



GWICH'IN MENTOR – APPRENTICE PROGRAM APPLICATION GUIDELINES

1. Introduction

The Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) is pleased to announce the opening of our Gwich'in Mentor-Apprentice Program. The program will support language speakers and language learners dedicated to passing on our Gwich'in language. The Mentor-Apprentice Method of learning has proven to be effective in increasing the number of speakers of Indigenous languages.

During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the Gwich'in Tribal Council supported a Mentor-Apprentice Program Pilot Project. Its goal was for Mentors and Apprentices to plan, schedule and complete 100 hours of Gwich'in language immersion time together. The successful teams were clear in their language learning objectives and committed to meeting their goals. Due to the success of the pilot, the GTC is happy to provide this program in a fuller form. Below are stated the program guidelines as stated in Master-Apprentice Program Description.

2. Master- Apprenticeship Program Description

A Master-Apprentice Program supports one-on-one teams, pairing fluent language speakers with language learners. In the program, a “Mentor” (a fluent speaker of Gwich'in) is paired with an “Apprentice” (learner). The mentor and the apprentice spend 300 hours per year together doing everyday activities using the Gwich'in language, creating an intensive, immersive language learning environment. Two aspects of this method have significant healing effects: learners re-engage with their traditional language and world view; and mentors, who often have few opportunities to speak Gwich'in, have an opportunity to refresh their language. The method is similar to the way we learned language as babies, by being totally immersed in it, listening to the language spoken around us as our families and friends went about their daily activities. The Master-Apprentice Program supports the use of the Gwich'in language and supports community-wide efforts to ensure that the Gwich'in language not only survives but thrives.

3. Program Goal and Objectives

The goal and focus of the Mentor-Apprentice Program is to have apprentices increase their fluency in understanding and speaking Gwich'in. Though reading and writing are valuable skills, an apprentice must be able to speak and understand to become fluent.

Program objectives are:

- To increase the number of speakers of both dialects: Gwichyà Gwich'in and Teetl'it Gwich'in;
- To support Gwich'in language revitalization and preservation;
- To support Gwich'in language education of all types in becoming more immersive;
- To engage the community, from youth to Elders, in language preservation, and revitalization initiatives;



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- To increase the awareness and acceptance of the Gwich'in Language in the community;
- To strengthen the language skills of existing speakers and to increase the number of new speakers.

Why Preserve and Revitalize the Gwich'in Language?

- Learning more than one language increases intelligence and memory, and improves academic success;
- Being able to speak Gwich'in will improve job prospects;
- To increase community interest in learning and reclaiming our heritage;
- To reclaim the knowledge, values and world view imbued in the language of our Elders and ancestors;
- For our communities to retain access to knowledge of the land, stars, foods, medicines, oral histories, stories, and traditional practices so we can be better stewards of our territories;
- Language is a big part of self determination; knowing who we are and where we came from will give us tools to build our future. With it we will be stronger.

4. Things to consider before you begin

Learning a new language or improving the language skills you already have is hard work.

The most successful teams are committed and don't give up. To keep motivated, it helps to be learning things that are interesting, fun, inspiring and useful in your daily life.

It also helps to have clearly defined long-term goals and clear short-term goals that bring you closer to your long-term goals.

Take a moment to think about responses to the questions below.

- You will be more engaged and you will remember what you've learned if it interests you. What interests you?
- What are your goals for the language? Do you want to share it in your home, place of work or ceremonial setting? Do you want to be able to teach children, chat with friends, or listen to Elders?
- Consider your level of fluency or understanding of the language (perhaps you are just beginning, that's alright too). How much language do you understand? How much can you say? Where would you like to be in one year?
- Everyone has different learning styles. How do you learn best? By listening? By watching? By engaging with the world through doing, trying, tasting and touching? The best practice is likely a combination of all of these. (It's very important to remember that this program is different from studying grammar or vocabulary. You should avoid writing things down. The focus of this program is conversation.)



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- Focus on one subject at a time. For example, if you work or live with children you might want to learn language around childcare, songs, games, or stories to tell them. If you fix, build or create things, you might learn language around working with tools. If you are interested in traditional knowledge, such as harvesting and preparing plants and animals, then you could focus on that. Your interests should be negotiated with your Mentor to make sure you are a good match. Perhaps your mentor has more ideas of topics and activities you could explore together that could bring out that language.
- The easiest way to learn and remember new things is to build on what you already know. Consider what language you already know and what skills you already have. These are great areas to explore and build upon.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Language is for communication. In order to better remember and understand what we learn we need to practice. Practice means to try, to fail, and try again. Over time we gain strength, confidence and fluency. You must be prepared to step beyond your comfort zone. Mentors can be very helpful by encouraging us with patience, kindness and laughter. You will develop a relationship built on trust and mutual respect.

