the language name Mi'kmaw has been spelled in various ways, including in the references cited here. When referring to the dialect spoken in the Maritimes, we adopt the spelling Mi'kmaw, following the [Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey style guide](#) and the [Mi'kmaw Language Act](#) of Nova Scotia. (The dialect spoken in Quebec uses a different orthography, which results in the language name being spelled as *Mi'gmaw*.)

Regarding the Mi'kmaw programs, Osborne et al. (2011) found that students in both immersion and regular programs showed comparable scores in literacy and math assessments, while Tompkins et al (2013) found that grade 7 reading scores for students were enrolled in Mi'kmaw or Wolastoqey surpassed those of their non-immersion peers. McCarty (2009) reports similar findings for students who first learned to read in Navajo through immersion programs, noting that they “not only outperformed comparable students in English-only programmes on standardised tests, they surpassed their own previous annual growth rates, and they did so by greater margins each year” (see also Combs & Nicholas 2012).

In short, even if immersion education is only in the early years, it has lasting academic benefits. Simon (2019) reports that Mi'kmaw immersion students' academic success continues after they transition beyond immersion. This is consistent with Coates & Leech-Ngo's (2016) observation that 90% of Indigenous language immersion students go on postsecondary education, compared with the national average of 60%.

2.3.3. Cognitive and Intellectual Development

One of the reasons why students in immersion programs perform exceptionally well on tests of academic achievement may be the well-documented link between multilingualism and cognitive development (see, e.g., Bialystok 2011⁴). Learning multiple languages – particularly at an early age – is beneficial for brain development and can have long-term impacts on intellectual development. Multilingualism has even been linked to a decreased risk for diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Indigenous language educators and researchers have pointed to the fact that students in Indigenous language immersion programs develop intellectual capacities in their own languages (see, e.g., McCarty 2009; Lee-Morgan et al. 2019). As Navajo educator Wayne Holm notes, “Because they were being taught in their own language, children were able to actively participate in their own education from day one” (as cited by McCarty 2009).

2.3.4. Sense of Identity and Connection

Wayne Holm's comment about students' participation in their own learning reflects a bigger advantage of Indigenous language immersion education - the sense of identity and connection to heritage, culture, and community that is cultivated through immersion education. Simon (2009) notes that “the language teaches them cultural pride, values, customs, and respect, and it builds towards the future of generations to come.” McCarty (2009) discusses the ways in which immersion education creates expectations of success for students; not only do they perform well academically, but they come to expect success and they see themselves as individuals with high potential to succeed and contribute to their communities and society at large. Concurrently, Coates & Leech-

⁴ Bialystok, Ellen. 2011. Reshaping the mind: the benefits of bilingualism. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology* 65(4): 229-35. doi: 10.1037/a0025406.

Ngo (2016) observe that communities with immersion education programs have lower rates of gang activity, substance abuse, suicide rates, and high school dropout rates. This speaks to the “ripple effect” documented by Hermes & Kawai’ae’a (2014): it isn’t simply the students enrolled in immersion who benefit, but their families and community networks may also benefit. Once immersion programs are established and are creating new generations of speakers, enrolments will grow (see Alencastre & Kawai’ae’a 2018 on the growth of one Hawaiian immersion program from 50 students to 3000). In short, the benefits of Indigenous language immersion education are far-reaching, and there is a strong need to develop and support a workforce of Indigenous language immersion educators.

3. An Unmet Demand

The preceding section outlined the numerous benefits of Indigenous language immersion education, and yet there is a paucity of K-12 immersion education opportunities for Indigenous children across Canada. As noted above and summarized in Table 1 below, less than 2% of Indigenous children are enrolled in immersion programs.

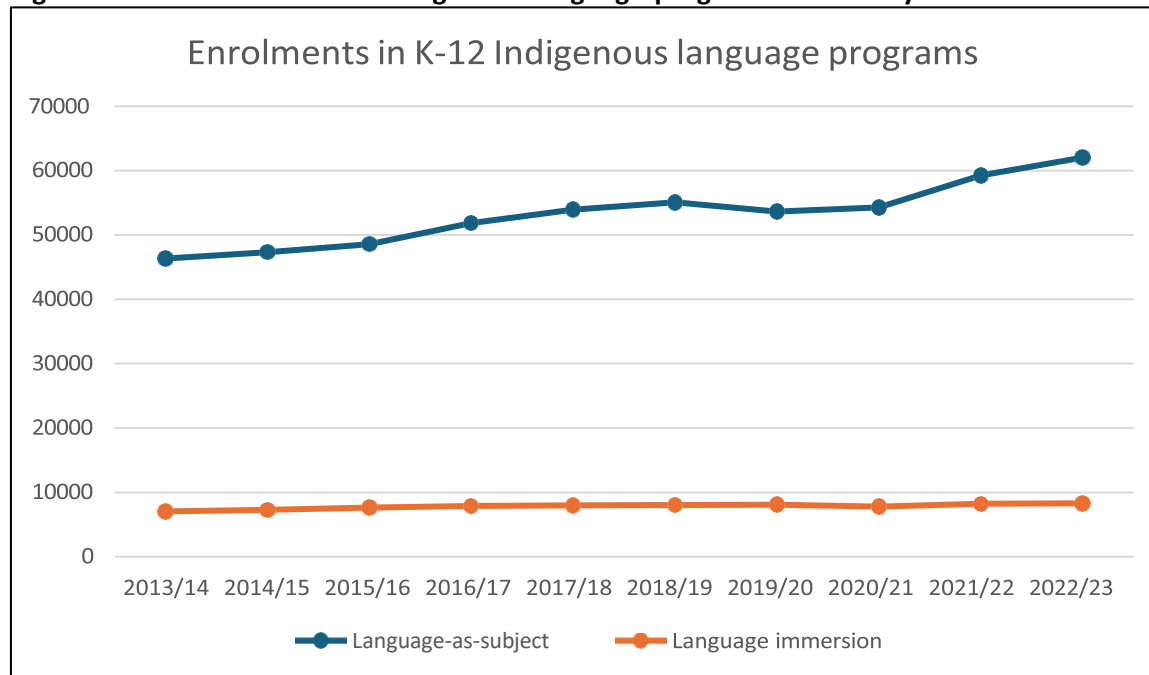
Table 1. Enrolments in K-12 Indigenous language programs

	Number	Percentage
Indigenous school-aged children (ages 5-19) ⁵	470,520	100%
Students in Indigenous language-as-subject programs ⁶	54,306	11.5%
Students in Indigenous language immersion programs ⁷	7,764	1.65%

Table 1 demonstrates that very few Indigenous students in Canada are enrolled in Indigenous language programs, let alone immersion programs. The enrolment numbers in Table 1 are for all students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), so in fact, the percentages are likely even lower than what is calculated here. Moreover, although Indigenous peoples represent the fastest growing population in Canada with a 9.4% growth from 2016-2021⁸, Indigenous language programs are not growing at a comparable rate. Figure 1 below shows the growth in Indigenous language program enrolments over a ten-year period; notably in the period between 2016 and 2021, enrolments in immersion in fact declined.

⁵ Statistics Canada. 2023. *Canada [Country] (table). Indigenous Population Profile. 2021 Census of Population.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-510-X2021001. Ottawa. Released June 21, 2023.
⁶ Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0078-01. Number of students in Indigenous language programs, public elementary and secondary schools, by program type. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710007801-eng>. (2020/21 figures are used for reasons of comparison with the 2021 Census).
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ [Indigenous peoples and communities \(rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-642-x/2023001/article/00001-eng.htm)

Figure 1. Enrolments in K-12 Indigenous language programs over ten years⁹



The primary reason for the shortage of Indigenous language programs – and especially Indigenous language immersion programs – is a shortage of trained and certified educators (see, e.g., Greymorning 1997; Hermes and Kawai’ae’a 2014; Hinton 2001; Hornberger & De Korne 2018; Lewis 2008; May & Hill 2005; Milligan et al 2012 on the global shortage of ILITT programs). There is a strong and urgent need for training programs that qualify Indigenous language immersion teachers as certified teachers. In what follows, this need is demonstrated by way of a scan of existing postsecondary Indigenous language programs across Canada.

3.1. Scan of Postsecondary Indigenous Language Programs

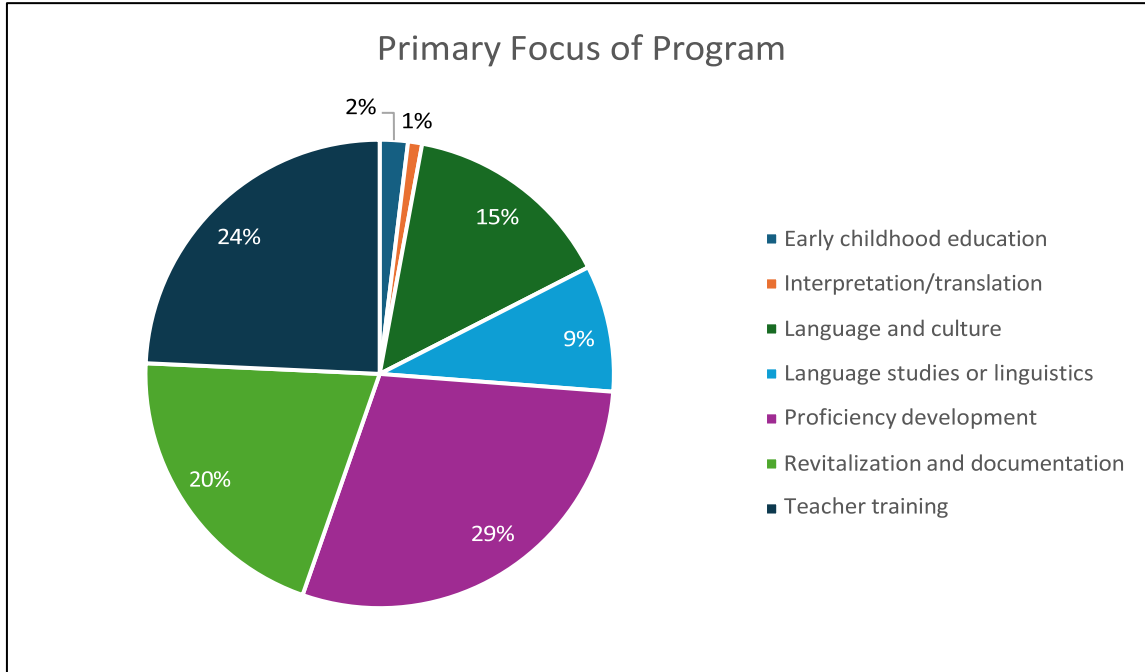
This section reports on the results of an environmental scan conducted in 2024 and designed to identify postsecondary Indigenous language programs in Canada. The methodology for the scan is described in Appendix A, and a list of programs is included as Appendix B. The scan is focused on programs with a primary focus on Indigenous languages that lead to a formal accreditation from a recognized postsecondary institution in Canada. It examines postsecondary courses on Indigenous languages, programs or courses that lead a credential through a recognized post-secondary institution (i.e., community-based programs without postsecondary

⁹ Data is drawn from Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0078-01. Number of students in Indigenous language programs, public elementary and secondary schools, by program type. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710007801-eng>.

partnerships), as well as courses or programs focused on language, i.e., other types of teacher training programs or Native Studies programs.

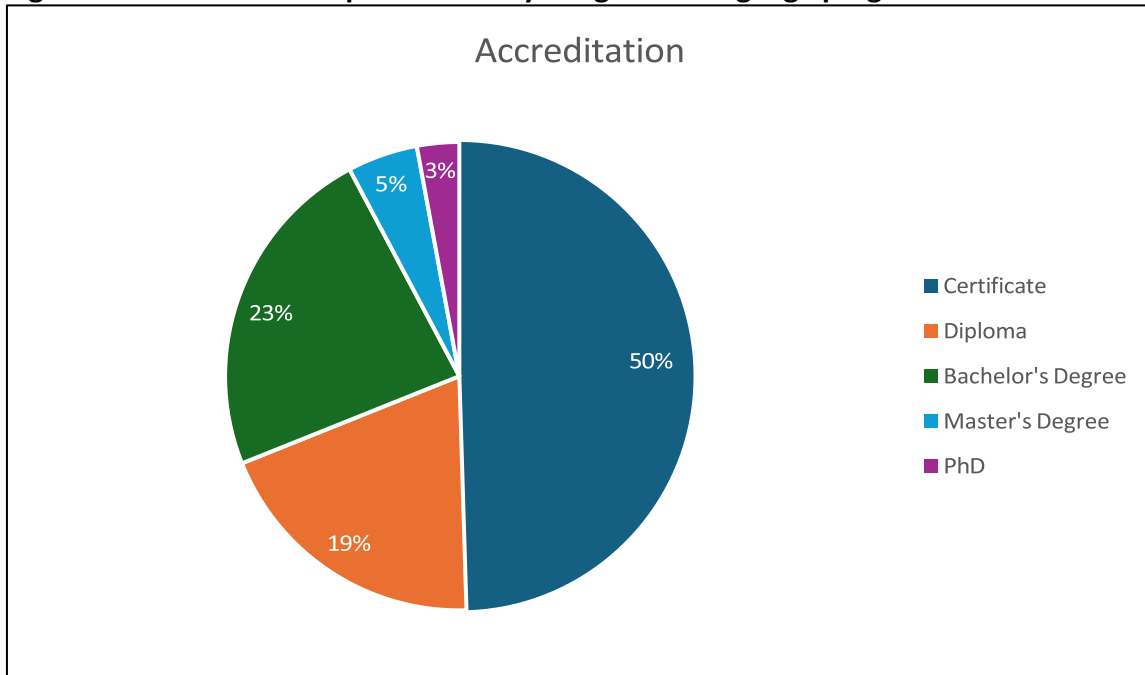
Through the scan, we identified 103 Indigenous language programs at 45 postsecondary institutions across Canada. The majority are proficiency development programs, followed by teacher training programs. The primary focus of the programs is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Primary Focus Areas of Postsecondary Indigenous Language Programs



