



# Safeguarding Your Language Through Documentation

A Toolkit for Beginners



## Acknowledgements

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**SILR**  
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2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF  
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## Terminology Considerations

This document is written largely in the English language, which is entwined with colonial worldviews. As a result, the document contains some terminology that is more relevant to western ways of learning. This section attempts to offer alternatives that more closely reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) International Decade of Indigenous Languages Working Group has developed the following three preferred terms and definitions to describe the state of languages:

**Linguistic diversity:** When we talk about linguistic diversity, it is important to recognize that First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and dialects are distinct and unique. These languages are at different levels of recovery or fluency strength and as a result, have diverse needs for their maintenance, revitalization, awakening, reclamation and restoration. While languages are distinct, they share the experience of colonial oppression and discrimination that systematically tried to erase them.

**Language equity:** This phrase refers to the need for all Indigenous languages to receive equitable financial and legal support. It also entails recognizing all Indigenous languages as official languages. As the first and original languages of what is now referred to as Canada, they deserve the same respect, support and recognition as the two currently recognized official languages.

**Teacher:** Indigenous teaching often occurs through storytelling, songs and games and by listening to elements of nature. More inclusive terms for “teacher” that embody Indigenous perspectives on teaching and sharing knowledge include storyteller, pedagogue, Elder, knowledge holder, and language holder. It is important to recognize that learning may occur outside of a classroom setting.

**The CCUNESCO International Decade of Indigenous Languages Working Group has raised the following terminology considerations:** Recovered, awakened, awakening, reclaimed, revitalized, maintained, reclamation, restoration, few remaining speakers, at risk of being forgotten or going dormant. The terms “dormant” or “sleeping” are preferred over “extinct” because the latter implies that a language is or could be lost forever. Languages come from the land; therefore, they cannot go away. They might go dormant, but the seeds of the language are embedded in the land.

The First Peoples’ Cultural Council has developed the following five additional definitions:<sup>1,2</sup>

**Sleeping language:** A language that is not actively spoken in a community.

**Reawakening a language:** A notable moment in revitalizing a language when a sleeping language is brought back into public consciousness to strengthen and reinforce its use.

**A living language:** One that is actively spoken in a community and will be shared with younger generations.

**Silent speakers:** A silent speaker is someone who has a good understanding of a language but does not speak it. There are many kinds of silent speakers, including residential school survivors, people who grew up hearing but not speaking the language and people with internalized negative beliefs and values about their language that have been pronounced by Western society.

**Language learner:** A language learner is anyone in the process of learning their Indigenous language by participating in any type of language learning method, program, or class.

### Other terms

**Mother tongue speakers:** Someone who learned a language from birth.

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1 FPC News Release. First Peoples’ Cultural Council. (2023, November 29). <https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FPCC-News-Release-pentlach-Language-Announcement-29.11.2023-4.pdf>

2 Dunlop, B., Gessner, S., Herbert, T., & Parker, A. (2018). *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages*. First Peoples’ Cultural Council. <https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FPCC-LanguageReport-180716-WEB.pdf>

*“Our languages are integral to our relationships, they are part of our sacred bundles and allow us to speak to the land, the waters, and the universe and all of the beings who inhabit these places. Our languages enable us to maintain our relationships and responsibilities... if we don't have our languages, who will be the caretakers?”*

Elder Marilyn Capreol,  
Shawanga First Nation



## The purpose of this toolkit

Documenting a language can keep it strong for future generations, and anyone can contribute to this work. If you're interested in documenting your language, this toolkit - created by and for Indigenous Peoples - offers practical steps you can follow. We recognize the urgency and need to record our languages, and we lead this type of work through training and action-focused strategies.

We designed this toolkit for people without formal training in linguistics, documentation or technology. If you're interested in supporting your community through language revitalization or would like to document your language or the stories told by relatives or community members, this toolkit is for you. We aimed to make it simple and easy to follow in hopes of supporting language learners, Knowledge Holders, youth, and anyone else on their language documentation journeys.

## The International Decade of Indigenous Languages

The United Nations declared that 2022-2032 would be the International Decade for Indigenous Languages. The aim is to bring awareness to the alarming rate at which these languages are becoming endangered and take steps to preserve and revitalize them. Initiatives, programs and action plans have been developed to support the mobilization and preservation of Indigenous languages during this decade. Documenting the languages is one approach, especially in their oral forms.

According to the United Nations, of the 6,700 languages spoken worldwide, 40 percent are in danger of becoming dormant, and most of those that are threatened are Indigenous. Yet Indigenous languages are important to our identities. They express cultures and worldviews and are critical tools for expressing our self-determination and existence. They also hold vital information about scientific and traditional knowledges of ecosystems, conservation and sustainability that can benefit the whole of society.

During this decade, Indigenous Peoples around the world are mobilizing to document and maintain their languages for today and for future generations. This work can be hard, especially when only a few people work on a given language.

By documenting your Indigenous language, you are contributing to the well-being of your family, community and Nation and ensuring that your knowledges and traditions are passed down to future generations. It is also a way to honour and respect the diversity of human cultures and ensure that the voices of Indigenous Peoples are heard and valued - especially through our ancestral languages.



As the United Nations states, “Languages are one of the most significant emblems of human diversity, revealing how we can perceive, relate to, and understand the world differently. Languages are vehicles of our cultures, collective memory, and values.”<sup>3</sup>

Here are two questions for you to consider:

- What if someone wants to record their Indigenous language to have for their own personal record, or to share with their family and/or community? Is this possible?
- How can someone who does not have training in linguistics or anthropology document their language? Is it possible to document your own language without this experience?

The answer to both questions is YES! Language documentation can be time-intensive, but it does not need to be overwhelming or confusing. It can be as simple as creating a simple plan, using affordable recording equipment, saving your recordings, sharing them within your family and community, and collaborating with others to do more of this work.

We hope this toolkit provides you with the information you need to document your language. In it, we have provided suggestions for the equipment you'll need, some considerations related to both set-up and ethics, elicitation techniques, what to do after you are finished recording, and how to edit, save and share your recording.

*“We have ecological rights - we have a right to the air we breathe, and language is our breath of life, it needs to be protected in the same way we protect our waters, our trees, our lands and all of its beings.”*

Dr. Opolahsomuwehs Imelda Perley, Wolastoqi, Tobique First Nation, St. Mary's First Nation and Houlton Band of Maliseets

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3 United Nations. (2023, February 10). UN DESA Policy Brief No. 151: Why indigenous languages matter: The International Decade on Indigenous Languages 2022-2032 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-no-151-why-indigenous-languages-matter-the-international-decade-on-indigenous-languages-2022-2032/>

## What is language documentation, and why is it important?

*“Our languages are the voices of each of our lands. The lands of which they were born. They tell those stories. They keep our connection to our ancestors. They keep our connection to the ecology, to everything and everyone that grows on that land. And we need to be able to know that our languages serve as their memory.”<sup>4</sup>*

Dr. Lorna Wanosts’a7 Williams, Lil’wat First Nation

Language documentation is a subfield of linguistics. The key steps include: recording the language (using various methods), creating and maintaining metadata, and transcribing, analyzing, translating, archiving and sharing the results. These steps are usually done by people with training in linguistics.

However, when it comes to documenting a language for the purpose of reawakening and/or preserving it, we don’t believe that a lack of such training should present a barrier. We believe in using documentation to describe and archive languages and to support people in learning and teaching them.

The steps involved are similar and may seem overwhelming at the outset. But if you focus on one step at a time, the process will seem less daunting.

Language documentation is important for Indigenous languages because it allows us to keep valuable records of our languages for future generations. We can record phrases, words, traditional stories, prayers, songs and more—all of which are important in understanding our cultures and identities as Indigenous Peoples. After we document our languages, we can use the recordings to create language learning resources, tools and curricula that incorporate the most important components of learning a language: listening, hearing, speaking, writing, reading and culture.

For languages that have few elderly speakers remaining, time is of the essence. Elders and fluent speakers participating in the documentation process should be supported, such as with offers of transportation, honoraria, gifts, food and ethical protocols.



