

# Gonàowo t'a Nàts'etso; Ełets'àts'edi t'a Nàts'etso

Tłıchọ Language, Culture and Way of Life:  
A Report from the Cultural Coordinator 2010-2013

*Strong in way of life;  
strong in working together.*





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Office of the Cultural Coordinator  
Tłıchọ Research and Training Institute  
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This 1st triennial report from the Office of the Culture Coordinator is dedicated to Philip Rabesca (1953-2009), a colleague, educator, learner, language activist, interpreter, translator and passionate advocate for our Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life.

We also remember Francis Blackduck, Mary Adele Bishop, Michel Bouvier, Ernie Camsell, Jimmy Drybones, Fred Lafferty, Ben Lafferty, Henry Lafferty, Luis Lafferty, Elizabeth Mackenzie, Joe Nasken, Pascal Smith, Vital Thomas and the other interpreter/translators who moved back and forth between two worlds for the benefit of our people.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Thank you to Bill Hoggarth for his contributions to Part Four.  
Edited by Jim Martin.

### **Gonàwo t’a Nàts’etso; Elets’ats’edi t’a Nàts’etso**

Tłıchǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life: A Report from the Cultural Coordinator 2010-2013

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# Message from the Cultural Coordinator

*“Strong in way of life; strong in working together.”*

Seot’i,

This is the first three-year report from the Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator required by the Tłıchǫ Intergovernmental Services Agreement. This report gives an overview of Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life in relation to the activities of the three governments. This report also includes nine recommendations.

The past two years have been exciting and rewarding and, at times, frustrating and challenging. The greatest challenge has been in trying to create what the elders’ had envisioned would be the role of the Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator. As Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator, I have had the privilege of looking deeper into Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life. I greatly appreciate the elders, youth and community members for their stories and their support.

As Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator, I advocate for building capacity so that the young Tłıchǫ Government will have the resources necessary to become self-determining.

At times, I have felt overwhelmed thinking about Tłıchǫ language revitalization and culture. As the Tłıchǫ First Nation, we are all responsible for the health of Tłıchǫ language and culture. This is the reason why the Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator’s priority has been “building capacity to build a Nation”. Without understanding one another there will be no shared understanding. This report, “Gonàowo t’a nàts’etso; Eelets’àts’edı t’a nàts’etso” speaks to the responsibilities all levels of government have to work together. Together, we need to build strong cultural communities at the local level, and to build strengths in our Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life.

As I had done at the first face-to-face meeting, I would strongly urge the three governments to build effective communication between all parties and Tłıchǫ First Nation citizens.

Ts’èwhı naxixè gozǫǫ,

Lucy Lafferty  
Tłıchǫ Cultural Coordinator

## PART 1

# Executive Summary

*“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, 1996.

**T**he Tłı̨chǫ Intergovernmental Services Agreement (ISA) was signed by Canada, the Government of the NWT and the Tłı̨chǫ Government in 2003. The Agreement established the position of the Cultural Coordinator to advise the Parties on how to use their respective powers in ways that respect and promote Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life. Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life is the foundation of self-government.

The first Cultural Coordinator was appointed in 2010. Under the terms of the ISA, the Cultural Coordinator is required to produce a report every three years. This first report, “Gonàowō t’a nàts’etso, Elets’ats’edi t’a Nàts’etso” for 2010-2013, describes the current state of Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life, and addresses issues relevant to the Parties to the Agreement.



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



This report puts forth nine recommendations to the Parties intended to strengthen Tẖcẖo language, culture and way of life. The recommendations are the following:

- All Parties to the ISA have obligations to identify, anticipate and prevent or minimize damage from harmful social policy and legislation to Aboriginal cultures and languages in the NWT.
- The need for all Parties to the ISA to recommit to the strengthening of language and cultural communities at the local level across the NWT.
- The need to support and encourage Aboriginal language transmission in the home.
- The need for the provision of increased auxiliary support for Aboriginal programs and services currently being developed and implemented by the GNWT/TCSA in Tẖcẖo communities.
- The need for the Tẖcẖo Government to assume a leadership role in the development and delivery of programs and services that will “practice, promote, protect and preserve” Tẖcẖo language, culture and way of life.
- The need for the development and application of conceptual tools such as the Tẖcẖo Plan (section 6.2 of the ISA) to monitor the state of Tẖcẖo culture.
- The critical importance of developing and supporting interpreters and translators for the proper delivery of programs and services at all levels of government.
- The need to avoid duplication of language and cultural resources, programs and services at the local level through systematic and regular communication among the Parties.
- The importance of providing a physical “home” to bring together resources for the continuing work on Tẖcẖo programs, services, language, culture and way of life.

## PART 2

# Background to the Work of the Cultural Coordinator

*“Often, people who do not speak a language will experience feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, inferiority, inadequacy, intimidation, frustration, anger, isolation or hopelessness. They lack a sense of pride, belonging or acceptance. If language is not respected and given its proper place in society, some of its speakers may even come to resent the language group they are a part of, because they see it as being socially or intellectually inferior. All of these feelings can lead to major social problems.”*

– 1992-1993 Annual Report from the NWT Languages Commissioner, pg. 9.

The Tłı̨chǫ Agreement and the Tłı̨chǫ Constitution set out the framework for self-government within which the Tłı̨chǫ people, through the Tłı̨chǫ Government, can assert their sovereignty as a distinct people within Canada. The Tłı̨chǫ Agreement and the Tłı̨chǫ Constitution lay down both a foundation on which to build and a beacon towards which the Tłı̨chǫ First Nation can move. These foundational documents create the legal and cultural basis for the long-term future of Tłı̨chǫ communities and the operations of the Tłı̨chǫ Government. The Constitution speaks to preserving and protecting language, culture and heritage, in the words of Monfwi, “for as long as the land shall last.” Promotion of Tłı̨chǫ language and cultural practices are embedded in the Tłı̨chǫ constitution. They are important values in their own right, and efforts to preserve language and culture parallel our governments’ efforts to protect land, water and wildlife. As values, they speak to our deep spiritual connection to the land as expressed by one of our elders, Elizabeth Mackenzie, “We are from the land... We are the land.” (Dene Kede: Education: A Dene Perspective, 1993, p.9)

Over the past few decades great changes have come to all our families and communities. Anecdotally, we know that Tłı̨chǫ language use is declining dramatically. At one time not so long ago, all Tłı̨chǫ children entered school fluent in our Tłı̨chǫ language and learned English as a second language. Today, most children in all our communities enter school with English as their only language. The decline of language use among children is matched by a decline in participation in traditional activities by families and the passing of elders from many homes.



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



The decline of language use is noted in research around the world as a threat to the survival of minority cultures. Language is the vehicle through which cultural values and spirituality are expressed, and traditional knowledge and skills are practiced. With language loss, communities lose the vital knowledge of their ways of life accumulated over generations. In our Tłıchǫ communities, we know that as our children are involved in less and less of our culture and way of life, the “domains” of their language shrink. Knowledge of the skills, attitudes and way of hunting, fishing, travelling on the land, our history, heritage and spirituality shrink to a limited community language that is a tragic form of language loss. Research states that language loss can damage the identity of our youth, and is related to the troubling health and other issues facing many First Nations.

***Highlights from the Work of the Cultural Coordinator:*** The first Cultural Coordinator was selected in March 2010 by the Tłıchǫ Implementation Committee, made up of representatives of the governments of Canada, the Northwest Territories and the Tłıchǫ. Initially, the position was placed within the offices of the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) in Behchokǫ but, in June 2012, the office of the Cultural Coordinator was co-located within the culture department of the Tłıchǫ Government.

Since 2010, the Cultural Coordinator has provided support to the Tłıchǫ Government, the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency and the Government of Northwest Territories in the development of their language and culture planning. This has included the GNWT/TCSA five-year plan for Tłıchǫ Yatı (language). The Cultural Coordinator also assisted with the development of the award winning Tłıchǫ ımbè summer program in Whatı, Gamètı and Behchokǫ, coordinated and facilitated a gathering of Tłıchǫ interpreters, elders, youth and language advocates at a fish camp at Russell Lake, participated in the Trails of Our Ancestors canoe trip to Whatı with youth, community members and elders, and worked with elders from the four communities on Tłıchǫ translation and standardization research.

