

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROGRAM







MISSION

To provide educational, career and cultural opportunities to enhance the identity and quality of life for Doyon shareholders.

VISION ELEMENTS

- · Financial Sustainability
- · Effective and Collaborative Strategic Partnerships
- Organizational Excellence
- Every Shareholder's Dream is Realized
- Strong Demonstration of Native Traditional Language and Culture

VALUES

DENE – Culture, Language, Work Ethic/Way of Life, Intergenerational Well-being/Connectivity

INTEGRITY - Transparency, Honesty, Accountability

QUALITY – Excellence, Focus, Proactive, Measurable Results. Innovative

COMMUNITY – Raising Healthy and Happy Native Children, Supporting, Mentoring, Shared Vision within the Community

IDENTITY – Who We Are, Where We Come From, Discipline, Respect

OUR LANGUAGES

Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana)

Deg Xinag

Denaakk'e (Koyukon)

Dihthaad Xt'een Iin Aandeeg' (Tanacross)

Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim)

Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in)

Hän

Holikachuk

Inupiag

Nee'aanèegn' (Upper Tanana)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All the ancestral languages of the Doyon region are critically endangered. The Athabascan languages in our region include: Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana), Deg Xinag, Denaakk'e (Koyukon), Dihthaad Xt'een lin Aanděeg' (Tanacross), Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim), Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in), Hän, Holikachuk, and Nee'aanèegn' (Upper Tanana). Inupiaq is the 10th language in our region, spoken historically in Alatna, Evansville, and Beaver.

The current endangered status of our languages is an outcome of a long history of laws, policies, and institutions that sought to assimilate Alaska Natives into mainstream culture. If the current trend is allowed to persist, all of our region's languages will be lost within the span of a few generations.

When we look at the iconic map of Alaska Native languages (see next page), produced by the Alaska Native Language Center, we see clear and sharp lines drawn between each distinct language. The reality is those lines are actually very blurred. Traveling up or down the rivers, the languages gradually shift dialects village by village, fishcamp by fishcamp, trapline by trapline. The comparison might be made to a hillside of aspen trees, which might appear as many individual trees, when in fact it is essentially one tree system, united through a network of roots sending up new shoots through the soil. Another way to look at our region is we are "One People: Many Languages."

There is plenty of cause for hope amidst the adversity our languages have endured. Tribes have expressed their desire to have children learn their Native languages, which has led to some school districts instituting bilingual programs as well as various organizations incorporating language programming into their missions. Significant progress was made on the statewide level in 2012, when the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council was created to advocate for the survival and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. Another step forward occurred in 2014 when the Alaska Legislature and former Governor Sean Parnell amended the 1988 Official Language Act to include all 20 Indigenous languages of Alaska. And then, in 2018, Governor Bill Walker declared a linguistic emergency for Alaska Native languages, with the intention of promoting and preserving all 20 recognized Indigenous languages in the state.



As momentum continues to builds towards greater protection for and revitalization of Alaska Native languages across the state, Doyon Foundation assumes a leadership role in Interior Alaska. Our board and staff are committed to ensuring that current and future generations have the opportunity to hear, to learn, and to speak the language of our ancestors.

The Doyon Foundation Language Revitalization Strategic Plan 2018-2021 is our roadmap towards that vision. The plan provides a general strategy for moving forward through the identification of key areas of focus, long-term goals, and short-term actions. Doyon Foundation understands that the landscape of language revitalization is constantly changing and therefore we are committed to continually reflecting upon and adjusting our strategies to adapt to changing environments and conditions.

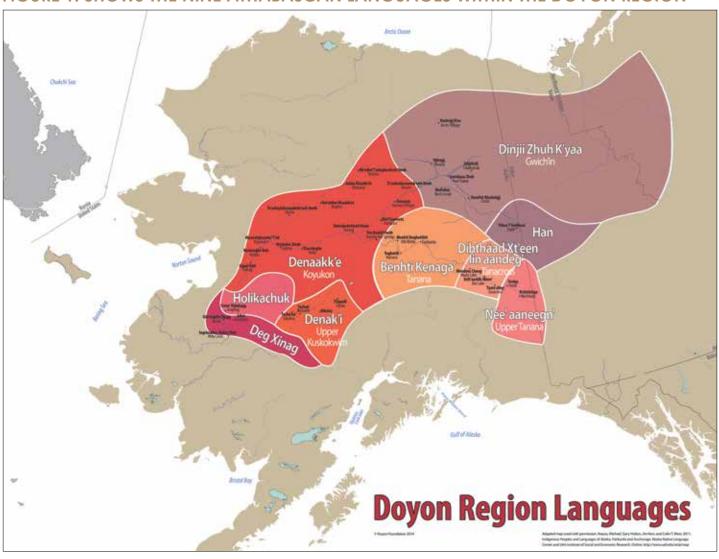
WHO WE ARE

Doyon Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization established in 1989 by Doyon, Limited. Doyon Foundation's mission is to provide educational, career and cultural opportunities to enhance the identity and quality of life for Doyon's 19,000+ shareholders. The Foundation carries out its mission by providing basic and competitive scholarships, works with organizations to place interns, and advances traditional Native knowledge by partnering with various organizations.

