



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



WE HAVE TO HEAR THEIR VOICES



Bringing the arts to life
De l'art plein la vie

A Research
Project on
Aboriginal
Languages and
Art Practices

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PREFACE: itohtêwin (goal of journey)

Tanisi all,

I would like to share with you how this project came into existence as the Elders have taught me according to my understanding. For those of you that know me, you are aware that my mother tongue (Michif/Cree) is very important in my life. The work that I do at the Canada Council for the Arts is driven by the languages of art, and it is clear that these languages are dominated by English and French as the two official languages of this country. In one of many conversations with my Aboriginal colleagues at Council, we talked about the fact that our languages are virtually invisible here at the Canada Council for the Arts. We shared a mutual concern that our Aboriginal languages should take their rightful and respectful place in this beautiful country. Official language status is very recent in the history of Canada and was brought into effect in Canada without any meaningful participation from the very people who lived here on this land for thousands of years. I wonder if any one of those lawmakers asked an Algonquin or a Huron or an Innu if they understood or agreed to what it meant to be unheard, and thus not understood in their own languages.

Rather than dwell on the past, we looked to the present and the future. We looked at the honourable and respectful place that the Canada Council has come to after more than 50 years of existence, the ongoing nurturing and constructive relationship that has developed over the years with Aboriginal artists and organizations, and the vehicle that brings us together in the first place—our love of the arts.

In our Aboriginal languages, many of the fluent speakers have pointed out the fact that there is no specific word for art, but there are literally hundreds of “verbs” that describe an artistic activity. These descriptive verbs in Cree or Mohawk or Haida have incredible ranges, and are all related to different aspects of traditional life and culture: from singing to the child in the mother’s womb, to dancing, to welcoming the sun or the rain or the thunder beings. The most incredible revelations come from the old Indian languages that inspire and teach and fully illuminate our lives—whether we are from that bloodline, or just arrived in Canada from Somalia, Iran, or Russia. The universality of our languages and our stories is only beginning to be shared with others across the world.

The origins of all of our stories—whether a sacred traditional story that can only be shared through ceremony, or a contemporary theatrical performance that is experienced by thousands across the world—have their beginnings through our original languages, even if we do not speak the words anymore. The language is in our blood, in our collective memories, and with our ancestors who are here with us: to guide us, to protect us, and to help us regain our sacred words and our own means of expression through our languages. This is what I have been taught by my relatives and by the Elders of many communities across Turtle Island, which we now call Canada.

When it comes to the arts, we only have to listen to the languages of the arts, the songs, the chants, the stories, the trickster’s many voices all coming together in our sacred creation. In this project, I can truly hear and feel the spirits of the many languages of the ancestors whose voices reverberate throughout time.

Take a moment and listen.

Bruce E. Sinclair

INTRODUCTION

The Canada Council for the Arts released *Moving Forward*, its Strategic Plan for 2008 to 2011 in October 2007. The plan, which laid out the Council's values and directions for the three-year period, recognized the importance of "equity" as one of the five directions that frames the work of the Canada Council. The equity direction states that the Council will enhance its "leadership role in promoting equity as a critical priority in fulfilling Canada's artistic aspirations."¹

The accompanying Action Plan "commits the Council to using its unique national perspective to identify and address access-related issues (regional, linguistic, cultural, racial, generational, gender-based and disability-based), and it incorporates equity as a horizontal principle in the Council's operations."² The Action Plan further states that there is a need to "Provide Council information in and appropriate assessment processes for artists and arts organizations working in Aboriginal languages..."³

At the Canada Council for the Arts, the Grants to Aboriginal Writers, Storytellers, and Publishers program (in place since 2004) is currently the only program that provides support for projects in an Aboriginal language. As a result of the strategic directions and the need to gather information to inform Canada Council's priorities and initiatives, the Aboriginal Arts Office and the Research and Evaluation Section at the Council collaborated on a research project to advance knowledge and understanding of the connection between Aboriginal languages and art practices. This report, *We Have to Hear their Voices*, presents the research findings.

During this project, several new themes emerged. However, there were also several themes that re-emerged or were reaffirmed with respect to Aboriginal worldviews and the interdisciplinary nature of language and art practices. While this research project identifies specific ideas and solutions for the Canada Council to consider regarding its future directions, further research is still needed in the broader context of language and art practice—for example,

- an in-depth literature review on Aboriginal languages and art practices, including indigenous or non-Aboriginal languages and art practices;
- an environmental scan to identify "sound practices" of those institutions delivering Aboriginal language programs; and/or
- a look at how to create research opportunities to bring together linguists, Aboriginal language practitioners, and Aboriginal artists to explore, discuss, and articulate their ideas and knowledge on this topic, in their own languages.

This report introduces the Canada Council to a plethora of concepts within Aboriginal worldviews that may be foreign to non-Aboriginal language speakers. It attempts to articulate the concepts of nations, whose traditional culture, heritage, and beliefs within a life-system are embedded in languages and expressed in a diverseness of art practices. This is in complete contrast to a "Western" worldview.

¹ Canada Council for the Arts, *Moving Forward 2008–11: Strategic Plan* (Ottawa: Canada Council for the Arts, 2007), 10. Of note, the Canada Council's new strategic plan, *Strengthening Connections 2011–16*, continues with the five directions outlined in the previous plan.

² Canada Council for the Arts, *Moving Forward 2008–11: Action Plan* (Ottawa: Canada Council for the Arts, 2008), 10.

³ *Ibid*, 16.

With that said, the writers (Bruce Sinclair of the Canada Council and Deborah Pelletier) are grateful for the opportunity to share significant elements of their lives—relationships of past, present, and future—and grateful to the artists, who were incredibly giving. The writers also wish to thank Claire McCaughey, Head of Research and Evaluation, and Louise Profeit-LeBlanc, Aboriginal Arts Coordinator, for their guidance, support, and feedback on this project.

METHODOLOGY

In the development of this research project, the Canada Council for the Arts recognized that the study of Aboriginal languages and art practices must be placed within the context of the Aboriginal communities where, for the most part, Aboriginal languages are acquired and transmitted. The Canada Council therefore acknowledges the presence and significance of Aboriginal worldviews and the relationships between language and art, and how these may differ from Government of Canada views and approaches to such a complex topic, which is as rich and diverse as the number of Aboriginal languages in Canada.

For this project, an Aboriginal Language Research Project⁴ team gathered information from a number of different sources:

- Canada Council application files of artists and arts organizations were reviewed to identify artists and arts organizations whose applications contained an Aboriginal language component for production, research, or translation. This information was used to compile a list of potential participants to interview or survey.
- Interviews and talking circles were conducted over a period of four months, from September 2009 to January 2010, with selected artists and language practitioners representing various disciplines, language groups, and competency levels in using Aboriginal languages.
- In October 2009, a survey questionnaire was sent by email invitation to 1,009 artists who had previously applied for a Canada Council grant and who had self-identified as Aboriginal. The project team received responses from 31% of the artists.
- Statistical reports from census data and associated documentation on Aboriginal languages and usage were also compiled and presented as background to the information that would be heard from artists and arts organizations. This background information includes demographics for Canada's Aboriginal population, and data on language usage and significant language trends.
- Further information was gathered on current government policy and initiatives, including the legacy of the residential school system and its impact on Aboriginal languages and art practices.

This report also draws upon what members of the research and writing team learned during other gatherings, such as the Inuit Arts Focus Group⁵—a historic gathering held at the Canada Council in May 2009—and the Fifth Annual National Aboriginal Arts Administrators and Funders Gathering, which was hosted by the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais in 2006. However, the report focuses primarily on what was heard from participants in the interviews/talking circles, and from those who responded to the email survey.

⁴ This team is comprised of various Canada Council staff, including Louise Profeit-LeBlanc of the Aboriginal Arts Office and the following members of the Research and Evaluation Section: Claire McCaughey, Steven Mah, John Ruston, Adam Meisner, Jacinthe Soulliere, and Shannon Peet. The report was written by Bruce Sinclair of the Canada Council and Deborah Pelletier.

⁵ This group consisted of distinguished artists, arts administrators, and Elders from Nunavut for whom Inuktitut is the mother tongue and majority language spoken.

