



**Title of Project**

Understanding Roles and Meanings of an Intercultural Higher Education for Rural Youth and Communities in Mexico

**Researcher**

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**TIRF Research Topic Investigated**

Language Endangerment and Revitalization

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**Project Summary**

Through an ethnographic case study of one of Mexico's public Intercultural Universities, I explore how experience of an intercultural higher education curriculum influences rural and Indigenous students' academic trajectories and engagement in linguistic and cultural maintenance. Intercultural and culturally relevant education could act as a key vehicle for enhancing the quality of education and the promotion of linguistic and cultural rights. Yet most research on postsecondary access and persistence focuses on how individual students might adapt (or not) to mainstream university settings and their languages, rather than how the university can adapt to the local needs and linguistic aspirations of students, their families, and communities. Further, few studies explore how pedagogical practice might help youth overcome common obstacles to participating in linguistic and cultural maintenance, such as pressures to migrate and systemic and interpersonal racism. Indeed, recent analyses call for heightened attention to both the ways that successful language revitalization must be intertwined with larger issues of social justice and decolonization, and the ways that educational projects seeking linguistic and cultural maintenance might better attend to the material and social realities – and, I would add, the academic needs – of Indigenous adolescents and young adults. By observing teaching at the University and how students apply their learning in community settings, I seek to understand how and for which youths an intercultural education can strengthen academic achievement while developing their abilities to deploy their local languages and knowledges as assets and in ways that make sense within larger pluricultural and global realities.