



**Official Languages Commissioner
of the Northwest Territories**

Annual Report

2025/2026





July 1, 2026

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

It is my duty and privilege to submit the Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, pursuant to Section 23 (1) of the Official Languages Act, for the period from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026.

Herzog

Acting Languages Commissioner

English

French

Cree

Tłchq

Chipewyan

South Slavey

North Slavey

Gwich'in

Inuvialuktun

Inuktitut

Inuinnaqtun

Language Commissioner * Dene Zhatie Ts'eh K'eh Eghalaenda * Pekiskwehk Commissioner * Nekhweginjik Eenjit Adachoo Nàdhat
Dēne Yatī Xa Tthe Theda * ᑯᑦᑲᑦᓴᑦᐱᑦᔨᑦ ᑭᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ * Dōnesōāi yati gha k'aowo dèè * Ukuahiliqinikutt Kaminsinia
Duhdá Elígu Ncnc Dene Kedé Karlá gha k'áowe * Uqautchitigun Angalatchiyuaq * Commissaire aux langues

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Message from the Languages Commissioner

The 2025–2026 fiscal year was a period of significant transition and capacity building for the Office of the Languages Commissioner.

A key milestone was the development of a new role and the appointment of a Deputy Languages Commissioner in December 2025. I am pleased to welcome Maxine Trennert to this position. Working out of the Ombud's Office in Hay River, her presence helps ensure that the Office of the Languages Commissioner remains accessible to residents across the Northwest Territories.

This year also marked the beginning of efforts to modernize the office's visual identity and public-facing information. Progress to date includes the creation of a new logo, poster and pamphlet outlining the Office's mandate and explaining how residents can seek assistance. Work is underway to update our website so complaints can be submitted directly online to increase our accessibility. While these updates remain ongoing, we are

actively working to ensure that all updated public resources are translated into all official languages of the Northwest Territories.

Community outreach continued throughout the year and included engagement with Indigenous governments, service providers, and community members through meeting and community events. These efforts are essential to expanding awareness of the Office of the Languages Commissioner and ensuring residents understand their rights under the **Official Languages Act**. Outreach also serves as a valuable mechanism for gathering information that may not emerge through formal complaints. Given the historically low number of complaints received by the Office, this information can support the Languages Commissioner in considering matters on their own initiative.

Although no own-motion investigations were completed this year, the Office emphasized early engagement with departments to address potential language services issues

"...collaboration enables concerns to be identified and addressed early..."

before they escalate to a formal complaint or investigation. One example was the Office's inquiry into the **Active Offer Policy**. By engaging with the relevant department prior to initiating a formal investigation, the Office was able to obtain responses to questions, learn more about upcoming initiatives aimed at supporting Indigenous language translation and service delivery, and it helped inform the Office's ongoing monitoring approach. This engagement also led to the **Franco-phone Affairs Secretariat** agreeing to share recurring themes from complaints related to French-language services. Such collaboration enables concerns to be identified and addressed early and supports the possibility of broader, systemic review should patterns continue to emerge.

Information shared by community members has a direct and meaningful impact on the work of this office. Moving forward, community outreach, own-motion inquiries, and investigations informed by issues raised through community input or the lived experience of the office's team will continue to guide our work. These efforts will strengthen outcomes and help ensure that equal language protections and access to services are available to all residents of the Northwest Territories.



About the Office of the Languages Commissioner

ROLE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER

The Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories is an independent office whose mandate is to ensure the rights, status and privileges of each of the Official Languages are respected by Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) institutions. It also ensures compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES WITHIN THE NWT

The Northwest Territories has eleven (11) Official Languages which include:

Chipewyan, Cree, English, Gwich'in, French, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, & Tłıchǫ.

WHAT KIND OF COMPLAINTS CAN THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER INVESTIGATE?

The Languages Commissioner can investigate complaints regarding all GNWT departments, the legislative assembly, courts, corporations, boards, commissions and agencies.

