The Language Sustainability Toolkit

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This toolkit is a living document that we are frequently expanding and refining. For the most current version, please visit wikitongues.org or livingtongues.org. Please send any feedback to hello@wikitongues.org or annaluisa@livingtongues.org.

Introduction

This Language Sustainability Toolkit was created by Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and Wikitongues. Living Tongues is one of the world’s leading endangered language research organizations, providing online language learning and preservation tools such as electronic online multimedia dictionaries. Wikitongues is a global movement for language survival, helping people document, archive, and promote their languages online.

Wikitongues and Living Tongues believe that every person deserves the resources to keep their language alive, so we developed a process for you to measure the health of your language and build a strategy for people to keep speaking the language. In this toolkit, you’ll learn about techniques that you can use to document your language, promote your language, and organize your community to speak your language. You’ll also learn about success stories from around the world. The process of recording and storing your language can be called language documentation, and the process of keeping your language alive can be called language revival or language revitalization. All of those activities are key parts of language sustainability.

What is Language Sustainability?

Language sustainability is a way to think about the lifelong goal of keeping your language alive. How do you teach your language to the next generation and make your community proud to speak it? Every community is unique and the path to language sustainability will be different for everyone. You may need to inspire people in your community to speak your language by creating books, films, music, and other media in your language. You may need to push your government to officially recognize your language, so that it becomes more widely respected. You may need to build immersive environments for your language, either in person or online, so that people in your community can easily use your language on a daily basis. Regardless of the strategy that you choose, remember: keeping your language alive is a long-term process that requires patience, perseverance, and hope. Let’s get started.
Language Story: Tehuelche
Dora Manchado, the last fluent speaker of Tehuelche (aonekko ‘a’ien), worked with linguistic anthropologist Javier Domingo (University of Montreal) in the final years of her life to record her knowledge of her language and culture. Upon her passing, Domingo wrote, “Dora knew perfectly well that language not only means interaction, but also trust, complicity, intimacy. She proved to me that language means sharing, and company. Thanks to the recordings she made, the rest of the community members now have, if they want, the possibility of affirming their past and reconstructing their identity.”
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Get Started

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WIKITONGUES
You can follow the steps in this toolkit by yourself, but we have found that language revival projects grow faster when people work together as a team. Working with other people can help expand your network, motivate you, give you more ideas, and increase your long-term productivity. Teamwork also builds up a community around your language, which is essential to keeping it alive.

Locate other like-minded people who can join you, either in person or online (or both). If possible, include people of different ages, genders, and professions. In the beginning, it is not necessarily important for you to be fluent in your language, but it is important that you and your team are excited about keeping your language alive. In the long run, it may be helpful to connect with at least one advanced or fluent speaker, if your language has any.

**How to find your team?**

- Search for other speakers on Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, and other platforms.
- Search hashtags related to your language or culture on Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms.
- Reach out to local school teachers who teach your language.
- Find cultural organizations dedicated to promoting your language.
- Search on [Global Voices](https://globalvoices.org) and [Rising Voices](https://risingvoices.org) to read posts about your region; you may find like-minded language activists, writers, educators, and artists.
• Contact local universities with programs in history, anthropology, or linguistics. There may be professors or students there who study your language.

• Contact Living Tongues Institute and Wikitongues (hello@wikitongues.org)! We work with people all over the world and may be able to connect you with someone who works on your language.

After you find your team

• Determine the best way to communicate and collaborate. What platform works best for you? Teams can use Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, Slack, or other platforms for getting in touch, and online workspaces like Google Docs, One Drive, or Dropbox to organize and share their content.

• Plan regular meetings to share your progress and ideas. Having weekly or monthly meetings scheduled on your calendar builds momentum. Depending on your situation, these meetings may be online or in person, but they all help build the strength of your community and relationships with each other.

• Decide what your language needs to thrive, and plan to make it happen over time.

In the following sections, we show you how to evaluate how healthy your language is, how to document your language, and how to promote it through activism and community organizing.
Every community faces different challenges to keeping their language alive. As you evaluate what your language needs, think about why your community is struggling to teach, speak, or use your language. This may be a difficult process. Here is a list of common challenges and potential solutions:

**The number of speakers is declining**
If there are few fluent speakers of your language or the majority of speakers are older, try recording interviews with elders and other fluent speakers and share that content online. This will be the beginning of language-learning materials. It may also inspire and encourage others, especially young people, to join you in learning and promoting your language.

