

From Dene Kedə to Dene Ts'ı́ı

Rethinking Resurgence in the Sahtú Region, Northwest Territories



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Máhsı cho!

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Three Key Messages

1. Sahtú Dene and Métis families need to live, learn, and be well on the land

Current knowledge, including literature and interviews for this project, points towards a link between Dene Kedə (language), Dene Ts'ı́ı (ways of life), and wellbeing. Some Sahtú youth have had opportunities to live on the land with their families, and it adds richness to their language and culture learning. However, such opportunities are increasingly rare as the cost of on the land activities increases, and time, capacity and resources for such activities becomes more constrained. **Policy outcome:** More supports are needed for local organisations such as ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resources Councils) to help families spend time on the land. **Knowledge gaps:** Each Sahtú community is markedly different, but many sources of information about language, wellbeing, and ways of life are territorial or regional rather than local. As such, more intense in-community work (including work with people, schools, and physical records) is needed to create a coherent profile for each settlement region and identify corresponding strengths and opportunities. Moreover, it is worth exploring further the relationships between Dene Kedə, Dene Ts'ı́ı and healthy and fulfilling ways of life.

2. Holistic Dene Kedə/Dene Ts'ı́ı programs support strong governance

There currently exists a myriad of government language and way of life programs, but these tend to be narrowly defined and thus difficult to match with the holistic nature of community needs and governance. Governance systems arising from the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, primarily focused on asserting space for exercising jurisdiction in relation to Territorial and Federal governments, have not until recently fully or consistently accounted for the role of Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı. **Policy outcomes:** The Sahtú Region needs a strategic plan that can be the basis for providing coordinated supports for Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı programs in schools, communities, and on the land as a basis for community and environmental governance. The example of the recently-formed NWT On the Land Collaborative, which brings together different funders to develop accessible and coordinated programming, can serve as a model. Regional bodies such as the Ne K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı (Living on the Land) Forum, a Sahtú advisory body involving ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne, government, and industry delegates as well as academic collaborators, along with knowledge sharing venues such as the Sahtú Cross-Cultural Research Camp, are well-positioned to serve as platform for developing a robust regional plan. Compiling and archiving multi-media Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı learning tools and program reports will be helpful for program planners, users and evaluators. **Knowledge gaps:** More research is needed to explore relationships between heard/spoken and read/written Dene Kedə, Dene Ts'ı́ı practices, and governance. A comprehensive evaluation of Dene Kedə/Dene Ts'ı́ı programs, broadly defined, will be an important basis for regional strategic planning.

3. Youth need to be drivers for Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı initiatives

Youth have demonstrated that they are inspired to learn their language and Dene ways of life: improved resources, structured and varying learning spaces, immersion strategies, and accessibility of funds and tools would help them to do so. Right now, language and cultural programs do not seem accessible to many young adults, in part because they do not account for the cultural and economic crossroads that contemporary youth must navigate. **Policy outcomes:** Improved training and support is needed for teachers and families in providing culturally appropriate supports for youth leadership and readiness to contribute to community economies. A well-supported youth-driven program such as has been aspired to by the Sahtú Youth Network and Dene Ts'ı́ı School are keys to building capacity and leadership. **Knowledge gap:** Research is needed to understand cross-cultural dimensions of learning for contemporary youth, linkages between Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı in learning, and the role of youth in Indigenous governance and mixed economies.

Executive Summary

In Canada and worldwide, Indigenous languages and ways of life are increasingly recognized as key components of wellbeing, and an essential priority for all levels of governance in Canada. Language revitalization is integrated holistically with everyday life, ways of life, and worldview. In the Sahtú Region of the Northwest Territories, three major dialects of Dene Kede, each themselves encompassing more than one variety, are spoken in five communities with a strong spirit of self-determination and continued land-based practices. This Knowledge Synthesis marshals more than fifty years of literature through a review of over 250 documents, along with current youth knowledge and co-authors' experience, to identify community and regional strengths, and inform best practices in resurgence – or language and way of life revitalization in this region.

Domains of Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ Revitalization

A framework of seven “domains” of resurgence emerged from this Knowledge Synthesis. Interconnected spheres such as law and policy, education, and local knowledge variously impact languages and ways of life, and change can be mapped in each of them across time. What emerges is a complex scenario that highlights challenges in strategic planning – since each domain invokes a distinct historical thread, and thus a distinct planning consideration for the present and future. We have sought to identify Sahtú-based processes that may represent solutions to barriers thrown up by historical and contemporary circumstances. As such, we suggest that local organisations such as ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resources Councils established by the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement), the Ne K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ Forum, a Sahtú advisory body involving ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne, government, and industry delegates as well as academic collaborators, and the vision for a Sahtú Youth Network all represent key potential forces, complementary to and supporting local self-government, in supporting Dene and Métis resurgence.

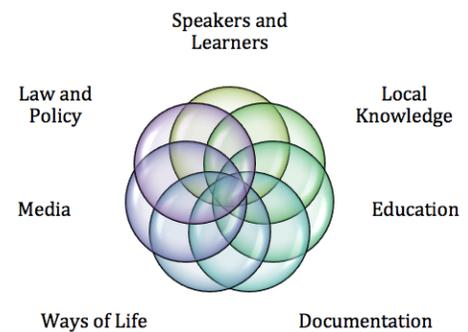


Figure 1: Domains of Resurgence

Law and Policy literature begins with the first steps taken by the Government of the NWT (GNWT) into working with multiple official languages, and establishing frameworks for accommodating traditional knowledge and traditional economies. Over time, with greater activism and consultation as well as comprehensive land claims agreements, responsibility for language and ways of life was increasingly devolved to local Indigenous governments. Now, with self-governance on the rise in the Sahtú, a plethora of authorities, mandates, and funding sources mean that resources for language and ways of life are bountiful but not always accessible. As Sahtú organizations work towards an emphasis on Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́, new policies bring together community and environmental governance. The ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'ı́ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB), a regional land claim organisation responsible for wildlife, habitat and harvesting, has recently formally adopted a community-driven, Dene Ts'ı́ and youth-centred approach that takes a lead from ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne conservation planning initiatives. In addition, Délı́ne's *Belare Wı́le Gots'ı́ ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time* plan, the first formally approved community conservation plan, is infused with Dene language concepts and Dene Ts'ı́ approaches to conservation. Similarly, the *Best of Both Worlds Action Plan for a Traditional Economy* situates conservation planning in the context of the region's mixed economy, reflecting priorities established in the Sahtú Land Use Plan. The Ne K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ Forum and youth caucuses convened as part of research and conservation activities in the region have helped to strengthen community voices in policy decision-making.

State-sponsored **Education** has had a sad history in the NWT as evidenced by the federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Early territorial schools had to adapt to be more locally and culturally responsive in part by dealing with this legacy. Working with community partners in the 1980s, a

variety of stakeholders began developing Dene literacy materials for use in NWT schools. In the following decade the ground-breaking *Dene Kede Curriculum* was developed. Other education programs such as language nests met with success during the early 2000s. The impact of land claim agreements, devolution and self-governance on Sahtú language and way of life education is yet to be clearly seen. Initiatives to explore learning processes outside the school setting include Cross-Cultural Research Camps and the Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School. The experience with these relatively new initiatives is that learning is most successful when it is two-way and cross-cultural.

Documentation of Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ has been practiced for over a century. The federal government supported the development of dictionaries and grammars in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The Dene Language Standardization project, with a 1987 report, was a catalyst for a proliferation of shareable written Dene Kedə documents, including dictionaries and place-names maps, locally, regionally, and at the territorial level. Now, digital technologies are beginning to make Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ recordings and texts accessible in new ways. Community members are working with technical collaborators to document Dene language and ways of life, and communities are learning what it takes to realize OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) research principles as part of revitalization processes.

New digital technologies have also expanded the availability of Dene **Media**. Radio, local and regional, was an early home for recordings of Elders and other speakers, and the impact of having radio in each Sahtú dialect is still felt today. In addition, television, physical media, museum exhibits, and maps, have proliferated since the Official Languages Act of 1984. The contemporary availability of digital multimedia, web-based and social media provides learners with new ways to support integrated learning through creative expression.

In tandem with regional and territorial efforts, **Local Knowledge** projects and programs have provided the grassroots backbone of resurgence in each Sahtú community. While many of the projects that have gone on for the past 50 years suffer from a lack of monitoring, evaluation, and records, they have had significant impact that is documented in collective memory. The NWT began recording local work more comprehensively following the Official Languages Act (1984) and Traditional Knowledge Policy (1993), and the expansion of traditional economy programs. With increased local advocacy, capacity building, devolution, and self-determination, local knowledge and leadership has begun to spearhead and guide programming.

Dene Kedə **Speakers and Learners** form the key measurement of language vitality: the nature of statistics around Dene language use in the NWT has changed over time and continues to improve. In the 1980s and 1990s, occasional, inconsistent assessments by individuals such as missionaries and anthropologists were replaced by standardized community surveys and studies by the NWT Languages Commissioner. In these same decades it is possible to see declining numbers of Dene Kedə speakers in each Sahtú community. More recently, questions have been added to survey instruments to include adult second language learners, as well as Dene Kedə speakers who grew up with the language, and this extra nuance shows a less extreme degree of language shift. Additionally, records from the early 2000s and forward have begun to track shifts in attitudes and ideologies about language use, which are essential to understanding why people choose to learn their language, speak their language, and pass it on.

Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ are holistically brought together in Dene and Métis **Ways of Life**: for example, the impact of economic shift and the emergence of a mixed economy combining wage labour and traditional practices is an important area of study. Considerations about ways of life inform all the sections of this study. *ʔehdzo Got'ı̨ı̨e* play a key role in supporting way of life activities, and community governments also prioritize this – there are numerous activities throughout the Sahtú Region that are relatively undocumented. The *Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ Forum* has recently decided to expand its mandate to provide more consistent and coordinated support for Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ initiatives. Regional Cross-Cultural Research Camps and the Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School are means of strengthening confidence and capacity through cross-cultural learning and leadership-building.

Youth Wellness, Knowledge and Leadership

Sahtú youth participating in an on the land Dene Ts'ı́lį School during two weeks bridging August and September 2017 contributed significantly to this study through focus groups, interviews, learning activities, and co-authorship.

Dene youth believe their languages and ways of life to be important in connecting them to their heritage, granting them access to a different worldview, and making them better leaders. Youth learn some words and phrases from family, and are exposed to the language regularly in their communities on the streets, from Elders, and from media like community radio. Some have had opportunities to practice traditional activities with their families and through community programs. However, the youth first encountered structured opportunities to learn Dene language and skills in school. Classroom learning provided a good introduction, but has not allowed them to speak fluently or feel confident that they possess core traditional skills and knowledge that will help them to thrive in current times.

There are few opportunities for youth to continue learning Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́lį in a structured way once they leave grade nine. Students would prefer that learning in-class Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́lį continue into high school and college, and that language learning take more of an immersion approach that is socially and culturally relevant to them. Once they are out of school, youth encounter several challenges to learning: self-consciousness, feeling overwhelmed, a lack of motivation (sometimes rooted in addictions, trauma and other contextual factors), combined with low accessibility of language and skills learning resources. However, youth had a number of ideas for how to prevent and circumvent such problems.

In the future, youth recommend programs that are judgment-free, safe spaces to practice Dene Kedə. They want Elders to be involved in their learning process so that they have access to Dene Ts'ı́lį along with the language, and an opportunity to learn in a structured environment would allow them to take the language day by day rather than feeling overwhelmed by the immensity of the task. They emphasize that it is also essential to practice Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́lį in the home, in school, in the community, on social media, and on the land.

Imagining Indigenous Futures, Imagining Canada's Future

Indigenous languages, knowledge, and land-based ways of life have been shown to point a way forward for sustainable futures in Canada and globally. The Sahtú Region presents fascinating insights into the complex nature of efforts to reclaim Indigenous language and ways of life as a basis for Indigenous governance. Such efforts must consider seven distinct domains, each with its own history, barriers, and opportunities for innovation. Further research can provide a more in-depth understanding of community strengths, programming opportunities, and the role of youth as present and future community leaders and land stewards. The Dene and Métis communities of the Sahtú Region, like many Indigenous communities across Canada, are both vigorously self-determining and increasingly integrated into the global context. They are conscious of the importance of their role as stewards of their language, knowledge, and ecological integrity. This Knowledge Synthesis points to the role that in-depth regional and local research with the critical involvement of community members as researchers can play in providing valuable understanding of Indigenous resurgence and how it can be meaningfully supported.

