TRANSLATION COMMONS

2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF Indigenous Languages

International Translation Day

September 30, 2026

Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights: The Power of Being Understood

Online event organized by:
IDIL & Translation Commons

Join the event on Youtube

Website: https://translationcommons.org

Introduction

UNESCO and Translation Commons are convening this virtual event in collaboration with Indigenous organizations and community leaders to celebrate the International Translation Day (30 September, 2026) with special emphasis on Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights. At the 71st session in 2017, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 288 (A/RES/71/288, para 2), recognizing "the role of professional translation in connecting nations, and fostering peace, understanding and development", and declaring 30 September to be International Translation Day.

In 2026 the overarching theme for the International Translation Day is **Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights: The Power of Being Understood.** This online event is organized within the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2019. Bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including linguists, members of the Global task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, artists, activists, interpreters, and more, this event aims to foster meaningful dialog on these crucial topics. Students, educators, speakers of Indigenous languages, language advocates, policy makers, and all interested parties are encouraged to attend.

International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)

There are over seven thousand languages globally, and a large portion are spoken by Indigenous peoples. In recent years, Indigenous linguistic rights have gained international attention due to the rapid decline in intergenerational transmission of many Indigenous languages. Urgent collaborative action, centred on Indigenous leadership and community-driven strategies, is needed to support language continuity and the knowledge systems they sustain.

In 2019, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) through resolution A/RES/74/135. This resolution calls upon all stakeholders to address the critical loss of Indigenous languages and emphasizes the urgent need to support community-led revitalization, reclamation, and use of Indigenous languages across culturally determined domains across all socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political arenas. The aim is to use Indigenous languages as drivers for building peace, justice, development, and reconciliation in societies.

The International Decade calls on all stakeholders to work to ensure:

- Greater awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism
- Legal recognition of Indigenous languages
- Institutional recognition and inclusion of Indigenous languages guided by community protocols
- Continued support through the allocation of financial, human, and institutional resources, and infrastructures

Indigenous Languages and Translation

The Global Action Plan has four interlinked outcomes regarding Indigenous languages: revitalization, community-led promotion, and support for intergenerational transmission as defined by language communities. One outcome focuses on functional usage. Actions during the International Decade are creating an environment to enhance this usage in socio-cultural, economic, environmental, legal, and political domains. This involves implementing legal

frameworks, strengthening institutions, especially Indigenous institutions, building capacity, encouraging dialogue, and ensuring stakeholder participation.

A key action during the International Decade will be building the capacity of interpreters and translators for Indigenous languages. This is essential to support Indigenous Peoples' rights to interpretation and translation, including community-developed and -led interpreting practices and capacity-building. This also applies to refugees, people with disabilities, and sign language users. Professional interpreters and translators ensure effective communication between Indigenous people and public authorities.

2026 Theme
Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights: The Power of Being Understood

Please join Translation Commons in an online event celebrating International Translation Day.
Language is not only a tool for communication, but is also a vessel for identity, culture, and belonging. When people cannot access education, justice, healthcare, or political participation in their own language, their fundamental rights are at risk. In these crucial moments, interpretation and translation serve as the vital bridge to protect the human rights of Indigenous Peoples facing structural disadvantage and linguistic marginalization.
The 2026 International Translation Day theme invites us to explore what it truly means to be understood. We will examine the political, social, and technological dimensions of linguistic diversity, and ask a central question: How do translation, interpretation, and language rights ensure the right to be understood for indigenous communities? This event will address how policy, community action, and translation technologies can be designed to respect linguistic variety and data ownership, ensuring that linguistic diversity is not a source of exclusion, but a source of strength that serves Indigenous Communities.

