Environmental Assessment Terminology Workshop

Hosted by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

February 11-13, 2020

Report of the Workshop

Contents

MVEIRB Environmental Assessment Terminology Workshop Context

The co-management boards of the Mackenzie Valley have been developing translations of common and specialized terminology related to environmental assessments and resource development in order to facilitate meaningful consultation and engagement through proper interpretations during community meetings and public hearings. By fostering a shared understanding of language, the Board can ensure that Indigenous people can understand information, provide input and express their concerns in their own languages.

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) held an Environmental Assessment Terminology workshop in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NT) on February 11, 12 and 13, 2020. The workshop was intended to build on previous terminology work conducted between 2008-2010 and in 2012, through which terminology glossaries were created as reference sources for interpreters and translators in particular, and also for the general public. This workshop was intended to build on the existing glossaries, filling gaps and targeting specific terminology anticipated for upcoming hearings.

The glossaries are in the following Indigenous languages and are linked below:
o Dëne Suǫ́łıné Yatıé (Chipewyan)
o Tłı̨chǫ Yatıì (Tlicho)
o Sahtúot'ı̨nę Yatı̨́ (North Slavey)
o Dene Zhatıé (South Slavey)
o Dinjii Zhuh Ginjik (Gwich'in)
o Wıılìıdeh Yatı (Weledeh Tłı̨chǫ)

http://reviewboard.ca/reference_material/aboriginal_lanuage_glossary

The goals for this workshop were to:

❖ discuss and translate environmental assessment terminology that needed to be updated or added to the glossaries;
❖ bring together the interpreters and translators from the Dene Languages to have consistent back translations for the terminology; and
❖ clarify any previous translations with proper back translations.

Workshop Methodology

The workshop was facilitated by Allice Legat. Participants included Board staff, who acted as technical resource people, providing insight into the meaning of specific vocabulary, terms and concepts in English. Participants also included language experts, at least one interpreter from each of NWT's six primary language groups. There was also a *note*-taker, Sylvia Charlo of PlanIt North, whose role was to enter back-translations and Dene language translations into a central database as they were completed. Sylvia was also tasked with providing brief notes about methodology and completing this report.

Given differences in structure and concepts between Dene languages and English, for most terms, translations are not direct. That is, it is important to first discuss what a term or concept means in English and agree on an English description that *can* be accurately translated to each Dene language. This detailed explanation of an English term has been referred to throughout this process as a *back-translation.*

The workshop was structured with Board staff first introducing a term through a powerpoint slide. Each slide listed the term in English, as well as any back-translation that had already been developed. Language experts and board staff then worked together in break out groups to discuss the meaning of the word or phrase, first in English and then to secure accurate language translations. Board staff roles were to help describe often technical concepts related to the processes and content of Environmental Assessments and resource development management.

This report summarizes the content presented and the resulting discussions with an emphasis on describing the overall methodology that was used. That is, brief descriptions summarize specific discussions on each of the three days and highlight ways in which each day proceeded differently from the general methodology described above.

The final list of the work completed for each term was submitted to the review board.

Day One

Welcome and introductions

Mary Rose Sundberg opened the workshop with a prayer. Allice welcomed participants, reviewing the goals and structure of the workshop. She explained that the workshop was to discuss and translate environmental assessment terminology that needed to be updated or added into the glossaries, and to bring together interpreters and translators from several Dene Languages to have consistent translations for the terminology. Allice also emphasized the concept of the *back*-translation, explaining the importance of having consistent back translations across language translations so that everybody has a shared understanding of what a term means in English. Given the importance of the back-translation and the on-going challenge of developing back-translations that accurately capture the meaning of the English

word or phrase and can be translated to Dene, there are a number of translations in the previous glossaries that need updating by first producing a common back-translation and then ensuring that the existing Dene translations remain accurate. Therefore, this workshop includes both *new* terms (not yet translated) and also previously translated terms that require clarifications with agreed upon back translations.

Allice welcomed and thanked the language experts in the workshop who were from different regional Indigenous groups and who each brought substantial expertise working with their languages as interpreters, translators and/or teachers. Allice invited all participants to introduce themselves.

