



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
Special Chiefs Assembly

December 5-7, 2023

Shaw Centre – Ottawa, Ontario

Ottawa is located on the unceded unsurrendered Territory of the Algonquin People.

ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS
Assemblée extraordinaire des Chefs

Du 5 au 7 décembre 2023 - Centre Shaw - Ottawa (Ontario)

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First Nations Languages Funding Model

History

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) advocates to establish long-term, sustainable, consistent, and appropriate approaches to support First Nations in their effort to recover, reclaim, maintain, and normalize First Nations languages through the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

Assembly of First Nations Resolution 10/2021, *Support for the Co-development of a Distinctions-Based Indigenous Languages Funding Model*, and Resolution 17/2022, *Support for the First Nations Languages Funding Model*, directs the AFN, the Technical Committee on Languages (TCOL) and the Chiefs' Committee on Languages (CCOL) to work on the development and implementation of a First Nations Languages Funding Model, that includes an agreed-upon process to ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of funds across the regions.

The Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) Regional Allocation Formula for the Indigenous Languages Component (ILC) was developed without input from First Nations. First Nations-in-Assembly ratified the interim First Nations Languages Funding Model through Resolution 17/2022, *Support for the First Nations Languages Funding Model*. The Model included weightings for new factors to be included in the allocation formula that the TCOL, CCOL, and First Nations-in-Assembly broadly supported. The Funding Model was included in a Treasury Board Submission to unlock Budget 2019 ongoing funding. As a result, approximately \$52.6M in ongoing annual funding for First Nations was unlocked and became available starting in 2023-24.

AFN's recent advocacy

Over the past year, the AFN has been working with the TCOL, CCOL, and DCH on implementing an interim First Nations Languages Funding Model, which includes revising the First Nations Regional Allocation Formula for the ILC funding. This fiscal year, DCH has unilaterally decided to continue to apply the status quo (base of \$300K plus the number of languages) Regional Allocation Formula on the ILC funding over the next five years. As a result, the AFN Languages and Learning Sector has continued to work with the regions to determine preferred approaches, including factor weighting, if additional funding is accessed for languages.

At a meeting held on October 5, 2023, the CCOL passed a recommendation that directs the members of the TCOL to work with their regions to develop proposed weightings for a revised Regional Allocation Formula until March 2024. Regional committee members will come together following these discussions to determine a commonly agreed upon approach, including the weights of the five factors—number of languages, population, language vitality, number of First Nations, and remoteness—to be included in a resolution for the 2024 Annual General Assembly. If any new financial commitments from the Government of Canada become available, this work will ensure that First Nations collectively make the decision about the Regional Allocation Formula and how ILC funds flow to their regions.



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The AFN continues to prioritize budget advocacy as additional funding is required to ensure the success of the implementation of the interim First Nations Languages Funding Model and the Indigenous Languages Act (ILA).

The AFN identified over \$3.8 billion for adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding for First Nations language revitalization needs over the next five years in the 2024 AFN Pre-Budget Submission (PBS). In addition, official correspondence has been sent to the Minister of Finance, referencing the drop in DCH's ILC funding by over \$65 million in 2024-25. This funding shortfall is concerning for First Nations across Canada, while current demand in the program is nearly double the available funds.

The AFN also requested the immediate provision of \$18 million to help provide greater equitability in allocating insufficient funding to regions in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

In support of the implementation of the interim First Nations Languages Funding Model, the AFN also completed *Revitalizing First Nations Languages: A Costing Analysis*. This report identified the costs for revitalizing First Nations languages and was used to inform part of the AFN's 2023 PBS and the Treasury Board Submission to unlock ongoing language funding. While Budget 2023 did not provide any new funding for language revitalization, the AFN will continue to use these estimates in advocacy efforts for increased language funding.

Next Steps

The AFN will continue to advocate for greater investment to support language revitalization outside of schools. As work on the Regional Allocation Formula continues, the AFN will support regions at their request to advance this work. This advocacy will facilitate the development and implementation of a First Nations-supported regional allocation formula that ensures equitability in funding allocation for languages across all regions and signals First Nations control over funding decisions.