

Yukon Native Language Centre

GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE TRANSLATION REQUESTS

Please read carefully, before committing to YNLC translation service, for your understanding and best translation results.

All Yukon First Nation (YFN) languages are critically endangered, with many communities down to one speaker. Translation has a crucial role to play in the process of respectful and culturally appropriate language recovery.

YNLC is not a translation bureau and does not receive funding to provide this service, but it acknowledges the importance of translations and can assist with legitimate, respectful translation needs. YNLC may refer requests to other agencies, organizations, First Nations, or translation consultants.

The cost for translation services is determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on complexity of the translation, length of the translation and availability of translation consultants. The fee for translations in YFN languages cannot be compared to those of dominant languages such as French.

Translation is a complex endeavor, requiring the active collaboration of multiple participants to produce a quality translation. It requires close reading of a text in the source language, understanding its meaning, creating an equivalent text in the target language and applying the translation exactly as provided. Please understand that, **there is no such thing as a one-to-one correspondence between languages.**

The content to be translated should be coherent and intelligible, without ambiguity and potential for confusion. Idioms may have a clear meaning in English, but most likely will not in other languages. Always use clear, plain English.

Submitting a short, catchy English phrase for translation, does not always equate to a short, catchy translation in a Yukon First Nation language and the application of the translation into a graphic design may present difficulties for the requestor. It is important to carefully consider slogans before submitting them for translation.

Translations are not exact and First Nations languages have forms that have implications not present in English and vice versa, this is the case for translations in general. For instance, when requesting a translation for a phrase containing the word “wild”, it is difficult to translate in all of the Yukon First Nation languages. No contrast between the concept of “wild” and “tame” exists in these languages. Another example is found in the English word “place”. This generic term does not exist in Yukon First Nation languages and needs to be identified instead, with an actual mountain, river or specific geographic location. Therefore, requesting a translation for the phrase “Preserving Wild Places” becomes a complicated process. Meaning is often lost when languages are translated.

Orthography, the standardized system for writing a language – including both the symbols used to write the language, and the conventions for which symbol refers to sound, is very important to meaning within Yukon First Nation languages and must be respected. It is

important that when given a text for translation, the translated version be copied exactly as it is provided or the meaning may be altered and disrespected.

A request for translation services that is deemed as culturally inappropriate, or one involving specialized legal, medical, engineering or other professional or expert terminology where the required legal, medical or other expert translation skills or terminology are not available, may be declined by YNLC. Translation requests must support the respectful use and preservation of Yukon First Nation languages.

Requests for translations from Yukon First Nations or those that directly impact First Nation language learning will be given priority. Culturally sensitive translations, as identified by YNLC staff, may require written permission from the First Nation(s) of the targeted translation before any translation can occur. All works of translation must give acknowledgement to the translator. Translation permission must be obtained and provided to YNLC by the requestor, when applicable, as required within the Copyright Law of Canada.

The issue of Indigenous cultural knowledge through translation into majority languages is highly politicized in some areas of Canada and some Indigenous groups have taken a stand against translation being done at all. In many communities, younger people are learning their languages as a second language and translation into the Indigenous language creates the materials needed to support this work and promote literacy in the language. The best use must be made of the limited resources that exist, especially our respected speakers¹.

Please honour our language requests and help us provide a service that respectfully builds and encourages the expanded usage of our Yukon First Nation languages.

¹ Mackenzie, Marguerite, and Brittain, Julie. *Translation as a way to save Indigenous languages*. Circuit, Numéro 139. Été 2018.