

Photo: Robert Matthew



Language and Culture Immersion Programs Handbook



First Peoples'
Heritage, Language &
Culture Council

Acknowledgements

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First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council (FPHLCC) has strongly supported First Nations language and culture revitalization and maintenance projects in British Columbia (B.C.) since 1990.

Language and cultural immersion has proven to be the most successful method for the transmission of language and culture from generation to generation. For this reason, language and culture immersion camps, where participants are surrounded by their traditional culture and language, are highly valued in B.C. First Nations communities.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) and New Relationship Trust (NRT) provide support and funding, allowing FPHLCC to distribute language and culture immersion camp grants to many B.C. First Nations communities. In addition, FPHLCC provides ongoing support to communities with program planning, development and reporting.

FPHLCC is working towards improving and making the language and culture immersion camp grant program more accessible for B.C. First Nations communities. This handbook is intended to be a practical tool for elders, community members, teachers and anyone else involved in language and culture immersion camps. It includes tips for language teaching and learning, ideas for language immersion games and activities, as well as suggested language teaching methods.

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Five Language Learning Principles

- Learning a language requires patience from teachers and from learners.
- Language is learned by speaking it; give learners lots of chances to speak.
- Repetition is crucial; the more language a person hears, the more they learn.
- People learn in many different ways at different rates.
- Language is essentially used for communication, and the goals of language teaching should be to allow learners to communicate in the language.

Five Tips for Language Immersion Activities

- Any activity can be turned into a language learning opportunity.
- A good way to help learners pick up words and phrases is to have learners repeat actions, words and phrases.
- Language immersion does not include English.
- Learning is always more successful when it is fun and enjoyable.
- Feel free to create your own games and activities based on your own program!



Photographer: Jan Miettinen-Hart



Simple Language for Beginners

In the beginning, it is important for learners to be able to follow simple instructions and understand basic phrases. If learners can understand a few of the basics, they will feel more comfortable and learning will come easier.

Basic language for instructions - Learners can always participate by following instructions.

examples:

stand up	jump	look
sit down	put your hands up	listen
come here	fold your arms	speak
go back	cross your legs	smell
be quiet	turn around	one
give me the _____	lie down	two
turn right	put _____ back	three
turn left	leave _____ alone	four...
where is the _____?	clap	ten ...

Saying 'Hello' - Learners need to be able to use simple questions and greetings.

examples:

hello	yes
goodbye	no
how are you?	maybe
I am fine	thank you
we are fine	have a good day

Daily Conversation Repetition



Photo: Karen Borsato

When the same simple conversations are repeated each day several times, they will become ingrained in learners' minds and they will never forget them.

Introductions - Learners can introduce themselves to the group by using set phrases.

examples:

my name is _____.

my mother's name is _____.

I am from _____.

I am _____ years old.

my father's name is _____.

I love my family.

Questions and answers - fluent speakers can ask and repeat questions that follow a set pattern.

examples:

what is this?

what is this for?

this is a _____.

it is for _____.

what colour is this?

where is the _____?

it is _____.

it is there.

how old are you?

where are you from?

I am _____

I am from _____

how do you say _____?

what am I doing?



Daily Activities

Language is naturally learned through daily activities. All daily activities can be carried out in your First Nations language. In a language immersion camp, phrases and words can be easily learned through daily routines with fluent speakers.

Meals – Learners can pick up words and phrases related to eating, food items, meal preparation, cleaning up and mealtime conversations.

examples:

are you hungry?	more?	the food tastes good	wash the dishes
yes, I'm very hungry	how was your meal?	would you like more?	clear the table
no, I'm not hungry	come and eat	no thank you	dry the dishes
do you like _____?	I'm full	yes please	wipe the table
this is delicious	serve the food	pass the salt	put the dishes away
can I have some	eat all your food		

examples:

breakfast	helping	guest	knife	spoon
lunch	hungry	thank you	fork	plate
dinner	thirsty	washing	bake	bowl
feast	full	cook	fry	table
eat	oven	drink	pot	chair
kitchen	stove	food	pan	dishes

Daily Activities



Photo: Stratonic gathering

Routines - Learners can pick up words and phrases related to getting up in the morning, getting dressed, going to bed, personal hygiene and the body.