## Safeguarding a language

Language documentation can **awaken a dormant (sleeping) language**. According to the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), "A **sleeping language** is a language that is not actively spoken in a community... **Reawakening a language** is a notable moment in revitalizing a language, in that a sleeping language is brought back into the public consciousness to strengthen and reinforce its use."<sup>5</sup>

There are quite a few examples of Indigenous communities reawakening their languages. The Wendat language is a great example of how reawakening a sleeping language can bring positivity into a community and revitalize its culture and identity. The last fluent speakers of the Wendat language passed away 150 years ago. However, today, children are learning and practicing how to pronounce words. Wendat language documenters were able to reconstruct their language through historical documentation from the 17th and 18th centuries. This documentation is now used to train the educators who teach the language to children at the local elementary school and daycare.

Reawakening the Wendat language has had broad impacts, according to Megan Lukaniec, a Wendat member, and professor of Indigenous language revitalization at the University of Victoria: "Even though we have no speakers today, there is still that emotional layer to what we do and the kind of healing that is coming out of this."<sup>6</sup>

Another example of reawakening a dormant language is the pentl'ach language. According to a 2023 FPCC news release, the language was once considered to be sleeping because there had been no active speakers since the 1940s. "However, the Qualicum First Nation has been working for several years to reclaim the pentl'ach language.

The nation received grants from FPCC's Language Revitalization Planning Program to develop a community language plan, including a plan for reconstructing pentl'ach from the documentation that exists, and now it is considered a reawakened language."<sup>7</sup>

## Before you begin recording

Before you begin the process of recording your language, ensure you are not duplicating materials or content that already exists. It is likely that some sort of language documentation has been done in your community. Researching what already exists will save you time and allow you to focus on what hasn't been done yet.

If you are not sure where to begin, inquire whether your community has a language committee, and if so, approach members to ask about their work. If there is no language committee, you can approach your Band Council, Elders, fluent speakers, or language learners and ask if they know of any tools, materials or recordings, or if your community has a website. You can also search for archived materials in your language using the key words for online searching at the end of this section.

If something similar to what you were planning to create already exists, see if you can expand on or add to it. Is there any missing information? You can also collaborate with the person (or people) who created the existing recordings or tools to advance them.



Key words for online searching:

- [Endangered Languages Project catalogue](#)
- [Recording \[insert language\]](#)

5 FPCC News Release. First Peoples' Cultural Council. (2023, November 29). <https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FPCC-News-Release-pentlach-Language-Announcement-29.11.2023-4.pdf>

6 Deer, K. (2019, December 21). "it's a big dream but we need dreamers": Reawakening the dormant wendat language | CBC News. CBCnews. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/wendat-language-wendake-revitalization-1.5375926>

7 FPCC News Release. First Peoples' Cultural Council. (2023, November 29). <https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FPCC-News-Release-pentlach-Language-Announcement-29.11.2023-4.pdf>

# 1. Equipment



*"I am a firm believer in spoken language rather than written. Writing is a tool, but the oral is more important."<sup>8</sup>*

Alfred Joseph, Ktunaxa, ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation

A certain amount of technical equipment is fundamental to the recording process in language documentation: it ensures not only that you capture the elicited content, but that you can create quality audio and video recordings that can be accessed in the future.

In this toolkit, we describe the equipment you'll need, including whether it is essential or optional. While we cannot recommend specific brands or models, we will discuss how to choose equipment that fits your budget and meets your needs. For more ideas, you can also look at blogs from experts in the field.



Key words for online searching:

- [Best video cameras of \[year\]](#)
- [Best affordable video cameras of \[year\]](#)

## Recording device

● REQUIRED

A recording device is the single most important piece of equipment you need to document a language. This is what you will use to record the audio or video materials. A recording device can be as simple as your phone, or it can be a camera, affordable audio recorder or camcorder. The choice depends on what's available, your budget, what you are comfortable using, and—most importantly—what type of content you want to record.

You can do **audio-only** recording if you want to capture only voice or **video recording** to capture both video and voice. We suggest recording video whenever it's possible, safe and appropriate. This is because audio recordings can't always portray cultural contexts (such as gestures) as well as video recordings. Video recordings may also invoke more engagement and excitement for viewers. For these reasons, if you want to record more than just words—such as a story or prayer—video recording is the better option.

You should also think about how much storage you have access to and the audio and video formats you would like to record in. Generally, audio files take up less storage space than video files.

Let's do a quick review of audio file formats. An audio file format is the format in which the audio you record is saved to your device. Different formats have different pros and cons—for example, some are better than others at preserving audio quality for longer.

Audio files can be **compressed** or **uncompressed**:

- A compressed format removes some data to make the file smaller and easier to store.
- Uncompressed audio file formats do a better job at retaining the quality of the audio but take up more storage space.

There are also **two main types** of audio file formats: **lossy** and **lossless**.

- Lossy formats lose a certain amount of file data permanently when compressed, which can drastically reduce the audio quality.
- Lossless formats do not lose any quality in the process of being compressed. The drawback is that these files are usually larger than lossy ones and can require more storage space.

The two most common types of **lossless** audio file formats are WAV and FLAC. A FLAC file is compressed, while a WAV file is uncompressed. We recommend WAV because it is the best quality audio that you can record. The FLAC format is more outdated, and newer devices are usually not compatible with it. That said, WAV will take up substantial storage.

MP3 is considered a **lossy** format. Therefore, if you have enough storage space, we suggest using WAV instead. (However, if you have limited storage space, MP3 will do.)

You can easily convert your MP3 into a WAV format and vice versa. There are many conversion apps and websites if you would like to do this.

Whatever recording device you choose, be aware of what audio file format it records in because this will be instrumental to preserving your recordings. In addition, be sure you have adequate storage space for your recordings.



Key words for online searching:

- [Lossy vs lossless audio formats: how to choose the right one?](#)

If you are recording audio only, then an audio recorder or your phone is all you need. But if you want to record video, you'll need to choose a camera. Deciding if you need only your phone versus a camera or audio recorder is important. Below, we outline some points that may help you decide which option or options you would like to use.

## Smartphone



Your smartphone is the most affordable option for documenting your language: any type of phone you use will have video and audio recording features that are free and easy to use. In addition to the built-in features on your phone, you can also download free voice or video recording apps. If you have a small budget, then your phone is your best option.

The downsides are comparatively limited storage space and (usually) lower audio and video quality. Audio and video files take up a lot of storage space, so if you do not have a storage plan, this might not be the best option for you. You can avoid the storage space issue by immediately uploading each recording to a third-party storage app (such as Dropbox or Google Drive) and then removing the file from your phone before you begin the next recording. However, this can become tedious if you are doing a lot of recordings.

If you decide to use your phone as an audio recorder, then you can use the pre-installed audio recording app or download another one to use after doing some research. You can usually alter the audio settings within apps to suit your needs. You might have to look for online tutorials to figure out how to do this. Keep in mind that tweaking your settings to improve the audio quality may result in your audio files taking up more space.

Different audio recording apps will have different functionalities. If you want to keep it simple, and you don't have much experience with audio recording,

then we suggest using the app that came with your phone. It will capture quality audio with minimal background noise and likely offer editing options (albeit limited ones).

You can also use an external microphone to make your audio recordings sound even better.



Key words for online searching:

- [Best voice recorder apps for high quality \(Android or iPhone\)](#)

## Audio recorder



An audio recorder is a good option, especially if you have limited storage space on your phone, or if you do not want to save recordings on your own personal device. Audio recorders come with a range of storage options, from as little as 4 GB to as much as 64 GB or more.

An audio recorder will require a bit of an upfront investment. They are available at many price points (generally from \$40 to \$200), depending on the quality and storage capacity you want. When choosing, look for at least 4 GB in storage. If you feel that you need more space than your recorder comes with, keep in mind that many recorders accept memory cards.

Look for at least 8 hours of battery life.

Ease of use is also important: can you easily transfer files from your audio recorder to a computer? Check if the recorder has a cable you can use for this. In addition, check for sound quality and what sound format the device records in. It is best to choose one that records in WAV or MP3.

