

What we Heard Report: Consultations on the Implementation of The Indigenous Languages Act

Consultations on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the
Indigenous Languages Funding Model

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Introduction

On June 21, 2019, the *Indigenous Languages Act* (the Act) received Royal Assent. The Act is intended to support the self-determining efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages.

In December 2019, the Prime Minister mandated the Minister of Canadian Heritage to “continue to fully implement the *Indigenous Languages Act* in order to preserve, promote and revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada, with long-term predictable and sufficient funding to support the implementation of the Act.”

The preamble of the Act acknowledges that “Indigenous peoples are best placed to take the leading role in reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining and strengthening Indigenous languages”. The Act mandates consultations with a variety of Indigenous governments, other governing bodies and organizations responsible for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages on a number of implementation issues.

This final report follows a series of consultations that focused on two key *Indigenous Languages Act* implementation issues: the establishment of an Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, and the establishment of measures to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding. The report contains a comprehensive overview of what was heard throughout the virtual consultations undertaken in the Fall 2020 and the online portal and offers a series of next steps.

Executive summary

Purpose of consultations

The Government of Canada carried out consultations in 2020-2021 as part of the ongoing implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*. The consultations focused on two areas: the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the development of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model. Regarding the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, the intent of the consultations was to seek views and perspectives on roles, responsibilities and early priorities for the Office, and qualities and qualifications to look for in a Commissioner and Directors of Indigenous Languages. On the Indigenous Languages Funding Model, the consultations sought feedback on how to frame and operationalize a funding model, what should be funded, and measuring success in revitalizing and preserving Indigenous languages.

Overview of process

A Joint Implementation Steering Committee (the Committee) is comprised of national representatives of Indigenous peoples and nations (the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council) and the Department of Canadian Heritage who work collaboratively on the implementation of the Act.

Initial consultation plans and materials were developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and were consequently adjusted to a virtual format to ensure the health and safety of participants during the pandemic. The Committee was instrumental in developing the revised distinction-based approach to consultations as well as the revised consultation material prepared for September 2020. The Government of Canada proceeded with 26 virtual consultation sessions from September to December 2020 and provided other opportunities to contribute through an online portal and questionnaire on the

Department of Canadian Heritage website, and through invitations to provide written submissions to the Department.

In addition to the sessions organized with Committee partners, sessions were also organized with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

The consultations involved a series of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation virtual sessions, as well as two sessions focused on Friendship Centres and one session with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. A broad range of participants attended the sessions, including Elders, youth and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. Representation included Indigenous governments and representative organizations, governing bodies and organizations working in culture and language, community-based experts and practitioners, teachers and other education system representatives. Sessions were held in all jurisdictions. In total, approximately 500 people participated in the consultation sessions including 300 First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities.

Over 300 people responded to the online portal questionnaire, and nine written submissions were received.

What we heard synopsis

General comments on Indigenous languages and the *Indigenous Languages Act*

There were many rich conversations and comments throughout the consultations on broad issues related to Indigenous languages. Many participants talked about the significance of Indigenous languages, the current state of these languages, the impacts of colonialism on language transmission, and the urgency and scope of the work ahead to revitalize them. Participants also shared their ideas on how the critical work of revitalizing Indigenous languages fits into the context of reconciliation and must be Indigenous-led. Discussions also included thoughts about moving the work forward beyond the *Indigenous Languages Act* and beyond the mainstream through support for grassroots initiatives, the importance of a whole-of-government approach that is transparent and accountable, and ensuring clear roles and accountabilities.

The Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

Roles and responsibilities

Many participants in the consultations shared that the Commissioner and Directors should, as a starting point, understand that Indigenous languages are sacred, medicinal and connected to the land and that there is trauma associated with the loss of Indigenous languages. The work of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should be premised on this foundational knowledge and should employ a holistic, Indigenous approach.

The Office should remain focused on the work of revitalizing Indigenous languages and be responsive to Indigenous peoples and communities. The Commissioner and Directors should learn from others, develop and maintain relationships and partnerships, gather information on Indigenous languages, the current state of the vitality of Indigenous languages in each community and best practices, and create networks for information-sharing and effective communication. There were many conversations on how best the Office should be structured to ensure representation of all Indigenous peoples and languages. Many participants also saw that an important role for the Office, as a champion for Indigenous

languages, will be to raise awareness, promote, advocate and support efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages.

Early priorities

A key message that emerged from the discussions on early priorities for the Office is that efforts need to focus immediately on critically endangered Indigenous languages, while recognizing that all languages are at risk and should be supported. At the same time, the Commissioner and Directors need to quickly establish and operationalize the structure of the Office and ensure early communication and knowledge-gathering and sharing with Indigenous people.

Other short-term objectives that were proposed include the establishment of inclusive partnerships, and working closely with Indigenous peoples to determine the state of Indigenous languages, plan, and build a strategy for moving forward and for measuring success.

Qualities and qualifications of appointees

Participants overwhelmingly thought that appointees to the positions of Commissioner and Directors should be Indigenous. Many also shared that appointees should have at least some level of fluency in an Indigenous language. Other attributes that were discussed for these positions included strong leadership, communication and advocacy skills, being passionate about the work involved, fairness, the ability to work across diverse groups, and being respected by the Indigenous language revitalization community.

Other qualities and experience that were frequently mentioned include:

- Non-partisan and well versed in how the federal bureaucracy works.
- Knowledgeable about the connection between languages, identity, culture, values and wellness.
- Knowledgeable about the history and current state of Indigenous languages.
- Grounded in one's own culture, adopting an Indigenous worldview to the work.
- Practical experience in the area of Indigenous language revitalization, ideally gained at the community level.
- Some academic or theoretical background in a related field was thought to be important, but for many participants, not as critical as on-the-ground work experience.

Indigenous languages funding model

Building blocks for a funding model

Participants consistently remarked on the urgent nature of the work ahead to revitalize Indigenous languages. There was broad support for the idea critically endangered languages and dialects should be prioritized while recognizing that all Indigenous languages are important and need support. It was also broadly understood and agreed that current funding levels are not adequate to achieve the stated objectives of Indigenous language revitalization and that funding needs to be sustained over the long-term. Discussions around adequacy of funding often included comparisons to resources provided for official languages and suggestions to make sure that funding for Indigenous languages reflect the amount of funding, time and energy spent by governments harming them in the first place, such as resources put into the creation and maintenance of the Residential School system.

There were many conversations and different ideas shared on how best to ensure equitable, fair and accessible funding across regions and languages. Topics included a per capita component, including urban populations, adjustments for remoteness, a distinctions-based approach, a Nation-to-Nation approach, a needs-based approach, baseline amounts per community, prioritizing communities that have experience with residential schools, capacity and language vitality factors. Participants in many sessions recommended that a whole-of-government approach to funding be adopted.

How to fund and what to fund

Numerous participants across many sessions saw the development of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model as an opportunity to think in a transformational way about Indigenous languages. Specifically, Indigenous ways of knowing and learning should be incorporated in the work ahead.

A key message that emerged consistently from the sessions is that funding for Indigenous language revitalization efforts must be flexible. Participants spoke about this flexibility in many ways, including within the context of lifelong learning and by describing the broad range of activities and approaches that should be supported, all tailored to the learner, the community and the language in question. Lifelong learning should be holistic to enhance well-being and ensure better access to services in Indigenous Languages.

Participants also stressed the importance of an Indigenous-led funding process that is accessible, responsive, timely and transparent. Funding should be long-term, stable, sustained, reliable and predictable, with application and reporting requirements. Many favoured funding going directly to Nations or communities and their community-driven efforts.

Many self-governing Nations confirmed they are ready to negotiate funding arrangements now in the context of their self-government agreements and associated funding mechanisms, in the context of the direct relationship they have with the federal government.

Defining and measuring success

Success in Indigenous language revitalization is connected to identity, cultural continuity, capacity building, self-determination, health and well-being.

