

CHAPTER 4

WHAT IT MEANS
TO MAINTAIN AND
BRING BACK
INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES



WHAT IT MEANS TO MAINTAIN AND BRING BACK INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

KEY FINDINGS:



- Maintenance, revitalisation, renewal and reawakening activities are vitally important to support the continuation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
- Even traditional languages currently considered relatively strong require purposeful and ongoing maintenance actions, so they do not become critically endangered.
- The AIATSIS 2018–19 Survey finds that there are at least 31 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language varieties being reawakened by communities in Australia.¹⁹⁵

PART 1: MAINTAINING A STRONG LANGUAGE

In this Report, references to ‘maintaining a language’ refer to strong traditional languages, which are spoken ordinarily by all generations as fluent speakers, within families and in the community. The chain of language transmission from parent to child is unbroken. This intergenerational language transmission is ongoing in the case of strong languages.

This section does not include discussion on the maintenance of new languages as this is a complex subject and goes beyond the data collected for this Report. The benefits of using mother tongue languages (both traditional and new) in service delivery and education are discussed in Chapters 2 and 5.

Ideally, communities make the decisions about the future of their languages and determine the actions and practices appropriate to use and preserve them. In this context, maintaining a language is about the sum total of speakers’ decisions (influenced by the opportunities available to them) – moment to moment and day to day – about speaking their language. Members of a speech community can be supported in maintaining language by ensuring they can use their language as often as possible, in as many facets of life as possible. The more restricted speakers’ use of a traditional language becomes, the harder it is to maintain it as a strong language.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

A language is being maintained when intergenerational transmission of that language is taking place:

Within families

Across the generations, parents speak this language as a first language and use it with their children who respond to them in kind.

In the community

The everyday language spoken in the community is this language, so children hear it and use it, and continue acquiring it.

KEEPING TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES STRONG

Maintaining a language requires using that language. For languages with a smaller number of speakers, which in 2019 includes even the strongest traditional languages with the largest numbers of speakers,¹⁹⁶ this can be a difficult proposition in the face of the dominant national and international language, English, and in some areas competing with a vibrant new Indigenous language as well.

Everyday speakers of a traditional language can feel pressure to switch to English (or perhaps a new language) in order to carry out some part of life.¹⁹⁷ While multilingualism is of itself beneficial, opportunities for speaking small, minority languages are easily swamped by the need to speak dominant languages if intentional actions to support them are not taken. For example, government services can employ speakers of the same languages as are spoken in the community, including in schools, clinics, social services and police stations. Speakers can be given time and encouragement to develop common ways of using language to discuss new initiatives so as to better inform the community and service providers.

Language maintenance is influenced by a variety of factors. Other languages, commonly English, are dominant in broader communication needs and commerce situations. In addition, traditional languages are facing rapid and potentially radical change, and different generations may hold different attitudes to speaking traditional languages.¹⁹⁸

Rapid change in a language may require a re-think about which variety is used in some settings. The language of older people might be considered the proper and aspirational version that young people will have to work hard at learning. The language that younger people speak could be the variety that would enhance children's classroom learning experiences because it is what they fully understand. In NILS3, this was reflected where two responses were received for what may be considered two varieties of the same language; one spoken by the older generations (Manyjilyjarra) which is described as in decline; and one spoken by the younger generations (Martu Wangka) which is described as on the rise in terms of number of speakers. Several other respondents described similar situations for other languages.¹⁹⁹

To maintain strong traditional languages is to prevent these languages from further decline, and in the process find ways to further strengthen them by ensuring more opportunities for all generations to continue speaking the language.

"You mob gotta help us ...those songlines they been all broken up now ...you can help us put them all back together again"

When presenting major survey exhibitions, curators generally develop a concept, then consult from time to time with the artists and other stakeholders. *Songlines: Tracking The Seven Sisters* (National Museum of Australia, 2017) was different. Art historian Vivien Johnson describes the exhibition as a tour de force that: "...began when Anangu elder Mr David Miller, from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, asked a roomful of Canberra academics and museum personnel to help his people put their broken songlines back together again."²⁰⁰

In response, curators Margo Neal, Sita McAlpine and Christiane Keller asked: "...how do you bring back the ancient living breathing songline into a museum space, and how do you also realise this Anangu plea to preserve ancient songlines?"²⁰¹

The Seven Sisters exhibition was monumental, tracking the journeys of ancestor beings across three deserts and six language groups spanning Martu Country, the APY Lands and Ngaanyatjarra (NG) Lands of Australia's Central and Western deserts. Over seven years, senior custodians collaborated with the National Museum of Australia and the Australian National University to tell the epic story, associated with the Pleiades star cluster, that includes a chase across vast tracts of the country, a complex mix of courtship and harassment, a moral tale on kinship and law, and a creation story to explain how things came into being.

