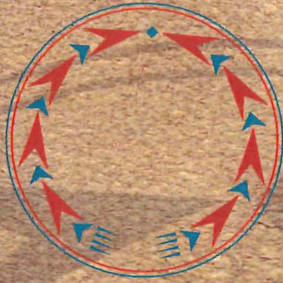


The Office of the Northwest Territories  
Languages Commissioner  
Annual Report 2001-2002

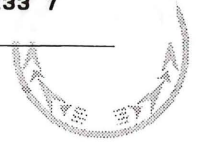


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## *Vision and Mission Statement*



### **Vision**

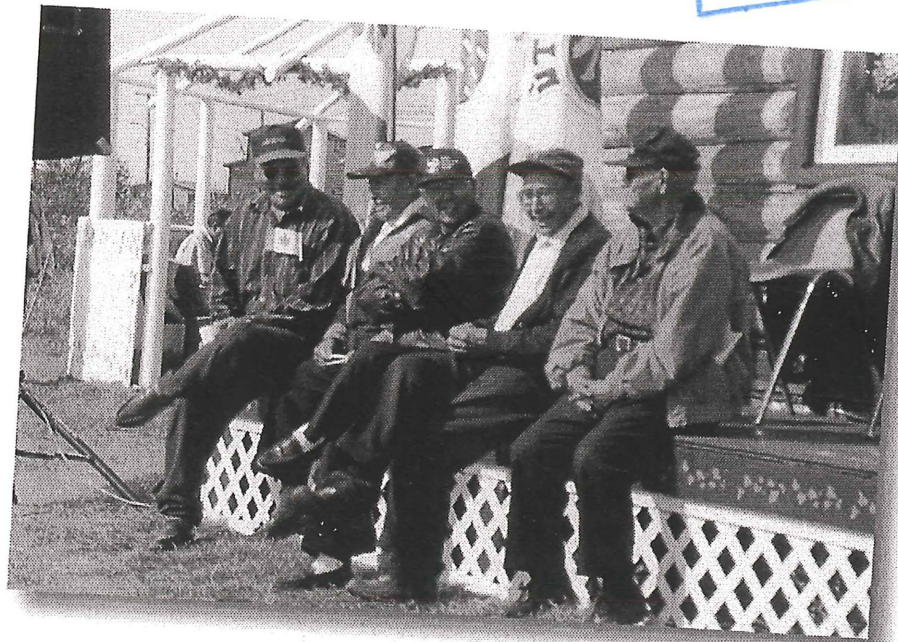
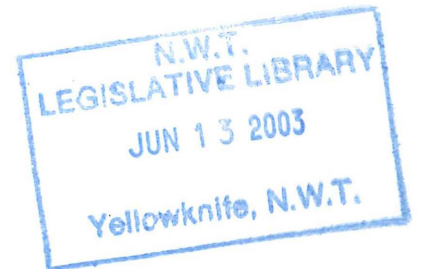
As Elder Leo Norwegian so eloquently said, "Like the people before us, we must rise like the water and take our place in the protection of languages and culture for the next generation of people."

Each step we have taken in language revitalization has been taken with Elders and many committed and dedicated persons. Each achievement has been made by working together toward the common vision of strong, healthy NWT official languages. The Office of the Languages Commissioner must follow this cooperative approach, working together with all language communities and NWT citizens in meeting their language needs and aspirations and upholding the *Official Languages Act*.

### **Mission**

The Office of the NWT Languages Commissioner meets this Vision by:

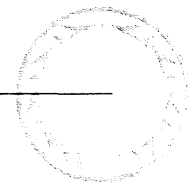
- Advocating support for NWT official languages development;
- Monitoring and research activities;
- Receiving and resolving inquiries and complaints regarding the *Act*;
- Consulting with an Advisory Board;
- Making reports and recommendations to the government and Legislative Assembly; and
- Communicating with the public.





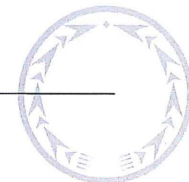
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This is now my second year in the Office of the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. The past 12 months have been exciting and rewarding ones, and for me they have been a time of challenges, of learning, of high hopes, of hard work

and, most important, of learning from the many different people I have met in my travels among the communities. This period has been a vital one for the languages and cultures in the NWT, and as Official Languages Commissioner I have been privileged to be a part of the public debate over their future. In reporting on the events of the last year, I do not simply speak for myself as Commissioner. I speak as well for the Advisory Board to this office, with its collective wisdom and knowledge that have been such a great support to me in my work.

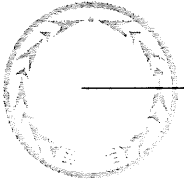
Let me start by explaining the mandate of this office. An important aspect of the mandate is to give recognition to the efforts and accomplishments of community people. When I first came into office, we found people in communities working in relative isolation from each other on language and culture. Few linkages existed among the different activities in these fields, and no one was actively promoting or highlighting their work. Since then, this office has tried to act as a clearing house for all these diverse efforts, and has devoted considerable time and resources to giving them a higher profile. As I see it, the people of the NWT themselves are primarily responsible for maintaining their languages and cultures through their ongoing, day-to-day efforts. The supporting role of this office is to publicly highlight and emphasize how community people are keeping their languages and cultures alive.

Another significant function performed by this office is that of advocacy for language rights. As directed by the Advisory Board, I and my staff work

to keep language issues alive and at the forefront of the public's and the government's agendas. We regularly meet with and seek to influence decision makers like the NWT's Premier and Cabinet, the Legislative Assembly, and the Chiefs and other community leaders. This takes us to meetings at the Legislature, regional and territorial Assemblies, annual general meetings and community gatherings. As language advocates, we want this office to be seen as belonging to and representing the people, not just the Legislative Assembly. I want to make this office a people's office by ensuring that our directions come from the Advisory Board and the communities.

This past year, the office's central priority was to participate in the Review of the *Official Languages Act*. Section 29 of the *Act* requires the Legislative Assembly to conduct a 10 year review of it. It also says that: "The Languages Commissioner shall provide all reasonable assistance to the Legislative Assembly or any committee of it that is designated as established for the purposes of this section..." Given our clear mandate, both I and the Advisory Board looked forward with great anticipation to assisting the Special Committee on the Review of Official Languages (SCOL) in carrying out this important review. We saw the SCOL review as offering a valuable opportunity to receive direction from and hear the wishes of the communities on the future of their languages.

From its years of work on curriculum, the Advisory Board knows that the review process's success depends crucially on how it is implemented. Just as in curriculum development, implementation must begin in the earliest stages of the SCOL review. From the very start, teachers and the public must be kept informed about any curriculum changes, and a very important step is to also include the people who will actually implement them. As front line workers with experience in designing and implementing curriculum, the Board's members recognize they have a special contribution to make. It is in this spirit that we approach the review of the NWT's *Official Languages Act*.



The Advisory Board's second meeting, in Yellowknife in October 2001, provided a unique forum for us to work cooperatively with the Special Committee (SCOL). The first day of this meeting was taken up with a session between the Advisory Board and the SCOL, and involved a frank and informative exchange of views. There was also a presentation by a delegation from Nunavut, which is conducting a parallel review of the *Official Languages Act* in its jurisdiction. Following this joint session, the Advisory Board's members turned their attention to the *Official Languages Act*. For the next two days, we analyzed this *Act* in depth and sought ways to ensure that it better serves the needs of the language communities of the Northwest Territories. As part of this work, we reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Special Committee.

The Advisory Board's review came up with 15 recommendations about the *Official Languages Act*. It directed this office to consolidate the recommendations into a report, which is to be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly as well as the Special Committee. In the interest of public education, the Board also decided to hold an internal workshop with the media after its Yellowknife meeting. This workshop was organized by the Language Commissioner's Office, and was successful in informing various members of the media about the SCOL review.

Sometimes, as Language Commissioner, I feel daunted and overwhelmed by the task which faces all of us who seek to revitalize languages in the Northwest Territories. One morning, this year, I woke up to hear an Elder singing a love song, which brought me great hope and optimism. His love song will be heard all over this land, and it will be maintained and carried into the future. Hearing the song made me realize that he too plays a role in maintaining this culture, and that I do not carry this burden alone. We all share responsibility for our languages and cultures. I remembered the advice of another Elder, when I first entered this Office. He

told me: "The road will not be an easy one, but you must have faith, you must believe and take time to see what is actually there. When you finally see the picture, then you will realize that you were never alone and that many, many held your hands along the way."

A little later, I also heard Mitchell, a five-year-old, talk about the importance of speaking one's own language – almost as an Elder would speak. He said, I wish more people spoke the language, because I don't like to speak alone. He was translating for his grandmother in the hospital. Hearing this woke me up. So many people are working to protect and continue their languages. Everyone has a part to play in maintaining language and we don't rely just on government or on the Special Committee to do so. These experiences inspire me and make me realize that I have to move on, to work again.

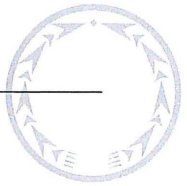
There are so many people that gave me support and inspiration over the past year. I want to acknowledge the efforts and to thank Elders, educators, Aboriginal leaders, Advisory Board members, Divisional Boards, our elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly, and people in the communities.

This office can only succeed in fulfilling its mandate if it works collaboratively with other organizations and individuals. My responsibility as Languages Commissioner is not to walk in parallel to the communities and their initiatives for language and culture, but to work in support of them. Once again, I hope to go on this adventure with you. In closing, let me share my vision. The birds have returned, the land is blooming and all over, you can hear the laughter of people as they speak in their own languages. The chants of the tea dance music grow louder...

Mahsi,  
  
Fbbie Tatti  
Languages Commissioner of the NWT



# Organization



## Advisory Board

The *Official Languages Act* of the NWT states that the Office of the Languages Commissioner must have community contact. This is achieved by community visits, but more importantly, via the establishment of the Languages Advisory Board. The function of the board is to provide strategic direction and leadership on an ongoing, continuous basis, including during the review of the *Official Languages Act*. An Advisory Board is also essential in maintaining communication between the various language groups.

Objective	Action	Status
Regular Annual Advisory Board meetings	2nd Annual Advisory Board meeting, October 2001	Complete

## History

The Advisory Board to the Office of the Languages Commissioner was established and the first organizational meeting was held in conjunction with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment from October 24 to 26, 2000.

Advisory Board members were chosen carefully through community consultation using a number of criteria:

1. Representation of Elders and regional language workers from each of the official language groups;
2. Members have lengthy experience in language work;
3. Members speak their own languages; and
4. Members have specialized language skills, e.g. literacy, interpreting/translating, linguistics, language program development and research.

Board members are highly regarded in their communities and, with their collective skills, experience and resourcefulness, provide expert advice to this office. The support from Divisional Boards of Education contributes greatly to successful operation of annual Advisory Board meetings.