*Example.* Language activists often submit their language videos to the Wikitongues’ Youtube channel

**Your community struggles with internalized shame**
It is common for people to feel embarrassed or ashamed about speaking their language because their culture has experienced severe forms of discrimination, oppression, or racism. Those feelings might run very deep. Changing those feelings over time means understanding the history of the language and the people who speak it, and the issues that speakers have faced over generations. Also, people may feel a sense of guilt when they try to learn the language, and are told that they are “not speaking correctly.” If people in your community are shy
about speaking for some of these reasons, have private conversations with like-minded individuals to determine safe spaces where you can use your language and begin to restore a sense of pride in using it for yourself and for others.

**Example.** West Frisian activists in Leeuwarden, Netherlands led community language flash mobs, social media campaigns with local celebrities, and encouraged stores to give discounts for people who came in speaking West Frisian to build community pride in using the language.

**Speakers are far apart**
If you are not physically close to other speakers of your language or members of your culture, try using the internet to find language allies.
See Find Your Team for more ideas.

**Example.** Users of Black American Sign Language (BASL), who often live far apart, use a private Facebook group for discussing their language, speaking with each other, and creating new signs.

**There is little or no financial support for your language**
If there is little local support for your language or you can’t find funding to document, archive, or teach your language, see the funding sources section for a list of foundations that may be able to help you financially. If you have never written a grant proposal, reach out to someone who has experience writing for advice. You can also think creatively about ways to generate money for keeping your language alive, such as monetizing a Youtube channel, creating a fundraiser event to help support the creation of new materials, or partnering with another group or company to raise funds.

**Example.** Bintou Camara, a language activist in Guinea, is raising money to revitalize her language, Nalu, by partnering with foreign embassies and companies that are present in her community.

**Your language’s writing system is not standardized**
For some languages, there might not be a standard writing system yet. There might also be technical issues involving certain special characters that aren’t easy to use on computers or mobile devices yet (see step 4’s “Digital Technology” section for a longer discussion on that topic). For some languages, there may even be multiple competing writing systems. Be aware that choosing a script can be an action that has political impacts in your community. Linguists can help guide the process of choosing a script, but ultimately it should be up to community members to make decisions about scripts.
**Example.** In the Sora language (India), there are five competing writing systems. They are associated with different religious or political factions in the region. Resolving the issue of standardizing the writing system should come from within the Sora community and may take patience, negotiation and time. It may turn out that the writing systems need to co-exist and be used in all the language resources, to be fair to people's preferences.

**Your language has many unique dialects**
If your language has several dialects, it is important to look at all dialects in the beginning of your revitalization project. Which dialect do you want to focus on? How do speakers of each dialect like to be represented? You may be able to include some (or all) of the dialects in your project, but in some cases, you'll want to develop separate resources for each individual dialect. At Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, we are often asked about dialects and how they are presented in our electronic multimedia dictionaries. Some communities want their dictionary to contain several dialects, and we accommodate that. Other communities request to have a separate dictionary for each dialect, and we help facilitate that as well.

**Examples.** Catalan has several distinct varieties, each with unique vocabulary and grammar. Catalan from Catalonia and Catalan from Valencia—also called Valencian—are promoted by separate organizations: the Institut d’Estudis Catalans and the Academica de la Llengua Valenciana.

The Yanesha’ language (spoken in the southcentral Peruvian Amazon) has two dialects, upriver and downriver. Yanesha’ speakers, leaders and educators have decided that the two dialects are similar enough that they can all share the same educational resources such as dictionaries and schoolbooks. Dialectical differences are identified in the materials.

**Your language lacks educational materials**
If it is difficult to find any educational resources in your language, try working with local educators, artists and community organizers to create learning materials like children’s books, dictionaries, and grammars. You can also start by translating existing educational resources into your language.

