

Digital Collaboration: 21st Century Tools for Revitalization

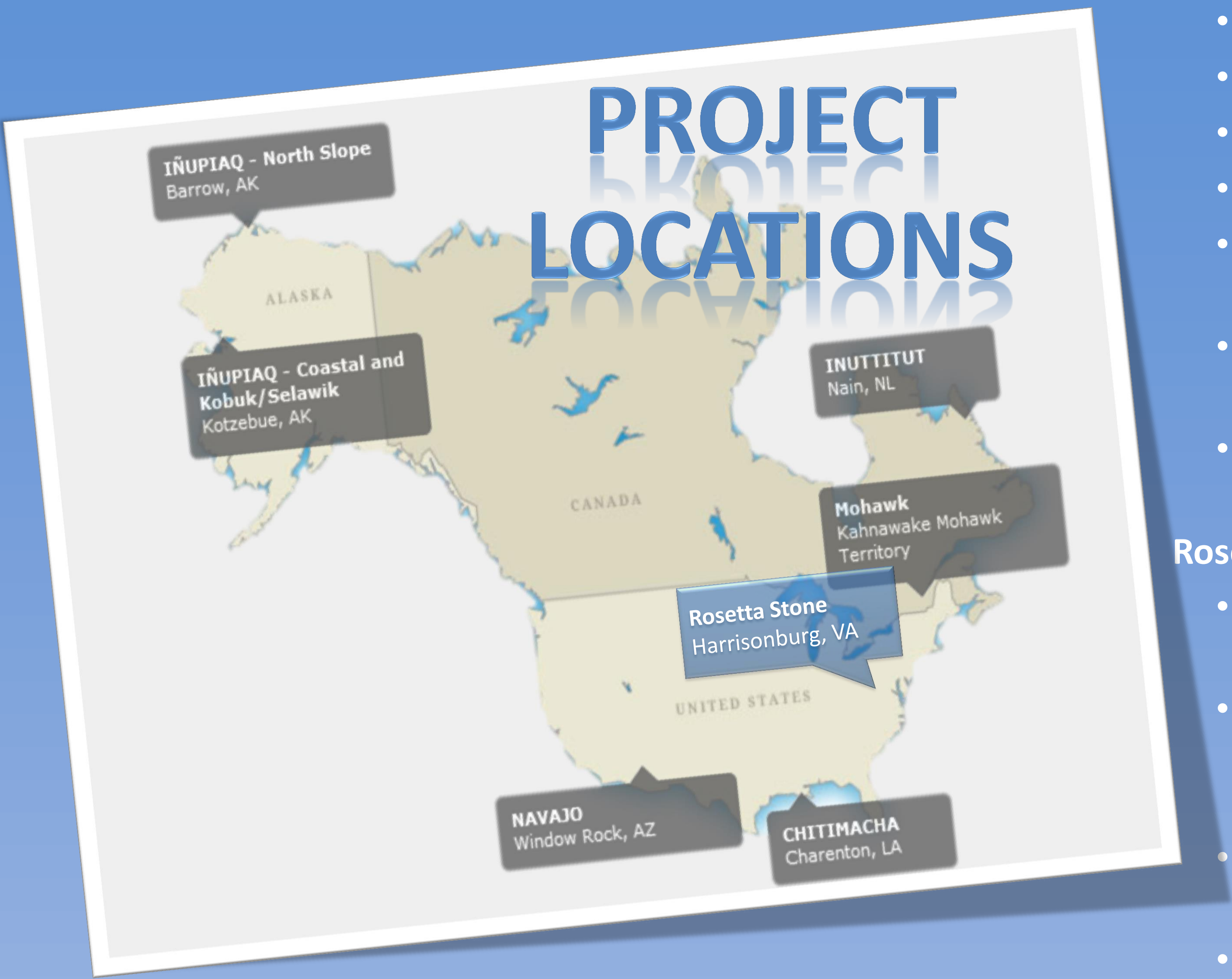
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ABSTRACT

The advent of digital collaboration technologies is making teamwork for language revitalization projects cheaper and easier than ever before. Today numerous technologies exist to facilitate long-distance collaboration on any aspect of a team project, requiring nothing more than a computer and an Internet connection. In the past, these technologies could be prohibitively expensive for many communities, or they had steep learning curves, especially for those community elders who are uncomfortable with technology. Today many of the best tools are not only easy to use, but also entirely free. Such tools facilitate group tasks like collaborative writing and editing, file sharing and version tracking, voice calling, audio recording, photo capture and sharing, and conferencing—all via the Internet.