Keynote: "Rights, Policy, Social Justice, and Language Vitality"

This opening keynote sets the stage by explaining what "Linguistic Diversity" is and what it means specifically for Indigenous communities. It examines the political and legal frameworks that determine whether linguistic diversity flourishes or disappears, exploring how language rights are enshrined—or suppressed—in national and international policy. The keynote will explore the vital link between language, resources, and power structures, highlighting how Indigenous and minority communities can gain control over their own linguistic data and rights. Finally, it will introduce how AI-assisted tools and technology can be utilized to protect and amplify these often-suppressed rights

Theme 1: "Identity, Culture, Human Experience and Language Revitalization"

This theme foregrounds lived experience, examining what is at stake when a language is endangered and how communities work to sustain, reclaim, and revitalize it. Through direct community case studies, participants will hear first-hand accounts of how reduced language use affects identity, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and cultural continuity. Crucially, this session will answer a central question: How do translation, interpretation, and language rights ensure the right to be understood for indigenous communities? We will explore translation in the service of languages, demonstrating how it acts as a lifeline to support oppressed populations and protect their fundamental human rights. The session will also examine the challenges to language continuity, colonial assimilation policies, gaps in institutional support, and digital exclusion—and community-led strategies for resilience and revitalization.

Theme 2: "Technology, Translation and the Future of Linguistic Diversity"

This final theme looks ahead, examining how digital technologies and translation tools can either threaten or sustain linguistic diversity. Focusing on concrete case studies, this session will demonstrate how technology can actively assist Indigenous communities in revitalizing their languages, protecting their human rights, and resisting oppression. We will explore and advocate for the development of "variety-aware" language technologies, AI and digital platforms that are specifically built to support and amplify, rather than flatten or harm, linguistic variation. Finally, this panel will explicitly address the crucial intersection of technology with education, learning, and language revitalization. We will highlight community-driven frameworks that ensure digital advancements become powerful tools for survival and inclusivity, preventing the risks of algorithmic homogenization; and the need for community-controlled, variety-aware technologies that support low-resource and Indigenous languages.

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Join the event on Youtube

Main objectives

- Highlighting the Role of Translation: To explicitly address the central question of how interpretation and translation support Indigenous language communities, acting as a vital service to protect the language rights of Indigenous and minoritized communities, supporting community-led access to justice, education, and healthcare in their languages.

- Human Rights and Frameworks: To highlight the critical importance of linguistic diversity as a human rights issue, and to examine the legal and political frameworks needed to protect the language rights of Indigenous, minority, and marginalized communities.

- Power Structures and Data Ownership: To explore the relationship between language, power, and resources, examining how political structures can be leveraged to ensure language rights are respected and how Indigenous communities assert and exercise linguistic data governance according to their protocols.

- Centering Lived Experiences: To bring lived experience to the center of the conversation through community case studies—such as the Koya language—examining the internal and external threats endangered languages face, as well as the strategies they employ to survive and revitalize.

- Advocating for Variety-Aware Technology: To evaluate how globalization and technology, including AI, can either support or harm linguistic diversity, with a specific focus on building and supporting "variety-aware" language technologies that respect rather than flatten the full spectrum of human languages.

- Fostering Inclusivity and Updating Policies: To foster dialogue on policies and perceptions around linguistic variety, and to identify concrete steps that governments, institutions, and civil society can take to promote true inclusivity and accessibility for all language communities.

- Education and Language Revitalization: To address the critical role of education, learning, and language revitalization programs in sustaining endangered languages, exploring how formal and informal learning environments can help pass languages on to new generations.

- Reinforcing Community-Led Approaches: To ensure that the voices of Indigenous and minoritized language communities remain at the heart of discussions about their linguistic futures, reinforcing community-led approaches to language revitalization, reclamation, and maintenance, data governance, and cultural representation

Speakers will be representatives from Indigenous Peoples Organizations, academia and other public and private organizations working with Indigenous Peoples and language professionals from all over the world. You can watch the live event on the Translation Commons YouTube channel.