This report, *We Have to Hear Their Voices*, presents the research findings and results. It is divided into three parts. The first part serves as background information and presents findings from the secondary source research on demographics and trends with regard to Aboriginal languages in Canada. The second part is dedicated to the voices of the Elders, the wisdom keepers, who continue to pass on their knowledge—both traditional and contemporary—as related to languages and the arts. Finally, the third part presents what was heard from the voices of the interview/talking circle and survey participants:

- levels of understanding and speaking an Aboriginal language;
- which artistic disciplines are involved and how the languages are incorporated in art practices; and
- thoughts on how Aboriginal languages intersect with art practices.

The report concludes with a number of suggestions from participants on future directions for the Canada Council.

PART ONE: ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES IN CANADA

Diversity in Aboriginal Languages

Canada has a rich diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultural heritage and languages within a total population of 1,172,790 Aboriginal people. While there is no agreement on the exact number of Aboriginal languages, there is some consensus that First Nations in Canada represent at least ten language families and isolates, that the Inuit represent a separate language family, and that the Métis represent a unique mixed language.⁶

It is difficult to understand exactly how many languages there are due to many factors, one of which is that many Aboriginal people speak English and French as a mother tongue, while others speak both an Aboriginal and an official language. Other Aboriginal people have only a passing knowledge of their ancestral language, while some minor languages are becoming or are already extinct. It is also worth noting that some Aboriginal people do not participate in federal censuses and, when reported, the variety of dialects greatly complicates any classification.⁷

The intent of this report is not to delve into the statistics or discuss the details affecting language acquisition, retention, and practice. It aims instead to bring the reader's attention to some important facts and trends that may impact an artist's "formal" involvement in the arts, their ability to understand and speak an Aboriginal language, and the degree to which language is incorporated into their art practices, if at all. Therefore, the following information is presented only to provide a glimpse into the variety of Aboriginal languages in Canada and some of the emerging trends. It serves as context to the primary topic of incorporating language in art practices.

For example, Mary Jane Norris' assessment in "Aboriginal languages in Canada: Emerging trends and perspectives on second language acquisition" speaks to the diversity of Aboriginal languages and their relationship to identity. She states:

These languages reflect distinctive histories, cultures and identities linked to family, community, the land and traditional knowledge. For many First Nation, Inuit and Métis people, these languages are at the very core of their identity.⁸

Furthermore,

Although most Aboriginal language speakers learned their language as a mother tongue, many factors contribute to the erosion of intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal languages, including increasing migration between Aboriginal communities and cities, and to and from reserves; linguistic intermarriage; the prevailing influence of English and French in daily life; and the legacy of the residential school system.⁹

⁶ Eung-Do Cook and Darin Howe, "Aboriginal Languages of Canada," in *Contemporary Linguistic Analysis*, 5th Edition, eds. W. O'Grady and J. Archibald (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman), 294–309.

⁷ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "Native Peoples and Language," in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

⁸ Mary Jane Norris, "Aboriginal languages in Canada: Emerging trends and perspectives on second language acquisition," in *Canadian Social Trends* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1998), 19.

⁹ Ibid.

This is reaffirmed in the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which said that language is often recognized as the essence of a culture. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples indicated that the revitalization of traditional languages is a key component in the creation of healthy individuals and communities.¹⁰

Number of Aboriginal Languages in Canada

There are approximately 221 Aboriginal Languages in North America. Many of these First Languages cross the Canada-US border. Fundamentally important to the national multilingual identity is the fact that there are no fewer than 52 First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages that are indigenous to Canada.¹¹

Highlights on First Nations

In both 2001 and 2006, approximately 29% of First Nations people who responded to the Census of Canada reported that they could speak an Aboriginal language well enough to carry on a conversation. In 2006, this figure was higher for First Nations people living on-reserve (51%) than for those living off-reserve (12%).¹²

The 2006 Census recorded over 60 different Aboriginal languages spoken by First Nations people in Canada. The same census further indicates that the Aboriginal languages with the most speakers estimated to be able to carry on a conversation are as follows:

Cree	87,285
Ojibway	30,255
Oji-Cree	12,345
Montagnais-Naskapi	11,080
Dene	9,250
Mi'kmaq	8,540
Siouan	6,285
Atikamekw	5,320

For all other languages the number of speakers is below 5,000.

The number of First Nations people who speak their ancestral language has increased for most of the languages with a large number of speakers. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of First Nations people who spoke Oji-Cree, Atikamekw, Montagnais-Naskapi, Dene, and Cree showed increases for those who could carry on conversations. The most viable languages are Cree and Ojibway.¹³

¹⁰ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 163.

¹¹ Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations," *2006 Census Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006), 8.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Highlights on Métis

The most commonly spoken Aboriginal language among Métis is Cree, followed by Michif, the traditional language that evolved from the intermingling of Cree and French languages. Older Métis are more likely to speak an Aboriginal language. An estimated 12% of Métis aged 75 and over are able to converse in an Aboriginal language, compared with 9% of those aged 65 to 74, and 6% of people aged 45 to 64. Fewer than 3% of Métis people aged 44 and under speak an Aboriginal language.¹⁴ While the 2006 Census showed a decline of 1% since 2001, the *Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 – Initial Findings: Well-Being of the Non-reserve Aboriginal Population* reported that keeping, learning, or relearning one's Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important.¹⁵

Highlights on Inuit

The number of Inuit who reported being able to speak their ancestral language number 32,200. The Inuktitut language is considered one of the three most viable Aboriginal languages to survive, and while it remains strong overall (69% of Inuit can speak Inuktitut), knowledge and use showed a decline in 2006. It appears that Inuit are less likely to speak it as their main language at home.

Additional Highlights

Many of the Aboriginal languages spoken by North American Indian and Métis people in non-reserve areas are on unsteady ground. Aboriginal language retention and transmission is often difficult due to few opportunities to practice these languages and often fewer opportunities for people to learn an Aboriginal language.¹⁶

Within the next decade, most of the language groups face the loss of their last generation of fluent speakers (Elders) and the stories embedded in the original languages. Although the situation with certain Aboriginal language groups is critical, there is—conversely—a revitalization of Aboriginal languages currently underway in the Aboriginal community. Specific language maintenance and preservation strategies, led by grassroots teachers and community activists, are in progress across the country. There are Aboriginal languages strategies implemented in the provinces, in the education and health sectors, and in various cultural organizations.

Government Policy and Programs

At present, there is neither federal legislation nor an overarching federal policy for the recognition and revitalization of indigenous languages in Canada. This is despite the bilingualism and multiculturalism movements of the 1960s, the devolution of programs in the 1980s, and the work of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures between 2002 and 2005. Hence, there are no laws, policies, or sustainable programs at the federal level that could encourage or guarantee the acquisition and retention of existing Aboriginal languages.

¹⁴ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal peoples Survey 2001 – Initial Findings: Well-being of the Non-reserve Aboriginal Population* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2001), 28.

¹⁶ Ibid.

In 2002, the Department of Canadian Heritage announced \$172.5 million in funding, allocated over a 10-year period, for an Aboriginal languages and culture centre. However, this program was cut from the budget in 2006. In place of this funding, a \$40 million extension was provided to an Aboriginal Language Initiatives program, with \$5 million allocated per year over the next eight years, ending in 2014.

At the Canada Council for the Arts, there is no policy on Aboriginal languages in Canada. The Grants to Aboriginal Writers, Storytellers, and Publishers program is the only program that includes a component specific to Aboriginal languages. This program component has been in place since 2004. However, the Canada Council is presently developing a Northern Arts Strategy with a particular focus on Nunavut. This strategy will be directly related to the issue of language and access to the arts.

Historically, the Quebec Act of 1774 set a precedent for the recognition of French and English as the two founding languages in Canada; however, no recognition was given to the indigenous languages at the time. Since then, the Government of the Northwest Territories granted official language status in 1988 to Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tlicho. The Government of Nunavut proclaimed Inuktitut as a third official language, along with English and French, in 2009.

The Impact of Residential Schools

When one is researching Aboriginal languages in any capacity in this country, it would be remiss not to discuss the impact of the Indian Residential School system in Canada and the intergenerational impact this system had on the First Peoples of this land, including the Métis. There are a number of stories and evidence to indicate how Aboriginal peoples' culture and heritage, or the people themselves were systematically erased through assimilation policy. Language and cultures—including social practices such as ceremonies, traditional styles of clothing, and length of hair—contravened existing government policies and mores.

Government policies restricted the development of an environment that would enable Aboriginal peoples, as artists, to practice their way of life. This had an impact on the songs, dances, and stories, as well as the "visual art" of Aboriginal life in tipi designs, beadwork, birchbark biting, clay pottery, woven baskets, and dance regalia. The restriction to not speak the mother tongue was akin to being forced to forget one's mother and one's identity. As a result, a number of languages and cultural practices were hidden in order to survive.

