

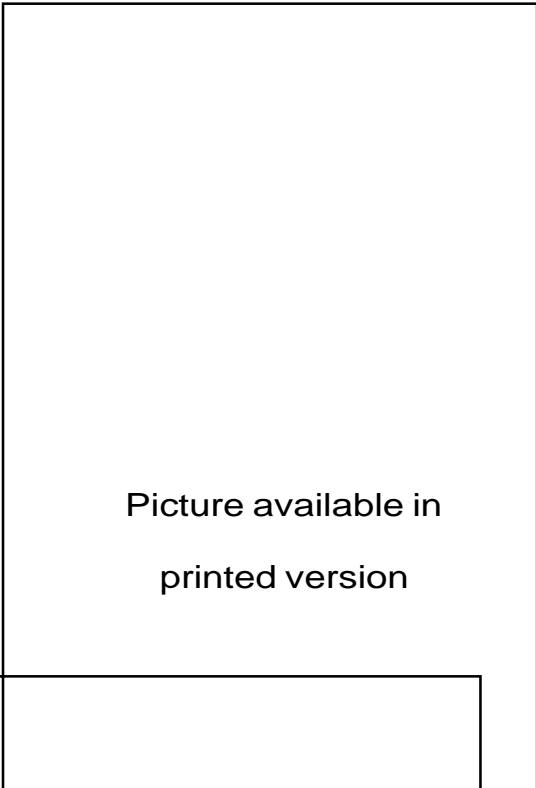
Handbook for
Aboriginal Language
Program Planning
in British Columbia

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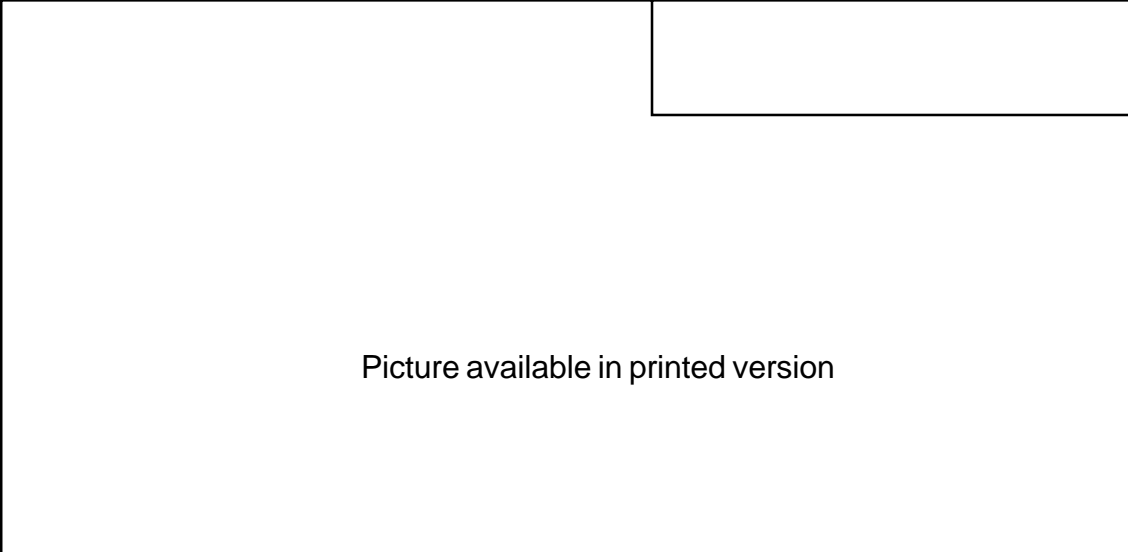
March, 1998

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A Report Prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee
Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee
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by

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March, 1998

On the cover, picture of Elders Mary John Sr., Nakazdli Nation, and Catherine Bird, Saikuz Nation.

On inside title page, picture of Tille Gutierrez, Elder with the Sto:lo Nation Language Program, and picture of Upper St'at'imc students in an adult language class.

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Executive Summary

This handbook on Aboriginal Language Program Planning is intended to provide assistance to First Nations communities and organizations which want to design or expand their language programs. First Nations languages in B.C., due to a variety of factors, are now in a critical state. Throughout B.C., English has increasingly replaced the use of Aboriginal languages, and Aboriginal young people are exposed to the dominance of English in the school system, the community, and the home. In some communities, only a few Elders can still speak their language fluently. In response to this situation, and given a growing recognition of the connection between language, culture and identity, many First Nations are now taking steps to overcome significant challenges, in order to revitalize and revive their languages.

Accomplishing the goal of language revitalization requires careful planning; it requires the establishment of realistic goals and expectations, along with thoughtful plans for their realization. Language revitalization can involve a variety of initiatives. It is often useful to begin with an assessment of the current state of the language, based upon definitions of fluency which are determined by each First Nation. It may also entail documentation of the language, the recruitment of people who speak the language, specific programs and activities to promote the use of the language whenever possible, and an integration of the language into the education system. Perhaps most importantly, if a language is to survive, young people must be encouraged to learn and use the language as much as possible; ideally, children will have an opportunity to practice the language in the home, with their parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and they will be exposed to role models who use the language in their everyday activities.

The goals and steps to be taken by each community will vary, depending upon the state of its language and its priorities. In every situation, however, there will likely be a role for people of all ages in the home, the family, and the community. The education system may also provide opportunities for language revitalization.

Experience and research have demonstrated that it is easiest to learn a language in early childhood, and that it becomes increasingly hard to learn a language as people age. The benefit of early childhood education programs is therefore evident, and it is useful if Elders who are fluent in the language spend time with young children, communicating with and encouraging them to use their language. This situation can be achieved through initiatives such as language nests and/or daycare programs.

It is also crucial that language programs be extended into the K-12 level of education. Immersion programs can provide a maximum of exposure to the language, and are therefore used in many schools. In other cases, First Nations as Second Language Programs are being implemented. Each approach has benefits and weaknesses, and the approach taken should depend upon the unique circumstances of each

community and school. Whatever approach is taken, language programs at the primary and elementary level are most effective when they involve adequate time for instruction and exposure to the language, as well as a connection to First Nations traditions and values.

There are significant challenges to be overcome in the implementation of secondary level language programs, including limited numbers of teachers trained to deliver such programs, as well as limited financial resources and educational materials. These difficulties can be overcome, however, and successful secondary programs can be designed and implemented. In the context of the public school system, curricula for grades 9 - 12 must be approved by the B.C. Ministry of Education through the development of Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) or as locally developed courses. It is therefore important to discuss with school districts the need for language programs in public schools.

Language education for children and young people, as discussed above, will be most effective if there is an opportunity to practice the language in the home and the community. There is a need, therefore, for adult language courses, as a number of First Nations communities have recognized. Aboriginal language courses developed in liaison with Universities and Colleges can offer recognized credits, and such programs have attracted significant numbers of students when they have been available. In many cases, more informal classes, weekend, and week-long retreats have also been implemented. While adult courses may not quickly produce large numbers of fluent speakers, they have been effective in allowing many people to develop their language skills.

All language programs, if they are to be effective, should be based upon a strong foundation, including clear curriculum which outlines what will be taught, how, and in what order. Such curriculum will ideally reflect the community goals and philosophy behind the language program. Most successful programs also include learning outcomes and assessment strategies, as well as appropriate instructional strategies and resources. In the public school system, Ministry guidelines require that these issues be addressed through the development of Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs). Whatever form is used, however, it is important that issues of copyright and ownership of the curriculum and materials be considered.

Although efforts to revive Aboriginal languages will be most successful if they are supported by the entire community, Aboriginal language teachers are crucial. In many areas, unfortunately, fluent speakers who have become certified to teach the language are near retirement. First Nations communities are implementing a variety of initiatives to address this situation. In some cases, First Nations Language Authorities have been created to support such initiatives, to help identify fluent speakers and to recommend those individuals for certification by the BC College of Teachers. Language Authorities can also help to develop and authorize new vocabulary, to promote the use of Aboriginal languages, and to support community-wide efforts to ensure that Aboriginal languages not only survive, but thrive.

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Aboriginal Language Program Handbook

I. Introduction

This Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning is meant to help First Nations communities and organizations design language programs which will meet their local needs and maintain, revitalize or restore the use of their Aboriginal languages in their communities among children, adults and elders alike.

At present, most Aboriginal languages in this province are in a critical state. The first half of the century saw decades of purposeful eradication through the residential school system and through the effect of government policies. In recent decades it has been the overwhelming dominance of the English language in the school system, in the media and in the public, including within reserve communities, that has brought about this situation. While the current generations of Aboriginal people are victims of this process, they nonetheless are now faced with having to reverse it before it is too late.

Reversing language loss, or language shift, as it is often called, is a difficult task. Nonetheless, it has been accomplished, or at least successfully begun, as examples from other parts of the indigenous and non-indigenous world show. We cannot rely on the school system alone to achieve it; reversing language loss will take combined efforts in the home, the community and the education system, supported by legislation, and much collective and individual

determination. It will also require a maximum of both financial and human resources to achieve.

Besides raising awareness in First Nations communities of the current critical state of Aboriginal languages in British Columbia, the aim of this booklet is to help communities plan and implement programs to bring their languages back, in collaboration with elders, speakers, educators, and other resources within the community, and with the help of the public education system and First Nations institutions. In order to achieve this, we will examine the state of Aboriginal languages in British Columbia, including factors which led to the current critical situation, and which are continuing to erode Aboriginal languages. We will then turn to the issue of the legal status of Aboriginal languages, and language planning. We will discuss what approaches, resources and efforts are necessary to revitalize the use of languages, and how they can be implemented with local level strategies.

In the second part of the book, we will turn to the role of language in the formal education system, and we will address the kinds of school programs for Aboriginal languages that exist and work, current provincial policies for second languages programs, and how language programs can be improved. Then we will turn to issues such as

curriculum development, Aboriginal language teacher education, and the certification of language teachers.

Acknowledgements

Although I wrote this booklet in a relatively short period during the Fall of 1997 at the request of the Aboriginal Language Subcommittee of the First Nations Education Steering Committee, it followed several years of experience at the personal, family, community and educational level in working to preserve Aboriginal languages. During this time, at many workshops and meetings, and in Aboriginal language teacher education classes I taught, I had much feedback from Aboriginal language teachers, elders, educators, parents, and others about the situation of Aboriginal languages in this province.

In particular I would like to thank Mandy Jimmie, Sharon Lindley, Joan Gentles, Chief Clarence Louie, Dorothy Hunt and the Executive members of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation, Mona Jules, Beverly Frank, Martina Pierre, Cecilia DeRose, Antoinette Archie, Deborah Page, and the Carrier language teachers and the staff of Chief Atahm school for important advice and ideas about reviving languages in First Nations communities. The members of the Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee of the First Nations Education Steering Committee, who commissioned this Handbook, also provided useful suggestions and additions, and

thanks to Christa Williams and Barbara Kavanagh of the Steering Committee. I also thank my husband, Chief Ron Ignace, for his help and support.

Last, but not least, I thank and dedicate this book to the many First Nations language teachers, speakers and elders who, usually in difficult circumstances, are struggling hard to maintain their Aboriginal languages. I hope that this book will help to clear the path for strengthening their languages in the future.

Yiri7 re skukwstsetselp !

Marianne Ignace
February 1998

II. The State of British Columbia Aboriginal Languages

Aboriginal British Columbia is renowned for its linguistic diversity. In Canada, there are between 50 and 73 Aboriginal languages representing eleven language families. The exact number varies because sometimes languages are listed separately, and sometimes they are listed as dialects of other languages. In British Columbia alone, there are between 27 and 34 Aboriginal languages, representing eight distinct language families or isolates (languages that are not known to be related to any other language). Table One contains a listing of these languages grouped according to families and the areas where they are spoken. We know that all of these languages, during the past century, have undergone tremendous and traumatic decline.

2.1 Historical Overview

During the second half of the nineteenth century, epidemics in Western North America and what was to become British Columbia decimated the Aboriginal population by 25% - 90%. Thousands of aboriginal people who knew and spoke their languages, their histories, and their cultures, died. These people were parents and grandparents, or they were children or youth who spoke their language and by dying young never had a chance to pass the language on to succeeding generations.

Since the late eighteenth century, a major assault on Aboriginal culture and languages has taken place through Canadian government legislation and policies. The Canadian government denied the rights and interests of the Aboriginal peoples of the country and put into place policies that aimed to assimilate Native peoples by oppressing their way of life and languages. Much of this began after the first federal *Indian Act* was passed in 1876. By 1884, the so-called anti-potlatch amendments to the *Indian Act* prohibited the Potlatch and similar ceremonies. Further amendments to the *Act* were made in 1918 under Indian Affairs Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott, who sponsored a crusade against Aboriginal ceremonies and institutions and gave Indian Agents the power to prosecute. The prohibition against ceremonies, dances, and in particular the potlatch, was in effect until 1951, when it was dropped from the revised *Indian Act*.

The potlatch, or giveaway, was a very important institution for Aboriginal cultures. Through the potlatch, knowledge about the culture, told in stories, histories, and songs, all told and sung in native languages, was performed and committed to memory. Prohibiting the potlatch and confiscating Native peoples' symbols of and monuments to history was like burning these peoples' history books. According to Kwakaw'ka'wakw Judge Alfred Scow (cited in Royal Commission on Aboriginal

Table One: Existing British Columbia Aboriginal Languages**1. Tlingit (isolate)****2. Haida (isolate)****3. Tsimshian**

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| a) Smalgyax (Coast Tsimshian) | b) Southern Tsimshian | c) Nisga.a |
| d) Gitxsan | | |

4. Wakashan

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| a) Kwakw'ala | b) Haisla | c) Heiltsuk |
| d) Oweekeno | e) Nuchaanulth | f) Dididaht |

5. Salish**Coast Salish:**

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| a) Halq'emeylem | b) Squamish | c) Cowichan |
| d) Comox | e) Songish | f) Semiahmoo |
| g) Sishiatl (Sechelt) | h) Nuxalk (Bella Coola) | |

Interior Salish:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| a) St'at'imc (Lillooet) | b) Secwepemc (Shuswap) | c) Nlakapmx (Thompson) |
| d) Nsilx (Okanagan) | | |

6. Athapaskan

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| a) Carrier (Dakelh) | b) Wet'suwet'en | c) Tsilhqot'in |
| d) Sekani | e) Dunne-za (Beaver) | f) Slavey |
| g) Kaska | h) Tahltan | |

7. Ktunaxa (Kutenai) (isolate)**8. Algonquian**

Cree

Peoples (RCAP), 1996, p. 341), outlawing the potlatch “prevented the passing down of our values, of oral histories, etc., all of which were in the Aboriginal language.”

The brunt of the assault on Aboriginal languages occurred through the joint efforts of the Church

and the State to “civilize” and assimilate Aboriginal peoples, and within the context of the Indian Residential School system. The initial period of missionaries’ efforts provided instruction in the new religion, be it Protestant or Catholic, for the most part in the native language. This changed, however, after the turn of the century. Then, under

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pressure from the quickly increasing settler society, the goal of assimilating Aboriginal peoples and, indeed, denying their interests, was more aggressively pursued. Residential Schools, which educated and socialized the young, were seen as a useful and crucial vehicle in assimilating native peoples. To enforce attendance at these schools, the government added sections to the *Indian Act* in the 1920s and 30s which made attendance compulsory, and imposed jail sentences and fines on parents who did not send their children.

The measures pursued through the *Indian Act* were a concerted attack on the transmission of Aboriginal values and the transmission of cultural patterning -- in particular language. Residential Schools took children out of the Aboriginal family and community, where children had been socialized into the cultural patterns of their peoples:

“It was through language that children received their cultural heritage from parents and community. It was the vital connection that civilizers knew had to be cut if progress was to be made... Aboriginal languages could not carry the burden of civilization ... without the English language, the Aboriginal person was seen as ‘permanently disabled.’ As long as he keeps his native tongue, so long will he remain a community apart.”

(RCAP, 1996, p. 341)

In the recollection of Aboriginal elders and adults throughout Canada, Residential Schools set to stamp out Aboriginal languages; children had their Aboriginal languages literally beaten out of them.

Many elders remember being strapped, put in solitary confinement, convicted to do physical labour, and being humiliated, chastised, and shamed by their teachers and principals for speaking their language in the School. Some went to Residential School for 10 years, being admitted at five or six years of age. Others attended for “only” five or six years. Anishinawbe (Ojibway) author Basil Johnston explains the assault on native children and their languages throughout the era of the Residential Schools:

A kick with a police riding boot administered by a 175-pound man upon the person of an eight-year-old boy for uttering the language of a savage left its pain for days and its bruise upon the spirit for life. A boy once kicked was not likely to risk a second or third. A slap in the face or a punch to the back of the head delivered even by a small man upon the person of a small boy left its sting and a humiliation not soon forgotten. And if a boot or a fist were not administered, then a lash or a yardstick was plied until the ‘Indian’ language was beaten out. To boot and fist and lash was added ridicule. Both speaker and his language were assailed. “What’s the use of that language? It isn’t polite to speak another language in the presence of other people. Learn English! That’s the only way you’re going to get ahead. How can you learn two languages at the same time? No wonder kids can’t learn anything else. It’s a primitive language; hasn’t the vocabulary to express abstract ideas, poor. Say ‘ugh’. Say something in your language! ... How can you get your tongue around those sounds?” On and on the comments were made, disparaging, until

in too many the language was shamed into silence and disuse.”

(Johnston, 1990)

While many of the people who attended Residential Schools after first learning their Aboriginal languages did not entirely lose their ability to speak the languages, the schools had major consequences for future generations and all efforts at revitalizing Aboriginal languages. Furthermore, many of those impacts continue today, and include:

- 1) As the first generation of Residential School students became parents, they raised their own children speaking English, hoping thus to spare them the trauma and humiliation they themselves had experienced in the Residential Schools. The Residential Schools thus broke the pattern of the **intergenerational transmission** of Aboriginal languages, which is of crucial importance to language survival, as we will explore further below.
- 2) Those generations of Aboriginal people who had learned or acquired their language as young children before being forced to attend Residential Schools have carried the burden of humiliation and shame for a lifetime. Many speak of still feeling shame when speaking their language; others never venture to try to relearn it. Therefore, for adults who are trying to relearn their language and/or gain the confidence to speak it, there is a tremendous amount of emotional and psychological trauma and baggage from which people have to heal and continue to overcome.

There is a correlation between what linguists know as “language acquisition phases” and the degree to which elders and adults retained their language after the Residential School experience. Those who were sent to school at a very young age (5-6 years old) had acquired their Aboriginal language to a lesser degree than those who had been sent at age 10-11, by which time a child’s language acquisition of grammar and the sound system is nearly complete.

What added to the eradication of Aboriginal languages in the Residential Schools was the influx of English into reserves after the early 1950s. Off-reserve employment, even if seasonal, meant that Aboriginal people started to have to learn English -- in many cases the men first. The influx of new technology, of farming machinery etc. into Aboriginal communities also had an influence; the Aboriginal languages had no terms for these items, and while in many instances people coined new terms for these things in their own language, in other instances they began using English language terms, thus compounding the effect of the Residential School system.

Although the Residential School era ended during the late 1960s with the Federal Government’s push for “integration” rather than “assimilation,” the era since the 1960s has meant continued attendance in an English-only school system for Aboriginal children, which is now the British Columbia public school system. Nowhere in British Columbia are Aboriginal children who attend public school

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schooled in their Aboriginal language as the major language of instruction. As we will see in Section VII, attempts to reverse this trend and implement schools which give instruction in Aboriginal languages face enormous obstacles.

To reiterate, the above factors disrupted, and in some cases destroyed, what we call the **intergenerational transmission** of Aboriginal languages. Until the era of Residential schools, all Aboriginal children from reserve communities acquired without effort their languages as children in their home communities, and these languages were used as the language of communication in the Aboriginal family and in the community. During the past few decades, however, English has more and more replaced the use of Aboriginal languages in Aboriginal communities, both in public and in the home. In most Aboriginal communities of British Columbia, the parent generation, in many cases by now the grandparent generation, uses and speaks English to communicate with the younger generation.

For the past twenty years, the overwhelming dominance of the English language not only in the non-native public, the education system, and the workplace, but also through the broadcasting media, has further influenced the fate of Aboriginal languages. Television, particularly access to satellite television in even remote reserve communities, has had a tremendous impact, especially on younger generations, who tend to watch television

for several hours a day, instead of interacting with elders as they did in past generations.

Few Aboriginal communities in British Columbia have any access to radio broadcasts in their language, let alone TV broadcasting. Few books, newspapers, videos, or multimedia computer materials written in Aboriginal languages exist, and where they exist, they have a hard time competing against the vast amounts of visually attractive and well-marketed materials available in English.

In addition, new housing standards in reserve communities, although they have bettered peoples' living conditions, have separated three-generation families who used to live under one roof. As a consequence, young children often do not live under one roof with their grandparents, as they did in the past, but live with their parents or one parent who for the most part speak(s) English with them.

The above factors mean that, although the Residential School system was replaced by public schooling three decades ago, the loss of Aboriginal languages has not been halted. Aboriginal children, for the most part, are still schooled in English. English is also the "power language" in most walks of life. Because their Aboriginal language was ostracized and devalued for generations, and because they have had to adapt to the use of English, many elders are in the habit of speaking English.

Younger people are growing up in a world where, generally, they can get by without their ancestral

language. For the most part, getting ahead in education and improving one's economic and social well being does not require knowing one's language. The fact that the young adult generation, and for many languages by now also the middle aged generation, does not speak the language and in many cases does not understand it, has created a painful communication gap between elders and the generations below.

Communities which still have monolingual speakers of the Aboriginal language (that is, people who only speak Indian and no English) see a need for translators and interpreters, in order to enable elders to speak in their language at public meetings, and for non-speakers to un-

derstand these speeches. Even where all members of the community understand English, translation services would allow for the possibility of meetings to be conducted in the Aboriginal language, which would help to preserve and publicly validate the language. For example, the Wet'suwet'en people stress that in some of their communities, meetings are mostly held in the Wet'suwet'en language, and translators are needed for those who do not speak the language.

For many elders and adults who have gotten out of the "rut" of speaking their language, and for whom using it requires conscious effort, it is seen as hardly compatible with today's fast pace. An Interior Salish language teacher for example, reported meeting a friend of hers, who she knew could speak her language. Trying to use and promote her language, the language teacher addressed her friend in the Salish language. The friend, however, looked at her watch and said (in English), "Sorry, I can't talk [our language] right now, gotta rush to an appointment!"

2.2 Numbers and Statistics

Unfortunately, alarming as they are, published figures on the extent of the decline of Aboriginal languages are less than accurate. They tend to overestimate the number of speakers and the extent to which Aboriginal languages are in use.

In 1990 and 1991, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) conducted a survey of First Nations lan-

guage conditions among reserve communities in Canada, published in the reports *Towards Linguistic Justice for First Nations* (1990) and *Towards Rebirth of First Nations Languages* (1992). With good reason, the AFN reports viewed Aboriginal

languages as a First Nations **community** resource, and thus stressed the role of First Nations communities (Bands) in revitalizing and maintaining Aboriginal languages. The survey also studied the situation of language maintenance or decline at the community rather than Aboriginal Nation or language group level.

At the time, the findings of the AFN survey alerted people to the critical state of First Nations

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languages. Among the 171 (of the total of approximately 600) First Nations communities which participated in the survey, the following scenario emerged (AFN, 1992, p. 8):

- **12% or 21 First Nations have flourishing languages** (over 80% of all age groups are fluent in the First Nations language, and many are able to read and write the language). No First Nations in this category were from British Columbia;
- **18% or 31 First Nations have enduring languages** (over sixty percent of almost all age groups are fluent in the language). Two First Nations in this category were from British Columbia;
- **28% or 48 First Nations have declining languages** (at least fifty percent of the adult population and a lesser percentage of young people are speakers of their language). Ten First Nations in this category were from British Columbia;
- **30% or 52 First Nations have endangered languages** (less than 50% of the adult population speak the language and there are few if any young speakers, or, although over 80% of the older population speak the language there are no identified speakers under 45 years old). Twenty First Nations in this category were from British Columbia; and
- **11% or 19 First Nations have critical languages** (there are less than 10 speakers, or there are no known speakers living in the community). Five First Nations in this category were from British Columbia.

The 1990 and 1992 AFN Reports also found an important relationship between whether a language

was flourishing, declining, or endangered, and the amount of use it had in public in the community. Languages which were/are used in a wide variety and number of occasions, such as at community meetings, at the band office, in schools, and at social events, tended to be flourishing and enduring. Languages which were rarely used in public were declining, endangered or critical.

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996, pp. 604-608) also compiled figures about the state of Aboriginal languages in Canada. These figures were based on the 1991 Canada census, which asked whether a person had an Aboriginal language as his/her mother tongue, and whether an Aboriginal mother tongue was used in the home. The RCAP report tabulated these data according to language families. For language families represented in British Columbia, the tabulations are shown in Table 2.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) report also notes:

Only a small number of Aboriginal people speak Aboriginal languages. While more than a million people claimed Aboriginal ancestry in the 1991 census, only 190,165 said an Aboriginal language was their mother tongue, and 138,105 reported using their Aboriginal mother tongue in the home ... The relationship between mother tongue and actual language use is an important indicator of language vitality. A discrepancy between the two indicates a language shift, since a language that is no longer spoken at home

cannot be handed down to the younger generation” (pp. 605-606).

The RCAP report further notes that 92.5% of all individuals who reported having an Aboriginal mother tongue originated from three linguistic groups, namely Algonquian (especially Cree and Ojibwa/Saulteaux), Inuktitut and Athapaskan.

Closer inspection of the state of languages in specific First Nations communities and among particular languages shows that the situation is far worse than the above surveys suggest.

In the summer of 1995, a committee of seven elders/language resource people and myself as

facilitator carried out research on the state of the Secwepemc language in seven southern Shuswap communities in order to find out if and how the local school district should improve its efforts at delivering Shuswap language programs. Shuswap or Secwepemtsin is one of the languages of the Interior Salish family in the Interior of British Columbia. The Shuswap Nation comprises 17 communities in total.

Trying to determine to what extent the people in these seven southern Shuswap communities actually knew and used Secwepemtsin, our team held hearings with elders, speakers, educators, parents, chiefs, councillors and others in each of the

Table 2: State of Aboriginal Languages in British Columbia

Language Family	Mother Tongue (No. of Speakers)	Home Language (No. of Speakers)	Ratio: Home Lang. to Mother Tongue (%)
Algonquian	131,330	96,230	73
Athapaskan	19,140	13,750	72
Haida	165	45	27
Kutenai	175	40	23
Salish	2,835	835	30
Tlingit	105	10	10
Tsimshian	395	65	17
Wakashan	3,445	1090	32

From: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996, p. 606

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communities, whose band population ranged between 80 and 800. We had different elders use consensus to tally the number of speakers in their community. These tallies were remarkably consistent among elders and from community to community. We identified fluent speakers of the language as people who could carry on and understand a conversation in Secwepemctsin for as long as the situation required, with vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation that was acceptable to the audience and the elders. We also identified a second category of fluent “understanders,” that is, people who could follow the details of a conversation, but who could not speak the language save for a small number of words or phrases. A third category included individuals who understood the gist or fragments of spoken Shuswap, but who could only say a few words. The fourth category included individuals who basically had no knowledge of the language, save for a few words.

