

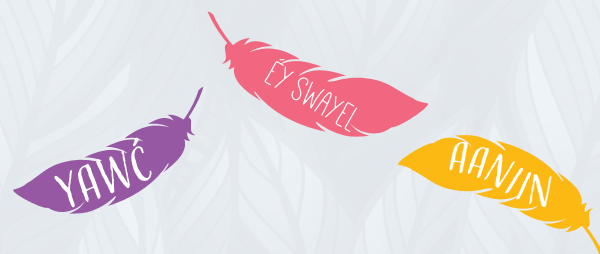


United Nations
International Decade
of Indigenous Languages
(2022-2032)





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Draft First Nations National Action Plan for the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2022 to 2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (the Decade), with the aim to raise awareness and draw global attention to the urgent need to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous languages throughout the world.

The more than 65 First Nations languages in Canada are linguistic treasures that express a distinct First Nations world view and way of life. Not only are they essential to our identity, to who we are as individuals and as First Nations, they are unique and rich repositories of human knowledge that capture and transmit our unique way of thinking and understanding the world. First Nations languages are vibrant and sophisticated. Their built-in complexities and literacies convey meanings and world views that reflect all realms of life, be it emotional, spiritual, or cognitive. An essential aspect of self-determination, our languages are fundamental to our individual and communal health and well-being; our relationships with family, community, and the natural environment; our culture; and our educational and socio-economic stability and growth.

First Nations languages are also a human right. The Canadian government has affirmed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIPA)*, which recognizes First Nations inherent right to their languages.

Despite Canada's international and domestic commitments and obligations, however, First Nations languages remain under severe threat due to historic and ongoing colonialist policies and actions. According to Canada's most recent census (2021), 18.9 per cent of First Nations people have knowledge of a

First Nations language compared to 22.48 per cent in 2016. The data reflect a decline in mother tongue speakers as well as in second language speakers since the previous census.¹

First Nations communities and organizations across the country have been responding to the threat over many years and are making important strides to maintain and strengthen their languages. This First Nations National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (the Action Plan) harnesses some of that knowledge and experience in the context of the Decade. Designed for all stages of the language revitalization journey, the overriding goal of the Action Plan is to enhance and support the reclamation and revitalization of First Nations languages, with an ultimate objective of increasing normalization, throughout the country. The Action Plan is built on five areas of action: to enhance awareness on the part of First Nations and all Canadians; to increase engagement of First Nations of all ages; to strengthen coordinated community-centred approaches; to enhance support for First Nations language initiatives and increase accessibility; and to enhance measurement.

¹ See Census of Population Profiles, 2016 and 2021 for details



The lack of sufficient funding and the absence of adequate support have been a source of great frustration and have impeded progress and, as time progresses, the lack of sufficient funding ensures that the challenge of language revitalization becomes even greater. Recent developments in Canada, including legislation and some increased funding, as well as recent international efforts, give us hope that positive change is possible and that First Nations language use will increase over the next ten years. To enable progress, however, much greater awareness, engagement, action, and investments are needed now.

The Decade provides an opportunity for extraordinary action on the part of First Nations together with increasing awareness and support of all Canadians – as both have a role in ensuring First Nations languages thrive long into the future. A rallying call that provides moral support and builds awareness at all levels, the Decade presents a unique opportunity to come together to make great strides in revitalizing First Nations languages for our generation and for the many generations to come.



1. Where We Are

Government of Canada policies and actions aimed to destroy First Nations languages, leaving a legacy of trauma for survivors and their children. Legislation and policies such as the *Indian Act*, the Residential School (Institutions) system, the Anti-Potlatch and Anti-Sundance laws and the Sixties Scoop prohibited children from learning their languages, robbing First Nations of their capacity to transmit their languages to subsequent generations.

Attempting to reverse the impact of such actions on their languages, First Nations have advocated for redress for these assimilationist policies and for increased financial support from the Government for more than 60 years.² The efforts of individual First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and numerous other First Nations organizations have brought the issue to the public eye and have yielded positive results including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 and the enactment of the *Indigenous Languages Act* in 2019, which affirms Canada’s commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration (Preamble), and recognizes that Section 35 of the *Constitutions Act, 1982* includes rights related to Indigenous Languages (S 6).³

Canada has also supported the International Year of Indigenous Languages (2019) and is now part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).⁴

Today, First Nations survivors, youth and others across the country are demonstrating a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for language revitalization. The Decade provides a rare and important opportunity for First Nations, federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments and other Canadians to come together in an international context to develop strategies and actions that will have the positive effect of reclaiming and revitalizing all First Nations languages across this land.