examples:

are you tired?	it's time to wake up	what's the weather like today?
brush your teeth	it's time to go to bed	the weather is good today
get dressed	good morning! / good night!	it's cold/hot/sunny/rainy/ snowy/windy today
I'm tired	did you have a good sleep?	how do you feel today?
make your bed	wash your hands and face	I feel good today

examples:

early	pants	body	finger	tomorrow
late	shirt	head	leg	shower
awake	dress	eye	foot	towel
asleep	skirt	nose	knee	wet/dry
tired	shoes	mouth	teeth	bed
weather	socks	ear	soap	blanket
sun	underwear	hair	wash	pillow
cloud	hat	stomach	faucet	comb
rain	jacket	arm	toilet	toothbrush
sky	vest	hand	today	bathroom



Daily Activities

Chores – Learners can participate in daily chores such as chopping firewood, cleaning and gardening. From these chores learners can learn many new words and phrases.

examples:

chop the wood

today we need to _____

pull the weeds

can you help me?

water the plants

is it too heavy?

wash the dishes

carry the wood

clean the house

stack the wood

examples:

firewood

heavy

tree

floor

plants (different
names)

help

flower

dishes

garden

carry

soap

room

weeds

stack

scrub

window

water

lift

brush

sweep

clean/dirty

wash

collect

come/go

Plans for Activities – Learners and fluent speakers can have simple discussions about plans for the day involving family, friends and community.

examples:

what are we going to do today?

is it a good idea?

where are we going?

let's go for a walk.

do you want to go _____?

we are going _____

let's go visit Grandma.

let's go together

let's visit _____

what do you want to do?

let's play a game

let's go fishing

Outdoor Activities



Photo: Robert Matthew

All outdoor activities can be carried out in your First Nations language. When learners are interested and can see places, things and actions in real life, they tend to remember the vocabulary and phrases better.

- Nature Walks**
- Fluent speakers can explain to learners about preservation, birds-plants-animals interaction, biodiversity and outdoor survival.
 - Fluent speakers can point out names of plants (edible plants and berries), animals, geographic features and place names.
 - Learners and fluent speakers can visit historical sites and sacred places to learn about traditions and history.

Outdoor Activities – Learners and fluent speakers can participate in cultural outdoor activities.

example outdoor activities:

learning to build fires

canoeing lessons

fishing

gathering food

tanning hides

swimming

food processing

picnics

collecting (roots, berries, tree bark)

building rafts



Photo: Robert Matthew



Oral Language Games

Simple games that learners already know how to play in English work well for learning a language. A tiny bit of competition always adds to the fun of learning. Simple games also help learners feel at ease and comfortable to learn and make mistakes.

Pictionary – A learner is secretly given a word or phrase and has to draw it out for his/her teammates to guess.

Charades – A learner is secretly given a word or phrase and has to act it out for his/her teammates to guess.

Card Games – Cards with pictures or numbers on them can be used for many different games. For example: If two learners have the same card, the first one to say what is on the card gets to keep all the cards.

Story-making – Learners are given a few words and have to create an oral story using those words. The stories are usually very funny!

Drawing – Learners can practice drawing representations of words and phrases.

Cut and Paste – Learners can create personal posters or collages using pictures from magazines, then present their creation to the group.

Simon Says – Learners follow as the leader calls out actions. If a learner does the wrong action, he/she can sit down until the next round.

Learners Teach – Learners are divided into groups and taught the names of different objects, then each learner is responsible for teaching their words to the other groups.

Eye-Spy – Vocabulary items are said aloud and learners must point to the correct object.

Ball of Yarn Toss – A learner with a ball of yarn asks a question eg. "who's your father?" then tosses the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle. Whoever catches the ball of yarn has to answer the question and ask another question, then toss the yarn to someone else.

Bingo – A bingo card can be filled with pictures and numbers. When a learner hears something on their card called out, he/she can mark it off.



Cultural Knowledge Activities

Photo: Charmain Adams

All cultural activities can be carried out in your First Nations language. Learners will benefit from observing and participating in activities that allow them to gain cultural knowledge in their First Nations language.

Prayers, Ceremonies and Smudges – can be carried out daily

Lahal – Learn to play lahal, create lahal sticks and play lahal.

Family Trees – Learners can draw family trees and learn family vocabulary and history.

examples:

mother	grandmother/grandfather	sister
father	cousin	grandchild
child	aunt	man
son	uncle	woman
daughter	brother	baby

Songs, dancing and drumming – Teach songs by demonstrating one part of the song at a time and having learners repeat.

Place names – Create a map using traditional place names.

Storytelling – Teach phrases and words using pictures, and then tell a story.
Have learners re-tell the story.

