

FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

“Look out there,” the Native Elder said to the young man and tell me what you see.” The young man looked out and responded, “Well I see a tree, a fence, and someone walking out there.” Yes,” the old man answered, when you figure out the relationship between the three come back and see me again”

(In Colorado and Collins 1987, p.51)

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INTRODUCTION

The 2003 All Ontario Chiefs Conference (AOCC) in Whitefish Lake First Nation passed resolution 03/18 directing that First Nations needed a new comprehensive education strategy. The motion called for a research paper into the needs of the First Nations community with regards to education systems. They directed that a research paper into these issues be developed and titled it 'The New Agenda: A Manifesto For First Nations' Education in Ontario'. This paper which examines the needs for language programming forms one part of this larger research.

FRAMEWORK FOR THIS PAPER

The framework for this paper was developed around five objectives. Following is an overview of these objectives, with a complete description provided as Appendix A.

1. What is the vision for the future of First Nations education?
2. What currently exists in the First Nations education system?
3. What do First Nations need to realize their vision for a successful education system?
4. What are the costs of each item to realize the vision for a successful First Nations education system?
5. What are the roles and obligations of the federal, provincial and First Nations governments in achieving the vision of a successful First Nations Education system?

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative information was required in a number of areas regarding First Nations visions of education for their communities as well as their perspectives regarding the barriers to developing the supports necessary to effective First Nations language programming. Information was gathered from a number of primary sources. First, meeting notes were utilized from two (2) different focus groups sponsored by the Chiefs of Ontario – one (1) group of parents and one (1) group of educators. Further, a questionnaire was developed (See Appendix B) to be utilized for follow up interviews with key informants to expand on the information gathered in the focus groups. In total 6 of the questionnaires were completed by participants representing the following institutions and roles:

Instructor, Pilot Program, Sault College

Principal, Public School offering 'core language programming

Cultural Programmer, Wikwemikong Heritage Organization

Administrative Assistant, Woodland Cultural Centre & Sweetgrass First Nations Language

Principal, I.L. Thomas Elementary School

Native Language Instructor, Waabshki Penasi

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* served as a foundational reference for this paper. A study commissioned by the Chiefs of Ontario titled; an *Environmental Scan on Indigenous Language Activities* in Ontario provided the basis for understanding the scope of First Nations language revitalization activities in Ontario. Specific program data related to First Nations language programming options within provincial schools was gathered from the Ontario Ministry of Education. Lastly, key informants within the on reserve education systems provide invaluable assistance, advice and information.

Cost-related data was accessed from the following sources: Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Region Case Study on Teacher Salary / Non-Salary Issues.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Initially, the relationship between First Nations and Europeans in Canada could best be characterized as “that of Nation to Nation” (Albert, 1995, Jennings 1985). However, popular history and mythmaking has propagated the patently false view that First Nations peoples were without governments, and at best had minimal social organization. Initially, “Native and newcomer societies approached their relationship cautiously, consciously guarding the principles of respect, non-interference and harmonious coexistence” (Albert, 1995. p 180). The unknown and unforgiving environment, coupled with competition and rivalry among European nations, created a dependence on First Nations people for survival, knowledge of the land and subsequently possession of land for settlement. In summary, “...the same pattern had been observable across Canada...relationships remained (in early phases) cooperative and mutually beneficial, and changes induced in both parties were non-directed and did not seriously disrupt respective societies” (Miller, 1985, p 272).

This changed as the English solidified their position through Covenant Chain relationships and gained dominance in Canada. First Nations peoples began to be viewed as ‘obstructions’ to the expansion of European settlement. The Royal Proclamation unilaterally confirmed that the legal responsibility for relationships with First Nations would rest with the Crown, and then established the process by which First Nations lands would be acquired by the Crown, later leading to the numbered treaties. “By the nineteenth century, settler societies (now independent states) commenced their own nation building, and relationships and alliances with Native peoples, were no longer necessary” (Albert, 1995. p 180). During this period the English effectively began their efforts to colonize First Nations peoples in Canada, ultimately developing, with the Indian Act of 1876, an authoritarian, coercive approach which held as its central goal the eradication of the cultural, spiritual, and economic foundations of First Nations societies. “The Indian Act was passed for the specific purpose of managing the cultural and social genocide of Native people, as it included as one of its primary objectives the Canadian governments’ responsibility for ‘civilizing’ Native people” (Armitage, 1995. p 78). The resulting oppression and exploitation of First Nations peoples has been well documented.

The prevailing view underlying the Indian Act was that First Nations peoples were culturally, socially and spiritually inferior, and that they would not survive unless they changed and were assimilated into the broader Canadian society. It was thought that the primary vehicle through which this could be achieved, was the residential school system.

“.... the historical experience of residential schooling in which children, some as young as six, were removed from their families for 10 months of the year or even years at a stretch. They were prevented from speaking Aboriginal languages and taught to reject their ‘savage’ ways. They lived without intimate contact with adults whom they could trust to make sense of the environment, trapped in a world with other equally confused and deprived children. In their testimony, former residents of these schools stated that their development had been arrested by the experience and it would take years for them to complete their maturation, if they succeeded at all in growing into socially and emotionally mature adults” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3 Gathering Strength, Chapter 5 Education, pp 18, Canada Communication Group-Publishing, 1996).

For almost a full century, First Nations children were systematically removed from their homes spending 10 months of the year in the care of strangers. First Nations languages were considered a key target in the quest to destroy First Nations cultures, and children unable to speak English were punished, severely. As a consequence many returned to their communities unable to speak in their original languages. Language is considered to be the foundation of any culture.

“Aboriginal people speak about language and culture in the same breath. Fluent speakers, particularly elders, are certain that without their languages, their cultures will be lost, because it is impossible to translate the deeper meanings of words and concepts into the languages of other cultures ... The intimate relationships between language, culture and thought underlie the insistence of Aboriginal people that language education must be a priority” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3 Gathering Strength, Chapter 5 Education, pp 463, Canada Communication Group- Publishing, 1996).