In this context, some signs of success may include Indigenous people of all ages speaking their Indigenous languages proudly and comfortably, and knowing and valuing their cultures. Other markers of success could include increased access to Indigenous languages, and heightened visibility, protection and respect for Indigenous languages and Indigenous peoples.

There was a consensus on the proposition that Indigenous peoples will define and measure qualitative and quantitative markers of success for themselves and that these may look different from community to community and from language to language.

Context-setting

Purpose of consultations

The consultations undertaken by the Government of Canada in 2020-2021 on the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act* focused on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the development of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model.

With respect to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, the intent of the consultations was to seek the views and perspectives of a variety of Indigenous governments, governing bodies organizations, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, educators and other language experts on potential roles, responsibilities and early priorities for the Office, and what qualities and qualifications to look for in a Commissioner and Directors of Indigenous Languages. Feedback from the sessions will help the Minister of Canadian Heritage make recommendations to the Governor in Council for the appointment of a Commissioner and up to three Directors of Indigenous Languages.

On the Indigenous Languages Funding Model, the consultations sought feedback from Indigenous partners on the framing of a funding model, on how a funding process should operate, on what should be funded under the funding model and how best to define and measure success in the area of Indigenous languages. This information will inform the development and operationalization of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model, which will help to fulfill one of the Act's objectives, which is to establish measures to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding to support Indigenous languages.

Overview of process

Further details on the purpose of consultations are contained in the [Discussion Guide: Consultations and Engagement on the Implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*](#).

Planning and design

A Joint Implementation Steering Committee (the Committee), comprised of representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage, is taking a partnership approach to the co-implementation of the Act.

The Committee was instrumental in developing the overall approach to consultations as well as the consultation materials, including a comprehensive consultation guide, agenda, invitation lists and invitation letters.

The initial plan was to hold in-person consultation sessions across Canada in spring and summer 2020. However, with pandemic-related restrictions coming into effect in March 2020, an alternative path forward was developed over the course of summer 2020. Even though the circumstances were less than ideal, it was important that the consultations proceed as quickly as possible in order to ensure the timely establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and to move forward with the development of a Funding Model.

With input from the Committee, the Department of Heritage proceeded with virtual consultations, provided other opportunities to contribute through an online portal and questionnaire made available on the departmental website, and invited interested persons or organizations to provide written submissions to the Department. The Department also communicated to participants that although virtual means of consulting would be adopted, they would not replace more traditional, in-person events over the long-term.

Virtual consultation sessions

In total, 26 virtual sessions took place from September to December 2020. In addition to the sessions organized with Committee partners, sessions were also organized with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

Of the 26 sessions:

- 16 were held with First Nations.
- 5 were held with Inuit.
- 2 were held with the Métis Nation.
- 1 was held with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.
- 1 was held with the National Association of Friendship Centres.
- 1 was held with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

Sessions were held in all jurisdictions. In total, approximately 500 people participated in the consultation sessions, with an average of almost 20 participants per session.

A broad range of participants, with varying expertise, attended the sessions. Representation included local and regional Indigenous governments, organizations working in the area of culture and languages, individuals working on Indigenous language revitalization at a community level, and teachers and others working at all levels of the education system, from early childhood education to the post-secondary system.

Each session lasted approximately 4 hours. The overall structure of each session consisted of:

- introductory remarks and a broad dialogue on Indigenous languages between the participants and Government of Canada political representatives or senior officials.
- an in-depth discussion on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages.
- an in-depth discussion on the Indigenous Languages Funding Model.

A sample agenda for the consultation sessions is available at Appendix A.

Online consultation portal and written submissions

An online questionnaire mirroring the proposed questions in the consultation guide was available on the Canadian Heritage website during the virtual consultation sessions. Participants were also able to provide feedback through written submissions. Over 300 people responded to the online portal questionnaire, and Canadian Heritage received nine written submissions.

General comments provided on Indigenous languages, the *Indigenous Languages Act*, and the work ahead

Beyond the focus on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the Indigenous Languages Funding Model, there were many productive conversations throughout the consultation sessions on broader contextual issues related to Indigenous languages. Many participants talked about the significance of Indigenous languages, the harm colonial policies caused to these languages, and the urgency and scope of the work ahead to revitalize them. Participants also shared their ideas about how working to revitalize Indigenous languages should be Indigenous-led, moving the work forward beyond the *Indigenous Languages Act*, and ensuring that roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear.

Participants said that Indigenous languages are...

Indigenous languages are holistic, sacred, alive and spiritual. They connect to identity, culture, ceremony, and Mother Earth. They are the first languages of the land and their words come from the land, a traditional source of knowledge. Language specialists include those who are on the land and water: healers, hunters, fishers, people who sew.

Indigenous languages carry an understanding of life and a way of life. They contain unique worldviews and knowledge, and embody Indigenous stories, history, and a living philosophy. Embedded in these languages is an important intellectual legacy that includes cultural, ecological, medical and other scientific knowledge.

Indigenous languages are a vital part of who Indigenous people are. They are an expression of sovereignty, and belong in the hearts and minds of the people. The revitalization of Indigenous languages contributes to Nation-building and helps to restore value systems.

There is a critical link between the health of Indigenous languages and the wellness of Indigenous peoples. The languages are medicinal, and a healing process is involved in their revitalization, both at the individual and community level.

Participants across different sessions shared the notion that Indigenous languages do not die: some fall asleep but can wake up again.

Participants said that urgent action is required

The *Indigenous Languages Act* is long overdue. Indigenous peoples have been calling for this support for many years. Many Indigenous languages are critically endangered. As the number of fluent speakers declines, these languages are at risk of being lost. Some participants are working to recover languages rather than revitalizing them. Time is of the essence for this important work.

Participants described how we got here

The current state of Indigenous languages is attributable to the impact of historical cultural and linguistic genocidal processes imposed by the Government of Canada whereby the impact is still felt today. There is a direct correlation between the current state of Indigenous languages and assimilationist and oppressive policies and practices, including residential schools. Many participants shared their own personal stories about the loss of their languages, and placed the work of revitalization in the context of addressing grief and healing, emphasizing the emotional and wellness implications of Indigenous languages work.

There were suggestions that the government's commitment to supporting the revitalization of Indigenous languages should reflect the time, effort and resources deployed to harm them in the first place.

The consultations were a good starting point for what will be a long-term effort to reclaim some of what has been lost. The important work of revitalizing Indigenous languages fits into the broader context of reconciliation, which includes respecting Treaty promises and developing new fiscal relationships.

Participants said Indigenous languages work must be Indigenous-led: Indigenous languages belong to Indigenous peoples

Indigenous languages revitalization efforts should be by and for Indigenous peoples. Many recognized the valuable role and contributions made by Elders and Indigenous women in particular in the teaching and transmission of Indigenous languages. There should be ongoing Indigenous oversight of the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

It will be important to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning into the work of Indigenous language revitalization. The work is conducive to transformational thinking, especially in terms of improving the cultural safety of Western education.

Inclusiveness

The work forward on Indigenous languages should include a multitude of Indigenous voices, communities, governments and other entities. Included among these are Elders, Indigenous women, Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQIA persons, First Nations persons living other off reserve and other urban Indigenous people.

Many participants commented on the distinctions-based approach, with some sharing their view that this approach is required for the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act* and for related consultations. Some participants emphasised the need to be inclusive of members who reside outside their community, notably people living in urban areas, who often have significant needs (high rates of homelessness, incarceration, children and youth in care, as examples). In addition, some participants suggested that a government-to-government approach might also be more inclusive of modern treaty Nations.

Participants talked about Indigenous languages beyond the *Indigenous Languages Act*

Although the *Indigenous Languages Act* is a long-awaited and significant achievement, it does not go far enough, according to some participants. Specifically, there is more work to do to define the rights mentioned in the Act, especially important in terms of the right to education in Indigenous languages, and to specify obligations. Some participants voiced that the Act does not ensure equitable treatment for Indigenous languages when compared to the English and French languages, and it does not recognize Indigenous languages as the first languages of the land. Many participants spoke about their inherent right to Indigenous languages and others considered education in their Indigenous languages as a human right and that every Indigenous person has the right to learn their language.

