

DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

2006-2009 DENE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



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DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1984, as a result of the passing of the *Official Languages Act* of the Northwest Territories (NWT), the federal government has provided the Government of the NWT (GNWT) with multi-year funding to preserve and enhance the NWT's official Aboriginal languages. Up until the 1990s the GNWT held primary responsibility for Aboriginal languages programming and services in the NWT. This included training for Aboriginal interpreter/translators and teachers. Then in the late 1990s, based on numerous studies and reports, the GNWT decided to transfer greater responsibility over language programming and services to the official language communities. As a first step, each language community had to prepare a five-year language plan that would be used to guide and assess language programming in their respective regions. The Deh Cho Language Development Plan was completed in April 1999 and an assessment of the Deh Cho language programming was conducted in June 2003.

All language funding has been provided through the *Canada-NWT Contribution Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages*. A new multi-year agreement is currently being negotiated between Canada and the GNWT. As a component of the contribution agreements with the GNWT, the Aboriginal language communities are required to assess and update their original language plans.

The Deh Cho Language Working Group met in Fort Simpson and in Hay River to review the original language plan that was developed by Crosscurrents Associates Ltd. of Hay River. This current draft document includes additional information from the meetings of the Working Group, however, some original material have been left as information items and for discussion purposes.

Language Vision:

The original wording of the Vision has been changed into simple English without changing the intent and meaning of the original statement:

*The Dene language of the Dehcho will be maintained as an **important part** of all social, cultural and political activities and will be the **main** language use for Deh Cho Dene culture and value.*

*The Deh Cho elders will assist in the planning, preserving and developing the Dene language through traditional community consultations, **in the context of healthy lifestyles.***

Goals and Objectives:

The **long-term goals** established through this plan as discussed by the Deh Cho Language Working Group will include:

- Regional Resource Center
- Regional Cultural Camps
- Annual Workshop
 - Terminology development
- Community Language Coordinators
- Cultural Training
 - history and traditional laws.
 - beliefs and values-family
 - healing
- Pre-school Language Training: daycare
- Community Orientation (focus on newcomers to the community)
 - nurses, RCMP, teachers
 - Cross-cultural Awareness
- Community Place Names
 - Traditional names
- Community Literacy Training
 - basic writing/reading (English/South Slavey)
- Regional TV & Radio

The key **short-term objectives** identified to achieve these long-term goals focussed on the following main activities:

- Community Language Survey
- More Community Cultural Activities
- Acknowledge Speakers
- Record (Audio/Video) -Cultural Events
 - Storytelling
 - Elders' Video
- Focus on Youth
 - Traditional education
 - School
- Community Literacy Awareness Week
- Language Promotion:
 - use of Dene language in workplace
 - use of Dene language at meetings, assemblies, etc
 - use of Dene language at community events
 - use of community radio
- Addressing Healing Issues: (workshops)
 - loss of language and culture
 - health issues
 - government assimilative policies.

Community Language Priorities:

The discussion of the Deh Cho Working Group during their meetings resulted in the following list of community language priorities:

Community Language Priorities – 2006-2009

<i>Community</i>	<i>Language Status Among Youth</i>	<i>Program Priorities</i>
Tthets' ék' ehdéli (Jean Marie River)	All youth interviewed say English is first language	-Community museum -Community base activities -Hunting and survival skills -Land Base activities -Record elders stories
K' ágee Tu (Kakisa)	Most youth say English is first language	-Community base activities -Elder/youth activities -Land base activities -Place names/trails -Video elder's history
Nahæâ Dehé (Nahanni Butte)	Dene and English are equally spoken in the home among adults and youth	-All season cultural camps -Community history/pictorial -Culture workshops -Land base activities (mtgs) -Community base activities -Record traditional camping, hunting areas etc.
Áíídlíî Køç (Fort Simpson)	Language is weak, almost non-existent among youth	-Continue with land base activities -Develop resource materials (booklets etc.) -Youth activities -Family orientation activities -Elders program -Daycare to Dene Immersion school -Family Cultural Centre -Joint Ventures – Partnership with other programs/communities -Traditional trails/place names -Basic Oral and Literacy skills
Pehdzeh Ki (Wrigley)	Language data not tabulated	Priorities not tabulated
Sambaa K'e (Trout Lake)	Mixed Dene / English with youth primarily using English	-Continue with history book (Now & Then) -Pre-school to immersion -Elder/Youth Activities -Continue with On-The-Land programs -Moose/caribou tanning -Community base activities -Traditional Dog blankets -How to make nets -Young men traditional activities -Archaeological studies