The results of this survey were sobering. The Secwepemc language is in a much worse state than the AFN survey and the RCAP survey had suggested. According to the Secwepemc communities that participated in the AFN survey, their language was declining. As Table 2 shows, the RCAP report lists Salish languages as having 30% mother tongue retention. However, closer inspection and our elders’ own assessment showed that Shuswap is not merely a declining language, but is an endangered language. In some communities it is even in a critical state, and in one community it is extinct, with no fluent speakers remaining. On average,

we found that only 3.5% of people in the communities we surveyed are fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin. Moreover, our committee found that:

- virtually all fluent speakers are in their fifties or older;
- even those who can speak the language often do not use it in the home, especially with younger generations;
- almost no children are being raised speaking the language in the home; and
- to date (with the exception of an immersion program which was started in one community a few years ago), school programs have not produced proficiency or fluency in the language, and have not resulted in the use of the language, except for a few words, among younger generations (Ignace, 1995).

In 1996 and 1997, elders/speakers from other Secwepemc communities were asked to total the number of fluent speakers in their communities, with very similar results. The situation in most other Interior Salish First Nations communities appears to be as critical. It also appears to be even worse in the case of some other language families on the Coast and in the Interior, where numerous languages have less than a dozen speakers left.

Among the Aboriginal languages of British Columbia, the Carrier and Tsilhqot’in languages have been rated as in a relatively healthy state, with participating speech communities listed as “enduring” in the 1990 and 1992 AFN surveys. A recent workshop at the Yinka Dene Language Institute (YDLI),

however, showed that in Carrier communities, young adults of the parent generation by and large do not or cannot speak Dakelh, the Carrier language, and thus very few children are still growing up learning the language. In Carrier communities, the generation of fluent speakers is forty years and older -- in some communities even sixty years and older (YDLI, 1998).

Likewise, the Tsilhqot'in language is declining. In a paper titled *Language Loss Among the Chilcotin*, based on research done during the late 1980s, linguist Clifton Pye (1992) observes that:

The economic and social changes of the last two decades have tipped the scales against the maintenance of the Chilcotin [Tsilhqot'in] language. Surprisingly, this fact is not apparent to most Chilcotins today. Almost everyone I talked to felt that Chilcotin was still a viable language, especially in relation to the surrounding Salish languages. Indeed, a sizeable percentage of children over ten *do* speak Chilcotin. I discovered, however, that children under ten speak only English. This seems to be the result of a curious situation of language usage; most Chilcotin parents, though fluent in Chilcotin, use English when speaking to children. This was dramatically brought to my attention on one of my trips to the reserves. I was attempting to tape-record a three-year-old girl in order to find out how much Chilcotin she knew. Her mother helped me by telling her, "Say *naslhiny*. Can you say "naslhiny,"" using English to coax her daughter into producing the Chilcotin word for *horse*. This was interrupted when the grandmother

came to the back door to find out what I was doing there. The mother and grandmother entered into a long conversation in Chilcotin. Yet, when the mother returned to her daughter, she continued the conversation in English. For reasons I have yet to understand fully, Chilcotin parents seem to have come to view their own children as native speakers of English who must be 'taught' Chilcotin. Their children learn a few Chilcotin words (numbers, colors, and a few basic nouns) for imitation. Furthermore, many parents feel the children's mispronunciations of the first Chilcotin words they attempt is evidence that they cannot learn Chilcotin. Mispronunciation of English words is ignored. Chilcotin-speaking parents even address their babies in English, long before the babies have produced any intelligible vocalizations [what we would commonly refer to as 'baby-talk'].

This loss of the Tsilhqot'in language has carried on during the 1990s. Although still much in use among the adult generation, Tsilhqot'in is continuing to be used less in the home by children and young parents. However, in recent years, Tsilhqot'in communities have taken first steps to revive their language. Realizing its loss is an important first step, and immersion programs are now being planned and established (Gentles, 1995).

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What is Fluency?

We often speak of, or compare, “fluent speakers” of a language in gauging how many human resources we have available in the community as we try to revive the language, or in assessing how many people actually use the language. However, in carrying out community surveys of fluency, it is important to understand that an elder who was raised speaking the language may have a different sense of who is fluent than will a young person who does not know it. Therefore, depending on who is asked how many people in the community are fluent, and what the definition of “fluency” is, a survey might arrive at different or inaccurate numbers. This likely happened with the AFN surveys, which were usually filled out at band offices, often by home-school coordinators delegated to complete this task, who, especially in B.C., in many cases did not speak their Aboriginal language.

Example

In 1991, three members of the Skeetchestn First Nations community, driving home from a language conference, estimated the numbers of “fluent speakers” at home, a reserve with a population of approximately 220 people on and 190 people off reserve. Person A, then in his 40s, who was raised speaking the local Aboriginal language and uses it in the household as well as on public occasions, interpreted the question as “everyone more fluent than me and who is an elder,” and named about six individuals. Person B, a younger person who was just beginning to learn the language in an adult education course, interpreted the question as “everyone more fluent than me,” and named about 30 individuals of the elderly and middle generation. Person C named about 15 people, and included for the most part elders whom she had heard using the language in conversation in public or in the home. An assessment of fluent speakers by elders in the community in 1995 yielded a number of about 15, three of whom have since passed away, and an equal number of individuals who understand the language, can pronounce it well, but save for a few words do not actively speak it.

Fluency Can Be Learned

Interviews and conversations with many Aboriginal language teachers and elders throughout British Columbia have shown that many of those people who now speak the language and teach it had lost their command over the language for decades, usually as a result of the trauma of the

Residential Schools discussed above. Many of these people re-learned the language, often through many years of hard work. Some individuals relearned the language as young adults after coming home from Residential School by again living with, and having to interact with, speakers of the language (e.g. a mother-in-law, a grandparent).

Some people have improved their speaking of an Aboriginal language because of its important function in ceremony. In many cases, individuals had to begin using their Aboriginal language because they inherited a social position. Thus, many individuals who inherited chiefship over a clan or community, as is the case in Aboriginal cultures of the Coast, found themselves in a position where they had to speak their language in public and improve their knowledge of it in order to be acknowledged in their new role.

Such examples show that Aboriginal languages can be learned, and the individuals (many of them now elders) who learned or relearned their languages based on their calling and circumstances can be excellent role models for younger generations.

In some cases, First Nations individuals have learned their parents' or grandparents' language nearly from "scratch" with the help of courses and by having elders as mentors with whom they practised. While such examples are still rare, we will return to possibilities for becoming fluent in a language below when we discuss adult language programs.

On the down side, it is also important to recognize that "younger elders" who are replacing their own parents and grandparents as fluent speakers are in many cases less fluent than their parents and grandparents, since they were raised less in the Aboriginal language and more in English.

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Several of the Aboriginal languages of Canada, including some British Columbia languages, have only a handful or even a single remaining elderly speaker left. Bill Wilson, former Vice-Chief for British Columbia of the Assembly of First Nations, noted in 1986 that only a single speaker was left of the Comox language: “She can speak it but no one is going to understand her” (cited in Canada, 1990, p. 24). Other languages of Coastal and Northern British Columbia are in almost as critical a state:

Southern Tsimshian has almost no fluent speakers left; Squamish, Sechelt and Straits Salish have less than thirty; and Heiltsuk has six speakers remaining.

In a news story about Angela Sidney (now deceased), aged 87 in 1989 and the last speaker of the Tagish language in the Yukon, journalist Ken

McQueen (cited in Canada, 1990, p. 39) noted that “Ms. Sidney has been interviewed by anthropologists and linguists over many years, has played a role in promoting native literacy for her work, has been awarded the order of Canada.” But by the late 1980s, in McQueen’s words, Tagish was a language waiting to die: “It is frozen on video and audio tape. Linguists have inadequately converted its skeleton into the roman alphabet. And some of its stories are translated into English. But

Tagish truly lives in just one place: in the mind of a woman with no one to talk it to.” Mrs. Sidney died in 1993 .

2.3 The Legal Situation

Except in the Northwest Territories, where Inuktitut (the Inuit language) and the Dene or Athapaskan languages have had status as official languages since

1990, Aboriginal languages do not have federal, provincial or territorial recognition as official languages in Canada.

Since the 1970s, Canada has maintained a policy of official bilingualism and multiculturalism. Despite the presence of a multitude of Aboriginal nations with distinct lan-

guages which existed for thousands of years before the arrival of the French and English peoples, Canada recognizes English and French as the “founding cultures,” and thereby grants official status to these two languages only.

Besides the two official languages, Canadian legislation recognizes *minority language rights*. These rights, however, refer to the rights to schooling and services of French-speaking minorities in

As depressing as it perhaps is, a useful step for First Nations communities planning to implement language programs aimed at revitalizing their languages is to realistically assess the number of fluent speakers who exist, their age groups, and whether any young adults of the present parent generation speak and use the language. Finding this out will help a community determine the work that lies ahead and the kind of language revitalization program that is needed. It will also determine the human resources which are absolutely necessary for taking steps to revitalize one’s language.

English speaking areas, and the rights of English-speaking minorities in French-speaking areas and provinces.

Under its multicultural policies, Canadian legislation gives certain incentives to the maintenance of *heritage languages*, which are the languages of immigrant populations (eg. German, Chinese, Japanese, Punjabi, Italian, etc.).

Although the 1969 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism noted that “everything must be done to help the Native populations preserve their cultural heritage,” and although many provincial and federal policies note that Aboriginal languages *should* be supported, Aboriginal languages have no legal or recognized position in Canada’s bilingualism and multiculturalism policy, and are not specifically mentioned in the 1982 *Canadian Constitution* or *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Various pieces of existing legislation, however, can be interpreted as including Aboriginal language rights.

- *The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*, Section 35.1 states that “the existing rights of Aboriginal Peoples are hereby recognized and confirmed.” While the interpretation of this section is still being debated by the Canadian public and politicians on the one hand, and Aboriginal peoples on the other, the Supreme Court of Canada, for example in the Sparrow case (*Sparrow vs. Regina. 1990*), has argued for a liberal and broad interpretation of what is included in “existing rights.” Aboriginal peoples have maintained that Aboriginal rights include the right to learn, use and have services provided in one’s Aboriginal language.
- based on several Supreme Court decisions, First Nations have also argued that the federal Crown, represented by the Minister of Indian Affairs, has a *fiduciary obligation* to protect the rights and interests of First Nations peoples, and hence their languages.
- Section 15 (1) of the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights* guarantees equality before the law, with equal protection and benefit of the law for all Canadians, “without discrimination, and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental and physical capacity.” While rights for languages other than French and English are considered to be included, no specific mention is made of them, although Section 27 of the Charter states that it “shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.” Aboriginal people have argued that equality means the protection of and access to services in their own languages, equal to that provided for English and French language services.
- The 1976 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* 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 the other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.”
- The 1994 United Nations Resolution regarding the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states that “indigenous peoples have

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the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit, to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing system and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.”

Some precedent legislation also exists in Canada which gives a certain measure of protection to Aboriginal languages.

The 1990 *Northwest Territories (NWT) Official Languages Act* declared the six Dene languages of the Territories and Inuktituk to be official languages of the NWT, along with French and English. Aboriginal peoples of the territories thus can access services (e.g. broadcasting and other media services, translation of documents, court services, public schooling etc.) in their native language. As recent studies have shown, however, legal recognition as an official language alone has *not* stemmed the tide of language decline for these languages in recent years.

There is also a lesson which can be learned from the implementation of the *NWT Official Languages Act*. Vast amounts of funds were spent on the translation of policies, legislation and other documents into the Aboriginal languages. By contrast, very little was spent on community-oriented efforts at revitalizing and maintaining the use of the languages.

Since the mid-1970s, the James Bay Cree and Inuit, through the James Bay and Northern Que-

bec Agreements, have held special language education rights which are implemented by locally controlled school boards. The James Bay Inuit immediately implemented exclusive Inuktituk instruction at the primary school level. The James Bay Cree, after initial failed attempts to improve literacy rates and education through English instruction, implemented Cree as the primary language of instruction for elementary grades and, to a certain extent, at the secondary level. It appears that for the James Bay Cree or Innu, autonomy in education has worked in maintaining their language among the younger generation with the help of K-12 schooling. Outside of schooling, the Cree language continues to be spoken in the home and community (Coon Come, 1997).

In Quebec, Aboriginal languages are exempt from the implementation of Bill 101, the *French Language Charter*, which severely restricts education and services in languages other than French. It should be noted that before Aboriginal languages were exempted from Bill 101, Aboriginal people in Quebec, such as the Kahnawake Mohawk, began to revive their language in opposition to having the French language imposed on them through legislation. Thus, Bill 101 actually was a catalyst for the establishment of Mohawk immersion programs and other community efforts to revive and preserve the Mohawk language.

In at least a small effort to fund Aboriginal language programs, in 1990 the province of British Columbia legislated Bill 23, *The First People's Herit-*

age, Language and Culture Act, “based on the principle that Native People themselves should take the leadership role in preserving their culture and languages but that other sectors of society have responsibility to share in the costs of a cultural initiative that will benefit all British Columbians” (Hon. J. Weisgerber cited in British Columbia, 1990). As of the Fall of 1997, however, despite the legislation, the British Columbia government has not provided secure funding for the Foundation it created to implement Bill 23.

Internationally, indigenous languages have legal status in numerous Nation States. Some examples of this include:

- Gaelic (Gaeltacht), the Irish language, has had official language status in the Republic of Ireland since its independence from Britain in 1919;
- a 1975 decree made Quechua an official language of Peru, on par with Spanish;
- Guatemala’s 1985 Constitution recognizes Mayan languages as part of the cultural heritage of the nation and mandates bilingual education in Indian areas of the country;
- the 1987 *Maori Language Bill* declared Maori the official language of New Zealand, affirmed the right to speak Maori in certain legal proceedings, and established the Maori Language Commission, which acts as an advisor to the government on policies and programs that will effect the official language status of Maori, and grants certificates in Maori fluency;
- the 1990 *Native American Languages Act* encourages and supports the use of Native American languages in the school system, and

gives recognition and accreditation to Native American languages on par with foreign languages. It also states that no restrictions can be placed on the use of Native American languages in public forums. A 1992 Bill enacts funding policies and procedures according to the aims of the Bill. The verdict is still out on the effect of this Bill; and

- recently, the Republic of Yakutsk (Russia) designated Sahka, the indigenous language of the Yakut, as an official language of the republic, and guarantees protection of four other indigenous languages.

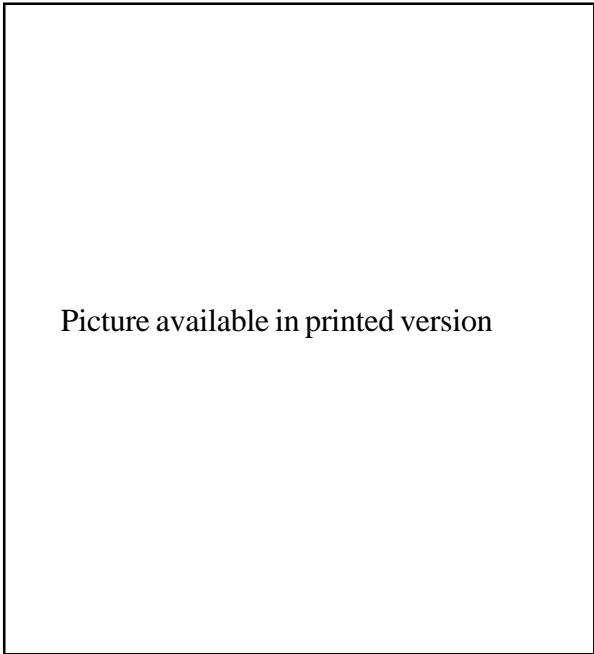
On the whole, however, Canada has done very little to recognize and preserve the Aboriginal languages of the country. Between 1986 and 1991, several bills and policies were proposed to legally recognize and fund Aboriginal languages. The most important of these was Bill C-269, *An Act to Establish an Aboriginal Languages Foundation*, introduced in 1989 by Northwest Territories Aboriginal Member of Parliament Ethel Blondin. To date, however, the Federal Government has not passed any legislation to protect Aboriginal languages.

During the last few years, the Canadian government’s agenda has been steered by Quebec separation, and by what are perceived as other issues of national and regional interests, such as the economy. With Aboriginal peoples and their languages a small minority in the country, federal and provincial governments have been hard-pressed to take political or legal action on Aboriginal language issues. In the public’s and politicians’ opin-

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ion, the state of Aboriginal languages is not seen to effect the general public in the same way as, for example, Aboriginal land title questions or Aboriginal rights issues; those issues challenge the Crown's assertion of ownership of resources, and thus impact on the economy and investment. Therefore, Aboriginal language revitalization has *not* been a priority for the Canadian federal government.

Along with the lack of legal recognition, there has been a lack of funding for Aboriginal language programming and development. The last decade of public spending on Canadian official languages versus Aboriginal languages sadly illustrates this trend. The estimate for 1996/97 spending on official languages amounted to \$10,509,000; by comparison, over a nine year time span between 1986 and 1995, the federal government spent a total of \$925,000 on Aboriginal languages.



Picture available in printed version

In June 1997, a proposal was tabled by the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres (FNCCEC) to enact Protective Legislation for Aboriginal Languages in Canada, proposing to introduce it as legislation by “the appropriate Minister of the Crown.” FNCCEC has 15 member organizations in BC.

Another recent initiative through the British Columbia First Peoples' Cultural Foundation calls for legal protection of BC languages, and a multifaceted strategy for resourcing Aboriginal language revival. This initiative was tabled through the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). At the time of this writing, the AFN is reviving its efforts to develop federal policy and secure funding for Aboriginal languages. In February 1998, it created a National Chiefs' Committee on Aboriginal Languages, along with a technical working team. This will hopefully mark the beginning of renewed Aboriginal language activity through the AFN.

Elder Ralph Williams of the Nlaka'pamux Nation, with his grandson, Benjamin, believes that “it is my responsibility to teach Benjamin our language on the land, beyond the classroom walls.”

***An Important Consideration:
Can Endangered Languages Be Saved Through Legislation?***

While recognition as an official language is an important step in recognizing the current and historical role of a language in the fabric of a nation-state, and helps to provide funds for offering services in the language, in itself it does not guarantee its maintenance. Some examples of this include the following.

- ***The Canadian Minority Languages Bill.*** *The 1991 Canada census returns show that the use of the French language among French minorities outside of Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick, which have high concentrations of speakers, has been steadily declining.*
- ***The Gaelic language in Ireland.*** *Despite the fact that Gaelic has been recognized as an official language since the 1919 establishment of the Republic of Ireland, Gaelic has almost given way to English. Fennel blames this on the Irish government failing to consult with Irish people and Gaelic speakers at the local level when it tried to take measures to revitalize the language; “instead, ... it tried through its various agencies to do the job on their behalf, and without any commitment or activity on their part to end the linguistic erosion. A clear absurdity, when one looks at it” (Fennel 1980, p. 36-37).*
- ***The NWT Official Languages Bill*** *(as I mentioned above) has not halted the decline of Aboriginal languages in the Territories to date. As Freda Ahenakew found: “While the Act has had many positive effects in the NWT, it has not, on its own, been able to reverse the language shift” (Ahenakew et al. 1994).*

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III. Why Preserve and Revitalize Aboriginal Languages?

... Even this vastly reduced reservoir of linguistic diversity [among North American Native languages] constitutes one of the great treasures of humanity, an enormous store-house of expressive power and profound understandings of the universe. The loss of the hundreds of languages that have already passed into history is an intellectual catastrophe in every way comparable in magnitude to the ecological catastrophe we face today as the earth's tropical forests are swept by fire. Each language still spoken is fundamental to the personal, social and - a key term in the discourse of indigenous peoples - spiritual identity of its speakers. They know that without these languages they would be less than they are, and they are engaged in the most urgent struggles to protect their linguistic heritage.

(Zepeda and Hill, 1991)

Canadian Aboriginal peoples see their ancestral languages as a right protected in the Constitution, in Treaties (where they exist), and in international law. The Canadian courts have also found that the federal government has a fiduciary obligation to protect these rights.

The fact that Aboriginal languages of Canada are a unique part of Canadian heritage, and are not spoken anywhere else in the world, is often mentioned as something that makes the languages worthy of protection and revitalization. However, as we have seen, to date this has led to few concrete measures to revitalize them by the Canadian state on the one hand, or by First Nations communities themselves on the other.

Aboriginal elders who speak their languages, but also younger people who mourn their loss, point

to the connection of Aboriginal languages with culture, and with one's roots and identity. The late Secwepemc elder Nellie Taylor noted that "without your language you're nothing, you are like a white person, lost and without a home."

Likewise, the chief of an Interior First Nations community remarked that "Thirty years from now I do not want my children to know by their status card only that they are Indian. Knowing their language is what will give them an identity" (Ignace, 1995). A 1991 Report titled *First Nations Aboriginal Languages Policy and Program Considerations* noted that "to speak your Aboriginal language means more than just speaking. Our languages are tied to knowing who you are in the core of your soul" (First Nations Congress, 1991).

In 1992, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) summarized the importance of Aboriginal languages as follows:

The Aboriginal Languages were given by the Creator as an integral part of life. Embodied in Aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and the fundamental notion of what is truth. Aboriginal language is an asset to one's own education, formal and informal. Aboriginal language contributes to greater pride in the history and culture of the community; greater involvement and interest of parents in the education of their children, and greater respect for Elders. Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.

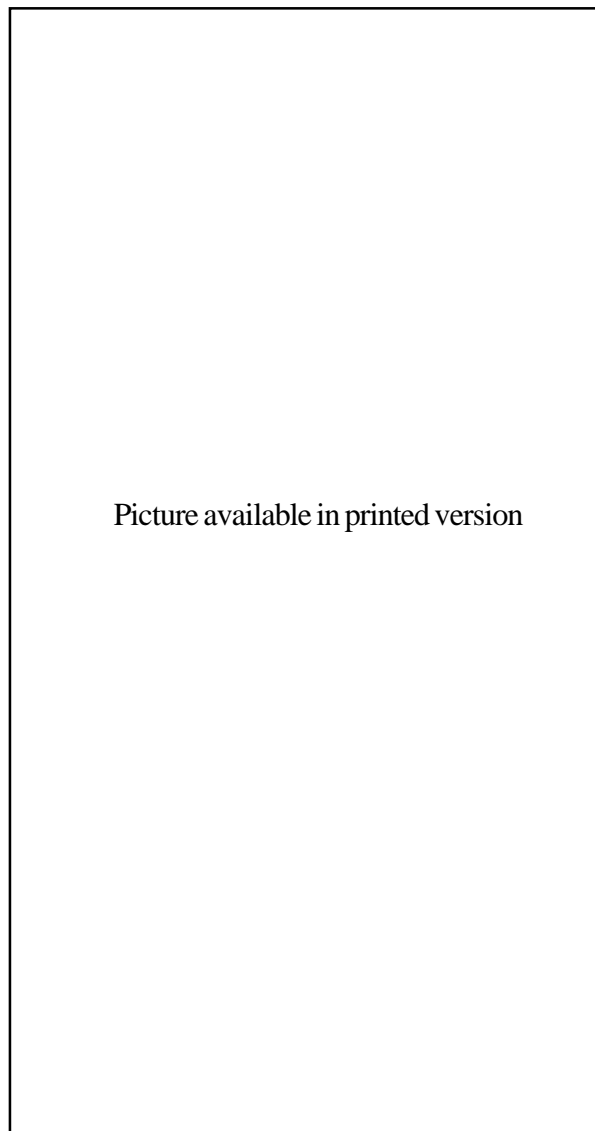
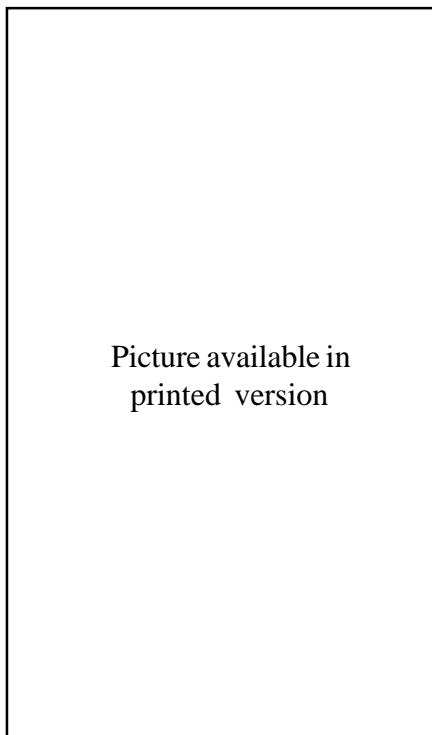
Such statements are not mere philosophical statements but have practical implications: indigenous peoples world wide, as well as language planners who have examined minority and indigenous languages, have realized that "the destruction of language mirrors dislocation and destruction of family and community by a modern technological society. Reversing language shift therefore is potentially a contribution to the solution of problems that are greater than the one that is first on its own agenda" (AFN, 1992, p.14). As to the positive effect of Aboriginal languages on social and personal well-being, the following points have been noted:

- The ability to speak one's language has a positive impact on personal and collective self-esteem, identity and sense of cultural and personal belonging. This further means that effective language mobilization programs at the community level must tie a language revival program to the wider process of strengthening the community. They must be linked to the improvement or restoration of spiritual, mental, physical and emotional wholeness of the community and its members. Accepting and understanding the connection between language and cultural well-being is a first major step towards revitalizing a language. *It remains up to First Nations communities and peoples, however, to translate these concepts into practical ways in which knowing and communicating in one's ancestral language will contribute to healing from the traumas of the past and restoring wholeness to communities and their members.*
- The Mission Statement of the BC Public School System states that "The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy." With respect to the education of First Nations people, this mission statement in turn is constitutionally mandated by the Canadian federal government. In the context of what is noted above, Aboriginal people in British Columbia will best be able to develop their individual potential and contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable national economy if they are able to retain and revitalize their aboriginal languages which connect them to their roots and identity.

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3.1 The Benefits of Learning and Knowing an Aboriginal Language

For many years, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents and educators were told that education in an Aboriginal language -- whether through immersion or bilingual education -- would be detrimental to children's social and intellectual development, and that it would "hold them back." The consequence was that Aboriginal parents were told to "teach them English first to get them off to a good start." As linguists and specialists in bilingual or multilingual education now know, the opposite is the case. Learning an Aboriginal language from an early age -- whether in the home, in school, or, ideally, in both settings -- enhances the social, emo-



Elder Mary John, OAC, Saik'uz Nation: "I have tried very many ways over the years to teach our language to our people and more and more I have come to realize that we need to start with the little ones." It is at this age that Mary feels we need to start.

tional and intellectual development and academic achievement of children. Bilingual education specialist Jim Cummins expresses this connection in the following points:

1. “The development of additive bilingual and biliteracy skills [i.e. the extensive use of two written languages in education] entails no negative consequences for children’s academic, linguistic or intellectual development. On the contrary, although not conclusive, the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic, academic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children;” and
2. “Spending institutional time through the minority [i.e. Aboriginal] language will not result in lower levels of academic performance in the majority language [i.e. English], provided of course the instructional program is effective in developing academic skills in the minority language.” (Cummins 1989)

What this means is that if a child learns both his/her First Nations language and English in school, he/she will not be left behind. Indeed, it turns out that learning to speak and understand, as well as read and write a First Nations language provides benefits, and students who do this will not be held back in their overall performance. Learning their language enhances First Nations children’s skills.

First Nations’ experiences with Aboriginal language immersion programs and bilingual programs have shown this to be true. The skill levels of Kahnawake Mohawk children in their Mohawk immersion program show that the English skills of Mohawk immersion students do not suffer in the long run.

It must be pointed out, however, that the degree of success in improving a child’s intellectual and social skills depends on the quality of the curriculum and the instruction of the Aboriginal language program. We will return to this point below, in Section VIII.

