



FIRST PEOPLES'
CULTURAL COUNCIL

Meaningful Conversations in Language Revitalization Work

from the *Language Revitalization Planning Toolkit*

DRAFT

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This resource is an excerpt from the *Language Revitalization Planning Toolkit* that is being developed by FPCC. If you have questions about this resource, please contact the FPCC Language Revitalization Coaches at languagecoaches@fpcc.ca.



Community Engagement

A successful language revitalization plan reflects the ideas, beliefs, and goals of people in the community. This section addresses how to develop a plan that reflects the community. This section has been adapted for use in language revitalization projects that may fit within a larger existing or developing community language revitalization plan.

Contributions from the community will ensure a project plan:

- Brings the community together with a united vision and purpose
- Builds momentum and creates community interest and excitement
- Respects transparency, collaboration, and openness
- Integrates inter-generational knowledge and perspectives by seeking the wisdom, guidance and ideas of both Elders and youth
- Welcomes traditional and elected leaders to provide input, guidance, and advocacy

Considerations for Community Engagement

A process that brings the community together to plan for the future of their language can be powerful and impactful. A complex range of emotions and responses can arise when people discuss the vitality of their language. Consider the following points when talking about language revitalization with the community:

Ground the work in culture and tradition: Use cultural protocols and practices to guide the language team and planning process.

Explore the language status and planning context: Start by understanding the community's history of language loss and reclamation efforts. This will help ensure the plan takes into account the different perspectives of community members. The language profile conducted in the spring stage is an ideal activity to explore the language status and context of the community. Informal steps, such as having conversations with fluent speakers, Elders, and other Knowledge Keepers, are also useful.

Listen with openness and compassion: Language planning can be deeply personal and may cause painful memories to surface for some people due to the impacts of colonial oppression and language loss. Listen with openness and compassion to the stories and experiences of others. Consider identifying a support network, such as Elders and/or mental health workers, who can offer extra support throughout the process.



Uncover a positive pathway forward: Language planning can bring up negative feelings that may focus conversations on barriers and challenges resulting from the impacts of colonization. While understanding barriers is the first step to addressing and overcoming them, too much focus on negative issues may immobilize the process. Find ways to emphasize the strengths of the community and the unified vision and goals of the plan.

Nurture kindness and understanding: Community members will naturally have different opinions, ideas, attitudes, and experiences. There may also be challenging dynamics between some community members. Having someone on the planning team who is aware of community dynamics can be helpful. Plan community engagement in ways that avoid or manage potential conflicts (for example, forming groups with individuals who generally get along). Strategies that remind people of the community's shared values may also help.

Develop group meeting agreements: One way to create a safe and collaborative space is to create shared commitments about how participants will treat each other. These commitments can be based on values such as respect, compassion, and kindness. As a group, outline the ways you will work together during a meeting. A facilitator may provide some examples and then welcome others to share. A group meeting agreement might include the following ideas:

- *Be present (avoid distractions like cell phones and side conversations).*
- *Share your thoughts and make space for others to share theirs.*
- *Respect each person's contributions.*
- *Recognize that people have different opinions, backgrounds, and experiences.*
- *Take care of each other and hold each other up.*

Identifying Key People

In the Language Revitalization Planning process, it is important to try to communicate with as many community members as possible. As your language technology project plan may fit within a future more comprehensive language revitalization plan, this tool can provide a helpful guide as you move your project forward presently as well as into the future of language revitalization sustainability for your community.

This worksheet may help to identify individuals or groups who can contribute to the language project process. There may be specific people to reach out to due to community protocols and/or because of the knowledge they hold. Consider who to involve, what the goal of engaging with them is and what role they might play in developing the project plan. List specific names under each category.



Identifying Key People Worksheet

Names of Key People	Role in Developing the Plan
<p><i>Example</i> Elders: Bobby Joe, Stella Armitage</p>	<p><i>Provide cultural guidance into the process and plan</i></p>
<p>Current language speakers / Elders</p>	
<p>People with experience hosting community meetings and /or creating community plans</p>	
<p>People interested in language initiatives</p>	
<p>Youth</p>	
<p>Knowledge Keepers</p>	
<p>Chief and Council / leadership</p>	
<p>Members of the community's administration</p>	
<p>Educators</p>	
<p>Community leaders / family representatives</p>	
<p>Off-reserve members who are interested in language revitalization</p>	
<p>People from other communities (that share the same language)</p>	
<p>Others (for example, artists, people with technical skills)</p>	