



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### BCAFN Celebrates National Indigenous Languages Day March 31, 2022

**(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC)** — In celebration of National Indigenous Languages Day, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) calls for continued and further actions to preserve, promote, and revitalize Indigenous languages, and recognition of the rights of First Nations in Canada. Colonial policies forced several generations of Indigenous peoples across Canada into Residential Schools, where speaking Indigenous languages was often suppressed by staff. Students were primarily permitted to speak English and French, and disobedience was met with violent punishments. As a result, many Indigenous languages in Canada are now endangered.

"I am hopeful and encouraged by the many innovative efforts that have been initiated, including, last year's appointment of Ron Ignace of the Secwepemc Nation as the first Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. He is leading a new federal government department established as an important element in implementing the Indigenous Languages Act," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "As well, this year is the first year of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages ([IDIL2022-2032](#)), a global effort to preserve, revitalize and support Indigenous languages worldwide.

With yesterday's release of the BC government's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*, accountability and implementation of policies and legislation will further advance the revitalization and preservation of First Nations languages. The BCAFN is now working with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), First Nations Summit (FNS), and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESEC) on how First Nations languages might be coordinated and advanced within the *Declaration Act* framework going forward, as well as intersections with national-level work.

IDIL2022-2032 aims at ensuring Indigenous peoples' right to preserve, revitalize, and promote their languages, and mainstream linguistic diversity and multilingualism innovations into sustainable development efforts. It will create unique opportunities to collaborate policy development, stimulate a global dialogue in a true spirit of multi-linguistic engagement, and urgently communicate for the usage, preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages around the world.

204 First Nations communities are located in British Columbia with 34 distinct languages and almost 90 dialects. Approximately 50% of the Indigenous languages in Canada are spoken in BC. Locations of languages and dialects can be viewed on the First Peoples' Cultural Council [languages map page](#).

#### Additional links:

[Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages](#)

[The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan](#)

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