The shame, fear, rejection, and loss of identity that resulted from residential schools have impacted many Aboriginal people, and thus impacted language development. However, many survived this experience and have shared traditional teachings and creation stories with beauty and kindness in their own language, despite what happened in those lonely schools not so long ago.

The Apology

The Government of Canada now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential School policy were profoundly negative, and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage, and language. Prime Minister Stephen Harper made an official apology to the survivors in June 2008.¹⁷

The development and work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2007, is a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

¹⁷ *House of Commons Debates, Official Report (Hansard)*, Volume 142, Number 110, 2nd Session, 39th Parliament, Wednesday, June 11, 2008.

PART TWO: WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE ELDERS

The Elders teach us that

Indigenous peoples of North America have a unique relationship with the natural elements: the Sun, Wind, Earth and Water.

A whole worldview is contained in the language structure and ways to relate to everything around you. Language is the backbone of the culture.

The centre of our being is within the element of language, and it's the dimension in which our existence is most fully accomplished. We do not create a language, but are created within it.

...many...stories [are] a connector to the First Peoples understanding of land identity, for example, many stories or legends are landscape based...¹⁸

In the development of this research project, the Canada Council recognized that the study of Aboriginal languages and arts practice must be placed within the context of the Aboriginal communities where, for the most part, Aboriginal languages are acquired and transmitted.

The Canada Council also recognizes the Elders as sacred carriers of the languages and keepers of knowledge on the traditional way of life. According to many Elders from many nations across Turtle Island, language, culture, and heritage are intertwined. In order to begin to understand the connection between language and art practice, it is necessary to look at this relationship within the context of the worldview of Aboriginal peoples—whose beliefs, knowledge, and systems have been formed from their relationships to the world around them.

Relationships to all things animate establish and maintain one's place within the circle of life. In an animistic world, all things with "spirit" include all that is in the universe—the sun, the moon, the earth, and all that is living. As well as accepting the definitions of modern science, many First Peoples see the mountains, rock, fire, wind, and water as "living." For many indigenous societies, all living things are interconnected and therefore interdependent on the other: there is no separation from one element or another within the life system. Language is considered "living" because it forms part of the "being" or the "spirit" of the individual, which is connected to and dependent on all other living things.

It is generally understood and accepted that language is inherent in culture and heritage, and the two are, therefore, intertwined. Language is many things: it is a tool used for recording and preserving thoughts, and is a form of communication. Equally so, art may be used as a tool for recording and preserving thoughts, and as a form for expressing or communicating those thoughts. Therefore, language and art may be interwoven, complementing one another. Language and art are a means for recording and further expressing culture and heritage to create and share information or ideas; for educating; for maintaining a historical body of knowledge; or for entertaining, all of which contain a "story" element.

¹⁸ Canada Council for the Arts, "Survey Results: We Have to Hear Their Voices" (unpublished document, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, October 23, 2009).

For many indigenous societies, language, culture, and heritage were traditionally developed, preserved, and maintained in oral narratives, chants or songs, symbols, and imagery. Significant aspects of history were recorded using illustrations and symbols in petroglyphs, and in winter counts on hides and, later, on blankets. Today, other practices—such as writing, illustrating, drawing, painting, carving, sculpting, and beading—are being carried out for the same purposes. More contemporary practices expand the earlier forms of expression and interpretation, and use a variety of media and forms, including text, visual art, music, sound recording, and digital media. However, the “story” element is maintained—perhaps not always interpreted, but nevertheless embodied within the art practice (i.e., its conception, process, and expression or interpretation).

With this understanding, the words of the Elders become clearer when instruction is given to speak the language for important words or concepts—such as names and places—because using the language is considered a spiritual way of communicating. Furthermore, revitalization of the languages is of the spirit; it is the meaning of life and an appreciation of beauty that surrounds us. When language is fully understood and spoken, words and concepts are interpreted in artistic ways—in sacred stories, songs, and dances, and in writing, performance, media, and visual artistry.

In 2006, Innu Elders who were present at a gathering hosted by the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais—and who guided the gathering with their knowledge, patience, and words—said,

Territory, language, arts and culture are important to our lives, as people of the land... Imagination is an artists territory. Quand le territoire est fort, les langues sont fortes, et les artistes sont forts.¹⁹

Manidoonatteshiingkwe, Ojibway, a First Languages activist based in Southern Ontario, also notes the importance of addressing the self and the relatives in their Indian names, and going through the process of receiving a name in a traditional way from an Elder in the community.

The language is a precious, precious gift...it is how we understand life. That’s the structure of our spirit...²⁰

As the Elders have indicated, language is integral to the development of art practices. Similarly, art practice is a form of communication that is intertwined with or created alongside language, and is intrinsic to the development of culture and heritage in Aboriginal societies.

¹⁹ The Fifth National Aboriginal Arts Administrators and Funders Gathering (NAAAFG), held September 2006 in Sept-Îles, Quebec, hosted by the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais.

²⁰ Basil Johnston, “Culture as Treatment Symposium” (unpublished speaking notes, Wabano Health Centre, Ottawa, November 20, 2009).

PART THREE: WHAT WE HEARD FROM INTERVIEWEES AND SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

What We Heard About Aboriginal Language Competencies

In an attempt to garner as many possible answers and not to intimidate respondents with linguistic jargon, the Aboriginal Language Research Project team developed open-ended questions for determining language competencies. In other words, no parameters were assigned to language levels when interviewees or survey participants were asked to describe their ability to speak or understand an Aboriginal language. This resulted in open-ended answers and some difficulty in compiling the data. For example, some respondents indicated that their level of understanding was “enough” or “adequate” while others indicated they were able to understand the “gist” of a conversation. In these instances, it was not entirely clear what the respondent had described. Did they understand the flow or direction of the conversation or did they understand the idea only?

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents used common language, which characterized their levels of comprehension and ability to speak. A clearer picture emerged once ranges were established: beginning, intermediate, and advanced categories were assigned to the responses in order to capture and analyze the data. Each of these categories is described below. For further details, see Appendices C and D, Levels of Understanding an Aboriginal Language, and Levels of Speaking an Aboriginal Language, respectively.

a) The **beginning range or level** refers to language that involves a very limited or basic vocabulary to a somewhat adequate vocabulary. Limited or basic includes vocabulary used for greetings, alphabets, numbers, objects, events, names of people, animals, spirits, places, songs, and ceremonial phrases or chants. Adequate vocabulary moves from the limited or basic to routine courtesy addresses and communicating minimum practical needs. This range of vocabulary is limited to visiting, travelling, obtaining basic needs, and asking for assistance using phrases or short sentences.

b) The **intermediate range** uses vocabulary that is adequate for most to all practical and social conversations and for limited working relationships in a known discipline. With respect to grammar and pronunciation, there is full range of basic structures that are well-understood and complex structures that are used. Mistakes sometime occur but meaning is accurately conveyed. Fluency can be impaired by occasional hesitations; however, flow of speech is maintained by circumlocution when necessary.

c) The **advanced range** assumes one has been immersed in language or has reached a bilingual state. One can understand, speak, read, write, and translate in either syllabics or Roman orthography or both. Vocabulary is broad, precise, and appropriate to the subject or the occasion. Errors seldom occur and do not interfere with accurate expression of meaning. Fluency is similar to native fluency in known subject fields and it is easy for native speakers to listen.

What we heard about the levels of language competencies was that the number of respondents who are able to understand Aboriginal language is far greater than those who can actually speak it. Among the survey respondents, 93% reported having some understanding of an Aboriginal language while only 28% reported being a speaker of an Aboriginal language. Of those who reported understanding and speaking an Aboriginal language, most of the responses fell into the beginning and advanced levels.

Those classified in the beginning category were those who indicated they spoke very poorly, minimally, with few words and phrases, used broken or basic sentences, spoke small talk or baby talk. They knew only greetings, names of peoples, animals, places, events, commands, instructions, mealtime words, prayers, songs, ceremonial words, or slang or “naughty” words. These are artists who forgot or lacked the opportunity to maintain their language, due to their isolation from other speakers, the availability of language resources, or other reasons. Despite the challenges and difficulties regarding availability and access to language resources, there were a large number of “beginners” who were still interested in continuing to acquire language or develop their abilities.