Many sessions included conversations about Indigenous languages in the context of official languages in Canada. Indigenous peoples want their languages to be safe, like the official languages are, and acknowledgment that their languages are equally valued and valuable. Participants contrasted the level of resources made available to support official languages rights and institutional infrastructure against that available for Indigenous languages. Many participants thought that Indigenous peoples should have the same right to, and support for, education in their own languages as official language communities do. There was some frustration that Indigenous language education was not receiving the same level of respect and support as education in official languages, with some participants pointing to examples of multi-million-dollar new French-language schools under construction, especially in the Territories.

The discussion around Indigenous languages and official languages included a number of comments about recognizing Indigenous languages as official languages or as “first” languages. There was some

variation in terms of what this could look like, but many participants suggested that various Indigenous languages could be official languages in certain regions of the country.

For example, Inuktitut, a non-official language, is the language spoken by the majority of people in Nunavut – this is unlike anywhere else in Canada. Many participants proposed an amendment to the federal *Official Languages Act* to recognize Inuktitut as an official language in Nunavut; this would ensure the language receives the same level of support as federal official languages in areas such as the education, health and justice systems. Others sought more support, recognition and legislative protection from provinces and territories in this regard.

Participants talked about the need for a whole-of-government approach that is transparent and accountable

Although Indigenous peoples will lead the work involved in revitalizing Indigenous languages, the involvement of all levels of government is critical.

- The federal government should ensure a whole of government approach to the co-implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act* and, in collaboration with JISC and the provinces and territories, develop a strategic plan to this end.
- The federal government should be prepared to discuss Indigenous languages matters at various tables, including the Collaborative Fiscal Policy table, and should engage in bilateral negotiations with self-governing Nations.
- The federal government should provide information on all available federal funding in support of Indigenous languages.
- Provinces and territories can play a role in Indigenous languages revitalization, especially in the areas of education, accreditation and child and family services.
- All levels of government should have clear accountabilities, be responsive to what Indigenous peoples are saying and commit to a long-term effort to revitalize Indigenous languages.

What we heard from the virtual consultation sessions: Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

Summary Reports

View [summary reports](#) for each consultation session.

Roles and responsibilities

A listing of proposed key accountabilities, collaboratively developed by the Joint Implementation Steering Committee, was included in the consultation materials and helped to inform the discussion on the potential roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. The proposed key accountabilities are included in Annex A of the [Discussion Guide: Consultations and Engagement on the Implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act](#).

Overall, feedback received from participants during the consultations was consistent with the proposed key accountabilities. However, participants did emphasize certain aspects of the proposed key accountabilities over others, made suggestions on how best to prioritize some of the functions, and provided additional comments, as described below.

First Nations

The starting point

Indigenous languages are sacred, medicinal and connected to the land. There is trauma associated with the loss of Indigenous languages. Appointees to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should premise their work on these foundational understandings and employ a holistic, Indigenous approach. Another starting point for the Office is knowledge about the contextual differences and diversity from one language group to another, including various dialects and cultures, and the differing needs of people living on reserve and off reserve.

Learn from others

It will be important for the Office to veer away from reinventing the wheel and to learn from others. Successful and innovative language revitalization models already exist, as do Commissions and other entities with similar mandates. Some participants also cautioned that the Office should be mindful of mandate and role overlap, as many of the proposed activities are already underway locally or regionally in some jurisdictions - an organization in Yukon, for example, undertakes research and planning for Indigenous languages. Participants also requested that feedback from these consultations be shared with the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages.

Representation and structure

Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring the Office could equitably represent and reflect the issues and realities of all regions and language groups across the country, including the specific language needs of First Nations people living off reserve, and the variety of languages in certain regions, notably in British Columbia. There was concern that the proposed structure of only one Commissioner and three Directors may not allow for adequate representation of all Nations, languages, language groups and states of languages. To address this concern, some participants suggested building additional representation into the Office's structure, perhaps on a Nation-by-Nation basis or by region, province or territory.

There were different thoughts about how best to structure the Office. While some agreed with the idea of structuring the Office using a distinctions-based approach and rotating between distinctions for the role of Commissioner, there were concerns that one First Nation Director would not be sufficient to represent the Indigenous languages interests of all First Nations, given the number of Nations and the overall population size. Others suggested a structuring along language groups, languages, language vitality or Nations, rather than along provincial and territorial lines or a distinctions basis.

The conversation generated a mix of ideas about whether the Office should be centralized or decentralized. Some participants thought a more regionalized structure would better address concerns around adequate representation and foster a closer connection to communities and to those working on the ground in the area of Indigenous language revitalization. For example, it was mentioned that there should be one Director to represent each province/territory. Others thought the Office would be best located in the National Capital Region, as much of the work will involve working within the federal

government to advocate for Indigenous languages. Yet others proposed a combined regionalized and national approach for the Office. Some ideas to consider in respect of a potential combined structure included:

- The three Directors could each represent a certain region of the country and have a specialized understanding of the languages, communities, expertise and needs of their respective regions.
- Regional entities could be created, perhaps along the lines of languages or language groups, to provide the link between communities and the Office.
- Take inspiration from other existing decentralized models, such as the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Finally, there were suggestions that Indigenous peoples be well represented throughout the organization, beyond the Commissioner and Directors.

[Stay focused on Indigenous languages](#)

Many people expressed some apprehension about the ambitious nature of the roles and responsibilities proposed for the Office. There were concerns about whether the Office would be resourced appropriately to meet these expectations, and whether the Office would stray from its primary focus of revitalizing Indigenous languages. For example, while participants expressed support for the Office in its dispute resolution role or acting as an ombudsperson or watchdog, some were concerned that the demand may be too great that it would divert precious time, effort and energy away from critical language revitalization efforts.

Participants worried that the Office would become another bureaucratic institution and expressed some doubt as to whether it would remain focused on the objective of addressing the urgent needs with respect to Indigenous language revitalization. Some thought that resources devoted to staffing and operating the Office are resources diverted away from community-led language revitalization work, and others suggested the Office streamline its activities in order to maintain this focus, and explore ways to carry out its responsibilities virtually in order to contain costs. One way to help alleviate these concerns, as was suggested by participants, is to evaluate the Office's performance on a regular basis to verify if it is in fact helping to revitalize Indigenous languages.

[Stay focused on communities](#)

A common theme that emerged from the discussion on the Office's roles and responsibilities is that Indigenous communities are, and must remain, at the heart of efforts to lead the revitalization of Indigenous languages. The expertise for the work ahead is in the community: communities are already working effectively on language revitalization and they know what the needs are.

With this in mind, the Office should approach its work in a community-centred way. Specifically, the Office should visit and engage regularly with communities, respect protocols that are in place, listen to the people there to understand their needs and establish mutually trusting relationships with grassroots-level experts and other community members.

Beyond establishing these critical connections, the Office should align itself with communities in joint efforts to:

- Hold Canada accountable for the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*.
- Build sustained and community-held infrastructure for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages.
- Develop community language assessments and community language plans.

Many participants spoke about the requirement that the Office be not only responsive to, but also accountable to, communities and community-driven efforts.

Partnership approaches

Many participants spoke about the importance of the Office engaging a “whole of government” approach to the work of revitalizing Indigenous languages. There was a recognition that bringing a range of partners, including multiple federal departments and provincial and territorial governments, to the table will be a key to success and will help to break down silos and other barriers. Examples that came up frequently centred on the important linkages between Indigenous languages and the education system, as well as the child and family services system.

The Office should also work closely within a “whole of government” approach to promote institutional change when it comes to Indigenous languages and to make connections between Indigenous language communities and government.