Regarding the type of accreditation, 69% (n=71) of the programs do not cumulate in a degree, but in some other type of credential, such as a certificate or diploma. Of the other 31%, most cumulate a Bachelor's degree (Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education, or a minor in either), and only a small number (n=8) cumulate in a graduate degree (Master's or PhD). This is summarized in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Accreditation of postsecondary Indigenous language programs



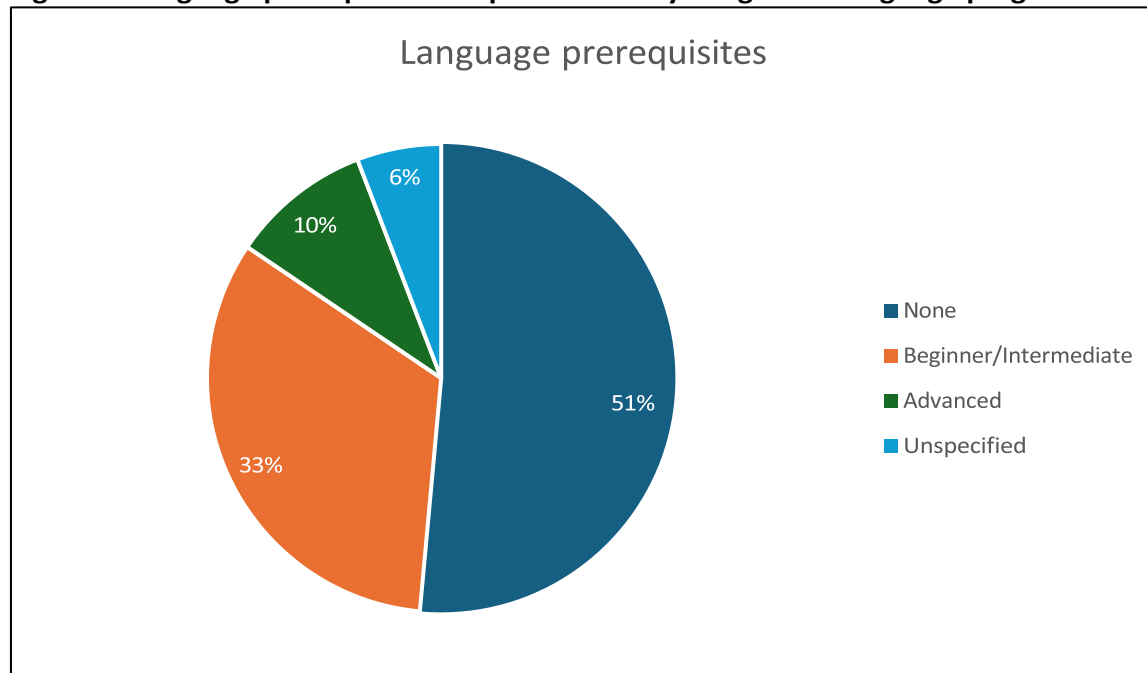
As observed in Figure 3, half of the programs identified as certificate programs. Notably, only eight of the programs are graduate programs, five Master’s and three Doctoral. Given that the typical requirement for postsecondary institutions to hire instructors is a PhD, this is a gap, and it poses problems for staffing, succession planning, and program sustainability (see section 6.5 for further discussion).

For most programs in the scan, students can apply the credits earned towards later programs (e.g., course credits earned in certificate and diploma programs can be applied towards a Bachelor’s degree; a Bachelor’s degree is a requirement for most graduate programs). As such, many of the programs can, in principle, provide a pathway towards a recognized degree or equivalent required for certified teachers and/or postsecondary educators (Teacher certification will be further discussed in Sections 3.2 and 6.3; Appendix E summarizes teacher certification standards across jurisdictions.) However, only 27% (n=12) institutions in the scan offer programs that are structured in such a way that they can be laddered with other programs to provide a direct and straightforward path for students to achieve higher degrees of accreditation. See sections 5.8 and 7.2 for further discussion of laddering and its impacts.

Most of the programs in the scan offer flexibility in terms of entrance requirements. While high school graduation is a typical prerequisite for most undergraduate postsecondary programs, lived experience and other credentials are taken into consideration for nearly all programs in the scan. In terms of language prerequisites, 51% (n=53) of the programs do not require any degree of proficiency upon admission and beginner learners are welcomed into the program. The remaining 49% includes

programs that require beginner through advanced proficiency, as well as programs for which language prerequisites are unspecified. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Language prerequisites for postsecondary Indigenous language programs



Notably, most of the programs that require some degree of language proficiency upon entry are those that are in a laddered structure so that proficiency is acquired at earlier stages in the progression of accreditations. Only 14% (n=14) of the programs are not advanced but required language proficiency upon entry.

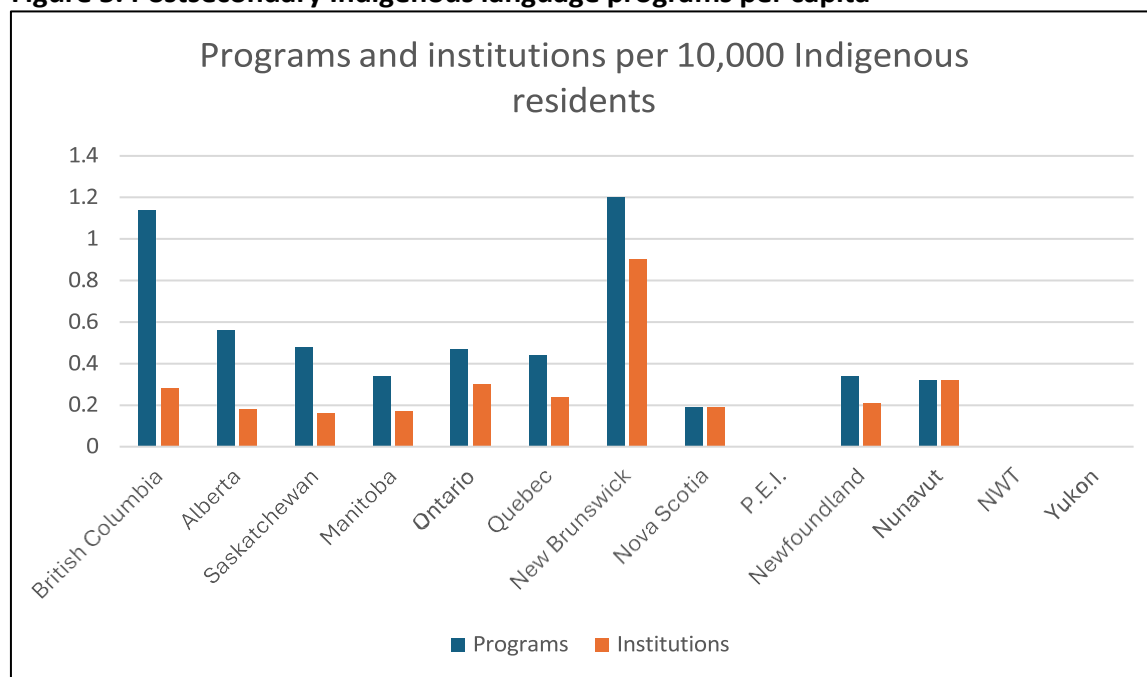
Regarding the regions in which postsecondary Indigenous language programs are offered, as shown in Table 2, in absolute numbers according to the location of the primary campus of the accrediting institution, British Columbia and Ontario have the highest number of Indigenous language programs amongst the provinces and territories. However, these are also the most populous jurisdictions, so this figure alone does not address the question of access to programs. If we control for population and examine the number of programs and institutions per 10,000 Indigenous residents¹¹, we see in Figure 5 that New Brunswick and British Columbia have the most programs per capita.

¹¹ Population data is drawn from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population using the variable of Indigenous identity.

Table 2. Regional distribution of postsecondary Indigenous language programs

Province or Territory	Number of programs	Number of institutions
British Columbia	33	8
Alberta	16	5
Saskatchewan	9	3
Manitoba	8	4
Ontario	19	12
Quebec	9	5
New Brunswick	4	3
Nova Scotia	1	1
Prince Edward Island	0	0
Newfoundland	2	1
Nunavut	1	1
Northwest Territories	0	0
Yukon	0	0

Figure 5. Postsecondary Indigenous language programs per capita



Notably, the location of the accrediting institution’s primary campus provides limited information on how well-supported Indigenous communities truly are in terms of access to postsecondary language programming. Many institutions have flexible delivery options and many also have formal partnerships with communities, both of which allow students living far from campus to access programming. Regarding the question of flexible delivery options, of the 91 programs¹² for which data

¹² This information was not available for 12 programs in the scan.

on delivery mode options are available, 36% (n=33) have on-campus options only. Meanwhile, 64% (n=58) have flexible delivery options, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Flexible delivery options of postsecondary Indigenous language programs

Delivery mode options	Number of programs	Percentage
Online	25	27%
In community ¹³	41	45%
Hybrid (short intensives in-person + online)	10	11%

Regarding the question of community partnerships, 39% (n=40) of the programs are offered in partnership with Indigenous communities, and 30% (n=31) are offered through an Indigenous-led institution. Most of the remaining programs were created through consultation with Indigenous experts.

Another way to address the question of access for Indigenous communities across question is through the languages supported by the programs in the scan. Programs with a theoretical or applied focus (e.g., linguistics or teacher training) can in some cases be made available to all students, regardless of their Indigenous language. However, some are necessarily specific to one or more languages. For programs that are language-specific, there are 55 languages represented in the scan, suggesting that 23 to 31 languages are not represented.¹⁴

3.2. A Focus on Teacher Training Programs

Looking specifically at Indigenous language programs with a primary focus on teacher training, we find that there are 25 programs from 19 institutions across Canada. Eleven of these programs qualify graduates to apply for provincial or territorial teacher certification upon completion; four of these are designed for proficient speakers. (Appendix E provides an overview of teacher certification standards across Canada.) These programs are listed in Table 4 below (with an asterisk to indicate those designed for proficient speakers).

¹³ This includes primary or satellite campuses located in Indigenous communities.

¹⁴ This count is based on a report developed by Heather Bliss in 2024 for the Geographical Names Board of Canada on Indigenous language names. (This report is available for distribution upon request.) An absolute number cannot be determined in large part because not all programs are specific in listing the languages they support (e.g., “Dene,” instead of specific Dene languages).

Table 4. Indigenous language teacher training programs qualifying graduates for certification

Institution	Program	
First Nations Technical Institute	Teacher of an Indigenous Language Certificate	*
Lakehead University	Indigenous Language Instructors Diploma	*
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Bachelor of Education for Nunatsiavut	*
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	Advanced Diploma in Indigenous Language Teaching	
Nipissing University	Teacher of Indigenous Language as a Second Language	*
St. Thomas University	Native Language Immersion	
University of the Fraser Valley	Aboriginal Culture and Language Support Diploma	
University of New Brunswick	Wabanaki Bachelor of Education	
University of Regina / First Nations University	First Nations Languages Minor, Indigenous Teacher Education	
University of Victoria	Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization	

Table 4 lists the ten Indigenous language teacher training programs that qualify graduates for teacher certification. Four additional programs provide professional development training for individuals who are already certified teachers, and the remaining nine programs provide training in Indigenous language education but do not qualify graduates to be certified as teachers. Nearly half of the teacher training programs (n=12) provide students with practicum opportunities.

Nearly 90% of the programs (n=22) provide students with specialized training to be language teachers, although six of these also qualify graduates to teach in other settings (i.e., other courses) more broadly. Three of the programs do not focus on language teaching but provide educational training for teaching in the language. Notably, even though graduates of some of these programs go on to teach in immersion settings, only one focuses on immersion pedagogy, and only four others provide some dedicated courses in immersion pedagogy.¹⁵ These are listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Postsecondary Indigenous language programs with immersion pedagogy courses

Institution	Program	Immersion
St. Thomas University	Native Language Immersion	Focus
University College of the North	Teaching ininimowin	Some
University of Regina / First Nations University	Extended Studies in First Nations Language	Some
University of Saskatchewan	Language Teacher Education Program	Some
University of Victoria	Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization	Some

¹⁵ What is unclear from the scan is whether and to what degree immersion pedagogy is discussed in more general courses in other programs focused on teaching methodologies or pedagogical principles and practices.

3.3. Summary

In this section we have seen that, as of October 2024, there are 103 Indigenous language programs at 45 postsecondary institutions across Canada. Less than a quarter of these are teacher training programs, and the majority do not lead to a degree or qualify graduates for teacher certification. Over half of the programs do not require any base level of language proficiency for admission, and most offer flexibility in terms of course delivery, with online, in-community, or hybrid options. Most teacher training programs are specific to teaching language-as-subject and few offer specialized training in immersion pedagogy.

4. Promising Programs in Canada

The preceding section highlighted that, while there are over 100 accredited Indigenous language programs offered through recognized postsecondary institutions across Canada, there is a gap in terms of Indigenous language immersion teacher training (ILITT) programs, particularly degree programs that qualify graduates for teacher certification.

This context provides the backdrop for this section, which highlights programs identified through the environmental scan that, perhaps with some expansion or adaptation, may serve as models for an ideal ILITT program. A program is considered ideal if it features the following eight variables:

- ✓ Designed and delivered through community partnerships¹⁷
- ✓ Flexible delivery (in-community and/or online)
- ✓ Includes proficiency development
- ✓ Includes (at least some) course delivery in the language
- ✓ Includes education courses
- ✓ Includes practicum opportunities
- ✓ Graduates are qualified for teacher certification
- ✓ Includes specialized training in immersion pedagogy

¹⁷ Measures of cultural safety, cultural teachings, and ideological alignment with Indigenous ways of knowing are not included in the Pugh matrix as these are difficult to compare across programs and institutions. Rather, we assume that, if a program is developed through a community partnership, then important cultural and ideological components of the program will be honoured and embedded within.

