



International Decade of Indigenous Languages

(2022 – 2032) Fact Sheet

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), which aims to draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve and promote them nationally and globally. The IDIL aims at ensuring Indigenous Peoples' have the right to preserve, revitalize and promote their languages. Many Indigenous languages are in danger of becoming extinct. There is an urgent need to protect, revitalize, and promote Indigenous languages around the world.¹

United Nations Language Facts:²

- There are 370 million Indigenous people around the world.
- 6700 Indigenous languages are spoken worldwide.
- Around 3000 languages could disappear by the end of the century, at a rate of one every two weeks.
- 40% of the world's population cannot access education in a language they speak or understand.

First Nations Language Facts:

- It is estimated prior to contact with Europeans, there were approximately 450 Indigenous³ languages and dialects spoken across what is now Canada.
- Approximately 70 Indigenous languages remain in Canada.
- Indigenous languages in Canada are critically endangered and urgent action is required to reverse the devastating loss of language and culture.

Why are First Nations languages important?

- Connection to culture.
- Reclamation of ways of knowing and being.
- Sustainable development, investment, peace building and reconciliation.

How can you be involved?

- Become actively involved in international language revitalization activities.
- Share your language reclamation journey
#IndigenousLanguages #IDIL20222032
- Join the IDIL community <https://idil2022-2032.org/>
- Review the First Nations National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages for more information.

Quotes:

"Indigenous languages matter for sustainable development, good governance, reconciliation and peace building in our societies."
–UNESCO, International Year of Indigenous Languages, 2019

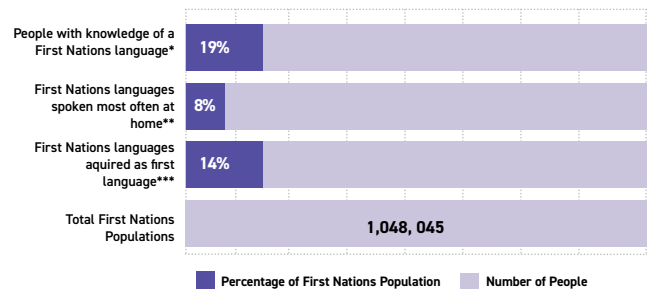
"Our languages are central to our ceremonies, our relationships to our lands, the animals, to each other, our understandings, of our worlds, including the natural world, our stories and our laws."
–Former National Chief Perry Bellegarde

"We have the heart, we have the vision to bring that language back to the best of our abilities before we lose all our elders... We have a responsibility as human beings to try to restore what was taken from us." –Ogimaa Rachel Manitowabi, AFN AGA 2023

"Our languages will no longer stand in the shadow of other languages here in our land. Let us always honour our Indigenous languages." –Ron Ignace, Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

"Each Indigenous language is priceless for humanity. They are treasures overflowing with history, values, literature, spirituality, perspectives and knowledge that have been developed over millennia, resulting from their interaction with nature: with forests, rivers, oceans. When a language becomes extinct, all those memories die with it, all that history, all that science." –H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

How many people speak a First Nations language in Canada



* Refers to whether a person can converse in a First Nations language
 ** Refers to the language the person speaks most often at home
 *** Acquired as a First Language = Mother tongue - which refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood.

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

³ Indigenous refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis

¹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages>

² <https://www.unesco.org/en/languages-education>



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The First Nations National Action Plan (Action Plan) for the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) was informed by past engagements with First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Technical Committee on Languages, Chiefs Committee on Languages, and participants at the AFN Languages Forum *New Horizons: Celebrating First Nations Languages* in November 2022.

Action Plan:

The Action Plan is built on five areas of actions:

- Enhance awareness.
- Increase engagement.
- Building community strategies.
- Enhancing support.
- Improving measurement.

The Vision:

- To harness developments in Canada and the mobilization efforts of the IDIL.
- To realize significant growth in First Nations language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and normalization across the country.
- By the end of the IDIL, we hope to increase the number of First Nations in Canada who speak their mother tongue language.

Purpose:

- The Action Plan provides examples for action at all stages of revitalization.
- Being part of an international effort presents opportunities to create an atmosphere of action, enthusiasm, and engagement.
- To instill a sense of pride in our languages.
- Through the Action Plan, the AFN will seek to secure additional funding for IDIL specific activities, separate from Indigenous Languages Component funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

How can you be involved?

- Actively participate in First Nations language revitalization activities.
- Share your language reclamation journey #ShareYourLanguage #LearnAWord
- Help First Nations languages gain global support and recognition.
- To see more ideas, strategies and actions you can take during the IDIL, check out the Action Plan on the [AFN Webpage](#).

Quotes:

"Indigenous languages are at the heart of who we are as Indigenous Peoples, connecting us to our cultures, spirituality, identities, and the land. There's a growing movement underway, driven by Indigenous Peoples everywhere, to rebuild and secure the vitality of our languages for future generations."

–Dr. Lorna Williams, First Peoples' Cultural Foundation

"You're not learning a word, you're learning a world. Language reclamation is about expanding the diversity of our knowledge because language is an expression of the accumulated experiences of people. Those who do revitalization work say that biodiversity and knowledge diversity are one and the same: it's work that makes our world better."

–Dorothy Lazore, Akwesasne

Language family	Examples of languages	Regions
Algonquian	Anishnaabemowin, Blackfoot, Cree, Mi'kmaw, Oji-Cree	Across Canada
Dene	Dakelh, Danezāgé', Dëne Sųłınë', Southern Tutchone, Tăttān, Tlingit, Tłı̄c, ẖ, Tsilhqot'in, Tsuut'ina	Northwest Territories, Yukon, Alberta
Iroquoian	Cayuga, Huron-Wendat, Kanyen'kéha, Oneida, Onondaga	Ontario, Quebec
Ktunaxa	Ktunaxa (language isolate)	British Columbia
Salishan	Éy7á7juuthem, hən'q'əmin'əm', nsyilxcən, SENĆOTEN, Skwxwú7mesh, St'át'imcets,	British Columbia
Siouan	Dakota, Lakota, Stoney Nakoda	Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba
Tsimshian	Gitxsan, Nisga'a, Sm'algyax	British Columbia
Wakashan	Hai7zaqvla, Kwak'wala, Nuuchah-nulth, X'a'isla7ala	British Columbia
Xaad Kil	Xaad Kil (language isolate)	British Columbia

Source: Assembly of First Nations Its Our Time Toolkit - Book 12 First Nations Languages