Context

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) and the *Calls to Action* report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) have marshalled many Indigenous voices in calling for attention to (and support for) Indigenous education and language revitalization, and to the importance of being grounded in ways of life. Language vitality is now recognized as a key component of wellbeing¹, and an essential priority for all levels of governance in Canada. Resurgence processes are complex and varying, encompassing local activism, local and regional governance, federal, provincial, and territorial legislation and funding, media, on the land and community way of life programs, documentation projects, and education programs. A growing chorus of young Indigenous scholars and activists is using the concept of “resurgence” to evoke the coming together of language, culture, way of life and governance that is essential to processes of self-determination.²

Indigenous communities are faced with the ongoing challenge not only to increase the number of language speakers and way of life practitioners, but also to develop a vision of resurgence as a core component of the future. While Official Languages legislation, documentation, and curriculum development are all essential components of language revitalization, they also run the risk of compartmentalizing language learning, losing parts of the rich cultural heritage from which a language stems. Increasingly, Indigenous language activists are calling for greater integration of culture, ways of life and worldviews in language programming. To embody this approach, two key ideas are the inspiration for this report:

- *Dene Kede*: Dene language, including worldview and philosophy. This term was highlighted with the development of the Dene Kede curriculum in the Northwest Territories, discussed in the literature review.
- *Dene Ts’ı̄łı*: Dene ways of life. This complex concept is also the inspiration for the Dene Ts’ı̄łı on the land school, where some of the research for this report was conducted.

Dene Ts’ı̄łı in the Sahtú

This knowledge synthesis focuses on language and way of life revitalization processes, and the variables that influence them, in the five communities of the Sahtú region of the Northwest Territories: Délı̄ne, K’á̄h̄bamı̄túé (Colville Lake), Rádełı̄hkó (Fort Good Hope), Tulita (Tulıt’a), and Tłegóhı̄ (Norman Wells) (we use the different names interchangeably) – see Appendix A for a list of acronyms, terms, and a map of Sahtú communities. The Sahtú population totals 2,500, approximately 1,800 or 70% of whom are Dene and Métis; in four of the five communities, the indigenous populations range from 84-94%; the exception is Norman Wells where the indigenous population is increasing, but as of 2016 remained at 36%.³ Within these communities there are roughly three dialects encompassing six varieties of Dene Kede, “Dene language,” (also known as North Slavey), reflecting the diverse histories of the historically nomadic Sahtú families. The cultures have been enriched by interaction with other neighbouring peoples as well as one of the most ecologically diverse landscapes in the North American continent. These landscapes are reflected in the naming of the peoples and their language variants, including: Dela Got’ı̄ne (End of the Treeline Dene), Dəho Got’ı̄ne (Big River Dene, people of the Mackenzie River, the second largest river system in North America); Shúhtaot’ı̄ne (Mountain Dene, people of the Mackenzie Mountains), and Sahtú Got’ı̄ne (Great Bear Lake Dene, inhabitants of the largest lake within the borders of Canada and 8th largest lake in the world, whose pristine watershed is now recognized as the world’s first Indigenous-nominated International Biosphere Reserve).

This collaborative project involving community and academic partners brings together knowledge about Dene Kede and Dene Ts’ı̄łı (Dene ways of life; being Dene) in the Sahtú Region as essential components of evolving community visions for resurgence. We situate the Sahtú within the larger historical context of the Northwest Territories, recognizing that processes at the Territorial level have had significant influence within Sahtú communities – especially over the past fifty years that are the main focus of this Knowledge Synthesis. Bringing together available literature with youth interviews and the co-authors’ experiential knowledge, we explore what has been tried, what hasn’t, and what variables are connected to any given program’s development, implementation, and success.

Since the 1970s, the Dene Nations of the Northwest Territories have gained national and even international recognition for a series of ground-breaking initiatives in contemporary nationhood and land claims. These included large-scale land use mapping projects, a program of traditional knowledge research, policy and curriculum development, and a series of land claim agreements that have led towards contemporary self-government negotiations. More recently, innovative new initiatives are creating spaces for resurgence at the Territorial scale, including Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, Dene Nahjo, and the NWT On the Land Collaborative that celebrate and promote Dene languages, ways of life and governance.⁴ As such, the time is ripe for a synthesis of existing knowledge and best practices in sustaining language and ways of life. Policymakers within all levels of government in the Northwest Territories are increasingly interested in expanding and refining language and culture revitalization initiatives, with an eye to what works best for youth.

Settled in 1993, the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement was the second of the three Dene agreements now in place in the NWT, and closely followed the template established by the Gwich'in a year previously. As we approach celebration of 25 years of the Sahtú agreement, a strong spirit of resurgence infuses regional discussions about language and ways of life across each of the five communities of the region. A short-lived but intensive shale oil exploration boom in the region during 2013-2015 was a catalyst for a number of new initiatives in governance. The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́łı (Living on the Land) Forum, composed of ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resources Councils), government and industry representatives and with participation of academic researchers active in the region, has expanded its mandate over the years to encompass on the land programs as well as research and monitoring. The Forum has sponsored a number of activities to support regional knowledge and governance processes, including Research Results Workshops, Cross-Cultural Research Camps, and Dene Ts'ı́łı Schools. The Sahtú Youth Network emerged in 2014 from elder-youth discussions about climate change, petroleum development and governance.

The Sahtú community of Déłı́ne set the stage for a new era in the fall of 2016, offering the first model of formally recognized community-level self-government in Canada. The Déłı́ne Got'ı́ne dialect was established as the official language of government in Déłı́ne. Self-government negotiations in other communities are being fast-tracked, and the community of Tulı́'a had just initialed an agreement in principle at the time of writing (2017). In recognition of this evolving governance context, the regional ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB), a collaborative management Board created by the land claim, formalized a Dene Ts'ı́łı and community-driven approach to implementing its mandate in 2017. Recently, research on social issues in the Sahtú has signalled a new phase in critical thinking about governance in the context of persistent social issues resulting from colonial history.

Domains of Resurgence

Numerous factors contribute to resurgence in the Sahtú. The “domains” discussed here are interlinked, but it remains useful to think about them as somewhat distinct in order to see how language and culture policy, programming, and resources change in different ways in each domain throughout time. For example, the Sahtú is positioned within a series of initiatives and laws that make the Northwest Territories unique in Canada. The *Official Languages Act* (1984/1989) stands out in recognizing eleven official languages, of which nine are Indigenous – more than any other political division in the Americas. The Act unleashed an unprecedented effort to involve nine Indigenous languages in the governance of the territory by offering translation/interpretation for government functions and services. It contributed to a territory-wide legal and policy framework for Indigenous social, cultural, and linguistic rights. As such, while the number of Sahtú Indigenous language speakers has decreased since 1960, territorial support for Indigenous languages has increased markedly. Education and curriculum have been impacted by Official Languages legislation, but have also changed differently over the last few decades. Meanwhile, some cultural practices including handgames, drumming, and organised community on the land programs are arguably becoming stronger.

The following framework emerged from qualitative analysis of relevant literature. Each “domain” should be regarded as a tool for thought, rather than a wholly distinct vector of resurgence.

- **Local Knowledge:** Local language programming, intergenerational transmission of knowledge, Elders’ knowledge.
- **Documentation:** Dictionaries, grammars, recordings, and other written and oral resources.
- **Education:** Curriculum materials and support, teacher education and support, education policy and goals.
- **Media:** Radio, television, digital applications, social media, film, museums.
- **Law and Policy:** The Official Languages Act, territorial support, programming, legislation, funding, local and regional governance, self-government, devolution.
- **Speakers and Learners:** Number of speakers, number of learners, change throughout time, language attitudes and ideologies. While aspects of this domain infuse all other conversations about Dene Kede and Dene Ts’ı̨ı̨, it has been placed in Appendix D to accommodate the adjoining charts and graphs.
- **Ways of Life:** Economies, land use, harvesting, arts and crafts, workplaces.

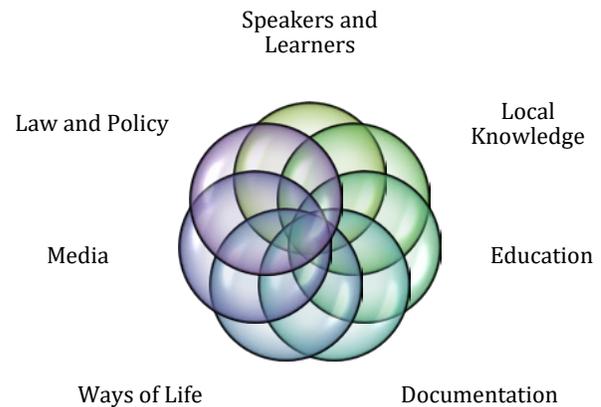


Figure 1: Domains of Resurgence

Report Structure

This report provides an overview of the implications of this Knowledge Synthesis, followed by a discussion of project scope and approach. Results are provided in two sections: first a thematic timeline summarizing the literature review⁵, and second a summary of key messages from the activities, focus groups and interviews at Dene Ts’ı̨ı̨ School. The report closes with a summary round-up of the state of knowledge, a discussion of knowledge mobilization initiatives, conclusion, and endnotes. More details are provided in a series of appendices, as follows: Appendix A provides a list of acronyms and terms used in the report, along with a map of Sahtú communities; Appendix B includes experiential reflections by the four Dene/Métis co-authors; Appendix C provides an in-depth discussion of “Youth Knowledge” from Dene Ts’ı̨ı̨ School and the questionnaire used for interviews; Appendix D is an exploration of statistics about speakers and learners in the Sahtú Region; Appendix E is a detailed timeline of events; and finally, Appendix F is a bibliography of 177 annotated sources.

Implications

The knowledge synthesized in this report calls attention to the abundance of Dene Kede and Dene Ts’ı̨ı̨ change, programming, and initiatives that have proliferated in the Sahtú since 1960. As such, three key areas are highlighted for future consideration: **Knowledge Opportunities**, areas for future research and further investigation; **Sustainability Opportunities**, areas where currently existing programs and initiatives need improved follow-up, monitoring, evaluation, and support; and **Opportunities for Innovation**, where an ideal opportunity for a new program or initiative has been identified.

Knowledge Opportunities

Each Sahtú community is markedly different, but many of the most proliferate sources of information for reports like this are territorial or regional. As such, more intense **in-community work** (including work with people, schools, and physical records that may not be accessible online) is needed to create a coherent profile for each settlement region and identify corresponding opportunities.

Information in the region points to **learning gaps between heard/spoken and read/written Dene Kede, Dene Ts’ı̨ı̨ practices and governance**. One avenue for exploration is why these gaps exist, how

different age groups prefer to learn, what resources they need, and what different roles these have in each Sahtú community.

Some information and interviews point towards a **link between Dene Kedə, Dene Ts'ı́ı́, wellbeing, and governance**. It is worth investigating this further: what are the relationships among them, and what respective roles do Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ play in healthy and fulfilling ways of life?

Research is needed to understand **cross-cultural dimensions of learning for contemporary youth**, linkages between Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ in learning, and the role of youth in Indigenous governance and mixed economies.

Sustainability Opportunities

There are bountiful and diverse Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ revitalisation initiatives in and around the Sahtú. One key challenge is to record these through monitoring and evaluation, so that communities have the evidence they need to make programs more strategically effective and accessible.

Support **regional strategic planning initiatives** through bodies such as the Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı́ Forum and venues like the Sahtú Cross-Cultural Research Camp. Support **Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ programs and program evaluation initiatives** in schools, communities, and on the land as a basis for community and environmental governance. Many Sahtú youth have experienced such programs, and it adds richness and strength to their memories of language and culture learning.

Multimedia Dene Kedə learning resources and program reports are plentiful but difficult to find. In addition, youth are excited to add to these resources using the tools at their disposal. Easily found **community archives or digital libraries** might help program planners, evaluators and users find these resources and add to them in the future.