First Nations communities were devastated. Survivors of these schools returned to their communities suffering from various physical, sexual and mental abuses including a total assault on language, culture and worldview. Students leaving residential schools were prepared only to participate in the lowest end of the Canadian economy. Further, given their separation from parents and elders they often lacked even the most rudimentary skills in terms of traditional economies, and given the institutional and in some cases abusive environment they had been subject to, they lacked to traditional knowledge to raise their children in the manner of their ancestors. Many communities continue to suffer from severe dysfunction characterized by violence, alcoholism and suicide.

The downward spiral of First Nations communities would continue until the late 60's. At this point the federal government introduced its *1969 White Paper policy*, and in response First Nations began to organize politically as an attempt to maintain their cultures and communities. This re-organization was spear-headed by the National Indian Brotherhood, a formal organization developed to represent the interests of Native people across Canada. The National Indian Brotherhood tabled the 1972 policy statement on Indian education, titled *Indian Control of Indian Education*. The federal government accepted this document as its national policy, and it provided the impetus to commence the process of dismantling the Residential School system. Throughout this entire process, the importance of language to cultural revitalization was consistently recognized and called for by First Nations in Canada..

Given the prevailing personal trauma and social conditions within their communities, many First Nations turned to their local school systems as the avenue to revive their languages. Some communities implemented Native as a Second Language-type programming, which progressed to other models such full Immersion and 50/50-type programming (these will be described in greater detail later in this paper).

The examination of the needs of First Nations will review First Nations perspectives around the five questions or areas for discussion outlined in the Manifesto Framework document, and commences with a summary of the First Nations vision.

1. VISION for the FUTURE of FIRST NATION EDUCATION

First Nation Vision of the Place of Language in Education of Children

For any group or organization 'vision' is considered central to success. First Nations peoples are no exception and have been clear in articulating the importance and centrality of their languages to maintaining their identities and cultures.

First Nations within Ontario recognize that First Nation Languages as indispensable components to the survival and sustenance of indigenous nationhood. Ontario First Nations recognize that the previous three decades have witnessed the accelerated decimation of First Nation languages to the point where all except three in Canada are near extinction with limited child and youth fluency. Resolutions 03/03 and 02/26

from All Ontario Chiefs Conferences, clearly articulate this vision (See Appendix B All Ontario Chiefs Conference Resolutions).

Indian Control of Indian Education

Starting in 1969, in response to the federal *White Paper Policy*, First Nations organized politically in an attempt to preserve and maintain their culture, against what was perceived to be the systemic dismantling of First Nations culture and communities across Canada. The National Indian Brotherhood published *Indian Control of Indian Education (1973)*, which provided the first comprehensive articulation of a First Nation vision for education.

The document focused on areas such as responsibility and jurisdiction, culturally appropriate programs and facilities, and the quality of instruction, and in particular the need for culture based curricula, including the need for Native teachers. The report called for;

- Local control of First Nations education;
- Involvement of First Nation's people in curriculum development;
- Training of First Nations educators and counselors; and,
- On reserve day schools.

The *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy statement was adopted as national policy by the Federal government the same year it was released and represents the first shift away from the assimilation and colonial paradigm previously in existence. The key principles identified in this document continue to form the foundation upon which First Nations education systems are based. These principles were reiterated in the *1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People called for a radical shift in the role of education in the lives of First Nation children and their communities. Education has increasingly come to be viewed as the vehicle through which First Nations can retain their languages and therefore maintain their cultures.

“For more than 25 years, Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nation” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3 Gathering Strength, Chapter 5 Education, pp 434, Canada Communication Group- Publishing, 1996).

The RCAP report was clear in articulating the need for formal education systems to support the revitalization of First Nations languages in Canada.

Educator Focus Groups

A vision for education, which includes First Nations languages, was supported and in fact expanded on by the participants in the Educator focus groups commissioned by the Chiefs of Ontario. The following statements, as articulated by First Nations educators, support the need to have language and culture included in the First Nations vision for education.

Vision for Education

- Holistic approach to education (cradle to grave process); the entire community must be engaged in the process.
- The uniqueness of our education system lies in the goal of ownership and caring; cultural and language proficiency are at the heart of our vision while instilling the ability to compete in the mainstream.

First Nations educators still support the need for education systems to be ‘owned’ by their communities, so they have the autonomy needed to develop education systems which can be a vehicle for revitalization of culture and language.

Principles of Education

When questioned as to the principles which should guide the development of First Nations education systems, educators identified the following;

- Respect for First Nations knowledge, environment, communities, each other; each person is a part of the education team and brings different things to the process.
- Sustaining First Nations identity – the need to teach our children about our culture and history – from our creation story, our historical context, to our present treaties and agreements.
- The term elder must encompass a spiritual aspect, because it is losing meaning. First Nations languages are very specific as to meaning and this must be articulated for the term elder and the vision to have meaning to everyone, grandparents may be a better term to use.

These principles all point to the need for strong and effective First Nations language programming.

Qualities of Successful Students

Educators were asked their views in terms of what they considered to be desirable qualities of graduates of First Nations education systems and they identified the following traits or characteristics.

- Be aware of the need to sustain the community,
- Have self identity and self-esteem.

While other qualities were identified, these three support the need for First Nations language programming. First Nations communities need fluent First Nations speakers, if they are to retain and preserve their cultures, as well as support positive self-identity and self-esteem in their children and youth.

Parent Focus Groups

Participants in the parent focus groups (commissioned by the Chiefs of Ontario) shared many opinions with regard to ‘what’ the education of their children should look like.

In terms of a vision for education the parent focus groups introduced the following, which could be directly linked to language retention.

- Education will incorporate language and culture,
- Education will be an instrument to preserve our language,
- First Nations education must be unified and support First Nation cultures and languages. It must educate the children in the culture and language without compromising academic skills required to succeed in mainstream systems.

Focus groups were further questioned as to what the ‘principles’ of education should look like They identified the following points in regards to principles of education:

- Will incorporate the concept of life long learning, cradle to grave philosophy,
- Education should employ cultural integration

First Nations Education and parental engagement must be built on the following value; *‘Appreciate our gifts from the creator - - our children’*.