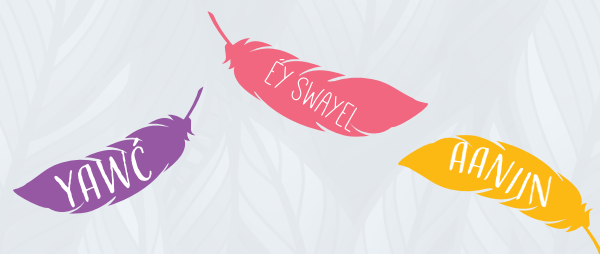
² *A Guide to An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization*, Assembly of First Nations, 2019-2020.
https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

³ First Nations are also part of the Joint Implementation Steering Committee (JISC) with government and other Indigenous representatives on the implementation of the Act.

⁴ AFN Resolution, 2018/46, *United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages*, and AFN Resolution 2021/16, *United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages*.



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2. Envisioning the Decade

The vision of the Action Plan is to harness developments in Canada and the mobilization efforts of the Decade to realize significant growth in First Nations language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and ultimately normalization, across the country.

The Action Plan envisions greater appreciation of the beauty, value, and importance of First Nations languages, with First Nations languages assuming greater visibility in public domains across the country. The Action Plan aims to foster more engagement in language revitalization and to instill a sense of hope for the future of First Nations languages across Canada. By the end of the Decade, the Action Plan envisions a significant increase in First Nations access to instruction and in language fluency.

Given the diversity of First Nations languages, language states, capacities, and readiness, the Action Plan includes strategies for a range of revitalization actions within the 10-year time frame. Recognizing the value of experience, support and sharing knowledge,

the Action Plan envisions more coordination across First Nations and First Nations organizations, and increased support from governments and civil society.

The Action Plan also envisions increases in funding that are adequate, sustainable, and long-term as the Decade progresses. More funding is needed to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen, and normalize First Nations languages and to increase fluency, vitality and growth of First Nations language learners, speakers, and teachers. In addition to the funding needed for the implementation of the ILA (through the Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program (ILCP), specific funding is also needed for the Decade.

3. Objectives / Action Areas

The primary objective of the Action Plan is to **enhance and support the reclamation and revitalization of First Nations languages** such that First Nations languages will thrive as living languages over the course of the Decade and well into the future. In practical terms, the goal is that all First Nations will be in a state of active revitalization.



Five Action Areas and associated goals to support this primary objective include:

A. Enhancing Awareness

The Action Plan strives to build awareness among First Nations, all governments and the public at large of the value, beauty and distinctiveness of First Nations languages; of the importance of keeping them alive and thriving; and of First Nations inherent rights to their languages. The aim is for concrete commitment and action to flow from this awareness.

B. Increasing Engagement

The Action Plan aims to increase engagement on the part of First Nations Peoples of all ages in the work of revitalizing their languages through the mobilization opportunities that are part of the Decade. Within the first two years of the Decade, the aim is for each First Nation as well as First Nations individuals, to consider where that are at in their language revitalization journey and to begin to determine what steps they would like to take.

C. Building Community Strategies

The Action Plan provides strategies and approaches for First Nations and their organizations based on the number and type of community speakers. The Plan emphasizes the need to choose actions in appropriate sequence to ensure strong foundations for programming. The Plan also acknowledges the need to integrate First Nations languages in all sectors of society, including the arts, TV, radio, and all other types of media. One early goal is for each First Nation to have an active language plan, and, over time, to experience success according to their self-determined objectives.

D. Enhancing Support

The Action Plan promotes the development of mechanisms to support First Nations, particularly where supports are not available, in areas of language planning, capacity building, accessibility to resources, and sharing innovative and promising practices. The Plan supports and encourages First Nations advocacy for adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding from all levels of government. The aim is for First Nations language activities to be funded to a level that reflects actual needs and for these activities to be well-supported by regional and national networks as determined by First Nations by the end of the Decade.