## Part 2. Background to the Work of the Cultural Coordinator (Continued)

Other research activities of the Cultural Coordinator have included: reviewing past, present and future government activities in the Tłıchǝ region; the Tłıchǝ Immersion Program; residential school issues and the Truth and Reconciliation process; Tłıchǝ land claim and self-government issues; Canada and the Aboriginal land claims and self-government policy and processes; Aboriginal language, literacy and the NWT official languages; the cultural impact of loss of caribou; mining companies and their interests on Tłıchǝ lands, along with federal environmental assessment panel reviews; Tłıchǝ interpreters and translators coursework, including a review of materials developed by the Yamožha Kue Society, Navajo, United Nations, Maori and Hawaii.

Committee work has included: the GNWT Health and Social Services Official Language Committee, with the mandate to ensure HSS compliance with the Official Languages Act of the NWT; Official Languages Consultant to GNWT departments, including northern Health Authorities, the committee to develop an NWT Labour Force Development Framework 2010-2020, the GNWT Official Languages Board and the NWT Steering Committee on Teacher Education Programs.

Other areas of interest have included devolution, the GNWT and the Tłıchǝ Government, the potential sociocultural impact of Fortune Minerals mining interests adjacent to the Tłıchǝ community of Whatì, Aboriginal students, education, and the recent national and local “Idle No More” events.



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



### PART 3

## Role and Duties of the Cultural Coordinator

*“That way of life is our elder’s culture. When our forefathers lived on this earth, from the time they woke up until the time they went to sleep, they worked in the bush. Even though they didn’t speak English, when they spoke it was a great education for us... Today we are talking about their traditions. We are talking about how we can make them strong within our people once again!”*

– Jimmy B. Rabesca (1990) in *Strong Like Two People*.

The position of the Cultural Coordinator was created by the Tłı̨ch̨o Intergovernmental Services Agreement to be the “ambassador” for issues of language, culture and way of life between the Tłı̨ch̨o Government, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Cultural Coordinator advises the Parties to this Agreement to use their respective powers in ways that respect and promote the language and the culture and way of life of the Tłı̨ch̨o First Nation.

Appointed by the Parties upon a recommendation from the Tłı̨ch̨o Government, the Cultural Coordinator now reports administratively to the Director of Culture and Lands Protection. The role includes providing advice and recommendations on policies, procedures, draft legislation and the conceptualization of government programs and services designed to assist with the promotion of Tłı̨ch̨o language, culture and way of life.

The Cultural Coordinator may identify and initiate research to determine the state of the Tłı̨ch̨o language, culture and way of life, as well as recommend ways of strengthening it. The Cultural Coordinator also determines standards for the use of the Tłı̨ch̨o language, and advocates for required services for individuals who are unilingual by promoting the use of the Tłı̨ch̨o language in workplaces, homes, schools and media, as well as the development of translation services and the training of interpreter/ translators.

### Part 3. Role and Duties of the Cultural Coordinator (Continued)

The Cultural Coordinator evaluates language and culture programs designed by the three levels of government, providing advice on their design and implementation. The Cultural Coordinator also consults with communities to assess their language requirements and determine ways to strengthen the use of the Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life, facilitating the development of cultural orientation programs for new staff, and facilitating the incorporation of Tłıchǫ culture and practices into service systems and programs.

The Cultural Coordinator coordinates the production of a three-year status report as required by section 8.7 of the Intergovernmental Services Agreement (ISA). This report reviews the state of Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life, and the impact of government legislation, policies, programs and services.

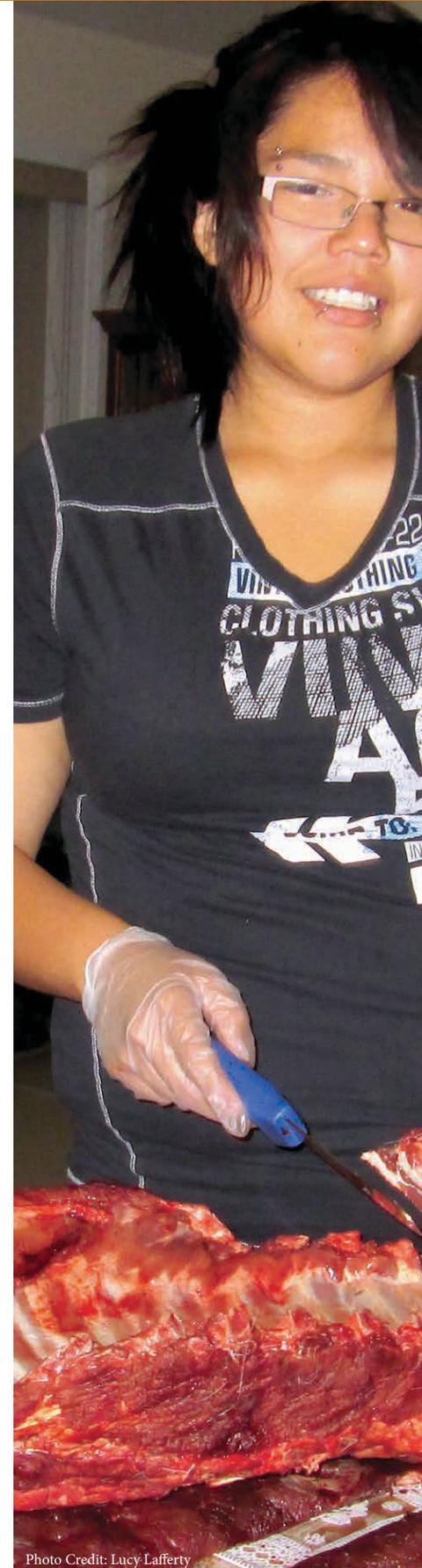


Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



## PART 4

# State of the Tłı̨chǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life

*“In this present age it is important for us to listen to our elders. We can talk about them and their words when discussing other topics. Those who have worked a long time, and have many experiences, are like those who are very educated... While we are still healthy and there are some elders among us, we should quickly teach the children using the words of the elders!”*

– Harry Simpson (1990) in *Strong Like Two People*.

Researching, monitoring and reporting upon the state of the Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life is one of the most important responsibilities of the Cultural Coordinator. It can be anticipated that, in the future, these triennial reports will become primary sources of data for the development of language and cultural policy in the Tłı̨chǫ region for the Tłı̨chǫ Government and, hopefully, at both the territorial and national policy level as well.

It became clear during the development of this report that the tools that currently exist to measure Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life are not adequate to the task required by the Cultural Coordinator and the Tłı̨chǫ Government. Thus, it becomes one of the recommendations of this report for the Parties to begin to work together to develop the more meaningful measures and indicators that are required.

***Moving Beyond the Anecdotal: Indicators and Measures:*** Sustaining language, culture and way of life requires good planning, which, in turn, depends on good information and data. Planning is contingent on research, in particular, research with a strong Aboriginal perspective. With the recent establishment of its Research and Training Institute, the Tłı̨chǫ Government has created the vehicle for undertaking community-based research projects, and for training Tłı̨chǫ citizens to do field research. The creation of baseline data incorporating indicators of language usage, transmission of cultural values and the strength of traditional activities needs to be the first order of business. Baseline information is essential as a starting point for recording trends that will provide clear measures of the viability of Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life over time.

#### Part 4. State of the Tłıchǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life (Continued)

**Context for Research and Planning:** Tłıchǫ planning occurs in a context that is global, national, regional and local in scope. Information from many external sources suggests that vigilance is needed to ensure the long-term viability of the Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life.