Parents were also asked to consider what they would see as the ‘ideal’ graduate of a quality First Nations education students. The qualities of successful students were expressed by the parents as incorporating the following:

- Success means graduating our children with the academic skills required to go on into mainstream schools while still maintaining knowledge of our culture and language.

Questionnaire Findings

There was only one question which related to the broader vision or principles associated with a First Nation system of education. To be specific, “Please describe the key principles, which the language program in your school is built?” Questionnaire respondents articulated the following principles;

- Retention of language was the paramount principle,
- Maximum student involvement and integration with other subjects [First Nations language utilized as the language of instruction for all subjects].

Questionnaire respondents also indicated the need for First Nations independence and autonomy in planning and developing education systems which integrate the above concepts as key criteria in moving forward.

Summary

Since the early 70’s First Nations people have been clear that their languages and cultures must form the foundation and basis of their educations systems, and that in order to achieve this they need enhanced autonomy and independence. While there have been refinements in terms of the vision of First Nations peoples, a number of key principles have remained consistent for decades:

- First Nations education systems must be controlled by and accountable to First Nations communities themselves.
- First Nations education systems must reinforce and support the culture and identities of First Nations children

In a discussion regarding the qualities of successful students, the educator and parental focus groups both identified this key statement as a priority:

- Students will be well grounded in their First Nation culture and languages, as well as possessing skills to allow them to transition to the mainstream sector.

2. WHAT CURRENTLY EXISTS?

The Province of Ontario has the largest First Nation population in Canada, and as such encompasses a diverse population. There are three major linguistic groups; Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) , Mushkegowuk (Cree)and Ogwehowehegeha (Iroquoian each embodying numerous dialects). Almost all these languages are in a state of crisis when it comes to fluency levels. The following is a breakdown of speakers nationally of Ontario First Nation Languages according to You Took My Talk, Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment-Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Ken Hughes M.P Chairperson, (December 1990):

<u>Language</u>	<u>Number of Speakers Nationally</u>
Cayuga	360
Cree	55,000
Delaware	10
Mohawk	2,000
Ojibway	30,000
Oneida	200
Onondaga	100
Seneca	25
Tuscarora	7

Virtually every First Nation language is at a crisis point in terms of fluency levels, an issue that has long been recognized and of concern within the First Nation communities. These figures were released in 1990. Indications from key informants suggest that the numbers have steadily declined. First Nations languages are on a clear path to extinction unless dramatic measures are undertaken for their revitalization.

The issue of language retention is complicated for First Nations communities for a number of reasons. Firstly the social/emotional trauma suffered by First Nations communities at the hands of residential schools continue to have intergenerational impact. For many years, First Nations languages and culture have only been associated with physical pain and other more negative reinforcements. Recall the goal of Residential schools was to assimilate First Nations, so their languages were forbidden, and those who spoke First Nations languages in these settings were often subject to harsh discipline. Even if parents have managed to retain some level of fluency, powerful social conditioning has inhibited their ability to pass on languages, often with the well-meaning consideration that the dominant language is the new currency to survive and thrive in the current age. The residential school experience has left many First Nation communities mired in chaos and dysfunction, with high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, violence

and suicide, which is certainly not conducive to healthy family systems. As families experience dysfunction and breakdown in their relationships, so is their capacity to transmit First Nations languages and cultures (*Chiefs' of Ontario Consultation Meeting Reports, 2004*). Last, given the marginalization experienced by First Nations communities, First Nations languages are simply not visible in either the electronic or written media, so there is little opportunity for usage or even exposure for younger people.

Given these factors, First Nations communities have looked to school systems and other formalized institutions as primary vehicles to maintain and pass on their languages. Following is an overview of the formal supports available to ensure the continuation of First Nation languages and culture.

Current Education Structures, Programs, Services and Human Resources

Currently supports for First Nation language programming were garnered from the Chiefs of Ontario paper titled. "An Environment Scan on Indigenous Language Programming in Ontario", questionnaires completed by key stakeholders, as well as information from focus groups, sponsored by the Chiefs of Ontario in 2004.

Urban vs. Reserve Based Programming

In urban settings there are various approaches to First Nations language programming. For example, the Aboriginal Headstart program in Toronto offers Ojibwe language instruction to pre-school age First Nation children. Further, Ontario's Ministry of Education provides for Native as a Second Language (NSL) instruction at the Secondary school level. There are no First Nations Language Immersion programs available to off-reserve peoples in the provincial setting. The First Nations languages that are recognized within the Province of Ontario for the purposes of NSL are: Cayuga, Cree, Delaware, Mohawk, Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, and Oneida.

There is a greater variety of programming available in reserve-based First Nations communities. First Nations schools offer Native as a Second Language programs which follow provincial curriculum policy requirements for time and outcomes. However, there are unique initiatives in First Nations territories based in Total Immersion and 50/50 Language programs. Following is a more detailed description of these models.

Program Types or Models

There are three major types of programs in which First Nations language instruction is offered, and while there may be some regional differences in terms of program specifics, a summary of each model will be provided.

(i) Native as a Second Language

Provincial schools may offer a First Nations language program if enough parents express an interest in this for their children attending that school. The Native language program comprises of the expectations that students are to achieve in grades 1 through to Grade 8. However, school boards may choose to design their programs in such a way that students can enter into them in Grade 4 rather than Grade 1. Boards that choose to start their Native language programs at Grade 4 must ensure that students are given the opportunity to achieve all of the expectations outlined in this document by Grade 8. All Native language programs are to be offered during the school day. A minimum of 20 minutes should be allocated to the program per day in Grades 1, 2, and 3, and 40 minutes should be allocated per day in Grades 4 to 8. When a school board decides to offer a Native language program at the elementary level, it should take into account that the program must be offered through to the end of secondary school. This type of Native

language program is not intended to make students fully bilingual; rather, the program offers students the opportunity to develop a functional command of a Native language, which can be expanded through further study or contact with other speakers of the language. All courses in the Native language programming covers oral communication, reading, writing, vocabulary, language conventions, grammar and use of information technology. Students also become familiar with the writing and sound systems of the language under study, and develop an appreciation of Native language and culture.¹

Within First Nation Communities, Native as a Second Language programming is very similar to mainstream instruction in languages such as French, Spanish and others. It basically provides instruction, usually ranging from the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, in a Native language, on a daily or weekly basis. There is a broad range of frequency across sectors ranging anywhere from ½ hour once per week, 1 hour per day and on upwards.