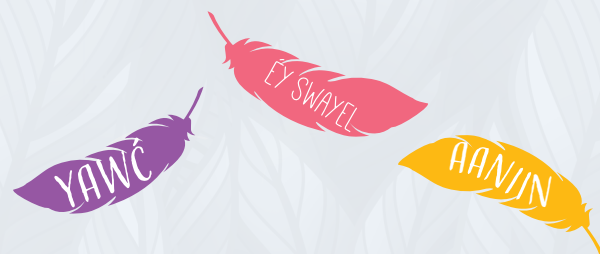
E. Improving Measurement

The Action Plan promotes enhanced tools for measuring progress and provides a list of indicators for success that can be measured within the timeframe of the Decade. It also includes suggestions regarding who could facilitate the various measurement functions. The aim is for the implementation of a robust, accurate, and useful measurement framework that upholds First Nations data governance.

The objectives of the Action Plan are consistent with those of the Decade, which aim to draw attention to the critical risk to Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them at the



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national and international levels.⁵ The Plan is similarly linked to UNESCO's Global Action Plan (GAP),⁶ which also acknowledges the urgent need to protect, revitalize, and promote Indigenous languages around the world. By 2032 and beyond, the GAP aims to have Indigenous languages preserved, revitalized, promoted, and used across all socio-cultural, economic, environmental,⁷ and political domains as

drivers for building peace, justice, development, and reconciliation. The GAP also calls on member states to develop their own Action Plans in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples. This Action Plan provides an essential First Nations perspective on the actions that are needed throughout the Decade and beyond.



4. A Plan for Action

Directed primarily at First Nations as the leaders of their own language revitalization, the Action Plan provides examples for action at all stages of revitalization. At the same time, the Plan recognizes that First Nations language revitalization requires support from all segments of society and that each has a role:

- First Nations and First Nations organizations, as the primary audience, can use the Action Plan to enhance engagement as well as their own planning, action, and measurement efforts.
- Canadians across the political, cultural, and socio-economic spectrum, can support revitalization efforts through enhanced awareness of the value and importance of First Nations languages to First Nations Peoples and by encouraging supportive policies in various domains.
- The AFN could help put in place mechanisms to support First Nations revitalization work. It would continue to advocate for more funding and resources from all levels, for improved government processes including regarding the ILA, and for Decade-specific funding from the Government.
- By aligning with the objectives of First Nations and their organizations, all levels of government, including opposition parties and civic leaders from all sectors, can work with First Nations to create and support policies that enhance language revitalization and reconciliation.

The languages of the many First Nations are in different states of vitality; First Nations have different resources, be they human or organizational; and communities have different capacities and levels of readiness to revitalize their language. The examples in the Action Plan apply to all First Nations, regardless of the state of their language or their experience with revitalization.

A. ENHANCING AWARENESS

The Decade is an opportunity to enhance awareness and build communication among all Canadians of

the value and importance of revitalizing First Nations languages; of the impact colonialism has had on First

⁵ <https://idil2022-2032.org/>

⁶ https://idil2022-2032.org/about-2022-2032#global_call

⁷ The GAP is also linked to the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals, as languages are strongly linked to environmental, health, and social issues, for First Nations and Indigenous languages across the globe.



Nations languages and First Nations enjoyment and exercise of their rights related to languages; and, of the relationship between languages and traditional territories.

All levels of government, advocacy organizations, and civil society can play a role in increasing the visibility and use of First Nations languages in their work and activities. Greater awareness can also be built through campaigns and by organizing events about First Nations languages and the Decade. Enhanced awareness and appreciation of First Nations language revitalization would build support for First Nations language initiatives and funding.

B. INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

As an international platform, the Decade aims to mobilize Indigenous Peoples, with the support of others, to work toward greater revitalization of their languages. For First Nations, being part of this international effort presents opportunities to create an atmosphere of action, enthusiasm, and engagement and instill a sense of pride in our languages. Regardless of where communities are in their revitalization journey or of the starting point, be it at the beginning of the revitalization effort or further along, appreciation of the gift of First Nations languages and renewing engagement in revitalizing our languages can greatly benefit our people and our communities in meaningful and positive ways.

Understanding the critical state of our languages, as well as the possibilities for growth, also provides a strong basis for increasing engagement in the revitalization effort for all First Nations including youth, leaders, and others.

