

Supporting small languages together:
The history and impact of the
*International Conference on Language Documentation
& Conservation* series

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The *International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation* series, or ICLDC, has, since its inception in 2009, become the flagship conference for the field of language documentation. Every two years, conference attendees gather at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa to share their experiences working on diverse topics related to the preservation of underrepresented languages worldwide. Attendees come from a range of backgrounds: Indigenous language communities, language activism organizations, K–12 school systems, as well as students and faculty from colleges and universities. They represent dozens of countries and hundreds of languages, and they have one goal in mind: supporting small languages together. In this paper, we trace the history of the ICLDC series since the first iteration and discuss the scope of its impact on the field of language documentation and conservation according to conference attendees. We also look ahead to the changes that the covid-19 pandemic will bring to the structure of the conference in 2021 and beyond.

1. Introduction The *International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation* series, or ICLDC, has, since its inception in 2009, become the flagship conference for the field of language documentation.^{1,2} Every two years, conference attendees gather at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) in Honolulu to share their experiences working on diverse topics related to the preservation of underrepresented languages worldwide (see Figure 1). Attendees come from a range of backgrounds: Indigenous language communities, language activism organizations, K–12 school systems, as well as students and faculty from colleges and universities. They represent dozens of countries and hundreds of languages, and they have one goal in mind: supporting small languages together.³

In 2019, the ICLDC celebrated its tenth anniversary. In honor of that milestone, we present here the history of the ICLDC series, including how the series started and details about the events at each iteration (Section 2). We also discuss the impact of the conference series as described by our attendees in a post-conference survey conducted after ICLDC 5 (Section 3), and we look forward to the 2021 conference, which, because of the current covid-19 pandemic, will take advantage of radically different modalities for participation, and the opportunities that broad online access to the ICLDC present (Section 4).

2. History of the ICLDC

2.1 Inception As described by Rehg (2017), the impetus for the ICLDC series was an internationally-attended visioning meeting about strengthening the establishment of language documentation and conservation as a subdiscipline of linguistics, held at the East-West Center’s Hawai‘i Imin International Conference Center in Honolulu, April 7–8, 2006. Participants in the meeting included scholars from Japan, Australia, Canada, and the United States, and the outcomes of this meeting included the birth of the journal *Language Documentation & Conservation*; the establishment of a summer institute in language documentation and conservation, the Institute on Collaborative Language Research or CoLang; and the creation of a biennial series of

¹We wish to extend our gratitude to Ken Rehg, Nick Thieberger, Yuko Otsuka, N. Ha‘alilio Solomon and Gary Holton for their contributions to the activities described in this paper. We also acknowledge the considerable assistance of the many members of the Student Steering Committees over the years, as well as the multitudes of volunteers who have provided on-site assistance at the conferences – the success of the ICLDC has been in no small part because of your efforts. Ashleigh Surma also provided assistance with this paper. Sponsors of the ICLDC series include the UHM Department of Linguistics; the UHM College of Languages, Linguistics & Literature; the UH Hilo Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language; ‘Aha Pūnana Leo; Ke Kula ‘O Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u Iki; the National Foreign Language Resource Center; the National Resource Center-East Asia; the UHM Center for Pacific Island Studies; the UHM Endowment for the Humanities; ‘Imiloa Astronomy Education Center; the UHM Center for Southeast Asian Studies; and the UHM Dai Ho Chun Foundation. Major funding for the ICLDC has been provided in part by grants from the National Science Foundation (1937611, 1745711, 1209489, 1405434, 1614134, and 1039605). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

²The main ICLDC website is found at <http://icldc-hawaii.org>.

³“Supporting small languages together” is both the slogan of ICLDC 1 and the title of this paper; it signals the cooperative aspects of language work as the paramount value of the event.

conferences hosted by the Department of Linguistics at UHM. Thus, the ICLDC was born, with its first instantiation scheduled for March 12–14, 2009 at the Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center on the UHM campus.



Figure 1. (clockwise from top left) ICLDC attendees listen to a plenary address; plenary speaker Rick Lightning speaks to the audience in 2017; a graphic artist takes visual notes during a Talk Story Roundtable; attendees enjoy an evening reception. (Photo credit: Bradley Rentz)

2.2 ICLDC 1: Supporting Small Languages Together According to Nick Thieberger (p.c.), chair of ICLDC 1, response to the call for participation was far greater than had been originally expected. Discussants at the 2006 visioning meeting had estimated that attendance at such a conference would be in the realm of 80 people; in fact, 311 people flocked to the world's first conference dedicated to the documentation and conservation of the world's endangered languages. The theme of the first conference was "Supporting Small Languages Together", and the call for proposals acknowledged that a decade had passed since Himmelmann's (1998) seminal article and that documentary linguistics was gelling both as an independent subdiscipline of linguistics and as a community of practitioners:

It has been a decade since Himmelmann's article on language documentation appeared and focused the field into thinking in terms of creating a lasting record of a language that could be used by speakers as well as by academics. This conference aims to assess what has been achieved in the past decade and what the practice of language documentation within

linguistics has been and can be. It has become apparent that *there is too much for a linguist alone to achieve and that language documentation requires collaboration*. This conference will focus on the theme of collaboration in language documentation and revitalization and will include sessions on interdisciplinary topics. (National Foreign Language Resource Center 2009, emphasis added)

This early focus on the collaborative aspects of language documentation and conservation means that from the start, the intended audience for the ICLDC has been broader than just academic linguists and has included experts from inside language communities, cultural organizations, and students. Over one hundred papers and posters were accepted for presentation at the 2009 conference, in six parallel sessions over two and a half days. The conference included presenters from Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Egypt, the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Russia, Senegal, the Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Tokelau, the UK, and the USA.

ICLDC 1 was the only instance of the conference to accept proposals for organized panel presentations from the public – after 2009 the number of submissions was just too overwhelming for the conference organizers to find time for panels, although later conferences did feature invited panels. Panel topics in 2009 included teaching and learning less commonly taught languages, graduate student issues, the role of geographic information systems in language documentation, language documentation in Japan, ethics, documenting music, and ethnobiology in language documentation.

ICLDC 1 also featured four plenary addresses; in later years, organizers reduced the number of plenaries to make time for more regular presentations. The plenarists in 2009 were Nikolaus Himmelmann (University of Muenster)⁴ on *Linguistic data types and documentary linguistics*,⁵ Paul Newman (Indiana University) on *Linguistic fieldwork as a scientific enterprise*,⁶ Phil Cash (University of Arizona) on *Documenting enduring cultures*,⁷ and Leanne Hinton (University of California, Berkeley) on *Language revitalization at home*.⁸

Ample time for social interaction among conference attendees has always been a scheduling priority for the ICLDC organizers, starting with the first conference. Ten-minute breaks after every presentation allow participants to make connections with one another and have always been a positively-rated feature of the conference in the evaluation forms. ICLDC 1 also started the tradition of holding two evening receptions featuring local and regional cuisine, as well as Hawai'i-, Pacific-, or Asia-focused cultural presentations. The receptions in the first year featured Tokelauan dance performances and hula.