Event Steering Committee

- Dr. Siva Prasad Rambhatla, Former Professor of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad (India)
- Dr. Prabhakar Rao Jandhyala, Professor and Dean, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad (India)
- Prof Hanem El-Farahaty, Professor of Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting, University of Leeds (UK)
- Mr Ravi Rebbapragada, Executive Director, Samata (India)
- Mr Valts Ernštreits, Director, University of Latvia Livonian Institute, Co-chair of Ad-Hoc group on Digital Equality and Domains (Latvia)
- Ms Heather Souter, Director, Prairies to Woodlands Indigenous Revitalization Circle (Canada)
- Mr Tex Texin, Language Program Lead, Board of Advisors, Translation Commons (USA)
- Ms Jeannette Stewart, Founder, Translation Commons, (USA)

Program (Virtual meeting and Streaming - Pacific Daylight Time)

7.00 am PDT, 4 pm CEST (10 min)
Welcome Address

7.10 am PDT, 4.10 pm CEST (20 min)
Opening Keynote "Rights, Policy, Social Justice, and Language Vitality"
Presentations

7.50 am PDT, 4.50 pm CEST (40 min)
Theme 1: "Identity, Culture, Human Experience and Language Revitalization"

Presentations

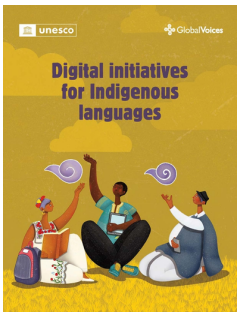
8.30 am PDT, 5.30 pm CEST (40 min)
Theme 2: "Technology, Translation and the Future of Linguistic Diversity"
Presentations

9.10 am PDT, 6.10 pm CEST (20 min)
Closing Keynote
Presentations

9.30 am PDT, 6.30 pm CEST (10 min)
Closing Address

Resources

Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL2022-2032)
Abriged version, 2022
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383844

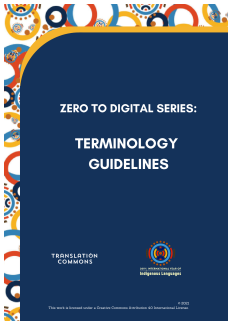


Digital initiatives for Indigenous languages
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387186

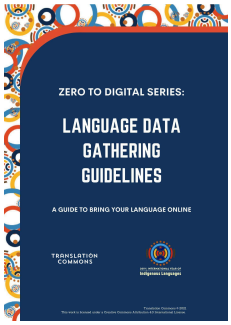
UNESCO Courier (April-June 2022).
Translation: from one world to another
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381067_eng

UNESCO (2021). The International Year of Indigenous Languages: mobilizing the international community to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages (Flagship Report)

[Zero to Digital]
A guide to bring any language and script online

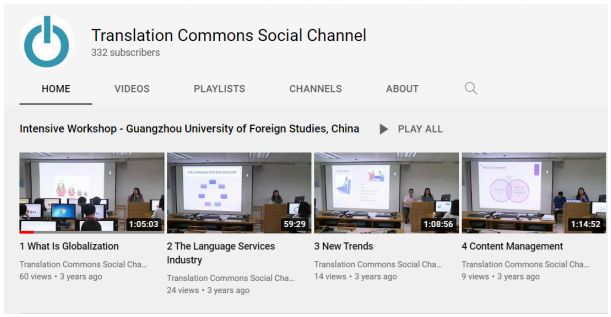


[Terminology Guidelines]
A guide to help Indigenous communities create the new terms and manage their language assets



[Language Data Gathering Guidelines]
A guide for Indigenous communities to systematically gather their data to enable digital applications

[Video Resources] for Language Digitization



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#IndigenousLanguages #WeAreIndigenous #internationaltranslationday #ITD2026

Official website of the IDIL2022-2032:
https://en.idil2022-2032.org/
https://fr.idil2022-2032.org/
https://es.idil2022-2032.org/

High-level launch event of the IDIL2022-2032 website
13 December 2022, UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France

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Contact details

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