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# Canada's National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)



**The Action Plan is available in the following  
Indigenous languages:**

**Denesuline  
Innu Aimun  
Inuktitut  
Mi'kmaq  
Michif  
Oji-Cree**


**Aussi disponible en français sous le titre :  
Plan d'action national du Canada pour la Décennie internationale des langues autochtones  
(2022-2032)**

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**The Honourable Pascale St-Onge**  
**Minister of Canadian Heritage**

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Pascale St-Onge'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

## Ministerial message

Indigenous languages are the bedrock of identities, spirituality, relationships with the land, and self-determination for Indigenous Peoples. They encapsulate generations of wisdom, ancestral knowledge, laws, customs, and traditional beliefs. They ground Indigenous youth in their cultures and traditions, strengthen their identity and position them to develop to their full potential.

Yet Canada's history of discriminatory government policies and practices have been detrimental to Indigenous languages and contributed significantly to the erosion of Indigenous languages. In Canada, there are over 70 Indigenous languages, three-quarters of which are endangered and none of them are considered safe. The acceleration of this linguistic trend on a global scale is deeply troubling. In Canada, the languages of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation Peoples, repositories of ancient philosophies, worldviews, and unique cultural perspectives, are vanishing at an alarming rate.

The Government of Canada recognizes that urgent action is imperative to prevent the loss of all Indigenous languages in Canada. For this reason, the *Indigenous Languages Act* which received Royal Assent in 2019 is intended to serve as a catalyst for change and to increase momentum in supporting Indigenous Peoples in reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining, and strengthening their languages.

Indigenous Peoples are best positioned to lead this work. For this reason, Canada's National Action Plan has at its core, the objective of supporting Indigenous Peoples in defining their vision and advancing their own action plans to support the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Throughout this Decade, it is our shared responsibility to collaborate, share stories, and support events that underscore the pivotal role of Indigenous languages in Canada. Our National Action Plan for the Decade aims to create a legacy that will be cherished by our children and their descendants, for they are the torchbearers entrusted with keeping these languages alive.

Thank you, Merci, Ay-hay, Nakurmiik, Meegwetch, Miikwehc, Mahsi Cho, Tshinashkumitin, Wela'lin, Maarsee



## Introduction

There are over 70 Indigenous languages in Canada. They are a key element of Indigenous culture and identity. Most of the living Indigenous languages in Canada are endangered and none of them are considered safe.

During the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, Indigenous Peoples expressed their desire that the international community continue working together to seek better outcomes for Indigenous languages and advocated for a Decade for Indigenous languages.

**On December 18, 2019, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (the Decade) from 2022 to 2032.**

The main objectives of the Decade are to:

- ▶ **Draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages**
- ▶ **Take urgent steps to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages at the national and international levels**

Under the leadership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an ad hoc committee drafted a Global Action Plan for the Decade (GAP) laying out outcomes for 2022-2032. The GAP mission statement is as follows: **Indigenous languages are preserved, revitalized, promoted and used across all socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political domains and is a driver for building peace, justice, development and reconciliation in our societies.** The GAP calls for the development of national action plans and regional plans (where appropriate).

Canada's National Action Plan provides a flexible strategic framework to support Indigenous Peoples in their efforts to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, strengthen, and promote Indigenous languages in Canada.

This plan is also meant to foster collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, such as provinces and territories, civil society, academia in support of the Decade.



## Vision

Recognizing the urgent need for action and the importance of reconciliation, the **efforts of Indigenous Peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages are supported**, leading to positive results and continual progress. This includes **increased visibility, vitality and use of Indigenous languages**, including among youth and across multiple mainstream domains, thus creating a legacy that will live on through generations.

## Foundational Principles

The National Action Plan acknowledges Canada's history of discriminatory government policies and practices which included among other things, assimilation, forced relocation, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and day schools. These policies and practices were detrimental to Indigenous languages and contributed significantly to their erosion and current critical state, reaffirming the urgent need for action. This requires that today, and in the future, the following foundational principles are respected:

- ▶ **Indigenous control and self-determination**, in alignment with Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, the *Indigenous Languages Act* and the *United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA)*
- ▶ **Continued and dedicated focus towards reconciliation**, such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQA+ Calls for Justice, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) via the UNDA Action Plan
- ▶ **Recognition of the high importance of youth, Indigenous community-driven priorities, education, and intergenerational transmission** transmission in the revitalization of Indigenous languages
- ▶ By Increasing the number of Indigenous language speakers and addressing barriers in reaching individual and collective goals, a **legacy that will last throughout generations is attainable.**