Worldwide, minority and indigenous languages are going extinct at the rate of one language every two weeks. UNESCO reports that nearly 2,500 of the world's 6,700 languages – fully one-third of the total – are at risk. Even official languages are in danger. The use of Irish (Gaelic), although it is the official language of Ireland, a country of 6.4 million people, and even though it is taught in schools, is now considered endangered.<sup>1</sup> (Notes appear at the end of Part 4. See page 16.)

Within Canada, First Nations languages are also in decline, in spite of many efforts to revitalize them.<sup>2</sup> In British Columbia, all of BC's 32 languages are severely endangered or nearly extinct, and some are already extinct. Only 5.1% of BC First Nations populations are fluent speakers, only 8.2% are classified as semi-speakers and only 11.1% are first language learners. More than half of the fluent speakers are 65 years and older, less than 2% are under the age of 25 and most of the fluent speakers are expected to be gone by 2016. Of critical importance, in most of the communities, the Aboriginal language is rarely used in the home or community for daily communication, or by government or the media.<sup>3</sup>

Closer to home, in a recent report, the 2010-2011 Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated has expressed alarm at the decline in the use of Inuktitut. Despite Inuktitut being the first language of the majority of Nunavut residents, its home use is steadily declining. Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of Nunavummiut who reported using Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun most often at home declined from 57% to 54%. The report lists three goals for keeping the Inuit language strong:

- raising its status among youth,
  - promoting its use in the home, and
  - creating the conditions to graduate fully bilingual students from high school.
- The report calls for more parental involvement in teaching and using the language at home.<sup>4</sup>



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



**State of Tłıchǫ language, Culture and Way of Life:** In the Northwest Territories, the state of Tłıchǫ is mixed, rather better than any of the other official first languages of the NWT, but cause for concern nonetheless. Between 1989 and 2009, the NWT Bureau of Statistics recorded an overall decline in the percentage of the Aboriginal population 15 years and older that speaks an Aboriginal language – from 55.6% of the population in 1989 to only 38.0% of the population in 2009. For Tłıchǫ speakers, the decline was from 96.1% in 1989 to 90.4% in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

**Language Use in the Tłıchǫ Communities:** Data taken from the 2011 Census indicate that Tłıchǫ is the only language group whose mother tongue speakers are not highly concentrated in the older age categories. The number of persons reporting Tłıchǫ as their mother tongue was stable between the 2006 Census and the 2011 Census, growing slightly from 1,950 individuals to 1,965 individuals, and Tłıchǫ home use increased somewhat between 2006 and 2011, from 1,095 persons to 1,205 persons.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, however, home use of Tłıchǫ was lower than mother tongue and, according to J.A. Fishman (2001), this is a warning flag for language retention. The Bureau of Statistics measures language retention as the ratio of home language to mother tongue. A ratio greater than one indicates that the language is relatively healthy. But if the ratio is less than one, the language is showing signs of degradation. In 2011, every NWT Aboriginal language indicated a ratio less than one. For Tłıchǫ, the ratio was 0.6.<sup>7</sup>

Table 1: Tłıchǫ Speakers over the age of 15 between 1989-2009					
	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
<b>Tłıchǫ Region</b>	<b>96.1 %</b>	<b>96.5 %</b>	<b>98.1 %</b>	<b>94.6 %</b>	<b>90.4 %</b>
Behchokǫ	94.3 %	95.5 %	97.9 %	93.1 %	89.1 %
Gamètì	100 %	100 %	98.4 %	98.5 %	93.3 %
Wekweètì	100 %	98.8 %	96.8 %	96.1 %	93.6 %
Whatì	99.1 %	97.2 %	98.9 %	96.9 %	92.8 %

Data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics available at: <http://www.statsnwt.ca/language/>

The gap between mother tongue and home use is an indicator that steps are required to reverse the decline in the use of the Tłıchǫ language through efforts to promote greater use of Tłıchǫ in the home, the school and community.

Part 4. State of the Tłıchǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life (Continued)

**Cultural Practices in the Tłıchǫ Communities:** Although we can take some comfort in the fact that the practices of our Tłıchǫ way of life remain important in many families in our communities, here too, the statistics can be alarming. Fishing and hunting to harvest food for our families is still a comparatively strong, though declining, activity. Reliance on country food in our diets is higher in the Tłıchǫ communities than across the NWT as a whole. Country food represents half, or more than half, of people’s daily diet in Gamètì, Wekweètì and Whatì, and 38% of the household diet in Behchokò. However, to a resident of our communities with a memory going back 20 years, viewing these figures calls to mind the need for firm baseline data. Anecdotally, it would be very difficult to find a single family in any Tłıchǫ community 20 years ago who did not hunt and fish to feed their families.

**Table 2: Cultural practices, country foods and the Tłıchǫ communities 2008**

<b>Percentage of people who hunt and fish to feed their families</b>	Behchokò	35.3 %
	Gamètì	41.6 %
	Wekweètì	64.2 %
	Whatì	46 %
	NWT as a whole	36.7 %

Data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics available at: <http://www.statsnwt.ca/Traditional%20Activities/>

The traditional economy based on hunting, fishing and trapping remains a viable economic option for those who wish to pursue it on a full or part-time basis. Country food has an economic value that is not reflected in statistics on economic activity and income. Support for the traditional economy is also important as a cultural activity. Cultural activities related to sewing moccasins, gloves and jackets for the family, as well as other traditional handcrafts, can also have value in a modern economy. It is important for the Tłıchǫ Government to develop these opportunities. The Tłıchǫ online store (see [www.tlıcho.ca](http://www.tlıcho.ca)) is one example of an attempt by the Tłıchǫ government to support and grow this traditional economy.

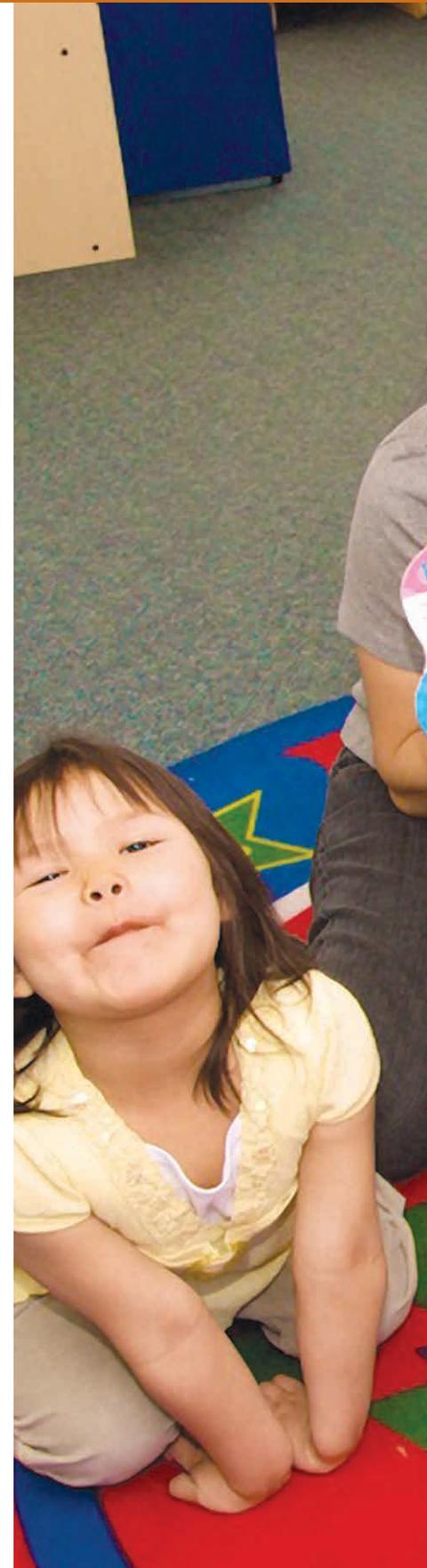


Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



**Table 3: Cultural practices, country foods and the Tłıchǰ communities 2008**

<b>Percentage of people who trap as a source of income in the Tłıchǰ communities</b>	Behchokò	15.1 %
	Gamètì	16.7 %
	Wekweètì	19.3 %
	Whatì	14.3 %
	NWT as a whole	5.9 %