The story was told from the perspective of the people within the songline, using their languages and their ancient ways of passing on knowledge. Through full scale projections of custodians speaking in language, through art, dance, stories and song, the Seven Sisters songline has been recorded and 'put back together again' for future generations, and to share with all Australians and the world.

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

There are many maintenance initiatives that support the continuing vitality of languages.

The language community should be able to choose to use their first language in all aspects of community life, and there should also be support for learning English

to a high standard, so people can access all available economic and social benefits and opportunities. There are some specific activities that help create an environment that nurtures the ongoing use of speakers' first language in rich and varied interactions and hence foster community language maintenance. These are detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Initiatives supporting language maintenance

<p>Service delivery in language</p>	<p>In a language maintenance environment, the option of service delivery in people's first languages enables effective communication with service providers and improves access.²⁰²</p> <p>This is particularly vital for services for high stakes interactions, such as health and justice, in childcare and education settings for young children, and in aged care facilities.²⁰³</p> <p>This approach provides quality services and gives people access to services to which they have a right. Providing service delivery in people's first languages reinforces and supports the strength of traditional languages.</p>
<p>Creating situations where children continue to learn and use the language</p>	<p>Research since the 1970s has shown that mother-tongue medium instruction is an important precursor to successful second language literacy. Throughout the early years of education, lessons delivered through a child's first language, with a gradual, staged transition to English as a second language has been demonstrated to improve access to education, as well as English literacy.</p> <p>Using the children's first language as the medium of instruction has strong community and language maintenance benefits.²⁰⁴ It enriches the language through focus on the words and sentences needed to teach curriculum content. This includes adult speakers creating educational materials to deal effectively with new concepts, helping children enrich their first language by extending it into modern situations, and helping children deal more effectively with new (academic) concepts through the language they know best. This application extends Indigenous languages into all school curriculum situations. It lays the foundation for the entire speech community to develop shared terminology for contemporary issues, like severe weather events, health and nutrition decisions and civics issues.</p> <p>The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority provides the 'first language learner pathway' (i.e. mother tongue) in the school curriculum.²⁰⁵ In the classroom context, the students' mother tongue is fostered and maintained when they are able to use it for classroom learning. Their teachers, learning resources and curriculum delivery all do more than simply recognise the language.</p> <p>The Australian Government's <i>Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages</i> was developed as part of the <i>Australian Curriculum: Languages</i>. The Framework provides a way forward for schools in Australia to support the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages.</p>

<p>Creating situations where children continue to learn and use the language (cont'd)</p>	<p>The pressure to switch to speaking only English or a new language is reduced when there are teachers, resources, and a curriculum that all go beyond just recognising the student's first and main language,²⁰⁶ and actually use the language in the classroom for classroom learning.</p> <p>Using students' first language as the medium of instruction in schools benefits the community in that knowledge of their language becomes a desired attribute for teachers, and so speakers' roles as school teachers is more highly valued.</p>
<p>Documentation</p>	<p>While documentation on its own cannot maintain a language, the work of documenting a language can raise speakers' awareness of whether a language is being used by all generations and how it is being used,²⁰⁷ for example through sand-story telling or sign languages.</p> <p>Speakers have access to all kinds of useful and interesting language documentation. This safeguards knowledge for future generations, including documentation of on-Country knowledge and specialised concepts.</p> <p>Documentation enables the production of resources that can be used immediately, as well as providing information for the updating of resources and pedagogical materials, such as dictionaries for classroom purposes and health worker reference works.</p> <p>The development of literature includes the development of first language literature for all ages and the use of first language written, audio and visual materials, and phone apps for service delivery.</p> <p>Specific areas of community interest are purposefully developed using the mother tongue and disseminated through community education initiatives, for example emergency warnings.</p>
<p>Local recognition</p>	<p>Encouraging the use of traditional languages in the mass media such as in popular music, movies and television bolsters language maintenance, especially if that content becomes internationally popular.²⁰⁸ Many of Australia's famous media exports of Indigenous culture are in strong languages such as Yolŋu Matha and Western Desert. The music of Baker Boy, Yothu Yindi, Gurrumul and the Warumpi Band, movies such as <i>Ten Canoes</i> and TV shows like the <i>Bush Mechanics</i> series are examples.</p> <p>Local broadcasting delivered in local languages creates an ongoing vehicle for everyday language use. The importance of this was demonstrated in the 1980s and 1990s through the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme. From 2014, the ABC with the help of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the NT, began broadcasting an Indigenous language News Service in Warlpiri, Yolŋu Matha and Kriol.</p> <p>Encouraging incoming professionals coming to work and live in the community to learn the local language by making classes available promotes community pride and provides local employment opportunities.</p>



