



LANGUAGES *of* THE LAND



A RESOURCE MANUAL FOR
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE ACTIVISTS


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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS - NWT LITERACY COUNCIL

The NWT Literacy Council is a territorial-wide organization that supports and promotes literacy in all official languages of the NWT. Aboriginal language development and literacy has been an important part of the programs and services we deliver. Since 1994, we have worked in partnership with individuals and organizations involved in Aboriginal language development and revitalization. Our work includes:

- delivery of Aboriginal language writing workshops;
- publishing of Aboriginal language books in Inuktitut, Dogrib, Innuinnaqtun, Chipewyan, and South Slavey;
- researching a promotional and support strategy for Aboriginal languages in the NWT; and
- promotion of Aboriginal languages in print and on radio and television.

Over the past year, Aboriginal language communities have assumed more control over the resources and direction of Aboriginal language development, enhancement and revitalization efforts. This is a very positive development and has the potential to create new language strategies that involve entire communities – including families, schools, and community organizations.

Languages of the Land was developed as a resource manual for individuals and community groups interested in Aboriginal language development work. The resource manual has three purposes:

1. to provide background information on language development issues and the status of Aboriginal languages in the NWT;
2. to share strategies for community-based planning for language development activities and projects; and
3. to provide information on the resources available to support local Aboriginal language work.

We hope you find **Languages of the Land** useful in your work, and we welcome any feedback you may have.

Thank you

A steering committee was involved in the development of this resource manual. The NWT Literacy Council would like to thank those members of the committee who volunteered their time to this project:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| • Alestine Andre | Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute |
| • Joanne Barnaby | Dene Cultural Institute |
| • Elizabeth Biscaye | Native Communications Society |
| • Rosa Mantla | Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School |
| • Andy Norwegian | Deh Cho Divisional Education Council |

The drawings used in this manual were selected from a number of submissions by students at the J.B.T. Elementary School in Fort Smith, the Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School in Rae-Edzo, and Princess Alexandra School in Hay River. The photos were made available from the NWT Archives.

Cate Sills, Executive Director
NWT Literacy Council
Yellowknife, NT



DEFINITIONS

When dealing with language and planning issues, it is important to know the jargon (the special words) that are used. Here are the definitions and explanations of a few important words and phrases that are used throughout this manual.

Aboriginal Language Community

A language community is the group of people who speak – or are descendents of people who speak – a particular language. A language community often crosses political and social boundaries. For example, the South Slavey language community includes First Nation and Metis people from northern Alberta, northern British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

Activist

An activist is someone who is willing to take direct action in order to achieve a certain goal. *Language activists* are people who actively promote and practice language retention and revival activities.

Culture

Culture refers to the way we live that makes us different or special from other groups of people. Our culture includes many things – what we eat, what we wear, how we make a living, our ceremonies, our art, our laws, etc. An important element of culture is what we believe – how we understand the world – what we value in life. The most important way we express our culture is through our language, so culture and language are very closely linked.

Dialect

A dialect is a slight variation in wording or pronunciation in a language that often results from geographical differences. For example, Lutselk'e uses the "k" dialect of Chipewyan while Fort Resolution uses the "t" dialect. The language is still Chipewyan, but the word water translates as either ku or tu, depending on the dialect.

Fluency and Literacy

Fluency refers to our ability to understand and speak a language. A person who understands and speaks a language well is considered fluent in the language. Passive fluency is when someone understands a language but does not speak it (or is shy about speaking it). *Literacy* is the ability to read and write a language.

Home Language

Home language is the language that we normally speak in our own home.

Home Language to Mother Tongue Ratio

Many Aboriginal adults in the Northwest Territories learned a traditional language as their first language when they were children. This language is their *mother-tongue*. Then, for a variety of reasons, they switched to English as they grew up and now speak English at home to their own

children. English is now their *home language*. If 100 people learned Gwich'in as their mother tongue, but only 17 still use Gwich'in at home with their own children, the home-to-mother-tongue ratio is 17 to 100 or 17%. This means that 83% of Gwich'in children are not learning their language at home today.

Inter-Generational "Mother Tongue" Language Transmission

Our *mother-tongue* is the language we first learn as children. *Inter-generational mother tongue language transmission* means that grandparents and parents talk to their children in their traditional Aboriginal language so that the children learn the language naturally at home. This is the only way that languages were taught for thousands of years – and it worked!

Language Retention and Revitalization

Language retention means to hold on to (or retain) one's language. *Language revitalization* means to breathe new life into a language – to have it grow and expand.

Language Shift

Language shift refers to a change in the use of the language. If elders still speak their traditional language but their grandchildren do not, then *language shift* has occurred.

Linguists

Linguists are people who study the development and structure of languages. Linguists can help people study and document their language in order to help preserve it, especially if a language is being lost.

Mobilization

To mobilize something is to get it moving. *Community mobilization* means getting many individuals and organizations in a community to actively commit themselves to a special task or goal – such as language revitalization.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning refers to planning that is done in times of instability or rapid change. If the future was predictable, people would do long-range planning – they would know what changes lie ahead. In the north today – with unsettled land claims, self-government negotiations, constitutional changes, economic uncertainty, etc. – all planning is strategic. Strategic planning must be more creative and flexible and must allow for constant evaluation and quicker decision-making.



USING THE MANUAL

This manual has been prepared as an active planning tool for Aboriginal language activists throughout the new Northwest Territories. It is based on the belief that the Aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories can only be maintained and passed on to younger generations if there is a concerted effort by many individuals and organizations to revitalize the languages.

The manual is divided into three main sections:

- *Things You Need to Know;*
- *Taking Action;* and
- *Aboriginal Language Resources.*

Things You Need to Know

In this section, a summary of some important language retention and revitalization issues is provided. Linguists have done considerable research on language shift around the world because Aboriginal languages are not the only languages that are struggling to stay alive. In fact, most countries in the world have one or more traditional languages that have been – or are being – lost. This section also provides basic information on the seven Aboriginal languages / dialects that are used in the new Northwest Territories and on Aboriginal language rights.

Taking Action

Readers can use this section as a guide for local language planning – either at the community or regional level. This section stresses the need for shared action – no one individual or organization can retain or revive an Aboriginal language. You may write in, draw in, photocopy, and share this section of the manual. But don't put in on the shelf and leave it for someone else to act on. Be an activist!

Aboriginal Language Resources

A wide range of informational and human resources exists in all regions of the Northwest Territories. Often, however, these resources are often not publicized, catalogued, or distributed. This section of the manual identifies some of the resources presently available to communities.



STATEMENTS BY ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE ACTIVISTS

My Dene Language - A Lost Heritage?

I stole something very important from my son – his Chipewyan language. I didn't intentionally do this to deprive him. I could come up with all kinds of excuses of why I didn't teach him to speak Chipewyan, but after all is said and done the fact remains that by not teaching him, I deprived him of the opportunity to learn some valuable lessons and history from his grandparents.

Sure they could talk to him about simple everyday things in their limited English, but they could not share with him the stories of his ancestors and the life they lived because he wouldn't understand it. He is missing out on learning more about himself and his people because he cannot effectively communicate with the source of this information.

I can tell him the stories in English but sometimes the richness of the history is best related in the language. Telling him about "Dene Medicine" is not the same as telling him about *ᚱᚺᚰᚰᚰᚰ* – one explains a practice, the other defines a people's way of life. I've taken this concept away from my son by not teaching him his language.

I wish that someone had told me when my son was born to make sure I taught him his language. By not doing so, I have taken away an important part of his culture. It makes me very sad when I think about what I didn't do.

As parents, we should make every effort to teach our children their language.

Seyatí - Dēnēch'aní Dēne Ghą Húle

Seyas ghą t'así bet'óreᚱa beghą nıᚱı - beyatı. Hanılé ᚱasᚱı ᚱat'éle. ᚱejasjá t'á beyatı honıᚱᚱıle desı xadúwıle húlı, hurelyᚱı hási dé húlı, beyatı honıᚱᚱıle t'á, betsún chu betsı chu háyuhuneltēn xᚱᚱıle.

Nay that'in yatı huhurıth'a t'á, t'asıaze ghą yexél haihelni xadúwıle húlı, yunıs hanı-u, t'at'ú náᚱ'ats'idé hılé sí ghą yexél haihelni xᚱᚱıle, yenorenı xıle t'á. ᚱedērı t'á, t'at'ı dēne ts'ı ᚱén helı sí ghą hureldēn xıle, t'ᚱ ᚱedērı ghą yexél halı li chu ᚱeluhurıth'aile t'á.

That'in yatı t'á bexél hasnı xadúwıle húlı, nok'e dēne yatı t'áᚱauı, té nezı benoredı. ᚱek'ᚰᚰᚰᚰ ghą bexél hasnı dé, that'in yatı t'aslá dé, ᚱᚺᚰ'ıᚰᚰᚰ yenorenı xıle. Beyatı honıᚱᚱıle t'á, nay bechánı ts'ı t'ası té nezı yenorenı xᚱᚱıle.

Seyas nekenıya kú, ᚱıᚱᚱᚱᚱ neyas beyatı hánuᚱᚱᚱᚱ sélnı ᚱánıde senı xa. Beyatı honıᚱᚱıle t'á, bechanı beghą húle lajá. Beghą nánıstıᚱı dé, seba nezıle.

Dēne tıhkúé dáıdlı sí, nuwesken beyatı huneltēn xa rıłtsá haᚱᚱ.

Sabet Biscaye

Executive Director, Native Communications Society of the NWT

Member, Ministers Forum on Education

Previous Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Department of the Executive



My Mother Tongue

My first language is my mother tongue, Tłıchǫ Yatıì, the Dogrib language. I have always spoken this language since I first learned to speak. Because of being fluent in my language I know my identity as a Dene person and I know and understand my ancestors' culture and traditions.

I know that our language is very important because it brings us close to our own people through communication and sharing, it lets us feel comfortable about expressing ourselves in many ways, it gives us confidence in doing things, and it prevents us from feeling isolated in other communities in our region.

My Dogrib language has always been important to me, which is why I started to help the linguists with writing and reading the language in the early seventies. To this day, I have promoted my Dogrib language in every way I can – with my children, the children of our region, parents, elders, leaders, and in the school environment.

I have emphatically stressed the importance of our language and culture to the media, at regional and international meetings, in written communications, and through workshops in which I have participated. It is important to maintain and strengthen our language for ourselves, for our identity, and for our children's and their grandparents' sake. It is important to love our language. Everything we know of our traditions comes through the words of our parents and the stories of our elders, and it is important to love the language in the same way as we love them.

Rosa Mantla
Principal, Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School





Our Language is Important

Our Dogrib language is very important to us because it identifies us as a people in a unique culture within the land we occupy. Our language holds our culture, our perspective, our history, and our inheritance. What type of people we are, where we came from, what land we claim, and all our legends are based on the language we speak.

