

Building Aboriginal Language Skills at Home

Tips for Parents

Children learn a language by living the language. Living the language means using it in everyday life. Children need to hear their language and need to see adults using the language in real communication.

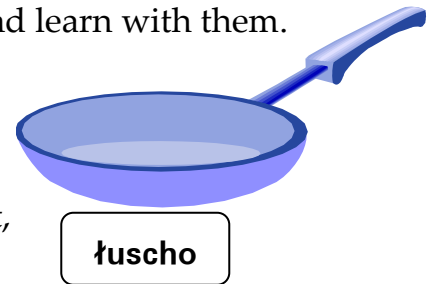
By using your language you are passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. Values, beliefs and social customs get passed on through oral traditions and through speaking your language.

Here are some tips for passing on your language:

- Speak your language at home—every little bit helps! Even if you aren't fluent, use what you do know.
- Speak to your young babies in your Aboriginal language. Start speaking to them while they are in the womb. Sing traditional songs in your language.
- Ask people who are fluent in the language to visit your family. Ask your parents or grandparents to speak the language to your children.
- Have an Aboriginal language only night each week. Turn off the TV, computer, Wii, Xbox etc. Invite friends and family to participate. Make dinner and play games or tell stories for the evening.



- Use your language with your children for everyday life. Use your language when you are sewing, washing dishes, stacking wood, shopping, playing or giving instructions.
- Tell stories to your children about the old days or teach them legends. Or tell them about how they were born and what they were like as a baby. You can also make up stories and tell them to your children.
- If you can, bring home books, tapes and other materials in your Aboriginal language. You can also make simple number books or word books in your Aboriginal language.
- Teach your child one new word a day in your language. Practice the word over and over again.
- Help your children with their language homework and learn with them.
- Write labels in your language and put them on things in your home. Have your child read the labels each night before he or she goes to bed. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat!
- Bring your children shopping with you. Tell them what you want in your language and ask them to get it.
- Go on the land with your family. You'll have lots to talk about: planning, and being on the land.¹



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