Support local governments to implement the Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ programs they are putting forward with each new step towards greater self-determination.

Opportunities for Innovation

Sahtú Dene Youth are inspired to learn their language and ways of life, and improved resources, structured and varying learning spaces, immersion strategies, and accessibility of funds and tools would help them to do so. Right now, programs to help young adults learn Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ do not seem accessible to many. Support **youth-driven initiatives** like the Sahtú Youth Network to build capacity and leadership. Some past programs have undergone **evaluations**: consider revisiting and learning from their results. For example, the NWT language nest program met with great results, but appears to have been discontinued in several communities

Education is one of the first ways many youth are exposed to structured Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ learning. Improved training and **support for teachers** in implementing culturally founded curricula and language materials might improve youth learning. In addition, Sahtú youth comment that they would like to see an extension of Dene Kedə classes to high school, with immersion, story-based and experiential way of life components including on the land activities.

Scope and Approach

The scope for this project was first defined in dialogue with a number of Sahtú Region community leaders, language activists and youth, who all identified a need to marshal previous research, experiences and initiatives as a basis for defining and achieving community and regional visions. As part of project initiation, the approach was guided by key staff at the NWT and Sahtú Regional level who are positioned to take action based on results and conclusions, including staff of the GNWT Aboriginal Languages Secretariat (Education, Culture and Employment), NWT Literacy Council, Sahtú Secretariat Inc., and ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB). In addition, several consultants with previous relevant experience as researchers and decision-makers provided invaluable historical knowledge and advice.

Language and way of life revitalization processes are often documented only informally. As such, our Knowledge Synthesis draws upon three types of sources: 1) an extensive literature review and

consultation; 2) interviews and participant-observation at the Fall 2017 Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School; and 3) experiences of research team members – the latter knowledge base is significant, since all co-authors have significant experience in the Sahtú Region, and five are long term Sahtú residents. Two of the co-authors are senior Dene participants (Walter Bezha and Michael Neyelle) with extensive experience in leadership and research; two are Métis youth (Jordan Lennie and Shelby Lennie); and two are academics with experience in the Sahtú Region dating back to the 1970s. See Appendix B for experiential reflections by the four Dene/Métis co-authors that complement the findings in this report.

The literature review is provided in several different formats for diverse uses. In the results section of the main report, the literature along with co-author experience forms the basis for summary historical timelines of the seven domains of resurgence, with a focus on the past half-century. A second timeline, the table in Appendix E is presented as a chronologically ordered table with colour coding that identifies the regional scope of each event. The table presents a detailed overview of events, with source references, for a researcher who seeks to understand a strictly chronological progression of events in the Sahtú or NWT. It is intended to be an informative reference, rather than a summary of trends. An annotated bibliography is included as Appendix F and highlights 177 sources that have contributed significantly to our understanding of the seven domains of resurgence.

The overall literature review for the thematic and detailed timelines encompasses a wide variety of available (with dedicated search effort) materials. Often materials are difficult to find or access, and it should be noted that the collection gathered for this Knowledge Synthesis is by no means complete. Our search process involved not just database searches and archival work, but also informal assistance from language activists, educators, and policy-makers in the Sahtú and the NWT. We owe great thanks to numerous people who pointed us in the direction of invaluable information. A number of organization websites and social media pages were also searched for relevant documents. We intentionally cast a very wide net, and there are areas where our review is not comprehensive (for example, with regard to the significant body of education and culture-related policy in the NWT). To collate this data, we developed a qualitative coding system that became our framework of “domains” of resurgence. We tracked trends within each domain by decade.

The following types of collected literature are annotated in Appendix F 1) reports from all levels of government, including community, regional, territorial, and federal bodies; 2) published academic and non-governmental sources; 3) theses and dissertations; 4) curriculum materials and reviews; 5) language documentation and resources; 6) newsletters and unpublished literature. Statistics related to Dene Keda and Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨, primarily from the NWT Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Canada, are reviewed in Appendix D; NWT Bureau of Statistics staff were very helpful in providing context for the statistics, as well as data not available on the Bureau's public website.

To supplement the literature review, we developed a series of oral survey questions that emerged from our initial research and conversations with language activists and policy-makers in the Sahtú and NWT. Considerations about the differences between use of oral and written language, for example, is a contemporary knowledge gap, underscored by literature from the 1990s which *did* collect data on these themes. Furthermore, the emphasis on youth language learning experiences, successes, and challenges, emerged from conversations with local language researchers and activists. The survey deliberately undertook a strength-based approach in order to identify opportunities for program development – in contrast to the endangerment approach that has historically prevailed in indigenous language research.

In order to gather the key *youth knowledge* component of our knowledge synthesis, oral surveys were delivered in a series of interviews and focus groups at an on the land Sahtú Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School for youth between the ages of 18 and 30. Researchers framed the research with a long-distance discussion at a Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School in winter 2017. The fall 2017 School included youth from the communities of Colville Lake, Délı̨ı̨, Fort Good Hope, and Tulít'a. All eleven students at the school participated in the focus groups and language activities, while four self-selected as interviewees. This qualitative data, supplemented by participant observation from the camp, makes up the final portion of this report (Appendix C provides more details).

Results: Thematic Timeline

This Knowledge Synthesis contains two timelines, intended for different purposes and audiences. In what follows, a historical summary is provided of the seven domains of resurgence emergent from a qualitative coding process. Within each theme, it is possible to observe change throughout time, and trends as different organizations, levels of governance, and individuals interact and innovate. A visualisation of this timeline is presented in the figure below. Each domain highlights changes that would be lost in a single, unilinear timeline. For example, “documentation,” or written or aural language recording, has tended towards standardization and consolidation for much of its history in the Sahtú and Northwest Territories, a trend that has not been mirrored in other domains. In addition, this overview is intended to map trends through time rather than identifying each distinct detail and event. It is designed for a reader who wishes to understand the complexity of language and way of life revitalization in the Sahtú and NWT, and see how different factors contribute to overall change differently. Although the focus is on the half century since 1970, for some domains we have extended our reach backward in time, because the earlier history helps to shed light on the more recent past and the present. A more detailed chronological timeline that is exclusively focused on the period from 1970 to the present is provided in Appendix E.

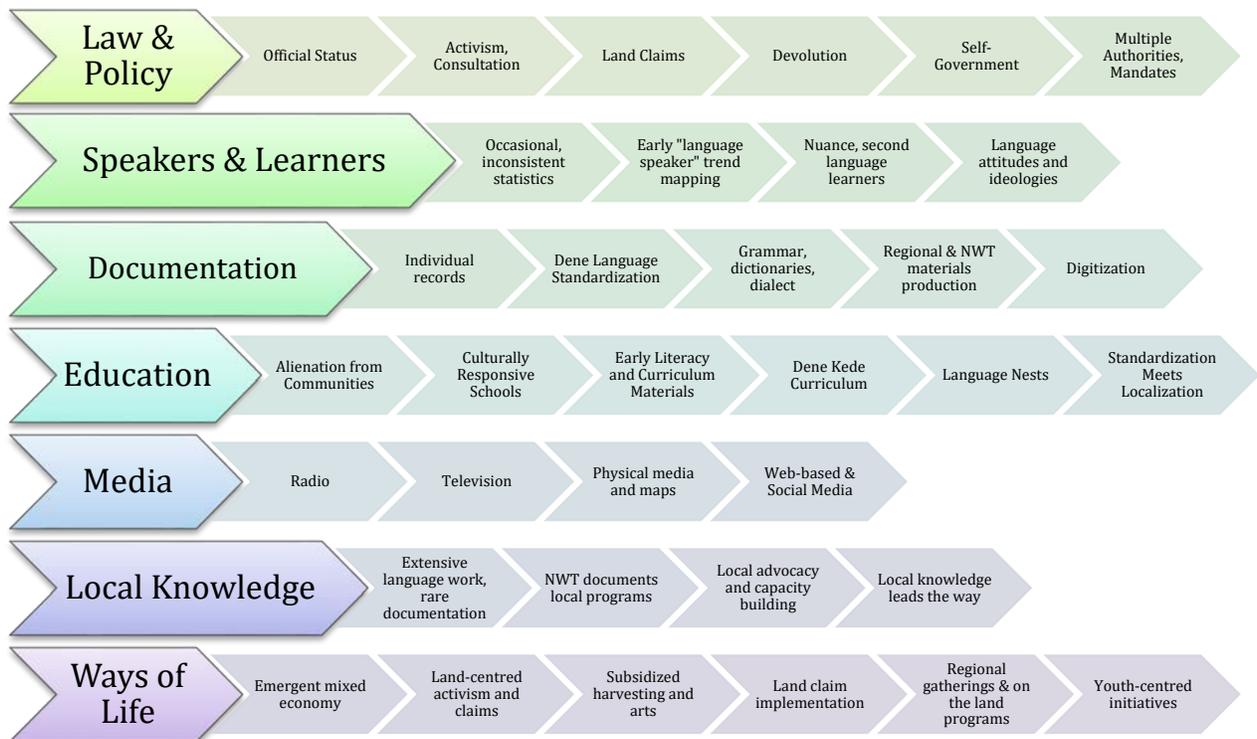


Figure 2: Visual Thematic Timeline

Law and Policy

The Government of the Northwest Territories

The NWT has made sustained attempts to support Indigenous languages through policy and legislation.⁶ In particular, ‘English Only’ was never an acceptable default in the Northwest Territories, where the Legislative Assembly has been majority Indigenous for most of its history.⁷

Early Years: Learning about Indigenous Languages in Governance

- 1973: Creation of the NWT Language Bureau, with an Aboriginal Languages Section⁸ responsible for interpreting/translating services, training personnel in languages and literacy, developing terminology.
- 1984: First iteration of the Official Languages Act (OLA).⁹
- 1990: OLA amended to include equal status for Indigenous Languages, amended again in 2003 to separate North and South Slavey.
- OLA allowed for improved funding and status, criticized for including languages in high-level governance rather than recognizing local language rights.¹⁰ Allowed unilingual speakers to access government proceedings and services.

Improved Outreach and Consultation

- 1992: First NWT Languages Commissioner, Betty Harnum. The Commissioner served as the public face of the OLA: acted as an ombudsperson and outreach officer, alleviating confusion about the act and advocating for amendments and policy improvements.
- 1990s: Shift to prioritizing consultation and community-run programming.
- 2004: Board of Indigenous advisors added to advise OLA implementation.

Devolution

- 1990s: Devolution (privatization or passing GNWT services and offices to community control) began in earnest during this decade.
- Applauded for increased local control, criticized for lack of regulation, training, and funding.¹¹
- 2000s: Regional language coordinators appointed and language plans developed to complement territory-wide programming.

Proliferation of Programs and Mandates

- 2017: Many departments in GNWT, non-governmental organizations, granting agencies, federal initiatives have programs and funds available for Indigenous language revitalization. Approved for abundance of resources, criticized for inaccessibility, applicant confusion, lack of coordination.¹²

Regional and Local Governance

Dene and Sahtú activism, self-determination movements, and land use advocacy have unalterably shaped the Northwest Territories.

Early Political Changes: Dene Organizations and Advocacy

- 1970: Incorporation of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories (renamed Dene Nation 1978). Purpose, in part, to coordinate Dene land claims and negotiations.¹³
- 1975: Dene Declaration calls for recognition of Dene self-determination.¹⁴
- Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (or Berger Inquiry, 1970s): a successful effort to guide the fate of land use in the NWT, with careful attention to language and ways of being.

Land Claims and Resource Management Legislation

- 1980s: Preparation for Dene Nation comprehensive land claim, including extensive mapping.¹⁵
- 1990s: Call for renegotiation of Dene claim; Government of Canada enters talks with individual regions.
- 1993: *Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA)* signed, 41 437 km² of land along with subsurface rights to 1813 km².¹⁶ Included commitments foreshadowing Sahtú community self-government.¹⁷

- Land claim generates new local and regional governing bodies (e.g., Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated, ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı [Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB], district and local Land Corporations, local ʔehdzo Got'ıne [Renewable Resources Councils]).
- 1998: Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act establishes co-management system envisioned in the SDMCLA, including Sahtú Land and Water Board and Sahtú Land Use Planning Board; allows beneficiaries a voice in resource management so that Dene Ts'ııı can be accommodated.