The Foundation's work in the area of language revitalization came in response to shareholder concerns regarding the impending loss of our ancestral languages.

A 2007 estimate by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska Native Language Center, indicated there were less than 500 Dene' Athabascan language speakers.

FIGURE 1: SHOWS THE NINE ATHABASCAN LANGUAGES WITHIN THE DOYON REGION



In 2010, the Interior Athabascan Council of Elders, Denakkanaaga, passed resolution #10-15 "Funding the Preservation of our Athabascan Languages and Culture," which called for a concerted effort to preserve Athabascan languages. In 2011, Tanana Chiefs Conference (a consortium of 42 Interior tribes) passed two resolutions, one of which supported the development of computer-assisted language resources and the other called on school districts and regional Native organizations to develop proposals for language preservation and documentation.

In 2012, the leadership of Doyon, Limited responded to this call for action by investing in the establishment of a regional language revitalization program. Under the direction of Doyon Foundation, the organization's first step was to create a five-member volunteer committee representative of shareholders, descendants and tribal members who shared an expertise and passion for language revitalization.

Since its initial formation, the Doyon Language Revitalization Committee (DLRC) has played a key role in guiding the design and development of a regional language program. The DLRC meets monthly and is composed of a board committee and advisory committee with representatives from all languages in the Doyon region.

In 2012, the Doyon, Limited governing board of directors, along with the support from President Aaron Schutt, awarded start-up funding to Doyon Foundation to establish the Doyon Language Revitalization Program.

The initial goals of the Doyon Language Revitalization Program were to:

- Expand the organizational capacity of Doyon
 Foundation to effectively and efficiently develop,
 implement, and sustain a Native language
 revitalization program.
- Develop a language revitalization program that will ensure the cultures and languages of the Doyon region are taught, documented, and easily accessible.

Doyon Foundation recognizes that working towards the vision of revitalizing our languages will require a collective effort on the part of many individuals and organizations. Key to our success will be the ability to better align efforts, maximize resources, and to embrace lessons learned and best practices from other Indigenous language revitalization initiatives.

OUR LANGUAGES, OUR LIVES

I DON'T TALK TO YOU FOR TODAY, I TALK TO YOU FOR A LONG WAYS AHEAD.

- NEAL CHARLIE

Our people have a long history in Interior Alaska with a traditional lifestyle based on seasonal subsistence activities. The various communities that identify as Athabascan have been (and continue to be) very diverse, with each region possessing its own distinct language or dialect, worldview, and cultural values.

Since the time of contact with Western society, Alaska Native people have experienced an unprecedented rate of change. The gradual settlement of Alaska over time introduced all manner of external influences including new populations, laws, policies, diseases, institutions, values, economies, and languages.

Beginning in the early 1900s, the education of Alaska Natives became a growing priority for both missionary groups as well as federal and territorial governments. The establishment of both mission- and government-operated boarding schools across Alaska would eventually become a familiar part of the Alaska Native experience.

Generations of Athabascans attended boarding schools often experiencing historical trauma associated with the banning, punishment, and shaming of Native languages within these educational institutions. Many of these students left boarding school either no longer speaking or being fearful of speaking their Native language. As this generation eventually became parents, the majority were understandably unable or unwilling to pass on the language of their ancestors to their own children. These developments coupled with the growing prominence of English as the official language of the Alaska served to displace Native languages. Compounding this history is the aging / loss of fluent speakers as well as the limited opportunities for new language learners.

The figures on the following page provide some quantitative evidence for why an intervention for language revitalization is sorely needed in the Doyon region however the numbers only tell one part of the story. Language revitalization is complex and involves many factors including identity, traditional knowledge, and cultural survival.

