



FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES

OVERVIEW

At the December 5 & 6, 2017, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA), Resolution 77/2017, *Support for Continued Co-Development Work on the Indigenous Languages Act*, was passed, providing further support and direction for the joint development of an Indigenous Languages Act. Furthermore, the resolution identified key principles to guide the co-development process relating to the Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) and legislative development work and consultation expectations listed below.

1. Adopt the AFN First Nations Indigenous Languages Initiative National Engagement Sessions Report.
2. Adopt the principles below, drawn from the Report referred to in paragraph 1. These principles shall inform the framework and approach that the Government of Canada must employ, together with First Nations governments to co-develop legislation, regulations and policies regarding the protection, promotion, preservation, revitalization, recovery and maintenance of First Nations languages.
 - i. Recognition of the importance of Indigenous language to land, culture, traditional knowledge, worldview, participation in the economy, and domestic and global relations.
 - ii. Acknowledgement of the need and importance of redress of harm by colonization, destructive policies and laws.
 - iii. Affirmation of commitment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other key human rights instruments and principles.
 - iv. Affirmation of the various approaches to languages recovery, revitalization and maintenance and the critical role of education/lifelong learning in the opportunities for language learning.
 - v. Articulation of objectives for the protection and support of Indigenous languages and related rights, including intellectual property rights, cultural appropriation, etc.
 - vi. Affirmation of First Nations jurisdiction over Indigenous languages.
 - vii. Articulation of enforceable individual and collective rights.
 - viii. Articulation of specific federal obligations, duties and authorities to protect and support Indigenous languages including funding.
 - ix. Acknowledge the need for proficient indigenous controlled systems and capacities for the archiving of, and for the provision of access to language data.

ISSUE UPDATE

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- x. Authorities to establish suitable institutions to advance Indigenous languages objectives and rights, that such institutions will not displace existing First Nations institutions.
 - xi. Establishing annual reporting and a five year review requirement.
- 3. Direct the AFN to remind the Government of Canada of its Constitutional obligation to the requirement for extensive consultation based on the standard of Free, Prior and Informed Consent on the proposed languages bill upon its availability.

UPDATE

The AFN will be guided by the resolution key principles in the co-development process. The next step will be the co-development, through the Canada/AFN/Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami/Métis Nation Council Co-Development Working Group, on the content of the legislation. Work needs to be done on costing, life-long learning, institutions, and communications, which sub-working groups have been established to address.

Some of this work includes, but is not limited to:

1. Determining what sustainable, predictable, and sufficient funding looks like, in a languages approach.
2. Researching what model works best in regards to a commissioner(s) or institutions.
3. Identify the strategies, activities, programs and services required for the protection, revitalization, promotion and maintenance of Indigenous languages, specific to life-long learning.
4. Developing tools for information and awareness purpose.