There were relatively few respondents at the intermediate level. Those who were described their abilities as good, average, fairly good, proficient, quite well, very well, or good enough to follow or understand the “gist” of conversations. Many of these respondents indicated a desire to create or support the development of new language materials, for either preservation purposes, or for teaching, inspiring, and empowering members of their community in the arts and other related aspects.

Similar to the beginning level, a large number of respondents saw themselves within the advanced category. They perceived themselves as being fluent or bilingual, spoke very well, had a high level of proficiency/fluency, were completely fluent, at a masters level, and could read, write, speak, and translate in both syllabics and Roman orthography. They noted they were raised in the language or immersed in it their entire life with opportunities to communicate fluently with family, Elders, and the wider community. As such, they were able to achieve an advanced level of competency. Some of these respondents identified themselves as the song keeper and leader in their community, in the artistic translation of dreamers, songs, and traditions.

In summary, there were a significant number of respondents who were proud to say that they had some level of understanding and speaking. However, most of these respondents fell into either the beginning or advanced categories. Several noted they were able to understand more than they could speak. Those respondents connected to their culture and heritage had lots of opportunities to memorize beginning vocabulary, as a result of hearing the same words used in chants, songs, prayers, or greetings at community or cultural gatherings. Other beginners were those that had access to introductory courses, which taught names of people, places, events, animals, numbers, and descriptions, while others received rudimentary teachings from Elders or language practitioners in their community. The beginning category included those who would typically learn and use words associated in applying titles, descriptors, or other phrases to works of art, or words used in cultural ceremonies introducing or celebrating language and art practice. Those who identified themselves as completely bilingual could speak, read, write, and translate in one or more languages and would typically cite translation as part of their work.

What We Heard About Artistic Disciplines and How Aboriginal Languages Are Incorporated in Art Practices

Throughout this study, we heard that language and art practices are in the blood, collective memories, and teachings that are passed on. For example, many of the original legends, stories, and plays are rooted in specific First Nations' sacred stories, cultures, and traditions. Trickster stories use character to encompass many First Nations, including Wisahketchak (Nehiyawewin), Ikhdomé (Spider Man / Dakota), Nanaboozhoo (Anishnawbe), Napi (Blackfoot), and Glooscap (Miqmaq), among others. Many of these were first told in their original languages and have since been translated into other languages worldwide.

Aboriginal artists are involved in and practicing virtually all of the art forms. Although many do so without the influence of their original mother tongue, there is still a link between their art practice and the First Languages.

When we asked participants about which artistic discipline they worked in and how they used Aboriginal language in art practice, we heard that the interactions between the arts and the practice of Aboriginal languages are as dynamic as they are diverse. Responses illustrated the breadth and depth in which Aboriginal languages emerge alongside artistic practice—from the everyday dance recitals of schoolchildren to the monumental performances of an opera. Many of the references to the disciplines are interwoven, such as the connections between song and visual art and dance and music.

It is worth noting that responses to the question which asked how Aboriginal languages are used in art practices were far greater than when people were asked to describe in which artistic discipline they worked. Respondents appeared more likely to describe the “how” aspect of art practices, as opposed to “what” discipline they identified with. For example, few references were made to involvement in the visual arts, yet when asked how, several respondents made references to drawing, painting, or beadwork. This may have something to do with difficulty expressing oneself in the “language” of the Western world, as alluded to previously. Clearly, many of the older languages would not include concepts or vocabulary captured in modern disciplines, such as “visual art” and “opera.” As noted in the Preface, many Aboriginal languages have no word for “art.” Therefore, it may be inferred that it would be difficult within a culture that approaches life holistically—where all of nature imbues spirit—to isolate art practices to one particular discipline. Concepts may, therefore, be expressed in several disciplines, as all are connected or have some relationship.

How do Aboriginal artists incorporate language in artistic practices, as we know them in contemporary times and at the Canada Council for the Arts? The answer is as diverse as the multitude of Aboriginal languages in Kanata (Canada) and on Turtle Island (North America). The answer is also in all of the arts disciplines in the Western world, the global context, and at the Canada Council. Art is imbued in the lives of Aboriginal people, in their blood, and in their dreams. There is no separation between art and life. All are related.

The themes that emerged depicted relationships, all of which connect to identity and worldview; to lands and territories and the elements within; and to the language, culture, and heritage of the people. Time and time again, respondents spoke about how language and art practices are interconnected and interrelated, and that the concepts within the language are interwoven or linked to art practices. They said linguistic structures incorporate relationships, such as with descriptive nouns and verbs for the universe, the elements, and living things. In *Saulteaux*, for example, anything can be a verb.

The artistic disciplines identified by the respondents included dance, music, song, performance, film media, playwriting, writing, publishing, sculpting, painting, and visual art. Other types of art practices included traditional art, curatorial work and art history, website design, cultural programming, social work, technical artistry (conceptual), and arts administration (not included in any specific discipline). There were also a significant number of responses that considered art practice in the field of education. Respondents perceived their art practice as extending to learning and teaching the arts—particularly through storytelling—as well as through reading and writing regional stories and local histories, language immersion and instruction, music, and counselling. Others noted ceremony, ritual and performance, cultural teachings, traditional songs, drum dancing, and powwow dancing, all of which contain artistic value.

In order to analyze the data received from this question, responses were placed into the recognized art disciplines that were articulated and new categories included. A summary of those responses follows below. For further details on which artistic disciplines were used and how language is incorporated into art practice, see Appendices D and E, Survey Data on Levels of Speaking an Aboriginal Language, and Survey Data on Which Artistic Disciplines are Used, respectively.

Ceremony, Ritual, Cultural Teachings, Stories, and Celebrations

For the most part, ceremony, ritual, cultural teachings, stories, and celebrations recognize Aboriginal worldview as a predominant and somewhat pre-eminent link between Aboriginal language and art practice. For many respondents, it is the teachings and stories from the Elders that are the sources of inspiration used to conceptualize and think about the art process and product. We heard that the relationships connecting worldview, identity, and place of being are where art practices emanate from—beginning with one’s sense of identity and where one belongs within a community, and extending to the universe.

We heard that language forms an identity that is inextricably linked to the cultural life of the people—in the songs, dances, and spiritual ceremonies. It runs through the blood: it is in the collective memories of the people.

For sixteen joyous years I again have been hearing the musical syntax of our language spoken. On the day when I spoke Anishinaabemowin with understanding to our Creator on the way home, my blood memory danced.²¹

When Elders talk about the revitalization of the languages, it is of the spirit, the meaning of life, and an appreciation of beauty. When describing the language and its significance, Elders speak in artistic ways, interpreted through sacred stories, songs, and dances.

During the 2009 Inuit Arts Focus Group at the Canada Council for the Arts, an Elder from Nunavut talked about how language is inextricably bound together with art, and is essential to the survival of the culture and life of the Inuit.²² For example, one Inuit carver has said that the creation of his artwork begins with Inuit thought transforming into action, as guided by the stories of his Elders. Another carver has spoken about the journey with his artistic process, in finding and preparing the whalebone, which sometimes takes two years.

²¹ Canada Council for the Arts, “Survey Results: We have to Hear Their Voices” (unpublished document, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, October 23, 2009).

²² Peter Irniq, “Inuit Arts Focus Group” (unpublished interview notes, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, May 2009).

Language is always integral to the process of visualizing the stories recounted by the Inuit Elders that, in turn, are interpreted through the pure contours of the whalebone.²³

Specific examples where Aboriginal languages incorporate art practices include introductions of educators and others at cultural gatherings, cultural teachings, songs for personal use, family and community and ceremonial settings, sacred or traditional songs, names, translations of songs, prayers, feasts, preparation of feasts, and celebrations.

In our round dances, we had special songs to start with and special songs to quit with...we had to learn how to sing chicken dance songs, round dance songs and ghost dance songs...kayas (long ago) all of the people had medicine protection and all had Indian names...names like wasewawasis or "the child glows."²⁴

Dance, Music, Song, Performance

We heard that the most popular use of Aboriginal language is, by far, in the disciplines of dance, music, song, and performance. The level of interaction between the arts practice and the languages reveal the interconnectedness of the cultural aspect of the territory and the Aboriginal nation(s). Many of the references to the disciplines become interwoven, such as the connectedness between song and visual art and dance and music. Aboriginal language is used in theatre, native musicals, native theatre, theatre exercises, and in both traditional and contemporary stories. It is also used in playwriting, ranging from simple scripts that include only words and phrases to major dialogues or complete productions in theatres. Aboriginal language is used in creating, writing, and performing spoken word, song, dance, and music, and in establishing or drafting fictional or real characters, settings, or location. Sometimes, it is used in celebrating when a performance is completed, a cultural tradition that recognizes those past, present, and future as contributors to the performance.