Audio recorders are great for longer sessions, such as interviews, stories, prayers and ceremonies. However, a drawback is that to edit the recordings or share them with others, you will first have to transfer the files to a computer.

In other words, an audio recorder is strictly to record audio. To do any other steps, you will need to upload your files to a computer.

If you decide to buy an audio recorder, make sure it has better sound quality than your phone. There are various affordable, semi-affordable, and expensive audio recorder options. You can learn more about these through online research and find them at BestBuy, Amazon, Walmart, Staples, or other electronic stores. You can also look at buying second-hand devices on websites where people sell things.



Key words for online searching:

- [What are the different types of voice recorders and how to choose a good one?](#)
- [Easy to use voice recorders](#)

## Camera

If you want to record video in addition to audio, a simple and affordable option is to use your phone—aside from letting you record, most phones also offer some options for improving video quality. For instance, you can change settings like brightness, resolution, frame rates, stabilization, and white balance (to improve colour capture). To do this, search online for “how to change video recording settings on my [iPhone/android model]”.

However, for maximum video quality, you might want to consider buying a camera. There are many different types available, so it’s best to research thoroughly before deciding. Bear in mind that you will most likely have to spend at least \$200 for a decent camera, and you will also have to buy a memory card for storage (usually around \$20 and up).



Some cameras are specifically designed to take photos, while others are meant for taking videos. Ensure you buy the correct camera for your purposes. Before making your purchase, familiarize yourself with the pros and cons related to camera type (DSLR, mirrorless, compact, action), image quality, lens type, size, and video performance.

If you are going to spend hundreds of dollars on a camera, make sure it offers some functionalities and mechanisms that your phone doesn’t. There are many guides and blog posts you can read online about this. Search for “what to look for when buying a camera”. Watch and read step-by-step tutorials so you can be confident that you’re using the best video settings. Much like recording devices that have different audio file formats (WAV, MP3, FLAC), video cameras have different video file formats.



Key words for online searching:

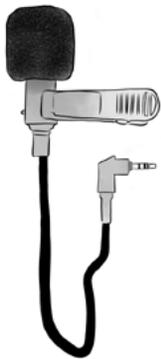
- [Beginner’s guide to buying a camera for video](#)
- [What are the different types of video formats?](#)

# Microphones

● OPTIONAL

A microphone is not required, but it can enhance the quality of your audio considerably. It can eliminate background noise and create clearer recordings, especially when recording in noisy settings.

If you can afford it, it is worth investing in a good model because most microphones last a long time. There are many different brands and models available on the market, ranging from small Lavalier mics to large studio mics, with prices starting at about \$35 and going to over \$300.



Lapel/Lavalier mics are small, which is great if you want to make a video in which someone's face is visible or are demonstrating something and need to keep their hands free. Headset mics are best for sound quality but might be uncomfortable to wear for a long time and may not look the best. Large studio mics are also great for sound quality, but can get in the way of recording, and have to be situated properly for the speaker.

You may also need some sort of stand for a studio mic so the speaker can speak into it comfortably.



When looking for a microphone, check what formats it can record in (MP3, WAV, etc.), what directions it can record in (unidirectional, omnidirectional, or bidirectional; see image below), how much storage space you will need on your recording device to accommodate the microphone, and whether your microphone will be compatible with your recording equipment (for example, whether it requires a USB, iPhone or Android adapter to plug into your recording device).



## Unidirectional microphones

capture sound from one direction. Therefore, it is best suited for recording one person because it reduces ambient noise in the background.



## Omnidirectional microphones

are best if you are recording a large group, such as singers, or a conversation among multiple people because it captures sound from all directions.



## Bidirectional microphones

pick up sounds from two angles making them ideal for recording conversations between two people.

You may also want to consider whether the microphone can perform in different environments. For example, if you are recording outside, can it eliminate wind noise, or do you need to buy a windscreen or dead cat? (A dead cat is a type of fuzzy windshield that is used to eliminate wind noise when recording outside.)

All in all, any type of mic that you buy will be an asset to your recording setup.



Key words for online searching:

- [Microphone buying guide](#)

## Headphones

● OPTIONAL

Headphones are optional, but they can be useful if you want to hear the audio being recorded (to ensure the sound is recording properly), and they can help your ears pick up things you might not normally notice. For example, a computer fan may not sound loud to your ears, but it can sound loud on the recording, and with headphones on, you will notice this. Headphones are also useful when editing your recording.

You can use any type of headphones, whether over the ear headphones or ear buds.



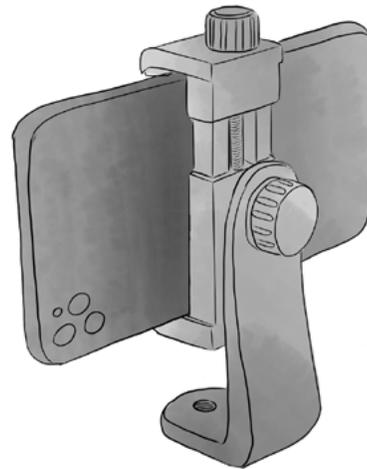
## Tripod

● REQUIRED

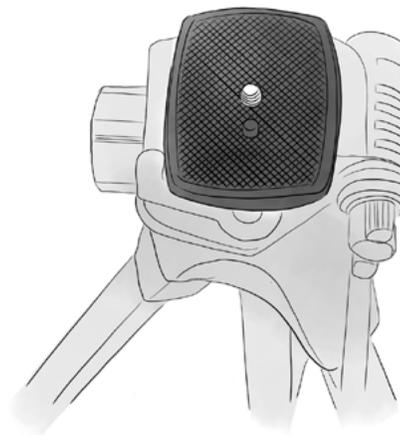
A tripod is required for video recording. It will allow you to mount your phone or camera and ensure you have a good angle on your participant throughout the recording process. Using a tripod will also free up your hands and ensure your recording is not shaky. This way, you can focus on your participant, take notes if needed, and be more present during the recording. There are many different options in terms of size, height, weight and price.

Note that there is a difference between a phone and a camera tripod. These will have different attachments (to hold your phone or camera), so check to see which type the tripod comes with.

A phone attachment will have clips to hold the phone,



while a camera attachment will be flat, with a small screw in the middle.



Tripods can range in price from \$25 to \$100. A less expensive tripod is completely sufficient.

Please note that there is a difference between tripods used for photography and video recording, but both have similar functionalities.



Key words for online searching:

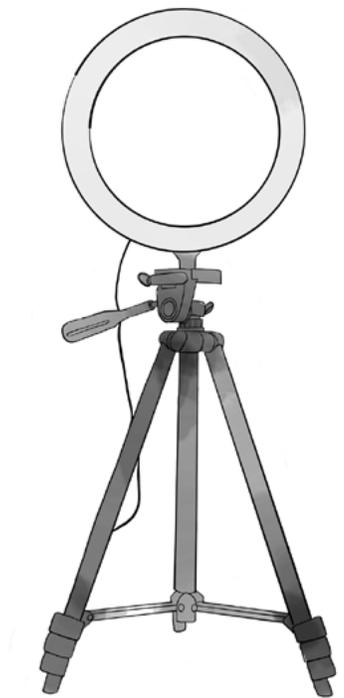
- [What to consider when buying a tripod](#)

## External lighting

● OPTIONAL

External lighting is a great way to enhance your video recordings, especially when recording indoors or in dimly lit rooms. It can add brightness and clarity.

Although it's optional, you might want to invest in a portable camera light to get professional results. There are several different options and many price points, so be thorough with your research before buying one. Some tripods come with a ring light, so if you want both a tripod and external lighting, look for package deals.



Key words for online searching:

- How to get the perfect video lighting
- How to choose the best lighting setup for video recording

## Equipment recap

Equipment is integral to the documentation process and merits some consideration and research at the get-go. Let's review what was discussed.

