



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
September 19, 20, & 21, 2023
Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 24/2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR EQUITABLE FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES REVITALIZATION FUNDING

MOVED BY: CHIEF KEN WATTS, TSESHAHT FIRST NATION

SECONDED BY: PROXY JUDY WILSON, SKAWAHLLOOK FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. First Nations have the inherent rights to revitalize, learn, use, transmit, and access services in their First Nations language;
- B. These rights are affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and which British Columbia and Canada have committed to implement through legislation:

Article 13 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons. 2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means;

Article 14 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their

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cultural methods of teaching and learning. 3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including 14 those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language; and

Article 16 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination;

- C. The First Peoples Cultural Council's (FPCC) *2022 Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages* reported that First Nations have seen an increase in First Nations language learners and semi-speakers, and affirms the role of increased funding in the success of First Nations language revitalization activities;
- D. However, many First Nations still face barriers in their work to revitalize, learn, use, transmit, and access services in their First Nations language. A critical, well-known barrier is access to needs-based, sustainable, flexible funding that can support First Nations' self-determined languages revitalization;
- E. First Nations languages do not receive sufficient protections or supports, especially when compared to the privilege afforded to English and French as Canada's recognized official languages;
- F. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) *Revitalizing First Nations Languages: A Costing Analysis* estimates the annual cost of First Nations languages revitalization across Canada to be \$2.003 billion;
- G. The Government of Canada has only committed approximately \$52 million to First Nations languages across Canada in 2024-2025 and subsequent years, despite their legislative commitments to facilitate the provision of adequate and sustainable funding for First Nations languages in the *Indigenous Languages Act*;
- H. FPCC estimates that the resulting funding gap for BC First Nations languages ranges from 30-40 million each year from 2024-2029; and
- I. In July 2023, at the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly, First-Nations-in-Assembly voted to not pass draft resolution 26 *Equitable Funding for Languages Revitalization*, which sought ratification for a new Regional Allocation Formula for the Department of Canadian Heritage Indigenous Languages Component funding. This formula was proposed by the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages (CCOL); however, BC Chiefs expressed concern that the proposed formula would significantly negatively impact the amount of funding for the BC region (as well as several other regions) and that more work was needed to arrive at a consensus-based, data-driven formula.

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Government of Canada to fulfill their legislative requirements to fund all First Nations languages equitably based on the real costs to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen First Nations languages;
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Government of Canada to immediately address funding shortfalls for all First Nations regions that are oversubscribed for language revitalization initiatives;
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly denounce the fact that the Government of Canada has aimed to force First Nations into the untenable position of having to decide which First Nations languages are harmed and which are supported through the Regional Allocation Formula, and acknowledge the importance of all First Nations languages across the country;
4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the AFN and Chiefs Committee on Languages, Technical Committee on Languages and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to continue their work to develop an equitable Regional Allocation Formula and to arrive at a consensus-based recommendation to bring back to the AFN First Nations-in-Assembly to be reviewed;
5. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Chiefs Committee on Languages, Technical Committee on Languages and the AFN to continuously monitor the equitability of the Regional Allocation Formula and its impact on regional language revitalization activities, and engage in research that informs the future use of additional factors and improved data quality; and
6. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the AFN to ensure that its advocacy does not detract or hinder existing First Nations agreements which contain language components from advancing their current language processes.

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