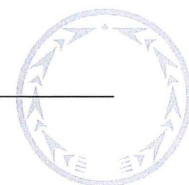


## Advisory Board Members

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Region	Board Member
Dogrib	Elder Elizabeth Mackenzie, Rae-Edzo
	Madeline Rabesca, Fort Rae
	Elder Alphonse Eronchi, Fort Rae
	Jonas Lafferty, Rae-Edzo
	Rosa Mantla, Rae-Edzo
	George Mackenzie, Rae-Edzo
Sahtu	Elder Victor Menacho, Tulita
	Jane Modeste, Deline
	Camilla Tutcho, Deline
	Fred Rabesca, Fort Good Hope
	Jessie Campbell, Norman Wells
French	Daniel Lamoureux, Yellowknife
	Fern Denault, Yellowknife
Inuvialuktun	Elder Rosie Albert, Inuvik
	Elder Victor Allen, Inuvik
	Renie Arey, Inuvik
Innuinaqtun	Emily Kudlak, Holman Island
Chipewyan	Elder Sarazine Basil, Lutsel K'e
	J.C. Catholique, Lutsel K'e
	Anne Biscaye, Deninu Ku'E
Gwich'in	Elder Jane Charlie, Fort McPherson
	Liza Andre, Tsiigehtchic
	William Firth, Fort Mcpherson
	Betty Vittrekwa, Fort Mcpherson
Deh Cho	Elder Adele Hardisty, Fort Wrigley
	Elder Joe Bonnetrouge, Fort Providence
	Andy Norwegian, Fort Simpson
	Fanny Swartzentruber, Fort Simpson
	Joachim Bonnetrouge, Deh Cho First Nations
	Doris Camsell, Hay River
	Raymond Sonfrere, Hay River, DCI
Jean-Marie Broda, Hay River, DCI	





In 2001-2002, the duties of the researcher/analyst position at the Office of the Languages Commissioner were contracted out to a Yellowknife consultant. The assistance of the researcher/analyst is crucial to this office's ongoing effectiveness. His/her responsibilities include research and analysis of language issues, preparation of Annual Reports and Business Plans, documenting complaints and inquiries, addressing caseloads, and ensuring that timely responses are issued from this office.

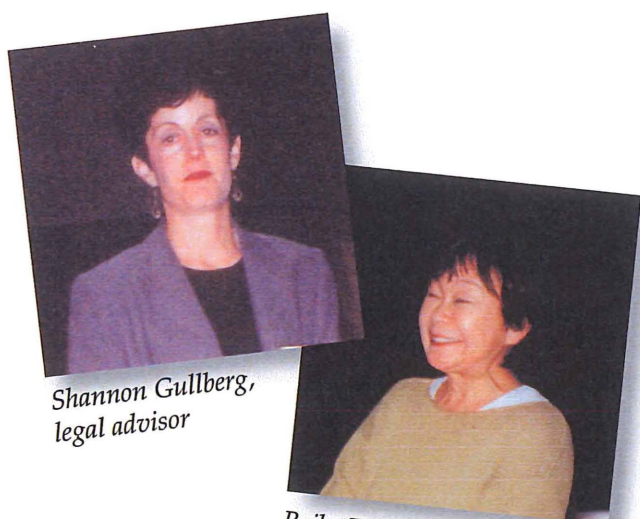
The purpose of the Office Structure is to increase office capacity to perform its new priorities of Advocacy, Research and Monitoring.

Objective	Action	Status
Office Re-organization	Rewrite current job descriptions to include:	
	• Research Analyst	Complete
	• Public Affairs Liaison	Complete
	• Administrative Assistant	Complete
	Hire Public Affairs Liaison	Complete
	Hire Research Analyst	Complete
	Hire Administrative Assistant	Complete

## Comments

It is very important for this office to build capacity to perform functions that are expected by stakeholders, e.g. advocacy, providing contemporary research and resources, promotional programs and communications.

Shannon Gullberg provides legal counsel in resolving complaints and providing legal opinion on issues affecting the office. Ms. Gullberg was instrumental in preparing workshops for review of the Act.



*Shannon Gullberg,  
legal advisor*

*Reiko Trudeau, researcher*

Reiko Trudeau has extensive experience in language development projects in the Northwest Territories. Prior to joining RT & Associates as a managing partner in the early 1990s, Reiko held a number of posts within the GNWT's Department of Education, including Coordinator for the first Dene Teaching and Learning Centres and instructor for the Aboriginal Language Teacher Education Program in Yellowknife. As a managing partner with RT & Associates, Reiko has assisted in the preparation of a number of business plans and studies for the Office of the Languages Commissioner, including the Office of the Languages Commissioner Strategic Plan, Annual Report and Advisory Board Report. In addition, Reiko has provided consultation for a number of projects related to arts and culture, including the Ndilo Cultural Interpretive Centre Business Plan (November 2002), Bison Crossing Crafts and Tannery Business Plan (July 1998), Netsilik Miniature Collection (October 1999), NWT Arts and Crafts Wholesaler/Retailer Survey (August 1999), the Igutaq Group Printmaking Market Potential, and Northern Nishnawbe Artists (NNA) Strategic Plan 2001-2002 (December 2000).

### Comments

A central part of my mandate as Languages Commissioner is to act as an advocate for language rights. The *Official Languages Act* provides a legal foundation for the recognition and protection of languages in the NWT. However, formal language rights are of limited value unless people can exercise them effectively, both in their home communities and elsewhere in the NWT. This office has a crucial advocacy role to play on behalf of official language users, especially where the exercise of their language rights is restricted or frustrated or denied.

The Languages Commissioner's Office needs the public's support and its advice and direction on how we can be more effective advocates for language rights in the NWT. In return, I and my staff try our utmost to carry forward peoples' concerns to the territorial government, and to highlight and support their front line efforts on language and culture.

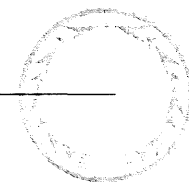
In my capacity as an advocate, I held many meetings over the past year with the public, language organizations, government agencies and departments, and in many cases, I gave speeches or made formal presentations to them. I also met with individuals privately, to discuss their concerns about language in confidence. These face-to-face meetings are one of the most rewarding aspects of my work. They energize me and give me vital insights into the hopes and challenges of communities and groups who are working to strengthen and promote our languages. Assemblies, in particular, offer such valuable opportunities for me to meet with the Chiefs and other community people, and to take their direction on the language work done by this office.

I want to make special mention of my recent visit to Tulita. While there, I was shown through the new learning centre, which has been in existence now for half a year. The community felt that students

needed to learn within a more traditional setting and managed to find money within their budgets to establish the Tulita Cultural Centre. Students attend regular school classes, however, for part of the day they are also taught traditional Dene activities by Elders at the Centre. Their instructions are organized around five traditional activities and cycles, including different stages of tanning hides and food preparation as well as drum making. Teachers and students speak in their own languages and English while engaging in these activities. Elders provide food and refreshments for visitors throughout the day.

The Tulita Cultural Centre is like a cultural language camp in the heart of the community. In my view, this is an excellent model of how to carry out cultural-based language education work. Visiting this centre and seeing how its activities are succeeding took my breath away, literally. It clearly illustrated for me what a community can do when everyone – including Elders and leaders – work together to strengthen their traditional language and culture. It reinforced my faith in language revitalization as being possible for communities in the Northwest Territories. I said, yes, this is what the Elders have been talking about!

An important ongoing priority for the Office of the Languages Commissioner is to obtain sufficient funding for interpreter/translating services to support our work. Since the Language Bureau's closure, this office has been carrying on its business without a secure budget for interpreting/translation services (I/T). So far, it hasn't succeeded in acquiring funding for these much needed I/T services. It is crucial to conduct our meetings, correspondence and communications with the public in the languages that people are most familiar with, and the Office of the Languages Commissioner cannot adequately do this without the help of interpreters and translators.



The purpose of Advocacy is twofold: recognize and encourage groups and/or individuals in their language work; and encourage people to claim their language rights under the *Act*, with the support of the Office of the Languages Commissioner. The Language Commissioner's visits to various communities is key for this office to understand what is happening at a community level and to see and hear what the language instructors and Elders want in regards to language retention.

#### 2001-2002

Target		Action	Achieved
Community	1	Sahtu Regional Visit, February, Deline	Meetings
	2	Chief Ehtseo Ayah Erihtl'e ko (school) staff and students, February, Deline	Attendance
	3	Sahtu Regional Visit, February, Tulita	Meetings
	4	Chief Albert Wright School staff and students, February, Tulita	Presentation and Attendance
	5	Sahtu Regional Visit, February, Norman Wells	Meeting
	6	Sahtu Regional Visit, February, Fort Good Hope	Meeting
	7	Chief T'selie School staff and students, February, Fort Good Hope	Attendance
	8	Dogrib Elders Validation Meeting, May, Rae-Edzo	Meetings
	9	Deh Cho Elders Validation Meeting, June, Fort Liard	Meetings
Regional	1	Dogrib Language Committee Meeting, March, Gameti	Presentation and Attendance
	2	Deh Cho First Nations Assembly, June, Kakisa	Meeting and Attendance
	3	Dene National Assembly, July, Tulita	Presentation and Attendance
	4	Dogrib Treaty 11 Assembly, August, Wekweti	Presentation and Attendance
	5	Gwich'in Tribal Council Assembly, August, Inuvik	Presentation and Attendance
	6	Sahtu Regional Community Visits, February	Presentation and Attendance
Territorial	1	Advisory Board Meeting, October, Yellowknife	Attendance
	2	ECE Language Conference, May, Yellowknife	Attendance
	3	Language Commissioner of Nunavut, June, Yellowknife	Meeting
	4	Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Workshop, June, Yellowknife	Meeting and Workshop Given
	5	Aurora College Graduation Ceremony, May, Inuvik	Presentation and Attendance
National	1	Ombudsman Meeting, April, Toronto	Meeting
	2	Native Language Preservation Conference, April, Albuquerque	Meeting
	3	Indigenous Language Conference, May, Los Angeles	Presentation and Attendance
	4	Language Commissioner of Canada, June, Yellowknife	Meeting
	5	Ombudsman Conference, September, Quebec City	Presentation and Attendance
	6	Language Conference, December, Wales	Presentation and Attendance
	7	Language Conference, January, Thunder Bay	Presentation and Attendance



### Comments

As Commissioner, I am keenly aware of how research has failed to keep pace with our efforts to maintain and revive our languages. It is time for us to step back and take a careful look at what our language research has achieved and at how we can do it better. Roman Orthography is strong in our schools, and generations have been trained in its use. However, given the challenges which our traditional languages and cultures now face, we as educators need to explore the potential of every educational tool available to us. Syllabics is one of those tools: it worked very well for us in the past and, properly used, it could work well in our present school systems. In my view, a key priority for future research should be the whole area of syllabics.

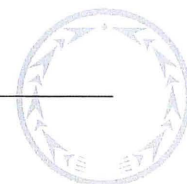
Years ago, a decision was made to develop and adopt Roman Orthography as the means to read and write the Dene languages. It was felt this was the best way to teach our young children how to read and write in their own languages. This was done mainly because there weren't enough representations of the sounds in the syllabic system introduced by the missionaries at the turn of the century. Depending on the language, there can be anywhere from five vowels in the syllabic writing system to 26 in the Roman Orthography. There really are 26 vowel sounds, hence the dilemma over which writing system to use. There was concern that the students might have problems making the transition from syllabics to the English writing system.

The Elders have always felt alienated from the Roman Orthography writing system and from the reading programs that were being designed to

accommodate the students. The basic decision to use Roman Orthography was made primarily for the students' sake. On my recent travels, and in the workshops I have attended this year, the question of the writing system has resurfaced. Much time was spent discussing the syllabic writing system at the Sahtu Language Workshop, and work has also begun on syllabics by the Chipewyan Language Group. Our Elders have been brought into these language workshops as active and important participants. Once again, they have taken on their distinguished roles as our teachers. Their joy at teaching and sharing with us is truly inspiring.

An Elder passed away several years ago and, in an old, faded suitcase under his bed, they found many of the writings he had done over his lifetime. However, all that he wrote – all that valuable knowledge – is lost forever because no one could read it. We simply cannot afford to lose information like that, for to do so is to deprive future generations of a priceless resource! All of us concerned about language and education must do what we can to make sure that this vital flow of information and wisdom is maintained between the past and the future – our youth.

