

Assembly of First Nations

National First Nations Language Strategy

Annual General Assembly, July 10-12, 2007

Halifax, Nova Scotia



July 5, 2007

NOTICE TO THE READER

At the request of the Assembly of First Nations, this document was developed to address the need for a national strategic plan for the revitalization of First Nations languages in Canada.

This plan was informed and developed based on the information collected from the following sources:

- Assembly of First Nations Languages Unit, Education Unit and Strategic Planning and Policy Coordination
- The Draft for Consideration National First Nations Languages Strategy May 25, 2007
- The First Nations Plan Confirming and Advancing a National First Nations Languages Strategy: Proposed Framework 2007
- First Nations National Languages Strategy: Cost Estimate for Implementation; FAV COM, 2007.
- A Time to Listen and the Time to Act National First Nations Language Strategy 2000; Assembly of First Nations.
- AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages National Planning Meeting April 3-4, 2007
- Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nations, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures. 2005
- Regional Consultation notes from BC, Quebec, Labrador, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Yukon Territory, Saskatchewan, NWT, and Ontario. Input from Manitoba, Alberta were incorporated from the notes provided from the National Planning Meeting April 3-4, 2007.
- Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, Barcelona, June 1996
- First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, NAHO
- Seven Hypotheses on Language Loss: Causes and Cures, 1996 Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University
- Te Tuaoma The Maori Language: Steps that Have Been Taken 1999 New Zealand
- Te Rautaki Reo Maori The Maori Language Strategy, 2003

This document is respectfully submitted with the twenty-year vision of revitalization of our languages and in the common use of First Nations languages in our homes, communities and nation wide. It is our vision for Canada to respect and ensure the protection of our languages as evidenced through legislation and long-term sustainable investment.

Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald
Akwasasne Mohawk Territory

Purpose of this Document

Languages are a gift from the Creator which carry with them unique and irreplaceable values and spiritual beliefs that allow speakers to relate with their ancestors and to take part in sacred ceremonies. It is our vision that the present generation recover and strengthen the ability to speak these sacred, living languages and pass them on so that the seventh and future generations will be fluent in them.¹ As they belong to the original peoples of this country, First Nations languages must be revitalized, protected and promoted as a fundamental element of Canadian heritage.

The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights Article 7 states²:

1. *All languages are the expression of the collective identity and of a distinct way of perceiving and describing reality and must, therefore, be able to enjoy the conditions required for their development in all functions.*
2. *All languages are collectively constituted and are made available within a community for individual use as tools of cohesion, identification, communication and creative expression.*

Article 8

1. *All language communities have the right to organize and manage their own resources so as to ensure the use of their language in all functions within society.*
2. *All language communities are entitled to have at their disposal whatever means are necessary to ensure the transmission and continuity of their language.*

The health of our languages has been critically impacted over the past century and this strategy is designed to support and revitalize the contribution of our nations to Canada through our rich culture, history and languages. The initiatives described herein have been designed to ensure the ongoing revitalization, recognition and protection of our languages.

To achieve this vision First Nations and Government must combine efforts to plan and coordinate the generation of language growth envisioned herein.

This strategy has been prepared with input from First Nations at the community, regional and national levels.

¹ Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures. 2005

² Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, Barcelona, June 1996



Background

In 1998, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) declared a state of emergency on First Nations languages, and in 2000, prepared a national language strategy.³

In 1996-2001, the *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* reported that the total number of Aboriginal people who identified by *mother tongue* declined from 23 % to 9% in spite of the fact that the total Aboriginal population surveyed *increased* by 18%. According to the *First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey*, half of all First Nations adults understand a First Nations language 'relatively well' or 'fluently.' Among those 55 years and over, the rate rises to 71%, dropping to 39% among those 18-34 years, and to 26% among children 6-11 years of age.⁴

AFN conducted its own survey between 1990 and 1993 and found that almost 70% of First Nations languages are in *decline, endangered or critically endangered*.

In 1998, Statistics Canada issued a special report on Aboriginal languages (based on 1996 data). Out of 50 Aboriginal languages in Canada, only three - Inuktitut, Cree and Ojibwe - were *flourishing* with over 20,000 people identifying an *Aboriginal mother tongue*. However, two of the three Aboriginal linguistic groups in Canada that were previously considered 'safe' - Cree and Ojibwe - have now shown a significant decline in the '*population reporting an Aboriginal identity by mother tongue*.'

In 2002, the Government of Canada made a commitment of \$172.5M over 11 years towards the revitalization and preservation of Aboriginal languages and cultures. First Nations viewed this as an important and minimal commitment to begin addressing the serious needs for First Nation languages. In 2003, the Minister of Canadian Heritage mandated the *Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures* that delivered its' final report and recommendations in July 2005. First Nations supported the general direction of the recommendations but pointed out the need for a distinctions-based approach recognizing the diversity of First Nations languages, as well as, the need to recognize the central role of First Nations in the revitalization and maintenance of their languages.

In December 2006, Minister Oda announced that the allocation of \$160 million budget originally intended for First Nations languages had been removed from the fiscal framework by the current federal government.

³ Background Excerpted from *The Draft for Consideration National First Nations Languages Strategy* May 25, 2007

⁴ First Nations Centre 2005. *First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey. Results for Adults, Youth and Children Living in First Nations Communities*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization.