This section ranks programs identified in the environmental scan according to a simplified Pugh matrix that assigns a score to each program based on which of the above eight variables the program features. For purposes of the matrix, each variable is treated as equally important and assigned a value of 1 if present in the program and 0 if not present. A score of 0.5 is scored in cases where the variable is partially present (e.g., teacher certification is limited in some regard, or immersion pedagogy training is only minimally incorporated into the program).

The Pugh matrix identifies five programs from the scan that score 75% (6/8) or higher. These are listed in Table 6 and described in further detail below. Some of the programs listed are series of ladder programs, designed to support a comprehensive and scaffolded training experience for educators.

Table 6. Pugh matrix for promising ILITT programs

	<u>UVic BEDILR</u>	<u>StTU Maliseet Immersion</u>	<u>UCN Kenanow BEd</u>	<u>UNB Wabanaki BEd</u>	<u>Georgian ANPD</u>
Community partnerships	1	1	1	1	0.5
Flexible delivery	1	1	1	1	1
Proficiency development	1	1	0	1	1
(Some) course delivery in the language	1	1	1	0	1
Education courses	1	1	1	1	1
Practicum opportunities	1	0	1	1	1
Teacher certification	1	0.5	1	1	0
Immersion pedagogy	0.5	1	0.5	0	0.5
TOTAL	7.5	6.5	6.5	6	6

In what follows, each of the programs identified in Table 6 are discussed in greater detail.

4.1. University of Victoria (UVic) Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization (BEDILR)

The UVic Indigenous language programs are world-renowned for their focus on community partnerships, which lead to flexible, in-community delivery models, and courses taught by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers with expertise in culturally-grounded ways of learning and knowing (see Mclvor et al. 2017)¹⁸. Community-based instructors are mentored by full-time faculty at UVic

¹⁸ Mclvor, Onowa, et al. "Lighting a Fire: Community-based Delivery of a University Indigenous-Language Teacher Education Program." *Promising Practices in Indigenous Teacher Education*, 29 Oct. 2017, pp. 189–203, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6400-5_14.

and supported with a resource toolkit designed by UVic staff and faculty (see Czaykowska-Higgins et al. 2017)¹⁹. Courses and programming can be adapted to community-based cohorts' specific needs.

Another distinct advantage of these programs are the ways in which they ladder: certificate programs in language proficiency or language revitalization ladder into a diploma in proficiency, which then ladders into a Bachelor of Education degree that qualifies graduates for B.C. teacher certification. Unlike most other non-degree Indigenous language programs that ladder into a B.Ed., this program offers a specialized B.Ed. delivered through a community-based cohort model so that students can continue to build their language proficiency and learn educational principles and methods specific to their community needs. Czaykowska-Higgins et al. (2017) note, "the ultimate goal of the Diploma and Bachelor of Education is to graduate certified teachers with enough language proficiency to teach in immersion schools."

In terms of drawbacks, that there is only one course listed in the calendar that is specific to immersion pedagogy.²⁰ Moreover, as with other postsecondary-community partnership programs, there are challenges aligning university deadlines with community funding timelines through PSPP.²¹ Funding is further discussed in section 6.4.

4.2. St. Thomas University (StTU) Maliseet Immersion and Native Language Immersion Teaching Certificate

Andrea Bear Nicholas (2009)²² describes this program as "the first ever, native language immersion teacher-training programme in Canada." She documents its development and its outcomes, graduating individuals who are proficient in Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqey and have specialized training to teach in immersion settings. The program has been running since 2001 and consists of two certificate programs, which can be laddered: (i) a Maliseet immersion program, and (ii) a language immersion teaching *certificate*. The information available through the university website is limited (which may suggest it is no longer offered), but organizations such as the Wolastoqey Curriculum Committee report graduates of the program as recently as 2019.²³

Given the limited information, it is difficult to assess this program, and it would be worthwhile interviewing Andrea Bear Nicholas and/or others familiar with its roots and current offerings. However, the program holds significant promise in that it bundles proficiency development and

¹⁹ Czaykowska-Higgins, Ewa, et al. "Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalisation through Collaborative Post-Secondary Proficiency-Building Curriculum." *Language Documentation and Description*, edited by Wesley Y Leonard and Haley De Korne, vol. 14, EL Publishing, pp. 136–159.

²⁰ [Indigenous Language Revitalization \(uvic.ca\)](https://www.uvic.ca/indigenouslanguage/revitalization/)

²¹ As reported in a 2022 interview with Aliko Marinakis.

²² Bear Nicholas, Andrea. "Reversing Language Shift through a Native Language Immersion Teacher Training Program in Canada." *Social Justice through Multilingual Education*, edited by Ajit Mohanty et al., Multilingual Matters, 2009, pp. 220–237.

²³ [About — WLCC \(skicinowato.com\)](https://www.skicinowato.com/about/)

immersion pedagogy. There does not appear to be a practicum component to this program, and while it does qualify graduates for teacher certification, the certification is restricted to early childhood and primary school settings only.

4.3. University College of the North (UCN) Certificate in Teaching Ininimowin and Kenanow Bachelor of Education

These two programs together qualify graduates for teacher certification through culturally-grounded and community-based courses and practica. The curriculum is designed and delivered with the support of Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Programs are offered in community. The certificate program is delivered entirely in the language and focuses on language instruction (including immersion). As for drawbacks, proficiency in Ininimowin is a prerequisite for admission to the certificate program, and while the degree program infuses language throughout, it is not strictly language-focused.

4.4. University of New Brunswick (UNB) Wabanaki Bachelor of Education

The curriculum and delivery model for this four-year degree program was designed by Knowledge Keepers and Elders.²⁴ The program is taught through a Wabanaki cultural lens and is infused with cultural teachings and land-based practices. It follows a flexible delivery model, with a combination of in-community and online coursework designed to accommodate students' schedules (i.e., with evening, weekend, and intensive courses, depending on the cohort).²⁵ A language certificate program is embedded in the program, and students also complete a language teaching practicum at a community school. Graduates of the program are qualified for New Brunswick teacher certification, level IV.

There are three levels of teacher certification in New Brunswick. (See Appendix E.) Level IV is the introductory level for all new teachers with a Bachelor of Education degree from a recognized Canadian institution.²⁶ Graduates of the Wabanaki B.Ed. can complete an additional year of study to be eligible for Level V. Only those with Master's degrees are eligible for Level VI. Levels are used to determine rate of pay, but none of the certifications for Levels IV-VI are restricted in other ways.²⁷ At least two cohorts have gone through this program to date; it is unclear when another intake will take place.

²⁴ [New UNB program teaches Wabanaki culture to future educators | CBC News](#)

²⁵ [Wabanaki bachelor of education program provides culturally grounded approach, flexibility to aspiring teachers \(unb.ca\)](#)

²⁶ [Teacher Certification \(gnb.ca\)](#)

²⁷ [ECTH-2022-2023.pdf \(nbta.ca\)](#)

As for potential drawbacks, it is unclear whether any courses are delivered in Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqey, or whether program delivery is entirely English. It seems the focus of the program is on teaching language-as-subject, rather than language-as-medium. Introducing courses in immersion pedagogy, and modelling immersion by delivering programming in the language, would align this program with OCIL's vision for Indigenous language immersion teacher training.

4.5. Georgian College Anishinaabemowin and Program Development (ANPD)

Georgian College offers a ladder sequence of programs consisting of a one-year Anishinaabemowin beginners' proficiency certificate, offered through an immersion program,²⁸ followed by an education diploma. Both programs are offered virtually or in-person on campus in Barrie, Ontario. The ANPD is a two-year program designed to support community language program developers and instructors. Graduates receive an Ontario College Diploma, which does not grant enough credit hours for teacher certification (either for General Education or for Native Language Education, see Appendix E).²⁹

That this program does not qualify graduates for teacher certification is its primary drawback. Otherwise, it has many of the key ingredients for a successful Indigenous language immersion teacher training program: proficiency development, immersion pedagogy, educational principles and practices, and language practica.

The program is not offered in community via community partnerships, but it was designed through community consultation and Indigenous ways of knowing are embedded throughout the program. The remote delivery option offers flexibility. Whether in-community programming would be preferred by potential students is unclear.³⁰

5. Effective Strategies in ILITT Programming

The preceding section highlighted five promising Indigenous language programs in Canada, as identified through a simplified Pugh matrix that assumes ILITT programs are most effective when they meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Designed and delivered through community partnerships
- ✓ Flexible delivery (in-community and/or online)
- ✓ Includes proficiency development
- ✓ Includes (at least some) course delivery in the language

²⁸ [Begin your foundational journey to speaking and understanding Anishinaabemowin - Georgian College](#)

²⁹ [Requirements | Ontario College of Teachers \(oct.ca\)](#)

³⁰ OCIL research staff interviewed representatives from this program, who spoke highly of community engagement and centering of cultural values.

- ✓ Includes education courses
- ✓ Includes practicum opportunities
- ✓ Graduates are qualified for teacher certification
- ✓ Includes specialized training in immersion pedagogy

This section examines the criteria themselves by analysing findings of a descriptive literature review to determine what experts in Indigenous language immersion education identify as effective strategies in ILITT programming. A description of the methodology employed for the literature review is given in Appendix C and a bibliography is included in Appendix D.

5.1. Overview from the Literature Review

From the literature review, there are certain themes that emerge to define the key components of a successful ILITT program. Table 7 below lists effective strategies identified in the literature review for supporting teacher candidates in ILITT programs. These are listed in descending order according to their frequency of occurrence (for all papers) in the literature review. The frequencies of occurrence of each strategy in papers focused on Canada are also provided.

Table 7. Effective strategies identified in the literature review to support teacher candidates

Strategy	n total	% total	n Canada	% Canada
Ongoing professional development	39	29%	10	22%
Culturally responsive pedagogy	35	26%	12	26%
Mentorship	25	19%	6	13%
Flexible delivery (in-community, virtual or hybrid)	23	17%	10	22%
Networking opportunities	21	16%	6	13%
Program delivery in the language (full or partial)	16	12%	5	4%
Practicum opportunities	16	12%	3	2%
Program laddering	10	8%	3	2%
Land-based learning	8	6%	6	13%
Financial incentives or subsidies	8	6%	1	1%
Cohort-based program	4	3%	3	2%
Assessments of proficiency	3	2%	2	4%
Trauma-informed approach	2	2%	2	4%
Training resources for community instructors	2	2%	2	4%

In what follows, the most cited strategies (those with over 10 references in the literature review) are discussed in greater detail.

5.2. Ongoing Professional Development

Ongoing professional development – or what is sometimes referred to as “in-service training” – was the most frequently referenced strategy in the literature review, with nearly one-third of all papers discussing it as an important aspect of effective ILITT programming. Many spoke to the need for dedicated in-service training in immersion pedagogy, including theories and practical applications of second language acquisition (e.g., Lewis 2008; Siekmann et al 2017). Others addressed the importance of creating opportunities for teachers to continually advance their own language skills (e.g., May et al. 2004). Kipp (2000) states simply, “you can never train teachers enough. Summer institutes such as the University of Alberta’s CILLDI program provide opportunities for immersion teachers, but more dedicated programming for immersion teachers to hone specialized skill sets and to develop higher levels of proficiency in their languages are also needed. The additional qualification programs specific to Indigenous language teaching offered by Six Nations Polytechnic provide one good model that could be replicated in other communities and institutions. Moreover, professional learning communities (PLCs) can provide ongoing support for Indigenous language immersion teachers; this is further discussed in section 7.4.

5.3. Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy

Over one-quarter of references in the literature review discussed the importance of ILITT programming adopting a culturally-responsive pedagogy that honours Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Indigenous people and communities across Canada are not homogenous, and there isn’t one single way to respect and uphold Indigenous values in postsecondary programs. Protocols and practices are diverse and varied and are best understood and implemented through the guidance of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and other leaders and experts within communities. This speaks strongly to the need for community partnerships and Indigenous leadership in postsecondary programming. As we saw in section 3.1 above, 39% of Indigenous language programs in Canada are offered through formal partnerships, and an additional 30% are offered by an Indigenous institution. Partnerships are further addressed in section 7.1 below.

5.4. Flexible Program Delivery

Flexible models of program delivery, including online, in-community, or hybrid options were described as important aspects of effective ILITT programming by 17% of the papers in the literature review, and 22% that focused on Canadian programs. As noted in section 3, this is a feature that is already embedded in over 60% of Indigenous language programs in Canada, and all five of the promising programs discussed in section 4 include flexible delivery options. Just as implementing a culturally-responsive pedagogy is something that is best led by Indigenous communities, so is determining the best ways to support students through program delivery that meets their unique needs. Community partnerships can have logistical benefits, such as allowing postsecondary

programs to operate out of community spaces, and they can also open doors for communities to advise postsecondary institutions on when, where, and how programming is delivered so it meets student needs. Partnerships are further discussed in section 7.1.

5.5. Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

Teachers in training need ongoing opportunities for mentorship and networking with fellow educators. For immersion teachers, it can be challenging to stay in the language, particularly if they are not first language speakers themselves. There may also be vocabulary that is specific to certain school subjects that is not widely used in other settings. Even after completing their degree and going through stages of proficiency development training, teachers are seeking opportunities to advance their language skills (see, e.g., Lee-Morgan et al. 2019). Language mentors can help teachers and teachers in training to continue to grow their vocabulary and develop higher levels of language proficiency (see, e.g., Sampson 2014 for discussion).

It isn't just proficiency development for which teachers and teacher trainees are seeking mentors and collaborators. Indigenous language education (whether immersion or language-as-subject) is rarely supported with the same wealth of curricula and resources as mainstream language education, requiring educators to be innovative in their approach and creative in their capacity to develop materials or adapt existing ones. Hébert (2000) speaks to the isolation that many Indigenous language teachers experience, noting, "curriculum development, its implementation and evaluation, is a massive undertaking and cannot be done adequately in isolation. Ideally, curriculum developers are part of a team that may include members from both inside and outside the local cultural and educational communities."