To assist us in this important task, we are very fortunate in having Elders in our midst who still read and write in syllabics. In a very true sense, our Elders are living scholars, and we need to make better use of them in teaching languages to our students. By continuing to use syllabics, Elders "implement" strategies for keeping our languages alive. They are living examples, and they can teach us how best to implement similar strategies in our school systems.



The function of Research is to provide socio-linguistic research, relevant to the Northwest Territories, that monitors language trends and identifies critical success factors of language development projects. Collection of past studies in the development of official languages of the Northwest Territories provides language workers with a reference base and much needed materials for new program development.

Objective	Action	Status
Acquisition of contemporary language research on NWT languages	Works of Wendall White, Karen Rice, Ed Cook, Vic Monus, June Helm, Schott Rushforth, Robert Young, Leslie Saxon, Phil Howard, NWT Teach and Learning Centres, GNWT departments and cultural associations	Work in progress
Supportive research in the Review of the <i>Official Languages Act</i>	2001 Business Plans, review process, socio-linguistic research	Complete and in progress
NWT Case Studies	Family involvement in French advocacy initiatives Dene Kede and Innukatigiit Curricula Fall caribou hunts and documentary by CBC Television Researched Yamoria's journey for OLC unit display	Work in progress Review implementation Ongoing Complete
Other Jurisdictions	Study of other jurisdictions and identification of critical success factors in language programs and legislation Navaho Language Research Project Study Hawaiian Language Nesting Project	Work in progress Complete Proposed





## Monitoring

The function of Monitoring is to provide accountability for language funding.

Objective	Action	Status
Monitor Canada-NWT Agreement for languages agreement	Identify allocation of funds, purpose of funds, whether objectives were met and whether departments conducted evaluation.	Work in progress
Monitor Vote 1 (GNWT) language funding	Identify allocation of funds, purpose of funds, whether objectives were met and whether departments conducted evaluation.	Work in progress
Public satisfaction surveys	Language services in health care	Work in progress

### Comments

Allocations for Vote 1 and Vote 4 language funding can be found in Appendix Two. The office is committed to ongoing monitoring of activities, ensuring that funding is used for its designated purpose.





## Complaints

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### Comments

The Office of the Languages Commissioner received and responded to a number of complaints, invitations and inquiries during 2001-2002. A total of nine new complaints were received by this office, primarily related to the French and Dene languages. The time that we take to resolve complaints typically ranges from under one month to more than one year, depending on the issue's complexity.

The complaints process administered by the Office of the Languages Commissioner is important to the recognition and protection of official languages in the NWT. Lodging a complaint can be daunting, especially if you are seeking recourse in another language. Some people have found it lengthy and cumbersome, and even where there is an outcome it may be unclear to them what was actually achieved. Last year, I and my staff reviewed the whole complaints process administered by this office. We worked hard to simplify this process, and outlined some new guidelines in our newsletter. The new forms were also distributed through News/North and Yellowknifer newspapers. Currently, the office is located on the third floor of the Panda Centre, so it isn't as readily accessible as it might be. In order to deal adequately with the complaints and inquiries we receive, this has to be a "storefront" office.

In 2001-2002, the Office of the Languages Commissioner was invited to attend 30 public functions and community meetings. There has been a steady increase in the number of invitations we receive, which indicates a greater awareness of this office and its role. This is partially due to the work of the Advisory Board in giving a higher profile to the work performed by this office.

Last year, 79 inquiries were directed to this office. The number of inquiries declined from the previous year, largely because the Special Committee on Languages (SCOL) began its community hearings. In the course of these hearings, the Committee received various complaints and inquiries, as community people took this opportunity to express concerns about their language rights. This office saw an increase, however, in inquiries from Aboriginal people, which indicates to us that our profile is being raised.

Some inquiries handled by the Office of the Languages Commissioner can't be dealt with as easily by a GNWT department. In many cases, they do not have the staff available to address these language and cultural inquiries. I believe that this office is becoming known for its depth of knowledge and its ability to answer most inquiries by internal research in a quick, specialized and efficient manner.



## Communications

The function of Communications is to stimulate public awareness of official languages, language development initiatives in the NWT, understanding of public rights under the Act, office roles and responsibilities, and to respond to inquiries made to the office.

Objective	Action	Status
Receive inquiries	Resolve inquiries	Ongoing
Public display	Official language and culture display panel	Complete
Press release	Regarding establishment of the Advisory Board and information regarding Review of the Act	Complete
	Public display unit	Complete
	Aboriginal Language Month	Yearly
Web site	Redesign web site	Work in progress
Initiate quarterly newsletter	First newsletter widely distributed and published on the office web site	Complete and ongoing
	Fall, Winter, Spring 2002 newsletter circulated to 550 organizations and individuals	Ongoing
Aboriginal Languages Month	NWT-wide TV ads in all official languages during March	Complete
	Newspaper advertisements promoting official languages	Complete
	Information display, Centre Square Mall, Yellowknife	Complete
	Storytelling (Dene stories and legends) with students of Tulita School	Complete
	Presentations and community visits to Deline	Complete
	Honouring women and their work in languages, Kakisa	Complete
	Community visits to Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells and Gameti	Complete

### Comments

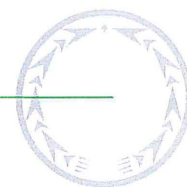
The office received positive feedback from community members regarding the newsletter. In fact, there were requests for additional copies. The newsletter has had an impact. It keeps the communities informed of regional language activities, pays tribute to the Elders for their contributions to language initiatives, and acknowledges major contributions to languages. In addition, information on all major conferences, nationally and internationally, is a part of our newsletters.

One of the most successful projects undertaken by the communities was the development of the translation of the National Anthem of

Canada into all the Aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories. The Office of the Languages Commissioner would like to thank all those participants who donated their time for this important and useful project.

The Office of the Languages Commissioner would also like to thank all those people who contributed to the Yamoria Project and assisted with the validation of our display unit. This stand-up display unit travels with the Office of the Languages Commissioner regionally, nationally, and internationally. The travels of Yamoria, his importance to the Dene people, and the information this display gives people not familiar with our lands valuable and insightful information as to who we are as a people.

## *Excerpt from Languages Commissioner's Yamoria Speech to the Legislative Assembly*



In the beginning, when the world was new, Yamoria was the lawmaker. Yamoria was not born of a human mother, rather Yamoria and his twin brother, Yamogha, were given to us by the Creator. It is said that Yamogha travelled into the future and stories about Yamogha are rare because, as we all know, stories from the future can only be given to a few very special people.

But Yamoria travelled around the world or the universe and as he travelled around the world, he saw many things happening that made it hard for the people to survive. So as Yamoria travelled around he began to put things right so people could survive and live a better life. This is why Yamoria is called the lawmaker. Many landmarks we see today, that have been left behind during Yamoria's travels around the universe as he made things right, are reminders of how we should live in order to survive as a people.

Today, it is fitting that we are here together with lawmakers, students and children who will carry

the Yamoria stories to the next generation. We are grateful for the students who are here today.

...As you have seen, Yamoria travelled to the lands of every Dene tribe in the Northwest Territories. Each tribe has a variation of Yamoria's name: for the Dogrib it is Yamoza, the Gwich'in Etachokai, North Slavey Yamoria and South Slavey Yamodezha. As we look upon the landmarks, we must remember that Yamoria's laws endure in the words of our languages which we must protect.

...In closing, I would like to leave you with the words of Stanley Isaiah of Fort Simpson, who reminds us that the symbol of the three beaver pelts on Bear Rock Mountain, and the forever burning fire upriver from the mountain, are signs of the land, set there as a reminder of the teachings of the legends. Stanley said that, if we remember the teaching of the legends and work with them, if we take the sign set on the land for us as our symbol, we will never have any problems surviving as a nation.

*Language is the Heart of the People – and Voices of Our Ancestors*





## Summary of Costs

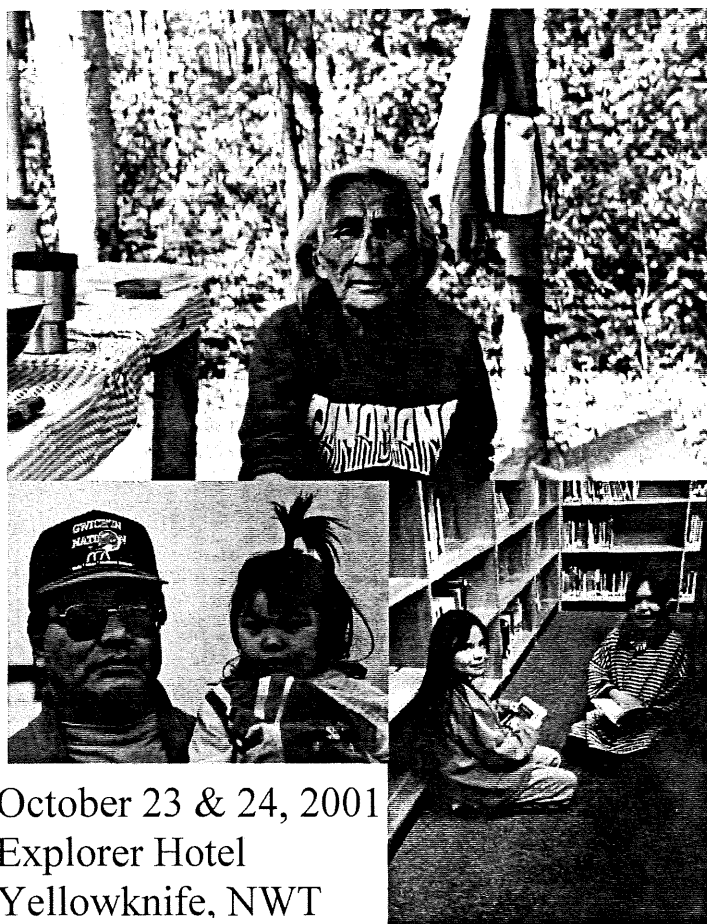
### Languages Commissioner Budget 2001-2002

	2001-2002 Main Estimates	2001-2002 Revised Estimates	2001-2002 Actual Expenses
Compensation and Benefits:			
Salaries	197,000	76,256	76,255.61
Wages	8,000	12,000	18,228.19
	<b>\$ 205,000</b>	<b>\$ 145,000</b>	<b>\$ 94,483.80</b>
Other Expenses:			
Travel and Transportation	40,000	29,248	29,248.14
Materials and Supplies	25,000	33,331	33,380.84
Purchased Services	20,000	11,615	11,615.09
Utilities	300	413	413.00
Contract Services	180,200	129,867	129,866.92
Fees and Payments	15,000	12,311	12,311.16
Other Expenses	5,000	2,829	1,370.00
Tangible Assets	0	0	0
Computer Hardware and Software	4,500	2,829	2,828.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 290,000</b>	<b>\$ 203,000</b>	<b>\$ 221,033.85</b>
	<b>\$ 476,000</b>	<b>\$ 467,198</b>	
<b>Total Surplus for Languages Commissioner</b>			<b>\$ 8,000</b>





# Advisory Board Meeting Office of the Languages Commissioner



October 23 & 24, 2001  
Explorer Hotel  
Yellowknife, NWT





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# Introduction

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The Advisory Board for the NWT Office of the Languages met in Yellowknife October 23 and 24, 2001 for the second annual board meeting since its inception in Year 2000.

Board members in attendance represent all NWT official language groups and were provided with simultaneous interpreting services.

Also in attendance were observers from various organizations. (See Appendix 1 for a list of Advisory Board members, observers, and interpreters in attendance).

