

## **Aboriginal Language Curriculum Development**

Jurisdiction: Saskatchewan

Contact: Larry G. Ahenakew

Level: K-12

Theme: Curriculum/Materials

### Description of Practice:

With the need to preserve First Nations and Métis languages, Cree language curriculum writing, as well as materials development was undertaken. The curriculum and resource materials are developed collaboratively with Elders and other speakers of the language. Curriculum and materials are developed to support both instructional and immersion programs. The goal is to promote First Nations and Métis languages that will be used by their respective populations. The materials developed allow other First Nations language groups to be able to translate into their own languages, including Nakawe/Saulteaux, Dakota/Nakoda/Lakota, Dene, Métis, and dialects within each.

### Background:

A strong partnership has been developed among Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Onion Lake First Nation, Prince Albert Grand Council, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Northern Lights School Division 113, and the Province of Saskatchewan. Funding is provided from the federal and the Saskatchewan governments, along with contributions from the partnership. The agreement for funding is for five years. The project is currently in its third year. The following rationale is used to promote the program:

- Provincial student demographics indicate a growing presence of First Nations students in provincial schools.
- Aboriginal leaders and community members have expressed language retention and enhancement as a priority.

To date, curriculum and materials are nearing completion in the primary grades, both in the instructional and the immersion programs.

### Development:

In order to fulfill the mandate of language curriculum and materials development, two centres of linguistic excellence were established. Along with the centres, the name of “The Gift of Language and Culture” was adopted.

- Instructional Cree curriculum and materials development was established with the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.
- Immersion Cree curriculum and materials development was established with Onion Lake First Nation.

The development centres are governed by an executive committee comprised of senior members of the partnership. The executive meet every six-weeks and the coordinators of the development teams meet regularly as well.

Evidence:

Regularly scheduled meetings occur among the partners and the development teams, which serve to keep the development of curriculum and materials on schedule. Both development centres are piloting the materials within their respective jurisdictions. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band pilots their material at two sites; one on the reserve in La Ronge and the other at Sucker River. Onion Lake has an immersion program operating at its primary school on the reserve. Both have indicated the successes that each is experiencing. The developers also comment on the knowledge that they are gaining from the whole process of curriculum and materials development. Both sites employ members of the community with teaching and development backgrounds.

Adaptability:

The development of curriculum aligns itself with the provincial curriculum on Aboriginal languages and also with the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol. The curriculum and materials production is equipped to allow other First Nations' language users and developers to translate the materials into their own language or dialect. It is hoped that by having those with the language develop the curriculum and the relevant materials that the students will see the value and also see the relevance of their First Nation language. Currently, our Branch is exploring ways to strengthen this work through improved relationships with the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, so that development in other First Nations languages can begin.

Further information:

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You can also visit the web site for the Gift of Language and Culture at [www.giftoflanguageandlearning.ca](http://www.giftoflanguageandlearning.ca)