

Reconnecting Land, Language, and People: a Five-Year Project between Touchwood Agency Tribal Council and First Nations University of Canada

This presentation by Senator Bill Strongarm (Touchwood Agency Tribal Council) and Dr. Andrew Miller (First Nations University of Canada [FNUniv]) provides an overview of an on-going collaboration four Plains Cree/Saulteaux communities in Treaty Four area of southern Saskatchewan and faculty from Indigenous Studies, Education, and Languages programs at FNUniv. Our research objective was to document Indigenous toponyms and land use histories to improve knowledge and respect for Indigenous cultures and histories through the creation of community-based educational materials. A second objective was to record Indigenous vocabulary connected to locations and livelihoods. Through collaborative research processes, our interdisciplinary team published an Indigenous history book, an accompanying teacher's lesson plan, and an award-winning trilingual children's book. Our research is based on the assumption that by connecting language, history, and the land we support memory, cultural renewal, and on-going political efforts to maintain access to traditional lands guaranteed under the treaties. We explore the idea that the land is where the link between Indigenous cultural traditions and language revitalization is most meaningful and where access to land resources reveal an important dimension of the struggle for settler/Indigenous reconciliation.