

## Abstract for the General Public

In 2011, Poland ratified the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH) and since then, the nation has been working to protect and promote their cultural heritage elements. The goal of this research project is to expand on existing theories and best practices in intangible cultural heritage scholarship in Poland and analyze how the concept can serve Indigenous and local communities in Canada. By taking a multi-disciplinary approach, this research will work with ICH-custodians, academics, and policy-makers to examine Poland's current policies and practices aimed at protecting and revitalizing folklore, including languages, that can be applied in an international context. The objective is that, having learned from the wealth of examples and practices of ICH-work in Poland, the scholarship can be relevant in Canada, notably in the context of enlarging the political discourse around ICH and to enhance Indigenous and local community-based heritage transmission. To date, no researcher has come to Poland to learn from the Polish ICH experience with the intent to use the work with Indigenous people. Likewise, examples of ICH work from Canada can provide interesting case studies for Poland, thus rendering this proposal as a knowledge-exchange research project.

Because ICH encompasses elements like traditions, storytelling, music, songs, and traditional knowledge exhibited through individuals and communities, this critical examination will build on diverse theoretical perspectives including ethnographic research and Indigenous methodologies. The research questions framing this project include (1) what are the ways intangible cultural heritage elements are revived, maintained, and transmitted? (2) how are folklore livelihoods contributing to the survival of traditions and professions? (3) how is ICH pushing the boundaries of cultural and environmental management and laws, including, discovering specific policies that have been helpful in ensuring inter-generational transmission? The answer to these broad questions will provide case studies for ICH documentation and safeguarding while also determining at what levels (local, regional or national) practices are best guided.

It is anticipated that the first portion of the fellowship will be spent on literature review, textual data collection, and ethics applications so that the most of 2023 and on-wards can be spent on fieldwork and publications. Core fieldwork activities include going to communities, to cultural events, speaking with traditional knowledge-holders as well as with those working in ICH-related professions. In tandem with scholars from Nicolaus Copernicus University, the research project will involve experts 'shadowing' each other in their respective expertise and exchanging knowledge on own research lens and scholarly insights into ICH. The methodological tools include participant observation, key informant interviews, and narrative analysis. Formal interviews and discussions will be audio-visually recorded and data from the project will be in the form of audio and video files that will be subsequently transcribed and reviewed by the participants. Based on the PI's established academic work in Canada, graduate students will be offered the opportunity to learn about research methods, theories, and data collection that align with ethical and Indigenous research.

The hypothesis is that methods for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage related to storytelling, traditional knowledge, songs, music, and language, can be fruitfully applied in both Canada and Poland to promote and transmit folklore and heritage in communities. While this research will advance the discussions of ICH identification and protection, it will also influence policy and research-approaches to sustainable development and community rights across different cultural landscapes. Furthering scholarship on the practical applications of ICH in anthropology, Indigenous/folklore/cultural studies, this work will also promote reconciliation between Indigenous people and Canada.