

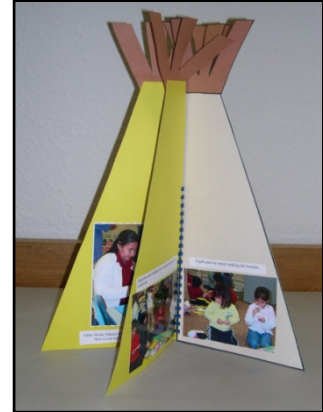
Tips for Building Aboriginal Language Skills in Childcare and Language Programs

To really take root, children and families need to hear and use their language not just at home. They need to hear and use their language at school, at the daycare and at other community events. Here are some ideas for including language in your early childhood program or language program.

- Include traditional activities like storytelling, drum dancing, games and singing in your program. These are good ways for children to learn culture and language.
- Make learning fun. Use humour. Don't discourage children who are learning new skills.
- Have several fluent speakers who can talk to each other. This lets children 'see' and hear the language working and the rules around language.
- Use different activities in your program. Some children need to write things down to learn, while others need to hear. Other children need to do something physical, like drawing, to learn.
- Model what you want children to learn. Let them watch until they feel comfortable trying by themselves.
- Take children out of your usual space into another context, such as a tipi in the yard for storytelling. This makes it more real.
- Find out what the children in your program like to do. They learn better when they are doing things they like.
- Try and use complete sentences – not just words.



- Create resources in your language and use them in your program. You can create books, storybooks, dolls, activities and games in your own language. Have parents or learners in your community help you make these resources. They will be proud of their accomplishments and more likely to use them with their family.
- Have Elders come to your program to share stories, language and culture.
- Incorporate traditional skills into your program like tool making, sewing, cooking, dog sledding and hide tanning. Have Elders come and teach the skill in your Aboriginal language. ¹



Ulukhaktok has a traditional skills program each week. Elders teach children, youth and families traditional skills like sewing fur mitts, tanning hides, tool making and survival skills. This program has been very successful with lots of participation from the community.



Photo from Ulukhaktok, courtesy of Jeri Miltenberger, Fort Smith

¹ Adapted from materials prepared through the GNWT's Early Childhood Development Framework for Action by Harnum & Associates