According to the Ministry of Education Schools October Report 2002-2003 (Appendix C); enrolment in Native Language programs in 2002-2003 (within publicly funded Elementary Schools) are as follows:

Language Programs	Number of Students in Elementary Schools
Cree	998
Ojibwe	2 403
Oneida	121
Total Students Enrolled	3 522

According to the Ministry of Education Schools October Report 2002-2003 (Appendix C); enrolment in Native Language programs in 2002-2003 (within publicly funded Secondary Schools) are as follows:

Language Programs	Number of Students in Secondary Schools
Cree	27
Ojibwe	411
Mohawk	85
Oneida	31
Total Students Enrolled	544

Total Immersion

Total Immersion programs attempt to completely immerse the student in a Native language, with some programs providing significant cultural content (through providing instruction in ceremonial speeches and songs). This model is primarily utilized by the Ogwehowehgeha at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and the Mohawks of Akwesasne, though they also offer programming in the other two program types. There are two schools at Six Nations, I.L. Thomas which offers Cayuga immersion for grades 1 – 8, and Kawennio which offers Mohawk Immersion for grades one to secondary school. Data specific to Akwesasne could not be obtained at the time of writing this paper. Each program in Six Nations follows the Ontario provincial curriculum but uses a First Nation language for all instruction and interaction with children. Children are encouraged to use their language outside of the classroom, on the playground, in the home, and in extracurricular activities. Most programs are offered within settings that offer standard education options (English/Provincial Curriculum), along with the full immersion programming.

¹ <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/native/index.html> , Ontario Ministry of Education, Queens Printer for Ontario 2004

50/50 Instruction

This program model was developed at Six Nations in response to parent concerns that their children needed to obtain a foundation in academic programming such as reading, spelling and writing in English. The 50/50 Language Program essentially offers an even split between English language instruction and instruction in a First Nation language. Specific courses are taught in each component. For example science and social studies may be taught in the First Nation language using ceremonies and ceremonial cycles as tools to the complete lessons. There is only one school offering this type of programming, and it is available for grades 1 to 8 at I.L Thomas.

The following table provides an overview of the various program options in terms of First Nation language instruction.

Program Type	Frequency/Duration	Languages	Objectives/Goals
Native as Second Language (NSL)	Ranges from 20 min. a day, to once or twice weekly.	Ojibwe, Cree, Iroquoian	Varies, but for the most part the goal is familiarity not fluency
Total Immersion	Duration of the school day.	Iroquoian (Cayuga, Mohawk)	Fluency
50/50	Half the school day	Iroquoian (Cayuga)	Fluency in First Nation language, as well as mainstream academic skills.

Curriculum/Resources

The Chiefs of Ontario *Environmental Scan* identified that there were a number of community-based initiatives and volunteers involved in curriculum and resource development, specific to First Nations language programming in Ontario. Examples are:

- *Kwayaciiwin Education Research Centre, Northern Nishnawbe Education Council,*
- *Omushkego Education, Mushkegowuk Education Authority,*
- *Woodland Cultural Centre, Woodland Cultural Centre.*

The preceding organizations are engaged in a number of activities designed to support Native language retention. Following is a discussion on the specific activities of each organization. This discussion will highlight a combination of their human resources, unique programming and funding issues facing their efforts.

The Kwayaciiwin Resource Centre (KRC)

The Kwayaciiwin Resource Centre (KRC), located in Sioux Lookout (Ontario) has been in operation since August 2002. The Centre employs a staff of seven: a coordinator, administrative assistant, two curriculum developers, two resource teachers and one artist/illustrator. Staff members support First Nation schools in their communities by:

- assisting LEAs and school staff in implementing newly developed district elementary guidelines, developing culturally appropriate curriculum material for the new guidelines, as well as Aboriginal language and cultural teaching materials and resources;
- conducting evaluations of the District Bilingual Bicultural program every three years;
- developing and implementing district-wide tests for Grades 2, 4, 6 and 8;

- providing consultant services and professional development to teachers, principals, Education Directors and LEA members; and
- setting up a district Resource Library, which loans material to schools.

The Kwayaciiwin Resource Centre (KRC), through the District Education Planning Committee (DEPC) submitted a proposal for the multi-year Pilot Project in the summer of 2000. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) commitment is to fund this initiative as a pilot project. INAC has invested \$2 419 200.00 (\$1.5 million for FY 2001-2002, \$919 200.00 for FY 2002-2003) in this project to date. It is important to note that funding is not guaranteed, and must be applied for on a year by year basis.

Omushkego Education

Omushkego Education has evolved into a regional educational organization whose primary function is to support their First Nation communities, the respective Education Authorities, Education Departments, Day Cares and Schools by way of curriculum development and support services. The Omushkegos' renewed Mission Statement clearly explains what they are about in terms of values, beliefs, the contributions they want to make and serving as a foundation for the future. Omushkego Education is a regional educational partnership of First Nation Communities active within the Mushkegowuk Council. Local Educational leaders determined long ago that it was essential to collaborate, network, and communicate on a consistent basis to address the multifaceted needs and aspirations of the communities. The role of this association is to collaborate and cooperate in such ways as to:

- promote and maintain a Cree Vision for future generations through Language & Culture,
- promote and maintain a regional focus and voice on educational issues,
- promote strong and productive relationships with all partners in education,
- provide advise, support and assistance to Education Authorities, Education Departments, Day Cares, and Schools,
- promote, develop, implement regional Cree language & culture curriculum,
- provide support services to Bill C-31 post school students,
- review and monitor provincial and federal education policies and guidelines,
- establish Omushkego Institute to develop linkages and partnerships for certification programs of various post-secondary institutes,
- lobby for regional educational funding and curriculum support services,
- administer regional project funds such as Summer Science Camps,
- plan, coordinate and implement annual regional education conference such as the Great Moon Gathering, and
- attend all Board of Chiefs meetings to inform and seek political support.