⁴Parentheticals after participants' names contain affiliations as listed by the participants at the time of the conference.

⁵<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5162>.

⁶<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5163>.

⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5164>.

⁸<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5165>.

ICLDC 1 also started our partnership with Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani School of Hawaiian Language at UH Hilo, on Hawai‘i island, in offering a Field Study of the Hawaiian language immersion programs in Hilo, including visits to Ke Kula ‘O Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u Iki, a K–12 Hawaiian immersion school, and ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center. The Field Study took place over the two days following the ICLDC.

The organizational structure introduced at ICLDC 1 has been more or less sustained throughout the conference series: an Organizing Committee of six faculty from UHM and UH Hilo, headed by a chair and coordinated by NFLRC program coordinator Jim Yoshioka, was tasked with arranging most aspects of conference scheduling and logistics; an Advisory Committee of 25 international scholars in language documentation vetted abstracts; and a Student Steering Committee of more than fifty student volunteers from UHM and beyond handled most of the in-the-moment concerns before and during the conference. Over the years, the Student Steering Committee has become the locus of ICLDC organization: students enroll for graduate degree credit during the academic year of the conference and are in charge of most of the major planning activities, including arranging food and entertainment, scheduling, corresponding with presenters, handling paperwork, program layout, technical support, and more.

An additional tradition that began at ICLDC 1 was the recording of conference presentations and the subsequent archiving of those recordings, plus slides, handouts, and posters, in the UHM institutional repository ScholarSpace, for free download by the public.⁹

2.3 ICLDC 2: Strategies for Moving Forward The somewhat unexpected success of the 2009 conference encouraged the organizers of ICLDC 2, scheduled for February 11–13, 2011, to offer a more ambitious program and seek substantial external funding. The theme of the conference was “Strategies for Moving Forward”, which was intended to build on the momentum from the 2009 conference. The conference was chaired by Yuko Otsuka and featured invited colloquia, a film screening, and a series of pre-conference training workshops.

Attendance in 2011 increased by 23% to 383 registrants. 221 paper abstracts were submitted to the 2011 conference, a 46% increase over the previous meeting. The Advisory Committee, consisting of twenty-two recognized experts from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the USA, and the UK, accepted 111 abstracts, representing a 50% acceptance rate. The program included 93 papers in up to six parallel paper sessions and 27 poster presentations. Three plenary addresses were given: Keren Rice (University of Toronto) on *Strategies for moving ahead: Linguistics and community goals*,¹⁰ Wayan Arka (Australia National University/Udayana University) on *Language management and minority language maintenance in Indonesia: Strat-*

⁹Archived materials from every ICLDC can be browsed or searched at <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/5960>.

¹⁰<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5169>.

egy issues,¹¹ and Larry Kimura (UH Hilo) on *A journey of beginnings: The Hawaiian language revitalization efforts, 1970s forward*.

Organizers also invited four organized panels. A panel on lexicography in endangered languages was organized by Sarah Olgivie (University of Cambridge); a panel on the use of film in language documentation was organized by Rozenn Milen (Sorosoro Foundation) and Melissa Bisagni (Smithsonian Institution); a panel on training efforts in language documentation including the American Indian Language Development Institute at the University of Arizona, the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute at the University of Alberta, and the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity in Australia was organized; and a panel on grammaticography was organized by Sebastian Nordhoff (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology). The two evening receptions featured Hawaiian and Balinese musical performances.

ICLDC 2 also featured a substantial pre- and post-conference program. In the two days preceding the conference, a series of optional, no-cost workshops on language documentation technology, funded by the National Science Foundation, were held; these included workshops on software including ELAN, FLEx, Toolbox, LEXUS, and VICOS, as well as topical workshops on psycholinguistic techniques for the assessment of language strength, film in language documentation, archiving challenges and metadata, and language acquisition for revitalization specialists. The workshops filled quickly, and many conference attendees voiced regret that they could not get a space in the pre-conference workshops. In addition, the evening before the main conference featured a screening of short films in and about endangered languages from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Norway, Tonga, and Wales.

After the conference, the Smithsonian Institution took advantage of the convergence of so many language documentation experts by holding an open brainstorming and consultation meeting on their Recovering Voices project. A second Hilo Field Study took place over the two days following the ICLDC.

2.4 ICLDC 3: Sharing Worlds of Knowledge Evaluations of ICLDC 2 revealed that attendees were overwhelmingly requesting two changes to the ICLDC program: a longer conference and more learning opportunities. In response, the chairs for ICLDC 3, Andrea Berez-Kroeker and Victoria Anderson, extended the length of the conference by a full day to 3.5 days, which allowed the Organizing Committee to integrate learning opportunities in the form of Master Classes (see below) directly into the conference program, rather than offering the optional, limited-enrollment pre-conference opportunities that were available in 2011. ICLDC 3 took place February 28–March 3, 2013.

For the theme of the 2013 conference, the Organizing Committee decided to incorporate a more specific focus. The theme “Sharing Worlds of Knowledge” was intended to highlight the fact that documenting languages requires knowledge that goes beyond simply understanding linguistic structure. Language documentation was becoming more interdisciplinary in its approach, an ongoing trend heralded by the

¹¹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/5170>.

newly published *Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork* (Thieberger 2012), a collection of twenty papers dedicated to supporting the documentation of entire systems of knowledge through language. Traditional field linguistic training did not provide enough background on nonlinguistic topics to mitigate the risk that a well-intentioned researcher may accidentally miss recording valuable (and often endangered) knowledge. In his introduction, Thieberger writes, “Linguists are in a position to record much more than narratives and example sentences, but need guidance once the topics of discussion go beyond everyday expertise” (2012:1). Linguists need exposure to the concepts that are basic to other disciplines in the sciences, arts, and humanities:

Linguistic fieldwork can result in more than just a description of the grammar of a language; it can also record cultural information that provides new insights into local knowledge systems. The problem for a linguist is that they cannot possibly be prepared for every topic that could arise in the course of fieldwork. As a result, either opportunities to explore such topics may be lost or the records produced may not be as useful to others as they could be. What would a musicologist like to see included in the recording of a performance? What would a botanist like to know about a plant’s use and how it has been identified? Which constellation of stars is it that features in a particular traditional story? (Thieberger 2012: 3)

This view of the interdisciplinary nature of language documentation guided the development of a series of Master Classes, open to all ICLDC participants, for the 2013 conference. The Master Classes were designed to give language documenters practical information to guide their documentation, and instructors were invited who themselves conduct field-based research. Each two-and-a-half hour class was offered twice during the three afternoons of the ICLDC. Linda Barwick (University of Sydney) taught a Master Class on *Documenting ethnomusicology*;¹² Alex Golub (UHM) taught a Master Class on *Documenting kinship systems*;¹³ David Mark (University at Buffalo) taught a Master Class on *Ethnophysiogeography: Documenting categories of landscape features*;¹⁴ Will McClatchey (Botanical Research Institute of Texas) taught a Master Class on *Folk taxonomy*;¹⁵ Warren Nishimoto (UHM) taught a Master Class on *How to document oral history*;¹⁶ and Tamara Ticktin (UHM) taught a Master Class on *Documenting ethnobotany*.¹⁷

The number of participants at ICLDC 3 increased by nearly 15% over the 2nd ICLDC, with 439 attendees reaching the maximum capacity of the Hawai‘i International Conference Center. Conference participants came from 25 countries. The Advisory Committee, consisting of 34 internationally recognized experts, anonymously reviewed 282 abstract submissions (a nearly 28% increase from 2011), and

¹²<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26182>.

