

Annual Report
1997 - 1998



Languages Commissioner
of the NWT



June 1, 1999



The Honorable Speaker,
Legislative Assembly,
Yellowknife,
Northwest Territories.



Honorable Speaker:



Pursuant to Section 23 of the *Official Languages Act*, I hereby submit to the Legislative Assembly, for consideration, the Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT, covering the fiscal year 1997 - 1998.

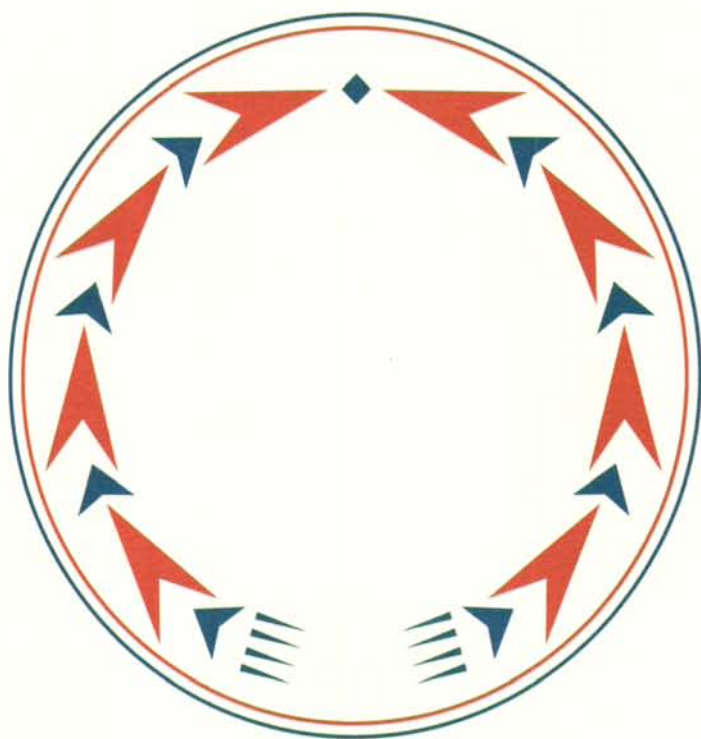


Sincerely,



Judi Tutcho
Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories





The official logo of the Languages Commissioner's Office symbolizes the eight official languages of the Northwest Territories – Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, (including Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun), and Slavey (including North and South). The arrows focus on the diamond; for just like a diamond, the languages of the North are unique, precious and rare. The points of the arrows reflect the struggle to promote, protect and preserve our cultures through the continuing usage of our languages. The circle is a powerful symbol for the strength and protection of all the language groups working together.

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Message

from the Languages Commissioner



This is the second Annual Report in my four-year term as Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It has been an inspirational and rewarding year and my commitment to working with the languages of the North is as strong as ever. The knowledge and experience that I have gained over the past year have made me very conscious of the different language situations and concerns of the people of the North. Although there are many, I am confident that if Northerners work together we can accomplish a lot in the preservation, protection, promotion and practice of our official languages.

I have spent many long hours travelling, visiting and listening to the people of the North, especially the elders who offer their wise descriptions of life experiences, and the youth who are learning to cope in a fast paced and changing world. In turning to the people of the North, I have seen, heard and felt the words that express how crucial it is for us to save our languages.

As far as the situation of our languages is concerned, I am constantly dealing with the combination of two very strong and different feelings. One of those feelings is a sense of pride. We have

eight languages that are recognized as official in our homeland and are protected by the *Official Languages Act of the Northwest Territories*. This broad recognition of linguistic diversity does not exist anywhere else in Canada. Our languages are our communication tools. It is essential for us to use these tools in order to protect our culture. Our living languages are the linguistic richness that we possess. We must keep in mind that it is very important that we have these living languages come back to their fullness of use. I remember my Grandfather, Suzeo Tutcho's words: "The Land is what feeds you, and what feeds you is good, what feeds you goes through your mouth, so what comes out of your mouth should be the goodness of the Land as is spoken in our languages."

We must realize that this whole beauty that we possess in our languages is also the beauty of our Land.

The other feeling is sadness. Our languages are disappearing, slowly. The fading voices of our people whisper throughout the Land. The loss beats in our ears and reminds us with each passing generation that if we do not do something, our languages will pass also. We are our own worse enemies for destroying our languages. We cannot blame anyone. We cannot ask anyone to give us back our languages. We have to be committed, dedicated and real to ourselves in the work that must be done to restore our languages. We cannot let English take over our languages. As one of our Dehcho educators, Andy Norwegian, said: "Wouldn't it be strange to get up one morning and hear the robins sing like seagulls." If we are not careful in preserving, promoting, protecting and practicing our languages, this is what will happen. We must act now!

What is to be done? Government has deemed the languages of the North as important. Their intention is to preserve the languages through the legislation that is in the form of the *Official Languages Act*. But we have to assist the government as it is for our own protection that the languages were legislated. And if you feel that protection is slowly being eroded and that you are not receiving the language services that are stipulated in the Act, then it is up to you to bring about change. This is your responsibility.

People have to start realizing for themselves, for their children, and for their community, that it is important to keep the languages alive. Nobody can preserve their language and culture by themselves. It takes a collaborative strength from all members to have this common goal of keeping our languages alive. We are unique people. And this uniqueness is reflected in our language and culture. Tom Porter of the Mohawk Nation says: "At least 60 percent of your values, your culture and your tradition is continued within your languages. Once our languages become extinct we lose automatically 60 percent of our values and traditions as a Native people." We cannot let this happen.

For the languages to grow strong in the future, we need to provide our children with the communication tools. Once we pass on those tools, our values, traditions and principles by which we live, our children will be prepared for the next generation. They will know where they came from and then they will definitely know where they are going. It is important that we keep our languages in our daily life. We must work towards making our languages strong, proud and honoured. For if we don't do anything, we will be left with nothing. Former Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi said it best in his famous words: "A wise man said, 'It's the land that makes the people.' So, it is this land we live on, this Turtle Island of North America that makes us look the way we do, act the way we do and talk the way we do. As Aboriginal people of Turtle Island, we do not have the luxury of going to another country where our languages and cultures are intact. Other races that have freely chosen to come to our Land can always return to their country of origin if they feel that their languages or culture are threatened. We do not have such a choice. Consequently, it is more important for the Aboriginal people to maintain their languages and cultures in this Land than that of any other group – or race."