Much like the Kwayaciiwin Resource Centre, this Centre must apply for funding on a year to year basis.

The Woodland Cultural Centre

The Woodland Cultural Centre staff has assisted not only the Five First Nations Communities that support and govern the Woodland Cultural Centre with their language initiatives. The staff also assists many First Nations communities outside the mandate of the Cultural Centre. The Woodland Cultural Centre has been able to do this by supporting another organization called 'The Sweetgrass First Nations Language Council Incorporated'. The Language Council works with teachers and other language professionals and educators by organizing professional development, workshops, conferences and forging partnerships. They do this by allying with a variety of domestic and international institutions and individuals who want to assist in the struggle to retain our languages. The Sweetgrass First Nations Language Council Incorporated through its membership has maintained statistics of First Nations in Southern Ontario and language retention rates in its region. The number of speakers who are still fluent in their mother tongue or First Nation Language in Southern Ontario is less than 3% of the total First Nation population.

Despite the often many obstacles, the Woodland Cultural Centre has been involved with many First Nations language initiatives over the last 13 years, many of them innovative:

- It has assisted with the founding of the first ever Cayuga and Mohawk Language Immersion School at Six Nations of the Grand River and served as the administrative authority.
- It has published a Cayuga Language Thematic Dictionary and Mohawk Lexicon.
- It has assisted with the founding and support of community radio in southern aboriginal communities.
- It has published a number of language primers for the primary level.
- It has lobbied for pay equity for language teachers as well as for their better training.
- It has lobbied and advocated for Aboriginal communities to have the right to teach Aboriginal languages in the classroom.
- It supported the development of the Native as a Second Language Guideline of the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Education.
- It supported the organizing of a great number of Dance and Music celebrations.
- It advocated and assisted with the development for support for Aboriginal Dance and Music as a legitimate art form for the 'legitimate' stage in Canada.
- Assisted with the first ever Juno Award Category recognizing the Music of Aboriginal Canada.
- It collects and archives oratures in First Nations Languages.

The Woodland Cultural Centre is a microcosm of all First Nations cultural centres insofar as it does not have a guaranteed budget for its language initiatives, and relies on yearly proposal submissions and approvals.

Summary of Cultural Centre Activities

Cultural Centres are important organizations engaged in a number of activities designed to support First Nations language retention and revitalization such as;

- *Recording, documenting and preserving language,*
- *Developing materials to increase language use,*
- *Collecting and sharing information on models and best practices,*
- *Promoting traditional approaches to learning (language camps, immersion),*
- *Organized gatherings of language families to share ideas and develop strategies for language revitalization, retention/maintenance,*
- *Translation, transcription and computation of historic information and rituals, community adult immersion initiatives,*
- *Developing short/long term strategies and plans for revitalizing and maintaining languages.*

Please note that not all Centres are engaged in all activities, involvement tends to be related to manpower and the availability of resources to do so. In reviewing the above list it is evident that while there are a number of functions necessarily devoted to the retention of First Nations languages, only a few items actually relate to directly supporting language programming in schools. These are:

- *Developing materials to increase language use,*

- *Collecting and sharing information on models and best practices,*
- *Developing mechanisms for sharing information, materials and other resources among language groups,*
- *Promoting traditional approaches to learning (language camps, immersion).*

Only one setting – Anishnaabemowin has obtained funding under these categories. The majority focus their attention on areas such as cataloguing language, ceremonial speeches and songs. In both the *Educator Focus Groups* as well as *key informant questionnaires*, the lack of resources was identified as a key challenge within First Nations language programs. (An Environment Scan on Indigenous Language Programming in Ontario, Chiefs of Ontario, 2004)

It is important to note the distinction between the types of language development initiatives because the federal government has divided responsibilities for First Nations languages between two departments. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports First Nations language programming in schools, for instance the development of language curriculum through cultural centres. Heritage Canada supports language revitalization outside of schools. The lack of coordination between government departments leads to bureaucratic headaches for First Nations, schools and cultural centres since all language activities are ultimately inter-related, but must occur in a manner which marches in lockstep with the independent and distinct accountability requirements of the two federal departments.

Primary Support for Cultural Centres

Cultural Centres within Ontario obtain their funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the Cultural/Education Centres Program (CECP). The Cultural/Educational Centres Program (CECP) was started within Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 1971 as a way to help First Nations and Inuit communities to preserve and promote their culture and heritage. The CECP provides financial assistance to First Nations, tribal/district councils, Inuit communities and First Nation/Inuit non-profit corporations to preserve, develop and promote First Nations and Inuit culture and heritage, by delivering programs and services at the community level. This is done by funding established centres, which develop and operate cultural/educational programs for First Nations and Inuit people to participate in, and for the general public to experience.

The Cultural/Educational Centres Program was designed to provide assistance, both financial and otherwise, to help First Nations and Inuit people establish and operate cultural/educational centres. Objectives of these centres do include:

- reviving and developing traditional and contemporary cultural skills;
- conducting and/or facilitating research in First Nations/Inuit heritage and culture;
- increasing First Nations/Inuit peoples' knowledge and use of their traditional languages;
- developing linguistic learning resources;
- developing culturally-oriented educational materials;
- promoting cross-cultural awareness;
- developing and increasing access to new and more accurate information about First Nations/Inuit heritage; and
- improving opportunities for Canadians to become knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, the historical and current role of First Nations/Inuit people in Canada.

Funding is granted to First Nations/Inuit communities, tribal/district councils and non-profit corporations based on availability, budget and program approval and community support. Once funding is granted, regular activity reports, financial reports and audits are requested as required.

In 2000-2001, the CECP supported about 105 cultural centres across Canada with an annual budget of approximately \$8.2 million. It should be noted that the annual budget has remained the same in excess of sixteen (16) years and many centres operate under insufficient budgets.

Summary

Native language programming is available in three major families; *Anishinaabemowin*, *Mushkegowuk* and *Ogwehowegeha*. There are a broad range of alternatives available when it comes to types of instruction. Options range from Native as a Second Language, Full Immersion and 50/50 instruction which aspires to provide equal instruction in English and a Native language. Further, most First Nation communities offer educational supports and resources which would lend themselves to promoting and supporting Native language programming. However only one setting Anishnaabemowin (Chiefs of Ontario, An Environmental Scan of Indigenous Language Activities) is actively engaged in developing much needed resources and curriculum materials, which leaves a gap in terms of development of materials.

