



Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM

February 2020

with assistance from Chief Strategy Group





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Approach	2
Current State	4
A Path Forward	
Priority Areas	9
Goal Considerations	
Next Steps	
Acknowledgement	22

Introduction

Chief Strategy Group (CSG) was pleased to assist the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. As part of our philosophy, CSG begins all projects with a clear understanding of our client's needs and firmly believes in starting with the end in mind. The scope of this project was to provide objective facilitation services that culminated in a 'jumping off point' for language strategies. Our approach aims to help advance and enhance the preservation and proliferation of the Cherokee Language, specifically among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Approach

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), through their Education Division, engaged a group of professionals to provide objective observations and recommendations related to the preservation and proliferation of the Cherokee Language. A key goal of the process was to capture what is working well, opportunities for improvement, and a focused direction to move toward.

A multi-faceted approach was utilized to provide a community forum that would allow various stakeholders an opportunity to come together. Through this process, the engagement was focused on community-based input and response sessions.

Objectivity was key throughout the process which allowed community members to freely speak about their ideas on the future of the language initiative.

Observation

The EBCI engaged three language experts to observe language programs and their environments. This occurred over a three-day period and primarily focused on instructional environments. The consultants brought forward a wealth of experience in linguistics and indigenous language preservation. Their backgrounds include specific work with Cherokee language in both North Carolina and Oklahoma, endangered indigenous languages in California, and a strong background in research and teaching methodologies. Each of the consulting linguists possesses advanced degrees and have spent time at the university-level instructing and researching language.

The consulting group visited multiple programs over the three-day period. This included the following: Kituwah Preservation and Education Program (KPEP), Cherokee Central Schools (CCS), Snowbird Library, Cherokee Adult Language Learners (CALL), Mothertown Project, Robbinsville After School program, University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNCA), Western Carolina University (WCU), and the Cherokee Speakers' Council.

Each visit consisted of observation and recording of notes from the team of consultants. The observations were primarily informal and did not disrupt the learning environment. This allowed the consultant team to gather an objective perspective of how language is currently being taught and learned throughout the community. In some instances, the consultants were able to engage in more defined and directed conversation with the instructors or program managers.

It should be noted that the observation phase was high-level due to time constraints. Specific and detailed information related to curriculum, methodologies, and language acquisition assessments were not included. Additionally, information related to the alignment of programs from an organizational perspective, the impact and use of resources, and the effectiveness and efficiencies of programming were not included. A more detailed evaluation and analysis is highly warranted.

Although high-level, key insights were gained through the observations. The insights were determined through the collective knowledge base of the consultants, and not a singular set of notes. Those observations occurring in multiple settings were prioritized, while singular occurrences received less emphasis. These served as the baseline for the facilitation with the stakeholders and community. Additionally, these are further articulated in the *Current State* section that identifies positive attributes of current efforts as well as opportunities for enhancement.

Stakeholder Facilitation

Building upon the insights gained from observations, a one-day facilitated session was held to begin to layout the path forward. For this phase of the project, the EBCI utilized facilitators experienced in Indian Country to ensure the conversation was productive and appropriate. The facilitators focused on objectivity and moving the conversation forward in a positive manner. Specifically, the intention of the facilitators was to bridge the gap between the professional observations and the ideas of the community.

The Cherokee Speakers' Council provided symposium protocol as ground rules for engagement and decorum. The Speakers' Council assisted the facilitators throughout the event and ensured mutual respect for all in attendance.

Stakeholders during the full-day session primarily consisted of those entities that had been observed or interviewed earlier in the week. The audience also included administrative officials from the various programs engaged in language learning and acquisition. Additionally, the session was livestreamed and recorded for access by the larger community.

The primary goal of the stakeholder facilitation was to build upon the observations and create a 'jumping off point' for future activities. These activities would be arranged through 30, 60, and

90-day initiatives, as well as longer term strategies developed as 1, 3, and 5-year goals. Observations were presented and discussion was facilitated, allowing the consultants to provide more detailed and specific insights. Using these observations, the stakeholders and consultants brought forward potential goals and actions to make positive changes on a path forward.

Community Facilitation

The symposium culminated with a community engagement session at the end of the week. This session invited the community to review the work that had been done, consider potential actions and goals, and provide input into what would work best. Similar to the *Stakeholder Facilitation*, this phase was led by experienced facilitators who objectively guided the conversation in a positive manner. The consultants were able to present a high-level review of their observations, while also providing some example of positive actions that could be taken moving forward. The symposium protocol provided by the Cherokee Speakers' Council was again utilized to provide a respectful and positive environment for all who attended.

Attendees included many of the stakeholders, community members, and those generally involved in language preservation activities. More specifically, this included teachers, parents, and others. Additionally, the session included questions and comments from those watching the livestream.

After the initial sharing of observations, potential priority areas and paths forward, the community was able to ask questions, provide comments, and propose additional considerations. These were captured by the facilitation team and have been included within the larger findings of this report.

Current State

To know where one wishes to go, they must be realistic of where they currently are. This includes identifying the strengths and opportunities to build upon, as well as the weaknesses and threats that need to be mitigated and planned for.