3.2 Countering Questions About “Feasibility” or “Practicality”

It is often noted by the general public, or by those in positions to make decisions over financial resources, that the preservation and promotion of multiple minority languages in a country, a province or a region is not feasible or practicable. However, it is important to point out that two-thirds of all countries on earth have more than six languages. There are between five and eight thousand languages in the world, and the great majority of these are spoken by very small populations (Coulmas, 1984, pp. 8-10). With its approximately 50 Aboriginal languages, two official national languages, and about 60 non-Aboriginal heritage languages, Canada falls within the 18% of nations that have more than 50 living languages.

It needs to be stressed again, however, that legal recognition by the non-Aboriginal world alone will not be enough -- especially for languages which are spoken only by a handful of elderly people and which are not currently being passed on to the younger generations in the home. In countries which have been successful in maintaining linguistic diversity, an important prerequisite was no obsta-

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cles to the passing on of the language from generation to generation, or to its use in the home, neighbourhood and community.

But if everyone recognizes the importance of maintaining Aboriginal Languages, why are they still eroding?

As the quotes cited above show, and as many Aboriginal elders, educators and younger people have stated publicly many times, they value their language. Few people oppose the idea that Aborigi-

nal languages are worth preserving. Many have pointed out that the languages express and reflect Aboriginal culture in ways English simply cannot, and express cultural knowledge, world views, humour and spiritual connections. Yet, despite people professing to consider their language as important, the languages continue to decline. Why is that?

Research has shown that it is useful to distinguish between the *communicative* and *symbolic* functions of language. The communicative function of language relates to the fact that it is a tool of com-



Picture available in printed version

Elder and Language Teacher Instructor, Catherine Bird, Nakazdli Nation (far right) with graduates of Carrier language teachers program: "It is important for the people to know their mother tongue. This is how our elders talked to the people and passed down our history, beliefs and stories. When we started to lose our language the older generation could not communicate with the younger generation in our language and the meaning was lost when they tried to communicate in English."

munication. People use a language for practical purposes to speak to each other, to ask for and give information, to express feelings, wants and dislikes, to express themselves in everyday life and in ceremony, at home, in public, and in all other walks of life.

But language also has a symbolic function; it is an emblem of ethnic group membership. Aboriginal groups refer to their ancestral language as something that distinguishes them from non-Aboriginal people and that makes them unique as particular First Nations or peoples. Edwards (1985) pointed out that in minority ethnic groups, the loss of the language as an actual tool of communication can be severely eroded or lost, while its symbolic function is still intact. That symbolic function derives from the real, communicative function of the language in the past.

Due to outside influences, the communicative function of many languages has eroded, however, and among many or most members of the group has been replaced by English. Distinguishing the practical communicative from the symbolic dimension of a language explains how attitudes towards a language can operate at a different level than the actual use of the language. Oudin and Drapeau found that a majority of members of a Montagnais (Innu) community in Labrador *view* their language as very important, although the language is only sparsely used in the community (Oudin and Drapeau 1993; Drapeau 1995). The important lesson to be learned from this is that *attitudes operate at a different level than actual use of a language, and positive attitude alone does not translate into speaking the language.*

First Nations who try to revitalize their language in their communities might discuss these points and raise awareness that valuing the language (in a symbolic sense, as a marker of identity) does not automatically translate into enhancing the use of the language. It is crucial that community members recognize the importance of the practical, communicative function of the spoken language in both everyday life and in ceremony in order to increase its use.

IV. Language Planning and Language Revitalization: What Works?

A shrinking language minority cannot be saved by the actions of well-wishers who do not belong to the minority in question. In particular, its shrinking cannot be halted by the action, however benevolent and intelligent, of a modern centralised state. It can be saved only by itself: and then only if its members acquire the will to stop it shrinking, acquire the institutions and financial means to take appropriate measures, and take them.

(Fennel 1980, p.39)

The above quote is taken from a book about the depressing failure of the Republic of Ireland's attempts to revive the Gaelic language. Although it is a language in a different cultural and historical tradition than North American Aboriginal languages, Fennel's statement gives us a lesson. Language revival will not take place through the intervention of the State on behalf of Aboriginal peoples, as much as state resources are needed to reverse language shift.

The best guarantee of success for language revival is the will and stamina of community members at the local level to increase the use of their language. Of help in this process are practical and appropriate tools and strategies, which we will discuss below. The failure of language revival prescribed mainly by state control and state legislation also provides a lesson for Aboriginal nations; resolutions and declarations by Aboriginal Nation governments and First Nation governments will be useless if they only give "official language status" to the Aboriginal language or give "utmost importance" to its maintenance. Declarations must be

followed up and supported by ongoing, practical measures. In order to plan and implement the revival of languages, we can turn to some tools and concepts from *language planning*.

4.1 What is Language Planning?

Language planning refers to the development of goals, objectives and strategies to change the way a language is used in a community. It involves some intervention or "social engineering" of language use. Language planning involves two components:

- a) **Status Planning:** improving the role the language plays in the Nation or community. Official language status within a country or province is one goal of language status planning. Other, and perhaps more effective and enforceable goals, could be: (i) giving the language official status within an Aboriginal Nation or First Nations community, along with planning measures to enforce that status; (ii) giving an Aboriginal language valid and priority status as a language to be taught within the public school system, or within a Band Operated school. Improving the status of a language, of course, must go hand in hand with devising practical ways in which this can be implemented; and

b) **Corpus planning** refers to the planned change in the nature of the language itself. It can involve the creation of new vocabularies and their standardization. It usually also involves the creation and then standardization of a writing system for the language.

For any endangered language it is important that both of these components are carried out.

People who have studied the contact of languages, and the phenomena of language shift and language death, have come to paint a bleak picture of the chances of survival of minority languages in the contemporary world. However, we can learn from past mistakes and misguided language planning efforts and strategies.

A shortcoming of many language revitalization efforts of the past was that they, for the most part, tried to increase the number of *second language speakers*; instead of focusing on reviving the use of a language among the members of a language community, they focused on having it taught in schools, which in itself did very little to reactivate its use in the community.

In order to avert language death and language shift, internationally renowned language planner Joshua Fishman proposes eight stages in Language Planning which, if carried out successfully, can bring the use of a language back. We can adapt these eight stages to the situation and revival of Aboriginal languages in British Columbia. They will be useful tools for First Nations communities, to help them to assess which efforts need to take place, and where a community is at in the process of language revitalization.

The most common language revitalization strategy is to increase the number of second language speakers of the Aboriginal language, usually through immersion, or other less intensive methods. These artificial means will not, however, make the language viable; they are at best a form of palliative care analogous to a linguistic life-support system. In order to revitalize a language, it is necessary to restore natural self-reproductive ability and reverse the trend towards language shift. Reversal of shift goes beyond increasing the number of second language speakers of the Aboriginal language. It involves increasing the number of people who speak that particular language as a first language. Language revival implies bringing back a once-extinct language as the medium of communication in a given community.

(Drapeau, 1995).

Stage 8 involves the *reconstruction* of the language. Especially for languages that are not well documented, this means the recording and compiling of as much knowledge of the language from elders/fluent

speakers as is possible, before it becomes impossible to collect such information. Reconstruction can involve the recording and compiling of vocabulary and expressions in dictionaries. It includes the recording, analysis and presenting of stories and legends, of life histories, of songs, proverbs, and all other kinds of knowledge of the language in taped

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and written form. It must also involve the documentation of the sound system (phonology) and grammar of the language.

Documenting and reconstructing the sound system, grammar and a many-thousand word vocabulary of a language is a difficult task, which usually requires someone who is trained in linguistics, and it involves many thousands of hours of work. Unfortunately, most linguistic materials on Canadian Aboriginal languages are written in technical linguistic jargon and are not accessible for members of the speech communities (even for those who still speak the language).

It is extremely important that First Nations communities develop the expertise and capacity to develop teaching grammars (which can teach the structure of the language to older children and adults, hopefully in a user-friendly way) from existing or ongoing linguistic research, alongside bodies of texts and multimedia materials, as well as practical dictionaries.

The linguistic materials collected on paper, and on audio and videotape, can also become invaluable resources for curriculum to teach younger people the language. In the case of many First Nations, a vast amount of such materials already exist in public and private collections. Here, it is a matter of cataloguing and duplicating the materials, storing them safely, and editing or preparing them so they are usable.

While a good amount of linguistic research has been done since the late nineteenth century on British Columbia Aboriginal languages, much more can be done and needs to be done.

Stage 7 is the *mobilization* of elderly speakers who still speak the language well. This stage involves recruiting these elders to speak the language with younger people, their children and grandchildren, which is much easier said than done. It also includes recruiting elders to teach the language in formal settings, and providing them with the skills to do so. Many elders who speak their language would like to learn to read and write it, and mobilization can involve teaching literacy to elders.

For BC Aboriginal languages, the elders who know and speak their languages are the most valuable and most irreplaceable resource. For all BC Aboriginal languages, there are a significant number of people who are not fluent speakers of their language, but who, because they were exposed to it as children, although they were not made to speak it back to their elders, are what we might call “fluent understanders.” It is critical to mobilize this group of people, because it will take them less time to speak the language than it will take someone who starts “from scratch.”

Stage 6 is the *promotion of the use* of the language in the family, the neighbourhood, and the community. If this promotion is successful and translates into families, individuals, parents, grandparents and children increasingly using the language

in everyday life and on public occasions, Stage 6 can restore and continue the pattern of intergenerational transmission of the language. *This stage is the most crucial of all. As Fishman notes, “If this stage is not satisfied, all else can amount to little more than biding time.”*

At the same time, because the family and household are not public arenas where language use can be planned and enforced by a First Nations government, it is also a difficult stage to plan. It rests on the will and determination of elders and their younger family members, and the help and encouragement they can be provided.

Again, it is very important to restore this pattern of intergenerational transmission not only with the help of the elders/fluent speakers, but also with those who understand the language. If the latter are convinced of the usefulness of learning to speak the languages, and the rewards this will create, these people can play an invaluable role in the transmission of the language to younger generations, and in the creation of a cohort of young adults who speak the language to one another and will teach it to their children.

Stage 5 involves integrating the language into the formal education system, and the integration of schooling and literacy into the efforts to revive the language. This stage this can be accomplished through evening classes, weekend school, and First Nations second language programs with a limited amount of instruction in school. The school pro-

grams of Stage 5 are within the realm of what already exists or is easily possible within the British Columbia school system.

Fishman calls stages 8 through 5 the “weak side” of language revival. They do not primarily rely on financial resources, but on the sweat and toil of community members.

Stage 4 involves the replacement of the dominant language by the Aboriginal language in formal education. This means immersion programs, at least at the earlier levels of schooling, and bilingual or partial immersion programs at the higher levels of schooling.

Stage 3 involves the integration of the language into the workplace. It requires considerable corpus planning, including literacy, translation of documents, mobilization of speakers to use it in the workplace, and the creation of opportunities and occasions for integrating the language into the workplace.

Stage 2 involves integrating the language into the domain of what Fishman calls “lower government services that are in direct contact with citizens.” For First Nations languages, the agencies in question would be First Nations or Band Governments, Tribal Councils, and service organizations of particular First Nations (for example, Cultural Centres, First Nation schools, etc.).

Success Stories

Why Hebrew Language Revitalization Succeeded

The Hebrew language, the language of the Jewish people, is often named as a language that has been successfully revived. Jewish people went through centuries of being suppressed in their religion and culture, scattered throughout Europe and America, and of course they were victims of the Nazi Holocaust from the 1930s until 1945. In 1948, the State of Israel was created in their homeland in the Middle East. By this time, the speaking of Hebrew had been kept alive, often in secret, in religious ceremonies. Much of it, however, was confined to religious texts.

Reviving the speaking of Hebrew combined symbolic with practical communicative functions: Jewish people who moved to Israel after the establishment of the State of Israel were from many different language backgrounds (Russian, English, French, German, etc.), and needed a common language to communicate in. A symbolic function of Hebrew was that it was an emblem of common nationhood, common religion and common destiny, despite its persecution. A nation-state with autonomy over educational, political and social institutions enabled the quick come-back of Hebrew, which was enforced as the national language in all public institutions after 1948.

By 1961, Hebrew was identified as the primary or only language of 75 % of the population of Israel. Some practical strategies for its revival included: (i) Berlitz type teaching in schools, and in evening and weekend classes; (ii) establishment of Hebrew speaking societies, where people gathered to practice speaking the language; (iii) the coining of new words and terms to modernize the language; and (iv) developing official terminology through the Hebrew Academy.

The Language of the Maori People of New Zealand

Maori has been called a “language that has risen from its deathbed” (AFN, 1990). The *Maori Language Bill of 1987* declared Maori an official language of New Zealand, and includes the right to speak Maori in legal proceedings. It also established the Maori Language Commission (this commission is empowered to issue certificates of competency to interpreters and translators). Since 1960 there was increased pressure on the New Zealand government to establish immersion and bilingual schools. These continued during the 1970s and 80s. An important measure were the nursery school immersion programs or language nests in place since the early 1980s. Schools were seen as an important element in language education; however, the Maori have learned that efforts in the schools must be supported by language use in the home and in social institutions (see below for a discussion of language nests).

Maori language revival was driven by: (i) the creation of a popular movement within the context of a movement towards cultural and political autonomy; (ii) flexible boundaries of ethnicity: everyone who professes to Maori identity and cultural roots can be incorporated into the community. There is no equivalent to “Indian status” which predetermines, according to government policy, who is to be legally recognized as a member of the ethnic and cultural group, and language education is culturally sensitive; the Maori language movement teaches values and traditional knowledge through the medium of the language.

The Revitalization of Mohawk in Kahnawake

During the 1970s, the Mohawk people of Kahnawake in Quebec -- a native reserve on the outskirts of Montreal -- were experiencing the decline of their language, which had been replaced by French and then by English. In 1978 the province of Quebec enacted Bill 101, the French language charter, which curtailed education and services in languages other than French. Fighting for the survival of their language and culture, the Kahnawake Mohawk established the Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center to preserve their cultural heritage. In addition, in 1980 they established a Mohawk immersion program modelled on French immersion programs elsewhere in Quebec, in order to re-introduce the use of the language to younger people in the community. This was the first Aboriginal language immersion program in Canada, and it has since become a model for other Aboriginal communities in North America. Recent research on the use of Mohawk language in Kahnawake has shown that the immersion program has had a positive effect on the knowledge and use of Mohawk in the community:

Through the control of its school system, which enabled the community to introduce a Mohawk immersion program for elementary school children, this effort has proven largely successful by three measures: 1) a rise in the ability to speak Mohawk [especially among those less than twenty years old who went through the immersion program], (2) an increase in the mixing of Mohawk with English; and (3) an increase in the private speaking of Mohawk among the youngest people surveyed. The Mohawk language now enjoys a central place in the soul of the community - an indication of both the success of the revitalization efforts and the tight link between language and cultural identity in this community.

A handicap to the full revival of the language, however, is the fact that a middle generation (i.e. people in their twenties and thirties) do not know the language and have not learned it, which makes full revitalization difficult.

(Information from: *Hoover, 1992*)

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Stage 1, according to Fishman, involves the implementation of the use of the language at the “upper reaches of education, media and government operations.” Use of the language in the “upper reaches of education” would involve its use as a language of instruction (rather than as a language that students learn as a subject) in Aboriginal Post-secondary institutions. Particularly for BC Aboriginal languages which are ancestral languages to a small minority, use in “government operations” should be interpreted as referring to use of the language between communities within the same Aboriginal Nation or tribe. In this sense, “government operations” relates to communication between First Nations communities (bands) within the same Nation, or between Tribal Councils and other institutions within the same Aboriginal Nation which shares a language. However, the latter requires careful planning, because there may be dialect differences between communities, or because there exists more than one writing system (orthography) for the language.

Stage 1, then, calls for the establishment of a Language Authority -- that is, a body which plans and oversees such things as writing systems, adaptation of new terms, deciding which grammatical forms and pronunciation are considered correct and appropriate by speakers of the language, and other things. We will return to this issue below.

At least within an Aboriginal Nation, Stage 1 also means that the First Nations political bodies give a language official status within the Aboriginal Na-

tion. The Mi’kmaq Council of Grand Chiefs recently voted to give official status to their language within their Nation. This does not mean, however, that the non-Mi’kmaq public and politicians in the Provinces in which the Mi’kmaqs’ Aboriginal territories lies (Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island) have recognized its official status to date. However it does mean that the Mi’kmaq themselves give it official status.

Fishman’s Stage 1 also invokes the role of media in language revival. This could involve broadcasts in the Aboriginal language through radio and television, the publication of newsletters, newspapers and magazines, and communication through the Internet. It could also include the production of a large, readily available library of books, videos and computer software (i.e. multi-media CD ROMs) in the Aboriginal language. Some communities already have some of these devices available, but much, much more can be achieved and needs to be achieved, which requires human resources and, especially, financial resources. *Indeed, media, especially radio, television, computers and videos can have a crucial role in Stage 4.* Today’s adults and children spend several hours a day listening to, watching, or at least exposed to television and radio. Radio and television in the Aboriginal language, where it can replace English broadcasting and films, could have a very useful and important role in promoting and reintegrating the use of Aboriginal languages in the family and household.

A less ambitious scheme for **language preservation** was suggested by linguist Michael Krauss. Depending on how critical the state of a language is and what the community's human resources are, he suggests three levels, as follows.

1) Language documentation: this involves documenting the language as adequately as possible, and is similar to Fishman's Stage 8. It would include the preparation of a comprehensive grammar, dictionary and collection of traditional oral literature (stories, oral histories, songs, proverbs, speeches), both written and tape-recorded.

2) The active cultivation of a language in a restricted number of settings: such as schools, ceremonies (for example the potlatch) or in church. Krauss points out that Hebrew maintained itself for several centuries

through preservation at Levels 1 and 2. This kept the language from total extinction, and in this century allowed it to be revived as a spoken language. 3) Maintaining and/or restoring full conversational ability in the language among community members.

Krauss questions whether for highly endangered languages the restoration of that language as a living language in all aspects of life is a feasible goal. In the end, this will depend on the range of pro-active measures that community members can take to restore the speaking of their language in everyday life, including in the family and neighbourhood.

It is worth pointing out that for Canadian Aboriginal languages, language revitalization will probably

***Stages in Reversing
Language Shift***

A. Ensuring Intergenerational Transmission

8. Reconstruct the Language
7. Mobilize Fluent Speakers
6. Restore Intergenerational Transmission (through family, neighbourhood and community reinforcement)
5. Teach the language in school.

B. Extending the Usage

4. Implement immersion and strong bilingual education.
3. Use the Language in Work Environments
2. Offer government services in the language
1. Use the language in higher education, media and government

(Fishman, cited in RCAP, 1996)

not be a one-time effort. Even if younger generations of speakers of an Aboriginal language can be created, these need to be maintained in all future generations in the face of the continuing presence and dominance of English in the non-Aboriginal pub-

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lic. Once revitalized, the ongoing struggle for Aboriginal languages will be to maintain themselves by creating future generations of speakers and users.

Given these monumental and sometimes overwhelming tasks, and the few success stories to date, some language planners have offered the depressing opinion that many Aboriginal languages are beyond the point of saving (see Drapeau 1995; Rigsby 1987). Whether this prognosis will fulfil

itself depends upon the will, efforts, and on the present and future achievements of First Nations communities. While financial resources play a big role in the revitalization of languages, some of the

most crucial components of language revitalization are low-cost but very labour intensive, and require very high levels of ongoing commitment and sweat.

Mobilizing Your Community

In order to create the will and commitment that a community needs to revive its use of a language, the members of the community must be mobilized and must inspire one another. In the beginning, it may be difficult to persuade the whole community to use the Aboriginal language, or to get the whole community involved in learning it. However, over time, perhaps those who in the beginning see no practical value in speaking their language or teach-

ing it to their children can be won over. If it seems like too difficult a task to involve the entire community right off the start, a section of the community can nonetheless begin the process. In discussing language planning, Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Band expressed what may be a reasonable first goal if reaching the whole community or Nation is too difficult a task. During a language planning session, Chief Louie noted that his community has about a dozen fluent speakers. “If we

still have a dozen speakers in thirty years because some of our younger people become fluent, then at least we are maintaining the present status quo.”

It is not true that many First Nations languages are beyond the point of saving. However, to what degree Aboriginal languages can be revitalized is determined not only by the kind and level of resources (i.e. funds) available, but by the amount of work the community and its members are able to put into the language revitalization effort.

I discussed above the value that many First Nations people associate with their language, and the connection between language, culture, and identity which is widely recognized. I also discussed the difference between the communicative and the symbolic functions of a language. It may be difficult to mobilize younger members of the community who do not speak their language; they may not see a practical necessity for using it, may be perhaps intimidated by it, or they are frustrated by their previous inability to pick it up when surrounded by speakers. If they are older, they may still grieve being deprived of their language through the effects of the Residential School system.

In order to mobilize community members, the revival of the language must be tied to practical situations and goals. I noted above that the revival of the language should be seen as part of a process of strengthening the community. It should not be tied to the past only, but must be connected to the present and future of a community.

4.2 What You Can Do

Have a community planning session. Discuss with your community members what value and importance, if any, they see in the language.

- ➔ For some community members, young and old, it may be important to express their grief about the loss of their language through the Residential School, or being deprived of acquiring it because of the effects of the Residential School.

The fundamental goal of all First Nations language programs is to contribute to restoring the mental, spiritual, physical and emotional wholeness of the community. Once a community accepts the link between such wholeness, its culture and its language, the first major step towards revitalizing the latter has been taken (Fettes, cited in AFN, 1992).

- ➔ Discuss the connection of the Aboriginal language to the culture, roots, identity, social, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing. However, be aware that attitudes do not automatically translate into a use of the language.
- ➔ Imagine yourself in the future, and think what the world will be like without your language. Do you want to be in it, or do you want your children or grandchildren to be in that world?
- ➔ Alternately, if adults do not learn the language, but their children learn it, what will happen when adults become elders ?

- ➔ Discuss how, perhaps, for many younger and middle aged people the Aboriginal language has become an emblem rather than a tool of practical communication. Will this bring the language back? What else is needed?
- ➔ Refute some common myths about language learning and bilingualism, such as: “children will learn English better if they are not taught their own language in school,” or “learning their own language will hold them back.” What does modern research say about such things ?

- ➔ With the help of knowledgeable people within your community, with the help of information provided in this book, or with any Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal expertise you can muster, discuss with parents and grandparents in your community what they can do to start using the language with young children, not as single words but in continual conversation. ***It is important that both parents and grandparents are conscious of how language acquisition of young children works.***

- ➔ Brainstorm about what role the language plays in your community now :
 - On what occasions is it used?
 - Who speaks it?
 - Do people who know it speak it with each other and with younger people?
 - What role can the language play and what role should it play?

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- Who are your human resources? What does it take to mobilize them?
- ➔ Realistically discuss with your community members that learning a language is not an easy task. It takes a few years of hard work for a person to learn a language, even if it is their ancestral language. Discuss the rewards of being able to speak and use the language.
- ➔ Discuss possible ways of bringing back the use of the language in the community, the family, in public, and in the home.
- ➔ Discuss realistically whether your present efforts at reviving your language are working. What can be improved?
- ➔ Review the eight stages that Fishman proposes. Where is your community? What can be done better?
- ➔ ***Remember: language planning efforts, and their implementation, must take into account the revitalization of the language not only in the school or education system, but also in the home and in the community. The best gift that elders and grandparents can give to their children and grandchildren is to use the Aboriginal language with them as much as possible, beyond saying the odd word in the language.***

In the next section, before we turn to the role of the formal education system, we will discuss in more detail what are reasonable and realistic goals for improving the status and practical use of a language in a community.

V. Setting Goals According to Your Needs and Your Situation

Depending upon how critical a state your language is in, you can set goals along a sliding scale and according to the extent to which your community feels it needs to be brought back. You can also determine the order of priorities depending on your situation.

For speech communities and languages which still have significant numbers of speakers of the language not only in the elderly generation, but also among middle-aged and younger adults, and perhaps even among children, it may be possible as a goal to ***restore full or significant bilingualism*** within a generation or less, keeping in mind that all children and adults will likely continue to need to know and use English to get by in and with the outside world. Such a goal can be reached by finding measures to expand the use of the language in the community and in the home, and by creating language nests and immersion programs (see below Section VII). These will expose young children to the language, and will help them to learn and use it.

Another goal can be to increase literacy in the language, and produce a large array of written and aural sources in the language for schooling and entertainment (including books, magazines, videos, TV and radio programming, which all generations can then use in lieu of English language sources of

entertainment and education). It is important to realize that for written sources to be effectively used by the Aboriginal community, you must create readiness and interest in the written form of the language. This could mean a literacy campaign for adults, combined with reading and writing classes, and discussions of the importance of having the language in the written form. We will discuss this aspect further in Section VII.

It must be pointed out, though, that Aboriginal language literacy campaigns which were tried in the United States did little to preserve Aboriginal languages (Zepeda, 1995). Literacy should complement and provide further tools for the speaking of the language, rather than replacing speech.

For speech communities whose language is declining or endangered, and perhaps even for those that are at the critical stage, the realistic goal is to ***restore and revitalize*** the use of the First Nations language among the generation(s) who still have the ability to speak the language. One way to do this is to create settings and formal classes where fluent understanders of the language can practice speaking it in a non-threatening environment. It may be possible to achieve the restoration of the use of the language in public and ceremonial settings wherever possible. A long-term goal for these languages may be to produce younger cohorts of

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speakers (children and younger adults) through efforts that cover the home, the community, and the education system. Rather than addressing an across-the-board restoration of the language as an immediate goal, it may be useful to discuss and decide which settings in public and in the home lend themselves to restoration, as far as use of the Aboriginal language is concerned.

For languages which are in a critical state, the immediate goal should be to *preserve* as much information as much as possible, and to preserve the languages still spoken by elderly fluent speakers today by recording and archiving vocabulary, grammar, the sound systems, as well as oral histories, stories, songs, speeches and other means of expression in the language.

Despite language restoration as an immediate goal, the community can and should discuss if and how it can maintain, restore and revitalize the use of the language, at least in certain settings (e.g. in potlatches and ceremonies), and which settings can be added later in increments.

Short and long-term goals can also be set along a sliding scale as follows:

Appreciation of language in community ————— Full fluency by all

It is important to recognize that *appreciation and awareness* of the Aboriginal language will not necessarily mean that individuals will make a priority of learning to speak or use it. In order to restore its use, if it is declining, you must set your goals higher than appreciation. However, setting an immediate goal of restoring full fluency may be unreasonable for a community where only a few percent of the people speak and/or use the Aboriginal language.