Our culture depends on our language, because it contains the unique words that describe our way of life. It describes name-places for every part of our land that our ancestors traveled on. We have specific words to describe the seasonal activities, the social gatherings, and kin relations. Rules which govern our lives bring stability to our communities, and our feast days, which bring people together, are all inter-related within our language. Losing our language will not only weaken us as a people but will diminish our way of life because it depends so much on our language.

We inherited our forefathers' language. They did their duty to teach us their language. It does not belong exclusively to our generation. It also belongs to our children. We have a responsibility to teach our language to our children at home from infancy to adulthood, to teach them the richness of our language so that they in turn may be able to pass it on to their children. It is our responsibility to have our language spoken and taught in the schools and to nurture our children in our language on the land for part of the year.

According to surveys taken on Aboriginal language comprehension and usage in our schools, there is a definite decline in the number of children speaking our language. It is therefore an urgency to maintain and revitalize our language in the homes, in the schools, and in our communities.

Goyatù Gogha Wet'aaʔà Họt'e

Goyatù gogha wet'aaʔà họt'e, wet'à gonèk'e gonàowò k'ẹẹ dọ ts'ııı ne t'à. Gonàowò, dàani wek'ẹẹ kànets'ııʔa, gowhaèhdò ɣıgodı, eyıts'q gocho ɣınàowò got'sò ade ha sù hazò ɣoyatù ıı whela họt'e. Dọ dàhòt'ı ts'ııı, edıı got-s'q dọ ats'ııt'e, gonèk'e edıı agòht'e, eyıts'q gowhaèhdò godı hazò ɣoyatù t'à weghò gots'ede họt'e. Gonàowò, goyatù t'à eda họt'e, goyatù t'à gonàowò ghò gots'ede ha yatù nezı lô xàʔa ɣòhı. Wet'à dè goızhı ts'ııı, gonèk'e edıı gocho k'ehogııhde sıı hazò wegodıı ɣòhı. Sı taàt'e ayıı hots'ehtsıı dọ elègehde nıde, eyıts'q dani elèot'ı ts'ııı, eyı hazò ɣha yatı ıq xàʔaa ɣòhı. Dọ elèxè ts'èwhı geeda ɣha nàowo ɣòhı eyıts'q dzèdeè ɣha done elenagehdè sıı hazò ɣoyatù t'à wek'ayats'ehtı họt'e. Goyatù while ajà nıde done xàʔaa ts'ııı ɣha nàtso-le ats'ede ha, eyı zò-le, gonàowò k'ẹẹ ts'eada-le agode ha họt'e. Eyıt'à goyatù wet'q gonàowò nàtso họt'e.

Goʔhdàà edeyatù goghàgııʔ họt'e. Edeyatù hoghàgogeèhtq t'à edılàà hogèhtsı họt'e. Goxı dıı ts'eada sıı goxı zò goyatù nıle. Gozhaa sıı ɣıyatù họt'e. Eyıt'à gokò goyıı gozhaa bebia ɣııı gots'q ʔhdah ɣıılèe gots'q goyatù hoghàgets'eehtq ha gogha la wheʔq họt'e. Goyatù wet'à gots'ede ha wexııı zò t'à ɣıts'q gots'ede ha họt'e, hani-de ededı sıı edezhaa hoghogeèhtq ha agede ha. Enıht'èkò goyıı goyatù t'à gots'ede eyıts'q goyatù ghàgıts'eehtq sıı eyı gots'q hoèlı họt'e eyıts'q xoo taàt'èè chekoa goyatù t'à geezhe ha dechııı ts'q agets'ehʔı sıı eyı sıı gots'q hoèlı họt'e. Hani hòʔq nıde Tıchqò yatıı k'ets'edı ha.

Enıht'èkò chekoa dàtłq Tıchqò yatıı t'à gogede ɣha nagogııhtà ekò chekoa ıq goyatù k'ehogezq-le agejà ɣıgòʔq. Goyatù ghò nàıts'edèe ats'ejà t'à gokò goyıı, nıht'èkò goyıı, eyıts'q gokòta ɣòla sıı hazò elats'ats'edı t'à goyatù wek'ets'edı ha eyıts'q nàtsoò ats'ele ha ts'ııwq ats'ejà họt'e.

Mary Seimens
Dogrib Language Specialist,
Teaching and Learning Centre



I Speak Two Ways

I speak two ways
 From birth, I spoke my native language - Dogrib
 A precious gift from my parents, my ancestors, my culture.

I learned to speak another language
 Words given to me through the media when I was four
 I speak two ways.

At school, I learned the magic of reading and writing
 When I was older, I learned to read and write in Dogrib
 A precious gift from my parents, my ancestors, my culture.

Words given to me by my parents through the days
 And words learned while going to school
 I speak two ways.

Though it appears that the dominant language has won
 I'm still attached to my native tongue
 A precious gift from my parents, my ancestors, my culture.

Deep down, hope is not uncommon
 Though deeply gratifying the other language is, still
 I speak two languages
 A precious gift from my parents, my ancestors, my culture.

Lianne Mantla
 May, 1999





THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Language is the principal instrument by which culture is transmitted from one generation to another, by which members of a culture communicate meaning and make sense of their shared experience. Because language defines the world and experience in cultural terms, it literally shapes our way of perceiving – our worldview.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People – Volume 3

When we use our own native language, we go into the thought world of our ancestors, including their language and thought systems.

Dr. Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley; Proceedings – Strength from Culture Symposium; Education, Culture, and Employment

Within current language theory, there is a belief that "language is culture" – that language embodies our own unique cultural understanding of the world and also guides how we interact with the world. Many Aboriginal people feel strongly that their historical and cultural integrity as First Nations people is rooted within their respective languages.

From this perspective, maintaining the use of a traditional language is essential to one's cultural identity and the key to understanding and appreciating the history, knowledge, beliefs, and values of one's ancestors. Importantly, maintaining the language also allows one to bring forward and use traditional knowledge, beliefs, and values in interpreting and responding to the world today. In this sense, Aboriginal languages are not a relic of the past, but a dynamic tool people can use to interact in a meaningful and authoritative way with the rest of society.

In fact, viewing Aboriginal languages as "living" languages that have inherent use and value in modern society is critical to their preservation. Establishing and promoting a meaningful context for continued usage of traditional languages, in a society increasingly dominated by English, is a fundamental challenge for Aboriginal people.

Within current literature relating to Aboriginal languages, the loss of Aboriginal languages in Canada is acknowledged as being far more serious than the loss of any other of the many languages used and spoken in this country. All other languages are immigrant languages and therefore have a "homeland" in another part of the world. English, French, Chinese, and Greek, for example, are all spoken in other parts of the world. If these languages are "lost" in Canada, they are not lost to the world.

However, for most, if not all of the Canadian Aboriginal languages, this is their homeland. If the languages are lost here, they are lost forever to the world. The enormity of this loss is still not fully understood or acknowledged. In fact, the rapid loss of Aboriginal languages that is occurring today may well constitute the final assault on Aboriginal people in a long history of colonization.

Fortunately, in the Northwest Territories, the value and importance of Aboriginal languages is recognized through legislation. The Northwest Territories has the most advanced and supportive legislation and policies in Canada relating to the maintenance, promotion, and revitalization of Aboriginal languages.

With time, resources, and effort it is possible in the Northwest Territories to reestablish Aboriginal languages as working languages in many aspects of people lives. Doing this, however, is only partially dependent on legislation and policy; it is primarily dependent on the value each language community, each culture, places on its own language.

The relative value of a language will ultimately be determined by the people who inherit its usage – who choose to continue speaking it rather than gradually abandoning it in favor of another, more dominant, language.



LANGUAGE SHIFT

When two (or more) languages are in contact, one possibility is that they both will hold their own (maintenance of both languages); another is that one will give way partially or completely to the other (with the possible death of one of the languages); yet another, is that new languages will be formed.

Evaluation of the Canada – NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT; Literature Review; GNWT

There are a number of possible factors that contribute to language shift:

- forced change (such as being punished for speaking one's language);
- domination of one language group over the economy, education, and civic structures of the society;
- inter-cultural marriages; and
- geographic movement (usually from rural to urban areas - decreasing the number of speakers in a given area).

Researchers generally agree that these factors are complex and inter-related; there is no simple formula for language loss – each geographic and cultural situation is different.

There are also a few circumstances where language shifts do not occur. These include:

- geographic isolation, where a group of speakers is not in direct contact with a dominant language (such as small Cree and Inuit communities in northern Canada);
- self-imposed cultural boundaries (such as the case with Quebec);
- externally imposed boundaries (an isolation or segregation of cultures, such as happened on Reserves); and
- situations in which the two languages have different functions in society (for example, religious use vs. everyday use).

Recently, geographic isolation has become less of an influence on the protection of Aboriginal languages because of the widespread availability and incursion of television into remote communities through satellite technology.

Historically, there are very few societies that have maintained widespread bilingualism. In fact, it has been stated that no society needs or has two languages for the same function, so language shift is the norm. For example, within Canada, in spite of official English-French bilingualism, there are few predominantly French-monolingual or even bilingual communities outside of Quebec and northern New Brunswick.

The fact that language shift is the norm is of immediate and critical concern to Aboriginal language proponents. Any strategies to maintain and revitalize a language must acknowledge and develop strategies to overcome this tendency for cultures to shift, over time, to a more dominant language.

Interestingly, in Canada, an example of a reverse shift in language use occurred during the early years of the fur trade. Many traders, or their Metis children, learned English or French and the local Aboriginal language. When trading furs, the early languages used in commerce were the Aboriginal languages. Given this economic incentive, Euro-Canadians, in many instances, made rapid language shifts.

In effect, for a language to be maintained, there must be an immediate and perceivable benefit within at least some aspect of people's current lives to continue to understand and speak the traditional language. Maintaining a language for its intrinsic or historical value does not appear to provide enough widespread incentive within a culture group to sustain a language indefinitely, particularly when there are strong social pressures and benefits attached to the use of another, more dominant, language.





COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

"... a language strategy begins with the mobilization of the community itself... The goal is to enable First Nations to assert and ensure full ownership of their linguistic and cultural heritage... For any language program to succeed, parents and the community as a whole must be persuaded that it is valuable."

A Guide to Language Strategies for First Nations Communities; Assembly of First Nations

Due to the extreme pressures that exist on most Aboriginal languages, a one-dimensional approach to language maintenance and revitalization will not be effective. Developing school programs in isolation of community-based programs and activities can lead to frustration on the part of educators and limited success in terms of promoting or achieving fluency, particularly among children whose home-language is English.

Aboriginal language strategies must be wholistic and comprehensive if they are to succeed in reversing the trend of language shift. Effective language revitalization must involve a coordinated and cooperative approach that includes families, schools, and community organizations.

One linguist, James Bauman, has gone so far as to suggest that an effective mobilization strategy will tie language revival to the correction of some form of social problem. In other words, the direct goal is not to save the language, but to solve a problem or better people's lives through the revitalization of a traditional language and the cultural beliefs and practices that are attached to it.

A fundamental intent of any language retention strategy is to mobilize and inspire Aboriginal language communities to take ownership over their own language revival.



LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

The first step in developing a plan to maintain or revitalize a language involves assessing the current status of the language. When assessing the vitality and usage of an Aboriginal language within a region or community, linguists use a simple rating system. The rating system below was developed by James Bauman in 1980 and presented in the document: *A Literature Review – Maintenance and Revitalization of Aboriginal Languages – Evaluation of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT* [hereafter referred to as the *Language Report (1992)*].

This language rating system is very useful for understanding the degree of language loss in a particular area (nation, region, or community) and can help to subsequently identify the types of strategies that might be used to maintain or revive that language.

As you review the language rating categories on the next pages, check off those things that apply to your community or region. You will quickly be able to determine the approximate status of your own traditional language.



LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT CHART

| |
|--|
| <i>The Flourishing Language</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Has speakers of all ages, some of them monolingual.<input type="checkbox"/> Population increases lead to an increase in the number of speakers.<input type="checkbox"/> Is used in all areas of communication.<input type="checkbox"/> The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.<input type="checkbox"/> Speakers become increasingly literate. |
| <i>The Enduring Language</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Has speakers of all ages; most are bilingual.<input type="checkbox"/> The number of speakers remains the same in spite of population increases.<input type="checkbox"/> English tends to be used exclusively in some situations.<input type="checkbox"/> The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.<input type="checkbox"/> There is little or no Aboriginal language literacy in the community. |
| <i>The Declining Language</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> There are more older speakers than younger ones.<input type="checkbox"/> Younger speakers are less fluent in the language.<input type="checkbox"/> The number of speakers actually decreases over time, in spite of an increased population.<input type="checkbox"/> All speakers are bilingual and English is preferred in many situations.<input type="checkbox"/> There is very limited literacy in the language. |
| <i>The Obsolete Language</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> An obsolete language has very few young speakers. Fluency stops at a certain age in the adult population.<input type="checkbox"/> The language is not taught to the children at home.<input type="checkbox"/> The number of speakers is declining rapidly.<input type="checkbox"/> The speakers are all bilingual and English is preferred in most situations.<input type="checkbox"/> The language no longer adapts to new situations. |
| <i>The Extinct Language</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> There are no living "mother-tongue" speakers. |

Unfortunately, most of the Aboriginal languages in the new Northwest Territories can be categorized as "declining".



THE STATUS OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

OVERVIEW

One of the most common methods of assessing language shift is analyzing home-language to mother-tongue ratios. According to the Canada Censuses of 1986 and 1996, the home-language to mother-tongue ratios of the languages of the Northwest Territories (pre-division) were as follows:

| | 1986 | 1996 |
|----------------|------|------|
| ▶ English | 122% | 122% |
| ▶ Inuktitut | 92% | 84%* |
| ▶ Dogrib | 97% | 72% |
| ▶ South Slavey | 72% | 59% |
| ▶ North Slavey | na | 59% |
| ▶ Chipewyan | 71% | 44% |
| ▶ French | 60% | 45% |
| ▶ Cree | 38% | 18% |
| ▶ Gwich'in | 57% | 15% |

** The Census does not distinguish between Inuvialuktun and Inuktitut. Although Inuktitut is a strong language in Nunavut, statistics regarding the use of Inuktitut and Inuvialuktun in the new Northwest Territories would likely show a much more significant decline.*

These figures show clear examples of language shift. English is the only language that has continued to gain new speakers. In both 1986 and 1996, for every 100 people who learned English as a first language (their mother tongue), 122 people now use the language as the main language at home. This means that many people are switching over to English from Aboriginal (and immigrant) languages.

All of the other languages are showing a clear decline in usage – less people are using the language at home than before. The Dogrib and South Slavey languages are declining less rapidly – language transmission is still occurring in a majority of the homes. But some languages, particularly Cree and Gwich'in, show a rapid and serious decline in usage.

This decline is even more serious when one looks at the changes in the home-language to mother-tongue ratios between 1986 to 1996. Using the Dogrib language as an example, in only ten years this ratio has dropped from 97% to 72%. This means that for every 100 people who had Dogrib as a mother tongue in 1986, 97 still used the language at home. But by 1996, for every 100 people that had Dogrib as a mother tongue, only 72 still used it at home. All of the other Aboriginal languages show similar trends. Clearly, Aboriginal people are losing their languages at a significant rate.



THE CHIPEWYAN LANGUAGE

The Chipewyan language is a traditional language in the Northwest Territories and in the northern parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. According to the 1996 Census, there are 1,305 people in Canada who list Chipewyan as their mother tongue. Of these, 515 live in the Northwest Territories. The majority of the NWT Chipewyan speakers live in the communities of Łútsēlk'é, Denínu Kúé (Fort Resolution), and Tthebacha (Fort Smith), which are relatively isolated from one another. Chipewyan is indigenous to all three of these communities.

The two main dialects of Chipewyan are the "k" and "t" dialects. Łútsēlk'é is connected through the "k" dialect to the Chipewyan people of northern Saskatchewan. The communities of Denínu Kúé and Tthebacha tend to use the "t" dialect, which is more common in northern Alberta.

It is difficult to determine how many Chipewyan people (or people of Chipewyan heritage) actually live in Canada or the NWT because the Canada Census does not record this information.

According to the 1996 Canada Census, only 44% (or approximately four out of ten) people in the NWT who learned Chipewyan as their mother tongue now use it as the main language at home. This means that the number of children hearing and learning the Chipewyan language at home is less than half of the previous generation. Use of the language is obviously declining fairly rapidly.

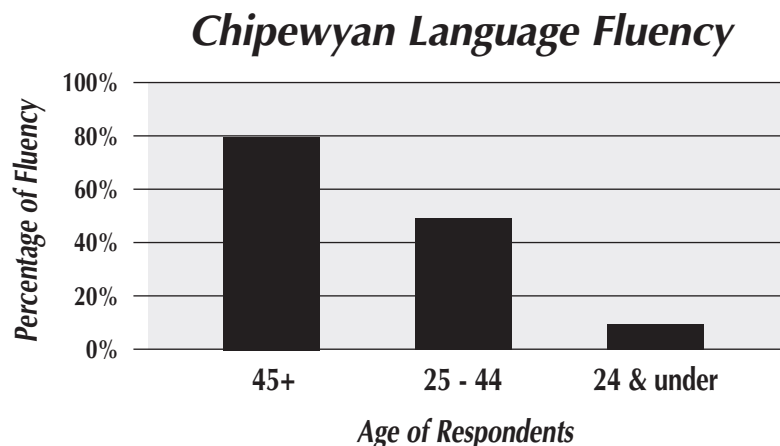
This trend was also identified in Part 2 of the Language Report (1992). This study involved Chipewyan respondents from the communities of Tthebacha, Denínu Kúé, and Łútsēlk'é. According to this study:

- over 80% of the respondents age 45 or over were very fluent in Chipewyan;
- approximately 50% of the respondents between the ages of 25 to 44 were very fluent; and
- less than 10% of the respondents between the ages of 5 to 24 were very fluent.

Clearly, there has been a dramatic shift in Chipewyan language fluency within the three living generations – grandparents to grandchildren.

Two issues that must be addressed in relation to retention and revitalization of the Chipewyan language are:

- *the small population base of speakers, spread out over a very large geographic area, which makes it harder to coordinate programs and services; and*
- *the existence of two relatively distinct dialects, which means that two sets of language materials must be produced with the limited language budgets available.*





THE CREE LANGUAGE

The Cree language is the most widely spoken Aboriginal language in Canada. In the 1996 Canada Census, it was listed as having 76,840 mother-tongue speakers. By comparison, the second largest Aboriginal language group is Inuktitut, at 26,960 mother-tongue speakers. Cree is one of only three Aboriginal languages in Canada that could be considered, as a whole, to be enduring. However, in a few areas of the country, it is clearly declining.

Although there are 76,840 mother-tongue Cree speakers in Canada, only 49,855 say that Cree is currently the first language in the home. This is a ratio of 65% nationally. In Saskatchewan, the ratio of home-language to mother-tongue speakers is 59%. In Alberta, it is 48%. In the NWT, it is 17%. Obviously, the status of the language varies quite widely from area to area, with a sharp decline in usage in the NWT.

There are four formally recognized dialects of Cree in Canada: Plains Cree, Swampy Cree, Woods Cree, and Moose Cree. The South Slave region uses a dialect referred to locally as Bush Cree – which is similar to Plains Cree but with some regional adaptations. The four main dialects have a few consistently different sounds along with some distinct word differences.

According to the 1996 Canada Census, there were 185 people in the Northwest Territories who listed Cree as their mother tongue. However, there is no data concerning the number of people in the NWT who are actually of Cree heritage – the only census categories for Aboriginal people are Indian, Metis, and Inuit.

It is common knowledge that Tthebacha (Fort Smith) has the largest group of Cree people, both First Nation and Metis, and that Hay River also has a significant Cree population. The Bush Cree dialect is most common in Tthebacha and the Plains Cree dialect is most common in Hay River. Most of the Cree people of the South Slave region have relatively close family relationships with Cree groups in northeastern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan. Many of the northern Cree are inter-related with the Chipewyan people.

According to the the document "Nehiyawehin – Cree Language Plan for the Northwest Territories", the following actions must be taken to preserve and revitalize the language.

- *Establishment of Language Advisory Committees in Tthebacha and Hay River.*
- *Development of local policies that support language retention initiatives.*
- *Creation of language coordinator positions.*
- *Direct funding of community and culture based language activities.*
- *Integration of school and community programs.*
- *Establishment and/or expansion of Cree language resource centres in Tthebacha and Hay River.*



THE DOGRIB LANGUAGE

The Dogrib language is the only Aboriginal language of the Northwest Territories that is spoken only in the NWT - it is not indigenous to any other area of Canada. It is rooted in the communities of Behchokó, Wha Tı, Gahmı̀ti, and Wekweı̀. Within the traditional geographic area defined by these communities (with the possible exception of Detah, which is in close proximity to Yellowknife), Dogrib culture and language is predominant and is likely to be predominate well into the future.

According to the Canada Census, there were slightly over 2000 mother tongue speakers of the Dogrib language in 1996, most of whom still live within their traditional land use area. Dogrib is the strongest of the Dene languages in the NWT – 72% of the people who learned Dogrib as a first language still speak it at home. Although Dogrib could still be considered an "enduring" language, particularly in the smaller communities – it does show early signs of decline.