Data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics available at: <http://www.statsnwt.ca/Traditional%20Activities/>

**Demographic Changes:** There are changes in the characteristics of the populations of the Tłıchǰ communities, and in the NWT and Canada, that have an impact on the development of policy at all levels of government. The Tłıchǰ population, as reported by the NWT Bureau of Statistics for 2006, is substantially younger than the averages for the NWT and Canada. The median age is almost the same in the four Tłıchǰ communities – a median age of approximately 25 – compared with a median age of 31.2 for the NWT and 39.0 for Canada. This is an important factor that needs to be a consideration in the development of policy by the Tłıchǰ Government. Seen in conjunction with findings in the TCSA/CIET research about the deep pride held by many young Tłıchǰ people in their culture, it can be a powerful asset in developing community-based social policy.<sup>8</sup>

Both Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>) and the NWT Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.statsnwt.ca/>) are important sources of baseline and trend data on language use. However, measures of cultural vitality are not captured in their surveys, and data about traditional knowledge can only be inferred indirectly and imperfectly through data on the traditional economy. None of these data speak qualitatively to what motivates people or what they believe can or should be done to preserve, protect or revitalize aspects of Tłıchǰ language, culture and way of life.

Statistics Canada bases its evaluation on the health of an Aboriginal language on the number of speakers. However, new research states that the number of speakers alone is a poor measurement of the health of a language and, rather, what is important is the occurrence of intergenerational transmission, and especially how many children are learning the language.

#### Part 4. State of the Tłıchǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life (Continued)

For the needs of the Tłıchǫ Government, the data is too sparse and sporadic in nature. Data is also self-reported and serious questions about what is actually being determined by the research process are legitimate, considering that the reported numbers appear very high compared to a variety of sources of anecdotal evidence from the communities.<sup>9</sup>

None of these statistics report data on language use or language attitudes of children and youth. If a greater depth of information, knowledge and insight into these matters is to be achieved over the next three-year reporting period of the Cultural Coordinator, it will likely have to be done by Tłıchǫ people acting with the support of the Tłıchǫ Government. It is necessary to work collaboratively with the GNWT to develop the processes to meet these research needs, which would be shared by other Aboriginal cultural communities across the NWT.

**Potential Research Tools:** Fortunately, there are tools with which to assess and reverse the loss of language and cultural practices, and the skills to apply these tools can be learned by community-based research teams and used for local self-assessments. Elements of the following tools could be used for project work by the Cultural Coordinator, the CART team (Community Action Research Team) and the Tłıchǫ Research and Training Institute.

The First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Cultural Council in British Columbia has developed tools for assessing and revitalizing Aboriginal languages. The Framework for Defining and Measuring Language Endangerment is an assessment tool by which a language may be categorized as thriving, declining, critically endangered or extinct (sleeping, with no living speakers).



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



The second tool is an eight-step cycle for language revitalization. The first step in the process is to conduct an assessment of the status of the language. Community mobilization and support comes next, followed by other steps involving research, goal setting, planning projects and initiatives to create more opportunities for language use, leading to self-sustaining language use.<sup>10</sup>

Another self-assessment tool is VITEK: the Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK). The Vitality Index collects data against three related measures:

- Intergenerational Rate of Retention,
- Cumulative Rate of Retention from successive age groups to the next, and
- Annual Rate of Change by the target age group.

Measuring differences in TEK aptitude between age groups allows one assessment to provide trend information with a time depth of approximately 50 years. VITEK is participatory and collaborative. It allows data to be collected on participants' conceptual knowledge and practical skills.

TEK is defined as something with deep cultural and spiritual dimensions that is adaptive to changing conditions. It involves wisdom as well as knowledge; it is cumulative and not static; it provides a cultural group with a cognitive road map and a moral compass. It is knowledge deeply connected with both the natural and the cultural context. As such, it plays a central role in sustaining the organization, vitality and resilience of human systems and ecosystems.<sup>11</sup> In this context, language is inseparable from expressions of culture and way of life and our spiritual relationship to our land.

Part 4. State of the Tłchq Language, Culture and Way of Life (Continued)

**Notes to Part 4:**

- <sup>1</sup> *Extinction of Human Languages Accelerating* (26-04-2013).  
<http://www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/363/65/>
- <sup>2</sup> In British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, virtually every community college, university and Aboriginal organization offers language courses at various levels from basic oral language courses to certificate, diploma and, in a few cases, four-year degree programs in a regional Aboriginal language. High school courses are also available in some regions.
- <sup>3</sup> First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council. *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2010*, pp. 4-11.
- <sup>4</sup> Nunatsiaq Online (25-04-2013). *Action Needed to Save Inuit Language in Nunavut: NTI*. The NTI report for 2009-10, released in October 2011, is entitled *The Inuit Language: Our Primary Concern*. It is one in a series of annual reports on the state of Inuit culture and society in Nunavut. [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674action\\_needed\\_to\\_save\\_inuit\\_language\\_in\\_nunavut\\_nti/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674action_needed_to_save_inuit_language_in_nunavut_nti/)
- <sup>5</sup> NWT Bureau of Statistics (n.d). *% Aboriginals 15 Years and Older that Speak an Aboriginal Language, by Community, Northwest Territories, 1989-2009*.



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



- <sup>6</sup> The NWT Bureau of Statistics defines mother tongue as the first language learned in childhood and still understood. Home language is defined as the language most often spoken at home.
- <sup>7</sup> NWT Bureau of Statistics. *newstats Language 2011 Census* (26-10-2012). Tables 1-5 and notes.
- <sup>8</sup> Summary Report: Tłı̨chǫ Baseline and Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and blood-borne viruses 2006-2007, available at [http://www.ciet.org/\\_documents/200811974337.pdf](http://www.ciet.org/_documents/200811974337.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> As proposed to the Chiefs Executive Council in a briefing note dated 01-14-2013.
- <sup>10</sup> First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council. *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2010*, pp. 13 and 33.
- <sup>11</sup> Terralingua (n.d). *Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge. An Introductory Guide*, pp. 11-13. [http://www.terralingua.org/vitek/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Terralingua\\_VITEK.pdf](http://www.terralingua.org/vitek/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Terralingua_VITEK.pdf)

## PART 5

# Actions/Inactions of the Parties that Impact Language, Culture and Way of Life

All levels of government have profound impacts on the language, culture and way of life of their communities. Loss of culture and language does not just happen because of actions taken or not taken in families, in homes and local communities, but is a result of a complex web of actions taken and not taken by governments as well. Cultural and linguistic impacts happen when governments make decisions to do so purposefully, and even unintentionally, when governments make decisions without attention to the context.

Purposeful decisions to impact Aboriginal language, culture and way of life were made intentionally by the Government of Canada in the residential school decisions of the last 100 years. The child and family services “scoop”, where social workers remove Aboriginal children at extremely high rates from Aboriginal homes “for their protection”, is a GNWT policy decision with a presumably unintended impact on Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life.

Although all Parties to the Intergovernmental Services Agreement would likely assert that such overt examples of poor government policy as the residential school decisions are things of the past, it is clear that even relatively “minor” actions taken by central governments can have “unintended” consequences and impact language, culture and way of life at the local level. A story from the Chief of Behchokǫ, Clifford Daniels, speaks to policy by the GNWT that has had serious impacts on people’s access to on-the-land delivery of language and culture programs at the local level:



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



*Chief Clifford Daniels related the story of a number of people within the community of Behchokò who are unable to participate in cultural on-the-land programs and activities such as hunting and other harvesting activities for the benefit of their families because of restrictions on their movements out of the community by GNWT programs and services.*

*Both GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment Income Support programs and Department of Justice programs require individuals to remain in their communities at all times or there will be consequences to their continued participation in GNWT programs and services. The participants in these programs understand this means that they are NOT to go on the land to hunt, trap, fish or otherwise harvest food for their families.*

In many jurisdictions, public policy considerations towards environmental and health issues often invoke a “precautionary principle” or “precautionary approach”, where the responsibility to show harmful impacts falls on the Party who desires to make the changes. The precautionary principle has been made a statutory requirement in European Union legislation, where there is believed to be a social responsibility to anticipate public harm and an obligation to prevent or minimize the damage even when that damage cannot be certainly predicted in a complex world (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precautionary\\_principle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precautionary_principle)). The precautionary principle asserts that the burden of proof for the risk of harm falls on the Party intending on acting.