There is nowhere to go to restore or relearn our languages. They are here in the Northwest Territories. No, our languages should not be sitting on the backburner! They should be alive and strong. They should be used in the homes, schools, communities and governments of the North. Let's work together towards making this happen. Remember our languages are a privilege that needs to be respected.

Office of the Languages Commissioner

History

In 1984, the Legislative Assembly passed its first *Official Languages Act*. Modelled on the federal Act, it had two essential purposes: the Act guaranteed equal status for the use of English and French by members of the public using government programs and services, and the Act officially recognizes the Aboriginal languages in use in the Northwest Territories. Then in 1990, the Assembly made major amendments to the Act to give greater status to northern Aboriginal languages. Recognizing the official status of Aboriginal languages was intended to preserve and promote Aboriginal cultures through protection of their languages. The 1990 amendments also created the position of Languages Commissioner for the NWT to be appointed by a vote of the Legislative Assembly for a term of four years. The first appointment was made in December 1991. The Office of the Languages Commissioner was opened in February 1992. The Languages Commissioner is an independent officer and accountable to the Legislative Assembly. In May 1996, the Legislative Assembly appointed Judi Tutcho as the second Languages Commissioner.

Mission Statement

The Office of the Languages Commissioner works to assist in the preservation, promotion and protection of the official languages of the Northwest Territories, and to ensure that the GNWT departments, boards and agencies comply with the spirit and intent of the *Official Languages Act* as is legislated.

Vision

As the Languages Commissioner of the NWT, I aim to commit my knowledge, experience and energy into helping families, homes, communities and governments in their daily lives to develop a deep awareness of the importance of languages and their inherent connection to the heritage and culture of the people of the North.

Duties of the Languages Commissioner

Part II, Section 20 of the *Official Languages Act of the NWT* outlines the main duties of the Languages Commissioner. It states that the Languages Commissioner is required:

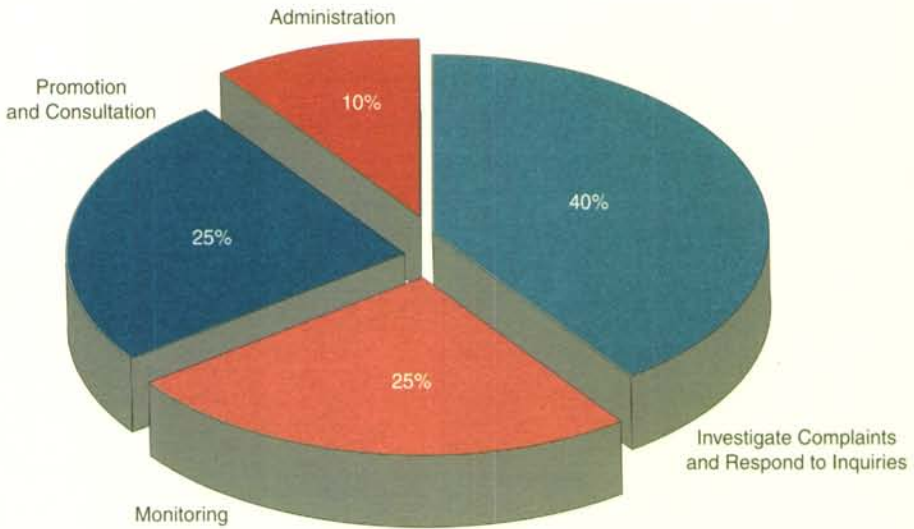
- to take all steps within her legal authority to ensure the language rights under this Act are upheld;
- to ensure all government departments, boards and agencies comply with the Act;
- to ensure the territorial government advances Aboriginal languages.

As well, the Languages Commissioner may investigate complaints from the public. She can also act without a public complaint if she believes the Act has not been followed. The Languages Commissioner can make reports and recommendations to the government based on these investigations.



Right to left: Judi Tutcho, Languages Commissioner; along with Elaine Keenan-Bengts, Information and Privacy Commissioner; and Anne Crawford, Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Figure 1 – Languages Commissioner’s Duties



As illustrated in Figure 1, the Languages Commissioner has four main functions:

- 1 Inquiries and Complaints:** The largest percentage of activity is spent handling the inquiries and investigating the complaints that are received in the office.
- 2 Monitoring:** The next function concentrates on monitoring the language services and programs of the GNWT to ensure that they adequately meet the obligations set out in the *Official Languages Act of the NWT*.
- 3 Promotion and Consultation:** As well, the Languages Commissioner works avidly to promote the Office of the Languages Commissioner and to consult with the various linguistics communities through participation in many workshops, conferences and meetings that relate to the languages of the North.
- 4 Administration:** And finally, the remainder of activity is administering the Office of the Languages Commissioner with the support of the Legislative Assembly.

Year in Review

April

April 1-3, 1997

L.C. travelled to Tuktoyaktuk to attend the Inuvialuit Youth Conference.

April 4, 1997

L.C. went to the launching of the 1-800 line for Cancer at Stanton Regional Hospital. L.C. gave a speech and presented an appreciation award.



April 16-17, 1997

L.C. travelled to Rankin Inlet to attend the launching of the Inuktitut Curriculum, Inuuqatigiit.



May

May 26, 1997

L.C. travelled to Fort Smith to attend a meeting of the Multi-Cultural Parents Group and a discussion about Teaching and Learning Centers.

May 30, 1997

L.C. attended the Annual General Meeting of the NWT Literacy Council and the Launching of the South Slavey Book, Dehcho Gha Got'ii Gogondi.

June

June 2-4, 1997

L.C. travelled to Fort Providence to attend the South Slavey Book Launch and visited schools in the community.



June 6-9, 1997

L.C. travelled to Inuvik for Beaufort Delta Divisional Board of Education meeting.



June 16-19, 1997

L.C. travelled to Inuvik to attend the Aboriginal Justice Conference '97.

June 22-25, 1997

L.C. travelled to Ottawa to meet with Nunavut Implementation Commission to discuss Language Issues in Nunavut.

June 26, 1997

Treaty 8 Tribal Council Annual General Assembly, N'dilo.