For First Nations, engaging in language revitalization based on an understanding of the state of their particular language sets the stage for determining appropriate action and accessing support. The following four language states are used by language stakeholders and experts in Canada and beyond to inform and guide the work: *Reclamation; Revitalization; Maintenance; and Normalization*. The Action Plan reframes those categories through a dynamic lens using the terms *Survive, Revive, and Thrive*.⁸ Outlined below, the three categories provide a framework for understanding the state of a language and the general approaches to action for the Decade:

- i. **Revive:** For sleeping languages, or those with few limited speakers, there are strategies to ensure these languages can be revived and reclaimed, including accessing historically documented resources to archive the language and begin language learning; building organizational and fiscal capacity; and developing suitable plans to reclaim the languages.
- ii. **Survive:** To ensure languages survive into the future, the Action Plan encourages efforts to enhance organizational capacity and readiness; to develop innovative ways to increase the calibre and number of language teachers; to set up / enhance formal and informal learning programs within and outside schools, including immersion and on-the-land/water experiences, for people of all ages and stages of life.
- iii. **Thrive:** In order to thrive, languages need to be maintained and, ultimately, normalized such that they are spoken in day-to-day activities and in public domains. To ensure languages are able to thrive, the Action Plan provides mechanisms to strengthen and enhance the use of languages over the course of the Decade and beyond through all formal and informal learning and living environments.

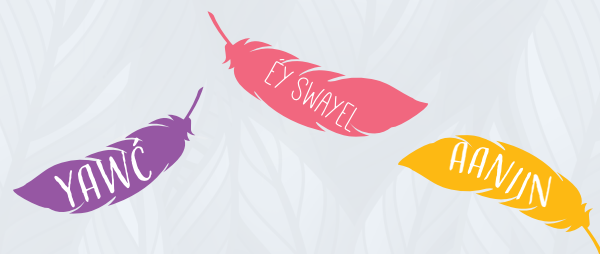
⁸ Similar terms are used in the Indigenous Languages Act, 2019

⁹ See <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>

¹⁰ Speaker categories draw from AFN's Indigenous Languages Initiative National Engagement Sessions Report, December 5, 2017, which are based on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, 1991, Reyhner 1999, FPCC 2013.



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C. BUILDING COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Understanding the state of a language is an important first step. Looking at community resources and capacities is an essential next step. Among the many useful community indicators (financial resources, organizational capacity, community engagement for example), assessing the number of speakers, including mother tongue speakers, second language speakers, their ages and their mean ages, goes a long way to helping communities choose revitalization strategies that are right for them. Despite the many issues around collecting First Nations data, accessible data are available through the census.⁹

The core of the Action Plan is a list that includes speaker categories (based on those that are most common among First Nations) and pairs them with selected suggestions for action. See Table 1.0 below. The actions listed, a sample of possibilities that is by no means exhaustive, are based on international and First Nations experience and expertise.¹⁰ The list links First Nations speaker realities and situations with possible approaches that fit those particular realities. It reflects an understanding that every First Nations situation is unique and that each community requires measures that are distinct and appropriate to their situation.

The examples listed are based on the principle that actions need to be sequenced in order to be effective, ensuring fundamentals are in place before embarking on the next phase – whatever it may be, and however long it may take. (One such example is training teachers and developing a curriculum before setting up learning programs. Despite the time training and developing resources may take, the program is unlikely to succeed without them).

Developing a critical mass of fluent speakers requires comprehensive, life-long learning approaches in formal and informal settings including engaging younger generations through the innovative use of technology. The list below focuses largely on actions for First Nations communities and First Nations organizations. The Action Plan recognizes that for First Nations languages to be maintained and normalized over time they need to be integrated into all realms of life, including the family and in the home, education, public spaces, workplaces, communities, and media. The Action Plan also acknowledges that such integration requires support and action on the part of all levels of government and the broader Canadian community.

The process of language revitalization takes a long time to take root; and it is challenging at any stage. Bold actions, based in communities, can offset the trend of First Nations language loss and advance the rights, needs and interests of First Nations Peoples.