Professional learning communities (PLCs) can provide the infrastructure for Indigenous language teachers to connect with mentors and other collaborators; this is further discussed in section 7.4.

5.6. Program Delivery in the Language

Although program delivery in the language was only discussed in 12% of the papers in the literature review, it is an important strategy to highlight. Notably, four of the five programs described in section 4 are confirmed to offer some course programming in the language, and it is yet unclear whether the fifth (UNB's Wabanaki B.Ed.) does too. Given that graduates of ILITT programs will be teaching in their languages, it seems natural that they should also receive their education in their languages (at least in part). This is a good way to establish and model patterns of language use, but it also provides opportunities for important cultural teachings to be imparted through the medium of the Indigenous language in question – which arguably is the only way to do so, as some concepts cannot be adequately explained through the medium of English or French. Indigenous language teachers and teachers-in-training are explicitly seeking ILITT programs that are offered in their languages; postsecondary institutions can respond to this need through community partnerships, which create

pathways for proficient speakers to be hired to teach or otherwise support teacher trainees in ILITT programs. (See section 6.5 on staffing and 7.1 on community partnerships.)

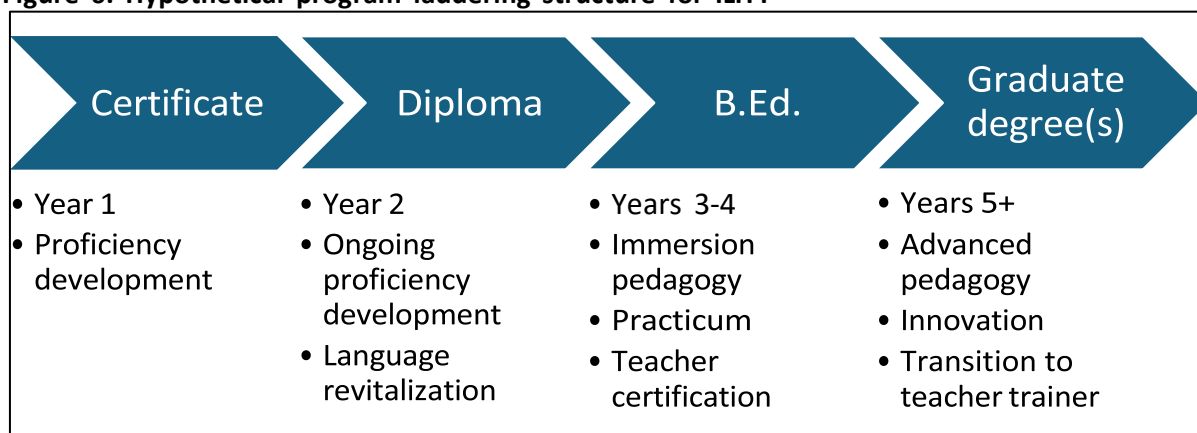
5.7. Practicum Opportunities

As noted in section 3.2, nearly half (48%) of existing Indigenous language teacher training programs in Canada provide students with practicum opportunities, something that was noted as an effective strategy by 12% of the papers in the literature review. Practica not only provide “hands-on” training for developing teachers, but they also support networking and mentorship (see section 5.5). Moreover, there is a strong correlation between practica and teacher certification; nine of the eleven programs in the environmental scan that qualify graduates for certification include a practicum component, and nearly all certifying bodies in Canada require a practicum for certification. See section 6.3 and Appendix E for more on teacher certification.

5.8. Program Laddering

Program laddering refers to a curriculum structure that includes multiple entry and exit points for students with different educational backgrounds and needs, allowing credentials to be earned at each stage. It provides a clear pathway for students to develop the requisite skills and knowledge to be successful Indigenous language educators, and provides customized training at every stage, including graduate degrees that qualify individuals to teach in postsecondary programs, which supports long-term program sustainability. A hypothetical laddering structure is depicted in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Hypothetical program laddering structure for ILITT



6. Roadblocks

This section discusses challenges or barriers that experts have identified in preventing the propagation of successful ILITT programs. Content in this section is drawn largely from the literature review, the methodology for which is described in Appendix C, with the bibliography provided in Appendix D.

6.1. Overview from the Literature Review

The literature review codes papers according to challenges or barriers in developing or implementing ILITT from two perspectives: that of the institution and that of the student. Regarding the former, 45% (n=60) of the papers in the literature review discuss challenges in ILITT from the institutional perspective. Considering only papers that focus on Canada, 41% (n=19) discuss challenges from the institutional perspective. The specific challenges are listed (in descending order of frequency of occurrence in all papers the literature review) in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Institutional challenges/barriers identified in the literature review

Challenge	n total	% total	n Canada	% Canada
Legislation and policy	30	23%	9	20%
Financial sustainability	22	17%	11	24%
Student recruitment	14	11%	5	11%
Staffing	13	10%	5	11%
Lack of resources	8	6%	3	7%
Geographic diversity	7	5%	3	7%
Linguistic diversity	5	4%	3	7%
Parity with mainstream programs	6	5%	1	2%
Challenges with assessment	6	5%	1	2%
Program not long/comprehensive enough	4	3%	0	0

44% (n=58) of the papers discuss challenges or barriers in developing or implementing ILITT from the student perspective. Regarding just papers that focus on Canada, 43% (n=20) of the papers discuss challenges from the learner perspective. The specific challenges are listed (in descending order of frequency of occurrence in the literature review) in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Student challenges/barriers identified in the literature review

Challenge	n total	% total	n Canada	% Canada
No specialized immersion training	22	17%	4	9%
Ideological mismatch (Western education)	16	12%	5	11%
Lack of cultural content	12	9%	5	11%
Program does not lead to adequate certification	10	8%	4	9%
Inadequate proficiency development opportunities	10	8%	1	2%
Time constraints (/lack of flexibility in programs)	7	5%	3	7%
Cultural safety	6	5%	3	7%
Financial barriers	5	4%	1	2%
Lack of community support	3	2%	2	4%
Geographic barriers	3	2%	1	2%
Lack of flexibility	2	2%	1	2%
Program delivery in majority language only	1	1%	1	2%
Limited job opportunities	1	1%	0	0
Challenges learning standardized orthography (for L1 oral speakers)	1	1%	0	0

In what follows, the most cited barriers identified in Tables 8 and 9 (those with over 10 references in the literature review) are discussed in greater detail.

6.2. Legislation and Policy

Legislation or policy was the most frequently cited institutional challenge identified in the literature review. The majority (n=23) listed government-level policy barriers that impact institutional capacities, including the following:

- i. Lasting impacts of assimilationist policies leading to conditions of language endangerment
- ii. Changes in government lead to inconsistencies in program offerings
- iii. Lack of government funding and infrastructure support for institutionalized ILITT program
- iv. Standardized accreditation policies that fail to recognize ILITT programs
- v. National or regional policies requiring dominant language literacy education

Points (i)-(iii) speak to the very existence of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, designed to provide advocacy and support for language revitalization and to liaise with government but be impervious to shifts in power. Point (iv) regards teacher certification, which is discussed in depth in section 6.3 and Appendix E. Point (v) is more relevant in the United States than Canada, but it is interesting to note the gap in policymakers' understandings about how Indigenous language immersion education can support academic achievement, including dominant language literacy (see section 2.3.2 for discussion).

Institutional policies were less frequently cited (n=4), and included the following:

- vi. Open enrolment policies at tribal colleges lead to inconsistent proficiency levels
- vii. Institutions failing to approve calendar listings of ILITT courses or programs

While point (vi) is less relevant in the Canadian context (with the tribal colleges in question being in the United States, point (vii) is relevant for Canadian institutions, many of which require multiple levels of review for approving new courses (academic departments, faculties, higher administration, and provincial or territorial Ministries for new programs). Approvals for very specific courses or programs that are anticipated to have low or sporadic enrolments may be difficult to achieve at some levels, particularly when institutional budgets are tied to enrolments. One solution to this bureaucratic barrier is to develop templatic programming that maps out a generic curriculum which can be customized for different communities' needs; this is further discussed in section 7.1.

Finally, several papers (n=9) discussed the lack of collaboration between governments, institutions, and other policymakers as a barrier in advancing ILITT programs. Many spoke to the need for action plans or implementation strategies that bring together legislative actors to best support the needs of Indigenous teachers and learners.

6.3. Teacher Certification

As noted in the preceding sub-section, the failure of regional accreditation bodies to recognize ILITT programs for their capacity to qualify graduates for teacher certification was described as a policy barrier by several authors in the literature review. In addition, 10% of the papers described lack of accreditation as a barrier for students in ILITT programs.

The solution to the accreditation problem is not simply to grant ILITT programs capacity to certify graduates, but rather to expand programs in such a way that they meet the benchmarks for certification, and more importantly that they provide adequate training in the skill sets that educators need to feel confident and supported teaching in Indigenous language immersion settings. Certification standards across Canada are summarized in Appendix E. The remainder of this section expands on the need for adequate training leading to certification, as well as the need for certification to reflect the realities of Indigenous language immersion teaching.

While 10% of papers in the literature review cited lack of accreditation as a barrier for students, other frequently cited barriers included a lack of specialized immersion training (17%), a lack of cultural content (9%), and inadequate opportunities for proficiency development (8%). Together, these findings suggest that many existing ILITT programs are too short or otherwise lack the comprehensiveness needed to adequately prepare Indigenous language immersion teachers. This was also cited as an institutional barrier in 4% of the papers. Meanwhile, as noted in section 5.2, 29% of the papers list ongoing professional development as an important measure of success, suggesting

that, even with a comprehensive ILITT program leading to certification, professional skill-building and proficiency development are ongoing needs of Indigenous language immersion educators.³¹

De Korne (2013) notes that Indigenous language teacher certification policies tend to focus on allocations of authority, rather than benchmarks of success, and when benchmarks of success are specified, they are often vague. However, De Korne argues that, without benchmarks of success, Indigenous language teachers do not have the same opportunities to demonstrate their language proficiency and teaching competencies as do teachers of “mainstream” languages (see also Laurin 2018)³². The solution, it seems, is to empower Indigenous-based certifying bodies to specify their own benchmarks of success, something that is indeed happening in some jurisdictions, and something that is strongly advocated for by Chew & Tennell (2022), amongst others. Initiatives such as community-based ACTFL training or implementing community-customized proficiency measures are also a good step in the direction of establishing and implementing benchmarks.

In many places across the globe, there are persistent concerns around inequities in pay, short-term and unstable placements, lack of respect, and lack of opportunities for integration into mainstream professional networks for Indigenous language teachers. This is particularly the case in jurisdictions where certification is rigidly defined, but exceptions are made for Indigenous language teachers whose experience and expertise don’t fit the mainstream mold.

Moreover, in many jurisdictions, existing certification pathways do not align with community language goals. Wilson & Kawai'ae'a (2007) describe the challenges in compelling the Hawai'i Department of Education to view Hawai'ian medium education as its own unique category, rather than treat it the same as other foreign language programs. They argue that licensing and certification standards follow from ideology, and it is important to get this right (see also Tulloch et al. 2022). One of the areas where misalignment between certification policies and community goals is perhaps more likely is literacy; whereas some communities may choose to prioritize oral language skills, English-based biases can influence mainstream policies (see Gillies & Battiste 2013).

One final point to note is that many Indigenous language programs do not create pathways towards teacher certification, and it can be challenging for potential teachers to navigate what training they need (see Laurin 2018). This highlights the importance of mentorship and collaboration, as well community partnerships, which can provide information and guidance to help teacher candidates navigate postsecondary systems.

³¹ Notably, the need for ongoing in-service training for immersion teachers is not restricted to Indigenous immersion teachers. A recent report* on the gaps in French immersion teacher training in Canada found that the French immersion teacher shortage is in large part a problem of retention, as teachers not feeling supported with their ongoing professional development needs, including language proficiency. See sections 6.7 and 7.3 for more on French immersion.

*Arnott, S., Smith, C. W., Battistuzzi, A., Culligan, K., Dicks, J., Kristmanson, P., Masson, M., Spiliotopoulos, V., & Wernicke, M. (2023). *Identifying requirements and gaps in French as a second language (FSL) Teacher Education: Recommendations and guidelines (research report)*. Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

³² While De Korne’s work is focused on the United States, Laurin’s is centered in Manitoba and his findings are drawn from interviews with Indigenous language teachers in the province.

6.4. Financial Sustainability and Funding

Financial sustainability was the second most frequently cited barrier from the institutional perspective, referenced in 22% of the papers in the literature review. Meanwhile, from the student perspective, funding was cited as a concern in only 4% of the papers. The fact that student funding is cited only infrequently in the literature review may reflect growth in funding opportunities for Indigenous students such as the Government of Canada's Post-Secondary Student Support Program (or PSSSP)³³. A 2022 survey by Universities Canada³⁴ found that over 90% of universities in Canada also provide financial aid specifically earmarked for Indigenous students. While student funding remains an important consideration, the remainder of this section focuses on institutional concerns around financial sustainability, as this was the more frequently cited barrier in the literature review.

Most of these papers mention inadequate funding for program development but do not provide specific analyses or details about funding shortfalls. One exception is Hobson (2014), who describes the challenges of compelling postsecondary administrators to approve Indigenous language programs that may not be profitable or even net-neutral for the institution. The funding formula for postsecondary programs is typically based on a calculation of FTEs (full-time enrolments, or the equivalent thereof), and Indigenous language programs, by design, tend to draw from a small pool of students, none or few of whom are international students, whose high tuition fees offset program expenses. Moreover, there may be at least a perception of extra expenses associated with community-based programming, including facility costs, travel expenses for visiting faculty and staff, compensation for Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and the like.