**Example.** Artists and storytellers in Haiti and Rwanda work closely with Nabu, a children’s literacy non-profit, to publish children’s books in Haitian Creole and Kinyarwanda.
Your language isn’t politically recognized
Many governments prioritize dominant languages. They might not support smaller minority languages, or they might actively try to erase them. If your government doesn’t recognize or support your language, and political activism is allowed in your country, try contacting a local lawyer who can show you how to petition for language recognition. Sometimes, legal work is available pro bono: for free. You may also decide that political recognition is unnecessary and other forms of support and revitalization take priority.

Example. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kihunde language activist Hangi Bulebe successfully rallied his community to introduce Kihunde in primary schools, despite the absence of government recognition for the language.

Depending on your situation and your country’s history, some (or all) of the above challenges may threaten the future of your language. It’s impossible for one person to solve all of these problems alone, but that’s where your team comes in. By working together, you can divide the work, focus on your individual skills, rely on each other’s strengths, and ensure a strong, resilient, and long-term effort to keep your language alive.

Talking with your team or community about what your language needs might be the first step to making a difference. Is your language being spoken in the streets, or used in online spaces? Remember that you and your team might be the first ones to bring the language back into the public. Future generations will be grateful for the work that your team does to keep your language alive.

Worksheet Questions
• How do you engage with your language?
• Who do you speak it with? Where do you speak it?
• Who would you like to speak it with in the future?
• Is there a sense of “internalized shame” in your community about the language? Do you know why that feeling exists (or does not exist)?
• Do you feel proud of your language? If so, what are things about your language that you love? If not, what are things about your language that you struggle with?
• Who in your community, or online, would be on your dream team for language revival?
• What other roadblocks (or challenges) does your language face?
• What are some solutions that can help you?
1.3 Assess Your Language’s Health

When you start a revitalization project, take time to reflect on the health of your language. If your language has few speakers and little documentation, prioritize the creation and preservation of audio and video recordings so that future speakers may use those materials. For example, today’s speakers of nearly dormant languages such as Tutelo-Saponi, Cornish, Tunica-Biloxi, and Wendat relied on decades-old dictionaries, publications, and recordings to revive their languages in their communities.

Linguists tend to describe language health according to the scale below. Remember that these categories are here to help us understand what is happening to a language over time. Languages can shift from one category to another. You and your community have the power to keep your language alive.

**Healthy / Thriving**

There is a stable or growing community with speakers of all generations. Your community’s youngest members still learn and use your language.

**Threatened**

There is a small but semi-stable community of speakers. There are still younger people learning the language. Note: a language can be threatened even if it has a large speaker community.
No children speak the language at all. That means that they are learning a different language when they begin to speak.

The youngest speakers are over the age of 40.

The youngest speakers are over the age of 60.

There are no more fluent living speakers left, but some social uses of the language still remain, or there is a heritage identity associated with the use of the language.

There are no more fluent living speakers left, no parts of the language are being used at all, and there is no sense of heritage identity associated with the language. For example: Sumerian is an extinct language.

Worksheet Questions
- Are young children and teenagers learning your language? Where?
- Are adults learning it as well? Where are they learning it?
- If few people are speaking the language, what caused this?
- What dominant language(s) might be replacing the language?
- How many speakers of your language are there? If you don’t know, where can you find that information?
- What health category do you think your language is in?
- If the language is becoming more threatened over time, how could you help increase the interest in reviving it?
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Document Your Language
Document Your Language

2.1 Gathering Available Language Materials

Every community working to keep their language alive has one thing in common: documentation, so their language can be shared and taught. Before you create new documentation, find out what materials already exist in your language and try to collect them. You can make physical photocopies or download digital copies that you can store online using a cloud service, like Dropbox or Google Drive, for everyone on your team to access. Through this process, you will see what has been done already, and what still needs to be done. If you don't know where to start, contact local educators and professors to see who can help you find materials. Local libraries and universities may have resources in your language. You may also find materials online at any of the following websites:

- ELCat (Endangered Languages Catalog)
- Glottolog
- OLAC
- Wikitongues
- YouTube
- PARADISEC
- ELAR
- DoBeS
- First Languages Australia
- AILLA
- Living Tongues Educational Resource Page
Language Materials Checklist