In 2000 the *National First Nations Languages Strategy: A Time to Listen and The Time to Act*, was developed by the Chiefs Committee on Languages. The strategy contained 14 recommendations based on 30 years of research conducted by the AFN, which included direction by First Nations Elders given at a national language conference held in 1993. The strategy was adopted by resolution of the Chiefs-in-Assembly in July 2000.

Now in 2007, First Nations must re-confirm and focus the National Strategy and deliver clear messages to government to re-instate its original commitment and seek support from the Parliament and Canadians in general for the revitalization, recognition and protection of our languages.

This document was researched and adapted from the numerous consultation documents collected from First Nations over the past year and from the collective work accumulated by the AFN over the last 30 years.

Much of this document also acknowledges and builds upon the expertise and work of other countries such as Australia, the United States and the Maori of New Zealand who have struggled to revitalize, protect and preserve their languages much as we are here today in Canada.

The History of Language Loss

One of the most obvious signs of the health of a language is the number of its speakers. Symptoms of loss include loss of fluency as younger generations prefer to speak another tongue. Usage also declines in “domains” where language was once secure, such as, in cultural observances, schools and most importantly, at home.⁵ Growing numbers of parents also fail to teach the language to their children, therefore, impacting the levels of fluency over time.

We know our languages are dying. The one sure way *to murder a language* is to ensure the genocide of its speakers.⁶ This was systematically done during the 1800’s during the colonization era, and thereafter, during the residential school era.

More often *languages die* in a more complex and gradual way through the assimilation of speakers into other cultures. Repressive policies and other attempts at cultural genocide in the past have taken a toll over several generations of our speakers.

Displacing a community’s language and vernacular is equivalent to displacing its deepest systems of beliefs. Language is tied closely to our sense of self in terms of personality, ways of thinking, group identity, religious beliefs and cultural rituals. These qualities are enormously difficult to assimilate away by the dominant society.⁷

Language choices are influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by social changes that disrupt the community in numerous ways.⁸ These include:

Demographic factors – when individuals have to leave the community to attend school or find employment. Mobility often leads to the *intermarriage* of language within the household.

Economic forces – opportunities for employment and commerce tend to be open only to the fully proficient in the dominant language. Today First Nations language speakers must accommodate the English/French dominated marketplace

Mass Media – television and video cassette records and DVD’s have First Nations children watching MTV, listening to heavy metal and playing electronic media which has displaced traditional pastimes, and thereby, impacted the passing down of First Nations history and culture.

⁵ Adapted from James Crawford, *Seven Hypotheses on Language Loss: Causes and Cures*, 1996
Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *ibid*



Social Identifiers - the ascription of low status to First Nations languages has resulted in aspiration towards role models that among the young tend to be non-First Nations.

Through our consultations we have observed that the loss of language and culture has most often been contributed to by residential schools. We are at a cross roads on language. We must revitalize our languages and help our young people learn and take pride in their traditional languages and culture. To be kept alive our languages must be used daily.

Our Elders⁹ call upon us to:

- Not forget our languages.
- Speak and write our languages.
- Teach and learn our languages.
- Respect each other's dialects.
- Focus on young people.
- Start in the home to strengthen the will of the people to revitalize and bring back our languages.
- Work together to build a foundation for our peoples.

The ability to speak our language helps us to understand who we are in relation to ourselves, our families, our communities and to Creation itself. Our languages connect us to our spirituality and ceremonies which increase personal self-esteem, familiarize us with our culture and bring about community healing. Language loss, especially for our youth, has set them adrift between our cultures and that of mainstream Canadian society. Revitalizing our language and culture is a way to healing and to reconnecting with the land.

A community driven revitalization strategy is required based on community commitment to identify priorities and develop and carry out plans that would involved all age groups. The strategy must be a minimum of 10 to 20 years to begin to overcome the legacy of neglect but with particular focus on the most critically endangered languages.