Regional Leadership-Building Initiatives

- 2013: Shale oil exploration boom in the Sahtú and associated research and monitoring requirements are the catalyst for establishment of the Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring (SERM) Forum; supports traditional knowledge and scientific research that benefits communities.¹⁸
- 2014-2017: SERM Forum coordinates annual Research Results workshops and Cross-Cultural Research Camps, as well as localized community research workshops; the Forum also reviews NWT research licensing process and takes steps to develop a place-based regional research strategy.¹⁹
- 2014: Sahtú Youth Network concept developed by youth through elder-youth exchange about health and climate change adaptation funded by Health Canada.²⁰
- 2015: *Best of Both Worlds* project sponsored by SRRB leads to development of an action plan for a traditional economy in the Sahtú Region.²¹
- 2017: SERM Forum expands its mandate to include Dene Ts'ııı and on the land programs, and thus changes its name to Ne K'ə Dene Ts'ııı Forum; supports the first two Dene Ts'ııı Schools for youth.

Self-Government and Self-Determination

- 2016: Community of Délıne first to successfully negotiate self-government; community of Tulıt'a has signed an Agreement-In-Principle.
- Self-government and self-determination regarded as tools for increased authority over language programming and education.
- The Délıne Got'ıne Government can keep a record or copy of laws in Dene language, even though the authoritative versions must still be English.²²
- Self-government consolidates many of the diverse levels of governance generated by the land claim, previous legislation; seen as less bureaucratic.²³
- 2016: Délıne ʔekwé Working Group completes *Belare Wile Gots'ę ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time* plan, the first of its kind in Canada.²⁴
- 2017: The SRRB formally decides upon a community-driven, Dene Ts'ııı and youth-centred approach to fulfilling its mandate, and supports all communities of the Sahtú Region to develop community conservation plans.²⁵

Education

Education in Canada and the Northwest Territories has a long and complex history, including millennia of local education in family units and bands, along with mission education, residential schools, and federal day schools. This overview begins with the 1960s and territorial jurisdiction over education, in order to focus on contemporary efforts to integrate language and culture teaching into the school curriculum. However, the history and continuing impacts of both cultural continuity and colonialism underlie everything that follows.

Alienation from NWT School Programs

- 1960s: Parents skeptical of schools where child could be left with no northern survival skills and no good southern education.²⁶
- Not relevant or localized: numerous non-native, southern teachers, temporary presences in communities.²⁷
- 1969-1990s: NWT schools used Alberta curriculum.²⁸

Culturally Responsive Schools: Early Steps

- 1982 report: *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories* recommends improved teacher training, curriculum development, community involvement.
- Late 1970s and 1980s: Emergence of school programming that is place-based, child-centered, culturally responsive (e.g., involving Elders in class, doing land trips.)²⁹
- Late 1970s: Parents able to be elected as local education authorities. One of the first avenues for direct parental involvement in school decision-making.³⁰ Brought more language and culture to schools, delivered by community members.
- 1980-2017: The preschool named for its founder, Sister Celeste Goulet Child Development Centre, was established in Tulít'a with a goal to support learning Dene language and culture while also preparing children to be successful in school.

Early Literacy and Curricular Materials

- Prior to 1970s, very few reading or NWT curricular materials could be used to teach Dene language, reading, writing, and culture.
- 1970s: Department of Education Linguistic Programs Division runs Teacher Education Program literacy workshops, for Dene teachers to learn to write Dene using roman orthography.³¹
- 1978: Example resource from this era, *Sahtú Got'ine Gokedéé: A Slavey Language Pre-Primer in the Speech of Fort Franklin*, which associated Dene Kedə words and sounds with pictures.³²
- 1980s in Sahtú: Dene Kedə speakers and linguists, with Linguistic Programs Division, produced a set of readers and accompanying workbooks to help Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 teachers teach in North Slavey.

1980-1981 Memory

The language group began making curriculum materials for teaching in Dene K'é in Déljñę. The basal readers and accompanying workbooks we developed followed main characters engaged in traditional living-on the land activities set in pre-contact times. Our goal was for Dene to be the language of instruction in Grades 1 and 2 teachers by 1981. To meet this goal, the curriculum group aimed to develop place specific, culturally accurate, and content rich curriculum resources for both the teachers and students.

Since curriculum production was labour intensive and slow, the team encouraged the teachers in Déljñę to use the Language Experience Approach (see the work of Sylvia Ashton Warner) where teachers provide a common experience, which children talk about together and then collectively create a written text that describes that experience. This approach can be highly successful and enables teachers to create their own local, culturally relevant reading materials with the students, and they can use these texts to teach writing, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary.

Cynthia Chambers, Emeritus Professor, University of Lethbridge

Dene Kedə and Community-Oriented Curriculum Development

- 1993: Developed with council of elders, by and for Dene language speakers.
- Celebrated as one of the most culturally founded curriculums by RCAP, academics, policy makers, and many others.³³
- Includes expectations for Dene language learning as first and second language, both oral and literacy skills.
- Localized through curriculum “inserts,” developed by Dene Cultural Institute, Regional Teaching and Learning Centers, and others.³⁴
- Challenge of implementation: teacher training, familiarity, and resources.³⁵

New Programs: Improved Planning, Teacher Education, Language Emphasis

- 1993: Formalized collaboration between NWT, Alberta, and other jurisdictions with *Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (WCP)*, Kindergarten to Grade 12; gives rise to *Common*

*Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs, K-12, 2000. Advisors include George Blondin and Albertine Ayha; Working Group includes Dene Curriculum Coordinator Fibbie Tatti (NWT Education, Culture and Employment).*³⁶

- 2001-2006: Harnum & Associates' *Long Term Plan Regarding the Role of Education, Culture, and Employment in Aboriginal Languages Literacy in the Northwest Territories: importance of teachers and student literacy, assessment of programs.*³⁷
- 2004: *Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education Directive* established a 90 hour/year minimum for Aboriginal language classes.³⁸
- 2007: New Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Certificate Program launched, with participation from Sahtú instructors.³⁹

Language Nests

- Intended to be immersion child-care with Elders and fluent Dene caretakers.
- 2003: 18 communities in NWT, including Sahtú.
- Noteworthy because it has one of the only formal evaluations of the language acquisition results of an Indigenous language-teaching program in the NWT.⁴⁰
- Located within pre-existing, licensed, preschools and daycares. Some full immersion, others second-language programs as a result of the language skills of pre-existing staff and children.
- Teachers developed their own methods and resources, supported by workshops and funding.
- Low salaries and unstable positions did not incentivize fluent speakers to take Language Nest Jobs. Many were supported by voluntary assistance from Elders.⁴¹
- Children gained language skills, particularly comprehension. Délı̄ne nest prepared students for immersion kindergarten and made children less nervous to use Dene in school.⁴²
- Created community professional development opportunities: e.g., Fort Good Hope Teaching and Learning Centre and Language Nest Staff held a workshop in Accelerated Second Language Acquisition for parents and interested community members.⁴³
- 2014: transferred to regional Aboriginal government control.

Standardization and Localization

- 2017: Move towards greater standardization of curriculum materials, teacher training and hiring, language, etc.
- Simultaneously, trend of standardization is matched by increased devolution and localizing institutions such as local governments, teaching and learning centres, etc. Individualizing teaching materials and methods within standardized curriculum.
- Implication: emphasis on support and evaluation from GNWT⁴⁴ while communities assume increased local agency.
- Despite increase in resources, new institutions, currently no NWT schools offer first-language instruction (across all subjects) in an Aboriginal language.⁴⁵

Documentation

Prior to 1980, numerous Dene language speakers, fieldworkers, missionaries, anthropologists, and linguists (not mutually exclusive categories) recorded Dene Keda/Sahtúot'ı̄ne/North Slavey using both writing, audio, film, and maps. Regional and individual differences in spellings and alphabet choices prevailed in written documents, including use of French-based orthography (Émile Petitot), and syllabics introduced by Oblate missionaries.⁴⁶ The early anthropologists and linguists that visited communities of what is now the Sahtú Region produced rich and holistic portrayals of Dene ways of life and language based on experiences living in communities and on the land.

Missionaries, Anthropologists, Social Researchers

- 1862-1883: Oblate priest Émile Petitot travels widely in what is now the Sahtú Region and beyond, documenting placenames, language and stories.⁴⁷

- 1928-1929: As a young anthropologist, Cornelius Osgood spends a winter on Great Bear Lake and publishes accounts of his experience.⁴⁸
- 1957: Jean Michéa visits Norman Wells to document oil and gas industry, and is convinced by a local priest to walk with Shúhtaot'ine into the mountains. He produces a film *Tie-cho-ka: Quelques images du Grand Nord*⁴⁹, and publishes an article and a book.⁵⁰
- 1960s: Hiroko Sue Hara conducts doctoral research in Fort Good Hope, early 1960s.⁵¹
- 1967, 1968, 1971: Joel Savishinsky conducts fieldwork with Colville Lake community members.⁵²
- 1968-1971: Beryl Gillespie visits Great Bear Lake, and with Norman Simmons documents construction of mooseskin boat on Begádá (Keele River).⁵³
- 1969: Keith and Ellen Basso conduct research in Tulit'a at K'áalq Túé (Willow Lake).⁵⁴
- 1970s: Scott Rushforth conducts doctoral research with people of Great Bear Lake⁵⁵ and provides research assistance to Indian Brotherhood of the NWT/Dene Nation.⁵⁶; Harald Beyer Broch writes an ethnography of trappers at Fort Good Hope.⁵⁷
- June Helm edits the Subarctic volume of the Smithsonian Institute's *Handbook of North American Indians* (1981) and publishes a major ethnohistory of Dene based on research with Tłı̨chǫ (Dogrib) and other Dene people since 1959 (2000)⁵⁸.
- 1980s: Lynda Lange conducts research a research project entitled *The Impact of Government of Canada Administration and Social Programs, and of Economic Development North of the 60th Parallel, on the Situation of Dene Women and Their Work*.
- Late 1980s and 1990s: Tom Andrews and Chris Hanks conduct ethnoarchaeological research in Shúhtaot'ine Néné (Mackenzie Mountains) and Fort Franklin (Délı̨ne); Andrews goes on to join a multidisciplinary team researching caribou and human interactions at alpine ice patches in the Mackenzie and Selwyn Mountains, and on developing a heritage risk assessment model related to permafrost thaw slumping (2000s).
- 1989-1993: Nicole Beaudry conducts ethnomusicology research in Délı̨ne, Fort Good Hope and Tulit'a, recording not only songs but also stories in order to gain insight into the meaning of song.⁵⁹
- 2000s: A series of graduate students consider various socio-ecological questions with a special emphasis on community and ecological governance through community-collaborative research.⁶⁰ Dene graduate students begin to complete theses based on research with their home communities.⁶¹

Documentation for Land Claims/Mackenzie Valley Pipeline (Berger) Inquiry

- 1972-1974: Dene Nation coordinates Dene Mapping Project over two years with the aim of establishing a land claims database to be used in land claims negotiations.⁶²
- 1974-1977: Dene Nation works with anthropologists and political economists to document Dene ways of life as evidence for Berger Inquiry.⁶³
- 1975: Rene Fumoleau publishes history of Treaties 8 and 11 based in part on Dene oral histories.⁶⁴
- Community participants in Berger Inquiry hearings testify about Dene and Métis ways of life.⁶⁵

Dene Language Documentation

- Keren Rice and a group of University of Toronto students do linguistic research with John Turo, from Fort Good Hope and residing in Toronto.
- 1973: Keren Rice initiates research in Fort Good Hope in 1973 and later does research in Délı̨ne, and Tulit'a, leading to publication of *A Grammar of Slave* and other academic documents.⁶⁶
- 1978: Délı̨ne (then Fort Franklin)-based Pentecostal missionary Chuck Bloomquist, with assistance and instruction from linguist and fellow missionary Philip G. Howard, works with speakers and community researchers to prepare a topical dictionary in the local dialect, including development of Dene terms for newly introduced technologies and concepts.
- 1970s-2004: Philip G. Howard conducts linguistic research on South Slavey language with Dehcho communities leading to publication of a verb dictionary. This is important because Dene languages are verb-based. A second volume is produced in collaboration with Andy Norwegian.⁶⁷

- 2011-ongoing: *Déłıne Language, Stories and Songs* documentation project, a partnership with University of Toronto, University of Cologne and DoBeS (Endangered Languages Documentation Program, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics), involves transcription of audio recordings and preparation of a community archive as well as a song book.⁶⁸
- 2012-ongoing: SRRB initiates mixed-language approach in research and reporting, starting with *Remember the Promise* book related to NWT Species At Risk concepts and processes, and *Best of Both Worlds* assessment of the regional mixed economy.⁶⁹

Dene Languages Standardization

- Recommended by Athapaskan Languages Steering Committee, in conjunction with curriculum development and OLA needs.⁷⁰
- 1987: Standardization project initiated.
- North Slavey addressed as three major dialects, “Rádeyılı, Déłıne, and Tulít’a.”⁷¹
- Committee noted intergenerational and possibly gendered speech differences. Based spelling primarily on speech of Elders.⁷²
- Roman Orthography, based on sound-symbol correspondence.