PART 2: BRINGING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES BACK

A RANGE OF SITUATIONS FOR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that are considered endangered or sleeping can be revived, renewed or reawakened. This process can vary depending on whether the language group is starting the journey with no fluent speakers, or with some. It has been demonstrated that it is possible to revive a language at either end of this continuum.²¹⁰

There are different categories used to describe where a language sits on the endangerment continuum, and what kinds of support activities are appropriate. In this Report the following terms are used:^{xvi}

Revitalisation: has a generation of older speakers left and children are likely to have a good passive knowledge of the language.

Renewal: there is still an oral tradition, but there are no fluent speakers, and children are likely to have little or no passive knowledge of the language.

Reawakening/Revival/Reclamation: there are no speakers or partial speakers and reliance is on historical sources to provide knowledge.

REVITALISATION

The results from the AIATSIS Survey indicate that there are around 78 traditional languages no longer being passed on to children but which still have a number of elderly speakers.²¹¹ The contexts of these languages are diverse, some having only one elderly speaker, some having hundreds, and many in-between. There are various strategies that can be used to strengthen these languages, depending on the precise situation. One strategy, the Language Nest, seeks to create a situation that re-starts intergenerational language transmission. This approach has seen a number of successes around the world.²¹² Another strategy is the Master-Apprentice approach, which brings together an adult learner to work intensively with a speaker in immersive situations and again, this strategy has seen some notable successes.²¹³

For some languages, such as Yawuru (spoken around Broome in Western Australia (WA)), the language had declined to a state where only a handful of older fluent speakers remained.²¹⁴ In recent years the community has

^{xvi} It should be noted that these terms may be used differently by other writers.



MYTH: ONCE A LANGUAGE IS GONE YOU CANNOT BRING IT BACK

Modern Hebrew, the national language of Israel, is a good example of a language being brought back. It stopped being spoken as an everyday language more than 1,500 years ago but remained as a language of religious use. After 1880, it was revived as a language of everyday talk in the country that became Israel. But naturally, because of great changes in the ways of living and technologies, Modern Hebrew is very different from the Hebrew of the Old Testament.²⁰⁹ Today many Aboriginal languages are being renewed and reawakened. Like Modern Hebrew, today's renewed languages follow from the ancestral languages but have been adapted to talk about modern life.

been actively working to bring Yawuru back into use. Adult learners have worked hard with Elders to once again make the language a part of daily lives, and now the community is working together in schools and with families for children to learn Yawuru. For these languages in revitalisation mode it may be possible to restore intergenerational transmission, for example through a Language Nest, as is happening with Miriwoong in the eastern Kimberley of WA.²¹⁵

Whatever the exact context, for languages in revitalisation mode it is possible to carry out detailed language documentation which can create an extremely valuable body of material that will be available for whatever approach is taken, or for some future time when it might be necessary to renew/reawaken the language.

RENEWAL AND REAWAKENING

Some traditional languages that went through a period of having no child speakers are now being renewed or reawakened. This means that after a break in intergenerational transmission, sometimes over many decades, people are working to learn and use the language, and teach it to their children. Each renewal and reawakening language situation is unique.