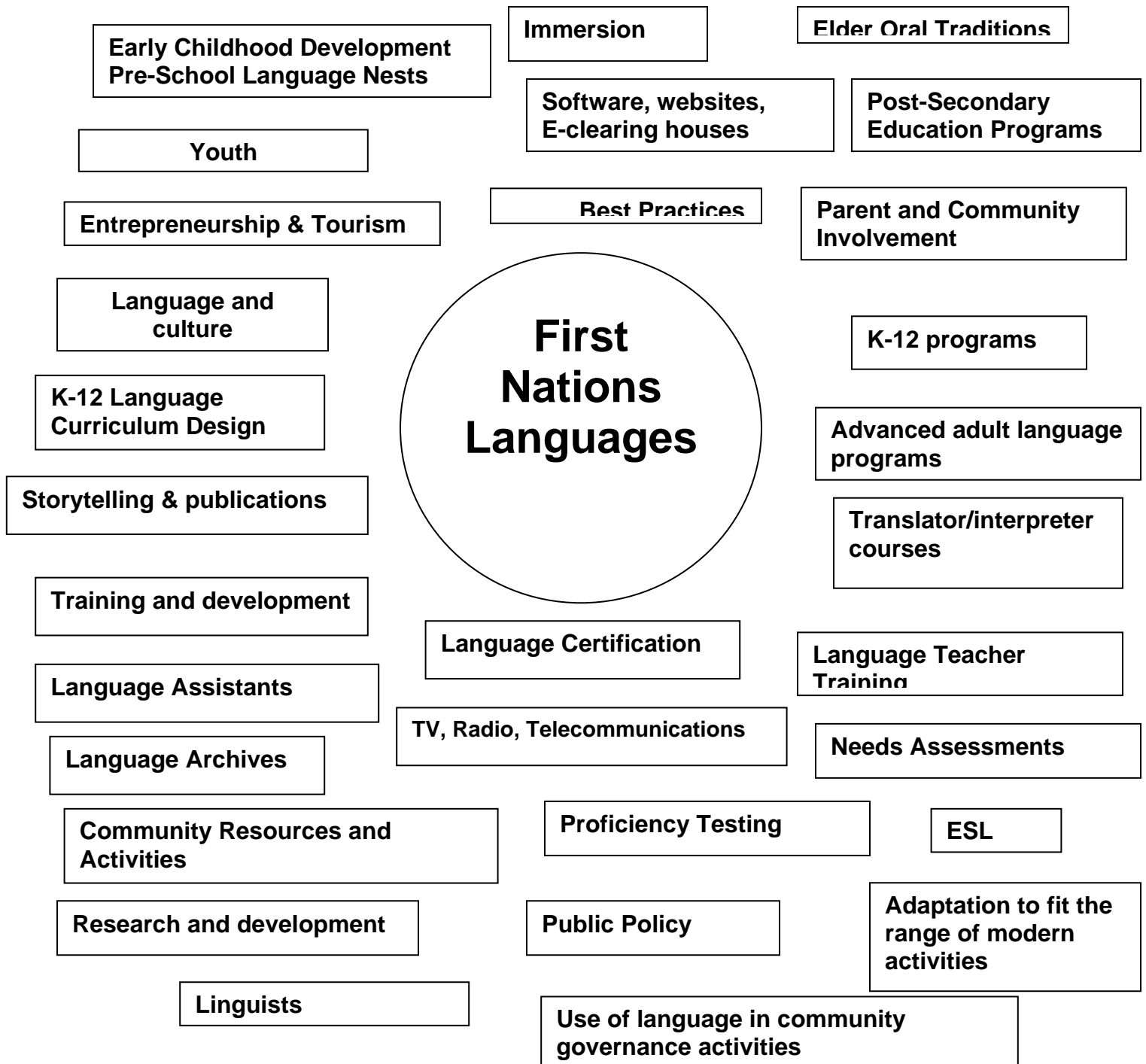
The core elements of our strategy are to ensure the revitalization, recognition and protection of our languages through sustainable investment, capacity building, promotion and preservation.

⁹ Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures. 2005



The Vision for First Nations Languages in Canada

A twenty-year vision is envisioned that reflects the 10-year federal commitment to languages and beyond. The emphasis of effort is on First Nations language revitalization, recognition and protection. This must be supported through sustainable investment, capacity building, promotion and preservation. Language revitalization activities include:



Overview of the First Nations Language Strategic Plan

This plan is a *road map* for how First Nations in Canada will work together to effectively revitalize, recognize, protect, promote and preserve First Nations languages nationally. The plan was produced based on the research, consultation and input of First Nations language experts from across the country.¹⁰ This plan is based on the importance of language to the survival of First Nations culture.

The Vision is: By 2027 First Nations languages will be revitalized and in common use in First Nations homes, communities and nation wide. Canada will respect and ensure the protection of our languages as evidenced through legislation and long-term sustainable investment.

The Policy Objectives are:

1. First Nations have jurisdiction over First Nations languages which are recognized and affirmed consistent with Section 35 of the Constitution Act.
2. First Nations seek legislated protection via a First Nations languages Act that would be consistent with First Nations and Government of Canada laws dealing with languages.

There are **5 major goals** envisioned as part of this strategy. They are:

1. Increase the number of First Nations people who speak their language by increasing the opportunities to learn their language.
2. Increase the opportunities to use First Nations languages by increasing the number of circumstances and situations where First Nations languages can be used.
3. Improve the proficiency levels of First Nations citizens in speaking, listening to, reading and writing First Nations languages.
4. Increase the rate of which First Nations languages can be enhanced, revitalized and developed so that they can be used in the full range of modern activities.
5. Foster among First Nations and Non-First Nations a positive attitude towards, and accurate beliefs and positive values about First Nations languages so that multi-lingualism becomes a valued part of Canadian society.

¹⁰ Excerpted from [Towards a new Beginning Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Culture](#) 2005, the [AFN Regional Languages Consultation Notes](#) and the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages [National Planning Meeting](#) April 3-4, 2007 notes.



Language revitalization activities include:

1. Research and development,
2. Curriculum development,
3. Information dissemination,
4. Updating the language to fit everyday use in a modern context,
5. Language maintenance, revival and awareness,
6. Testing language skills,
7. Certification of language skills.

Most importantly monitoring and evaluation is required to assess the improvement in the health of First Nations languages in order to measure progress in the achievement of the government investment and language policies. Also, monitoring and evaluation is required over time to document the government contribution across sectors to changes in the health, revitalization, recognition, protection, promotion and preservation of First Nations languages.

Some of the proposed First Nations language revitalization indicators are:

1. Number of people who speak a First Nations language.
2. Opportunities to learn a First Nations language.
3. Proficiency in a First Nations language.
4. The visibility of the language.
5. The availability of the language.
6. The use of the language.
7. The production of First Nations language materials.
8. The behavior toward the language.
9. The attitudes toward and beliefs and values about First Nations language.

Regular milestones are required to ensure adequate progress is being made towards our long term vision. To this end ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be required to measure progress from a First Nations, as well as, government perspective. The following diagram illustrates the major elements of the language strategy as described herein.