¹³<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26183>.

¹⁴<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26196>.

¹⁵<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26195>.

¹⁶<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26193>.

¹⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26194>.

accepted 133 papers, for a 47% acceptance rate. The final program included up to six parallel paper sessions, 30 poster presentations, and 20 “electronic poster” presentations – a new feature in 2013 that allowed attendees to interact directly with software and web developers. Two plenary addresses were delivered by Nicholas Evans (Australian National University) on *The web of words and the web of life: Reconnecting language documentation with ethnobiology*,¹⁸ and Kālepa Baybayan (Polynesian Voyaging Society) on *He lani ko luna, a sky above: In losing the sight of land, you discover the stars*.¹⁹ Two evening receptions featured a taiko Japanese drumming performance and Hawaiian music.

The 2013 conference offered additional opportunities for students, community language workers, and Deaf or hearing-impaired participants. The National Science Foundation funded six travel scholarships for the authors of the best abstracts by students and/or members of an endangered language community who are actively working to document their heritage language and who are not employed by a college or university. The Student Steering Committee also organized a graduate student mixer on one evening of the conference. ICLDC 3 was also the first event in the series to offer sign language interpretation in American Sign Language and featured a full session of presentations on endangered sign languages worldwide.

ICLDC 3 featured a variety of additional special events before, during, and after the conference. Two free public talks, sponsored in part by the UHM Dai Ho Chun Endowment, were given on the days immediately preceding and following the conference. Linda Barwick (University of Sydney) spoke about cultural diversity in the temporal arts, and David Mark (State University of New York at Buffalo) spoke about the documentation of landscape features in indigenous languages. The evening before the start of the conference, two films were screened, with the producer/directors on hand to answer questions from the audience of 80 after the screening.

As for post-conference activities, the two-day Hilo Field Study was as popular as ever, and the Smithsonian Institution once again held another consultation meeting open to all ICLDC attendees.

2.5 ICLDC 4: Enriching Theory, Practice, & Application Until ICLDC 4, the conference organizers had made a concerted effort to keep the theme of the conference less focused on traditional linguistic scholarship, electing instead to investigate the newer, less-traditional and more-inclusive aspects of the work of language documentation. By the fourth iteration of the ICLDC, however, some participants were expressing interest in attempting to re-integrate more traditional approaches to linguistics into the program, with an eye toward the contributions of language documentation to linguistic description and analysis. At the same time, there was a recognition that linguistics has a great deal to offer in terms of language teaching and potentially much to contribute to approaches to language reclamation.

Thus the theme for the February 26–March 1 ICLDC, “Enriching Theory, Practice, and Application”, arose from conversations with Andrew Garrett (UC Berkeley)

¹⁸<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26184>.

¹⁹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/26186>.

and Shobhana Chelliah (then Program Officer for the NSF Documenting Endangered Languages program). The theme was intended to highlight the need to strengthen the links between language documentation (practice), deep understanding of grammatical structure (theory), and methods for teaching endangered languages (application). The theme focused on language documentation as the investigation of grammar and linguistic structure on the one hand, and the development of that investigation into sound pedagogy for under-resourced languages on the other.

The funding application to the NSF noted that

[e]ndangered language teaching in the language community is often informed by only the most basic or generic of language pedagogies, and language teachers are often frustrated by the lack of methodologies that go beyond short conversation, basic vocabulary, and constructions [...] Compounding the problem, these same trained teachers may not have enough linguistic knowledge of the subject language to develop robust teaching materials and programs, while linguists with command of linguistic structure may not have the teaching training required to properly educate students or inform language teachers.

In the past [linguists ...] have created reference grammars and pedagogical grammars, and most documentation projects include some component for creating teaching materials. What is still lacking from the discipline is a systematic discussion of how to transform documentary materials like annotated corpora and reference grammars into an effective pedagogical workflow for endangered languages (e.g., reference grammar > pedagogical grammar > teaching materials > pedagogical methods > assessment of teaching programs). There is a disconnect between linguistic theory and pedagogical theory, and the field of language documentation has the potential to bridge this gap when its practitioners gather together in Honolulu in 2015. (Berez & Anderson 2014: 2)

To address these problems, the Organizing Committee developed another series of Master Classes, this time on topics in descriptive linguistics, as well as a series of four Special Sessions featuring issues on Pedagogy in Language Conservation. The Master Classes were again integrated into the daily schedule, and were offered at three levels. Three “non-specialist” level classes were offered: Pat Shaw (University of British Columbia) taught *Introduction to linguistics for non-linguists*;²⁰ William O’Grady and Kamil Deen (UHM) taught *Introduction to first language acquisition for language conservation*;²¹ and Theres Grueter (UHM) taught *Introduction to second language acquisition for language conservation*.²² Five Master Classes were offered at the intermediate level: Sarah Cutfield (Australian National University) taught

²⁰<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25391>.

²¹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25395>.

²²<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25399>.

Elicitation and documentation of deixis;²³ Andrew Koontz-Garboden (University of Manchester) taught *Elicitation and documentation of verb alignment and argument structure*;²⁴ Bert Remijsen (University of Edinburgh) taught *Elicitation and documentation of tone*;²⁵ Juergen Bohnemeyer (State University of New York at Buffalo) taught *Elicitation and documentation of tense and aspect*;²⁶ and Sun-Ah Jun (University of California, Los Angeles) taught *Elicitation and documentation of intonation*.²⁷ Four Master Classes were offered at the advanced level: Michael Lev (University of California, Berkeley) taught *Elicitation and documentation of evidentiality*;²⁸ Marianne Mithun (University of California, Santa Barbara) taught *Elicitation and documentation of valency-changing constructions and processes*;²⁹ Peter Jenks (University of California, Berkeley) taught *Elicitation and documentation of definiteness and quantification*;³⁰ and Judith Aissen (University of California, Santa Cruz) taught *Elicitation and documentation of topic and focus constructions/processes*.³¹

The four Special Sessions on Pedagogy in Language Conservation were selected by a special review committee from twenty-eight submissions. *From technical to teachable: Strengthening the interface between documentation, revitalization, and teaching* was organized by Dylan Herrick (University of Oklahoma) and Tracy Hirata-Edds (University of Kansas). *The teachable and the learnable: The role of linguistics in endangered language pedagogy* was organized by Jordan Lachler (University of Alberta). *Learner-centered pedagogy: Adapting dialect variation, multilingualism, and social dynamics in endangered language education* was organized by Hayley De Korne (University of Pennsylvania). *Language pedagogy and practice in indigenous Australia: Learning observations from infancy to teenhood* was organized by Barbara Kelly (University of Melbourne).