TABLE 1: 2007 NATIVE LANGUAGE POPULATIONS AND SPEAKERS IN THE DOYON REGION

LANGUAGE	Number of Villages	Total Population	Number of Speakers
Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in)	7	1,000	150
Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana)	2	100	25
Denaakk'e (Koyukon)	13	2,300	150
Dihthaad Xt'een Iin Aandeeg' (Tanacross)	3	200	50
Nee'aanèegn' (Upper Tanana)	2	300	55
Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim)	4	100	25
Hän	1	60	12
Holikachuk	1	180	5
Deg Xinag	3	250	14

Source: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Language Center

- 1. A strong connection to language gives Indigenous people stronger self-identity and self-esteem; the loss of language significantly affects culture. Dene' Athabascans identify with our culture through language since it holds our protocols, values, and beliefs. Knowledge of language validates our Athabascan way of life. Stories told and recorded by speakers strengthen our culture. As the chance to record fluent Elder speakers and the ability to translate disappears, so do the stories and the guidance they provide.
- 2. The declining number of Athabascan speakers translates to language loss and/or extinction.

 Table 1, above, shows the estimated number of speakers living in each of the nine language areas in the Doyon region based on the most recent 2007 data Alaska Native Language Center. This data is coupled with the project's target population, which is the estimated percentage of adults equal to or over the age of 18. This speaker data, the most recent available, is now 11 years old. We have lost many Elders in the past several years and our language situation continues to shift; currently there are only three Holikachuk speakers.
- 3. There are insufficient numbers of qualified Athabascan language teachers, which means a lack of language learning opportunities within the Doyon region. The ability to speak a language does not translate to the ability to teach it, so insufficient teacher numbers makes the potential for loss of languages even greater. Current programs within the Doyon region consist of classes through five school districts, limited

afterschool programs, and classes offered at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. While worthwhile, the effort has not resulted in many new fluent speakers of Dene' languages. How do we create opportunities to speak our languages, a regular time and space to use the language in the community?

These current realities all point to the need to undertake a revitalization effort that capitalizes on the growing support for Alaska Native languages across the state.

2018 PLANNING SESSION

On January 12–13, Doyon Foundation hosted a two-day strategic planning session focused on language planning and policy. The purpose of the gathering was to create a shared vision of the Language Revitalization Program at Doyon Foundation.

- Day 1 looking internally, reviewing the existing plan and strategizing with the Doyon Foundation Language Revitalization Committee (LRC)
- Day 2 broadened the discussion to include speakers, teachers, and leaders from around the region

Each day's activities brought out ideas and activities focused on bringing our languages to a safer place with more daily use by more people in more areas. The results of the activities are summarized below and culminated in a list of priorities which will shape the directions and activities of the LRC for the next several years. This plan will be used to map activities and to report back to the board of Doyon Foundation.

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICIES

This is a living document that outlines major focus areas for language planning and policy development for the languages in the Dovon region. The strategies listed here are guideposts for the LRC and offer suggestions for partner organizations and individuals who are committed to defending the health of our languages and our people. Language planning is a deliberate and systematic attempt to influence the behavior of individuals in regards to language choices, and also to influence the health and use of specific languages. Language policy refers to the ways that languages are chosen and used, and the active (written and spoken rules) and passive (behaviors) ways that languages function. These planning and policy activities are often viewed in three realms: Micro refers to individuals and families, and the focus is often on how to make endangered languages the language of choice. Meso is the community and region, and focus is often on how to make sure the language has its fair share of power and use. Macro refers to the state, federal, and international issues and attempts to influence policies regarding language use and presence.

In addition to these areas, this document looks at strategies in terms of immediate (within the next one to two years), near future (within the next three to five years), and distant future (within the next five to 20 years). Some strategies look at activities and others at behaviors, and also some focus on the language communities and others focus outside of the language community. One of the primary recommendations is to create a shift in the ways that our languages are valued by our people, which will take deliberate efforts that combat the generations of structural racism that Indigenous people have faced during the violence of colonialism. William Wilson, a professor at the Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikolani, College of Hawaiian Language, says that language revitalization is about two things: 1) protecting the speakers you have while making new ones, and 2) making your language the language of power and use. In addition to these two principles, language communities should focus on making language realms the place that people want to be, where everyone is safe and valued, and where efforts

and accomplishments are recognized and celebrated in ways that avoid competition but instead embrace a universal uplifting of Indigenous peoples and their efforts.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A key step for organizations working on language revitalization is to map out areas of social change or acceptance. There are many obstacles to achieving the goal of language revitalization, and it can be helpful to categorize these into areas of Accept, Ignore, Resist, or Change.

Attendees listed things that were both inside the language communities, and in the surrounding societies. These categories can inform decisions by helping us to understand what kind of obstacle we are confronted with, and that in turn allows us overcome or move past them. There were many specific examples provided by attendees; listed below are but a few of them.