☐ Print dictionary
☐ Online multimedia dictionary
☐ Educational grammar used to make curriculums
☐ Audio recordings of words, phrases, natural conversation, and interviews
☐ Video recordings of oral histories, daily activities, interviews with speakers
☐ Musical recordings with lyrics
☐ Educational materials for students
☐ Stories (recorded and written in text, when available)
☐ An ISO code (for digitization and browser recognition)
☐ Glottocode (for academic/archival recognition)
☐ UNICODE recognition (for digitization)
☐ Fonts for your language’s script, if your language uses a script
☐ Access to a keyboard in your language
☐ Advanced Digital Tools such as spellchecker and predictive text
☐ Comprehensive grammar (optional)
Recording an oral history is another core component of what we call ‘early stage’ language documentation. This video shows the language as it is naturally spoken. Those looking to research the features of a language and those seeking to learn it can find great value in a well-documented oral history. Perhaps most importantly, oral histories can offer a look into the life of a speaker, or a community.

If you are recording content in a language that has very little existing documentation, you may want to consider officially archiving it for future generations as well. Have a look at Archiving for the Future. According to their website, it is a training course that is “designed to teach language documenters, activists, and researchers how to organize, arrange, and archive language documentation, revitalization, and maintenance materials and metadata in a digital repository or language archive. The entire course can be completed in approximately 3-5 hours.”

**Technical and Aesthetic Considerations**

Whether you’re using a professional camera and audio recorder, or just a smartphone, remember the following:

**Clean audio is essential**

It’s important to record your interview with minimal background noise and audio interference. Avoid crowded hallways, busy streets, or background music.
Stick to landscape dimensions
Though it is common for people to use portrait ratios when recording with smartphones, it is better to film with landscape dimensions; that is, with your phone horizontal rather than vertical. This is better for online media players. The video should be framed to the upper body of the speaker(s) or wider.

Smartphones make great audio recorders
If you have access to a professional camera, but lack professional audio equipment, your phone can be used to record external audio. For iOS devices, we recommend iTalk. For Android, we recommend Audio Recorder.

What to Discuss in an Oral History
Videos should be as natural as possible. If you are recording yourself speaking, you can plan your topics beforehand. You can choose what to share in the video. Often, people speak about their language and their relationship with it, their hopes for the future of their language, their favorite foods from their community’s cuisine, or anything else important to them!

What is most important when capturing an oral history is that the person in the video feels at ease, and shares information they are comfortable with. If you are recording someone else, it is good to chat with the interviewee beforehand (if possible) to help calm their nerves. We recommend to not provide questions, but to have the speaker freely share. If they are having trouble thinking of something to say, or get stuck during the recording, you can always help encourage them and suggest topics; tell them what you would talk about as inspiration.
Transcription versus Translation

Transcript refers to the text of your interview in the language(s) spoken rendered into some means of writing it, that is, the actual words used in the language(s) while a translation is a rendering of the meaning of the content of the video transcript into another language. If you can, create a transcript of your language(s) as spoken in the recording and a translation into an international language. You can do this in person or afterwards by email or phone.

Ideal file type for subtitles

The best way to create transcripts and translations is with .SRT files. These types of files sync automatically with most video and media players to create subtitles.

How to format subtitles

- Each subtitle is formatted with three line breaks:
  - The numerical sequence counter: 1, 2, 3, and so on.
  - The opening and closing time markers, which are formatted as **Hours:Minutes:Seconds:Milliseconds** and joined by --> .
  - The raw text of the subtitle.
- Subtitles should contain fewer than 40 characters per line of text. You can use websites such as [https://wordcounter.net](https://wordcounter.net) to double check your lines.
Example
“Hello, my name is Joana. I am from Tarragona and Catalan is my mother tongue. I also speak Spanish and English.” is formatted like this:

```
1
00:00:01,00 --> 00:00:03,00
Hello, my name is Joana.

2
00:00:03,03 --> 00:00:11,00
I am from Tarragona
And Catalan is my mother tongue.

3
00:00:11,06 --> 00:00:14,00
I also speak Spanish and English.
```

How to create subtitles
To create an .SRT file, open up your preferred text editor on your computer (for example: Word or Pages) and divide your transcript or translation by the lines they would appear as subtitles. When you're done creating your .SRT file, save it with the file extension .srt. Most default text editors will generate .srt files seamlessly, but you may have problems using Microsoft Word. We recommend using Sublime Text, which is free for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers.