Others said that Aboriginal language is used when family and Elders contribute to the background of an art practice; for conceptualizing or thinking about cultural design; in singing and drumming at events; in recording performances; in studying and transcribing songs; and in a circus show.

In this category, we also heard of

- plays that featured an Aboriginal language in the words of many characters and many manifestations of tricksters;
- a musical cabaret featuring vocals in an Aboriginal language through a contemporary setting, expressing a story through Cree, English, and French;
- inter-tribal theatre performances by cast speaking languages other than their own; and
- an all-Cree libretto, paired with the music of Chinese-Canadian composers in an opera.

²³ Bill Mersoak, "Inuit Ullummi" (unpublished speaking notes, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, December 1, 2009).

²⁴ Canada Council for the Arts, "Survey Results: We have to Hear Their Voices" (unpublished document, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, October 23, 2009).

We also heard how language was infused in all parts of a project to discuss the challenges, processes, and issues unique to the creation of indigenous language performances, and as a critical tool to establish and locate individual, community, and collective identities.

We heard that the universality of music can overcome linguistic barriers, as noted by one respondent who was able to connect with the familiarity of an Aboriginal language structure that was incorporated into a song by an Aboriginal artist.

Film, Media

In this third category, many respondents provided very general answers, such as filmmaking and video making and performance, documentary filmmaking, and cultural and educational videos. As such, it is unclear exactly how Aboriginal language is incorporated in these art practices. However, other answers indicated that Aboriginal languages are used in scripts, subtitles, components of video spoken by youth, animated characters in a television show, and in screenwriting.

Sculpting, Painting, Visual Arts

Here, we heard that the art piece speaks a story for the past, present, and future. In this category (like all others), many respondents indicated there is a relationship whereby language defines the aesthetic—it is a reflection of the sacredness of being. Aboriginal language is used in interpreting and titling the piece of art. Works of art, legends, and stories are given names, titles, and descriptions in syllabics or Roman orthography of Aboriginal languages. Aboriginal language is also used for conceptual thinking, inspiration, and listening to Elders, and for learning and design of works. Other respondents have attached titles, words, phrases, or complete stories in their language to describe or interpret the art or art practice.

Writing, Publishing, Illustrating

In this category, we heard that Aboriginal language is used in a variety of writing genres—from simple introductions to full texts or illustrations. It is used to depict characters; locations; and names of people, animals, and places, or events. Although few respondents indicated they had published, there appears to be a significant amount of writing of children's stories, legends, songs, and screenplays. There is also a significant amount of media and research projects that involve recording Elders' histories of traditional harvesting practices and crafts, as well as digital writing and imagery, expressing a need to record traditional stories and knowledge.

While this category captured mostly large-scale projects in writing, publishing, and illustrating, other artists indicated that Aboriginal languages are also used in art practices in a more limited way. This includes references, texts, and words used during the art process, as well as simply assigning titles to music, lyrics in songs, text on CD jackets, or greetings and introductions at performances.

Education, Teaching

Respondents viewed teaching and learning language as intrinsic to one's identity and a significant element of art practice. Through the language, a strong identity is built, as an individual and as linked to community.

Some also viewed storytelling, oral teachings of the stories, legends and myths, songs, chants, and drumming as all connected to family, community, and culture. The ability to express the stories is very much connected to one's ability to understand the story that has been told or translated from the Aboriginal language. Others noted Aboriginal language is used at conferences with awareness-building activities.

Several respondents noted a lack of access to living language resources in an urban setting. They also indicated that even though efforts were made to initiate language recovery programs—including the development of language resources, websites, conferences, and videos—there is still a lack of infrastructure and resources to enable artists and community members to access language learning programs. While some are struggling with availability and access, others have found ways to work language into a broader elementary school curriculum, centering on traditional culture where dances are introduced with declarations in a rehearsed, but fluid Aboriginal language.

What We Heard About the Intersection Between Languages and Art Practices

Through the voices of participants we learned about worldviews, relationships, and sharing perspectives and values—both in technical and traditional approaches, and in recognizing and acknowledging the relationship between contemporary and traditional Aboriginal art practices that incorporate languages. We heard that the art process and product embodies language, and is part of a living culture and heritage.

For example, during the 2009 Inuit Arts Focus Group, language and the arts was spoken about as inextricably bound together, and essential to the survival of the culture and life of the Inuit. Language is directly related to a sense of identity, and to the physical and socio-economic health of individuals and communities.

Throughout this project, we've also heard participants say that the connection between Aboriginal languages and art practices can be summarized in the notion of "relationships." This connection implies a relationship that is magical—as it inspires, motivates, enlivens, empowers, and transforms. It is reflective of and defines and describes culture or who Aboriginal people are. It enables the transmission of cultural knowledge and history of peoples, rooted in person, community, land, and resources within a greater universe. Ideally, the relationship can inform, promote, preserve, and protect cultural heritage, and has the power to penetrate boundaries and transcend barriers. This connection or point of intersection is integral to life processes, and thereby interwoven with and inseparable from them.

In other words, there is no separation between culture and heritage and all other aspects of social development, including language and art practices. The majority of respondents emphasized this relationship and the need to nurture language development alongside the development of the arts, without detriment to one or the other.

Respondents were able to identify what that connection was, as it related to self, their community, and the world around them, including the lands and resources. What they said was there is a definite connection between language and arts practices as it relates to self-identity. They stated that connection is integral to character, and is an intuitive and spiritual source that is rooted in truth, knowledge, and reality. This intersection provides a spiritual aspect to the work because it connects personal and communal heritage, and may be a process of identifying who one's spirit is and the clan system one belongs to. The connection develops understanding of self and thereby helps to express self and allow for freedom of expression and to reflect who Aboriginal people are. It has been said that the language and the art practice are both the hand and heart of the practitioner.

At the risk of losing the essence of participants' voices, the writers have included the following excerpts from the survey to further emphasize the relationship or, rather, the "intersection" of language and the arts as perceived by those who responded to the survey.

What we heard was that the connection of language and art practices

- is intrinsic and unique to culture;
- enlivens, strengthens, and inspires;
- is a way of conceptualizing the world and the medium;
- is a wonderful fusion that is interwoven and inseparable, where one comes from the other;
- is reflective of one or the other, deeply interconnected, goes hand-in-hand, is difficult to practice separately, and helps one understand the other;
- is an art, melodic, beautiful, magical;
- is an inspirational platform, introduces concepts, is descriptive, and is a fluid concept of being that enriches process and practice;
- is didactic and can promote language;
- enables deeper meanings and knowledge, and enhances learning;
- is a cultural bridge, a doorway, and a vehicle for the preservation of culture.

Furthermore, language and art practice can

- transform, empower;
- explain cultural meanings;
- express culture, concepts, and meanings;
- transmit cultural knowledge, taxonomies, and cognitive structures;
- penetrate boundaries;
- transcend language barriers;
- create stories and information about culture, plants and animals, all of which have special meanings;
- hold many aspects of culture and arts, and provide an authentic regional expression, unique throughout the world.

Language and art practice is deeply informed by an ethereal connection that may be rooted in

- the Aboriginal way of life, history, culture, values of community, principles of culture, words of the ancestors—it describes and defines a worldview;
- a worldview that is manifested in language and art practices, one that describes the relationship to the lands, waters, and supernatural—a relationship that is part of the whole process;
- a relationship to the universe, land, animals, people, ancestors, individuals, communities and their identity, and all living things and materials that are part of the aesthetic choice;
- Aboriginal language structures, syntax, verbs, rhythms, or movement that can take Aboriginal peoples into realms inaccessible or unknown in the English language.

It is a connection that is unbroken as part of the circle or continuity of culture in which communication connects one to learning that is timeless.

WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE CANADA COUNCIL - NIWÎCÎWÂKANAK = ONES WITH WHOM I MAKE A PATH

We heard that the importance of the Elders and fluent speakers, and the collaborations and integration of the art forms within the languages is a primary theme. The quality of the relationship between artists, speakers, Elders, and in particular, youth, was discussed at length. Various concepts began to evolve in this process. The dynamics of artistic creation and the empowerment of the individual artist resounded throughout the research project as a direct link to Aboriginal speakers, collaborations, and kinship.