WE CANNOT INVESTIGATE:

- Federal government
- Indigenous governments
- Municipal governments
- Private business or institutions
- RCMP

How We Do Our Work

HEARING FROM RESIDENTS

Residents who interact with GNWT institutions hold key information to understanding concerns related to receiving services in any of the Official Languages and compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

PROVIDE EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT

Those concerns then form the work of the Languages Commissioner and the recommendations to the GNWT department. The Languages Commissioner is not a GNWT employee which ensures independence and the ability to provide recommendations to government institutions without restriction.

WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

The Languages Commissioner has the ability to work as an impartial third party to relay the concern forward and to work with the GNWT department to address the concern. This process takes the burden off the complainant and focuses on a resolution.

Our Process

The Languages Commissioner can investigate individual complaints received or can carry out investigations at their own initiative.

Complaints can be provided by email, phone, in person at our office, or when the Languages Commissioner travels throughout the NWT.

All complaints are confidential and names will not be shared without consent.

INQUIRY

A request for information, usually related to the status or use of Official Languages, or about the *Official Languages Act*. It does not include any suggestion that a person feels that they have been unfairly treated.

COMPLAINT

A complaint involves a situation where a person 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.

HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT?

You can provide a complaint in person at our office, call us, or fill out a complaint online.

OWN INITIATIVE INVESTIGATION

An investigation can occur when the Languages Commissioner decides to investigate a specific situation or larger systemic issue, regardless of whether a complaint has been filed with the office.

STEPS IN PROCESS

1. Receive complaint and obtain any additional information needed
2. Determine if we have the authority to accept and proceed with complaint
3. Work with the applicable department to resolve the complaint
4. Inform of outcome or recommendations made

Overview 2025/2026

Welcoming New Leadership

In December 2025, the Official Languages Commissioner (OLC) marked an important milestone with the arrival of a new Deputy Languages Commissioner. This appointment strengthened the Office's leadership team and reinforced its commitment to advancing and protecting language rights across all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. The Deputy Languages Commissioner brings valuable Indigenous knowledge and experience, fresh perspective, and a shared passion for supporting linguistic diversity and community engagement. Their addition has been warmly welcomed by staff and partners alike and sets a positive tone for continued collaboration and progress in the year ahead.

New OLC Logo

WHY CHANGE THE OLC LOGO?

As the Northwest Territories evolves on its ***Reconciliation Journey***, the OLC took to modernizing its logo. Our office is active, engaged, and responsive to the needs of the public. We want to increase recognition of the OLC's work in protecting languages rights across the NWT. A refreshed logo ensures the Office's visual identify is current and reflects the cultural, linguistic, and social landscape, including celebrating the 11 Official Languages. An innovative design offers space for Indigenous knowledge, symbolism, and worldviews. The new logo shares important symbols that reflect cultures, languages, and nature—it respects our past while helping us to connect with new generations across the NWT.

ABOUT THE LOGO

The new logo designed by our new **Deputy Languages Commissioner** is Nature's palette: it features three caribou representing past, present, and future generations looking upward to the stars and **Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis)**. The caribou is a sacred animal that holds spiritual, cultural, and physical significance to Indigenous peoples in the NWT. Dene, Inuit, and Métis peoples view caribou as a sacred gift, a relative, or teacher that has sustained their way of life for thousands of years. Above them shine eleven stars, each symbolizing one of the 11 **Official Languages of the NWT**, celebrating the rich linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of the north. Stars are important to the cultural, spiritual, and practical lives of Northerners serving as navigation tools, seasonal calendars for hunting and anchors for oral traditions. **Northern Lights** are also deeply revered and integral to stories and are reminders of ancestors watching over the living. Together, the caribou, the stars, and the **Northern Lights** create a logo that expresses unity, resilience, heritage, and the deep connection between language, culture, and the land. It is a symbol of strength and continuity, honouring the past and future while celebrating the richness of life in the north.



About the Artist

Maxine Trennert (Alianaq Qutani), Deputy Languages Commissioner, brings both heart and leadership to her work in supporting the Official Languages Office. Born and raised in the NWT, she is guided by a lifelong connection to the land, to community, and to the teachings that have shaped her path. Her professional career reflects a sustained commitment to **Indigenous Relations, Socio-economics**, and the ongoing work of **Truth and Reconciliation**. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Alberta.