Networks and information-sharing

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was that the Office should play a key role in gathering and sharing information and language learning resources, and in creating networks to facilitate exchange among experts in Indigenous language revitalization. Participants suggested that the Office collect existing information on Indigenous languages, including best practices, resources, domestic and international research, and facilitate information sharing and language learning through an accessible repository. The Office should also establish mechanisms, including digital platforms, to gather people working in the field in order that they may have regular dialogue about challenges and successes and think creatively about solutions.

Champion, promote and advocate for Indigenous languages

A significant role for the Office will be to raise awareness about the value and importance of Indigenous languages more broadly. Key to this will be promoting a greater understanding among Canadians about the history of colonial policies and practices and the devastating impact they have had on Indigenous languages. As a “champion” of Indigenous languages, the Commissioner in particular should be able to speak about the issues in a way that fully reflects the diversity of views and realities around all Indigenous languages.

Many participants shared their thoughts on the proposed advocacy role for the Office. As an example, the Office could effectively advocate for increased funding in conjunction with experts and organizations working on language revitalization at the community level. The Office could also help to improve the funding process for Indigenous languages, including the development of simpler tools and methodologies for accessing federal funds.

Research

The topic of the Office’s potential role in research regarding Indigenous languages generated discussion around supporting research activities and conducting research. Many participants agreed that the Office

should provide support for Indigenous-led and community-driven research, and others thought that the Office could undertake specific research, like establishing a baseline to measure Indigenous language vitality at the community level, and perhaps some comparative research to identify gaps and help limit duplication of effort. If the Office decides to conduct any research, it should be community-led, take into account available local and regional research, and it should be ethical and respectful of First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP).

Inuit

Representation and structure

In terms of appointments to the Office, participants shared their thoughts about the importance of rotating representation between the distinctions-based groups for the position of Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. While undertaking the important work ahead, the Office should take into account the language needs of all Indigenous people, including Inuit who live in cities.

Participants proposed a streamlined and regionalized structure for the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and suggested that offices be welcoming spaces where visitors can hear Indigenous languages spoken. In Nunavik, participants thought there should be a Language Authority specifically for the region that could build relationships with the Office. Others suggested the creation of Elders' Committees to serve as liaisons between the Office and experts working directly on revitalizing Indigenous languages.

There were some concerns that the Office, as currently conceived, may be too small to tackle the significant tasks ahead and people wondered if it would be able to adequately address and represent Inuit concerns.

Relationships, communication and partnerships

A key undertaking for the Office will be to establish ongoing communication and regular consultation and collaboration with people and communities working to revitalize Indigenous languages, including in remote areas. The Office should also work closely with territorial governments and federal departments, especially Indigenous Services Canada, on education-related matters and facilitating the use of Indigenous languages in all areas of life.

Learn from others and gather and share information

The Office should learn from existing best practices by examining other similar models within Canada and internationally, should share this information broadly and rely on quality data to support its decision-making.

Champion, promote and advocate for Indigenous languages

An important role for the Office will be to promote its mandate while helping to instill a sense of pride in Indigenous languages and culture and highlighting the importance of these languages for all Canadians. The Office can help raise awareness about the realities of Indigenous languages in different parts of the country and demonstrate in a concrete way that they are a priority by promoting them, advocating for them, and encouraging their use at all levels of government – Indigenous, federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal.

Research

Participants thought that any research conducted by the Office should be Indigenous-led, and should involve and benefit communities. An example of a research project that could be useful for communities would be to map out and establish costing for the provision of federal services in Nunavut in Inuktitut. The Office could also assist with efforts underway to establish a common writing system across the Arctic region.

Métis Nation

Representation and structure

With respect to representation, participants offered that, as a starting point, the Office should recognize and reflect the diversity within Indigenous communities and treat distinctions-based groups equitably. Participants stated that over time the position of Commissioner should rotate among Métis Nation, First Nations and Inuit individuals and that one of the Directors should always be a Métis Nation citizen. As it undertakes its work, the Office should also consider the language needs of Indigenous populations that are sometimes overlooked such as persons with disabilities, families involved in the child and family services system, and incarcerated and homeless populations, for example.

Participants proposed that the Office establish a presence in the Métis Nation homeland and that offices be accessible and welcoming to Indigenous people.

Many thought that the task ahead for the Office is quite significant and that expectations are high, and wondered if one Commissioner and three Directors would be sufficient. Participants emphasized the importance of a properly staffed office to handle the many debates and ensure an appropriate range of expertise.

Stay focused on communities

With the perspective that communities are at the centre of Indigenous language revitalization efforts, many participants underscored the importance that the Office have a solid understanding of what is happening on the ground at the community level. Office representatives should visit communities and involve grassroots people in their work, specifically when it comes to research and census information. The Office should prioritize community-level efforts, involve Elders in their work, and support the development of community-based capacity building, language assessments and strategic language plans.

Communication and relationships

Participants recognized that partnerships are a key to success when it comes to revitalizing Indigenous languages and suggested that the Office engage and maintain ongoing communication and relationships with a diverse range of people and groups involved in Indigenous language revitalization. The Office should adopt a “whole-of-government” approach, engaging with all relevant federal government departments and should establishing critical relationships with the provinces and territories.

Networks and information-sharing

According to participants, an important function for the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages will be to collect examples of successful initiatives in Canada and throughout the world, and to share these best practices across distinctions-based groups, possibly through the creation of an accessible resource repository.

Advocacy and support

Participants proposed that the Office advocate for rights related to Indigenous languages, and support training and capacity building initiatives, the development of Indigenous language-related databases, and holistic approaches to monitoring the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

Urban and multi-distinction

Starting Point

Participants suggested the Office incorporate the teachings and spirit contained in Indigenous languages into its work.

Representation, structure and approaches

Participants thought the Office should rise above politics, build relationships with all Indigenous stakeholders and stay focused on achieving measurable results for Indigenous languages. The Office should represent all Indigenous groups and where Indigenous languages live, including in urban settings. Suggestions included structuring the Office along provincial, territorial, regional lines or by Indigenous language families, rather than by distinctions. In particular, the Office should ensure ongoing communication with and accountability to urban Indigenous people and organizations (the Friendship Centre movement, for example). Some participants proposed that the Office establish a forum or a council of Language Keepers, with representatives from different language groups and Elders, to guide its work.

In addition, the Office should hold the Department of Canadian Heritage accountable for its level of engagement with all Indigenous organizations and representatives. Participants proposed that the Office employ a “whole-of-government” approach in carrying out its mandate to help revitalize Indigenous languages.

Partnerships and accountability

Being responsive to Indigenous peoples should be the Office’s first priority. In this context, potential roles include:

- Advocating for Indigenous people.
- Facilitating their connection to government.
- Holding government accountable for how it collaborates and co-develops policy with Indigenous groups, including organizations serving urban Indigenous populations, on how to define and measure results in the area of Indigenous language revitalization as an example.

The Office should also work with federal partners to establish a whole-of-government approach to Indigenous languages.

Awareness raising

One of the important tasks ahead for the Office will be to increase general awareness of the value, heritage and history of Indigenous languages.

Research and other potential supports

The Office should take stock of existing research on Indigenous languages and ensure that any research going forward is Indigenous-led and owned. Possible areas to examine are the structural barriers to

Indigenous languages in urban settings, and how best to build a sustainable institutional infrastructure for Indigenous languages.

Early priorities

First Nations

Primary focus: endangered languages

Participants frequently noted throughout different sessions that the starting point for the Office must be to take urgent action to address Indigenous languages that are in critical danger, with the understanding that all Indigenous languages need support. Many spoke about languages being in crisis, and about fluent speakers, mostly Elders, being lost. Prioritizing immediate action for these languages must take precedence over other initiatives such as further research and the starting point for revitalization efforts should be on fluent speakers rather than institutional capacity.

Set up and structure

The Office should undertake to establish clear roles and responsibilities, including its structure and decision-making ability, and communicate this clearly to the public.