The following report contains two sections:

- 1) summaries of the following: opening remarks from NWT Commissioner Glenna Hansen, NWT Languages Commissioner Fbbie Tatti; updates on language revitalization initiatives from board members; and closing remarks by Bill Erasmus (National Chief of the Dene Nation), Elder Elizabeth Mackenzie and Andy Norwegian
- 2) Board workshop discussions and recommendations on the review of the Official Languages Act

## Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Glenna Hansen

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I would like to speak to you about and encourage you concerning languages. Fibbie, thank-you for your invitation. I'd like to welcome the Elders, everybody that's involved in the languages, the staff. It gives me great pleasure to be here to speak to the importance of your efforts in the preservation and promotion of all official languages in the Northwest Territories. It is wonderful to see such diverse representation of languages and people from different language organizations and different communities.



This venue reminds me of when I was a member of the board of education. I can remember the issue of languages being brought to our attention and our meetings. I remember in those days that it was very difficult - very, very difficult for the aboriginal languages to be recognized. I remember as a board director thinking how could we encourage this? Those were very difficult times because of budgets and because we didn't have enough money in those days to see it go from the primary into the upper, high school level. I can remember those times and you know, we felt strongly about protecting the language and culture of the people. As you prepare for this review, I urge you to remain focused on this very task. The review allows you to reflect on the past and present. You assess and justify the future needs for the preservation and promotion of all official languages in the Northwest Territories.

The importance of community consultation will assist in this journey and it will take everyone's participation and cooperation to achieve the goal. I would like to thank you for being here. I recognize the dedication you have to this important issue and the wealth of knowledge that you will share with one another. When I think about languages, I think about people who have dedicated their lives and time to this task. It is important that we continue to strive together to promote the languages and protect them - when you think of the word *protect* it means to *guard*. We have to make sure we do not lose any ground.

I want to wish you all the best. I thank God for the traveling mercies that He gave you to come here. I pray that He will grant you the traveling mercies to go home and that He will protect your families while you're here so you can focus on the task that's ahead of you.

Once again, thank you Fibbie for your kindness and support to my office and I thank you people. If there is anything that I can do as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories within my guidelines, I would be more than happy to assist you in any way that I can.

God bless you and take care of you.

## NWT Languages Commissioner, Fibbie Tatti

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Fibbie Tatti, Commissioner of Official Languages, thanked Glenna Hansen for her opening remarks and recalled visiting the Inuvialuit communities when Glenna introduced Fibbie to community language workers and organizations.

Ms Tatti recognized board members have had the difficult dual role of board work and interpreting in the past and thus acknowledged the importance of the interpreting team present. Fibbie also introduced Office staff, Sylvie Boisclair, Public Relations and Heather Bibby, Administrative Assistant and encouraged board members to contact them for any assistance they may require.

In welcoming Board members and guests, Fibbie asked particular care be given to Elders during the course of the meetings.

Following are excerpts from Ms Tatti's opening remarks.

Ten years ago when the Act first came into being, one guideline put in place was to review this Act after ten years to see if it was working for the people. For all those years we have lived and worked on these aboriginal languages -in the schools, in translation work, as chiefs - it was in all these different areas that we worked on the aboriginal languages. When they talk about the review of this Official Languages Act, we who have been working on the languages all these years, are the ones that must have our input into this review.

We have been in leadership position for languages for years – all of us around this table. I think we have a responsibility to provide that kind of direction for our people out there. If you look around the table, you have people from everywhere representative of the languages. We do have to provide that direction. That is what we're intending to do in the next couple of days – to work on the how are we going to try to help out there.

I feel a one-hour orientation to the Language Act at community hearings will not prepare you to be an active, informed participant to make the kind of recommendations that are required. What is really important here is that when we go back into our communities, when we participate at the community level, we are prepared to make informed presentations.

We've worked on programs and curriculum development – most of us. We now have to concentrate a little bit on legislation. We have to work on the Act and see how it can serve us better. This group has that kind of leadership and that kind of background to do that. It's a shift in the focus of what we used to do. There is nobody out there that has as much experience as you have, in terms of leadership for languages.

One of the things that we've always talked about is that our language is our language. It is up to us to determine what it is going to be. We can't have people out there telling us – this is what we think your language should be. I think the people themselves have to say, "This is what our language is to us. This is how the Act can best serve us." This is the work we must prepare for. Within the next year, there will be community hearings in reviewing the Act. Within the next two days, you will discover how much work it is to be an informed participant in the community hearings.

I keep thinking there is so much work to be done. On the other hand, when we were working on Dene Kede K-6 and Dene Kede 7-9 we knew how difficult it was going to be and we still had a lot of fun working on the curricula. One thing you should know is that Dene Kede is being used in the University of Saskatchewan – it's a prerequisite to graduating with a Bachelor of Education degree. Yesterday we talked about the Languages Act as one of our finest moments. I think Dene Kede as a prerequisite for a person to get a degree in education at a university is another thumbs up for us – one more thing we have done and again one of our finest moments. I think at lunch time when you are sitting and relaxing, I think you should just kick your shoes off and say, "That was me."

Now we have something else to work towards. We're shifting focus in terms of the things that we used to do ... but I expect we'll continue with the great working relationship that we have.

# Language Revitalization Updates

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Following are board member updates on language work in their regions and communities. (See Appendix 3 for transcripts)

## Dogrib



Phillip Rabesca, George Mackenzie, Mrs. Mackenzie, Mary Richardsson, Alphonse Eronchi

Phillip Rabesca, Chairperson of the Dogrib Language Community Committee, presented an update of language work being undertaken by the Dogrib Language Community.

**Organization.** The Dogrib Language Community Committee operates within the Dogrib Community Service Board (DCSB), which is responsible for education, health and social services. The Committee, comprised of two members from each of the five Dogrib communities, Wha Ti, Gameti, Wekweti, Dettah and Rae-Edzo, meets three times a year. Because DCSB is based in Rae-Edzo, community leaders decided the language centre offices would also be based in Rae-Edzo to maintain a close working relationship with DCSB. There have been organizational changes over the past year. The DCSB Chief Executive Officer has changed and all language centre staff, offices and facilities are now housed in the Nishi Khon Complex in Rae. Elders and Committee members who are not employed elsewhere receive an honorarium.

**Planning.** Once the transition was complete and funding received the Dogrib language committee met in Wha Ti in October 2001 to review the funding and language plan, and develop a detailed budget. Language Committee meetings are held in each of the five Dogrib communities on a rotational basis. The Committee reviews the Dogrib Language Plan and community project funding proposals.

### Dogrib Language Community Projects

Since last year, the Dogrib Language Community funded eight projects with sixteen planned for the coming year. Phillip described the following projects:

1) Language Survey. In undertaking the language survey of five communities, only one community, Rae, remains to be completed. Initial results show that Dogrib language use is declining. Once the report is complete, the Committee will present the results to the Department of Education Culture and Employment, community leaders and the Dogrib Service Board in order to determine how to help young people use the language more. "The elders are saying that when we don't know our language, we don't know what kind of person we are, so they're giving us a message. We're going to look at the survey and look at what's happening to the language."

2) Publications. Current publishing projects include a *Third Edition of the Dogrib Language Dictionary*, *Dogrib Prayer Book* (including a *Second Edition*). The prayer book will be complemented by audiotapes. A video production *Tliicho K'iel* the making of a canoe, was completed.

**Human Resource Development.** Phillip stressed the importance of interpreter/translator training. Refresher courses in medical and legal translation and interpreting will be funded and will initially be offered in cooperation with the Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School in Rae-Edzo.

**Communication.** Elders say it very important to provide important language information to the general public. A conference is planned for May 2002 in order to present results of the Dogrib Language Survey and provide information on language programs and projects. Those aware of loss of language and culture, youth, and elders will be invited to the conference, which will be open to the public in general.

“If we don’t make our people aware of information out there, what’s going to happen to our language? ... Our people are telling us this. You who are working on the Dene languages, we appreciate your work. If you can make it better for the community, if you can make the community aware of Acts and laws that are available for Dene, you will make it available. The information will sit there for a future generation. This is how and why our Dogrib language community continues to work closely together.”

## Inuvialuktun and Innuinaqtun



Emily Kudlak, Rosie Albert

Renie Arey, Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre (ICRC) and Emily Kudlak, ICRC, Holman Island presented updates on Inuvialuit language projects.

**Organization.** The Inuvialuit Language Community is like a Teaching and Learning Centre and is under the auspices of the Inuvialuit Cultural Centre and works with six communities - Inuvik, Aklavik, Holman Island, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour.

ICRC works with three dialects and hires resource people in communities to provide support in the three dialects. ICRC works closely with language teachers and provides program support. There are plans to move the language centre to a larger facility in November.

**Publications.** Pictionaries in three dialects have just been published, also a dictionary in the Sigalik dialect in Tuktoyaktuk, and dialects of Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk. Emily Kudlak is now completing the Holman dialect and there are plans for publishing in the Aklavik and Inuvik dialects. Soon to be completed are booklets with CDs made from tape recordings. Currently an illustrated book about reindeer were coming from Alaska long ago is being prepared for publication. A prayer book is being developed with the Anglican minister.

**Child Development Centres.** Currently there are three communities with child development centres where children are learning to speak their language. ICRC will fund child development centres in each community if the children are learning to speak their language and provides instructors.

**On the Land Programs.** ICRC supports school On the Land Programs with language teachers. Contracted to community corporations, the On the Land Programs provide real experiences, such as muskrat trapping, fox trapping, sewing, drum dancing, whaling on the coast. Fishing experiences closer to the community are also arranged.

**Adult Language Classes.** ICRC recently began Inuvialuit language classes for the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation from 11 am to 1 pm.



**Partnered Learning.** Renie spends two hours every Wednesday with Elder Rosie Albert for literacy training.

**Resource Development.** The Language Centre has collected over 1,000 tapes made in the past and some made by ICRC, which Elders are in the process of translating into English.

**Holman Island.** Emily Kudlak reported specifically for Holman Island, a community of 450 people with three dialects. Many projects are being undertaken in both Inuvialuktun and Innuinaqtun. Consultations with youth about where their interests were in terms of language and culture showed an interest in drum dancing. As a result, drum dancing for youth and adults is held twice a week. During the dances, songs are taught, as well as the movements, meanings of the songs, how to pronounce words and how they are written. After-school programs include tool-making, sled making, on-the-land trips where net making and cabin building is taught. Evening pre-school programs are held where there is teaching of song and rhymes. Emily said she would like to see summer school programs for high school students where they could get funding to do mini-projects in their languages.

## Chipewyan

JC Catholique reported on Chipewyan language activities in Lutselk'e.

**Organization.** There is a regional coordinator for Chipewyan communities Lutselk'e, Deninu Ku'e, and Fort Smith under the auspices of Akaitcho Territory Government. In Lutselk'e, the Dene Wotchina offices are in the Development Corporation Building with plans to relocate to the centre of town, more accessible to people and Elders, and a facility more suitable for having coffee and tea with Elders while recording their stories. Functions of the coordinator include fundraising, financial management, meetings with the regional coordinator and Akaitcho Territory communities. The coordinator also made school visits, lobbied government for resource materials, attended ECE's Echoes of the Language Conference and the Chipewyan Language Festival.

Chipewyan language community members actively participate in annual gatherings with other Chipewyan in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta numbering about 20,000 individuals with the Northwest Territories group approximately 1500. The most recent gathering of 700 people (the largest since beginning in 1982) was held in Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan. Governance - how to organize as a Dene Sulinè Nation - is discussed. This year Dene Sulinè Grand Council was established with plans for instituting a president and other organizational protocols for year 2004. The gatherings also serve as a venue to exchange information including environmental issues related to mining.

