

KONTINÓNHSTATS

Mohawk Language Custodian Association

Association pour la préservation
de la langue Mohawk

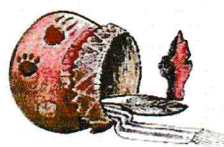


STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2025

Summary Document

Language, culture, identity



The Mohawk Language Custodian Association's Strategic Plan was developed in collaboration with the MLCA's Board of Directors, Teachers, Students and members of Kanehsatà:ke.

Consultations took place from March 2020 until June 2020.

Requests for a copy of this summary report or the entire strategic plan process report may be sent to:

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A Word from the Board of Directors

Dear Kanehsata'keró:non,

We would love for you to join us on our journey to bring Kanien'kéha back into our daily lives, into our homes and into our community. We have prepared this strategic plan to help guide us in doing so.

Learning the language requires a great deal of time and commitment. Teachers must encourage students. Students must be brave and speak their language. Differences in dialect must not discourage us from speaking our beloved Kanien'kéha. We appreciate the efforts of second language speakers. There are many parts of the language that do not follow the rules. It makes it difficult, we realize, to learn and to speak. We rely on the expertise of our first language speakers to help us in revitalizing our language and keeping it alive. We also rely on our learners to keep practicing and sharing their language. We hope that all, young and not so young, will continue to encourage each other as we revive our beautiful Kanien'kéha.

We envision a future where a language law or constitution reinforces the importance of learning, speaking and using the language in all services in the community. Though the results of the survey do not reflect this idea at this time, we felt it was important to start reflecting on a future law now. Given the limitations of the pandemic, it was difficult to assess the reason for this response. It reflects an unclear survey question or a lack of information on the topic. Unfortunately, time is no longer on our side. As you know, we are losing speakers daily. This is why the students currently enrolled in the language program are critical to the survival of Kanien'kéha.

The dedication and commitment of the students in the intensive language program is admirable. They have devoted their time and energy to learning their language and eventually, of sharing it with you and the entire community. They are constantly proposing new ways of fundraising to keep the language program alive. Please encourage them when you see them and support their fundraising efforts with your donations.

We will continue to seek funding for the pursuit of the objectives set in this plan and for the ongoing promotion, protection, preservation and revitalization of our beloved Kanien'kéha. One day in the near future, we hope to be able to share the knowledge we have acquired over the years in a conference, eventually, when we will be allowed to gather again.

Until then, continue to use your language every day, regardless of how little or how much you know and regardless of the dialect or accent you use to pronounce the words.

In peace and friendship,

Hilda Nicholas, President,

Ellen Gabriel, Vice-President,

Linda Cree, Secretary/Treasurer



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Background

The Mohawk Language Custodian Association (MLCA) was incorporated under Part II of the Canada Corporations Act by letters patent August 12, 1999. The association is part of the Tsi Ronterihwanónhnha ne Kanien'kéha Language and Cultural Center. The association is a not-for-profit corporation and was created when funding for the language and cultural center was reduced to a point to where it was no longer possible to ensure ongoing programming or curriculum development. The association is able to seek funding and donations from different foundations to achieve its goals for the preservation, revitalization and teaching of the Mohawk language, culture and history. The MLCA is governed by a board of directors, as per the by-laws of the corporation. There are currently three directors on the board of directors.

The MLCA adheres to the Mohawk Language Standardization, as was established at a conference in Tyendinaga in 1993. Standardization is necessary for individuals to communicate effectively with one another¹. This method is always critical in creating new words to express modern day life in Kanien'kéha. The language taught at MLCA adheres to this system, while respecting different dialects spoken. With a standardized language system, it is possible to teach early literacy skills in Kanien'kéha.

In 2016, an evaluation of educational services in Kanehsatà:ke included an evaluation of the Tsi Ronterihwanónhnha ne Kanien'kéha Language and Cultural Center, which operated under education services. Several recommendations were made to ensure the materials and curriculum developed for language and culture remain accessible to the schools in Kanehsatà:ke.

As a result of assimilation policies, there is now a state of urgency to revive Indigenous languages. In 1996, UNESCO declared that “Canada’s Aboriginal languages are among the most endangered in the world.” There are only 60 fluent speakers remaining in Kanehsatà:ke and they are aging. MLCA wishes to reflect on the future of Kanien'kéha in Kanehsatà:ke. The outcome will be based on future funding possibilities.



In 2020, the MLCA received funding from Public Service Canada to develop a five-year strategic plan. As the expert in language, culture and history in Kanehsatà:ke, the MLCA, knowing the legislative landscape would soon change, decided to renew their strategic plan, in consultation with speakers, learners and teachers. This new strategic plan will enable MLCA to use their expertise to benefit the preservation, promotion, protection and revitalizing of Kanien'kéha and Kanien'kéhá:ka identity, culture and values.

