

Assessment tool research report

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ASSESSMENT TOOL

RESEARCH REPORT

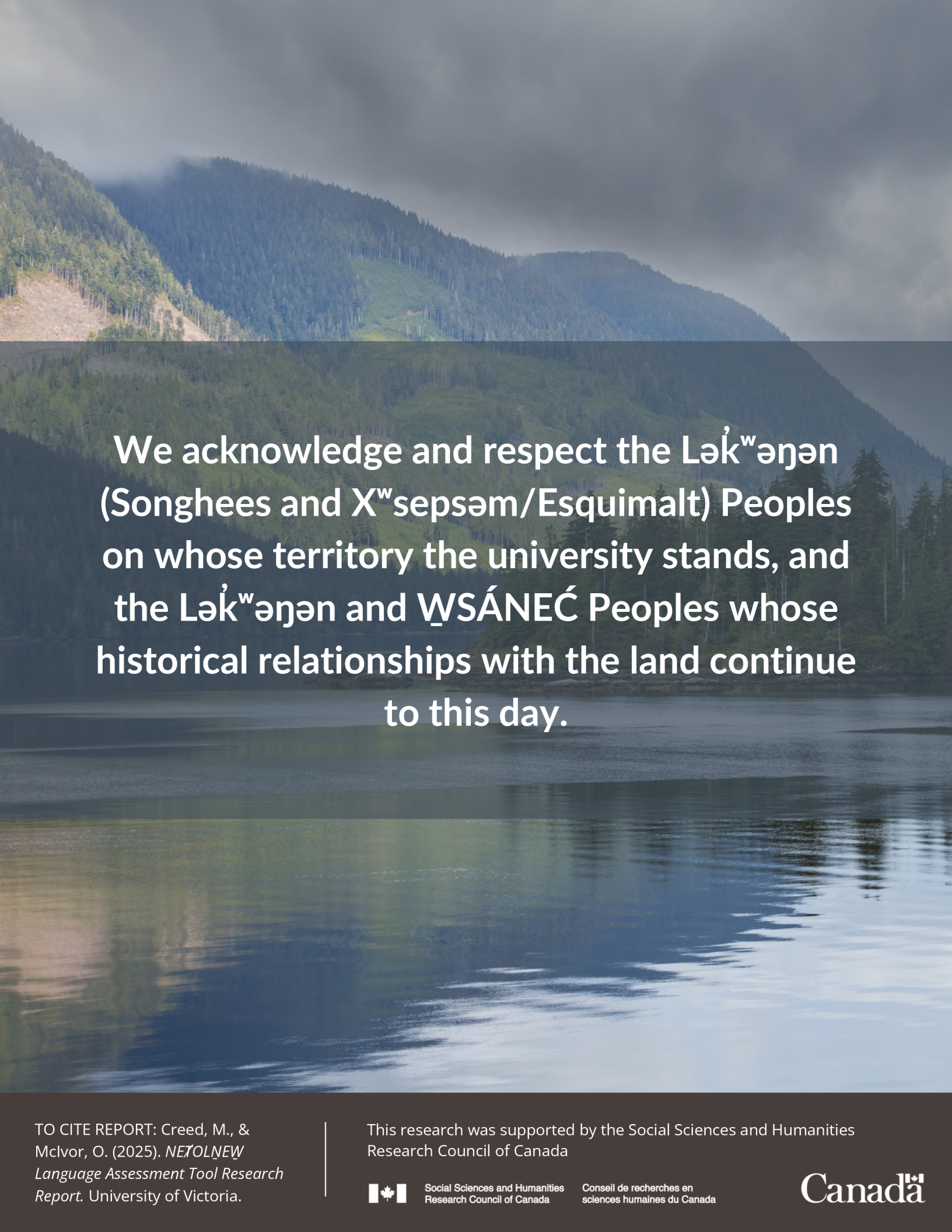
JUNE 2025

**NETOLNEW RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA**

PREPARED BY :

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and X̱w̱sepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Canada

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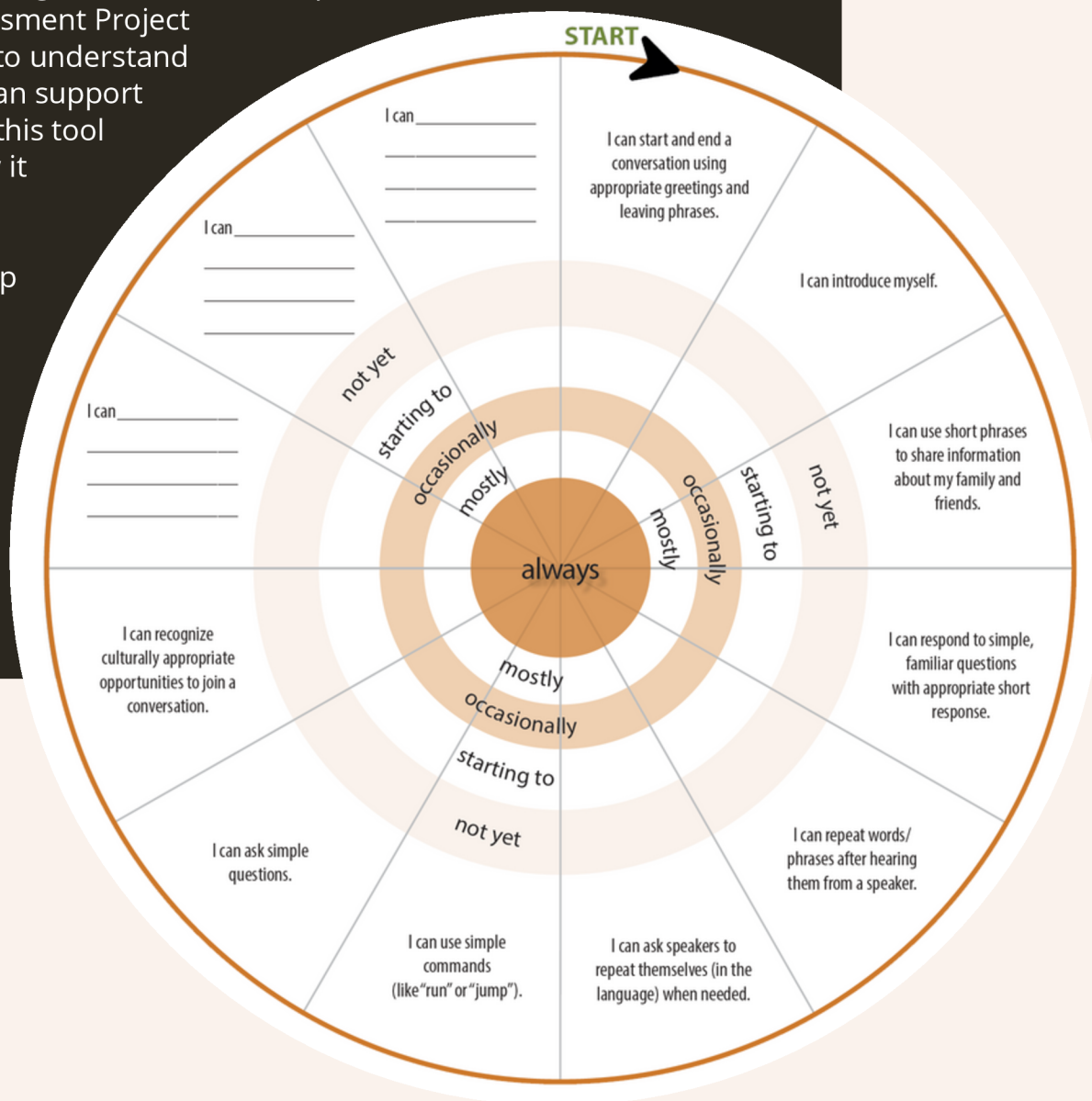
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT

The NETOLNEW Language Learning Assessment Tool was developed in 2016 as part of the original NETOLNEW Research Partnership, which focused on the mentor-apprentice program. In the second phase of the NETOLNEW Assessment Project (2023-2025), we sought to understand how assessment tools can support language learning, how this tool has been used, and how it could be improved.

Our research partnership undertook a three-part research study as part of our commitment to understanding how the AT supports Indigenous language learning and how it could be improved.



FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF LITERATURE

FINDINGS

- 45 language learning assessment tools were identified— not all of them were specific to Indigenous languages
- It was noted that most Indigenous language learning assessments were specifically geared for children (26) rather than adults (11)

POPULAR FRAMEWORKS

- Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) are popular assessment frameworks adapted to Indigenous adult language learning environments
- Major categories of assessment found were:
 - proficiency scales/benchmarks
 - self-assessments
 - language proficiency tests

CULTURE & SPIRITUALITY

- Culture was incorporated into Indigenous language learning assessment tools in four main ways: 1) Intercultural communication; 2) Presenting a cultural worldview; 3) Using culturally relevant examples/topics; and 4) Measurement of cultural pride
- Almost every language learning assessment tool reviewed did not include spiritual components or components addressing language trauma and/or healing

SURVEY & FOCUS GROUPS RESEARCH

SURVEY & FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

- Most survey respondents were language learners
- About two-thirds of survey respondents identified as women (all focus group participants were women)
- Many survey respondents came from British Columbia (i.e., Hul'q'umi'num', nuučaanuł, Secwepemctsin), but many others came from across Canada (i.e., Cree, Ojibwe, and Inuktitut), the United States (i.e., Denaakk'e, Chikashshanompa') and a few Indigenous communities outside of North America (i.e., Edo, Krenak, Māori)
- Focus group participants were from Western and Praries Canada, as well as Alaska



USE OF THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

- The AT is most often used for mentor-apprentice programs, but is also frequently used for post-secondary language programs, home language learning, and adult immersion programs
- The AT is used more frequently for Speaking than Understanding assessments, and more for the Beginner level than Intermediate level
- Survey respondents most commonly use the assessment annually