Captured quotes from the community members

“Everyone wants more speakers”

“Speakers like to speak Cherokee all day”

“We have to work together”

“New employees should learn simple greetings”

“Greet kids at the school in Cherokee”

“Language should be in Tribal programs”

“The whole boundary should be carved out for language”

“Create free resources that are available to all”

“Need remote learning opportunities through local Universities”

“We must share information and resources”

“The key is communication”

“Need a designated website and facebook to share information”

Positive Attributes – positive things that are currently happening

- Designated funding
- Alignment with values
- Alignment with Tribal government priorities
- Capacity building
- Resources assignments
- Documentation of progress
- Expanding programming
- Commitment of all stakeholders
- Tribal government support

Opportunities – those areas where work is being done, but improvements can be made

- Focus on creating speakers
- Allocation of resources
- Categorization of work and responsibilities
- Knowledge and resource sharing
- Promoting established methodologies
- Input on an overarching operating structure
- Strategic alignment of Tribal entities

Current Resources Focused on Language

There are multiple existing resources focused on the preservation and proliferation of the Cherokee Language amongst the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. With committed funding, including that of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, a strong basis exists upon which to build and expand. The following represent some of the resources focused specifically on language.

- Kituwah Preservation & Education Program
- Cherokee Central Schools
- Dora Reed Center
- EBCI – Summer programs
- Cherokee Youth Center
- Contracted resources – Jackson, Swain, Graham and Cherokee County schools
- Western Carolina University
- UNCA - Asheville

A PATH FORWARD

The intent of the Language Symposium was to provide a platform for strategic decisions moving forward with language preservation and proliferation. Through objective observation and facilitated community input, the Symposium was designed to serve as a ‘jumping off point.’ This framework would assist the EBCI in short-term actions, as well as long-term strategic goals around language initiatives. The short-term actions would be focused on 30, 60, and 90-day segments. The long-term strategic goals would require more defined buildout, resource commitment, and assignments. They would consider a 1, 3, and 5-year horizon.

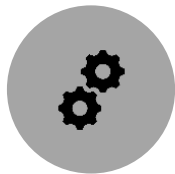
Priority Areas

To better organize the strategic platforms, priority areas are suggested as a means of grouping. These overarching themes will help the EBCI to align goals and objectives within larger categories. The priority areas will also assist in understanding the big picture of needs and focus in the area of language preservation and proliferation. It is worthwhile to note that many goals and initiatives will, and should, touch on more than one priority area.

Through the observation, discussion, and facilitation the following priority areas emerged and obtained consensus from the attendees of the Symposium.



SHARED
KNOWLEDGE



TEACHING &
LEARNING



COMMUNITY



RESOURCES

Shared Knowledge – This area captures those initiatives and activities associated with sharing resources and knowledge related to the larger fabric of Cherokee culture, of which language is a part.

Teaching & Learning – This area focuses on the practice of teaching language acquisition and the various methods and best practices of the profession.

Community – This area is the most far-reaching and would include social, cultural, political, and economic factors impacting the Cherokee community.

Resources – This area is comprised of the strategic alignment of resources – financial, human, cultural, etc.

Goal Considerations

Within each priority area, specific goal statements will emerge. Based on the results from the Symposium, these statements are not currently fully developed. However, general consensus was obtained for these goal considerations. Further, within each goal consideration one will find more specific activities that can be undertaken or developed. These activities will support the accomplishment of that goal consideration.

Timeframe represents the potential amount of time for the full accomplishment of that action. Those corresponding with 1-3-5 are the longer-term activities and initiatives. 1-3-5 indicates this is a 1, 3, or 5-year goal. These items require more detailed attention and consideration for the buildout of an actionable goal and objectives. Activities with a 30-60-90 designation in Timeframe represent those that are shorter-term and ready for more immediate action. These may be completed in 30, 60, or 90 days. The Division of Education needs to consider the specific allocation of resources and responsible party to complete these tasks.

Detailed buildout will be necessary for these activities. Information to identify during that buildout may include responsible party, resources, identification of milestones, performance measures, and defining what success looks like.

Shared Knowledge			
Evaluate and develop an archival facility, connecting all aspects of Cherokee culture		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Conduct feasibility study	1-3-5	
	Determine appropriate site location	1-3-5	
	Determine overall budget and funding sources	1-3-5	
	Create operations plan	1-3-5	
Capture, catalog, and archive audio, video and written use of the Cherokee language from fluent speakers		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Determine methods for collecting and storing language use	30-60-90	
	Create plan for collecting language use, including budgetary considerations	1-3-5	
	Communicate initiative to fluent speakers and their families and ask if they would like to participate	1-3-5	
	Implement plan	1-3-5	
Identify and include all Cherokee speakers in language preservation and proliferation efforts		Timeframe	Responsibility

LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM

	Capture existing databases from different programs and combine into one comprehensive list with important information	30-60-90	
	Reach out, visit, document	30-60-90	
	Ensure all speakers are included and invited to events	30-60-90	
	Develop comprehensive database with appropriate protections for confidentiality	1-3-5	
	Align with shared language resources	1-3-5	
	Explore innovative ideas for inclusion and expansion	1-3-5	