July

July 28-31, 1997

L.C. in Inuvik to attend the Gwich'in Assembly.



August

August 12-15, 1997

L.C. at the Hay River Reserve to attend the Dene Nation Assembly and the Book Launch of the second Chipewyan storybook published by the Dene Cultural Institute.



August 25-29, 1997

L.C. in Fort Good-Hope to attend the Sahtu Assembly.

September

September 8, 1997

L.C. in Regina to attend the National Ombudsman Institute's Annual General Meeting.



October

October 4, 1997

L.C. at St. Patrick's High School for the NWT Literacy Carnival.

October 8-9, 1997

L.C. travelled to Fort Simpson to participate in their Literacy Week events.

October 10-12, 1997

Fédération Franco-TéNOise Annual General Meeting, Yellowknife – Researcher attended on L.C.'s behalf.

October 21-25, 1997

L.C. travelled to Smithers B.C. to attend the Carrier of our Culture Conference.

October 28-30, 1997

L.C. travelled to Inuvik to attend the Beaufort Delta Leaders Conference.



December

December 1-4, 1997

L.C. travelled to Inuvik to attend a bilingualism conference sponsored by Beaufort Delta Divisional Board.

January

January 14-17, 1998

L.C. travelled to Toronto to attend Canadian Ombudsman Association meeting.

January 19-22, 1998

L.C. travelled to Inuvik to attend the Bilingual Conference with Beaufort Delta Divisional Board of Education.



February

February 5, 1998

L.C. travelled to Deline to attend a Wellness Conference.



February 24-26, 1998

L.C. travelled to Rankin Inlet to attend the Keewatin Teachers Conference.

March

March 9-12, 1998

L.C. attended a Youth Conference in Yellowknife.

March 14-15, 1998

L.C. attended the Fédération Franco-TéNOise Annual General Meeting in Yellowknife.

March 16-18, 1998

L.C. travelled to Banff to attend the Symposium on Aboriginal Languages.

March 20-21, 1998

L.C. travelled to Winnipeg to attend the Aboriginal Language Focus Meeting.



March 23, 1998

L.C. travelled to Iqaluit to attend the Nunavut Language Policy Conference.

March 30, 1998

L.C. attended the Teachers Conference in Yellowknife.

Highlights

Highlights

Web Page

New Web Page – April 1, 1997

As the millennium approaches, I recognize the major role that technology will have in facilitating communication and in accessing information throughout the North, as well as in the rest of Canada and the world. For this reason, I decided to take the necessary steps towards developing my own web page for the Office of the Languages Commissioner. As such, on April 1, 1997, we unveiled our web page on the World Wide Web. This new web page features the many different profiles of the Languages Commissioner in action: press releases, newsletters, public documents (including the *Official Languages Act of the NWT* and the Annual Reports), the roles and responsibilities of the Languages Commissioner, an explanation of people's language rights and an audio sampling of the eleven official languages of the North.

I invite the people of the North to take advantage of this new way of communication. I feel very strongly that this new technology will work very well in the promotion, preservation, protection and practice of all the official languages of the North. I encourage people to voice their concerns, comments and questions by contacting www.gov.nt.ca/Lang_Com. I thank Mr. Bill Wade for his work in developing and designing our new web page.

Privatization

Privatization of the Language Bureau – July 15, 1997

As the newly appointed Languages Commissioner, I came into my position at the end of a work in progress, namely the privatization of the Language Bureau. The privatization was already a done deed: on July 15, 1997, Aboriginal interpreter/translators were given their layoff notices. My biggest concerns at that moment were the quality of service and the maintenance of standards in the Aboriginal languages. As the year continued, I saw more clearly the

effect of this closure on my office. There was a definite increase in the number of inquiries at my office. The inquiries ranged in variety from questions concerning Aboriginal language services, to asking for Aboriginal interpreter/ translators, to who was certified, and how could an interpreter/translator be certified? If my office in Yellowknife received this many inquiries, I can imagine how many inquiries there were at the community level. I still have many questions related to the privatization of the Language Bureau, and I am in the process of initiating a special study on this privatization and its effect on Aboriginal languages. Furthermore, I will be monitoring very closely the Aboriginal language services to the people of the North provided by the GNWT departments, boards and agencies.

Plain Language Version

Plain Language Version of the *Official Languages Act*

– December 15, 1997

Since the creation of the *Official Languages Act of the NWT*, our office has always been asked if we had a plain language version of our Act. The reason for this request is that like so many other Acts, it is difficult for many people to understand the legal terminology used in writing Acts. It is a very technical style of language used by lawyers, judges and government officials. As such, I worked closely with my office's legal counsel to devise an easy-to-understand version of the *Official Languages Act*. The plain language version is designed to assist the general public in its understanding of language rights as is set out in the Act. The people of the North have to have a clear understanding of their rights if they are to act on them. As Edward Lennie, an Inuvialuit from Inuvik, once said, "Why does the government always use sixteen-cylinder words?" Therefore, to help people like Lennie and other grass roots people, my office has devoted its time and energy to producing this plain language document.

Conference

Nunavut Language Policy Conference – March 23, 1998

The Nunavut Language Policy Conference was held in Iqaluit from March 24 to 26, 1998. The conference was sponsored by the Nunavut Implementation Commission. The purpose of the conference was to discuss language issues that needed to be addressed by the Nunavut Government. The delegates were given the opportunity to be a part of the process in regards to language policies and legislation for the new Nunavut Territory. I made my presentation at this conference on March 23, 1998. I explained my roles and responsibilities as Languages Commissioner; gave a brief description of the history of the *Official Languages Act*; reported the existing laws and policies that govern language in the NWT; and finally presented some of the practical working challenges that the Nunavut officials will eventually face when dealing with their own language issues. The focus of my presentation was the *Official Languages Act*. My legal counsel gave an “unofficial” summary of the Act concentrating on its legalities in regards to the status of Inuktitut and Canada's two official languages of English and French.

The Nunavut Languages Policy Conference was basically an information sharing opportunity for my office to brief the Nunavut officials on language issues. It was a positive and excellent opportunity to provide the Nunavut people with the experience and knowledge that the Office of the Languages Commissioner has gained since it came into existence in 1992. At the end of the meeting, the Nunavut officials made it very clear that they would work towards having their own Inuit Languages Commissioner and make Inuktitut, Innuinaqtun, English and French the official languages in the new territory of Nunavut.