First Nations Language Strategy

| | |
|---|---|
| Vision: By 2027 First Nations languages will be revitalized and in common use in First Nations homes, communities and nation wide. Canada will respect and ensure the protection of our languages as evidenced through legislation and long-term sustainable investment. | |
| Policy Objectives | |
| 1. First Nations have jurisdiction over First Nations languages which is recognized and affirmed consistent with section 35 of the Constitution Act. | 2. First Nations seek legislated protection via a First Nations languages Act that would be consistent with First Nations and Government of Canada laws dealing with languages. |
| Goals and Milestones¹¹ | |
| 1. Increase the number of First Nations people who speak their language by increasing the opportunities to learn their language. | 3. Improve the proficiency levels of First Nations citizens in speaking, listening to, reading and writing First Nations languages. |
| 2. Increase the opportunities to use First Nations languages by increasing the number of circumstances and situations where First Nations languages can be used. | 4. Increase the rate of which First Nations languages can be enhanced, revitalized and developed so that they can be used in the full range of modern activities. |
| 5. Foster among First Nations and Non-First Nations a positive attitude towards, and accurate beliefs and positive values about First Nations languages so that multi-lingualism becomes a valued part of Canadian society. | |

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|------------------------|
| Heritage Canada |
| Language and culture |

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| INAC |
| Education - Elementary Secondary Post Secondary Parental-Community Involvement Cultural Ed. Centres |

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|---|
| Other Departments |
| Health Canada (AHSOR) Industry Canada HRSDC SDC Provinces |

| Language Revitalization Activities | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. research and development | 4. modernizing and updating language |
| 2. curriculum development | 5. testing language skills |
| 3. information dissemination | 6. certification of language skills |

| First Nations Language Monitoring and Evaluation Framework |
|---|
| 1. Monitoring and evaluation of the health of First Nations languages in order to measure progress in the achievement of the Government investment and language policies. |
| 2. document over time the Government contribution across sectors to changes in the health of First Nations languages. |

| Proposed First Nations Language Revitalization Indicators | |
|---|---|
| 1. Number of people who speak a First Nations language | 6. the use of the First Nations language |
| 2. Opportunities to learn a First Nations language | 7. the production of First Nations language materials. |
| 3. Proficiency in a First Nations language | 8. Behaviour toward First Nations language |
| 4. the visibility of the First Nations language | 9. The attitudes toward and beliefs and values about First Nations languages. |
| 5. the availability of the First Nations language | |

¹¹ Adapted from Te Tuoma The Maori Language: The Steps that Have Been Taken 1999 New Zealand



The Policy Objective # 1

1. First Nations have jurisdiction over First Nations languages which is recognized and affirmed consistent with Section 35 of the Constitution Act.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes that:

- First Nations languages are guaranteed to all First Nations by Section 35 of the Constitution Act.
- Legal recognition of First Nations languages ensures permanent and long term sustainable funding which is required for the revitalization, protection, promotion and preservation of First Nations languages over time.
- The recognition of diversity among First Nations and the number of languages is imperative to ensure the protection of their unique cultural and linguistic legacies.

Current Situation/Strategic Approach:

Section 35.1 entrenches our First Nations language rights in the Canadian Constitution through the following wording “*the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.*”

The Crown has historically ignored the linguistic rights of First Nations peoples. The supreme court of Canada has declared; “... *the historic powers and responsibilities assumed by the Crown constituted the source of a fiduciary obligation.... [There is] a general guiding principle for s.35 (1). That is, the government has responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to Aboriginal peoples.*” R v. Sparrow.

The federal government has a legal obligation through various treaties, and through legislation, to provide adequate resources that will enable First Nations to exercise this right.¹²

¹² Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures. 2005



Policy Objective #2.

First Nations seek legislated protection via a First Nations Languages Act that would be consistent with First Nations and Government of Canada laws dealing with languages.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes that:

- First Nations languages require legislated protection as part of harmonization of Canada and First Nations laws that deal with languages. This legislation must have equal standing to the protection legislated for French and English.
- In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recommended and supported the concept of giving Aboriginal languages “official status.”
- In 1997 the Aboriginal Languages Initiative was established as a result of Securing our Future Together (Redbook II) which contained a commitment to “work with Aboriginal peoples to establish a program to preserve, protect and teach Aboriginal languages and to ensure that these languages, which are vital components of Aboriginal culture and Canada’s heritage are kept alive for future generations.”¹³

Strategic Approach

The importance of a First Nations language strategy must be supported through legislated protection of our languages to ensure achievement of our vision. This must be pursued in a coordinated manner to ensure the crisis facing our languages is addressed through funding, public policy and long term commitment by government. This is consistent with similar practice in other countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States who have legislated Languages Acts protecting the Indigenous languages of their First peoples. Activities that support this objective include research and development of a Languages Act focused on revitalization, preservation and promotion, and the introduction and support from Parliament for this Act. This approach reflects the crisis and need for language growth over the next twenty years and for the generations to come.

¹³ Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures. 2005



Goal # 1

Increase the number of First Nations people who speak their language by increasing the opportunities to learn their language.

Rationale:

This goal recognizes that:

- First Nations language speakers must be guaranteed opportunities to learn their language. These efforts are required to revitalize our languages especially those that are critically endangered.¹⁴
- It is critical to ensure that First Nations speakers have opportunities to speak, read, write and listen to First Nations languages at home, work, play, in the community and through the governance and daily goings on at every level.
- Fluency and language resilience begins with the children. Opportunities for language training at the early childhood development stage and throughout the life cycle is essential.