In this poster I detail and compare a number of collaborative tools for language teams, focusing on tools that are both inexpensive and easy to use. Drawing on experiences from Rosetta Stone’s Endangered Language Program, which has worked remotely with communities across the continent, I outline the merits and demerits of each tool, along with practical advice for integrating these technologies into revitalization projects.



THE PROBLEM & BACKGROUND

Common Difficulties Faced by Revitalization Projects

- Transferring large digital files
- Slow Internet speeds
- Keeping databases synchronized and up to date
- Extremely large distances between collaborators
- Difficulty getting entire language team in one place
- Cost of transportation, phone calls, or mailing physical media
- Travel in region is difficult, costly, time consuming, or even dangerous
- Language consultants unfamiliar or uncomfortable with technology

Rosetta Stone Endangered Language Program

- Based in Harrisonburg, VA, with projects across North America
- Large collaborative team of language consultants and stakeholders for each project, each in different locations
- Thousands of lines of text for each project, each with accompanying high-quality audio and photo
- (Program is currently dormant.)

What’s it for?	How can I use it in my project?	Limitations
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calling and video conferencing over the Internet• Sharing your screen with others• Calling landlines and cell phones (extremely cheap)• Instant text messaging from computer to computer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Train team members on using software (using the screen share ability).• Conduct long-distance linguistic elicitation.• Hold regular meetings, conferences, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-person video requires paid account• Calling landlines and cellphones is cheap but costs money
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recording Skype conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record elicitation sessions, stories, etc.• Record of meeting notes.• Create archive-friendly .wav files.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PC only• Audio quality and formats good but limited
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking full or partial pictures of your computer screen• Recording videos of your computer screen while you’re performing actions or tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create training videos or documents for team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video capture limited to 5 minutes
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Storing and backing up to any kind of file• Immediate synchronization of files across computers• Sending files that are too large to e-mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain an up-to-date lexical database across computers.• Store all project files in a central location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 GB limit without a paid account (\$9/mo. for 50 GB)• Requires a (free) Dropbox account to retrieve files
 youseNDit <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending files that are too large to e-mail• Receiving files without having to set up an account	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send files to team members who would have difficulty using or installing other tools.• Save files you frequently send to people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 GB limit without a paid account
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating, collaborating on, sharing, and editing documents online• Collaborating in real-time—can instantly see changes• Managing different revisions of a document	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create online forms for conducting community surveys.• Maintain a spreadsheet of photos that need to be taken, or words that need to be elicited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Web interface only• Lacks some of the features of MS Office and iWork
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating and editing any type of Microsoft document online	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow team members to create documents even if they don’t have the latest version of MS Office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires latest MS Office suite to take advantage of syncing capabilities
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizing and tagging photos on your computer• Quickly uploading and sharing photos online• Adding metadata to your photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain a shared web album of photos for a visual dictionary.• Back up, edit, and share your fieldwork and anthropological photos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few collaborative features• 1 GB storage limit without a paid account
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uploading and sharing photos and videos• Ensuring multiple backups of your important photos• Adding metadata to your photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share fieldwork photos with consultants after returning home.• Back up videos to the web.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 300 MB limit without a paid account
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easily creating notes, outlines, clippings of websites, collections of images, and more• Sharing and collaborating of notebooks• Mobile, web, and desktop access to notes and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline collaborative presentations.• Maintain a shared repository for research and project notes.• Maintain a digital field journal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive (\$80) if purchased individually, although cheaper if bundled with MS Office• Limited features in web interface

A CASE STUDY: DROPBOX

Features

- **Dropbox folder.** The program creates a Dropbox folder on your computer where you can keep all your project files.
- **Linked computers.** You can link multiple computers to one account. Anything saved on one computer automatically appears on the others.
- **Automatic backup.** Anything you save in the Dropbox folder is automatically backed up online and to other computers.
- **Shared folders.** You choose which folders to share, and you get extra storage space each time someone signs up!
- **Automatic updating.** Each time you save a file, it gets updated in all locations.

Uses

- **Streamlined collaboration.** Collaborate with team members on the same dictionary database file.
- **File transmission.** Send extremely large audio, video, or PDF files.
- **Safe backup.** Ensure safe backup on multiple hard drives.

DIGITAL TOOLS FOR COLLABORATION

Advantages of Digital Tools

- Assist in capacity-building
- Promote collaboration
- Reduce costs and time
- Allow for easy digital backups

Ideal Criteria for Digital Tools

- Foster collaboration
- Free or extremely cheap
- Easy to learn and use
- Use archive-friendly formats
- Built-in or easy-to-use backups
- Don’t depend on Internet speed

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