Budget

The Office of the Languages Commissioner's budget of \$351,000 is divided into two main categories:

Salaries and Wages	@	\$228,000
Operations and Maintenance	@	\$123,000

The chart below outlines the specific allocation, expenditure, and variance amounts for the 1997/98 fiscal year.

Figure II – Office of the Languages Commissioner Statement of Expenditures, 1997 - 1998

	Allocation	Expenditure	Variance
Salaries and Wages			
Salaries and Wages	\$213,000	\$202,150	\$10,850
Casual Wages	\$15,000	\$4,278	\$10,722
Sub Total	\$228,000	\$206,428	\$21,572
Operations and Maintenance			
Travel and Transportation	\$25,000	\$43,361	(\$18,361)
Materials and Supplies	\$12,000	\$12,176	(\$176)
Purchased Services	\$12,000	\$16,192	(\$4,192)
Contract Services	\$35,000	\$50,905	(\$15,905)
Fees and Payments	\$38,000	\$19,506	\$18,494
Furniture, Equipment	\$0	\$8,479	(\$8,479)
Other Expenses	\$1,000	\$791	\$209
Sub Total	\$123,000	\$151,410	(\$28,410)
Task as a Whole	\$351,000	\$357,838	(\$6,838)

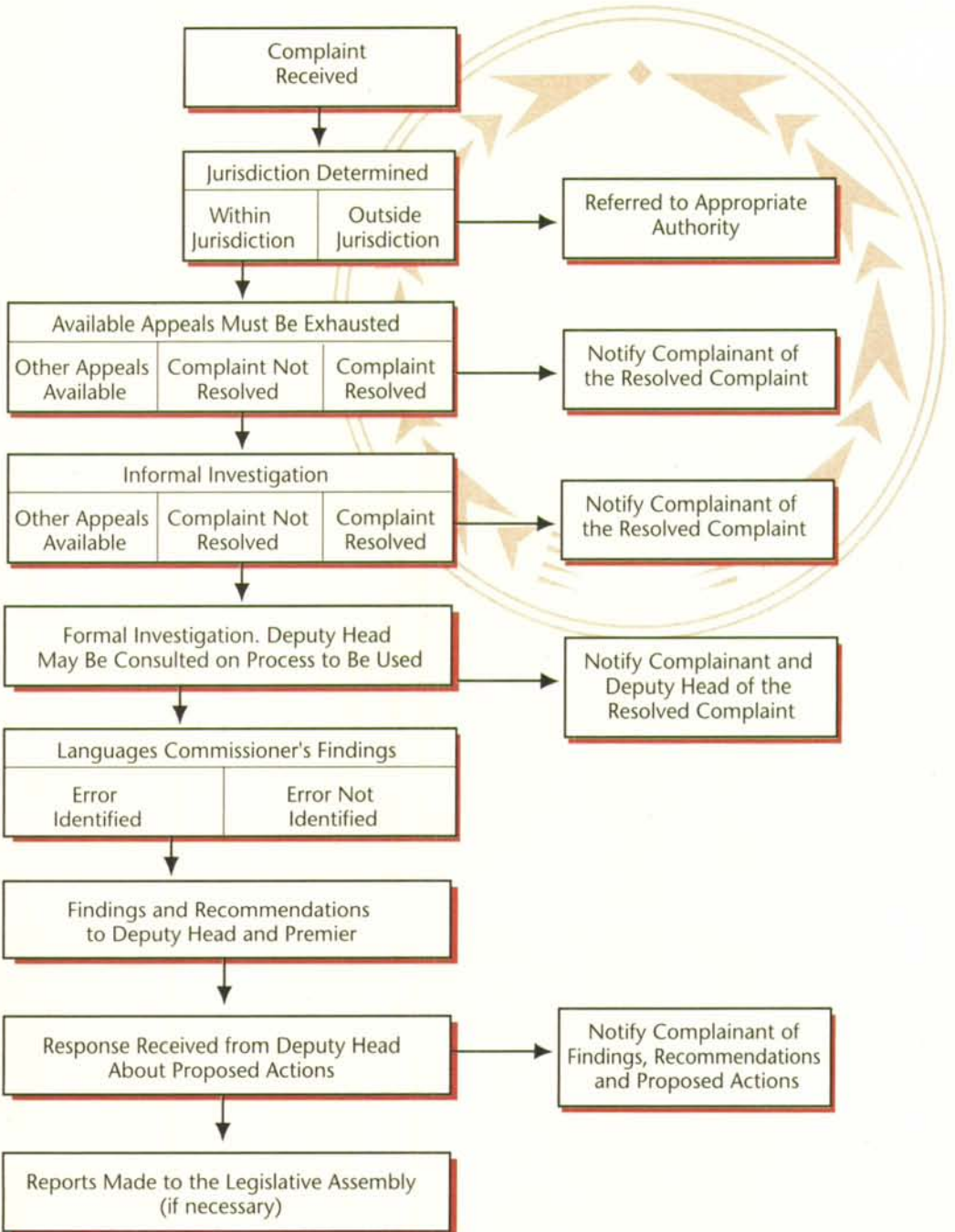
Source: Legislative Assembly Financial Report

Operational

Data and Statistics

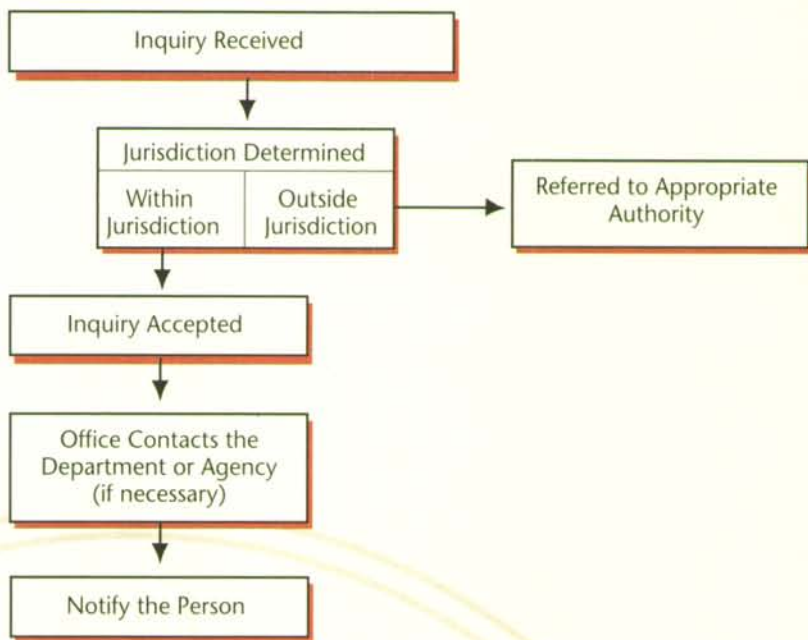
Flow Chart of Complaints

The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles complaints. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



