

TOWARDS A NEW BEGINNING



A FOUNDATIONAL REPORT FOR A STRATEGY TO REVITALIZE FIRST NATION, INUIT AND MÉTIS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Report to the Minister of Canadian Heritage by
The Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures
June 2005

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Towards a New Beginning: A Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures

Executive Summary

Our Guiding Principles

The Task Force's work was informed by values and principles taught by the Elders. It was inspired by a vision that sees First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages as gifts from the Creator carrying unique and irreplaceable values and spiritual beliefs that allow speakers to relate with their ancestors and to take part in sacred ceremonies. This vision sees the present generation recovering and strengthening the ability to speak these sacred, living languages and passing them on so that the seventh and future generations will be fluent in them. It sees these renewed languages as expressions of First Nation, Inuit and Métis nationhood in a country that has made itself whole by recognizing them in law as the original languages of Canada. This vision sees Canada providing enduring institutional support for First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and Canadians of all origins, recognizing, sharing and supporting these principles and values.

Part I — Introduction to the Task Force Report

The Task Force acknowledges that this report is only a beginning, a foundation for the long-term, community-based work still to be done. Language and culture are the foundations of the nationhood of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people and the Task Force does not intend this report to detract from their Aboriginal and treaty rights under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The term "Aboriginal" is avoided as it may blur distinctions between First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples, as well as between their different past and present government-to-government relationships with each other and with Canada.

Part II — The Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures

Composition of the Task Force

In December 2002, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that Canada would create a centre with a budget of \$160 million over 10 years to help preserve, revitalize and promote Aboriginal languages and cultures.

To advise the Minister, 10 Task Force members — Bruce Flamont, Ron Ignace, Mary Jane Jim, Amos Key Jr., Helen Klengenberg, Alexina Kublu, Rosemarie McPherson, Ruth Norton, Frank Parnell and Linda Pelly-Landrie — were appointed in December 2003 by consensus among the partners: the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council, working closely with the Government of Canada. A Circle of Experts, a group of knowledgeable and experienced language and cultural leaders, educators and community workers from across Canada, was also named to assist the Task Force.

Task Force Mandate and Terms of Reference

On appointment, the Task Force received a mandate to propose a national strategy to preserve, revitalize and promote First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and cultures. Detailed terms of reference were provided later, calling for advice on the structure and functions of the proposed languages and cultures centre and requiring the Task Force to report back to the Minister.

How Our Elders Guided the Task Force Process

Drawn from First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities from across Canada, all Task Force members share the view that language and culture are maintained and transmitted at the family and community level, sanctified by spiritual practices and ceremonies, and symbolized by the inspiring presence of Elders. Before beginning their consultations, the Task Force held a meeting on May 14, 2004, with Elders, to seek their guidance and blessings. As a result, all Task Force processes were filled with respect for the serious and sacred nature of the work being undertaken.

Task Force Approach and Activities

For administrative and political reasons beyond the control of the Task Force, including the short timeframe, all elements of the terms of reference could not be fully addressed. However, the Task Force was able to meet with the Elders for guidance, conduct a research and literature review, carry out 16 cross-Canada community focus group consultations, consult with national First

Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations, prepare research guidelines and protocols, assess and analyze the consultation results and other data collected, and deliver this foundational report.

Part III — Our Languages and Cultures: Cornerstones for Our Philosophies

Our Languages: Our Social and Spiritual Values

A people's philosophy and culture are embedded in their language and given expression by it. Language and culture are key to the collective sense of identity and nationhood of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples. Their languages arose here and are structured differently than languages born elsewhere, because they are based on relationships.

Our Languages: Our Connection to the Land

The most important relationship embodied by First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages is with the land. "The land" is more than the physical landscape; it involves the creatures and plants, as well as the people's historical and spiritual relationship to their territories. First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages show that the people are not separate from the land. They have a responsibility to protect it and to preserve the sacred and traditional knowledge associated with it.