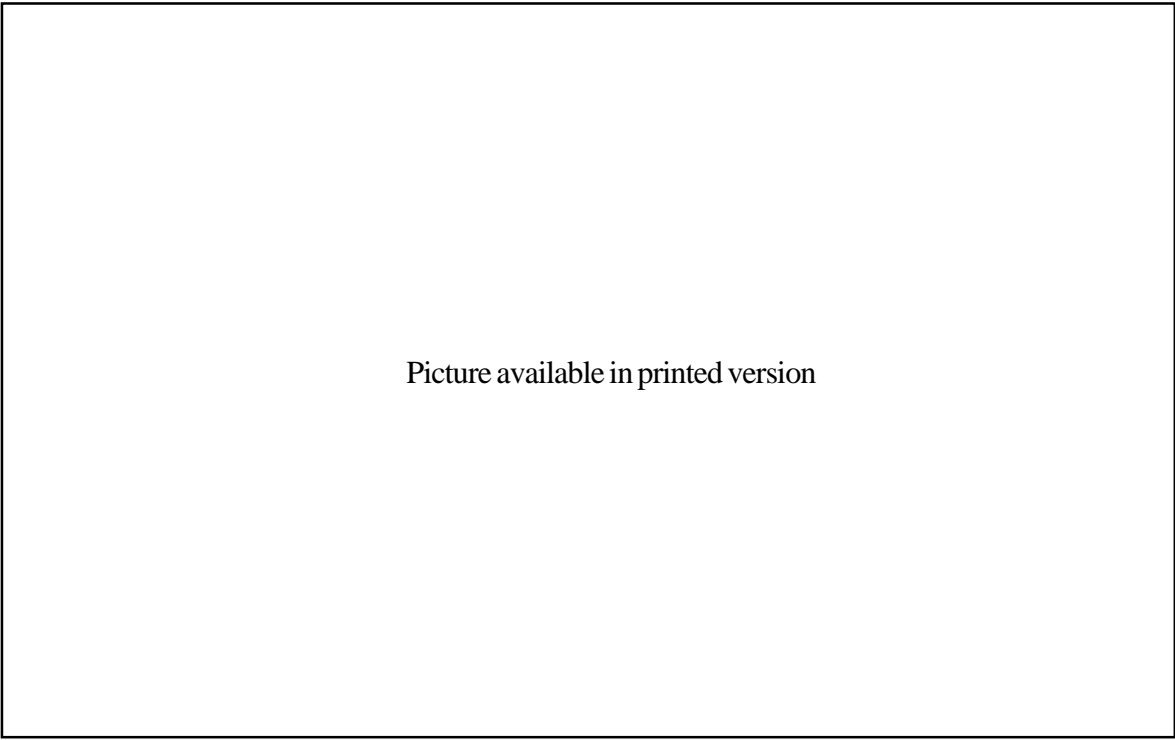
5.1 What You Can Do

- ➔ After your initial planning session, do a Community Assessment of the state of your language and the resources that are available (number of speakers, understanders, those who read and write, storytellers, singers and drummers, those who are willing to and/or have taught the language). Remember to distinguish between attitudes about the language and the extent to which it is used in communication. These two will not be the same! Distribute the results and discuss them with your community.
- ➔ Discuss goal-setting, and what are reasonable goals and objectives to set in your community.
- ➔ Distribute this booklet to your households and discuss the issue of language revival with community members and parents. Republish excerpts in flyers, newspapers, and newsletters to mobilize your community. Do this more than once. Mobilization must be an *ongoing* effort !
- ➔ Discuss examples of other Aboriginal and/or indigenous languages which have been successfully revitalized, or which are ahead of you in their efforts to maintain or bring back their languages. Provide interested community members with readings, or, better yet, invite a guest

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- speaker from such a community, especially if it is an Aboriginal community.
- ➔ Find out more about Aboriginal language revitalization efforts through the Internet. Join discussion groups and bulletin boards, if this is helpful.
 - ➔ Start a parents', elders', or community support group to revitalize the language. Try to use the language in this group, even if this is done to a limited extent.

These are the grade one students of Ivy Maitland's Haisla Language class, and according to Maitland the younger the better. "If we can start teaching children at an early age, we will have a better chance of reviving our language and in turn our culture," Maitland says. Her worst fear is the passing of an elder because that means a part of Haisla culture is gone. She says, "its really important for the elders to tell the children stories and encourage them to speak our language, it might be the only way to save our history." She says her students, from kindergarten to grade seven, are excited to learn their language, and appreciate visits from Haisla elders into their classrooms. "I tell my students not to be scared of asking the elders questions or listening to them when they're speaking Haisla. The more Haisla history they learn, the more they will be able to pass on to their own children."



Picture available in printed version

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VI. Strategies for Restoring and Revitalizing the Community and Home Use of First Nations Languages

On the basis of experience and research, I have continually pointed to the role of the community, household and family (both nuclear and extended) in revitalizing an Aboriginal language. As Fishman (1991, p. 111) notes, “The basic stages of language revival are labour intensive rather than cost-intensive, and, as such, they depend squarely on the dedication, ability and simple sweat and tears that can be mobilized.”

In order to implement, plan and assess your efforts at reviving your language in the community, it is useful to have a local person who can function as an organizer and coordinator of programs, events, and activities which will bring together different generations in the communities in an effort to use, learn and promote the language. However, it is extremely important that the effort of the community does not rest on one person alone who is expected to achieve the revitalization of the language in the community. Many contemporary Aboriginal language teachers are aware that their communities put on their shoulders the entire burden of keeping the Aboriginal language alive. This does not work. Instead, what the community needs is an effective organizer who can combine the efforts of elders, parents, politicians, children and youth,

and who can assist all generations in implementing practical strategies to bring back the use of the language.

Below are some strategies which First Nations communities who have engaged in language planning efforts have suggested as feasible in revitalizing the use of an Aboriginal language. I am grateful to many language teachers, elders, community members, educators and others, who, during workshops and gatherings I attended, suggested these options in the past.

6.1 In Public

- ➔ Promotional posters, signs and billboards. The Navajo reservation, for example, reportedly has a large billboard at its entrance which says, “Did you speak Navajo with your child today?” Communities can also develop and display (in every household, if possible), posters of young and not-so-young community members who are working on learning or re-learning the language.
- ➔ Other ways in which interest can be stimulated may include:
 - ✓ traffic signs (stop signs, children-at-play signs) in the language;
 - ✓ street signs within the community and reserve that are in the Aboriginal language;

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- ✓ billboards or signs which display traditional place names.
 - Support and reward the use of the language on public occasions, for example at public dinners, potlatches, or other social events. To begin, prayers and brief speeches and phrases or greetings in the language can be introduced; increase the amount and extent of the use of the language with time. This will require planning and commitment from all participating individuals, both in the audience and among those who speak. On these public occasions, use signs and labels for as many things as possible (washrooms, menus, kitchen, and other items and locations).
 - Organize bingo games in the Aboriginal language with good cash prizes
 - Find ways to integrate the use of the language into the workplace. For example, place speakers of the language with individuals who understand it and with those who are beginners. Brainstorm with the workers and the community about what may be appropriate incentives and rewards to bring back the language in the workplace. Be realistic and set goals in increments, give elders/speakers an important role in this process, and give them rewards, even in the form of acknowledgment and praise, whatever is appropriate among your people.
 - Support and reward the use of the Aboriginal language in First Nations government (such as council meetings; Band meetings; in the office; in written communications). This will require creating language classes for adults, and literacy classes for those who already know the language. Find appropriate and practicable ways to give incentives to workers for learning the language. Note that it is crucial that this is done together with the workers, not over their heads.
- Lay out realistic expectations, and increase them in increments. Again, involve elders as teachers in the language classes.
- Place Aboriginal language sections in your First Nations community newsletters and newspapers. Give adults an occasion to study them and ask questions about their content. Increase the amount of Aboriginal language in these papers with time. As the knowledge and use of the language increases, give community members an opportunity to provide input.
 - Organize elders/speakers' evenings, or events where you can bring speakers of the language from different communities together. Encourage younger people, and especially those who understand but do not speak the language to attend.
 - Organize immersion camps for the community on weekends (more on immersion in Section VII and Section VIII).
 - A Montagnais (Innu) community in North Eastern Quebec has implemented a system of buttons by which speakers identify themselves and one another. A blue button identifies a fluent speaker of the language. When he/she meets another person with a blue button, they have to use the language with each other. A red button identifies a person who understands but is trying to learn how to speak. A person with a blue button has to try to use the language with a person who has a red button, and red button individuals make the commitment to try to use it with blue-button persons and with each other. A person who is just beginning to learn the language wears a blank colour button, which encourages fluent speakers and understanders to use it with them. People who have no buttons are not interested. Make the buttons attractive, culturally meaningful and desirable!

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In the Home

What will work best, obviously, is if those who still speak the language can switch to speaking it in the home on an ongoing basis. However, this is not easy, and is hindered by various factors, including the frustration and trauma which many adults still suffer after being deprived of or punished for speaking their language earlier in life, and the fact that Aboriginal languages are among the most difficult to learn, including in the early stages. Language learning, even re-learning, takes an enormous amount of practice and perseverance, and will not happen in a short period of time. Below are some possible strategies for reintroducing the use of the Aboriginal language into the home.

- ➔ Make a point of using the language at meal time or on other regular occasions during the day. Increase the extent to which it is used, i.e. from words and short phrases in the beginning, to being able to keep up dialogue in the language for 15 - 30 minutes after a period of time. ***This will take practice and patience! Do not give up if it does not work well the first time around.***
- ➔ Encourage grandparents' use of the language with grandchildren and with children. Ask them to use more than words, but to keep up speaking the language, especially with young children. While very young children (e.g. those under 3) will repeat much of what the grandparents say, and will give the appearance that they understand much, ***it is very important to keep this up after the grandchildren reach the age of about 3, when they will have acquired English from their peers and parents quite well, and will develop a tendency to speak***

and answer back in English. This is normal, but it is important that parents and grandparents are aware of it. It is best if grandparents “play deaf” if the grandchildren speak English with them. This provides the best chance for younger children’s continued acquisition of the language, which is crucial if you want the children to eventually speak rather than merely understand the language. Ask elders who are parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents to also practice speaking the language in the home with young and not-so-young adults. Be patient. Start with small bits of conversation and/or words, but increase it with time. Adults’ learning of the language works most effectively if this practice in the setting of the household is combined with formal classes (see below, Section VII).

- ➔ If you are a parent, aunt or uncle, use the language with toddlers and small children, even if your vocabulary is limited. Take the young children’s increased need for more vocabulary and more complex phrases as an incentive to stay one step ahead of them.
- ➔ Find forms of entertainment (e.g. playing games, watching videos) which can integrate the Aboriginal language. Get together with other families which have the same objectives. If and when you watch children’s shows on English language television, play commentator in the Aboriginal language and describe what is happening on the screen.
- ➔ Think about your daily schedule and activities. Where can you integrate private practice of the language, and find occasion to use and practice the language with elders and with peers?
- ➔ Change your lifestyle by:
 - ✓ spending less time watching TV and more time visiting and socializing with elders;

- ✓ attending a language class. Set a goal to attend it for the duration of the class sessions, even if it is tempting to quit after a few weeks.
- ✓ as in the old days, but less frequently practised today, spend time working alongside and for elders in your extended family; make firewood for them, help them in the household, and use these occasions to practice the language.

Think of the task of revitalizing the use of your language as “one day at a time,” while keeping the larger goal in mind.

It is important to be realistic and reasonable about setting objectives with regards to language reintroduction in the community and in the home. Rather than setting fundamental goals (“no use of English in public from now on”), which usually need to be abandoned in short time and lead to frustration, it will work better if goals are set incrementally or in steps, beginning small and increasing with time. Examples of this would be to open meetings with a prayer in the Aboriginal language; to have speakers at public functions say initially a few words or sentences in the Aboriginal language, and steadily increase the amount; and to make a point of inviting speakers of the language to public functions and family functions where they can use the language, if only for a brief time initially.

It may also be difficult to mobilize your community to the extent that every adult and elder will commit to revitalizing the language, let alone keeping up

that momentum. If this is the case, a more reasonable way to set goals is to maintain the number of speakers in your community through the efforts of a smaller group of younger to middle-aged parents who maintain or gain fluency in and use of the language in the home and in public. I raised this issue above in Section II.

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VII. Planning a Formal Language Program According to Your Needs and Resources, and Making Sense of Provincial Policies on Language Education

As we have seen in the previous sections, an ideal language program which will revitalize a language and bring it back from the deathbed, or which will preserve and restore the use of a language still spoken by large segments of the community, must involve people of all ages in the home, family and the community. In addition to this, the education system can and should play an important role in reversing Aboriginal language shift.

In this section, we will consider what kind of school programs, from early childhood education to post-secondary and adult education, can help to revitalize an Aboriginal language. In order to get maximum benefits from language education, it would be desirable to have full immersion programs in the Aboriginal language from early childhood and Kindergarten through to at least the primary grades, and ideally through to grade 12. However, the development and maintenance of such immersion programs would require a tremendous amount of both human and financial resources. They would also be difficult to attain, at least in the near future, with the available human resources and within the public education system, especially in School Districts where the speakers and descendants of a First Nations language are in a small minority.

We will therefore discuss a range school programs that exist or may exist, especially in light of existing policies. We will discuss regulations and standards which primarily affect public schools, but will also influence the shape of language programs in First Nations operated schools. *Although many First Nations communities may think they need to implement low-resource programs in the short run as the only realistic option, it might be useful to consider more effective programs like immersion as long-term goals and to work toward those, while improving existing First Nations as Second Language Programs in the interim.*

7.1 Early Childhood Programs

Aboriginal people who learned their language as young children, and adults who are trying to learn it in mid-life, know that it is far less painful to learn a language naturally from infancy than to learn it later in childhood or even adulthood. The research of linguists and language educators has verified this perspective. We call the learning of a mother tongue in infancy and early childhood *language acquisition*, to set it apart from *language learning* which takes place through some kind of formal instruction later in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood.

Linguists have studied language acquisition for some time and have found fascinating information about how, within months of being born, babies actually begin acquiring their language. By about age five, they manage to master its basic sound system and grammar. They have mastered the finer parts of the grammar and sound system by about age ten, and then continue to learn new vocabulary throughout their lives. We know that seemingly without effort, all children will acquire their mother tongue in this manner. This happens as they are being exposed to and absorb thousands of repetitions of words and phrases. Linguists also suppose that they are steered by an innate capacity to discover grammatical rules and the formation of sounds. Indeed, there appears to be an optimal age for language acquisition, which is between infancy and the teen years. After that, it is more difficult to learn a language, especially if one has not learned or acquired more than one language already. While adults *can* effectively learn languages later on in life, it is more difficult for them to master a language -- especially its sound system.

Given these findings about the benefits of acquiring or learning languages early in life, it makes sense to expose children to their Aboriginal language as early as possible. Unfortunately, since most Aboriginal children are not exposed to their grandparents or others who still speak the language on a daily basis, it is difficult to achieve the acquisition of an Aboriginal language in the home by young children.

During the 1970s, the Maori people of New Zealand, as they faced the decline of their language, became aware of the benefits of early childhood language education. They thus began an effective kind of early childhood program called **Te Kohanga reo** or “**language nests**” which exposes Maori children to their Aboriginal language to the fullest extent possible from early childhood on. In the beginning, “language nests” were started with very limited financial resources in the homes of Maori language speakers (usually grandparents), who would look after a small group of children on a daily basis while continually speaking and interacting in Maori with the children using Maori.

By 1992, more than 700 “language nest” daycares existed in New Zealand. They are seen as an important part of the revival of the Maori language and have effectively involved elders and community resources, in traditional cultural teaching.

An important lesson to be learned from the first years of the New Zealand experiment with “language nests” is the need to plan long-term how to follow up the preschool program with other community efforts or they alone will not raise young fluent speakers and users of a language. The Maori case shows that young children who moved on from language nests to English-only schools after kindergarten lost their competence in Maori in a matter of months. Therefore, it is important that “the ultimate linguistic benefit of a language nest is dependent on the children being able to further develop their language skills outside it, within the con-

Language Nests

Te Kohanga Reo literally means “**the language nest.**” A kihanga is a centre that immerses young children in Maori language and culture within a nurturing and protective environment that includes the Maori concept of whanau or extended family. The following definition appears in the 1993 New Zealand Official Yearbook:

A kohanga reo is a whanau/family base where a deliberate effort is made to create a Maori cultural environment, in which Maori language values and customs are naturally acquired by preschool children from their *kaumatua* (elders). Through the example of the *whanau*, the children learn *aroha* (love, compassion), *manaakitanga* (caring, hospitality), *whanaungatanga* (family responsibilities) and they are taught traditional knowledge, crafts and customs, all through the medium of the Maori language.

The *kohanga reo* movement demonstrates how Maori culture could be maintained and developed in modern society and has been the springboard for other community education and development programmes. Commentators have focused on the achievements of the kohanga reo movement in relation to two areas: (i) social and political change -- within communities and the country as a whole; and (ii) the provision of bilingual, bicultural early childhood education for individual Maori children.

According to Augie Fleras, three goals predominate: (i) the promotion of *te reo Maori* (the Maori language) as a language of everyday use through language immersion; (ii) the promotion of Maori culture through the *whanau* both as a traditional extended family arrangement and as a cluster of values; and (iii) community renewal through sustained interaction of parents, children and elders (1987, pp. 80-81). Fleras observes that *Kohanga Reo* is at the “forefront” of Maori cultural renewal. He suggests that its impact cannot be underestimated for three reasons: (i) a growing number of Maori children can speak or are familiar with *te reo Maori*; (ii) parents have renewed confidence in their ability to advance Maori cultural interests; and (iii) Maori have a powerful symbol of protest in promoting Aboriginal interests (1987, p. 83).

(Information From: Lightford, 1993).

text of the school, community or family.” (AFN, 1992b, p. 18).

What is Needed to Start a Language Nest Program?

It is crucial to have one or more elders in your community who are not only fluent in the language, but who are capable and available to spend the entire day communicating with young children and carrying out daily routines with them. First Nations communities which have existing daycare centres may consider to turn them into language nests, especially if their daycare workers are able to speak the Aboriginal language. However, for licencing purposes, or to have childcare which meets the western norms and standards of early childhood education, they may also find it to be advantageous to have certified daycare workers who have completed an Early Childhood Education training program offered at Community Colleges and usually 12 months in length. Since in most cases graduates of these programs are of the younger generation and therefore not fluent in the language, this complicates the establishment of language nests.

However, some alternatives are:

- ➔ Pair up certified younger daycare workers with elder fluent speakers and have them work as a team, ensuring that the elder uses verbal communication to the fullest extent. Provide incen-

tives to the younger person to become proficient in the language over time. Since the interaction will involve young children, the repertoire that is needed to effectively communicate with them does not need to be huge. If the younger person already *understands* the language and needs to improve *speaking* ability only, this is an advantage. It should be emphasized that for effective language nest programs, the ability to speak the language is important, not reading and writing.

- ➔ Plan and implement, with the help of a local community college, an accredited early childhood education program which will: a) provide training in early childhood education to speakers of your language; and/or b) provide training in becoming proficient in the language to existing daycare workers. It may be useful for different First Nations communities which share K-12 programs in the same language to jointly venture into these kinds of training programs.

- ➔ Where it is difficult to get community support for an immersion or language nest daycare/preschool, parents of young children who are interested in the language nest concept can still achieve it by arranging in-home daycare with a speaker of the

Where language nests mark the beginning of Aboriginal language education that is followed up by further learning of and use of the language in the home, in the community and in the school, rather than being seen as making children fluent on their own, they can play a vital role in language revitalization.

language or with a speaker supported by a younger person. These parents can mobilize others in the community and perhaps achieve a community-run language nest on the long run. Mohawk language nests were begun in this fashion in Kahnawake.

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- Following from what I noted above, it is also important that the community and its parents continue the children's learning of the language.

Following their success in New Zealand, in Canada language nest daycares have been established during the past few years in a number of Aboriginal communities (see RCAP, CDROM, 1996). In British Columbia, a few Aboriginal communities have attempted language nest pre-school programs. However, their experiences show that it takes much determination and energy to operate them. Especially for languages which have few able-bodied speakers left, immersion daycares are not easy to operate.

The Adams Lake First Nations community established a language nest preschool program in the early 1990s, based on community members learning about the success of these programs in New Zealand and in Mohawk communities. The Adams Lake program stopped after some years. Its coordinator noted that this was "mainly due to staff burn-out, low enrolment, and a lack of financial support," the latter unfortunately being an everpresent threat to such initiatives. The Adams Lake daycare coordinator moreover noted that "what is needed is funding and an administrative framework that includes operating principles, quality standards, and a monitoring system." (Michel, 1994). The Adams Lake community, however, benefited from the language nest experience in that the cohort of children who initially attended the pre-school, with the addition of many other children,

now attend a Secwepemc language immersion school, Chief Atahm School, on the same reserve. Chief Atahm School now runs up to Grade 7.

Similar efforts have been made in the Gitksan community of Gitwangaak, through the Gitwangaak Language, Culture and Education Society, which has operated early immersion programs.

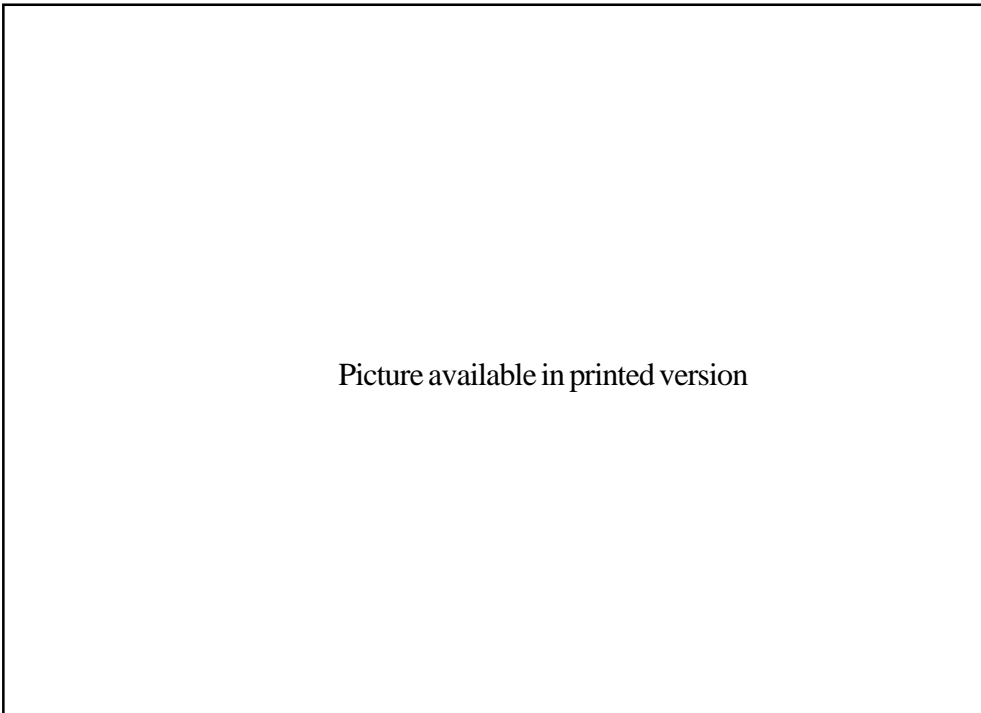
7.2 *Other Pre-School Programs*

Believing or realizing that they lack the resources to mount an immersion program, many First Nations communities create some exposure to the Aboriginal language for their children at the pre-school level, often totalling no more than 15 minutes per day. Without doubt, these programs have a limited function. They at least expose young children to the language, and the children may learn greetings, learn to count to ten, say a few common words, and perhaps learn some songs and nursery rhymes. They also have a useful and important function as cultural enrichment programs which teach children about the values and practices of a First Nations culture, especially in the absence of other meaningful First Nations cultural programs, and in the absence of other First Nations community members among school staff.

From the point of view of revival of the language, however, such short-exposure programs, especially where there is no follow-up in the home or community, will *not* make children fluent to any degree. They may have a useful function in the initial

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phase of a community's plan to revitalize their language, where the goal is to promote the community's and parents' awareness of the language. However, for a community which sets its goals higher than that, such pre-school programs will not meet its goals.



Picture available in printed version

7.3 K - 12 Programs: *Immersion or First Nations as Second Language Programs?*

Like language nests, immersion programs at the Kindergarten through Grade 12 level (K-12) are modelled on the advantage of “natural acquisition” of a language through maximum exposure, modelling, and repetition, as opposed to learning a second language through drills, formal memorizing and grammatical explanations. The immersion approach has been widely practised in Canada with French immersion (Programme Cadre français) during the last 20 years. According to the immersion approach, all school activities and all instruction from Kindergarten throughout the primary years are carried out in the language that is to be learned (the “target language”). During the

*A Kindergarten Shuswap program at
Neqweyqwelsten School, Chu Chua*

intermediate years and more so in High School, English gradually becomes more dominant in the classroom, but still side by side with the target language, which is carried forth throughout the senior secondary years with more than half of the school subjects continuing to be taught in French.

Since French immersion has become widespread in Canada, there has been much debate among language educators about the effectiveness of the immersion approach. At first glance, immersion seems to be an ideal solution, which leads to excellent listening skills (comprehension) and excellent speaking skills (expression) in the target language, through seemingly effortless prolonged exposure. Compared to children who are taught a second language

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through no more than 90 to 120 minutes of instruction a week, immersion children have far better comprehension, and are able to speak with much more ease and far less inhibition in a shorter period of time.

On closer inspection, however, it is important to realize that a classroom immersion situation is not a “natural acquisition” situation. The teacher, who is either a native speaker of the second language or very proficient in it but also knows English, uses the language to communicate with a large number of children who are already proficient in English and will want to use English with each other out of habit. The teacher then has to maintain communication in the second language (whether French or an Aboriginal language) in the face of children who have an urge to talk English to one another and to the teacher. It takes a competent immersion teacher more than a year to enforce the use of the target language with the teacher; it usually takes some years to enforce the use in the classroom among students, and, usually, the use of the target language does not carry forth to the playground and to activities or conversation among students outside of the classroom unless incentives and rewards for this are established.

Critics of French immersion have also pointed out that, while immersion students have excellent comprehension skills, their speaking skills are by no means perfect. Immersion students can express themselves fluently in French, but their spoken French, after years of modelling by teachers, often

has an English accent and is grammatically flawed, in that it shows a large influence by English.

For the purpose of the preservation of the French language, this is not too important. The expectation in French Immersion programs is that graduates of immersion programs will be able to use the language effectively if they go to Quebec or France, or they will be able to communicate with French-speaking people closer to home. Some parents send their children to French Immersion programs not primarily for the sake of learning French, but for the challenge and skills the immersion approach provides to students. Even if the French language skills of graduates of immersion programs are flawed, there are still more than 100 million native speakers of French in France, Quebec and other places where French is being kept alive and passed on from generation to generation by native speakers.

In contrast, for the sake of preserving an Aboriginal language, it is important that children who become competent in the language will use it with each other outside of the classroom, with elders in their community, and with their own children as they grow up and become parents. Many elders also feel that it is important that young people who learn their Aboriginal language learn how to pronounce the often difficult sounds to the fullest extent possible, and learn to preserve the richness of the grammar and its nuances of meaning by eventually *mastering* the language.

Because of their shortcomings, French immersion programs have recently put emphasis on students learning phonetically and grammatically correct speech by combining the exposure to the language with more formal methods of teaching the language, such as drills, grammatical explanations, and correcting the speech and writing of students. These seem to have improved the speech and writing of French immersion students.

Lynn Drapeau's research report for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples on "Aboriginal Language Conservation and Revitalization in Canada" (1995) also warns against parents and educators taking for granted that Aboriginal language immersion in the school alone will revive intergenerational transmission. Instead, she notes, immersion must be accompanied by strategies that reinforce and extend the use of the language into the community. She adds that:

There is a possible perverse side effect of immersion (possibly of any strong form of Aboriginal language instruction) in that it may incite parents and the community at large to neglect their responsibility to transmit the ancestral language. They may entirely defer to teachers for intergenerational language transmission. The success of formal schooling in the Aboriginal language could then lead to a Pyrrhic victory [a victory at too great a cost] since the daily use of Aboriginal language at home is a [necessary condition] for language survival (Drapeau 1995, p. 17).

