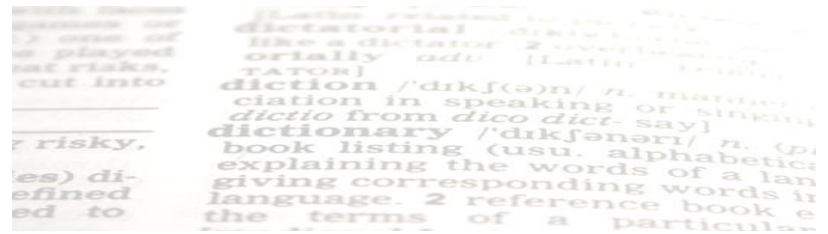


LANGUAGES



Native Women's
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L'Association des
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du Canada



The On-Going Legacy of Residential Schools

- Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples had their own well-established systems of childcare and education that were rooted in community, the natural environment and spiritual teachings.
- After the Europeans arrived, colonization began and the introduction of the *Indian Act* paved the way for the reservation and residential school systems responsible for the cultural genocide imposed upon Indigenous people in Canada.
- The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous people came from the belief that their worldviews were inferior or primitive.
- Residential schools were established in 1880 and the last school closed in 1996. These schools practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students.¹
- Students were forced to speak English and French and students caught using their mother tongue were punished.²

Indigenous Languages in Canada

- The majority of languages that are under threat of disappearing are Indigenous languages.³
- Languages are not only a method of communication but also an intricate system of knowledge.^{3,4}
- Language is central to identity, cultural preservation, worldviews, spirituality, expression and self-determination.^{3,4}
- Language families include Algonquian languages (Cree, Ojibway, Innu/Montagnais, Oji-Cree, Mi'kmaq, Atikamekw and Blackfoot), Inuit languages (Inuktitut), Athapaskan languages (Dene, Tlicho, Slavey and Carrier), Siouan languages (Stoney, Dakota), Salish languages (Shuswap, Halkomelem), Tsimshain languages (Gitksan, Nisga'a), Wakashan languages (Kwakiutl, Nootka), Iroquoian languages (Mohawk), Michif, Tlingit, Kutenai and Haida.⁵
- The threat of extinction of Indigenous languages is a direct result of colonial assimilation policies.^{3,4}
- The chronic under funding of Indigenous language protection and revitalization efforts continues to contribute to the decline of Indigenous language speakers.⁶
- Linguistic decline also threatens the loss of traditional knowledge, which is orally passed from generation to generation.⁷

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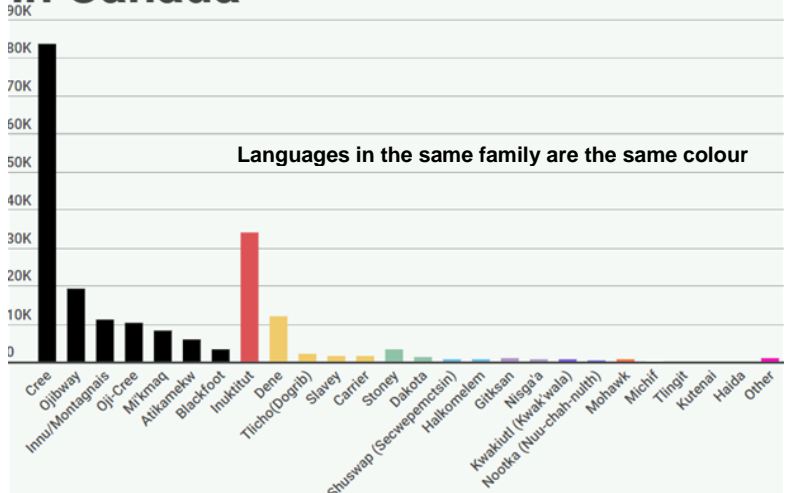
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Indigenous Languages

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- There are over 60 Indigenous languages and 12 different language families spoken in Canada.⁵
- Only three of the 60 languages are expected to survive the next century.⁴
- Indigenous mother tongue speakers are aging.^{4,5}
- Of the most reported Indigenous languages, these languages are spoken on a regular basis at home.⁵
- Inuit communities often speak different dialects and use different writing systems, sparking a debate if a standardized writing system is appropriate for all communities.⁸
- Métis people's realities as mostly landless people have impacted their identities and access to language.⁹
- Urban communities find language preservation particularly challenging, citing lack of priority in urban centres.⁷

Indigenous Language Speakers in Canada



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- Funding is the largest barrier facing Indigenous language revitalization programs.⁶
- Only five per cent of First Nations children report learning Indigenous languages at school.⁶
- Many communities report that there are no language classes or teachers available, and no one to practice language skills with.⁶
- There are language programs in place in most regions of Inuit Nunangat, but programs are limited beyond K-3 lessons.⁸
- Websites and YouTube videos provide online spaces to learn Michif.⁹
- Many friendship centres offer language classes, but programs are often cut due to a lack of sustainable funding mechanisms.⁷



TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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