- For audio recordings, you can use a phone, an audio recorder, or a video camera.
- A microphone is optional but can be a great investment for any type of recording, and you can usually get away with a less expensive model.
- Headphones are optional but can help you be more confident about the quality of your audio.
- If you plan on video recording, then a tripod is important because it will help create better-quality content and will also free up your hands during interviews. Less expensive tripods will work just fine.
- Finally, if you want to enhance your video recording you can use a ring light or external lighting to make your video look more professional.





## 2. Ethical considerations

*“Language is inextricably linked to ceremony and to the land.”<sup>9</sup>*

National Association of Friendship Centres

Before you begin the recording process, you should familiarize yourself with **cultural** and **ethical protocols** to follow when recording someone who will be sharing their language, stories and cultural knowledge. Researchers affiliated with institutions, such as universities, often follow such protocols to ensure that when they document people, languages and cultural content, they do so ethically. Given that you are not a researcher affiliated with an institution, you might not consider this necessary—but you still have a responsibility to respect the cultural and ethical protocols of your community, your culture, and the people you are recording.

<sup>9</sup> Our languages, Our stories - Towards the Revitalization and Retention of Indigenous Languages in Urban Environments. National Association of Friendship Centres. (2018). [https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Briefs/DiscussionPaper\\_NAFC\\_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Briefs/DiscussionPaper_NAFC_e.pdf)



**Cultural protocols** refer to the value systems, customs and cultural practices in a particular family, community or nation. Your community and Nation will have their own protocols for asking about and sharing their language, cultural practices and beliefs, such as songs, stories or prayers. It is important that before you record content, you are aware of the protocols for gathering and sharing it. For instance, in some communities and Nations, it is customary to offer tobacco when asking an Elder for their time and knowledge. Some communities and Nations allow only certain people to hear and learn specific stories, and certain stories can be shared only at certain times of the year. A story might belong to a family, or cultural protocols and ceremonies might determine when a story can be shared. There are many good reasons why a person or community might not want to share their knowledge with you.

There can also be hesitancy to share knowledge because some communities have had experiences where people from outside have come and mined their knowledge without understanding or respecting how it should be used or shared and have caused harm or damage as a result. For this reason, before you record someone, initiate a conversation to create a shared understanding of what type of content you will record, who will be able to listen to it, where and how it will be shared, why it is being recorded and shared, and how it will be used, now and in the future. This will ensure you respect your participants' boundaries and protocols.

On top of personal protocols, you also have a duty to ensure that you will not be harming your community in any way by sharing the content you record. After having a conversation with your participant, you should ask about community protocols and parameters for sharing knowledge. An Elder or Knowledge Keeper might be able to help you learn about these protocols.

**Ethical protocols** are similar to cultural protocols, but they focus more on the individual, the type of information being documented, and guiding values that are not tied to cultural norms. An important component to be aware of is ownership of knowledge. Who will own the recording? Ownership is important when documenting a person, culture, language and history to ensure that the individual and/or community will have ownership of the resource being created. In many past instances, researchers who documented Indigenous communities claimed ownership of the knowledge they recorded, sometimes even publishing the knowledge as if it were their own.

This is unethical because the knowledge belongs either to the person being recorded or to their community. For this reason, you should always be clear that you will not own any of the recordings. The person from whom you elicit knowledge will have complete ownership of them. This becomes important if, for example, the person you recorded asks you to remove the recordings from wherever you published them or asks you to give them all the copies.

When recording someone, it is important to obtain their **consent** beforehand to ensure they are okay with being recorded, understand why you are doing so, and know how you will use the recording. It is a good idea to have a consent form for the participant that clearly articulates why you are documenting them and how you plan to use and share the recording. A consent form can be short and simple (see Appendix 1). The main requirements include the names of the participant and interviewer (in this case, you), the date and place, what content you are recording, and how. It can also include a list of ethical questions for the participant. It is best not to set up the ethical questions to elicit simple yes/no answers. Instead, have a discussion with your participant to determine what they are okay with. This may reveal additional privacy and ethical considerations that you might not recognize using yes/no questions.



For example, you might find out that your participant is okay with you emailing the recording to everyone in the community but does not want you to publish it on YouTube. Or you may be able to publish the whole recording, but they don't want you to cut up little clips to publish separately. Another question is whether participants want their real names included. Some people may opt for a **pseudonym** or a fake name or may simply prefer to be referred to as anonymous. This is usually for safety and privacy purposes. Either way, it is important that you ask about it before recording.

Another important ethical consideration is ensuring that interviewees have access to the recording at any time. You can send it to them or create a copy in a format they can access.

Consent forms should be used whether you are recording audio or video:

- **Verbal consent** is acceptable, and some participants may prefer it. To obtain verbal consent, read the consent form to your participant and go through the questions. The only difference is that rather than signing a form, they will confirm verbally. You would usually record this verbal consent when you start the audio or video recording.
- **Written consent** requires the participant to read the consent form and sign it. After you have obtained consent, you can begin your recording.

Another important component of cultural and ethical protocols is ensuring that there will always be someone who can consent to future uses of the recording. In other words, if the participant were to pass away, who would have control over the recording? You can include this question in the consent form (see Appendix 1), and the participant can name someone in their family or someone else they trust. This aspect of consent is particularly important if you are collecting a family history or story. Ideally, you would hope that these recordings will be accessed for many generations, so ensure that you know who will have ownership of them over the next 100 years or so.

Some people like to approach this in time segments. For instance, the participant may stipulate that their child will initially have control over the use of the recordings, but after a period of time, it will be up to them to name the next consenting family member. Or the participant might just say that someone in the family will have ownership a hundred years down the line, or that the recording will go back to the community for ownership. Whatever is decided, it is important to have this conversation so that the participant has a chance to give it some thought. Issues with consent can make it difficult to access a resource as time goes on.

It is important to take cultural and ethical protocols seriously because otherwise, your actions could harm your participant and/or community. For example, it would be harmful to publish recordings or resources from a community that were not meant to be shared publicly, such as a story, prayer or ceremonial practice. You could also harm your participant if they share personal details or stories about other people that should not be made public. Or your participant might have access to cultural knowledge that they do not actually have permission to have, and revealing this fact by sharing the recording could harm them spiritually or psychologically. It is better to be prepared and cautious to avoid issues.

We have attached an example of a consent form (Appendix 1) that you can use. If you are unsure about whether to choose verbal or written consent, ask your participant what they prefer. If they opt for written consent, make sure you have two copies of the consent form: one for them to keep and one for you.

After the consent process is complete, it is also important that you **compensate** your participant for their time and knowledge. This does not have to be monetary—it can be a gift, favour, public acknowledgment, or other culturally appropriate way of showing gratitude. It is always important that we acknowledge our people for their time and knowledge.



Key words for online searching:

- [Linguists code of conduct](#)
- [First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession \(OCAP\)](#)

## 3. Setting up

Before you start recording, make sure you know how your equipment works and how to set it up. There are several things to consider.



## Who you are recording

Think about what your speaker will need to feel comfortable. Will they sit in a cozy chair? Do you have food and drink for them? Are they aware of the process and the approximate amount of time you are asking of them? Are they okay with the questions you will be asking? Is the participant a loud or soft speaker? (The latter question is important because you may have to adjust your audio settings accordingly.)

## Location and background

Give some thought to where you will be recording. Try to ensure there will be limited background noise and be aware that while background noise may not be all that apparent to you, there may be low-key hums from household appliances like fans, air conditioners and refrigerators. Are you near one of these? Or by a road? Can you hear cars driving by? Think about the best location for maximum sound quality. If there are other people where you are recording, make sure they know you are recording so they do not interrupt you. If you are recording a video, does the background look cluttered? Is the speaker visible in the video? Is the speaker set up in a good spot?

## Microphone and audio

After you have established a quiet, spacious, comfortable environment, setting up your recording device relative to the speaker is important. Depending on where they are sitting, ensure that your device is close to them so you can record quality audio.

If you are using your phone or audio recorder, it is a good idea to set up a table between you and your speaker. If you are using an external microphone with your recording device, make sure you have both the recording device and microphone in good locations. Ensure the microphone is set up at a good range to pick up the speaker's voice. You may be able to adjust the mic settings on your recording device. Before you begin recording, do a few tests to determine the best spot to place your microphone and recording device. If you are using your recording device's built-in microphone instead of an external microphone, consider recording the audio separately through a second source.