There are important parallels between public policy considerations towards environmental and health risks, and the language and cultural risks to northern peoples of harmful social policy. It is estimated that by the year 2100, over 90% of the languages presently spoken on earth will be silent (Davis, 2009). Each language represents a unique cultural source of knowledge and wisdom, and a way of knowing the world. As biodiversity is an important measure of the health of biological systems<sup>1</sup>, so too, cultural diversity can be used as a measure of the health of our global culture. However, if present trends continue, as Edgar Morin has warned in a UNESCO report, our grandchildren will live in a vast global monoculture (1999).

Part 5. Actions/Inactions of the Parties that Impact Language, Culture and Way of Life (Continued)

In northern Canada, federal government policy has created Aboriginal governments in Nunavut (1999) and in the Tłı̨chǫ communities of the Northwest Territories (2005). At the heart of their creation is an assumption that these new governance structures will strengthen the survival of indigenous, tribal cultural identities and their languages, cultures and ways of life. However the burden of proof for harm to language, culture and way of life is placed on the Aboriginal governments.

The function of the Cultural Coordinator, according to the Intergovernmental Services Agreement, is the application of the precautionary principle in reverse, where it becomes the responsibility of the smallest Party to the ISA to show impacts from the actions of the other Parties on Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life. This is unfortunate as, of the three Parties to the ISA, the Tłı̨chǫ Government has the fewest legislative and policy research and monitoring resources.

All levels of government should acknowledge the responsibility to apply the “precautionary principle” in regards to the language, culture and way of life of Aboriginal communities. The application of this principle would ensure that legislation and policy actions taken by Canada and the GNWT are reviewed and “policed” internally for harmful impacts.

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<sup>1</sup>Note: See *Terra lingua: Unity in Biocultural Diversity and their Index of Biocultural Diversity* (<http://www.terralingua.org/projects/ibcd/ibcd.html>)



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



## PART 6

# Communications between the Parties

A story told by Tłı̨chǫ elders, and widely known among the Dene of the Northwest Territories (see Dene Kede), regarding how the caribou and fish became a food source for the people has lessons for us today, to help us communicate with each other...

*“Hagodi (it was said)... At the beginning, when the “first creatures” were formed with shapes and colours and roles, they would come together... That the “first creatures – animals” had all gathered and noticed some helpless “beings”. They were concerned about them. Most “first creatures – animals” off-spring were born equipped with inner survival skills and were able to live on their own right away. However, the “first creatures – animals” noticed that the helpless “beings” off-spring were very helpless and depended on their parents for many years. The new “beings” were not going to survive for very long without the help of the “first creatures – animals”.*

*The “first creature – caribou” and “first creature – fish” said that they will be the food source for these helpless new “beings” who lived in the cold region. The “first creature – bear” got up quickly and said, “NO, I will be the food source for these new “beings”. It is said that the “first creature – bear” is very short tempered and easy to anger. As it is at any “first creature” gathering, they let “first creature – animals” with issues or concerns speak. And so the “first creature – bear” was allowed to speak about why “first creature – bear” should be the food source.*

*The “first creature – bear” spoke of how large animals have rich meat and how parts of their body can be used for medicine. The “first creature – bear talked about how the thick, long-haired fur can be used for clothing and blanket to keep the new “beings” warm. The “first creature – bear” spoke eloquently and what he had said was true. The “first creature – animals” discussed among themselves what “first creature – bear” had said. Finally, after long discussion, one of the “first creature – animals” stood up and asked “first creature – bear”, How will the new “beings” survive when you hibernate?*



## Part 6. Communications between the Parties (Continued)

*The “first creature – bear” pondered the question for a long time. People do not like to admit their mistakes. They need time to consider what they can do to minimize their mistake. Finally, the “first creature – bear” said, “Yes, you are right, but I will be food source for the new “beings” when caribou and fish are scarce. Everyone agreed and they celebrated with a feast and a dance.*

*To this day, Tłı̨chǫ people still use the system the “first creatures – animals” used to gather and discuss issues. People gather to discuss issues and concerns, people respect the speakers by agreeing to disagree, people celebrate the outcome with a feast and dance. From this story, we learn to respect others, and think before we speak; we learn to help those in need, give what is needed by giving the best we have; give people time to speak their mind; give groups time to talk about the issues and gather input while providing appropriate questions. We learn to recognize and admit our mistakes and look for collaborative solutions, and we learn to celebrate the outcomes.”*

Like the “first creatures”, the Parties to the Tłı̨chǫ Intergovernmental Services Agreement communicate on issues related to Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life in a number of different ways. Initially, the primary methods of communication have been through the Tłı̨chǫ Implementation Committee and correspondence between the Parties:

- *The Tłı̨chǫ Agreement and the Tłı̨chǫ Implementation Committee:* Established to oversee, monitor and provide direction on the implementation of the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement, the Implementation Committee is made up of representatives from the Tłı̨chǫ Government, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada. The Committee meets three times annually to review obligations and responsibilities under the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement.
- *Correspondence between the Parties:* The Grand Chief of the Tłı̨chǫ Government, the Premier of the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada communicate regularly on issues of mutual concern through correspondence.



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



More recently, the Parties to the ISA have added regular senior leadership meetings and, now, the 1st triennial report of the Cultural Coordinator on issues related to Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life:

- *Working Together: A Memorandum of Understanding between the Tłıchǫ Government, the Government of the NWT and Biannual Leadership Meetings:* In June of 2012, the Government of the NWT and the Tłıchǫ Government acknowledged their “unique and evolving government to government relationship and agreed to work with one another on the basis of mutual respect, recognition and responsibility.” This understanding led to the establishment of two working meetings a year to enable the leaders to work through issues of mutual concern. Two issues related to Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life have been raised and resolved through this mechanism:
  - The conflict between the TG Harvest Subsidy policy and GNWT Income Support regulations was resolved in November 2012 with modifications to the GNWT position, which allowed the TG harvest subsidy to be paid to citizens without financial repercussions on those Tłıchǫ citizens on Income Support.
  - A Shared Services Agreement has been finalized between the Tłıchǫ Government and the Government of the NWT to establish a collaborative process on shared spaces between early childhood programs and services delivered by the Tłıchǫ Government in GNWT schools. The early childhood programs are a major tool for imparting Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life to our children.
- *The Intergovernmental Services Agreement and Reports of the Cultural Coordinator:* As per section 8.7 of the ISA, the Cultural Coordinator will provide the Parties to the Agreement a report on the impact the actions of Canada, the GNWT and the Tłıchǫ Government are having on Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life. As capacity is increased, it is intended these reports will become major statements on the status of Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life, and the relationship between the Parties.

## PART 7

# Activities of the Tłıchǫ Government

*“The stories never die. We are still using the story. We live our lives like the stories. These stories are from my grandmothers, my grandfathers. I am talking with my grandparents’ stories. Their words are very important because they will help you live in the future. Their words will help you think for yourselves.”*

– Translated from the Tłıchǫ Oral Record. Madeline Drybone (1994)  
in *Trails of Our Ancestors: Building a Nation*, page 37.