**Promotion.** The Chipewyan language committee organized many promotional and fundraising activities including the following: Chipewyan language bingo held every Wednesday where everything including calling numbers was in Chipewyan; advertising Chipewyan language through t-shirts, mugs, posters, etc., a Chipewyan language luncheon was held in June where everyone must speak Chipewyan before they could get fed; Chipewyan word of the day where every day a new word is posted in the Band office (Elders provided the words in both Roman orthography and syllabics); and Dene Wotchina language

song contest in four categories: elders, adult, youth and children. There was also a joke category. This was a popular event and resulted in a lot of singing and laughter that day.

**Publications.** Funds raised from the promotional activities were used to record church hymns, which were produced on CD by Akaitcho Territory Government. Three main prayer songs and a song will be used in the school at the beginning of each day, and there are plans to supplement the CDs with written words for the children to follow.

**Language Programs.** The committee raised \$8,000 from the Dene Nation Language Initiative Fund for a two-week language camp at the spiritual gathering. During the camp, Chipewyan is taught through songs and traditional games. Besides cultural activities such as drying meat and fish, there was a hike on a traditional route the first three miles before going to the barrenlands. In addition, the committee contributed \$5,000 for a pre-kindergarten language program where one Elder was hired to work with the children to teach Chipewyan.

**Human Resource Development.** The committee is lobbying Aurora College to start the interpreting program as a result of high demand for interpreters in light of development in the region. JC pointed out the interpreting program enhances the language especially since there is no linguistic program offered.

**Communication.** The committee plans to sponsor the next Dene Wotchina Language Conference in February or March and will serve as a forum for exchange of information in terms of education and strategies for keeping the language strong. In addition, the conference serves as an avenue for people reconnecting with relatives lost because of boundaries and distance.

## Gwich'in



William George

Elder Mrs. Jane Charlie and William George presented updates on Gwich'in language plan, administered by the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, part of the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

**Organization.** William George began work in July with the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute Five-Year Gwich'in Language Plan and is supported by an Elders Advisory Council and works with specific projects with the Gwich'in Language Centre. The Gwich'in Language Plan includes many projects, about fifteen of which are not supported by funding, therefore new plans will downsize the number of projects. Strong ties are maintained with Gwich'in language workers in Yukon and Alaska where parents still speak to their children in Gwich'in.

**Community Visits.** Initial work undertaken to implement the Gwich'in Language Plan included community visits for the purposes of outlining the Plan and also to survey youth in communities regarding language. Happily, survey results show that young people have a positive attitude towards re-learning their language.

**Language Survey.** There are plans to visit communities to do a language survey to start in Aklavik.

**Publications.** Work is ongoing on the dictionary project documenting the many words that was used in the past but not too commonly used today. Dictionary work is being done in Arctic Red River and Fort McPherson where elders explain the word meanings and correct

pronunciation. Gwich'in Elders Biography Calendars will continue – last year seven biographies were completed, twelve this past summer with plans to complete more next year. Also, a medical terminology handbook is under development to be released by Christmas.

**Immersion Programs.** Working with the Gwich'in Teaching and Learning Centre, pre-school bilingual programs have been operating with children successfully learning Gwich'in and plans are underway for developing kindergarten immersion. Immersion is a concept that has met with success in Alaska. Creating materials for immersion programs has proved to be very challenging.

For two weeks past July, six young people, two elders and language community workers travelled to a traditional Gwich'in location up the Arctic Red River during which time only the Gwich'in language was spoken. The trip went well and all were pleased with the results.

**Communication.** William indicated there is a need for sharing program development initiatives in order to avoid duplication as new people come on line.

**Fort McPherson.** Elder, Mrs. Jane Charlie spoke about language activities in Fort McPherson. Mrs. Charlie said she has been attending many meetings regarding language and there is a lot of work being done. As Elders, they are studying the Bible and having fun teaching it to children. School programs include on-the-land projects with Elders. Children learn to snowshoe, set nets and rabbit snares, set tents, cut wood with an axe. Elders also teach old-time dances to younger children and teenagers. In addition, in 1995, Mrs. Charlie's husband went back and opened a 100-year-old trail, which is now being used every winter and they are busy in March taking anyone interested in following the trail. They also go over the mountains in March.

“Last winter I went with them – we traveled 12 hours one day on the skidoo and the next day I got up – I was fine. I followed his trail, I am happy and half the time I'm crying. This one trip I got myself ready and the Lord help me, I will be on that trail again.....This about our language, I am very, very happy. Try your best. Try hard. God will give you strength and you will win. We will talk our language and they will listen.”

## South Slavey

Elder Mrs. Adele Hardisty, Andy Norwegian (DehCho Teaching and Learning Centre) and Joachim Bonnetrouge (DehCho First Nations Language Community Committee) presented updates on South Slavey language work.

**Elder Mrs. Adele Hardisty.** Mrs. Hardisty spoke about her long involvement with language work, which includes sitting on the Subject Advisory Board for Dene Kede curriculum



Doris Camsell, Adele Hardisty

development. Mrs. Hardisty stressed the importance of mothers to become more aware of language issues and understanding their role in teaching children their language from a very young age, when they are being held close and hearing their parents' words. Mrs. Hardisty reflected on how she herself learned from her parents by listening. Mrs. Hardisty taught one-hour classes in schools and used the same approach of having children listen to her as she speaks in her own language. "... just an hour at a time I talk to the children in my own language. I sit amongst them with their teachers and the teacher would interpret for me." In reflecting on the language work, Mrs. Hardisty said, "Now I'm really happy and grateful about the

Dene language and everything here is beginning to come together. Even in the schools, the people can talk to them..... I think things like that can happen."

### *Dehcho Teaching and Learning Centre*

**Organization.** The Dehcho Teaching and Learning Centre is part of the DehCho Divisional Education Council which administers nine schools in the region. Although the Language Centre concentrates on language activities within school boundaries, any language work done outside schools is seen as an enhancement to school programs and express their support in working with the DehCho First Nations language community committee. Andy said they were particularly interested in working with the middle age group which was identified in the Language Survey as the people who are not transmitting language and culture.



Denise Kurzewski, Fanny Swartzentriber

**Human Resource Development.** With language instructors retiring or coming to retirement, there is an urgency to develop human resources. The Centre works with Arctic College in delivering aboriginal language teaching courses leading to certification. To date there has been good participation in the two courses, which were open to language instructors, adult education students, and others in the community interested in teaching the aboriginal language. The Centre is making strong effort to recognize language instructors who have been working for years, and plans are to encourage language instructors to make presentations to the committee undertaking the review of the Language Act.

**School Programs.** Over the past ten years, the Centre has been working on developing and implementing Dene Kede K-6 and the draft Dene Kede 7-9, the Dene language curricula that were developed by consulting with Elders, including Adele Hardisty and Joachim Bonnetrouge, who advised the curriculum committee on how children can learn to be a Dene person and how to teach in the Dene way.

**Publications.** The South Slavey language dictionary developed over ten years is an over 800-page work that explains language structure and contains verb stems. Currently more words are being added to it and there are plans to put the dictionary on CD-Rom.

**Communication.** Every fall, the Centre takes the opportunity during the regional teachers' conference to bring in all language instructors for the purpose of sharing important information related to languages. For example, last year the Official Language Act and the review, was discussed. Also, teaching courses include information on language issues and how it relates to language teaching.

### ***South Slavey Language Community***

**Planning.** As part of planning process, over 1000 people were interviewed in assessing the state of languages in the DehCho. Organizing training and strategic planning workshops in DehCho communities was part of the process resulting in comprehensive language strategic plans in almost every community.

**Organization.** DehCho First Nation leaders decided to allocate all their language funding to communities and delegated one part-time coordinator position responsible for administering the language program by reviewing proposals and allocating funds to communities in a timely fashion.

**Language Survey Observations.** The most surprising result was that just 64% of DehCho Elders are fluent in their language. As age groups become younger, language fluency decrease rapidly: adults 37%; youth 12%; children 2.9%. Although Fort Liard is the strongest language community, English is the stronger language for 50% of the community. In terms of priorities in people's lives, survey results showed that language and culture was not a priority. On a more positive note, in terms of where language is strongest, in Fort Providence, social gathering such as card happen totally in Dene language. Joachim Bonnetrouge said it is important to recognize positive things in our communities and take advantage of other language settings where people come together.

**Community Projects.** The majority of language projects currently being funded are language camps with Elders, and although they do not necessarily reflect all elements of strategic plans, they are projects that can be quickly undertaken and will hopefully lead to related projects such as language immersion schools. One project being considered is a pilot Dene immersion program for the region. Another ambitious undertaking would be establishing a Dene language radio station to cover the ten communities.

## North Slavey



Jessie Campbell

Jessie Campbell recently began work with the Teaching and Learning Centre for the Sahtu Divisional Board of Education and reported on Sahtu language activities.

**Organization.** The Language Centre is staffed by one coordinator and four part-time Teaching and Learning Centre personnel working within the Sahtu schools and supporting full-time K-12 North Slavey language instructors.

Language centre staff participate on the language community committee established within Sahtu First Nations.

### Community Projects

Tulita. Victor Morris Mendo and Ricky Andrew with Violet Wrigley interpreting for students provided drumming workshops with schoolchildren.

Deline. Past year activities included on-the-land cultural classes and hymns in Slavey with Rosie Sewi.

Fort Good Hope. Fred Rabisca coordinated on-the-land projects.

Norman Wells. Attended by Fbbie Tatti and George Blondin, was a workshop on families and syllabics with Tobak.

**Human Resource Development.** Liz Hanson, Aurora College, provided a three-week literacy course in Inuvik.

## French

Daniel Lamoureux, franco-TéNOISE, reported on French language community activities.

**Organization.** The French community has gained strength in the Mackenzie communities including in Tuktoyaktuk and others.

**Planning.** The three-year strategic plan includes creating an economic development society to help Francophone entrepreneurs to either develop currently owned businesses or start new ones.



Daniel Lamoureux

**Infrastructure.** Plans include the establishment of a second French school controlled by a French School Commission, the only French school board in the Northwest Territories; and building two cultural centres within the next five years, one in Hay River and one in Fort Smith. Franco-TéNOISE unsuccessfully attempted to access support from the federal Western economic development fund because the program does not apply to the Territories.

**School Programs.** There are French immersion programs in Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Hay River with plans to start another in Inuvik within the next year.

**Human Resource Development.** Still to be completed is a needs assessment in training, funded by the Federal Government. It is anticipated that study results will lead to new programs that improve employability of Francophones

**Communications.** Public communications is made possible through L'Aquilon (the North Wind), a weekly newspaper widely distributed throughout the Territories and Radio Taiga, a radio station subsidized by the Federal Government is based in Yellowknife with plans to become territorial-wide within the next year.

**Promotion** There have been a variety of writing contests in both Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Franco-TÉNOISE is still waiting for a response to a request made in January, for funding for a \$200,000 promotional project.

## **Dene Cultural Institute**

Raymond Sonfrere is the assistant director of the Dene Cultural Institute (DCI) and sits on the Office of the Languages Commissioner Advisory Board on behalf of the Dene Cultural Institute. Raymond's language work spans approximately twenty years as an interpreter for the government and his people.

Raymond noted when DCI started in 1986 Elders were saying they did not want to lose their language and culture. That message has not changed. Raymond affirmed DCI's commitment to working towards the goal of language and cultural preservation and is happy to be working on the Board. Raymond emphasized that "working with the language we want to keep and the culture we want to keep is no small thing" and emphasized that in looking at language to remember the words of the Elders that language is not a separate entity but one with the land, the culture and the way you pray – our spiritual way.

