



February 4, 2021

JACKSON LAFFERTY
MLA, MONFWI

Oral Question 457-19(2) Interpreters

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question that you raised on November 03, 2020 regarding the development and training of professional Indigenous language interpreters.

The Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to fostering lifelong learning, skills development, training, and employability, particularly to promote the Northwest Territories (NWT) nine official Indigenous languages. Since 2014, the GNWT has provided funding directly to Indigenous Governments to implement their Regional Indigenous Language Plans to revitalize Indigenous languages and grow the number of speakers.

Currently the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is planning a March 2021 Interpreter/Translator (I/T) gathering for the approximately 30 existing NWT I/Ts. The purpose of this gathering is to bring together the I/Ts to address their training needs, and to listen to their concerns. In addition, to identifying the I/Ts' technical training needs, ECE will also share resources and initiate the preliminary work to develop an I/T costing grid to standardize invoicing processes.

ECE is also moving forward with two exciting new Indigenous Language Revitalization initiatives to expand and enhance Indigenous language programming and training in all NWT regions. The first is the Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP), an immersive language learning initiative, currently being delivered at the community level; the second is a new pilot Indigenous Languages Diploma (ILD) Program, planned for delivery at the post-secondary level. Both the MAP and ILD programs will provide more intensive training opportunities, and in turn, increase the number of Indigenous language speakers and their language proficiency levels.

MAP is the first step in an overarching strategy for revitalizing Indigenous languages starting in 2020-2021, and continuing into 2021-2022 in partnership with six (6) regional Indigenous Governments.

During this same time period, 2020-2022, ECE is initiating the research, partnership and program development, which will inform the fall 2022 intake of the 2-year pilot ILD program delivered in partnership with Aurora College, University of Victoria and Indigenous Governments. During the ILD program, students will be eligible to apply for the NWT Indigenous Languages Scholarship Program and NWT Student Financial Assistance.

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After completion of the ILD program, students can choose to enter into specialty areas (career paths) to advance their higher levels of Indigenous language proficiency, which will involve language specific career development and practical training in interpreting, translating, broadcasting, community language instruction, resource development and /or MAP mentoring.

The long-term goal is to develop the pilot ILD initiative into a laddering approach to achieve Indigenous languages certificate, diploma and bachelor's programs owned and delivered by Aurora College, and eventually become the flagship program in the new and upcoming NWT Polytechnic University. The development of graduate level programs will also be explored once the pilot ILD program has been approved as part of the new NWT Polytechnic program offerings.

The MAP and ILD programs together will help to build a foundation of new NWT language speakers to support the protection, revitalization and use of Indigenous languages into the future. Increasing the number of fluent language speakers will help expand the availability of Indigenous language services across government departments, in schools and early childhood programs, in the media, and other public services.

It is ECE's vision that the MAP and ILD programs will contribute not only to the development of a new generation of professional Indigenous language interpreters and translators, but also advance other Indigenous language career paths in the NWT.

In the meantime, ECE will continue to work towards an interim, more immediate, solution to I/T training and support, as described above, prior to the full roll-out of the ILD program at Aurora College.

Thank you for your leadership and questions in this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R.J. Simpson
Minister, Education, Culture
and Employment

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Minister, Education, Culture and Employment
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs