

# **ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE BROADCASTING IN CANADA**

## **An overview and recommendations to the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures**

### **Final Report**

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**For:**

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

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## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b><i>Executive Summary</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1	<b>Background</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.2	<b>Summary of Key Issues</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.3	<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><i>The State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1	<b>Languages and Speakers</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.2	<b>Dispersal of languages</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.3	<b>Status of Language Use</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Aboriginal People and the Media</i></b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Aboriginal Language Broadcasting in Canada</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>
5.1	<b>Key Dates in the Evolution of Aboriginal Language Broadcasting</b> .....	<b>11</b>
5.2	<b>Policy Support for Aboriginal Language Broadcasting</b> .....	<b>12</b>
5.3	<b>The current state of Aboriginal language broadcasting</b> .....	<b>20</b>
5.4	<b>Summary of Key Findings:</b> .....	<b>24</b>
5.5	<b>Aboriginal languages and the Internet</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Impacts of Aboriginal Language Broadcasting</i></b> .....	<b>28</b>
6.1	<b>Other Canadian and international examples</b> .....	<b>28</b>
6.2	<b>Maori-language Broadcasting</b> .....	<b>31</b>
6.3	<b>Impact of Aboriginal language broadcasting on language use, acquisition, retention, quality</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Conclusion</i></b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Recommendations</i></b> .....	<b>40</b>

## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### ***1.1 Background***

The Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures was established in 2002 by the then Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps. It was created as part of an initiative to revitalize and promote Aboriginal languages and cultures. A three-phase action plan was developed, with funding of \$172.5 M over 11 years. The first phase is a continuation of the Aboriginal Languages Initiative. The establishment of the Task Force is the second phase.

The ten members of the Task Force are responsible for developing recommendations to guide the creation of a new Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Centre, which will represent the third phase of the initiative. To support development of these recommendations, the Task Force has been holding consultations, listening to presentations, and commissioning research reports.

The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) was asked to prepare an analysis of the role of Aboriginal language broadcasting in the revitalization of Aboriginal languages across Canada. Jennifer David of Debwe Communications Inc. was contracted to prepare the report, based on documents reviews, analysis and interviews, for submission by APTN to the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures.

### ***1.2 Summary of Key Issues***

Broadcasting has a vital role to play in the revitalization and survival of Aboriginal languages. This, however, is often an overlooked area of language learning, and much more research must be done to quantitatively confirm the positive impact of broadcasting on language use and fluency.

There is no significant legislative protection for Aboriginal language broadcasting, rendering long-term planning impossible, engendering a sense of "second class citizens" among broadcasters, and, in some cases, denying Aboriginal broadcasters the opportunity to provide quality programming.

Some Government support exists for northern Aboriginal communications societies, under the Northern Native Broadcast Access Program (NNBAP). There are, however, other radio stations outside this umbrella that provide a valuable service in Aboriginal languages, but are not provided with adequate financial support.

Many radio stations are unable to conclusively identify the needs of their listeners. Most cannot afford to conduct meaningful audience surveys that could lead to more appropriate and successful programming and help establish corporate policies regarding Aboriginal language programming.

While the majority of Aboriginal language speakers are older, there are efforts to encourage more Aboriginal youth to speak their language. These youth are largely unaware of the opportunities for full time employment and a lifelong career that exist in

broadcasting industry, a sector where fluency in an Aboriginal language is an important asset.

Broadcasters represent an important cultural and historical resource of archival information, including interviews with elders and several generations of political leadership, and discussions about and in various Aboriginal languages. Most radio stations and television producers are unable to keep and catalogue this valuable and irreplaceable asset, and it is slowly being lost to future generations.

Aboriginal language broadcasting has wide-reaching appeal, and attracts growing Aboriginal and mainstream audiences across Canada and internationally. The potential of both radio and TV, however, has not yet been fully tapped. Tapes of shows or CD's of language interviews, for example, are not being widely used in other contexts to assist in revitalizing Aboriginal languages. There are some exceptions to this; but generally, Aboriginal media represent a sadly under-utilized resource for language learning.

There is currently no organization or association that would enable all Aboriginal broadcasters to meet, network and find common ground to address common issues. There is no national voice for Aboriginal broadcasters, nor is there any mechanism by which the broadcasters could work together on joint research projects or undertake valuable surveys. Such an association would be beneficial for Aboriginal-language initiatives.

### **1.3 Recommendations**

1. The *Broadcasting Act* should be revised to enshrine rights and adequate funding for Aboriginal language broadcasting. Additional policy or legislation can be adopted on a regional, provincial or territorial basis to provide additional recognition of and support to Aboriginal language broadcasting;
2. More research is required to gather empirical data on the link between Aboriginal language broadcasting and retention of Aboriginal languages. This research should include both northern and southern Aboriginal broadcasting initiatives;
3. Provide support, including financial, training and networking opportunities, for Aboriginal community radio stations across Canada;
4. Provide funding so Aboriginal-language radio and television organizations can undertake audience surveys to better tailor their programming to their audiences;
5. Support and encourage the creation of a national Aboriginal broadcasters association. Community radio, NNBAP network radio/television, and APTN can join together for networking and lobbying initiatives as well as joint research projects that can benefit Aboriginal language programming;
6. The Government should encourage more Aboriginal youth to consider broadcasting as a career. Use role models, career fairs, and high school media courses. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging language speakers to see the potential careers available in broadcasting;
7. Provide adequate funding for facilities, resources and personnel to preserve and archive the existing tapes of interviews and programs with elders and others speaking Aboriginal languages;

8. Encourage and support radio stations and television producers to use their products and services in other contexts. Some examples would be videotapes in schools, inclusion of broadcast materials in Aboriginal language curricula, radio projects where youth interview elders, tapes being played in day care settings, etc.
9. Any future undertaking or research to be conducted in the area of Aboriginal language and broadcasting should be directed towards APTN and other Aboriginal broadcasters in various regions of the country. For Aboriginal people to have input and to be able to share their vast traditional knowledge, it is imperative that Aboriginal people control the media for and about them.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

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Nearly every Aboriginal person in Canada has access to radio and/or television service. Since the 1960s, broadcasting has penetrated Aboriginal homes and communities at a swift pace. It was embraced by many, passively accepted by others and vehemently opposed by others still. Many saw the potential of both media; others realized that radio and television could also have a severe detrimental effect on traditional language, culture and community life. Both groups have been proven right; over the last four decades broadcasting has indeed proven to be a powerful tool, with both positive and negative impacts.

From the early 1970s to the early 1980s, serious and substantial initiatives were put in place to provide Aboriginal people with the opportunity to develop their own radio and television networks. These were intended, in part, to create a counterweight to the sudden and overwhelming influx of foreign, English-language, European/Canadian/American programming accessible in previously isolated northern, rural and remote Aboriginal communities. Those early efforts led to the creation of Aboriginal communications societies, mostly based in northern Canada. Other organizations in southern Canada, without the same access to funding, also began to broadcast, but on a much smaller scale. These broadcasting initiatives provided a forum and a tool to enhance and celebrate Aboriginal language and culture. All of the societies established through the NNBAP program in the early 1980s are still in operation, though some have reduced their scope or amount of programming in the intervening years.

The impact of television and radio on the preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal languages is not easily separated from other influences. This has led to broad generalizations about its consequences, but very little concrete data or statistics. All radio and television networks assert with some confidence that their programming has a positive impact on language use; this is one of their core values and reasons for existence. Yet very little objective, quantifiable information about this impact exists. It is very clear from the experience of other language groups, however, that **the broadcasting sector has a major role to play in helping to revitalize and sustain Aboriginal languages.** It is a sector that is often overlooked in the development of language policies, programs and strategies; it must be reviewed carefully and substantially.

Audience surveys are one way to establish the connection between broadcasting and language use. Surveys carried out by NNBAP-funded groups in the 1980s included questions about acquisition of vocabulary, quality of on-air language and the impact of these media on languages spoken at home. Findings all suggested that language programming is important, and that it does have a positive impact on the retention of language. However, no funding has been available to conduct audience research among NNBAP groups for more than a decade.

To understand the potential and real impacts of broadcasting on language retention, it is necessary to look at other national and international examples where in-depth research has been conducted. It is also important to consider anecdotal or oral evidence of the impact. **It has been noted that the quality and frequency of Aboriginal language use is strongest in the regions where viewers/listeners have access to Aboriginal language broadcasting; this is a strong indicator of media's potential impact.**

### **3 THE STATE OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES IN CANADA**

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#### **3.1 Languages and Speakers**

The precise number of Aboriginal languages in Canada depends on whose definition of “language” is used. Most authorities agree that there are between 53 and 70 Aboriginal languages in Canada.

In the 1996 census of Canada just over 25% of the Aboriginal population reported that their mother tongue was an Aboriginal language. Respondents included Inuit, First Nation (on and off reserve) and Métis. However, only 15% of the entire Aboriginal population reported that they actually spoke an Aboriginal language at home.<sup>1</sup>

In the more recent Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 32% of respondents (off-reserve) said they could speak or understand an Aboriginal language. 59% of non-reserve Aboriginal adults stated that keeping, learning or relearning an Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important. There was broad agreement that language is a vital component of cultural survival.

Both the 1996 census and the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey suggest a measure of revitalization is occurring within some Aboriginal languages. While 12% of 2001 APS respondents said they had an Aboriginal mother tongue, 15% said they could converse in an Aboriginal language. This suggests that a number of individuals may be learning to speak an Aboriginal language later in life, despite not having spoken it at home.

#### **3.2 Dispersal of languages**

The likelihood of a language’s survival is a function of the number of its speakers. Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut are the three strongest Aboriginal languages in Canada, and are spoken fluently by the greatest number of individuals. Many other languages are in a critical state.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report noted that more than 92% of the Aboriginal people surveyed in 1991 with an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue came from the three strongest language groups.<sup>2</sup> The small remaining percentage of speakers is divided among more than a dozen other languages, many of them endangered or threatened.

*See the Indian and Northern Affairs map in Appendix 3 that shows dispersal of Aboriginal languages across the country.*

The strongest enclaves of Aboriginal language speakers are in the North and on reserve. As statistics show more Aboriginal people, particularly youth, are leaving reserves, this trend is not encouraging.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, January 13, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Gathering Strength Volume 3*, Ottawa, 1996, p. 604.

<sup>3</sup> Consilium, *Evaluation of the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres*, 2003-2004, p. 12.

### 3.3 Status of Language Use

In 1990 and 1991, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) conducted a survey of First Nations language conditions on 151 reserves. The results were published in the reports *Towards Linguistic Justice for First Nations* (1990) and *Towards Rebirth of First Nations Languages* (1992).

This survey indicates that 50 out of approximately 53 Aboriginal languages are declining, endangered or facing extinction. The reports stated that only one-third could be classified as **flourishing** languages (over 80% of all age groups are fluent in their native language) or **enduring** (over 60% of all age groups are fluent). One quarter of the communities had **declining** languages (the number of speakers declined in each age group). Over three-quarters of the older age groups were fluent, with this proportion dropping rapidly to less than 10% among young children.<sup>4</sup>

The report made a very important correlation between the status of the language and the use of that language in public. The more a language was used in community meetings, schools, social events and media, the healthier the language.

According to the 2001 Census of Canada, there are many Aboriginal languages in decline or on the brink of extinction. Serious and determined efforts must be undertaken to sustain these languages. Many factors are contributing to the decline in Aboriginal languages: these include the proliferation of mainstream media, increased urbanization and often isolation from other language speakers, extensive and mostly exclusive use of English (or French) language curricula in schools, difficulty for traditional languages to adopt and create new ideas and modern concepts, and the accelerating loss of Elders who speak the languages and who could have passed on language skills to a younger generation.

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<sup>4</sup> Consilium, *Aboriginal Languages Initiative Evaluation*, 2002, p. 31.

## 4 ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THE MEDIA

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If you write a nation's stories, you needn't worry about who makes its laws. Today, television tells most of the stories to most of the people, most of the time.

*George Gerbner, Montreal Gazette, 1990<sup>5</sup>*

Marshall McLuhan asserts in his book *The Global Village* that technology (including the telephone, radio and television) has become an extension of our senses, of our minds. We are now linked together across the globe and can communicate at a rapid pace with someone on the other side of the world. In *Understanding Media*, his famous quote that "the medium is the message" is relevant to the discussion of Aboriginal language broadcasting. He says: "any medium has the power of imposing its own assumption on the unwary."<sup>6</sup>

Nearly every household in Canada owns at least one television and one radio.<sup>7</sup> The amount of television that Canadians watch has remained fairly consistent for the past 10 years, fluctuating between 20 and 25 hours per week.<sup>8</sup> Francophones in Quebec watch the most television, while residents of Alberta watch the least.

Extensive research has confirmed the influence of the media in all areas of life, including children and advertising, media violence, hate crimes and the Internet, and media stereotyping. Many studies have shown that the media is a central factor in the formation of culture, identity and community.

Given the fragility of Aboriginal language, the impact of media on Aboriginal people is of critical concern. Most research suggests that, for Aboriginal people, mainstream media has been a major agent in the loss of culture, identity and community. As Gail Valeskakis points out in her report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "for Aboriginal Canadians, the experience forged through media is too often one of exclusion, stereotypical inclusion or appropriation."<sup>9</sup>

Stereotypes of the alcoholic on welfare; the wise elder, the squaw, the princess, the noble savage, and the warrior are just a few of the images that the media perpetuates through advertising, typecasting, and exclusion of contemporary portrayals of Aboriginal people. Aside from the recent CTV television hit, *Corner Gas*, in which Lorne Cardinal plays a police officer, there are very few programs where Aboriginal people are not cast in stereotypical roles. This continues despite decades of recommendations and policy statements from the CRTC, the Federal Government and other agencies, pointing out the dangers inherent in dishonest and inappropriate characterization of Aboriginal people.

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<sup>5</sup> Valeskakis, Gail, "The Role, Development and Future of Aboriginal Communications." *Research report for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media*, McGraw-Hill, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada The Daily, November 21, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Valeskakis, Gail. "The Role, Development and Future of Aboriginal Communications."

The issue of appropriation is also a common issue for Aboriginal people in the media. Well-intentioned non-Aboriginal people are often asked to comment upon or categorize Aboriginal people or situations, leaving Aboriginal people without a voice and creating a void in the media where Aboriginal people are being seen and discussed, but not consulted or asked to contribute in a significant way.

Finally, Aboriginal artists – performers, writers, producers, directors - are often excluded from mainstream television altogether, and have had to find access to media through Aboriginal-specific venues such as APTN. Much-touted programs such as *North of 60* and *The Rez*, while employing Aboriginal people and telling Aboriginal stories, were still a product of a mainstream network, subject to higher management decisions and editorial control based on audience preferences and network policies. These decisions are made without consultation with Aboriginal people; mainstream television thus provides no consistent window on Aboriginal reality.

All these considerations have had serious consequences for Aboriginal people, and particularly for youth. A recent article by the Media Awareness Network stated that:

“Anyone who understands or studies the social development of children and young people knows that attitudes, values and self-esteem are well developed by the mid-teen years, or even earlier. What young people see and hear in the media helps them to figure out how the world works and who and what is valued in our society.”<sup>10</sup>

Mainstream images and coverage have a clear impact on how Canadians see Aboriginal people. In 2003, the Centre for Research and Information on Canada released its annual survey. One of the most surprising statistics showed that 51% of Canadians surveyed thought that Aboriginal people were the same or better off than the average Canadian. In light of reports from the Auditor General and Statistics Canada about shortages of adequate housing, lack of access to safe drinking water, health and education inadequacies, particularly on reserve and in remote and northern regions, this finding is disturbing. In this same survey, 57% of Canadians said that poverty should be blamed on circumstances beyond a poor person’s control. That number drops to 48% in the case of a poor Aboriginal person.<sup>11</sup>

The influence of media in shaping opinions and defining community identity cannot be overstated. This is why it is imperative, not only that Aboriginal people gain greater access to the mainstream media, but also that Aboriginal people control the media that they and their children are exposed to. **Aboriginal language broadcasting can help to counter the negative images prevalent in the mainstream media, and can transmit values to a future generation** - values that include culture and language.

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<sup>10</sup> “The Impact of Stereotyping on Young People,” *Media Awareness Network*, 2004. From [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal\\_people/aboriginal\\_impact.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal_people/aboriginal_impact.cfm)

<sup>11</sup> *Centre for Research and Information on Canada*. “Canadians Want strong Aboriginal cultures but are divided on Aboriginal Rights,” press release, Nov. 26, 2003.

## **5 ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE BROADCASTING IN CANADA**

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### **5.1 Key Dates in the Evolution of Aboriginal Language Broadcasting**

- 1960 CBC Northern Service broadcasts first Aboriginal language radio program, via studios in Montreal
- 1961 Inuit in the eastern Arctic begin radio broadcasts
- 1967 Kenomodiwin Radio, a travelling radio van, brings language programming to six communities in northwestern Ontario
- 1967 CBC television programming is introduced to the North via videotapes sent to several communities
- 1971 Northern Pilot Project begins a series of radio experiments in the north with funding from the Department of Communications
- 1972 The launch of the Anik satellite system. This enabled the widespread distribution of radio and television signals to remote northern communities
- 1972 CBC Northern Television Service is established
- 1973 Native Communications Program launched. This was a funding mechanism to help support Aboriginal community radio and newspapers
- 1973 Wawatay Native Communications Society is established
- 1978 The Inukshuk Project in the eastern Arctic is created
- 1980 The “Therrien report” is released. This report, entitled “The 1980s: A Decade of Diversity”, is one of the first formal reports to address the issue of Aboriginal cultural and linguistic preservation, and the role that broadcasting can play
- 1981 Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and Northern Native Broadcasting, Yukon established
- 1983 Launch of the Northern Native Broadcast Access Program and the Northern Broadcasting Policy. Thirteen northern (above the Hamelin line) communications societies are funded under the NNBAP. The initial contribution was \$40 million over four years, to provide Aboriginal language television and radio programming
- 1985 The first of a series of funding cutbacks to the NNBAP societies
- 1986 Publication of the Caplan-Sauvageau report, called the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy. Like the Therrien report, this report emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal language broadcasting
- 1988 Standing Committee on Communications and Culture makes recommendations on the need for Aboriginal programming funding, particularly language funding in areas of southern Canada, to complement funding already in place in the North
- 1990 The CRTC releases its Native Broadcasting Policy
- 1991 A new *Broadcasting Act* is unveiled. Support for Aboriginal language broadcasting is mentioned, though it is qualified by the phrase “as funds become available.”

- 1992 Television Northern Canada, a dedicated northern distribution system for northern, Aboriginal programming, is launched
- 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report is published. After several years of consultations, this report makes extensive recommendations on a broad range of political, social, economic and cultural issues, including broadcasting and language
- 1996 Telefilm introduces the Aboriginal-language envelope, a \$1 million fund to encourage Aboriginal language television production
- 1999 Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, the world's first Aboriginal television network, is launched
- 2002 Aboriginal Voices Radio, a national Aboriginal radio network, is launched with an initial station in Toronto

## ***5.2 Policy Support for Aboriginal Language Broadcasting***

One of the earliest instances of government support for Aboriginal language broadcasting occurred in 1971 with the introduction of the **Northern Pilot Project**. Funded by the Department of Communications, this initiative allowed several communities to experiment with the medium of radio. Initially viewed as a curiosity by some, it soon became apparent that radio had immense potential to promote community development and to facilitate dissemination of cultural and language information.

In 1973, the **Native Communications Program** was launched. This program supported the development of Aboriginal language radio and newspapers, and of local and regional "communications societies". It was designed to provide assistance to northern communities, and helped launch more than 100 community radio stations across the North. Funding for this program was terminated in 1990, and many community radio stations ceased operations. Today, without federal funding, some stations remain on the air with minimal advertising, often funded by radio bingos.

Much has been written about the **Inukshuk project**, started in 1978. It was initiated and funded by the Department of Communications as a showcase for Canada's satellite technology. Inukshuk was the first Inuit opportunity to experiment with television production in a networked setting. These pilot projects proved there was immense community interest in producing community-based, language programming. Precursors of both IBC and TNI (in a comparable initiative called "Nalaakvik II") participated in the projects, and became strong advocates for the importance of Inuit-controlled and Inuktitut-language programming.

In 1980, the CRTC released its report on extension of service to northern and remote communities. Dubbed the **Therrien Report** after author Real Therrien, the report makes a clear and impassioned argument for support of Aboriginal language broadcasting. One of its main recommendations was:

"Canada must fulfill its obligation to provide opportunity for its native peoples to preserve the use of their languages and foster

the maintenance and development of their own particular cultures through broadcasting and other communications.”<sup>12</sup>

The report also found evidence that “radio is a valuable instrument for preserving [Aboriginal] cultures and languages.”<sup>13</sup> It made recommendations on support for Inuit broadcasting, and for the creation of locally controlled communications societies. This report has had far-reaching effects, and led to the creation of many of the NNBAP societies in existence today.

The Therrien Report was just one of several significant northern and Aboriginal communications studies conducted during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Of particular concern to both northerners and the government was the impact of the introduction of southern-based, English-language programming into the North. Northerners emphasized that these programs posed a serious threat to the cultural and linguistic integrity of their communities. It was recommended that the Canadian broadcasting system should help protect Aboriginal cultures and languages.

Three decades of analysis have confirmed that the introduction of southern-based, mostly American and English-language radio and television programming had an enormous impact on the use of Aboriginal languages in the North. Similar impacts have been observed among Aboriginal people across Canada, but the effects were most noticeable in the North because of the region’s late introduction to television. Various studies (Coldevin, Wilson, 1980; Granzberg, 1982) show that the introduction of television to Aboriginal communities had an immediate affect. It helped speed up the acculturation process, and led to a decline in the use of Aboriginal languages. The introduction of television had a particularly strong impact on children who were enthralled with the high technical quality and foreign content of sitcoms, sports and movies.

As a result of consultations in the early 1980s, three federal departments announced the creation of the **Northern Broadcasting Policy** and the **Northern Native Broadcast Access Program** in 1983. The Policy was based on five principles intended to increase the participation of northern Aboriginal people in broadcasting. One principle was: “Northern native people should have fair access to northern broadcasting distribution systems to maintain and develop their cultures and languages.” The NNBAP was a program aimed at providing long-term, stable funding to broadcast organizations. It was limited to communities north of the “Hamelin line”, and would enable groups to provide television and/or radio production. The announcement of the NNBAP led directly to the creation of 13 Aboriginal communications societies.

One year after its creation, however, funding to the program was significantly reduced; and several other cuts to the program followed in the years to come<sup>14</sup>. Groups who had hoped to expand from radio to television (or vice-versa) were not able to do so. Many other groups had to reduce their operations or plans for future projects. Several evaluations have confirmed that NNBAP groups are producing programs on inadequate budgets.

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<sup>12</sup> Therrien, Real, *The 1980s-a decade of diversity*. CRTC, 1980, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Consilium, *NNBAP Evaluation*, 2003

The creation of the Northern Broadcasting Policy and the NNBAP established the need for a distribution system, which led in 1991 to the launch of Television Northern Canada (TVNC), a dedicated northern satellite network to broadcast programming by the northern Aboriginal communications societies.

In 1985, the Minister of Communications announced a Task Force to make recommendations on public policy as it related to the Canadian broadcasting industry. It was a massive undertaking, with a mandate to review all areas of the sector with the goal of recommending major, national policy changes. The main recommendation from the report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, usually referred to as the Caplan-Sauvageau report, was for the creation of a new Broadcasting Act. Many of the recommendations called for greater representation in the broadcasting industry of Canada's cultural diversity.

Specific recommendations were made regarding Aboriginal broadcasting. One of them was:

“Native-language broadcasting should be administered at arm's length from the federal government and should be provided with sufficient funds to cover the cost of all essential related activities such as training.”<sup>15</sup>

The second major recommendation was:

“The Broadcasting Act should affirm the right of native peoples to broadcasting services in aboriginal languages considered to be representative where numbers warrant and to the extent public funds permit.”<sup>16</sup>

Both the Caplan-Sauvageau report and the report from the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture recognized the importance of Aboriginal language broadcasting, and recommended its inclusion in the Broadcasting Act.

This Act, which defines broadcasting in Canada, came into effect in 1991. Many Aboriginal broadcasters were pleased to see that Aboriginal broadcasting was mentioned. It would later influence the direction and development of other policies, including the Aboriginal language fund at the Canadian Television Fund. There was, however, disappointment that the Act did not go far enough to support Aboriginal broadcasting. The Act did not enshrine Aboriginal language broadcasting as a priority: instead, it noted the need to ensure that programs “reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of Aboriginal peoples within that society.”<sup>17</sup> This means that Aboriginal language programming is not recognized nor protected to the same extent as English and French programming.

The Act also stated that “programming that reflects the Aboriginal cultures of Canada should be provided within the Canadian broadcasting system *as resources become*

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<sup>15</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy*, Ottawa, 1985, p. 524.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 519.

<sup>17</sup> Communications Canada, [News Release](#), June 23, 1988, p. 3

*available for the purpose* [emphasis added]<sup>18</sup>. This has become a contentious issue for many Aboriginal language broadcasters, and numerous letters, position papers and presentations have attempted to convince the federal government that this section must be revised. The phrase “as resources become available for the purpose” has become a stumbling block for many producers and programmers, linking the availability of Aboriginal language broadcasting to the political process. There was also no specific mention of Aboriginal language programming, simply Aboriginal cultures.

The **Native Broadcasting Policy**, announced in 1990 by the CRTC, also made mention of Aboriginal language programming, and provided detailed definitions of native programming. A “Native Undertaking” was considered any program, in any language, directed specifically towards an Aboriginal audience. The CRTC also established two types of radio stations, Type A and Type B. Type A are those stations in markets where there are no other commercial stations. Type B are in markets where at least one other commercial station is in operation. Licensees would be required to adhere to the provisions of a Promise of Performance, one of the requirements being to “...describe how the proposed programming reflects the needs and preferences of its target audience, and the specific measures taken to ensure that such programming fosters the enhancement of aboriginal languages and culture.”<sup>19</sup>

In 1996, the much-anticipated **Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples** was released. Five volumes of research, reports and recommendations were presented to the Government. Regarding broadcasting and language, the Commission documented the devastating effect that consistent exposure to the English language, or in some regions, French, has had on the erosion of Aboriginal languages. If Aboriginal people had more access to media and communication in their language, it could be said, that this might not have had such a negative influence. In order to reverse this trend towards language loss, the Commission outlined various strategies. In addition to providing recommendations to ensure that language is preserved and transmitted and to support teaching of languages in schools, work environments and the government, the report identified media as an important element in helping to keep languages alive.<sup>20</sup>

Two recommendations were made with specific reference to Aboriginal language broadcasting.

**3.6.11:** The government of Canada recognize the special status of Aboriginal-language broadcasting explicitly in federal legislation.

**3.6.12:** The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission include in licence conditions for public and commercial broadcasters, in regions with significant Aboriginal population concentrations, requirements for fair representation and distribution of Aboriginal programming, including Aboriginal language requirements.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> CRTC, *Native Broadcasting Policy*, 1990, section 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Volume 3, chapter 6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

The Federal Government's response to the Report of the Royal Commission ("Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan"), did not directly address these recommendations.

These major policy initiatives over the last three decades have helped to define the Aboriginal broadcasting sector today, and give a sense of its importance in the overall area of Canadian cultural policy. A recent study on Canadian policy support to Aboriginal broadcasting concluded that Aboriginal language broadcasters "...are, in fact, supporting Canada in meeting many of the broader, national policy goals that have defined the government's agenda for the past five years in such areas as culture, communication, diversity, and national identity."<sup>22</sup>

Several studies and reports prepared by Aboriginal organizations, including the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Assembly of First Nations, have also supported initiatives and policies that promote Aboriginal languages, though there is no specific mention of broadcasting. In 1998, the Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution to move this issue forward. In part, the resolution states;

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chiefs-in-Assembly hereby declare a State of Emergency respecting our First Nation languages, and call upon the government of Canada to act immediately to recognize, officially and legally, the First Nation languages as part of the official languages of Canada and to make a commitment to provide resources necessary to reverse First Nation language loss and to prevent the extinction of our languages."<sup>23</sup>

The AFN later declared the year 2000 as the "Year for First Nation language restoration."

A number of other recent studies and initiatives have lent direct and indirect additional policy support to Aboriginal language broadcasting:

The **Canadian Television Fund/TelefilmCanada Aboriginal-language Envelope** was created in 1996, and provides nearly \$3 million in funding from both the Canadian Television Fund and Telefilm Canada. It was established to encourage the production of Aboriginal language programming.

Telefilm Canada's Equity Investment program first offered funding for Aboriginal language programming. In 1997, the Canadian Television Fund announced a separate \$1 million fund for Aboriginal-language programming.

When the envelope was created, there was great flexibility in administering the fund, compared to the English or French-language fund. This included accommodating additional program categories, accepting license fees that are not exclusively cash contributions; and no requirement for the production to be broadcast in prime time.

The Aboriginal-language production community commended the CTF on the creation of the envelope. It would come to pass, however, that the amount of the fund would become too inadequate.

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<sup>22</sup> Consilium, *Aboriginal And Public Broadcasting In Canada*, 2002

<sup>23</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister's National Working Group on Education. *Literature Review, Language and Culture*, p. 11.

**Statistics on the Aboriginal-language fund, Canadian Television Fund<sup>24</sup>**

Year	# of successful applicants	Smallest budget	Largest budget	Regions	Categories
97-98	8	\$10,000	\$218,975	62% from north/NNBAP members	75% documentary
98-99	14	\$18,215	\$200,000	Evenly spread	78% documentary
99-00	16	\$42,948	\$200,000	56% north/NNBAP	94% documentary
00-01	15	\$15,000	\$200,000 (7)	40% north/NNBAP	87% documentary
01-02	16	\$93,340	\$200,000 (7)	12% north/NNBAP	81% documentary
02-03	17	\$24,665	\$200,000 (7)	12% North/NNBAP	70% documentary
03-04	15	\$126,441	\$200,000 (7)	13% north/NNBAP	60% documentary
04-05	18	\$36,070	\$200,000 (8)	17% north/NNBAP	61% documentary

The number of successful applicants has been steady for all years except the first year. There is a dramatic decrease in successful applications from northern Canada and a corresponding increase to southern Aboriginal producers. In the beginning, producers requested smaller amounts of funding. By the 2003-2004 season, the fund was administering no less than \$100,000 per producer. This would allow for a wider variety of programs with higher technical quality but would also mean more producers would not be able to receive funding.

Though statistics are not available, many producers will attest that the fund is oversubscribed. The advent of APTN has meant a greater strain on the Aboriginal-language envelope. This has led to policy changes. While the majority of projects funded in the early years of the envelope were shot, produced and delivered originally in an Aboriginal language, this changed with the greater strain on the fund. By 2003, the CTF policy was that productions could be originally shot in an Aboriginal language or versioned from English or French. This has led to a greater number of programs not shot originally in Aboriginal languages.

Many producers working originally in Aboriginal languages feel this has hampered their efforts to access the Fund: other producers feel the Fund must be more widely accessible and available to all Aboriginal producers. As Aboriginal producers in English

<sup>24</sup> Canadian television Fund, "Program Delivery/Policy and Administration/2004," prepared November 2004.

and French have a lower success rate in the main fund, they would like to see an expansion of the Aboriginal-language fund in order to produce their programs.

With the advent of APTN, demands on the Fund have increased dramatically. APTN is committed under the terms of its license to broadcast 25% Aboriginal language programming, and the Fund is viewed as a critical source of support to enable the network and Aboriginal producers to meet its commitment.

**The Standing Committee on Heritage** conducted a series of public consultations on Canadian broadcasting, and released its report in June 2003. Entitled “Our Cultural Sovereignty: the Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting”, the report included a number of comments and recommendations regarding Aboriginal language radio and television producers, as well as APTN. Among the recommendations, the Standing Committee agrees with numerous earlier reports calling for the removal of the phrase “as resources become available” in the Broadcasting Act in reference to support of Aboriginal broadcasting. The Standing Committee also made recommendations to support stable funding for NNBAP, called for a review of Telefilm’s Aboriginal-language envelope, and supported the McGregor report (an assessment of the technical requirements for northern radio and television networks).

**The Task Force on Cultural Diversity in Television**, completed in July 2004, emphasized the power of the media in shaping attitudes. A review of ethnic television confirmed that, for many people, broadcasting is a way of “re-introducing cultural identity and language to second and third generation” ethnic minorities. While there was no specific mention of Aboriginal-language programming, the Report recognized that access to minority-language programming is a vital way for people to maintain ties with their culture, language and community.

Efforts are being made in a number of regions across Canada to help sustain or revitalize languages. Many initiatives are in place to support development of curriculum materials, training and teaching opportunities and opportunities to speak the language as well as preserve the stories and dialects in jeopardy. Since 1998, the **Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI)** of the Department of Canadian Heritage has provided critical funding for more than 1200 Aboriginal language projects across Canada. Projects include creation of cultural resource centres, publishing dictionaries, research, development of immersion programs, and video projects.

Aboriginal language broadcasting is also supported in some provinces and territories by regional policy initiatives. The 1986 **NWT Task Force on Aboriginal Languages** recommended more Aboriginal language programming and emphasized the need for technical training of language producers. The Task Force heard from many people who indicated that they wanted to see their languages and cultures reflected in the media. As a result, one of the recommendations was to grant official status to six Aboriginal languages in the NWT and to set up an Office of Official Languages in 1990. In its 2001 annual report, the Language Commissioner said the effect of making these languages official has been positive, but must be continually monitored and supported.

“It is also clear in daily living, English dominates everywhere – not only in institutions such as schools and health care facilities, but also in stores, banks, movies, and other entertainment including videogames, books, radio, and television. It is critical the efforts of

language workers have support at the highest level, the Legislative Assembly.”<sup>25</sup>

The Government of Nunavut is currently establishing the **Nunavut Film Commission**. They actively promote and support Inuktitut-language programming. On a general level, the government is also reviewing and revising its current language legislation to ensure the viability and use of the Inuktitut language. They have adopted an Official Languages Act and, while English is still the language of the government, plans are to make Inuktitut the official language of all government-related initiatives by the year 2020. The Government’s most recent Speech From the Throne introduced this language legislation as one of Nunavut’s top priorities.

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<sup>25</sup> Government of the Northwest Territories. Office of the Languages Commissioner, *2000-2001 Report*, p. 6.

### 5.3 The current state of Aboriginal language broadcasting

For purposes of this study, “Aboriginal language broadcasting” consists of the following:

- NNBAP funded radio and television production
- Local community radio stations, predominantly in southern Canada
- Independent film and video producers who create language material for APTN

This does not encompass the entire spectrum of “Aboriginal language” broadcasting: more comprehensive research can and should be done in this area, taking into consideration northern community radio stations, CBC radio (particularly CBC North), Aboriginal language programming on mainstream radio, and television programming originally produced in other languages and dubbed into an Aboriginal language.

Given the resources and time frame available for the preparation of this paper, we have confined the scope of our study to the areas listed above.

#### Community and Network Radio

There is a great discrepancy between radio broadcasters who receive funding through the NNBAP program, located above the Hamelin line, and those who receive no core Government funding, based mostly in southern Canada. It must be noted that these two separate groups of radio broadcasters have different needs and objectives, and also play different roles in the retention and revitalization of Aboriginal languages.

#### NNBAP-funded societies.

Organization	Region and number of communities served *	Amount of programming per week	% of Aboriginal language programming	Change in language programming since 1999
CFWE radio (Aboriginal Multimedia Society of Alberta)	Lethbridge and 55 communities in central and northern Alberta	Radio: 168 hours	15%	Less hours of Chipewyan programming: few speakers. Policy to add more languages but lack of funding
Inuit Broadcasting Corporation	Nunavut, 26 communities	3.5 hours in television plus special programs, ICSL	100%	Down from 5.5 hours. Some shows down from 1 hour to 1/2 hour
Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation	Saskatchewan, 50+ northern communities plus major southern cities	Radio: 112 hours TV: 1 hour	Radio: 20% TV: 90%	More language on radio: from 1 hour Cree, 1 hour Dene to 2 hours Cree (and Michif), 2 hours Dene
Inuvialuit Communications	Inuvialuit Settlement	1 hour in television	50%	Same hours, one 1 hour show became two ½

Organization	Region and number of communities served *	Amount of programming per week	% of Aboriginal language programming	Change in language programming since 1999
Society	region in western NWT, 6 communities			hour shows.
James Bay Cree Communications Society	Cree of eastern James Bay, 9 communities	20 hours in radio	80%	Same hours, programs aimed at hunters/trappers now aimed at community audience
Native Communications Inc.	Manitoba, 49 transmitters reach 96% of province	Radio: 159 hours TV: 6.5 hours	Radio: 30% TV: 30%	Mostly the same, lost some shows, gained others—lack of youth speakers
Northern Native Broadcasting, Yukon	All Yukon communities	Radio: 168 hours TV: 1.5 hours	Radio: 20% TV: 50%	Same programs and hours but policy level need to increase
OkalaKatiget Society	Northern Labrador, 7 communities	Radio: 21 hours TV: 1 hour	Radio: 50% TV: 50%	No change in TV, more time on radio for Inuktitut-only program
Société de communication Atikamekw-Montagnais	5 regions in Quebec and southern Labrador, 12 communities	25 hours in radio	95%	Down from 27 to 25 hours. Increased use of news reviews in French. Reduced staff, smaller office space.
Taqramiut Nipingat Inc.	Nunavik, 15 communities	Radio : 15 hours TV: ½ hour	Radio: 100% TV: 100%	Radio increase from 10 to 15 hours per week. TV reduced from 26 to 13 episodes per season
Wawatay Native Communications Society	Northwestern Ontario, 39 communities	Radio: 40 hours TV: 1 hour	Radio: 90% TV: 20%	Radio: same shows but increased use of language TV: decrease from 100% language to 20%.

### Non-NNBAP community radio

Community radio stations are small, independent, and isolated local operations across Canada. There is no association for Aboriginal community radio, virtually no support, scant acknowledgement of their work, and little opportunity for stations to network and learn from each other. Each station develops its own mandate and programming priorities. Many struggle to continue broadcasting, and are sometimes kept on the air through the dedication of a small number of people, often volunteers. While the NNBAP-

funded groups are sometimes given the opportunity to meet at a Program-sponsored, government-funded event, there are no comparable opportunities for smaller, community-based Aboriginal radio stations to meet and network.

Most community Aboriginal radio stations, however, see the value and potential of radio, and have developed policies that enable their station to play a role in language revitalization. A large number of them were set up specifically to enhance and revive languages, as Charles Fairchild points out in his article about CKRZ and other southern stations:

The emergence of a growing number of community radio stations on reserves throughout Southern Ontario and Quebec has been in large part a reaction to the erosion of Aboriginal languages and cultures all across Southern Canada which has accelerated dramatically over the last two decades.<sup>26</sup>

Organization	Region and number of communities served *	Amt of programing per week	% of Aboriginal language programming	Change in language programming since 1999
CKRZ, Six Nations	Six Nations and outlying area for 80 km, southern Ontario	Radio: 24 hours/day with repeats & music	10%	Increased number of shows in Mohawk and Cayuga. More acceptance.
CHFN, Cape Croker	Cape Croker and surrounding towns, 500 on reserve, central Ontario	Radio: 80 hours	5%. One show everyday teaching Ojibway	Decrease from two shows to one show. No volunteer to coordinate the show.
CKON Akwasasne	Reserve straddles U.S., Ontario and Quebec,	Radio: 150 hours	10%. 10 minute "word of the day", 6 hour block in language	Increase. Added the Word of the Day program, very popular.
Muskwachees Radio, "The Hawk"	Hobbema, Alberta (4 communities)	Radio: 105 hours	Varies: approx. 40%. Word of the day, weather, talk between music	Concerted effort by DJ's to speak more Cree on air. Language classes offered to DJ's. Goal to make station 100% spoken Cree.
Kispiox Radio, CFNCR	Gitskan nation, community of 700	Radio: 25 hours	0%	New station has translated stories and conversations and needs to record them for radio

<sup>26</sup> Fairchild, Charles. "Below the Hamelin Line: CKRZ and Aboriginal Cultural Survival," *Canadian Journal of Communications*, Vol. 23, #2, 1998.

\* Organizations working in television have national distribution of programming through APTN.

## **Television**

Since the launch of APTN in 1999, Aboriginal film and television producers have had access to the network as a means of distribution for their productions, and have been able to showcase work that other networks were unwilling or unable to broadcast. This opportunity has been particularly important for producers of Aboriginal language programming. Northern producers and communications societies have been broadcasting their programs on Television Northern Canada since 1992: APTN has taken over that role.

APTN is committed to broadcasting 25% of its programming in a variety of Aboriginal languages. This has enabled many producers to work in a language other than English or French, and reach target audiences that may have had very little access to language programming.

In a recent audience survey, APTN discovered that its viewers are decidedly split on the issue of language programming. Some felt it was important for communities to see and hear programming in their own language, but many others had no patience for languages they did not understand. It seems many viewers welcome Aboriginal language programming - but only if it is in their own language!<sup>27</sup>

It was suggested by some respondents that APTN schedule language programming in specific time blocks so viewers will know when they will appear. This goes against APTN's policy of inclusion and integration of language programming, but underscores the challenge facing the network in terms of language.

Advertising is a major factor in scheduling Aboriginal language programming. Unless programs are dubbed, captioned or subtitled, advertisers are not interested in placing ads within these programs; they realize the market for unilingual programs is very small. When a program provides captions or subtitles, however, statistics confirm that audiences grow. This suggests that people who do not speak a language are willing to watch a program if there are English subtitles or an English version.

APTN would also like to see more original language programming genres. Currently, the majority of Aboriginal language shows are documentary or newsmagazine-type shows. It is difficult to find language speakers who can work in other genres such as drama or comedy. These formats are very expensive, and there are very few funding sources available to produce such shows.

In order to expand the reach of its Aboriginal language programming, APTN is developing various partnerships, vigorously promoting the use of broadcasting as a language-learning tool. The network has partnered with ExpressVu and Telesat to provide broadcasting services to SchoolNet, a Canadian educational website that

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<sup>27</sup> Strategic Inc, *APTN: Brand Equity Measure Programming and Promotional Test*, 2001.

encourages educators to use Internet technology to support learning. In Ontario and Quebec, every school with technology from ExpressVu and Telesat was given satellite dishes and decoders to receive APTN free of charge. Schools were given the capability to tape, listen or watch any show on APTN for use in the classroom. APTN intends to partner with other schools, and is considering additional initiatives to make the network more widely available in the classroom.

APTN is also considering partnerships with other broadcasters. A current agreement with OMNI 1, an ethnic channel, sees OMNI providing APTN with production funding to create new programs in Aboriginal languages that can then be versioned into languages other than English or French. This allows Canada's immigrant communities to hear Aboriginal stories and programs in their own languages.

Independent Aboriginal producers have raised a number of their own issues regarding language programming, particularly the need for more language programming funding. The Aboriginal-language envelope at the CTF is inadequate to meet the demands placed on the fund. Producers also acknowledge the added cost of producing in various languages. Paul Rickard, a Cree producer, developed ***Finding My Talk***, a series that profiled various Aboriginal language initiatives across Canada. Versions of the series were done in English, French, Cree and Mohawk. It was most difficult to produce the Mohawk language version due to the limited number of speakers and difficulty in translating the concepts, as well as matching the text with the corresponding video. Producers want to provide their programming in various languages, Aboriginal audiences are eager for such programs, and APTN has its CRTC commitment to meet; but there is simply not enough financial assistance for production of multiple language versions, and no compensation available to producers who cover the costs themselves.

#### **5.4 Summary of Key Findings:**

1. All societies identify the promotion and support of Aboriginal languages as one of their main objectives in their respective mandates.
2. Most societies rely on word of mouth or face-to-face meetings with stakeholders to determine what their audiences want or need. Audience surveys were once conducted as a requirement of NNBAP funding. That element has been cut from the Program and consequently very few broadcasters have done audience surveys, with the exceptions of TNI and Missinipi Broadcasting.
3. Most societies are offering the same or a reduced amount of Aboriginal language programming now, compared to five years ago. Most have cut back on their overall number of programming hours, especially in television. This is due mostly to lack of funding rather than desire to provide programming. Many cited the increasing cost of technology, the decrease in NNBAP funding, and higher standards required by APTN as reasons for some decline in programming.
4. Radio broadcasters have been able to maintain audiences, formats and timeslots better than television.

Most societies have long-term goals of trying to maintain their current levels of service. Few are venturing into additional programs in television, with the exception of IBC. Radio stations are hoping to increase types of programming in Aboriginal languages, especially those geared toward youth. Radio stations are also planning to become more

independent and decentralized. Many would like to involve more community stations in providing programming. This has led to an increased need for training.

Major issues regarding language programming at the societies include:

- Lack of proficient language speakers able or willing to learn radio or TV production;
- Lack of technical training for those currently working;
- Difficulty in meeting all the needs of regional dialects;
- Lack of funding to undertake audience surveys;
- Competition with mainstream media;
- Need to make programming relevant to a younger audience;
- Higher technical standards established by APTN make it more difficult to produce quality programming on same or reduced budgets.

Many of the communications societies have been in operation for 20 years or more. They have created a vast archive of materials about culture and language. Earlier this year, the NNBP groups presented the government with its perspective on broadcast policy. The need to archive valuable material was raised as a concern. They noted that it was not possible to adequately preserve this valuable resource without proper facilities, personnel or resources. These archives contain interviews and information in Aboriginal languages, a number of them facing serious erosion. These historic cultural materials need to be preserved.

For community radio stations in southern Canada, the main issue is financing. Volunteers run most stations, so it is difficult to enforce policy or to dictate program formats or standards.

In many areas of southern Canada, the issue of language is painful and contentious. Residential schools and other colonial institutions systematically attempted to outlaw the use of indigenous languages. The result has been an aversion to discuss the subject, particularly among those who were children in the 1940s and 1950s and who are now middle age. This is the demographic that could be most useful in maintaining community radio, but it is also the demographic with the least knowledge of Aboriginal languages.

Other issues raised include:

1. Lack of proficient language speakers able or willing to learn radio production;
2. Sense of shame in hearing/knowing the language, and consequent resistance to listening to language programming;
3. Need for advertisement to cover costs, which may require compromising elements of programming;
4. Very few resources in audio or digital format that can be put on the air (stories/legends, interviews with elders...)

Language programming on television is a complex issue, and one that requires more research. The relatively new arrival of APTN has changed the landscape and opportunities for Aboriginal language programming but has also raised a number of new questions and issues. Much of the language programming on APTN originates from

some of the strongest language groups (Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibway). To provide more Aboriginal language programming, there must be strong language speakers as well as financial assistance.

Another issue raised by several of the Aboriginal language broadcasters was the need for the groups to meet and network. There is currently no organization or association that represents Aboriginal language broadcasters on a national level. Several groups have joined together recently to form an association called the National Aboriginal Communications Council. Ideally, this organization would represent Aboriginal network radio, Aboriginal community radio, Aboriginal language producers and APTN. Its stated objectives are to:

- Strengthen national representation of Aboriginal communicators;
- Work toward building a true national radio network;
- Continue to work with the national government to engage the recommendations to fund equipment replacement costs for NNBAP groups;
- Forge alliances and partnerships to encourage and expand Aboriginal communications training;
- Strengthen aboriginal language utilization in communications initiatives;
- Act as regulatory and legislation watch dog in particularly to those developments with direct implication on Aboriginal communications;
- Build Aboriginal communications linkages nationally and globally

Such an association could be a powerful voice for Aboriginal language programming and a catalyst for change and innovation in Aboriginal broadcasting.