Background presentation – co-management context

Mark Cliffe-Phillips, Executive Director of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) shared a background presentation about the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA), co-Management, land use planning, and wildlife and resources management. He outlined the geographical jurisdiction of the MVEIRB, an area that includes the entire Mackenzie Valley but excludes the Inuvialuit Region, explaining that the Inuvialuit Settlement Region is independent and operates under separate federal legislation with respect to Impact Assessment processes and in areas of climate change and wildlife.

Mark explained that it is the Review Board's responsibility to consider the values in each region and community, which may be impacted by a proposed development. The Board is tasked with looking at the bigger projects that may have significant adverse effects on the environment including on the social, cultural and the economic well-being of communities. The Board follows Socio-Economic and Traditional Knowledge (TK) guidelines and is tasked, within the MVRMA to incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. There are various ways to do this. One is to ensure that the EA process is as accessible for Dene language speakers as possible. However, for a Dene speaker to participate effectively in an environmental assessment process, there must be ways for concepts to be understood across language and across cultures.

The Review Board seeks to emphasize the importance of TK to companies proposing to work in each of NWT's region and explain to these project proponents that they need to be listening to TK and ensuring that it guides their decision-making throughout the whole process. TK should be integrated into the project planning and also when the Review Board are conducting cultural impact assessments. This work on terminology will help to ensure that TK can be better incorporated into EA at all stages of a proposed project and its impact assessment.

Terminology Work in Plenary

Amanda Annand, Environmental Assessment Officer with the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board began a presentation sharing the terminology work that the Board staff

hoped to accomplish trough the workshop. Within the powerpoint, each term had at least one dedicated slide, in which the English term was presented as well as a back translation, if indeed a back translation had already been agreed upon. For instance, the first terms presented were terms *about how we do environmental assessment*. The first term presented was ***project alternatives*.** The slide provided a suggested *back translation*, which in this case was "Other ways of making the development, like different mining methods (open pit or underground), or different waste management (landfill or truck it out). Images on the screen shared an example from the Environmental Assessment for Diavik, in which there had been a discussion about where to put the processed kimberlite (PK). The intention of the powerpoint was to provide a departure point for discussion among workshop participants so that all participants could develop a shared understanding of the intention of the English term and from there define a common *back translation*.

Figure 1: An example of how terms were presented to participants in powerpoint slides.

Amanda presented nine terms specific to the *processes* of environmental assessment

The nine EA process terms presented were:

1) Project Alternatives, Environmental Assessment
2) Community Hearing
3) Formal / Technical Hearing
4) Intervention
5) Public Record
6) Scope of Assessment

7) Scope of Development
8) Developer's Assessment Report (DAR)
9) Environmental Assessment

Alice then asked participants to divide into their language break out tables to work through the terminology list. The Review Board staff were each seated at each of the different language tables, to help with explanations of the terms in English.

Small group work

Participants sat with their different language groups at each table and worked at their own pace, verifying with the Board staff member any confusion they may have had with any term. Each language group had been given a specific colour of paper to record translations, in order to help the recorder distinguish between the different languages. As each group finalized back-translations and Dene translations, their words were written on the paper provided and hung up around the room with the term in English and in their language. As words were finalized, Sylvia would enter translations into the main spreadsheet database.

Sharing and validation in plenary

After the first terminology work session, Allice had asked the participants to come back to the large table so that the participants could share the terms they had developed. First, they would say the English word, then the translation, followed by the back translation. As each person said their translation of the large section of words, other participants had an opportunity to suggest slight differences in translation – either to the English back-translation or to the Dene language translation.

The participants split again into their small language groups where they could adjust any terms from the previous sharing, given the group feedback, or they could continue working through the terminology list.

Later in the day, everyone again came together to discuss further any complications they may have encountered with the terms. The participants communicated that they would like to continue working in the small groups, and that they appreciated having a Board staff help them with any complications arising from each of the words or phrases.