Things to Accept: We are conscious of their existence, and are not able to change them

- · Our Elders are going fast
- · Languages are endangered
- Where we are in our language journey
- · Ownership of language
- · Revitalization can be done!

(Acceptance can also be a positive, as in the last two bullets)

Things to Ignore: We will not allow to derail efforts

- Negativity
- Those who say it is "too hard"
- Those who don't believe there is value in our languages
- The idea that learning a Native language is a disadvantage for a child
- · Limiting beliefs

Things to Resist: We need to stand up against

- Quitting
- Talking death into being (i.e., consistently saying our languages are dying)
- · Opposing ideologies
- Colonization
- · Self-doubt
- · Doubt from others



Things to Change: We can transform

- Attitudes
- Apathy
- · Our daily thoughts—think in the language
- · Spend time with Elders and speakers
- Create safe places

Language revitalization needs to build momentum in order to establish a place of high social value and function among communities; it is important to understand internal and external forces that can affect language revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

Focus Area 1: Data

Monitor the status of our languages, work to shift numbers

Focus Area 2: Collaboration

Encourage a grassroots community approach to language revitalization

Focus Area 3: Advocacy

Promote opportunities to elevate our languages to their rightful place

Focus Area 4: Programs

Pursue grant funding opportunities and share resources with communities in the region

Focus areas were proposed to help summarize the larger level goals of language activities in the Doyon region. In order for the program to effectively achieve this vision, it was critical that priorities be identified. Key actions were identified for each focus area and were further broken down into "next steps" in order to guide implementation efforts.

FOCUS AREA 1: DATA

Goal: Monitor the status of our languages, work to shift numbers

Action: *Identify numbers of speakers, learners, and instructors by village*

Next Steps:

- · Compile speaker data from grant applications
- Conduct survey of villages self-reporting number of speakers
- Share data with public, organizations
- · Include partial or passive speakers, learners

Action: Develop surveys for ANA and ANEP grants

Next Steps:

- Work with data company to build on previous surveys
- · Share data in grant reporting
- Measure impact of grant project

Action: Collect quantitative data on impact of programs

Next Steps:

- Numbers of communities and shareholders served
- Share in reporting to board
- Measure impact of projects

FOCUS AREA 2: COLLABORATION

Goal: Create a grassroots community approach to language revitalization

Action: Encourage a collective impact approach to language revitalization

Next Steps:

- · Collaborate with tribes
- Identify opportunities (audio-conferences, potlucks, focus groups, etc.) to align language revitalization efforts and resources: Doyon Foundation, Tanana Chiefs Conference, University of Alaska, Tribes, Communities, Governments, and Village Corporations

Action: Create opportunities for language learning

Next Steps:

- Outreach events
- Language teaching and learning workshops
- Literacy workshops

FOCUS AREA 3: ADVOCACY

Goal: Promote opportunities to elevate our languages to their rightful place

Action: Support language learning in schools

Next Steps:

- Recruit and develop next generation of teachers
- · Creation of curriculum and materials
- Meet language credit requirements



Action: Celebrate 2019 as International Year of Indigenous Languages

Next Steps:

- Partner with local and statewide organizations
- · Promote IYIL in blog, email, and social media posts
- Culminating event during AFN

Action: Documenting evidence-based practices **Next Steps:**

- Develop Indigenous evaluation process for program and projects
- Outreach to other Indigenous language efforts
- Meet language credit requirements

FOCUS AREA 4: PROGRAMS

Action: Pursue grant funding opportunities, and share resources with communities in the region

Next Steps:

- Building and expanding on existing grant work
- · Building infrastructure
- Collaborate with language regions on grant projects

Action: Develop language leaders

Next Steps:

- Continue highlighting language champions in the region
- · Host regional language summit
- · Technical assistance for language efforts in region

ENAA BAASEE' YOU TL'EEYEGGE HUKKENAAGE GHU KK'ONUHDENEEYH DEHN.

- ELIZA JONES

MAPPING OUR CHALLENGES

- · Need for language revitalization efforts to become institutionalized, how will our regional and local organizations support language revitalization in the long term.
- · Language revitalization is complex and includes a) collective and individual attitudes at the local, regional and state levels; b) the number, motivation and availability of speakers and learners; c) the existence, availability, quality and access of language resources and materials; d) social and individual learning endeavors that require persistence over time; and e) safe environments to learn, healing from trauma and a focus on language wellness.
- · Oftentimes there is competition for language contractors who are otherwise employed, or whose schedules are very full.
- · Need to recruit, train, encourage a new generation of language learners to become teachers. Those currently teaching languages are doing incredible work, but they are few in number, or may be planning retirement. Who will become teachers in the future?