Table 1.0: Speaker Categories and Promising Actions

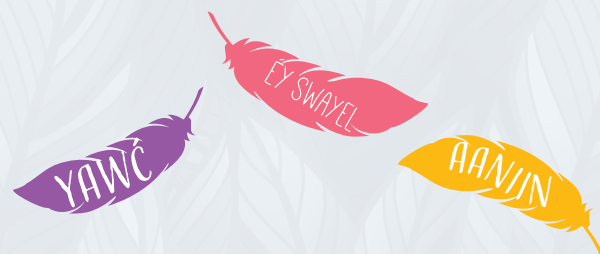
Speaker Community	Promising Actions
<p>Very few Elders with only symbolic proficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase documentation of languages and speakers (oral, written, voice and video recordings) through various media, including archiving, recording and transcribing language speakers • Increase words used in ceremonies • Encourage parents to give First Nations names to children • Determine if there is a regional entity/organization or related language entity that could provide support and/or funding to your community for language revitalization; contact entity; and determine what resources are available.



Speaker Community	Promising Actions
Only Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement examples listed above • Seek expertise to help develop language plans with level-appropriate steps and effective sequencing • Develop word lists and dictionaries • Record natural day to day (conversational) speech of Elders • Connect Elders with language learners (and potential learners) of any age and language level to engage informally in conversation, e.g., speak to grandchildren in the language • Implement Mentor Apprentice pairings where possible • Support Elders to rekindle their involvement in language transmission • Connect Elders with schools and informal settings to engage and inspire • Seek / find funding to remunerate Elders (and learners) for their work • Identify Silent Speakers, work with them to provide needed supports
Only adults past child bearing age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement examples listed above • Sequence suggestions listed above and build on initiatives of previous stages including documentation, exploring potential regional and organizational supports for planning and resources • Seek expertise on language planning with effective sequencing of actions • Develop language plans for formal and informal approaches • Train language speakers to become teachers • Develop training programs for adults, including healing initiatives • Focus on youngest children (language nests) • Identify needs for capacity development - garner community support, create a language committee, apply for funding, develop accessible resource database, among others • Partner with other First Nations to enhance capacity • Develop comprehensive community and government language policies and programs
Some intergenerational use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement examples listed above • Sequence suggestions listed above, building on initiatives of previous stages • Focus on speaking to children at home from pre-natal on • Encourage parents to speak to their children and to raise them in the language • Inspire youth to learn the language, e.g., social events, online modules, pop culture, engaging with Elders, music and art, games • Create community sites of language use • Develop online modules (e.g., on YouTube, apps) for every language / dialect



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Speaker Community	Promising Actions
<p>Language is still very much in use in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement examples listed above • Sequence suggestions listed above and build on initiatives of previous stages • Encourage Language Teacher Training • Ensure presence of adequate funding to retain qualified teachers in the community • Establish immersion programs in formal and informal learning settings / establish immersion schools • Promote volunteerism in language institutes (schools, offices, etc.) • Ensure organizations and governing bodies are language role models • Develop local or regional language policies and laws
<p>Language is used in elementary school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on examples listed above • Improve immersion teaching methodologies (Total Physical Response, Accelerated Second Language Learning, etc.) • Introduce / bolster immersion and bilingual education programs • Improve language nests • Include effective language learning throughout elementary, junior high, high-school and post-secondary education • Develop resources in language, e.g., story books • Develop First Nations sign language (e.g., Oneida sign language) • Develop measurement tools to know what is working
<p>Language is used widely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in places of business • by local government and community, especially for communications and media • some language use by other levels of government and in higher education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the language the language of the office • Develop new vocabulary for work terms • Collaborate with provinces on protocol agreements for secondary and post-secondary education • Ensure First Nations languages are incorporated into provincial schools • Develop textbooks in the language for all academic subjects; e.g., through a First Nations publisher • Promote language use in local government through policies and laws • Translate documents • Provide interpretation services, where warranted • Promote language use in newsletters, newspapers, radio, and TV • Teach college level classes in the language • Apply oral and written language in the arts and in publications • Give awards for language publications and other language activities • Create access to media and government services in the language.

D. SUPPORT

First Nations are best placed to do the work of revitalization. Self-determining communities know what they need and want for their languages. Yet, the work is complex and partnering together with others can be helpful and can make the work more enjoyable, meaningful, and productive. Language planning, capacity-building, and establishing appropriate programs take time, resources and experience. Training teachers, developing curricula, training program managers also require experience, resources and expertise. People who have the



knowledge of and experience in the complicated work of revitalization need to be tapped and utilized for all First Nations who want such support going forward.

