

ONE mind · ONE people

NETOLNEW

Adult Indigenous contributions to reviving languages in
British Columbia through Mentor-Apprentice style learning

ASSESSMENT TOOL REPORT



Introduction

THE RESEARCH PROJECT NETOLNEW “one mind, one people” focused on better understanding adult Indigenous language learning with two community partners in British Columbia through the popular Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP) method (Hinton, 2001).

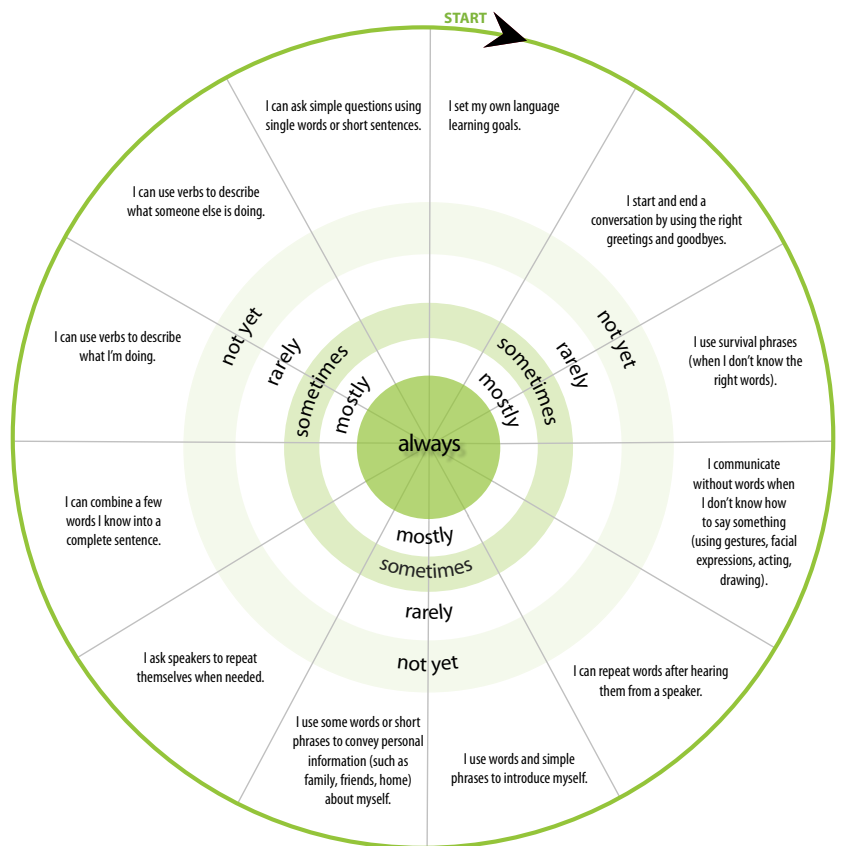
The Assessment Tool

THE ASSESSMENT TOOL (AT) fills a gap in adult Indigenous language learning (AILL) by expanding on existing models, accounting for the unique learning context of AILL, and incorporating project participants’ feedback and input.

The AT was developed collaboratively with community partners, apprentices, and researchers with expertise in both education and linguistics.

To support novice and intermediate Learners, the domains of Speaking and Understanding for Beginner and Intermediate levels have been developed and piloted. We used a *5-level Likert-type scale* with a *focus on growth*, making the AT appropriate even for beginner learners. The first level “Not yet” signals to something new the learner can work towards, an important focus of the tool.

We collated and adapted *learning goals* into a user-friendly, specialized, yet generalizable model using *I Can...* statements. Our focus on a “can do” model was a purposeful positive approach to language learning assessment. The AT Booklet also includes space to reflect on learner goals, activities, and achievements.



Outcomes

APPRENTICES GAVE OVERALL positive feedback to the experience of using the AT and commented that using the AT inspired confidence in their learning progress.

While apprentices found the AT beneficial, they commented that as they progressed in their learning, using English (in the tool), rather than their Indigenous language, felt disruptive at times.

From apprentices' reflections we learned that language learning goals reached further than “conventional” learning goals, and by extension, they challenged traditional (Western) concepts of success in language learning:

- > *Learning and maintaining specific cultural knowledge* • Blank statement fields were mostly used to add cultural activities: *I Can... “say a prayer”, “identify written place names”, “translate from old recordings”, “understand the gist of ceremonial speech”*
- > *Language revitalization* • Participants shared learning the language to keep it alive as a main goal: *“I definitely interact more with the elders, I feel like we have a connection, I guess, through language, cause they enjoy hearing it from me, and, or enjoying talking in the language to me, right?”* (a language apprentice)

Apprentices with all levels of proficiency were able to complete the AT. Through a cross-sectional analysis (see chart below), percentage scores for 21 participants suggest that initially, Beginners tended to over-rate their level of language abilities. Throughout Year 1, over-rating was corrected, and the learning steadily increased through to Year 2. Intermediate scores began to increase in the latter half of Year 2 and in Year 3.

Year 3 scores include self-assessments of learners who had completed their MAP training a few years back. We explain the slight decline in Beginner scores from Year 2 to Year 3 in that these past learners are no longer actively working on Beginner tasks, while also having reached a level of insight into their learning that reduces the chance of over-rating skills in these areas.

The next steps in the development of the AT will be to further test and expand “Listening and Understanding” to the Advanced level as well as include Reading and Writing learning goals across all levels.

Apprentice self-assessments of language proficiency growth

	Year 1, first half	Year 1, second half	Year 2, first half	Year 2, second half	Year 3, total
Speaking – Beginner	72 %	69 %	85 %	90 %	85 %
Understanding – Beginner	76 %	71 %	87 %	90 %	82 %
Speaking – Intermediate	51 %	47 %	56 %	59 %	72 %
Understanding – Intermediate	62 %	56 %	57 %	63 %	75 %



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