Non-Latin Characters
.SRT files support any character set supported by Unicode, so whether your transcript or translation uses the Cyrillic alphabet, Arabic script, or any other writing system, it will work with .srt formatting.
Many languages are under-documented. In these cases, there is an urgent need to create a reference resource such as a dictionary (which contains the lexicon of the language: the words and their meanings). You, or a member of your core team, can begin this process by creating a list of written vocabulary and phrases. These can later be used to create dictionaries and other learning materials. Living Tongues’ Master Elicitation List is a starting point that contains thousands of prompts that you can use when recording words and phrases in your language. Feel free to add to it as you go along, because this list is just a beginning.

You can also create your own lexicon by using Living Dictionaries, an online dictionary-builder created by Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages. Led by activists and linguists around the globe, Living Dictionaries are collaborative multimedia tools that can help languages survive for generations to come. Ideal for safeguarding indigenous as well as diasporic languages, Living Dictionaries are never out-of-print, infinitely expandable resources. They go beyond the limits of a static print dictionary by combining language data with digital audio recordings of native speakers, accompanied by digital photos and videos. Living Dictionaries address the urgent need to provide comprehensive, free online tech tools that can assist endangered language communities simultaneously in conservation efforts and revitalization programs. Language activists who are facing rapid language loss have enthusiastically voiced their desire to create and maintain their own digital resources. This platform can accommodate everyone from seasoned field linguists to emerging language activists. The intended target audience of this web app is inclusive, diverse and multilingual. The interface is available for use in a growing number of dominant languages, and allows for several hundred glossing languages. Go to https://livingdictionaries.app/ to find out more.
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Promote Your Language
3.1 Determine Your Language-Related Goals

What Do You Want For Your Language?
Take a moment to answer the following questions regarding your language revitalization project. This can be done individually, or with your core team.

- What kinds of events could be good settings for the language to be used?
- Do you want more people to speak your language? If so, how many?
- How can you use the Internet to locate other speakers of your language?
- Can you make a public call-out on a radio station? How else can you use the radio to share your language?
- Can you and your team use social media and community forums to organize events? What types of immersion events can you create, either physically or online?

Cultural and Linguistic Media
Media are a great tool for promoting your language, teaching your language, and sharing your language. If your language lacks media, decide which channels and platforms are best for your community. Observe what media people in your community like, and imagine what you could create in your language that would be similar. Examples of media include:

**Recorded music.**
The Peruvian rapper Liberato Kani produces music in his ancestral language, Quechua, rather than Spanish.
Radio shows and podcasts.

Online language-learning platforms.
Indigenous languages such as Maori, Scots Gaelic, Hawaiian, Quechua, Navajo, and Lakota are featured on educational platforms, with online courses, flashcards, and games available. Read more here: A Guide To Learning Indigenous and Under-Resourced Minority Languages by Living Tongues.

Television, animation and movies.
Members of the Haida language movement produced a feature film entirely in their language: SGaawaay K’uuna, or “Edge of the Knife”. Also, check out the Amazonations series: a collaborative research project that brings together anthropologists, animators, artists, and Indigenous people.

Online videos.
In addition to editing Wikipedia in Basque, Aiora Probatxoa manages a Basque-language YouTube channel to engage younger speakers of their language.

Only text feeds.
Telegram and Twitter feeds are easy ways to publish in your language on a daily basis. For example, L’Office du Jèrriais uses Twitter to promote the Jèrriais language online by posting memes, language facts and other engaging content. With about 1500 followers, almost a third of the entire Jerriàis-speaking world is online.

Wikipedia.
In 2001, Catalan activists became the first to publish on Wikipedia into a language other than English. In 2020, the Nyoongar language activist Ingrid Cumming is translating Wikipedia so that young people in the community can read entries and learn in their own language, rather than English.

Interactive websites.
This website teaches vocabulary in Marra, an Australian Aboriginal language. Kanienkeha.net is an open-source site that teaches Kanien’keha (Mohawk), a First Nations language spoken in Canada.