Materials Produced after Standardization

- Interpreter-Translator terminology production, training at Arctic College.
- NWT Literacy Council & Teaching and Learning Centres trains participants in production of children’s books and assist with curriculum materials.⁷³
- Proliferation of materials for children rather than adults, difficult for mature “Dene as a second language” learners.⁷⁴
- Early 2000s: North Slavey dictionary projects.

Digitization

- New technologies permitting new types of documentation.
- Preserving old reel-to-reel recordings and cassette tapes from Déłıne and Fort Good Hope in NWT archives.⁷⁵
- Digital place name projects: Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Sahtú Atlas, Déłıne Knowledge Project, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, and others.
- Digital records of academic studies.⁷⁶
- Proliferation of language and culture resources.

Media

The discussion of digitization and documentation is intimately connected with Media as, of course, recordings and a standardized writing system enable the development of such media as cellphone applications, Dene keyboard plugins for everyday use, and significant bodies of material for recorded radio or television.

Radio Broadcasting

- 1960s: Recording initiatives start, such as “People Talk” by CBC Radio in Inuvik and the Committee for Original People’s Entitlement (COPE).⁷⁷
- GNWT begins offering grants, awards for community broadcasting services.
- Early local and regional talk radio in Dene Kedə, followed by larger projects like CKLB (well-known Yellowknife station with Indigenous language programming).⁷⁸
- Local Sahtú stations, still in operation at time of writing, include CBQO/ Fort Franklin Radio Society (Déłıne) and CBQE/Chartered Community of K’asho Got’ıne (Fort Good Hope).⁷⁹

Early Television and Film

- 1980s-1990s: Northern stations, programs like Television Northern Canada begin to work in some Indigenous languages.⁸⁰

- Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) produced Dene language programming, supported by ECE & the Native Communications Society NWT (NCS, which helped develop the APTN-airing program “Dene: A Journey”).⁸¹
- GNWT, CBC, and freelancers such as Earth Magic Media produce films (e.g. *Village of Widows*).⁸²

Physical Media: Museum Exhibitions, Signs and Maps

- 1997: Dene languages and place names on documents, signs, and maps with NWT Geographical and Community Names Policy 71.09.⁸³
- Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center (PWNHC): Permanent exhibition *Journey of a Mooseskin Boat* translated into Mountain North Slavey, temporary exhibits in multiple languages.⁸⁴
- Workshops give oral histories to PWNHC collection items, documentation with Elders and youth.⁸⁵

Web-Based and Social Media

- Unicode Dene font and keyboard toolboxes for Windows and Mac, developed by a team including Chris Harvey, Jim Stauffer, Betty Harnum, and Délı̨ne Knowledge Project team members.⁸⁶
- Language application for iPhone and Android: “Shúhtaot’ine Intro” piloted in 2012 with vocabulary, phrases, games, and quizzes.⁸⁷
- *Our Dene Elders* television series produced by the Native Communications Society is digitized and made available through Isuma TV’s online portal; with recordings of 45 Sahtú elders, the collection is second only to the Tı̨chq̄ recordings.⁸⁸
- Social media: See, for example, resources for NWT Indigenous Languages Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/592262134238848>)⁸⁹, regional and local parallels.⁹⁰

Local Knowledge

A significant challenge in assessing Sahtú-based language programming is an absence of documentation. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, many people in the Sahtú spoke Dene Kedə, and we know that some local schools taught in Dene as a first language for early grade levels, for example. The idea of explicit Dene language programming may be anachronistic to project onto this time period. Nevertheless, many Dene people were reclaiming language and culture that they were separated from by residential or day schools with support and mentorship from friends, family, and Elders. The following reflects documented projects, rather than a comprehensive overview: the human element is captured better in the interviews.

Increased Visibility for Local Projects

- 1970s-1980s: Growing support for Indigenous languages from the Government of the Northwest Territories. Funding sparks increase in documentation and reporting.
- Local curriculum development groups (e.g. Fort Good Hope Language Group, 1982-1984).
- Sahtú linguists and activists teaching, holding workshops, developing materials for dictionaries and schools, unofficial local libraries.⁹¹

Local Interactions with Territorial Programs

- Interpreter-translators take opportunities for training at Arctic College.
- Local interpreter-translators and fluent speakers’ advocacy for respecting dialectal difference begins showing up in official documentation.⁹²
- 2002: NWT Literacy Council identifies areas of overlap between Sahtú language priorities and their own: including preserving structure and terminology along with traditional stories and teachings.⁹³
- Late 1990s-early 2000s: Local and regional language plans show trend towards documented local programming.

Local Knowledge Leading the Way

- Increased language workshops, Sahtú stories, books, and publications.
- Publications in journals and policy documents introduce Dene Kedə and Dene Ts’ı̨l̨ to academic and political communities,⁹⁴ initiatives like the Délı̨ne Knowledge Centre⁹⁵ display local ideas of new ways to maintain Dene Ts’ı̨l̨.
- Collaborating with newcomer researchers and conducting research “the Indigenous way.”⁹⁶

- Informal publications like *Sahtú Godé Dáhk'é, Place of Stories*⁹⁷ spread Dene Kədə and Dene Ts'ı́ı within the Sahtú.
- Workshops, including on the land programs for youth and Elders,⁹⁸ local culture camps, annual spiritual gatherings, seasonal hunts bring community members together in unofficial language learning activities.⁹⁹

Local Experts Building Cross-Cultural Capacities

- For decades, Dene people have been building training at home and away to obtain more power as language and culture advocates.
- Increasingly, language speakers are training through programs like the University of Victoria Indigenous Language Revitalization program and the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute at the University of Alberta.¹⁰⁰
- Graduates return with tools that help them use oral and written language professionally, in schools, in advocacy, and in government.
- Programs in north emerging with cross-cultural components (e.g., Dene Ts'ı́ı School, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning [dechinta.ca]) where Dene ways of life are taught with southern accreditation.

Ways of Life

Emergent Mixed Economy

- Dene and Métis continue traditional harvesting practices, including gathering, hunting, trapping, and sharing.
- 1920s-1960s: Oil production at Norman Wells, uranium and silver mining near Great Bear Lake, and emergent settlement institutions provide a variety of jobs to supplement incomes in the face of declining fur prices.
- 1962: Oblate priest Bern Will Brown is sent to Colville Lake, a community established with a goal to maintain land-based trapping and subsistence harvesting practices and thus avoid social issues.¹⁰¹
- 2000: The Délı́ne First Nation partners with Canada to investigate the impacts of the Port Radium experience.¹⁰²
- *Best of Both Worlds* research leads to an action plan for the Sahtú traditional economy in the context of a brief shale oil exploration boom.¹⁰³

*Government Assistance for Harvesting and Arts and Crafts*¹⁰⁴

- 1970s-1980s: Funding provided for transportation to harvesting areas as part of wildlife management strategy.
- 1970s-present: Trapping promoted through system of advances to trappers.
- 1980s-present: Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs (GMVF) program established to promote NWT fur industry and provide a debt-free marketing service in support of the traditional economy and cultural/spiritual wellness. Programs such as Take a Kid Trapping support school-aged youth.
- 1990s-present: Community Harvester Assistance Program provides ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resources Councils) with funding to support equipment (retooling), snow machines and fuel for harvesters to participate.
- 1989-1998: NWT trap exchange program replaced leghold traps with certified humane quick kill trapping devices.
- 1990-2015: Harvesters Conservation trust fund provided each community equal access to a one time lump sum in support of on the land activities.
- 2009-present: GMVF Fur and hide program provides crafters access to processed fur pelts and traditional tanned moose hide at cost.

Land Claim Implementation

- 1990s: SDMCLCA creates a number of new organizations that support Dene decision-making about land and regional economics (including ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'é Nákedı and ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne).

- 1998: Sahtú Land Use Planning Board, Sahtú Land and Water Board lead to recent (five year) land use mapping project as basis for planning, and traditional knowledge studies conducted as part of regulatory requirement.
- 2013: Sahtú Land Use Plan approved.
- 2007 and 2016: Caribou conservation hearings conducted by SRRB, as required under the SDMCLCA.
- 2016: Community inputs, including submission of a caribou conservation plan by Délı̨ne, leads SRRB to formally adopt community-driven conservation planning and Dene Ts'ı̨ı approach to implementing its mandate.

Regional gatherings and on the land programs

- 1990s-present: Community, regional and territorial governments enhance funding support for travel to and hosting regional gatherings, including Sahtú Dene Council and Sahtú Secretariat Annual General Meetings, Wood Block Music Festival (Fort Good Hope, biannually), annual Délı̨ne Spiritual Gathering, expanding handgames tournaments, and funerals for Sahtú community members.
- 2013-present: Regional research workshops, Cross-Cultural Research Camps, on the land Dene Ts'ı̨ı Schools, sponsored by Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum, now renamed the Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı̨ı Forum.
- A sequence of projects funded by Health Canada points to strengths in Dene and Métis ways of life in the context of climate change.
- NWT On the Land Collaborative and NWT On the Land Summit event highlight the value and importance of on the land programs for community learning, healing and wellness.

Youth-Centred Initiatives

- Communities continue support for youth on the land learning opportunities.
- Elders repeatedly state the importance of involving youth in local research and governance processes and on the land activities, with limited results.
- 2014-present: Gender research by Rauna Kuokkanen shows that Dene women consider directly supporting youth initiatives to be key for addressing social and governance issues.
- 2014-present: Sahtú Youth Network established as a framework for supporting youth initiatives.
- 2014-present: Youth caucus sessions become a feature of regional and local research and conservation activities as a means of supporting strong youth voices.
- 2016-2017: Pilot On the Land Scholarship initiative.
- 2017: Dene Ts'ı̨ı School provides cross-cultural learning opportunity for youth aged 18-30.
- 2017: Youth caucus at on the land Mountain Caribou Planning workshop proposes parallel Guardian land stewardship and healing programs.

Results: Youth Knowledge

Dene and Métis leaders, Elders, parents and youth have been saying that young people need to spend more time on the land so that they can help to keep Dene ways of life alive. Dene Ts'ı̨ı School is a new initiative for youth to heal and learn on the land. In February and August/September 2017, the first two Dene Ts'ı̨ı School sessions were held at Dəocha (Bennett Field) on Sahtú Də (Bear River) over a period of 16-18 days. Students participated in a series of classes, workshops, and research sessions. Since students are used to structured learning in schools and often are not experienced on the land, the approach was cross-cultural. Learning activities were often team-taught, including formal training for certificates, and teachings by traditional knowledge holders.

The Fall School included certification in Wilderness First Aid and Pleasure Craft Safety, as well as activities related to navigation, medicinal plants, and other survival skills. Safety planning was an important part of both schools. Elders shared their stories, and digital storytelling offered a way for youth to express themselves. Between scheduled activities, students participated in traditional activities such as sewing, helping with camp maintenance, preparing Dene béré, working on hides, or harvesting. The School wove

Dene Kedə into its Dene Ts'ı́ı́ focus by using Dene Kedə in meetings, translating course terms, and holding workshops on Dene Kedə revitalization approaches. Finally, several youth volunteered to do interviews with the *Dene Kedə to Dene Ts'ı́ı́* research team.