As an Indigenous artist, Maxine utilizes various mediums that reflect her curiosity and appreciation for our natural world. Her art is guided by the land, family teachings, and the enduring wisdom of her ancestors. Raised with the understanding that the land is a living source of strength, identity, and wellbeing, Maxine carries forward knowledge shared by her grandparents and parents through visual storytelling.

Caribou hold a special place in Maxine's heart. Teachings from her father about resilience, survival, and respect for life continue to shape how she depicts this sacred animal. One of her earliest drawings of a caribou was later transformed into a caribou hair tufting by her mother—it became a powerful symbol of creativity and knowledge passed across generations. Stars and the **Northern Lights** illuminate her work, representing ancestors' presence and honouring the eleven **Official Languages of the NWT**.

Through her art, Maxine creates spaces of remembrance, connection, and continuity. Each piece reflects the deep relationships between people, language, culture, and the natural world—ensuring Elders' teachings remain alive and accessible for generations to come. Her work invites viewers to reflect on where they come from, who walks alongside them, and how language and culture continue to guide us forward.

"My art is a way of sharing what my family and the land have taught me about how connected everyone and everything is, so that those teachings continue we share, that is our way. Quyanainni"

Public Education and Outreach

BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS THROUGH OUTREACH

The Office of the Languages Commissioner (OLC) continued to strengthen relationships across the Northwest Territories through meaningful community outreach grounded in respect, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

SOUTH MACKENZIE CORRECTION CENTRE (SMCC)

In February, the OLC engaged with residents and staff of the **South Mackenzie Correctional Centre (SMCC)** in Hay River, supporting the centre’s therapeutic community model through culturally respectful, trauma-informed engagement. This work reflected the OLC’s mandate under the **Official Languages Act (OLA)** and emphasized dignity, personal accountability, and community connection.



South Mackenzie Correctional Centre (SMCC) in Hay River (Photo by OLC)

YELLOWKNIFE TRADESHOW

In May 2025, the Office of the Languages Commissioner attended the **2025 Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce Spring Trade Show** at the Yellowknife Multiplex. The two-day event brought together more than 180 booths, along with a food court and children’s activity area, and welcomed approximately 4,000 attendees. Participation in the trade show provided an important opportunity for the OLC to connect directly with residents, raise awareness of language rights and services, and strengthen public understanding of the Office’s mandate.



Languages Commissioner, Krista Carnogursky and Deputy Ombud, Michelle Staszuk at the 2025 Yellowknife Tradeshow

WAVES 2025: GLOBAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES SUMMIT

In August 2025, the Languages Commissioner attended **WAVES 2025: Global Indigenous Languages Summit** in Ottawa, a landmark gathering hosted by the **Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages**.

The summit brought together thousands of participants from across Canada and around the world to share knowledge, celebrate Indigenous languages, and explore practical approaches to language revitalization through dialogue, cultural programming, and collaboration.



In August, the Languages Commissioner met with staff from the **Fédération Franco-Ténoise** to hear concerns and discuss how additional supports can be provided to the French community.

OLC's Languages Commissioner, Krista Carnogursky (center), Sophie Gauthier (left) President and Audrey Fournier (right), Executive Director of the Fédération franco-ténoise sharing ideas for collaboration and shared commitment to language access across the Northwest Territories.



NWTAC - 2026 AGM

In March, the OLC participated in the **Northwest Territories Association of Communities (NWTAC) 2026 Annual Assembly**, joining representatives from all 33 incorporated communities and designated authorities. Participation in the AGM provided an important opportunity to promote awareness of language rights and obligations, strengthen partnerships with community governments, and remain aligned with shared priorities. These conversations reinforced collaboration with partners who play a vital role in delivering public services and advancing community-driven goals. Together, these engagements reflect the OLC's ongoing commitment to accessibility, respect for linguistic diversity, and stronger connections with communities throughout the Northwest Territories.