The Past: Different Cultures, Different Perspectives

Of the many differences in cultural perspective between First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and other Canadians, the oral tradition is most important. It is the preserve of Elders and others whose sacred responsibility is to pass on the stories that reflect the relationship between the people and the places and events that define them. First Nation languages were the official languages of historical treaties, and the oral tradition is the basis for interpreting them now.

Our Languages and Cultures: Our Nationhood

First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples are nations in the original sense of being groups of people linked by common bonds of language, culture, ethnicity and a collective will to maintain their distinctiveness. Canada's departure from this understanding at Confederation and its subsequent policies of assimilation contributed to language loss. The practices, traditions and customs maintained by First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages are the basis of the Aboriginal and treaty rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Our Languages: Our Responsibility, Canada's Duty

While there are worldwide trends compounding this loss of language, Canada's past assimilative actions, particularly the residential school system, cannot be ignored. Canada's failure to protect First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and cultures means it must now provide the resources necessary to restore them. All federal departments share this responsibility. However, First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples must also take their rightful place as the first and foremost teachers of their own languages and cultures.

Part IV — First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages: Where We Are Now

Our Languages: Our Diversity as Peoples

A national linguistic and cultural revival strategy must reflect the diversity of First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and the different conditions of their languages. The exact number of languages and dialects is unknown, but around 61 are spoken today. First Nations speak 59 languages. Inuit speak various dialects of Inuktitut and Métis speak Michif, as well as some First Nation languages.

The Status of First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages

Given their preliminary and incomplete nature, existing community-based studies assessing language vitality in terms of numbers of fluent speakers and rates of intergenerational transmission were interpreted with caution by the Task Force. What these studies do show is the diversity of First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages vitality, ranging from flourishing to critically endangered. Even languages with a large number of speakers may be flourishing in some regions or communities and be in a critical state in others.

Language Use in the Home

The Task Force cautiously assessed the data from other preliminary and incomplete sources, such as the Census, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey and a British Columbia First Nation language study. These sources provide information on mother tongue speakers, the ages of those who know the language and language use in the home. In terms of mother tongue, Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut are shown to be viable but losing ground. In British Columbia, First Nation intergenerational language transmission seems to be in serious decline.

First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages in Urban Areas

Analysis of Census data shows that language strength among non-reserve First Nation people is declining and that Michif is in a critical state. The conclusion is that since First Nation, Inuit and Métis people living in cities tend not to use their languages at home, intergenerational transmission is exceedingly difficult.

Summary of Linguistic Conditions

The studies and surveys give a multidimensional picture of First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages. Some are spoken by only a few Elders, others by tens of thousands. Large language groups like the Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut are viable, having at least 25,000 speakers, ranging from the young to the elderly. However, all languages, including those considered viable, are losing ground and are endangered.

Part V — Calls for Action

Calls by the Assembly of First Nations

First Nations have been lobbying since 1972 for federal support for their languages. In 1998, the Assembly of First Nations declared a state of language emergency, calling on Canada to recognize and financially support First Nation languages. In 2000, the Assembly of First Nations proposed a “First Nation Language Policy for Canada,” whereby Canada would recognize First Nation languages as Canada’s original languages and help First Nations protect, promote and use their languages, and deliver language programs and services under their own jurisdiction.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples saw language revitalization as key to a renewed relationship between Canada and First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and noted that the power to establish language priorities, policies and laws is a core Aboriginal self-government authority under the Constitution. Although the focus of language conservation and revitalization efforts must shift from formal institutions to communities, families and social networks, Canada was also urged to work with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples to establish a national Aboriginal languages foundation to assist in this effort.

Recent Calls for Action by the National Political Organizations

The Task Force consulted directly with national First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations. The Assembly of First Nations prefers a specific First Nation language foundation. The Métis National Council prefers that language funding come through the federal interlocutor’s office and go to its provincial affiliates. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami expresses no preference, but reserves the right to participate at a national level and prefers to spend its share of funding on explicitly Inuit priorities.