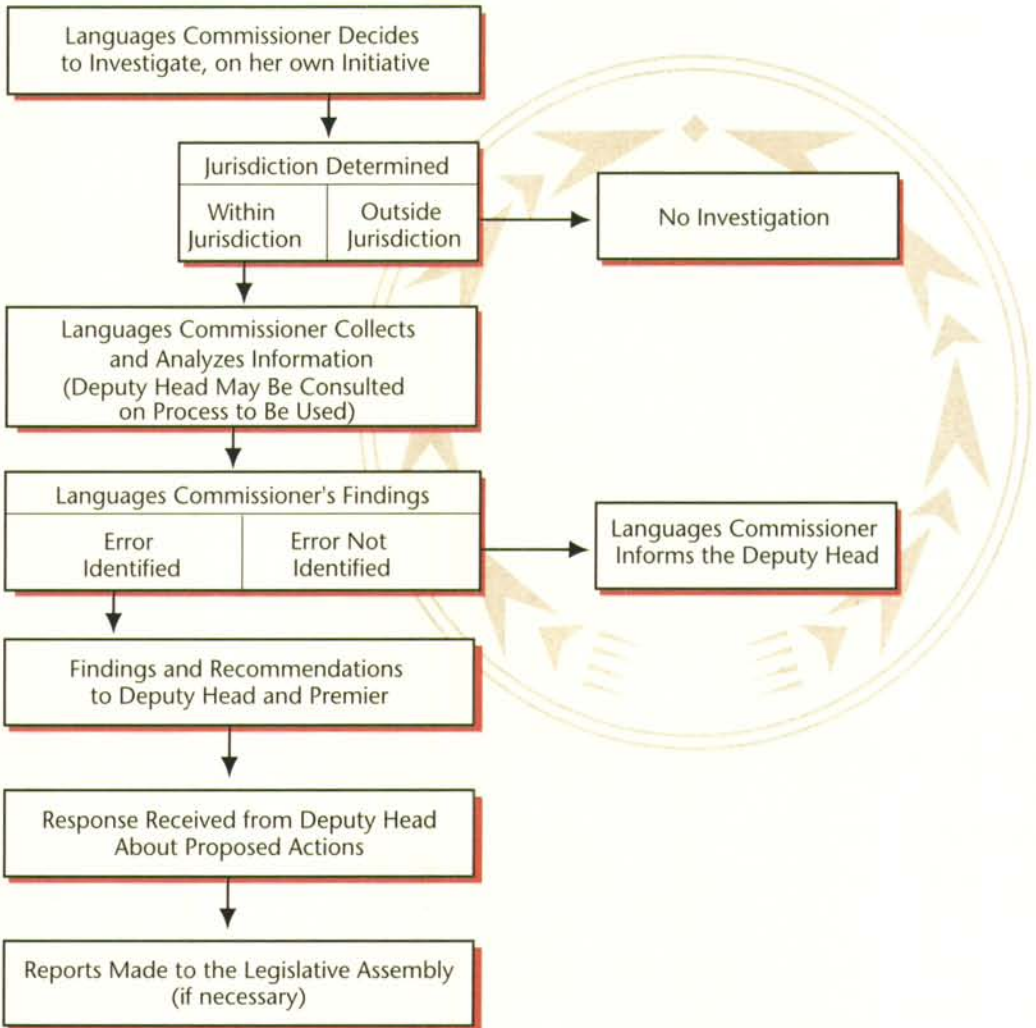
Flow Chart of Inquiries

The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles inquiries. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



Flow Chart of Languages Commissioner's Initiatives

The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles an investigation that is initiated by her. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



Statistical Summaries

The Statistical Summaries are presented in the following Figures III to XIII.

These Statistical Summaries focus on an analysis of the case load, such as:

- where the complaints and inquiries originated;
- what type of organizations or individuals contacted us; and
- which department or agency was the subject of the complaint or inquiry, etc.

Most of the figures relate to the “case load” in 1997 - 1998.

Case load means “all the new cases opened in 1997 - 1998 plus all the cases that were unresolved on March 31, 1998.”

Each time the Office deals with a complaint, guidelines are currently used by the Languages Commissioner in complaint investigation.

The procedures were developed taking into consideration the *Official Languages Act*, investigation guidelines used in other jurisdictions and past investigative experience of this office.

Definitions:

An **Inquiry** is a simple request for information, usually about official languages or the *Official Languages Act*, or any other Act or regulation relating to the status or use of the official languages. It does not include any suggestion that a person feels that she or he has been unfairly treated.

A **Complaint** involves a situation where a person or group feels that their language rights or privileges have been infringed or denied. They may feel that they have been treated unfairly or have been adversely affected by some policy, program, action or lack of action.