Strategic Approach:

Activities supporting this goal include community based – language specific early childhood development and pre-school language instruction, immersion programs, K-12 language programs and curriculum design, language teacher and teacher assistant training, needs assessments, parent and community involvement, adult language programming, language certification and proficiency testing.

¹⁴ Excerpted from [Towards a new Beginning Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Culture 2005](#), the [AFN Regional Languages Consultation Notes](#) and the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages National Planning Meeting April 3-4, 2007 notes.



Goal # 2

Increase the opportunities to use First Nations languages by increasing the number of circumstances and situations where First Nations languages can be used.

Rationale:

This goal recognizes that:

- First Nations language speakers must have access to increasing circumstances and situations where First Nations languages can be used beyond the education sector which is traditionally the conventional crucial area for language transmission.
- Telecommunications, television, radio, electronic media is required that reinforces First Nations language, culture and traditions in a manner that values and reinforces First Nations history, culture, mannerisms, ideologies and beliefs.
- Economic, demographic and social identifiers are required that reinforce and influence positive language choices that promote the use and validity of First Nations language usage.

Strategic Approach:

Activities that support this goal include increased focus on entrepreneurship, eco-tourism, training, development, economic development, story telling, use of First Nations languages by the leadership (in the community and as an integral part of local governance), television, radio, electronic and print telecommunications (in order to reinforce First Nations languages awareness, usage and visibility). This will be accomplished through increased community language and culture resources, as well as, activities that support, facilitate and validate First Nations language usage. Increases in language visibility in a vast array of circumstances and situations at the individual, family, community and national levels will facilitate the revitalization, recognition, protection, promotion, investment and preservation of our languages at all levels.



Goal # 3

Improve the proficiency levels of First Nations citizens in speaking, listening to, reading and writing First Nations languages.

Rationale:

This goal recognizes that:

- First Nations languages are diverse and demographically dispersed nationally. There are linguistic and regional features within the language families across the country. To acknowledge, recognize and accommodate this diversity these features must be upheld and preserved. Proficiency levels in speaking, listening, reading and writing First Nations languages are required and anticipated.
- First Nations languages were critically affected by the social and political environment in Canada via the dominant language and linguistic attitudes of the non-First Nations majority. To revitalize First Nations languages it is necessary for the wider Canadian milieu to value and support a positive First Nations languages and linguistic environment. Such support is required through legislation, the media, telecommunications, trade, commerce, eco-tourism and other venues that validate and support First Nations language, culture and traditions.
- Second language learning and language skills training requires greater awareness of language learning processes. Linguists, language specialists and experts with the knowledge and teaching skills required to preserve and document languages while they are still alive is essential to address the critically endangered language crisis before the last speakers are lost and their languages along with them.

Strategic Approach:

Activities that support this goal include research, development, retaining linguists and language specialists, ESL language techniques and adaptations, language certification, needs assessments, story telling, publishing and developing cultural and linguistically specific resources, curriculum materials and guides, sharing of Elder oral traditions, curriculum design for K-12, post secondary research and language development, usage in the media via television, radio, electronic communications, written word, archives, software, websites, electronic clearinghouses and immersion. This approach supports language, revitalization, recognition and protection through extensive promotion, investment and capacity building at all levels of community existence including local, regional and national.



Goal # 4

Increase the rate of which First Nations languages can be enhanced, revitalized and developed so that they can be used in the full range of modern activities.

Rationale:

This goal recognizes that:

- The ability to speak our language helps us to understand who we are in relation to ourselves, our families, our communities and to the broader world around us. Our youth have been set adrift between our cultures and that of mainstream society. Revitalizing our language and culture means enhancing, adapting, modernizing our languages as a way to maintaining health, healing and a connection to our communities, our land, our culture, our traditions and world view.
- Community driven initiatives are required that will enhance and maintain the integrity of our distinct dialects. This requires ongoing work to record, collate, analyze and transmit the unique aspects of our speech to our new generations of speakers.
- Telecommunications, media, television, radio, electronic transmission devices, the Internet, and all other modern telecommunications are impacting our First Nations languages, as well as, the dominant language on a daily basis. Our languages are having to adapt to keep current with this phenomenon to ensure usage in the full range of modern activities.

Strategic Approach:

The activities of this goal are supported by adaptation, modernization, linguistic analysis, recording, collating, analyzing, transmission, dissemination, telecommunications, media, websites, software, clearinghouses and other modern activities that enhance, revitalize and support the use of our languages in the full range of modern activities acknowledging our global and ever changing community environment.



Goal # 5

Foster among First Nations and Non-First Nations a positive attitude towards, and accurate beliefs and positive values about First Nations languages so that multi-lingualism becomes a valued part of Canadian society.

Rationale:

This goal recognizes that:

- First Nations language and culture is valued to some extent as a part of Canada's heritage by some elements of Canadian society. Ongoing education and public awareness is required however to enhance the attitudes and nurture accurate beliefs and positive values about First Nations languages within the context of a Canadian bilingual cultural, social and political environment. The challenge is to enhance language attitudes in the wider public domain. Due to the diversity of language families demographically across the country non-First Nations support for the use of First Nations languages in the public marketplace is limited.
- Canada is ever increasingly a melting pot of cultural groups, immigrants, linguistic and cultural phenomena that highlights even more the need for language revitalization, recognition and protection from a First Nations perspective. Given that First Nations citizens are the First peoples and have constitutional guarantees through Section 35.1 of the Canadian Constitution.