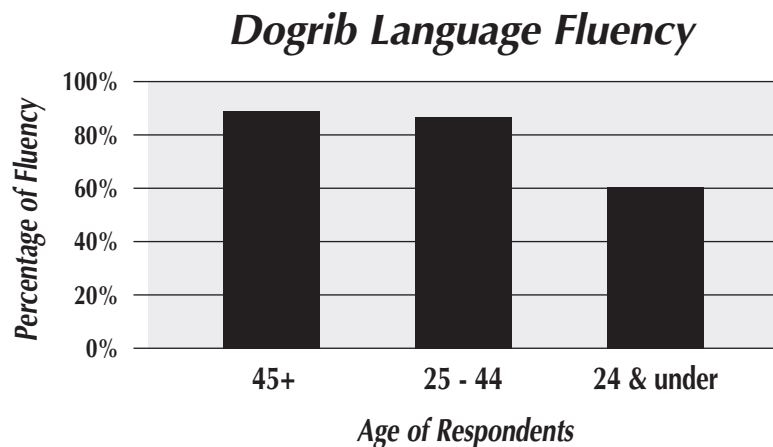
In Part 2 of the Language Report (1992), the following age-related data from the study is presented.

- Over 90% of the study respondents over the age of 45 were rated as very fluent in Dogrib.
- Approximately 87% of the respondents between the ages of 25 to 44 were considered very fluent.
- Almost 60% of the respondents between the ages of 5 to 24 were also very fluent in Dogrib.

These statistics indicate that there is a decline in language fluency occurring in the grandchildren of the present generations. However, it also indicates that the majority of young people are still very fluent in their traditional language.

Dogrib has many strengths and opportunities to build on.

- *It is the only indigenous Aboriginal language within its traditional area.*
- *Dogrib people are, by far, the majority within the language area.*
- *The elders and cultural traditions continue to play a strong role in the community.*
- *Through land claims, community empowerment, and self-government initiatives, Dogrib people themselves will have considerable control over their collective destiny. They will be able to enact policies, initiate programs, and provide incentives to support language retention.*





THE GWICH'IN LANGUAGE

In the Northwest Territories, Gwich'in is the weakest of the Dene languages. According to the Canada Census, during the period 1986 to 1996, the home language to mother tongue ratio for Gwich'in dropped from 57% to 15%. In effect, for every 100 people who learned Gwich'in as their mother tongue, only 15 still use it regularly at home and are therefore passing it on to their children or grandchildren. Without a rapid and effective intervention, it is possible that the usage category for this language will become "obsolete" within a generation or two.

Gwich'in is the primary Aboriginal language of Teetł'it Zheh (Fort McPherson) and Tsugehtshik, and is one of two Aboriginal languages used in Aklavik (along with Inuvialuktun). There are also Gwich'in speakers in the Yukon and Alaska. According to the 1996 Census, the number of mother tongue speakers in the Northwest Territories is approximately 260. The number of home language speakers is listed as 40.

In Part 2 of the Language Report (1992), it was noted that only 4.5% of the people interviewed during the study used Gwich'in as their home language. For 96% of respondents, English was identified as the dominant language in the home.

With this few speakers, the primary goal for the Gwich'in language for the past few years has been "preservation":

- ensuring that the language is recorded and documented in its original form; and
- gathering and documenting the stories and cultural traditions of the elders before they pass away.

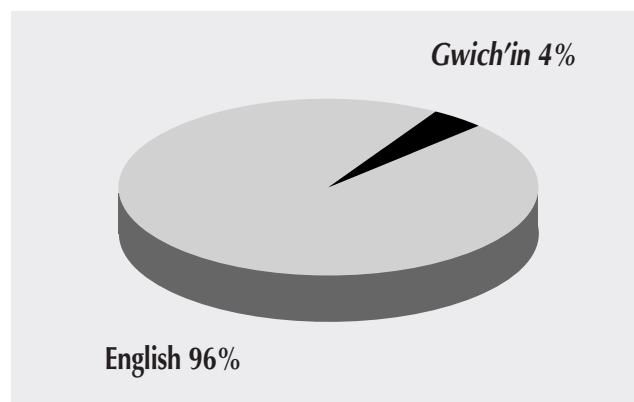
Cultural awareness activities, with a language component, have also taken place.

The challenge for Gwich'in language activists is to build the commitment required from individuals, families, and government – including Aboriginal governments – to collectively take the next step to language revitalization.

According to the Dinju Ahu Gınjik Hahtr'agoodınjih Sru' (the Gwich'in Language Plan, 1999) revitalization of the Gwich'in language requires the following actions.

- *Coordination of Gwich'in language initiatives through a regional language office.*
- *Development of regional policies to support language revitalization.*
- *Expansion of interpretation and translation services.*
- *Further documentation of the language.*
- *Coordination of school language programs through the Gwich'in language office.*
- *Expansion of community-based programs and services.*

Gwich'in as a Home Language





THE INUVIALUKTUN DIALECT

Inuvialuktun is a regional dialect of Inuktitut. It is the language of the Inuvialuit people, who have a distinct cultural identity. Unlike Inuktitut, which is a very strong language, the Inuvialuktun dialect has been in decline for a number of years. The language is rooted in the Beaufort-Delta area of the Northwest Territories, which has had a very long history of contact – through whaling, trapping, and hydrocarbon development – with Western society and the English language.

In the Canada Census, Inuvialuktun is not identified as a distinct language – statistically, it is included with Inuktitut. With the creation of the new Northwest Territories, the status of Inuvialuktun will likely change – it will have to be accounted for as a distinct NWT language.

The Language Report (1992) studied and reported on Inuvialuktun as a separate language. During this study, one hundred and seventy six people from the communities of Inuvik, Sachs Harbour, and Tuktoyaktuk were interviewed.

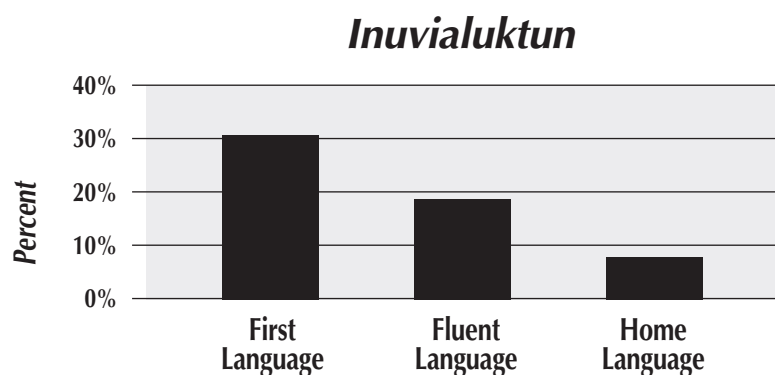
In Part 2 of this study, the following results were noted.

- Approximately 31% of the respondents learned Inuvialuktun as a first language.
- Only 19% indicated that it was now their most fluent language.
- Only 7% said that it was their home language. English was the home language of 93% of respondents.
- The most fluent age group was adults 45 years of age and older, with a 70% fluency rate.
- None of the respondents under the age of 25 were fluent.

Clearly, an alarming language shift has occurred in just two generations - grandparents to grandchildren. With no fluent child speakers emerging (no mother-tongue speakers being raised) this dialect is in serious danger of being lost within the next generation.

According to the Inuvialuktun Language Plan, the following actions must be taken to preserve and revitalize the language.

- *Creating awareness and changing attitudes - the importance of the language must be stressed through language promotion activities (via electronic and print media), increased exposure to the language (signage, public events, etc.), and recognition of elders and other active speakers.*
- *Strengthening of existing programs - including pre-school programs, language immersion camps, and teaching of traditional skills (with a language component).*
- *Development of new initiatives - such as a master-apprentice program (pairing fluent speakers with individuals who want to learn), family language classes, youth conferences regarding language and culture, language day camps, workplace language training, and language nests.*
- *Capacity building - such as providing training in the areas of teaching, linguistics, and translating; terminology development; networking; and strengthening the ICRC.*
- *Preservation of traditional knowledge -including the recording and translation of oral histories and the production of resource materials.*





THE SLAVEY LANGUAGE

The Slavey language is listed as one of the eight official languages of the Northwest Territories. However, there are two standard dialects of Slavey – South and North Slavey. South Slavey is the primary dialect in the Deh Cho region and North Slavey is predominant in the Sahtu region. There are also localized sub-dialects in each region. Dialects of Slavey are also spoken in parts of northern Alberta and British Columbia.

South Slavey

According to the Canada Census, there were approximately 2400 mother tongue speakers of the South Slavey language in Canada in 1996. The majority of these speakers live in the Deh Cho region.

South Slavey is one of the stronger languages in the NWT. Although the home language to mother tongue ratio dropped between 1986 and 1996, the 1996 Census notes that 59% of those people who learned South Slavey as a first language still speak it regularly at home.

However, according to statistics from the Language Report (1992), decline in language use is occurring rapidly among the three living generations, with the most significant decline occurring between parents and children. For this report, one hundred and ninety three (193) people in the communities of Echaot'je Kúé (Fort Liard), Zhahtu Kúé (Fort Providence), Łíídlı́ Kúé (Fort Simpson), and Xátł'odehchee (Hay River Reserve) were interviewed. Of this group:

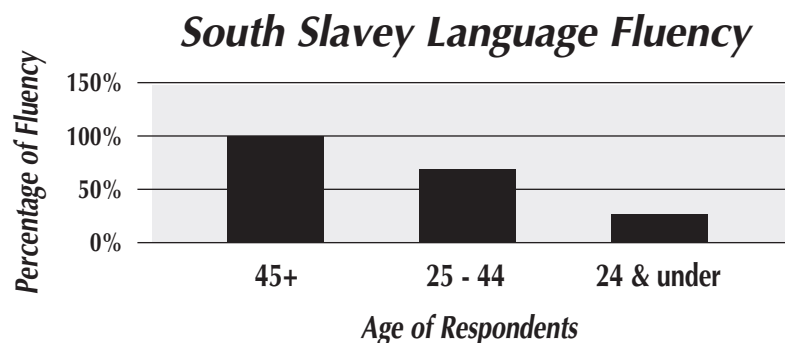
- all of the respondents over the age of 45 were fluent in their language;
- 70% of the respondents between the ages of 25 to 44 were also fluent; and
- slightly over 20% of the respondents under the age of 25 were fluent.

This data indicates that fluency has dropped from 100% among the grandparents to 20% among the grandchildren. Again, most of this drop has occurred between parents (70% fluency) and their children (20%) fluency. With a high fluency rate among middle-aged adults, there is good potential for retention and revitalization within families. But if this decline continues, very few of the young people today will have a language to share with their own children in the future.

The Deh Cho benefits from having only one indigenous Aboriginal language. Slavey people are still a majority in this region and, through land claims and self-government processes, may have the authority and resources to support language retention and revitalization initiatives.

The Deh Cho Language Plan proposes a language revitalization strategy that incorporates the following key elements.

- *Active involvement of elders in all language and cultural initiatives.*
- *Integration of language, cultural, and healing initiatives.*
- *Language nests for pre-schooler and their parents.*
- *Language promotion, particularly among young parents.*
- *Establishment of a Deh Cho Cultural and Language Institute to coordinate and support all language activities.*
- *Development of Slavey language radio and television broadcast facilities.*





North Slavey

North Slavey is the language of the Sahtu region, which includes the traditional communities of Dél̄ne, Tulít'a, Rádeȳl̄kóé, and K'áhbam̄túé. Data on the North Slavey dialect has only recently been gathered through the Canada Census. The most recent Census listed 255 mother tongue speakers in the NWT. The results of the Census data from 1991 and 1996 are inconclusive with respect to language shift.