In our work, Raymond asked members to remember the strong nation from which we come. "In the past, our Elders have been through a lot of difficult times, but they never gave up – they always continued on and now we have a big job to do .... As we work – we can't give up - we have to keep our minds strong."

## National Chief of the Dene Nation, Bill Erasmus

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Guest speaker, Bill Erasmus made the following presentation.



We are really pleased that you are having this meeting. I am really quite pleased to be here to hear people speaking their language.

The Dene Nation, as you know, is very concerned. We do administer some funding through the Assembly of First Nations and it is in its last year of existence as it is. As far as I know there will be a new program starting next fiscal year. There is also some endangered language money being funded through a cultural institution in Ontario.

There really is not enough money put into our languages - you know that more than anyone else. I think what we need to do is combine the dollars that are out there, the different pots - and you are probably talking about this - combine the different money that is out there and put it into one and have the people administer accordingly.

Our office, for example, should not be administering programs. The money should be out in the regions. It should be where the languages are. That is what I would like to encourage - that we bring dollars together from wherever the sources are, federal, territorial, put them together and decide where they should go. Say if it is North Slavey for example, then it should go to the North Slavey people and they should decide where the money should go because they know their priorities. They are the ones that speak the language and there should be a lot of flexibility around it. For example, if they feel that all the money should go in the school, then I think that is where it should go. Then next year it might go somewhere else, but people should set their own priorities.

Otherwise, I am afraid our languages are going to die and it will happen in our lifetime. It is going to happen very quickly. There are some communities in the south where only five or six Elders can speak their language fluently.. If we do not make a major effort and if we do not speak on a daily basis then that will happen here.

I really want to commend you. I want to encourage you and I just want to let you know that we will do everything that we can. I intend to meet with Fibbie and other people who are involved in languages to make this a campaign that can work.



## Closing Remarks – Elder Elizabeth Mackenzie

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Elizabeth Mackenzie, Mary Siemens

I would like to share a short word with you. When you meet and talk about language it is very good and you always feel good about it. Although we never finish the work, we always continue because we want to work with the children. We want to help the children.

There are many beautiful things that people possessed that we now possess. There are many things that parents have passed on to their children and we become a very big person by it - we become a valuable person.

Our ancestors have done a lot of work, but we cannot see it. If we want to look at what they have done, the only thing we can see today is where they have traveled, where they have camped in the past. We see the rocks that they have left behind which were used for fishing. Those are things that are visible, but what they have given us for our own knowledge is in us.

It seems like they have given us a great deal of things for us to carry on in our lives. Today, all of us who are here in this meeting, each one of us possesses beautiful, valuable information from our parents. That is one of the reasons we are all here together - because we possess this information. If we did not listen to our parents we would not have retained those, but because we listen to our parents and we have retained their knowledge we are here. We may not be very strong as one, but we are powerful as a group. We will be very powerful when we work together.

So, do good work. You are going to tackle a very special, important work. You have to watch how you say, what you say and how you say it and to take care of yourselves. If you take care of yourselves, we will be at a meeting like this again together.

## Closing Prayer - Andy Norwegian

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We were faced with a number of questions during our meeting over the past two days. We asked, Why? Why is our language so important to us? Why is it important that we do not lose our language?

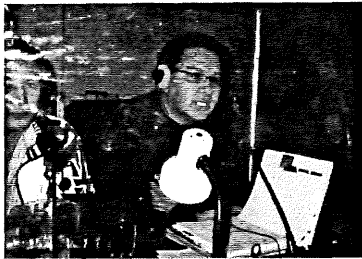
When I think about those questions, I always remember a story that was something an Elder has said that always reminds me of why I am working in the area of languages. It is a story that I use personally to get my spirit moving again. I hope that it gives you the same spirit it gives to me.

An Aboriginal Elder was once asked why is our language so important? And he replied:

What if you woke up one morning and you saw on the branch of a tree a robin and it was singing the song of the sea gull? How would you feel? You probably would feel that in the Creator's law something has gone wrong and it is in this way that it is not meant for us to lose our language. Amen.



## Advisory Board Workshop Discussions and Recommendations for the Review of the Official Languages Act



# Introduction

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*"I remember after the Task Force, after the Task Force which led to the NWT Official Languages Act which recognized Aboriginal Languages as official, a government leader at that time approached me and said, 'You have gone far beyond your mandate.' That was then and here we are ten years later with the opportunity to reflect on the past and look to the future, and again exceed our mandate."*

Fbbie Tatti, NWT Languages Commissioner

In the fall of 2001 (October 23 and 24), in Yellowknife, the NWT Languages Commissioner Advisory Board held a two-day workshop to consider a number of issues related to the NWT Official Languages Act. The purpose of the workshop was to provide the NWT Languages Commissioner with Board opinion on how the NWT Official Languages Act might be revised and improved to become a more effective instrument in NWT language enhancement and development. The Commissioner was to use the information from the workshop to make a presentation to the NWT Legislative Assembly's Special Committee for the Review of the Official Languages Act (SCOL), and also to provide board members with a grounding in bringing issues and discussion to community members for their presentations to SCOL during community consultations.

During the workshop, legal counsel for the Office of the Languages Commissioner (Shannon Gullberg) provided members with useful background information on the Act including summary information on three sections of the Act: 1-8; 9-16 and 18-25; and issues related to those sections that lacked definition and prevented effective NWT language enhancement and development support. Advisory members then broke into smaller groups to discuss the different sections of the Act and related issues, with each group presenting a summary of their discussions with recommendations for revisions to each section.

Outlined in this report are the main elements of the background information presented, issues raised and recommendations. As the reader will see there were three central themes to the Advisory Board discussions.

### **Theme #1. Act Lacks Aboriginal Perspective**

Advisory Board members say there is no aboriginal perspective to the Act and cite examples: the Act is written and published in English and French but not the eight aboriginal languages; and the Act groups languages together without due regard to the important cultural and linguistic differences between groups, i.e., North and South Slavey; and Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun and Innuinaqtun. Further, the Act does not enshrine important institutions such as the Language Bureau.

### **Theme #2. Act Assigns Lower Status to Aboriginal Languages**

Advisory Board members agree that under the Act English and French are accorded much higher status than any of the Official Aboriginal Languages and cite examples: Legislative Assembly presentations can be made in either English or French but with aboriginal languages on an 'as needed basis' - the latter not defined; all NWT Acts and journals must be printed in both English and French but not in the Official Aboriginal languages unless directed by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories; and Government interpreter service is mandatory for English and French but only in Official Aboriginal Languages if there is "significant demand" or because of the "nature of the office". Both requirements are undefined.

### **Theme #3: Expand Office of the Languages Commissioner Roles & Responsibilities**

Advisory Board members say the Office of the Languages Commissioner must have expanded roles and responsibilities in the areas of language enhancement and development including: coordination, planning, research, monitoring and evaluation. Advisory Board members believe expanded roles and responsibilities for the Office would do much to improve the spirit and the intent of the Act in preserving and strengthening NWT aboriginal languages.

# Background

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*“An Elder was once asked, why is our language so important? And he replied, what if you woke up one morning and you saw on the branch of a tree a robin and it was singing the song of the sea gull? How would you feel? You probably would feel that in the Creator’s law something has gone wrong and it is in this way that it is not meant for us to lose our language.”*

Andy Norwegian, at the October 2001 meeting of the Advisory Board of the Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

In 1982, the Federal government initiated amendments to the Northwest Territories Act with the intent of making French and English official languages of the Northwest Territories. The attempt to legislate English and French as official languages of the NWT initiated a powerful force to recognize NWT Aboriginal languages in the same manner as English and French. In 1984, the NWT Official Languages Act was passed, legislating English and French official languages with aboriginal languages recognized by regulation.

In 1986, the Government of the Northwest Territories appointed the Aboriginal Task Force to investigate and make recommendations on how aboriginal languages of the North could and should be used, developed and promoted. During community hearings, words spoken by northern citizens re-affirmed language as a cultural worldview, and that aboriginal languages should be recognized equally with French and English. By 1990, the Act was amended giving official status to eight languages - Cree, Chipewyan, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut (including Innuinaqtun and Inuvialuktun and Slavey (including North Slavey and South Slavey.) The Act also protects the Official Languages by directing the government to undertake initiatives that lead to Official Aboriginal language preservation, enhancement and development (Section 20[1]).

The 1990 amendments also established the NWT Office of the Languages Commissioner, and in 1992, the first Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories was appointed. Also, Section 29 of the NWT Official Languages Act requires a ten-year review of the Act. It is this ten-year review that the NWT Legislative Assembly’s Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act (SCOL) is currently undertaking.

As legal counsel (Shannon Gullberg) points out, we shall see over the course of the workshops, that the NWT Official Languages Act gives English and French prominence and some status to Aboriginal languages and is a compromise between the Federal government and the NWT Legislative Assembly. Any amendments that may decrease language rights in the Act can be made only with consent of the Parliament of Canada.

The following Table 1 outlines sections of the Act dealt with during the workshop and what is established by various sections of the Act.

**Table 1. Workshop Discussions on Sections of the Languages Act**

<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Sections</b>	<b>What the sections establish</b>
1	1-8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Official languages for the Northwest Territories</li> <li>2) Institutions to which the Act applies</li> <li>3) Rights and privileges of official languages.</li> </ol>
2	9-16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Use of Official Languages in the Legislative Assembly</li> <li>2) Which government documents must be printed in the various Official Languages</li> <li>3) Language rights in court</li> <li>4) When a member of the public can demand services in the various Official Languages.</li> </ol>
3	18-25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Office of the Languages Commissioner</li> <li>2) Powers and authority of the Languages Commissioner</li> </ol>

# Sections 1-8

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## *Issues*

With Sections 1-8, legal counsel Shannon Gullberg identified three sets of issues: Definition of Language; Institutions to which the Act applies; and who has rights and privileges under the Act.

1. **Definition of Language:** Although the Act designates a number of languages - Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut (including Innuinaqtun and Inuvialuit) and Slavey (including North Slavey and South Slavey) - as official languages, the Act does not provide a definition for language nor criteria for official language status. Some say it is too difficult to define language, concluding if common language names apply people themselves can decide if they speak an official language. Others say if language is defined too narrowly, dialects that should be included will be overlooked.

In light of the ever changing 'language landscape', it is important to have clear definitions of language. Without such definitions, the public is left with unanswered questions that make Act enforcement 'guess work'. These questions include: If a language is not likely to last, should it get official status? If a new language is developing, how does it fit into legislation? What is the purpose of granting official language status – What is the goal? Is legislation the best way of achieving the goal? In asking whether official languages in the current Act should be amended, what is our perspective of language and what are the criteria for making languages official?

2. **Institutions to Which the Act Applies:** The Act is restrictive - applying to some groups and excluding others. Indeed, Section 8 states the Act applies to the Legislative Assembly and Government of the Northwest Territories, while Section 3 states, for the purposes of the Act, municipalities, therefore hamlet councils, bands, city and town councils, are not part of the Legislative Assembly in the Northwest Territories. This is also true of private industry which is excluded from compliance with the Act - a particularly important exclusion now that government services are more frequently delivered by the private sector. How do these restrictions impact on effective Act implementation?
3. **Who Has Language Rights and Privileges:** In considering rights and privileges of the Act, a central question arises: "Who holds rights and privileges under the Act? An individual? A group? Depending on who is interpreting the Act, responses vary. If an individual holds rights and privileges, then the inclination may be to deal with complaints about language services on an individual basis, case by case. If a group holds rights and privileges, then the inclination may be to examine the broader issue of how to protect the interest of that specific one group - which may be more difficult in the short term, but more meaningful and permanent in the long term.

