



First Nations Languages Funding Fact Sheet

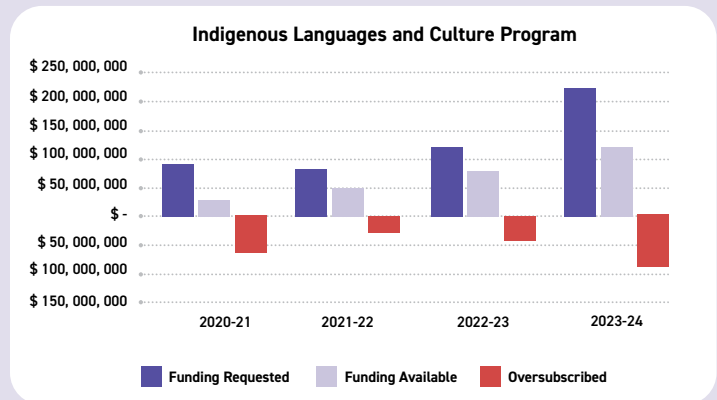
August, 2023

This fact sheet is intended to provide an overview of First Nations languages needs which are in a state of emergency and immediate action is required to reverse language loss. Discriminatory and assimilationist government policies and practices led to a devastating interruption in the natural intergenerational transmission of First Nations languages. Residential Institutions, day schools, the Sixties Scoop, and laws forbidding traditional ceremonies intentionally suppressed First Nations culture and languages through the forcible removal of more than 150,000 Indigenous children.¹

Current First Nations Language Funding

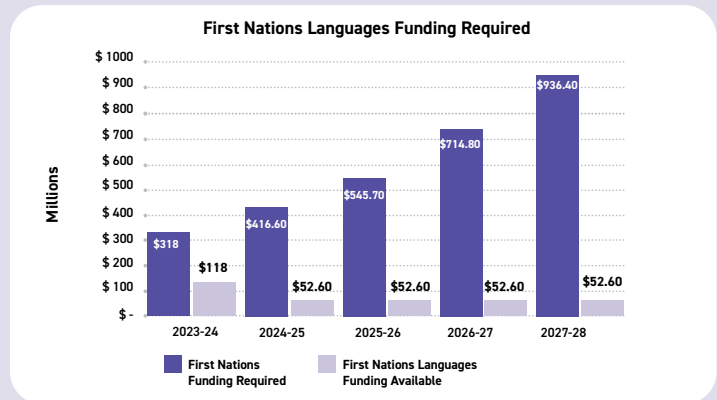
- The Department of Canadian Heritage's (DCH) Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program (ILCP) is the primary source of funding for First Nations to develop language plans, and support project-based language revitalization funding outside of schools.
- Despite the Government of Canada's obligation to provide adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages through the *Indigenous Languages Act* (ILA), DCH will decrease First Nations Languages funding by **56%** for 2024/2025.
- In 2022-23, the difference between eligible funding requested vs. funding available was oversubscribed by over **\$45 million**. This number continues to rise. (Figure 1)
- The ongoing decline in DCH funding will result in the loss of an estimated 62 First Nations language programs.
- DCH needs to address the recommendations regarding funding for First Nations languages, from the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs Report on Indigenous Languages, with an immediate injection of ILCP funding.
- AFN's Costing Analysis (2022) estimates the cost of revitalizing languages outside of schools to be **\$2.0 billion** annually. It is estimated it will take until 2032 for the annual need to reach the estimated **\$2.0 billion**, which will be significantly higher to account for inflation and population growth. (Figure 2)

Figure 1: First Nations language funding Administered by Department of Canadian Heritage compared eligible funding projects submitted. 2020-2024²



Sources: Statistics Canada, AFN 2022 Costing Analysis, DCH Indigenous Languages Component Intake Summary,

Figure 2: First Nations language funding required vs. Actual funding available. 2023 – 2028



¹ AFN Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/INAN/Brief/BR12226012/br-external/AssemblyOfFirstNations-e.pdf>

² This chart only includes language revitalization funding outside of schools.