Medow (2018)³⁵ finds that the per-FTE expenses for a Canadian postsecondary institution to deliver a program vary considerably, from around \$22,000 up to \$68,000. Programs with lower enrolments offered in more remote venues tend towards the higher end of that scale. However, these factors are only piece of the larger puzzle, and as Hobson (2014) notes, universities may be driven to support Indigenous language programs in part because they have the potential to raise the profile of the institution. In the Canadian context, postsecondary institutions are motivated to support Indigenous rights to education; Universities Canada finds that 97% of Canadian postsecondary institutions are working to integrate Indigenous knowledge, and 72% have partnerships with Indigenous communities.³⁶

Beyond just the sociopolitical motivations for offering Indigenous programming, there may be financial reasons that feed into the funding formulae used to calculate per-FTE costs for individual programs. Statistics Canada reports that, on average, tuition accounts for less than 30% of university revenues, with the large bulk of revenues comes from federal and provincial or territorial

³³ [Post-Secondary Student Support Program](#)

³⁴ [UC-2023-Survey-Indigenous-Education-Reconciliation-EN.pdf](#)

³⁵ [1-First-Nations-Post-Secondary-Education-Review---Institutions-Costing..... pdf](#)

³⁶ [UC-2023-Survey-Indigenous-Education-Reconciliation-EN.pdf](#)

governments³⁷ (see also the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario for a report³⁸ with similar findings). Although government funding may ebb and flow (see section 6.2), the fact that governments are a primary revenue source for postsecondary institutions means that advocacy can be directed towards governments, who have legally-mandated responsibilities to uphold Indigenous rights to language.

Moreover, as demonstrated throughout this report, there is indeed a high demand for ILITT programs. And unlike canonical postsecondary programs, Indigenous language programs that are offered through university-community partnerships are uniquely positioned to explore alternative funding models that are not dependent on tuition fees from enrolments. For example, both the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University have service agreements with partnering communities that outline community's per-course financial agreements to the university, which do not vary based on enrolments. These can be customized based on community's needs and capacities; some may not require the university to hire instructors directly or they may have classroom space in community that doesn't require extra expenditures. Communities can also seek their own funding sources, including the Government of Canada's Post-Secondary Partnership Program (PSPP)³⁹.

In short, although cited as an institutional barrier in the literature review, there is no a priori reason to assume that Indigenous language programs are not financially sustainable for universities. The per-community costing model allows for flexibility, including in terms of enrolment numbers. And with templatic programming such as that described in 7.1, universities can design course and program shells that can be adapted to diverse community needs, which is both cost-effective and scalable.

6.5. Staffing

Staffing was the fourth most frequently cited institutional barrier in the literature review, discussed in 10% of the papers reviewed. A concern in some contexts is the typical requirement for instructors to have graduate-level (i.e., Master's or PhD) training to teach for postsecondary institutions (see, e.g., Wilson 2018 for discussion). A work-around discussed in several papers is to acknowledge lived experience and cultural/linguistic expertise as credentials for community-based instructors (see, e.g., Bear Nicholas 2009; Czaykowska-Higgins 2017). This is particularly achievable when communities are directly involved in hiring instructors for ILITT programs. Institutions such as Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of Victoria (UVic), whose Indigenous language programs are offered in partnership with communities, are good models: community-based sessional instructors are hired based on recommendations from community; at SFU, depending on community needs, instructors can be onboarded as SFU employees, or as employees of the community in question.

³⁷ [Who pays for a university education? - Statistics Canada](#)

³⁸ [Contextual-Background-to-the-Ontario-University-Funding-Formula-English.pdf](#)

³⁹ [Post-Secondary Partnerships Program: National Guidelines](#)

Even if institutions recognize alternative credentials, instructors need training resources and other supports to navigate the complexities and bureaucracies of teaching postsecondary institutions. Czaykowska-Higgins et al. (2017) describe a teaching package designed for community-based sessional instructors in the UVic programs that includes guidelines on various topics including class activities, feedback and assessment and also includes course shells that can be populated with content for different languages. See section 7.2, as well as Johns & Mazurkewich (2001) for further details.

Beyond training resources, sessional instructors are often mentored and supported by regular full-time faculty, sometimes even in co-teaching arrangements, depending on the respective instructors' expertise. It is important this work be acknowledged by institutions as part of faculty's regular workload; if regular faculty are mentoring or co-teaching sessional instructors on top of their other teaching, research, and administrative duties, there is a risk of burnout. Teaching releases that allow regular faculty to focus their energies on mentoring community-based instructors is one way that postsecondary institutions can acknowledge the importance of this work and compensate faculty for the workload. Sufficient support staff are required as well.

One final point to note is that, although hiring community-based sessional instructors with alternative credentials can be an effective short-term strategy for programs that are offered only sporadically (e.g., on a cohort basis to build capacity in small communities), other hiring strategies are also needed. Sessional instructors are hired on a contract basis without long-term job security or stability, and their compensation is far less than that of a regular faculty member. Postsecondary institutions need to prioritize hiring of tenure-track faculty to develop, oversee, and teach in Indigenous language programs. Moreover, as noted in section 3, there are only eight graduate programs specializing in Indigenous languages in Canada (five Master's and three PhD programs). There is a need for more graduate-level training opportunities in Indigenous languages (and especially Indigenous language education) to generate a workforce who can lead ILITT programs.

6.6. Proficiency Development

Lee-Morgan et al. (2019) surveyed graduates of initial teacher training programs for Māori immersion programs in New Zealand, and they found that, across the board, graduates are less confident in their Māori language skills than in English. Nine other papers in the literature review similarly report that the proficiency development training that is provided through ILITT programs is insufficient for those teaching in immersion settings. Most of this discourse is focused on the need for advanced proficiency training; beginner and intermediate language skills are often developed through ILITT programs, but there is simply inadequate time in these programs for students to develop higher levels of proficiency. This speaks to the need for ongoing professional development, mentorship, and networking – hallmarks of effective programs discussed in section 5.

6.7. Specialized Immersion Training

McCaffery (2010) notes that immersion education is “a major professional field with its own professional knowledge and expertise, similar to other curriculum areas.” Evidence of this is found in the wealth of teacher training programs and professional development opportunities for French immersion teachers in Canada; Arnott et al. (2023)⁴⁰ note that every province in Canada has postsecondary programming with some form of FSL (French as a Second Language) specialization, and most also offer specialized Pro-D series for French immersion teachers.

However, although language immersion is a well-established specialization within the broader domain of education, Indigenous language immersion educators are rarely afforded the opportunity to receive targeted training in this specialization. This gap in ILITT programming was the most cited challenge in the literature review, with 22% of papers discussing this gap. As discussed in section 3.2, there are only five Indigenous language programs in Canada that provide specialized training in immersion pedagogy, and only one of those five is explicitly focused on immersion, with the remaining four offering limited coursework on the topic.

May & Hill (2005) advocate for specialized training, not only in immersion pedagogy, but also in curriculum and material development for immersion and language assessment. They argue that this requires pre-service (/initial) and in-service (/professional development) training in the following areas:

- Bilingual theory and research
- Second language acquisition and development
- Instructional strategies in second language development
- Bicultural, multicultural, and educational equity
- Cooperative learning strategies

The breadth of this list speaks for itself. Indigenous language immersion teachers receive little if any specialized training in immersion – but clearly there are many theoretical and practical aspects to the field that are needed to support their success. This is further discussed in section 7.3.

6.8. Ideology, Cultural Content, and Cultural Safety

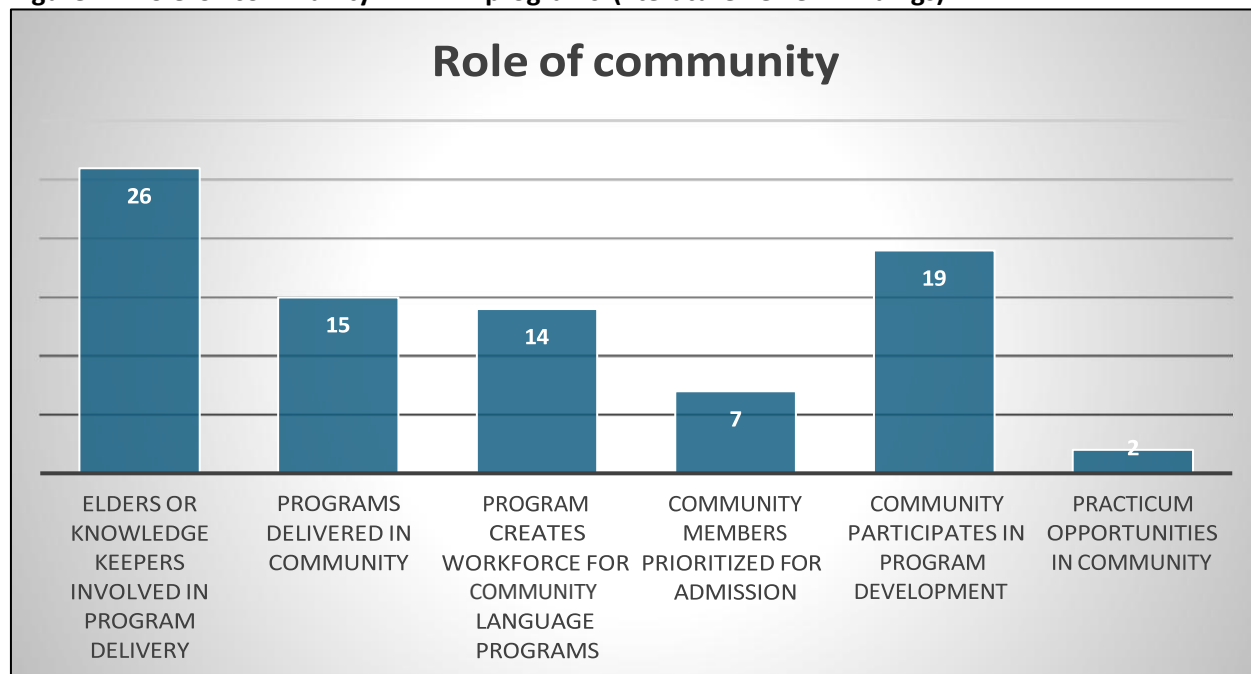
16% of the papers in the literature review identified ideological mismatches as a barrier for students, 9% listed a lack of culture content, and 5% listed issues with cultural safety. Together, these findings speak to a strong need for community-university partnerships in which the content and delivery of

⁴⁰ Arnott, S., Smith, C. W., Battistuzzi, A., Culligan, K., Dicks, J., Kristmanson, P., Masson, M., Spiliotopoulos, V., & Wernicke, M. (2023). *Identifying requirements and gaps in French as a second language (FSL) Teacher Education: Recommendations and guidelines (research report)*. Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

ILITT programs can be adapted to community needs and led by community-based educators with expertise in cultural teachings.

Adapting a program to community needs means that ILITT programs across Canada can and should be diverse, reflecting the diverse cultural and linguistic identities of Indigenous nations. The literature review identified several different roles for communities to play in ILITT programs, as summarized in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Role of community in ILITT programs (literature review findings)



Adapting to community needs also means that other student barriers such as geography (2%) and lack of program flexibility (2%) can be addressed. Moreover, the institutional barrier of student recruitment can be addressed by providing a community-rooted program that meets the cultural needs of students. As noted in section 4, successful programs are often defined by a culturally responsive pedagogy (26%), flexible delivery models (17%), program delivery in the language (12%), and land-based learning (6%).

6.9 Student Recruitment

Student recruitment was the third most frequently cited institutional barrier in the literature review, cited in 11% of all papers. As noted in the preceding sub-section, programs developed and delivered through community partnerships can be an effective strategy to address a lack of student interest, as such programs can meet the cultural and logistical needs of students. Moreover, researchers have observed that student recruitment issues are tied to hegemonic perspectives that Indigenous language education is somehow less valuable a career path than mainstream education (e.g., Bear

Nicholas 2009, Michel 2012). Breaking this cycle requires not only a “top down” strategy of creating new programs but also a “bottom up” strategy of encouraging and educating Indigenous youth and other potential ILITT students through other types of language programs and initiatives. This again underpins the message that ILITT – and K-12 immersion education – must be embedded within the context of broader community-driven plan to holistically support language revitalization.

7. Moving Forward

This section serves as a summary and conclusion for the report by reviewing key highlights that emerge as best practices for advancing ILITT programming in Canada.

7.1. University-Community Partnerships

Partnerships have been a major theme throughout this report. With the possible exception of Indigenous-run postsecondary institutions, universities are not equipped to make decisions about how best to serve Indigenous communities. Indigenous leadership is a fundamental requirement in designing and implementing ILITT programs, and the best way to ensure that Indigenous leaders have decision-making capacities is for postsecondary institutions to partner with communities.

When ILITT programs are community-designed and led, Indigenous students’ cultural needs can be nourished, and their cultural safety protected. Indigenous ways of knowing and being can be guiding factors in the development and implementation of the curriculum, and the diverse ideologies and belief systems of Indigenous communities can be respected and upheld.