Part VI — What We Heard in the Consultations

What Our Elders Said

Where We Are Right Now

Many of those we heard in the consultations attributed the loss of their languages and cultures to the residential schools. They said that First Nation, Inuit and Métis people are at a crossroads on language and culture, where they must make choices, take action and involve the Elders. They focused on urban centres and youth, calling for funding and support mechanisms to help young people learn and take pride in their traditional languages and cultures.

Ethics and Concepts

Elders emphasized that language, culture, spiritual values and First Nation, Inuit and Métis sense of identity are inseparable concepts. Although writing and recording are useful supplemental resources, languages must be kept alive by daily use. Teaching the languages must be done with awareness of the important values these languages carry.

Personal Practices

Elders called on First Nation, Inuit and Métis people to do the following:

- Do not forget our languages.
- Speak and write our languages.
- Teach and learn our languages.
- Respect each other’s dialects and do not ridicule how others speak.
- Focus on young people.
- Start in the home to strengthen the will of the people to bring back our languages.
- Work together to build a foundation for our peoples.
- Speak with a united voice.

Institutional and Government Actions

Elders urged educational institutions to focus on:

- training programs, including immersion and bilingual schools, cultural camps and urban language programs;
- First Nation, Inuit and Métis control of language curricula to make language study mandatory, increase language teaching hours, and provide courses and programs, including degree programs, in First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and cultures;
- development of educational resources including curricula, books, promotional and supplemental materials, technology, and research to address the needs of professions such as medicine, law and engineering;
- encouragement to youth to take leadership roles in language preservation; and
- development of other training resources, such as language mentoring programs, language teacher training programs and formal acknowledgment of Elders' ability to teach languages, including appropriate professional recognition.

Governments were urged to act:

- Recognize the value of traditional languages and cultures by entrenching them in the Constitution.
- Develop infrastructure to preserve and strengthen languages (e.g., a strategic plan, language and culture program standards, rules directing funding straight to communities, cultural awareness guidelines for researchers and program officers, protection of traditional knowledge, community-based language and culture centres governed by boards of Elders and community members, First Nation language laws requiring chiefs, council members and employees to know their traditional languages, and standardization of written languages).
- Support resource development, including lifestyles that foster language retention, by financially supporting:
 - development and distribution of teaching resources, technology and research materials;
 - research on traditional languages, cultures and knowledge; and
 - First Nation, Inuit and Métis people who choose to live a traditional lifestyle, as well as supporting initiatives to teach youth the skills to live traditionally or on the land.

What the People Said

The Role of First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages

During 16 community consultations held across Canada in 2004, many stated that the ability to speak one's own language helps people to understand who they are in relation to themselves, their families and their communities, and to Creation itself. They spoke of the connection between one's own language and spirituality,

noting that focusing on language, spirituality and ceremonies can increase personal self-esteem, familiarize people with their culture and bring about community healing. They lamented language and culture loss, especially for the young people adrift between their cultures and that of mainstream Canadian society, and stressed that revitalizing language and culture is a way to heal and reconnect with the land. They attributed language loss to Canada's assimilation policies, particularly the residential school system, as well as to individual, institutional and government complacency.

Status of First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages

Many proposals were made to revitalize language, including federal legislation giving First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages the same recognition and respect as the English and French languages. Financial support at the same level provided for English and French was also recommended, along with additional legislation to protect traditional knowledge so that First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples may direct the revitalization and use of their languages and cultures and benefit from them.

Need for a Community-Driven Revitalization Strategy

There was consensus on the need for a community-driven revitalization strategy, based on community commitment to identify priorities and develop and carry out plans that would involve all age groups. Action must be taken now to prevent further language loss. The strategy must be a 100-year project to overcome the legacy of the many decades of neglect, but with particular focus on critically endangered languages.

Roles and Priorities of a National Language Organization

Participants recommended that key roles of a national language organization include:

- coordinating the research and planning for a long-term language strategy;
- increasing awareness of the importance of First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages;
- partnering with industry, governments and Indigenous peoples internationally; and
- directing funds to communities.

There was consensus that the organization should be streamlined, with minimal infrastructure, that decision making should be delegated to the regional level, that immediate funding should be provided to communities with few remaining fluent speakers, and that communities should get funding for community-based research and long-term language planning. All agreed that language and cultural education should be a main program focus, with many also recommending that it coordinate a clearing house or clearing houses to allow sharing of resources and research on best practices.