The MLCA retained the services of the Business Services Department of the First Nations Adult Education School Council to complete the strategic planning process, report and plan.

¹ The Mohawk Language Standardisation Project (1993) *Conference Report*. Literacy Ontario.

Vision in KANIEN'KÉHA

Given the Mohawk Language Custodian Association's mission, a vision statement was developed in Kanien'kéha.

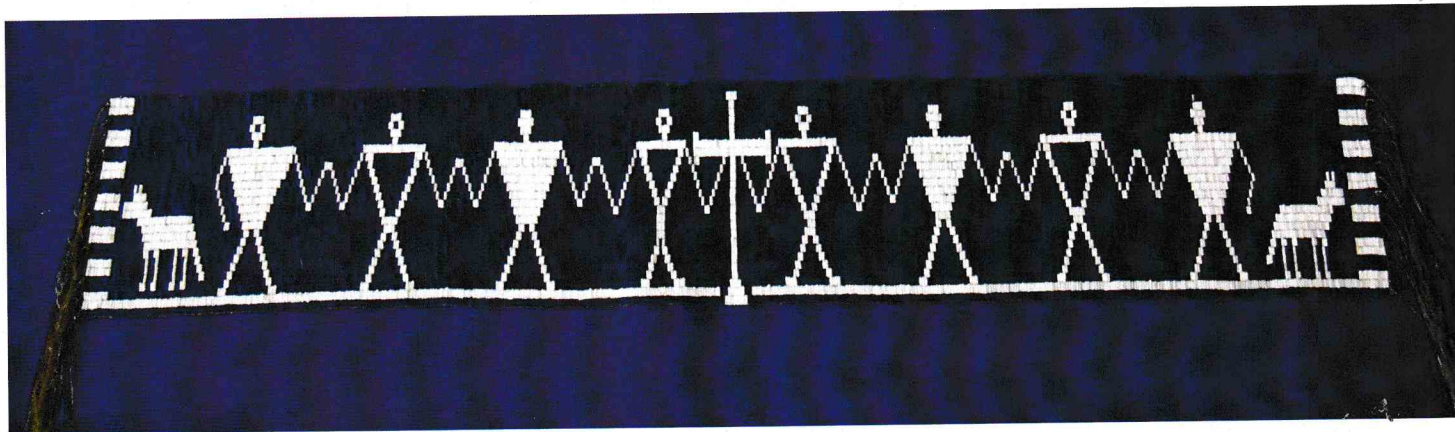
“Ska'nikòn:rah tsi entsitewatá:ti nonkwawén:na.”

Vision

Everyone is proud to speak Kanien'kéha and history and culture is reflected in daily life in Kanehsatà:ke and in its schools.

Mission

Our mission statement is to preserve, promote, protect and revitalize Kanien'kéha and Kanien'kéha:ka identity, culture and values.



Emerging Themes Following SWOT and PESTLE Analysis

During the consultations on the strategic plan, stakeholders were asked to imagine Kanehsatà:ke in the future, in the seventh generation. They were asked to imagine what the state of the language would be in that seventh generation. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the current strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. These reflections continued with consideration for the different environmental influences affecting the achievement of the vision. Specifically, participants were asked to consider what they would be able to achieve within the next five years that would enable them to get closer to the future state they envisioned. The following is a summary of the themes which emerged from these consultations.

There was consensus on the strength of the people involved in MLCA. The staff, board, students and teachers have preserved through instable funding situations. MLCA also possesses a history of accumulated knowledge and is able to produce fluent speakers through its program. There is a common understanding that there is an urgency to revive the language given the impact of the history of colonization and assimilation policies.

Difficulties around funding emerged as a significant hindrance in implementing MLCA's vision and mission. This is exasperated by times of limited political support. These issues, coupled with a population of fluent speakers who is aging and limited teaching within the schools and other community services, cause concern.

The political climate, both internally and externally, presents a number of threats. These are a consequence of the sociopolitical historical context of going land dispossession and discrimination.

The recognition of the urgency to revive Kanien'kéha provides several opportunities. The coordination of language and cultural learning activities across community services would enable collaboration and language learning for all ages.

It was suggested that MLCA would coordinate efforts to revitalize language learning by obtaining sustained, core funding for programs and activities. Resources would be shared throughout community services and succession plans for replacing language teachers would be developed. In addition, language promotion, protection and revitalization is fully engrained in the Kanehsatà:ke political scene.

The future of Kanien'kéha in Kanehsatà:ke is dependent upon MLCA's expertise and the availability of core funding. A Heritage Center offering language learning activities, using technology and deploying succession plans within the community would enable MLCA to achieve its vision.