## Comments and Recommendations



Elder Eddy Weyallon with Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School students

*“The language we want to keep, and the culture we want to keep – that’s not a very small thing.”*

Raymond Sonfrere  
Dene Cultural Institute

1. **Language Definition:** Advisory Board members agree the Act should clearly define language and criteria for official language status under the NWT Official Languages Act. Members say official aboriginal languages should be those languages that originated and grew out of a life lived on the land. In other words, the land created a place for language. As such, members say language criteria selected must reflect that each Aboriginal language lies within specific geographic areas whose boundaries reflect the pre-contact, traditional economic, linguistic and cultural practices of each group. For this reason, South Slavey, North Slavey, Innuinaqtun and Inuvialuit should be designated official languages. Members say real names of official languages should be used - e.g. *Tliicho*, *Sahtu* ...
2. **Institutions to Which the Act Applies:** Advisory Board members say the Act should apply to all government departments and boards, agencies, and private contractors receiving funds from the GNWT including transportation services, community governments, medical and court services and programs, policing. Members believe a major drawback in Act implementation was the lack of consultation with the public resulting in the loss of such important institutions as the Language Bureau and NWT training through Aurora College. To reverse this loss, the Act should define guidelines and regulations that hold institutions to specific roles and responsibilities in Language Act implementation. At the community level, the Act must apply to community governments - indeed, important language initiatives such as signage cannot be enforced without such legislation. The Act should also apply to the private sector including banks, department stores, grocery stores, airlines, licensing agencies, and dentists.
3. **Whose Language Rights and Privileges:** Advisory Board members say language rights and privileges should *not* be based on population size but on an individual’s right to communicate or learn in their own language. In the case of language groups, funding for language communities should not be based on population but on need with need defined by an accepted language assessment tool.



## Summary of Recommendations Section 1-8

The following Table 2 summarizes issues and Advisory Board recommendations for Sections 1-8 of the Official Languages Act.

**Table 2. Summary of Issues and Recommendations, Sections 1-8**

Issues	Recommendations
No definition or criteria for official languages	Define Official Languages to Reflect Traditional Geographic Areas
Act is restrictive – applies to government but excludes municipalities and private sector	Apply Act to all government departments, boards, agencies; private contractors receiving government funding; and community governments
Not clear on who has language rights and privileges – individuals or groups	Base right and privileges on individual's right to communicate and learn in own language without reference to population size. Fund language groups on need based on accepted language assessment tool

# Sections 9-16

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## *Issues*

The words “language rights” mean there is obligation to ensure language services in the official languages. The overview of Sections 9-16 shows that French and English have a prominent position with Aboriginal Languages having lesser status. With Sections 9-16, Advisory Board members identified four sets of issues related to the provision of services in the official languages where aboriginal languages have lesser status including: Use of Official Languages in the Legislative Assembly; Printing of Government Documents; Language Rights in Courts; and Government Delivered Services.

- 1. Official Languages in the Legislative Assembly:** Under the Act, any person can make a presentation to the Legislative Assembly in any Official Language. Currently the Legislative Assembly contracts Interpreter/Translator (IT) services on an “as-needed” basis. Therefore, if a person wishes to speak through an interpreter the onus of securing interpreting services is the presenter's responsibility. But under the current system it is much easier for the public to access English and French interpreter/translators than aboriginal interpreter/translators.
- 2. Printed Government Documents:** Section 10 of the Act establishes that NWT Acts and journals must be published in English and French. (Original and interpreted versions of sound recordings of public debates are provided on reasonable request). Because of this requirement, the NWT Official Languages Act and others are published only in English and French. However, the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories can direct publishing of NWT Acts and journals in one or more other Official Languages, but there is no requirement to do so.

Section 11 establishes that certain formal documents must be published in English and French if it fulfils the following four criteria: document is a formal or legal-type document; document is “pursuant to some legislative authority” - that is, the document was produced because an Act or Regulation says it has to be produced; document is a notice directed to the public; and document is a notice from the Legislative Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories or government board or agency. In all cases the document need only be printed in English or French - unless the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories directs document printing in any of the Official Aboriginal Languages, but again there is no requirement to do so.

- 3. Language Rights in the Courts:** Court documents can be filed in English or French. The Act does not address the need to file court documents in any of the other Official Languages. Further, to participate in court proceedings in official Aboriginal Languages, individuals must request an interpreter in advance with responsibility for providing interpreting services with the government institution. In other words, individuals wishing to speak any Official Language other than English or French, should not expect language services, rather they must give notice of their interpreting needs in advance. In providing court orders and decisions in Official Aboriginal Languages, the court will order oral translation if the court believes it a reasonable request. Not only must the Official Aboriginal Language speaker request interpreting services, they must also prove that the request is “reasonable”.
- 4. Obtaining Public Government Services:** Government Head Offices in Yellowknife and Regional Offices must provide language services in English and French and language services in Official Aboriginal Languages if: 1) there is “significant demand”; or 2) “nature” of the Office. Significant demand is not defined - in the federal Official Languages Act, significant demand is based on numbers, which may not be appropriate for the Northwest Territories. “Nature” of the Office is taken to mean Health and Social Services for the most part.

Past experience shows that in our system, interpreting services have not been readily available. In deciding the extent of language rights, it is important to consider effective and efficient implementation measures. For example, in establishing interpreting services, the government may want to consider: certification and accreditation of interpreters and translators; registry of approved interpreters and translators; development of a professional interpreter/translator association; providing resources; and appropriate budgets for contracting interpretation and translation.

Ms Gullberg pointed out that there are language rights that go beyond the NWT Official Languages Act. For example, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 14 guarantees assistance of an interpreter in criminal proceedings for a party or witness who does not understand the language in which court proceedings are conducted.

In determining language rights, Ms Gullberg suggested two approaches could be used: 1) decide what the language rights should be and put them into practice and 2) look at current practice and assess whether current practice is meeting theoretical objectives.

## Comments and Recommendations



Gwich'in Elder

*“In the past, our elders have been through a lot of difficult times, but they never gave up – they always continued on and now we have a big job to do and it’s a big project to work on. As we work on it, we can’t give up – we have to keep our minds strong.”*

Raymond Sonfrere, Dene Cultural Institute

Advisory Board members were in consensus that the current Act does not adequately reflect the Aboriginal perspective of language nor adequately guarantee Official Aboriginal language rights. Board members offered a number of comments - many more wide ranging than those issues identified.

1. **Revise the Act to Incorporate Aboriginal Perspective:** Board members say the Act should be re-written or revised by an Aboriginal-language speaking legal counsel, written first in the Aboriginal languages, to ensure Aboriginal perspective of language is clearly defined. The Languages Commissioner should be called upon to assist in amending and ratifying the Act. The Act should remain as “stand-alone” legislation cross referenced and put in context with other related legislation including: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canada Languages Act, Code of Human Rights and others.
2. **Printed Government Departments:** Board members say little has been done to make the public aware of language legislation. To enhance greater public awareness, they say the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories must direct publication of same documents in Official Aboriginal Languages including birth certificates, driver’s licenses, and health cards. Further, the Act, along with other important Acts - Wildlife Act, Education Act, Child Welfare Act - should be published in all Official Languages including user-friendly audio and printed summary form for distribution to government offices, communities and libraries - the latter including the NWT Legislative Assembly Library. Likewise, background information should be developed and circulated on events leading to 1984 Aboriginal Language Task Force, NWT Official Languages Act and current 10-year Act Review.
3. **Language Rights:** Board members say quality Official Aboriginal Language service continues to be seriously compromised by a person or group having to show significant demand or important nature of the office. In all cases, the onus for securing interpreting/translation services rests with the individual or group. Here the individual/group must first be aware of their language rights, then they must request language service and finally show significant demand or important nature of the office. Within these restrictions, government departments cannot possibly offer efficient or effective language services - especially in situations where effective and efficient communication is critical, and often of an emergency nature, for example, in

the courts, policing, transportation centres, airline safety, education and health. The Act should direct government departments to provide high quality language service in the Official Aboriginal Languages, without restrictions of significant demand or nature of office.

Board members say the Act should define how language services will be delivered in both the Legislative Assembly and government departments, boards and agencies.

Further, Board members say government has to work with aboriginal people in developing proactive aboriginal language service -for example, it should be mandatory that government departments annually provide government workers with orientation in language learning and culture.

And the public should be made aware of how government departments are upholding the Act including measures government has taken in developing a multi-lingual workforce.

Board members say all language rights and services must be transferable with respect to self-government. Elders say when Treaties were signed it was agreed that in the future nothing would change culture and language. Government language services and the Language Act should reflect the spirit and intent of the Treaties.

- 4. Language Organization & Delivery.** Board members say the government has a mandate to promote and enhance Official Aboriginal Languages. But the government's mandate is not reflected in government actions such as closing the Language Bureau. Act Amendments should therefore include re-establishing a language bureau with full range of interpreting and translation services for all regions.

Although the creation of Language Communities has been positive in channeling more government funding to language communities, Board members say much needs to be done to provide more resources for language enhancement and development. To that end, Board members say that government should not abrogate their responsibilities vis-à-vis language enhancement. Language communities should not have the sole responsibility for NWT language enhancement and development. Others should have expanded responsibility including the Office of the Languages Commissioner. To meet this need, the Act should define which agencies and organizations - public, private and quasi public - have roles and responsibilities with respect to Aboriginal Language enhancement and development including those of coordination, planning, research, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

The Act should make provision to ensure official language teacher training and interpreter/translator training. The Act should guarantee accurate interpreting and translation.

The Act should highlight the importance of language research ensuring research on language use by elders and youth, and technical terminology used by various government departments.

**Table 2. Summary of Issues and Recommendations, Sections 9-16**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Language use in Assembly on as needed basis	Maintain permanent Interpreter/Translator staff for all Official Aboriginal Languages
Printed government documents required in English and French but in Aboriginal Languages only if directed by the Commissioner of the NWT	Ensure high profile documents are printed in all Official languages: Acts, birth certificates, drivers' licenses, health cards and court proceedings
English and French required in courts but Aboriginal language use requires test of "reasonableness"	No restrictions on use of Aboriginal languages
Government services required in English and French but Aboriginal language service dependent on "significant demand" or "nature of office"	No restrictions of "significant demand" or "nature of office"

# Sections 18-25

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## *Issues*

The Office of the Languages Commissioner was established to ensure that government institutions recognize rights, status and privileges of each of the Official Languages and comply with the spirit and intent of the Act. In meeting this responsibility, the Languages Commissioner has the power to make investigations - either self-initiated or based on a complaint from the public - and produce findings with recommendations for action. If the department does not take appropriate action, the Languages Commissioner has the power to make a report to the Legislative Assembly for action.

The Languages Commissioner must make an annual report of Office of the Languages Commissioner activities including: recommendations for proposed changes to the Act - if considered necessary or desirable in order to uphold the spirit and intent of the Act.

In assisting the Languages Commissioner, the Act establishes that the Languages Commissioner meet with representatives from each Official Language group acting in an advisory capacity, not less than once a year.

With Sections 18-25, legal counsel Shannon Gullberg identified two sets of issues related to the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Languages Commissioner including:

- 1. Powers of Enforcement:** In the Province of Quebec, where there is a perceived violation of the Act, the Quebec Language Commission has the power to hold hearings and make orders, thus serving as both an administrative and quasi-judicial body. In Manitoba, only the courts can make declaratory orders - for example, declaring there is a violation of the Act - but without power to enforce compliance with the Act. In the NWT, recommendations are brought to the political authority - namely the Legislative Assembly - where recommendations can lead to system-wide actions with broad impacts, as opposed to orders on a case by case basis.