Part VII — Protecting and Promoting Our Languages

Protecting and Promoting Languages at the National Level

Most of the world's Indigenous languages are in danger of extinction, including those in Canada. Regardless of the number of speakers, all First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages are equal. There are many reasons why every effort should be made to save them.

First, they are the original languages of Canada, spoken here millennia before French and English. They ground First Nation, Inuit and Métis nationhood, are recognized in treaties and are entrenched in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. There is an intimate connection between those who speak them and this land, and the Task Force recommends that the physical connection between First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and the land be restored and strengthened through government-to-government agreements on comanagement or similar regimes (Recommendation 1).

Further, First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages contain a wealth of traditional knowledge of benefit to Canada and the world. As a signatory to the international *Convention on Biological Diversity*, Canada is obligated to preserve traditional knowledge. The evolving domestic and international law on traditional knowledge supports the Task Force recommendation that Canada work collaboratively with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples to develop better traditional knowledge protection and benefit-sharing measures (Recommendation 2).

Canada's ongoing nation-building is another reason to make efforts to save these languages. Canada has acknowledged its unfinished constitutional business with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and has formally acknowledged its past actions of suppressing their languages and cultures. In this context, the disparity between the national funding provided for French and English and that provided for First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages is highlighted.

Status Planning for First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages

International experience shows that successful language revitalization requires a partnership between government and the communities whose languages are at risk. It also requires government action — for example, giving a minority language official language status — to reverse the perception that lesser-spoken languages are inferior.

Aboriginal Languages as Official Languages

Legislation giving official language status to several Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut is examined and assessed. The Task Force concluded that official language status without funding sufficient to support an adequate level of programming and services does little to sustain an endangered language and highlighted the disparity between the funding offered for the French language in these territories and that provided for the First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages.

International Language Planning

Experience in Ireland and New Zealand shows that official language status without popular support does little for language revitalization. The support and commitment of the linguistic community itself is required, as are appropriate infrastructure and adequate funding. The Task Force recommends federal legislative recognition to promote and protect First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages (Recommendation 3) and supportive federal funding at least equal to that provided for the English and French languages (Recommendations 4 and 5).

Language Status and the Individual

International experience confirms that the status of a language influences whether it will be used and supported. Past policies intended to remove language and identity from the thousands of children who were placed in residential schools caused many to lose their connection to their people and to view their languages as inferior.

A review of the recent Assembly of First Nations criticism of the federal Department of Indian Residential Schools Resolution highlights the psychological harms suffered by residential school survivors, which impeded them from passing on their languages and cultures. Those harms cannot be compensated under the current federal out-of-court resolution process, even though they resulted from actions tantamount to a breach of federal fiduciary obligation. The Task Force adopts and strengthens the Assembly of First Nations recommendation calling for compensation to any individual who attended these schools as a step towards recognizing the value of First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages to these individuals (Recommendation 6).

Language Planning in First Nation, Inuit and Métis Communities

Calls for funding for community priorities established in the consultations, coupled with international data

showing grassroots participation to be key to language revival, prompted the Task Force to recommend a long-term national language strategy, based on “bottom-up” community-driven language planning, with support from regional and national First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations (Recommendation 7).

The need for accurate and up-to-date data to ground a national long-term strategy led the Task Force to recommend that the national language organization coordinate a community-driven baseline study of language conditions for which Canada should provide funds beyond its present linguistic and cultural funding commitment (Recommendation 8).

Successful international experience in reviving critically endangered and extinct languages led the Task Force to recommend that Canada provide additional funding support for critically endangered First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages (Recommendation 9) to allow extra and immediate revitalization work, such as documenting and archiving.

Language Education

Need for Culturally Relevant Education

In its Roundtable on Life Long Learning, Canada agreed with the Task Force that language education can play a vital role in language revitalization.