For languages, such as Kaurna (spoken around Adelaide in SA), the language was not spoken at all for nearly 60 years, when people began using historical sources to reawaken the language.

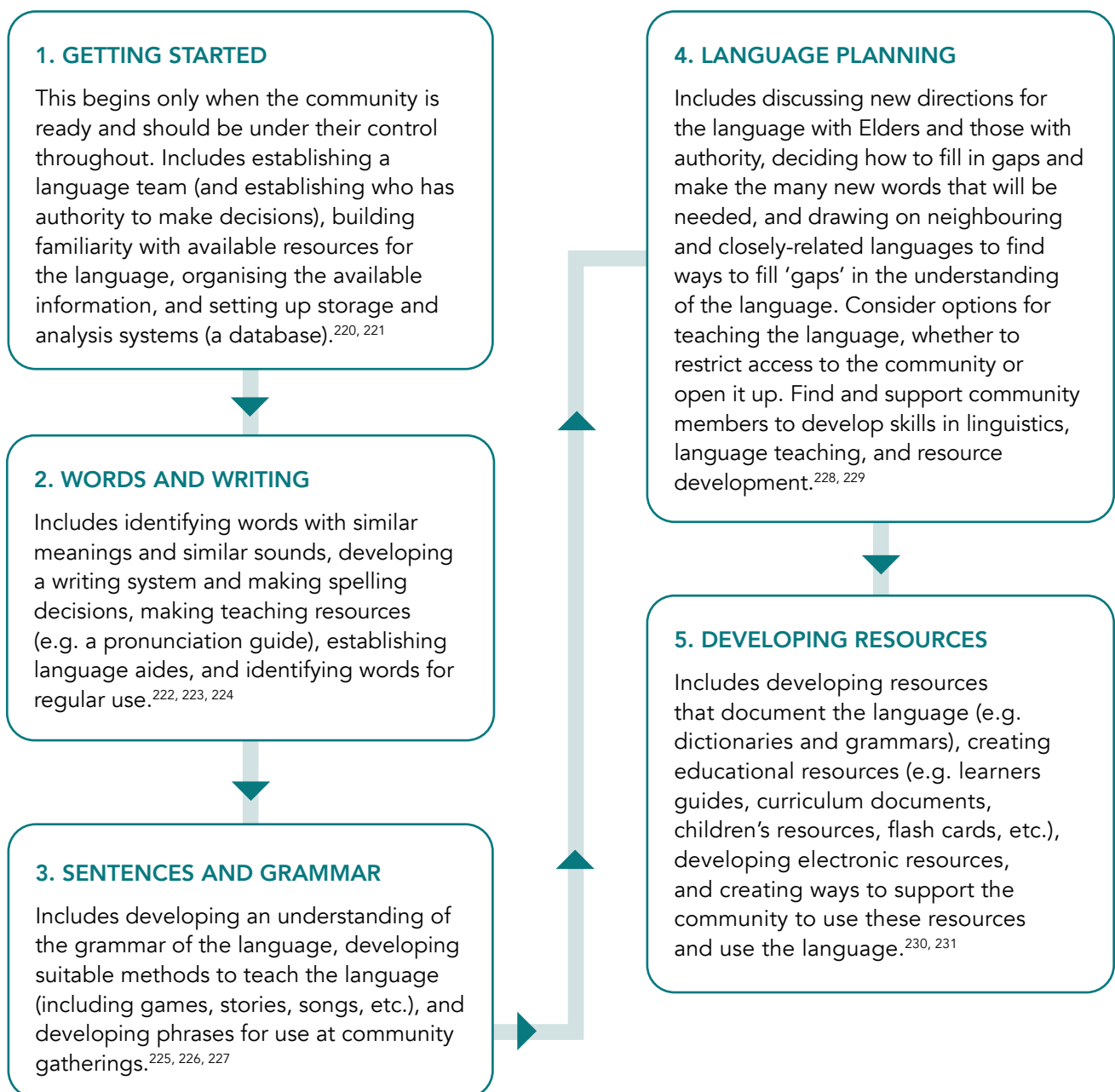
Some Kurna people have taken it upon themselves to learn, use and teach their language in their daily lives.²¹⁶

Another example of language renewal is Wiradjuri (spoken in NSW), where there are now TAFE NSW Certificate 1, 2 and 3 courses available, a Graduate Certificate delivered by Charles Sturt University, and schools in places such as Parkes, Wagga Wagga, Young and Narrandera are taking up Wiradjuri language education.²¹⁷

Reawakening a language refers to bringing a language back into use after a time when there was no inter-generational transmission and then no speakers (or at least, none available).

