

Section I

Rationale and Needs

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**November Roundtable
Needs and Rationale Group Abstract**

- 1.) The legal right to maintain indigenous languages has been accepted for the most part in this country, but the “effective” right is not in the hands of American Indian tribes. They do not have the tools to do the job in spite of recent reversals in government policy in the direction of self-determination.
- 2.) Accepting Joshua Fishman’s emphasis on the necessity for the intergenerational transmission of mother tongues, the Group expressed its belief that a well-planned investment in Indian languages, and indigenous languages generally, would be extremely effective “in terms of addressing pressing national and international problems.”
- 3.) The Group emphasized:
 - a) the importance of language as irreplaceable cultural knowledge.
 - b) the importance of bilingualism and an “English Plus” philosophy.
 - c) the Native American Languages Act’s impact on government policy changes.
 - d) the importance of family values in language survival.
 - e) the work of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force and the White House Conference of 1992.
- 4.) The Group recommended several courses of action in developing the “effective right” of Native peoples to maintain their languages:
 - a) fostering of new, innovative, community-based approaches.
 - b) directing more research efforts toward analyzing community-based successes.
 - c) fostering communication and partnerships between communities and organizations trying new approaches to maintaining languages.
 - d) promoting heightened consciousness of the catastrophic effects of language loss both among members of language minority populations and among members of the mainstream population.
- 5.) Because of the federal and state governments’ long-term roles in creating the current endangered status of American Indian and Alaskan Native languages, it is appropriate for them to provide assistance in helping American Indians and Alaskan Natives to stabilize and renew their languages.