## **5.5 Aboriginal languages and the Internet**

The rise of the Internet is expected to have a profound impact on the revitalization and survival of Aboriginal languages. The gap between broadcasting and the Internet is getting smaller with every new technological advance. The use of the Internet is increasing among Aboriginal people, and access to the Internet is increasing in Aboriginal communities that were previously unable to connect.

In 1995, the Information Highway Advisory Council presented a report to the Department of Industry called "The Challenge of the Information Highway." It outlines several strategies that can be undertaken by the Government to increase the use of the Internet for language and cultural studies. They point out the advantages of the Internet over conventional classroom studies:

"Technology-based tools are effective because they allow the learner and the source of information to interact. Unlike institutionalized education, where the learner must go to a classroom at an appointed hour, these tools can be adapted to the individual's pace and style of learning and can be used over the distances and on demand."<sup>28</sup>

Aboriginal language speakers are also beginning to discover the benefits of the Internet. Language-learning tools, dictionaries, phrase books, sound clips and other initiatives can be placed on the World Wide Web and accessed around the globe. Recently, the Inuit website [attavik.net](http://attavik.net), which provides "solutions for Inuktitut computing" launched an important initiative to allow for the use of Inuktitut syllabics on the web. Individuals and groups can now write, manage documents and offer online payments on their websites, all in Inuktitut. This could also become available for other syllabic-based languages such as Cree and Ojibway.

In terms of language and broadcasting, it would be very easy to adapt and modify both existing and future language programs from their current radio or television format. The Internet increases the potential audience for language programming, and provides important new opportunities for people to learn languages.

More and more television and radio networks are also making their programming available on-line. Many internet-only stations exist around the world. Aboriginal broadcasters could make their programming available 24 hours per day to any location in the world with Internet access. This has tremendous potential for language learning, especially for individuals or groups in urban centres who may not have access to speakers from their home communities.

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<sup>28</sup> Johnston, David. Connection, Community, Content: The Challenge of the Information Highway," *Final report of the Information Highway Advisory Council*, p. 60.

## **6 IMPACTS OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE BROADCASTING**

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### **6.1 Other Canadian and international examples**

Empirical data on the impact of Aboriginal language broadcasting on the retention and survival of Aboriginal languages in Canada is difficult to find. The absence of any significant studies analyzing this impact is, in itself, an interesting finding, and confirms the need for much more research in this area.

There are, however, examples from other language groups and countries with indigenous language populations. This section provides a brief description of some initiatives regarding language broadcasting that shed light on the Aboriginal broadcasting situation. These initiatives could also serve as examples of best practices that could be implemented regarding Aboriginal language broadcasting in Canada.

#### ***Canada's Official Languages***

The most obvious and relevant comparison for Aboriginal-language broadcasting is the promotion and entrenchment of French-language laws and initiatives in Quebec and in Canada through official bilingualism. A number of sweeping initiatives that were introduced in Canada and Quebec have had a significant and positive impact on the vitality of the French language.

In 1963, the Federal government appointed a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism to look at the state of the two Canadian realities and recommend ways to develop Canada "on the basis of equal partnership between the two founding races."

The Task Force submitted seven reports over the course of eight years, and made sweeping recommendations. Some of the most far-reaching included:

- Parliament should adopt an Official Languages Act to establish equal status of French and English;
- Parents should be allowed to select the official language of their choice for education;
- The federal Public Service should be bilingual, and civil servants should be free to work in either language

These three recommendations were implemented, and have had an enormous impact on Canada, on Quebec, and on the state of the French language across the country.

The Official Languages Act came into effect in 1969, and was updated in 1988. It guarantees Canadians the right to receive federal government services in either French or English; promises equal opportunity for employment and advancement at all federal institutions for English or French speakers; and promotes opportunities to learn both English and French.

Quebec followed suit with their own official language laws and the Charter of the French Language, which established the primacy of the French language in government, education, culture, technology and the courts in the province. It also laid a solid policy

foundation for the extension and promotion of French-language broadcasting throughout the province. Some of the major initiatives include:

1. Adoption of French as the main language of communication, instruction and administration in Government, post-secondary educational institutions, health care facilities and the courts;
2. Classroom time for both English as a second language in French schools and French as a second language in English schools;
3. Intensive language training for immigrants;
4. Requirements for children of immigrants to attend French-language school;
5. Use of French on signs both internally (bulletin boards...) and externally (signs, advertising, product labels...);
6. Use of French in the technology sector, including computer software, hardware and documentation, and the production and transmission of information on the Internet;
7. Adoption of the Cinema Act, which ensures that French versions of movies are seen in Quebec;
8. French quotas for songs played on French-language radio stations;
9. Quebec-specific regulations to give priority access to French-language television channels throughout the province.

In 2003, the Quebec government issued a report entitled *Living in French in Quebec*. It stated the Quebec government's various policies on the French language and outlined a number of impacts that could be seen because of the introduction of the language laws. According to the document, the use of French has visibly progressed in Quebec:

1. Public and commercial signs have, in part, recovered a French character, particularly in Montréal;
2. Francophone consumers receive more services in their language;
3. French is used to a greater extent among workers and in the day-to-day activities of enterprises;
4. Increasing numbers of young immigrants are attending French-speaking schools, meaning they are integrating more easily into Québec society, which is mostly francophone;
5. Gaps in terms of income and status, which previously worked to the disadvantage of Francophones, have narrowed.<sup>29</sup>

### ***French-language Broadcasting.***

In the Report on the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, there is specific mention of French-language broadcasting and its impact on the language. "It is clear that broadcasting played a key role in the evolution of French...and that Quebec

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<sup>29</sup> Secretariat à la politique linguistique, gouvernement du Québec, *Living in French in Quebec*, 2002, p. 5.

broadcasting, culture, language and society grew up together.”<sup>30</sup> And Quebec has regulated its broadcasting, as well as other cultural institutions, to favour French-language productions. Steps have included the creation of Radio-Quebec, availability of more French-language television stations, and provincial funding for arts and culture produced in French.

Speaking to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in 2003, Philippe Lapointe, vice-president of TVA (Quebec’s commercial television network), stated that imposing French-language quotas and providing funding for French-language production has helped to secure the status of French-language programming. He stated that in the 1980s, French-speaking Canadians were mostly watching American programs. Today he says there are virtually no American programs on the French-language networks. People are now watching French-language, made-in-Canada productions. He points to several reasons for this success:

1. Audience preference for programs that understand the local and regional preferences of people, programs that “talk about the stories that are very close to the people who live here.”<sup>31</sup>
2. Access to federal financing through the Canadian Television Fund.

Other reports and documents point to the Quebec government’s policies in helping to maintain French as the primary language in broadcasting. These include the creation of the Quebec Department of Communications; the setting-up of communications departments in Quebec universities; and the development of the “Programme d’aide aux médias communautaires” that financed the formation and maintenance of autonomous community radio and television corporations.<sup>32</sup>

The result of these and other policies have placed the French language in an enviable position in Canada. In Quebec especially, their language surrounds Francophones every day in nearly all circumstances. It is possible to not hear the English-language in everyday business.

It is this kind of pervasiveness that is necessary to assist and revitalize Aboriginal languages. It is obvious that language retention and promotion depend on a complex series of social conditions and systems, including education, workplace and home use of language, legislative and policy support. The availability of high quality broadcast services as a fundamental, first tier of service is an important element of that linguistic support framework. Broadcasting plays a role, but it is the official policies as well as the access to education in the language, coupled with its extensive use at all levels, that will ensure that French thrives. More effort must be made to make a concerted effort to put Aboriginal languages in the same framework.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report says the same thing:

“In Aboriginal nations where the ratio of home use to mother tongue is high, making the Aboriginal language official might give impetus to its continued use in the community and to the elaboration of vocabulary to deal with

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<sup>30</sup> *Task Force on Broadcasting Policy*, 1985, p. 212.

<sup>31</sup> *Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage: Our Cultural Sovereignty*, chapter 8.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, Eric. “Canadian Broadcasting and Multiculturalism,” *Canadian Journal of Communications*, vol 17, #32, 1992.

contemporary inter-cultural experience. While legislation alone cannot work a reversal in language shift, its role in a multi-faceted, community-based strategy for language conservation and revitalization may be valuable.”

## **6.2 Maori-language Broadcasting**

In New Zealand, nearly every one in seven people consider themselves Maori, according to their most recent census. They are found in all sectors of the economy, and employed at all levels of Government. One in four Maori speak their indigenous language; nearly one-quarter of Maori speakers are under the age of 25.

While Canada’s linguistic situation is more complex than that of New Zealand (in that Canada has more than fifty Aboriginal languages), there are a number of language and broadcasting initiatives being undertaken in New Zealand that suggest possible strategies for Aboriginal language revitalization in Canada.

Maori-language promotion is a priority of the government of New Zealand. In 1999, the Government published its *Maori Language Strategy*, acknowledging its obligation under treaties established more than a century ago, which committed the Crown to helping to promote the Maori language. It set out a number of objectives to increase the number of Maori speakers, improve proficiency and provide opportunities in the broadcasting sector for more language speakers. Broadcasting is an important element of the Government’s strategy. Reasons for linking language retention with radio and television production include:

- Their existence has powerful symbolic implications, as they show to all New Zealanders that Maori is a living language;
- They make the Maori language accessible to both Maori language learners and those proficient in Maori, and facilitate interaction, in Maori, between the two groups;
- They are major sources of new words and thus can promote and disseminate developments in the Maori language;
- Listening to radio and watching television are popular leisure activities;
- Both provide many opportunities for Maori people to hear and listen to the Maori language, which in turn stimulates the further use of the language;
- Both can provide and support educational programmes.<sup>33</sup>

The Maori Language Commission also cites broadcasting as a powerful tool to promote language.