A five-year strategic plan is proposed as a roadmap for achieving the vision.

Main Orientations of the Strategic Plan

MLCA IS THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPING LANGUAGE RESOURCES, PROGRAMS AND SPEAKERS

- The MLCA Heritage Center provides a safe place for community members to gather, speak their language, create resources, develop an online presence and share their language and culture in a respectful inclusive atmosphere.
- Every six years, or 10,000 hours, students graduate from the program as fluent speakers and share their language with their community.

- Sustainable funding that includes core funding, enables MLCA to build a team of artists, researchers, teachers, linguists, curriculum specialists, historians, knowledge keepers who work together to support the community to achieve the objectives set.
- Succession plans are developed to ensure speakers are the future teachers, elected officials, educators, health workers, etc.
- Partnerships with the education sector enable graduates of the language program to be certified in Kanien'kéha

MLCA OBTAINS SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR ONGOING LANGUAGE PRESERVATION, PROMOTION AND REVITALIZATION

MLCA SUPPORTS LANGUAGE LEARNING WITHIN COMMUNITY SERVICES AND COMMUNITY LIFE

- Cultural and language activities occur at the Heritage Center, in the community and on the land
- MLCA coordinates a Circle of Knowledge that guides the deployment of fluent speakers into various community services
- Collaboration and shared funding for employees in community services to take sabbaticals to become fluent speakers and return to their service to share their language and knowledge

Objectives and Actions from 2020 to 2025

Objectives	Actions	Indicators of Success
MLCA is the center of excellence in developing language resources, programs and speakers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MLCA Heritage Center provides a safe place for community members to gather, speak their language, create resources, develop an online presence and share their language and culture in a respectful inclusive atmosphere. • Every six years, or 10,000 hours, students graduate from the program as fluent speakers and share their language with their community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update plans for Heritage Center; • Create a fundraising plan for building, set objective and share with the community; • Continue teaching students in language program; • Student evaluation – teacher evaluate program for improvement; • Create repertoire of existing resources and publicize it; • Create action plan for new resources: discussion circles for young and not so young, online, apps, capsules, etc; • Provide opportunities for learning about identity and culture; • Organize graduation for students; • Identify each graduate’s strengths and interests and integrate them into appropriate work environment to benefit the community; • Deploy fluent speakers into activities within MLCA and throughout community; • Move into Heritage Center; • Develop plans to create a language nest program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of community members know MLCA as the center of excellence in language learning • The community is welcome and comes to MLCA for all language resources • MLCA has an online presence and uses technologies as resources • Those not learning the language access cultural teachings and learn about their identity as Onkwehón:we • Novice speakers have a place to speak Kanien’kéha • Fluent speakers have a place to speak Kanien’kéha • There is sufficient funding for to support all those wishing to enter the language program • Strong fluent speakers who are interested in teaching become teachers; fluent speakers interested in politics are elected to lead; every graduate finds his or her place benefiting the advancement of the community • MLCA reaches its fundraising goal • MLCA owns and operates a welcoming Heritage Center where language resources and designed and shared • MLCA operates a language nest • Children learn Kanien’kéha at a young age
MLCA obtains sustainable funding for ongoing language preservation, promotion and revitalization		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable funding enables MLCA to build a team of artists, researchers, teachers, linguists, curriculum specialists, historians, knowledge keepers who work together to support the community to achieve the objectives set. • Succession plans are developed to ensure speakers are the future teachers, elected officials, educators, health workers, etc. • Partnerships with the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit funders for regular, sustained funding; • Lobby federal government to recognize MLCA expertise in creating fluent speakers and their role revitalizing, promoting, preserving Kanien’kéha in Kanehsata:ke; • Hire a manager to support the influx of the new funding and a new team; • Create a Circle of Knowledge to support the implementation of the entire strategic plan; • Create a work-study program enabling students to learn the language while they work within a community service; • Create succession plan for community resources, especially teachers and educators; • Examine best practices around the world and consider WINHEC (World Indigenous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLCA has regular, recurrent funding enabling it to focus on achieving its mission • MLCA signs a 5-year funding agreement, including core funding, with federal government • A new manager is hired and a new team of experts is built • MLCA develops a succession plan in collaboration with community services • Language learners are deployed in all community services offering MLCA resources and developing new resources to suit specific service needs • New Kanien’kéha teachers are deployed into the education sector • Certified, fluent speakers are working in all community services

Objectives	Actions	Indicators of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education sector enable graduates of the language program to be certified in Kanien'kéha 	<p>Nations Higher Education Consortium);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnerships with educational institutions recognizing language learning as a certified skill for future teachers; • Deploy fluent speakers into community; • Report on achievements to federal government and sign a new 10-year funding agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New funding agreement signed for 10 years.