Once again, conference attendance rose for ICLDC 4 to 455 attendees, a number so large that we needed to move the conference to a new, larger location, the Ala Moana Hotel. Attendees came from 27 countries and territories. The Abstract Review Committee reviewed 237 abstract submissions for regular talks and poster sessions. 121 paper presentations, 38 posters, and 15 electronic posters were accepted.

Two plenaries were given, an opening address by Lenore Grenoble (University of Chicago), titled *The hitchhiker's guide to documentation: Communicative practices, cultural competence and proficiency guidelines*,³² and a closing address by Anthony Woodbury (University Texas at Austin), titled *Verbal artistry: The missing link among language documentation, grammatical theory, and linguistic pedagogy*.³³ The reception featured Hawaiian music and a ti leaf lei-making workshop. The pre-conference

²³<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25392>.

²⁴<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25393>.

²⁵<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25396>.

²⁶<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25398>.

²⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25402>.

²⁸<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25394>.

²⁹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25397>.

³⁰<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25400>.

³¹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25401>.

³²<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25387>.

³³<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/25388>.

film screening featured short films from Alaska, Canada, and the northern Guinea coast. In 2015 the He ‘Ōlelo Ola Field Study in Hilo took place in the few days just before the ICLDC.

2.6 ICLDC 5: Vital Voices: Linking Language & Wellbeing The theme of the March 2–5 2017 ICLDC, chaired by Andrea Berez-Kroeker and Gary Holton, explored the relationship between language maintenance and wellbeing in endangered language communities, based on a growing body of literature about the correlation between the two:

In a global analysis of the social determinants of wellbeing, a 2007 World Health Organization study notes that “perhaps the most crucial factor is the breakdown in traditional social structures, of culture and of language” (Nettleton et al. 2007: 114). A summary of that report concludes: “In such circumstances, transmission of cultural and linguistic meaning may improve health and well being” (World Health Organization 2007: 10). A review in *The Lancet* finds that “language is crucial to identity, health, and relations” (King et al. 2009: 78). As this statement makes clear, these studies tie language not simply to the medical concept of health but to a broader cultural concept of wellbeing. The factors related to cultural wellbeing are difficult to quantify, but there have been several recent successful attempts to do just that. An Australian study found an inverse correlation between Aboriginal language knowledge and suicide rates (Hallett et al. 2007). Going further, Biddle and Swee (2012) analyze 32 demographic variables and find a positive correlation between language maintenance and happiness, or emotional wellbeing. Drawing on detailed language vitality data from Alberta, Oster et al. (2014) find an inverse correlation between Indigenous language knowledge and rates of Type II diabetes.

The nature of this correlation between language and wellbeing – particularly the directionality of causation, if any – remains the subject of much debate. Yet the existence of a correlation is not entirely unexpected. Languages encode knowledge systems, so language loss represents more than a loss of a communicative system; rather, language loss entails loss of Indigenous knowledge systems. And these traditional knowledge systems in turn encode cultural practices related to wellbeing. The implications for the field of language documentation are profound and far reaching. Knowledge systems are among the most threatened domains of endangered language. Knowledge of esoteric domains such as botanical classification and traditional medicines is forgotten well before basic vocabulary and language structure. Hence, these areas of traditional knowledge are precisely the areas which need to be prioritized by language documenters. (Berez-Kroeker & Holton 2015: 10–11)

The conference again featured two plenary addresses: an opening plenary by Alice Taff (University of Alaska Southeast) on *I gu.aa yáxxwán: Be of good courage*³⁴ and a closing plenary by Rick Lightning (Ermineskin Cree Nation) and Richard Oster (University of Alberta) on *Can language and cultural continuity protect against diabetes in First Nations communities?*³⁵ In 2017, organizers replaced the Master Class format with a new forum that had been requested in feedback from attendees of previous ICLDCs. The “Talk Story Roundtables”, now a staple in the ICLDC program, are 90-minute discussion sessions led by an expert discussant and limited to 20–30 attendees per session. The Talk Story sessions provide a venue for more intimate, multi-directional conversation among attendees and allow for ample sharing of personal experiences in a more casual environment than a regular conference presentation session.

We offered eight Talk Story Roundtables in 2017, with each topic taking place multiple times to accommodate more participants. These included *The Pūnana Leo experience: Returning Hawaiian to the children while impacting the lives of new and native speakers alike* by Lolena Nicholas (Pūnana Leo o Honolulu and UHM), Larry Kimura (UH Hilo), Keiki Kawai‘ae‘a (UH Hilo), Kanani Kawai‘ae‘a (Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u school), Alohalani Hausman (Brigham Young University Hawai‘i), and Kau‘i Kaina; *Sharing and designing collaborative outreach projects for language and community wellness* by Lgeik‘i Heather Powell (Hoonah City Schools Haa Kusteeyi Aya), Nakil.aan – Hans Chester, and Seigóot – Jessica Chester (Juneau School District); *Decolonizing Indigenous Language pedagogies: Embodied approaches to teaching and learning* by Wesley Leonard (University of California, Riverside) and Daisy Rosenblum (University of British Columbia); *Asserting wellbeing through reclamation and revitalization of our Indigenous languages* by Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla (University of British Columbia) and Alanaise Goodwill (University of British Columbia); *Language surveys and wellbeing* by Keren Rice (University of Toronto) and Mary Linn (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage); *Language is like food* by Michael Walsh; *Our histories flow through our blood: Diabetes in Indigenous communities* by Rick Lightning (Ermineskin Cree Nation) and Richard Oster (University of Alberta); and *Interdisciplinarity in language and wellness: How to do it, how to fund it?* by Susan Penfield.

In addition to the new Talk Story Roundtables, ICLDC 5 also featured Workshops, which are intended to be more presentational and instructional in style than the Talk Story sessions and can accommodate 60–100 participants. Six Workshops took place: *Science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum as a lens for language and culture revitalization in Alaska* by Cikigaq-Irasema Ortega (University of Alaska Anchorage), Lilian Olson (Chevak School), Flora Ayuluk (Chevak School), and Lisa Unin (Chevak School);³⁶ *Mutual intelligibility and mutual respect: The effect of language devaluation on self-esteem and wellbeing* by Shoichi Iwasaki (University of California, Los Angeles), William O’Grady (UHM), Changyong Yang

³⁴<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/42064>.