Drawing on the experiences of language reawakening work across Australia we can identify a broadly consistent pathway.^{218, 219} This language reawakening pathway is represented in Figure 4.2. While each step is represented discretely, in practice there is considerable intersection and overlap between each step in the pathway.

Figure 4.2: Steps to reawaken a language



xvii Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage

There are several requirements before this process can be undertaken.

The community must be ready to undertake the journey of language reawakening as this can involve dealing with memories, histories of trauma and other confronting matters that produced the need for this work.²³²

Reawakening a language is likely to be successful when language knowledge held by community members is able to be shared across the community.

There must be sufficient materials available to underpin the work of language reawakening. This work involves assembling all known materials, including knowledge held in the community. While it is likely to be useful to work with a trained linguist in this process, it is crucial that community members have the lead role both in guiding the work and in learning with the linguist.²³³

Historical materials were likely to have been collected by individuals with little or no knowledge of a language or awareness of effective writing systems or grammatical structure. For this reason, these materials may not provide an accurate representation of the language and need to be carefully analysed to work out what the language was like (i.e. asking the question “what did the recorder hear that led them to write this down in this way?”).²³⁴

This work supports the writing of a ‘grammar’, a document laying out a technical description of the language. It is essential to write this as clearly as possible.²³⁵ While few will be able to read this, it is necessary as it provides a detailed analysis of the language and lays out aspects such as the sound system. The linguist may be able to draw on descriptions of related languages to improve the analysis or at least to make educated guesses to fill the gaps. The grammar provides the information needed to produce the full range of materials to support language learning, whether by children or adults.²³⁶

As the above work is progressing, the community can be working to develop a better understanding of technical issues, such as the development of a suitable system for writing the language. This involves discussion of the likely sound system of the language and consideration of different potential ways of writing the language. The community should be provided the opportunity to develop an understanding of the relevant technical issues to inform their decision making on the writing system.²³⁷

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES COMING BACK

2018–19 AIATSIS Survey

It is difficult to distinguish from the survey results whether a language is in renewal or reawakening mode, but the NILS3 results presented in Table 4.3 show that there are at least 31 languages that have not been used for some time, but now have new speakers. That is, they are being reawakened.²³⁸ This is an increase from the results in NILS2 of 2014.²³⁹

2016 ABS Census

The 2016 ABS Census only gives indirect information about language revitalisation, reawakening and renewal, because the question does not distinguish between languages spoken as the main means of everyday communication, and languages that are being learned. However, from previous surveys and research it is possible to identify some languages with self-reported speakers as reawakened or renewed languages.²⁴⁰ The number of self-reported speakers, who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, for the top 10 Indigenous languages being renewed are set out in Table 4.4.²⁴¹

Table 4.3: NILS3 question 2: Which description best fits the current state of this language?

Degree of Vitality	Description	Count
STRONG/SAFE	The language is used by all age groups, including all children. People in all age groups are fluent speakers	14
UNSAFE	The language is used by many age groups, but not all children are fluent speakers.	8
DEFINITELY ENDANGERED	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and older. Only people in the parental generation and older are fluent speakers.	13
SEVERELY ENDANGERED	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and older. Only people in the grandparental generation and older may still understand the language.	43
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	The language is used mostly by the great-grandparental generation and older. Only people in the great-grandparental generation and older may remember some of the language and may not use it very often.	14
REVIVING/REVITALISING/ REAWAKENING	The language has not been used as an everyday language for some time, but some people are now learning and speaking the language.	31
NO LONGER SPOKEN [SLEEPING]	There is no one who can speak or remember the language.	16
N/A	Don't know	2
Total number of language varieties reported		141^{xviii}

^{xviii} These numbers include two creoles – Kriol and Yumplatok

Table 4.4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speaker numbers for top 10 languages being renewed