A PLAN OF ACTION 2019-2021

KEY ACTIONS	NEXT STEPS	YEAR
Priority Area: Data		
Develop a database of information on speakers, learners, and instructors by village	Create database framework	2019
	Utilize Our Language grant as an opportunity to continue documenting language status of villages	
	Identify contacts with knowledge of language status in particular regions	
ANA and ANEP grant surveys	Work with data company to build on previous surveys	19-21
	Share data in grant reporting	
	Measure impact of grant project	
Priority Area: Collaboration		
Utilize collective impact approach to language revitalization	Identify opportunities (audio-conferences, potlucks, focus groups, etc.) to align language revitalization efforts and resources: Doyon Foundation, Tanana Chiefs Conference, University of Alaska, Tribes, Communities, Governments, and Village Corporations	2020
Foster opportunities for language learning events	Create opportunities for new learners to engage with experienced advanced learners	
	Partner with Effie Kokrine and other interested schools to increase language learning opportunities for students	
	Attend/present/collaborate with the 2019 Alaska Native Studies Conference	2019
Priority Area: Advocacy		
Advocating	Work with secondary school systems in FNSBSD to create opportunities for students to receive academic credit	2020
	Develop talking points for carrying message of language revitalization	2019
Priority Area: Programs		
Continue to share information on language-related events	Maintain "language events" link on new website and blog, share through Facebook page, (Instagram, Twitter?)	2019
	Host a series of teleconferences to share information on language-related events	19-20
	Utilize radio and other media to market the Doyon Foundation Language Revitalization Program	
Documenting evidence based practices	Developing an Indigenous evaluation process to evaluate our program and projects	2019
Share language learning tools	Publish courses for five languages in Doyon Languages Online project	
	Share existing clips on useful words and expressions in ancestral languages	2019
	Develop new clips on useful words and expressions in ancestral languages (i.e., Indigenous Peoples Day in the languages, marking other holidays and public events)	2019
	Continue producing Word of the Month for all languages in region	2019
	Include website links to existing software apps	2019
Develop language leaders	Form a working group committed to developing language leaders, ex. teacher cohort	19-21

THIRTY-YEAR VISION

Workshop participants were asked to think of one thing they would like to see 30 years from now.



The idea behind this activity is to be able to forecast where we hope to see our languages go. To give it context, some of the programs and successes in Hawai'i were talked about with this point in mind: what you see in Hawai'i now—language schools, language teacher degree programs, and a dramatic increase in the number of speakers and places where the language is used—is a result of intensive language planning and policy activities over the past 30 years.

The list below summarizes what was shared by participants. These should be used to begin thinking about the long-range vision for the language program.

- · Children and grandchildren speaking fluently
- Half of us are speaking our Native languages and having conversations
- Children speaking our languages as first languages
- · Our schools will be immersion schools
- Interactive archive with all our language materials that we all can access
- Young people that are working on learning now will be working in our languages and teaching
- Everybody speaking—at least speaking and understanding some
- Young people doing what they normally do—but in our language
- More men involved in language activities
- · Grandkids speak back to me
- · All of us working together; all of our people healthy
- · Indigenous control of education
- Alaskans in charge of their own education and language health
- People comfortable in their language, talking to each other
- People learning each other's language, not just their own

- Hearing kids play and shout out in their language, language in the post office, language in the church service
- People hunting and trapping
- All of our people studying through our language: preschool through Ph.D.
- Having a big party and being successful
- Conference where people come from all over the world to see the people who brought back 10 Athabascan languages
- · Little kids speaking our language
- Speaking our Upper Tanana language
- An archive for our languages; recording our languages being spoken now
- See our languages in books, written fluently
- · People return to the village
- All our children and grandchildren speaking our language while playing
- All the generations to get a higher education, to speak their language, to be strong, and to stand up for their rights
- · Children speaking with their parents
- Children talking to each other in our language
- Increased access to language learning groups/tools
- · Increased visibility of our language
- Systematic AND organic language learning processes (in school and taught regularly at home or in the community)
- More traditional singers and mask dances with traditional tea partner ceremony
- More Alaska Native teachers and administrators
- Accepted language credit (at the district/school level)
- Let down our guard for this
- More of the language
- · United effort
- · Not feel guilty
- Having access to the tools needed
- Have young people and youth involved
- Go to archives at UAF
- · Practice and live cultural traditions
- Increase cultural fluency



















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