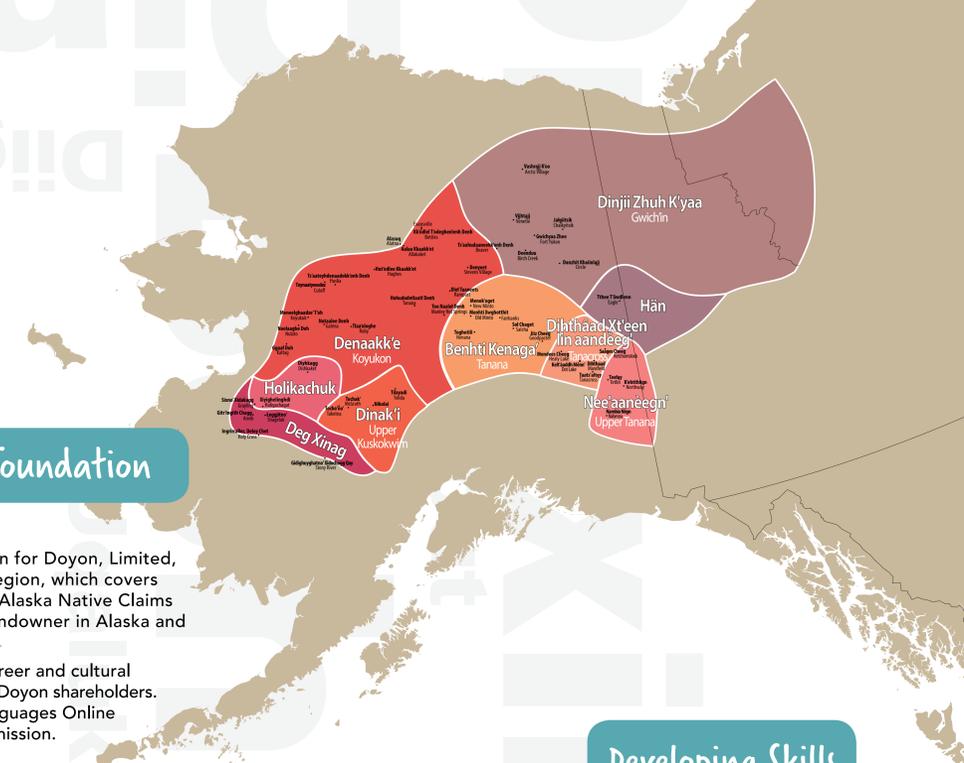
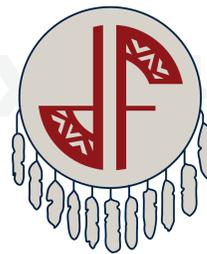




# DOYON FOUNDATION



## Our Languages An Urgent Need

Alaska has a total of 20 Native languages; of those, 10 are based in the Doyon region. Due to the rapidly decreasing health of creative and fluent Native language speakers, these languages are not being passed on quickly enough to ensure their survival. All of the Doyon region languages are severely to critically endangered, and will be lost within the span of a few generations if no action is taken. There is an urgent need to promote and foster language opportunities for non-speakers.

To respond to this need, Doyon Foundation began laying the groundwork for a region-wide language revitalization program in 2009. Doyon, Limited generously awarded start-up funding to establish the program in 2012. Since then, the program has continued to grow through undertakings such as the Doyon Languages Online project.



## Who We Are Doyon Foundation

Doyon Foundation is the charitable nonprofit foundation for Doyon, Limited, the Alaska Native regional corporation for the Doyon region, which covers 12.5 million acres in Interior Alaska. Created under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Doyon, Limited is the largest private landowner in Alaska and has more than 20,000 shareholders.

Doyon Foundation's mission is to provide educational, career and cultural opportunities to enhance the identity and quality of life for Doyon shareholders. Our Language Revitalization Program and the Doyon Languages Online project are two important ways we work to achieve this mission.



## Doyon Languages Online

### Making Language Learning Available to All

Doyon Languages Online (DLO) is a partnership effort between Doyon Foundation and 7000 Languages, a nonprofit that supports endangered language learning through software donated by Transparent Language.

DLO aims to create introductory online lessons for all of the endangered Doyon region languages: Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana), Deg Xinag, Denaak'e (Koyukon), Diihthaa'd Xt'een in Aandéeg' (Tanacross), Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim), Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in), Hän, Holikachuk, and Nee'aaneeg' (Upper Tanana). Additional goals include working with teachers in the Doyon region school districts to incorporate these courses into their lessons, field testing course utilization and effectiveness, and developing guides for dialects to develop their own courses.

The project is supported by three full-time staff, 17 content creators and two former interns.

DLO is funded by a three-year grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), awarded in 2016, and an additional three-year grant from the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP), awarded in 2017.



DOYON  
languages online

## Challenges and Opportunities

With a project this ambitious, many challenges and opportunities show up along the way to success. Here we show a few of the challenges and the tools we used to address them.

### Challenges

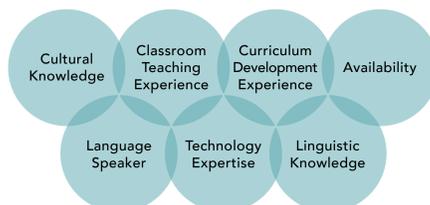
- 5 Distinct Languages
- Long Distances
- Small Office
- Growing Programs
- New Software
- Varying Levels of Knowledge

### Tools

- Collaboration Between Languages
- Shared Online Workspace
- Google Forms for Data Tracking
- Online Project Management
- Patience
- Language Teams

## The Path to Success

Language revitalization is a relatively young field of work, and the Doyon region languages are categorized as endangered. This makes finding a single person who has all of the skill sets required to create an online language course difficult. Here we show some of the skills and expertise needed to create a course. We work in teams and participate in training to become cross-functional and overcome this challenge.



## Developing Skills

### Capacity Building

#### Facilitating Production

DLO is a many-faceted endeavor with benefits extending beyond the creation of an online learning tool for the Doyon region languages. Content development for DLO enables language community members to develop skills they did not previously have. For example:

- Elder speakers learn computer skills to execute the project and collaborate over distance technologies (such as cloud-based software).
- Tech-savvy beginning learners work closely with fluent speakers to create the lessons, in essence facilitating a "master-apprentice" relationship.
- Fluent speakers gain reading and writing skills in their language.
- All language team members gain the unique skill sets required to develop online courses for their language.

With additional staff, media equipment and continued training, Doyon Foundation can now better support the production of language-learning content, tools and media. The increased capacity from the DLO project include:

- Three content creator workstations (two of which double as media editing computers).
- Three additional staff members (two of whom are Doyon Foundation alumni and Doyon shareholders).
- A studio setup with lighting, cameras and microphones.

## Content Creation

### The Process of Language Revitalization



The process of creating introductory language-learning courses includes developing conversations and vocabulary for 10 units, utilizing donated software to package the material, recording the conversations with Native speakers, and providing supplementary material such as hints, photos, videos, culture explanations and grammar explanations. Each piece of developed material then undergoes a full review process by speakers, linguists, Doyon Foundation staff and 7000 Languages staff.

We contract with individuals from each of the focus language communities to organize language teams. These teams work collaboratively with Elders, linguists and the DLO development team to create the courses.

For our courses, we focused on generating short conversations in the language. We were then able to use these to make scripts and record videos to help the learner see the language in context. Constructed conversations also gave examples of language in use, as opposed to in isolation. With multiple modalities for the material, we are able to fully utilize the many features of the donated software.

We are proud to say that during the 2017 – 2018 fiscal year, content creators for the nine languages logged 2,356 hours!