Video games.
Mushroom 11 allows people to play in Algonquin, Inuktut, and Anishinaabemowin. Singuistics is a singing game that released a Gwich’in edition. Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace is an Aboriginally determined research-creation network in Canada whose goal is to ensure Indigenous presence in the web pages,
online environments, video games, and virtual worlds that comprise cyberspace.

**Books and poetry.**
WriteOurWorld encourages kids to publish e-books in their language. Nabu works with storytellers and illustrators from around the world to publish children’s books in their languages.

**Comic books and graphic novels.**
Far Lombard is translating and publishing graphic novels in Lombard. Kiyindou Yamakasi created a comic book in Nigerian Pidgin, exploring Yoruba mythology.

**Performance art and dance**
The Khakas language theater performances in Khakassia, Russia are some of the only sanctioned ways that local people can engage with their native language. Another great example is the popularity of the Haka dance: it is a type of ancient Māori war dance traditionally used to showcase pride, strength and unity. Learn Native American dance traditions online with Pow Wow Sweat.

**Traditional Sports**
Many Indigenous sports are making a resurgence in the public eye. Learning terminology related to the sport, or traditional game, may be a great way to access the languages. An example of this is the World Indigenous Games.

**Awareness Campaigns & Signage**
You can use social media to promote knowledge of traditional names for places, animals, and plants in your language. In Winnipeg, Canada, Michael Redhead Champagne is promoting Cree-language signs at the local zoo. Some university campuses in North America feature signs in Indigenous languages.
This section is about the necessary first steps for expanding digital technology to support your language for use on computers and mobile devices. Are you able to easily use your language online or on your devices? Here is an initial set of questions to help you identify steps to advance your language’s digital self-determination.

**Does your language have an ISO 639-3 code?**
The UN-affiliated International Standards Organization maintains three-letter codes for over 7,000 languages. Web and software developers use these codes to teach computers and other devices to recognize different languages. [ISO 639-3 code](#) set for your language. If your language doesn’t have an ISO 639-3 code, apply for recognition [here](#).

**Why does this matter?**
If your community is digitally active, it is important to have the ability to use your language on your devices. Without an ISO code, it is impossible to translate operating systems and software interfaces, or even get support for tools like Google Translate. An ISO code creates access to these opportunities.

**Is a Unicode-supported font available in your language?**
Even if your computer doesn’t have your language’s writing system pre-installed, it is possible that there are fonts for your language. Start by searching for your language on [Google Noto](#) or [Brill](#) two multilingual fonts that each support more than 500 writing systems. If Unicode fonts are not available, you can work with font designers and people within the technical industry to create font(s) to support text using the script(s). Desktops and laptops allow installation of downloadable fonts. *Note that many mobile devices may not directly support font installation.*
Why does this matter?
A supported font is required to display characters on screens. Using Unicode fonts further ensures that you have support for languages that have extended character sets.

Is it easy to type in your language?
Google Virtual Keyboard has over 100 keyboards for 70 different languages to use on your computer with the Chrome browser. If your language does not have a standardized font, consider contacting Debbie Anderson at the Script Encoding Initiative for help getting started.

Why does this matter?
When people are unable to type in their language, it is common for them to slowly shift to another language. For example, in Ethiopia, most devices don’t come with the Ge’ez script pre-installed. As a result, there has been a slow shift toward using the Roman alphabet online, which has caused a language shift towards English among young people. The ability to type and text in your language is central to keeping it alive in the digital age.

Are keyboards with autocorrect available on your phone?
Many smartphones have a certain amount of languages which you can install to your keyboard within the settings. For keyboards not already included with your phone, visit Gboard, the Google Keyboard for mobile. It has support for many languages on both iOS and Android.

If there is not a phone keyboard available for your language, consider working with people in the technical industry to develop a keyboard or input method. Here are good resources to help you begin: Keyman, Microsoft Keyboard Builder, and SIL Ukelele. Note that installing a keyboard or another input method from the internet may introduce security risks.

If your language already has an ISO code, fonts, and a keyboard available, advanced language technologies are available to further digitize your language: speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and machine translation. For further information, visit the Language Digitization Initiative.