OLC's Languages Commissioner, Krista Carnogursky (right) and Deputy Languages Commissioner, Maxine Trennert (left) at the NWTAC 2026 Annual Assembly, reinforcing collaboration and shared commitment to language access across the Northwest Territories.

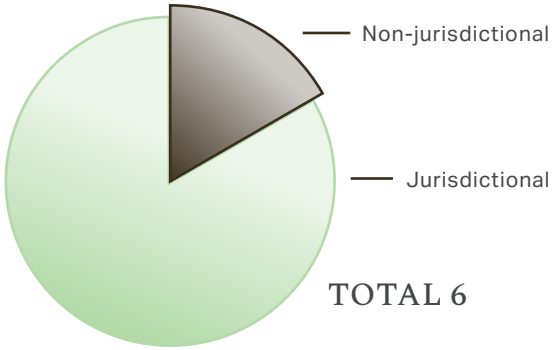
Examples of our work

In January, the Office of the Languages Commissioner had the pleasure of assisting a Yellowknife resident seeking the North Slavey translation for "mother" as part of a meaningful baby shower gift. Our team connected the caller with the **Government of the Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) Directorate of Indigenous Translators**, helping ensure the request could be fulfilled respectfully and accurately. The interaction highlighted how small enquiries can foster cultural appreciation and personal connection, and the caller expressed sincere appreciation for the support provided.

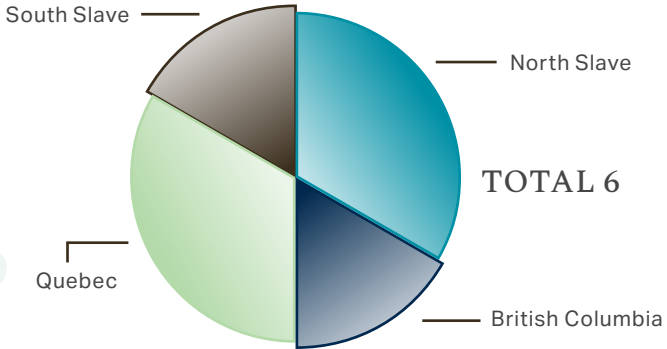
In the 2025/2026 fiscal year the Languages Commissioner had 6 case files. Of these, 4 were closed and 2 remained open and were moved to Early Resolution.

All 6 case files fell within the Office's jurisdiction. They involved the **Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the Department of Justice, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, and the Rental Office**, and two matters recorded as unspecified or other. In terms of outcomes, 3 cases were referred back to the organization, 2 were moved to Early Resolution, and 1 was discontinued. Two case files (with ECE and Rental Office), three Information Requests (NWT HSSA and two unspecified). All five case files are closed: (NWT HSSA, Rental Office, Justice, 2 unspecified/other).