1. Immersion Language Education

The educational and social benefits of bilingualism, including those recorded by Inuit and First Nation language immersion programs, are explored, and the disparity in funding between federal French language immersion and First Nation, Inuit and Métis language programs is highlighted. The Task Force recommends that Canada provide equivalent funding to First Nation, Inuit and Métis language immersion programs (Recommendation 10) and that it fund five-week First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth language immersion programs like those currently offered youth for English or French language immersion (Recommendation 11).

2. Second-Language Programs

European experience shows that attaining second-language proficiency requires a high level of curriculum resources and teacher training, along with opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. Many First Nations whose schools are funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development offer second-language programs for their languages but lack the financial and related resources (such as regional support

mechanisms) to permit their students to achieve proficiency. A First Nation-sponsored study proposed a federal endowment fund for these purposes. The Task Force agrees and recommends that the DIAND increase its First Nation school funding to the same levels as those of the funding provided by the provinces for provincially managed schools (Recommendation 12).

The Community’s Role in Language Education

To revitalize an endangered language, language educators advocate full community involvement, especially that of parents and Elders, so that children arrive at school with some knowledge of their language and the opportunity to use it outside the classroom.

Language Education in Correctional Institutions

The revival of interest in learning about their own cultures among First Nation, Inuit and Métis persons in the federal corrections system has led to three types of culturally relevant programming: “Pathways Units” in high-security institutions, where Elders offer guidance; minimum-security institutions allowing incarcerated persons to gradually reintegrate into the social life of their communities; and community-run healing lodges offering traditional First Nation, Inuit and Métis teachings and methods of healing. The Task Force recommends that Canada take the next step by funding First Nation, Inuit and Métis language training in federal correctional institutions (Recommendation 13).

Language Teacher Training

During the consultations, there were calls for more and better-trained language teachers. The Task Force agrees and recommends the creation of a program by Canada and the provinces along the lines of other federal youth language programs to allow First Nation, Inuit and Métis students who wish to become teachers to learn their own languages and have access to summer bursaries or appropriate employment programs (Recommendation 14).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and Canada’s ministers of education have called for greater First Nation, Inuit and Métis teacher training and recruitment. First Nation schools are at a disadvantage in terms of salary and benefits, and the training role that First Nation, Inuit and Métis postsecondary institutions could play remains unexamined. The Task Force recommends that First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada review progress on teacher and language teacher training, including the role that First Nation, Inuit and Métis postsecondary institutions could play (Recommendation 15). Furthermore, the Task Force

calls on the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to fund these institutions so that they play a more prominent role (Recommendation 16).

Part VIII — A National Language Organization

On the basis of the Task Force's mandate and the views of consultation participants and the national First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations, the Task Force recommends a Languages and Cultures Council (LCC) to continue the work it was unable to complete and to provide leadership in developing a long-term, national language strategy (Recommendation 17).

Languages and Cultures Council

The advantages of drawing on the corporate memory and collective wisdom of the Task Force led it to recommend that its members be named as the interim council for a one-year period to finalize the work that could not be completed within the relatively short time frame provided in the Task Force mandate (Recommendation 18).

Vision, Mission Statement and Principles

The Task Force set out a vision for the LCC that sees First Nation, Inuit and Métis language revitalization efforts being “child centred, Elder focused and community driven” and provided an LCC mission statement focusing on “supporting and advocating for the preservation, maintenance and revitalization of our languages and cultures.” The Task Force sees the LCC being guided by the following principles:

- equality of access for all language and community groups;
- priorities established by each region in consultation with linguistic communities;
- fiscal responsibility and transparency and accountability to the government of Canada and to First Nation, Inuit and Métis governments; and
- appropriate recognition and fair compensation to Elders for their expertise and traditional knowledge.

Mandate

The LCC mandate would be to oversee the national language strategy, including:

- establishing a program operations function to distribute funds to national First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations and to assist in policy development and the development of regional clearing houses and communication centres;
- continuing the Task Force work by consulting the federal government to maximize the effectiveness and coordination of policies and programs that support language and culture, including self-government,

comprehensive claim and territorial language agreements;

- consulting with provincial governments to encourage collaboration and to advance an integrated language strategy;
- making recommendations to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and to stakeholders on program, planning and administration, including funding and evaluation criteria; and
- lobbying for a national language commissioner to monitor the implementation of the national language strategy.