Figure III – Case Load over the last 3 years

	Ongoing from Previous Year	Cases Received	Case Load	Cases Closed	Cases Ongoing
1995-1996	64	211	275	250	24
1996-1997	24	94	118	103	15
1997-1998	15	158	173	165	8

Figure IV – Complaints, Inquiries, Languages Commissioner Initiatives and Other Cases Received, 1997 - 1998

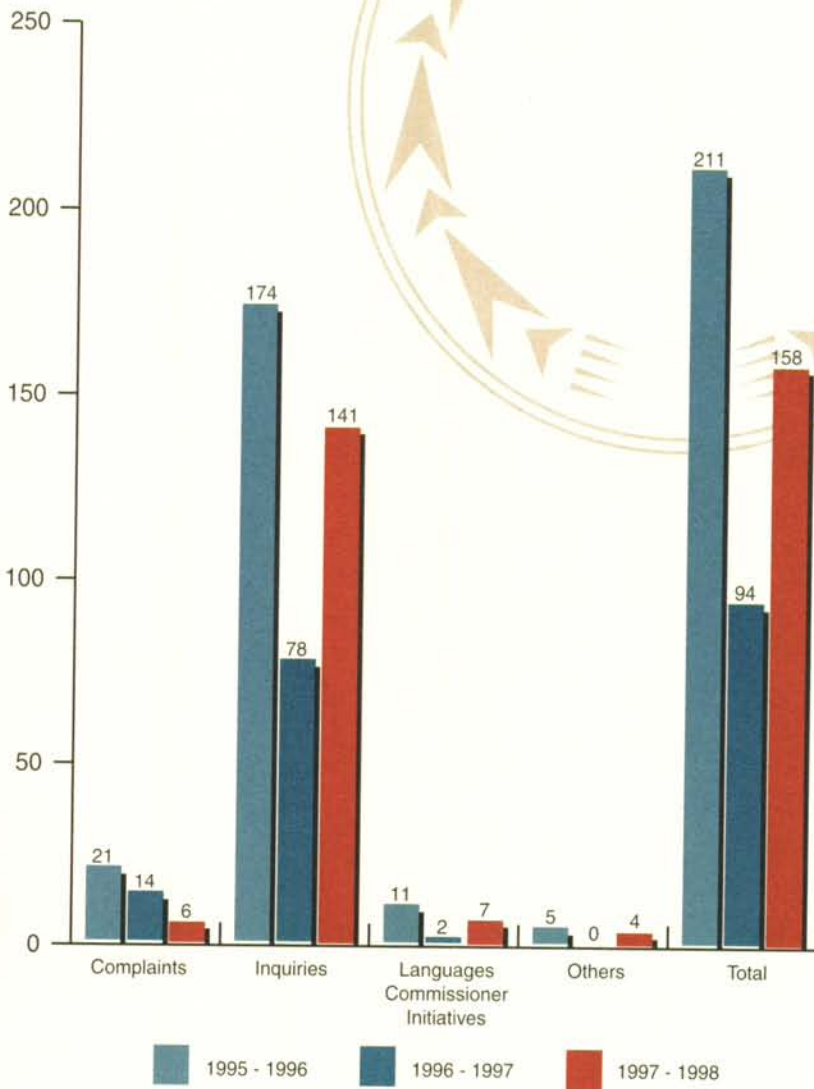


Figure V – Origin of Cases by Region, Case Load, 1997 - 1998

Region	% Case Load	% Population
Baffin Region	6	21
Fort Smith Region	13	20
Inuvik Region	10	14
Keewatin Region	2	11
Kitikmeot Region	2	8
Yellowknife	53	27
Outside NWT (Canada)	14	
Outside Canada	1	

Population based on 1996 Census

Figure VI – Jurisdiction over Case Load, 1997 - 1998

	% Within Jurisdiction	% Outside Jurisdiction	% Total
Complaints	61	39	100
Inquiries	69	31	100
Invitations	92	8	100
L.C. Initiatives	100	0	100
Others	50	50	100
TOTAL CASES	74	26	100

Figure VII – Jurisdiction over the Cases Received, 1997 - 1998

	% Within Jurisdiction	% Outside Jurisdiction	% Total
Complaints	50	50	100
Inquiries	69	31	100
Invitations	91	9	100
L.C. Initiatives	100	0	100
Others	50	50	100
TOTAL CASES	74	26	100

Figure VIII – Type of Organizations which Contacted the Languages Commissioner, Case Load, 1997 - 1998