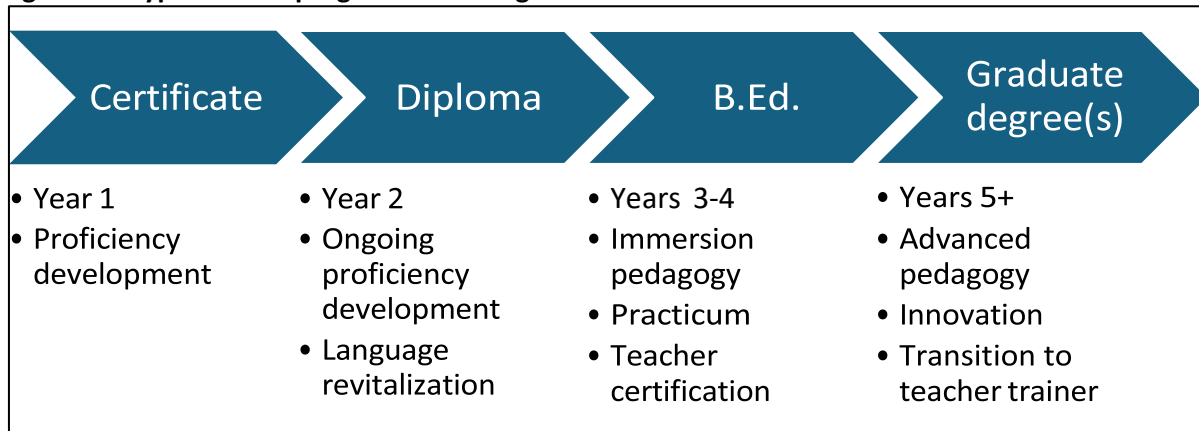
Postsecondary institutions can ensure that ILITT programs adequately prepare graduates for teaching careers by structuring programs such that they meet regional standards for teacher certification. They allow communities to customize programming to their own needs by creating templatic curricula with course shells that can be adapted to each community’s unique context. This reduces the bureaucratic challenges of seeking approval for new courses or programs while still supporting community autonomy to oversee the implementation of curriculum. It also allows programs to be scaled up and offered to increasing numbers of communities, which addresses concerns about program sustainability and funding.

There are also logistical reasons for ILITT programs to operate in partnership, such as community’s capacities to recruit staff and students, provide in-community courses (including land-based programming), and to schedule courses and practica in such a way that students’ needs are best met. Elders and other Knowledge Keepers can take part in program delivery, and courses in community can be more readily offered through the medium of the Indigenous language of the land.

7.2. Flexible and Customizable Curricula

The environmental scan identified over 100 Indigenous language programs in Canada, focusing on diverse and much needed areas such as proficiency development, language documentation and revitalization, linguistics, language and culture, and teacher training. Half of these are certificate programs, which are typically short-term (1 year or less), and from a bird’s eye perspective, it is conceivable to imagine stringing together short-term programs to provide a comprehensive Indigenous language education. However, only 27% of the institutions in the scan provide laddering structures that provide clear pathways for students who want to complete a series of accreditations that focus on Indigenous languages. A hypothetical laddering structure was presented in Figure 6 above and is repeated below.

Figure 6. Hypothetical program laddering structure for ILITT



This type of laddering structure is ideal, as it provides multiple entry and exit points for students. Those who are beginner learners can focus on proficiency development and later transition into theory and practice in language revitalization and language teaching, while those who already have some language proficiency may choose to enter at a later stage. Some will choose to conclude their postsecondary journey with a diploma or Bachelor’s degree, whereas others will go to graduate school. Laddered programming provides students with options, which helps generate a diverse language workforce, and can drive enrolments, leading to long-term program sustainability.

Laddered programming is one way to ensure flexibility in program offerings. Another is to develop curriculum frameworks with course shells, or templates, that can be adapted for individual communities’ needs. These curriculum frameworks may include customizable templates – or course shells- for the following instructional components:

- Learning outcomes
- Unit and lesson plans
- Classroom activities
- Assessment tools
- Readings and resources

Universities can be good allies by ensuring that programs are structured to meet regional standards for teacher certification while still allowing customization by community partners. This affords community-based instructors the flexibility to design programs that appropriately transmit the knowledge contained within their languages. Moreover, these frameworks can streamline approval processes and even budgets for postsecondary institutions; a single (but customizable) framework for a series of courses is simpler to implement at the institutional level than various different programs for different communities.

7.3. Immersion Specializations

There is one program in Canada that specializes in Indigenous language immersion education – the Native Language Immersion Teaching Certificate Program offered by St. Thomas University. While commendable in its focus, as noted in section 4.2, this program does not include a practicum component and it provides limited teacher certification. This example highlights the gap in ILITT programming in Canada: there is an urgent need for trained and certified Indigenous language immersion teachers who are proficient in their Indigenous languages and have specialized expertise in immersion pedagogy. Section 6.7 outlined the complexity of this specialization, which underpins its importance and the fact that existing programs are not providing enough focus in this area. Designing Indigenous language teacher programs to provide a concentrated focus on immersion pedagogy is a key need, and postsecondary curriculum designers should look to existing expertise in this area by liaising with the academic community of second language education.⁴¹

7.4. Professional Learning Communities

Professional development was the most frequently cited effective strategy for ILITT programming in the literature review, and opportunities for mentorship and professional networking were also frequently cited. Providing teachers with ongoing opportunities to learn together and from each other supports proficiency development and innovation in terms of curriculum and resource development, teaching strategies, and assessment. Indigenous language immersion is a specialized field – and Indigenous language immersion teachers need infrastructure and support to connect as a specialized community.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) can bring Indigenous language immersion teachers together to share resources, ideas, challenges and triumphs, and to collectively develop and advance best practices in this growing field. Providing the infrastructure for PLCs to flourish across Canada falls within the mandate of OCIL and is one concrete step that OCIL can take to support ILITT programming.

⁴¹ e.g., [Homepage - Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers \(CASLT\)](#)

7.5. Next Steps

This report has demonstrated a clear need for Indigenous Language Immersion Teacher Training (ILITT) programs. We have seen that immersion education has numerous far-reaching benefits, especially when it is integrated in broader community-led language revitalization initiatives. There are many good examples of promising practices in Indigenous language education, but there remains a paucity of programs that provide opportunities for Indigenous educators to acquire the language proficiency, pedagogical skills, and regional teaching certifications they need. While the need for such programs is clear, the pathway to achieve this goal is complex, with many steps along the way. Postsecondary partnerships that focus on flexible and customizable programming that includes immersion specializations and professional learning communities is a good place to start.

Appendix A. Environmental Scan: Scope and Methodology

The objective of the environmental scan is twofold. First, its aim is to develop a comprehensive list of all accredited Indigenous language programs offered by postsecondary institutions in Canada. Second, the scan aims to provide high-level information on features of these programs to facilitate a comparative analysis of programs and to identify gaps in the postsecondary landscape for Indigenous language immersion teacher training (ILITT).

The scan was conducted in May through October 2024 and is limited to accredited postsecondary programs in Canada that were described by the institution during that timeframe as being currently (or recently) offered. Isolated language courses that do not comprise an Indigenous language program resulting in accreditation are not included in the scan, but it is noteworthy that many postsecondary institutions offer Indigenous language courses.

At present, the scan is restricted to programs with a focus on Indigenous languages. In the future, it may be useful to expand the scan to include Indigenous cultural programs, and/or language pedagogy or language immersion programs that are either focused on other languages (e.g., French) or not focused on a particular language or group of languages.

A preliminary list of programs was compiled by OCIL staff, and then this list was cross-checked against other trusted databases listing postsecondary programs, such as those made publicly accessible and searchable by provincial or territorial ministries responsible for postsecondary education. These are listed in Table 10 below.

Table 10. List of postsecondary program databases by province/territory

Province/territory	Ministry	Program Databases
British Columbia	Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills	Start your search (educationplannerbc.ca)
Alberta	Advanced Education	Explore Post-Secondary Programs - alis (alberta.ca)
Saskatchewan	Advanced Education	n/a
Manitoba	Advanced Education and Training	n/a
Ontario	Colleges and Universities	Programs ontariocolleges.ca ; Browse by Category – OUInfo
Quebec	l'Enseignement supérieur	n/a
Nova Scotia	Advanced Education	n/a
New Brunswick	Postsecondary Education, Training, and Labour	n/a
Prince Edward Island	Workforce, Advanced Education, and Population	n/a
Newfoundland	Education ; Postsecondary Education Branch	n/a
Yukon	Education	n/a
Northwest Territories	Education, Culture, and Employment	n/a
Nunavut	Education	n/a

In each of these databases, additional programs were identified using the search term “Indigenous language.” The results of this search method were not comprehensive. For example, a search of the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education database produces only three programs at Blue Quills University, none which are language-related, but we know that Blue Quills provides Cree and Dene language programs.

The second method used to identify programs is to scan lists of programs by institution. A list of all postsecondary institutions in Canada, organized by province and territory, is published and regularly updated by Employment and Social Development Canada.⁴² Institutions with a focus outside the scope of this project (e.g., Alkan Air Flight Training in the Yukon) were excluded, as are those not located in the country. For the remaining institutions, their lists of programs were accessed from the institutional website and scanned for candidates to include in the scan.

The resulting list includes 103 programs, as listed in Appendix B.

A list of questions was developed to evaluate each program’s proximity to an “ideal” ILITT program. The questions address issues including training focus, community involvement, program design, delivery and length, staffing, accreditation, student support services, funding and networking opportunities, and student outcomes. OCIL research staff engaged a subset of program representatives to respond to a questionnaire or participate in a virtual meeting. This work resulted in comprehensive and nuanced data for a small subset of the 103 programs in the scan. Additional web-based research filled in the gaps to provide a high-level overview of key aspects of all programs to facilitate quantitative and comparative analyses (see section 3), and to develop a simplified Pugh matrix to identify promising programs (see section 4).

⁴² [List of designated educational institutions - Canada.ca](#)

Appendix B. List of Indigenous Language Programs

Table 11 below lists the 103 Indigenous language programs identified through the environmental scan. See section 3 for discussion, and Appendix A for a description of the methodology used to develop the scan. Note that the scan was completed in October 2024; programs launched after that time are not included here.

Table 11. Indigenous language programs in Canada

Program	Institution	Accreditation ⁴³
Anishinaabemowin	Algoma University	B.A.
Native Languages	Brandon University	B.A. (Minor)
Certificate in Indigenous Language	Brock University	Certificate
Lil'wat Nation Language and Culture	Capilano University	Certificate
Sechelt Nation Language and Culture	Capilano University	Certificate
Oneida Language Immersion, Culture, and Teaching	Fanshawe College	Diploma
Paswe'aatigook Anishinaabemowin Language Foundations	Fanshawe College	Diploma
Bachelor of Education: Indigenous Languages	First Nations Technical Institute	B.Ed.
Teacher of an Indigenous Language	First Nations Technical Institute	Certificate
First Nations Language Instructor	First Nations University	Certificate
Anishnaabemowin and Program Development	Georgian College	Diploma
Maajii-Anishnaabemdaa	Georgian College	Certificate
Early Childhood Education Anishinaabemowin	Kenjgewin Teg	Diploma
Arts, Literature and Communication - First Nations Languages	Kiuna College	Diploma
Indigenous Language Instructors Program	Lakehead University	Diploma
Anishinaabemowin Land-Based Immersion	Laurentian University	Certificate
Cree Language Teacher Development	Maskwacis Cultural College	Certificate
Indigenous Bachelor of Arts in Cree Language	Maskwacis Cultural College	B.A.
Indigenous Language Revitalization	McGill University	PhD
Indigenous Language Revitalization	McGill University	M.A.
Indigenous Language and Literacy Education	McGill University	Certificate
Bachelor of Education for Nunatsiavut	Memorial University of Newfoundland	B.Ed.

⁴³ AQ = Additional Qualifications (for certified teachers); B.A. = Bachelor of Arts; B.Ed. = Bachelor of Education; M.A. = Master of Arts; M.Ed. = Master of Education

Modern Languages (Inuittut)	Memorial University of Newfoundland	B.A.
Indigenous Language and Culture	Mi'kai'sto Red Crow Community College	Diploma
Certificate of Mi'kmaq Studies	Mount Allison University	Certificate
Advanced Diploma in Indigenous Language Teaching	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	Diploma
First Nations Language Proficiency	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	Certificate
Indigenous Language Proficiency	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	Diploma
Teacher of Indigenous Language as a Second Language	Nipissing University	Certificate
Awi'nakola	North Island College	Certificate
Indigenous Language Fluency	North Island College	Certificate
Interpreter/Translator Program	Nunavut Arctic College	Certificate
Indigenous Languages and Cultures	Queens University	Certificate
Mohawk Language and Culture	Queens University	Certificate
Indigenous Language	Red River College	Certificate
Anishinaabemowin Immersion	Sault College	Certificate
First Nations Language Proficiency	Simon Fraser University	Diploma
Indigenous Language Proficiency	Simon Fraser University	Certificate
Indigenous Languages and Linguistics	Simon Fraser University	Graduate Certificate
Indigenous Languages and Linguistics	Simon Fraser University	M.A.
Indigenous Languages and Linguistics	Simon Fraser University	B.A. (Minor)
Bachelor of Arts in Ogwehoweh Languages (BAOL)	Six Nations Polytechnic	B.A.
Teaching Cayuga	Six Nations Polytechnic	A.Q.
Teaching Mohawk	Six Nations Polytechnic	A.Q.
Teaching Ojibwe	Six Nations Polytechnic	A.Q.
Maliseet Language Immersion	St. Thomas University	Certificate
Native Language Immersion Teaching Certificate	St. Thomas University	Certificate
Kenanow Bachelor of Education	University College of the North	B.Ed.
Teaching ininimowin	University College of the North	Certificate
Dene Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	B.A.
Dene Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	Certificate
Dene Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	Diploma
Early Learning and Childcare levels 2-3	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	Diploma
Indigenous Languages	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	M.A.
iyiniw pimâtisiwin kiskeyihtamowin	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	PhD
nêhiyawêwin Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	B.A.