In considering amendments to the Act related to the Office of the Languages Commissioner, it is important to consider enforcement - more specifically: 1) Is enforcement only to make the violator aware they have violated the Act with hopes the violation will be corrected? 2) Is punishment in the form of fines or other penalties important in preventing others from violating the Act? 3) Is complainant satisfaction the purpose of enforcement? or 4) Is enforcement an overall watchdog function - an institution that monitors language services ensuring high quality language services and programs?

- 2. *Independence of the Office of the Languages Commissioner:*** How does one ensure the independence of the Office? Currently, the Commissioner reports to the Legislative Assembly, ensuring independence from government departments, boards and agencies in making recommendations. Some Ombudsman offices ensure accountability and independence by: 1) appointing ombudsman to sit for only one term, avoiding any suggestion reappointment depends on how recommendations and investigations are carried out, and 2) extending the term of the appointment past the life of the Legislative Assembly so a current Assembly will never have political authority over the appointee and 3) disallowing any kind of negotiation, even on points of salary so there is no suggestion an appointee would fail to enforce effectively as a condition for increased salary and/or benefits.

Although Languages Commissioner independence from government is ensured by reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly, there is need to streamline Languages Commissioner Office operation including authority for staffing and administering contracts.

## ***Comments and Recommendations***

Advisory Board members agree the Office should have the primary role of promoting aboriginal language enhancement and development including awareness of the Act and the Office through community meetings, attending First Nations Assemblies, attending Language Community meetings, publishing newsletters, and website development. Further, the Office should be in a more visible high profile location with offices that clearly reflect the cultural importance of the Official Languages. The Office of the Languages Commissioner and Languages Commissioner titles should be named using aboriginal language in the Act.

Members say the Advisory Board should include board members from each Official Language group - members who speak their own languages, have strong backgrounds in language enhancement and development, and are well respected in their respective communities. Board members should include Elders from each Official Language group with recognition in legislation along with their roles and responsibilities and title in an aboriginal name in the Act. The Act should direct the Board to meet at least once a year and for a working group, at least three times a year.

Board members say there are many departments, boards and agencies and other organizations that have programs related to aboriginal language delivery - each operating independently from the other. Under the current system, it is not clear which department, board and agency should obtain funding or how much funding they should receive or



what is accomplished collectively. It is recommended that the Office be established as a coordinating, planning, monitoring and evaluation agency with the aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness for all departments, boards and agencies with a budget that reflects the needs and ability for Office to deliver those needs.

Board members say the Act should include measures that clearly define the independent nature of the Office including ability to hire staff and administer Office operations.

Members say the Act should ensure that policies are based on research that provides accurate and consistent baseline data on language growth or decline. More importantly, the Office should have research and monitoring responsibilities that tie territorial-wide socio-linguistic trends to those critical success factors that enhance and maintain strong aboriginal use in the NWT.

Members say in supporting promotional activities, the Act should direct the Office to develop and maintain a central library containing current research, historical information, other language acts, research from other jurisdictions relevant to language legislation and language enhancement initiatives. Materials should be published in all Official Languages either in print, audio or video form, whichever is most appropriate. In addition, technology such as aboriginal language fonts should be distributed to government departments, organizations and individuals.

Members say it is important there are trained and certified interpreters and translators. To meet this need, the Office should have responsibility for coordinating language communities in developing a reliable interpreter/translator certification process with a registry of certified interpreters and translators - similar to the interpreter and translator certification process the Maori Language Commission oversees which is outlined in the Maori Language Act.

Members say the Act should recognize that languages change and develop and recognize the need to work with Elders' messages and modern technology in documenting and developing language of youth and specific workplaces such as those of justice, transportation, health, education, wildlife and so forth.

Members say the Act should establish an operating budget with adequate support staff for the Office to undertake promotion, research, monitor, maintain a language institute, and coordinate activities. The Office should also be supported by regional staff, one in each language community to assist in promotional and research and monitoring activities. The Office budget should include adequate funds for interpreting and translation of meetings and documents in all Official Languages.

**Table 2. Summary of Issues and Recommendations, Sections 18-25**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
There are gaps in language enhancement and development including: coordination, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation	Languages Commissioner Office should have legislated powers and authority for coordination, planning, research, monitoring, evaluation and enforcement
Measures for independence of Languages Commissioner need to be expanded	<p>Appoint Languages Commissioner to preside in overlap of at least two Legislative Assemblies so Assembly has no political authority over appointee.</p> <p>Role of LC as an ombudsman should be reflected in regulations that empower the LC to operate independently in administering Office operations.</p>

# Conclusions

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It is fortunate that this Review of the Official Languages Act is underway. With the support of the Special Committee, we can continue our work towards achieving the goal of entrenchment of language rights for *ALL* residents of the NWT.



*“How could we encourage aboriginal languages to be recognized? I remember thinking about that and those were very difficult times ... I can remember those times ... we felt strongly about protecting the language and culture of the people. As you prepare for this review, I urge you to remain focused on this very task. The review allows you to reflect on the past and present. You assess and justify the future needs for the preservation and promotion of all Official Languages in the Northwest Territories.”*

*Glenna Hansen, Commissioner of the NWT*

# Participants

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1. William Firth, Gwich'in Language Community Coordinator, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Ft McPherson
2. Liza Andre, Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, Tsiigehtchic
3. Mrs. Jane Charlie, Elder, Fort McPherson
4. Liz Hanson, Aboriginal Language Instructor, Inuvik
5. Fred Rabesca, Community Language Worker, Fort Good Hope
6. Raymond Sonfrere, Dene Cultural Institute, Hay River
7. Jean-Marie Broda, Dene Cultural Institute in Hay River.
8. Daniel Lamoureux, Franco T NOISE, Yellowknife
9. Emily Kudlak, Inuvialuit Cultural Centre, Holman Island
10. Renie Arey, Inuvialuit Cultural Centre, Inuvik.
11. Ms. Rosie Albert, Interpreter/translator, retired Inuvialuit Instructor.
12. Victor Allen, Elder, Inuvik,
13. Sarazine Basil, Elder, Lutselk'e
14. JC Catholique, Language Activist, Lutselk'e,
15. Mary Siemens, Dogrib Translation Committee, Yellowknife
16. Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council, Yellowknife
17. Camilla Tutcho, Elder, DEA, Deline
18. Jane Modeste, Interpreter/Translator, Deline
19. Madeline Rabesca, Elder, Fort Rae
20. Phillip Rabesca, Chair, Dogrib Community Language Committee
21. Elizabeth Mackenzie, Elder, Fort Rae
22. Ms Campbell, TLC Coordinator for the Sahtu Region, Norman Wells
23. Victor Menacho, Elder, Tulita.
24. Doris Camsell, Aboriginal Language Instructor, Hay River
25. Joachim Bonnetrouge, Language Community Coordinator, DehCho First Nations
26. Adele Hardisty, Elder, Wrigley
27. Joe Bonnetrouge, Elder, Fort Providence
28. Fanny Swartzentruber, South Slavey Teaching and Learning Centre, Deh Cho Divisional Education Council, Fort Simpson
29. Andy Norwegian, South Slavey Teaching and Learning Centre, Deh Cho Divisional Education Council, Fort Simpson
30. George Mackenzie, Cultural Instructor, Rae-Edzo
31. Jonas Lafferty, Interpreter/Translator, Dogrib Region
32. Alphonse Eronchi, Elder, Fort Rae

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## Speakers:

Glenna Hansen, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories  
 Billy Erasmus, Chief, Dene Nation

## Observers:

Denise Kurszewski, Coordinator, Culture-based Education & Aboriginal Languages, ECE  
 Sue Heron Herbert, Chairperson  
 Melody McLeod, Language Community Coordinator, ECE, Yellowknife  
 Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council, Yellowknife  
 Lise Picard, Canadian Heritage, Yellowknife



**APPENDIX TWO**  
Summary of Vote 1 and Vote 4 Allocations  
2001-2002



## Total GNWT Official Languages Funding for 2001-2002 (Votes 1 and 4)

Aboriginal Languages		Vote 4	Vote 1
Teaching and Learning Centres Total		\$ 475,000	\$ 0
Beaufort-Delta DEC	\$ 91,641		
Deh Cho DEC	\$ 91,874		
Dogrib DEC	\$ 78,505		
Sahtu DEC	\$ 68,751		
South Slave DEC	\$ 67,155		
YK 1 DEA	\$ 39,130		
YK 2 DEA	\$ 38,010		
Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program		\$ 200,000	\$ 0
Aboriginal Language Broadcasting		\$ 175,000	\$ 170,000
Interpreter/Translator Training Program		\$ 50,000	\$ 0
Language Planning		\$ 70,000	\$ 0
Language Promotion		\$ 25,000	\$ 0
Language Resource Development		\$ 30,000	\$ 0
Geographic Place Names		\$ 15,000	\$ 0
Terminology Development/Language Workshop (H&SS)		\$ 25,000	\$ 0
Terminology Development (WCB)		\$ 25,000	\$ 0
Language Communities Total	\$1,568,000	\$1,125,000	\$ 443,000
Chipewyan	\$ 193,000		
Cree	\$ 107,000		
Dogrib	\$ 339,500		
Gwich'in	\$ 162,000		
Inuvialuktun	\$ 267,500		
North Slavey	\$ 214,000		
South Slavey	\$ 224,500		
Other	\$ 60,500		
Special Project: Special Committee to Review OLA		\$ 100,000	
Literacy – Official Languages (from 2.4M Literacy Initiative)		\$ 0	\$ 300,000
Cultural Projects		\$ 0	\$ 66,000
Language Services Section – Admin.		\$ 0	\$ 280,000
Aboriginal Language School Programs Total	\$5,835,711	\$ 0	\$5,836,000
Beaufort-Delta DEC	\$1,536,324		
Deh Cho DEC	\$ 779,689		
Dogrib DEC	\$ 889,861		
Sahtu DEC	\$ 738,368		
South Slave DEC	\$1,150,783		
YK 1 DEA	\$ 376,673		
YK 2 DEA	\$ 330,297		
Conseil scolaire francophone	\$ 33,716		
<b>Total for Aboriginal Languages</b>		<b>\$2,300,000</b>	<b>\$7,095,000</b>

Information provided by ECE

## Total GNWT Official Languages Funding for 2001-2002 (Vote 4)

French Language		Vote 4 only	(no Vote 1)
Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages			
ECE	GNWT French Translation and French Services	\$ 318,000	
	Services to the Public	\$ 97,000	
	Policy and Coordination	\$ 157,000	
	Language Promotion	\$ 10,000	
	Community Funding (PDCC)	\$ 145,000	\$ 727,000
Justice	Legal Translation Services	\$ 408,000	
	Services to the Public	\$ 32,000	\$ 440,000
H&SS	Policy and Coordination	\$ 40,000	
	Services to the Public	\$ 40,000	
	Services to the Public (Health Boards)	\$ 150,000	\$ 230,000
Executive	Services to the Public		\$ 10,000
Finance	Services to the Public		\$ 3,000
FMBS	Services to the Public		\$ 4,000
Legislative Assembly	Services to the Public		\$ 20,000
MACA	Services to the Public		\$ 15,000
NWT Housing corporation	Services to the Public		\$ 11,000
Public Works and Services	Services to the Public/Office Space		\$ 80,000
RWED	Services to the Public		\$ 30,000
Transportation	Services to the Public		\$ 15,000
Workers' Compensation Board	Services to the Public		\$ 14,000
NWT Power Corporation	Services to the Public		\$ 1,000
Special Project: Special Committee to Review OLA			\$ 50,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$1,650,000</b>
Canada-NWT Agreement for French Language Education			\$1,161,000
<b>Total Funding for French</b>			<b>\$2,811,000</b>

Information provided by ECE