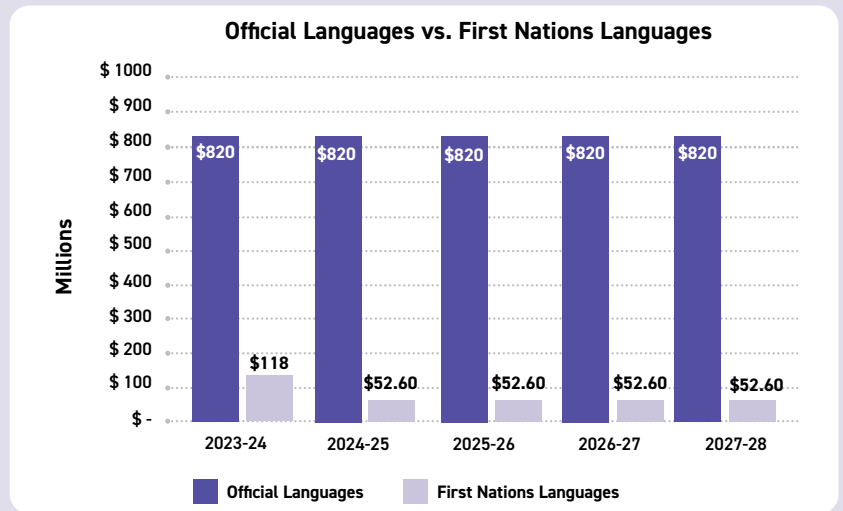
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- DCH administers funding using a Regional Allocation Formula based on number of languages. The formula was developed without the input of First Nations and has created large inequalities leaving First Nations to fight over limited amounts of funding each year.
- In order to fully implement the ILA, First Nations have advocated for their languages to have Official Language status and for funding to match that of the Official Languages. (Figure 3)
- Budget 2023 provided new investments of **\$1.4 billion** over five years (2023-2028) for Official Languages; this is in addition to the cumulative and ongoing funding of **\$2.7 billion** (2018-2023), for a total of **\$4.1 billion³** over the next five years, while Indigenous languages have not received any additional funding in over two years.

Figure 3: Distribution of First Nations elementary secondary programs, by province, 2021



Sources:
DCH, Official Languages Act

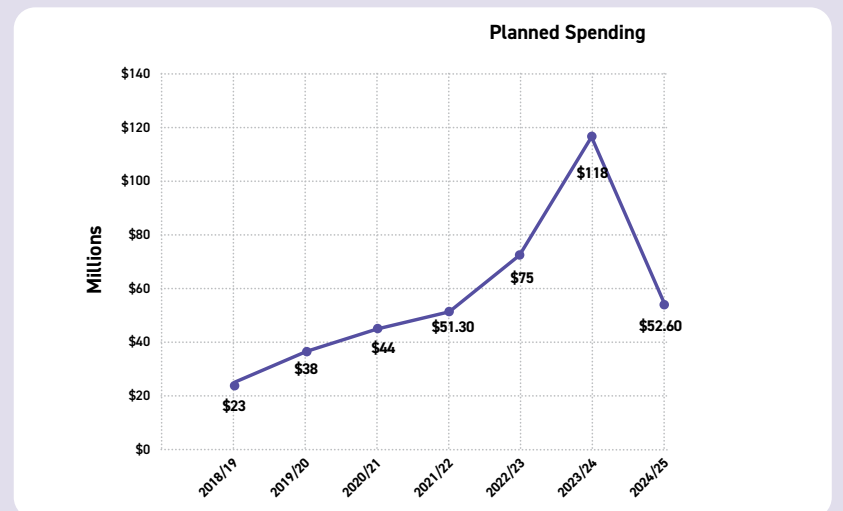
Whole of Government Approach to Language Revitalization

- Year after year, funding for language revitalization has fluctuated, leading to disruption in language programming. This demonstrates a continued lack of government commitment to revitalizing First Nations languages. The impact of these funding fluctuations on community programming cannot be underestimated (Figure 4).
- Revitalization of First Nations languages is a shared priority and calls for a whole of government approach, with provinces and territories providing additional language revitalization funding.

Examples of Whole-of-Government Success

- The Northwest Territories have 11 Official Languages, 9 of which are Indigenous.
- In 2022, Nova Scotia made Mi'kmaq an Official language, through the Mi'kmaq Language Act.
- In 2022, the province of British Columbia provided \$35 million in funding for Indigenous languages to the First Peoples Cultural Council.

Figure 4: Fluctuations in Funding for Language Revitalization (2020 – 2025)



Source:
Department of Canadian Heritage

³ AFN Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/INAN/Brief/BR12226012/br-external/AssemblyOfFirstNations-e.pdf>