STRENGTHS OF THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

- The focus on Speaking and Listening (as opposed to literacy skills) were seen as strengths
- The use of “Can-Do” statements was seen as an asset
- The opportunity to reflect on one's language learning was seen as essential
- Focus groups participants spoke to an appreciation of the circular design

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT TOOL IMPROVEMENTS

- AT users would like to see expanded domains to include literacy
- AT users recommend addressing language healing and trauma within the AT, as well as cultural aspects being more closely represented
- AT users expressed challenges with being able to track progress over time
- Many shared challenges with the rating scale being not specific enough
- Many shared that a more refined digital version of the AT would be useful
- Many expressed a desire to reflect more deeply on their language learning journey

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Develop a web-based version of the AT to be able to track progress more easily
- ▶ Maintain the paper-based option of the Assessment Tool (some prefer)
- ▶ Maintain the circular design and the “Can-Do” statements in the AT
- ▶ Incorporate aspects of culture, spirituality, and healing into the AT
- ▶ Rework the rating scale to greater assessment precision
- ▶ Strengthen or expand sections allowing for greater language learning reflections
- ▶ Develop a framework to develop additional domains and levels, such as an advanced levels, literacy and cultural domains

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This research project began with an environmental scan of existing literature based on previous research by members of the NETOLNEW Research Partnership (2017) and later guided by the Assessment Tool Advisory Committee (2023). An in-depth environmental scan (ES) of assessment literature (largely for Indigenous languages, but also more generally) was undertaken by Research Coordinators Robyn Giffen and Myles Creed in early 2023.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the ES was to locate existing language learning assessment tools and understand how they are used in Indigenous language learning environments. By undertaking the ES, we sought to understand the broader context of Indigenous language assessment. The ES had the additional three aims, that is to: 1) evaluate whether to update the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool; 2) confirm the purpose for the tool and have a rationale for update and/or expanding the tool; and 3) gain a clearer understanding of where the NETOLNEW AT fits within the suite of assessment options.

METHODOLOGY

The scope of the ES looked at assessments that were designed or oriented towards adults. However, we found most Indigenous language assessments have been designed for children, and so these were included, in the understanding that youth-oriented assessment tools can often provide insight into adult tools and are sometimes adapted for adult language assessment purposes. We also looked at assessment tools geographically focused on Canada and the US. However, there are examples of note in Māori language learning communities in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and CEFR, which while developed for a European frame of reference. The CEFR has been a popular framework for language learning communities across the world and has been utilized and/or adapted by some Indigenous communities in North America. We sought research published after 2010 (15 years or newer), although some early 2000s influential work was also included.

In our review of literature, we devised categories of the assessment tools found, as seen in the table below.

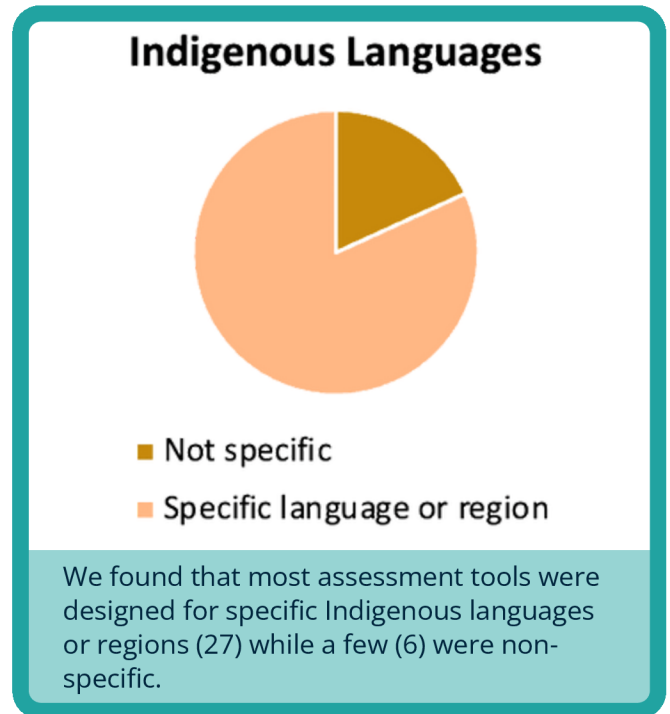
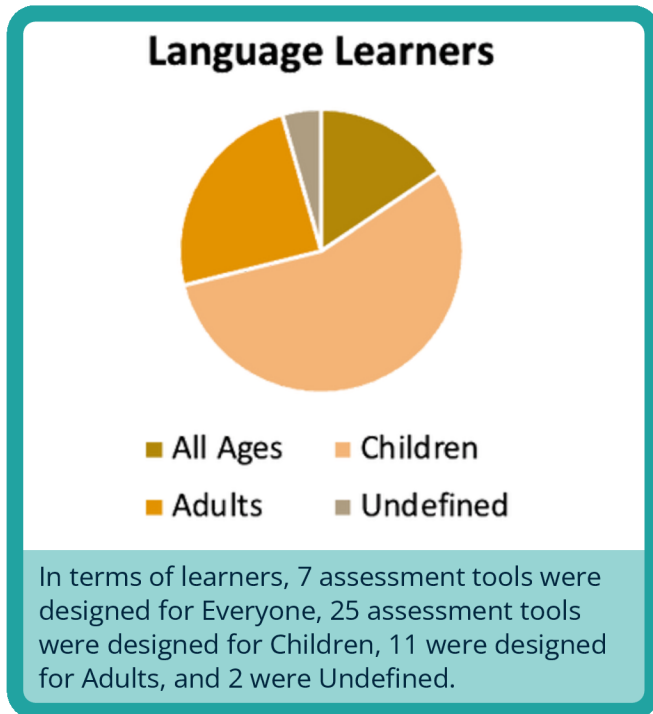
Table 1: Environmental Review Coding Categories

Category	Description
Developed by	Organization or individual who developed the assessment
Purpose	What Assessment Tools or literature this Assessment Tool was based on, or inspired by
Learners and contexts	The age groups and contexts for learning. For example, adults, kindergartners, K-12, language house, etc.
Tester	The person who administers the assessment, e.g., teacher, researcher, self
Domains and competencies	The language learning domains and competencies assessed: e.g., speaking, listening, writing, reading, etc.
Levels and rating scales	The levels of language ability, e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced
Training for the assessment	The assessment has a built-in training component
Tracking progress over time	The assessment tracks over time. i.e., suggestions in the assessment for a time period to retest
Cultural components	There are Indigenous cultural aspects included in the design of the assessment tool
Spiritual components	There are spiritual aspects built into the assessment tool
Indigenous communities using the tool	Indigenous communities who are using (or used) this tool
Relevant citations	Publications that mention the tool
Year created	i.e., 2015

FINDINGS

In all, we located 45 assessment tools. These were divided into four main categories:

- 1) proficiency standards/scales/frameworks
- 2) self-assessments
- 3) proficient speaker assessments, and
- 4) language tests



We identified four ways cultural components were incorporated into assessment tools: intercultural communication, cultural worldview/definition of the speaker, use of culturally relevant examples/topics, and measurement of cultural pride.

Spiritual components and considerations of addressing language trauma and/or healing were rare.

There were 18 Assessment Tools that included instructions or examples of frequency of assessment (i.e., tracking progress over time.) Most of these assessment tools were from school programs that assess at the end of the semester, end of year, or after several years.

SUMMARY

The NETOLNEW Assessment Tool was the only tool found that was designed for any Indigenous language adult learner regardless of language background. We found that there are opportunities to include culture, spirituality, and healing categories, which are currently not well represented. The environmental scan of literature provided a foundation for understanding Indigenous language assessment broadly. Following this, the research team determined that it would be valuable to undertake a broader research project including a survey of NETOLNEW Assessment Tool users to understand what needs and wants AT Users might have for an updated Assessment Tool.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF LITERATURE

SURVEY The NETOLNEW Language Learning Assessment Tool (AT) was released in 2016, as part of the original NETOLNEW Research Partnership focused on Mentor-Apprentice style-programming.¹ In the second phase of the NETOLNEW Research Partnership project (2023-2025), we sought to understand how this Assessment tool has been used, and how it could be improved.

In the years since its release, there has been interest in learning how the tool is supporting Indigenous language learning, evaluating the efficacy of the AT, and the ways it could be improved. To this end, an Assessment Advisory Committee was formed in late 2022 and guided the 2023 development of a survey of AT users and practitioners, administered in 2024.

SURVEY DESIGN & SOFTWARE

Survey questions were designed with the Assessment Advisory Committee. The survey goal was to gather meaningful feedback from AT users, practitioners, and administrators.

A software called RedCap was used to collect survey responses. It was a new and recommended research tool licensed through the University of Victoria. We piloted its use as a survey tool in comparison to SurveyMonkey. We found that RedCap was useful for design of the survey and easy distribution but lacked analysis tools and held limitations for exporting graphics.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

A varied survey distribution plan was developed to ensure broad outreach, seeking diverse and far-reaching participation. The survey invitation was sent out via email listservs, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and X), as well as direct emails (identified by researchers as likely individual and organization users of the AT). Additionally, individuals and organizations who had contacted NETOLNEW about their use of the AT were sent emails, seeking their feedback. All correspondence included encouragement for wide distribution.

¹ <https://netolnew.ca/all-research-reporting/assessment-tool/>

The survey was released to the public for a three-week period in January and February 2024. Social media announcements with survey links were posted weekly during this time. A weekly gift card was drawn as an incentive for survey participation.

After three weeks, the survey was no longer advertised to the public, however the link remained open to a few individuals who had contacted us directly about the survey in the past years. Although 274 responses were collected in this period, many of these were spam. Eventually 57 responses were verified Indigenous language users of the AT. Indigenous languages users were considered verified if they listed their Indigenous language in their demographic information. Indigenous languages outside of North America were also included (such as Krenak & Maori).