Structure

The LCC should be independent and apolitical, and it should be governed by a 15-member council of representatives (six First Nation, two Inuit, two Métis, one from an endangered language group, two Elders, one youth and one from the Government of Canada), with staggered three-year terms, except for a nonvoting chairperson chosen to hold office for four years. Members would be experienced in language planning, programming or education, as well as in nonprofit governance, financial management and program administration; knowledgeable in community and government structures; and fluent in a First Nation, Inuit or Métis language.

Council Roles and Responsibilities

The LCC would have the following roles and responsibilities:

- overseeing development and implementation of the national language strategy;
- identifying and managing emerging priorities and implementing a plan based on community priorities;
- developing and implementing processes to properly allocate funds;
- identifying and (or) developing linkages at the national, provincial or territorial, municipal and local levels and identifying processes within government to support the implementation of the national language strategy;
- promoting languages as an integral part of Canadian and First Nation, Inuit and Métis identity;
- developing accountability frameworks;
- communicating information on the strategy to the public and to stakeholders;
- developing effective, multiyear evaluation methods and sharing with regions the responsibility for conducting evaluations;
- receiving reports from participating organizations and providing an annual report on spending, programs, services and results; and
- establishing and implementing a conflict-of-interest policy and code of ethics.

Accountability

The difficulties in measuring outcomes such as language fluency, where there is no clear definition, may hinder evaluation. The LCC should consult with communities and regions to come up with a clear set of objectives and outcomes, with reporting mechanisms and evaluative measures. This evaluation framework should match the standards of the Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI) program funding agreement.

Finances

Translation Services for French-Speaking First Nation, Inuit and Métis People

ALI evaluations show an inadequate level of services to French speakers, which the Task Force recommends be corrected with increased federal funding to the LCC, to enable it to provide a full range of services to French-speaking First Nation, Inuit and Métis people (Recommendation 19).

Current: Aboriginal Languages Initiative

Funded at \$5 million annually over four years, ALI was created in 1998 to help reverse First Nation, Inuit and Métis language loss. The Task Force reviewed a recent evaluation urging that the administration of ALI funding be examined to ensure optimal timing for release of funds and that new allocations account for regional variations.

Interim: Over the Next Five Years

Based on the consultations and the Task Force's own findings, the Task Force sees an urgent need for the \$160 million committed in 2002 for First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and recommends that Canada provide the funds over 5, instead of 10, years (Recommendation 20).

Endowment Fund

The Task Force examined the advantages and disadvantages of an endowment, structured either as a charitable organization or as a foundation. Consultations did not support an endowment, with most people preferring to have funds for language revitalization immediately available. While the Task Force wants the LCC to continue the study and consultation on this issue, it also sees virtue in having such a fund in the long term, particularly in generating funds from nongovernmental sources, and recommends that Canada provide the funds necessary to endow such a fund in perpetuity (Recommendation 21).

Short-Term Program Delivery

The Task Force recognizes that First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities and organizations may wish to

maintain existing regional program delivery structures and local decision-making processes. It recommends that the majority of funds already committed by Canada be decentralized to allow these structures and processes to continue and that the current ALI breakdown of funding for First Nation (75 percent), Inuit (15 percent) and Métis (10 percent) languages be maintained until a long-term national language strategy is developed and implemented, within the next five years (Recommendation 22).

The Task Force proposes a set of principles based on the successful aspects of the ALI to guide regional allocations of funds and recommends that regional allocations of funds to First Nations take into account variations in their languages and populations and that appropriate funding formulas be developed to account for regions with large populations and many linguistic communities (Recommendation 23).

National Projects Fund

The Task Force envisions a variety of projects that would be better addressed by the LCC than by regional or local organizations. Some of these projects involve issues going beyond a single region or language group, examining models for a national clearing house, conducting research and analysis of the federal language recognition legislation, and coordinating the national baseline survey. The Task Force recommends that 10 percent of the annual budget allocation from Canada's \$160-million commitment be set aside for the LCC to use for these purposes (Recommendation 24).