The youth who participated in the DTS grew up in the 1990s, a time rich with language and culture revitalization programs, as well as shifts in ways of life, legislation, and land use. Their experiences provide living testimony to the endurance and effectiveness of the types of programs surveyed in the literature review. Youth who came to school and participated in this research linked their experiences with Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ together, commenting that language learning brought them closer to their heritage, made them better leaders, and gave them access to different parts of Dene worldview.

What follows is a synthesis of key themes articulated in interviews, workshops/focus groups, and participant observation from the Fall Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School, in light of the literature review on Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ programming over the last 50 years of history in the Sahtú region. Further details, along with direct quotations from interviews and focus groups and the questionnaire used, are contained in Appendix C. Themes are clustered in four categories: 1) memories of Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́; 2) challenges in youth adult Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ learning; 3) integrating Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ learning; 4) the value of on the land

Memories of Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́

When asked about memorable Dene Kedə learning experiences, informed by their Dene Ts'ı́ı́ on the land setting, youth responses addressed a number of key themes:

- **Dene Classes:** Participants identified school as the most obvious place they had learned some Dene Kedə. From Kindergarten to Grade Nine, students were in classes that introduced them to language learning and its importance, vocabulary, and some Dene skills such as sewing. However, they commented that the classes hadn't really taught them how to put sentences together, and that they were just starting to really “get” the language when classes stopped in highschool.
- **Family and Community:** DTS students remembered learning Dene Ts'ı́ı́ and Dene Kedə with their families, often as observers or listeners. Some participants talked about learning best with their family on the land, or in near-immersion environments. In addition, students heard language in their communities, primarily from Elders and older adults.
- **Law and Policy:** While most DTS participants recognized that the Northwest Territories has official Indigenous languages, they did not show strong or clear personal connections to Official Languages law or policy. This being said, a number of youth knew their regional language coordinator or were familiar with the work of the Teaching and Learning Centres, and thus grew up with the impacts of evolving Northwest Territories languages policy whether or not it was recognized explicitly as such.
- **Media:** Community Radio and CKLB was the number one media source of language exposure for Dene Ts'ı́ı́ school participants. Interviewees commented that they heard the language over the radio frequently, and that many of the recordings played preserved important cultural histories. Participants were aware that some people used Dene language on social media, but often had not seen it much themselves. However, some Dene Ts'ı́ı́ students wanted to begin using Dene fonts and other social media tools.

Challenges in Young Adult Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ Learning

- **Self-Consciousness:** Some students felt worried, nervous, or uncomfortable trying to speak Dene in front of others. They felt that if they mispronounced a word, an older fluent speaker might laugh at them, which was highly discouraging.
- **Opportunities and Resources:** A number of youth did not know of any programs designed to help them as adult second language learners. Furthermore, most students did not know about existing Dene language apps, texts, and other resources. A few students had more access to these tools and brought some of them to the school.
- **Feeling Overwhelmed:** Several students commented that people their age were interested in learning their language, but that it was hard to find the energy to face such an overwhelming task. They felt that

people their age found it difficult to really commit, for several reasons. Some youth identified substance abuse as a key challenge, while another student raised the point that young adults might feel the size of a language to be unmanageable. In addition to the overwhelming task of learning a language, some interviewees talked about the feeling that preserving Dene heritage (in a broader sense) for the future was falling on their shoulders. Some framed this task as important and necessary, but also as immense and challenging. It is possible that this sense of improbable magnitude makes it more difficult for youth to become involved in heritage and language preservation.

Integrating Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ and Dene Kedə Learning

- **Understanding Dene Worldview:** Some interviewees felt that becoming more knowledgeable in Dene Kedə would unlock or bring out important components of Dene worldview and values. This spirit within Dene Kedə was seen as hard to describe using English and an English worldview. Interviewees voiced a desire to understand this better. One student commented that it would be useful to see Dene “teachings that go with the language,” such as Kinship and Family, included in Dene classes.
- **Extending Dene Immersion:** Students requested that Dene Kedə classes continue into highschool, and/or that other classes be taught in Dene Kedə as well. In addition, students wanted less English to be spoken during Dene class.
- **Expanding Learning Settings:** In addition to classroom education, students commented on the importance of extending Dene into all aspects of life. Some felt that they would learn better in on the land settings, if the language was spoken and written in the home, and if there were community opportunities for young adults to learn in a safe gathering spaces.
- **Expanding Opportunities for Intergenerational Conversation:** The close quarters of the DTS camp allowed for conversations and discoveries that might not normally occur within a community. This allowed Elders and youth to speak about key issues such as self-consciousness and language learning. Youth advocated for more Elders from each dialect and community to be present in future schools.

The Value of On the Land Programming

- **Participant Pride and Self-Confidence:** On one of the first days of the Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School, a Dene participant cooking for the camp offered to teach everyone to make drygeese. Those who participated were posting pictures to social media with their “first drygeese,” and throughout the camp it was clear that learning and improving bush skills (from hunting and trapping to preparing foods, fires, and tents) was a significant source of pride for students.

Similarly, all camp participants had an opportunity to create a “digital story” – a video narrative built from images, footage, voiceovers, and found sound or music – facilitated by Jessie Curell of Handson Media Education.¹⁰⁵ A number of these digital stories were about living the Dene way, keeping a close relationship with the land, and keeping their elders’ skills and traditions alive.

While all students seemed to identify Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ with Dene traditional activities, there was also a more subtle and dynamic sense in which people at the school talked about Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨. Students, instructors, researchers, and camp staff alike reflected on being on the land as an essential component of Saktı̨ı̨ life and the challenges that come with it.

- **Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨, Dene Kedə, and On the land Programming as Healing:** As some recent research has observed¹⁰⁶, the meaning of “on the land” is shifting—particularly for youth—to entail demarcated events or occasions rather than a continuous way of life. On the land *programs*—the word “programs” is telling—are one way of introducing Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ to each new generation. Redvers contends that these programs support healing and resilience, improving cultural, social, physical, and psychological wellbeing, along with intergenerational transmission of knowledge (and language transfer). Gordon, similarly, argues that on the land programs help preserve and pass on Dene epistemology, which acts as a healing force in the face of colonial trauma.

The small group of youth who attended the Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ Fall School had varying experiences on the land: some had spent a long time trapping, hunting, and lived in the bush regularly, while others had passed most of their lives in town. The youth from Colville Lake seemed to have more bush experience

than the rest, which has been recognized as a traditional strength of the community. However, it seemed that nearly all participants associated being on the land (whether as part of a “program,” or as a part of daily life) with opportunities to heal. People of all ages and backgrounds felt that the remote location of the school helped them stay sober and substance free, allowed them to reflect on their lives and actions, and gave them the space they needed to make strong choices.

State of Knowledge

At this point in history, Dene Kedə remains a living language in Sahtú Dene communities. But among youth, Dene Kedə has become a symbolic part of the larger practices of Dene Ts'ı́ı, including activities in the home, in the community, in the school, and on the land. In a broad sense, much research has been devoted in recent years to understanding causes of language shift, maintenance, and recovery. A significant and increasing amount of Dene Kedə materials exists and is being harnessed to create new and exciting programs and resources. A young student with the right guidance can not only experience Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı with their Elders but also find recordings of Elders from thirty years ago, access a grammar and dictionary, play games on a language app, build their own digital resources using Dene keyboards, and listen to Dene music on the radio. Decades of documentation, advocacy, materials development, innovation, and self-determination have brought us to an era with what seems like bountiful resources from a review of the literature. Now in the new era of self-governance, Dene Kedə materials are being developed that go beyond the domains of research and education to the domains of policy and practice, which presents exciting possibilities. New technologies open up the domain of bringing Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı alive through creative forms of expression.

Regional organisations like the Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı Forum and Sahtú Youth Network are strengthening their approaches to supporting resurgence processes in the Sahtú Region through strategic planning initiatives, albeit in very initial phases. A series of detailed reports reflecting on community and regional initiatives is starting to coalesce as a corpus that can serve as a basis for tracking the evolution of these processes.

When speaking with youth in Sahtú communities, some of them are aware of the resources at their fingertips and have great plans to keep learning and inspire others to do the same. A huge knowledge strength in this report is the contribution of youth's subjective and individualized experiences; these weave together the compartmentalized programs and histories into life stories.

Knowledge Gaps

The descriptions of the language that currently exist are largely based on the language as spoken in the 1970s and 1980s. Renewed work with speakers is needed to assess whether and how the language has changed. As well, it will be necessary consider how best practices in language documentation and language reclamation have evolved – there is a lot to be learned from the Dene Ts'ı́ı or living language approach that was not captured in the earlier dictionaries and grammars.

Many of the most proliferate sources of data for Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı status and trends are territorial or regional, and thus don't adequately capture the specificities of each community. As such, more intense in-community work (including work with people, schools, and physical records that may not be accessible online) is needed to create a coherent profile for each settlement region and identify corresponding opportunities.

A deeper understanding at the local level, used to localize and refine support given to programs and teachers, could play an important role in inspiring new and innovative community resurgence initiatives. Much can be gained from dialogue within communities addressing Dene Kedə and Dene Ts'ı́ı revitalization approaches from a perspective that is grounded holistically in community realities rather than fragmented program and funding silos originating in Yellowknife. This being said, the common approach of providing funding without sufficient capacity support has evidently served to weaken community in-school programming; in the absence of such support, community program administrators have tended to repeat the same activities year after year rather than benefit from iterative learning.

While a researcher in the south can find out a lot about what Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ materials and programs exist, it is much harder to see how they are used and whether they are having an impact. We were often unable to locate documented evaluations of foundational initiatives like Dene Kede curriculum, to learn from these ground-breaking programs and develop even more effective approaches, and we do not know the degree to which contemporary planning processes have been based on evaluative research. A synthetic program assessment drawing in part from the living knowledge of community practitioners would be invaluable. The experience of Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School and of schools such as Dechinta have made it clear that innovative cross-cultural approaches to learning are needed, accounting for the specific experiences and knowledge of contemporary youth.

Some information and interviews point towards a link between Dene Kede, Dene Ts'ı́ı́, wellbeing, and governance. It is worth investigating this further: what are the relationships among them, and what respective roles do Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ play in healthy and fulfilling ways of life? This topic could be productively explored both by quantitative and qualitative researchers. In addition, further research is needed to understand cross-cultural dimensions of learning for contemporary youth, linkages between Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ in learning, and the role of youth in Indigenous governance and mixed economies.

Knowledge Mobilization

An output of this project has been the development of a new network of knowledgeable individuals, both currently active and retired, as well as Territorial and regional organisations with an interest in supporting Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ processes. A private Facebook group, “Sahtú Dene Ts'ı́ı́” was created as an accessible knowledge-sharing venue for the network of community activists. Focus group activities at Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School involving students and instructors were also an important milestone in building awareness and understanding of the project among individuals from Sahtú communities. The Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School Facebook Group was a venue for review and validation of “Youth Knowledge” results. Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School alumni will now serve as an important bridge to Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ initiatives of the larger Sahtú Youth Network. As well, students will be encouraged to continue attending Dene Ts'ı́ı́ School sessions, and take advantage of other on the land opportunities and educational programs like Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, University of Victoria Indigenous Languages Revitalization program, and the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute.

Several of the co-authors received additional training through participation in this project, including the ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'ę́ Nákedı́ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) Chair, Michael Neyelle, Interns Jordan Lennie and Shelby Lennie, and Research Assistant Faun Rice.

Knowledge Synthesis results will be disseminated in a variety of ways over the coming months: through oral presentations to territorial and regional organisations and forums, including: the NWT Literacy Council and Aboriginal Languages Secretariat; the NWT On the Land Collaborative; the Sahtú Secretariat Inc. and Sahtú Dene Council; the Ne K'ə́ Dene Ts'ı́ı́ Forum; and the SRRB. Opportunities to present to community organisations including ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resources Councils) will also be embraced.