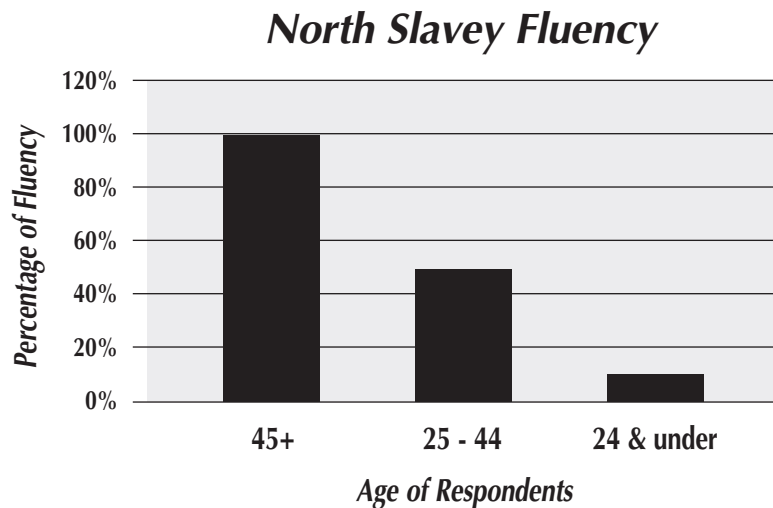
The most useful data was gathered as a part of the Language Report (1992), based on interviews with 160 people in Dél̄ne, Rádeȳl̄kóé, Tulít'a, and Inuvik. According to this report:

- 63% of the respondents learned North Slavey as a first language, and
- 54% indicated that North Slavey was their most fluent language and 45% use it most frequently at home.

This report documents an obvious and steady decline in language use over three generations – grandparents to grandchildren.

- Almost 100% of the 45 year and over age group were fluent in the language.
- Approximately 50% of the 25 to 44 year old age group were fluent.
- Only 10% of the respondents under the age of 25 were fluent.

A comprehensive language plan for North Slavey will be developed in the near future.





ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE RIGHTS

The Aboriginal language of the Northwest Territories have rights that are recognized in international, national, and territorial law.

International

In Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it states that: "In those states in which ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their own group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language."

In other documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights prohibit discrimination on the basis of language or race.

According to these international laws and covenants, Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories, particularly at the community level (which includes home, work, and school) have the fundamental human right to use their language and practice their culture.

National

Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution guarantees "Aboriginal and treaty rights". Aboriginal rights have been interpreted to include the rights of language and culture. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms also guarantees equality for all before and under the law, with equal protection and benefit.

However, the speakers of Aboriginal language do not have the same rights in national law as do members of French speaking minorities, whose rights are guaranteed in Section 23 of the Constitution.

Territorial

The law that has the most immediate impact on Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories is the Official Languages Act. Along with English and French, this act presently recognizes six official Aboriginal languages – Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Inuktituk (including Inuvialuktun), and Slavey. This law, which was enacted in 1988, is based on the belief that "legal protection of languages will assist in preserving the culture of the people as expressed through their language".

Under the Official Language Act, "the Official Language of the Territories have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Legislative Assembly and Government of the Territories". People have the right to receive government services in their own language:

- where there is significant demand for the use of such services (such as in their home community), and
- where it is reasonable that these services can be made available in the Aboriginal language (there are readily available Aboriginal language speakers or translators).



Under this Act, an independent Languages Commissioner is appointed to make sure that the spirit and intent of the act is followed by all government departments and agencies. The Languages Commissioner has the authority to receive and investigate independent complaints concerning violations of the Official Languages Act.

Where violations of the Act have occurred, the Languages Commissioner first works with the specific department or agency to correct the situation. If this approach does not provide satisfactory results, the matter may be referred to the Legislative Assembly. As well, individuals who feel that their language rights have been seriously infringed or denied may take the issue to court in order to obtain a just solution.

The Official Language Act has the full force of law and the Languages Commissioner has the independence and authority to be an impartial "watchdog" with respect to Aboriginal language issues in the Northwest Territories.





TAKING ACTION

AN OVERVIEW OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

It must be understood that there is a difference between a project and a strategy. A project is a single activity, with a beginning and an end. A strategy is an ongoing series of activities that may include one or more projects. In the Northwest Territories, language communities have primarily been involved in projects, while the strategies for language retention and revitalization have been developed and implemented by government agencies, including school boards.

This approach is changing significantly at the present time, as the territorial government grants more authority and resources to the respective Aboriginal language communities to develop and implement their own language strategies.

This section of the manual presents a few examples of successful Aboriginal language strategies from different parts of the world, including Nunavut, and an overview of language strategies and projects in the Northwest Territories.

International

The Maori

One of the more successful language strategies in the world – one that has been studied and copied by many other language groups – is the Maori "language nest" approach. Faced with a rapid decline in their language among young parents and their children, the Maori people of New Zealand organized cultural immersion centres for pre-schoolers and their parents. At these permanent centres – which were controlled by Maori people and had the active involvement of elders – parents and their young children (including infants) were immersed in the Maori language and culture on a regular basis.

The "language nest" program was orally based – listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. The program was based on the understanding that children learn languages more effectively when they are young and that parents must be speaking the language at home to reinforce its use.

In conjunction with these language nests, the Maori eventually implemented Maori language programs in the local schools. It was essential for language preservation that pre-school "graduates" of the language nests could continue to learn and practice their language at home and within the school system.



The Navajo

The Navajo people of the United States call themselves Diné, and are related to the Dene people of the Northwest Territories. The majority of them live on the Navajo Reservation, which encompasses a 25,000 square mile area of land overlapping the states of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. With a population of 250,000 people, the Navajo Nation has the largest population of First Nations people in North America.

In spite of its large population and relative isolation from the rest of America, the number of Navajo speakers began to decline rapidly during the last 30 years, particularly in those communities close to the borders of the reservation. To reverse this language shift, the Navajo people have worked hard to establish a comprehensive strategy for language retention and revitalization. Some of the main elements of this strategy now include:

- Navajo language day care and Head Start programs for pre-schoolers;
- Navajo language instruction (as a first or second language) in all grades K to 12;
- development of Navajo curriculum and language materials;
- an all-Navajo radio station;
- using Navajo as the working language of local and tribal governments;
- successfully encouraging more pride in and use of Navajo culture and language in the home and community; and
- ongoing lobbying for increased self-government over education and all other Navajo affairs.

As a result of this comprehensive language strategy, the number of children that enter school speaking Navajo has increased and the high school graduation class of 2004 is expected to be fully bilingual.



NWT Archives, GNWT



National

The Mi'kmaq

The traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people have been home to non-Aboriginal people for many hundreds of years. In spite of this long history of contact, the Mi'kmaq have managed to maintain and value their language and culture. In order to further protect their traditional heritage, the Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia have been lobbying and negotiating for many years for the establishment of a Mi'kmaq education system that would allow for greater control and flexibility in addressing language and cultural issues.

In February of 1999, a Final Agreement for the transfer of education was signed by the Mi'kmaq First Nations and the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada. Then, in April of 1999, the Governor in General of Canada signed an Order in Council proclaiming the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* as federal law. The province immediately passed a similar Act. Under this Act, nine of the thirteen Mi'kmaq First Nations gain full jurisdiction over all education programming on their respective reserves. The other four First Nations opted out of the Act, but have the opportunity to participate in the future.

When the law was enacted, Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (the Mi'kmaq education authority), said: " The completion of this process re-affirms the right of our people to govern the education of our children. As we approach the new millenium, our people can look to the future with renewed hope and confidence. This step will allow for the development of educational policies that reflect the values, beliefs, culture, and language of our people, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia."

The new arrangement will see the transfer of approximately \$140 million to participating Mi'kmaq First Nations over a five-year period. The Mi'kmaq First Nations will have full control over primary, secondary, and post-secondary programming.

Using the authority and resources provided through the Act, the Mi'kmaq intend to incorporate traditional cultural values and language into all aspects of the curriculum.



The Inuit

The Inuktitut language is one of only three Aboriginal languages in Canada that are predicted to survive over the long term. To a great extent, the successful retention of this language has been based on a simple strategy – continue speaking the language in the home. Inter-generational mother-tongue language transmission continues to be the foundation for language retention in most areas of the new Nunavut territory.

Due to the fact that many Inuit children enter school already speaking their language, it has been much easier to implement Inuktitut-based schooling in the primary grades. English is gradually introduced as a second language as a child progresses through school.

Other elements of the overall strategy that have supported the maintenance of Inuktitut include:

- documentation of the language and the stories of the elders;
- Inuktitut radio and television programming;
- widespread teaching of literacy skills and use of Inuktitut in the print media;
- the training and utilization of Inuit teachers;
- production of Inuktitut language materials;
- cultural-based activities for children on the land and in school;
- a variety of community-based projects aimed at promoting and strengthening the use of the language in the home and community; and
- the creation of the Nunavut territory.

The Inuit are in a similar situation to the Navajo, in that they constitute the majority of the population in a defined geographic area and have significant self-governing powers. They are also strongly motivated to maintain their language. These conditions provide a solid framework for language retention and revitalization activities.

Territorial

In the new Northwest Territories, there have been three different approaches to Aboriginal language activities – government-based, school-based, and community-based.

Government

For the past twenty years, the primary focus of government has been to ensure that a reasonable number of government services are available in Aboriginal languages. This focus resulted in the a few key activities:

- language preservation and standardization;
- terminology development; and
- interpreter/translator services and training.

It also resulted in the passing of the Official Languages Act and creation of the Languages Commissioner position.

The government has now realized that this territorial- level approach to language retention had limited impact and that language retention and revitalization efforts must be planned and implemented by the Aboriginal language communities themselves. Funding is being redirected to carry out this change. A new, comprehensive language strategy is being developed based on regional needs and aspirations.



Regional School Boards

For many years, regional school boards (now District Education Councils) have received funding through the government to establish Teaching and Learning Centres to develop curriculum and resource materials to support Aboriginal language instruction within the school system. At present, there are five Teaching and Learning Centres in the Northwest Territories: one each for South Slavey, North Slavey, Dogrib, Gwich'in, and Inuvialuktun.

These core-funded centres have played an important role in language promotion and the production of culture and language resource materials. However, many of the people involved in these centres (and in school-based language programming generally) are aware that they have a limited impact if children are not learning and speaking the language at home and in the community.

Community

Many community-based organizations have implemented local language projects, using funding from a variety of territorial and federal sources. These projects have generally been short-term, and have had varying degrees of success. Project activities have included:

- producing language materials such as dictionaries, storybooks, and video tapes;
- researching and documenting traditional place names and other traditional knowledge;
- teaching adult classes part-time in the evening or in adult education classes, usually with an emphasis on literacy;
- teaching languages in a family setting, involving both parents and children;
- running cultural camps for children that include both cultural awareness and language activities; and
- piloting innovative ways to revitalize Aboriginal languages.