Strategic Approach:

This goal is supported through public education, awareness, multi-media, story telling, information dissemination, research, post secondary education, translation, interpreters, Elders, websites, clearinghouses, language nests, community resources and activities, all which are geared towards positive attitudes, accurate beliefs and through fostering positive language values in a context of multi-lingualism for Canada.



The Role of First Nations in Leading First Nations Language Revitalization

Both First Nations (local, regional and national) and Government have significant roles in achieving our vision of revitalization of First Nations languages in Canada. These roles are based on collaboration, cooperation and coordination.¹⁵

First Nations through community consultations have made it clear that they see as their role:

- Language transmitters within the individual, family, community and nation milieu, and language caregivers for the future generations of First Nations language speakers. This is the cornerstone of First Nations language revitalization, recognition, protection, capacity building, promotion and preservation.
- Increased language usage in dominant domains will be supported and increased by First Nations as part of this strategic plan.
- All language revitalization efforts will be community driven and community specific acknowledging the rich diversity across the country. Each community will be nurtured and respected as they develop and implement language plans that reflect their unique needs, culture and worldview.
- First Nations will lead the work required to record, collate, analyze and transmit the unique aspects of their living language for the future generations of speakers.

¹⁵ Adapted from *Te Tūāoma The Maori Language: The Steps that Have Been Taken* 1999 New Zealand and *Towards A New Beginning - Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. A foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures.* 2005



The Functions of Government in Supporting First Nations Language Revitalization

There are several functions required of the Government of Canada. They include:

- First Nations Language Education: in early childhood education, elementary, secondary, adult education and post-secondary education. Also cultural education centers and programming.
- First Nations Language broadcasting: by supporting the growth of First Nations language through funding radio and television broadcasting in First Nations languages such as APTN the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.
- First Nations Language Arts: government support of language by support of culture, heritage, the performing arts, media and other mechanisms that support language, culture and traditions.
- First Nations language services: including dictionary making, benchmarking of proficiency, language and certification of translators and interpreters, and recognition and acknowledgement of First Nations languages as equal to the official status of French and English.
- First Nations language archives: supporting and providing resources for the collecting and maintaining of language archives which could include written, audio and audio visual language records. This support will assist First Nations driven initiatives at revitalization of critically endangered languages and language nests.
- Community planning, language, policy, coordination and evaluation: supporting and financing the planning and implementation of the work described herein as part of the First Nations language strategy.



NEXT STEPS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN¹⁶

PHASE I – COMMUNITY PLANNING

1. Confirming national support and momentum at the AFN Annual General Assembly 2007.
2. Community based language plans.
3. Implementation.
4. Initiation of action to protect First Nations languages based on section 35 of the Constitution Act and Section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

PHASE II – IMPLEMENTATION

1. Confirming full costing framework based on community plans.
2. Establishing clear targets relative to state of language determined as a result of the monitoring and evaluation plan.
3. Regional language authorities.
4. National coordination and pursuit of full revitalization and recognition.

PHASE III – MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. An effective and accurate system of monitoring and evaluation is established based on agreed upon indicators and achievement of tasks in Phase I and II.

PHASE I – COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Confirming National Support and Momentum from the political leadership at the upcoming Annual General Assembly of the AFN (July 10-12, 2007).

Community Language Plans - Every First Nations community has unique circumstances that affect language use and retention. This plan ensures that every community will have the opportunity and mandate to discuss and begin

¹⁶ Excerpted from Towards a new Beginning Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Culture 2005, the AFN Regional Languages Consultation Notes and the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages National Planning Meeting April 3-4, 2007 notes.



development of individual plans that respond directly to their unique demographic, linguistic and cultural reality.

First Nations communities are at different states of readiness in terms of pursuing revitalization activities and ongoing work needs to take place to promote recognition, protection, promotion and preservation of our languages. Elements of community plans will encompass, but not be limited to:

- Pre-School (Language nests)
- K-12 Programs
- K-12 Language Curriculum Development
- Community-based Language Instruction Programs
- Language Assistants
- Community Resources and Activities/Events
- Teacher Language Training
- Curriculum Development (ECD Programs, post-secondary courses in language and immersion instruction methods)
- Post Secondary Education
- Electronic Applications (web sites, soft ware, etc.)
- E-Clearing Houses
- Language Family Offices

All language funding will be targeted to community-level activities. Further, regional and national activities, where required, will focus on supporting communities and community plans.

COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH

A comprehensive research effort is required to examine community populations, the rates of fluency and the health of the languages on a community-by-community basis.

In addition, research plans will also provide an opportunity to identify national standardized definitions around fluency, the state and health of languages, along with other concepts leading to the development of a new, specific scale to determine the status and monitoring of language for each community.

REVITALIZATION, RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION

As part of the *Revitalization, Recognition and Implementation* of First Nations languages, AFN will advance an options paper outlining the legal and other avenues required to pursue preservation and protection of First Nations languages in a Canadian context. This will be developed for consideration by all First Nations. The link between protection, through legislation or other action, to the ability to leverage funding will be fully described. The basis of such protection will reflect the guarantee of Aboriginal and Treaty rights provided in section 35 of the Constitution Act, as well as, section 23 of the Charter of Rights

and Freedoms which references Canada's obligation to provide education to First Nations children in their own language.

Recognition and funding for First Nations languages will be considered in a manner similar to the provision of French language support in Quebec; keeping in mind that French is only one language while there are many First Nations languages.