Community focus

Participants anticipated that, in its first few years of operation, the Office would be actively engaged in information gathering, planning and relationship building. While doing so, the Office should ensure that it connects respectfully with communities and remains willing to learn about their histories, languages and protocols by visiting them and participating in culture-based activities and ceremonies as appropriate.

Working together to determine the state of Indigenous languages

There is a sense of urgency involved in undertaking an assessment of the state of Indigenous languages across the country. Many participants suggested that the Office work closely and quickly with Elders, communities and experts at all levels to get an accurate picture of the state of languages and dialects in different regions or conduct a national survey. Regardless of the method used to collect information around language vitality, it will be important to make sure the information is accurate in order to establish a good baseline or benchmarks against which the Office will be able to report regularly afterwards. Accurate data regarding Indigenous languages, including number of languages, dialects, levels of fluency, and other indicators will also be useful for planning purposes.

Working together to plan, build a strategy and measure success

Once the initial baseline data on the state of Indigenous languages is gathered, the Office should work with Indigenous peoples to co-develop plans and priorities for the work ahead.

While some participants believed a national, inclusive strategy and benchmarking for the Office's upcoming work in support of achieving the goals of the *Indigenous Languages Act* would be best, others thought that regional plans, or plans based on languages or language groups, might be better. There were various ideas about the timeframes involved, with some participants talking about planning for immediate action, given the urgent needs of many Indigenous languages, and others proposing medium or long term planning. Some people believed it would be helpful to involve provinces and territories in the planning as well as Elders and Indigenous organizations, communities and experts. Ideas to

incorporate into the planning exercise included infrastructure planning and establishing increased Indigenous language vitality as the overall goal.

After an agreed-upon baseline is established, participants thought that key areas to track in terms of measuring success could include spoken, written, and reading proficiency in Indigenous languages, the establishment and growth of Indigenous language programming, and the availability of Indigenous language services.

Gathering knowledge and facilitating information-sharing

Another key early priority for the Office will be to gather and share information about Indigenous languages, and facilitate exchanges among Indigenous people, communities, organizations and experts working in the field.

Information that the Office should collect includes the current state of Indigenous languages across the country, efforts underway to revitalize languages, successful programs and initiatives, best practices, knowledge, research, resources and networks, plans going forward, the vast amount of existing research on Indigenous languages, and a list of all Indigenous language teachers and instructors. There were suggestions made that Office representatives visit regional organizations, assemblies and communities, to gather this information. The Office should house (virtually and otherwise) all of the information collected, both domestic and international, for easy access by Indigenous language practitioners, who can then use, adapt and build upon existing work.

The Office should also prioritize the creation of networks, possibly by language groups, to foster greater collaboration and connect people working on Indigenous language revitalization. Facilitating meetings for Indigenous communities and language practitioners across Canada, and learning from existing models, like the systems, structures and funding in place for the French and English languages, were also noted as possible options.

Awareness raising, promotion and advocacy

The Office should promote the importance of Indigenous languages and the *Indigenous Languages Act* early on in its mandate. Part of its message could include advocating for stronger recognition of Indigenous languages as the first languages of Canada, and for transformational changes to the mainstream education system to incorporate Indigenous ways of learning and knowing.

Research

Areas that the Office could turn its mind to in terms of research agenda items include supporting participatory community-based research that examine and document best practices, adapting on-the-land teachings to urban settings, innovation in Indigenous language revitalization, and using culturally-based teaching and longitudinal studies. Any research activities supported by or undertaken by the Office should make use of existing research as a starting point, and should be Indigenous-led – for and by Indigenous peoples.

Inuit

Set up and early communication

Many participants expressed a sense of urgency around getting the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages up and running as quickly as possible, as there is a significant amount of work to

do in the short-term. At the same time, participants acknowledged there could be some pandemic-related challenges with this effort.

The mandate and structure for the Office should focus on properly supporting communities and should be widely known and understood.

Community focus, and working together to determine the state of Indigenous languages, plan, build a strategy and measure success

The Office should make an effort to visit Inuit Nunangat to spend time in communities with experts and partners early on to determine the state of Indigenous languages and to map out what the needs are going forward and to develop a work plan. Another priority area will be to establish partnerships with all levels of government, including provinces and territories, to identify impediments to progress on Indigenous languages and develop solutions. Participants from Nunavik in particular pointed to a report produced there on the state of the language and suggested that the Office make use of this report in its planning activities.

Gathering knowledge and facilitating information-sharing

A key function for the Office in its early days will be to take stock of existing information in the area of Indigenous languages, including best practices, research and available funding sources, and share this knowledge with partners. Many participants highlighted that information gathered should include both domestic and international models and research, with a specific eye towards initiatives underway in the North.

Research

The Office should make use of existing research as a starting point for any further research it supports or conducts and for mapping out next steps in its efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages. Any research initiatives should involve working closely with Indigenous groups to gather data and ensure information is Indigenous-owned. An interesting idea that the Office may want to explore further are the links between language fluency and literacy, identity, and decision-making power.

Connectivity issues

Many participants saw a role for the Office in helping to address the connectivity and bandwidth barriers that many communities face, especially in the North, and that impede their Indigenous language revitalization efforts.

Métis Nation

Immediate priority: critically endangered languages

Participants emphasized that Michif, the official National Language of the Métis Nation, is considered Critically Endangered. This means that there is an immediate risk that the language could be lost without significant, urgent intervention. The few remaining fluent speakers are elderly and often in poor health. Michif language experts are working to record essential vocabulary and develop greater proficiency among language learners while these experts and teachers are still with us.

Working together to plan strategically, measure success, and facilitate information-sharing

Many participants spoke about the need to establish a forward-thinking strategic plan as soon as possible in order to measure progress on Indigenous language revitalization. The strategic plan should be distinctions-based and take into account community capacity, and should reflect that funding on its

own will not solve all challenges facing Indigenous languages. The Office should also ensure that it takes into account the needs of overlooked populations going forward: persons with disabilities, families involved in the child and family services system, incarcerated and homeless populations.

Another early priority for the Office will be to gather and share information on best practices in Indigenous languages revitalization efforts, possibly through an accessible resources repository. Métis Nation participants noted the inadequacy of census data as a means of measuring the vitality of the critically endangered Michif language and proposed that an early priority for the Office should be to work with Indigenous peoples to develop more accurate and detailed assessments to identify numbers of fluent speakers and language learners for critically endangered languages.

There was frequent acknowledgment that the task ahead and the expectations on the Office are significant.

Early areas of focus for the Office

With a focus on communities, the Office should support community-level efforts to develop language assessments and language plans, and to build up capacity in the area of Indigenous language revitalization at the community level.

Urban and multi-distinction

Establishing Inclusive Partnerships

The Office should take special care early on to hear and reflect all Indigenous voices in the language revitalization work it carries out, including research and other activities. Establishing key relationships and partnerships, including with Indigenous peoples and organizations in urban areas and provinces, should also be a priority for the Office. These linkages will ensure alignment among Indigenous language initiatives and help troubleshoot issues in education, training, and accreditation, for example.

Working together to determine the state of Indigenous languages

An overarching goal for the Office in its first year should be to work with Indigenous groups and communities to determine the state of vitality of Indigenous languages and inventory available programming, including for Indigenous people living in urban areas, non-status and self-identifying Indigenous people.

Working together to plan, build a strategy and measure success

The Office should work closely with Indigenous groups and communities to develop a national Indigenous languages strategy with clear accountabilities, objectives, and a plan for how to achieve these objectives collaboratively.

Gathering knowledge and facilitating information-sharing

Many participants spoke about the Office's role in finding ways to bring people working on Indigenous language revitalization together on a regular basis. Hand in hand with this, it was proposed that the Office gather and house information on Indigenous languages – languages and dialects, number of speakers, research, best practices, evidence-based models – and facilitate information-sharing among experts and practitioners.

Research

Any research activities undertaken or supported by the Office should be collaborative in nature, and should benefit Indigenous peoples and contribute to evidence-based decision-making.