ORGANIZATIONS



COMMUNITY



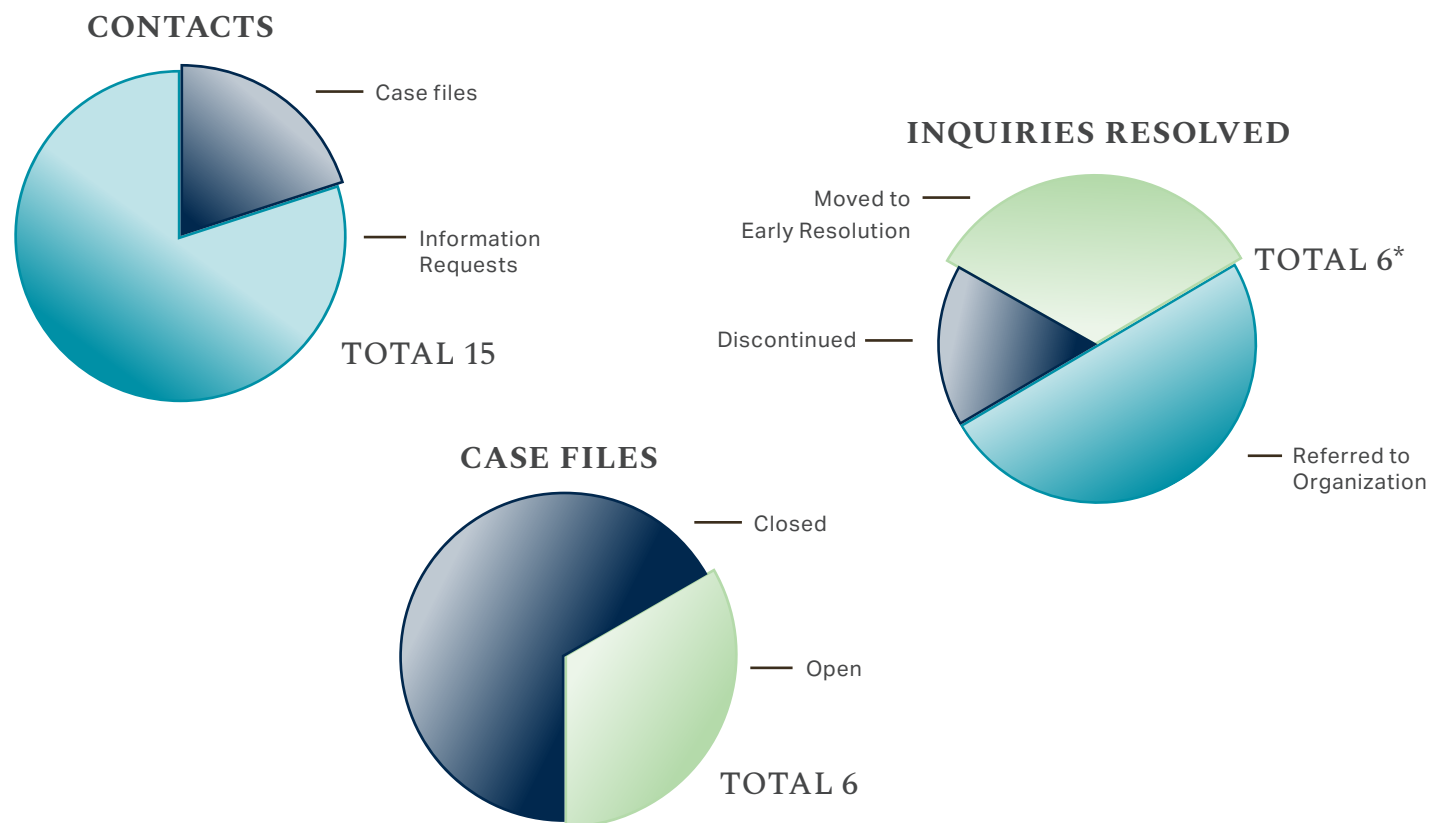
HOW CASES WERE RESOLVED:

Three cases were referred back to the Organization. The first case involved a southern health care facility seeking information on if **Inuvialuktun** should/can be added into the internal coding system within their organization and how that information ties to the population of the NWT.

The second case involved a request for funding Indigenous books and resources and was referred to the applicable department for additional information.

The third case involved a question regarding the use of Indigenous names when listing the Official Indigenous languages of the NWT. The information was shared and the client was advised that the Languages Commissioner uses information that is currently in the OLC legislation.

Two cases were moved to Early Resolution. The first involved questions about the **Active Offer Policy** and the availability of languages services and was addressed through early engagement with the relevant department to clarify current practices and planned improvements. The second involved access to **Tłıchǫ** interpretation in court so that conditions and proceedings could be clearly understood and was moved to early resolution to support timely coordination with the appropriate justice officials. Finally, one case was discontinued.



* 4 Inquiries did not proceed
2 Inquiries became complaints

Information Requests

OWN INITIATIVE DISCUSSIONS:

OLC Engagement on French-Language Required Positions (GNWT)

During the reporting period, the Office of the Languages Commissioner (OLC) initiated discussions with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT)—including the **Department of Finance (Human Resources)** and the **Francophone Affairs Secretariat (FAS)** to clarify how French-Language Required (English French bilingual) positions are established and managed. These exchanges were collaborative and transparent, and the OLC appreciates the departments' willingness to share detailed information in support of informed oversight under the **Official Languages Act (OLA)**.