MLCA supports language learning within community services and community life

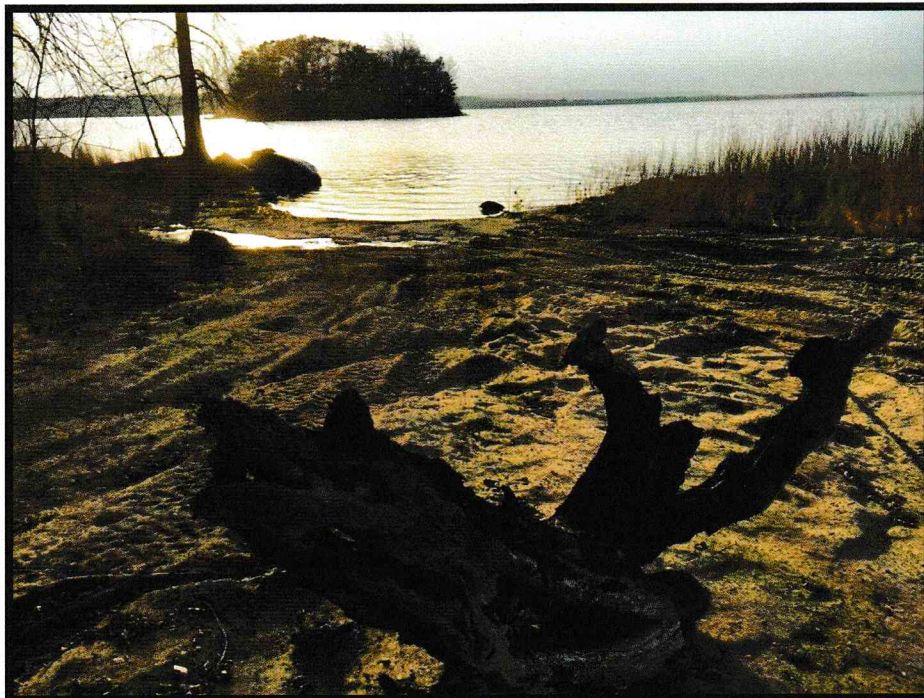
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and language activities occur at the Heritage Center, in the community and on the land • MLCA coordinates a Circle of Knowledge that guides the deployment of fluent speakers into various community services • Collaboration and shared funding for employees in community services to take sabbaticals to become fluent speakers and return to their service to share their language and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a language committee as a non-hierarchical governance structure for the deployment of language fluency actions within all community services; • Develop an action plan, in collaboration with all service directors, to integrate fluent speakers into each service and to identify employees who will integrate the language program during a sabbatical, prioritizing those who work with young children (school, daycare, crime prevention, etc); • Understand each service's future staffing needs to prepare succession plan. • Members from the Circle of Knowledge and students in language program share resources, activities and knowledge in the community, on the land, with young families, within community services. • Evaluate strategic plan and attainment of objectives and prepare next strategic plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A language committee, coordinated by MLCA, has a plan to support language within all community services • Employees working with young children are offered a sabbatical to learn their language • A community succession plan is implemented • All community services collaborate and share costs to produce fluent speakers • The language program admission requirements are understood by all • Sufficient funding through shared funding models enable more participants into the language program • Speakers are organizing activities throughout the community in Kanien'kéha • Language, culture and identity are becoming a part of daily life in Kanehsatà:ke
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Final Thoughts

The MLCA, a not for profit corporation that adheres to Mohawk Language Standardization, undertook a strategic planning process from March to June 2020. Colonization and assimilation policies have led to an urgency to revive Indigenous languages, including Kanien'kéha in Kanehsatà:ke. As such, the MLCA solicited the support of the Board of Directors, Kanien'kéha teachers and students, directors from services in the community as well as several community members in the reflection on the strategic plan.

Stakeholders agreed on a vision and a mission and expressed concerns over sustainable, core funding, ongoing programming to produce fluent speakers who can eventually replace teachers and language experts in the future. In addition, a consensus emerged on the leadership role of MLCA in coordinating collaboration with other community services on language preservation and revitalization activities, capacity building and the development of language programming, resources and engagement activities.

A five-year plan emerged proposing a roadmap to achieve the MLCA's vision. The plan utilizes a de-colonial lens to support language survival is based upon Onkwehón:we methods and ways of teaching, learning and strengthening Kanien'kehá:ka identity. Learning takes place on the homelands of the Kanien'kehá:ka, supporting the socio-economic, cultural and Haudenosaunee customs of land use, protection and culture.



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**KAKAENIÓN:HON
TSI NENTEWÁ:IERE**

2020-2025

KANIEN'KEHA SUMMARY