The success of these projects has been dependent on the organizational and management skills of the sponsoring organization and the level of participation generated from within the community. The impact of these projects is difficult to measure because they are often one-time events, with limited continuity or follow-up.

Summary

The most successful language activities throughout the world have been based on comprehensive strategies – on developing and implementing a wide range of projects and activities all directed toward a single goal – language revitalization.

Although there has been considerable activity by government, school, and community organizations in the Northwest Territories, there have not been comprehensive and coordinated Aboriginal language strategies for regional language communities. For many years, available funding and resources have been routed through a variety of territorial agencies with differing levels of jurisdiction and limited communication.

The development of language plans for each official Aboriginal language community in the Northwest Territories is a major step forward. Providing direct funding to these language communities will provide more opportunity to fully implement these plans.

As well, within the framework of regional land claims and self-government, Aboriginal language communities, through their governing organizations, are steadily acquiring the authority and resources to develop and implement comprehensive language strategies, which will include a mix of policy, incentives, programs, and projects.

However, there still must be the will within Aboriginal organizations to use the increased authority and resources to retain and revitalize Aboriginal languages. This is where the commitment and dedication of language activists is essential.



A FOUR STEP APPROACH TO LANGUAGE RETENTION

Language must be reintegrated back into the community and family life as an integral part of the healing process. Fundamental to this process is pride in culture and community identity. This has been literally beaten out many First Nation adults. Efforts to revitalize the language therefore must begin with reversing these attitudes and making community members aware of the importance and utility of language and traditional values.

Toward Rebirth of First Nation Languages; Assembly of First Nations; 1992

It has not been easy for Aboriginal languages to compete with English in the existing corporate and legislative world, because this world and the English language evolved together over many thousands of years. English expresses the beliefs and practices of western society far better than any other world language. The more that we adopt the Western system of business and government, the more likely we are to adopt the language that embodies it.

The Aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories are *languages of the land*. They did not evolve in legislatures, schools, libraries, or corporate boardrooms. They evolved from a deep and sacred relationship with the land. In that evolution, they became the only languages capable of fully expressing the history, beliefs, and practices – the culture and worldview – of the First Nations people in this area.

In order to maintain Aboriginal language relevancy in today's world, the culture that these languages embody must also remain relevant. If a deep, sacred, and active relationship with the land is not deemed important – if it is not practiced – then the languages that best express this relationship will also lose importance.

In fact, at this point in history, among the younger generations, the determining factor in rapid language shift is the subtle but rapid shift in ideology or world-view away from the teachings of the elders.

For this reason, retaining an Aboriginal language first and foremost means retaining the beliefs and practices – the culture – that the language is rooted in. The challenge for language activists, therefore, is to maintain, nurture, and interpret the traditional cultural relationships between land, animals, individuals, family, and community – expressed through the traditional language – in an increasingly complex, international social and economic system.

Meeting this challenge requires a few important steps – forming a core group, strategic planning, building alliances, and managing language activities. This section of the manual helps to explain these four steps.



Ingrid Kritch, Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute



Forming a Core Group

For many years, the three groups that had formal responsibility for the retention and revitalization of Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories were the Language Bureau of the Government of the NWT, the Department of Education, and regional Divisional Education Council (or Boards) through their Teaching and Learning Centres. Most of the resources devoted to Aboriginal language development were allocated to these three groups. The language activists that worked within these agencies were the main advocates for the retention and revitalization of Aboriginal languages.

In spite of the good work that these agencies have done, there is significant and rapid language decline occurring in all of the Aboriginal languages and dialects in the new Northwest Territories.

Recent language research has concluded that language retention activities must be controlled and directed by language communities, not by governments or other agencies that do not have a direct link to the language. The speakers of the language are the best advocates and managers of language initiatives. With this in mind, it is clear that Aboriginal language communities must take primary responsibility for the retention and revival of their own languages. It is also clear that language advocates – those with an understanding of and/or a passion for the language – must drive the process.

A first step in language revitalization, therefore, is the formation of a core group of language activists who are willing to commit themselves to promoting and revitalizing language and culture in their communities. These groups can be formed as committees of existing Aboriginal government or as independent societies, but each group, in order to be most effective, must have a formal mandate from the existing Aboriginal governments within the community and region.

The simplest approach is to get a Band or Tribal Council resolution that empowers the committee or society to act on behalf of local Aboriginal government with respect to language and cultural matters. Once established, direct communication links should be established with local Aboriginal government(s) and the local education authority.

The mandate of this core group must be clear:

- it must have a written and publicized mission statement, so that all community members understand its purpose;
- it must obtain the authority to coordinate and allocate language resources within the community, so that maximum impact is achieved with the limited resources available; and
- it must be a visible advocate and role-model for language and cultural retention (this means actively using the language and ensuring that elders and traditions play a key role in guiding the activities of the group).



Strategic Planning

Setting Realistic Language Goals

In nations where the language has fallen into disuse, the question may have to be asked whether revival of the language in ordinary communication is the only avenue or the most effective avenue of revitalizing the culture...

Royal Commission of Aboriginal People; Volume 3

Once the current status of a language has been established, a realistic assessment of what is possible in a particular community or social context must occur. This means that goals should be established that are achievable given the will, commitment, and resources available within a community or region.

In *A Guide to Language Strategies for First Nation Communities*, five different types and levels of language goals are identified:

- preservation,
- awareness,
- revival,
- reduced bilingualism, and
- full bilingualism.

PRESERVATION is the primary goal when a language is near extinction. Preservation involves documenting the language as thoroughly as possible before it dies out. This can also mean collecting and documenting legends, stories, and other forms of traditional knowledge.

CULTURAL AWARENESS means promoting a limited knowledge and use of the language as a component of other cultural activities. In effect, the Aboriginal language remains a second language and full fluency is not achieved.

REVIVAL means taking steps to restore the language so that it is a working language of family and community life. Revival requires "inter-generational mother tongue transmission". In other words, parents must be learning and speaking the language and teaching it to their children at a young age.

REDUCED OR PARTIAL BILINGUALISM means establishing full use of the language in certain community contexts. For example, the language might be used exclusively for family and cultural activities, but be used on a more limited basis in school and work.

FULL BILINGUALISM means establishing the language as the primary working language, or first language, in all sectors of the community – home, school, and work. For this to be achieved, the majority of residents of the community, at all age levels, would be bilingual.

Another language goal, which can be a component of any of these other goals, is literacy.

LITERACY is a useful tool for teaching language and also for recording language and preparing language materials. Preservation or formal documentation of a language can be improved by developing an accurate writing system. Full bilingualism in a school and work setting might only be possible with well-developed literacy skills.

However, literacy is not a precondition to Aboriginal language retention and revitalization. People can learn to speak a language without becoming literate. In fact, some Aboriginal language communities focus on fluency rather than literacy – maintaining the oral tradition becomes the first priority.

It must be noted that each of these language goals is worthwhile as long as they accurately reflect the will of the language and cultural community that they affect. There is no single goal that is good for all communities.



NWT Archives, GNWT

Strategic Approaches

The bottom line is that parents teach the ... language to their children and/or that adults use the language for significant social functions at home and in the community.

A Literature Review: Maintenance and Revitalization of Aboriginal Languages

If the community has chosen as its goal any type of full or reduced bilingualism, or true language revival, it must place the family at the centre of its strategy... the ultimate fate of the language is dependent on its use in everyday informal communication between the generations, so that children come to learn it, speak it, and identify with it in a spontaneous way.

A Guide to Language Strategies for First Nation Communities

Reversal of shift involves increasing the number of first-language speakers of a language.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People

The solution, it is felt, lies in the communities commitment to take action and in the government's resolve to support such action.

Evaluation of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT

In order to maintain or facilitate the effective revival of an Aboriginal language, experts agree that inter-generational transmission must occur. This process is most likely to occur within families, but requires the support and reinforcement of other groups and agencies with a community, including First Nation organizations, schools, policy makers, and funding agencies.

In the Northwest Territories, many schools have taken on, or have been delegated, a primary (and sometimes exclusive) role in promoting and maintaining Aboriginal languages within the community. If the language goal within the community is cultural awareness rather than a serious attempt at fluency, this approach is workable. But if the underlying expectation is the development of a working level of fluency by children, then this approach is unrealistic.

The strategy that a community develops must reflect and be consistent with the overall language and cultural goals of the community. And these goals must be realistic in terms of the current state of the language.

For each of the five language goals identified, examples of the general strategies employed to address them are provided on the following page. If you check off those strategies that are already being applied in your community or region, you will be able to identify the language goal(s) being pursued at the present time.



LANGUAGE GOALS AND STRATEGIES CHART

Preservation

is the primary goal when a language is severely endangered. In this situation, the basic strategy is very straightforward.

- Through oral histories and storytelling, as much of the language as possible is recorded and documented from mother-tongue speakers
 - Linguists are utilized to analyze and document the structure of the language and develop a writing system to assist in preservation efforts
 - Traditional place names and other important knowledge is researched and documented.
-

Cultural Awareness

is the goal when a community does not have the commitment or resources to retain a language but want people to at least have an understanding of important cultural activities and beliefs. Some basic language skills are also taught, but fluency is not achieved.

- Cultural activities take place within schools and adult training centres
 - Part-time language teaching takes place in schools and adult training centres
 - Traditional ceremonies take place, but often in English
 - Land-based culture camps are run for children and families, with a minimal language component
 - Aboriginal history is researched and taught
 - Traditional hunting and gathering activities are supported
 - Traditional ceremonies and decision-making processes are integrated into all Aboriginal organizational activities, but traditional language use is minimal
 - Traditional arts and crafts activities for recreation and business are supported
 - Print and audio-visual materials that reflect cultural practices and beliefs are developed in English
 - Some language teaching is incorporated into all cultural activities
 - Cross-cultural training is provided to non-Aboriginal people.
-

Revival

is the goal when a community wants to promote the language as a first language and reintroduce inter-generational transmission. Some of the things can be done to achieve this particular goal include:

- Promoting the use of the language in a wide range of community activities, from family life, to school, to community gatherings
- Ensuring that the language is utilized in print, audio-visual, and other media formats
- Providing language training to young parents and their children
- Providing language training at all levels of the school system



Revival continued

- Establishing events or activities in which the traditional language is used exclusively
 - Creating opportunities for more meaningful interaction between mother tongue speakers and the younger generations
 - Ensuring that government and other community services are available in the traditional language
 - Developing or lobbying for policies and incentives that encourage and reward the use of the traditional language.
-

Partial bilingualism

is a realistic goal where the language is still used to a reasonable extent among all age groups and where there are still some children being raised with their traditional language as their mother tongue. The strategy is to continue to promote the use of the language in as many community contexts as possible, and also provide a significant amount of language and cultural teaching within the school system.