Why does this matter?
The ability to text and use social media in your language is important for digital longevity. Autocorrect is helpful for daily use and a useful tool for those learning the language.

Further Reading
https://openlt.org/ is a manifesto for open language technology; it’s a great place to learn about advocating for your language’s inclusion in digital technology.
Promote your language

3.3 Immersion Techniques

Immersive environments are an excellent way for speakers of all levels to connect to each other and to the language. You don’t need to be 100% fluent to start an immersion group!

**Individual or Small Group Immersion**

One way to engage with your language is to listen to legacy recordings. Where possible, we also highly recommend connecting with a fluent or semi-fluent speaker, if there are such people, so you can ask them questions and have basic conversations one-on-one. You may want to consider locating or even creating a master-apprentice program. It is an immersive process where a new speaker learns directly from an experienced speaker by spending extended periods of time with them.

If you are a tutor who already has experience teaching your language, consider signing up as an online teacher. There are online teaching opportunities on apps and websites such as [HelloTalk](https://www.hel lotalk.com) and [iTalki](https://www.italki.com) and [Verbling](https://www.verbling.com) and others. Read [Learning Languages Online: A Guide to Studying Endangered, Under-reourced and Minority Languages](https://www.ethnologue.com) to see if your language has any online learning courses available. You can also promote yourself as a language tutor in Facebook groups devoted to language revitalization.

Find ways to increase your literacy skills in your language. As the [Kanien’kehà:ka](https://www.giyargsen.com) website powerfully states, “Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation of personal empowerment and a means for social and human
development.” If you’re with a group, you can create book clubs or writing clubs, and you can send text messages and emails in your language. Follow lingotips on Instagram for other creative language immersion ideas.

**Community Immersion**

In-person community programming such as language nests for toddlers are very effective ways to teach the language to little ones. Furthermore, family language programs where speakers of all ages can connect are a good way to promote intergenerational transmission. We also recommend looking into Dr. Greymorning’s Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) as an interesting way of approaching language learning by only using monolingual spoken language, and not using any other translation language as an “intermediary” to teach it. Events and gatherings such as poetry contests, language arts festivals, musical performances and language camps are excellent ways for speakers of all ages and levels to connect. These can be held online or in person. One excellent example of a language camp is Nêhiyawak, a Cree language learning camp held in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Other activities that can be shared are watching films in the language (or brainstorming about ideas to create films!) and listening to recorded or live music in the language in a community setting. We also highly recommend curating fun experiences such as culinary activities, where people can discuss and make food together while speaking in the language. Nature walks where speakers explore plant knowledge are also a fascinating and authentic way to learn about local plants and their traditional uses in the language. Going on bird-watching trips and discussing bird species in your language is also a good way to learn about local species, ecology and language.

**Signage, Media and Promotion of the Language**

Radio shows can help share your language regionally, and podcasts can promote stories and discussions in your language with people who live beyond your local area. Street signs can share the original linguistic landscape of a place, while also ensuring your language is visible in the public eye. Maps in local languages can reinforce the relationship between language, history, place and people.

In terms of online language activism, memes can promote humor and cultural-specific jokes, while increasing social media usage. You can use YouTube to share your language through videos, and you can create private Facebook groups to help connect speakers near and far. You can start using Twitter in your language, and add a hashtag with the name of your
language to see if other people start using the hashtag as well. You can create Wikipedia pages in your language. Wikipedia advances learning in your language and sets the stage for its use in academic and non-fiction literature.

**Economic opportunities associated with heritage language proficiency**

Promoting tourism and diverse cultural experiences may generate income. Participating in digital development of the language (apps, games, websites, etc) can also generate revenue in the long-term. Becoming an official translator or interpreter (in the health, legal and educational fields) can also yield job opportunities. Writing and releasing original music, and publishing books and e-books can generate income through royalties and licensing opportunities. Learning transferable technical skills for audio-visual and multimedia production can also lead to generating income from Youtube and possibly lead to work in the music, film and TV industries.
Many language communities need resources to get their programs off the ground and stay sustainable. We put together a handy list of organizations and foundations that offer grants for language documentation and revitalization: 
[we will continually update this page.](#)