However, the implied consent statement did not appear on the public survey as intended, due to a technical error. Therefore, we followed up with the verified individuals requesting their consent for their response to be included in the results. Those who did not provide email contact information or did not respond were eliminated from the pool of respondents. This resulted in 46 total respondents. The report below highlights the results of these respondents.

Those involved in the process of developing this survey were:

Assessment Advisory Committee Members:

Name	Grant Role	Organization
Kahtehrón:ni Iris Stacey	Contributing Partner	Kahnawà:ke Education Center
Dr. Rhonda Hopkins	Contributing Partner	Kenjegwin Teg
Beverely Roy	Contributing Partner	Kenjegwin Teg
Dr. Suzanne Gessner	Contributing Partner	First Peoples’ Cultural Council
Dr. Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins	Co-Investigator	University of Victoria
Dr. Onowa McIvor	Project Director	University of Victoria

Project members:

Research Coordinators Robyn Giffen and Dr. Myles Creed; Post-doctoral fellow Dr. Adam Stone and Project Associate Shirina Evans supported survey development.

FOCUS GROUPS

Following our review and analysis of the survey results, we held two focus groups and a few individual interviews (by request or convenience) to engage deeper with selected survey respondents and volunteer members of the NETOLNEW Assessment Advisory Committee.

The focus group questions were based on discussions with the Assessment Advisory Committee (October 2022-May 2023) and expanded on some questions from the survey. Focus groups were held via Zoom platform. The focus group guiding questions were:

- What is your current or past use of the Assessment Tool?
- What did you like about it? What would you keep?
- What would you change about the Assessment Tool?

Focus groups and individual interviews followed a conversational-style approach, allowing discussions to flow naturally, with additional follow-up questions introduced as needed.

Focus group participants were recruited via email. Emails were sent to the Assessment Tool Advisory Committee and verified participants of the Assessment Tool Survey. Two focus groups were held with five participants (total) as well as three individual interviews. The participants (8) were Dr. Belinda Daniels, Cheyenne Morgan, taaʔisumqa Dawn Foxcroft, Susan Paskvan, Charlotte Ross, and three anonymous participants. The focus groups were facilitated by Dr. Myles Creed, with Dr. Onowa McIvor supporting. The focus groups and individual interviews were held via Zoom in August and September 2024.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Belinda Daniels is néhiyaw from Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan. She is a teacher, professor, mother, and wife, working at the University of Victoria on Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ territories. Belinda has used the AT with her family, her late nôhkom, and her Cree speaking relatives, as well as for with the néhiyawak language experience immersion camp.

Cheyenne Morgan is from the Gitksan Nation and participated in the focus group from Gitwangak. She has used the AT in her mentor-apprentice program and in their adult language learning program.

taaʔisumqa Dawn Foxcroft is nuučaañuʔath and works with the Tseshaht Language House. She has used the AT in their language program, including the adult intensive program.

Susan “K’etsoo” Paskvan is Koyukon Athabaskan from Koyukuk, Alaska. She lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, where she was the Native Language Coordinator for the Yukon Koyukuk School District for many years. She used the AT in her mentor-apprentice program with Doyon Foundation learning Denaakk’e.

Charlotte Ross is Cree and speaks the th dialect of Woodland Cree. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Victoria. She is involved in two language projects in Saskatchewan where she supports Cree and Saulteaux (Anishinaabemowin). She has used the AT in their mentor-apprentice program and in their professional-development language sessions.

In addition to these participants the focus groups also included three anonymous participants.

FOCUS GROUPS METHODOLOGY

Focus groups were held via Zoom video-conferencing, utilizing its audio/video recording and transcription features. The recordings were reviewed to ensure transcription accuracy. To improve clarity, filler words like 'um,' 'uh,' and 'you know' were omitted. The coding software NVivo was used to create categories from the discussions. The focus group discussions were categorized based on recurring topics.

ETHICS

This research project was approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Board of Ethics. Survey and focus group participants were required to provide verbal or written consent to participate in the study.

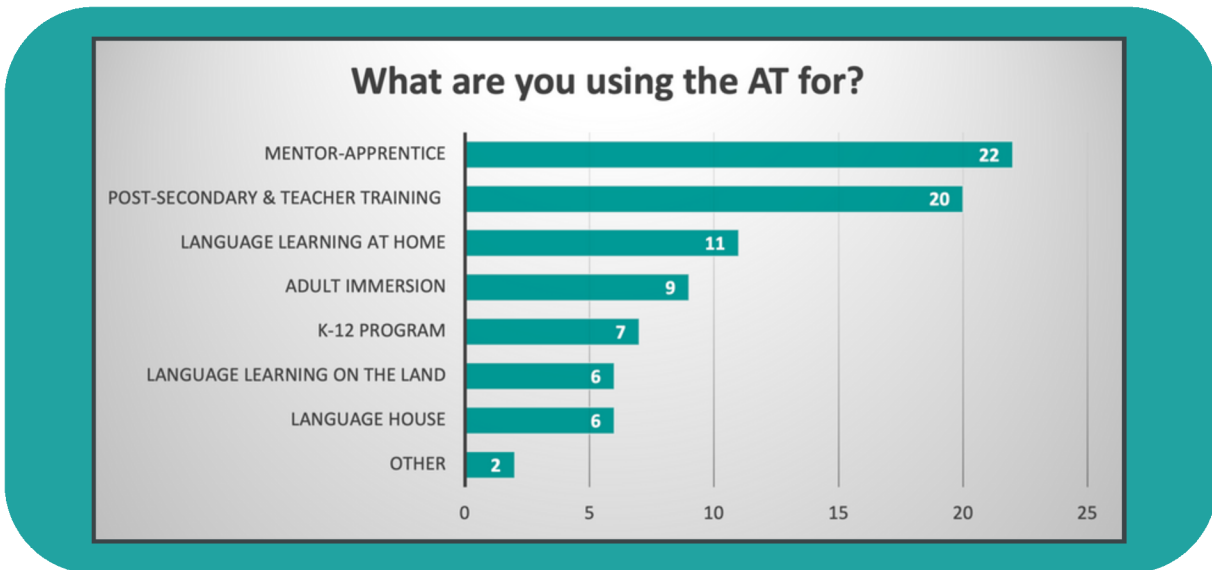
FINDINGS

This section includes the findings of both the survey and focus groups/interviews. The focus group findings are included (but identified separately) with survey results where the outcomes are connected.

USE OF ASSESSMENT TOOL

1. What kind language learning program/method are you using the NETOLNEW Assessment tool for? (Select all that apply)

Almost half of the respondents used the AT for Mentor-Apprentice Programs, while post-secondary/teacher training programs and home-based language learning were the second and third most common users. These were followed by adult immersion programs, K-12 programs, land-based language learning and use in language houses.



Statistics:

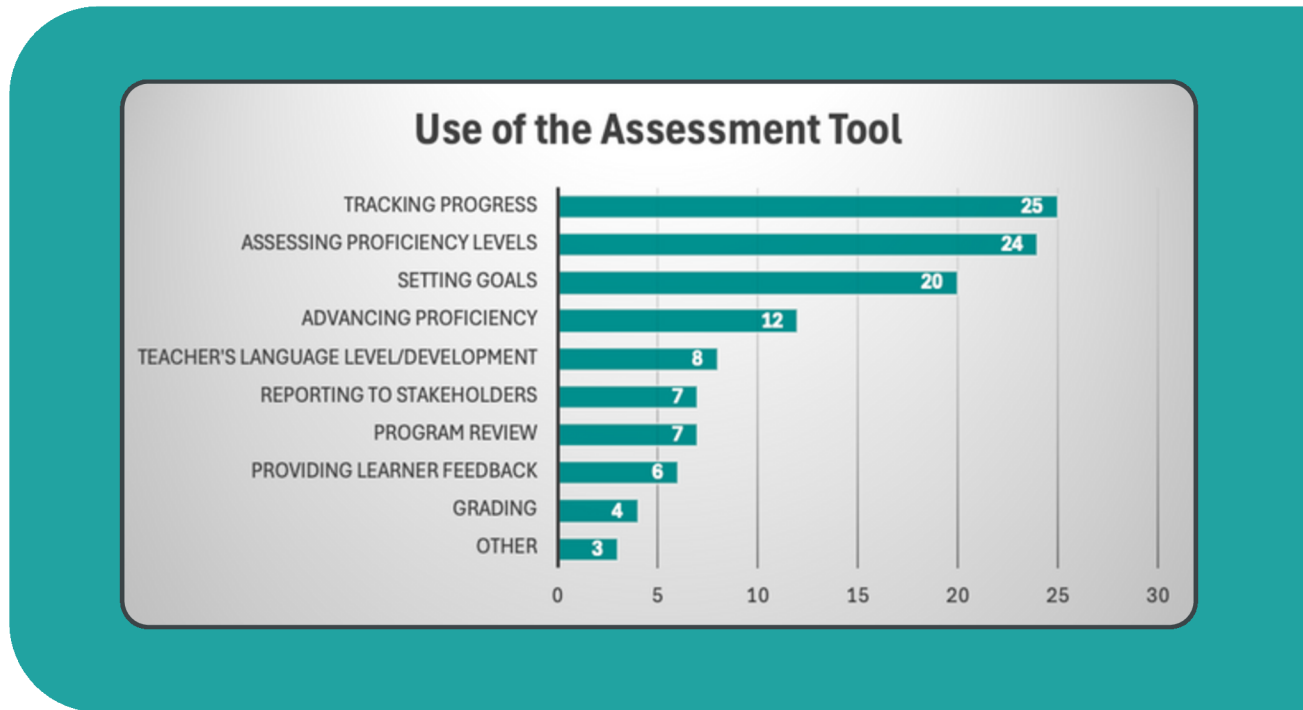
Mentor-Apprentice	22 (48%)
Post-secondary (university/college) and Teaching training	20 (41%)²
Language Learning at Home	11 (24%)
Adult Immersion	8 (17%)
K-12 program	7 (15%)
Language Learning on the Land	6 (13%)
Language House	6 (13%)
Other: Community Functions and Gatherings; not using at this	2 (4%)

² Post-secondary (university/college) and Teaching Training Programs were separate categories in the original survey and later combined for collation purposes.