nêhiyawêwin Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	Certificate
nêhiyawêwin Language	University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills	Diploma
CILLDI Community Linguist Certificate	University of Alberta	Certificate
First Nations and Endangered Languages	University of British Columbia	B.A.
Nte?kepmxcín, Nsyilxcn or St'át'imc Language Fluency	University of British Columbia Okanagan	B.A.
Mi'kmaq Studies	University of Cape Breton	B.A.
Minor in Indigenous Languages	University of Manitoba	B.A. (Minor)
Innu Language	University of Montréal	Micro-credential
Wabanaki Bachelor of Education	University of New Brunswick	B.Ed.
Education Diploma in First Nations Language and Culture	University of Northern British Columbia	Diploma
First Nations Language Certificate	University of Northern British Columbia	Certificate
First Nations Languages Diploma	University of Northern British Columbia	Diploma
Nisga'a Language Fluency	University of Northern British Columbia	B.A.
Nisga'a Language Fluency	University of Northern British Columbia	Certificate
Nisga'a Language Fluency	University of Northern British Columbia	Diploma
Indigenous Technolinguistics	University of Québec at Chicoutimi	Certificate
Advanced Training in Native Language Transmission	University of Québec at Chicoutimi	Certificate
Learning an Indigenous Language	University of Québec at Chicoutimi	Certificate
Teaching Algonquian Language	University of Québec at Trois-Rivières	Micro-credential
Indigenous Language Education	University of Regina	M.Ed.
Extended Studies in First Nations Language	University of Regina / First Nations University	AQ
Indigenous Language Guardianship	University of Regina / First Nations University	Certificate
Indigenous Languages	University of Regina / First Nations University	B.A.
Indigenous Languages	University of Regina / First Nations University	Certificate
Indigenous Teacher Education; First Nations Languages	University of Regina / First Nations University	B.Ed. (Minor)
Indigenous Languages	University of Saskatchewan	Certificate
Language Teacher Education Program (LTEP)	University of Saskatchewan	B.Ed.
Aboriginal Culture and Language Support	University of the Fraser Valley	Diploma
Halq'eméylem Graduate Certificate	University of the Fraser Valley	Graduate Certificate
Halq'eméylem Graduate Diploma	University of the Fraser Valley	Graduate Diploma
Halq'eméylem Intermediate Proficiency	University of the Fraser Valley	Certificate
Stó:lō Studies	University of the Fraser Valley	Certificate
Indigenous Language Documentation	University of Victoria	Micro-credential
Indigenous Language Proficiency	University of Victoria	Certificate

Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	Certificate
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	Diploma
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	PhD
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	B.Ed.
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	Graduate Certificate
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Victoria	M.A./M.Ed.
Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Languages	University of Winnipeg	B.A.
Indigenous Language Learning	University of Winnipeg	Certificate
Indigenous Language Revitalization	University of Winnipeg	Certificate
Teaching Indigenous Languages for Vitality	University of Winnipeg	Certificate
Indigenous Language Revitalization	Yellowhead Tribal College	B.A.
Indigenous Language Revitalization	Yellowhead Tribal College	Certificate
Indigenous Language Revitalization	Yellowhead Tribal College	Diploma

Appendix C. Literature Review: Scope and Methodology

The objective of the literature review is to synthesize qualitative data on effective strategies and best practices in teacher training and accreditation for Indigenous language immersion programs. The data is drawn from academic and government-sponsored research papers with a focus on Indigenous language immersion education programs and the training or professional development pathways for educators in said programs. The geographical scope of the literature review is global, as there are numerous well-documented Indigenous education programs in places such as New Zealand, Hawai'i and Norway. Papers published between 1990 and 2024 are included in the review.

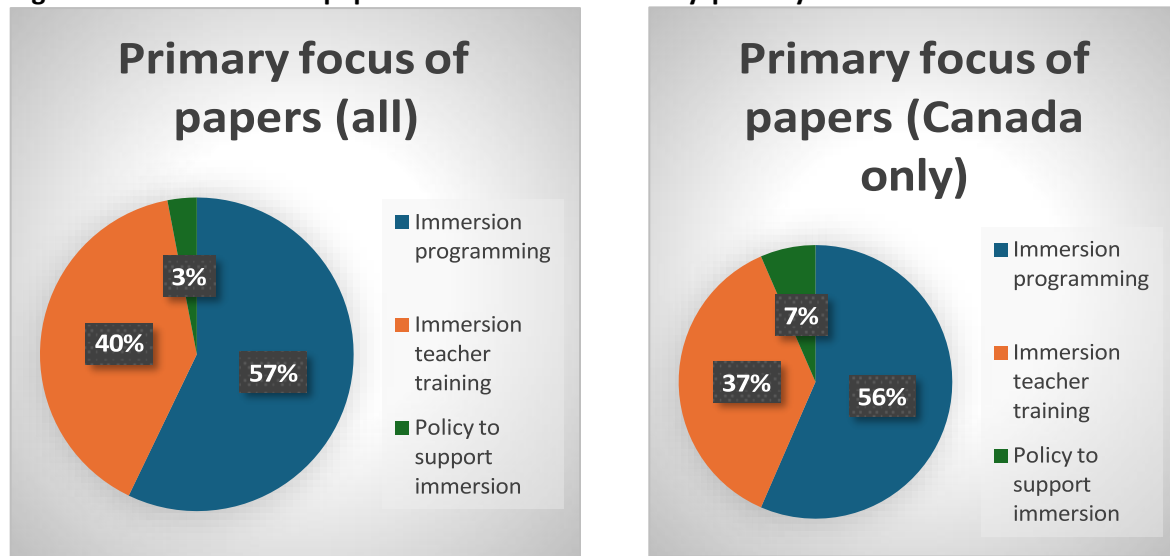
The library of papers was compiled in May-July 2024; papers published after that time are not included in the scan. The procedure for compiling the library of papers for review is as follows. A preliminary list of papers was identified from the researcher's own collection and supplemented with papers identified through a search of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library database using the search terms defined below.

- a. "Indigenous language immersion"
- b. "Language {immersion / medium} education & ""{Indigenous / Aboriginal / Cree / Ojibwe / Anishnaabemowin / Nishnaabemwin / Mohawk / Kanyen'kéha / Kanien'kéha / Hawaiian / Māori / Welsh / Gaelic / Sámi / Saami / Mi'kmaw / Mi'kmaq / Mi'gmaw / Mi'gmaq}"

The search terms in (1b) allowed for sources specific to individual Indigenous languages to be identified, particularly those with established language revitalization programs. Once the preliminary list was identified, a snowball strategy was applied, with the bibliographies of the papers in the list being searched for additional sources to include, iteratively until a comprehensive list has been compiled. As noted by Meighan (2021),⁴⁴ the snowball strategy is an effective and decolonizing approach rooted in Indigenous research methodologies, as it "decenters results determined by colonial and Western library knowledge organization systems alone" (p. 398). This methodology resulted in a library of 133 papers, the primary foci of which are summarized in Figure 8.

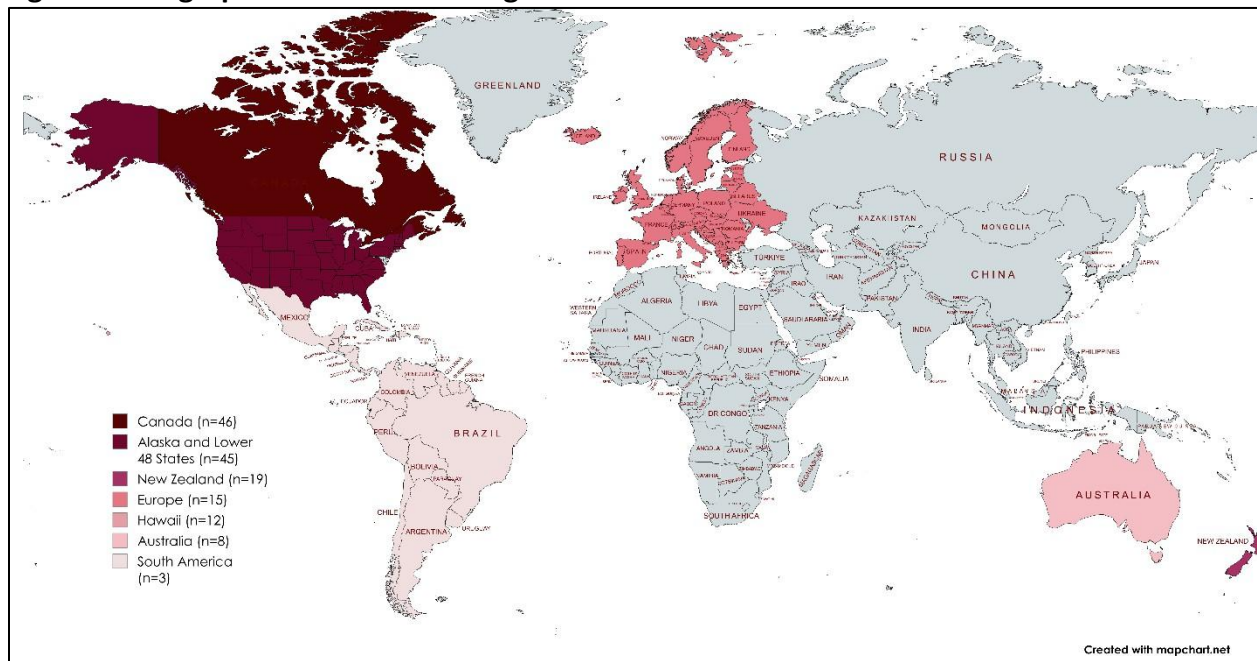
⁴⁴ Meighan, Paul J. 2021. Decolonizing the digital landscape: The role of technology in Indigenous language revitalization. *AlterNative* 17(3): 397-405.

Figure 8. Distribution of papers in literature review by primary focus



Regarding the geographic coverage of the papers, 33% (n=46) include discussions of programming, training, and policy in Canada, and other regions discussed include the United States, New Zealand, Europe, Hawaii⁴⁵, Australia, and Central and South America. The distribution of papers by geographic region is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Geographic distribution of regions discussed in literature review



⁴⁵ Hawaii is listed separately from the other 49 U.S. states because Hawaii is the only state with a comprehensive Indigenous language immersion education system.

The methodological framework for analysing the papers in the library takes the form of a descriptive review, in which relevant content from the papers is extracted and organized according to themes and codes, allowing common patterns to emerge. The themes and codes were identified as papers were reviewed; a total of thirteen themes were identified, with five to fifteen codes for each theme. The themes are listed in Table 12, with select example codes for each.

Table 12. Themes and codes identified in literature review

Themes	Codes (select examples)
Training program focus	Language revitalization; proficiency development; language-as-subject education; language-as-medium education
Credentials earned	Certificate; Bachelor’s degree; teacher certification; other professional certification
Pre-requisites for admission	High school diploma; language proficiency; community membership; professional experience
Laddering options	Proficiency certificate to diploma; diploma to degree
Programs supported by training	Additive immersion; maintenance immersion; bilingual; language-as-subject
Outcomes	Teacher confidence; pedagogical skills; language proficiency; capacity to develop resources; job placement; literacy
Effective strategies to support trainees	Flexible delivery models; culturally responsive pedagogy; ongoing professional development; networking; mentorship
Language pedagogies taught/modelled	TPR; grammar training and linguistics; orthography and literacy; bilingualism
Approaches to assessment	skills-based assessments; trauma-informed approach; Western grading schemas; self-assessment
Challenges or barriers (institution)	Financial sustainability; staffing; student recruitment; restrictive policies; lack of resources
Challenges or barriers (student)	Lack of cultural content; cultural safety concerns; geographic barriers; time constraints
Role of community	Community designs program; program offered in-community; Elders involved in delivery
Importance of immersion	Cultural identity; academic achievement; language revitalization; cognitive development

Appendix D. Literature Review Bibliography

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Appendix E. Teacher Certification across Jurisdictions

Shortages of certified teachers and challenges in certifying proficient speakers as teachers are often cited as variables threatening language vitality in a broad sense (see, e.g., Foxcroft 2016; Gilles & Battiste 2013; McIvor & Ball 2019). As noted in section 3, as of October 2024, there are only 11 postsecondary Indigenous language programs in Canada that lead to teacher certification. This section outlines the details of how Indigenous language teachers may be certified across Canada.

Education is a regional responsibility in Canada, with each province or territory having the authority to determine its own system for certifying teachers, including types of certification and requirements for becoming certified.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the available pathways to certification and types of certificates are similar across provinces and territories, with each requiring teachers to be granted certification through a regulatory board. All include a general certification allowing an individual to teach in grades K-12⁴⁷, and many also have an option for vocational certification for those wishing to teach a trade.⁴⁸ Only British Columbia, Ontario, and the three territories offer specialized certification for Indigenous language teachers, and only British Columbia and Quebec have policies that allow Indigenous language teachers to teach without provincial certification (see Foxcroft 2016).⁴⁹

In what follows, the certification pathways for each of the provinces and territories are surveyed, followed by summary table comparing certification pathways for each jurisdiction. This survey was completed in October 2024; changes to regional certification policies or pathways after that time are not reflected in the survey.

E.1. British Columbia (BC)

British Columbia provides a number of distinct pathways to teacher certification⁵⁰, as regulated by the B.C. Teachers Council.⁵¹ A Certificate of Qualification (COQ) in the form of a Professional Certificate or Basic Certificate is the most common type of teacher certification, granted to those who have completed a recognized postsecondary program that includes coursework and a practicum component. A COQ licenses teachers to teach at B.C. public schools and can also be used to teach at independent or First Nations schools. Alternatively, those teaching at independent or First Nations schools can apply for an Independent School Teaching Certificate (ISTC).

⁴⁶ [Constitution Act, 1867, Section 93](#)

⁴⁷ This condition applies to any school receiving any type of government funding. Registered private schools not receiving government funding are exempt.

⁴⁸ Vocational and trades certificates are not further discussed here.

⁴⁹ Foxcroft cites the First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act of 2006, and the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975, the latter of which provided for the establishment of the Cree School Board and the Kativik School Board.

⁵⁰ [Teaching certificates in British Columbia - Province of British Columbia](#)

⁵¹ [cert_standards.pdf](#)

Yet another pathway is what is referred to as the Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC), which grants temporary licensure to individuals who have completed an academic program in a particular area of study, but one that does not meet the typical requirements for a COQ. The DSTC is traditionally used for trades programs but has also been uniquely applied to grant graduates of select Indigenous language programs⁵² the authority to teach Indigenous languages for a limited term.

