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# REPORT

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***Ojibwe Language Strategy Proposal***



## RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### Ojibwe Language Strategy Proposal

**Date:** March 7, 2017  
**To:** Board of Trustees  
**From:** Heather Campbell, Director of Education

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the report be received for information only.

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#### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

One of the four pillars of the Strategic Plan is capacity building, with a specific goal of ensuring strategic roles within our District.

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#### CONTEXT

The Rainy River District School Board has worked to build a strong Ojibwe language program for its students over the past 7 years, focusing on expanding resources through the MERL (Modernize, Expand, Revitalize and Localize) project adopted by Seven Generations Education Institute, the Rainy River District School Board, The Ontario Ministry of Education and the ten Treaty Three First Nation communities in April 2011. At present, 8 schools have an Ojibwe Language Program, supported by a central Ojibwe Language Coordinator.

The MERL project has been successfully filling gaps in education content and delivery, through the development of Ojibwe books, children shows, and cultural videos as teaching aids; however, language loss is still occurring in our communities. Policy change, infrastructure, succession planning, and expanded programming in community daycares are all needed in order to sustain the language.

As part of the Annual Operational Plan's focus on developing succession plans for key areas of programming, this strategy has been drafted in partnership with Brent Tookenay, Seven Generations Education Institute and Mike Parkhill, SayItFirst. The proposed strategy focuses on revitalization strategy, building speakers, infrastructure, and further content creation. The process looks to support Ojibwe language speakers to become certified in order to have them formally pass on their ancestral language by developing pathways to introduce Ojibwe speakers as Early Childhood Education workers and Ojibwe certified classroom teachers, as these key roles support future speakers. Pathways are thus implemented with a focus on our high school students developing language skills and certification from Grade 10 through post-secondary life. The pathways being explored include cooperative education within current Ojibwe language programs, post-secondary support and apprenticeships, and diploma and degree options.

At the community level, the focus is on developing child learners from birth to JK with specific content developed and extended, in order to create a cohort of children ready for formal schooling. These key roles will be supported by further content creation, with the intent of ultimately increasing the number of language learners.

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## **SUMMARY**

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Execution of this plan will take considerable financial resources and a particularly skilled workforce to make all of this happen. Political will and community commitment are necessary for change to occur. As a guaranteed funding model will be needed for seven years to reclaim the languages, this plan is being shared with First Nation leadership, Ministry of Education, and other regional partners.

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## **ROUTING**

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Board	March 7, 2017
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