2. Which of the following describes your use of the NETOLNEW assessment?

(Participants could select all that apply)

The most common uses for the AT were tracking progress, assessing proficiency level, and setting goals. The AT was used least frequently for grading and providing students with feedback.



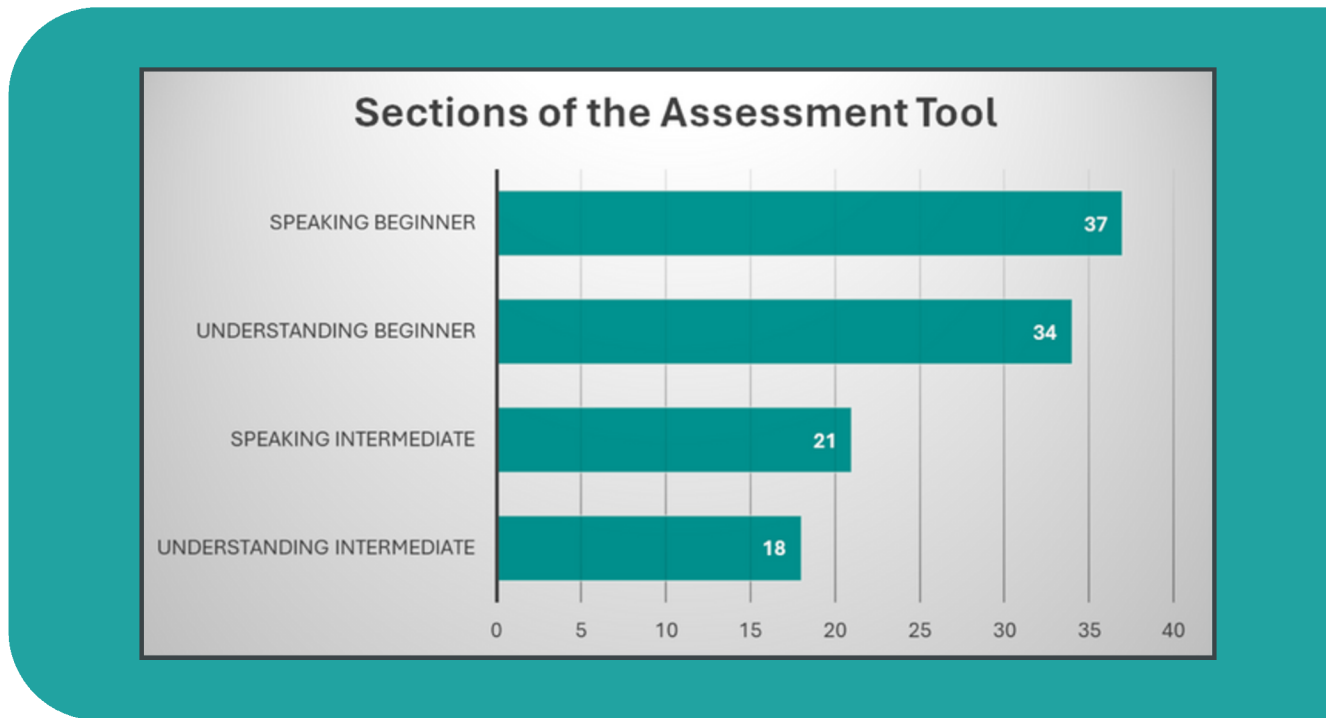
Statistics:

Tracking progress	25 (54%)	Reporting to stakeholders	7 (15%)
Assessing proficiency level	24 (52%)	Program review	7 (15%)
Setting goals	20 (44%)	Providing learner feedback	6 (13%) ³
Advancing proficiency	12 (26%)	Grading	4 (9%)
Teacher's language level/development	8 (17%)	Other	3 (7%)

³ Providing learner feedback was presented as "providing students with feedback" in the survey.

3. Which sections of the NETOLNEW assessment tool have you used? (Select all that apply)

The AT was used most frequently at the Beginner level. Speaking assessments were used slightly more than Understanding assessments, for both beginners and intermediate users.

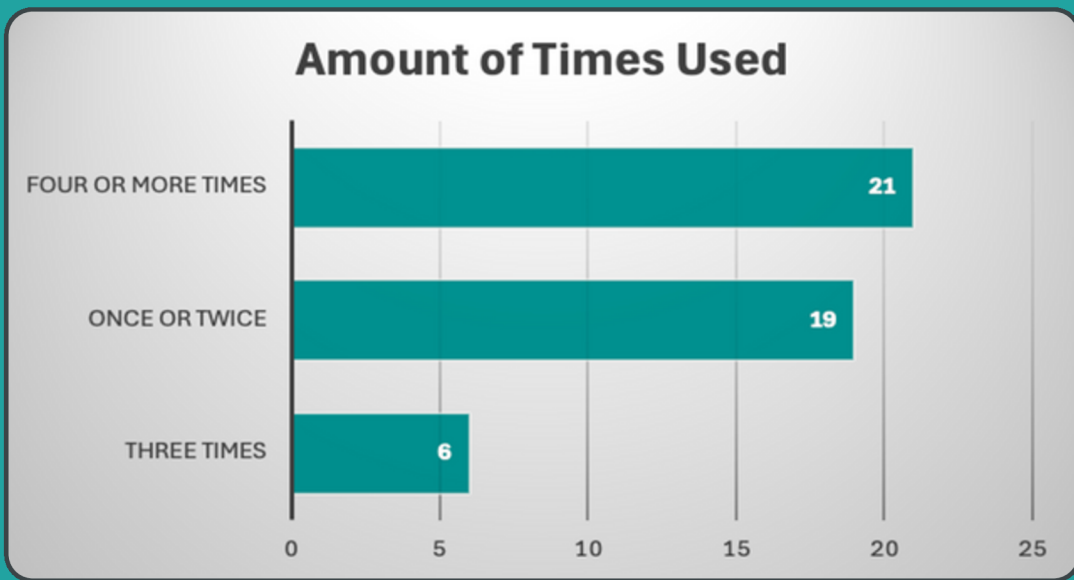


Statistics:

Speaking Beginner	37 (80%)
Understanding Beginner	34 (74%)
Speaking Intermediate	21 (46%)
Understanding Intermediate	18 (39%)

4. How many times have you used the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool?

Most AT users used the tool more than four times, however the number who used it once or twice was a close second.



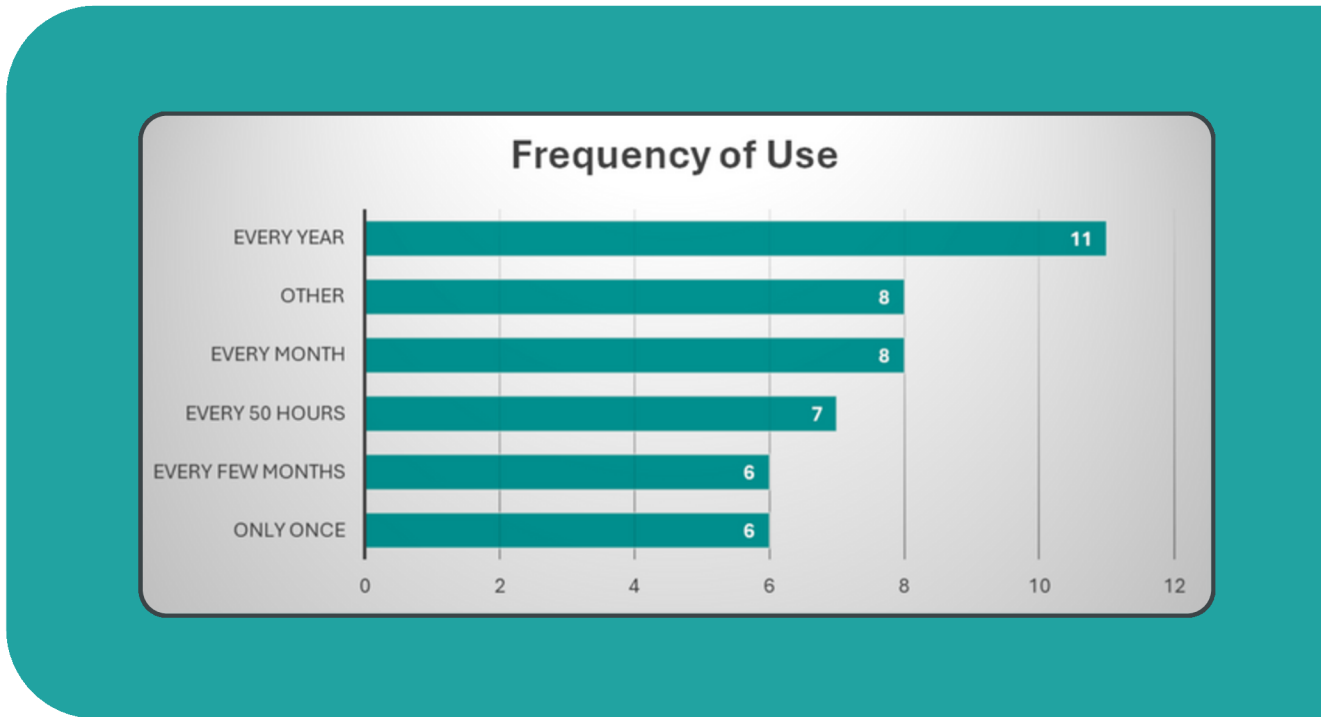
Statistics:

Four or more times	21 (46%)	Once	9 (20%)
Once or twice	10 (23%) ⁴	Three times	6 (13%)

⁴ 'Once' and 'Twice' were separate categories in the survey but later combined for analysis purposes.