In terms of a vision there was a clear consensus from focus group participants, that First Nations education systems need to support the languages and cultures of First Nations and be accountable to the communities. Participants identified their vision of education would ensure that successful graduates of these programs would possess a high level of cultural literacy and at the same time be able to participate and succeed in mainstream systems. Best Practices basically called for the inclusion of Elders and other resource people in programming, as well as high levels of cultural programming and events. Further, the need for resources to support First Nations language instruction was identified as being crucial.

3. WHAT DO FIRST NATIONS NEED to REALIZE THEIR VISION for a SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION SYTEM?

Gaps Between What Currently Exists and What is Needed

Research has demonstrated that for First Nations peoples, language and culture are critical components of a successful education. It is important to have a clear sense of the gaps in services – specifically services and structures required to support language programming. The primary sources of information regarding this issue will be the *questionnaires* and the *Chiefs of Ontario Consultation Meetings*. Participants identified a number of barriers, however only those that seemed common to all will be discussed. This section will begin with what participants identified as being key strengths of their individual programs – best practices so to speak.

Best Practices

Best Practices are an integral part of describing the First Nations vision of education. Best practices were identified largely through *Chiefs of Ontario Consultation Meetings* and have been identified as the following (specific to First Nations language programming);

- Cultural Centres language retention, revitalization and material development;
- Providing students with historical background;
- Involvement of parents and grandparents;

- Language integrated throughout the K-12 curriculum;
- Onkwawenna six month language immersion program in Six Nations utilizes a unique combination of teaching the patterns of the language, with conversational immersion;
- Partners in Change – elders coming in, cultural curriculum, experiential learning on the land;
- Elders to conduct traditional ceremonies which engage learners;
- Use of PA system for hand drumming and traditional prayer.

In addition to the above, the following best practices within their (First Nation Educators) own program and/or communities were identified, by respondents to the Language Questionnaire (See APPENDIX B)

- Holding regular language meetings to share ideas and resources;
- Holding an annual language conference to provide a broader forum in which to share ideas and resources;
- Offering First Nations language courses to parents to enable them to better support their children in learning the language;
- Providing a ‘Heritage Week’ which offers participatory First Nations cultural activities and presentations;

Following is a specific summary of what is needed to for First Nations to realize their vision for their education systems.

1. The need for more language instructors was identified, meaning individuals fluent in a First Nations language and possessing teacher certification. The Manifesto paper on Teacher Education elsewhere in this volume addresses First Nations language teacher education primarily by recommended that First Nations post-secondary institutions must be recognized as taking on the responsibility to develop First Nations language teachers.
2. The second major category is the need for resources. All participants identified the need for text books, films and other media; at the same level and quality available to support English language instruction. While there are resources allocated to the various institutions involved in First Nations language development discussed in the Environmental Scan, all cite limited financial support as inhibiting their capacity to produce materials specifically for use in the public schools. This leaves teachers responsible for developing their own resource material. Many language development organizations have targeted basic cataloguing of language to ensure retention, rather than curriculum development, as well as devoting significant resources to the preservation of ceremonies and other traditional forms of learning. Anishnaabemowin identified two projects devoted to developing First Nations language materials for use in schools (Chiefs of Ontario: An Environmental Scan on Indigenous Language Activities in Ontario, pp 8). The Language Department of the Akwesasne Mohawk School Board has developed numerous books, recordings and translations of popular children’s books including a series by author Robert Munsch. This leaves teachers responsible for developing their own resource material.
3. For those schools offering total Immersion programs, interviews with educators identified the lack of relevant curriculum was cited as being a major concern. There was particular concern for the lack of support provided to First Nations language teachers in adhering to provincial curriculum policy. Last, there is no evidence that any resources have been allocated to researching a First Nations specific language-based curriculum, which forces First Nations schools to operate strictly according to Ontario’s curriculum, or to take an individual and ad hoc approach to modifying these to fit the First Nations context, (as reported by Educator interview participant). Given the lack of resources allocated to First Nations languages, little or no attention is devoted to the assessment and evaluation of curriculum, so there is virtually no capacity for development of culturally appropriate curriculum for First Nations education.

4. Student behaviour, such as lack of focus and attention, acting out in class and other actions was the last major issue cited. The prevalence of serious socio-economic deprivation has been well documented, and it only follows that communities experiencing this level of deprivation will also suffer severe social disintegration. First Nation communities have the highest rates of alcoholism, suicide, violence and child maltreatment; so it only stands to reason that these factors will have an influence on the level of functioning of children. Virtually all those involved in direct delivery of education programs on-reserve pointed to child behavior as being a significant barrier to providing First Nations language instruction. The Educator consultations also identified student behaviour as being a serious concern.

Recommendations to Achieve Goals

1. The availability of fluent and qualified First Nations language teachers must be increased in order to enable First Nation students to access effective First Nations language programming both in First Nation schools and within Provincial school systems. Therefore it is recommended that targeted funding be made available to encourage individuals to seek to increase their language skills and complete a First Nation Language Teacher Education program.
2. First Nations post-secondary institutions must develop and deliver First Nations language teacher education programs which respond to First Nations cultural needs and professional standards. The federal government must make sufficient funding available for the development of a model First Nations language teacher education program in a First Nations post-secondary institution in Ontario. The model should be transferable and resources must be made available for curriculum modification in the various First Nations languages of demand in Ontario.
3. Given the increased stress and workload demands experienced by language teachers, there is an enhanced need for Teacher Aides within First Nations language programs. It has been demonstrated that students benefit by having at least two First Nation language speakers, who are able to converse in the First Nation language, within the classroom.
4. The Band Operated Funding Formula for First Nations schools must be modified to adopt a significant language immersion factor to account for the added costs of teacher training, professional development, curriculum development and teacher aides. The fragile state of First Nations languages must be recognized as a crisis which can be addressed, in part, by encouraging First Nations schools to adopt an immersion or 50/50 approach. This encouragement can be made by doubling the current instructional component of the Band Operated Formula for First Nations schools which choose to operate in immersion or 50/50 format.
5. The next recommendation relates to curriculum development for First Nation language programs, and is highly complex in terms of needs. First Nations Language instructors require ongoing training and support for their highly specialized field. First Nations languages and language immersion programs require high quality curriculum materials, including translated materials from English, French and other First Nations language texts. It is important to identify regional centres for language curriculum development and support. These regional centres must build upon the capacities of organizations such as the Woodland Cultural Centre, Kwayaciiwin Resource Centre (KRC), and Omushkego Education Authority. These centres must be fully supported financially and be directly connected to language programs in all schools, both First Nations and provincial.

