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# Assembly of First Nations

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# Assemblée des Premières Nations

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## SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY

December 5,6,7, 2023, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 76/2023

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**TITLE:** Support for Urgent First Nations Languages Funding

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**SUBJECT:** Languages

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**MOVED BY:** Chief Ira McArthur, Pheasant Rump Nakoda Nation, SK

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**SECONDED BY:** Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation, NS

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**DECISION** Carried; 60 opposition, 11 abstentions

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## WHEREAS:

- A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)* states:
- i. Article 13 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places, and persons.
  - ii. Article 14 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
  - iii. Article 16 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.
- B. The *Indigenous Languages Act (ILA)* establishes measures to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening of Indigenous languages.
- C. The Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) has failed to fulfill their legislative requirements and is reducing funding in the Indigenous Languages Component (ILC) by an estimated \$65 million in 2024/2025.
- D. Hundreds of First Nations language programs and local capacities that were developed over three years will be reduced or discontinued in 2024/2025 due to DCH's reduced funding.

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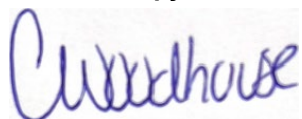
- E. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) 2022 Report, *Revitalizing First Nations Languages: A Costing Analysis*, estimates that over \$3.8 billion is required over the next five years to promote life-long learning in First Nations languages by supporting language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening outside schools, including the transition from proposal-based funding to consistent and ongoing funding as outlined in the ILA.
- F. AFN Resolutions 10/2021, *Support for the Co-Development of a Distinctions-Based Indigenous Languages Funding Model*, and 17/2022, *Support for the First Nations Languages Funding Model* provide the AFN, the Chiefs' Committee on Languages (CCOL) and Technical Committee on Languages (TCOL) the mandate to work on a revised regional allocation formula that is based on equitability.
- G. The CCOL met on March 29, 2023, and recommended a revised regional allocation formula based on number of factors including languages, population, language vitality, number of First Nations and census metropolitan areas, and remoteness, to be weighted equally in the formula.
- H. The CCOL recommendation was provided to the DCH which was confirmed as the revised First Nations regional allocation formula.
- I. Some First Nations regions understood that a relative increase was being implemented due to the confirmation of DCH.
- J. In July 2023 at the AFN Annual General Assembly, First Nations-in-Assembly did not achieve consensus with Draft Resolution 26/2023, *Equitable Funding for Language Revitalization*, which sought support for the revised regional allocation formula recommended by the CCOL.
- K. The DCH continues to allocate First Nations language revitalization funding through an allocation formula that was unilaterally developed without the free, prior, and informed consent of First Nations.
- L. Discrepancies between the status quo formula and the formula outlined in DR 26/2023, *Equitable Funding for Language Revitalization* equals \$18 million.
- M. The CCOL has recommended to advocate to DCH for immediate \$18 million of new targeted funding to support regions who have been negatively impacted by the status quo formula.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:**

1. Reaffirm that First Nations have the Inherent, Constitutional and Treaty rights to speak their languages which are further reinforced in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA)*.
2. Reaffirm that the Government of Canada has the financial responsibility to support the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of all First Nations languages.
3. Call on the Government of Canada to immediately address funding shortfalls by providing a \$3.8 billion commitment over the next five years for language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening outside schools, including the transition from proposal-based funding to consistent and ongoing funding as outlined in the *Indigenous Languages Act (ILA)*, and incremental funding for Section 8 and 9 agreements.

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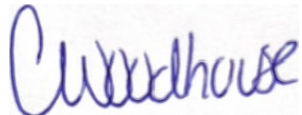
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4. Call on the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) to immediately provide \$18 million of new targeted funding to support regions that could be negatively impacted by the status quo formula.
5. Call on the DCH to remove any imposed funding formula on any new First Nations languages funding.
6. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Chiefs' Committee on Languages, and the Technical Committee on Languages to codevelop a funding allocation methodology that is consistent with AFN Resolution 17/2022, *Support for the First Nations Language Funding Model*, for any new funding, and seeks to bring a consensus-based recommendation back to the First Nations-in-Assembly.
7. Affirm that a co-development approach concerning First Nations languages is not intended to detract or hinder any self-government processes or derogate any existing First Nations Treaty and Inherent rights.

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