Language	State/Territory	Category	Number of child speakers (0–14)	Total number of speakers
Nyungar	Western Australia	Renewal	130	446
Wiradjuri	New South Wales	Renewal	126	436
Ngarrindjeri	South Australia	Renewal	102	301
Bandjalang	New South Wales	Renewal	23	105
Gamilaraay	New South Wales	Renewal	34	94
Gumbaynggir	New South Wales	Renewal	23	78
Yawuru	Western Australia	Revitalisation	18	57
Yorta Yorta	Victoria/ New South Wales	Reawakening	13	51
Kurna	South Australia	Reawakening	16	44
Paakantyi	New South Wales/ South Australia	Renewal	12	40

The fact that people report themselves as speaking these languages in the Census shows how much traditional languages are part of their identity, and how important the reawakening and renewing activities are.

Many people engaged in reawakening their languages identify with languages that are not explicitly listed in the ASCL.²⁴²

Ngiyampaa, a language of Western New South Wales

Ngiyampaa is not a separate language category in the ASCL,²⁴³ but in 2018, Lesley Woods, a Ngiyampaa woman, set up a Facebook page for Ngiyampaa people to share ideas about reviving the language. As of December 2019, it had nearly 300 members. The many things the community wants to do give a good idea about what is needed to begin reviving a language:

- Transcribing all the audio recordings made in the past
- Gleaning language information from historical written materials and standardising the spellings into the modern spelling system
- Developing a comprehensive dictionary
- Developing an online language teaching course (because many Ngiyampaa people live in different parts of the country)
- Developing language teaching apps.

SUPPORTING WORK TO BRING LANGUAGES BACK

Table 4.5: Initiatives supporting work to bring languages back

<p>Education programs and training</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are in a strong position to engage children and adults in language learning,²⁴⁴ which is necessary for language revitalisation and renewal, and should be part of the planning for reawakening a language.</p> <p>Language renewal and reawakening also offers opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language workers to document the language, discover materials about the language and create new teaching materials.</p> <p>This work requires training, as language teaching and language work are specialised areas. Many AIATSIS Survey respondents called for more training opportunities to support this work.²⁴⁵</p> <p>Of the 78 responses on this issue, 41 per cent said there were no training opportunities at all, 23 per cent said there were very few (or almost no) opportunities, and 31 per cent said there were few (or limited) opportunities. Just 5 per cent suggested the quantity of training opportunities was not limited to a small number.²⁴⁶ This was a qualitative question in the AIATSIS Survey, so responses should not be taken as representative.</p> <div data-bbox="464 1021 1449 1317" style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #c8e6c9;"> <p><i>Kuku Yalanji language renewal program</i></p> <p>Kuku Yalanji people worked together with Mossman State School and a qualified Kuku Yalanji teacher to introduce a language renewal program in 2017, starting with themes of self, family and place. After 18 months, the program was deemed a success. There was increased use of, and pride in, the language, increased community engagement with the school, better attendance, and far fewer instances of destructive vandalism.²⁴⁷</p> </div>
<p>Language resources</p>	<p>Through the AIATSIS Survey respondents provided a wide range of information about how members of various language groups were involved in the production, access and use of their language resources. Most responses demonstrated at least some involvement of community members in the production of language resources and in a number of instances showed active leadership by community. These resources include, but are not limited to, grammars, dictionaries, dictionary databases and texts.²⁴⁸</p> <p>AIATSIS is currently supporting the production of over 15 dictionaries, a number of which are listed on the AIATSIS website.²⁴⁹ In every case, community members are central participants in the work of creating the dictionaries and are very keen to see them published. These materials are key parts of the language support 'infrastructure' and are of use across the full spectrum of language endangerment contexts.</p> <p>The academic nature of some resources produced by people outside the community can limit their usefulness to community members.²⁵⁰ The comment on resources provided by respondents to the AIATSIS Survey indicates that involving community in producing language resources, and giving them access is crucial, but so too is ensuring that these resources are able to be actively used, to meet community language aspirations.</p>



