



WHY ADD A LANGUAGE TO YOUR DEGREE?

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There are hundreds of reasons to learn a new language, and learning a foreign language can open opportunities in far away lands and connect you with people who you would otherwise never meet, however I will not be making a case to learn a foreign language....

This is about why you should learn an Indigenous language

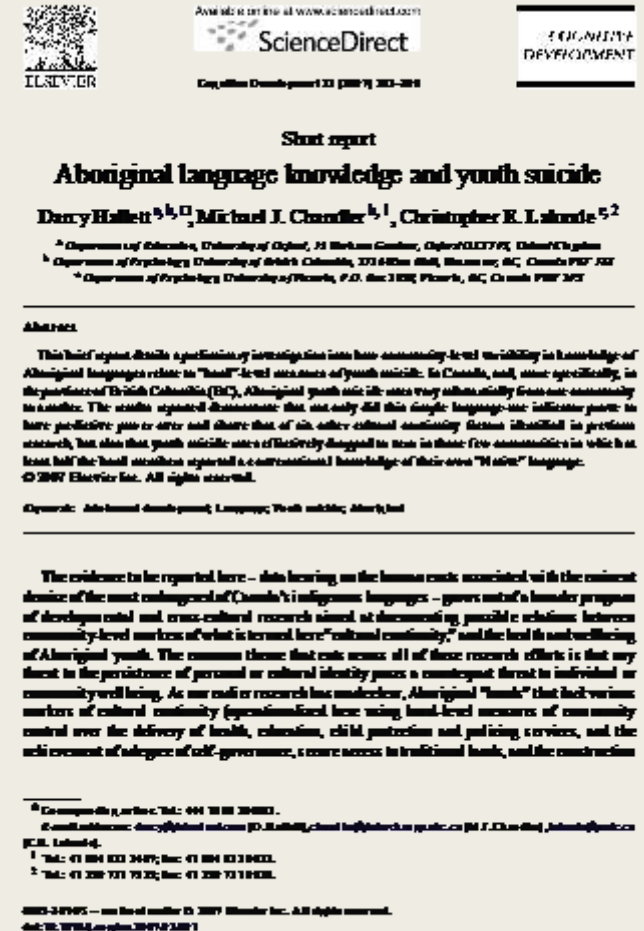
- Whether you have always felt a sense of flux, a knowing that the land around you is alive and in relation with you and wish to explain it...
- Or if you want to support the health of the Earth and the people who live on it...
- Or you simply want to further your understanding Indigenous cultures and peoples and take on a personal act of reconciliation ...

I implore you to learn the languages of the land on with which you live

Regardless of what you are studying, learning an Indigenous language just makes sense

For students in Health Sciences or Social Work...

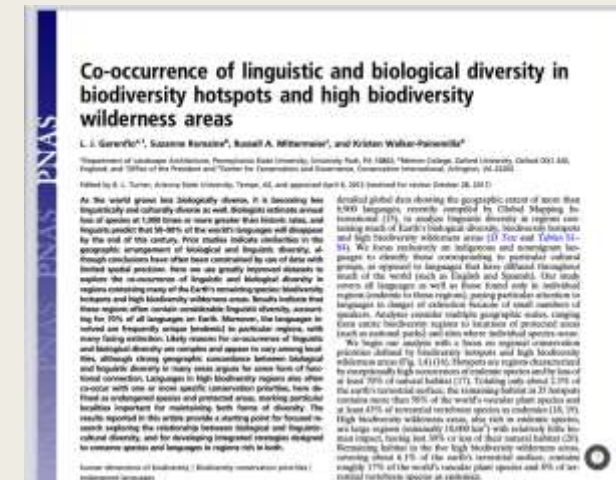
- Language fluency is a strong predictive factor of youth suicide in First Nations communities
- In community in which at least half of the communities have conversational fluency youth suicide is virtually non-existent¹
- Indigenous languages also offer insight into culturally appropriate philosophies of wellness²



1. <https://web.uvic.ca/~lalonde/manuscripts/2007CogDevt.pdf>
2. <https://cjr.archive.mcgill.ca/article/view/2346>

Students in Natural Sciences...

- Indigenous languages play an important role in preserving biodiversity – studies show there is a close correlation between the decline in biodiversity and decline of Indigenous language use¹
- Indigenous languages also encode for a lot of information about fauna and flora – imagine just knowing the names of species of bees also means you know their flight patterns, aggression, sound in flight, places typically visited, preferred nest site, color, smell, markings, type of wings, secretions, quality and quantity of honey, quality of resins or wax, edibility of pollen or larvae, etc.²



1. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.1117511109>
2. https://terralingua.org/langscape_articles/when-grasshopper-means-lightning-how-ecological-knowledge-is-encoded-in-endangered-languages/

Students in Human Rights or Social Justice...

- We are currently in The United Nations decade of Indigenous languages 2023-2032, and estimates suggest that 90-95 percent of Indigenous language will be extinct by the end of the century¹
- We need more people to advocate for government support and funding so we can support the Indigenous organizations' language revitalization efforts
- Although there are 5 Calls to Action regarding Indigenous languages in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Final Report², there has been little done to address them²
- Learning an Indigenous language can be a personal act of reconciliation

1. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/indigenous-languages.html>

2. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524495846286/1557513199083>

Students in Anthropology, Sociology, or History

- Languages tell us a lot about societies and cultures of the past and present – for example, contact languages like Michif tell us about the past relationships between multiple nations¹
- They also teach us about cultural values – for example, the Kankanaey Igorot have a concept of *inayan*, which prescribes proper behaviours for certain situations, and transcends the English notion of being “good” or “appropriate”²
- Many Indigenous languages hold stories and histories of events that happened thousands of years ago that are not written or recorded in textbooks³

1. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/auth/lib/crkn/login.action?returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Febookcentral.proquest.com%2Flib%2Fcrkn%2Fdetail.action%3FdocID%3D270873>
2. <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2019-1/indigenous-languages-knowledge-and-hope>
3. <https://www.survivalinternational.org/articles/3567-indigenousslanguages>

In closing, there are many reasons why everyone should consider learning an Indigenous language

Rather than learning a world language, take on the challenge of learning a language that doesn't have a duolingo course, or a google translate option

Maybe after learning about animate nouns in Anishinabemowin rocks and rivers will look a little more alive, or you will hear the breath of the wind when you describe the weather in Nehiyawewin

If you want to open your mind to new understandings and open yourself to new connections, start by learning the language of the land with which you live