³⁵<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/42065>.

³⁶<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/42067>.

(Jeju National University), Hiroyuki Nakama, Masahiro Yamada (Ritsumeikan University), Yukinori Takubo (Kyoto University) and Sejung Yang (UHM);³⁷ *Our language is our health: Connecting language revitalization to health outcomes for Indigenous communities* by Aliana Parker (First People’s Cultural Council) and Suzanne Gessner (First People’s Cultural Council);³⁸ *Documentation, revitalization, and benefits for young learners and their communities (NSF-sponsored workshop results)* by Ruth Rouvier (University of California, Berkeley), Joanne Knapp-Philo, and Tracy Hirata-Edds (University of Kansas);³⁹ *Where are your keys?* by Evan Gardner and Susanna Ciotti (Where Are Your Keys?);⁴⁰ and *Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon* by Gretchen McCulloch.⁴¹

Because we decided to move the conference back to our original venue of the Imin Center, we capped our registration at 435 registrants from 31 countries. The program committee reviewed 250 abstracts and accepted 131 papers, 22 posters, and 11 electronic posters, representing nearly 100 languages worldwide. Social events included a pre-conference film screening, two evening receptions featuring taiko drumming and hula, and a graduate student mixer. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the conference theme, Pōmai Stone and Ali Pérez of the UHM Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language created Ka Lumi Ho‘omalū in one of the rooms in the Imin Center as a “safe place to rest the heart and body” during the conference. The He ‘Ōlelo Ola Field Study in Hilo again took place just prior to the ICLDC, as did a screening of short films. The conference was followed by the 2nd Workshop on Computational Methods for Endangered Languages (ComputEL).⁴²

2.7 ICLDC 6: Connecting Communities, Languages, & Technology ICLDC 6, held February 28–March 3, 2019 and chaired by Gary Holton and Brad McDonnell, marked the tenth anniversary of the conference series. The conference theme, “Connecting Communities, Languages, & Technology”, highlighted the parallel development of language documentation as a distinct subfield of linguistics on the one hand, and the “dramatic technological evolution which has put advanced computing tools in the hands of language documenters and those striving to reclaim and maintain endangered languages” (International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation 2019) on the other. The aim of the conference was to

[...] initiate a dialogue which will lead to improved connections between communities, languages, and technologies. We specifically aim to bring together three groups which have not always worked closely together, namely: linguists, language communities, and technology developers. (International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation 2019)

³⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/41989>.

³⁸<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/42063>.

³⁹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/4206>.

⁴⁰<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/41990>.

⁴¹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/41992>.

⁴²<http://altlab.artsrn.ualberta.ca/computel-2/>.

ICLDC 6 featured two plenary addresses. Te Taka Keegan (University of Waikato) gave the opening plenary on *Language normalisation through technology: Te reo Māori example*,⁴³ and Kau'i Sai-Dudoit (Awaiaulu) gave the closing plenary on *Nānā i ke kumu: Look to the source*.⁴⁴ The popularity of the Talk Story Roundtables and the Workshops at ICLDC 5 led the organizers to repeat these formats in 2019, and organizers received an impressive 70 proposals for Workshops and Talk Story sessions. Six Talk Story sessions took place: *Connecting technology and language revitalization from a community-based perspective* by Britt Dunlop (First People's Cultural Council), Jacqueline Jim (SENĆOFEN Immersion School), and Kyra Fortier (First People's Cultural Council); *Decolonizing Indigenous language technologies: Centering communities and their languages in technology* by Adrienne Tsikewa (University of California, Santa Barbara), Wesley Leonard (University of California, Riverside), and Megan Lukaniec (University of Victoria); *Talking about child language documentation: Experiences, challenges, methods, and outcomes* by Barbara Kelly (University of Melbourne); *I 'ike 'ia kanaka ma kāna 'ōlelo: Ka wehewehe i nā mana'ole like 'ole e pili an no ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i*/Ideologies about Hawaiian language revitalization and reclamation by Hina Puamohala Kneubuhl (Kealopiko and Awaiaulu), Ha'alilio Solomon (UHM), and Katie Drager (UHM); *Leveraging technology to recirculate songs in endangered languages* by Clint Bracknell (Edith Cowan University), Linda Payi Ford (Charles Darwin University), Emily and Chloe Ford (New Ways for Old Ceremonies project), and Linda Barwick (University of Sydney); and *Immersing our homes and relationships: A discussion of the successes and struggles of heritage language transmission* by Whitney Nephew (Seneca Nation) and her daughter Mira Garrow, Kawennioŝtha Nicole Martin (Mohawk Nation), and Yeya'tón:nis Alexis Martin (Seneca Nation).

The program also featured six Workshops: *Rapid word collections workshops: Why & how to do them* by Brenda Boerger (SIL International) and Jeremy Avial (SIL International);⁴⁵ *Introduction to Mukurtu CMS: Connecting and sharing cultural collections and language materials* by Kimberley Christen (Washington State University and the Sustainable Heritage Network), Michael Wayne (Washington State University), and Alana Pollack (UHM);⁴⁶ *Bloom: Now communities can create their own books* by John Hatton (SIL International);⁴⁷ *Accelerating the analysis of your audio recordings with untrained forced speech alignment* by Rolando Coto-Solano (Victoria University of Wellington), Sally Akevai Nicholas (Auckland University of Technology), Samantha Wray (New York University – Abu Dhabi), and Tyler Peterson (Arizona State University);⁴⁸ *Transcription acceleration for language documentation with ELPIS* by Ben Foley (Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language), Daan van Esch (Google), and Nay San (Stanford University);⁴⁹ and *How to make a 'mother*

⁴³<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44883>.

⁴⁴<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44884>.

⁴⁵<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44885>.

⁴⁶<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44888>.

⁴⁷<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44889>.

⁴⁸<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44886>.

⁴⁹<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44890>.

tongues' digital dictionary by Mark Turin (University of British Columbia) and Aiden Pine (Indigenous Language Technology project).⁵⁰

465 participants registered for the conference. We received 312 abstracts, and accepted 131 paper presentations and 67 poster presentations, including 26 Technology Showcase exhibits. The Technology Showcase brought together developers, linguists, and community members involved in creating, repurposing, or otherwise utilizing a wide variety of technologies for language work to interact in an informal, hands-on session. Social events included our first-ever Game Night, a film screening, two receptions, and another graduate student mixer. ICLDC 6 again co-located with ComputEL, which was held before the ICLDC and which also co-sponsored the Technology Showcase. Once again, the UH Hilo He'Ōlelo Ola Field Study took place after the ICLDC.