Other elements of this strategy might include:

- Ongoing development of curriculum materials and resources relating to language and culture
 - Providing opportunities for infants and pre-schoolers to learn the language, in the home or in a more-controlled setting such as a daycare or preschool
 - Ensuring that the language has a special and ongoing purpose in the community that the more dominant language cannot fulfill
 - Establishing policies and other control mechanisms within the community in order to limit the influence of the more dominant language.
-

Full bilingualism

is the most challenging of the five main Aboriginal language goals and may be a challenging goal for many First Nation communities. According to the literature, full bilingualism is only feasible where the language is already widely spoken in the community and the Aboriginal community controls the education system. From a strategic perspective, full bilingualism will include most of the strategies listed above and will also require:

- Legislation, policies, programs, and resources that favour the traditional language over English, and
- A commitment at all levels of the community to develop and support the language - including the school, service agencies, governing organizations, and media.



Strategic Planning Steps and Questions

In order to develop an effective local strategy for the retention and revitalization of an Aboriginal language, a number of basic planning steps must take place and a number of basic strategic questions must be addressed. These questions should be posed during a community planning session. Even if the planning group is small, a strategic plan can be developed and implemented.

Step 1

The first step is to assess the status of the language within your community and the region you live in. The questions that need to be asked in this regard are:

- Is the traditional language of this area flourishing, enduring, declining, obsolete, or extinct? (Use the Language Assessment Chart provided in this manual)
- In what situations is the traditional language still used as the primary language – home, community events, meetings, on the land, etc.?
- In what situations is English used as the primary language? What programs and/or services are already being provided in the traditional language?
- Are there local policies in place to support and encourage greater use of the traditional language?
- What are the local attitudes toward the traditional language?



Barb Cameron, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, GNWT



Step 2

The second step is to develop an overall vision of language usage for your community. This vision would normally include a mission statement, a set of realistic goals, and a set of values or principles to guide language retention and revival. The key questions that need to be answered in order to develop this vision include:

- In this community, in five years, to what extent and in what situations will the traditional language be used on a regular basis? Where will it be used; who will be using it; how often will it be used? (Refer to the Language Goals and Strategies Chart for help identifying realistic goals.)
- In five years, to what extent and in what situations will the traditional culture still be practiced within the region? (When, where, and by whom?)
- What legislation, policies, programs, and resources will be in place to support the preservation and development of traditional culture and language?
- What are the values and principles that will guide the retention and revitalization of traditional language and culture within the community?

Step 3

The next step involves an analysis of both the positive and the negative impacts on the language. The questions that must be answered are:

- What are the strengths of the language and culture within the community at the present time? What things exist at present that positively support language retention and revitalization activities?
- What opportunities exist for the retention and revitalization of the traditional language and culture within the area?
- What are the barriers that exist that will negatively affect retention and revitalization efforts? What things make it more difficult to achieve the language vision?

Step 4

The next step involves identifying solutions and actions that can be taken by building on the language's strengths to overcome the barriers. There is one simple question that needs to be asked:

- What solutions can be found and actions can be taken to overcome these barriers and achieve the language vision? (Refer to the Language Goals and Strategies Chart for ideas.)

Step 5

The final planning step involves setting priorities and developing an action plan. The types of questions that have to be asked are:

- Out of all of the solutions and actions that have been identified, what are the five that would have the most positive impact on language development over the next six months?
- What are the five solutions or actions that would have the greatest impact on language development over the next five years?
- For these priority actions - Who is willing to take responsibility to carry each one out? When will these actions be taken? What resources are required?
- How will the community know that it is making progress? What criteria can be used to assess the effectiveness of the actions being taken?



Building Community Support and Alliances

Language retention and revitalization initiatives will only be effective if a majority of individuals and organizations at the community level understand and are committed to the tasks that must be accomplished. For this reason, the core group of language activists must do considerable work promoting the mission of language and cultural revitalization.

Building community support and alliances means relationship building. These relationships can be built by involving local agencies in the strategic planning process. It can also mean attending local meetings and keeping all agencies and decision-makers informed of the language goals and plans being set for the community. Commitments, even small commitments, to use the local language more must be solicited from both individuals and organizations. Be ready to provide suggestions on what could be done.

The simplest commitment from individuals is to learn and/or speak the language more - at home, at work, and in the community. Another important commitment is to support those people who do want to learn the language - don't laugh at their efforts and mistakes or they will very quickly give up. Agency commitments can include:

- posting Aboriginal language signs;
- ensuring that interpreter services are available at all times;
- providing wage incentives for bilingual staff;
- establishing bilingual policies (all staff, including non-Aboriginal staff, must begin learning the local language);
- hosting Aboriginal language meetings and workshops on a regular basis; and
- allocating or contributing resources to language and cultural activities.

A reasonable community framework for effective language activities would include:

- a committee or society (governed by language activists) with a clear community mandate to coordinate language programs and services;
- commitment from a large number of individuals to increase their use of the local Aboriginal language within home and community activities;
- policies within all local organizations that support and encourage use of the local Aboriginal language; and
- adequate resources to support a wide range of culturally-based language preservation, retention, and revitalization activities.



Overcoming Common Language Myths

In order to gain public and organizational support for language revitalization efforts, one of the most important tasks is overcoming negative language myths and attitudes.

Through a long process of colonization, many Aboriginal people have come to devalue their own culture and language. In order to gain allies at the community level, language activists must confront the negative and fatalistic attitudes towards Aboriginal culture and language and build understanding and pride in traditional knowledge and practices.

The most common myths and attitudes concerning Aboriginal languages are presented below.

Myth # 1

Learning to speak an Aboriginal language at a young age, as a first language, will make it more difficult or confusing to learn English as a second language.

A number of studies have clearly demonstrated the exact opposite – that a child who has learned an Aboriginal language at home as a first language can easily achieve proficiency in English. In fact, children who have the opportunity to develop two or more languages develop stronger cognitive (intellectual) skills than a unilingual child.

These studies are supported by the long history of bilingualism and multilingualism among Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories. Many elders and middle-aged adults speak two or more languages and have the knowledge and wisdom gained from understanding two or more perspectives of the world. In fact, today's younger generation is the first generation of Aboriginal people in the new Northwest Territories in many years to speak only one language.

From this perspective, one could say that we are becoming less educated.



NWT Archives, GNWT



Myth # 2

Aboriginal languages are obsolete in the modern world. Children only need English to succeed.

It is ironical that Aboriginal people are gaining more control over their lives through land claims and self-government and, at the same time, are turning away from the culture that they fought so hard to protect through land claims and self-government.

People survived for thousands of years in the north because they understood the world and how it operates. In a world that is increasingly moving toward a unified, technology-based culture that threatens to destroy the very Earth we live on, the maintenance of an Aboriginal world view is healthy, positive, and powerful. This world-view is embodied in – and can best be expressed by – the traditional languages.

At a spiritual level, the Creator gave people their own languages for a reason. Although we may not fully understand that reason, we must believe that the knowledge contained within that language has a purpose, not just for the people who speak it but for all people. The Aboriginal languages describe and define a relationship with the land and Creator in a way that no other languages can. If the spiritual relationships defined in Aboriginal languages are more accurate and relevant than those of other languages and cultures, then we all lose if this perspective is lost.

The message needs to be spread that Aboriginal culture is not dead or obsolete – the culture has tremendous value as a way of knowing and interacting with the world today and in the future. This insight must be shared within both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

Myth # 3

There aren't enough resources available to effectively revive the many diverse Aboriginal languages and dialects.

It is true that there are many Aboriginal languages and dialects in the Northwest Territories – some spoken by a relatively small number of people. The sheer number of languages and dialects makes it more difficult to mobilize communities to act collectively to lobby for more resources.

In spite of the enormity of the task – reviving seven main Aboriginal languages/dialects in the new Northwest Territories – the issue of resources must be put into a simple context: How much resources are devoted to teaching and using the English language and learning Western culture? The answer is obvious – an enormous amount of northern resources are consciously allocated to teaching the English language and a Western worldview. Yet, the English language is not endangered and never will be and Western culture is thriving.

Clearly, the allocation of resources involves choices. We live in a society where it is still assumed that Aboriginal people will learn English and adopt a Western lifestyle. On the other hand, it is still very unusual for non-Aboriginal people to learn an Aboriginal language or adopt traditional Dene or Inuit ways.

The message is clear – in spite of the Official Languages Act and the growing issue of inherent right, Aboriginal languages are second-class languages in their own homeland. The issue, therefore, is not a lack of resources, but an overt continuation of a long history of cultural genocide – undermine the language and the culture and control the minds and hearts of the people.



If some of the resources used to support the existing government bureaucracies were re-allocated to support language and cultural development...

If governments and other agencies made it mandatory for non-Aboriginal people to learn the Aboriginal languages of the people they serve...

If the education system made a more equitable split between resources devoted to English and those devoted to traditional languages...

...there would be ample resources for Aboriginal language retention and revitalization.

Language activists need to lobby for a much fairer share of the total language and cultural resources in the Northwest Territories, particularly at this point in time, with the rapid decline of most northern languages. And if existing governments won't allocate enough resources, then the land claims and self-government processes must have culture and language issues on the table at all times, so that resources are made available through these routes. Like the Navajo and Mi'kmaq, gaining full control of all available resources may be an essential step toward full language and cultural revival.



Managing and Coordinating Language Activities

One of the main problems facing Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories is the lack of coordination of resources and activities within and among language communities. The extent of this problem varies among the different language communities.

With most of the Aboriginal languages in rapid decline, it is unlikely that independent and isolated projects and activities will reverse the existing trend. From a strategic perspective, it is imperative that language communities collectively manage and coordinate the limited resources they have toward the common goal of language retention and revival.

This coordination must first be done internally. Each language community must ensure that all of the activities and projects taking place within its traditional area compliment each other, and that the information and resources generated are shared. Having a designated language and cultural agency of some sort – such as the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, or the proposed Deh Cho Language Institute – would allow for better coordination of activities, as long as this agency also works cooperatively with the regional Teaching and Learning Centres.

At the very least, regional and community steering committees made up of key language stakeholders could provide a forum for developing, managing, and evaluating Aboriginal language activities. Obviously, territorial, federal, and Aboriginal government agencies that have an Aboriginal language mandate must be kept informed and involved.

Well-managed programs and projects have the following elements:

- Full commitment to the program by the sponsoring agency;
- Formal and practical goals and objectives that can be evaluated relatively easily to determine if they were achieved;
- A budget that is used as a framework for all financial decisions;
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all people involved, particularly with respect to decision-making (who has the responsibility to make what decisions?);
- Methods for dealing with conflicts;
- Skilled personnel; and
- A formal process of evaluation - what was actually achieved for the amount of money and other resources utilized?

A simple rule of effective management is that success creates opportunity. It is much easier to access ongoing funding for a well-managed and effective program than for a program that has inconclusive results.

External coordination of activities can also be very beneficial. For example, the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre worked with an Aboriginal software company to develop a set of language lessons on CD-ROM. Once the basic pattern of the lessons was established, it was used for three different Cree dialects, two Chipewyan dialects, and Sauteaux. The development costs were then shared among the different language communities. This type of cost-sharing approach could be used among the language communities in the Northwest Territories, but a process for coordinating these types of efforts must first be created.