The revitalization, recognition, protection, promotion and preservation of First Nations languages must begin in every First Nations community and within every home.

PHASE II: IMPLEMENTATION

COSTING FRAMEWORK

The overriding objective of First Nations is to have the language funding that was cut from the federal fiscal framework in 2006 fully re-instated and enhanced to respond to the full costing framework referenced as part of Annex II of this document.

The AFN will target additional federal departments for language funding. These include Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (education, elementary- secondary, post secondary) and Health Canada for Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve and other early childhood specific programs.

ESTABLISHING TARGETS

Work is necessary to advance regional-level activities and will include the establishment of First Nations language teacher certification and training; promotion activities around First Nations languages using radio, local newspapers and other media; promotion of language issues with First Nations leadership and others; regular strategic planning; working with communities regionally; and, coordination with provincial entities such as Ministries of Education. In addition, regional activities will include assessing opportunities and options for gathering and developing curriculum, conducting and housing research on language syntax, terminology, language evolution, and lexicography.

NATIONAL COORDINATION TO PURSUE REVITALIZATION AND RECOGNITION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES

Additional activities at the national level will center on communications and advocacy for community, language family and regional level activities. New languages information will be provided and regularly updated, including research and reference material, as part of the AFN's existing website.



Finally, the AFN will work with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) on language issues to encourage the sharing of resources and materials within language families. At the same time, AFN will take advantage of **international** forums to raise awareness of the state of First Nations languages to gain international support and awareness of issues in this regard.

PHASE III: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

An effective and accurate system of monitoring and evaluation is established based on agreed upon indicators and achievement of tasks in Phase I and II.

ANNEX 1

CHRONOLOGY OF LANGUAGE & CULTURE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS¹⁷

1972

The AFN's first policy on First Nations language and culture is developed. "Indian Control of Indian Education" officially recognizes that languages and cultures are an integral part of First Nations education.

In response to the recommendations from Chiefs and Elders the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) implements the Cultural Education Centres Program.

1988

Assembly of First Nations publishes Aboriginal Language Policy Study (Phases I & II).

1988

AFN hosts National conference on languages to formulate First Nations Languages Policy Framework.

During AFN's Aboriginal Language Policy Conference (Ottawa: January 1988) the Honourable David Crombie, Minister of Secretary of State, offered to create an Aboriginal Languages Institute.

1989

Secretary of State included Aboriginal languages in Bill C-37 an "Act to Establish a Heritage Language Institute."

First Nations opposed inclusion in Bill C-37 on the grounds that First Nations languages are unique as languages of the founding nations protected under treaty and federal legislation.

1989

A private members bill, Bill C-269 "An Act to Establish an Aboriginal Languages Foundation" was introduced by Ethel Blondin based on the 'Kirkness Report.' The Bill was not introduced to parliament.

A lobby for Bill C-269 identified the need for updated research and the AFN undertook and documented additional research: "Toward Linguistic Justice."

1989

AFN declares March 31st "Aboriginal Languages Day".

1991

AFN hosts a National Conference to discuss recommendations from "Towards Linguistic Justice for First Nations" and the report "You Took My Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment".

¹⁷ Source: Assembly of First Nations web site www.afn.ca



AFN hosts 1st Annual AFN –Peter Gzowski Invitational Golf tournament in support of Aboriginal Languages and Literacy.

1992

AFN publishes “Towards Rebirth of First Nations Language’, to extend the survey of language conditions.

1992

AFN forms the Languages and Literacy Secretariat. Its mandate includes:

- Raising awareness about the importance of First Nations languages and literacy at the community level;
- Lobbying for protective legislation and increased funding;
- Carrying out the necessary research on State of the Language (tracking language shift, developing strategies to preserve and strengthen languages etc.);
- Establishing a First Nations Languages Foundation.

1993

AFN coordinates a National Elder’s Gathering and develops recommendations on languages and cultures based on the direction and guidance of Elders.

1996

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recommends the endowment of \$ 100 million for an Aboriginal Language Foundation.

1997

Canadian Heritage establishes the Aboriginal Languages Initiative to work in unison with Aboriginal Peoples to revitalize and preserve Aboriginal languages. AFN coordinates the national initiative on behalf of the First Nations.

1998

A Stats Can Report based on 1996 census data reveals that of the 50 Aboriginal languages in Canada only 3 are considered safe from extinction – Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut.

1998

The Chiefs in Assembly declare a national “State of Emergency on Languages.”

The AFN establishes the Chiefs Committee on Languages and the Technical Committee on Languages to protect and advance First Nations language rights in Canada.

2000

A National Strategy “A Time To Listen and The Time To Act” is developed by the Chiefs Committee on Languages, Technical Committee on Languages and the AFN Languages Secretariat.

The National Strategy and Draft-First Nations Languages and Foundation Act are adopted by the Chiefs in Assembly at its 21st Annual General Assembly, July 13, 2000.



2001

The Department of Indian Affairs cutbacks result in the termination of the AFN Languages Secretariat – the Language Sector is integrated with Education.

2002

AFN with the support of the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada develops a research initiative including a national literature review on First Nations languages and cultures.

The AFN drafts and promotes a National Accord on Aboriginal Languages with the Métis and Inuit.

AFN, Métis and Inuit representatives participate on advisory committee with Canadian Heritage to establish the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures.

2003

AFN re-establishes the AFN Languages Sector. Its primary mandate is to assist the Chiefs Committee on Languages to carry out its mandate to protect First Nations language rights in Canada.

