

## **Master Apprenticeship Program**

Jurisdiction: Yukon

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Level: K - 12

Theme: Community Based Practices,  
Culture and Language

### Description of Practice:

The Master-Apprenticeship Program (MAP) is designed to provide independent, motivated students with the opportunity to pursue structured study of an Aboriginal language. This program has open admission to those interested in learning to speak their YFN language and is a step towards developing a critical mass of young fluent speakers to transmit the language in Yukon public schools, in communities or at home. Currently there are 16 students (accompanied by 16 fluent speakers) enrolled in their first course.

### Background:

The program is modelled after Leanne Hinton's Master-Apprentice program, and is the result of a partnership between the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Department of Education's First Nation Programs & Partnerships unit and the First Nation communities that are participating in the training. The program consists of a number of courses that will lead the apprentice towards using and understanding their ancestral language. The students commit to an intensive one week orientation followed up by 10 hours of structured immersion per week for 10 weeks with their mentor and is wrapped up with an oral evaluation that involves the scrutiny of the UAF professor and the fluent First Nation Mentor. The MAP consists of a number of courses delivered over two to three years.

How is the practice integrated with ongoing non-aboriginal programming?

The master-apprentice program is open to First Nation and non-First Nation alike. The only requirement is for the student to secure funding for their course, which includes the cost of honoraria for the mentor and to be committed to spending 10 hours of structured language time with their mentor.

### Development:

All 14 Yukon First Nations communities have expressed the aspiration of offering immersion schooling in their traditional language. Currently, all 8 of Yukon First Nation languages are in a critical state as most fluent speakers are elderly and the sheer number of speakers is very low – in two languages only a handful remains. Most Aboriginal language teachers are nearing retirement and there is great urgency to prepare a critical mass of Aboriginal teachers that are fluent in their language to replace those nearing retirement.

This course was developed as part of a larger Yukon-wide effort to focus on those that are committed to learning a First Nation language. A critical mass of younger speakers is essential to offering full immersion schooling and is seen a step towards such a goal.

### Evidence:

This program is relatively new and as such, has not been formally evaluated. Anecdotal evidence from participants suggests that it is a successful and much-needed program.

### Adaptability:

Suggestions for adapting the practice in other jurisdictions: Ensure that funding is in place for all participants prior to start-up. Develop strong relationships with agencies or organizations that are responsible for language program funding. A partnership from the beginning is best.

Key lessons learned: Advertisement is key to recruiting participants. Language mentors would benefit from a workshop that focused on practising key teaching methods in immersion teaching situations. It is important that language mentors be recognized for being a mentor – perhaps a certificate indicating this would be most appropriate.

Cautions for interested jurisdictions: It is imperative that participants understand that there is a “required” commitment of 10 hours per week of structured language study with a mentor. The oral evaluations results in a pass or fail and is based on the accumulation of language goals being achieved on a weekly basis over a 10 week period.

### Further information:

See the following site for information on Leanne Hinton’s master-apprentice model and other language revitalization programs at: <http://www2.nau.edu/~jar/Methods.html>

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