Innovative Projects Fund

During the consultations, many spoke of the need to apply new technology and innovative approaches to language education and revitalization. The Task Force agrees and recommends a fund be established to promote development, testing, evaluation and integration of new pedagogical methods, but that Canada fund it separately from its existing commitment, so as not to detract from the funds urgently needed by communities to reverse current language loss (Recommendation 25).

Concluding Comments

The Task Force views this report as the first step of a 100-year journey to revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and cultures and is confident that, with Canada's support and the collective will of First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals, families and communities, this journey can be completed. Canada must recognize its rich linguistic heritage and accept that it is the oral histories, the songs and the dances that speak of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis connection with this land. They give the fabric of Canada the texture and coloration that

make it unlike any other fabric in the world. Restoring their languages and cultures would ensure that First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples remain strong nations for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows.

Task Force Recommendations

1. The Link between Languages and the Land

That First Nation, Inuit and Métis governments and the federal, provincial and territorial governments enter into government-to-government agreements or accords on natural resources, environmental sustainability and traditional knowledge. The agreements or accords should recognize the importance for First Nation, Inuit and Métis people of maintaining a close connection to the land in their traditional territories, particularly wilderness areas, heritage and spiritual or sacred sites, and should provide for their meaningful participation in stewardship, management, co-management or co-jurisdiction arrangements.

2. Protection of Traditional Knowledge

That Canada take a more comprehensive approach on the protection, use and benefits arising from traditional knowledge under the international *Convention on Biological Diversity* and that greater recognition be accorded to First Nation, Inuit and Métis people, particularly the Elders, in the collaborative planning process under the *Convention*.

3. Legislative Recognition, Protection and Promotion

That Canada enact legislation that recognizes, protects and promotes First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages as the First Languages of Canada. This legislation, to be developed in partnership with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples, must recognize the constitutional status of our languages; affirm their place as one of the foundations of First Nation, Inuit and Métis nationhood; provide financial resources for their preservation, revitalization, promotion and protection; and establish the position of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Language Commissioner.

4. Equitable Resources for Language Support

That Canada provide funding for First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages which is, at a minimum, at the same level as that provided for the French and English languages.

5. Language Support from All Federal Departments

That funding for First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages not be limited to that provided by the Departments of Canadian Heritage, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development. All government departments, and particularly the Departments of Justice, Health, and Human Resources and Skills Development, need to adopt policies and provide funding sufficient to allow for delivery of services and programs which promote First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages, in the same manner as for the French and English languages.

6. Restitution and Reconciliation

That Canada implement as soon as possible the recommendation of the Assembly of First Nations to pay a lump-sum award by way of compensation to any person who attended an Indian Residential School. Alternatively, Canada and the churches establish a restitution fund to pay a lump-sum award to any person who attended an Indian Residential School, as compensation for emotional and psychological trauma brought on by loss of connection to family and community and to language and culture.

7. A National Language Strategy

That a National Language Strategy be developed through community-based planning by First Nation, Inuit and Métis language communities, as well as by their regional and national representative organizations, with coordination and technical support to be provided by the proposed national language organization.

8. Baseline Language Survey

That as the first component of a national long-term strategy, the national language organization coordinate a baseline survey of language conditions. The baseline survey will be conducted by First Nation, Inuit and Métis people as part of community-based language planning and needs assessments. Further, we recommend that funding for this work be provided separately from current commitments.

9. Funding of Critically Endangered Languages

That Canada provide funding, in addition to what will be available under the current commitment, for those First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities whose languages are critically endangered, in order that they may undertake additional work to preserve their languages.

10. Funding of Immersion Programs

That Canada provide additional funding for First Nation, Inuit and Métis language immersion programs, at a level equivalent to that provided for the French and English languages through the Minority-Language Education component of the Development of Official-Language Communities Program.