Zhatie Køç / Deh Gah Got'ie Køç (Fort Providence)	Deterioration of Dene language among youth, but cultural practices still strong	-Youth Program and activities -Youth and Elder activities - --- Community Resource Centre -Collect elders stories -Land base cultural activities -All season cultural camps -Conversational Slavey classes -Basic Oral and literacy skills -Hunting and survival skills.
Acho Dene Koe (Fort Liard)	Half the youth have Dene as a first language; the other half English	-Culture Centre -Community base programs/activities -Community history -Continue land base activities -Place names/history -Partnership with other programs -Community radio
K' átâ' odeeche (Hay River Dene Reserve)	Language data not tabulated	Priorities not tabulated
West Point (Ts' eäö Kádélî)	Youth say English was primarily spoken in their home while growing up	-Land base activities -Place names/trails -Community base activities -Youth activities -Conversational language courses

Evaluation of the 1999 Language Plan

During the fiscal period 2005/2006 a portion of the language contribution allocated to Deh Cho region were transferred to communities for community-based language activities and programs. The following assessment table was prepared in June 2003 and has been left intact for information and discussion purposes:

Assessment of Deh Cho Language Programming

<i>Goals and Objectives</i>	<i>Inputs (Resources Placed into the Program)</i>	<i>Activities (Projects)</i>	<i>Outputs (Products and Efficiency of the Program)</i>	<i>Outcomes (Impact of or Effectiveness of the Program)</i>
Establish land based healing and education program utilizing experiential learning and teaching of Dene language, values and traditions. Honour and encourage our young people to use the language.	\$ 224,500 / year	Cultural Immersion Camps: Spring Summer Fall Three Camps: Jean Marie River Ft. Providence Kakisa Lake Oral traditions Elders	10 (Spring) New life 10 (Summer) Continuing 10 (Fall) Harvesting \$20,000 x 10 communities # of participants # of hours Two: Trout Lake and Ft. Providence	An increase in traditional knowledge and values. An increase in the number and quality of activities and projects in the community. An increase in Awareness of revitalizing, maintaining and preserving the South

<p>Provide incentive for them to use the language and to improve their skills throughout their lives.</p> <p>Support Slavey language activities within the community.</p> <p>Language Workshop</p>		<p>Terminology</p> <p>Chief Radio</p> <p>Elders working with the youth (on-going)</p> <p>Oral traditions</p> <p>Slavey classes</p> <p>Elder’s develop Terminology for the children</p> <p>Translating documents/transcribing</p> <p>Working Group recommendations</p> <p>Assessment Report presented to the Deh Cho Assessment and communities.</p>	<p>Two hrs/day: Ft. Providence</p> <p>Two hrs/day: H.R.R.</p> <p>10</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>3 on-going</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Slavey language for the future generations by having more elders input.</p> <p>An increase in recognition and support for the development of long-term strategies for the revitalization and maintenance of South Slavey with a focus on enhancing and reinforcing early language development.</p> <p>Increase in number of communities and individuals in language activities.</p> <p>An increase in the number of South Slavey speakers.</p> <p>To support the development of long-term strategies for the revitalization and maintenance of South Slavey, with a focus on enhancing and reinforcing early language learning.</p> <p>Gradual</p> <p>An increase in the number of communities and individuals in language activities i.e. based on annual funds.</p> <p>An increase the number of South Slavey speakers.</p>
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Key Elements of an Effective Language Development Strategy

For discussion purposes and to assist in the development of a framework for a comprehensive language plan the following key elements must be incorporated into the language plan:

- Strong legislation and policies that define and support language rights, particularly within government and the education system
- Sound management of language programming, including systems for ongoing planning and evaluation
- Adequate and diversified language funding
- Access to services in the Aboriginal language, either through front-line bilingual workers or the use of interpreter-translators
- The ongoing training, development, and/or proper use of local language specialists, including elders, teachers, interpreter-translators, linguists, etc.
- Language research and development, including the production of materials in different dialects
- Promotion of the language, particularly among youth and young parents
- Use of the language in all forms of media (print, radio, T.V., computer software, etc.).

Proposed Deh Cho Dene Language Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives from the original document have been revised with information generated from the meetings of the Deh Cho Language Working Group:

Proposed Deh Cho Dene Language Goals and Objectives for 2006-2009

<i>Key Element</i>	<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Primary Objectives</i>
Legislation and Policy	Strong, clearly defined, individual and collective language rights and policies ensuring the use of Dehcho Dene in governance, business, education, and other key aspects of life in the Dehcho region.	-Negotiate language and cultural rights within Dehcho Process -Fully and properly implement the <i>Official Languages Act</i> in the Dehcho -Establish Regional Language Policy -Implement stronger language and cultural rights within the education system.
Language Management	Delivery of formal Dehcho Dene language programs and services fully managed by the Dehcho First Nations.	-Establish a language working group for the Dehcho - Strong legislation and policies that define and support language rights, particularly within government and the education system -Ensure language planning includes ongoing surveying of Dehcho communities -Develop and implement a coordinated, regional