3. Measuring the impact We consider the continually-increasing number of abstract submissions and registrants to be an indicator of the general success and popularity of the ICLDC series. At the same time, we are aware that attendees expect us to keep pace with the rapidly changing world of language documentation and conservation, and to provide opportunities to grapple with new ideas. It has been a goal of every organizing committee to create a conference experience that is better than the one that came before, to offer new formats for interaction, and to highlight timely issues as themes for encouraging discussion and growth. For this reason, it has been important for us to meaningfully incorporate feedback from attendees into the planning of each event.

At every ICLDC, evaluation forms are distributed to participants in their registration packets and collected on-site or online. Usually these evaluation forms ask for opinions on the quality of the program, logistics (e.g., rating ease of proposal submission or registration), participant demographics (including identity, professional information, and distance travelled to attend), and hospitality (e.g., food and lodging options). In 2017, however, we enhanced our survey by including a section asking specifically about the short- and long-term impacts of the ICLDC series on the broader fields of linguistics and language documentation, as well as on attendees' research, projects, and education. We received 163 surveys in 2017; below we report the results of the questions relating to the impact of the ICLDC.

3.1 Global impacts Our survey contained ten statements regarding the impact of the ICLDC series that respondents were asked to evaluate on a four-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. Figure 2 shows the global responses to this section of the survey, displayed from most 'strongly agree' responses at the top to most 'strongly disagree' responses at the bottom.

Responses to the statement "The ICLDCs have had a positive impact on the larger fields of language documentation and conservation and linguistics" were overwhelmingly in agreement: 97% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while only

⁵⁰<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/44887>.

3% disagreed (and nobody strongly disagreed). The opportunity to develop professional connections with other attendees is considered to be a strong impact of the series: 96% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

Building new skills and directly improving attendees' projects or research are positive impacts of the conference series as well: 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had learned new skills by attending, and 89% agreed that attending one or more ICLDC conferences had directly helped their research and projects. 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attending the ICLDC had helped them find collaborators or partners for research and projects; 76% agreed or strongly agreed that attending the ICLDC had improved their research skills; and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that the ICLDC series was a good venue for sharing their research. 66% agreed or strongly agreed that the archived, freely-available recordings and presentation materials from previous ICLDCs have had a positive effect on their projects, research, or progress toward a degree.

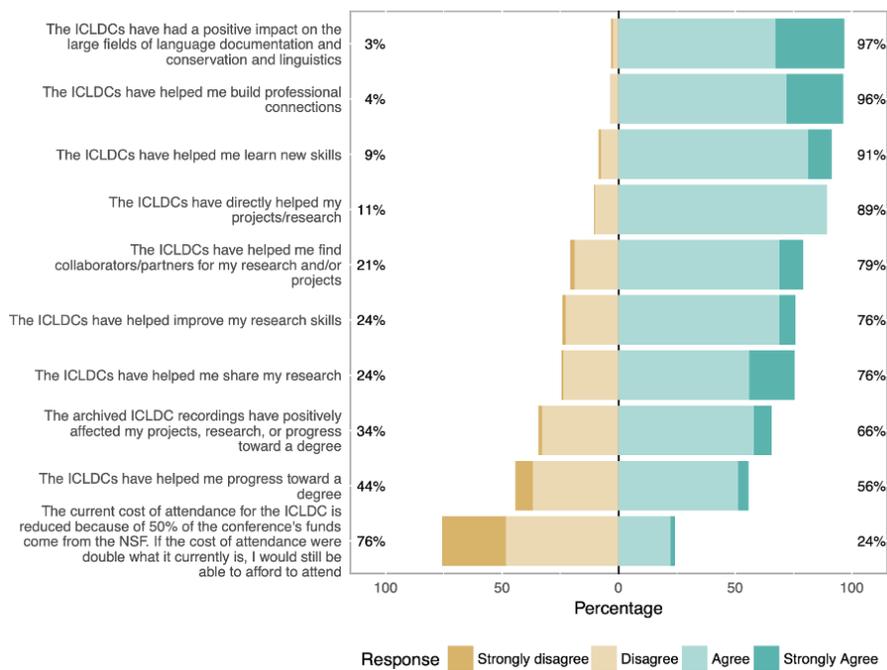


Figure 2. The impact of the ICLDC conference series, global responses

The impact of the ICLDC series on students is an important priority for the organizers and for the conference's main funder, the National Science Foundation. 56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ICLDC series played some role in helping them progress toward completing their college or university degree.

Interestingly, the only statement that received a majority-disagree or -strongly-disagree rating was related to the cost of attending the conference: 76% of attendees disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that if the conference series lost its

funding, resulting in registration fees that are twice what they are now, they would still be able to attend. This points to the importance of the continued strong support from external funding sources to the success of the series.

3.2 Impacts by student status As is mentioned above, the impact of the ICLDC on students is of particular interest to our main funder, but it is naturally one of the organizers' primary concerns too, given that the conference is based at a university. This section presents the Likert scale responses to the ten statements discussed in section 3.1 by student status: responses from non-students ($n=103$), responses from undergraduate students ($n=7$), and responses from graduate students ($n=53$). Figure 3 shows responses to all statements by student status, and here we discuss only the statements where there were notable differences among the groups.

The statements that showed differences among student status groups were all related specifically to research and progress to a degree:

- The ICLDCs have helped improve my research skills
- The ICLDCs have helped me find collaborators/partners for my research and/or projects
- The ICLDCs have helped me progress toward a degree
- The archived ICLDC recordings have positively affected my projects, research, or progress toward a degree.
- The ICLDCs have helped me share my research.

In the responses to each of these statements, the non-student responders and graduate student responders pattern together, while the undergraduate student responses are clearly different. In each case, the undergraduates responded with far fewer 'agree' or 'strongly agree' responses, and far more 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' responses, than the non-students and the graduate students. It is worth pointing out that we had far fewer undergraduate student respondents than graduate students or non-students, which probably reflects the fact that undergraduate students do not attend conferences as frequently as graduate students. Nonetheless, even these seven undergraduate students felt the ICLDC had less to offer them than others did, and clearly the ICLDC organizers need to step up efforts to increase the positive impact on our undergraduate attendees.