Indeed, not only in immersion programs, but also in First Nations as second language programs, this is a widespread phenomenon, according to many First Nations language teachers who feel that they are the only ones in their community responsible for keeping their language alive, while the rest of the community members feel that they do not need to address the issue of maintaining or reviving the use of the language.

The Issue of Literacy and Immersion

Second language immersion programs teach listening, speaking, reading and writing of a second language in that order. In order to keep Aboriginal languages alive, of course, it is most important that younger generations become competent in listening and speaking. Therefore, it is crucial that Aboriginal immersion programs emphasize *oral language skills*. Parents often wonder how their children will learn to read and write English if they attend a second language immersion program, or if they will not fall behind in their academic and intellectual abilities compared to students in English language programs.

As I mentioned above, research has shown that bilingualism (learning two languages at the same time) is no hindrance to children's development, but instead enhances it. In today's world, dominated by English communications and media, Aboriginal children who attend immersion programs already know, or inevitably will learn how to speak and understand English anyway. French immersion re-

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search has shown that primary grade children who are taught exclusively French through immersion can transfer their French reading and writing skills to English language reading and writing skills, especially if they receive some formal instruction in reading and writing English in their late primary grades.

Besides the self-esteem and cultural pride that Aboriginal language education from early grades fosters, research on minority and indigenous language literacy has also shown that “literacy skills first learned in the mother tongue are transferable to second languages.” (Canada, 1990, p. 5). For Aboriginal language primary immersion programs, it is therefore important that, besides oral language skills, reading and writing, the Aboriginal language forms an integral part of these programs. Such early literacy can then be transferred to and complemented by English language literacy from late primary grades on.

Where Aboriginal languages have standard alphabets or writing systems, this appears to be no problem. For languages which have more than one writing system -- or none at all that is accepted or used by elders and speakers themselves -- teaching reading and writing skills in the language may be a problem. We will discuss the issue of literacy and orthographies further in Section X.

If reading and writing is taught in the Aboriginal language, this requires the production of a great amount and variety of age-appropriate written material. It also requires materials that teach children

to read and write the language. This could be a problem for Aboriginal languages which have no standard orthography, or too many writing systems. But even for languages which have widely accepted written forms, it means that a large amount of ongoing resource development needs to be carried out.

In planning immersion programs, therefore, it is important to be aware of the following principles:

- immersion programs at the Primary level and beyond *must* be combined with efforts and measures in the community and in the home to use the language to the fullest extent possible and to reward students for using the language in conversation with peers, parents and elders outside of the classroom. Indeed, learning outcomes and assessment for immersion programs should include incentives, rewards and measurements for the degree to which immersion students bring back the use of the language into their communities. This is particularly important for languages that are spoken by only a small number of adults in the community;
- beyond relying on modelling and use of the language alone to teach it, immersion instruction should include ways to correct errors, for example, grammar drills through games, and exercises to practice speech that sounds as correct as possible. There should be methods that enforce and reward the correct use of grammar and words;
- immersion programs require a tremendous amount of planning, curriculum development and development of large amounts and varieties of written resources; and

- immersion programs require very proficient speakers of the language who are well trained in classroom management and language teaching strategies, and who know how to effectively and imaginatively use curriculum and develop or adapt learning resources.

In order to be successful, immersion programs have to meet three separate objectives at the same time.

These are:

- Linguistic objectives: they must raise the students' proficiency in the knowledge and use of the Aboriginal language;
- Academic objectives: regardless of language learning or acquisition goals, an objective of all school programs must be to educate children in skills and knowledge necessary for occupations, further schooling, for jobs, and to carry out tasks in the contemporary world; and
- Social objectives: an immersion program should further the emotional, social and cultural development of children, and should be based on and transmit the particular cultural values of the Aboriginal nation. As such, it should help the community and individuals to solve issues and prob-

Can Immersion Programs Be Offered in Public Schools Under Existing Policy?

“The *School Act* states that a school board may permit an educational program in a language other than English or French (Programme cadre de Francais [equals French Immersion]), provided that approval has been granted by the Minister and the educational program is offered in accordance with any regulations made under Section 5 of the *School Act*.”

(Language Education in BC Schools, Appendix 1)

lems based on its values and traditions.

Successful and well-designed immersion programs therefore need to teach a wide variety of skills and subjects which are based on and relate to Aboriginal traditional ways, but which also provide knowledge about and are relevant to the modern world.

In trying to meet these objectives, a number of

issues need to be considered when planning immersion programs.

➔ Input and help from Elders, Parents and Community members: as Aboriginal language educators have stressed, immersion pro-

grams are not an automatic solution to language decline, but only work if they are supported at the community level. First of all, this means that elders and speakers of the language must not only support them in principle, but must be willing to give their time and energy to being in the classroom, helping with field trips and homework and, most of all, supporting, rewarding and nourishing the increased use of the language outside of the classroom.

➔ Parallel Adult Language Programs: for First Nations communities which have no or few speakers in the parent generation, it is extremely important to offer adult language programs in

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order for parents to be able to keep up with their children in learning the language, and in order to be able to use it in the home.

- **Teachers and Elders in the Classroom:** an irreplaceable condition of Aboriginal language immersion programs is that the teacher be fluent or proficient enough in the language to carry through the entire school day's instruction in the Aboriginal language without lapsing into English for any length of time. Where the students all speak English as their first language, it requires more than proficiency in the First Nations language alone, but also stamina, skills and strategies in enforcing the First Nations language. It also requires careful program, unit and lesson planning on the part of the teacher.

Where an immersion program is operated by a public school within a school district, it also requires teachers who are both fluent or proficient speakers of the Aboriginal languages *and* who are also certified classroom teachers for subjects outside of First Nations language, that is, they must have a Professional or Standard teaching certificate. While Band operated schools do not strictly fall under these guidelines, they might however require the same certification for the sake of meeting standards generally upheld by the public education system.

All First Nations communities in British Columbia have expressed a dire need for more trained Aboriginal language teachers. Especially in First Nations communities with endangered or critical languages, where all speakers are elderly, almost no trained teachers who are also proficient or fluent

speakers tend to be available, which makes it difficult to implement immersion programs.

Besides long-term planning to either make First Nations teachers or future teachers proficient in the language, or to put fluent speakers through a teacher education program, a compromise solution exists, which has been tried by some Aboriginal language immersion programs. As in language nest daycares, this involves the teaming up of a non-proficient certified teacher with one or more proficient elders, who teach jointly.

Teamwork is the key here, because the elder needs to be the teacher's "voice," and they need to non-verbally communicate with each other seamlessly. This requires planning, practice and mutual compatibility, but some immersion schools have operated well with such team teaching.

Curriculum and Learning Resources

Aboriginal language teachers in general express an urgent need for both curriculum plans and for learning resources. Compared to core French or French immersion programs, existing amounts of curriculum materials for Aboriginal language programs are minimal. In order to maintain quality immersion programs, a vast amount of learning resources is required on an ongoing basis by teachers.

In addition, as immersion programs progress beyond the early primary grades, in order to meet both linguistic and academic objectives, teachers

and elders need to develop terminology to teach subjects which are otherwise taught in English, e.g. Mathematics (beyond counting, addition and subtraction), Sciences, Social Science, Physical Education, and other subjects. This need can be addressed, but it poses a challenge and requires the collaboration of elders, speakers and educators. The range and amount of curricular resources that need to be developed require financial resources and time. The translation of school subject matter

into the Aboriginal language requires the coining and adaptation of new terms in the native language. Where there is a shortage of speakers/elders who read and write the language or who have experience in curriculum development, it may be necessary to get a certain amount of training in both literacy and curriculum writing.

While all of these issues can be solved, given the right amount of planning, human, and financial

Existing First Nations Language Immersion Programs

Chief Atahm School

Chief Atahm School is located on the Adams Lake Reserve in the Shuswap Nation, and it services members of this and two other nearby Shuswap communities. Members of the community operated a “Language nest” daycare for a couple of years during the early 1990s, whose children then began attending the primary grades of the Band Operated School, which now includes Grades K - 7. Initially, Secwepemctsin (the Shuswap Language) was taught for two hours per day, and was extended to full immersion (instruction entirely in the Aboriginal language) in 1994. As of the Spring of 1998, the School had about 38 students enrolled. The two teachers are speakers of the language who also have teaching certificates, as well as a monolingual English-speaking teacher who teaches English language arts and English language math skills to children in the higher grades. Several elders from the community also work with the teachers and children in the classroom on a part-time basis.

According to an assessment by the Secwepemc language teachers and other speakers of the language, the Chief Atahm immersion students have comprehension and speaking ability of Secwepemctsin which far exceeds that of students in any other Secwepemctsin school program. Since few people of the parent generation speak the language, the students continue to have much better command of English than Secwepemctsin, and tend to use English on the playground and outside of school. The school is trying to address the issue of increased use of the language in the community through Secwepemc language courses for adults.

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resources, the perceived “inadequacy” of the Aboriginal language for curriculum in higher grades may arouse opposition against immersion programs beyond the early primary grades.

A compromise solution, again, may be to offer full immersion until Grades 4 to 5, followed up by a partial immersion program, where some of the core subjects (Science, Math, English language arts) would be taught in English.

Assessment and Evaluation

Like all other school programs and language programs, effective immersion programs require an honest assessment of whether, in both the short and long-term, their objectives are indeed being met. Such evaluation should involve both the linguistic and academic objectives set for the school and its grade levels, as well as community satisfaction and attitude. In addition, the evaluation should assess whether there is a carry-over from the school into the practical use of the language in the home and community. Especially the latter may be goals whose achievement can be measured only after several years of operation of the immersion program.

Follow-up: Further Levels of Schooling

While initially an immersion program may be established at the level of preschool and primary programs, parents and the First Nations community need to set long-term goals for that program and



Picture available in printed version

St'at'imc Language students at a summer immersion program. Centre: Neawana John. Upper St'at'imc Language Culture and Education Society

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for its follow-up. The goals could involve either expanding grade levels each year, which in turn will require ongoing recruitment of students and the human and financial resources to operate the program. It could also mean a potential expansion into a secondary school immersion program. Alternately, it could involve planning with a local school district for a core language program in immediate and secondary grades which will accommodate the competence in the language of the immersion students, and will not set them back to beginner levels.

Another option for follow-up is a community-based after-school program for intermediate and secondary school students which will provide them with continued practice in and use of the language.

Given that First Nations communities must carefully consider and address the above issues, it should be stressed that *Aboriginal language immersion programs which are thoroughly planned and implemented, and combine the teaching of the language in the school with community language revitalization do provide the best bet within the education system's contribution to First Nations language revitalization.* Even if immersion programs are not practicable in view of present shortcomings in financial and/or human resources, they could be long-term goals for a community.

First Nations as Second Language Programs

While few immersion programs exist in British Columbia to date, a large number of First Nations Language as Second Language programs exist throughout the province. Some of these are offered by School Districts, but it appears that the majority are offered by First Nations Band-Operated schools for the exclusive benefit of the community. Some programs have been in existence for 20 years, although, as Kirkness and Bowman (1990) note, after 20 years of “Amerindianization” of schools in Canada, and the instruction of Aboriginal languages in schools is still very limited. Furthermore, most language teachers throughout British Columbia indicate that, to date, First Nations as second language programs have *not* produced proficient speakers of the language.

While no figures on the number of Aboriginal language programs exist for British Columbia, the 1992 AFN survey of language programs for endangered languages (most of which were BC languages) showed that 60% of the communities in this category had access to preschool programs, 65% had access to Elementary programs, 30% had access to Secondary programs, 7% had access to what would be accredited Post-Secondary programs, and 30% of communities had some kind of Adult program, although few of these were accredited post-secondary programs. In sum, the vast majority of programs appear to be at the Pre-school/Elementary level. These programs also tend to be on reserve, likely in Band-Operated schools,

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whereas the majority of Secondary programs are off-reserve, i.e. operated by school districts.

Primary programs (grade levels K-3) and Elementary programs (grades 4-7) tend to be offered as local enrichment programs, offering instruction in the Aboriginal language anywhere between once per week for 45 minutes to 3-5 times per week for 30-40 minutes at a time. As local enrichment programs, they are usually funded out of *targeted funds*.

In Band-Operated schools, Aboriginal language programs are usually funded out of per-capita registered Indian student block funding provided by the Department of Indian Affairs. Since the Department of Indian Affairs has no particular or special provisions for resourcing language programs, First Nations community schools which want to offer Aboriginal language programs are usually faced with doing this at the cost of other urgently needed services, such as learning assistance.

Are Existing Primary Language Programs Useful?

Primary and elementary level Aboriginal language programs tend to offer insufficient instruction in and exposure to First Nations languages. This is due to a variety of factors which include a lack of funding, a lack of recognition of the language, a lack of adequate curriculum, a lack of curriculum and instructional resources, and a lack of trained teachers to carry forth longer blocks of instruction.

What Are Targeted Funds?

In British Columbia, targeted funds are dollars set aside by the Ministry of Education for the benefit of Aboriginal students who attend public schools. Under the terms of the Canadian Constitution, Aboriginal students do not only include status Indians on and off reserve, but also include non-status Indians, Metis and Inuit. Based on enrolments, targeted funds are transferred to schools districts in the province.

How Are Targeted Funds Allocated for Particular Programs?

Since 1994, the Ministry of Education stipulates that School Districts must be accountable in their allocation of Targeted Funds. It thus requires that targeted funds be allocated to particular school programs, or to access services for the benefit of Aboriginal students through local committees of Aboriginal peoples who live within the School District. Targeted funds at present resource an array of programs and services, including First Nations teaching assistants, learning assistance and support, cultural awareness workshops and programs, as well as Aboriginal culture and language programs and their curricula.

Existing language programs tend to operate at the level of fostering appreciation and awareness of the language rather than producing proficiency in the language, which is so urgently needed within First Nations communities in order to preserve the languages. Language educators are well aware of the

Should Public School Aboriginal Language Programs Be Open To All Students or Only Aboriginal Students?

The answer to this question is not easy, and related experiences will vary. Some of the pros of Aboriginal language programs open to everyone, including non-Aboriginal children, may be:

- a guarantee of higher enrolment, which translates into greater financial stability and continuity for the program;
- some elders and First Nations community members take the position that if their language is declining or on the deathbed, they would rather have a few non-Aboriginal children learn it, and share the knowledge of their culture and language; and
- if primary or elementary children are pooled together to receive Aboriginal language instruction, it may work better to find a time slot for all children rather than for First Nations children only, who might then be deprived of some other activity, such as library time, activity centre time, music, or art.

Some factors against opening First Nations language programs to all children are:

- the verbally less aggressive First Nations children may be overwhelmed by the non-Aboriginal children who, often due to more aggressive modes of verbal communication, appear to “learn faster,” thus intimidating or frustrating Aboriginal children;
- there is also fear that a large number of non-Aboriginal students in the classroom, perhaps even the possibility of non-Aboriginal teachers teaching the language in the future, will appropriate these languages from the control and meaning they have in First Nations communities; and
- where students are from multicultural backgrounds, an important principle to preserve the integrity of the Aboriginal language is that the control over the program, its content and way of delivery must be in the hands of the Aboriginal Nation.

fact that it is virtually impossible to become proficient in a second language through a maximum of 90 - 120 minutes of instruction per week, usually offered intermittently in the primary or elementary grades.

Increasing the Amount of Exposure

Where human and financial resources can be found to increase the instruction time and where a well-trained instructor can be found, it should be possible to extend the amount of instruction in primary

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programs, as well as in elementary and secondary programs.

Current guidelines for elementary/primary programs state that about 20% of instruction can involve locally developed curriculum. This would actually result in up to an hour of exposure to and/or teaching of the Aboriginal language per day. This is only useful, however, if the teacher is well-trained to deliver an hour-long program each day without students losing interest, with adequate classroom management, and with a range of activities and resources which support the language.

It also requires some effort to persuade the local school district to set aside this amount of time for a language program and to not get short changed due to the school arguing that no time slots of 45-60 minutes per day are available for dedication to instruction of and in the Aboriginal. Programs that involve up to an hour a day in the Aboriginal language could actually be partial immersion programs, where the language is not taught as a subject only, but where the language can enhance the social, emotional, intellectual and physical skills of young students, which are indeed the four goal areas of the British Columbia primary education program.

Increasing the Quality of Instruction

Many Aboriginal language programs would benefit from a curriculum plan with specified goals and objectives, which places the instruction in the specific Aboriginal language within the context of

the state of the language, and the goals of the First Nations communities which sustain it. Such an overall plan can be initiated as a part of community language planning and needs the input and support of elders, parents and other community members, who then must persuade the local school district to respect and support these goals and their implementation. This master plan should and can reflect First Nations traditional values and ways of teaching, instead of being dictated by the regulations and standards of the school district alone.

It is equally important to have a curriculum plan with a stated scope and sequence (see below, Section VII), and which states, for each grade level, learning outcomes, methods of instruction, modes of assessment and learning resources. In this way, a primary language program can result in progress by learners throughout the three to four years of instruction.

7.4 Existing Secondary School Aboriginal Language Programs

For numerous First Nations languages throughout B.C., in both public schools and First Nations operated schools, there exist locally approved second language courses. Courses approved by the local school board usually provide elective credit towards graduation, but at least until recently, they in general did *not* meet the Grade 11 language requirement towards graduation. They also do/did not meet language requirements set for University entrance by public institutions, unless students apply

What Are the Requirements for Secondary School Graduation and University Entry?

Provincial Regulations through the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MoEST) for Graduation from Secondary School

A second language in Grades 9 through 12 is not a graduation requirement from secondary school. However, the MoEST language template notes that study of a second language from Grades 9 through 12 “is necessary for many students who will continue their education or training in colleges, universities, or post-secondary institutions, or in workplace situations that require understanding of a second language.” (Template, p. 3).

Regulations for Admission and Degree Completion by B.C. Post-Secondary Institutions

Community colleges and University colleges generally have no secondary school language requirement for admission.

Universities have either or both of the following language requirements:

- 1) Language requirement for admission: in order to qualify for admission to BC universities following BC Grade 12, students need to have completed, among other subjects, a provincially recognized Grade 11 language course;
- 2) Some BC Universities and University Colleges also have second language requirements for Graduation with a Degree. For example, the University of British Columbia’s and University of Victoria’s Faculties of Arts require completion of 6 credit hours (two courses) of a second language. Simon Fraser University and University of Northern British Columbia have no language requirements for University degrees.

To date, these institutions will consider Aboriginal languages as meeting language requirements, but only on a case by case basis, and upon special request to the University’s Office of the Registrar. This request tends to be referred to the linguistics departments of the universities, where it is considered by Aboriginal language specialists who then make a recommendation to the Office of the Registrar.

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to have their language course recognized as constituting a valid academic language requirement on a case by case basis.

Secondary school language programs which exist at grade levels 8-12 face a number of problems and issues, all of which can be overcome. Like primary and elementary programs, secondary programs are in need of curriculum plans and age-appropriate instructional resources. In many secondary programs, students tend not to progress in their learning, but review the same subject matter year after year. This, incidentally, holds true for many primary and intermediate programs, as well. Although they learn a limited range of common words and some expressions, very few students develop Aboriginal language proficiency through Secondary School First Nations language programs.

What holds true for teaching issues at the primary/elementary level is even more acute at the Secondary School level. There is a tremendous lack of language teachers trained to deliver language programs at the secondary level. Most language teachers who have received training through courses, workshops, and in-service, and who have teaching experience tend to have gained/received it at the elementary school level. Secondary school levels require different teaching methods and skills, different curriculum planning, as well as different modes and tools of assessment of student progress than primary/elementary programs. Classroom management skills for the secondary school level also require particular training and education. Many

Aboriginal language teachers feel that there is a need for classroom management skills for the secondary level.

There also exists a lack of consistency in the offering and scheduling of Secondary school Aboriginal language courses. In few locations can students at the Grade 8-12 levels count on five years of the study of a language in sequence.

The annual scheduling of courses itself is often a handicap for students' progress in learning an Aboriginal language through secondary school programs. The best way to learn a second language in school is in continuous increments throughout the grades, i.e. through regular instruction ten months of each year. However, many school districts schedule language courses in a double block for one semester of the year. The end result is that students can have the language for one semester of school (five months), such as September to January of Year 1, with a seven month gap until the next course (September to January of Year 2). In some cases they even face a 12 month gap, if the follow-up course is not offered until the second semester of Year 2.

These observations may sound discouraging. However, teachers' skills, scheduling, curriculum, and resources can be improved, given the will of the schools and school district, and the human and financial resources to develop curriculum plans and resources and assist teachers with teaching and classroom management skills.

*Can Secondary Programs Be Successful in Producing Proficient Speakers?
A Question of Standards and Assessment Criteria*

In general, the BC policy of second language programs emphasizes and promotes the communicative approach to language teaching, and “This approach is premised on the position that the aim of language education is communication for a purpose and it is easier to learn a language when it can be practised in context” (*British Columbia*, 1996, p.3).

On the one hand, this policy is compatible with the idea that, in view of the endangered state of BC Aboriginal languages, the use and function of language in everyday communication needs to be taught, emphasized and nourished. On the other hand, aimed at educating the broad spectrum of BC students from different ethnic backgrounds, the policy does not emphasize the development of a particular level of proficiency in a second language. Its broad-based *standards* are set so students will be able to function in a French-speaking setting, to communicate information, make themselves understood, ask directions, and get by. As parents can attest, few students of French as a Second Language become proficient speakers of French through existing school programs. Few students in British Columbia have much need and occasion to practice their French outside of the classroom.

In this context, Aboriginal language programs, despite an inequity of resources and training opportunities, will have no difficulty meeting the standards of second language education in B.C. once curriculum plans and instructional resources are in place. Whether these standards address the *needs* of Aboriginal languages and their communities is another matter.

7.5 The Issue of Standards

“Standards refers to something that is set up as a rule to be measured, or a model to be followed.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1991). In education, standards provide a way of structuring learning in order to meet a mandate that has been set. Standards are tied to assessment, in that ways must be provided to measure the success or lack of success of the program and of the student within the system.

With regard to standards in education, Aboriginal people have, at least until recently, been in a situation in which the outside, dominant society has sets standards on their behalf. As Aboriginal people’s experiences with the public school system show, and as statistics about drop-out rates show, standards imposed by the dominant society’s education system have more often than not shortchanged the interests of Aboriginal people. They have done little to improve learning, and they have not even adequately measured the performance of Aboriginal students. It has been pointed out by Aboriginal educators that standards set by the public system

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generally have failed to address the particular context of the Aboriginal culture of the student and of Aboriginal learning styles (Jack, 1997).

Last but not least, standards in education have been continually imposed by an outside system, rather

than being developed by First Nations themselves.

Today, in cases where Aboriginal language education is part of the public education system, it is subject to the standards of the non-Aboriginal education system, usually set in principle by the Minis-

Sample Suggested Assessment Strategies

(from: *Draft: Secwepemctsin 5 - 12 Integrated Resource Package, adapted from the BC Ministry of Education 5 - 12 Language Template, 1997*)

At the secondary school level, some students might feel awkward trying to communicate in a new language. Risk taking is an important part of learning a language. Students should be encouraged to practice their new Secwepemc language skills, both within the classroom and with speakers of the language outside of the classroom. Errors should be seen and used as part of the learning process.

As students participate in oral activities (Total Physical Response Routines, show and tell, games), keep a checklist to record students' comprehension skills and, later, speaking skills. Some of this can be carried out through work in small groups. You should also:

- observe students as they interact in the classroom, in small groups and individually;
- collect and observe students' work, eg. a journal or log of new terms and phrases they have learned, along with scrap-book items, drawings, cut and paste materials ...; and
- give comprehension quizzes (teacher says a set of vocabulary items or phrases, students record their English meaning).

Observe and note evidence that students:

- listen attentively;
- choose the appropriate expression for the occasion;
- have increasingly comprehensible pronunciation of Group A, B, and C sounds in that order (described more fully in an appendix); and
- take risks in speaking the language.

try of Education through the *School Act* and other legislation and policies (e.g. the *BC Language Education Policy*), and in detail by school districts and schools.

Where Aboriginal language education is offered in a First Nations operated school, the issue is more complicated. First Nations operated schools are technically outside of the standards of the school system. This is positive on the one hand, in that it allows for autonomy to set one's own standards, and flexibility in addressing the local needs and situation of the community and learners.

On the other hand, graduates of First Nations schools may be at a disadvantage, because when they apply to a post-secondary institutions, their courses may not be viewed as equivalent to provincial courses, because it may not be clear whether the students' performance has been evaluated according to provincial standards. If it is a course for which provincial standards have not been set, such as a First Nations Language course, it may be disqualified off the top and not counted as an academic course.

For its language programs, and in general, it is therefore important for First Nations schools to set and maintain standards, and ways of articulating these standards with the provincial system. Articulation means being able to compare them in objectives and content in order to have them recognized as equivalent or similar where this is useful.

At present, First Nations schools are working together on addressing the issue of Standards through the First Nations Schools Association and the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Setting and maintaining standards is tied to the principles of assessment and evaluation; if one sets a certain standard at a desirable level, this is only meaningful if one plans and implements ways to check, on an ongoing basis (i.e. assessment) and at certain intervals in time (evaluation), whether: a) the program design and implementation works so that these standards are met (we refer to this as program evaluation); and b) students in the program meet these standards, and to what degree. We refer to this as student assessment and evaluation.

In the public school system, the Ministry of Education provides policies and guidelines for assessment and evaluation, which are circulated to school districts. Moreover, the new Second Language Policy discussed below sets standards for language education between Grades 5 and 12 in the public school system, including ways to assess and evaluate whether students meet these standards. However, the difficulty with these is that they were set mainly with French language education and heritage language education (German, Chinese, Punjabi) in mind, and do not address the particular and critical situation of BC Aboriginal languages or the situations in which these are taught.

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Following his findings about the crucial importance of re-establishing the intergenerational transmission of a language, Joshua Fishman, whose eight-stage approach to language planning we discussed in Section V, proposes that the only valid assessment criterion for Aboriginal language programs is: does the [proposed or existing] program promote the continuity of intergenerational language transmission? In other words: Does the program: a) provide the student with a level of proficiency so that he/she can use the language in the community and use it with such confidence and ease that he/she will speak it with his/her own children?; and b) provide incentives and measures for re-integrating the actual use of the language outside of the school, in the Aboriginal household and community?

In view of the inevitable importance of re-establishing intergenerational mother tongue transmission, the standards for First Nations language programs, whose goal it is to help revive the language with the help of schools, must ultimately go beyond setting a minimal level of functionality in the language, or measuring academic achievement within the classroom. Instead, they must be wholistic, in that they must address such factors as achievement of competence in the language and, more importantly, the transfer of this competence into the use of the language beyond the school grounds.

I noted earlier that not all Aboriginal language programs can or do set the revival of full fluency as

their goal. Aboriginal language programs which are local enrichment programs teach an appreciation of the language and cultural knowledge and skills. These programs have a valuable place in the curriculum, and should obviously be evaluated according to the objectives they set, which will be less focused on competence in the language and more on knowledge about and skills in the culture.

7.6 The New Second Language Education Policy of the BC Ministry of Education: Grades 5 -12

By 1996, as we noted, many Aboriginal language programs had been in operation in public schools for a decade or two, although generally not as core language programs. Core French was widely available as a core second language course between Grades 8-12, and in many school districts also in some form at the elementary school level. In addition, School Districts in the more populated areas of the province offered French Immersion (Programme Cadre Francais) in one or more of their schools. As well, in some areas of the province, heritage languages such as Punjabi, German, Chinese (Mandarin) or Japanese were offered in secondary schools, and curriculum plans for these programs were well established.