There was consensus that, due to the complexity and diversity of the issues of Aboriginal languages and art practices, artists practicing within an Aboriginal language context should meet to discuss these matters in a symposium or conference environment. The participation of Elders and fluent speakers, including the artists and their combined traditional and contemporary knowledge, would be considered essential to the success of such a gathering. In this context, senior artists that have a longstanding relationship with the Canada Council also suggested the formation of an Aboriginal Committee specifically for consultation on Aboriginal languages.

The participants acknowledged the benefits, but also talked about the possibilities of Aboriginal artists and language practitioners working together with the Canada Council toward a reconciliation of language preservation in art practices. Furthermore, they noted that all artists need to be able to articulate their artistic vision and process in their languages. Therefore, proper assessment and expertise by peer assessment committee members is required when applications stipulate language as essential to the art form in their project. This would ultimately ensure that Aboriginal artists who practice art in their languages and in their specific context have an equitable status in description, identification, and validity.

Aboriginal artists asked themselves difficult questions in this research project, offering conceptual and practical suggestions for the Canada Council that would create a deeper understanding of the artistic process through Aboriginal languages. One artist described the dynamics of this future relationship in terms of “posing the right questions around language [and] the structures of knowledge by community embedded in the language.”

The artists stated that awareness needs to be visible within the organization and that Aboriginal languages need to take some priority within the thinking of the Canada Council. The exposure of the languages is necessary so that respect and trust is developed among the Canada Council, artists, and language practitioners. Other suggestions offered by the community included promoting Aboriginal language arts festivals and events, and actively promoting partnerships in different sectors across Canada.

The main barrier identified in accessing Canada Council programs is language. For example, Inuktitut has many dialects, which complicates communication. Among other places, the issue of language and access to the arts was raised during the May 2009 Inuit Arts Focus Group. At that gathering, Inuit artists identified their main concern as the language barrier impeding their relationship with southern funding bodies and agencies.²⁵ This has had a detrimental effect on their arts practice. There needs to be a Canada Council representative that can speak Inuktitut, ideally, someone located in Nunavut/Nunavik. Some of the language used in Canada Council forms can be unclear, such as the word “Aboriginal.” It is not always clear that this term includes Inuit.

The participants identified a number of ideas, solutions, and strategies to further learning opportunities and enhance capacity. The following sections summarize their responses to the question of what would be some directions for the Canada Council.

Research is needed to

- further understanding of the connection between Aboriginal languages and art practices, and to document this information for public awareness;
- document the history and development of Aboriginal languages and art practices;
- articulate and illustrate a process that is inherently connected to language and culture;
- capture the knowledge embedded in Aboriginal artists’ identity, worldviews, cultural processes and practices with the accompanying legends, myths, and associated stories;
- explore the use of language in describing different designs and techniques, as well as different stories associated with art practice and objects;
- support the creation, development, and publication of language-learning resources in a variety of media;
- facilitate collaborations with existing institutions and programs for teaching and learning languages (e.g., identify successful programs and share this information with communities, or identify and recognize existing programs and initiatives within Aboriginal communities and other organizations);
- identify and locate Elders to record, translate, and share stories (as a business practice);
- develop creative ways to engage people to use Aboriginal languages in art practices.

Support is needed for **education and training**—the creation and development of instructional and learning resources that incorporate language and art practice. Specifically, participants noted that there is a need for

- education and training programs:
 - immersion programs, school programs, workshops, seminars, courses, classes, sessions, tutorials and language nests, immersion programs for families;
 - mentoring/partnering programs with Elders, language practitioners and artists;
 - local traditional teachings where family, community is involved;
 - a pilot program to support instructional programs tailored to the unique concepts and backgrounds involved in using Aboriginal languages in art practices;

²⁵ The majority of people living in Nunavut speak an Aboriginal language in their mother tongue. In 2009, the Government of Nunavut proclaimed Inuktitut as a third official language along with English and French.

- programs to assist purchase of equipment;
- projects to promote teachers and events;
- projects to develop teachers with competencies in teaching within schools and other instructional venues;
- projects to focus on storytelling, and storytelling events and festivals;
- programs to provide expertise and service in the development of an arts program that preserves projects where Aboriginal languages are used in the arts practice;
- projects to tap into existing immersion programs and educators, incorporate language instruction in school curricula;
- programs to motivate, engage learners: children, Elders, women, and youth;
- translation, transcription, and publishing services for language resources, including those in English; support for publication of products (books and multimedia); and improved access to resources.

There were a number of suggestions on the **type of resources and support** that could be used to incorporate Aboriginal languages in art practices. These included

- Web resources, interactive programs online, chat rooms, print products;
- illustrated dictionaries, interactive games, animal images, names and stories, and other school resources;
- multimedia products (CDs, DVDs);
- publication of stories, books, and other materials;
- digitization of languages/materials;
- editing and publishing texts on history of Aboriginal languages and art practices;
- translation services.

It was also noted on a number of occasions that support for **translation and interpretation services** should apply to

- titles, descriptions, catalogue essays, program notes, stories, legends, myths, poems, descriptions of poems, similes, metaphors, tables, languages resources, and other content that goes with pieces—whether spoken or written in Aboriginal languages—into English.

A number of participants offered numerous examples of how the Canada Council could **create forums for dialogue, discussion, research, or other discourse** that would facilitate the need for further exploration of the topic of Aboriginal artists and their language. They suggested that the Canada Council host symposia, annual conferences, or festivals (national and international) that would enable opportunities for recognition, learning, and information and knowledge exchange with various nations. The Banff Centre was cited as one location.

The objectives of such gatherings would be to

- create (short- or long-term) artist residencies, employing indigenous Aboriginal language teachers for introductory language classes. These would pair Elders, speakers, or language specialists with artists and include teachings on using Aboriginal languages in art practices. Participants would collaborate with Elders to ultimately produce a work based on what they have learned;
- bring together artists, Elders, and language practitioners to develop relationships and provide opportunities for mentoring;
- learn about the various practices, laws, protocols, knowledge, and life systems of one's own indigenous nation or others;
- discuss critical topics—not imposed ones;
- promote and recognize Aboriginal artists and how Aboriginal language connects to art practice;
- encourage innovative communication transmission and better ways to use emerging realities, technologies, and social media (blogging, Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
- develop an Aboriginal arts organization and/or committee comprised of representatives voted on by community members from each province, equally represented.

Respondents made a number of suggestions to **target funding**—to develop specific grant programs or components within existing programs, which are sustainable, meaningful, and fair, and that represent all languages and areas of art practice. Additionally, it was suggested that funding be earmarked for research, education, training, and resources. Other specific areas identified include funding for

- projects for Aboriginal languages that can be saved, those at risk, and those under-represented in art practices;
- new or existing educational and learning language programs, language resources, performing arts, writing and publishing, and multilingual children's books;
- cultural and friendship centres, public schools, individual artists, communities, grassroots programs;
- programs for youth working in media;
- projects to develop tools for business ventures;
- research and study on Aboriginal languages and art practices;
- programs that re-introduce the languages in communities;
- programs that support preservation, revitalization of Aboriginal languages in art practices, and connection to land and community;
- projects to interview Elders and other speakers to record and preserve stories and knowledge;
- programs or projects that focus on the preservation and communication of language materials: stories, Elder teachings, and the media involved in using Aboriginal languages in art practices (movies, documentaries, and recordings—whether analogue or digital).