Qualities and qualifications of appointees

First Nations

Participants frequently mentioned that appointees to the positions of Commissioner and Directors should be:

- Indigenous, with some suggesting the Commissioner should be a First Nation person.
- Fluent in an Indigenous language and in either English or French.
- Strong communicators.
- Strong advocates and representatives, known and respected by the Indigenous language revitalization community.
- In addition to experience, also passionate about the work of revitalizing Indigenous languages.
- Non-partisan.
- Able to navigate the federal bureaucracy.
- Selected in consultation with Nations/communities.

Knowledge

A frequent theme emerged around appointees to the Office having a solid understanding of the sacred nature and meaning of Indigenous languages. Participants specifically spoke about the connection between languages, ceremony, territory and identity and that Indigenous languages contain important knowledge, worldviews, cultural teachings, values and principles. Many also shared the importance of understanding the context and history of Indigenous languages, specifically of the colonial system and policies that led to their current state and that still exist. Appointees to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should have traditional knowledge and cultural awareness, and should appreciate how restoring Indigenous languages goes hand-in-hand with restoring a way of life and healing in communities and decolonization.

Some participants mentioned it would be ideal if appointees were grounded in their own Indigenous cultures and knowledge, and able to approach their work with an Indigenous worldview. Others thought lived experience at the community level and a solid understanding about Indigenous people, their lands, and the current Indigenous language landscape across the country were important. Information about the current landscape includes general knowledge about languages and language groups, their current states of vitality and efforts underway to revitalize them.

Professional experience

Most participants agreed that demonstrable and practical experience reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening and maintaining Indigenous languages should be a must, with many adding that this lived experience will ideally have been acquired at the community level.

Education

There was general agreement that a strong academic background in a related discipline was important, with some participants noting that theoretical knowledge could be acquired in other ways and others cautioning that academic requirements should be flexible, given the inequities in access to higher education often faced by Indigenous people.

Other considerations

Participants mentioned that appointees should be empathetic, conduct themselves with integrity, have the ability to delegate effectively and think creatively about solutions. They should also have a mature and holistic outlook, a good understanding of urban life, and an ability to listen to the many voices of Indigenous communities and languages experts.

In terms of representation, many participants in the British Columbia sessions mentioned the importance of being able to properly represent and understand the unique situation and diversity of Indigenous languages in that province. Given the realities of many remote and isolated communities and the sheer number of First Nations in British Columbia, some participants suggested that the Commissioner, or at least one Director, should be from that province.

Inuit

Participants frequently mentioned that appointees to the positions of Commissioner and Directors should be passionate about revitalizing Indigenous languages across the country.

Knowledge

Successful candidates should have a significant amount of knowledge about Indigenous languages and dialects, their states of vitality, their histories – including the history of Inuktitut - and work underway to revitalize languages. Participants also highlighted the importance of having a solid understanding of Inuit Nunangat, who the experts are in different regions and history of the regions in particular, and life in remote and isolated communities.

Professional experience and education

Participants highlighted the importance of having experience working closely with Indigenous groups in the area of Indigenous languages. Many thought that appointees should have some academic background in Indigenous languages and a solid understanding of the education system, but that “on the ground” experience working on Indigenous language revitalization should outweigh high levels of academic achievement when considering potential candidates.

Other considerations

The selection process could also consider candidates’ ability to collaborate and communicate effectively and transparently, their willingness to travel and their ability to multi-task. Participants mentioned that appointees should be proficient in an Indigenous language, with some suggesting they be bilingual, with fluency in English and Inuktitut. Others thought the Office should be representative of younger Indigenous people.

Métis Nation

Representation

Many participants specified that the Commissioner should always be an Indigenous person and that the Directors should represent the distinctions-based groups. The Métis Nation representative in particular should be from the community, fluent or learning to be fluent in Michif, and have a presence in the homeland. Over time, the position of Commissioner should be held by a wide diversity of Indigenous persons, rotating between Métis Nation individuals, First Nations and Inuit.

Attributes and abilities

Appointees to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous languages should have strong leadership, management and critical thinking abilities and skills, experience with audits, evaluation and report writing, and should know how to navigate government.

They also need to understand the dynamics of small communities and have the skills to build trust and develop effective working relationships at the grassroots level.

Urban and multi-distinction

Participants frequently mentioned that appointees to the positions of Commissioner and Directors should be Indigenous and fluent in an Indigenous language.

Knowledge

Appointees to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should have a grounding in an Indigenous culture, with an understanding of the intrinsic links between Indigenous languages, cultural teachings and identity. Successful candidates should also have a solid understanding about Indigenous languages, including the history of the loss of languages and culture, and knowledge about the recent *Daniels* decision.

Other considerations

Participants thought the selection process should seek out the following desired qualities and skills:

- Strong leadership, management, conflict resolution, communication, and negotiation skills.
- Effective listening.
- Advocacy skills.
- Flexibility.
- Ability to collaborate across distinctions and through the urban/rural divide.
- Passionate about the work of revitalizing Indigenous languages.
- Experience in strategic development.
- Knowledge about how government works.
- Knowledge of Calls to Action and Calls to Justice.
- Fairness.
- Ability to approach the work ahead through a holistic lens of identity, belonging and community.

Finally, participants shared that appointments should be:

- Non-political.
- Reflective of Indigenous languages and where Indigenous people live.
- Representative of Elders, youth and women.

What we heard from the virtual consultation sessions: Indigenous Languages Funding Model

Building blocks for a funding model

First Nations

Prioritize critically endangered languages

Participants agreed that while the funding model should take into account governance capacity building, they often stressed the importance of prioritizing critically endangered Indigenous languages. It will be important to establish an informed starting point to determine the state of languages generally, including dialects. One of the ways to measure the level of endangerment could be to take into account the number or percentage of speakers.

A common theme throughout this portion of the discussions was that all Indigenous languages are important and need support. In light of this, it will be critical to strike the right balance between prioritizing the languages that are most at risk while also supporting all other Indigenous languages. Participants suggested that the model provide a baseline amount for each Indigenous language, with additional funding available for the more endangered languages. Some also proposed that the model should connect to the most effective programs for different language states.

Funding adequacy and sustainability

There were frequent comments about the fact that current funding is nowhere near adequate for the language revitalization work ahead and that it does not even meet existing needs. Participants urged the federal government to meet the commitment in the *Indigenous Languages Act* to provide adequate, sustainable and long-term funding. Many thought that a good measure of how much is required should be to at least reflect the amount of time and resources expended by the government through systems, policies and programs that took the languages away in the first place.

Comparisons with English-language and French-language systems

Many participants drew comparisons with official languages and thought that Indigenous languages should be valued and funded on a comparable basis with these. This emerged mainly in the context of funding and resources made available for education in French and English. Some participants pointed to significant recent investments made for the construction of French-language schools in Yukon, and wanted to see similar investments for Indigenous languages.

Equitable funding

There was an agreed-upon desire for fair and equitable funding across Nations, regions and languages and a discussion on the variety of ways of achieving that, with some participants specifically mentioning the current underfunding of the Quebec region.

Many participants thought funding allocations should take into account population, including urban populations, with an adequate floor for smaller communities and adjustments for remoteness and language vitality factors. Several participants voiced that a per-capita based distribution does not work for smaller communities and thought the funding model should instead reflect community-determined needs and should consider each language or Nation individually. Some noted specifically that funding allocations based on the number of Indigenous languages is not equitable.

Other ways to distribute funding included allocating by Nation or by Treaty, including on and off reserve populations, which would enhance Nation building/rebuilding. Many participants proposed that a baseline amount of predictable and sustainable funding be provided seamlessly to each community or for each Indigenous language as a starting point, with additional funding available for proposal-based, time-limited innovative projects. Some participants suggested that priority in funding should go to Nations that had experiences with residential schools.