5. How often do you (or did you) use the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool?

The largest response category uses the AT once a year, whereas the remaining ‘frequencies of use’ options were similar. The ‘other’ category stated levels of use as: ‘randomly,’ ‘three times per term,’ ‘at the beginning and end of a MAP program,’ and ‘at the beginning and end of a 40-hour class’.

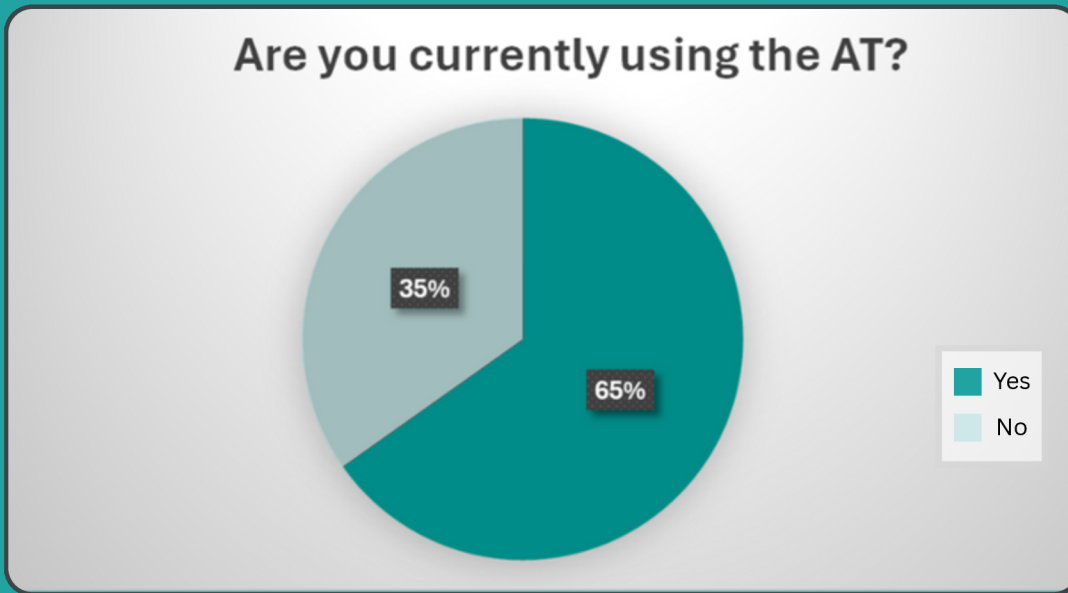


Statistics:

Every year	11 (24%)	Every 50 hours	7 (15%)
Other	8 (17%)	Every few months	6 (13%)
Every month	8 (17%)	Only once	6 (13%)

6. Are you currently using the NETOLNEW assessment tool?

Most respondents (65%) were currently using the AT. About a third of respondents (35%) were no longer using the AT.



When asked, why or why not they were continuing to use the AT, respondents stated:

They continued to use the tool because: it is easy to understand, and they are familiar with it; it is accessible and Indigenous-focused; it is convenient; it is useful for post-secondary programs; it helps gauge fluency level; or it is being used specifically for an immersion camp or mentor-apprentice program.

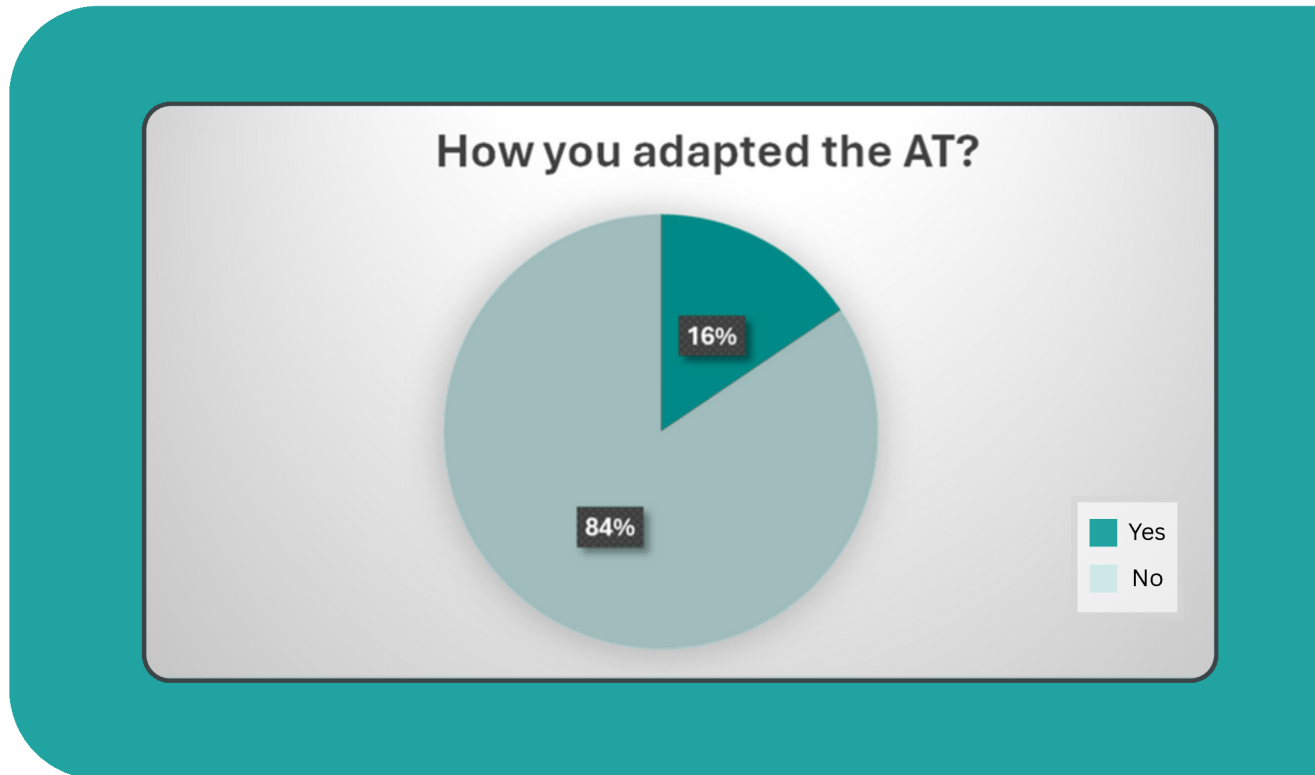
Those no longer using the tool stated: they haven't had interest in measuring their language level lately; they don't fully understand how to use the tool and turn it into useful information for language learners; they are at a stage in their language learning where they don't need assessment; they were using it for a specific program they were a part of; and because they only just become aware of the tool.

Statistics:

Yes	30 (65%)
No	16 (35%)

7. Have you adapted the NETOLNEW tool?

A minority of users (16%) adapted the NETOLNEW AT, with the majority (84%) stating they had not.



Statistics:

No	38 (84%)
Yes	7 (16%)

Those who said they had adapted the tool were asked 'how they adapted it'.

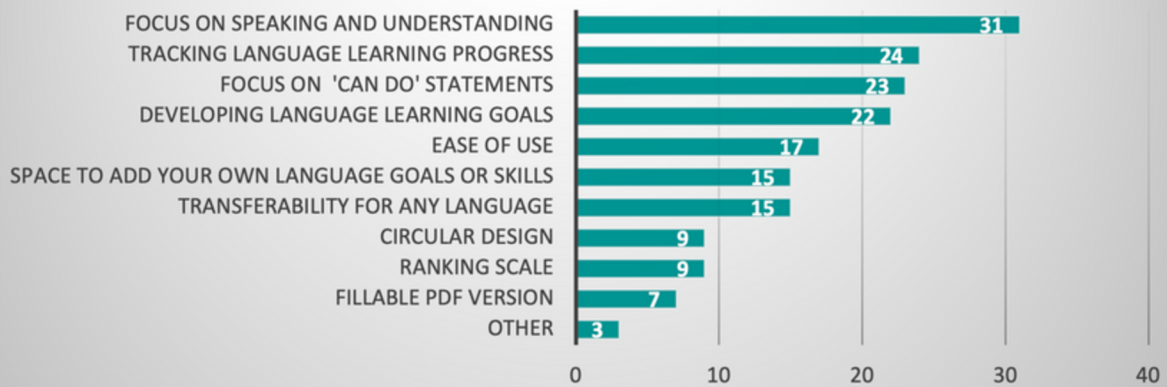
Those with substantive responses commented (2) that they adapted it by refining the assessment categories or adding words they wanted to specifically evaluate.

REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT TOOL

8. What did you find useful about the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool? (Select any that apply)

The most useful aspects of the AT were the focus on Speaking and Understanding domains which have been found to be most common in ILR (especially at the Beginner level). Other popular responses were the focus on “Can-do” statements, the ability to develop language learning goals, and the ability to track language learning progress. There were fewer responses about the technical features of the AT such as the ranking scale, the circular design, or the fillable PDF version. Those who responded ‘Other’ said it works well in classes where people are learning different languages; it is practical; and that it is a self-assessment giving learners agency over their learning.

Found Useful about AT



Statistics:

Focus on speaking and understanding	31 (67%)	Transferability to any language	15 (33%)
Tracking language learning progress	24 (52%)	Circular design	9 (20%)
Focus on what you 'can do' in the language	23 (50%)	Ranking scale (of “not yet-sometimes-usually-always”)	9 (20%)
Developing language learning goals	22 (48%)	Fillable PDF	7 (15%)
Ease of use	17 (37%)	Other	3 (7%)
Space to add your own language goals or skills	15 (33%)		

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES – RELATED TO QUESTION 8 (REVIEW OF THE AT)

Focus group participants highlighted other aspects of the AT that they appreciated and recommend keeping.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

One anonymous participant expressed their appreciation for the self-assessment format and recommended that it remain unchanged.

“When I do talk about self-assessment in general in my class, I talk about this idea that it gives people the right to determine their own paths and that is why these goals are so important, it fits into the framework for self-determination.”