In the Fall of 1996, the British Columbia Ministry of Skills, Education and Training (as it was then called) issued a new Second Languages Policy for schools titled "Language Education in B.C. Schools: Policy and Guidelines." This new language

Excerpt from Policy Circular Number 97 - 03***Date of Issue: March 5, 1997******Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Skills, and Training***

The Purpose of this policy circular is to describe the language education policy, especially the second language requirement for grades 5-8.

POLICY

1. All students are expected to achieve proficiency in one of the official languages of Canada, either English or French
2. Francophone children whose parents qualify for minority language rights under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are eligible to receive French as the language of instruction.
3. All students, especially those of Aboriginal ancestry, should have opportunities to learn an Aboriginal Language.
4. The ministry encourages opportunities for all students to learn languages that are significant within their communities.
5. English and French will be taught as first languages, all other languages will be taught as second languages.
6. All students must take a second language as part of the curriculum in grades 5-8, except where students are:
 - identified as having special needs or are receiving English as a second language services (ESL); and
 - unable to demonstrate their learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes of the second language course; or
 - enrolled in Late French immersion in Grade 6.
7. School boards will choose which second languages will be offered. Core French will be the language offered if the school board does not offer an alternative.
8. Only second language curricula, which have education program guides listed in the Education Program Guide Order, are eligible to meet the second language requirement for grades 5-8.
9. Students must take a second language in Grade 8 now. Other aspects of the policy will be phased-in as follows:
 - students must take a second language in grades 5-7 beginning September 1997;
 - language curricula used to satisfy the second language requirement in grades 5-8 must be listed in the Education Program Guide Order by September 1997
10. School boards may develop their own second language curricula for elective or additional language studies as permitted under the Local Programs Order.
11. School boards may apply to the Ministry to have their locally developed second language curricula given provincial approval. (A locally developed second language curriculum which has received provincial approval is eligible to meet the second language requirement for grades 5 - 8).

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policy has major implications for the future status and content of Aboriginal language programs throughout the Province.

The Language Education Policy was developed against the backdrop of the federal official and minority languages policy (see above, Section III). Its objectives are:

- 1) That all students in British Columbia become proficient in English;
- 2) That minority Francophone children can be educated in French (see *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*); and
- 3) It makes particular reference to Aboriginal Languages by noting:

The provincial government acknowledges the need to promote Aboriginal language and culture programs in British Columbia schools because they are indigenous to this province and are endangered. These languages should receive the benefit of extraordinary policy consideration. The government supports the need for understanding among cultures and encourages access to these languages for all students wherever possible.”

It adds that:

“School boards are encouraged to support the language preferences of the local Aboriginal peoples. Boards should consult with Aboriginal communities to determine which languages may be offered in schools.

The Ministry of Education, Skills and Training will consider requests to financially support curriculum development for

Aboriginal languages in addition to existing language and cultural funding already provided.”

- 4) It deals with second language education, with the following provisions: it “endorses” (but does not require) the learning of additional languages from K to Grade 4, and it regulates that all students, except students exempted through a special needs provision, *must* take a second language in grades 5-8 from 1997/98 on. Moreover, it requests that by the 1997/98 school year “eligible curricula to satisfy the second language requirement in grades 5-8 must be provincially approved.”

For Grade levels 9 - 12 (where language is not mandatory, since attendance in school is not mandatory), curricula need to be approved by the Ministry, although locally developed second language curricula can be approved as provincial curriculum by the Ministry. The Ministry further noted that it would “consider approving provincial curricula for second languages in consultation with school boards and local communities,” and promised that a language template would be provided to help school boards develop language curriculum.

This template, in the form of a generic Grade 5 to 12 second language Integrated Resource Package (IRP), was issued and distributed in February 1997, although its computer disc-format which was promised at the same time was not distributed by the time of this writing (see below for a detailed discussion of IRPs). Provincially approved curricula have since been developed for French, and for the

heritage languages Punjabi, Japanese, Mandarin, German, and Spanish.

An important consideration when First Nations communities consider developing an IRP is, where languages are approved by the local school board and by the Ministry of Education for instruction at the Grade 5-12 level, the funds for language instruction will come out of district funds for instruction, rather than targeted funds or other initiatives. However, the offering of language instruction in this manner is then also subject to continuous school board approval which, according to the Ministry, is to be based on enrolment, as well as other factors. Aboriginal languages which are offered in this fashion, then, must consistently have sufficient enrolment in order to be offered continuously.

The ministerial approval of a language program involves the following steps: following an assessment of need by the local community and the School Board, the School Board initiates the IRP development and notifies the Ministry's Curriculum and Resources Branch. A development team is then established, which develops the draft IRP. The draft IRP must be approved by the School Board, which forwards it to the Ministry for review and response (see *Languages Template Development Package*, p.5).

By early 1997, the situation that emerged for Aboriginal language programs from the new Language Education Policy was as follows: for all Aboriginal languages programs at the Grade 5-7 or 5-8 level,

the new policy meant that in order for students to be able to take the Aboriginal language as a recognized second language, it needed almost instant provincial approval (i.e. by Fall, 1997). Otherwise, students would have to switch to another provincially approved language, usually French, with the local First Nations language being sanctioned as an "enrichment" course only, but not as satisfying the language policy.

When they considered these implications, First Nations communities feared that the new policy would put the future of many First Nations language programs in jeopardy. Subsequently, the Ministry released a Ministerial Order which enables locally developed Aboriginal language courses to fill the language requirements, as an alternative to approval under the template. The Ministry noted that this alternative was developed "because of apprehension that the strict requirement of the template would eliminate Aboriginal programs. This alternative gives local language programs the status of Provincially approved courses." (Henderson, MoEST, 1997).

There were and are difficulties regarding protocol, First Nations /School District communications, the and appropriateness of language programs developed under the new policy. Some of the difficulties which have been noted by First Nations educators and language teachers at meetings include (see *FNESC Aboriginal Language Sub-committee Meeting Minutes*, April 1997):

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- since not all school boards have good working relationships with Aboriginal communities and First Nations, in many cases information about the Language policy and IRPs was not passed on to local aboriginal language organizations and/or First Nations, let alone Aboriginal language teachers;
- no process is in place for mandatory input into, let alone autonomy over, Aboriginal language IRPs by First Nations language communities. Under existing policy and guidelines, school districts, if they choose, can develop Aboriginal language IRPs without the participation of First Nations communities. Moreover, school district boundaries and Aboriginal language boundaries do not match. At present, many School Districts include more than one Aboriginal language, which means that they either have to prioritize which language is to be developed, or ignore Aboriginal language IRP development. Other Aboriginal nations/languages find themselves in more than one school district (for example, Shuswap is represented in five districts!), and are caught up in the bureaucracy of the Districts which provide little opportunity or incentive for speakers/teachers of the language to work together on IRPs;
- there was poor communication between the Ministry and First Nations regarding the policy and its effect, but especially with regard to the approval process for IRPs;
- the language template is not entirely appropriate to the objectives, meaningful learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and cultural context of Aboriginal languages. At the same time, the existing template indicates that large sections “must not be modified” and “must appear in your language IRP exactly as written in the Languages Template.” There is very little First Nations input and/or expertise at the Ministry level into the approval of Aboriginal language IRPs; and
- while the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training has since declared that languages can be approved without IRPs, the latter are still recommended in order to obtain approval and recognition of First Nations languages in the BC school system.

Excerpt from BC Ministry of Education, Skills and Training Ministerial Order to Amend BC Second Language Policy

...adding the following section:

Local Aboriginal Language Course

5.1 Despite Sections 4 and 5, a board may offer to a student in grades 5 to 8 an educational program in a second language which does not meet the learning outcomes set out in an educational program guide if that program is:

- a) a local Aboriginal language course developed in accordance with Ministerial Order 147/80, the Local Programs Order; and
- b) a board has entered into an agreement with the Council of a Band for the provision of the local Aboriginal language course as part of a student’s educational program.

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To deal with some of these concerns, the new Ministerial Order requires that local Aboriginal language courses can only be developed if a school board enters into an agreement with a First Nations community to provide courses.

The new languages policy also has implications for Aboriginal children currently in Aboriginal language programs in First Nations or Band-Operated schools, which themselves do not technically fall under the policy. For example:

- it may be difficult for Grade 5 - 12 Aboriginal language programs at Band-Operated schools to be recognized by the school system, unless the Aboriginal language already has provincial approval through the process laid out above. It is still unclear to what degree the Ministerial Order remedies this situation.
- students who attend a Band-Operated school where a local Aboriginal language that is not provincially approved is offered at the elementary school level (Grades 5-7) and then move on to a public secondary school will likely have to take French or another approved language in at least Grade 8 (where a second language is required), but without having had French in Grades 5 through 7.

This discussion raises more questions than it answers. However, some guidelines for action by local Aboriginal language organizations or teachers are:

- ➔ Contact your school district for a copy of the Language Education Policy and a copy of the language template;

- ➔ If you engage in language planning in the community, discuss the language education policy and its consequences. Look for community input as to if and how to have your Aboriginal language approved;
- ➔ Contact representatives from your school district, and/or discuss this situation with other communities that share your language, or with your local First Nations organizations, and/or First Nations liaison with the School District. Have any of them dealt with this issue? Are approved language programs and IRPs being developed or discussed by any of your First Nations communities in liaison with the District?; and
- ➔ Meet with your school district to clarify and discuss these issues.

7.7 Aboriginal Language Programs and Special Needs Children

The 1996 BC Language Education policy allows for the exemption of special needs students, but states that “students with special needs should not be exempted from learning a second language unless they cannot meet the expected learning outcomes of that language course.”

Only recently have data been collected by First Nations communities which support the tremendous need for special needs education in First Nations schools. The need for educational programs for special needs students is at a crisis level; studies have shown that between 20% and 30% of students in a sampling of First Nations schools suffer from severe learning disabilities caused by Fetal Alcohol Effect, behavioural problems, dyslexia and

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other special needs syndromes (First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA) and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), 1998). Additional students were reported as having mild learning disabilities which nonetheless require help and intervention.

At this time, public special needs funding does not cover First Nations schools. As a consequence, “the situation of First Nations schools ... is strikingly ironic. More is known today about how to educate children with special needs, about how to design and deliver effective programs and services, as well as how to identify, diagnose, place, treat and report the progress made by students with special needs. At the same time, First Nations schools do not have the resources necessary to take advantage of that increase in knowledge” (FNSEA and FNESC, 1998, p.4).

To address this serious crisis, the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the First Nations School Association have recommended the following actions:

- a) Assessment and Intervention Planning
- b) Program and Service Development and Implementation

c) Research and Evaluation to determine the extent of special needs and the nature of special needs of First Nations students.

Aboriginal parents and educators often ask the question: “should children with learning disabilities learn their Aboriginal language in the school?” This question has no easy answer. On the one hand, many Aboriginal language teachers in both the elementary and secondary classroom report that being taught the language by what is often an elder from their community provides a certain comfort level and positive experience for students with special needs, who are reported to function better in

the Aboriginal language classroom than with their classroom teachers in other subjects.

At the same time, special needs children

can become a burden on a language teacher, who is moreover seldom trained to respond to and work with special needs children. Moreover, it is important to stress that difficulties with memorizing and other skills of special needs students can make the learning of a second language more difficult. While a “normal” child may need about 12 repetitions of a word or phrase until it goes into memory, a special needs child may need between 50 and 100 repetitions of the same word or phrase until he or she masters it.

If and where Aboriginal language revival is a priority for First Nations communities and schools, it would be very useful to address and research the issue of Aboriginal language education and special needs. No research or knowledge base on this topic exists at this time.

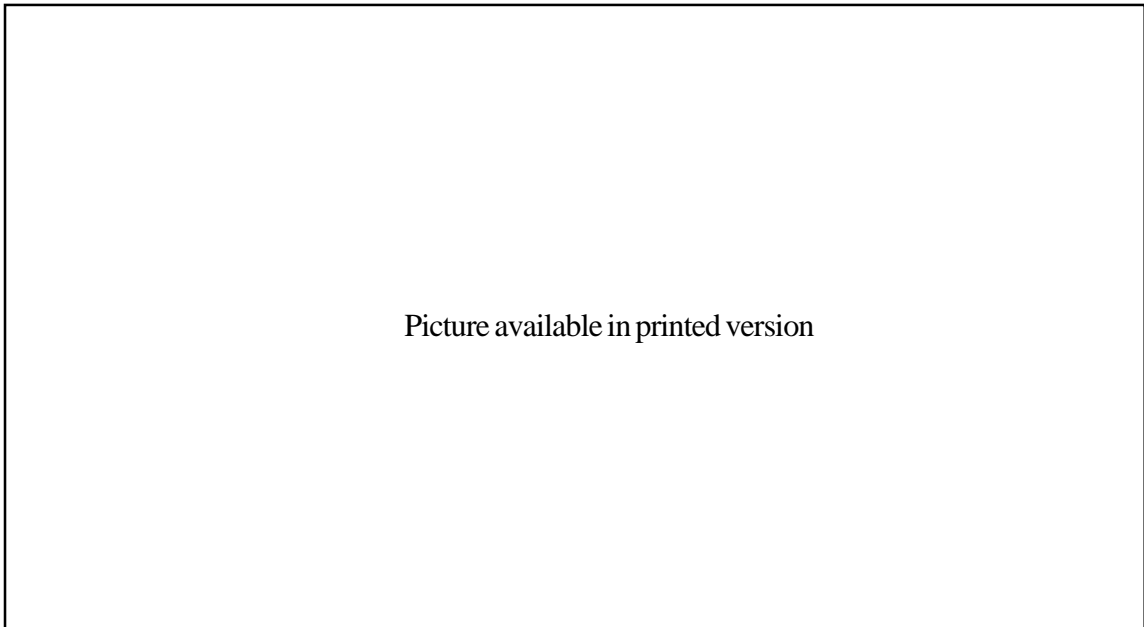
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These are issues that an Aboriginal language teacher needs to be aware of, rather than issues which should prevent special needs children from learning their language. Ideally, special needs children should benefit from learning assistance while learning an Aboriginal language. However, this assistance is often difficult to find and access. Aboriginal language instruction should be provided by a well-trained teacher, in a

setting in which the student feels comfortable, and which encourages his/her motivation to learn.

There is an important need for basic education, training and in-service of Aboriginal language teachers in the area of special needs education in so far as it relates to effectively teaching an Aboriginal language, and in so far as it relates to setting and meeting meaningful learning outcomes for special needs children.

Ideally, learning their Aboriginal language should and could have the function of helping a student's intellectual, emotional and social development at the primary grades, supporting the further development of memory skills and analytic skills at later grade levels. If and how this translates into practice, however, is little understood at this time.



Participants at a Total Physical Response Language Teaching Workshop, Kamloops, 1997.

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7.8 Aboriginal Language Education for Adults: What Exists and What Works

As we saw earlier, one of the major handicaps in the revival of British Columbia Aboriginal languages is the fact that most languages have virtually no fluent speakers in the young adult generation -- that is the people of childbearing age. Given the factors which we discussed in Section II (i.e. the changed lifestyles and communication habits, the omnipresence of English), it is virtually impossible for young children of a First Nations community to acquire their Aboriginal language in the home and from caregivers. Moreover language education in schools, even immersion, is less effective where the children cannot go home to parents or other caregivers to practice and use the language. Many First Nations communities have therefore recognized the need for Adult language courses.

Unfortunately, spontaneously organized courses which gather adults for two to three hours one evening per week tend not to last. Participants' family commitments or other priorities, or frustration with the pace of the course or their own slow progress, often cause them to drop out after a few weeks.

In recent years, a number of First Nations communities and organizations, together with universities, have begun to offer adult credit courses in particular Aboriginal languages. These courses offer a structure and framework for language learning,

as well as defined objectives and ways of assessing participants' progress. As credit courses, they have the added advantage that participants can integrate them into certificates, degrees, or diplomas in First Nations Studies, Education or other disciplines. Usually, participants can also sit in on these courses on a non-credit basis. In the Aboriginal institutes which offer them, they tend to be taught by a team of linguists and fluent speakers, or by fluent speakers of the language who have a background in teaching, often assisted and monitored by one or more elder fluent speakers of the languages.

The only constraint is that these courses are relatively costly, especially for small groups of participants, and they require some organizational and administrative work (i.e. admission and registration of students, maintaining student records). While Aboriginal language credit courses are not necessarily every community's solution to adult language learning, they have recruited a steady number of students where they have been offered.

The Secwepemc Cultural Education Society (SCES), in liaison with Simon Fraser University (SFU), began courses in Secwepemc language in Kamloops in 1991. Six courses in the Secwepemc language are now available at the Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level. At the request of the Cariboo Tribal Council, SCES/SFU also began Shuswap language courses in 1995 for the Northern Shuswap communities in the Williams Lake area. Recently, the Adams Lake commu-

nity, which operates the Chief Atahm Shuswap language immersion school, has also been offering adult Shuswap language courses through SCES/SFU. At the request of students and language teachers, SCES/SFU developed an eight-course certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency in 1995. A few students have now completed this certificate; about 12 others will have completed it in the near future.

Some First Nations groups have carried out needs assessments to survey the interest in adult language programs, and to find out what kind of adult language programs might work. The Nicola Valley First Nations, the Scwaxmx, whose languages are Nle7kepmxcin and Okanagan (Nsilxcin) carried out an extensive Nicola Valley Language Feasibility Study, and found that many community members were interested in learning the language and thus recommended adult courses and other ways of organizing the increased use of the languages in public (M. Jimmie, *Nicola Valley Language Feasibility Study*, 1992). Since 1993, Nle7kepmxcin courses have been offered in Merritt through the SCES/SFU Program in Kamloops. As of 1997, introductory courses have been offered through the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

Likewise, the Upper St'at'imc determined in a feasibility study that St'at'imc adults in the Lillooet area wanted to learn and improve their knowledge of their language. Since 1992, the Upper St'at'imc Language, Culture and Education Society, in conjunction with the SCES/SFU Program, have pro-

vided St'at'imc language courses in Lillooet. A cohort of Lillooet people have now completed six to eight levels of courses in St'at'imcets, and about 15 have completed the SCES/SFU Certificate First Nations Language Proficiency for St'at'imcets. One student of the language courses, although she started as a beginner, has learned the language well enough that the Upper St'at'imc Language Authority certified her as a proficient speaker, and she now teaches the language in a public school.

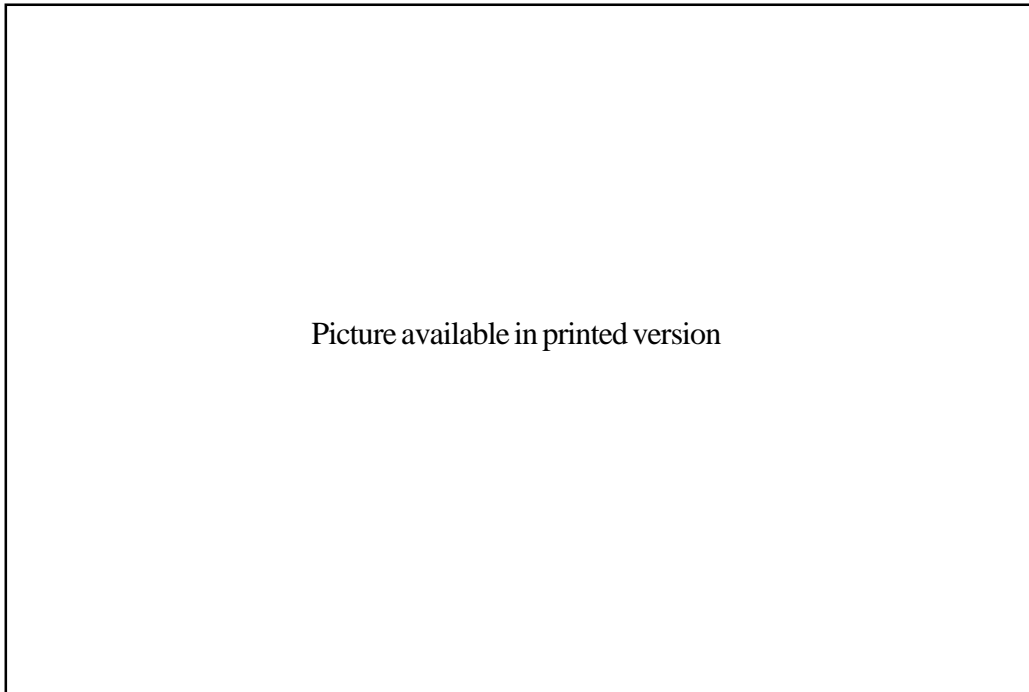
The Mount Currie Cultural Centre also offers Lower St'at'imc language courses in conjunction with SCES/SFU. Many of the students are already somewhat proficient in the language and have improved their speaking skills and reading/writing skills through these courses.

Recently, the Sto:lo Nation in Chilliwack has begun offering Halq'emeylem courses in conjunction with SCES/SFU, which are attended by 20-30 people.

The En'owkin Centre in Penticton, which serves the Okanagan people, has offered courses in conversational Nsilxcin (Okanagan language) and in reading/writing the language for several years, mainly during the summers.

For the past few years, the University of Northern British Columbia has delivered Aboriginal language courses to First Nations in Northwestern British Columbia. The courses which have been taught in partnership with Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a have

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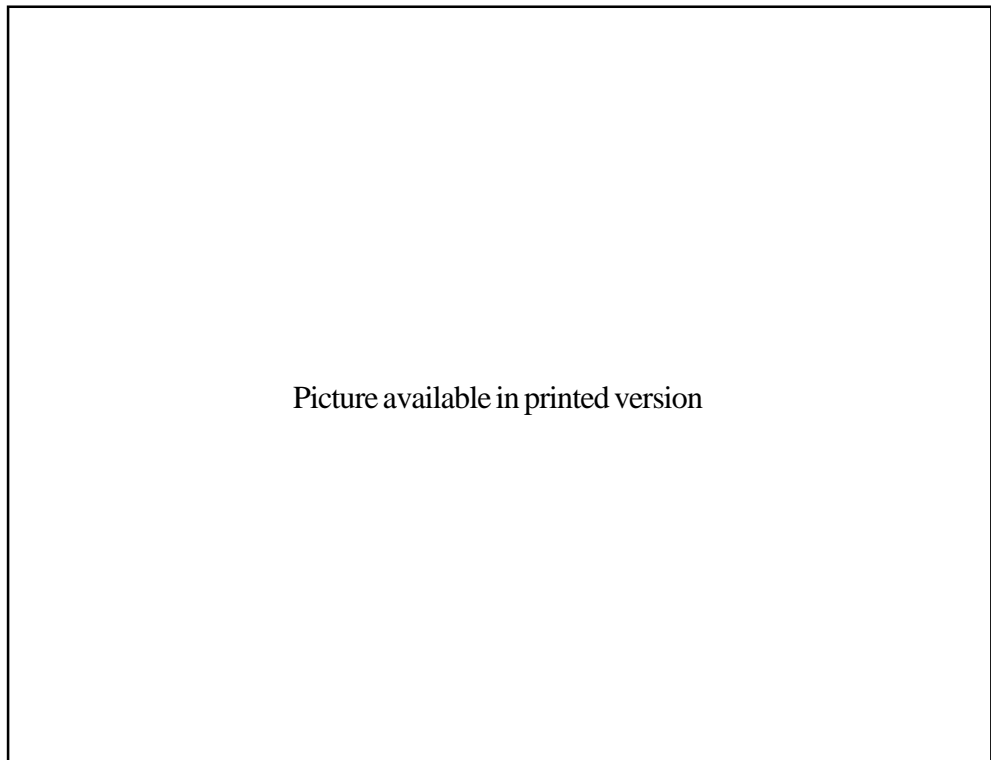


Okanagan Language Association Instructors presentation at Douglas Lake, B.C., Upper Nicola Band

from upper left:

Joe Saddleman, Sara Pierre, Delphine Derricksen, William Qualtier, Sarah Peterson, Andrew McGinnis, unknown, Theresa Tom and granddaughter, Hazel Squakin, Grace Greyeyes, Theresa Dennis

Presentation at the U.N.N. Friendship Centre, Vernon B.C. First of the eleven presentations of the language and curriculum materials developed by the Okanagan Language Association Instructors. The group was also recruiting new students to enroll in the Language Program at the Enowkin Centre, Penticton, B.C.



Picture available in printed version

Okanagan Language One Week Immersion Class

The En'owkin Centre runs an Okanagan Language Program aimed at training speakers of the Okanagan language to become Okanagan Language instructors. We all know that one who speaks the language -- any language -- is not automatically qualified to teach that language. The rules of language are largely subconscious, and only after serious analysis can one venture into the classroom to teach. The En'owkin Centre offers a series of courses that prepare students for level one entry as certified language instructors in the public school. All of the courses carry University of British Columbia credit, and the education courses train students in all aspects of classroom preparation and performance. The Linguistics courses train in linguistic analysis.

The En'owkin Centre and its staff were also mandated with setting and operating a one-week language immersion course at Owl Rock Camp from July 5 to July 9, 1993.

In April 1985, concerned elders decided on a uniform writing system for writing the language, but speaking the language at this camp was the primary concern of all Okanagan families and other interested persons.

The concept of the camp was total immersion language speaking for one week. Upon arrival, students attended a one-half day orientation in Okanagan, and then everyone tried not to speak English for the duration of the camp, except in dire or extreme circumstances. Each language teacher was assigned to a task or situation for their part of the program. They rotated at the pleasure of the Language Coordinator. Language activities were furnished to each of the instructors for their groups. Each group was organized into teams. All activities were under the supervision of the language instructors.

(Information from the En'owkin Centre Language Camp Information Kit).

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been particularly extensive. They have involved four levels of the Nisga'a language, which have been combined with courses in Nisga'a culture and other aspects. The first cohorts of students will graduate with a Bachelor's degree from UNBC in the near future, and the Nisga'a communities found the courses very productive in producing and improving adults' fluency in Nisga'a (Deanna Nyce, 1998). The Nisga'a courses were taught by fluent speakers/elders of the language.

Also in collaboration with UNBC, the Tsimshian Tribal Council has offered courses in Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian), taught by a linguist together with local elders. Likewise, UNBC has offered courses in Haisla.

UNBC's courses in the Carrier language are restricted to Prince George, with no courses through the Yinka Dene Language Institute or Carrier reserve communities.

Recently, the University of British Columbia has also begun to offer a course in the Musqueam dialect of Halq'emeylem.

In addition to the university level courses in First Nations languages, some First Nations organizations also offer First Nations language courses in adult basic education programs.

Are adult courses effective?

While they tend not to quickly produce large numbers of fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages, adult courses seem, by and large, to be regarded as the most effective vehicle in adult language education. To date, they have been important vehicles in producing small cohorts of younger people who have progressed from understanding their Aboriginal language to speaking it, and some students have even learned them from scratch.

In addition, a good number adults who are speakers of Aboriginal languages have gained very good literacy (reading and writing) skills through such courses. While university or college credit courses should by no means be regarded as the only way to bring the language to younger adults, language educators in the above First Nations communities see them as crucial and successful vehicles in making study of the language available to local adults (personal communications with: Bev Frank (Lillooet), Mandy Jimmie (Merritt), Deanna Nyce (Nisga'a), Mona Jules (Secwepemc), Donna Gerdts (Halq'emeylem), 1998).