Many participants commented on the importance of making sure the funding model takes into account the needs of Indigenous people living both on and off reserve and highlighted the role that Friendship Centres play in serving Indigenous peoples and in revitalizing Indigenous languages in an urban setting. Other participants highlighted that the model should also account for the specific needs of sometimes forgotten populations like incarcerated persons.

Other considerations

Participants favoured a Nation-to-Nation, whole-of-government approach to funding Indigenous languages, in recognition that other areas of the federal government have a role to play in Indigenous language revitalization. Others spoke about the need for transparency in funding and for an approach that is future looking, leaving space for additional investments.

Others noted that up-front funding for Indigenous language efforts should be significant, especially for those communities just starting up their work on languages.

Internet access and connectivity issues were raised, especially because the consultations occurred during the pandemic. Internet access varies greatly between communities and if access to on-line learning is not widely and reliably available, this creates another barrier to program access. During the discussion on funding, many participants emphasized the importance of taking a holistic approach to revitalizing Indigenous languages and making linkages to health, wellness, culture and history.

Inuit

Prioritize critically endangered languages

Participants agreed that the funding model should prioritize critically endangered languages, including dialects.

Funding adequacy and sustainability

There were a number of comments made about the inadequacy of current funding for Indigenous languages, with some people pointing to the insufficiencies in Nunavik in particular. Many participants urged the federal government to commit to sustained and ongoing funding that is adequate to reach the desired results. In terms of quantifying the amount of funding that should be made available, it was suggested that the funding model recognize and seek to address the harm done by past assimilationist policies and practices, and that resources and efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages now reflect efforts made in the past to harm them.

Funding distribution

Participants want to see a fair and equitable distribution of funds. Many spoke about a funding formula developed by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Working Group for Inuit regions: this formula takes into account a per capita component (with needs-based adjustments), reflects equality and language vitality factors, and builds on the notion of Inuktitut being an official language in the regions in question. Others

referred to a report produced in Nunavik on the state of Indigenous languages and what is needed going forward.

Funding arrangements

The overall design of the funding model should be broad enough to accommodate different kinds of funding arrangements, like Territorial Language Accords and other arrangements or agreements contemplated under the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

Métis Nation

Prioritize critically endangered languages

Generally, participants thought that while the funding model should reflect both language vitality and governance capacity, priority should go to critically endangered Indigenous languages.

Funding adequacy and immediacy

Communities and Indigenous language practitioners know what the needs are and know how to move forward on Indigenous language revitalization; what they need now are adequate resources to implement their plans.

Participants stressed that a long-term funding commitment to revitalizing Indigenous languages is required. The funding model should be flexible enough to support a variety of activities such as paying learners to spend time in language apprenticeships and other immersion environments, that are generally excluded in the current funding model.

The funding process should be more responsive to community needs. This includes reducing the complexity of the application and reporting requirements and reducing the often long delays between application, the decision, and the release of funds.

Funding distribution

Participants thought the funding model should reflect a distinctions-based, Nation-to-Nation approach. They also wanted funding distribution to be fair and to provide an equitable allocation for the Métis Nation. Rather than basing the funding model on the number of speakers or number of languages, suggestions on how best to allocate funding included accounting for total population of potential speakers, the urgency of preserving critically endangered languages, and following a regional distribution. Participants also spoke about the importance of ensuring a bottom-up, transparent approach to funding.

Urban and multi-distinction

Prioritize critically endangered languages

Overall, participants agreed that the funding model should prioritize critically endangered Indigenous languages.

Funding adequacy and sustainability

During the discussions on funding, there were multiple comments made about the inadequacy of current funding and the need for the federal government to commit to funding for Indigenous languages over the long term.

Equitable funding distribution

Many participants commented on the need for equitable, fair and accessible funding for Indigenous languages. A frequent theme was that a funding structure should take into account the Indigenous population living off reserve, and should include an allocation specifically for Indigenous organizations that serve this population. Many noted that Indigenous people largely live off reserve, and there were concerns that a funding model structured along a distinctions-based approach would leave this population out.

Other ideas about how best to ensure equitable funding included balancing a population-based approach to funding and organizational capacity, taking into account the track record and reach of organizations, and considering the number of Indigenous languages and the number of First Nations in a given region.

Other considerations

Some participants thought the funding model should include a “start up” component for organizations that are new to the work of Indigenous language revitalization, while others shared that funding should go to where the language needs are. Many spoke about the capacity that Friendship Centres have with respect to taking on the work of Indigenous language revitalization with urban Indigenous populations. Participants also emphasized the importance of a “whole of government” approach to funding during the discussions.

How to fund and what to fund

First Nations

Opportunities for transformational thinking

Many participants discussed the need to think about Indigenous language learning and the current Western education model in a transformational way. This includes thinking innovatively about Indigenous language learning and questioning the outcomes achieved under the mainstream curriculum and teaching methods. There were suggestions to try to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, and cultural teachings into curricula that goes beyond the school setting.

Flexibility

A key message that emerged consistently from the sessions is that funding for Indigenous language revitalization efforts must be flexible. Participants spoke about funding flexibility in many ways, with some talking about the context of lifelong learning and describing the spectrum of activities covering a full range of learners, from very young children to adults. Others talked about the diversity of approaches required to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages, depending on the communities and languages in question. Some participants shared their ideas about how Indigenous languages should permeate all areas of life, and that programs and activities are needed within a whole-of-government approach to promote their use in schools, homes, communities, commercial spaces, media, technology, literature, the arts and in Indigenous governments.

Diversity of approaches

Participants described a very large range of approaches, activities and programming that should receive support:

- Community-based language plans and strategies, and language assessments.

- Continued support for, and enhancement of, existing successful programs and models, like Mentor-Apprentice Programs and immersion programming.
- Capacity development and support at the Nation level, including “start up” funding for consultation, research, and design for those communities playing catch up, and resources to help communities support each other.
- Improved support, acknowledgment and compensation to properly honour and value Elders, Knowledge Keepers and other fluent speakers for their contributions to, and involvement in, Indigenous language learning.
- Supports for language learners, including incentives, living allowances and accreditation and recognition.
- Teacher training and certification, and recruitment of Indigenous language teachers.
- Immersion programs for all ages.
- Making better use of technology, like virtual learning programs, language apps, digital infrastructure and improving connectivity infrastructure.
- Capital costs and infrastructure to normalize Indigenous language learning and to deliver programs, possibly through a separate funding component.
- Specific, time-limited innovative or pilot projects, possibly through a separate funding component.
- Resource and curriculum development.
- Translation programs and interpretation services.
- Cross-border efforts (domestic and international) to revitalize Indigenous languages, in recognition that languages don’t stop at provincial, territorial or even national borders.
- Activities focused on young children and fostering Indigenous languages in the home, exposing children to the sounds as early as possible in life.
- Language camps and language nests.
- Bolstering Indigenous language programming in post-secondary institutions.
- Normalizing the use of Indigenous languages inside and outside communities, including place names, commercial, civic and other spaces, recipe books, media, arts, music, podcasts and radio.
- On the land, on the water, ceremony-based learning and culture-based learning, in recognition that the land and water provide and contain many of the words.
- Development of community-level language policies and institutions, including official language designation at the community level, Indigenous language commissions or other entities such as language houses.
- Adequate support and remuneration for full-time dedicated Indigenous language staff, like language champions at the community level.
- Efforts focused on adult learners, including parents and silent speakers.
- Programs for incarcerated men and women as language is a strong aspect of healing and identity.
- Indigenous language programming in early learning centres, parent/baby programs, cultural centres, and in the education system.
- Documenting, recording and archiving Indigenous languages.
- Research on best practices.

- Indigenous language schools and cultural centres.

Indigenous-led process

Many participants reflected that the funding process should be Indigenous-led and community-driven. Funding should be responsive to community-based needs, and Indigenous-led organizations should be making funding decisions, including decisions around funding allocations and around funding for ally institutions.