A recording device's built-in microphone is not always the best, so the audio may not be clear. Unexpected technical difficulties can sometimes occur that cause your audio not to record at all. Your back-up device could be another phone, an iPad or tablet, or an audio recorder, for example. It would be frustrating to record an hour-long session only to discover that the audio was not working, or that pivotal moments in the interview are not audible.

## Headphones

If you want to use headphones during the recording process, it's best to set them up after you have finished setting up your audio. Ensure they are not in the way. Headphones are fairly easy to set up—it's usually as simple as plugging them into your recording device. Remember, headphones are not necessary, so if it overcomplicates things, you can skip them.

If you plan on recording only audio, you can skip the next steps below, which focus on video.

## Camera or phone

Once you have found the best spot for your microphone and audio, go ahead and set up your video camera on a tripod. When setting up your tripod, look for the location that will give you the best angle on your participant. This will be a matter of trial and error, and you may have to move the tripod around. The best spot will likely be in front of the speaker—not necessarily directly in front of them, but in a spot that will capture the front of their face.

When recording, it is best to include the speaker's torso, arms and hands in the shot. This is because people often gesture when talking, and those gestures may contain important cultural information. If you plan to record cultural practices or ceremonies, then place the tripod farther away so you can see your speaker's whole body and any important cultural objects. The most important thing is to ensure you're getting a clear shot. If using an external microphone, set it up after you have decided where to place your tripod. If using your phone for video recording, the default settings are usually good, so you shouldn't have to worry about changing them.

## Lighting

In video production, lighting can make or break the quality of your shoot. Human communication often includes nonverbal factors, such as body language and facial expression. Good lighting will allow viewers to see these clearly. Poor lighting can make it difficult for viewers to focus on nonverbal cues, potentially leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

Fortunately, you don't need a huge budget or state-of-the-art equipment to achieve good lighting in your videos. Remember, the key is to experiment with different lighting setups and find what works best for you. Consider including the natural and artificial light sources available in your chosen location. If the room is too dark, can you brighten it? Does adjusting the brightness on your camera help? The location of the lighting is also crucial—for example, do not have your speaker sit in front of a window, because the backlight will create shadows that make the person hard to see. Also, avoid extreme side-lighting because it can create unnatural facial shadows that obscure expressions and gestures. Do not add so much light that your participant squints or blinks frequently.



Key words for online searching:

- Language documentation training webinars from the Endangered Languages Project

## Script: How to start a recording session

Before you start your project, it is important to establish a pattern for how you will begin recording each session. This will ensure you collect all the details you need each time. It will also be helpful in the future when people are listening or watching the recording: it can give them a better sense of who the interviewer and interviewee are, where and when the recording took place, and what was being recorded (type of words, phrases, what kind of story or song). We have created a template script to guide you (see Appendix 3). You can print this script and have it ready to go before you start your sessions. Please also review Appendix 4 for a sample recording checklist to ensure you have everything you need to start.



Examples of good framing



Examples of poor framing

## 4. Content considerations and elicitation strategies

Before you begin recording, it is essential to **plan ahead**: think about what you want to record, communicate this information to the speaker in advance, and arrive with a well-thought-out plan. Don't forget that you are working with someone else, and it is important to make efficient use of their time as well as yours. Planning ahead will ensure you document the content you had in mind and don't stray off-topic.



The first thing to think about is what you hope to record. Then, make sure your speaker is comfortable with your planned content. For example, do you want to record words, phrases, sentences, stories, conversations (possibly with multiple people), or prayers? Then, think about related topics. For example, if you want to record words, it is best to prepare topics and categories, such as foods, animals or colours. There are many different possible topics and categories, so it is safe to say that you and your speaker will not get bored.

Finally, while you should always have a plan, be ready to adapt it if your speaker wants to focus on something else.

## Type of content you can record

### Wordlists

Wordlists are lists of words that fall into particular categories. For example, if the category is animals, you will have a list of words such as dog, cat, cow, rabbit and so on. You can have as many wordlists as you want. Wordlists are good starting points if you have never done this type of work before. They can also be a great icebreaker for the start of a recording session to get your speaker thinking in the language.

The drawback is that the speakers might find it challenging to translate words directly from English into your language. Remember that many words have no direct translation. In that case, you can ask the speaker to expand on words that come close to the English word you are asking about. You can gain a deeper understanding of your language that way. For instance, in your Indigenous language, the same animal may have different names depending on its age, gender or cultural connection. Be prepared to take notes and expand your word list.

It's also a good idea to send your wordlist to your participant a few weeks before the interview so they can start thinking about the words. This can help make them feel more comfortable during recording. Sometimes, if you ask a speaker randomly what a word means and they do not know it off the top of their head, it can discourage them and make them feel like they don't know enough. It is better for them to feel prepared and comfortable.

You can add to your initial wordlists as your session goes on. For example, you can ask your speaker if they can think of any additional words that fall into the category. Below is an example.

### Category: Animals

Word in English	Word in your language (e.g. Ktunaxa)
Dog	xa?+cin
Cat	pu:s
Black Bear	nupqu
Rabbit	kyanuq+umna

### Phrases and sentences

Phrases and full sentences can sometimes be easier for speakers because they allow more room to convey meaning. It might be easier to ask your participant about a whole sentence than about a single word. But again, it is important to understand that many sentences will not be directly translatable and that there will be meanings that can't be conveyed in a literal or straightforward way. Translating certain sentences may be difficult.

Phrases and sentences are also useful because they can help you learn about the language structure. Much like wordlists, you can categorize the sentences and phrases you want to record. You can split them into categories, such as food and drink, greetings, partings and more. You can also categorize them based on seasons or locations, and as with word lists, you can add to them as the session goes on. You should send the phrases and sentences that you have in mind to your speaker ahead of time.

You can include both wordlists, phrases and sentences in a single recording session. For example, you could start with a word list, then use the words in phrases and sentences. Below are examples.

### Category: Greetings

English phrase	Phrase in your language (e.g. Inuktitut, South Qikiqtaaluk Dialect)
Hello, my name is _____.	ᐱᐱᐱᐱ, ᐱᐱᐱ ____. Aingai, atira ____.
What is your name?	ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ? Kinauvit?
Where do you live?	ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ? Namimiutauvit?
I am from _____.	____ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ. ____miutaujunga Ex: Ottawamiutaujunga

### Category: Animals

English phrase	Phrase in your language (e.g. Michif, Southern/"Heritage")
What is the dog's name?	Taanshi ee-ishinihkaashot li shyaen?
How old is the cat?	Keekwai sooñ n'aazh li minoosh?
How many cows are over there?	Kobaen d'animoo ee-ayaachik neetee?

## Stories: Traditions, legends, personal histories

Stories can provide an abundance of knowledge in your language and help you understand grammatical structure. Like sentences, stories are a great way to acquire language because they consist of natural speech. You will learn about different rules and meanings in your language that you might not learn through single sentences or phrases. There are several different types of stories you can record, such as traditional and sacred stories, mythical stories, and personal histories—and every story you record can be about something new.

Remember that not all stories should be shared publicly, and specific cultural and ethical protocol can be associated with storytelling. We recommend that you review the ethical and cultural protocol section of this toolkit before beginning and ensure you do your due diligence before recording and sharing stories.

## Conversations: Scripted or natural

Conversations are another great source of language. They differ from stories because they are interactional, so have different structures and connectors. A variety of topics may come up, including concepts that might not be covered in a story.

If you want to record a conversation, you would usually include at least two people (apart from yourself). Prior to the recording, you can prepare a scripted conversation for the speakers to follow. English scripts are fine, and can be helpful in eliciting specific conversations, concepts and meanings, or may help your participants generate their own ideas of what to talk about in the language. It is also easier to translate a scripted conversation. For example, you could create a script that talks about greetings or that focuses on how someone talks about their day.

Another option is a natural (or freeform) conversation in which your participant chats about something that comes to mind or a topic you suggest. Make sure to have questions ready to nurture the conversation. Keep in mind that freeform conversations can be more challenging to translate.