Determination of Positions

GNWT explained that **French-Language Required** positions are designated based on job duties—specifically where the regular use of French is necessary to meet service obligations under the **Official Languages Act**, **GNWT French Language Standards**, and department **Operating Plans**. The requirement must be explicitly written into the job description and applies to the position, not the incumbent. Where French enhances service but is not essential, positions may be designated **French-preferred**.

Funding Context

GNWT outlined a mixed funding model, **Federal funding (Canadian Heritage)** supports a core set of French Language Required positions under the **Canada-GNWT Agreement on French Language Services**, while the GNWT funds additional positions and any shortfall beyond the Federal envelope. Over the 2023-2028 period, federal funding totals \$5.9M annually (\$29.5M total) for French-language communications and services, training, monitoring, and compliance activities.

Monitoring and Accountability

The *Francophone Affairs Secretariate* oversees the *Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability (MEA)* framework, tracks performance indicators, and coordinates compliance audits scheduled for 2026-27. Results inform target adjustments and are reflected in public reporting, including *Annual Official Languages* reporting and *Strategic Plan* updates. The *Official Languages Board* advises the Minister, and the Languages Commissioner provides external oversight through investigations, mediations, and annual reporting.

Bilingual Designation Reviews

GNWT advised that bilingual designation reviews occur as needed, not on a fixed cycle, and are triggered by changes to job duties or service obligations, Operating Plan updates, organizational restructuring, or evidence of increased community demand identified through surveys, public feedback, or service use data.

Role of Community Input

Community perspectives are incorporated through *Francophone Community Satisfaction Surveys*, *Votre avis GTNO* (the GNWT public feedback mechanism, **consultations and partnerships, health-sector collaboration (including MOU-based input), and service-use data** (e.g., Services TNO). This input helps identify service pressure points—most notably in **Health & Wellness – and can trigger staffing reviews** where evidence shows sustained or growing demand for French-language services.

French Language Communications and Services – Ongoing Collaborative Work

As part of its mandate to promote compliance with the **Official Languages Act** and support effective language services for the public, the OLC continued informal and collaborative discussions with the Government of the Northwest Territories regarding the **Strategic Plan for French Language Communications and Services**. This work focused on sharing information, understanding historical and legal contexts, and discussing complex policy questions, including how communities with significant demand for French-language services have been identified over time.

Through ongoing meetings and written exchanges, the OLC provided a space for open

dialogue and mutual learning. All parties recognized that these issues are shaped by past agreements, legal decisions, and practical considerations. Rather than pursuing immediate changes, discussions emphasized thoughtful analysis, relationship-building, and identifying approaches that are realistic and achievable.

The OLC also highlighted the importance of collaboration with key partners, including **La Fédération franco-ténoise**, as part of informed and respectful decision-making. This engagement remains ongoing and reflects a shared commitment to cooperative problem-solving. The OLC will continue to gather information and contribute to discussions in support of its mandate and long-term delivery of responsive and inclusive language services.

Through ongoing informal collaboration with GNWT partners, the OLC strengthened shared understanding supported by compliance with the **Official Languages Act**, and contributed to more informed, relationship-based decision making for French-language services in the Northwest Territories.

OLC Appreciation

The OLC notes that these discussions strengthened shared understanding of the Government of the Northwest Territories approach to bilingual staffing and appreciate the departments' cooperative engagement, which supports effective accountability and the continuous improvement of French-language service delivery across the Territory.

Financials

ACCOUNT	EXPENDITURES (\$s)
COMPENSATION & BENEFITS	<u>341,187</u>
OTHER EXPENSES	
Travel & Transportation	11,933
Materials & Supplies	1,882
Purchased Services	10,068
Contract Services	23,504
Fees & Payments	800
COMPUTER EXPENSES	2,419
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	<u>50,606</u>
TOTAL	<u>391,792.51</u>



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