3.3 The impact of coming back Many of our attendees have been to multiple iterations of the ICLDC. We analyzed the reported impact of the ICLDC series, based on responses to the ten Likert-scale statements described in section 3.1, according to how many times the respondents had attended an ICLDC. The ICLDC impact score had an observed range of 5–24, with the observed range being 2–24, the mean score being 16.59, and the median being 17. The variable number of ICLDCs attended

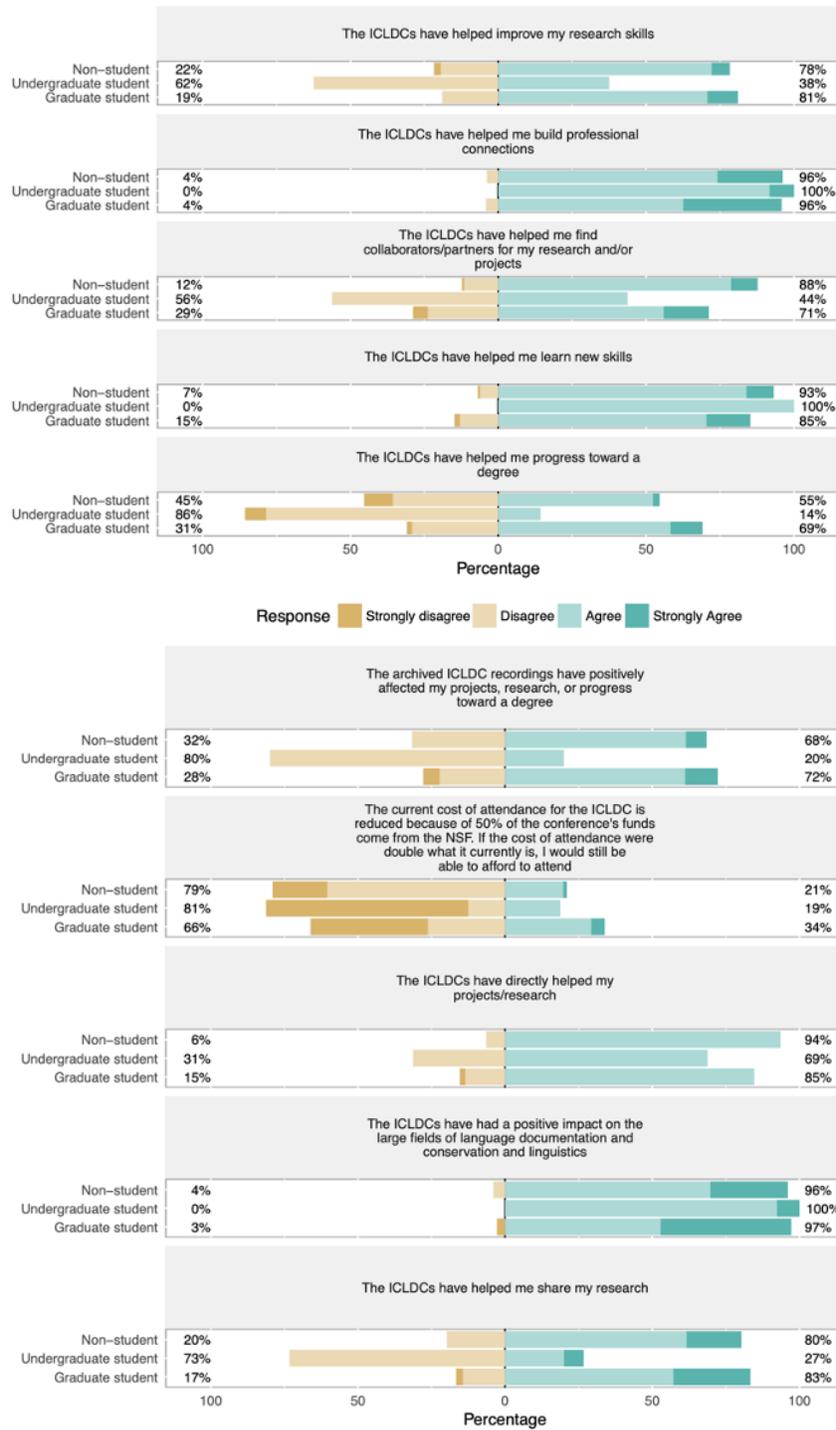


Figure 3. The impact of the ICLDC conference series by student status

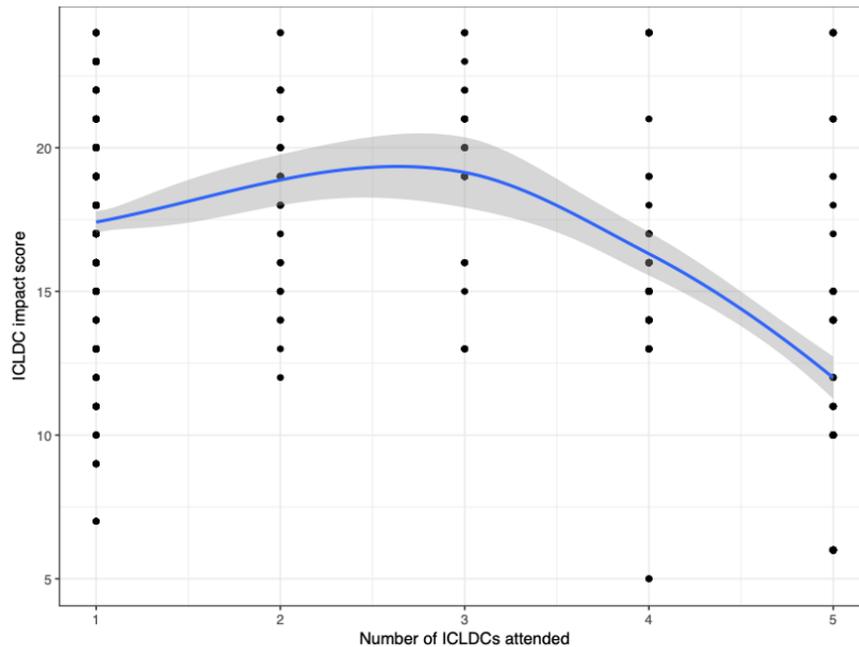


Figure 4. The impact of the ICLDC by number of ICLDCs attended (with loess curve)

ranged from 1 to 5, with a median of 1. Figure 4 shows the results with a loess curve applied.

Interestingly, the perceived overall impact of the ICLDC series increases with each additional conference, but only up to a point: three conferences. The perceived impact then decreases with attendance at additional conferences. We can speculate on why it might be the case that perceived overall impact waxes and then wanes. Language endangerment and loss is deeply entrenched. Its roots are systemic, based in generations of colonialism, linguistic racism, physical and emotional trauma, and unequal access to economic and educational resources (see e.g., Davis 2017, Hereniko 2017, Leonard 2017, Rosborough et al. 2017, Hill 2002, Dorian 1993). The longer one stays engaged with language work, the more one realizes that no one effort alone can make a significant impact on a global problem. Rather, it takes numerous efforts, with many people sharing ideas, stories, successes, and failures, across many communities and over a sustained length of time, to effect change. ICLDC is just one of many initiatives that provides a forum for bringing people together; over time we believe our attendees come to see the ICLDC as a treasured opportunity to meet and connect with colleagues that is, in the end, just one part of the complex and nuanced international response to language endangerment.

This is not to say that the ICLDC isn't an abundantly positive experience for attendees every time they come. To the contrary, where our survey also allowed respondents to write freely about the impact of the ICLDCs, we found overwhelming

enthusiasm about the conference experience. Some of these reflections are discussed in the next section.

