



# ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE TRANSLATION PROTOCOLS


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Language protocols are necessary to ensure reciprocal and equitable relationships between Indigenous translation experts and partners. While these protocols are not exhaustive, they capture some of the core tenets of our work.


 The foundation of an Indigenous worldview is an intimate relationship with localized space. Honor Alaska Native lands, peoples, languages, cultures, and governance systems within the translation process.


 Drawing on Indigenous self-determination and collective-decision making, Indigenous communities must actively lead and participate in every step of the language translation process: from the designing of translation content to the distribution of translation materials.


 Center Indigenous ways of knowing and learning language within the translation process.


 When facilitating translation panels, a culture of care and group agreements assist in creating a healthy environment. Translation panels should reflect community, family, elders, and youth.


- Decolonization resists the imposition of


 Euro-American values and knowledge systems that contribute to the systemic subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

 Careful attention must be applied to ensure that colonial knowledge systems and relationships are not replaying amongst Indigenous translators and partners.

 Language partners must include adequate compensation, reasonable deadlines, and clear responsibilities within written agreements.

 Indigenous language experts/communities should own and benefit from all translation work, and follow local protocols for approval and distribution.

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 Translation work is most powerful when Indigenous languages and terms are implemented into policies that decolonize systems and provide material and cultural benefits for the Indigenous peoples that create such terms.


To see a full description of these protocols, contact


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Given the history of language oppression and colonization in the United States, it is important that partners of Indigenous language experts are held accountable for just and equitable actions. The following recommendations highlight some examples:


## DO:


 **DO** consult Tribal governments or language committees before hiring individual Indigenous language translators.


 **DO** invite Indigenous language experts to collaborate equally on messaging campaigns from the beginning of the project.


 **DO** include Indigenous people in the decision-making process used to publicize or distribute translation materials.

 **DO** include legal, policy, or medical experts who can help break down the meaning of legal, policy, and medical terms.


 **DO** ensure that funding is secured for translation of an entire document, or for selecting the most important points within.


 **DO** provide translation deadlines that give Indigenous translators adequate time to prepare, edit, or consult with other community members.


 **DO** make space for non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to discuss differences in cultural communication.


 **DO** ensure that all technological or word processing systems are set up for the most efficient work environment for Indigenous translators.


## DO NOT:


 **Do NOT** hire translators or a translation company that is not affiliated or acknowledged by a Tribal government whose language is being featured in a translation project.


 **Do NOT** disrespect Elders. Never interrupt or talk over an Elder—leave space for silence and deep listening.

 **Do NOT** assume that linguists or linguistic knowledge are superior to First language speakers or Indigenous knowledge.

 **Do NOT** document Indigenous languages and attempt to sell products back to the community.

 **Do NOT** assume that a concept in English has a “direct” translation in an Indigenous language.

 **Do NOT** simply request the translation of titles or cover pages of a document.

 **Do NOT** share cultural content without Tribal consent and the opportunity to be reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness by knowledgeable local people representative of the culture in question (Alaska Native Knowledge Network).