Visiting – Participants can visit and meet community members with knowledge and wisdom.

Create your own cultural knowledge activities based on your community!

Arts and Crafts

Learners can express themselves by creating crafts and works of art in their First Nations language. Not only the product is important, but also the step-by-step process of learning skills and actions in the First Nations language is extremely valuable.

Art Projects – Learners and fluent speakers can create projects together.

example projects:

dream catchers	button blankets	drums	weaving
mandelas	sewing	paintings	Knitting
medicine bags	moccasins		

example words:

cut	cloth	tie	loop
sew	thread	knot	through
hold	yarn	even	pull
colours (different colours)	wool	open	push
leather/hide	needle	close	tight
button	scissors	beads	loose



Photo: Judy Chartrand



Nine Tips for Successful Language Teaching/Learning

Based on Leanne Hinton (2002)

1) Leave English Behind

Resist speaking English even though it would be much easier in many situations.

Avoid creating a pidgin mix of the First Nations language and English.

Think of English as a habit you are trying to break.

2) Use Nonverbal Communication

Actions – Act out what you are trying to say.

Gestures and Facial Expressions – Point to things you are talking about and use facial expressions that show what you are thinking.

Pictures and Objects – Use things and pictures to help communicate your meaning.

3) Teach in Full Sentences

At first, learners will be focusing mostly on new words, but hearing the words in the context of full sentences will help the learner remember and understand the real meanings.

4) Aim for Real Communication in your First Nations Language

Use the language for EVERYTHING.

Put learners in a situation where they have to use the language to do or get something.

Set up situations that require communication; rather than study a list of words about the weather, have a conversation about the weather.

5) Language is Also Culture

Your First Nations Language is not just a translation of English.

Learning a language includes learning customs, values and traditional activities.

6) Focus on Listening and Speaking

You don't need to use writing and reading to learn to speak a language.

Learners can learn a language unconsciously, simply by hearing it and using it.

7) Learn and Teach the Language through Activities

Fluent speakers and language learners should live daily life together. Rather than separating language learning from daily life, use daily activities as language teaching/learning opportunities.

8) Be an Active Learner

Language learning requires students to actively participate, rather than passively observe.

9) Be Patient and Proud of Each Other and Yourself

If you get discouraged, remember that you are doing the best you can. Each small step towards revitalizing a First Nations language is extremely valuable.



Photo: Karen Borsato



Five Methods and Approaches

The following are common methods and approaches in language teaching. It is not necessary to choose one approach, but it is useful to keep them in mind while carrying out your language program.

1) Immersion

This method of language teaching surrounds (immerses) learners in the language they are trying to learn. The language is used to communicate and to teach about other subjects. All activities, including meals, stories, daily routines and group activities are done in the language. Rather than teach the language alone, knowledge, skills and activities are taught by using the language. This method is more of a way of living (completely surrounded by the language) than a way to teach.

2) Natural Approach

This approach is based on the idea that a second language is learned in a similar way to a first language. When babies first learn language, they are never taught about grammar or language structures; they naturally learn without any instruction. Therefore, second language learners should also naturally learn language with little or no formal language instruction. Natural approach activities include reading, conversation, language games, and regular daily activities in the language.

3) Communicative/Task-based Approach

This approach is based on the idea that the main purpose of language is to communicate. Therefore, language learning should be focused on communicating and completing tasks in the language. With this approach, learners are not taught about the language, but instead are taught to do things in the language. For example, instead of learning weather vocabulary, a learner learns how to have a conversation about the weather.

4) Total Physical Response

This method of language teaching is based on body movement and speech together. Body movement is related to the mind, and if body movement occurs at the same time as speech, a learner will remember the speech more easily. It can be used to teach almost anything, including actions, object names, and storytelling. For example, while the language teacher calls out actions, learners perform those actions, and will remember the actions and words together.

5) The Silent Way

The basic idea of this approach is to allow the learner to discover, to experience and to have as many opportunities to use the language as possible. Instead of teaching, the teacher sets up opportunities for learners to learn independently. For example, a teacher could tell a story and have learners look at pictures related to the story. By doing this, learners are responsible for figuring out which words in the story go with each object in the pictures. In this approach, it is also important for the learner to make mistakes in order to learn. For example, a learner could guess the wrong name for an object several times before learning the correct name. In the end, the learner will remember the name for the object better than if the teacher had given the correct name right away.



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TE Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) Resource package for Māori Language Week. www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/

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