With respect to the Canada Council's operations, the respondents had suggestions related to three areas: capacity building; application processes and eligible expenses; and advocacy, promotion, and marketing. Suggestions for each of these areas follow below.

capacity building

- Assign an officer or contact for each region who is fluent in an Aboriginal language so that the communities can develop trust and communicate their interests.
- Designate someone in the community to assist with proposals and processes and be more involved in communities.
- Encourage Aboriginal language speakers to become involved in juries, projects with communities, and all other initiatives of the Canada Council.
- Educate jurors on the connections.
- Develop competencies at the Canada Council in Aboriginal languages and art practices to provide translation and interpretation services for programs and processes.
- Assign bonuses to non-speakers to learn or work in their traditional languages (i.e., translating, co-writing, subtitling, etc.).
- Support travel of language speakers to different communities to support the application process for those unable to speak English or French.
- Define role of Aboriginal officers who can speak to artists in their languages.
- Hire Aboriginal people to take Canada Council programs and funding to the communities.
- Involve provincial and territorial arts councils, Elders, and art organizations.
- Work with museums to connect artists to their collections to tell the stories of using Aboriginal languages in the art process or making of the objects.
- Have an Aboriginal language speaker review jury decisions before final selections are made and/or consult with speakers of the languages.
- Provide a list of Aboriginal language speakers who can provide guidance to people seeking to expand their knowledge of an Aboriginal language, concepts, protocols, etc.

application processes and eligible expenses

- Allow for some parts of grant applications to be written in Aboriginal languages.
- Translate documentation into Aboriginal languages for ease of First Language speakers in understanding and applying.
- Include Aboriginal language learning in art practices with travel grants, assign line items in budgets to support translators and Elders, and apply a set of measurements to the budget process that would focus on Aboriginal languages in art practices.

advocacy, promotion, and marketing of Canada Council programs and Aboriginal languages and art practices

- Celebrate and showcase artists and their work locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Create venues where artists can present their works using Aboriginal language in art practices (e.g. using titles, texts, etc.), especially recognizing beginning language speakers.
- Promote artists and their works with regional broadcasters (other than APTN, Aboriginal radio).
- Promote language diversity in programs.
- Advertise, market, and promote artists and their work, especially in Canada Council materials.
- Develop an awareness campaign using Aboriginal language media to reach and inform Aboriginal communities and organizations, and distribute information to them concerning Canada Council programs.
- Advertise filmmaking and other media where youth are working with Elders and communities to preserve oral histories (to engage youth).
- Develop creative ways to engage communities (including youth, Elders, and women) on participation and access to programs.
- Promote artists and languages in titles, texts, etc., in art venues.
- Translate promotional/marketing text or materials in Aboriginal languages.
- Publish a book about the Canada Council and Art Bank collection, using lots of photos of all the languages in Canada.
- Create contests (e.g., model Bata shoe museum contest).
- Develop an awards program.

Other Comments

- Target equity funding for Aboriginal languages in art practices, without reducing other funding programs.
- Enhance the programs and processes of Canada Council and its promotional activity to support availability and access to programs, but also to promote artists in general, and awareness among the general public of Aboriginal languages in art practice.
- Move beyond jiggling, powwow dancing, and singing: step up to the plate and focus on all artistic endeavours.
- Conduct any future interviews or surveys, such as this one, in Aboriginal languages and provide incentives or pay participants to respond.

The interviews/talking circles and the survey proved to be important tools in creating an increased understanding of the issues that artists face in relation to the maintenance and revitalization of their original mother tongue. The responses were overwhelming with respect to the positive reception and the incredible diversity and knowledge of the artists. All of the questions answered by the respondents contained insight and information that enabled the research project to gain focus and direction.

We believe it is time for Canada to recognize that Canada's linguistic heritage runs deeper than the French and English languages. It is, in fact, the oral histories, the stories of creation that explain how First Peoples came to be on this land, millennia before the French or English, and the songs and dances that speak of our connection with the land that give this fabric the unique texture and vibrancy that make it unlike any other fabric in the world.²⁶

²⁶ Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, *Towards a New Beginning, A Foundational Report for the Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures*. Task Force Report on Aboriginal

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Appendix A

Size and Growth of the population by Aboriginal Identity, Canada, 1996 and 2006

Aboriginal Identity	2006	Percentage change from 1996 to 2006
Total population	31,241,030	9
Aboriginal identity population	1,172,790	45
First Nations people(1)	698,025	29
Métis(1)	389,785	91
Inuit(1)	50,485	26
Multiple and other Aboriginal responses(2)	34,500	34
Non-Aboriginal population	30,068,240	8

Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1996 and 2006

(1) Includes persons who reported a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit identity only.

(2) Includes persons who reported more than one Aboriginal identity group (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit) and who reported being a Registered Indian and/or Band member without reporting an Aboriginal identity.

Appendix B

Aboriginal languages indicators for First Nations people, Canada, 2001 and 2006

Aboriginal languages	Aboriginal mother tongue(1)		Knowledge (2) of an Aboriginal language	
	2006	Percentage change 2001-2006	2006	Percentage change 2001-2006
Cree	76,460	10	87,285	7
Ojibway	24,410	-2	30,255	-2
Oji-Cree	11,605	18	12,435	20
Montagnais-Naskapi	10,470	8	11,080	10
Dene	8,495	9	9,250	8
Mi'kmaq	7,685	4	8,540	0
Siouan languages (Dakota/Sioux)	5,675	34	6,285	32
Atikamekw	5,140	11	5,320	12
Blackfoot	3,270	11	4,760	10
Salish languages	1,990	6	2,800	-1
Algonquin	2,020	10	2,560	12
Dogrib	2,055	10	2,540	17
Carrier	1,800	29	2,320	18
South Slave	1,575	15	2,160	7

Source: Statistics Canada censuses of population, 2001 and 2006

(1)'Mother tongue' refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood.

(2)'Knowledge' refers to languages in which the respondent can conduct a conversation.

Appendix C

Survey Data on Levels of Understanding of an Aboriginal Language

33% or less		Limited or basic vocabulary for greetings, alphabet, numbers, objects, events, names of people, animals, spirits, places, songs, ceremonial phrases. Adequate vocabulary from simple or limited to routine or basic courtesy and minimum practical needs related to visiting, travelling, obtaining basic needs and asking for assistance.
Beginner – Elementary		
1a. Limited	1b. Basic	
Poor Very poor Very minimal Few words and phrases Greetings, salutations Names of peoples, animals, places and events Commands, instructions, actions, mealtime words Prayers, songs, ceremonial phrases Terms of endearment Slang Swear words Rote Learning Little or Very little Extremely low Rudimentary Very minor Almost nil Faint Casual greetings Introductory words Funny sayings Naughty words Few common words Understand some	Fair Adequate Gist of songs, ceremonies, prayers, theatrical performances Enough to assist teaching Selective key words Course work Class work Studying Some words, songs, prayers Some ordinary words Small talk Baby talk Kindergarten talk Short words Below conversational Lots of words Few basic phrases Basic or simple sentence structure Broken sentences 30% Very basic Beginner speaker Sing songs Gist of conversation – in the context of basic known words, ceremonies and songs (Level 1) 30% Minimal	

Survey Data on Levels of Understanding of an Aboriginal Language

33% - 66% mid level		<p>Vocabulary adequate for most to all practical and social conversations and for limited working relationships in a known discipline.</p> <p>Listening comprehension is adequate to follow radio-broadcasts, speeches, conversations of two educated native speakers. Details and regional or dialectic forms may be missed but general meaning is correctly interpreted.</p>
Intermediate		
2a. Adequate vocabulary for all practical and social conversations	2b. Full range of basic structures well understood	
<p>Good Average Fairly good More than a beginner Minimal conversations Simple discussions Gist of conversation-level 2 Read simple sentences Speak and write half</p>	<p>Very good Above average Very well Quite well Quite a lot Strong</p>	

Survey Data on Levels of Understanding of an Aboriginal Language

67 % or more		Fully immersed: - Understands, Speaks, Reads, Writes and can translate in either or both Roman Orthography and Syllabics
Advanced		
3a. Fluent	3b. Bilingual	
<p>Excellent 80% Very high Can read, write and speak Fluent Understand, read, write, speak, sing and translate Good fluency, read, write, speak and translate Fully understand Fluent with family and elders Fluent speaker Fluent in everyday language, basic and older forms of language 80%</p>	<p>Bilingual Raised in language Understood and spoken entire life Full comprehension Fully immersed Read, write, speak and translate</p>	

Appendix D

Survey Data on Levels of SPEAKING of an Aboriginal Language

33% or less		Limited or basic vocabulary for greetings, alphabet, numbers, objects, events, names of people, animals, spirits, places, songs, ceremonial phrases. Adequate vocabulary from simple or limited to routine or basic courtesy and minimum practical needs related to visiting, travelling, obtaining basic needs and asking for assistance.
Beginner – Elementary		
1a. Limited	1b. Basic	
Poor Very poor Very minimal Few words and phrases Greetings, salutations Names of peoples, animals, places and events Commands, instructions, actions, mealtime words Prayers, songs, ceremonial phrases Terms of endearment Slang Swear words Rote Learning Little or Very little Extremely low Rudimentary Very minor Almost nil Faint Casual greetings Introductory words Funny sayings Naughty words Few common words Limited, identify a few words Some words Understand some	Fair Adequate Gist of songs, ceremonies, prayers, theatrical performances Enough to assist teaching Selective key words Course work Class work Studying Some words, songs, prayers Some ordinary words Small talk Baby talk Kindergarten talk Short words Below conversational Lots of words Few basic phrases Basic or simple sentence structure Broken sentences 30% Very basic Beginner speaker Sing songs Gist of conversation – in the context of basic known words, ceremonies and songs (Level 1) 30% Minimal	