“CAN-DO” STATEMENTS & RATING SCALE

The use of “Can-do” statements was highlighted as a beneficial way to help learners feel confident about their language abilities. One focus group participant noted that the “not yet” option on the rating scale was particularly beneficial.

“I like the fact that there are the categories that say not yet. So “not yet” means that it is still a possibility. It doesn’t mean there’s nothing.” - Charlotte Ross

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The use of reflection questions was also highlighted as an important part of the AT. One participant explained the importance of reflecting on one’s language learning:

“It says a place to reflect on your language learning optional. I would put it required because if we don’t have an opportunity, and I wouldn’t even maybe put required, I would just take optional out and say, it just is. Because if we don’t have opportunity to reflect on our own language learning, then we’re really doing a disservice to the language teaching.” - Charlotte Ross

CIRCULAR DESIGN

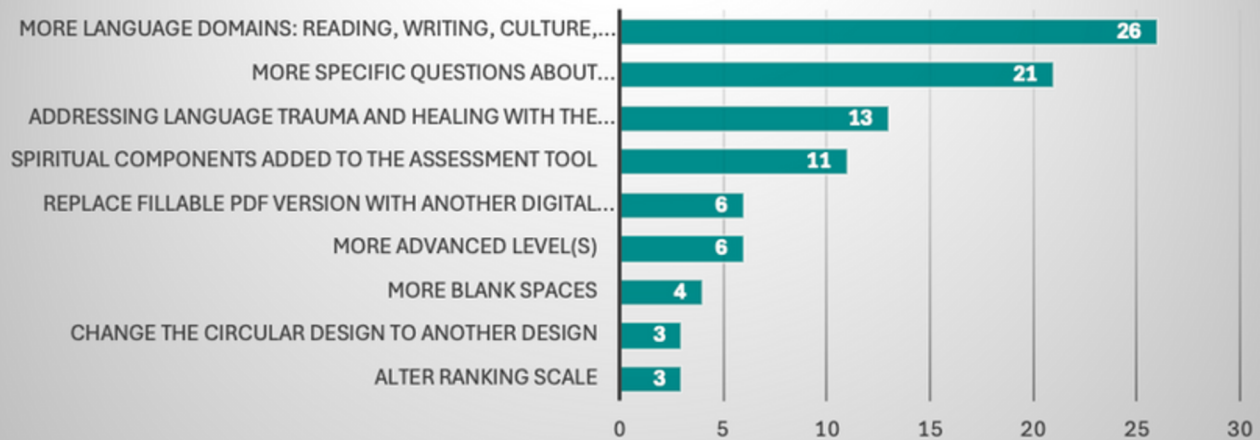
Focus group participants appreciated the AT’s circular design for its non-linear layout, which effectively highlighted the expanding nature of their language learning.

9. What would you change about the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool?

(Survey participants were asked to only choose relevant items)

More than half of the survey respondents stated they would like to see additional language domains, such as reading, writing, culture, and others. Nearly half suggested including more specific questions addressing grammar and vocabulary. About one-quarter recommended adding components related to spirituality, language trauma and healing. Fewer respondents shared opinions on the design of the tool, including the circular design, the fillable PDF, or the ranking scale.

What would you change?



Statistics:

More language domains: reading, writing, culture, etc.	26 (57%)
More specific questions about grammar/vocabulary learning	21 (46%)
Addressing language trauma and healing with the assessment tool	13 (28%)
Spiritual components added to the assessment tool	11 (24%)
Replace Fillable PDF version with another digital version	6 (13%)
More advanced level(s)	6 (13%)
More blank spaces	4 (9%)
Change the circular design to another design	3 (7%)
Alter ranking scale	3 (7%)
Other	5, (11%)

SURVEY COMMENTS ON SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS:

Some respondents liked the circular design, while others adapted to an online form instead of using it. One participant found the circular design was a challenging to use, and another suggested alternative designs, such a digital version or application that could monitor language learning and growth, in addition to the current fillable PDF.

Several respondents agreed on the importance of tracking progress over time. One proposed smaller transition steps between levels, while another suggested more grammar fields. A different respondent emphasized recognizing the developmental stages and use of grammar at various levels.

While most respondents expressed interest in additional domains beyond Speaking and Understanding, they appreciated the simplicity of the current design. They also saw value in expanding the tool to include domains of reading, writing, and culture.

When asked if participants found the AT difficult to use to track progress over time, two responded substantively to this question: one felt the levels are too large for new learners, while another user mentioned it is hard to compare different versions you have completed with the current AT.⁵

FOCUS GROUP'S SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Focus group participants were also asked what improvements they would like to see with the AT and provided many useful suggestions.

PROMPTS

Participant Dawn Foxcroft had a suggestion to include prompts for the fill-in-the-blank “I can” questions, with corresponding levels (e.g., Beginner, Intermediate).

An anonymous participant also mentioned that some learners have difficulty with the prompt “I am proud of...” as it can be challenging for some learners to speak about themselves in that way.

RATING SCALE

There was concern among focus group participants that the category of “sometimes” was too broad and that the categories were not distinguished enough. An anonymous participant suggested that three levels might be more manageable than four.

⁵ In the survey, this was presented as a separate question from question 10.

CULTURE, SPIRITUALITY, AND LANGUAGE HEALING

Focus group participants commented on the importance of including aspects of Indigenous language learning that is currently lacking in the AT: questions that address culture, spirituality, and overcoming language trauma. Belinda spoke to the importance of land-based learning:

“There are maybe two pieces of that pie that are missing when it comes to land, like land-based learning and when it comes to the spiritual aspect, because language is both of those things: land and spiritual.”- Belinda Daniels

Participants address how assessment can be traumatizing and how we can better address the needs of students to make sure assessment is not seen as punitive. Participant Charlotte Ross spoke to how the ACTFL scale begins with “no proficiency” and how that can really set learners back when they are told they have “no ability.” Dawn also spoke to this challenge:

“I really struggle with assessment and thinking about it and how to assess our students and how to assess ourselves and how to do that in ways that are uplifting and supportive and not traumatizing. And that can be really challenging. And just try to encourage our students that this is for yourself. There is no wrong. It is not graded.” - Dawn Foxcroft

One participant also spoke to the importance of healing to be incorporated into Indigenous language learning assessment.

“So, assessments need to have components of healing in their words, in their verbiage, in how it is presented and how it is used. And that it is something you’re able to wrap yourself in. And so, if you are having to wrap yourself in something that has prickly thorns...you are not going to want to wrap yourself in it for very long.” - Charlotte Ross

ADDITIONAL LEVELS AND DOMAINS

Focus group participants provided insight on how they could see the AT expanded in a future iteration. This included additional domains addressing culture, spirituality, and language healing, and reading and writing. Additional levels such as an Advanced level or more differentiated Beginner and Intermediate levels were highlighted as well as the possibility of an online platform or application where progress could be more easily tracked.

Other focus group participants spoke to how they would appreciate more differentiation between levels (like that of the ACTFL scale). The ACTFL scale has differentiated levels of Beginner – low, medium, high, for example.

Reading and writing as additional domains were discussed by focus group participants, although there was a wide range of responses regarding its usefulness. Some found that reading and writing assessments are useful, but others found that reading and writing can be an impediment to learning and being deterred by trying to learn in that manner.

MAKING THE ASSESSMENT TOOL INTO AN APPLICATION OR ONLINE VERSION

Many focus group participants spoke to the importance of having an online version or even a mobile phone application, where language practitioners could more easily track their progress over time. They mentioned it would be interesting to be able to populate graphs or data automatically for learners but also spoke to the importance of maintaining the paper version for accessibility and simplicity.

ADAPTABLE/EDITABLE

Many participants inquired about the possibility of making the AT more adaptable or editable, including translating into Indigenous languages (a process some had already undertaken). Some appreciated the current ability to adapt the AT, how it is non-language specific. Belinda Daniels spoke to the importance of adapting the AT for use with collective learning on the land.

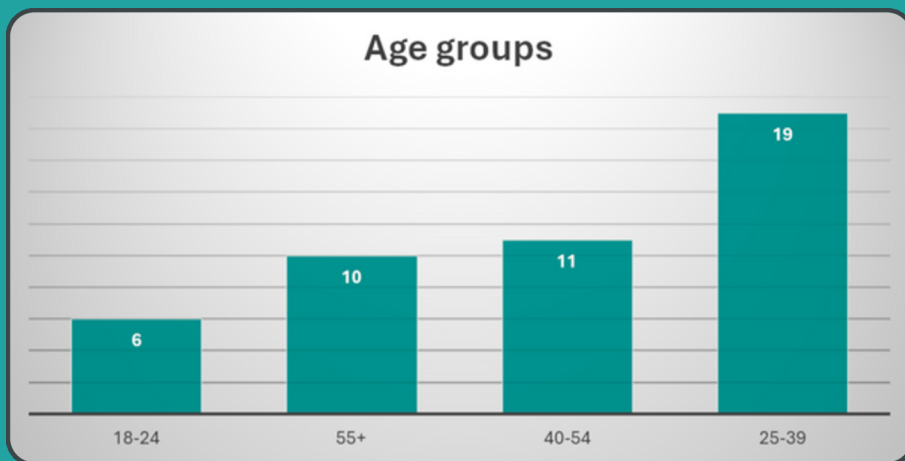
Participants spoke to their own experiences translating the AT into Indigenous languages (including SENĆOŦEN) and allowing that as a possibility for future iterations. Some challenges to making the AT more translatable or editable were also highlighted. One anonymous participant provided the example of the challenge of translating the tool into Dene Tha'. Susan spoke to the importance of having a tool that was useable cross-platform and cross-language.

A couple of participants recommended creating an oral AT format to accommodate those who prefer to avoid reading and/or writing or for those who are visually impaired.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

10. Age

The plurality of respondents to the survey were in the 25-39 age range, followed by the combined group of 40-55+, while the smallest group of respondents were 18-24 years of age.