6. First Nation language teachers have unique needs in terms of professional development so they need training opportunities which focus on increasing the number of available language instructors and developing effective pedagogy to facilitate language instruction.
7. Given the unusual demands place on First Nations language teachers it is recommended that resources be allocated to develop an Association or formal support network to ensure access to peer support.
8. There needs to be formal research into the whole issue of accommodating different dialects within language families, for both resource development, as well as for accommodation of instructors.
9. Developing and retaining fluency in a First Nations language requires a high level of parental and community support, given the predominance of English, therefore, it is recommended that resources be allocated for Parental Engagement as well as broader community development activities specific to First Nation languages.
10. A vehicle or mechanism needs to be developed to better coordinate on and off reserve First Nations language programs, which takes into account the need for a comprehensive plan that builds and expands on already established foundations.
11. It is recommended that Ontario First Nations direct the Ontario INAC Region to provide funding to do a comprehensive evaluation of current language programs offered within First Nation Schools.
12. It is recommended the Province increase support and resources allocated to planning and development of Full Immersion programs, with key objective being the need to develop comprehensive programming for grades kindergarten to high school.

It is clear there are a myriad of gaps or needs to be met before First Nations can hope to attain their vision of a quality education for their children. Given the crisis in fluency levels in a First Nations language, perhaps the most critical need is for a broader more comprehensive approach to recruitment, training and support of fluent language instructors and personnel to support them in delivering language programming. Without teachers and support staff, there will simply be no First Nation Language programming. Gaps were associated primarily with staff, resources, and broader parental and community support available to support First Nation language usage in a broader way. The last set of gaps or needs identified related to the need for a more systematic approach to curriculum and program development in the whole area of First Nations languages.

Recommendations to alleviate these issues were related to support for individuals in developing both fluency and capacity to teach First Nation languages, as well as capacity to provide ongoing support and professional development opportunities to language instructors. The next set of recommendations related to broader supports in the areas of supporting parental and community involvement to facilitate integration of language in the broader community to promote usage of First Nations languages. The last set of recommendations related to the need for a more comprehensive strategic approach to resource and

curriculum development, which has as a primary objective integration of First Nations language instruction from grades Kindergarten to High school, where population merits.

First Nations have been proactive and clear in articulating what is needed to develop education systems which will contribute to retention of language and culture, however neither the federal or provincial government has committed to providing the financial resources needed by First Nation communities. This will be discussed in greater detail in Section 5 which reviews obligation of all parties.

4. COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

We were unable to obtain costs for items related to resources and curriculum development due to idiosyncratic nature of the needs of individual programs and costs related to each region. The following itemized list may however, be helpful to individual First Nations to identify costs specific to their areas. Following is a table which provides an overview the specific needs to enhance First Nation language instruction, as well as estimated costs in those areas data was available

Item	Program	Amount
Native Language Teachers	Native Second Language/ 50-50 program / Native Language Immersion	\$47 707.00/ per teacher / per year *
Teacher Aide	Native Language Immersion Program / 50-50 Language Program	\$ 32 650.00/ per teachers aide / per year
Resource Material acquisition, development and modification	Native Second Language/ 50-50 program / Native Language Immersion	Item will vary by community needs
Professional Development for Language Teachers	Native Second Language/ 50-50 Native Language / Native Language Immersion	Item will vary by community needs
Resources to support a Native Language Teachers Association.	Native Second Language/ 50-50 Native Language / Native Language Immersion	Item will vary by community needs
Training Dollars to enhance fluency of Native Language Teachers	Native Second Language/ 50-50 Native Language / Native Language Immersion	Item will vary by community needs
Parental Engagement specific to language & cultural programs	Native Language Immersion Program / 50-50 Language Program	Item will vary by community needs
Double Instructional Component of Band Operated Formula	Native Language Immersion Program / 50-50 Language Program	\$3,885 x 2 elementary = \$7,770 per student \$4,681 x 2 secondary = \$9,362 per student**

* Salaries represent average median and were taken from the Ontario Case Study on First Nation Teacher Salaries.

** Figures taken from Manifesto paper on Band Operated Funding Formula.

Summary

While it is possible to itemize needed resources, more work needs to be done at the community level to identify specific costs associated with securing the needed enhancements.

5. Roles & Obligations of Federal, Provincial and First Nations Governments in Achieving the First Nations Vision of a Successful Education

Federal Government Responsibilities

First Nations understand that the financial support for education is the fiduciary responsibility of the federal government.

As identified in the brief history portion of this paper, the British Crown unilaterally gave themselves authority for First Nation peoples, through the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This piece of legislation was designed to protect the interests of First Nation peoples against the encroachment of non-native settlers; though it also had the effect of legislating away the sovereignty of Nations that prior to this were independent of the British crown (Tobias, John “Protection, Civilization, Assimilation” in Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada, Edited by Rick Miller, pp 128, University of Toronto Press, 1991). The key principle of *protection* contained within this piece of legislation established the obligation of the Crown to protect the interests of First Nations people.

The shift from Protection to Civilization led to the creation of the Indian Act as the vehicle through which the government of Canada could assimilate First Nation peoples. Subsequent revisions were made to the act and this included compulsory education for First Nation children (primarily through Residential schools). “The major piece of legislation enacted by the Parliament of Canada pursuant to its’ constitutional authority is the Indian Act. Sections 114-123 deal with Indian Education....Responsibility for Indian education was delegated to the federal government – more specifically the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development” (Assembly of First Nations First Nations Educational Jurisdiction, by Tremblay, Paulette C. pp 14, Unpublished paper April 2001). This formed the legal basis for fiduciary responsibility of Canada’s federal government for First Nations education.