11. Funding of Immersion Programs for Youth

That Canada make available bursaries to enable First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth to attend five-week immersion courses in their languages and cultures in the same manner as is provided to French and English youth in the Second-Language Learning component of the Enhancement of Official Languages Program.

12. Equitable Funding for First Nation Schools

That funding of First Nation schools by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development be provided at the same level and standard as that provided to Ministries of Education through Master Tuition Agreements.

13. Language Education in Correctional Institutions

That the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Commissioner of Corrections use their powers under the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* to provide federal funding for language programming and strengthen cultural programming to federally incarcerated First Nation, Inuit, and Métis persons.

14. Training Opportunities for Postsecondary Students

That Canada, and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada establish, as part of their Action Plan on Aboriginal education, a program to encourage First Nation, Inuit and Métis university students entering the teaching profession, particularly in language education, to become proficient in their languages by entering into master-apprentice programs or undertaking other cultural education in their communities. Specifically, that summer bursaries or employment programs be made available in the same manner as is provided for French and English youth language training programs.

15. Language Teacher Training

That First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada conduct a review of progress made on First Nation, Inuit and Métis teacher and language teacher

training initiatives relevant to recruitment and retention. Further, as part of this review, that the role of First Nation, Inuit and Métis post-secondary institutions in delivering language teacher training be reviewed, particularly with respect to immersion language teacher training.

16. First Nation, Inuit and Métis Postsecondary Institutions

That the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development provide additional resources to First Nation, Inuit and Métis postsecondary and existing institutions to enable them to establish language teacher training programs and, more specifically, immersion language teacher training programs.

17. A National Language Organization

That a permanent body of First Nation, Inuit and Métis representatives (Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Council or “LCC”) be established.

18. Establishment of the LCC

That current Task Force members be named as Interim Council members and have the responsibility of establishing the LCC. The Interim Council members will act for a period of one year and carry out the following duties:

- finalize the governance structure of the LCC;
- develop a three-year strategic plan;
- establish operations by preparing operating budgets, identifying staffing requirements and recruiting staff;
- negotiate transfer of Aboriginal language funds from Canadian Heritage;
- develop terms of reference and oversee a planning study for a language clearing house;
- plan and carry out the necessary research for implementation of a baseline survey and community-based language planning;
- seek nominations for the LCC; and
- shortlist candidates and provide list to national First Nation, Inuit and Métis organizations for final selection.

19. Provision of Services to French-Language Speakers

That funding be provided under the Official Languages Support programs to enable the LCC to provide a full range of services to French language speaking First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

20. Use of Short-Term Funding

That the existing commitment of \$160 million be provided on an urgent basis to First Nation, Inuit

and Métis communities for language preservation and revitalization efforts over a five-year period, rather than the proposed 10-year timeframe, taking into consideration the critical state of languages and the needs identified by the communities.

21. Establishing a Language Endowment Fund

That Canada provide funding to establish an endowment fund to finance community-based language programs in perpetuity.

22. Administration of Short-Term Funding

That the majority of funds committed by Canada be decentralized to allow existing First Nation, Inuit and Métis language decision-making structures to continue with their work. The current national allocation of funding under the Aboriginal Languages Initiative, that is, 75 percent to First Nation languages, 15 percent to Inuit languages and 10 percent to Métis languages, should be maintained until a long-term national language strategy is developed and implemented within the next five years.

23. Allocation of Interim Funding to First Nation Languages

That regional funding allocations for First Nation languages take into account varying populations and languages. Funding formulas should be developed which provides for base funding at the current level, with additional funding adjustments made for regions having large populations and many language communities.

24. National Projects Fund

That ten percent (10%) of the annual budget allocation from the \$160-million commitment be set aside to establish a National Projects Fund to be administered by the LCC, in partnership with the national First Nation, Inuit and Métis political organizations.

25. Innovative Projects Fund

That Canada provide funding to the LCC for the creation of an Innovative Projects Fund that will support innovative projects, research and the use of new technology in language education and revitalization efforts. The Innovations Project Fund is to be established with funding separate from the \$160-million dollar commitment and should reflect participation and support by all federal government ministries.