Some First Nations, language families, and language isolates are supported by regional, subregional or language-based organizations in their revitalization efforts and some First Nations are doing the work on their own. Others, however, have not yet begun their revitalization journey, may not have organizational support, and / or may not have access to the resources they need to begin their revitalization effort. To ensure no Nation is left behind by the Decade, all First Nations need to have access to support, if they want it, for assessing their language states, building their capacities, developing language plans, training teachers, and implementing their desired way forward.

To fill the gap, the Action Plan sees a role for a national network to reach out to First Nations who do not have structures of support to help them access the resources they need. A national network would help identify resources, help First Nations coordinate partnerships, and ensure that a First Nations-led system for support is available to those who want it. Engagements with First Nations have made it clear that such a network should have a limited role and a limited budget so as not to siphon off funding from First Nations. Engagements also made it clear that such a body should support, but not “step on the toes” of, regional bodies and must respect regional processes.¹¹

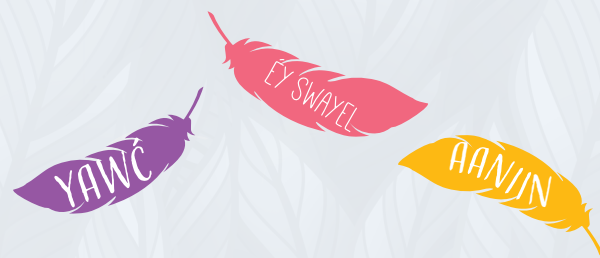
A national body would function as an informal network (a clearing house, steering committee, or council) that would reach out to those who lack support and connect them with the expertise that language revitalization demands. Where communities want support at the regional level, a similar approach could be taken. A national network could support and help connect existing organizations. Where desired or requested by First Nations, a national network could also help develop their own regional bodies, where they do not exist. The network could be comprised of regional and institutional representatives functioning as a Board of Directors with a small staff. Existing bodies with regional experience and expertise would thus come together to build on their strengths to function as a limited national infrastructure for language revitalization.

The mandate of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL), established through the ILA, also includes functions at the national level that are related to but differ from those suggested for the national network. These include dispute resolution; reporting on funding adequacy; promoting languages, including public awareness; supporting Indigenous Peoples’ efforts to revitalize their languages; and, supporting innovative projects and the use of new technologies in language education and revitalization.

¹¹ AFN documents on national First Nations body to support revitalization include:
<https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/closing-the-gap.pdf>



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Resources for Support

Recognizing the need for new and innovative resources in all areas of language revitalization does not, by any means, diminish or replace the many toolkits, guides, and resources that have been produced. The Action Plan encourages First Nations to view existing resources and to develop their own to address their particular needs.

The following AFN materials contain practical suggestions for language revitalization, including developing language plans and using social media. They also include references and links to some of the regional and language organizations across the country that have produced valuable resources:

A Guide to An Act respecting Indigenous languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization 2019-2020

https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Respecting_Languages_Report_ENG.pdf

First Nations Languages and Revitalization September 2020

<https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AFN-ResourcesForFirstNations.pdf>

Social Media Toolkit, 2020

<https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AFN-Languages-Toolkit.pdf>

E. MEASUREMENT

First Nations have stated during various engagements that action targets and tools for measuring their success are needed to demonstrate to First Nations and others that they are making progress and to demonstrate best practices over time. This is especially relevant to the Decade – efforts and successes need to be measured and publicized throughout the next ten years.

The lack of adequate data has been a significant barrier to enhancing awareness and understanding, engagement, support for action, and to securing more funding. Measuring success is an important task that will require support and collaboration across communities, organizations, the OCIL and the Government of Canada.

First Nations, language organizations and governments measure aspects of language revitalization. Yet, more and improved data are needed and the data currently being collected need to be distributed widely to ensure that others learn about what works and what does not.

The Decade serves as a useful 10-year timeframe to enhance mobilization and to assess and measure results. The Action Plan provides a sample of indicators that can be measured throughout the Decade to provide needed data. It also includes suggestions regarding who would be involved in measuring them.



Indicators

For the Decade, a wide range of indicators would be the basis for measuring increasing numbers of speakers and enhanced fluency with the hope and expectation that during the Decade there will be substantive improvements as outlined in the Objectives section above.