Closing comments, day one

In closing to the first day, Mark Cliffe-Phillips reviewed what would take place the next day and emphasized that it will be important that this work continue beyond the work that is accomplished in this three-day workshop. He emphasised how important the learning is for him and the other Board staff who are involved since they are able to better understand how terms are translated into Dene languages and understand how concepts are interpreted across cultures. He explained that he could see that s some of the terms do not make sense to the translators and therefore this sort of work is very important to develop a shared understanding of the intent of the words being communicated. He acknowledged that when the Board staff go

into communities and listen to Elders, they may not be fully understanding what the Elders are trying to say because of the way that the terms have been translated in the past.

Day Two

Lucy Jackson led an opening prayer. Allice acknowledged everybody's hard work as each person had been persevering through the list the day before, without barely taking a break. She emphasized the importance of taking breaks and the importance of taking the time that is needed to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the way that the terms are translated. By taking time and working together, the workshop team can ensure that at a hearing, everyone listening to interpretations will be hearing the same information. Allice explained that it was therefore important that participants do not feel rushed, even if they do not complete the full list of translations. Workshop participants understood that it takes time to discuss terms and reach agreement on their meaning and that ensuring proper translations is important both to support the EA process and also to ensure that their languages are documented and preserved accurately. As the language experts are being challenged with translating words that do not exist in Dene languages, participants have to be creative when trying to translate from English to their language. Allice validated that this takes time.

Allice also suggested to the groups that they ensure that the back translations are written out on the paper boards to ensure both the Dene language translation and the English back translation were both being properly captured by the recorder; this was not happening consistently on the first day.

Throughout the second day, participants continued working through the list of terms. At one point, the language groups came together to go through the second section of words on the working list in order to assist groups that may have been struggling to translate some of the terms. The second list of terms were grouped as "terms about action we take to prevent bad things from happening. The second list of terms included:

10) Commitment
11) Measures / Mitigation Measures
12) Follow-up Program
13) Management Plan
14) Adaptive Management
15) Progressive Remediation
16) Decommissioning
17) Post-Closure
18) Impact Benefit Agreement
19) Socio-Economic Agreement

By coming together, the language groups were able to share their back translations and translations and provide each other with tips about the meaning of the English terms and how these might be communicated in the respective Dene languages.

Day Three

Following an opening prayer, Allice asked participants if they would like to recommend any modifications to the workshop format. By consensus, participants suggested continuing to work in small groups as they had been doing in an effort to work through as many terms as possible. Participants were strongly motivated to continue working and very focussed at the task before them.

The groups did not have an opportunity to come together on the third day to share their back translations because of their focus and determination to move forward and because time was limited.

Towards the end of the day, the small groups came together to debrief the workshop and provide suggestions about what to do differently next time and as next steps.

Recommendations for future work

Allice invited feedback about the workshop and recommendations for future work. Participants' suggestions are summarized by theme.

1. Involve Elders and other opportunities for community validation

Typically, when an interpreter is workshopping a term, he or she does so in conversation with a group of Elders. This is an important approach to validation as the Elders provide insights into how they are understanding words and share what understanding they gain from a particularly way that a term is translated. For many of the language experts, it was difficult having to provide translations without being able to look to their Elders for this guidance and validation. Participants suggested a number of ways that these validation stages could happen including:

- Invite Elders to participate in the workshop or at least the last day of the workshop, to validate the work done
- Provide the terms ahead of time so that interpreters could do work in their home communities, coming with some of the translations already prepared
- Provide an opportunity for the interpreters to take the terms back to their home communities, validate them and then reconvene to make final changes and compare the feedback that each one received from their community Elders.

2. Having technical staff involvement in the break-out groups was very helpful

Many participants commented that the participation of the MVEIRB staff who could help explain technical concepts and board processes was very helpful. In turn, the staff were very grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the Dene perspective and how this informs the language and the way that concepts are described. By being a part of the workshop, staff were better equipped for their future roles when they are trying to communicate board processes and technical details to community members.