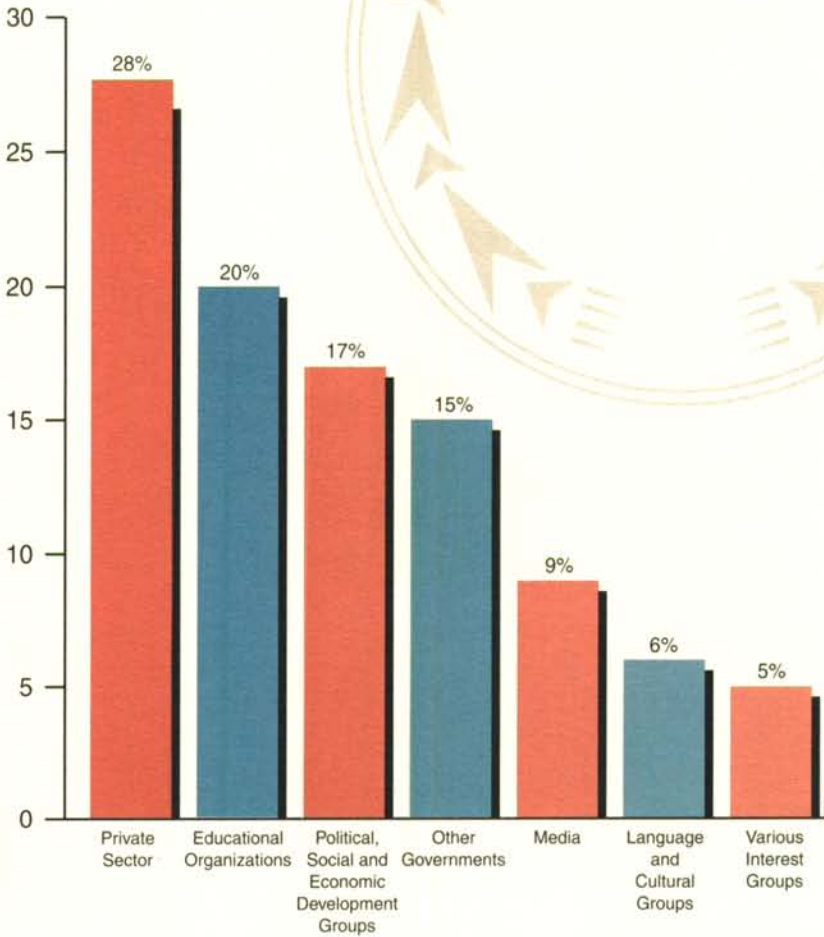


Figure IX – Subject of the Complaints, Case Load, 1997 - 1998

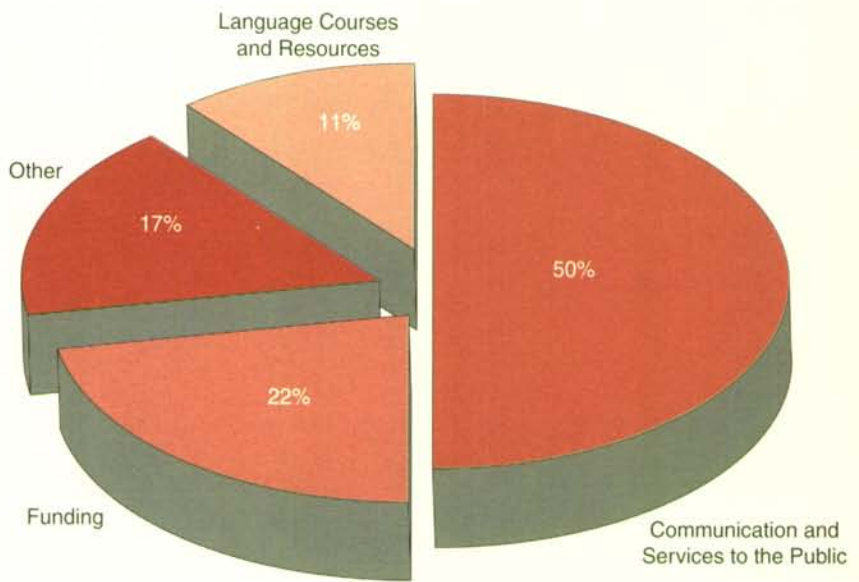
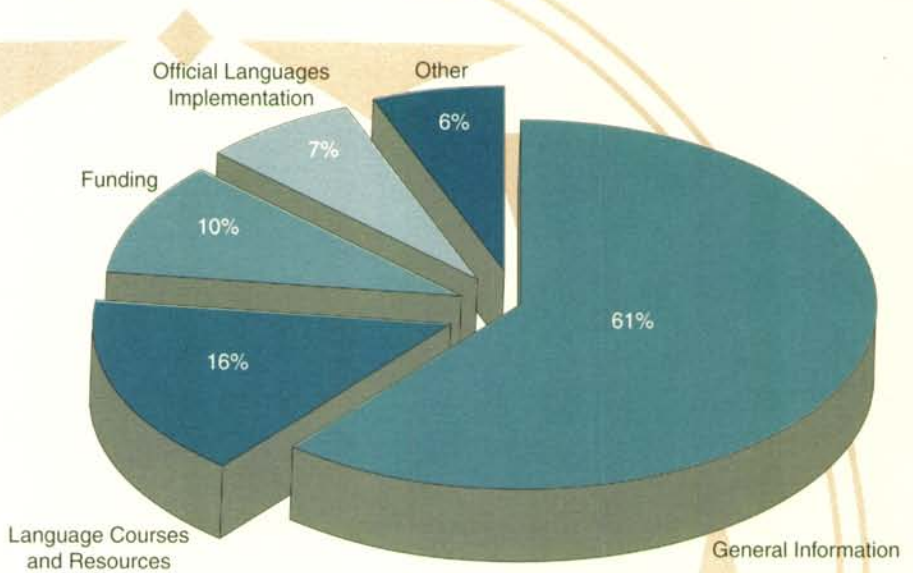


Figure X – Subject of the Inquiries, Case Load, 1997 - 1998



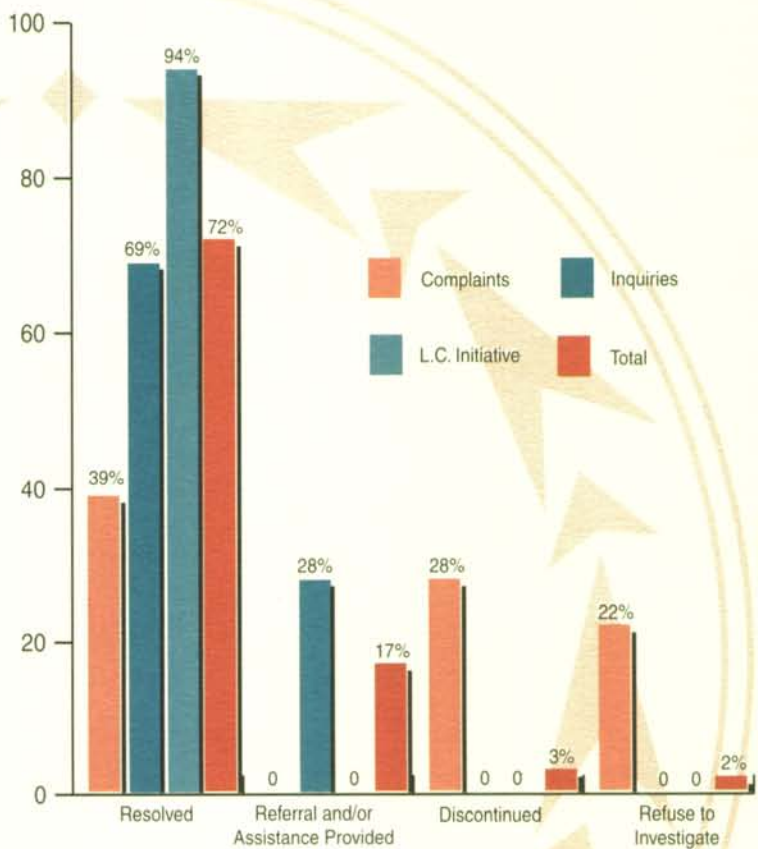
**Figure XI – Languages Involved in Complaints and Inquiries,
Case Load 1997 - 1998**

	Complaints	Inquiries	Total
Chipewyan	5	5	10
Cree	0	3	3
Dogrib	5	6	11
Gwich'in	0	0	0
Inuinnaqtun	2	2	4
Inuktitut	0	11	11
Inuvialuktun	0	1	1
North Slavey	0	3	3
South Slavey	0	3	3
Slavey	0	1	1
All Dene	2	7	9
More than one Dene	0	4	4
More than one Inuktitut	0	4	4
All Aboriginal Languages	0	17	17
Two or more Abori. Lgs.	1	4	5
Total Aboriginal	15	71	86 (69%)
English	0	1	1
French	3	4	7
All Official Languages	0	30	30
Other	0	1	1
TOTAL CASES	18	107	125