The report will be posted to the SRRB's webpage, along with the annotated bibliography and timeline in searchable database format; digital materials will be compiled in the online, password-protected Sahtú Library for community and regional researchers and research collaborators; and, as feasible depending on copyright restrictions, materials will be linked to the public online database. Results will also be presented in a series of Facebook posts on the Sahtú Wildlife Facebook page¹⁰⁷, which had approximately 2,700 followers at time of writing, with readership greatly expanded through paid “boosting.” A press release will be distributed to northern media contacts. The research team will also adapt results for publication in a journal.

It is expected that Sahtú-based co-authors Bezha, J. Lennie, S. Lennie, Neyelle and Simmons will directly apply research results in key regional and community initiatives that they are associated with, including the SRRB, Ne K'ə́ Dene Ts'ı́ı́ Forum and associated research and on the land activities, Sahtú Youth Network, and local ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne. This Knowledge Synthesis report and dissemination efforts will aim to inform Dene Kede and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ programming in the Sahtú Region and the Northwest Territories.

Many of the Sahtú-specific learnings are relevant to resurgence processes elsewhere, as evidenced in recent coverage in territorial and national press (eg. CBC North, Globe and Mail and Canadian Geographic); the co-authors seek to contribute to strategic discussions among Indigenous leaders, activists, scholars and their allies in Canada and beyond.

Conclusion

This Knowledge Synthesis has been a hugely valuable exercise, setting the stage for renewed strategic planning and research in an area that addresses the heart of Indigenous identities, well-being, and governance. When using the Sahtú Region as a focal point, we discovered a startlingly rich terrain of literature, lived experience, and youth interest and motivation. In reviewing over 250 documents – 177 of which are included in the annotated bibliography – the co-authors came to understand the great opportunities that exist for drawing upon historical experience to inform resurgence in the present and future. We were further encouraged to encounter a growing body of evidence that Dene Kədə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ programs, by way of on the land programs, play a critical role in the healing and leadership development that is needed to achieve strong governance.

This being said, the tasks ahead will not be easy. Our historical assessment makes it clear that resurgence is not unilinear but complex, occurring across numerous domains and in diverse contexts, and planning must take this into account. While processes of resurgence need to be unpacked in order to be fully understood, at the same time it is important to comprehend the interconnectedness of these domains – the holistic ways in which Dene Kədə and Dene Ts'ı́ı́ are lived in the home, in communities, in schools and on the land. Programming needs to be correspondingly holistic and integrated in order to be effective and relevant. Efforts need to be consolidated, and all parties need to work together so that communities are not inundated with a myriad of programs that are inadequately supported and thus are destined to fail.

On the cusp of self-government, Sahtú Dene and Métis communities are challenged to set a new direction for reclaiming their language and ways of life. Action now on the part of leaders, activists, and educators and their allies, grounded in historical and contemporary evidence, have the potential to make a significant difference. The co-authors hope that this current Knowledge Synthesis will be a catalyst for fertile discussion in communities and development of strong voices that can continue the good work done over the past fifty years.

Endnotes

¹ See, for instance: Chandler, Michael J., and Christopher E. Lalonde. 1998 Cultural Continuity as a Hedge Against Suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35: 191–219; Chandler, Michael J., and Christopher Lalonde. 2008. Cultural Continuity as a Protective Factor against Suicide in First Nations Youth. *Horizons—A Special Issue on Aboriginal Youth, Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future* 10: 68–72.

² See, for example: Alfred, Taiaiake. 2009. *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Freedom and Action*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Waziyatawin. 2012. The Paradoxes of Indigenous Resurgence at the End of Empire. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1: 68-85.

³ NWT Bureau of Statistics “Community Population Estimates by Ethnicity 2001-2016.” 2016 (July 1). http://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/commethnicity_2001-2016.xlsx.

⁴ Consult organization websites at www.dechinta.ca; www.denenahjo.com; www.nwtontheland.ca.

⁵ The literature review should not be treated as exhaustive. For a further discussion of sources surveyed, see *Approach and the Annotated Bibliography* in Appendix F of this report.

⁶ Fettes, Mark. 1998. “Life on the Edge: Canada's Aboriginal Languages Under Official Bilingualism” In *Language and Politics in the United States and Canada: Myths and Realities*, edited by Thomas K. Ricento and Barbara Burnaby, 117-149. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum: 125.

⁷ Fettes 1998: 126.

See also,

Harnum, Betty. 1998. “Language in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory.” In *Language in Canada*, edited by John Edwards, 469-82. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 474.

⁸ Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories [Judi Tutcho]. 2000. *Special Report on Privatization and Language Services*. Yellowknife. (from introduction)

⁹ The passing of the Official Languages Act in 1984 had an interesting impact on education in the NWT. Prior to the OLA, children in the majority in a community had the right to go to school in their first language (or at least be taught it as a subject) for the first three years of school. Afterward the OLA's passing, any official language could be taught, "regardless of the first language of even the majority of the students." This by no means guaranteed an English-speaking classroom; it simply weakened rather than strengthened Indigenous language rights (in this regard) in many communities.

See: Harnum 1998: 478

¹⁰ Fettes 1998: 127

¹¹ Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories [Judi Tutcho]. 2000. *Special Report on Privatization and Language Services*.

¹² See for example: NWT Literacy Council. March 2002. *Multiple Literacies: Improving our support for Aboriginal literacy in the NWT*. Yellowknife: NWT Literacy Council.

¹³ Asch, Michael. 1979. "The Economics of Dene Self-Determination." In *Challenging Anthropology: A Critical Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 339-352. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

See also <http://denenation.com/history/>.

¹⁴ Irlbacher-Fox, Stephanie. 2009. *Finding Dasha: Self-Government, Social Suffering, and Aboriginal Policy in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press. 16-17.

¹⁵ T'Seleie, Bella. 2000. *Land Use Information in the Sahtú Region, A Community Based Inventory*. Tulit'a: Sahtú Renewable Resources Board.

¹⁶ *Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*. 1993. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. See also, Nuttall, Mark. 2008. "Aboriginal participation, consultation, and Canada's Mackenzie Gas Project." *Energy & Environment*. 19(5): 617-634.

¹⁷ Irlbacher-Fox 2009: 17; Nuttall 2008: 622.

¹⁸ No Author. 2017. *Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́łı Forum Terms of Reference*. Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́łı Forum (formerly Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum): 5.

¹⁹ Wenman, Christine. 2015. *Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum 2013-2015 Update Report*. Tulit'a: PlanIt North: 16.; Wenman, Christine. 2016. *Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum Activity Report 2015-2016*. Tulit'a: PlanIt North: 99.

²⁰ Morgan, Shauna. 2014. "It's about our survival": Keeping the Food and Water Safe in the Sahtú Region - Research Results Workshop, Tulit'a, November 27-28, 2013. Tulit'a: Pembina Institute: 31.

²¹ Harnum, Betty, Joseph Hanlon, Tee Lim, Jane Modeste, Deborah Simmons, and Andrew Spring with The Pembina Institute. 2014. *Best of Both Worlds: Sahtú Gonę́ę T'áadets'enı́q, Depending on the Land in the Sahtú Region*. Tulit'a: ʔehdzo Got'ı́nę Gots'ę Nákedı́, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board.

²² The Délı́nę Final Self Government Agreement reads: 3.7.1 – The DGG shall: a) maintain a public registry of the Délı́nę Got'ı́nę Ɔeæadó and of all DGG Laws including amendments: i) in the English language, which shall be the authoritative version, and ii) at the discretion of the DGG, in the North Slavey language (See *Délı́nę Final Self-Government Agreement Act*, 2015. SC, c. 24: 29).

²³ Smart, Miles. 2014. *A View into the Sahtú: Land Claims and Resource Development*. MA Thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, Canada: 64.

²⁴ Délı́nę ʔekwé Working Group. 2016. *Belare Wı́le Gots'ę ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time*. Délı́nę : Délı́nę ʔekwé Working Group.

²⁵ SRRB Meeting Minutes, July 3-7, 2017, Yellowknife.

²⁶ Fogwill, Lynn. 1994. "Chapter 16: Literacy: A Critical Element in the Survival of Aboriginal Languages." In *Alpha 94: Literacy and Cultural Development Strategies in Rural Areas*. Edited by Jean-Paul Hauteceuer. Prepared by UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg Germany. Culture Concepts Publishers: Toronto. 229-248.

²⁷ Fogwill 1994: 234.

²⁸ McGregor, Catherine A. 2015. "Creating Able Human Beings: Social Studies Curriculum in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, 1969 to the Present." *Historical Studies in Education Special Issue: Education North of 60*. Vol. 27 (1): 57-79.

²⁹ Fogwill 1994.

³⁰ McGregor 2015: 61.

³¹ Howard, Philip G. 1993. "Language Initiatives." *Meta: Translators' Journal*. Vol. 38 (1): 92-95.

³² Compiled by Fibbie Tatti and Philip Howard; Linguistic Programmes Division; Department of Education Northwest Territories 1978.

³³ Fogwill 1994; McGregor 2015. See also: Ouellette, Robert-Falcon. 2011. *Evaluating Aboriginal Curricula using a Cree-Métis Perspective with a regard towards Indigenous knowledge*. PhD Thesis. Université Laval, Quebec, Département d'anthropologie, Faculté des Sciences Sociales. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3 Gathering Strength, Education (Chapter 5): 404-538.

³⁴ Supplementary documents like curriculum “inserts,” intended to localize *Dene Kede* with community language speakers, histories, etc., were developed. One example from the Dene Cultural Institute (1994) contains tapes and reports from three different initiatives: two Tłı̄ch̄q projects, and one from Fort Good Hope. The latter records elders participating in a Traditional Environmental Knowledge project, and lays out activities for children to do with listening (both to elders and to related tapes). While it is difficult to say how many of these exist, an inventory and digitization project might help Dene language teachers today. Additionally, the GNWT continued to draft teaching units to support Dene Kede curriculum as it developed the next installment for grades 7-9, as did Teaching and Learning Centers (TLCs). For North Slavey, the Sahtú TLC developed Traditional Dene Food and Traditional Dene Games teaching kits.

See: Dene Cultural Institute. Nov 1994. *Dene Kede: Justice and Medicine Activities*. Prepared for the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education by Dr. Joan Ryan and Martha Johnson, Research Associates, Arctic Institute of North America. Government of the Northwest Territories. 1996-1997. *Annual Report on Official Languages*: 5.

³⁵ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Volume 3: Gathering Strength, Chapter 5: Education*: 404-538.

³⁶ Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education. 2000. *The common curriculum framework for aboriginal language and culture programs: kindergarten to grade 12*.

³⁷ NWT Literacy Council. 2002. *Multiple Literacies: Improving our support for Aboriginal literacy in the NWT*. Yellowknife, NT.

³⁸ In schools where it is already being taught. See: GNWT. 2004. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2003-2004*, p. 21.

³⁹ Offered in 2007-2008 full time in Tłı̄ch̄q and part time in other regions. This program would allow graduates to teach K-12 Aboriginal Languages in NWT schools. See: GNWT. Nov 2007. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2006-2007*.

⁴⁰ Hume, Rutman, and Hubberstey. 2006. *Language nest evaluation report*. Yellowknife, Northwest Territories: Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

⁴¹ Hume, Rutman, and Hubbertsey 2006.

⁴² Hume, Rutman, and Hubbertsey 2006: 25-26.

⁴³ GNWT. Nov 2007. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2006-2007*.

⁴⁴ Department of Education, Culture & Employment. 2015. *Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change: Three-Year Education Renewal Action Plan*. Yellowknife, NT.

⁴⁵ The core subject second language approach continues (though Behchokó, Inuvik, and Fort Providence offer local language immersion classes). Plans to develop new Aboriginal language curriculum, with language acquisition assessment, are in motion at the GNWT. In the Sahtú, the next ten years of regional, local, and territorial oversight will undoubtedly yield interesting language education results. See GNWT. 2016. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2015-2016*.

⁴⁶ Biscaye, Elizabeth and Mary Pepper. 1990. “The Dene Standardization Project” in *Effective Language Education Practices and Native Language Survival* (pp. 23-29), ed. Jon Reyhner.

⁴⁷ http://srrb.nt.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=319:sahtu-place-names&catid=9&Itemid=912.