Both internal and external coordination and management require a commitment to communication and networking – sharing ideas, information, questions, concerns, insights, and successes. Communication is more likely when a shared commitment to a specific goal has been made. The goal becomes the reference point for decision-making. The most important question at all times is: What is the best thing to do at this time in order to help achieve the goal?

If the goal becomes the focus, then personal issues are less likely to interfere. If the goal is unclear, or not shared, personal issues can easily interfere with program activities.

For Aboriginal language communities, the overriding goal is likely the same – more people of all ages learning and using the language on a day-to-day basis. Utilizing the existing resources, as limited as they are, to maximum the achievement of this goal will require skilled and conscientious management and coordination of a wide range of language activities; and it can be done.



ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE RESOURCES

FUNDING

At the present time in the Northwest Territories, there are only a few sources of funding for Aboriginal language projects and activities.

Government of the Northwest Territories

The Government of the Northwest Territories provides direct funding for Aboriginal language activities from its own Education, Culture, and Employment (ECE) budget and also administers funding received through the "Canada – NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages".

During the 1998/99 fiscal year, the following Aboriginal language allocations were made.

| <i>Activity</i> | <i>Funding Recipient</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> | <i>98/99 Amount</i> |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Aboriginal languages instruction in schools: teacher salaries, texts, materials, etc. | Divisional Education Councils (7) | GNWT Schools Budget | \$1.6 million |
| Teaching and Learning Centres | Divisional Education Councils (7) | Canada - NWT Cooperation Agreement | \$500,000 |
| Language Planning | Aboriginal language Communities via Regional Councils | GNWT -ECE funds from Language Bureau | \$350,000 |
| Various: teacher training, I/T training, broadcasting, literacy and language enhancement. | Communication Societies, Aurora College, communities | Canada-GNWT Cooperation Agreement | \$1.4 million |

During the 1999/2000 and subsequent fiscal years, these amounts will change. The GNWT will be routing more money through the Aboriginal language communities (again via regional Tribal Councils) and less through departmental language programs.



The allocation to the language communities will be done using a simple formula. It is projected that each of the seven Aboriginal language communities will get base funding of \$50,000 for language activities and a further allocation based on population. Using a base amount of \$350,000 (7 times \$50,000) and a further allocation of approximately \$850,000, each language community would get the following amounts.

(It must be noted that the \$850,000 is strictly an estimate - the actual amount may vary.)

| <i>Ethnic Origin</i> | <i>Population Estimate*</i> | <i>% of Total</i> | <i>Base</i> | <i>Additional</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Chipewyan | 2,186 | 11.97% | \$50,000 | \$101,745 | \$151,745 |
| Cree | 863 | 4.73% | \$50,000 | \$ 40,205 | \$ 90,205 |
| Dogrib | 4,075 | 22.32% | \$50,000 | \$189,720 | \$239,720 |
| Gwich'in | 932 | 5.11% | \$50,000 | \$ 43,435 | \$ 93,435 |
| Inuit | 4,025** | 22.05% | \$50,000 | \$187,425 | \$137,425 |
| N. Slavey | 2,929 | 16.04% | \$50,000 | \$136,340 | \$186,340 |
| S. Slavey | 3,245 | 17.78% | \$50,000 | \$151,130 | \$201,130 |

**Based on 1996 Census*

***Including Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun.*

For those language communities that developed language plans during the 1998/99 fiscal year, this funding can be used for a wide variety of language retention and revitalization activities. Responsibility and accountability for the funding will rest with the regional Tribal Councils.

Language activists need to contact their respective Tribal Council for more information regarding access to this funding.

Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is coordinating a four-year \$20 million dollar language fund provided by the federal Department of Canadian Heritage. This funding is to be used primarily for Aboriginal languages considered to be in serious decline.

Approximately 1/3 of this funding is being routed through the national First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres. Aboriginal organizations can inquire about this funding through the FNCCEC National Office: (819) 772-2331.

As well, some of the AFN funding is being routed through the Dene Nation office in Yellowknife. The contact person regarding these funds is **Ethel Liske at the Dene Nation office: (867) 873-4081.**

In both cases, a written proposal is required.

The Assembly of First Nations has also produced some excellent language research materials. These resources can be ordered through:

AFN Resource Centre
One Nicholas Street, 10th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7B7
Phone: (613) 241-6798 Fax: (613) 241-5808
www.afn.ca



Aboriginal Head Start Initiative

This program is an early intervention program for pre-school Aboriginal children in larger northern communities. Because it has a strong cultural component, many groups in the north who have accessed this program provide language and culture instruction as a component of the curriculum.

The NWT contact for this program is **Brenda Cantin** with **Health Canada in Edmonton** at **(780) 495-5113**.

Private Foundations

There are a number of corporate and private foundations that provide funding for charitable causes, including cultural and language activities. The best source of information regarding fundraising within the corporate and foundation sectors is The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. The Centre has excellent resource materials that list grant agencies, provide information on how to approach grant agencies, and provide information on proposal writing. The Centre can be reached on the Internet at: **www.ccp.ca**

or can be contacted at:

The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy
425 University Avenue, 7th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1T6
Phone (416) 597-2293

LANGUAGE RESOURCES / AGENCIES

Elders and Fluent Speakers

The single most important resource to all communities is the elders and fluent speakers of the language. If language retention and revival is dependent on inter-generational mother-tongue transmission of the language, then the fluent speakers of the language are absolutely essential. If the most important reason for maintaining Aboriginal languages is to maintain the historical connection to the land, then the elders have a crucial role to play in all language activities.

For any language retention or revival activity to succeed, elders and fluent speakers must be involved as resource people. They must also be:

- encouraged to speak the language as often as possible to as many people as possible;
- cautioned about laughing or criticizing others for poor pronunciation or language use;
- acknowledged within the community for the special skill they have; and
- given the training they need to expand their role as language teachers and mentors.



Chipewyan

Over the past fifteen years, some Chipewyan language materials have been produced in the Northwest Territories, but this material has generally been produced at the community level for local use and has not been catalogued or distributed. There is no single agency that acts as a clearinghouse or resource centre for the Chipewyan language.

However, some excellent Chipewyan language resource materials are produced and distributed by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre in Saskatoon. Its address is listed below, in the Cree section. As well, the Northern Lights Museum in Fort Smith is presently preparing a Chipewyan dictionary. Other sources for materials would be the elementary schools in Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, and Áutselk'e.

The designated contact for funding transferred from the GNWT to the Chipewyan language community is:

Akaitcho Territory Tribal Government
Fort Resolution, NT
Phone (867) 394-3313

Cree

Very little Cree language material has been produced in the Northwest Territories, particularly in the Bush Cree dialect. However, a considerable amount of print and video material is available in the Plains Cree and other dialects. The two best sources for material are:

Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre
120 - 33rd Street East
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7K 0S2
Phone (306)244-1146

Duval Publishing
18120 - 102 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5S 1S7
(780) 482-7213
www.duvalhouse.com

The Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre in Hay River and Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre in Fort Smith also have some Cree language materials available.

The designated contact for GNWT funding for the Cree language community is:

South Slave Metis Tribal Council
Fort Smith, NT
Contact: Rob Tordiff
Phone (867) 872-3630

Dogrib

The single best source for Dogrib language materials is the Teaching and Learning Center of the Dogrib Community Services Board in Rae.

Teaching and Learning Centre
Dogrib Community Services Board
Rae, NT
Contact: Mary Siemens
Phone (867) 392-6377

Community language funding will likely be routed through the Treaty 11 Tribal Council.



Gwich'in

There are two agencies that play a key role in promoting the Gwich'in language. Information and resources regarding Gwich'in are available through both sources.

Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute
Tsiigehtchic, NT
Contact: Alestine Andre
Phone (867) 952-2131

Teaching and Learning Centre
Chief Julius School
Ft. McPherson, NT
Phone (867) 953-3613

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Centre will be administering the GNWT funds directed to the Gwich'in language community.

Inuvialuktun

There are two agencies that play a key role in promoting the Inuvialuktun language.

Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre (ICRC)
Tuktoyaktuk, NT
Contact: Pat Winfield
Phone (867) 977-2519

Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board Education
Inuvik, NT
Contact: Aboriginal Consultant
Phone (867) 777-7167

Community language funding will be administered through the ICRC.

South Slavey

Although South Slavey materials for local use have been produced in most of the schools in the Deh Cho region, the primary contact for resource materials is the Teaching and Learning Centre of the Deh Cho Divisional Education Council.

Teaching and Learning Centre
Deh Cho Divisional Education Council
Fort Simpson, NT
Contact: Andy Norwegian
Phone (867) 695-7263

The Deh Cho First Nations will administer GNWT funds directed to the South Slavey language community.

Deh Cho First Nations
Fort Simpson, NT
Phone (867) 695-2355



North Slavey

The main contact for North Slavey language resources is the Teaching and Learning Centre of the Sahtu Divisional Education Council.

Teaching and Learning Centre
Deline, NT
Contact: Albertine Ayha
Phone (867) 589-4105

North Slavey community language funding will be administered by the:

Sahtu Secretariat
Deline, NT
Phone (867) 589-4719

General

There are a few other agencies in the Northwest Territories that are directly involved in Aboriginal language development activities. These include the following.

Dene Cultural Institute, Hay River Reserve
Box 3054
Hay River Reserve, NT
X0E 1G4
Contact: Joanne Barnaby
Phone (867) 874-8480

The Dene Cultural Institute (DCI) has coordinated the production of a number of Aboriginal language materials and is committed to Aboriginal language retention and revival. At a special DCI assembly held in June, 1999, territorial delegates made the following recommendations – that DCI:

- support communities in developing language immersion programs;
- research and inform communities of effective language revitalization strategies around the world;
- assist communities in developing language and cultural curriculum policy;
- conduct its assemblies and conferences in the Dene languages;
- rename itself in a Dene language;
- act as a territorial resource and networking centre for the different language communities;
- participate in the formal review of the Official Languages Act;
- act as an ombudsman for the Dene languages;
- administer all territorial language enhancement funding;
- lobby for a variety of practical language initiatives; and
- assist in the development of an overall Dene Nation Language and Cultural Policy.



Department of Education, Culture, and Employment; Government of the NWT
Contact: Chuck Arnold
Phone (867) 873-7551

Languages Commissioner of the NWT, Yellowknife
Contact: Judy Tutcho, Languages Commissioner
Phone (867) 873-7034 or 1-800-661-0889

Native Communications Society, Yellowknife
Phone (867) 920-2277

NWT Literacy Council, Yellowknife
Contact: Cate Sills
Phone (867) 873-9262

Universities – Some of the major universities have linguistic departments. Often, graduate students are interested in doing research on a particular language as a part of their studies. Establishing contacts and working relationships with these departments is something that a territorial-level coordinating body could do to support regional initiatives.



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