## A four-pillar approach

The Plan is anchored in four separate, but interconnected pillars that will contribute to the revitalization, advancement, and visibility of Indigenous languages in Canada, as well as the thematic priorities of the Global Action Plan (see [Annex A](#) for more details). The four pillars are:

1. Supporting Indigenous Peoples in advancing their vision for the Decade
2. Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act*
3. Engaging Indigenous Youth
4. Creating lasting legacies


### Pillar 1: Supporting Indigenous Peoples in advancing their vision for the Decade

The Plan seeks to **empower and support Indigenous Peoples and groups** including those representing different segments of Indigenous society (for example: urban and rural, remote regions, women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and people with disabilities) in **developing and implementing their own unique action plans for the Decade**. Canada will also encourage other non-Indigenous groups such as academia, civil society, provinces and territories to collaborate with and support Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous organizations in developing their initiatives in support of the Decade.

#### Goals

- ▶ Indigenous Peoples advance their vision of the Decade
- ▶ Development and implementation of Indigenous-led action plans
- ▶ Representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Decade in various venues including the UNESCO and UN-system, and related international events

#### Proposed Actions

- ▷ **Support Indigenous groups**, including those representing different segments of Indigenous society (distinctions, urban and rural, remote, women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and people with disabilities amongst others) in their efforts for the Decade, and beyond
  - ▷ Support Indigenous Peoples in **developing and implementing their own action plans**
  - ▷ **Enable engagement initiatives** for the Decade advanced by Indigenous Peoples
  - ▷ **Support planning and implementation** of the Decade, through related activities/initiatives
  - ▷ **Facilitate the representation of Indigenous Peoples** in UNESCO/UN-system and events
- 



## Pillar 2: Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act*

### Goals

- ▶ Enhance current work underway with Indigenous partners to develop effective and meaningful mechanisms and means to implement the provisions of the *Act*.

### Proposed Actions

- ▷ Foster a whole-of-government approach to implementing the *Act* and facilitate cooperation between provinces and territories and Indigenous governments and other Indigenous governing bodies/organizations and entities
- ▷ Co-develop, implement and assess distinction-based Indigenous language funding models
- ▷ Work to advance measures that will facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding
- ▷ Co-develop and implement pilot projects, agreements or regulations on access to services in Indigenous languages
- ▷ Undertake activities to support and promote increased visibility and use of Indigenous languages including Indigenous sign languages
- ▷ Prepare for periodic reviews of the *Indigenous Languages Act* in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.


## Pillar 3: Engaging Indigenous youth

The third pillar focuses on **developing new and innovative initiatives led by and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth** from all backgrounds (residing in or outside of their communities, in urban, rural and remote areas; 2SLGBTQQIA+; and Indigenous people with disabilities). This pillar may also contribute to intergenerational traditional knowledge transmission between youth and elders, ultimately elevating the status of Indigenous languages, so they are respected and protected.


### Goals

- ▶ Encourage Indigenous youth to strengthen their knowledge of Indigenous languages through relationships with elders
- ▶ Empower youth to lead and participate in intergenerational initiatives related to the revitalization of Indigenous languages
- ▶ Engage Indigenous youth and facilitate their contribution in Decade-related activities

### Proposed Actions

- ▷ Support intergenerational and youth learning initiatives in diverse learning environments (formal and informal)
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- ▷ **Support youth for the creation and dissemination of creative contents** in and about Indigenous languages
  - ▷ **Promote Indigenous languages** amongst youth
  - ▷ **Organize youth engagement sessions** and forums
  - ▷ Support Indigenous youth-led activities that **strengthen their relationship with elders** by **creating opportunities to transmit Indigenous languages**


## **Pillar 4: Creating lasting legacies**

This pillar will help build a heritage that is anchored in the present and oriented towards the future. Aligned with the principles of ownership, control access and possession (OCAP), the fourth pillar **aims to leave a long-lasting footprint** by facilitating the digitization of linguistic resources, access to language instruction, and above all the promotion of cultural knowledge and technological scientific initiatives.

### **Goals**

- ▶ Indigenous Peoples **sovereignty** over Indigenous languages data
- ▶ Indigenous Peoples create **adapted resources/initiatives** to make Indigenous languages **thrive**
- ▶ Indigenous languages **are seen, heard, and respected in various domains of society**, including the workplace
- ▶ Facilitate **digital empowerment** of Indigenous Peoples
- ▶ Provision of **historical pieces of interest** to Indigenous Peoples in Indigenous languages
- ▶ Indigenous language learning opportunities are available regardless of the place of residence

### **Proposed Actions**

- ▷ **Support activities to research** and take stock of available data on Indigenous languages
  - ▷ **Increase and facilitate access to Indigenous languages data**
  - ▷ **Support the development of accreditation initiatives for Indigenous languages** with an emphasis on the value of Indigenous language and traditional knowledge, which could include an authoritative body and accreditation tools
  - ▷ **Support the development, promotion and dissemination of culturally adapted content** on and in Indigenous languages, whether online or through other medias
  - ▷ **Foster partnerships between Indigenous Peoples and historical organizations** to develop content on and in Indigenous languages
  - ▷ **Support the development of sustainable on-line and information technology-based Indigenous languages resources**
- 



## Ultimate Outcome

At the core, the International Decade of Indigenous Languages supports Indigenous Peoples reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages in Canada. **The ultimate outcome is to see a marked increase in the number and proficiency of Indigenous language learners and speakers, as well as an intergenerational and cross-societal transmission of Indigenous language and culture.** For a more detailed list of expected results, see [Annex B](#).

By doing so, we should be able to further our collective understanding of Indigenous history, knowledge and reconciliation; eventually creating a legacy that is thriving and perpetual, meaning it will live on after the Decade is over.





# Annex A: Links between the National Action Plan and the Global Action Plan

Under the leadership of UNESCO, an ad hoc committee stemming from the International Year of Indigenous Languages Steering Committee drafted a Global Action Plan (GAP) for the Decade laying out outcomes for 2022-2032.

## National Action Plan Pillars

### **Pillar 1: Supporting Indigenous Peoples in defining, leading and advancing their vision for the Decade**

The following contributes to the GAP thematic priorities:

- ▶ Education (1)
- ▶ Culture (6)
- ▶ Gender equality/women empowerment (9)
- ▶ Public and Private partnership for long-term commitment to global agenda (10)


### **Pillar 2: Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act***

The following contributes to the GAP thematic priorities:

- ▶ Education (1)
- ▶ Digital empowerment/Technology (3)
- ▶ Health/social cohesion/humanitarian response (4)
- ▶ Access to justice and public services (5)
- ▶ Culture (6)
- ▶ Economic growth (8)
- ▶ Gender equality/women empowerment (9)
- ▶ Public and private partnership for long-term commitment to global agenda (10)

### **Pillar 3: Engaging Indigenous youth**


The following contributes to the GAP thematic priorities:

- ▶ Education (1)
  - ▶ Digital empowerment/Technology (3)
  - ▶ Health/social cohesion/humanitarian response (4)
  - ▶ Culture (6)
  - ▶ Gender equality/women empowerment (9)
- 



## **Pillar 4: Creating lasting legacies**

**The following contributes to the GAP thematic priorities:**

- ▶ Education (1)
  - ▶ Digital empowerment/Technology (3)
  - ▶ Health/social cohesion/humanitarian response (4)
  - ▶ Access to justice and public services (5)
  - ▶ Culture (6)
  - ▶ Environment (7)
  - ▶ Economic growth (8)
  - ▶ Gender equality/women empowerment (9)
  - ▶ Public and private partnership for long-term commitment to global agenda (10)
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## Annex B: Expected results

### Pillars of the National Action Plan

#### **Pillar 1: Supporting Indigenous Peoples in defining, leading and advancing their vision for the Decade**

- Indigenous Peoples make the Decade their own
- Indigenous-led action plans developed and implemented
- Indigenous languages are more visible/familiar in non-Indigenous settings
- Indigenous Peoples further develop international network
- Increased Indigenous autonomy of language

#### **Pillar 2: Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act***

- Establishment of new distinctions-based funding models
- Measures are advanced to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding for Indigenous languages in Canada.
- Increased access to services in Indigenous languages
- Increased involvement of other governmental departments in supporting efforts towards the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening of Indigenous languages, notably via implementing the *Act*

#### **Pillar 3: Engaging Indigenous youth**

- Increased number of initiatives online and other medias featuring youth using Indigenous languages
- Increased opportunities for Indigenous youth to learn and use their Indigenous languages
- Better visibility of youth using Indigenous languages
- Increased intergenerational connections

#### **Pillar 4: Creating lasting legacies**

- Increased Indigenous self-determination and control in the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening of Indigenous languages
  - More publications, documents and content is publicly available in Indigenous languages
  - Indigenous languages are more widely recognized and visible in mainstream media and other spheres of society
  - Increased accessibility of Indigenous languages through several mediums such as technological and digital tools
- 