**D**uring the 2nd Tłıchǫ Assembly, and the mandate of the Cultural Coordinator, the Tłıchǫ Government has made significant efforts to build the foundation necessary to “sustain our Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life”. Planning processes have set priorities for the government. Work has now begun on establishing the organizational structures and creating the tools that are needed for the work that needs to be done. The following actions were taken:

- An overall strategic planning framework *Ilè dǫ gha gǫta (In Tłıchǫ Unity)* was approved, which has identified the core intentions of the Tłıchǫ Government.
- Legislative changes were made and an Establishment Policy for a new Department of Culture and Lands Protection was developed and approved by the Chief’s Executive Council. This policy clarifies the role of the Cultural Coordinator within the organizational context of the Tłıchǫ Government for the first time.
- Work has begun on a “A Plan for Action for sustaining Language, Culture and Way of Life”.
- A “Tłıchǫ Research and Training Institute” was established, which includes the position of the Cultural Coordinator on the Advisory Board.
- A commitment was made by the Tłıchǫ Government to the development of a cultural framework “The Tłıchǫ Plan” from section 6.2 of the Tłıchǫ Intergovernmental Services Agreement.

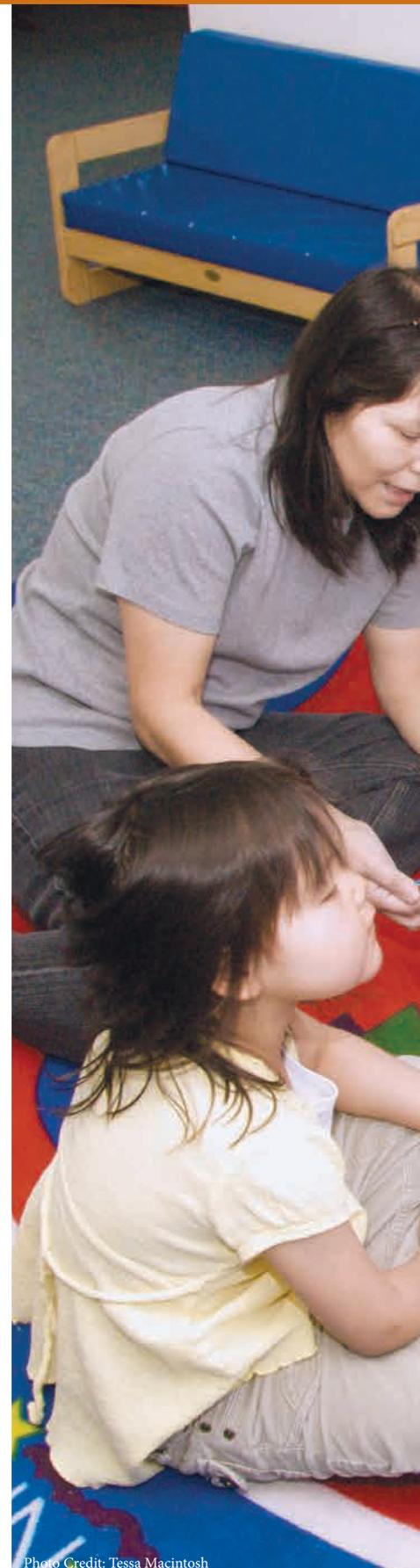


Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh

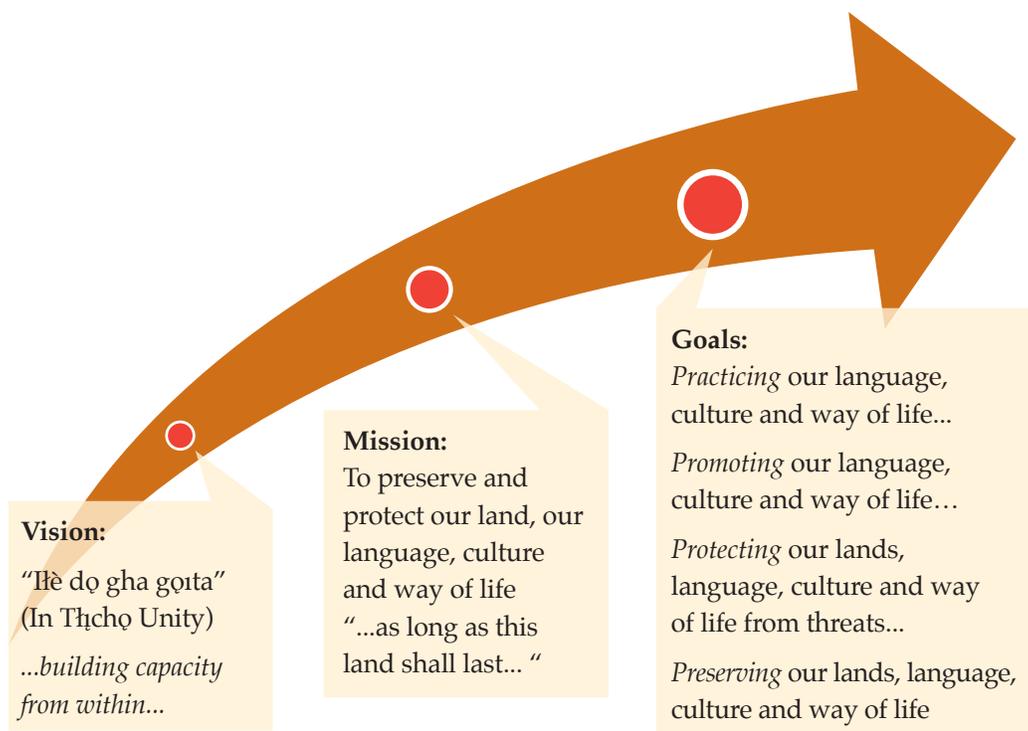


***Hè dọ gha gọta (In Ṭḥchọ Unity): A Strategic Framework and Intentions 2009-2013:*** Since 2008, the Ṭḥchọ Government has been engaged in comprehensive planning and priorities exercises that have resulted in the approval of a multi-year planning document. *Hè dọ gha gọta* contains a vision, mission, guiding principles and a statement of intentions or priorities which serve to describe what is important to the Ṭḥchọ Government. This work makes clear that a primary focus of the government must be... *sustaining our lands and environment, and... sustaining our Ṭḥchọ language, culture and way of life.* (See Appendix 10 i.)

***Legislative Changes and an Establishment Policy for Culture and Lands Protection:*** In April 2013, the 2nd Ṭḥchọ Assembly made changes to legislation enacted in 2005 that had created the initial departmental design of the government. The Chief's Executive Council was given the responsibility for approving changes to the organization through a set of establishment policies. The Establishment Policy for the Department of Culture and Lands Protection, passed by the Chief's Executive Council for the first time, gave a recognized place to the position and work of the Cultural Coordinator within the organization of the government. (See Appendix 10 ii.)

***Sustaining our Lands, Language, Culture and Way of Life: A Plan of Action:*** Work is continuing on the development of *An Action Plan to Sustain Lands, Language, Culture and Way of Life.* A key part of this plan is the restructuring of existing TG departments to create a new Department of Culture and Lands Protection. The new department has three functions, including Lands Protection, Research and Monitoring, and Cultural Practices. The position of the Cultural Coordinator has been placed within the research and monitoring function of the Department of Culture and Lands Protection. This action plan proposes four actions that are necessary to be undertaken by the Ṭḥchọ Government. These actions include the Protection, Preservation, Promotion and Practice of our language, culture and way of life.

**Figure 1: The Tłıchǫ Government and Sustaining Our Lands, Language, Culture and Way of Life**



The Tłıchǫ Government must have the ability to plan, direct, implement evaluate and follow up on the work that is necessary. This new department has 36 strategies to implement the Tłıchǫ Government intention to “sustain lands, language, culture and way of life”. (See Appendix 10 iii.)

**Establishment of the Tłıchǫ Research and Training Institute:** The Chief’s Executive Council has created the Tłıchǫ Research and Training Institute to advance the study of Tłıchǫ lands, language, culture and way of life through the promotion of research and its use for training, education and monitoring government commitments and responsibilities.



