RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE POLICIES & PLANNING

First Nations Languages and Revitalization

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Languages and
Culture Sector

Secteur des langues
et de la culture

Overview

Whether your First Nation is at the beginning of your language revitalization journey, or has already begun it, we know this work can be challenging. This toolkit provides an overview of various resources and tools that might be useful to your First Nation as you set language revitalization goals, and think about what is most needed for you to achieve them.

What is a language plan?

A language plan is a tool to help you chart a path forward based on your language's unique needs, that takes into consideration the resources your First Nation has available. They allow you to assess your current situation, set goals and objectives, identify gaps, and plan for what resources and tools are needed to reach your language revitalization goals.[1]

When conducting a **language plan** you will work with your First Nation to[2]:

Conduct an environmental scan of your language. Collect an inventory of your language resources, e.g. number of speakers, programs, and teaching resources such as dictionaries, curriculum, and number of teachers.

Set language goals. What is your vision for your language(s)? Think of the short, medium, and long term.

Determine how you plan to reach your goals. Write down some activities that will help you get there and set priorities.

Identify gaps in information, resources, capacity and include strategies on how to address these gaps and highlight related needs.

Engage your First Nation and build support– include everyone.

Consider ways of filling in any gaps in resources or information you need to execute your plan.

Consider GIDS (Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) and what language interventions (strategies) match your language goals. Based on your language status, for example, you might want to find fluent language teachers, mentors, and Elders; develop a committee to work on a dictionary; start a preschool immersion nest or immersion-based early childhood language education program; start school-based immersion or intensive language education programs; start adult language education models, e.g. mentor-apprentice; and, develop comprehensive First Nation and government language policies and programs.

Include ongoing monitoring and evaluation in your plan and consider ways to make it flexible to changes as needed based on the results of those evaluations. Include benchmarks and performance indicators or measures.

Match your plan to a broader strategy, if possible, and consider possible partnerships.

Continuously go through these steps as your needs may change over time as the appropriate interventions evolve over time as the language gets stronger.

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[1] AFN. (2019)." A Guide to: An Act Respecting First Nations Languages: A tool for First Nations language revitalization."
Retrieved from: https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

[2] Ibid

How do I do a language assessment?[3]

A language assessment looks at the resources available and the current state of your language(s) within your First Nation. When conducting a language assessment, you can begin by speaking with members of your First Nation about conducting a survey or questionnaire to learn more about the state of your language(s) and the progress that has been made over time. Ongoing assessments are useful in determining progress made towards your goals.

A **language assessment** involves asking questions like[4]:

How many speakers?

Between what ages?

How old are the youngest speakers?

Are speakers and/or second language learners able to get together easily?

Is there support within your First Nation?

What resources do you have in your First Nation?

Has some research already been done?

Is the language documented?

Are there any trained teachers?

Are there any university courses in the language? Are they easily accessible?

Do you need equipment/space?

If not, what is needed? Do you have dictionaries? Curriculum? A group of Elders? Classes or courses? Laws or policies in your government?

[3] AFN. (2019)." A Guide to: An Act Respecting First Nations Languages: A tool for First Nations language revitalization." Retrieved from: https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

[4] Ibid

What is the GIDS scale and how do I know where my language fits?[5]

Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) is a useful tool for reflecting on the needs of your language(s), and thinking about what kinds of resources and projects might be best for your First Nation.

Language revitalization strategies should be reflective of the current state of a First Nations language(s), and strategies are most effective when the language needs match the interventions used.

See the **Revised Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages,** as adapted in the AFN National Engagement Report, 2017 here:[6]

Stage	Speaker First Nation	Suggested interventions
8	Only Elders	• Documentation • Mentor-apprentice • Connect Elders to have conversations
7	Only adults past child bearing age	• Establish a language nest
6	Some intergenerational use	• Develop First Nation sites of language use • Encourage parents to raise their children in the language
5	Languages is still very much in use in the First Nation	• Promote literacy • Promote volunteerism in language institutes (schools, offices, etc.)
4	Language is used in elementary school	• Improve immersion teaching methodologies (TPR: total physical response, Accelerated Second Language Learning, etc.) • Introduce or bolster immersion and bilingual education programs • Develop textbooks in the language in all academic subject matter
3	Language is used in places of business and by employees in less specialized work areas	• Make the language the language of the office • Develop new vocabulary for work terms
2	Language is used by local government and First Nation, especially for communication and media	• Promote language use in local government, including through policies and laws • Translate documents • Provide interpretation services where warranted • Promote language use in newsletters, newspapers, radio, and TV
1	Some language use by higher levels of government and in higher education and training	• Teach college level classes in the language • Develop oral and written language in the arts and in publications • Give awards for language publications and other language activities

[5] AFN. (2019)." A Guide to: An Act Respecting First Nations Languages: A tool for First Nations language revitalization." Retrieved from: https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

[6] Ibid

What should I know about developing a language policy?[7]

We often think of policies as something done federally, but language policies can be useful at the community level as well. Language laws and policies can help further language revitalization efforts by guiding language plans and encouraging language use in specific spaces and contexts.

Things to consider when developing **language legislation and/or policies** within your First Nation or organization include:

Determine your capacity to develop a law or policy: Is there a language committee or group devoted to revitalization? Is it possible at this stage to conduct business in the language?

Consider your existing capacity and how the law or policy can help you reach your goals and long-term vision for the language.

Consider how the law or policy strengthens the implementation of a language plan – the aim is to keep the language alive.

Develop a language policy statement, including: mission, goals, declaring the language(s) of the First Nation or organization, setting out authorities, and other statements considered important, e.g. specific language activities or an implementation plan, among others.

[7] AFN. (2019)." A Guide to: An Act Respecting First Nations Languages: A tool for First Nations language revitalization." Retrieved from: https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

Language education resources for First Nations

We've compiled a couple of resources to help First Nations and organizations begin their language education journey. These include tools for language education, and some examples of First Nation-based language revitalization initiatives:

- First Peoples' Cultural Council
- Endangered Languages Project
- Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey
- First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres
- Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre

Are there regional resources you'd recommend to other language learners?

Let us know by emailing: **afnlanguages@afn.ca**