⁴⁸ Osgood, Cornelius. 1932. The ethnography of the Great Bear Lake Indians. In *Annual report for 1931. National Museum of Canada Bulletin*, Ottawa 70. 31-97; 1953. *Winter*. University of Nebraska Press.

⁴⁹ <https://norj.ca/2014/02/long-lost-documentary-on-dene-life-screened-in-nwt/>.

⁵⁰ Michéa, Jean. 1959. Les Chitra-Gottinéké: Groupe Athapascan des Montagnes Rocheuses. *Journal de la Société des américanistes*; 1967. *Connaissance des amériques. esquimaux et indiens du grand nord*. Société continentale d'éditions modernes illustrées.

⁵¹ Hara, Hiroko Sue, 1964. *Hare Indians and their world* (Doctoral dissertation, Bryan Mawr College).

⁵² Savishinsky, Joel S. 1974. *The trail of the hare: Life and stress in an Arctic community*. New York: Gordon and Breach.

⁵³ In June Helm (volume editor). 1981. Subarctic, volume 6, *Handbook of North American Indians*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution. 310-313, 326-337.

⁵⁴ Basso, Keith H. 1972. “Ice and Travel among the Fort Norman Slave: Folk Taxonomies and Cultural Rules.” *Language in Society* 1 (01): 31-49; Basso, Ellen. 1978. The enemy of every tribe: “Bushman” images in Northern Athapaskan narratives. *American Ethnologist* 5. 690-709.

- ⁵⁵ Rushforth, Everett Scott. 1977. *Kinship and social organization among the Great Bear Lake Indians: A cultural decision-making model*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona.
- ⁵⁶ Rushforth, Scott. 1976. The Dene and their land. In *Recent land-use by the Great Bear Lake Indians*, volume 3, part 2. Study done for the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories for Submission to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. 1-65; 1977. Country food. In Mel Watkins (editor). *Dene Nation: The colony within*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 32-46.
- ⁵⁷ Broch, H.B. 1986. *Woodland Trappers: Hare Indians of Northwestern Canada*. Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen.
- ⁵⁸ Helm, June, with contributions by Teresa S. Carterette and Nancy S. Lurie. 2000. *The people of Denendeh. Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada's Northwest Territories*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- ⁵⁹ Beaudry, N. 1992. "The Language of Dreams: Songs of the Dene Indians (Canada)." *The world of music* 34(2). 72-90.
- ⁶⁰ For example: Blomqvist, J. A. 2002. *Exploring the Interface between Corrections and Culture: A Case Study of Correctional Reform in the Northwest Territories*. Master's thesis. Canadian Studies and Native Studies. Peterborough: Trent University. Bateyko, D. 2003. *Evaluating co-management in the Sahtu: a framework for analysis*. Faculty of Environmental Design. Master's thesis. Calgary: University of Calgary. Carthew, R. 2007. *Beyond Bureaucracy: Collaborative relationships in the transition to co-management – a case study in the Sahtu Region, Northwest Territories, Canada*. Master's thesis. Centre for Transdisciplinary Environmental Research. Stockholm: University of Stockholm. Caine, K. J. 2008. *Water hearts and cultural landscapes: Practical understanding and natural resource management in the Northwest Territories, Canada*. Doctoral dissertation. Rural Economy. Edmonton: University of Alberta. Dokis, C. 2010. *People, Land, and Pipelines: Perspectives of Resource Decision Making Processes in the Sahtu Region, Northwest Territories*. Doctoral dissertation. Edmonton: University of Alberta. Fletcher, A. 2015. *Re/mediation: The Story of Port Radium*. Doctoral dissertation. Kingston, ON: Queen's University. Gordon, S. M. 2014. *Cultural Vitality as Social Strength in Délne, Northwest Territories, Canada*. Doctoral dissertation. Bloomington: Indiana University. Mak, I. 2011. *Enhancing Aboriginal Participation in Northern Land Use Planning. Environment and Sustainability*. Master's thesis. Montreal: Royal Roads University. McMillan, R. C. 2012. *Resilience to Ecological Change: Contemporary Harvesting and Food-Sharing Dynamics in the K'asho Got'ine community of Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories*. Master's thesis. Edmonton: University of Alberta. Polfus, J., et al. 2016. "Łeghágots' enetę (learning together): the importance of indigenous perspectives in the identification of biological variation." *Ecology and Society* 21(2). Polfus, J., et al. 2017. "Creative convergence: exploring biocultural diversity through art." *Ecology and Society* 22(2). Rice, F. E. 2016. *Time and Story in Sahtú Self Government: Intercultural Bureaucracies on Great Bear Lake*. Edmonton: University of Alberta: https://era.library.ualberta.ca/files/c02870w02805q/Rice_Faun_E_201608_MA.pdf.
- ⁶¹ Tatti 2015; Tutcho 2016.
- ⁶² Asch, Michael, Thomas D. Andrews, and Shirleen Smith. 1986. The Dene Mapping Project on Land Use and Occupancy: An introduction. In Philip Spaulding (editor) *Anthropology in praxis*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. 36-43.
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- ⁶⁷ Howard, Philip. 1990. *A dictionary of the verbs of South Slavey* (Vol. 1). Yellowknife: Department of Culture and Communications, Government of the Northwest Territories; Andy Norwegian and Howard, Philip. 2004. *A Dictionary of the Verbs of South Slavey*. Dehcho Divisonal Education Council.
- ⁶⁸ dobes.mpi.nl/projects/deline.
- ⁶⁹ Harnum, Betty and Deborah Simmons (based on stories told by Sahtú elders), 2014. *Kədə Nit'q Benats' adí - Xədə Rihēt'q Herats'ádi (Remember the Promise)* 2 volumes. Tulita, NT: ?ehdzo Got'ine Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board).
- ⁷⁰ North Slavey Working Committee: Sarah Doctor, Keren Rice, Paul Andrew, Dora Grandjambe, Jane Vandermeer, Judi Tutcho, Lucy Ann Yakeleya, Ron Cleary, Agnes Naedzo. *Report of the Dene Standardization Project*, 1990. Government of the Northwest Territories, Departments of Culture and Communications and Education.

⁷¹ “...three major dialects, Rádeyǰǰ, Délǰne, and Tulít’a. The community of Tulít’a has two major dialects within it... [one] very similar to that of Délǰne, which can be called the kw dialect, while others use the dialect that is labeled Tulít’a in this report, or the p dialect. Speakers from Rádeyǰǰ and K’áhbamǰtúé use the f dialect.” See *Report of the Dene Standardization Project* 1990: 46.

⁷² Biscaye and Pepper 1990.

⁷³ Fogwill, Lynn. 1994. “Chapter 16: Literacy: A Critical Element in the Survival of Aboriginal Languages.” In *Alpha 94: Literacy and Cultural Development Strategies in Rural Areas*. Edited by Jean-Paul Hauteceouer. Prepared by UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg Germany. Culture Concepts Publishers: Toronto. 229-248.

⁷⁴ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Hearing Record: Tuesday December 8, 1992*. Northern United Place Hall. Yellowknife, N.W.T. Recorded by Stenotran, Ottawa.

⁷⁵ GNWT Annual reports 2007-2008: 33 and 2008-2009: 36.

⁷⁶ For example, an ice patch study in conjunction with the GNWT that used spatial recordings of oral traditions: Thomas D. Andrews, Glen MacKay, Leon Andrew, Wendy Stephenson, Amy Barker, Claire Alix and the Shúhtagot’ine Elders of Tulita. 2012. “Alpine Ice Patches and Shúhtagot’ine Land Use in the Mackenzie and Selwyn Mountains, Northwest Territories, Canada.” *Arctic*. Vol 65, 1: 22-42.

⁷⁷ T’Seleie 2000.

⁷⁸ The Yellowknife station CKLB became one of the most well-known and proliferate sources of Indigenous language programming, and by 2009 could be heard in 30 different NWT communities. See GNWT. 2009. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2008-2009.

⁷⁹ GNWT. 2016. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2015-2016.

⁸⁰ Harnum 1998.

⁸¹ GNWT. 2010. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2009-2010 & GNWT. 2013. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2012-2013.

⁸² GNWT. 2015. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2014-2015.

⁸³ GNWT. 2009. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2008-2009.

⁸⁴ GNWT. 2009. *Annual Report on Official Languages* 2008-2009: 35.

⁸⁵ *Naxe Godí T’á Léots’ede, Sharing our Stories: A collection of stories and photographs of objects from the Sahtú region*. Developed 2013, January 2014 by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC)

⁸⁶ www.languagegeek.com; denefont.com.

⁸⁷ App: Shutaot’ine Intro. Version 1.1 December 15, 2017. Yamózhá Kúé Society, Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and the Sahtú Divisional Education Council.

⁸⁸ www.isuma.tv/en/ncsnwt

⁸⁹ “All people in all communities of the Northwest Territories share the responsibility of Indigenous language revitalization through active promotion, preservation, celebration, and use of Indigenous Languages. In partnership with the language communities, the Aboriginal Languages and Learning Secretariat plays a leadership role in achieving this vision.” (From “Story” in “About” section, NWT Indigenous Languages Facebook Page www.facebook.com/groups/592262134238848/ accessed 15.08.2017)

⁹⁰ Such as the “Radǰǰh Kóé xədə” Facebook group, www.facebook.com/groups/1380115562213876/, or Sahtú Gotǰh’ádín - Wildlife of the Sahtú Region (www.facebook.com/SahtuWildlife). These pages are often not dedicated strictly to language revitalization, but participants and commenters use Dene Kədə casually and in conversation, some of the time. The Délǰne Got’ǰne Government facebook page occasionally posts Sahtúot’ǰne Words of the Day, for example: “Hǰdúhdzene Sahtúot’ǰne kedé (Sahtúotǰine Word of the Day)--Whiskeyjack Point - ǰǰhk’ae bé, Pronounced: ǰoh-kai bay.”

⁹¹ T’Seleie 2000.

⁹² Example of *local advocacy impacting NWT: 1993, Dept. of Renewable Resources commissioned local translations of wildlife research and management terms in North Slavey, and Elders recommended they address each dialect separately. North Slavey Terminology and Concepts Related to Renewable Resources: An Interim Report, Tǰch’ádi Hek’éyedits’ádi gha Xədə Hé Goghǰ Dáts’eniwe Ghǰ ǰedátl’e*. 1994.

⁹³ NWT Literacy Council 2002.

⁹⁴ See for example, *Rakekéé Gok’é Godí: Places We Take Care Of*. 2000. Prepared by the Sahtú Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group. John T’Seleie, Isadore Yukon, Bella T’Seleie, Ellen Lee, Tom Andrews.

⁹⁵ Bayha, Denise, Walter Bayha, Irene Betsidea, Ken Caine, Dennis Kenny, Edith Mackeinzo, Deborah Simmons, and Marlene Tutcho. 2004. “The Délǰne Knowledge Centre: From vision to Reality.” *Pimatziwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*. 1 (2): 163-172.

⁹⁶ McGregor, Deborah, Water Bayha, and Deborah Simmons. 2010. "Our Responsibility to Keep the Land Alive: Voices of Northern Indigenous Researchers." *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*. 8 (1) pp. 101-123

⁹⁷ A series of monthly supplements to the Norman Wells-based *Mackenzie Valley Viewer* newspaper published during 1999-2001.

⁹⁸ GNWT. 2013. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2012-2013*. P. 24

⁹⁹ GNWT. 2015. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2014-2015*.

¹⁰⁰ GNWT. 2014. *Annual Report on Official Languages 2013-2014*.

¹⁰¹ Brown, B.W., 1998, 2000. *Arctic Journal* (2 vol). Northstone Publishing.

¹⁰² Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2005.

¹⁰³ Harnum et al 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication François Rossouw.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.handsonmediaeducation.com/>

¹⁰⁶ See, for example: Redvers, Jennifer. 2016. *Land-based Practice for Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut*. Master's Thesis, University of Calgary; Gordon, Sarah. 2014. *Cultural Vitality as Social Strength in Délı̄nę, Northwest Territories, Canada*. Doctoral Thesis, Indiana University.

¹⁰⁷ www.facebook.com/sahtuwildlife