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



The Tłı̨chǫ Research and Training Institute will do this by promoting research, the training of Tłı̨chǫ researchers and the education of people about Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life. The Institute has an Advisory Board composed of academic researchers who have made significant contributions to the region through their own research and/or their support for community-based research initiatives. Through the academic advisors on the Board, collaboration will be facilitated with their respective institutions and programs. Elders and staff have also been chosen who possess recognized Tłı̨chǫ cultural knowledge and who have experience participating in community-based action research initiatives in the fields of education, public health and wellness, child and family services and other disciplines. The position of the Cultural Coordinator also has a permanent place on this Advisory Board. This board also includes a sub-committee, which approves proposed research in the region. In the NWT, all scientific research must be licensed under the NWT Scientists Act (1988). As part of the licensing, this Act requires community approval for research proposed to be conducted in each region.

The development of a Tłı̨chǫ research agenda will increasingly emerge from an understanding of the Tłı̨chǫ Constitution and work on “*Hè dǫ gha gǫtta: A Strategic Framework and Intentions 2009-2013*”. Initial priorities are to develop greater understandings of our cultural heritage through traditional knowledge research as well as collaboration with our academic, government and corporate partners on shared research interests. The breadth of these interests include health and wellness issues facing our people, language and cultural revitalization, environmental issues involving climate change, lands and waters, the status of endangered and threatened species at risk, and the impacts of mining development. (See Appendix 10 iv.)

***Tłı̨chǫ Government Commitment to the Development of a Tłı̨chǫ Plan:***

The Tłı̨chǫ Plan is an idea that emerges from section 6.2 of the Tłı̨chǫ Intergovernmental Services Agreement (2003). The Tłı̨chǫ Plan is intended to “describe how Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life are to be respected and promoted in relation to health, education, welfare, family and other social programs and services in Tłı̨chǫ communities or on Tłı̨chǫ lands. The Tłı̨chǫ Plan is a proposed “cultural framework” that will describe how cultural characteristics can be used to inform governance and legislation, the development of social policy, and other strategies related to the delivery of programs and services by a modern government. As a tool to review services provided by the Government of the NWT, the Tłı̨chǫ Plan will provide measures to evaluate programs and services, and benchmarks for their development and progress.

## Part 7. Activities of the Tłıchǫ Government (Continued)

As a cultural framework, it will serve the entire Tłıchǫ Government, guiding the development of new Tłıchǫ legislation, policy, community strategies, programs and services. First steps to develop this framework include a comprehensive TK review with Tłıchǫ elders regarding the meaning and application of the principles of the Tłıchǫ Government as described in the Constitution, and in “Hè dǫ gha gǫita”.

Initial work on the Tłıchǫ Plan was begun at the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency in 2009 to critically look at the GNWT Child and Family Services system through the lens of a Tłıchǫ cultural framework. A summary of this work was published in the document, *“Report of the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency to the GNWT Standing Committee on Social Programs’ Committee to Review the Child and Family Services Act”*. (See Appendix vi.) Related to this research project were highly successful community health interventions relating to the sexual health program and an MRSA outbreak. Both interventions incorporated methodologies emerging from a Tłıchǫ cultural framework. Their successes highlight an ongoing need to research the Tłıchǫ-based strategies and practices that have proven measurably effective in improving health and wellness outcomes in our communities.

The Cultural Coordinator is expected to be one member of a team of staff, community elders and others who will continue work on the development of the Tłıchǫ Plan.



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



## PART 8

# Recommendations

*“Monfwi drew the map with his mind. He said as long as the sun rises, as long as the river flows, as long as this land shall last, and nothing will change for the people, that is what he said. That is an important agreement that he made for us and we can’t let it go. He did big things for us and we came all this way and we raised our children and we have been raised on this land. To this day we still raise our children on it.”*

– Translated from the Tłı̨chǫ Oral Record. Romie Wettrade (1994) in *Trails of Our Ancestors: Building a Nation*, page 35.

**W**hile motivation and verbal commitment by governments are essential drivers of efforts to sustain Aboriginal language, culture and way of life, tangible actions are also required in the form of resources for programs and services, and special initiatives. The following recommendations emerge from the work of the Cultural Coordinator and a review of actions of the three Parties to the ISA:

**1 Recommendation No. 1: All levels of government have the responsibility to apply the precautionary principle in relation to the potential loss and extinction of unique cultures, languages and ways of life in the NWT.**

There are important parallels between public policy considerations towards environmental and health risks, and language and cultural risks to northern peoples of harmful social policy.

*Roles for the Parties:* All levels of government have the responsibility to apply the “precautionary principle” in regards to Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life issues. The application of this principle would ensure that legislation and policy actions taken by Canada and the GNWT are reviewed and “policed” internally for impacts on language, culture and way of life.



## **2** Recommendation No. 2: Initiate a recommitment to the value of Aboriginal languages in the north.

Over the last two decades, the actions of the GNWT ostensibly to provide language and cultural resources at the local level have effectively gutted a pan-territorial commitment to the value of Aboriginal languages. The dissolution of the Culture and Communications Department, the Translation Bureau, a shrinking meaningful role for the NWT Languages Commissioner appears to be, at best, divesting the responsibility to do anything meaningful at the pan-territorial level. The richness of the NWT is the uniqueness of Aboriginal cultures. It is important that the GNWT not watch passively as the NWT moves to a vast monoculture unrecognizable from other jurisdictions.

*Roles for the Parties:* It is recommended that the Government of the NWT should review and implement the 2008-2009 recommendations of the Standing Committee on Government Operations Review of the Official Languages Act. (See Appendix 10 v.)

## **3** Recommendation No. 3: Support and encourage Aboriginal language transmission in the home.

All of the research on language revitalization agrees that one of the keys to survival and thriving of Aboriginal languages is to be found in the intergenerational transmission of language by parents teaching the language to young children in the home.

*Roles for the Parties:* All Parties to the ISA must do their parts to enhance the prestige of speaking an Aboriginal language (Tłı̨chǫ) by providing and/or developing resources that promote and encourage adults, especially parents, to speak Tłı̨chǫ in the home with their children and encourage non-speakers to become language learners.

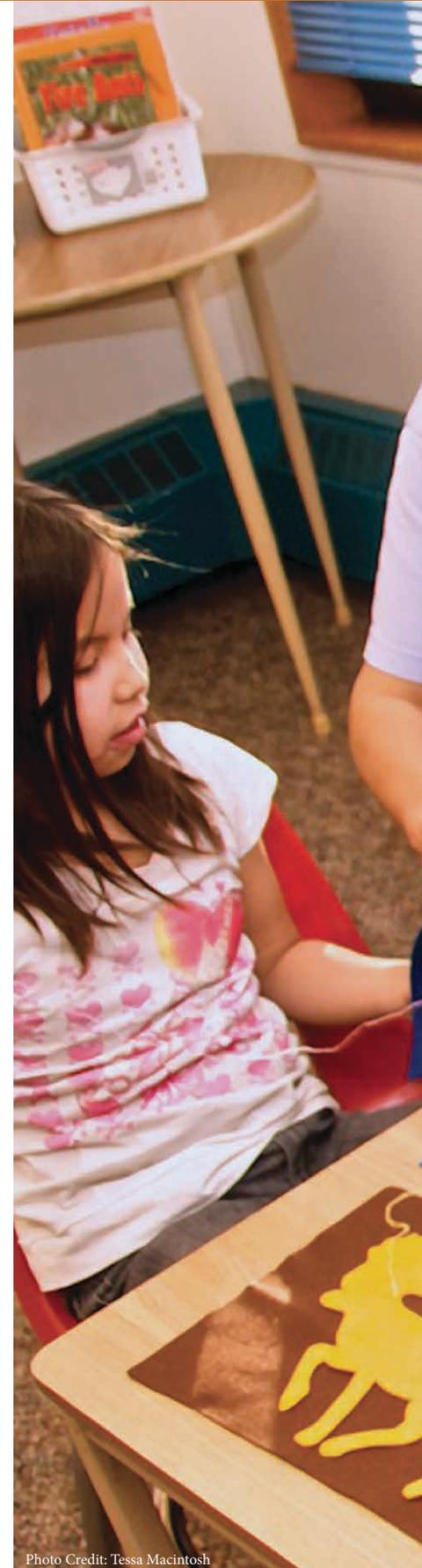


Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



#### 4

#### **Recommendation No. 4: Provide increased auxiliary support for Aboriginal language programs and services currently being developed and implemented in the Tłıchǝ communities.**

The Tłıchǝ Community Services Agency, primarily through its schools, and the Tłıchǝ Government, through various programs and initiatives, have developed a set of responses to support Tłıchǝ language, culture and way of life. Research sources identify many auxiliary supports that are necessary for the successful implementation of programs and services for children from pre-school through the primary, senior elementary, junior and senior high school levels, and for adult learners. Attention to program evaluation, Tłıchǝ literacy and orthography, training for early childhood educators and school teachers, special initiatives like language immersion, the language apprentice model, where an elder works directly with an individual language learner, or summer institutes, deserve consideration.