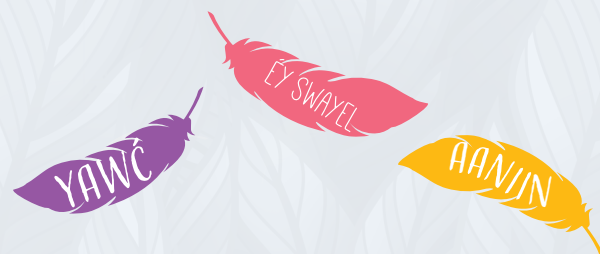
The indicators include activities, achievements, and changes in attitude, based on the objectives of the Action Plan, the Decade and First Nations capacities and priorities. Some indicators are easier to measure as they are based on quantitative data that are part of the public record, whereas others, the qualitative data, are less readily available. Nonetheless, measuring a broad range of indicators is a necessary part of assessing the successes of the Decade. The following is a sample of key indicators. Increases in the listed indicators would provide First Nations and others with useful data for moving forward for the Decade and beyond. By the end of the Decade, it would be important to have increases in the number of:

- Mother tongue speakers and second language speakers and learners
- Languages with active learners
- First Nations receiving funding for language revitalization and ensuring that every First Nations that wants to be funded will be
- Language plans that have been created and / or updated
- Teacher programs and participants for formal and informal settings
- Adult learners
- Languages taught in elementary schools
- Students being taught a First Nations language in school, including in provincial schools
- Student hours of immersion programming over time
- Grades that provide immersion programming
- Student hours and the range of grades that provide bilingual programming and course instruction in the language
- Immersion programs in formal and informal settings
- First Nations accessing support
- Services offered in First Nations languages
- Activities in the public domain (including broadcasting / new media)
- Jurisdictions enacting official language status for First Nations

An essential indicator of success for the end of the Decade would also include: Increasing levels of funding for language revitalization work from all levels of government, foundations, and other civic organizations.



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Anecdotal perceptions, while difficult to measure, are also useful, particularly when the information is consistent across geographies, languages, and situations. Valuable anecdotal information would include:

- Achieving higher levels of engagement of First Nations and First Nations youth in language revitalization
- Achieving greater awareness among all Canadians of the value and importance of First Nations language revitalization

Measuring Success

Determining appropriate and relevant measurement indicators is an important aspect of the Action Plan. Equally important is determining who can do the measuring and how it can be done without imposing harsh reporting burdens on First Nations and their organizations. Fortunately, there are some data that exist in the public domain, specifically in the census and in relevant government departments, as well as on the part of regional organizations, that can be collected and analyzed by various players.

i. First Nations

Many First Nations measure their language revitalization work to understand what works and what does not, and to support their internal planning efforts and their attempts to access funding. Indicators range from the number of people involved from year to year to subjective assessments such as the benefits people perceive from their involvement in language revitalization work. This data, while potentially robust, is often used only for those who produce it. Others require tools to develop measurement strategies in their language plans. Developing tools, strategies and mechanisms for accessing these data, and for sharing them, based on their own priorities and needs, could be of enormous value to other First Nations.

ii. The AFN

The AFN and others can collect and distribute data on the public record including FNIGC and census data on the number of language mother tongue speakers and the growth of second language speakers over the course of the Decade. The AFN can review language policy developments throughout government including the number of Section 8 and 9 agreements and the number of Tripartite Agreements being signed, as examples. As representatives of regional revitalization organizations, members of the TCOL and others in the AFN, can also provide data on progress including quantitative and anecdotal evidence of growth in areas of engagement and awareness, action, and support.

iii. Department of Canadian Heritage

As the source of much administrative data on funding, programming, and training, the Department of Canadian Heritage measures the success of language revitalization, in particular by providing the data and information they have to First Nations entities for analysis. The Action Plan envisions the Department of Canadian Heritage working with First Nations to review their indicators to be in line with First Nations priorities and improve reporting on key data about language revitalization.



iv. Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages¹²

As an independent body, the OCIL can also play a valuable role in measuring success. During recent engagement sessions, First Nations suggested the OCIL could be a hub for information sharing on best practices, language instructors, language resources, as well as a place to conduct research and studies related to funding, performance measures and community assessments.

v. Schools, School Boards, Provincial Departments of Education

Schools at all levels and in all systems collect enormous amounts of data, including on First Nations language programs (or the lack thereof) and First Nations student language needs. These data are important to issues of costing, advocacy, programming, demand, and determining success. Mechanisms are needed, therefore, to ensure they are accurate, widely used, and shared to improve language programs and outcomes within schools. Improving educational data will require the involvement of all education stakeholders.