Nisga'a Language and Culture Course

In cooperation with the University of Northern British Columbia, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a offers the following courses:

- * Issues in internal organization for contemporary indigenous people of the world;
- * Community-based research project applying First Nations research methods;
- * Art and material culture of the Nisga'a Nation;
- * First Nations health and healing;
- * Nisga'a religion and philosophy;
- * Nisga'a environmental philosophy and knowledge;
- * Advances seminar in Nisga'a studies -- extending the discipline;
- * The literature of the Nisga'a Nation;
- * Nisga'a songs and poetry;
- * Nisga'a speeches and stories;
- * A study of Nisga'a and its linguistic relatives;
- * Nisga'a Lexicography;
- * Nisga'a culture (levels 1, 2, 3 and 4);
- * Methods and perspectives in First Nations studies;
- * Seminar in First Nations studies -- defining questions for the discipline;
- * Nisga'a oral literature;
- * Issues in external relations for contemporary BC First Nations;
- * Issues in external relations for contemporary Canadian First Nations;
- * Issues in external relations for contemporary indigenous peoples in the world; and
- * Seminar in First Nations studies -- sources for the development of the discipline.

(From Information Submitted by the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a)

The Sto:lo Halq'emeylem Language Classes are Moving Forward in 1998 – Blessed With the Guidance of the Elders to Assist in the Revival of the Language

We, the students body of the Sto:lo Halq'emeylem Language Classes are fortunate to have three Sto:lo Elders on hand to guide us in the revival of the language for the Sto:lo Nation.

The Elders who committed to the revival of the Halq'emeylem language and are with us most of the time are: Yomelot (Roseline George), Xwiyolemot (Tillie Gutierrez), and Elizabeth Herrling. These are the Elders that work alongside our teacher and mentor, Tseloyothelwet – Shirley Norris.

We have been asked to sing at various funerals and wakes for our Sto:lo people.

In April of 1997, the classes started to perform at different functions within the Sto:lo territory by request, singing at the opening ceremonies for the Tzeachten Community Center, holding mini-lessons for the Seabird Island - Sto:lo New Year Celebration and even putting together a skit for the Elders at Christmas.

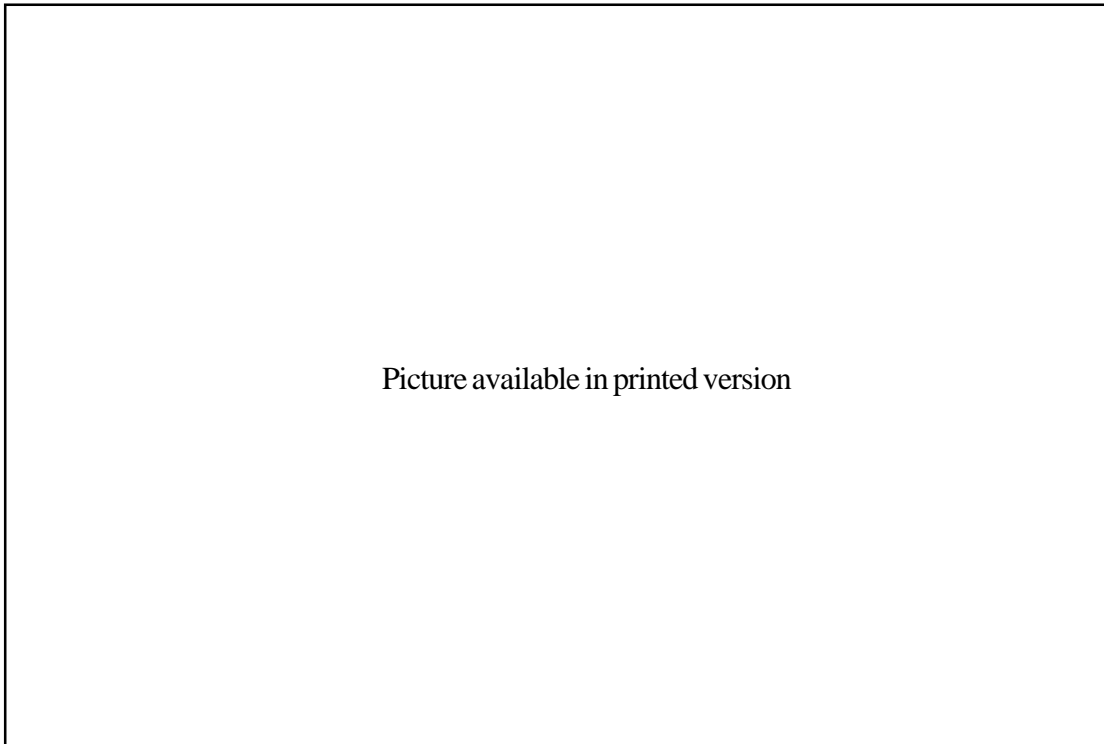
Tseloyothelwet put together a tape of Christmas songs to sell, and these tapes are still available by request.

On February 12, 1998, we recorded another tape of Halq'emeylem songs with Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 at Sol:lo Shxweli. The tape will be available for purchase in late March.

Class fundraising has been ongoing, with the purchase of class jackets and other expenses, including luncheons and Salmon Bar-b-que's. At our concession booth at the Cultus Lake Canoe Festival, we sold not only food, but had a promotion on the language tapes as well.

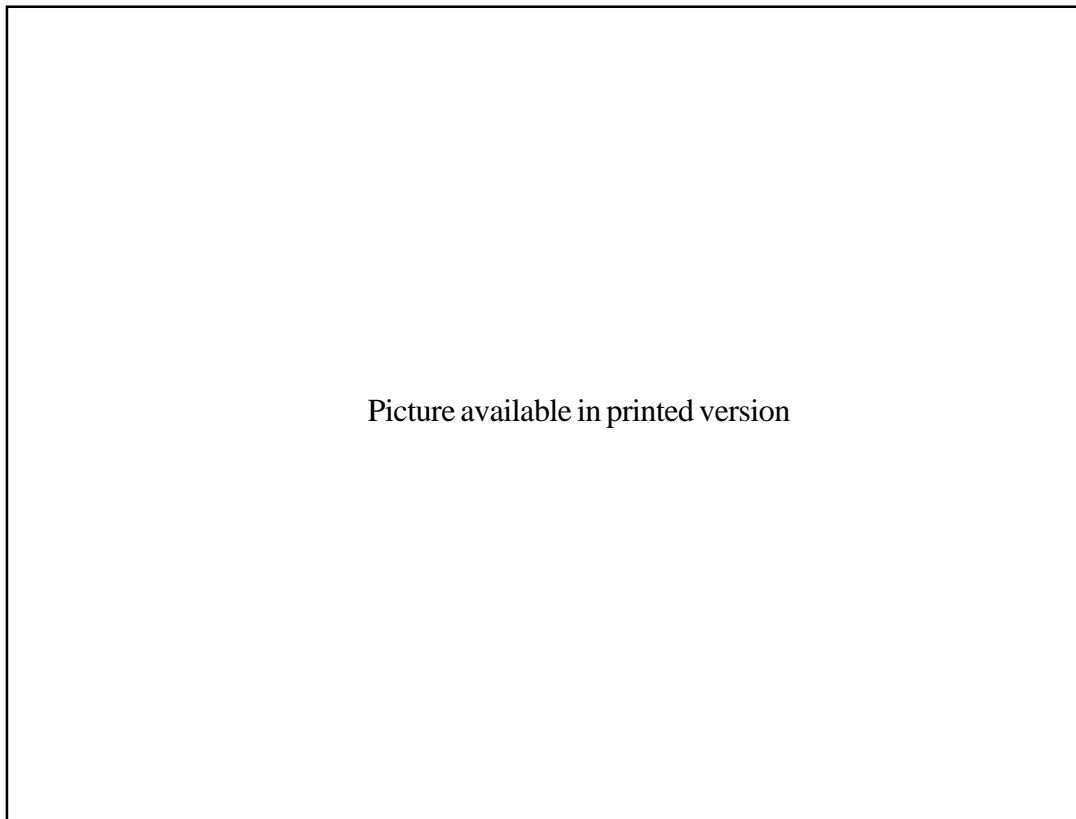
Currently, there are four Levels of the language being taught. The Sto:lo Halq'emeylem Language Student Body has been in existence since January 19, 1998, the language classes, however, have been ongoing since 1994.

(from the *Sqwelqwels Ye Sto:lo Newsletter*, March 2, 1998).



Picture available in printed version

*Eunice Ned,
Mary Stewart,
Yvonne
Tumangday,
Judy Douglas,
and Doreen
McIntyre, stu-
dents attending
a linguistic
class. Three
quarters of the
class lesson is in
Halq'emeylwm*



Picture available in printed version

*Linguist Strang
Burton, with
Rosaline George
(Yamalot), Eliza-
beth Herrling, and
Diane Charlie.
This is a linguis-
tics class.*

Secwepemc Education Institute Certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency

The Simon Fraser University Program in Kamloops is well known for its Aboriginal languages and linguistic program. Linguistics has been taught at this campus since Fall of 1989. In the Fall of 1990, the first Secwepemc language class was introduced. Since then, our Aboriginal language, linguistics and language teacher training education courses have grown rapidly and are known nationally.

The First Nations Languages Proficiency Certificate is intended for individuals who wish to acquire and/or improve their conversational and literacy skills as a particular Aboriginal language for purposes of teaching this language in elementary or secondary schools, or to adult learners in First Nations communities. It is also suitable for anyone wishing to enhance their knowledge of an aboriginal language for cultural reasons or professional needs.

Courses in Aboriginal Languages and the Certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency are currently available, in cooperation with local First Nations communities and language authorities, for the following languages: Secwepemc (Kamloops, Chase, Williams Lake); St'at'imcets (Lillooet and Mount Currie); NI'akapmxcin (Merritt); and Halq'emeylem (Chilliwack), and Dakelh (Carrier) will be available in Vanderhoof in the Summer, 1998. All courses are taught by fluent speakers of the language and/or are team taught by a linguist and a fluent speaker or elder.

Courses in other locations and/or in other languages can be offered at the request of the First Nations communities/organizations. Contact the SFU Program (250) 828 - 9799 for further information.

The certificate consists of 27 credit hours of course work. Eighteen of these credit hours must be earned by completing beginner and intermediate level courses in the aboriginal language itself. Six of the credit hours involve courses in introductory linguistics and practical phonetics. The remaining courses include optional advanced courses in the language, descriptive linguistics of the same language, or course in the aboriginal language teaching methodology, aboriginal language literature or aboriginal language curriculum development.

(information taken from the Secwepemc Education Institute Information Pamphlet)

VIII. Aboriginal Language Curriculum

8.1 What is curriculum?

The word “curriculum” comes from Latin and literally means a “race-course.” Not quite as literally, it refers to a *program of studies*, or a written plan for what students should learn and in what order. Two terms associated with curriculum are *scope* and *sequence*: they refer to *what* is learned, how it is learned, and in *what order*?

Why is it important or necessary to develop curriculum? One answer is to satisfy the Ministry of Education and to ensure that one’s courses and programs are recognized, accredited and thus funded. Beyond that, it is useful to develop a plan of action for what one plans to teach, how and in what order, so the teacher does not repeat the same subject matter month after month and year after year, which results in very little learning of the language, as well as boredom and frustration on the part of both student and teacher. Many language teachers themselves, as well as parents and speakers, have bemoaned this difficulty, and have made reference to what I have called an “endless loop of colours, numbers and animals.” Since action commands (“sit,” “stand up,” “walk,” “turn around”) and body parts, as well as numbers, basic colour terms and animal words are relatively easy concepts to teach -- at least superficially -- many language teachers begin by teaching them. Then, year after year, these themes are repeated without the

introduction of much new subject matter. Developing language curriculum is useful and important because it lays out a meaningful sequence for what is to be taught in what order, and therefore leads (hopefully) to incremental learning and progress in the students’ learning. Unless you develop a plan for the order in which subject matter should be learned, such progress is difficult to monitor and it is difficult to keep track of what you are teaching.

8.2 The Building Blocks of Curriculum

It is useful if actual curriculum development is preceded by a needs assessment and language planning at the First Nation, Aboriginal Nation or Language Authority level. This will allow you to map out overall goals and reasons why your community members want to preserve and/or revive your language. Such goals, which have been formulated with the help of the community, should then be formulated into a statement of Goals and Objectives, perhaps headed up by an overall Mission Statement or *Statement of Philosophy*, from which your goals, objectives and the particular nature of your program flows.

In curriculum development, *goals* list what you want to accomplish with your language program; *objectives* list particular aspects of the goals.

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A *rationale* provides reasons why your project and its goals and objectives are valid and important for your community and its learners.

Next, it is useful to address how you are going to deliver this program. What kind of *approach* will you take to teaching the language? Is it based on teaching the language as a subject (First Nations as second language) or as the language of instruction (immersion)? If it is a second language program, what particular approach to language teaching and learning will you take? Will your emphasis be on oral language or on reading and writing the language? At least in the early grades, and because oral competence is what is most needed to revive aboriginal languages, an oral language approach is usually recommended.

An approach is itself guided by theories and philosophies of learning and language learning. For example, the BC Languages Template recommends and endorses the *communicative-experiential* approach: “In this approach, the focus of instruction is the purposeful use of the language to perform real-life tasks, to share ideas, to acquire information, and to get things done. Grammar instruction plays a supportive role only - to provide some useful strategies to facilitate communication and comprehension” (Languages Template, p.3).

Next, you need to set overall *learning outcomes* for your program in a progressive order of grades. These lay out what you expect students to be able to do and know by the end of the program, and

as they progress through the program. These learning outcomes, in turn, may be focused around a number of different tasks or areas. The IRP template, for example, uses curriculum organizers (see below). Learning outcomes should begin with a phrase like, “It is expected that students will.....”. While it is clear that actual student performance and competence will vary, for the teacher learning outcomes are “benchmarks that will permit the use of criterion-referenced performance standards” (IRP template). This means that they will provide some goals for what students should know, be able to do, understand, be able to say, etc. by the end of a program. They are also benchmarks for assessing students’ progress and evaluating what they have learned. Assessment is only meaningful if it is based on goals for learning that are set to begin with.

Assessment strategies, which must be part of all curriculum plans, are ways to gather information about student progress and performance. Assessment does not always consist of tests and quizzes. Especially in the primary grades, but also throughout the higher grades, assessment should be based on ongoing observation in the classroom, and on the evaluation of students’ work, which should include journals, portfolios of art, homework, and other areas.

You should also list, in general, the kinds of learning resources which are available for the language. Particular learning resources are usually listed within units (see below).

In a language curriculum plan, it is also useful to list and/or describe the language content that is to be taught. This is only one component of a curriculum plan, but it is the one which usually most concerns elders and speakers. At this level, laying out a list and a sequence for what kind of terms, phrases, grammatical concepts, cultural contexts, and matter is to be taught and in what order, is useful. You

should also overall determine and list what resources are available for teaching this pro-

gram, and which ones need to be developed and listed in order of priority. You may pay some attention to how different dialects are going to be taught, if at all, and describe how you will deal with this.

8.3 Writing Units

Within a given language program (e.g. a primary program, intermediate level program, Grade 9-10 or 11-12 program), it is useful to divide the subject matter that is to be learned over the course of a school year or program into what curriculum developers call **Units**. A unit is an organization of various activities, experiences, and intended learning built around a central problem.

Units are often developed around a particular theme, which, especially at the primary and elemen-

tary level, can integrate learning within a number of subject areas. For example, a thematic unit on transportation can teach oral language skills (vocabulary building), reading and writing, and it can integrate Math concepts, in that different kinds vehicles are compared and grouped with regard to size, colour, purpose or function. It can moreover integrate science skills, music skills, drama, dance,

social studies and other areas.

In designing curriculum plans with First Nations elders and

speakers, I have often found that there is a preference for designing units and their sequences around the traditional seasonal round (hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping, but also adapted activities, such as ranching, farming or commercial fishing). This gives a culturally meaningful sequence to themes and content. However, the structure of the school year makes it difficult to integrate a seasonal round because some of the most important traditional activities (salmon fishing, root and medicine gathering and berry picking) fall into the summer months when children are out of school.

Besides the vocabulary and phrases built around traditional activities, it is also important to have units or portions of units which teach functional vocabulary for everyday life. On a daily basis, most of us are not involved in hunting, fishing, gathering or trapping activities, but need to speak and listen

Within a curriculum plan, it is important that objectives and approach, learning outcomes, teaching strategies, modes of assessment and evaluation, and the kinds of learning resources that are used all relate to one another.

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to the language in the setting of a modern household. It is therefore very important that thematic units address everyday vocabulary which people use to talk with one another about the things around them.

Besides selecting the theme itself, for each thematic unit the curriculum developer(s) needs to write a purpose or goal, a rationale, state the learning outcomes, and list the content of the actual subject matter (i.e. the vocabulary, grammatical forms and phrases learned through this unit, as well as culturally meaningful concepts). He/she must also provide a list of teaching strategies and list the learning resources available or in need of development. Finally, for each unit, the developer needs to define and list methods and tools for assessing to what degree the learning outcomes were reached.

Writing Learning Outcomes Within Units

Again, a crucial component of curriculum plans are Unit Learning Outcomes. Learning outcomes state, not from the point of view of the teacher but from the perspective of the learner (student/child), what he/she should be able to have achieved in the subject matter after he/she has been exposed to a unit, a year of a program, or an entire program. Unit learning outcomes should be specific, precise and clear in terms of the skills they address. This will make it easier to assess whether students fulfilled the learning outcomes. For example, it is not useful to state “after this unit [on traditional

fishing] the student should know the vocabulary of traditional fishing gear.” Such learning outcome statements leave open whether the student: a) can say these terms correctly; and b) demonstrates understanding of what these terms mean.

A more precise learning outcome statement for a unit on salmon fishing could be: “After this unit it is expected that students will be able to say the words for several kinds of traditional fishing gear when prompted in the ... language with pictures.”

A useful resource guide for writing curriculum, especially learning outcomes, is “A Handbook for Curriculum Developers” by the BC Ministry of Education, 1993.

8.4 Listing Instructional/Teaching Strategies

In writing up Units, it is useful and important to list **how** the teacher will teach the language content of a particular thematic unit or subject matter. Instructional strategies and teaching activities should conform to the overall approach to teaching the language which you stated in the beginning in outlining your goal and rationale. They should include a variety of strategies and methods which in turn make use of particular instructional resources.

The Grades 5-12 languages template lists many suggested instructional strategies, and language teach-

ers should consider if they are appropriate and useful, and test them. Many other language teaching strategies are listed in handbooks about language teaching strategies, such as E. Romijn and C. Seely, *Live Action English*, or Bertha Segal Cook, *Teaching English as a Second Language*. Both were developed for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, but can easily be adopted for Aboriginal languages.

8.5 Determining and Writing Up Your Language Content

This area requires careful work with speakers of the language and elders. Especially where different expressions or words exist for the same thing, or where your language curriculum comprises more than one speech community or even dialect, the language content for each thematic unit needs to be listed carefully. With the help of word search and replacement on the computer, it is easy to produce numerous dialect versions simultaneously. In an oral language program, the listed language content is not what a teacher follows literally word by word, let alone what he/she teaches in written form. However, having available a set of words and phrases that go with a unit will help the teacher prepare his/her lessons.

If you list your language content in detail after having worked it out with elders/fluent speakers of the language, this also has a legitimizing function. Since the content was developed and/or approved by elders/speakers, the language teacher knows

that the terms listed, as well as their spellings, are sanctioned and authorized by the community.

8.6 Listing Assessment and Evaluation Methods

We noted that assessment and evaluation refers back to the learning outcomes which were set for a particular unit or grade level. Methods of assessment and evaluation of student progress vary with the grade level. At the primary levels, assessment of student progress is naturally not based on formal tests, but on other indicators, such as: a) observation of students in the classroom; and b) collection of students' work. At higher grade levels, methods of evaluation and assessment become more formal. They may include:

- formal tests and quizzes
- student portfolios of art work and creative work
- oral presentations, for which evaluation can be based on:
 - student journals, where they record their progress, but also how they feel about their language learning; and
 - self assessment and peer assessment are other modes of evaluation which are useful.

8.7 Integrated Resource Packages

Since about 1995, the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training has developed and supported a new format for curriculum called Integrated Resource Packages. With the implementation of the 1996 BC Language Education Policy, a Grade 5-12

***Example of Unit Learning Outcomes from
Secwepemc Language Package, Grade 11/12
Secwepemc Cultural Education Society***

Learning Outcomes

After this unit, it is expected that the student will:

- * understand and follow 30 commands accurately;
- * understand Secwepemc numbers 1 - 100 and count from one to 100 in Secwepemc;
- * identify number of objects up to ten;
- * carry out simple arithmetic operations (addition and subtraction in Secwepemctsin);
- * say and respond to Secwepemc greetings and questions about name; engage in a brief dialogue introducing themselves or someone;
- * understand and say three pointing words (ye7ene, yerey, yeri7) and respond to, as well as say, simple sentences using pointing words;
- * understand and say the terms for at least 10 objects in the classroom;
- * begin to understand a few words and simple phrases and questions about season, weather and time of day (these will be presented during the introductory unit, but mastery is not expected until near the end of the year);
- * pronounce with good accuracy all Group A sounds of the language, as well as with limited accuracy Group B and Group C sound (this skill will be worked on throughout the year);
- * recognize written Secwepemc and be able to begin to sight-read simple words and phrases;
- * locate words in the English-Secwepemc dictionary and Shuswap-English word list, and have an idea of how to find English meanings of Secwepemctsin words in the Shuswap-English dictionary;
- * with emergent reading and writing skills, record words in their journals; and
- * where possible, try out new words and phrases with elders/fluent speakers.

Integrated Resource Package for a particular second language became the recommended format to seek approval for a second language curriculum. To this effect, the Ministry issued a K-12 Language Template in February 1997, along with a recommendation that Aboriginal Language curricula should conform to the Template as closely as possible.

Integrated Resource Packages are organized as follows:

1. The introduction covers the ground which introductions to curriculum plans usually cover, including philosophy, goals, rationale and approach, and how this program fits into education policy.

2. The main body of the IRP is then divided into grade levels. For a Grade 5 to 12 language template, this includes 9 (nine) grade levels, that is, 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, as well as a Grade 11 Beginner course, which is a concentrated course that covers the subject matter of Grade levels 5-10.

3. Each grade level is further divided into four **Curriculum Organizers**. These are areas which contribute to the learning of a particular subject. The second language template has four curriculum organizers:

a) Communicating: learning to communicate in a second language is regarded as a fundamental component of language learning. It emphasizes “authentic learning” of a language by learning to communicate in real-life and relevant situations;

b) Acquiring Information: it is important for students to develop the ability to find out information from original sources in the target language. While for French or heritage languages, this may mainly consist of finding out information from newspapers, books, radio programs, television, advertisements, restaurant menus, etc. acquiring information for Aboriginal language curriculum consists of finding out information in and about the language from speakers/elders. It also involves learning to use the range of existing written resources, tapes, etc.;

c) Experiencing Creative Works: involves creative expression, such as storytelling, music, and art, poetry, through which students can learn to enjoy forms of expression in the new language, and be motivated to continue their learning; and

d) Understanding Culture and Society: refers to the insights into the culture which students gain through the language and as a part of language instruction. While for French and heritage languages, the objective is for students to understand and appreciate cultural diversity, for Aboriginal students who are learning their ancestral language, this means gaining access to, learning about, and appreciating their cultural pasts and traditions.

4. Each curriculum organizer, in turn, consists of four components: a) Learning Outcomes; b) Instructional Strategies; c) Assessment and Evaluation; and d) Instructional Resources.

In developing Integrated Resource Packages for your own Aboriginal language, the Ministry advises to follow the Template as closely as possible. By

Is There One Particular Method of Language Teaching That Guarantees Success?

We must distinguish between a language teaching approach, such as the ones discussed above, and the particular strategies which a teacher uses to follow that approach. For example, immersion is an approach, as discussed above, and so is the communicative-experiential approach endorsed by the Ministry of Education. It is a very broad-based approach which looks at language learning not in terms of language items (vocabulary, grammar, sounds) to be mastered, but in terms of tasks to be performed successfully or comprehensibly in the language that is learned.

A more specific approach which many Aboriginal language teachers have been exposed to is Total Physical Response (TPR), originally developed by James Asher in the United States. Some of its principles are:

- * second language learning is based on the pattern of first language acquisition. Students learn listening, speaking, reading and writing in that order. Language learning is more successful if words and phrases are learned through action. Its basic procedure is as follows:
 - teacher demonstrates a task – students listen and respond to *commands* by following the teacher's modelling;
 - instructor repeats the commands and models them with a small group of students, then one student;
 - instructor adds new commands and combines new and old commands with entire group, then small groups;
 - instructor recombines old and new commands without modeling, and group responds, and individuals respond;
 - later on (after 10 hours), teacher reverses roles and students give commands.

Total Physical Response can work well in teaching actions, and actions combined with vocabulary. With a skillful and trained teacher, the TPR approach can also teach grammatical concepts, many of them with the help of games and routines. We could call TPR in the wider sense an inventory of user-friendly drills and exercises which help students develop listening skills, and if the approach is followed with care, speaking skills, as well.

Overall, many language educators suggest following a variety of methods and strategies. Besides TPR drills, games and routines, the teacher can use pattern drills, explanation of grammar with older learners, pronunciation drills, activities supervised in the target language, games, songs and rhyme.

and large, this is not a problem, because the learning outcomes are stated very broadly, and do not hinder the teaching of different dialects. The learning outcomes and other areas do not specify particular thematic units; rather they give examples and suggestions about kinds of thematic units which could be taught through suggested teaching strategies, and how the teacher can assess and evaluate students' work for these units.

Developers of Aboriginal language IRP's, however, need to assess whether the suggested subject matter associated with teaching strategies for particular curriculum organizers at particular grade levels is culturally and linguistically appropriate for their Aboriginal language.

Developers of IRPs can also take inspiration from the existing *Grade 5-12 Language Template for Punjabi* (Ministry of Skills, Training and Education 1995). Written for a non-European language, the Punjabi IRP lists teaching strategies which are more adaptable to teaching Aboriginal languages than the strategies suggested in the second language template.

How To Get Approval for an IRP?

As I noted above, Ministry Guidelines stipulate that IRPs are developed and approved by a School District, which then requests their approval by the Ministry. In order to initiate this process, you need to:

1) Contact your local school district through your First Nations Language Authority (see below) or other First Nations organization. If no IRP has been developed yet, your school district needs to send a letter of intent to the ministry. If an IRP for your language, or for another dialect of your language, is already under development, contact its developers. There is no need to reinvent the wheel with another IRP; however, your group and community needs to be comfortable with and able to take ownership of the IRP.

Ideally, different organizations and dialects which find themselves in different schools districts should be able to collaborate on a joint IRP for their language. However, geographic distance, dialect difference, and political issues sometimes prevent this. There are, to my knowledge, no Ministerial guidelines which address this issue. Next, discuss your plans with the School District, as well as future plans for implementing the IRP. There is no point in IRP development if it is not followed up by programs at the Grade 5-12 level. Band- Operated schools may also wish to benefit from the IRP for reasons I stated above.

2) Write the IRP according to the template. Substitute content suitable to your language but within the template guidelines as much as possible. Remember: You do not need to be specific with regards to language content, and the learning outcomes are set very broadly. You can turn this into an advantage, since it will allow much flexibility in the teaching of your language. Teamwork between

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educators, language teaching specialists, and First Nations language teachers may work well. You may also benefit from teamwork with IRP writers of languages within your language family. For example, the IRPs for Okanagan and Nlakapmxcin, Shuswap and St'at'imcets were developed in close consultation between the writers. This was feasible, since the languages and traditional cultures are similar.

3) Present the IRP for approval to your language authority and/or First Nations committee, whichever is appropriate. This is not a step required by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, but it is an important and necessary step in your First Nations language community/ies taking ownership of it.