What of the Federal government’s responsibility to support First Nation language and cultural programming? The National Indian Brotherhoods’ 1972 document *Indian Control of Indian Education* is clear regarding the paramount place of language and culture in First Nations education. It states, “What we want for our children can be summarized very briefly: (i) to reinforce their Indian identity (ii) to provide the training necessary for making a good living in modern society. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability” (National Indian Brotherhood, “Indian Control of Indian Education: Policy Paper Presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, pp 1, Ottawa, 1973). In 1973 the federal government adopted this document, which committed them to adherence to the documents key principle of ensuring that education systems for First Nations needed to support their rights to their identity - and one of the key mechanisms through which this is achieved is through language and cultural instruction. There is a strong basis to the First Nation position that support language and cultural programming as integral to the federal government’s obligation (fiduciary) to support the educational needs of First Nations.

Provincial Responsibilities/Obligations

The Provinces' primary responsibility for education flows from the 1982 Constitution Act, which mandates them with the legislative obligation for education.

This role, in terms of Reserve based communities, has primarily been through federal incorporation of provincial education standards for curricula and teachers, with the Federal government assuming financial responsibility. This practice has effectively blocked First Nation communities from accessing provincial grants and other funding envelopes to support First Nation education systems and institutions. However, section 91(24) of the Canadian constitution may provide grounds for Provincial obligations to fund First Nation language and cultural development initiatives. It basically provides for equal treatment of all citizens residing within that Provinces boundaries:

“ the provinces must acknowledge aboriginal peoples as being fully part of the population. The benefits and privileges of provincial residence must be available to all aboriginal persons, on and off reserve. The programs and services which give effect to these benefits and privileges must be tailored to the needs, circumstances and rights of the aboriginal population, without fear that a beneficial ‘singling out’ will render ultra vires an otherwise valid and proper legislative regime” (Pratt, Allan “ Federalism in the Era of Aboriginal Self-Government” in Aboriginal Peoples and Government Responsibility: Exploring Federal and Provincial Roles edited by David C. Hawkes, pp 53, Carleton University Press, 1991).

There may be some legal basis for First Nations to claim their right to access Provincial funding opportunities in supporting and enhancing language/cultural programming.

First Nation Responsibilities/Obligations

First Nation individuals and their communities have the ultimate moral obligation in terms of ensuring the continuation of their languages and their cultures. Virtually every policy paper regarding education for First Nations peoples, since the *National Indian Brotherhoods' Indian Control of Indian Education* paper published in 1973, has called for the recognition of the right to self-determination of First Nations in regards to the overall education of their children. It is the responsibility of First Nations communities to develop and create education systems that foster and support identity and pride in the First Nations culture. Educators and parents in the Consultation Sessions sponsored by the Chiefs of Ontario were clear in their sense of obligation to be the ‘visionaries’ who create these education systems.

“ ‘Teaching aboriginal languages in school, particularly for children who speak an aboriginal language at home, is critical for the attainment of literacy and success in the school system’... An experienced educator told the Committee that if children were to use their native tongue, a more positive self-image would develop and that in turn would facilitate the acquisition of literacy skills” (Edith Baker, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, Issue No. 30:60). Today, the aboriginal languages are being lost and “with this language loss, it is no wonder our Indian children have not done well in the public school system” (Christine Saulis, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, Issue No. 38:22). This failure of schools is because this system does “very little to give Indian children a sense of pride; they do not see themselves mirrored in this system. There is a need for funding aboriginal language initiatives such as school immersion programs and a need for technological instruments such as computers to develop, preserve and enhance aboriginal languages” (You Took My Talk, Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment-Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Ken Hughes M.P Chairperson).

First Nations must take responsibility for implementing pro-active self-determined approaches to language revitalization. This includes the unilateral choice to offer increased language programming in

First Nations schools, mandated language based programming as an essential component of early childhood education initiatives and daycare centres, and facilitating positive environments in First Nations communities which promote language learning and usage.

Summary

The general consensus of participants in the Consultation Sessions and of the key informant interviews is that parties are not living up to their obligations. The primary concern is with the role of the federal government in that it takes a formula approach to funding (which is not responsive to contexts of First Nations people). The limitations to the Provincial role seem to revolve around the perception that this level of government is primarily responsive to mainstream education needs, and devotes few (if any) resources to First Nations. The example cited is the recent development of the new Provincial curriculum, with no attention to the needs of First Nations for language and cultural programming.

Last, educators feel they were also falling short of the mark in a number of critical areas. First, was the lack of linkage and coordination among educators to facilitate sharing of resources, curriculum and other program ideas. The second area relates to their failure to develop resource material and the evaluation and modification of curriculum. There is such a lack of human resources to address these important tasks that we are often left with an ad-hoc approach.

Preferred Relationship

There must be a radical shift in the relationship among all three parties – the current relationship does not work, as First Nations are not and have never considered themselves to be another ‘municipality’. First Nations needs are unique in Canada and in Ontario, and there must be a vehicle to recognize and support this. First Nations are the original people of this land. If First Nations cease to exist, the nation-state of Canada will have lost a rich and vital part of its history and identity. What needs to happen to prevent the extinction of First Nations languages and cultures?

First and foremost, is the need for acknowledgment and acceptance of not only the fiscal responsibility, but also of the moral obligation of both the Federal and Provincial governments to ensure First Nations people have access to education systems on par with the rest of Canada. This means that both levels of government need to work in partnership to ensure First Nations people have adequate resources to fully support their education systems. Further, the federal government needs to ensure that preservation of First Nations languages and cultures is provided for in legislation. Anything less will mean that integration of First Nations languages and cultures will continue to be an after-thought rather than a priority. The status quo approach has, by not providing adequate support, contributed to the near demise of First Nations languages. The status quo is unacceptable. Governments in Canada must acknowledge through their actions that First Nations languages are important and require immediate targeted investment.

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