2004

August 25, the Chiefs Committee on Languages and AFN Languages Sector present the National First Nations Languages Strategy and First Nations Languages and Foundation Act to the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures.

ANNEX 2 PROPOSED COSTING FRAMEWORK ¹⁸

This proposed costing framework is provided for consideration and further development as a companion to the proposed strategy contained herein.

| COST CATEGORY | APPROACH | COMMENTS |
|---|--|--|
| PHASE ONE: development | | |
| Community Plan Development | One-time, block funding amount per community | ASSUMPTION: (1) All communities will require a base amount – which could be similar to that provided for community health transfer assessments; (2) Additional variable amounts for large populations (e.g. for surveys and needs assessments). |
| Region/Language Plan Development | One-time, block funding per language family | ASSUMPTION: (1) All language families will receive the same funding amount to develop a language plan and variable amounts for language families with large numbers of languages. |
| Electronic Applications (web sites, software, etc.) | Community and region applicants | ASSUMPTION: Estimated to be accessed by all regions and 25% of communities. Average cost per application: \$50,000 per language family, and \$20,000 per community. |
| Development of Regional Language Authorities | Provide support to communities and language family plan development | \$200,000 per authority |
| National Coordination and Securing Protection of First Nation languages | Support for Chiefs Committee on Languages supported by a core technical team to advance options | To be developed by AFN in conjunction with Chiefs Committee on Languages. |
| PHASE TWO: implementation | | |
| CHILDREN AND YOUTH LANGUAGE EDUCATION | | |
| Pre-School (Language nests) | <p>Child care & AHSOR: funding of staff person fluent in language for 30 hours per week</p> <p>Community/Parent language nests (preference to communities without child care or AHSOR, or which have children on waiting lists for these centres).</p> | <p>OPTIONS: (1) day care and head start centres in communities with flourishing and enduring languages will be funded for one fluent speaker (language assistant). It is expected that other staff will be gradually trained / replaced by fluent speakers, allowing these centres to become immersion focused over time. No additional base salaries for these existing</p> |

¹⁸ Excerpted from: Lemchuk-Favel, L., 2007, First Nations National Languages Strategy: Cost Estimate for Implementation. Ottawa; FAV COM.



| COST CATEGORY | APPROACH | COMMENTS |
|---|--|--|
| Language Assistants | <p>months)</p> <p>Community-based practical experience for post-secondary students</p> | <p>will initially focus on language education to children and youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of those which are flourishing or enduring: 25% (48) might provide high intensity immersion (based costs on existing First Nation adult immersion programs; and an average of 10-20 participants per community annually), and - flourishing, enduring and declining language communities would provide lower intensity language training for 15-20 participants per community <p>Note: developmental costs, including curriculum and instructional tools are considered below under Community Resources</p> <p>Note: language assistant costs are included in K-12 per diem.</p> <p>ASSUMPTION: An average of ten persons would be funded per language family per year, and implemented over a ten year period. Based on the French federal model which provides 25 hr/wk Sept through May: \$18,500 for nine months.</p> |
| Community Resources and Activities/Events | <p>Activities as defined by community plans. Assume all communities would require this funding. Includes curriculum development for adult programming.</p> | <p>ASSUMPTION: As all communities' projects will be unique, will assume an average of \$20,000 - \$40,000 per community per year</p> |
| <p>POST SECONDARY LANGUAGE EDUCATION</p> <p>Teacher Language Training</p> | <p>Specifically for those persons working in the education sector and wishing to upgrade their language skills in the summer break AND where adult language instruction programs are not available in their community</p> | <p>ASSUMPTION: Targeted to working individuals: bursaries of \$3,000 to teachers and ECD workers who are semi-fluent for out-of-community language training (room, board, tuition) of 2 months duration. Assume that an average of two persons per community where First Nations language is taught as a subject (partial immersion) would receive a bursary for this instruction.</p> |
| Curriculum | <p>Developmental funding for those</p> | <p>ASSUMPTION: fifteen post-</p> |



| COST CATEGORY | APPROACH | COMMENTS |
|--|---|---|
| Development (ECD Programs, post-secondary courses in language and immersion instruction methods) | institutions - now delivering ECD programs, or - providing post secondary education with First Nations majors, to assist in development of curriculum specific to languages and/or language families | secondary institutions would now be interested in developing these curricula at \$100,000 per institution over five years. |
| Post Secondary Education | Grants to individuals for full-time First Nations language and/or language/instruction study in post secondary institutions: | ASSUMPTION: assume 10 students per post secondary institution offering language programs, implemented over five years. Use INAC's average post-secondary cost per student |
| TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS Electronic Applications (web sites, soft ware etc.) | Community, language families or region applicants | ASSUMPTION: Estimated to be accessed by all language families/regions and 25% of communities. Average cost per application: \$50,000 per language family, and \$20,000 per community. (Communities to be funded for two years) |
| REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT Regional Language Authorities | Costs associated with regional language authorities to provide support to communities (core staff of coordinator and admin assistant) | To be determined through regional processes and dialogue to establish clear understanding of services to be provided by language family offices |
| Language Development Resources | Word development, validation, protocols, certification guidelines etc. | Each of 65 languages is assumed to require 2 years of funding at \$100,000 each year. Phased in over twenty years. |
| National Activities | Costs associated with national office functions (core staff of director, policy advisor, data analyst, administrative assistant) and national b-annual meetings. | Costs to be determined related to identified functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional development • Advocacy and coordination • First Nation languages symposium |