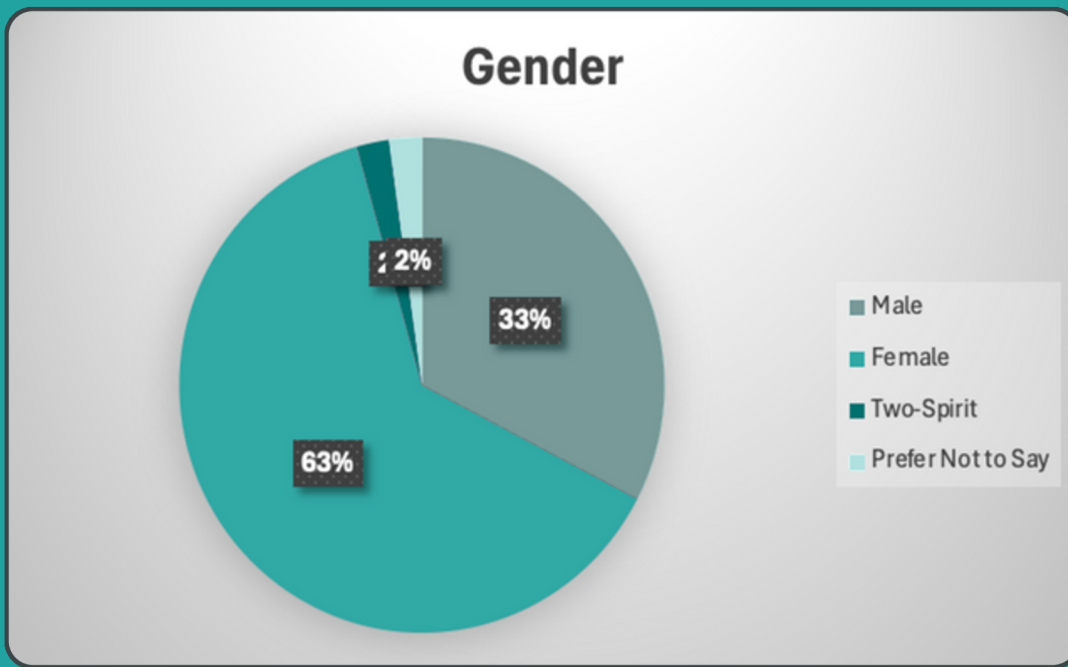


Statistics:

18-24	6 (13%)
25-39	19 (41%)
40-54	11 (24%)
55+	10 (22%)

11. Gender

Of the survey respondents, 63% identified as female, about 33% identified as male, and one respondent identified as Two-Spirit. One respondent preferred not to say, and no respondents identified as non-binary or other.



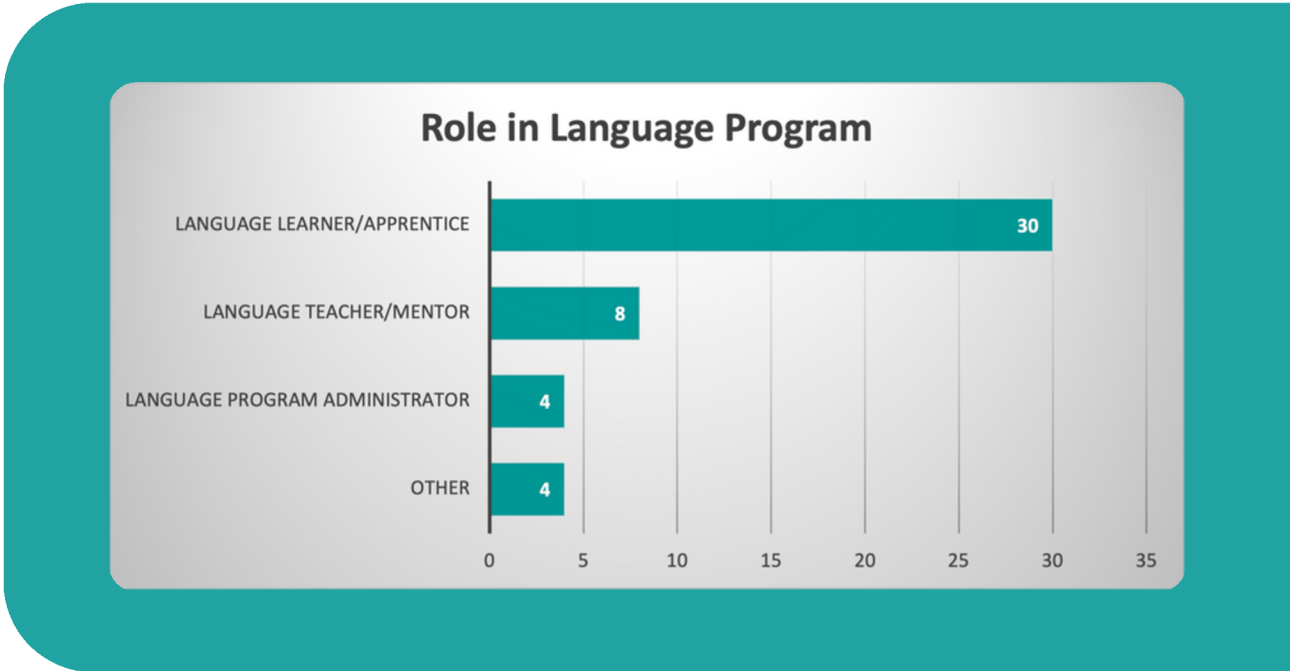
Statistics:

Female	29 (63%)	Prefer not to say	1 (2%)
Male	15 (33%)	Non-binary	0 (0%)
Two-spirit	1 (2%)	Other	0 (0%)

12. For purposes of this survey, please indicate the role that best reflects your use of the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool:

Most respondents were language learners, with a smaller group identifying as language teachers, followed by program administrators. Those who selected 'Other' indicated they were both learners and teachers, or a combination of all three.

Note: Language learner and Apprentice, and Language teacher and mentor were combined into one category each, respectively.



Statistics:

Language Learner/Apprentice	30 (65%)
Language Teacher/Mentor	8 (17%)
Language Program Administrator	4 (9%)
Other	4 (9%)

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES REPRESENTED IN SURVEY

MULTIPLE RESPONSES:

- **Cree (7)**
 - nehiyawewin (2), nēhiyawēwin, Woodland Cree, Swampy Cree, Cree (2)
- **Coast Salish (7):**
 - Halq'eméylem / Hulqumí'nuh / hə́h'qəmi'nuh (5): hul'q'umi'num', Hul'q'umi'num', Hulq'mi'num (2), Upriver Halq'emeylem
 - Coast Salish (1)
 - SENĆOŦEN (1)
- **Navajo (4)**
- **nuučaanuł (3):** Nuuchah-nulth, nuučaanuł, čišaaʔatḥ nuučaaḥuł
- **Ojibwe (3):** Ojibwe, Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), Chippewa
- **Secwepemctsin (3):** Secwepemctsin (2), Secwepemc
- **St'át'imcets (2):** St'át'imcets, Statlimc
- **Chilcotin (2)**

SINGLE RESPONSES:

Northern	British Columbia	Contiguous US	Outside North America
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuktitut • Dene • Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim) • Denaakk'e • Gwich'in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ditidaht • Kwakwala • Ktunaxa • Tse'Khene • Dakelh • Nedut'en 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chikashshanompa' • Cherokee language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Èdo • Māori (Te Reo Māori) • Tupuri • Tupi language • Krenak

Language program/organization (if applicable)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor Apprentice Program/MAP (7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ First Peoples' Cultural Council MAP (2) ◦ Doyon Foundation MAP (3) • nLE Immersion Camp (3) and its online courses • Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee (SILAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsesshaht Language Program • Hesquiaht language program • Kjeme Itchok • Bilingual Ojibwe Program • Seabird Island • SI'ST Language and Culture Society

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An overarching theme emerging from the research was the need to develop the AT in a way that serves Indigenous language practitioners by prioritizing Indigenization and decolonization in AT. An anonymous participant in the focus groups spoke to why it is so important to take an approach to Indigenous language learning assessment that is grounded in decolonization.

“When we’re decolonizing language, the whole idea about learning our languages is decolonizing ourselves and part of that decolonization is making sure that we attend to self-determination and sovereignty in our communities.”

Through our research, survey results indicated that the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool (AT) has been used across various Indigenous language learning contexts, particularly in mentor-apprentice and post-secondary programs. It is primarily utilized for tracking progress, assessing proficiency, and setting goals, with a strong emphasis on Speaking and Understanding at the Beginner level.

While most survey respondents found the AT valuable for language learning and teaching, there is interest in expanding its scope to include additional language domains, more proficiency levels, and the addition of digital version – both for improved accessibility and for progress tracking. Respondents represented diverse Indigenous languages across what is currently known as Canada and internationally. Most were language learners, followed by teachers and program administrators.

The focus groups and interviews provided key insights into the tool’s content, design, and potential for growth. Participants valued the self-assessment format, particularly the “Can-do” statements and the “not yet” rating category, though some suggested refining the rating scale for even greater clarity. The tool’s circular design was well received by all focus group participants, and many survey respondents, who emphasized the importance of adaptability, including translation into Indigenous languages.

Many participants emphasized the importance of integrating culture, spirituality, and language healing into the assessment tool to better support Indigenous language learners. They also suggested future developments, including an advanced proficiency level, greater differentiation among Beginner and Intermediate levels, and an online or app-based version for more effective progress tracking.