## Speeches, ceremonies, prayers and songs

*“Language lives in the people who speak it and in their traditions.”<sup>10</sup>*

Lynda Minoose, Cold Lake First Nation

You can also record speeches, ceremonies and prayers. Ethical and cultural protocols should be carefully reviewed and discussed beforehand. Recording this type of content is a great way to learn about cultural practices and your language.



Remember, think about what type of content you want to record before you begin so you can make the most of your time with your speaker and cover all the topics and content you had in mind.

## Elicitation strategies

There are a few additional elicitation techniques and strategies that you can use depending on the type of content you want to record. These strategies can also help your speaker feel more comfortable. For example, you can use props or visual aids while the speaker is telling a story.

You can use a question-and-answer approach for word lists, phrases and sentences. This can help you start conversations around words and phrases that you might not understand.

### Question & answer (Q&A) interviews

Q&A interviews offer a lot of flexibility: you can easily adapt your questions to the topics, or use the same questions for each topic. Still, speakers may run into difficulties trying to directly translate words from English. It is important to be strategic in how you ask your questions, so you don't confuse the speaker. Be flexible and leave room for the speaker to offer additional context. You can ask yourself beforehand (or ask the participant during the interview):

- Is there a specific word for this in our language?
- How would I convey this meaning?
- Is there a word or phrase that is similar to this meaning?

There are likely many meanings and words in your language that cannot be translated easily into English. It is vital that you keep this in mind while recording. Do not pressure participants to find a term that may not accurately reflect the word or meaning.

10 Henning Epp, K. H. (2022, September 27). *Five Things I've Learned About Preserving Indigenous Languages*. New Trail. <https://www.ualberta.ca/newtrail/people/five-things-ive-learned-about-preserving-indigenous-languages.html>

## Props

Using props is another way to elicit language. Props are great for gathering different types of content, and they can make it easier for the speaker by enabling them to come up with a sentence based on what they see in front of them. This can help them stay in the language more comfortably. There are many different types of props you can use to elicit language, such as puppets, dolls, action figures, or any other objects related to the activity or topic you are focusing on. For example, you can use action figures to act out a specific topic, or household objects to convey your meaning. You can also use materials used to make traditional art or cultural items and elicit information in this way. For example, you might gather birchbark, spruce roots, a crooked knife, strips of cedar, some water, bear grease and pine sap, and then ask about making birch bark canoes or baskets.

## Visual aids

Visual aids are different from props in that they are more like pictures or storyboards than physical objects. They can be used to elicit different types of content, and like props, they can help you overcome translation issues. In some cases, participants might find it easier to use visual aids than to act something out using props. You can use pictures, storyboards, wordless books, or silent movies, or you can play a movie on mute. Wordless books are those that use only pictures to tell a story (they can be children's books or books used by linguists), and silent movies are those that do not have any audio and are open to interpretation. There are many websites where you can find storyboard templates. You can also create your own with pictures or drawings, or you can use existing, complete storyboards. You can find wordless books in stores or at your local library. For movies, look online or check your collection.



Key words for online searching:

- [Storyboard template](#)
- [Indigenous wordless books](#)
- [The Master Elicitation List](#)
- [Language Gathering and Collection Guide, First Peoples' Cultural Council](#)

There are many other strategies you can use to elicit (or draw out) words and stories, such as descriptions or demonstrations of actions like doing laundry, cooking, cleaning, discussing recipes, crafting (like making a ribbon skirt), or other cultural practices. These can be easy and fun entry points, especially for video recording. You can also document two things at once - in other words, not just the language itself, but instructions on how to make something.

In this section, we have provided three of the most common elicitation strategies. It is important to think about what strategy is best suited to the content you want to elicit.

Before you go out and record, create a checklist (see Appendix 4). This will ensure you have everything you need before you start recording.



## 5. Recording

While you are recording, there are a few things to keep in mind. Before you start, make sure you have a template script ready (see Appendix 3). Ensure you have obtained verbal or written consent (see Appendices 1 and 2) before starting.



**Always make sure that the interviewee is comfortable.** Are they getting bored? Has their mood or body language changed? Do they look tired? These are important indications to pay attention to. If you can tell they are getting bored, it might be time to move the conversation along or change up the content or topic. Perhaps they need a break, or it might be time to end the recording.

If you notice any changes, check in with your speaker. Ask if they are still comfortable, or if they would like a short break. It might be beneficial to have multiple ideas and topics prepared in case your speaker does lose interest.

You can then move from one topic to another. Always engage with your speaker while recording: ask questions when needed and move the conversation along.

Don't forget to **make sure your audio and video equipment is working.** Sometimes your recording device might stop, or the audio might change. Actively checking from time to time will ensure you do not lose any content.



Key words for online searching:

- Do It Yourself Toolkit: Fundamentals of Field Recording

You may find it easier to prepare several shorter recordings rather than a single long one. You can stop recording and start again when moving from topic to topic or theme to theme. This can help you to access, edit and share your work later.

While recording, consider taking notes about any important points the speaker makes. You can also use a timer and include time references in your notes to make it easier to go back and listen to specific points when reviewing later.



## 6. Saving your work

After you have finished recording, think about your next steps. Will you continue to record, or was it a one-time event? Make a plan with your speaker. Think this through before the recording session so your participant knows what to expect. This way, if you plan to continue, you can agree on a date and time for the next session.

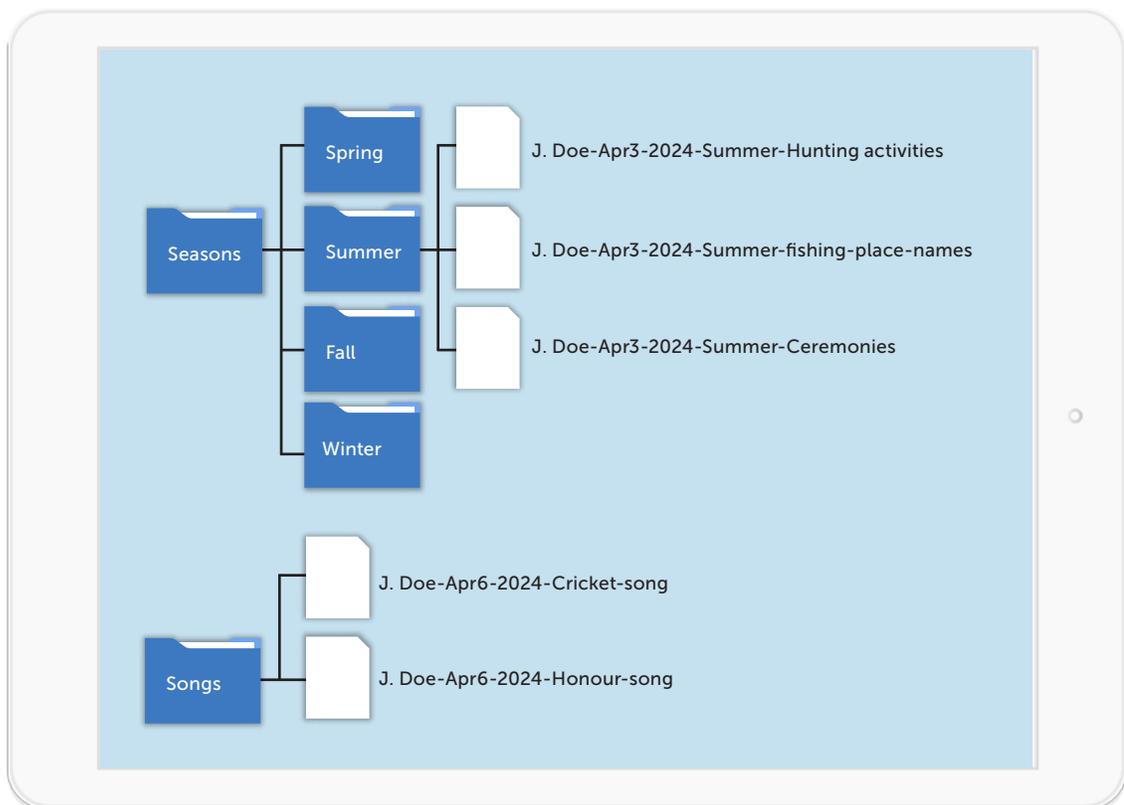
## Saving your recording

After you have finished recording, the most important step is saving your work. Make a copy of the recording and store it in a second location, just in case. In fact, it is a good rule of thumb to save your recording in **three different locations**, so you never lose your work. Most devices will automatically save and store your audio or video file when you press the stop button to end the recording. If you use your phone to record, uploading the recording will likely be simple because most third-party storage apps allow you to upload directly from your phone. However, if you use an audio recorder or video camera, you will need to upload the recording to a computer.