Survey Data on Levels of SPEAKING of an Aboriginal Language

33% - 66% mid level		<p>Ranges:</p> <p>Vocabulary adequate for most to all practical and social conversations and for limited working relationships in a known discipline.</p> <p>Grammar and pronunciation. Full range of basic structures well understood, and complex structures used. Mistakes sometimes occur but meaning accurately conveyed.</p> <p>Fluency. Occasionally impaired by hesitations. Flow of speech is maintained by circumlocution when necessary. There is very little groping for words.</p>
Intermediate		
2a. Adequate vocabulary for all practical and social conversations	2b. Full range of basic structures well understood	
<p>Good</p> <p>Average</p> <p>Fairly good</p> <p>More than a beginner</p> <p>Minimal conversations</p> <p>Simple discussions</p> <p>Gist of conversation-level 2</p> <p>Speak and write half 50%</p> <p>Proficient somewhat</p> <p>Good enough</p>	<p>Very good</p> <p>Above average</p> <p>Very well</p> <p>Quite well</p> <p>Quite a lot</p> <p>Strong</p> <p>Conversational</p> <p>Speak fairly well but not completely fluent</p> <p>Pretty well</p> <p>Can hold conversation pretty well</p> <p>Fairly well</p>	

Survey Data on Levels of SPEAKING of an Aboriginal Language

67 % or more		Range: Immersed in bilingualism.
Advanced		
3a. Fluent	3b. Bilingual	
<p>Excellent 80% Very high Can read, write and speak Fluent Understand, read, write, speak, sing and translate Good fluency, read, write, speak and translate Fully understand Fluent with family and elders Fluent speaker Fluent in everyday language, basic and older forms of language High level of proficiency/fluency Completely fluent Very high level Fairly fluent First language is... Advanced in</p>	<p>Bilingual Raised in language Understood and spoken entire life Full comprehension Fully immersed Master level of...song keeper and leader in artistic translation of dreamers songs and traditions Completely fluent Read, write, speak and translate</p>	<p>- Understands, Speaks, Reads, Writes and can Translate in either or both Roman Orthography and Syllabics</p> <p>Vocabulary is broad, precise and appropriate to the subject and the occasion. Grammar and pronunciation: Errors seldom occur and do not interfere with accurate expression of meaning. Fluency is similar to native fluency in known subject fields. Easy for native speaker to listen to.</p>

Appendix E: Survey Data on Which Artistic Disciplines Are Used

Ceremonial, ritual, cultural teachings	Dance, Music Song, Performance	Film Media Playwright	Sculpting Painting Visual Art	Writing and Publishing	Education Teaching	Other
Ceremonial, ritual and performance	Performance	Television and feature film	Textile art	Writing	Storytelling	Traditional art forms
Cultural teachings	Drumming and singing	Playwriting	Painter	Publishing	Reading and writing elders stories	Cultural programmer
Traditional songs and drum dancing	Waterdancer	Filmmaking	Birch bark canoes	Unpublished writing	Immersion instruction	Social work
Pow wow dancing	Music	Language audio with English subtitles	Drums		First Nations language teaching	Technical artistry (conceptual)
	Throat singing	Film production	Metal smithing		Educating	Arts Administration
	Comedy	Film/video	Curatorial		Music education	
			Curator		High school counselling	
			Art history			
			Website design			

Appendix F: Survey Data on How Aboriginal Languages Are Incorporated in Art Practices

Ceremonial, Ritual, Cultural teachings, Celebration

- Introducing students, educators for the seven teachings
- Songs for personal, family and community, and ceremonial settings
- Traditional tunes
- Prayers
- Feasts and ceremonies
- Opening prayers
- Sacred songs both sung and drum
- Storytelling of cultural teachings
- Preparation of celebrations
- Traditional or indigenous names
- Traditional songs
- Translating traditional songs

Dance, Music, Song, Performance

- Old stories in performances and songs
- Songs in visual art
- Chants and words of songs
- Song-writing
- Acting
- Dancing
- Singing
- Words and greetings in the body of a song or dance
- Words/phrases or vocals in songs
- Music in theatre
- Drafting Aboriginal characters or for establishing fictional locations
- Theatre, use lyrics for establishing fictional locations or for drafting Aboriginal characters
- Celebrating in song when art piece is finished to recognize those who came before and those who come later
- Music
- Conceptualizing or thinking of cultural design
- When family or elders are used in background of CD or DVD
- Spoken word performance accompanying contemporary and traditional musicians
- Singing, drumming at schools, events, conferences and awareness building activities
- Recording performances
- Studying and transcribing songs
- Writing lyrics
- Creating and performing piece
- Film and video making
- Performance teaching
- Theatre
- Plays
- Native musical
- Native theatre
- Performing
- Teaching theatre exercises
- Circus show

Film, Media

- Filmmaker
- Script with English subtitles
- Short film
- Youth speaking language in component of video
- Documentaries
- Animated characters in television show
- Short films
- Filmmaking, video-making and performance
- Documentary film
- Cultural videos
- Educational videos
- Screenwriting

Sculpting, Painting, Visual Arts

- Interpretation of visual art
- Sound-recordings of songs in art pieces
- Titles of visual art shows
- Descriptions of traditional art pieces
- Textile art
- Cave drawings as message on drum
- Telling a story through visual interpretation
- Beaded blanket art
- Words and titles in art
- Clay sculpture speaks a story of past, present and future [oral description of piece??]
- Describing each piece with original language
- Syllabics and Roman orthography embedded in art and storytelling about the art
- Titles, legends and words used in art
- Titles for museum pieces
- Syllabics in paintings and installation pieces
- Conceptual thinking, inspiration, listening to elders for learning and design of visual art works
- Visual art titles
- Carving, Drawing (stories, legends, words, names that could be represented)
- Naming or titling objects
- Exhibition titles, labels, project titles, story titles
- Descriptions of the parts of canoes (bark, tools, etc.)
- Names and stories of carvings
- Beadwork
- Art
- Through visual art

Writing, Publishing, Illustrating

- Writing children's stories (names, some words)
- Poetry
- Writing
- Playwriting
- Writing songs and chants
- Illustrating in books and cards
- Common references for Aboriginal character or fictional locations

Writing, Publishing, Illustrating (continued)

- Writing book (names of persons, animals and places)
- Short stories
- Writing history (identifying people, places and special events)
- Novel and academic analysis
- [Text] in a photography book, novel and film
- Greetings and other introductory words in graphic novel
- Novel writing
- Films
- Scripts
- Writing lyrics
- Spoken word
- Recording histories of elders on traditional harvesting practices and crafts
- Media projects
- Research
- Stories and legends, words, names that could be represented through writing
- Glossary of terms
- Physical or digital writing and imagery, audio, titles, etc.
- Translations of English texts
- Stories created based on carvings
- Writing about languages (meaning and pronunciation)
- Writing educational material
- Writing
- Describing art
- Words, phrases

Education, Teaching

- Traditional stories
- Storytelling (themes or through character names and identifications) Direct instruction
- Oral teachings Stories of animals that go with textile art
- Stories read and told
- Legends, myths, short stories heard
- Songs, chants while drumming
- Storytelling
- Cultural workshops
- Art History: integrate in teachings, words of stories, narratives in language of origin
- Drum stories
- Beaded blanket stories
- Traditional stories on website
- Stories of modern day events
- Language courses
- Teaching some words to students
- Descriptions of stories
- Dialogue in stories
- Stories
- Translating and describing documents
- Teaching of culture through throat singing
- Telling stories through songs and dances
- Promoting storytelling and listening
- Storytelling; translate or use dialogue of characters

Education, Teaching (continued)

- Teaching or parenting children
- Instructional books, DVD's

Other

- Incorporate in everything
- Directly in work
- Character names, traditional names of areas, events and people, and in conversational greetings
- Creating a piece with text
- Incorporate words, sayings, themes and legends in work
- A word here or there
- Introducing self and in making public presentations
- Introductions or greetings
- Dialogue or conversation
- Titles, Work Titles
- Titles and descriptions
- Titles for original compositions and CDs
- Text on CD jackets
- Text, audio material in work
- Text interspersed with writing in English at work
- Phrases at work
- Thinking, Concepts, Inspiration. Empowering
- Consulting with community elders
- Translations
- Media and interdisciplinary work created
- Promotional pieces
- Communicating with peer artists
- Websites