



## What is the history of this issue and how does it impact First Nations?

The Languages and Learning Sector (the Sector) continues to focus on the full implementation of the federal *Indigenous Languages Act* (the Act), which received Royal Assent in June 2019 after decades of First Nations advocacy.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a member of the Joint Implementation Steering Committee (JISC) along with the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) through its Indigenous Languages Branch, as well as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Métis National Council (MNC). JISC's co-development work is currently centred on establishing:

- a new Indigenous Languages Funding Model (NFM) to ensure there is adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding for all Indigenous-led language revitalization efforts; and
- the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL).

In recent months, the Sector provided input to support DCH in convening consultation sessions in 2020 and a symposium on Indigenous languages in 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultations were held virtually, by region, across the country. The consultations and symposium will support JISC members to better understand how funding mechanisms can be improved to better meet the needs of First Nations and informed Canada's selection of the Commissioner and Directors of OCIL.

The Commissioner and Director positions at the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL) are expected to be staffed by means of Governor in Council appointments in June 2021. The Sector advocated for the selection process to be modified to include Indigenous participation, including a First Nations representative on the Selection Committee.

The OCIL has the mandate and powers to: support the efforts of Indigenous Peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen their languages; provide culturally appropriate dispute resolution services and review complaints; promote public awareness of the richness and diversity of Indigenous Peoples; undertake research studies collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples; and provide an annual report on the use and vitality of Indigenous languages in Canada and on the adequacy of funding provided by the Government of Canada for initiatives related to Indigenous languages.

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Federal Budget 2019 committed \$333.7 million over five years, and \$115.7 million each year after that, to support the reclamation, preservation, and revitalization of Indigenous languages and to implement the Act. While that was a significant increase in funding available, those new investments have not been sufficient to meet the demands of First Nations. See further information on funding through Budget 2021 below.

DCH's Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program (ILCP), "Indigenous Languages Component (ILC) Call for applications," closed on February 22, 2021. A First Nations Review Committee is reviewing applications for 2021-22 funding and 2021-23 funding. The Languages and Learning Sector is looking into reports from the 2020-21 funding allocation process to support First Nations recommendations for improvements to the program guidelines and process, as well as how recommendations may apply to the development of the Funding Model.

### **How has the AFN's recent advocacy affected this area?**

Budget 2021 provided an additional \$275 million over five years and \$2 million annually thereafter to support the efforts of Indigenous Peoples in the reclamation, revitalization, and strengthening of Indigenous languages. In the budget, the \$275 million for Indigenous languages was not shown as a standalone item but was embedded in a \$460 million increment for "culture." Similar to Budget 2019, Budget 2021 funding can be used for the ILC and engagements. Further, it also includes dedicated funding to support Section 8 and 9 Agreements, as stipulated in the Act. Though Budget 2021 is a welcome increase to available languages funding, it is still insufficient to meet demand, and inadequate to support successful revitalization work. The AFN continues to advocate for adequate, sustainable, predictable and long-term funding.

The table below shows the incremental funding that Budgets 2017 and 2019 provided for DCH's former Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI) and the current Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program (ILCP). The ILCP replaces the ALI program. Budget 2019 funding for Indigenous languages is intended for preserving, promoting and revitalizing Indigenous languages. Other funding to support languages, not listed below, is provided through Territorial Language Accords, self-governing agreements, and Northern Aboriginal Broadcasting.

Note that Budget 2016 had also provided \$275 million over five years, from 2016-17 to 2021-22, to support language and cultural programming in First Nations schools on reserves. Through First Nations Elementary and Secondary Transformation, targeted investments have been made for language and culture programming to ensure all First Nations are receiving \$1500 per student.

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Item (\$ millions)	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Budget 2017	\$19.055	-	-	-	-	-	-
Budget 2019	\$15.1	\$44.1	\$71.6	\$87.2	\$115.7	\$115.7	\$115.7
Budget 2021	-	-	\$52.2	\$90.6	\$128.1	\$2.0	\$2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$39.1</b>	<b>\$44.1</b>	<b>\$123.8</b>	<b>\$177.8</b>	<b>\$243.8</b>	<b>\$117.7</b>	<b>\$177.7</b>

### Where do we hope to go in the future?

The Joint Implementation Steering Committee priorities are listed below:

- the development of a new Indigenous Languages Funding Model;
- costing research and analysis;
- the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages;
- the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032);
- Government of Canada interpretation and translation services;
- regulations pursuant to section 45 of the Act;
- communications;
- whole-of-government conformance to the Act;
- federal, provincial and territorial cooperation; and
- parliamentary and independent reviews of the Act.

The Sector continues to advocate for funding that meets the needs of First Nations, First Nations language experts, and language champions who lead language revitalization. The AFN has provided input to support the establishment and operationalization of the OCIL and contributed to the distinctions-based development of the Indigenous Languages Funding Model. The AFN's Languages and Learning Sector supports the full implementation of the Act and is exploring new research methodologies to support the development of the Funding Model. The full implementation of the Act calls for a whole-of-government approach to language revitalization.

The Sector conducted research projects with Indigenous researchers and is launching a survey to improve baseline data on First Nations languages and to support advocacy efforts related to policies, regulations, and language revitalization strategies.

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