Individuals who have completed the majority of their degree requirements for a B.Ed. but have not yet graduated may be granted a Conditional Certificate, and in exceptional cases when no certified teacher is available to fill a teaching position, an individual may be granted temporary (1-year) licensing to teach via a letter of permission from the school or school district.

For those who are teaching a First Nations language (as a subject), they can be licensed via a specialized First Nations Language Teaching Certificate, which does not have the same postsecondary requirements as other teaching certifications but instead requires a letter of recommendation from a First Nations language authority⁵³ attesting to the language proficiency of the applicant.

E.2. Alberta (AB)

To teach in elementary or secondary schools in Alberta, including band-operated schools, an individual must hold an Alberta teaching certificate.⁵⁴ Obtaining this credential requires completing a four-year university degree and a pre-service teacher preparation program that includes a specified number of credit hours and a practicum.

New teacher candidates receive Interim Professional Certifications after satisfying their education and teacher preparation requirements. If a new teacher candidate has graduated from an Alberta Bachelor of Education program and holds a valid job offer, they may be granted a 90-day Temporary Teaching Authority so they may begin teaching in advance of receiving their Interim certificate.⁵⁵ Teachers who are certified in another province and do not meet the requirements of the Province of Alberta may also be granted an Interim certificate valid for three years, during which time they are expected to complete any outstanding requirements. A teacher with an Interim certification must complete two years of full-time teaching in an Alberta accredited school and receive two successful formal evaluations before they can be recommended for a Permanent Professional Certificate (PPC). Candidates must be recommended by their school authority for the PPC; they cannot apply directly.⁵⁶

⁵² e.g., [Indigenous Languages Program - Nicola Valley Institute of Technology; Aboriginal Culture and Language Support diploma > Academic Calendar](#)

⁵³ [B.C. First Nations Language Authorities - Province of British Columbia](#)

⁵⁴ [Government of Alberta: Teacher Certification](#)

⁵⁵ [Government of Alberta: Teacher Certification](#)

⁵⁶ [Association of Independent Schools & Colleges in Alberta \(AISCA\): Teacher Certification Handbook 2020-2021](#)

In cases where a certificated teacher cannot be hired and there is a need within a particular school system, a Letter of Authority can be granted. This is a school-specific credential that is valid only for the current school year.⁵⁷

Alberta Education does not offer a specific credential for Indigenous language teachers.

E.3. Saskatchewan (SK)

All teachers in Saskatchewan schools, including those working in registered independent schools, must hold a certificate.^{58,59} Certificate requirements include completion of a four-year post-secondary degree and a teacher education program that includes a practicum. There does not appear to be an initial certificate; rather, there are two types of Professional Certificates (A and B). The Professional A Certificate credentials a teacher to teach all subjects in all grades, while a Professional B Certificate is subject-restricted.⁶⁰ Certified teachers moving to the province from another jurisdiction may be issued a Provisional Teacher's Certificate rather than a Professional Certificate.⁶¹

The Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board further offers two limited certificates. The Probationary B Certificate is valid for teaching at a "specified Independent School" but allows teaching all grades and subjects at that school. In cases where a certificated teacher cannot be hired, a Temporary Teaching Permit (TTP) may be issued. This is valid only for the current school year and only for the specific school.⁶²

E.4. Manitoba (MB)

Those teaching in Manitoba public schools⁶³ need to have either a Permanent or Provisional Professional Teaching Certificate. Either of these certifications, unless otherwise specified, allows a teacher to teach K-12.⁶⁴ The Provisional Teaching Certificate is valid for three years, during which the teacher is expected to complete any outstanding requirements for the Permanent Professional

⁵⁷ [AISCA: Teacher Certification Handbook 2020-2021](#)

⁵⁸ [SK Professional Teachers Regulatory Board: Certification](#)

⁵⁹ The SK certification website further notes that those teaching in First Nations schools "may be required" to hold a certificate but does not provide additional explanation.

⁶⁰ [SK Professional Teachers Regulatory Board: Types of Certificates](#)

⁶¹ It is not explained how the determination is made to issue a Provisional Certificate. [SK Professional Teacher's Regulatory Board: Certification](#)

⁶² [SK Professional Teachers Regulatory Board: Temporary Teaching Permit](#) One of the basic requirements listed is "some post-secondary education or a specialized skill (i.e. mastery of a specific language)". Possibly then, this is the type of certification that would be granted to First Nations Language Teachers that do not qualify for another certification type.

⁶³ "Some independent schools" may not require certification. [Manitoba: Professional Certification - FAQs](#)

⁶⁴ [Manitoba: Professional Certification](#)

Certificate. To obtain either certification, an applicant must meet specific education requirements, including completion of a B.Ed. program that includes a practicum.⁶⁵

Laurin (2018) explores two different programs and relates several interviews conducted with education professionals to explore best practices in developing an Indigenous Language Teacher Training Program (ILTTP) for the province. While mention was made in his report of the province's exploration into creating an "Aboriginal Institutes Consortium" that would allow Elders and experienced Indigenous language speakers to be recommended for postsecondary faculty positions in Aboriginal institutions, there was no discussion of this possibility for elementary or secondary language teachers (Laurin, 2018, p. 18). Additionally, one possible solution for certifying First Nations Language teachers under a model similar to that used for the trades was suggested in one of the group interviews. This would allow an individual deemed to have sufficient knowledge to teach while they were attending teacher training courses. However, it does not appear that this has yet been pursued.

E.5. Ontario (ON)

Teachers in publicly funded schools in Ontario must have a certification from the Ontario College of Teachers. Basic requirements include completion of a minimum three-year post-secondary degree and a four-semester teacher education program.⁶⁶

Ontario is unique among the provinces in offering a specific certificate for First Nations Language teachers as well as a certificate for those of Indigenous ancestry who do not hold a postsecondary degree. The certification for language teachers, known as certification as a teacher of a Native Language, requires fluency in Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk, Onkwehonwe, or Lenape in addition to completing a teacher education program designed to teach one of the languages indicated.^{67, 68} The certificate for those of Indigenous ancestry allows applicants to teach in grades K-3 and 4-6 without needing a postsecondary degree. However, completion of a teacher education program "designed specifically to prepare teachers of Indigenous ancestry" is required.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ [Manitoba Education Administration Act: Teaching Certificates and Qualification Regulation](#)

⁶⁶ This differs from other provinces, which require a four-year degree.

⁶⁷ [Registration Guide: Requirements for Becoming a Teacher of a Native Language in Ontario](#) The guide does not indicate if or how fluency is assessed. However, it does mention that if an applicant has completed their certification outside of Canada, they must provide proof of fluency.

⁶⁸ It is also not clear how, or if, other regulatory bodies (e.g., individual First Nations) are involved in evaluating and granting such credentials.

⁶⁹ [Registration Guide: Primary-Junior Teacher Indigenous Ancestry](#)

E.6. Quebec (QC)

Quebec grants a Teaching Diploma to applicants who have completed a four-year B.Ed. program that includes a practicum component. This is a permanent credential.⁷⁰ In cases where an applicant is currently in a teacher training program and has an offer of employment, a Provisional Teaching Licence may be granted; this allows them to teach while completing their training program. In cases where a certificated teacher cannot be hired, a Letter of Tolerance may be issued which allows a school to hire an individual without a teaching credential. Such a letter is restricted to a specific employer and cannot be renewed.

While there is no specific First Nations Language teacher certification offered by the province, McGill University does offer a First Nations and Inuit Education (FNIE) Teacher Certificate in Education as well as a B.Ed. in FNIE. The program is offered in partnership with various communities to assist those of Algonquin, Cree, Inuit, Mi'gmaq, Mohawk, and Naskapi ancestry to become qualified as a teacher. However, it appears that the program only certifies teachers to teach at the elementary level in Indigenous schools.⁷¹ The program includes language classes, selected based on the individual's language background, but is not specifically a language teacher training program.

E.7. New Brunswick (NB)

New Brunswick first issues an Initial Teacher Certificate to new applicants who have completed an approved B.Ed. program that includes a practicum. There are three different certificate levels, depending on the number of qualifying university credit hours completed. It is not clear when or how this converts to a regular Teacher Certificate.⁷² An Interim Teacher Certificate is granted to those who have completed their teacher education outside of New Brunswick; this can be renewed every four years or may be converted to a permanent certificate upon proof of two years of full-time teaching experience within the province.⁷³ There is no specific certification for First Nations Language teachers in New Brunswick.

E.8. Nova Scotia (NS)

Public school teachers in Nova Scotia must be certified or hold a teaching permit; a permit is granted in cases when a certificated teacher cannot be hired. Obtaining a certificate requires completion of a minimum of five years of undergraduate education including a practicum.⁷⁴ Qualified applicants

⁷⁰ [Quebec: Types of Teaching Licences](#)

⁷¹ [McGill: Integrated Studies in Education - Certification in Education FNIE](#)

⁷² [New Brunswick: Become a Teacher in New Brunswick](#)

⁷³ [New Brunswick: How to Upgrade your Certificate](#)

⁷⁴ [Nova Scotia Office of Teacher Certification: Basic Requirements & Process](#)

are awarded an Initial Teacher's Certificate. It is not clear how this converts to a Regular Certificate.⁷⁵ There are three additional levels of Advanced Teacher's Certificate, awarded based on education.

E.9. Prince Edward Island (PE)

Prince Edward Island offers five different teacher certification levels, based on the number of academic credit hours completed. At minimum, an Academic Certificate Level 4 requires completion of either a 120-credit pre-service teacher education program or a 90-credit hour undergraduate degree with a 30-credit hour pre-service teacher education program.⁷⁶ Each certificate also includes a Basic Designation indicating the level the individual is qualified to teach (Primary/Elementary or Intermediate/Senior).⁷⁷

E.10. Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

Newfoundland offers four different teaching certificates, each awarded based on the number of credit hours completed. For an Initial Certificate, an applicant requires a four-year university degree with a major in a teachable subject area and a one- or two-year education degree or a four- or five-year education degree.⁷⁸ After successfully completing two years of full-time teaching within the province, an Initial Certificate may be converted to a Permanent Certificate, if recommended by an "acceptable employer."⁷⁹

E.11. Yukon (YT)

Those wanting to apply for Yukon Teacher Certification must either hold a certificate from another province or territory or have graduated from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (YNTEP).⁸⁰ The YNTEP program, offered by Yukon University, leads to a B.Ed. degree that is credentialed by the University of Regina. As such, program graduates are qualified for both Yukon and Saskatchewan teacher certification. It is not clear if language teachers require certification, but a distinct career pathway for Indigenous language teachers is promoted by the province.⁸¹

⁷⁵ [Nova Scotia Office of Teacher Certification: Regular Certificates](#)

⁷⁶ [Prince Edward Island: PEI Teacher's Certificate Levels](#)

⁷⁷ [Application for a Teacher's License \(Educated Outside PEI\)](#)

⁷⁸ [Newfoundland & Labrador: Teacher Certification](#)

⁷⁹ [Newfoundland & Labrador: Teacher Certification/Employment - Frequently Asked Questions](#)

⁸⁰ [Yukon: Teacher Certification Application Quick Guide and Document Tracker](#)

⁸¹ [Yukon: Apply for a job as an Aboriginal Language Teacher](#)

E.12. Northwest Territories (NT)

The Northwest Territories offers both Interim and Full Teaching Certificates, including an Indigenous Language Specialty Teaching Certificate. Applicants are eligible for a full Teaching Certificate once they have successfully completed two years of full-time teaching. To be granted an Indigenous Language Specialty Teaching Certificate, an applicant must demonstrate fluency in one of the stated languages and must have completed either 25 hours of pre-service teacher training or one full academic year in the classroom. An Interim Indigenous Language Specialty Teaching Certificate is valid for two years. During this time, the certificate holder must complete additional teacher training requirements and successfully complete two years of classroom teaching.⁸²

E.13. Nunavut (NU)

An individual may only apply for Nunavut teacher certification after they have been offered a position.⁸³ The minimum requirement to qualify for the certification is a B.Ed. There are two types of initial certification: an Interim Professional Teaching Certificate and an Interim Standard Teaching Certificate, each of which are granted based on the academic background of the applicant. A range of specialty certificates are also offered including a Language/Culture Specialist Certificate.⁸⁴ Nunavut Arctic College offers a Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP)⁸⁵, including Inuktitut Immersion Programs (designed for fluent speakers who desire to teach in Inuktitut) in various communities.

E.14. Summary

A comparative summary of teacher certification pathways for Indigenous language teachers across Canadian provinces and territories is presented in Table 13 below.

⁸² [NWT: Application for an Interim Indigenous Language Specialty Teaching Certificate](#)

⁸³ [Nunavut Teacher Induction Program: How do I Apply for a Nunavut Teaching Certificate?](#)

⁸⁴ [Nunavut Teacher Induction Program: Teaching in Nunavut FAQs](#)

⁸⁵ [Education — Nunavut Arctic College](#)

Table 13. Teacher Certifications across Canada⁸⁶

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NL	YT	NT	NU	Total
Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC)	x													1
Letter of Permission	x	x	x			x	x						x	5
Professional Certificate	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Basic Certificate	x	x	x											3
Conditional Certificate	x	x		x		x	x	x				x		7
Trades Certificate	x		x	x	x			x				x		6
Independent School Teaching Certificate	x		x											2
First Nations Language Teacher's Certificate	x				x						x	x	x	5
Interim Professional Certificate		x					x			x		x	x	5
Provisional Teaching License						x								1
Technical Certificate			x											1
Temporary Certificate					x									1
Temporary Letter of Authority		x												1
	8	6	6	3	4	4	4	3	1	2	2	5	4	

⁸⁶ While the names of certification types vary among the provinces and territories, the British Columbian names are used here for ease of comparison. Those cells with an 'x' indicate a certification type that is equivalent to that bearing the B.C. name.

CONNECT

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