Teaching & Learning			
Develop a central collection of language resources for teachers and learners that is organized and accessible to all		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Share and evaluate existing collection of resources	30-60-90	
	Identify gaps	30-60-90	
	Evaluate technology solutions	1-3-5	
	Implement technology solutions	1-3-5	
	Align with best practices	1-3-5	
	Tag appropriately using metadata	1-3-5	
Design a shared approach to assess student progress		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Define overall goal and what progress looks like	30-60-90	
	Share current methods and rubrics for assessing student progress	30-60-90	
	Define criteria and standards that best measure progress	30-60-90	
	Develop assessment tools that best evaluate what progress looks like	30-60-90	
Inspire significant collaboration through information sharing and in-service training		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Define scope of information and training to be shared	30-60-90	
	Standardize sharing methods and key definitions	30-60-90	
	Develop platform through which to share information and training	1-3-5	
	Roll out information sharing platform	1-3-5	
Provide additional learning opportunities and encouragement for beginning speakers		Timeframe	Responsibility

LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM

	Identify all current learning opportunities	30-60-90	
	Elicit feedback from beginning speakers and teachers about which learning opportunities are most effective	30-60-90	
	Examine webinars as an additional learning channel	30-60-90	
	Design learning opportunities based on feedback from beginning speakers and teachers	1-3-5	
Expand “Teach what you know, share what you have” initiative		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Determine desired scope of initiative	30-60-90	
	Design public relations strategy for initiative	30-60-90	
	Deploy public relations strategy for initiative	30-60-90	
Develop strategy to link the systems together		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Gather all systems stakeholders together and confirm central vision for language	30-60-90	
	Assess efficiency and effectiveness of current methods for each system	30-60-90	
	Standardize language around methods and key information	30-60-90	
	Deploy most effective and efficient methods to all systems	30-60-90	
	Maintain inventory of all methods	Ongoing	
	Assess efficiency and effectiveness of methods on an annual basis and adjust strategy as necessary	Ongoing	

Community			
Articulate a central vision for language within the Tribe		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Schedule a follow-up meeting with leadership focused on overall direction	30-60-90	
	Identify reach of language proliferation – only Cherokee or include non-Cherokee who would like to speak Cherokee as well	30-60-90	
	Determine strategic direction and resource allocation	1-3-5	
Encourage language presence throughout the community		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Encourage greetings in Cherokee in local schools	30-60-90	
	Encourage language usage in local businesses	1-3-5	

LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM

	Erect signage in both Cherokee and English	1-3-5	
Assure strategic alignment with other cultural preservation and awareness initiatives		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Identify all cultural preservation and awareness initiatives	30-60-90	
	Assess strategic direction of each initiative	30-60-90	
	Engage all stakeholders in planning sessions to more appropriately align operations towards a shared vision for cultural preservation	1-3-5	
Effectively distribute public information about language events		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Determine appropriate communication channels that will reach the intended audience	30-60-90	
	Ensure information materials is in a digestible format	Ongoing	
	Distribute information through most effective channels	Ongoing	
Cultivate culture of acceptance in use of language in everyday life		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Allow speakers to come together and enjoy each other's company, speak the language, no formal instruction	30-60-90	
	Expand Coffee Hour initiative	30-60-90	
	Normalize the language and its use	1-3-5	
	Designate Language Space for language use (public)	1-3-5	
	Business customer service in the language	1-3-5	
Close the generational gaps of speakers		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Assess desire to learn Cherokee over all age groups	30-60-90	
	Develop age-appropriate curriculum	1-3-5	
	Design initiatives to include all interested	1-3-5	
Inspire a healthy community		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Assess community access to healthy foods	30-60-90	
	Assess community access to recreational facilities, including exercise equipment and classes	30-60-90	
	Design incentive program for healthy habits	1-3-5	

Resources		
Conduct organizational, operational, and programmatic assessments of language programs	Timeframe	Responsibility

	Based on assessment results, create additional relevant curriculum and align resources appropriately	1-3-5	
	Develop an oversight structure	1-3-5	
Evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Build-out current and upcoming resource allocations to determine impact	30-60-90	
	Create criteria for determining levels of success	1-3-5	
Improve alignment of fluent speakers with second language learners		Timeframe	Responsibility
	Identify available second language learners	30-60-90	
	Realignment of resources	30-60-90	
	Data collection around second language learners	1-3-5	
	Opportunities for better alignment	1-3-5	

Next Steps

The Language Symposium marks the beginning of a strategic focus on the Cherokee Language within the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Many resources and opportunities are in place, but guidance may be needed. Based upon the observations, the facilitation, and best practices CSG recommends the following considerations for next steps.

- Further define timeframe for short-term actions
- Identification of responsible party, necessary resources and expectations for short-term actions
- Creation of a strategic language steering committee to guide the strategic planning process for long-term considerations
- Communication plans for sharing input and creating ownership