There are different places where you can save and store your recordings after your sessions—and they all have pros and cons.

One option is a **third-party online storage app**, known as cloud storage. There are many apps for this—some are free (up to a certain amount of storage), while others come with monthly or annual fees. We suggest several here that are free, easy to use, and accessible. However, note that some of these have ownership and security policies that you may not agree with. This is something to be wary of, given that some people do not feel comfortable sharing their data with tech companies.

Most storage apps have an option for a paid version, which will usually give you added storage and other features that don't come with a basic free account. Give some thought to how you will organize your content once it is stored. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who has not been part of your project, but wants to use the content: How can you set things up to make it easy for them to find what they are looking for? What categories would be helpful? Think about filenames, too. Ensure you include the same basic information (such as speaker, date, and topic or focus) for each recording. The format does not matter as long as it is consistent across recordings. See example below on how to organize and name your files.



## Storage pros and cons

### Google Drive

Google Drive is one option for saving audio recordings. Accounts are simple to create and come with up to 15 GB of free storage. (Beyond 15 GB, you will have to upgrade for a fee or create a second account.) Files are easy to upload. If you use your phone as a recording device, you can do so directly.

Something to keep in mind: Google Drive does not have good video processing in the app. When you upload a video recording to Google Drive, depending on the length of the video, you may not be able to view the recording on the Google Drive app. This means that if you go onto Google Drive and try to open or view your recording directly on the app, it will not play. You would have to download the video recording from Google Drive to your device and view it this way. If you do re-download the video, there is a possibility that an error could occur during the downloading phase, and you could lose the video entirely.

Google Drive's privacy policy states that, "You retain ownership of any intellectual property rights that you hold in that content. In short, what belongs to you stays yours. We do not claim ownership in any of your content, including any text, data, information, and files that you upload, share, or store in your Drive account."<sup>11</sup> Unless you share your recordings with others, your recordings remain yours. It is also worth mentioning that technically Google Drive could access your recordings if they wanted to do, but they have a strict privacy policy to ensure your documents are private and only viewed by you. However, there is no guarantee that your recordings will be secure from spam, or hackers.

In addition, you could get locked out of your account or Google could terminate the account unexpectedly (such as if it believes you did not comply with its terms or policies). This would cause you to lose all your data.

### Dropbox

You can sign up for a basic Dropbox account for free and get 2 GB of storage. This is less than what you would get with Google Drive, but the trade-off is that Dropbox is better at processing videos. Dropbox has the same privacy policy as Google Drive: They do not own any of your files, they will only be viewed by you (unless you share them with others), there is no guarantee that they will be secure from spam, or hackers, and they could terminate your account unexpectedly.

### MEGA

MEGA is probably the best free third-party storage app. A free account comes with 20 GB of storage—no other free storage apps are as generous as this. Uploading is quick and easy, and if you want to view your recordings in the app, there are no issues with it playing. You can view a video recording immediately after you have uploaded it. There are no security issues with MEGA because it uses end-to-end data encryption. MEGA cannot view your content and does not own it. The only issue is that MEGA does not allow you to change or recover your password—so if you forget it, you will be locked out of your account forever.

### Computer hard drive

If you have a computer, you can save your recordings on it. You might prefer this to an online option for security reasons. With online storage apps, the concern is that they can shut down your account, lock you out of your account, or even cease operating. Still, while your computer might be safer in many ways, technical glitches could lead to a loss of files—and eventually, your computer will become outdated, so you'll need a plan for transferring your files. You also need to consider how much available storage you have on your computer.

If you choose this option, it can still be a good idea to keep a copy of your files elsewhere in case your hard drive fails, or your computer is stolen or lost.

11 Google. (n.d.). Google drive terms of service. Google Drive Help. <https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2450387?hl=en%22+%5C+%22%3A-%3Atext>

## USB or external drive

The final option for storage is old-school: never underestimate a USB stick or drive to store your recordings. If you are not the most tech-savvy, then a USB stick can be a great straightforward option. These drives also offer privacy and safety: no one else can access them without your permission, and your recordings won't be lost for reasons out of your control. In addition, while they do cost money, they are a one-time purchase, so are technically cheaper than online options in the long run. USB sticks and external drives are available in a range of sizes, from as small as 4 GB up to 1 TB or more.

However, a USB stick does require you to have a computer. Also, keep in mind that as technology evolves, you may have to invest in an adapter to plug it into a computer. You also need to store these devices in a safe place and routinely check your recordings on the device. It is a good idea to have multiple USBs or external drives for your recordings. This will safeguard your recordings and ensure you have a backup should one of the devices fail, get lost or stolen.

## Long-term storage: Archives

You might want to consider approaching a museum or library to ask if they may be able to support you by providing storage space in their archives. This is not always a possible or accessible option, but it is important to think about long-term storage because many of the online options (like the ones mentioned earlier) may not offer long-term solutions. An archive can be a great place to store your recordings because it usually offers a large amount of storage capacity, multiple back-up storage options (so you will never lose your recordings), and you can devise an agreement with the organization that determines who has ownership over and can access the archived data. If an organization agrees to house your recordings, you might consider including the ethical and cultural protocol mentioned earlier in the agreement you co-develop.



# 7. Editing your recording

Editing your recording is optional, and it can be complicated. Due to the many variables involved, such as the types of files and software used, as well as your knowledge and skill levels, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive guide within this document. Additionally, editing may require specific knowledge and proficiency with various software packages, which are beyond the scope of this toolkit. However, if you are interested in editing your recording, it is certainly feasible with basic editing software. We suggest recording shorter segments. This way, it will be easier for you to edit out long pauses, enhance the sound and video quality, and delete background noise.

Editing also allows you to add subtitles or captions. In fact, the possibilities with video editing are endless—so much so that they could be the subject of an entire course. We suggest starting with simple editing software (or even just the default editing features on your phone) if you only want to trim certain segments. You can also watch videos or step-by-step guides online for tips.

If you'd like to give video editing a try, consider researching some editing apps online to find the one that best suits your needs. A search for "how to edit audio/video using [SOFTWARE NAME]" may turn up some useful explanations on YouTube or other social media platforms.

## Pros and cons of different storage solutions

Method	Cost	Security/privacy	Ease of use	Longevity	Key pros and cons
Google Drive	Up to 15 GB free storage	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use, but less secure than some other options</li> <li>• Processing issues for videos</li> </ul>
Dropbox	Basic account comes with 2 GB free storage	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use, but less secure than some other options</li> <li>• Less free storage than other cloud options</li> <li>• Better at video processing than Google Drive</li> </ul>
MEGA	Free account comes with 20 GB storage	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our top pick for cloud storage</li> </ul>
Computer hard drive	Free if you have a computer	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private, but subject to loss/theft and possibly storage space issues</li> </ul>
USB stick/external drive	Upfront cost, but cheaper than paying for storage over the long term	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private, but subject to loss/theft and possibly storage space issues</li> <li>• Requires a computer</li> </ul>
Archive	Free	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generous storage, highly secure, inexpensive, and long-lasting, but more time-consuming to set up</li> </ul>

## 8. Mobilizing and collaborating

*“Our language is the heart and soul of our culture, as it allows us to communicate with one another, to perpetuate our concepts and worldview in a holistic manner while respecting the uniqueness and specific characteristics of our respective communities. Our language unites us and brings us together.”<sup>12</sup>*

Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish, Anicinabe (Algonquin)  
Abitibiwinni First Nation

<sup>12</sup> Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish. Minwashin. (2021, March 25). <https://minwashin.org/en/artists/richard-ejinagosi-kistabish/#:::text=Richard%20Kistabish%20is%20an%20Anicinabe%20%28Algonquin%29%20from%20the,English%2C%20as%20well%20as%20Anicinabemowin%2C%20his%20traditional%20language.>



Once you have recorded your content, saved the recording, and possibly edited it, what are the next steps? Think about what motivated you to document your language in the first place. What can you do next to continue your progress? How can you make sure that members of your community (current and future) will be able to access what you have documented? Are other people in your community doing similar work? If so, are there ways to team up with them?