*Roles for the Parties:* All Parties to the ISA have roles in the provision of auxiliary support for the success of Tłıchǝ Aboriginal language and culture programs. These include the development and gathering of regular, comprehensive and meaningful data that monitors the strength of Aboriginal (Tłıchǝ) languages and culture (GNWT and the TG), which provides evaluation and feedback for GNWT/TCSA initiatives such as the pilot language immersion program in the Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School in Behchokò (GNWT/TG), provision of adult language and cultural coursework and interpreter/ translator training (GNWT and Aurora College).

**5** Recommendation No. 5: Tłıchǫ Government will recognize and financially support its leadership role in the development and delivery of programs and services in the communities that will “practice, promote, protect and preserve” Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life.

It is important that the Tłıchǫ government assign proportional resources to achieve its mission and major goals. The government must aggressively work to assert its leadership in the area of Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life by maintaining the viability of the Tłıchǫ language as one of its two official languages and as a working language of government. It must develop an ongoing staff training program for Tłıchǫ Government employees that includes language and cultural training, and developing the use of written Tłıchǫ for government business and publications. Together a well-designed body of programs, services and special initiatives built up over time will help to make Tłıchǫ citizens “strong like two people”.

*Roles for the Parties:* It is recommended that the Tłıchǫ Government allocate increasingly larger proportions of core and other funding resources to begin to develop the necessary staff, programs and services that are necessary to ensure that its most important language and cultural intentions emerging from the Constitution and “*Hè dǫ gha gǫta: A Strategic Framework and Intentions 2009-2013*” are met.



Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh



**6 Recommendation No. 6: Recognize the critical need for the development of Tłıchǫ translators/interpreters.**

All Parties have a critical need for effective interpreter/translators for the delivery of programs and services from justice to healthcare. The lack of support for such services is a lack of respect for, and clear undercutting of, the viability of Tłıchǫ language, culture and way of life. Stories emerging from our communities of serious miscommunication between elders and healthcare providers, unilingual residential school survivors unable to receive healing work in their language, or courts not hearing the proper story, all emphasize the need for more attention and resources being provided to interpreting and translating services. Indicative of the critical relevance of this issue is that one of the first noteworthy activities of the TCSA Healing Wind sexual health strategy was the necessity to radically reframe the religious-based terminology used in the GNWT health clinics to interpret between clients and healthcare providers. GNWT interpreters were using words connoting shame and sinfulness in discussions related to sexual health. These needed to be changed to allow issues surrounding sexual health to be discussed openly and honestly, and to promote positive behaviour changes.

*Roles for the Parties:* Canada, the GNWT and the Tłıchǫ Government all have roles that can be played for the articulation of intentions and provision of resources directed towards the development of interpreter/translator programming and language services in the region and, more broadly, which will support the viability of Aboriginal languages across the north.

**7 Recommendation No. 7: Develop, apply conceptual tools like the cultural framework envisioned in the Tłıchǫ Plan.**

The work envisioned for the Cultural Coordinator cannot be properly achieved without the “tool” of a Tłıchǫ cultural framework, which will describe how cultural characteristics can be used to inform governance and legislation, the development of social policy and other strategies related to the delivery of programs and services by a modern government. As a conceptual tool to review and measure services provided by the Parties to the ISA, the Tłıchǫ Plan will provide cultural measures to evaluate programs and services, and benchmarks for their development and progress.

*Roles for the Parties:* All Parties to the ISA have a vested interest in the development of a comprehensive Tłıchǫ cultural framework under section 6.2 of the Intergovernmental Services Agreement and should contribute resources to its development.

**8 Recommendation No 8: Avoid duplication of resources, programs and services at the local level through systematic and regular communication among partners.**

There is a need for partnerships and sharing information at the local level in the Tłı̨chǫ communities. It is important to ensure that scarce resources are not duplicated in the design and delivery of community-based programs that can strengthen the practice of Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life, especially among our youth.

*Roles for the Parties:* It is recommended that the GNWT/TCSA and the Tłı̨chǫ Government coordinate community organizations through regular interagency meetings, and other means, to work together in the delivery of programs and services that could strengthen language, culture and way of life at the local level, and to ensure that programs and activities are not duplicated.

**9 Recommendation No. 9: Establish a physical “Home” for the “practice, promotion, protection and preservation” of Tłı̨chǫ language, culture and way of life resources and work.**

Other Aboriginal communities and governments have shown their commitment to the importance of their languages and cultures by investing in a physical home to showcase their pride in their cultures and facilitate the work on “language, culture and way of life”. The Grand Council of the Crees, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come has said, “Without a “shelter-house” one cannot survive... The presence of Aanischaaukamikw (heart-of-this-world) will allow us to share the best we have with the world. By sharing our culture and our ways of living in harmony with the environment, we can foster better understanding of Cree concerns, values and perspectives, and reinforce the enormous value of cultural linkage and exchange.” See <http://www.dec-ced.gc.ca/eng/publications/articles/2011/07/baiejames.html>

*Roles for the Parties:* The Tłı̨chǫ Government should strongly consider the value of providing the resources to provide a “home” for Tłı̨chǫ Yatı (language) and Nàowō (culture) as is done by many other Aboriginal groups. The home will reflect Tłı̨chǫ identity and culture and could house the Tłı̨chǫ Language and Training Institute.



Photo Credit: Lucy Lafferty



## PART 9

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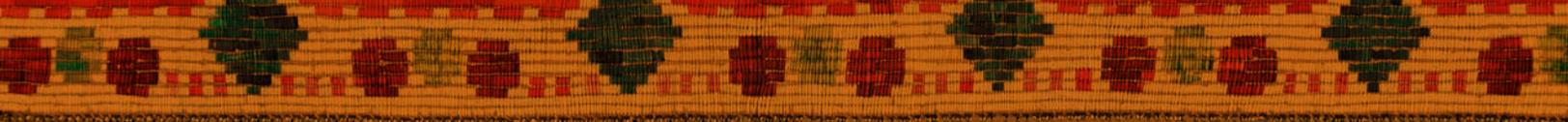
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## PART 10

# Appendices

- i) Hè dọ gha gọta: In Tłchọ Unity: A Strategic Framework and Intentions 2009-2013
- ii) An Establishment Policy for the Department of Culture and Lands Protection
- iii) Sustaining Our Language, Culture and Way of Life: An Action Plan
- iv) A Discussion Paper: A Tłchọ Research and Training Institute
- v) Recommendations of the Standing Committee on Government Operations: Review of the (GNWT) Official Languages Act 2008-2009. Available at [http://www.nwtlanguagescommissioner.ca/pdf/English\\_Report\\_on\\_the\\_Review\\_Official\\_Languages\\_Act\\_200.pdf](http://www.nwtlanguagescommissioner.ca/pdf/English_Report_on_the_Review_Official_Languages_Act_200.pdf) )
- vi) Report of the Tłchọ Community Services Agency to the GNWT Standing Committee on Social Programs Committee to Review the Child and Family Services Act





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