4) Present the IRP for approval to your local school board. Once it has been approved by the school board, it needs to be approved by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training.

5) Once the Ministry has approved your IRP, your First Nations language is approved provincial curriculum and can be offered within your school district in lieu of French. However, this is not automatic. You need to discuss and negotiate with your school district at which Grade levels to begin instruction, and how, and in which order, to phase in grade levels 5-8 and subsequent grades. You will need to address how students from Band-Operated schools who transfer to public schools at certain grade levels will fit into the program. It is also

important to develop long term plans for the maintenance of your language program. Since core language programs funded out of school district funds must have continuous high enrolment to be implemented, in some cases it may be an advantage to continue to rely on targeted funds to carry out Grade 5-12 language programs.

8.8 Developing Instructional Resources

I noted above that a wealth of instructional resources needs to be developed for Aboriginal language programs at all grade levels. In a basic sense, instructional resources rely on the imagination and creativity of the language teacher. Well-trained and creative language teachers can often produce an array of instructional resources without extensive funds or development. Simply put, very good instructional resources can be props for meaningful activities that are part of thematic units, which the teacher assembles and prepares and brings into the classroom. This will take some creative thinking and preparation.

Language Teaching Coach Dr. Bertie Segal-Cook (*Teaching English Through Action*) notes that when language teachers teach a certain subject matter, the best resource is the real item itself, followed, listed in order of usefulness, by miniature or reproductions of the item, colour pictures, and black and white pictures of the item. For example, when teaching about clothing, a teacher should use actual clothes as props and for dress-up. Second

best would be doll clothes, followed by colour pictures of clothes, followed by black and white pictures of clothes. Real props, in other words, are the best teaching tools.

However, next to “props,” teachers should and can make use of a wide variety of resources. First and foremost are written resources in the Aboriginal language. With the exception of perhaps a few stories and legends, teachers usually lack any variety and amount of written resources in the language. Some of these can be created by hand and through manual cut and paste. For example, teachers can use primary reader materials in English with culturally and linguistically appropriate content, translate these into the Aboriginal language, and paste over the text in the English books. The language teacher can also develop home reading materials in this manner, or, better yet, home listening materials which can also involve the parents or grandparents of the students by recording the story onto an audio tape and sending it home in a zip-lock bag for home reading.

Engaging parents to cut, paste, laminate, and colour can produce a wide variety of low-cost materials for the classroom. Engaging parents and families in work-bees to produce language curriculum materials also has the effect of engaging the family and community into the teaching of the language.

In recent years, language teachers have become intrigued as well as intimidated by the wealth of computer technology which can produce resources

in and for the Aboriginal language. Next to video and audiotapes, multimedia CD ROMs can now be produced with relative ease. Computers can be made to speak Aboriginal languages (as long as the right information is put in beforehand), and photographs and even film-strips can be integrated with texts to create multiple experiences of learning. Can technology help revitalize the Aboriginal languages, and can technology bring them back?

Making Technology Work

Most Aboriginal communities nowadays have access to video and tape recorders, as well as computers. Low-cost language teaching video-tapes, or tapes which show speakers/elders demonstrating cultural activities, are relatively easy to produce and can be valuable resources for the classroom.

Computers can also assist teachers and language learners in practicing and memorizing vocabulary, phrases and cultural content. Modern products which integrate written language, sound (spoken language, music), video clips, photographs and graphics are multimedia CD ROMs. Compared to even a few years ago, multimedia CD ROMs are easy to design and produce. As long as local communities have good quality video and tape recorders for recording elders and speakers on film and audiotape, one can now purchase user-friendly software programs which enable the production of a CD ROM, and with the help of CD ROM drives which can run CD ROMS, one can even produce and copy the disks.

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How useful are such programs?

Multimedia products, like videos, tapes, books, and other kinds of learning resources, can be excellent resources which can help students learn and practice vocabulary, pronunciation, and other things. However, they should complement the formal and informal teaching by live elders and language teachers -- never replace it. Computers and computer software such as databases also have a useful function in compiling dictionaries, word lists and other kinds of tasks.

8.9 Taking and Maintaining Ownership of your Language Curriculum and Language Program: Issues of Copyright and Intellectual Property Right

A major concern for Aboriginal organizations and First Nations which develop curriculum or curriculum resources is the ownership of the information about their culture in curriculum works, and the right to sell, distribute, copy, and use that information. These concerns exist largely on the basis of the overwhelming *appropriation* of their cultural knowledge which Aboriginal people and communities have experienced.

Loretta Todd defines appropriation as the opposite of cultural autonomy, which is the “right to cultural specificity, a right to one’s own origins and histories as told from within the culture and not as mediated from without. Appropriation occurs when someone speaks for, tells, defines, describes, rep-

resents, uses or recruits the images, stories, experiences and dreams of others for their own. Appropriation also occurs when someone else becomes the expert on your experience and is deemed more knowledgeable about who you are than yourself” (1990, p. 24).

Aboriginal people have experienced appropriation by the dominant society with respect to their arts and artifacts, spirituality, in literature, and many other ways. Where outsiders, whether academics, bureaucrats or educators, for their own interests and purposes, define the scope and content of Aboriginal language curriculum, they appropriate it. Elders, community members and Aboriginal politicians have often stressed the need for developing curriculum that is driven by the First Nations community, not driven and dictated by outsiders.

In addition, intellectual property rights and copyright play a role where the sale, distribution, and uses of curriculum and curricular resources are concerned. From an Aboriginal viewpoint, products of Aboriginal culture cannot and must not be alienated by outsiders having the control over their sale and distribution. This is not only a question of financial benefits and copyright, but one of intellectual property rights, both of which are complicated in Canadian law.

Copyright is the “right to copy.” The *Canadian Copyright Act* grants copyright owners the sole and exclusive right to reproduce, perform, or publish a work. These rights give copyright holders

control over the use of their creations, and an ability to benefit monetarily, and otherwise, from the exploitation of their works” (Harris 1992:1). Copyright, however, does not per se give someone the right over the ownership of knowledge; it only prevents distribution through copying. “Intellectual property rights,” in turn, address the issue of rights to original knowledge and its uses, but mainly in the area of patents, trade secrets, trademarks and industrial designs. Although the legislation may

change, at this point in time Aboriginal knowledge has little protection. That said, Aboriginal groups will nonetheless want to secure a measure of control over language curricula and resource materials by securing the copyright to these on behalf of their organization. Some Aboriginal language and culture organizations in BC, like the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society and En’owkin Centre, have already implemented this.

A useful guide about the issue of copyright and intellectual property rights are the following two publications by the Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes: “Copyright Law and Traditional Indigenous Knowledge of First Nations Peoples: A Resource and Information Guide.” 1996; and “The Protection of Aboriginal Culture: A Resource and Information Guide on Cultural Appropriation” by Lyle W. Frank, 1997

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IX. Training and Certifying Aboriginal Language Teachers

For the first dozen years or more of language programs, as they were being implemented by public schools and in Band-Operated schools, the teachers who delivered language instruction were recruited from among the fluent speakers of the language. For most languages of B.C., this meant elderly teachers who were fluent in the language but who usually did not have education and certification through the British Columbia College of Teachers as regular classroom teachers (e.g. standard or professional certification). The B.C. College of Teachers is an organization independent of school districts, the Ministry of Education, the B.C. Teachers' Federation and the Universities which train teachers. It does not offer teacher education, but it licences or certifies teachers, as mandated by the B.C. Provincial government.

Until the early 1990s, Aboriginal language teachers were usually hired as teacher assistants, and thus at pay scales which were well below those of certified teachers. As teaching assistants, under the terms of the *B.C. School Act*, they could not teach classes by themselves, but had to deliver language instruction under the supervision of a certified teacher -- usually the regular classroom teacher. Aboriginal language teachers, educators, and others recognized that this situation did not do justice to the invaluable knowledge of fluent speakers/elders who taught the language, but which were

hardly recognized by the school system.

In 1990-91, a committee of representatives from the British Columbia College of Teachers and First Nations communities revised the existing by-laws of the College to allow for the certification of First Nations language teachers as valid teachers. In creating a new category of certification for First Nations language teachers, the College and the First Nations advisory committee who designed the new by-law considered a number of issues.

For example, in British Columbia, because of the state of Aboriginal languages, most Aboriginal language teachers were elderly, and it was unreasonable to put them through a full 4-5 year teacher education program which leads to standard/or professional certification. In addition, proficiency in a First Nations language could not be replaced by other criteria, such as level of education.

Accordingly, the eligibility for a First Nations Language Teacher certificate rests on two things: a) the applicant must be proficient in a particular First Nations language; and b) it is a local ***First Nations Language Authority*** which declares that a person is proficient in a particular language.

The First Nations Language Teacher Certificate, besides the declaration from the language authority, requires the applicant to fill out an application form, submit two confidential letters of reference, official transcripts from institutions attended (where this exists), a verified copy of a birth certificate, the application fee (currently \$150.00), and authority for the College to conduct a criminal record search. The certificate is initially an Interim First Nations Language Teacher Certificate, valid for a four-year period. By completing 1.5 years of teaching experience and by being recommended by a school superintendent (or assistant superintendent, or an administrative officer) who has supervised and evaluated the applicant's classroom teaching experience, the interim certificate holder can qualify for a permanent certificate.

The by-law of the B.C. College of Teachers thus allows certification on the basis of proficiency in the language alone. First Nations language teachers are *not* required to complete a teacher education program at a university. Many language teachers themselves realize that proficiency in the Aboriginal language alone does not make them efficient language teachers.

To express these concerns, the American Indian Languages Institute, which since 1978 has provided training in language instruction for teachers, administrators and parents in the American Southwest, stated:

Section 2.B.01 (d) of the British Columbia College of Teachers specifies that:

- 1) The First Nations Language Teacher Certificate shall require the applicant to be a proficient speaker of a First Nations language; and
- 2) The First Nations Language Certificate may be issued to individuals who have been recommended by the appropriate First Nations Language Authority.

Declaration of Language Authority

We, the undersigned, hereby declare to the College of Teachers that to the best of our knowledge, the person named in this application is a fit and proper person to teach our First Nations Language and Culture; and We also declare that the person named in this application is a proficient speaker of our First Nations Language and has a broad understanding of our culture and society.

Authorized Signatures (at least two)

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1. We cannot teach language simply because we are speakers of that language. We must know what our language is like - its structure and function in everyday existence.

2. Even when we know these things about our language, we cannot teach it effectively. We need to know how our language may be acquired by our children. If we know the process we have a better framework with which we can develop curriculum and teaching materials.

3. We need to know what a curriculum should include, in what sequence and how much...

We must emphasize how we use our language if that language is to be useful. We therefore, do not teach a language just as an academic subject: We teach language as part of our total existence and as a basis for meaningful existence.

(Watahomigie and Yamamoto 1992, quoted in Fettes 1992)

Education and training for Aboriginal language teachers, therefore, must involve a number of areas, such as:

- understanding the process of language acquisition and language learning;
- understanding basic issues in language planning and language revitalization;
- understanding the use and development of effective and appropriate teaching strategies;
- understanding and being able to use and develop language curriculum;
- being able to read and write the language to prepare and use instructional resources;
- familiarity with policies, legislation and procedures involving the teaching profession;

- classroom management appropriate to the age group of children one teaches; and
- understanding the connection between Aboriginal language and culture, in order to be able to teach the language as an integrated and viable part of existence.

To meet the demand of Aboriginal language teachers, schools, and school districts for the training of language teachers, over the years, a number of public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal post-secondary institutions have offered courses and programs, usually in the form of “crash courses.” Numerous Aboriginal language teachers have benefited from these courses to improve their teaching skills.

En’owkin Centre offered a language teacher education program several years ago, and has recently re-embarked on language literacy and other training courses, as well as adult immersion courses.

University of Victoria offered a Native Indian Language Diploma Programme between 1974 and 1980 through its Faculty of Education and Department of Linguistics. It has offered no specific language teacher education programs since.

The University of British Columbia offered language teachers’ summer programs a few years ago with courses in language teaching methods and curriculum. Nothing appears to be offered at present. UBC also offers a comprehensive First Nations Teacher Education Program, but no specialization in teaching a First Nations language.

Yinka-Dene Language Institute offers a one-year language teacher training program in 1988-90 in conjunction with the College of New Caledonia. The certificate includes components in curriculum, language teaching methods, literacy, language structure, and working within the school system. This is a non-credit certificate, however, which does not count towards teaching degrees or other university/college degrees.

SCES/SFU Program in Kamloops (Secwepemc Education Institute) has offered an Aboriginal Language Teaching Summer Institute (1996 and 1997, and ongoing). Courses for language teachers are also offered in the SFU Certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency which combines 24 credit hours (8 courses) in language, language literacy and language teaching courses. Besides Kamloops, the SCES/SFU Program currently delivers Aboriginal Language teacher education courses to First Nations in Lillooet, Merritt, Williams Lake, Chilliwack and Mount Currie. Along with other courses required as prerequisites for teacher education, the First Nations Language Proficiency Certificate can be a prerequisite for the Professional Development [Teacher Education] Program offered on site for elementary and secondary education, which makes graduates eligible for Standard or Professional Teacher Certification.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society has protocol and/or affiliation agreements with Northwest Community College, the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and the Open Learn-

ing Agency. Through UNBC, WWN offers First Nations Studies courses in Nisga'a language, which can form part of a certificate or Bachelor of Arts degree in First Nations Studies.

The SFU Prince Rupert Teacher Education Program is offered in collaboration with the North Coast Tribal Council, the Tsimshian Tribal Council and First Nations on the Northwest Coast. It offers a four and five year degree program, including the Professional Development Program, with courses in First Nations Studies and some courses in First Nations language and language teacher education.

NAID is the Native Adult Instructor Diploma, offered by the Association of Aboriginal Postsecondary Institutes Resource Centre. It offers about 120 well-designed contact hours of instruction in curriculum development, and culturally sensitive methods of teaching First Nations adults. However, it is not specific to language teacher education, and is not a credential for Grade K-12 education. Most degree-granting institutions do *not* recognize the NAID program as transfer credit into a teacher education program or degree program.

9.1 Training and Education for Second Language Speakers

At present, a concern in First Nations communities, schools and among Aboriginal language teachers is the fact that many of the present generation of fluent speakers who have become certified as

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language teachers are near retirement age. Given the state of most British Columbia Aboriginal languages, the question is: “how can second language speakers improve fluency and expression in order to become Aboriginal language teachers in the near future?”

Different First Nations organizations and Institutes, like those listed above, as well as individuals and communities, are practicing and piloting a variety of courses, modules and efforts to improve the situation.

One vehicle for revitalizing speech among adults includes Language Mentoring, which is used in California, where more than a dozen Aboriginal languages are in as bad or a worse state than BC Aboriginal languages. Mentoring involves a student or learner working on-one-one with an elder/speaker to improve his/her speaking and listening skills. Mentoring works best for students who already have a basic knowledge of the Aboriginal language and who are trying to become proficient in conversation, or who are trying to increase their vocabulary, or their command over grammatically or phonetically correct speech. The Secwepemc Cultural Education Institute’s SFU program is currently piloting a language mentoring program which students can (but need not) take as university credit courses.

Many First Nations communities have also tried summer immersion camps for adults or families, with varying success. Without doubt, these camps

provide valuable cultural enrichment activities. In order to work, especially for beginners or near-beginners, they need to be carefully planned, otherwise immersion all too quickly becomes submersion (getting lost rather than immersed in the language), or immersion sessions turn into mainly-English brainstorming sessions about vocabulary.

Ongoing language courses can also improve the understanding and speaking ability of younger speakers. In addition to the above, community based First Nations language courses, ideally as credit courses, as we discussed above, serve the purpose of improving fluency in the language for future teachers.

9.2 The Importance of Aboriginal Language Literacy (being able to read and write)

What role and function does reading and writing the Aboriginal language have in the context of reviving and teaching it? We can look at this question from different angles. Above, I noted that literacy in an Aboriginal language can enhance English language literacy skills. Learning to read and write their Aboriginal language does not make it harder for children to read and write English.

In today’s world, reading and writing an Aboriginal language also has many practical advantages for communication, for learning and teaching, for researching, and for writing curriculum and developing resources. Other uses include:

- Reading and writing your language allows you to write letters, and circulate and publish information in your language. This can be a practical advantage; it can also raise the status of the language in the minds of the First Nations community and non-native people;
- Writing down words is useful and handy in order to memorize words you hear from elders. Writing is a mnemonic (memory) device. Quickly being able to jot down a new word you hear, or a word you had forgotten is much easier than always having to take along tape recording equipment;
- Writing and reading skills in your language is very useful if you are planning to do research on the language (collect terms and vocabularies, stories, nursery rhymes, etc.);
- If you can read your language, you will be able to read stories and other information that linguists or others collected from elders in the past;
- In order to develop materials that will help you to learn and preserve the language, you need to be able to write down words and sentences.

All Aboriginal languages in British Columbia for some time have been written by linguists and/or by local First Nations people. Indeed, at the turn of the century, when some missionaries taught some of the peoples of BC to read and write their languages with the help of shorthand or syllabics, for a brief time reading and writing flourished, until the Residential Schools system nipped this earlier phase of literacy in the bud.

Some BC Aboriginal languages use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) or the North Ameri-

can Phonetic Alphabet as their practical writing system. The IPA is useful in that it has a large number of standardized symbols which can render the many sounds that occur in Aboriginal languages which English does not have; however, it needs special fonts on your computer. In other cases, linguists and/or speakers of the language developed practical orthographies or writing systems which can by and large be written with the regular keys on a typewriter or computer keyboard, with the help of some diacritics (commas, stress-marks, glottal signs). In some cases, because more than one linguist worked in a particular First Nations language, that language has two or more alphabets, which can lead to friction among the users of the different orthographies. In such cases, First Nations communities, or language authorities where they exist, need to solve the problem by agreeing on one alphabet.

It is important to note that any alphabet which accurately renders all meaningful sounds of a language (phonemes) will do. It is up to Aboriginal people themselves to determine which alphabet best serves their purpose. An important consideration is that the more critical the state of your language, the more accurately must your writing system render all sounds, identify what sounds are glottalized, if there is tone, and where the stress is. Languages which are still passed on to the younger generation do not have to rely on the accuracy of the written form of the language in order to preserve them.

X. Language Authorities and/or Councils of Speakers/Elders

As I noted above, language authorities were created among First Nations or Aboriginal Nations in British Columbia as a result of the new by-law of the BC College of Teachers which certifies proficient teachers who are sanctioned by their language authority. The word “authority” was chosen because many other indigenous and non-indigenous languages in the world had already established language authorities, especially where they became official languages, in order to create and regulate new vocabulary, and in order to certify proficient speakers and translators. To date, between 12 and 14 Language Authorities have been established in BC.

10.1 How to Establish a First Nations Language Authority

In terms of the protocol between First Nations communities and the College of Teachers, no guidelines for the establishment of a First Nations Language Authority exist, since the College cannot dictate to the speakers, elders and politicians of an Aboriginal speech community how to organize, and who should form a language authority. BCCT has attempted to assist First Nations in establishing authorities while not being intrusive.

Usually, establishing a First Nations language authority involves submitting proof to the BCCT that

there is a valid constituency which represents the language or speech community. In some cases, language authorities have involved all communities within an Aboriginal Nation. For example, the Secwepemc (Shuswap) language authority includes all 16 Shuswap-speaking bands of the Shuswap nation. All bands/communities formed the language authority and, by way of band and tribal council resolutions, designated the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society as the organization for its housing. In other cases, language authorities involve the communities which constitute a major dialect of a language, as is the case with the Upper St’at’imc Language Authority, which represents the Fraser River dialect of Lillooet. In yet other cases, a single community represents a language authority.

Internal matters regarding which communities form and participate in a language authority must be resolved by the communities and their political organizations. In some cases, because dialect differences are profound, both in creating cultural distance and in actual language difference, it is useful to have more than one language authority.

At present, certifying proficiency is the major reason for the existence and a key task of Language Authorities. Language authorities need to concern themselves with the issue of who is to be consid-

ered a proficient speaker, and what defines a “proficient speaker?” Again, no regulations for this exist, or should exist, on the part of the College.

Different norms have emerged among First Nations Language Authorities. In most cases to date, fluent speakers appear to be the peer group which knows and recognizes one another. Where this is the case, Language Authorities need no formal criteria, but simply a continuing network among speakers of the language who, by practicing the use of the language, continue to gauge and know of one another’s proficiency.

The situation changes, however, where new proficient speakers are recruited, and where not all speakers in the language authority know one another and one another’s speaking ability through face to face interaction. In such cases, it may be useful to establish some standards and criteria for what is considered “proficiency.”

The Upper St’at’imc Language Authority has specified such norms for certifying the proficiency in St’at’imcets (Lillooet language) of applicants. It recognizes as one category elders who are fluent speakers and who know one another’s fluency through interaction. A second category, however, includes younger people who learn to speak the language. For these people, the Upper Stat’t’imc Language Authority recognizes completion of the SFU Certificate in First Nations Language Proficiency (which includes at least six courses in the language), plus a successful interview in the lan-

guage between a group of speakers/elders and the applicant as meeting the norm of proficiency (Beverly Frank, 1998).

First Nations language authorities may wish to consider the future certification of proficient speakers, especially those who learned the Aboriginal language as a second language, and whether and how they need to establish standards for certifying the proficiency of speakers.

10.2 The Need for First Nations Language Authorities Beyond the Certification of Speakers

I pointed above to the role of Language Authorities in other parts of the world in maintaining and reviving endangered languages. Language Authorities can be bodies that develop and authorize new vocabularies. This is an important area for Aboriginal languages. Many speakers feel an urgent need to adapt vocabulary and create the many terms necessary to communicate in today’s world, which includes refrigerators, computers, Nintendo games, modern foods, and many other appliances and items which need to be named.

Aboriginal speakers have a long history of naming new things which were adapted into Aboriginal cultures. In many cases, new terms were invented which made use of the concept behind a new device, and composed a term for it through the categories of the native language. Thus, in

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Secwepemctsin (Shuswap), a fridge is *cts'ellmen*, made from the particle *c*=inside, *ts'ell*=cold, and *men*=instrument. In other cases, Aboriginal languages borrowed words from the English or French language and incorporated those words into their own grammars until they became almost recognizable. Sometimes words were borrowed from other languages within the same language family. A useful role for language authorities would be to establish and authorize new vocabularies -- to “modernize” the language.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples pointed to the importance of this task, which groups of elders/fluent speakers are in the best position to carry out. In some cases, groups of different language authorities within the same language family or group (for example, Shuswap, Lillooet, Okanagan, Nlakapmx, all in the Interior Salish family) could jointly develop and/or mutually borrow new vocabularies. Likewise, language authorities can have a fruitful role in authorizing writing systems, in reviewing existing writing systems or orthographies, and in reviewing the pronunciation and spelling of existing words.

10.3 Representing and Working with Dialects

Many of the Aboriginal languages of British Columbia have two or more dialects. In the past, speakers of dialects within the same language respected one another’s differences in speech and sometimes meaning of words, but could freely communicate and knew they had a shared language.

The decline in speaking of the languages, together with the fragmentation of Aboriginal Nations into reserve communities, has led to a fragmentation of Aboriginal languages, especially in the minds of younger and middle-aged people. With the decline of Aboriginal languages, dialect differences in many cases appear to have become overwhelming. Younger and less fluent speakers or learners of Aboriginal languages often mistake dialect differences for correct vs. incorrect versions of the language. In other cases, where sentences and phrases are mistranslated, different dialects appear as mutually unintelligible. In the minds of older speakers, this is not the case. However, such perceived differences between dialects often make it difficult for speakers of one language to form one language authority, or, on a practical level, to garner the local support for its teaching. In these cases, it is useful to engage the speakers/elders themselves in dialogue to demonstrate dialect differences, but also the many ways in which dialects are similar.

XI. Finding the Resources to Revive Your Language:

While at present there are few funding sources for Aboriginal languages programming and curriculum development, the following organizations do provide funds for projects:

First Peoples' Cultural Foundation

The British Columbia FPCF provides operational grants to First Nations organizations which carry out First Nations language and cultural projects and programming. Sponsorship is limited to linguistic groups, and only one program per year, per tribal council will be designated for support. It also offers limited support for independent bands. Funds cover operational grants (up to \$60,000 annually) as well as funds for feasibility studies (max. \$15,000). Applicants must show that two-thirds of projects are cost-shared with other sources. Please contact the Foundation for guidelines and details.

First Peoples' Cultural Foundation
7-2475 Mt. Newton Rd.
Saanichton, BC
V0S 1M0
Phone: (250) 652-2426
Fax: (250) 652-3431

British Columbia Ministry of Education (K – 12)

The Ministry of Education (K – 12) provides curriculum development funds for First Nations language and culture curriculum projects to First

Nations in liaison with School Districts. Grants are in the \$25,000 range and subject to availability of funding.

Field Services & Aboriginal Education Team
Ministry of Education
PO Box 9158 Stn. Prov Govt.
Victoria, BC
V8W 9H3
Phone: (250) 356-2575

School Districts

School Districts, in liaison with local First Nations committees, administer targeted funds for aboriginal children within districts. These are based on a formula of approximately \$900 per Aboriginal child (Status/non-status, Inuit and Metis) enrolled in the district. Such funds cover language and culture curriculum development and instruction (where it is not core language), First Nations coordinators and support workers, First Nations teacher assistants, cultural awareness workshops, and other First Nations services. Contact your local school district as to who administers and allocates targeted funds in your area

For core First Nations language programs which are offered through the Ministry's Second Language Policy, School Districts can designate funds for language instruction.

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Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Under its Aboriginal Policy Framework, the Ministry provides program funding for Aboriginal institutes which are linked with public post-secondary institutions, or for a small number of autonomous Aboriginal institutes. Contact the Ministry for details.

Ministry of Education
PO Box 9158 Stn. Prov Govt.
Victoria, BC
V8W 9H3
Phone: (250) 356-2575

The Department of Indian Affairs

DIA provides funding on a per-capita student base for First Nations operated schools in Canada. These funds are allocated to First Nations communities/Indian Bands. Many First Nations schools set such funds aside for local First Nations language programming within their schools. There are, however, no curriculum development funds or other support funds available.

Canadian Heritage

The Multiculturalism Secretariat of Canadian Heritage has in the past allocated small grants (\$5,000 range) for First Nations language and culture projects. However, First Nations requests must compete with requests from Canadian heritage language groups. For 1998/99, Canadian Heritage has set aside \$5 million for Aboriginal language funding. At press time, however, the guidelines for distributing these funds had not been set.

Canadian Heritage
Multiculturalism
15 Eddy Street, 11th Floor
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0M5

In addition to public sources, a number of private funding agencies, corporations and foundations may occasionally fund languages projects. Contact the First Nations Education Steering Committee for a list of such organizations.

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***This Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning in British Columbia* was prepared by Dr. Marianne Ignace for the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee during the spring of 1998. The handbook was prepared in an effort to assist First Nations communities in designing, expanding or enhancing their efforts toward language revitalization. The handbook provides information related to the state of First Nations languages, as well as local, regional and international initiatives directed at reversing language loss. In addition, the handbook provides suggestions for programming and establishing efforts in early childhood education, the elementary and secondary school system, and the community.**

FNESC is pleased to make this handbook available to people interested in the preservation of Aboriginal languages. We believe that raising awareness about the critical state of Aboriginal languages and outlining some of the effective ways in which to address the pressing issue of language loss is a crucial step towards the protection of an invaluable resource. We hope that this handbook provides support to the many individuals and communities which are working so hard to retain their languages and to pass on that vital part of their culture and heritage to their children and grandchildren.

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