<p>Language resources (cont.)</p>	<p>Accessibility of material is provided through a variety of means, including direct distribution, storage at a language centre or similar place, and online access. Accessibility can be hampered by limited internet access and loss of materials in community keeping places.</p>
<p>Archives and libraries</p>	<p>Archives and libraries are safe places that in many cases hold significant repositories of resource material about languages.²⁵¹ These are not always easily found but many collecting institutions have in recent years undertaken specific activities to rediscover what language materials are in their collections. For example:²⁵²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The National Library of Australia Trove database is now using the AIATSIS AUSTLANG language coding. ▪ The National Archives of Australia has presented ‘Introduction to Archives’ sessions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and communities, to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection items to assist communities in connecting to memory and culture. ▪ The Alice Springs Public Library has a local languages collection of early eader texts and books for adults available in up to 14 different Central Australian languages. ▪ The State Library of Queensland’s Indigenous Languages Project supports the revival of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Since 2006, the project has supported 105 languages and dialects. One example has been the Yuwibara language of the Mackay Region which was considered to be sleeping. Since 2015, the State Library, in partnership with Mackay Regional Libraries, has assisted Mackay communities to rebuild their language from historical sources. The outcome will be a community dictionary and language app with over 1,000 words from Yuwibara and neighbouring languages.²⁵³ ▪ The Better Beginnings family literacy program from the State Library of Western Australia²⁵⁴ encourages and supports parents to be their child’s first teacher, talking, singing, reading, writing and playing with their child every day to develop literacy and language skills from birth. The program reaches 95 per cent of families across WA with newborn babies, and 99 per cent of all kindergarten students. ▪ Since 2010, Better Beginnings has been working with early childhood practitioners, parents, health nurses, teachers and Aboriginal Medical Services in 130 remote Aboriginal communities to bring early literacy opportunities to children up to the age of five. Read to me, I love it! reading packs have been specially developed to support the requirements of children living in remote communities. In 2019–2023, Better Beginnings will build on this approach to include a focus on developing resources in Aboriginal languages to improve engagement in literacy and learning.

Archives and libraries (cont.)

Paper and Talk: the Australian Breath of Life Pilot

The 2019 Paper and Talk project was run by AIATSIS and Living Languages, and is based on the US Breath of Life Institute. Both programs, although on opposite sides of the world, have connected the custodians of Indigenous languages with materials about those languages held in national archives, while training them in linguistic analysis and other skills needed to interpret, use and apply the materials they find.

Paper and Talk participants learned practical skills in linguistics and exploring archives, so they could develop language resources to assist in strengthening or revitalising their languages. The participants left the workshop with new materials and information about their languages, new linguistic and research skills to share with their communities, and ideas for language projects.²⁵⁵

"We discovered amazing words that we thought were long lost to us. That my grandfather had used and my grandmother. It was an exhilarating two weeks and I felt like I was on a rollercoaster ride, and we found what would have been at least a couple hundred words." Caroline Hughes, Ngunnawal participant²⁵⁶

Revival through business / income opportunities

Language revival offers opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage in translation and interpreting, broadcasting, liaison positions, ranger programs and more.

In addition to employment opportunities, such as language tour guides, translators and interpreters, language-based tourism also provides a vehicle for communities to carry out language revival activities. This can be seen in a qualitative study based in Canada which carried out visitor interviews about language, with a focus on cultural rather than economic benefits of tourism:²⁵⁷

In contrast to conventional approaches wherein Indigenous tourism, merely by its existence, is purported to be a tool for revitalization, language-based tourism programming is re-positioned as a strategic and intentional method in which the tourist becomes an active participant – contributing directly to the goals of language revitalization.

An earlier study in Canada also explored how Indigenous languages operate within tourism settings, and found that in these language revival contexts, the Haida had developed tourism initiatives that were economically, culturally, and environmentally sustainable.²⁵⁸

Engaging the broader community

The NILS3 survey found that in locations where languages are being reawakened, respondents reported wide non-Indigenous public exposure to the Indigenous language in forms such as place names, signage, and organisation names.²⁵⁹ They also reported on constant and increasing requests from the public and institutions for names, translations, Welcome to Country speeches, cultural performances and the like.



This chapter has outlined the extensive work involved in maintaining, revitalising or reawakening languages. This work is drawn on by organisations involved in designing and delivering programs and services, which is explored further in the next chapter.