3.4 ICLDC's impacts in respondents' own words Our survey contained two questions that invited respondents to reflect in their own words on the impacts of the ICLDC. We collated the responses and noted several themes that emerged from the responses after the 2017 conference. First, network-building opportunities are a primary impact of the ICLDCs. Responses include:

- “[The ICLDC is a] genuine occasion to connect across languages, ethnicities, and kinds of experience.”
- “[I]n working with a critically endangered language, I find that this conference has given me the opportunity to lift my head up! (out of the books) and be encouraged that there is the same work being completed around the world! :)”
- “I have met many (even most) of my current project collaborators at ICLDC. Chance meetings at ICLDC 3 directly led to me involvement in Colang 2014 and 2016. Two of my three grants are collaborations that have roots in my ICLDC 3 & 4 attendance.”

In particular, the ICLDC series is valued as being a place to build a community of colleagues working toward language reclamation:

- “[The] ICLDC is forming an international coalition of language advocates. Community builds stronger language revitalization.”
- “I love that [the ICLDC] brings community members and linguists together – Linguists especially need community members’ input, and this is a space where they are often welcomed to give that input in ways that is safe for them. It could still be better than that, but it’s better than any other conference I have been to. I also appreciate this conference raising the profile of documentary work in the linguistics community!”
- “It seems like the ICLDC does a good job of bringing together lots of people who work on language revitalization in a lot of different capacities. This seems critical for the field to move forward and for projects and efforts to be driven by communities.”
- “ICLDC has had a huge positive impact, and I think it’s especially beneficial to provide members of Indigenous language communities lots of opportunities to share their ideas and experiences with the changing but still non-Indigenous dominant groups of scholars in documentary linguistics.”

The ICLDC’s focus on Indigenous communities is another notable impact:

- “I am leaving this ICLDC conference filled with emotions that inspire me to carry on and pass on the language of our community. I am proud of our school team that came because we’ve had realizations of who we are as Squamish people but also how strong we are without knowing how strong we are!”
- “I believe that this conference has given me an insight as to how I can better serve my community in regards to language revitalization and well-being – it has also given me ideas on how I can better advocate for Indigenous languages. Lastly, I have been introduced to people and resources and tools that can aid in revitalizing language.”
- “The ICLDC Community has helped me to continue my learning on how to work ethically, collaboratively, with Indigenous partners. Each project I undertake is better and better aligned with the ‘right’ way of conducting research in this respect: collaborative, respectful, guided by Indigenous [...] perspectives and methods.”

The value of the ICLDC in filling in gaps in a university education was a noteworthy impact for several respondents:

- “[The] ICLDC has helped me to connect with research that is not emphasized at my university and to learn from leaders in the field. It has been a vital part of my educational and professional development.”
- “ICLDC₄ propelled me and my husband onto the path of language revitalization we are on now. As non-linguists ICLDC opened a door to the world of linguistics and has us seriously considering continuing with a PhD in linguistics.”
- “The way I frame my research and design my projects has been directly shaped by the knowledge and perspectives I’ve encountered at past ICLDC. As a young researcher in [language documentation and conservation], ICLDC provides a venue for my work to get exposure and constructive feedback that’s unmatched anywhere else.”

Finally, respondents note that the ICLDC series plays a central role in advancing the fields of language documentation and language reclamation/revitalization within linguistics:

- “I think ICLDC has had huge impacts on the field’s legitimacy, effectiveness, coherence, and connectedness of researchers and practitioners. Lang[uage] doc[umentation] / revitalization wouldn’t be the same without ICLDC. We need this conference to keep those fields moving forward.”
- “I really believe that this conference helps linguistics learn how to reapply theoretical, and analytical knowledge to real world situations. If we do not assist in the revitalization of languages there will be nothing left to study. This conference is a big factor in helping this be realized.”

- “[The ICLDC] further legitimizes [reclamation/revitalization] as a branch of linguistics. [It] brings greater attention to the issue of endangered languages worldwide and the amazing efforts around the world to revitalize them.”

In summary, our respondents provided evidence that the ICLDC series, as a place to ponder the complex ebb and flow of language vitality, has indeed had, for the most part, a positive impact. The goal of the series has always been to provide a welcoming space for the sharing of ideas among a diverse audience seeking common ground, and we believe we have been successful in that regard. In moving into the second decade of conferences, organizers will need to continue to be responsive to the changing goals of the field and of the individuals who attend. In this way, the impacts of the ICLDC will continue to expand.

4. Looking ahead: ICLDC in the age of covid-19 ICLDC 7 is scheduled for March 4–7, 2021. At the time of writing, the organizers have just decided to move the conference completely online in response to the dangers that traveling and congregating during the covid-19 pandemic present. At first we were disappointed that we would be unable to gather in the Imin Center in 2021 and share our experiences face-to-face in the shade of the Ko‘olau, but we soon realized that the online venue provides exciting new opportunities for growth in directions we might not otherwise have the chance to explore.

Since ICLDC 4, we have needed to remain conscious of our registration numbers – once the ICLDC grew to a size that pushed the limits of the Imin Center’s capacity, we had to cap registration, meaning that many people who wanted to attend were unable to. An online format allows us to accommodate far more participants than the in-person event and also allows attendees from locations from which travel would otherwise be prohibitively expensive or difficult. We also respect and share the concerns of ICLDC participants who are troubled by the added carbon footprint that frequent travel to conferences represents and the disproportionate effect of carbon emissions on Indigenous communities.

An online ICLDC will be more accessible as well. The cost of registration will be a fraction of what it was before. We will also be able to provide significant interpretation from and into American Sign Language, as well as real-time captioning. To account for time-zone differences, many presentations will be pre-recorded, and live presentations will be recorded and available online immediately.

Most importantly, the online format will allow us to explore new modes of interaction between participants. The program will be fully integrated with the Hilo Field Study, allowing attendees to participate in both virtual events at once. A blend of virtual meeting and webinar technologies will allow us to recreate the directionality of Talk Story Roundtable discussions and Workshops. Poster presenters will be able to receive feedback and answer questions, and some topically-defined social events are being planned.

The theme of ICLDC 7, “Recognizing Relationships”, has become especially timely in recent months, when traditional modes for communicating and collaborating are being challenged and reconfigured. At ICLDC 7,

[...] we propose to initiate a dialogue on how recognizing relationships can help overcome the many critical challenges in language documentation and language reclamation. We believe that this focus will lead to improved connections among academic linguists, various communities, researchers from other disciplines, educational practitioners, and many other stakeholders. We specifically aim to draw attention to the transformative power of recognizing relationships to overcome critical challenges. (International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation 2020)

We are certainly living in a time of critical challenges. Our hope is that the ICLDC 7 will bring to the forefront new ways of engaging with one another, new ways of supporting and sharing precious languages and the people who speak, sign, and learn them, and a renewed appreciation of the importance of collaboration in language documentation and conservation.

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