Figure XII – Cases Referred, 1997 - 1998

	Complaints	Inquiries
Cultural Affairs	0	1
Education, Culture and Employment	0	7
Federal Government	0	1
Health and Social Services	0	1
Hospitals	0	1
I/T Business	0	2
Language Bureau	0	10
Legislative Assembly	0	1
Official Languages Unit	0	3
Resources, Wildlife and Economic Dev.	0	1
Schools and Boards of Education	0	2
TOTAL	0	28

Figure XIII – Status of the Complaints and Inquiries, Case Load, 1997 - 1998



Recommendations

Recommendations

- 1 That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops a promotional plan regarding official languages in the Northwest Territories.
- 2 That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops a comprehensive accountability framework to guide all levels of government in languages issues.
- 3 That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops an implementation plan regarding the policy and guidelines of official languages.
- 4 That the Government of the Northwest Territories implements in all printed materials of departments, boards and agencies an active offer to receive information in one or more of the official languages.



Please be advised that these recommendations are from the 1996 - 1997 Annual Report. The Languages Commissioner has yet to hear from the Legislative Assembly on whether the above noted recommendations have been accepted or rejected. If they are accepted, the Languages Commissioner wishes to know how the Legislative Assembly will implement them.



- 5 That the Government of the Northwest Territories addresses the issue of privatization of language services and its impact on the government departments, boards and agencies.

End Notes

End Notes

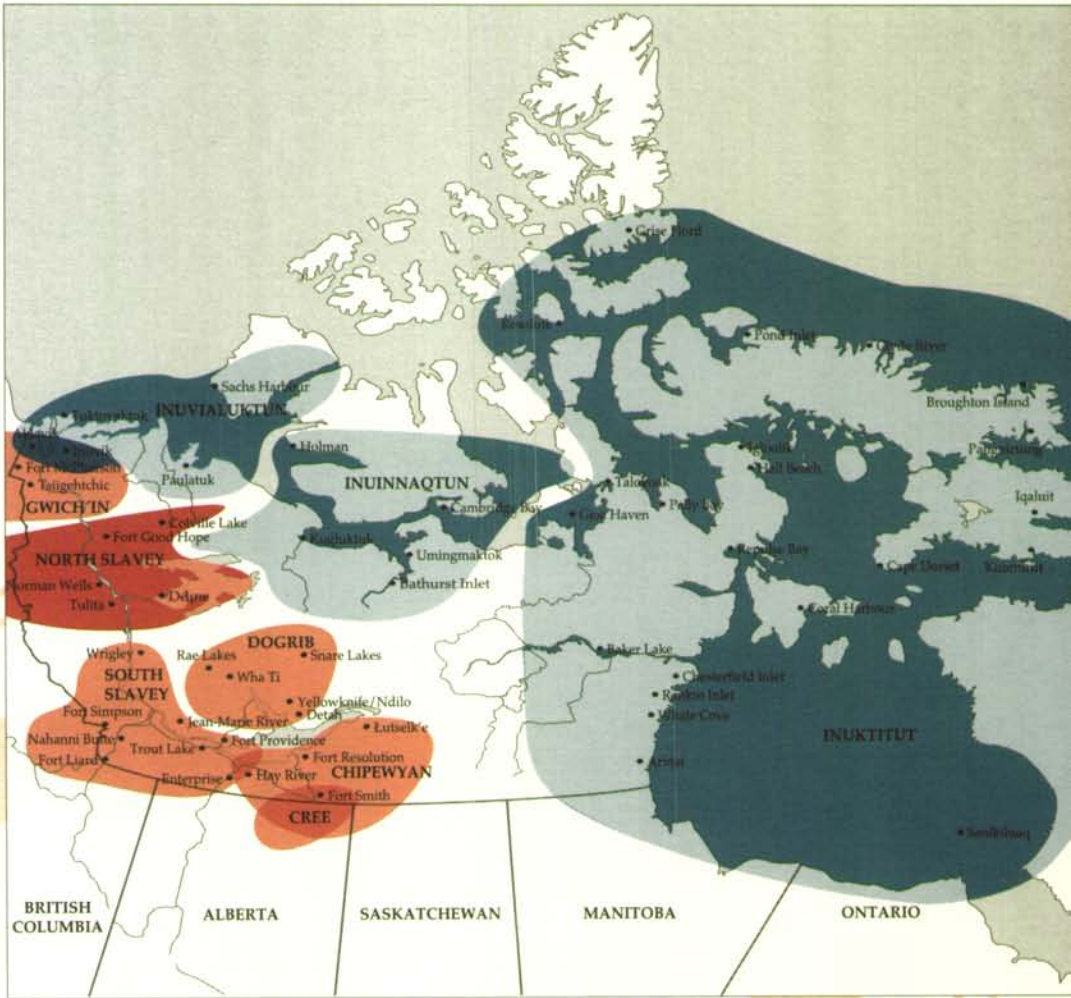
If you have questions, comments or concerns about languages in the Northwest Territories, please contact the Languages Commissioner. You can refer to the various methods of contact featured on the back cover.

As a linguistic ombudsman for the Northwest Territories, the Languages Commissioner, Judi Tutcho, handles complaints and inquiries about the *Official Languages Act of the NWT* or any other Act or Regulations relating to the status or use of the official languages in the NWT.



This material is available in another official language of the Northwest Territories where it has been requested in that official language on an ongoing and frequent basis by members of the public.

Official Languages of the Northwest Territories



English is used everywhere in the NWT. French is used in Yellowknife, Iqaluit, Fort Smith and Hay River.

To Contact the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories

In Person or by Mail: 3rd Floor, Panda II Centre
#19, 4915 - 48 Street
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 3S4

By Telephone: (867) 873-7034
Toll Free: 1-800-661-0889

By Fax: (867) 873-0357
Toll Free: 1-888-305-7353

By E-Mail: langcom@gov.nt.ca

By Web Site: www.gov.nt.ca/Lang_Com