F. A TIMEFRAME FOR THE DECADE:

“It took 125 years to create the problem — seven generations — so it may take generations to fix. The government spent so much time trying to exterminate our language and culture, it’s important to take the time to re-establish language and culture as a foundation for the future.”¹³

— The Honourable Murray Sinclair

Part of a larger picture of revitalization, the Decade can serve as a spring board for radical intention and mobilization. This Action Plan for the Decade weaves together various avenues of language revitalization, including First Nations and their organizations, recent legislative and policy changes, possibilities through education systems, and UNDRIPA.

Using the ten-year time frame, the Action Plan provides a guiding framework to improve language vitality for all language states. Mindful that language revitalization is a continuum that extends throughout the Decade and beyond, and that efforts will take place concurrently and are based on where people are at in their language journeys, the Action Plan suggests four units of time as a flexible guide to begin and continue the work.

The Launch: 2022 – 2023

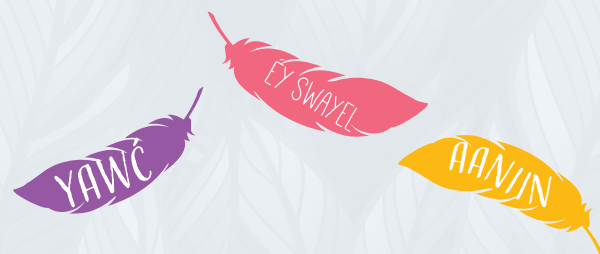
Efforts begin with the development of awareness, communications and engagement strategies by First Nations; promoting recognition of First Nations languages across Canada; enhancing regional support and establishing a national network for those lacking regional support.

¹² The OCIL was created to help promote Indigenous languages and support the efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen, and maintain their languages. OCIL’s requirements include reporting on the use and vitality of Indigenous languages in Canada and the adequacy of Government funding for language initiatives. The OCIL reviews complaints related to Indigenous language agreements, funding, Government obligations under the Act, and in the implementation of the Act.

¹³ Q&A: Murray Sinclair: Time to right the wrongs of the past on First Nations education, *Toronto Star*, Dec. 7, 2015



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International Decade
of Indigenous Languages
(2022-2032)**



Phase Two: 2024 – 2027

The second phase involves language planning including establishing tools for evaluation and measurement; developing partnerships; creating opportunities for growth; continuing to raise awareness. For First Nations already in a state of active implementation, this phase would involve enhancing the breadth and scope of existing activities.

Phase Three: 2028 – 2031

In the third stage, language plans continue to be implemented; programs (including language instruction) are increasing; public gets on board, and First Nations languages are becoming better integrated in the realms of education, homes/families, public spaces, media and broadcasting, workplaces, and communities; assessment and measurement strategies are being used.

Phase Four: 2031 – 2032

Recognizing that language revitalization is ongoing and concurrent across generations and in time, the Decade concludes with continued measuring and sharing success; building data; and advocating for more funding, resources, and support, all based on First Nations efforts and successes. This is a time for taking stock and sharing what works and what does not.



5. Conclusion

First Nations have advocated for First Nations language rights for decades. Despite challenges, there have been many successes over the years, including the ILA, the *Mi'kmaw Languages Act*, international recognition of First Nations language champions, and increases in learners, speakers and teachers of First Nations languages.

First Nations have made important progress for people across the land due to the efforts of leaders at all levels, be they volunteers, professionals, parents, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, youth, or members of communities. The strategies they have used are reflected in this Action Plan for others to use as promising examples, as models for effective action, and as inspiration for engagement and action.

While First Nations are central to the revitalization of their languages, support for language revitalization on the part of all Canadians – all levels of government, all political affiliations, and all sectors of civil society – is essential.

The Decade provides the opportunity to raise awareness locally, nationally and internationally to the importance of First Nations languages, helping First Nations languages become recognized and respected across Canada and beyond.

Through the Decade, it is our hope that First Nations languages will be on a path leading to better integration in all public domains, and that First Nations will have the right and ability to communicate in their language of choice. By 2032 it is also our hope that First Nations languages receive the support they need to continue to thrive, with adequate, sustainable and long-term funding now and well into the future. The Decade is an opportunity to build a strong and enduring foundation now for the generations to come.



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