5. Choosing the Mentor and Apprentice:

A. A Mentor should be:

- A fluent Gwich'in speaker;
- Deeply committed to teaching the Gwich'in language;
- Patient and understanding of the language learning process;
- Willing to spend a lot of time with the apprentice speaking only Gwich'in;
- Able to create a positive space for the language to grow;
- Open to learning and using different techniques to pass on the language to the apprentice.

B. An Apprentice should be:

- A Gwich'in Participant (Beginning or semi-speaker)
- Deeply committed to learning the Gwich'in language;
- Patient and understanding;
- Willing to spend a lot of time with his/her Mentor speaking only Gwich'in;
- Responsible for guiding the language learning process by preparing things to discuss in upcoming sessions, and reviewing what's already been learned;
- Willing to take risks and overcome fears of making mistakes in the language;
- Interested in and committed to passing on what he/she learns to others.



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C. Participant Eligibility Criteria

- There are no grade or language-skill requirements for the Gwich'in Mentor-Apprentice Program; however, participants must meet all of the above criteria for the entire duration of the program. Gwich'in participants who meet these criteria and submit their supporting documents will be considered for acceptance into the program.

Note: Apprentices must be at least 19 years of age on the first day of the program.

6. Application Process

Each potential Mentor and Apprentice team shall complete the following:

Part 1: Application Form

Complete all the sections in the application form.

Part 2: Letters

Each **Apprentice** is required to submit a letter. In the letter, please address the following:

- Which Gwich'in dialect do you wish to learn?
- Describe your desire to build your Gwich'in language fluency (i.e. what subjects are you particularly interested in learning about), and how will it enhance your Gwich'in identity.
- Are you open to learning and using different techniques to help you learn the Gwich'in language?
- Demonstrate your commitment to the preservation and revitalization of the Gwich'in language. i.e. How will you share what you have learned with your family and community?
- Demonstrate your commitment to the completion of a successful Mentor-Apprentice Program in the Gwich'in language.
- Explain why your Mentor-Apprentice Team will be able to work well together to over the course of the program.

Each **Mentor** is required to submit a letter. In the letter, please address the following:

- Are you a fluent speaker of the Gwich'in language? Which dialect do you speak?
- Is there a subject in which you have special knowledge or experience that will be helpful to your Apprentice?
- Explain your commitment to passing the language on in your community;



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- Are you patient and willing to spend a lot of time with the Apprentice, speaking only the Gwich'in language;
- Explain your understanding of the Mentor-Apprentice approach to language learning;
- How will you create a safe and positive space for the learner to practice their growing language skills?
- Are you open to learning and using different techniques to pass on the Gwich'in language to the Apprentice?
- Describe your commitment to the completion of a successful Mentor-Apprentice Program.
- Explain why your Mentor-Apprentice Team will be able to work well together over the course of the program.

7. Proposal Assessment Criteria

The following criteria will be used to assess eligibility of proposals. **Successful assessment against these criteria does not guarantee funding.**

- All required proposal elements are submitted and correctly completed;
- Both the Mentor and Apprentice display their awareness of the Mentor Apprentice learning method;
- Both the Mentor and the Apprentice express their commitment to successful completion of the program and a passion for Gwich'in Language Revitalization;
- The proposal supports the program objective to increase the Apprentice's fluency in speaking and understanding the Gwich'in language?
- The proposal clearly lays out learning goals, a schedule that works for both the Mentor and the Apprentice, and a work plan that sets some goals and monthly activities for what the apprentice would like to learn?

Overall proposal quality and the confidence of the selection committee that the Master-Apprentice Teams will complete the work, will be the primary factors in making final decisions. Please note that GTC will strive to support both dialects of the Gwich'in language, Teetl'it Gwich'in and Gwichyà Gwich'in.

8. Stipend Criteria

The purpose of the stipend is to pay for the time the Mentor and Apprentice spend in an immersion setting. All other expenses are ineligible and will not be funded. The budget below explains how the stipends are to be expended. Besides these stipends, there are no other eligible expenses:

- a. Mentor Stipends (300 hours at \$25/hour)
- b. Apprentice Stipends (300 hours at \$20/per hour)



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Stipend payments will be disbursed by GTC on the last Friday of each month based on verified invoices submitted by both the mentor and the apprentice quoting the number of hours spent in an immersion setting during the month of billing.

9. Proposal Application

Who can apply: Gwich'in Participants over the age of nineteen years.

Application Method: Submission of Completed application and accompanying letters to

Gwich'in Tribal Council, Language Department,
P.O. Box 1509,
Inuvik, NT
X0E0T0

Late proposals will be reviewed on an ongoing basis

Each successful team will be notified of their acceptance to the program and will be eligible to receive the prescribed stipend to support time spent in an immersion setting.

Thank you for your interest in the program and good luck!