3. Terminology workshops are very valuable for several reasons

Many participants commented about how much they enjoyed the terminology workshop and how important the work is. Not only does the work better equip interpreters to translate concepts at hearings, it also documents Dene language and the Dene perspective. Such efforts are vitally important and should be done for all topics; several participants were glad to see the Board making this effort as not every organization or government department prioritizes this type of work. One participant commented, for example, that Dene languages are still very strong and although fewer people are speaking the language, as long as this work is documenting it, then the language will never fade completely. Others commented that this work will live on a long time and be available for the younger generation as they learn to speak and understand their language and Dene perspectives.

The workshops were also insightful for Board staff to understand how these concepts are being understood and to practice themselves how they explain technical information with plain language.

Several participants emphasized the importance of having a follow-up workshop as soon as possible.

4. Create outputs from the workshop

Some participants talked about what they would like to see emerge from the efforts of the workshop, once the work is complete. For example, one person commented that Diavik has a translation book that worked very well for them; it was a glossary and dictionary for workers and for translators. A small booklet published would be a great tool to come from this. Others questioned whether the knowledge documented from this workshop could ultimately be presented in a format that would be useful for education within the schools. Participants also commented on the importance of bringing the group back together to review and validate any final publications.

5. Consider small format modifications for the workshop

Some changes to the workshop were suggested including:

- Hold it outside, or somewhere nearer to the land (like in Dettah or at Trapper's Lodge) where participants can be closer to the land since that is the basis of the language and the topics that are being discussed;

- Hold the workshop in the summer or spring when it is easier to spend time closer to the land and when it is not so cold and difficult for Elders to travel;
- Try to hold workshops at times when interpreters can come into Yellowknife for other meetings so that their time is being used as efficiently as possible;
- Light a candle during the workshop to invite the ancestors to guide their work;
- Try to serve traditional food for the Elders and food that is easy to chew (relatively soft);
    - and
- End gatherings and efforts like this with a feast to celebrate the accomplishments

6. Encourage broader efforts to conserve and teach about Dene language

Some recommendations were made concerning broader efforts to document and sustain Dene languages. For instance:

- Supporting courses to help translators learn and practice writing Dene languages
- Encourage and support Board staff to learn some Dene language, even if just a few words.
- Have a Dene person staffed at the Board who knows about Dene languages and Dene ways.
- Use more visual tools to help communicate about board processes and technical information.

7. Find ways to incorporate and honour the dialects

Each language has several dialects, which can make it very difficult for interpreters to choose just one translation. Interpreters can be resourced to work on the translations for each of the dialects.

8. Recognize the challenges of communicating across cultures

Many participants commented about how challenging this exercise was. The terms begin used are always starting with English centred terms and translations and they do not translate to Dene. Even once the back translation is done and agreed upon, it is very difficult to arrive at something that fully captures the English meaning because those concepts do not exist in the Dene languages. The two cultures really are living in different and unique worlds. It is very frustrating for the Dene interpreters and their people to be forced to communicate with English concepts.

An example of a very challenging back translation that was discussed was the concept of a "threshold". The examples that were given did not really make sense for Dene people and more work could be done ahead of time to prepare examples and back translations that resonate for people culturally.

Next steps and closing comments

Several participants remarked on the incredible motivation and dedication that was evident over the three days.

Mark Cliffe-Phillips thanked everybody for their participation and provided an overview about what he anticipated the next steps to be. These are:

- The Board will strive to seek funding to make this workshop a regular occurrence both to finish translating these words and to keep working them and refining them. As they are used over time, how they are understood and interpreted may evolve. The workshops are also important for ensuring that all the translators are familiar with the concepts and how to translate them.
- The glossary will have names of those who worked on the terms so that the Board knows how to contact for further validation.
- A binder will to back to each of the community interpreters so that they can bring it back to the next workshop, which will ideally be held in early spring. With the binder, everyone will be able to validate terms with their community members and Elders before the next workshop
- The glossary will be in alphabetical order (the words were grouped by *type* of words previously but alphabetical order will make it easier to find a word quickly.
- The Board will seek funding to also address those terms that were suggested to be put into a *parking lot* for future translation

The workshop was concluded with a closing prayer by Betty (Elizabeth) Hardisty.