		<p>action plan linking community-based language coordinators and activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build capacity of communities to do their own language planning and evaluations -Build on best practices from other communities. -Work cooperatively with Slavey language speakers in B.C. and Alberta
Financing	Adequate funding for all language initiatives that promote, revitalize and enhance the Deh Cho Dene language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consult with communities regarding contribution agreements and other funding arrangements -Lobby for increased language funding, from government and industry - find ways to generate funding for regional/community languages initiatives. -Coordinate language funding to the Dehcho through a ‘single window’ approach
Access to Services	Fully implement the provisions of the <i>Official Language Act</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Challenge the GNWT and its departments to fully implement the <i>Official Languages Act</i> by providing access to bilingual services throughout the region -Work with all agencies to develop policies and strategies to increase the use of the Dehcho Dene language in the workplace -- within government, industry, and community governments, including First Nation and Métis governments - challenge the GNWT to establish an Interpreter/Translator services in all the Dene languages of the NWT.
Training and Development	Develop and maintain a skilled bilingual workforce, with meaningful opportunities for employment in the language field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Through policy and other initiatives, increase employment opportunities for language specialists (such as educators and interpreter-translators) and bilingual speakers to provide stronger incentives for training -Conduct Dene language literacy workshops in all communities -Provide formal interpreter-translator training in the region -Provide formal certification for trained interpreter/translators. -Provide formal language instructor training within Dehcho region.
Research and Development	With the assistance of the Elders thoroughly document traditional Dehcho Dene terminology and develop new	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gather and document stories from Elders -Carry out intensive traditional place name research and documentation -Coordinate ongoing language terminology

	terminology to address contemporary issues	workshops throughout region, with a particular focus on legal, technical and environmental terminology. -Assess and document the use of syllabics among elders. -Partner with other linguistic institutions on language development.
Language in Education	Strengthen Dehcho Dene language rights within the education system and implement core language and cultural programming	-Develop, maintain, and strengthen a comprehensive Dene language curriculum ¹ , with resources, for pre-school through high school -Provide ongoing training for language instructors, regular teachers, elders, and parents to cooperatively implement curriculum -Establish a Director of Language and Cultural Education for the region (either through DCFN, the DCDEC, or the proposed DC language and cultural institute) -Through legislation or policy, allow parents the right to request and access Dene language immersion education, beginning with the younger grades -Incorporate seasonal land-based language and cultural immersion activities to reinforce language learning -Develop and implement a language nest model for parents and children throughout the region
Language Promotion		-Promote community-based cultural healing to overcome language and cultural shaming and loss. -Produce a video to promote the value and importance of the Dehcho Dene language -Support and coordinate social and cultural events where the Dene language can be used and shared -Promote and honour Dene language use among children and youth -Develop a strategy to encourage the use Dene language in the home, workplace, at gatherings, assemblies and community events.
Media and Technology		-Work with other agencies to increase Dene language radio and television services in the Dehcho -Develop Dene language learning and entertainment materials using modern technology such as CD-ROMs, video, etc. - research potential for development of local community website in the Dene language.

Preliminary Implementation Strategy

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As noted above, this document is a working draft – further development of the goals and objectives must occur. In order to move forward toward finalization and implementation of an updated 2006-2009 Dehcho Language Development Plan, the following steps should be considered.

1. Leadership should review this document, suggest preliminary revisions, and approve it in principle, pending the preparation of a more detailed plan by the Deh Cho Language Working group if necessary.
2. The Deh Cho Language Working group, including elders and language specialists, was established by resolution of the Leadership to:
 - a. Review and revise this working draft and bring it up to date.
 - b. Meet with other language stakeholders -- GNWT / industry / federal government / etc. -- to clarify immediate working relationships relating to the delivery of language and cultural programs and services (without prejudice to the Dehcho Process)
 - c. Prepare a detailed implementation and evaluation strategy as a component of the plan
 - d. Communicate with and seeking approval for the updated plan from communities and leadership.

FINAL COMMENTS

The *Final Report of the Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act* (2003) calls for “a new effort to support bilingual regions within the NWT, which will establish the base for a multilingual northern society, consistent with our history and our current socio-cultural fabric” (p. 307). However, language communities such as the Dehcho First Nations must take a leadership role in pushing the language and cultural agenda forward among all Dehcho and NWT agencies, otherwise current initiatives will not be followed through.

The Community Priorities and the Goals and Objectives as listed in this document should and must form the basis of the Deh Cho language plan for 2006-2009.

The Deh Cho Dene language and culture appears to be strong enough among elders and middle-aged adults to be revived, but concerted and coordinated efforts must be made -- particularly targeting children, youth, and young parents -- or the current decline in language use will increase and the language will cease to be relevant, valued, or used among future generations. Languages do not preserve and revive themselves – people preserve and revive languages. Decisive leadership action and political will is essential for successful language revitalization to take place.