“...Broadcasting is an important part of any serious Maori language promotion, revival and revitalisation programme. In our view... TV and radio are important to minority language revitalisation because of their tremendous influence and `cultural' power... TV and radio are two of the main carriers or conveyors of culture via their

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<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Maori Development, Government of New Zealand, *Te Tūāoma, The Maori Language: The Steps that have been taken.* Quoted from <http://www.tpk.govt.nz/publications/docs/tetuaomaeng.pdf>, p. 11.

presentation of news, views, the weather, entertainment, music and sport.”<sup>34</sup>

The Government supports this with direct funding to radio and television. Each of the twenty Maori radio stations receive operational funding; this is supplemented by other services and funds including distribution services, audience survey costs, and incentive funding directly related to the number of hours the station broadcasts in the Maori language.

New Zealand recently launched a national Maori television network. It was founded under the Maori Television Service Act 2003 with the stated aim of playing a major role in revitalizing Maori language and culture. The Act requires that the channel should be broadcast mostly in the Maori language, and “have regard to the needs of children participating in immersion education and all people learning Maori.” The Government committed \$11.5 million for operating costs, and an additional \$14.5 million for in-house programme production, acquisitions, subtitling and versioning. Other funding comes from independent producers.

The Government, through an agency called NZ On Air, also funds mainstream television programs that promote Maori language and culture. In 1998-99, the Government provided \$3 million to this end. Maori-language programming on mainstream television accounts for 15% of all New Zealand television coverage throughout the country, on frequencies reserved by the Crown for the promotion of Maori language and culture.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Gaelic-language Broadcasting***

In the same year as the announcement of the 1990 Broadcasting Act in Canada, a similar act was being announced in the United Kingdom. The Act entrenched support for Gaelic-language programming, and created an organization to oversee funding to Gaelic-language broadcasters. The mandate of this new group, called Telebhisean Gaidhlig (CTG), was to administer funds “in such manner as...will secure that a wide range of television programmes in Gaelic are broadcast for reception in Scotland.” The CTG was later expanded in 1996 to include support for radio, and the name changed to Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig (CCG). The fund was able to support a wide range of television programs for both independent channels and the BBC, thus ensuring a large audience for language programming.

The Gaelic Broadcasting Committee initiated a unique and successful program to introduce the Gaelic language to radio listeners. On the radio’s web site, gaelic-language learners can listen to a weekly “letter” and follow along, reading the text either from the website or from a copy printed in regional newspapers. It is an excellent example of multimedia application of language learning initiatives, integrating broadcasting, the Internet and newspapers.

BBC Scotland also introduced a children’s program aimed at students in immersion programs, providing language programming suitable to their language skills.

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Economic Development, Communications Services, Broadcasting summary, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Dr. John Gardiner-Garden, e-brief to Australian Parliament on Indigenous Broadcasting, November, 2003. From: [http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/Indigenous\\_broadcasting.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/Indigenous_broadcasting.htm)

Finally, the BBC supported and created a website on Gaelic language learning. “Beag air Bheag” provides 20 lessons, as well as a phrase book, a song box where you can listen to Gaelic songs and other resources for learning Gaelic. The use of sound clips and easy to understand lessons made this an award-winning web site that fit well with the BBC’s other Gaelic-language broadcasting initiatives.

### ***The Foundation for Endangered Languages***

This is an international organization that promotes research and dialogue about endangered languages around the world. In 2001, the Foundation held a conference on the role of media in promoting and protecting languages. A number of case studies were presented and discussed, many with potential significance for Canadian Aboriginal broadcasters.

The indigenous language of Morocco, Tamazight, has been successfully promoted and protected through the use of electronic media. After comparing the benefits of using the education system or the broadcasting system to maintain the language, the government and indigenous groups decided that radio and television were more advantageous. Drawbacks associated with use of the education system included:

- Near-exclusive focus on youth;
- Language learning was a special program that students had to take in addition to other studies;
- Teachers of the language were not often as proficient as students required;
- Learning through formal education meant many years before results of its effectiveness could be known.

Broadcasting, on the other hand, offered several advantages. These included

- More lively and attractive to people, therefore more willingness to participate;
- Larger reach;
- Lack of formal literacy requirements, an important consideration in communities with strong oral traditions;
- Benefits of using broadcasting could be seen in a short time, which is necessary because of the rapid decline of the language<sup>36</sup>

Other countries with small minority languages made similar observations. Many presenters felt that radio and television are under-utilized as a tool in language retention and survival.

Bernard Hervieux, of Societe de Communication Atikamek Montagnais (SOCAM) presented a paper on the importance of Innu and Atikamek language radio.

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<sup>36</sup> Moseley, Christopher, and Nichola Ostler. “*Endangered Languages and the Media.*” International conference proceedings, 2001. Morocco. Foundation for Endangered Languages, p. 42-50.

“In a manner of speaking, the SOCAM is the keeper of these languages and lifeways. Traditionally, Innu and Atikamek were transmitted solely by word of mouth, a tradition which is perpetuated and ensured by our network of radio stations.”<sup>37</sup>

The SOCAM presentation underscored many of the elements that make Aboriginal language broadcasting important, including:

- Its ability to link many remote communities together and reduce each one’s sense of isolation;
- Its capacity to promote effective governance by providing people with accurate and relevant information about political and economic news in their own language;
- Its tendency to promote fluency in a language through social validation and employment opportunities;
- Its reinforcement of group identity, giving people the opportunity to link together for common causes and issues.

Several other international examples of the success of using broadcasting to help in the revitalization of indigenous or minority languages were reviewed. This is another area in which additional research and identification of best practices would be rewarding.

### ***6.3 Impact of Aboriginal language broadcasting on language use, acquisition, retention, and quality***

As noted previously, there have been no studies to determine the quantitative link between Aboriginal-language broadcasting and the use, acquisition, retention and quality of Aboriginal language among its audiences. There are a number of strong and valid indications, however, that **broadcasting is having a vital and positive impact.**

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey reported in 2001 that the more sources an Aboriginal child could rely on for help in learning an Aboriginal language, the more likely they were to achieve fluency in understanding and speaking the language. This assistance could come from parents, grandparents, other relatives, teachers, friends, Elders the community in general, or the media.

For example, only 15% of Aboriginal children living in non-reserve areas who could count on a single source of assistance for learning an Aboriginal language were able to speak and understand the language very well or relatively well. On the other hand, 38% of children who could rely on three sources of assistance to help them learn an Aboriginal language were able to better speak and understand the language.<sup>38</sup> Broadcasting is one of these “sources of assistance” that can strengthen language acquisition and retention.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>38</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, July 9, 2004.

### ***Audience Surveys***

An audience survey conducted recently by TNI found that 71% of the respondents reported learning new Inuttitut words from listening to TNI radio, and 72% learned new words from television. A large majority of respondents wish to see more programs on Inuit culture, and to hear traditional stories told in Inuttitut. A large majority of the respondents requested additional programming on Inuit culture. Inuit in Nunavik are very supportive of TNI's programs; 83% of respondents were familiar with TNI's radio programs and 73% were familiar with TNI's television programming.

Missinipi Broadcasting also conducted a recent audience survey, which reported a slight decline in Cree-language speakers but an increase in "other" language speakers, which includes Michif and Saulteaux, both languages where MBC began to offer more programming. While respondents said the quality of the programming and the announcing decreased slightly since the previous survey in 1998, respondents said the quality of the Aboriginal language on the radio has increased. Some causes for concern, however, are that more people wanted to hear less Aboriginal language on the radio or even none at all. There is a significant decrease in the amount people would like to watch/hear, with the many people only wanting less than an hour per day. There was also a decrease in the percentage of people who think that MBC "helps preserve language and culture."

### ***Program Evaluations***

Periodic evaluations of government programs shed some light on the impact of Aboriginal language broadcasting. In the most recent evaluation of the **NNBAP**, it was pointed out that the NNBAP members were very successful in meeting the objectives of the federal government with regards to Canadian content, cultural participation and strengthening the connections between Canadians. The study confirmed that the programming provided by the NNBAP members is valuable not only to their regional stakeholders, but also to Canada as a whole

The evaluation also described the impact that NNBAP programming has had on viewers. These include:

- Increase in children's programming to teach language;
- Public forum programs to engage people in civic opportunities;
- Recording of elders and ability to preserve language and cultural knowledge;
- Role of APTN in providing a vehicle to produce language programming

This has led to more opportunities for language speakers to work in the field of broadcasting, opened up opportunities for youth, and encouraged them to maintain their language.

The **Aboriginal Languages Initiative** at the Department of Canadian Heritage also completed an evaluation in 2004. A case study included in that review described a specific project related to Aboriginal broadcasting, showcasing the impact that broadcasting can have on language retention and highlighting the importance of finding new and innovative ways to use broadcasting in language retention.

The Labrador Inuit Association initiated a program, termed a Language Nest, in 2001. This Language Nest was established "to promote, advance and conserve the Inuttitut

language through an Infant Care Program that offers intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development offered unilingually in Inuktitut.”<sup>39</sup>

The program is open to infants between three months and two years. Inuktitut speakers care for the babies and speak only Inuktitut to them. They participate in a wide range of activities and programs, all presented in Inuktitut. One activity involves watching the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation’s program Takuginai, which is an award-winning children’s program produced in Inuktitut. This program is presented on videotape to the infants. It plays in the background during the day and the infants are encouraged to watch and learn.