**Mobilization** refers to the act of putting resources—in this case, your recordings—to use for a particular purpose. Mobilization is important to ensure that the content you recorded can be used by people in your community—such as for language revitalization, curriculum development, archiving, preservation, teaching, and more. Will you develop and share language materials? Will you make use of social media? (If so, be cautious and get permission from your speaker and community first. Once you post on social media, it can be hard to take it down.)

Whatever you decide, you should let others know what you are working on. You can start by sharing your recordings with your language committee, language learners and speakers, Elders, or teachers. You can ask your Band Council for support in sharing your content through newsletters, social media or email.

You can also **collaborate** with others in your community doing similar work. This might lessen the load for everyone involved and help you work toward a specific goal. You can also use the audio or video you have recorded for specific additional language projects.

Some examples of how people have used language audio to develop language resources include short films, animated stories, and music videos. There are many ways to use your recordings to create fun language learning materials.



Key words for online searching:

- [Examples of language video projects](#)
- [Chipmunk and Grasshopper Story by Aiyana Twigg \(YouTube\)](#)
- [Sky Hopinka - Anti-Objects, or Space Without Path or Boundary](#)



## 9. Conclusion

*“When you learn your language, you’re learning the world view of your ancestors. I really take that to heart and I try to live through that every day.”<sup>13</sup>*

Sydney Māliidi Roberts, Kwakwaka’wakw

There are many ways to document a language, and this work is urgent and critical in Indigenous communities because their languages are under threat of becoming dormant. Many Indigenous communities have been supporting language revitalization, reawakening dormant languages, and mobilizing language resources for many years, but this work has not always been aware or appreciated by the greater public, or supported by governments.

We have covered the basic steps involved in documenting your language, starting with what documentation is and why it is important. We have also explained the equipment you need (and how to set it up), ethical considerations, elicitation techniques and strategies, what to do while recording, and how to save your recordings. Finally, we outlined how to mobilize and share your recordings and offered some ideas on how to develop language resources from them.

You are a driving force within your community, and you can be a part of positive change. By documenting your language, you will not only be supporting yourself and your participant, but your whole community and future generations.

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13 Deer, K. (2020, March 8). Celebrating indigenous women who are reclaiming and revitalizing their languages | CBC news. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/women-indigenous-languages-1.5488482>

# Learn more

Want to learn more about documentation and technology? We suggest checking out these websites:

[Indigitization Toolkit \(UBC Library\)](#)

[Check Before You Tech \(First Peoples' Cultural Council\)](#)

[RISE UP Workshop: How to Use Digital Tools to Support Minoritized Languages \(YouTube\)](#)

[Digital initiatives for Indigenous languages \(UNESCO; see pages 110-126\)](#)

[Language Documentation Training Webinar videos \(Endangered Languages Project\)](#)

[Language Documentation and Language Revitalization \(Cambridge University Press\)](#)



# APPENDIX 1: Consent form

## Project overview

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am documenting the language and cultural practices used by individuals in my community by recording speakers. This work will support the preservation of our language and culture for the future. The recording will take place at [LOCATION].

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to be recorded, photographed and interviewed as a knowledge partner in this project. I understand that:

- I do not have to answer any questions I am not comfortable with and may stop the interview at any time.
- Contributions made by all participants in this project will be held in confidence.
- I can request that a pseudonym (or fake name) be used to identify me in audio recordings.
- I will have the chance to approve my quotations or personally identifying information before it is made public.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

My name can be made public

Yes

No

My home community and Nation can be made public

Yes

No

These recordings may be shared on social media

Yes

No

\*If I am unable to give my consent over these recordings, I give permission to \_\_\_\_\_ on my behalf.

Phone number of person listed above: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Participant information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Home community and Nation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mailing address (to receive copies of recordings)

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_ City/town: \_\_\_\_\_

Province/state: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal/zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2: Verbal consent script

**If a participant prefers to provide verbal consent, then you can read the above consent form and receive their consent verbally. Other suggestions for gaining verbal consent can include the questions in this appendix.**

I am [YOUR NAME] and I am here with [INTERVIEWEE NAME]. You have expressed that you prefer to provide your consent verbally. Today, I will read a written consent form to which you will respond with your answers.

First, I am going to read the project overview. [READ THE PROJECT OVERVIEW in the consent form]. Next, does [INTERVIEWEE NAME] agree to be recorded, photographed and interviewed as a knowledge partner in this project? (The interviewee will respond yes or no.)

I will now explain what [INTERVIEWEE NAME'S] participation in this project means:

- They do not have to answer any questions they are not comfortable with, and they may stop the recording at any time.
- They understand that contributions made by all participants in this project will be held in confidence.
- They can request that a pseudonym, or fake name, be used to identify them in audio recordings.
- They will have the chance to approve quotations or personally identifying information before it is made public.

Confirm: Does the interviewee...

- Consent to these conditions?
- Wish to have a fake name?
- Want their name made public?
- Want their home community and/or nation made public?
- Agree to be video recorded?
- Agree to be audio recorded?
- Agree that their photo may be used in a final report (if applicable)?
- Consent to the recordings being shared on social media? (The participant may answer with specific parameters.) For example, can the recordings be shared on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube—or one, some, or all of these?
- Have preferences as to who can view the recordings? (Can everyone view them, or only specific community members or people? Allow the participant time to think about this question.)

If you are unable to give your consent to the recordings, who do you give your permission to? (Ensure the interviewee states the name clearly.) What is the phone number of [PERSON THEY GAVE PERMISSION TO]. What is their email address?

Moving on to the participant's information:

- What is your name?
- What is your home community and/or Nation?
- What is the date today?
- What is your email address?
- What is your phone number?
- If you are comfortable, do you mind sharing your mailing address in case there are physical copies of the recording to share?
- What is your street address? What city/town, province and country do you live in? And what is your zip or postal code?

Thank you for providing your verbal consent.

## APPENDIX 3: How to start a recording session (script)

Before you begin your project, it is important that you establish a pattern for how you will start the recording at each session. This will ensure you are able to gather all the details you have in mind. It will also be helpful in future when people are listening or watching the recording. It can give them a better sense of who the interviewer and interviewee are, where and when the recording took place, and what was being recorded (type of words, phrases, what kind of story or song).

You can follow the below template to guide you when you start your recording session.

I'm [YOUR NAME AND INDIGENOUS AFFILIATION OR ANY OTHER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION YOU WANT TO ADD].

I'm here today with [NAME OF INTERVIEWEE] on [DATE].

We are located in [COMMUNITY, PROVINCE].

It is currently [TIME OF RECORDING].

Today, we will be recording [CATEGORY AND OR BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IS BEING RECORDED].

## APPENDIX 4: Sample recording checklist

**Before you begin, make sure you have:**

- A secure recording space
- A plan for the content you want to record
- Transportation for speaker arranged
- A printed verbal consent form script
- A printed script to begin your recording session

Recording equipment, such as:

- A recording device
- A microphone (optional)
- Headphones/earphones (optional)
- A tripod
- Lighting (optional)
- Extra batteries (for camera or audio recorder)
- Charging cables for recording devices
- Snacks and refreshments for the participant
- Printed copies of the content you want to record
- Any props or objects needed to elicit content
- Paper and pen to take notes
- Additional language resources, if available (dictionaries, materials, etc.)







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