KEY FINDINGS

- The AT is most often used in mentor-apprentice and post-secondary programs
- Primary uses include tracking progress, assessing proficiency, and goal setting
- The Beginner level is most used for assessing both speaking and understanding, with somewhat fewer users at the intermediate level
- AT users were primarily language learners, followed by teachers and administrators
- The circular design was praised for representing Indigenous perspectives on learning (in contrast to a linear design)
- Participants expressed interest in an online or app-based version for digital progress tracking, while maintaining a paper-based option
- Participants appreciated the self-assessment approach and "Can-do" statements, but suggested refining the rating scale for clarity
- Suggestions included adding an advanced level and refining beginner and intermediate categories to be more differentiated
- Many highlighted the need to include culture, spirituality, and language healing in the assessment process
- While many appreciate the AT's current levels, some would like to see additional language domains and expanded levels

RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **Develop a web-based version of the AT to be able to track progress more easily**
- ▶ **Maintain the paper-based option of the Assessment Tool (some prefer)**
- ▶ **Maintain the circular design and the "Can-Do" statements**
- ▶ **Incorporate more aspects of culture, spirituality, and healing**
- ▶ **Rework the rating scale to greater assessment precision**
- ▶ **Strengthen or expand sections for language learning reflection**
- ▶ **Develop a framework to develop additional domains and levels, such as an advanced levels, literacy and cultural domains**

APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Confidential

Page 1

NETOLNEW Assessment Tool Survey of Users

ÍY SZÁCEL, Kwe', Shé:kon, Aanii, tånisi, Edlānet'e, negha dāgondih, Weytkp,
G

ilakas'la (greetings),

You are invited to participate in a research project about the
NETOLNEW

Assessment Tool.

The purpose of this survey is to collect feedback from past and current users of the
NETOLNEW

Assessment Tool about their experience using the tool. We are looking to learn how you have been using the tool in
your Indigenous language learning and what changes we could make to the tool to make it more useful to you.

You are invited to participate in this survey if you identify as an adult Indigenous language learner, a teacher of adult
Indigenous language learners, or a program director/coordinator of an adult Indigenous language learning program in
Canada or the United States who have used the
NETOLNEW

Assessment Tool.

This survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary. By submitting the survey, you are thereby consenting to participate in this study and the
information you share may be included in the study results.

You have the option not to respond to any questions. Any personal information that you provide will be kept strictly
confidential. Your responses can be submitted anonymously. All responses will be anonymized for dissemination of
results.

Participants who offer their name and contact information, can have their data removed if requested prior to the
analysis of data. Anonymous participants cannot have their responses removed once the survey is submitted.

To learn more about this study please email Research Coordinator, Myles Creed at netolnew@uvic.ca

If you have any concerns about this research, you may contact the study PI, Dr. Onowa McIvor at
langresearchasst@uvic.ca or at 250-472-4771 or the UVic Human Research Ethics Office at 250-472-4545 or by email
at ethics@uvic.ca.

Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research project. Yes

Use of Assessment Tool:

What kind language learning program/method are you using the NETOLNEW Assessment tool for? (Select all that apply)

- Mentor-Apprentice
- Language House
- Adult Immersion
- Post-secondary (university/college) Language program
- Teacher Training program
- K-12 program
- Language Learning at Home
- Language Learning on the Land
- Other:

Please indicate:

02-03-2025 23:52

projectredcap.org



Which of the following describes your use of the NETOLNEW assessment? (Select all that apply)

- Setting goals
- Tracking progress
- Assessing proficiency level
- Program review
- Reporting to stakeholders
- Providing students with feedback
- Grading
- Teacher's language level/development
- Advancing proficiency
- Other:

Please indicate:

Which sections of the NETOLNEW assessment tool have you used? (Select all that apply)

- Speaking Beginner
- Understanding Beginner
- Speaking Intermediate
- Understanding Intermediate

How many times have you used the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool?

- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four or more times

How often do you use the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool (or how often did you use it)?

- Only once
- Every 50 hours
- Every month
- Every few months
- Every year
- Other:

Please indicate:

Are you currently using the NETOLNEW assessment tool?

- Yes
- No

Why or why not?

Have you adapted the NETOLNEW tool?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how?

Review of Assessment Tool:

What did you find useful about the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool? (Select any)

- The focus on speaking and understanding
- Transferability for any language
- Focus on what you 'can do' in the language
- Developing language learning goals
- Tracking language learning progress
- Ease of use
- Includes space to add your own language goals or skills
- The ranking scale of not yet-sometimes-usually-always
- Circular design
- Fillable PDF version
- Other:

Please indicate:

Comments:

What would you change about the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool? (Select only relevant items)

- More language domains: reading, writing, culture, etc.
- More advanced level(s)
- Spiritual components added to the assessment tool
- Addressing language trauma and healing with the assessment tool
- More specific questions about grammar/vocabulary learning
- More blank spaces
- Alter ranking scale
- Change the circular design to another design
- Replace Fillable PDF version with another digital version
- Other:

Please indicate what design you would prefer:

Please indicate:

Comments:

If you have found the Assessment Tool difficult to use to track progress over time, please indicate how:

Demographics:

Age:

- 18-24
- 25-39
- 40-54
- 55+

Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Two-Spirit
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Name (can skip if you want to complete survey anonymously): _____

Indigenous Language: _____

Indigenous Nation/Community: _____

Language program/organization (if applicable): _____

For purposes of this survey, please indicate the role that best reflects your use of the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool:

- Language Learner
- Language Teacher
- Language Mentor
- Language Apprentice
- Language Program Administrator
- Other:

Please list: _____

Post Survey

Would you like to be entered in a draw for a \$50 gift card?

- Yes
- No

Would you like to be added to NETOLNEW Newsletter distribution list?

- Yes
- No

Are you interested in taking part in a pilot testing group of a revised version of the Assessment Tool later (in 2024)?

- Yes
- No

Please provide a valid email address. Please note your contact information will be used for only the post-survey questions for which you answered yes. _____

Thank you so much for taking the survey! Please reach out to netolnew@uvic.ca with any questions you may have.

APPENDIX B: VERBAL CONSENT FORMS



Information for Implied Consent

NETOLNEW Assessment Tool

ÍY SẪÁCEL, Kwe', Shé:kon, Aanii, tânisi, Edlánet'e, negha dágondih, Weytkp, Gílakas'la (greetings),

You are invited to participate in a research project about the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool.

The purpose of this survey is to collect feedback from past and current users of the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool about their experience using the tool. We are looking to learn how you have been using the tool in your Indigenous language learning and what changes we could make to the tool to make it more useful to you.

You are invited to participate in this survey if you identify as an adult Indigenous language learner, a teacher of adult Indigenous language learners, or a program director/coordinator of an adult Indigenous language learning program in Canada or the United States who have used the NETOLNEW Assessment Tool.

Participation is voluntary. By submitting the survey, you are thereby consenting to participate in this study and the information you share may be included in the study results.

You have the option not to respond to any questions. Any personal information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses can be submitted anonymously. All responses will be anonymized for dissemination of results.

Participants who offer their name and contact information, can have their data removed if requested prior to the analysis of data. Anonymous participants cannot have their responses removed once the survey is submitted.

To learn more about this study please email Research Coordinator, Myles Creed at mylescreed@uvic.ca

If you have any concerns about this research, you may contact the study PI, Dr. Onowa McIvor at langresearchasst@uvic.ca or at 250-472-4771 or the UVic Human Research Ethics Office at 250-472-4545 or by email at ethics@uvic.ca.

July 19, 2023

1



This information will be sent to focus groups participants in advance of our meeting and will be reviewed at the beginning of the focus group.

NEȚOLŅEW Assessment Tool

My name is Myles Creed. I am conducting research as a Research Coordinator of the NEȚOLŅEW Partnership about the NEȚOLŅEW Assessment Tool and the possibility of updating the tool.

Participation

We are asking you participate in this study as a member of the NEȚOLŅEW Assessment Tool Advisory Committee or Survey Participant. We are interested in your knowledge and experiences using proficiency assessments for adult Indigenous language learning. The purpose of this focus group is to consider how the NEȚOLŅEW Assessment Tool could be improved to better support adult Indigenous language learners.

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. I will ask questions about the NEȚOLŅEW assessment tool and your experiences using it. The focus group discussion will last about 90 minutes. We will video/audio-record the interview and then transcribe the recording.

Benefits

This research has no risks. This research will benefit the redevelopment of the NEȚOLŅEW assessment tool which will in turn benefit adult Indigenous language learners using this tool. This research will also benefit Indigenous language communities, instructors, and learners that are interested in learning more about assessment.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

Our university requires us to acknowledge that you may know members of the research team: Dr. Onowa McIvor, IED Professor, is maskēkow-ininiw (Swampy Cree). She is also the PI of the NEȚOLŅEW Partnership grant project.
Myles Creed, NEȚOLŅEW Research Coordinator / PhD Candidate at University of Victoria

Anonymity, Confidentiality, and Data Access

Your information and focus group interview will be stored a secure and password protected server hosted at UVIC. Since this focus group is taking place over Zoom and will be auto-transcribed by Zoom, the data may be in the US for the duration of the transcription (about the length of the actual interview recording). As such, there is a possibility that the recording may be accessed without our knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

If you choose to participate you can decide if you would like your name used in the study. We will only use your name in later sharing what we have learned if you have given us permission to do so. Otherwise, we will refer to your contributions generally as “a participant” or use a pseudonym of your choice.

If you agree to be identified, we would like to take a screen shot of our focus group to use in disseminating the results of this research. If you prefer not to be in the photo you can turn your camera off and I will block out your information from the picture.

If you choose to participate, we will share back our findings. We will also present findings of this research at conferences and in the media, as well as with other participants.

You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time during or after this focus group. You can withdraw by contacting Myles Creed at mylescreed@uvic.ca to declare your desire to withdraw. It may not be possible to remove your data after a certain point of analysis.

Disposal of Data

The data collected from this project will be stored for five years and then destroyed.

Contacts

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Do you have any questions?

Consent

If you agree to be part of the project, you can send me an email or tell me when we meet. I will track that you have given your consent.

If you agree: How would you like to be referred to in our writings and presentations?

Anonymous

Pseudonym – include here: _____

Include name: _____

Include community or organization affiliation: _____

Do you agree to the use of your image in the dissemination of results?