Participants, parents and the community have responded enthusiastically to the Language Nest. The program has a long waiting list, more families in the community are making a concerted effort to speak to their children in Inuktitut, and valuable employment opportunities for childcare workers to speak their language have been created. It was an extremely successful program because it linked various ways of learning to enhance the language retention in the infants.

### ***The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples***

RCAP was the most in depth and comprehensive government review of Canadian Aboriginal perspectives to date. A number of key statements on the impact of Aboriginal language programming were included in both submissions to the Commission, and in the Commission’s final report.

Over 90 per cent of the homes in the northern communities have a television set. As a Native journalist, I know this can definitely be one way to maintain a strong sense of Aboriginal identity in our changing environment.

Shirley Cook  
Native Communications Society of the Western Arctic  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, 8 December 1992

In discussing the history and impact of Aboriginal broadcasting, the Report has this to say:

Biennial audience surveys indicate that Aboriginal language programming is vitally important, especially for older people who often speak neither English nor French. As a result, the percentage of respondents who watch or listen to Aboriginal programming when it is available is very high.<sup>46</sup> The surveys also suggest that Aboriginal audiences have acquired new knowledge and skills related to their languages, traditions and contemporary environment through Aboriginal media. There is strong interest in extending Aboriginal-language programming and in providing programs for youth, who make up the majority of the population in most communities. By increasing the presence and legitimacy of Aboriginal languages, broadcasting reinforces the interest and language competence of younger

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<sup>39</sup> Consilium. *Aboriginal Languages Initiative Program Evaluation, 2004*, p. 63.

Aboriginal community members and helps slow the growing linguistic and generation gap between them and older unilingual members.

### **Anecdotal Evidence**

While empirical data on the impact of language broadcasting on the retention of Aboriginal languages is limited, there is ample anecdotal evidence that, broadcasting plays a significant role in the preservation of Aboriginal languages.

In a predominantly oral culture, anecdotal evidence is viewed as a valid and valuable source of data. In the absence of in-depth academic studies, the statements of viewers and community members become increasingly important. After three decades of phone-in programs, audience surveys, government program evaluations and community consultations on various issues, it is clear that Aboriginal viewers and broadcasters alike link access to Aboriginal-language media services with retention and promotion of language.

“I like children’s shows because I watch with my daughter and they are enjoyable. I really like the fact they they are in Inuktitut...because they make you feel a lot better in life.” (Kavavow, from Qanuq Isumavit, IBC Phone in show, 2004)

“It’s nice to hear somebody talking in Inuvialuktun. It’s your own language. You feel so much more. There are no translations for the feelings, emotions. There are words, things that you can’t translate. It’s nice to hear that.” (Mary Teddy, in Communication and Culture in the Western Arctic, 1986)

“I know a lot of people have been trying to get into the language because they are enjoying the programs so much that they want to be able to understand them. They get so interested that they try harder to learn the language, at least to understand it.” (Ann Kasook, in Communication and Culture in the Western Arctic—A Case Study, 1986)

“As the saying goes, ‘the children are our future leaders.’ Without them perpetuating the language and culture, it is obvious that it will pass into anonymity. The OkalaKatiget Society is helping to prevent this. Their productions and publications are a great asset to us educators. [They] are used in many of our courses throughout the various grades.” (Wilson Belbin, principal, Jens Haven Memorial School, Nain, Labrador. In letter to OkalaKatiget Society, April, 1990)

“There are many people who can tune in [to our television program] who are away from the communities and they appreciate watching in the language to keep up their language skills. They would have no access to media in their language if **Tamapta** was not on the air.” (Topsi Cockney, Inuvialuit Communications Society, interview with Jennifer David, October 2004)

“Aside from the Cree school board, the [James Bay Cree Communications Society] is one of the only major players in helping to preserve the language. It’s heard every day in people’s households. Elders have told us that it is really important and they are very grateful to hear Cree on the radio. The leadership in our communities realize they need fluency in Cree because we are there putting microphones in their faces and asking them to respond in Cree... of all the things, we’ve taken from the non-native society, the best has been radio...it’s a

great tool to help us preserve our language.” Luke MacLeod, James Bay Cree Communications Society, interview with Jennifer David, October 2004)

“People are more aware, especially the kids, about their language. We emphasize its importance. People are using SOCAM as a platform where they can express themselves in their own languages; they are more comfortable and willing to talk. We are complimentary to learning the language at home...by broadcasting every day, people tune in and SOCAM plays an active role in informing people about what’s happening.” (Bernard Hervieux, General Manager, Societe Communications Atikamek-Montagnais, interview with Jennifer David, October 2004)

“We get calls from people saying that they are better at speaking the language after listening to our radio. And it creates more togetherness between communities. It instills a sense of pride in the language.” (Christine Chisel, Wawatay Native Communications Society, interview with Jennifer David, October 2004)

“Language broadcasting has been ‘music to the ears’ of those who understand it. It helps people reawaken to their language and culture and the two are intrinsic...seeing and hearing the language on TV and radio, you feel connected to the language...it has also provided consistency—a place where you can always hear the language, even if there is nowhere else, they can always tune into radio and TV programming to help re-learn the language.” (Nap Gardiner, interview with Jennifer David, October 2004)

“Television has to be harnessed as a tool to help preserve the language, culture and identity of Inuit...the desire to keep Inuktitut healthy has found a fitting medium in film as a way to preserve, and expose, Inuit culture to Inuit and the outside world.” (Zebedee Nungak, commentator, CBC North, #168: InuiTV)

These comments are all from northern Aboriginal people involved in broadcasting. The experience of southern Aboriginal language broadcasters, in the absence of government support, has been very different.

“[W]hen the government drew that invisible line across the country and said that these communities north of this line need communication societies to preserve their languages, to preserve their songs, they gave them money for satellite networks, radio, printers for the newspapers and in the south we didn’t get that. So when we started our radio station at Six Nations, we used that against the CRTC and told them that it was a form of genocide because they didn’t give us the opportunity in the south to access those kinds of money so we could preserve our languages as well.” (Elaine Bomberry in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993)

We note again there is very little empirical data to support the widely shared perception that there is a clear link between Aboriginal language broadcasting and language retention. This link requires further study, and should be prioritized by the Aboriginal Languages Task Force as a main subject for further research.

## 7 CONCLUSION

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Media, and broadcasting in particular, are powerful tools in the creation and maintenance of culture, values and language. Television and radio are the most pervasive and invasive form of media, and has been used to indoctrinate, enlighten and educate viewers and listeners for more than half a century. As Gail Valeskakis points out, "The stories we tell in written and visual narratives have long been recognized as a window on who we are, what we experience and how we understand and enact ourselves an others."<sup>40</sup>

But media in general, and broadcasting specifically, has also been used by Aboriginal people to maintain and strengthen their languages and cultures. Unfortunately, this has not been adequately documented or acknowledged. Broadcasting must be considered more seriously in any discussion about the revitalization of Aboriginal languages, along with home, school and community initiatives.

As statistics show, the more influences that an Aboriginal person has, the more likely he/she will succeed in learning and retaining their Aboriginal language. Broadcasting should be one of the key pillars in language learning. International examples show that broadcasting does have a positive impact on the retention of languages. The proliferation and strength of French in Quebec is due, in part, to the strong policy support for the language as well as access to the language in a variety of contexts, including media.

Language programming on radio and television also has wider implications and should be supported. These include:

3. Fostering of a sense of pride among youth speaking the language;
4. Encouragement for involvement in local, regional and national initiatives and engagement in political process;
5. Jobs for language speakers;
6. Provision of role models who speak the language;
7. Legitimization and validation for use of the language.

Broadcasting has wide appeal and can reach a large number of people. The potential of Aboriginal-language programming has yet to be fully understood or utilized. But there are abundant indications that the retention and revival of languages can be greatly enhanced by the use of media, particularly radio and television.

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<sup>40</sup> Valeskakis, Gail. *The Role, Development and Future of Aboriginal Communications*, p. 1.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

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1. The *Broadcasting Act* should be revised to enshrine rights and adequate funding for Aboriginal language broadcasting. Additional policy or legislation can be adopted on a regional, provincial or territorial basis to provide additional recognition of and support to Aboriginal language broadcasting;
2. More research is required to gather empirical data on the link between Aboriginal language broadcasting and retention of Aboriginal languages. This research should include both northern and southern Aboriginal broadcasting initiatives;
3. Provide support, including financial, training and networking opportunities, for Aboriginal community radio stations across Canada;
4. Provide funding so Aboriginal-language radio and television organizations can undertake audience surveys to better tailor their programming to their audiences;
5. Support and encourage the creation of a national Aboriginal broadcasters association. Community radio, NNBP network radio/television, and APTN can join together for networking and lobbying initiatives as well as joint research projects that can benefit Aboriginal language programming;
6. The Government should encourage more Aboriginal youth to consider broadcasting as a career. Use role models, career fairs, and high school media courses. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging language speakers to see the potential careers available in broadcasting;
7. Provide adequate funding for facilities, resources and personnel to preserve and archive the existing tapes of interviews and programs with elders and others speaking Aboriginal languages;
8. Encourage and support radio stations and television producers to use their products and services in other contexts. Some examples would be videotapes in schools, inclusion of broadcast materials in Aboriginal language curricula, radio projects where youth interview elders, tapes being played in day care settings, etc.
9. Any future undertaking or research to be conducted in the area of Aboriginal language and broadcasting should be directed towards APTN and other Aboriginal broadcasters in various regions of the country. For Aboriginal people to have input and to be able to share their vast traditional knowledge, it is imperative that Aboriginal people control the media for and about them.

## Appendix One: Documents reviewed

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## Appendix Two: Interviews

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## **Appendix Three: Aboriginal languages map**