Funding process

Participants described the current funding process as proposal-driven, project-based, competitive, onerous, time-consuming, slow and lacking transparency. In contrast, they proposed that on a go forward basis, the funding process should move away from a proposal-based approach and be accessible, simple, streamlined, responsive, timely, and transparent. In particular, many offered comments about striking the right balance between accountability and streamlining application and reporting requirements, especially for those communities with lower governance capacity.

Who should receive funding

A clear message that came out of this discussion was that funding should flow directly to Nations or communities and their community-driven efforts. Many participants thought that priority in funding should go to grassroots efforts, local practitioners and community-level expertise and programming rather than Western institutions, political or other governing bodies. Others shared that while the bulk of funding should go to community-based work, any other funding should flow to Indigenous-led institutions, organizations and programs or Indigenous regional organizations who can help coordinate and provide Indigenous languages resources and expertise.

What the funding should look like

Participants called for long-term, stable, sustained, predictable funding agreements, with some specifying that core funding should be the norm. While the suggested duration varied, there was consensus on the fact that funding should be long-term (minimum of three-to-ten-year flexible agreements) in order to enable proper planning and implementation.

Self-Governing First Nations

Many self-governing Nations stated that consultations on a national funding model are not required for them, as they are ready to negotiate funding arrangements now in the context of their self-government agreements and the direct relationship they have with the federal government. From the perspective of self-governing First Nations, funding mechanisms for Indigenous languages already exist in the form of Financial Transfer Agreements. Furthermore, many self-governing First Nations already have Indigenous language plans; the missing piece is funding to implement them.

Inuit

Flexibility

Participants shared that an Indigenous Languages funding model should be as flexible as possible to support a range of activities and different language needs in various parts of Canada. Indigenous languages should be considered and supported in the context of lifelong learning and fluency both within and outside the education system and efforts should focus on all, including fluent speakers, children and adults, including parents.

Diversity of approaches

Participants described a broad range of approaches, activities and programming that should receive support:

- Teacher training, recruitment and proper remuneration for Inuktitut language teachers.
- Development of a wide array of language resources and materials in Inuktitut for all learner types, including books and audio books for different age groups, recordings, technology, signage and other visual resources, art, magazines, multimedia tools, television captioning.
- Connecting language to culture through on the land and on the water teachings and traditions, like building kayaks and making boots.
- Language nests for all age groups, language camps and Mentor Apprenticeship Programs.
- More immersion programs.
- Community language classes and workshops.
- Focusing on learning in the early years by working in early childcare centres and with parents and others to revitalize languages in the homes.
- Capacity development.
- Broadcasting activities to close gaps in Indigenous-led regional television and radio.
- Supporting, involving and properly compensating Elders and other speakers for their efforts in passing down their Indigenous languages, including support for Elders' Councils and accreditation.
- Collecting and gathering Elders' knowledge, including support for publication of their stories, and other Indigenous language content in various formats like print, audiobooks and podcasts.
- Addressing Internet bandwidth and other communications issues in remote regions.
- Developing and increasing the use of Indigenous languages learning technology such as games, apps and curriculum.
- Focusing on language learning in classrooms and working with the provincial government on curriculum development.
- Establishing a Language Authority in Nunavik, as well as Inuktitut-only schools, colleges and universities.
- Transcribing language recordings.
- Training and accreditation for Inuktitut translators and interpreters.
- Improved supports for students preparing for post-secondary studies.
- Circumpolar efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages.
- Support to hire staff and resources to cover travel costs, especially important in the Arctic.
- Undertaking initial studies to determine what the funding priorities should be.

Many participants talked about the critical issue of addressing taxation and pension issues affecting Elders who are working on language revitalization efforts and addressing international cross-border challenges in recognition of the uniqueness of Inuktitut as a circumpolar language and the need for Inuktitut speakers to strengthen their ties.

Indigenous-led funding process

Indigenous people, communities and regions should determine what the funding needs are.

The funding process should be simpler, streamlined and more accessible than the current process, and should include clear and broad communication about assessment criteria. Many participants stated that current proposal-writing requirements are too onerous and suggested that support be provided to proposal-writers and that the federal government consider accepting spoken word applications.

Participants acknowledged that recently established Indigenous Review Committees have helped improve the funding process, and that an even more regionally based approach would be a good next step. Previous studies conducted in Nunavik regarding Indigenous languages and the needs going forward were referred to multiple times by participants, who proposed that Canada negotiate funding agreements with Nunavik based on known needs.

Who should receive funding

A key message that emerged from these discussions is that funding should flow directly to Indigenous communities, groups and organizations and non-profits working on Indigenous language revitalization rather than to mainstream entities or provincial and territorial governments.

What the funding should look like

There was agreement that funding provided for Indigenous language revitalization should be stable, long-term and sustainable, with some participants proposing five-year agreements at minimum. Specific suggestions about the mechanics of funding included: flowing funds through Fiscal Transfer Arrangements, flowing funds to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, who will then distribute to its regional organizations, and providing block funding to the Nunavik region to ensure regional flexibility and control.

Métis Nation

Flexibility

Participants agreed that the funding model has to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and be sufficiently flexible to encompass a broad variety of community-determined activities needed for Indigenous language revitalization.

Diversity of approaches

Participants described different approaches, activities and programming that should receive support:

- Effective community-based programming that's already underway.
- The development of community language assessments.
- Funding for activities that integrate language and cultural learning and language gatherings.
- Indigenous language banking and archiving.
- Innovation and risk-taking.
- Greater use of existing and new technologies, including mobile apps, online learning, and various media.
- Supporting and involving Elders and fluent speakers.
- Language nests.
- Programming that focuses on different groups, including new adult speakers, parents, families, schools, and daycares.
- More and better teacher training.

- Providing financial support for Elders and language learners participating in intensive immersion programming such as language apprenticeships.
- Resource sharing and coordination of resource creation among institutions.

Indigenous-led process

Participants thought that the Métis Nation should administer funding for Métis language revitalization of Michif and other languages spoken by Métis Nation citizens.

In the spirit of a Nation-to-Nation approach, a new funding model should support a Métis Nation Language Accord and should reflect a long-term commitment.

The funding process should be timely and accessible and should deliver adequate, sustainable, predictable, multi-year funding for Indigenous language revitalization.

Who should receive funding

According to many participants throughout these sessions, funding should flow directly to communities rather than to provincial organizations or institutions.

Urban and multi-distinction

Flexibility

Participants often noted that the funding model should be as flexible as possible to support a variety of initiatives and needs, in recognition of the different populations and learning styles involved in Indigenous languages work, and what it takes for lifelong learning.

Diversity of approaches

Many participants noted that Indigenous languages are inseparable from culture and are part of the foundation of identity for Indigenous people. They offered a large range of the types of approaches, activities and programming that should receive support under the funding model:

- Partnering with schools, school boards, early learning centres, child and family services and other systems to ensure children, including children in care, and incarcerated persons are able to access Indigenous language services.
- Recruiting and credentialing Indigenous language teachers and speakers, and paying them properly.
- Developing Indigenous language resources, including language recordings, dictionaries and online content.
- Supporting Indigenous broadcasting, specifically, Indigenous radio programming.
- Supporting full immersion programs, including in urban centres.
- Land-based learning and language nests.
- Involving Elders and youth in Indigenous language revitalization.
- Infrastructure costs to support Indigenous language “hubs” in urban settings, creating spaces for urban Indigenous people to practice their languages along with their cultures and protocols (songs, drumming, dance, medicine wheel, dreamcatchers, basket making, etc.).
- Working with young people, parents and adult learners in urban settings to learn Indigenous languages, including the use of a trauma-based approach to Indigenous languages with some learners, including residential school survivors.

- Using technology to learn and teach Indigenous languages without forgoing the importance of a one-on-one approach to language learning, in a relationship context.
- Efforts to modernize Indigenous languages.

Participants agreed that the bulk of funding should support on-the-ground efforts to revitalize and preserve Indigenous languages rather than research.

Funding process

The funding process should reflect a move away from proposal-based funding, and should be accessible, simplified and timely. With respect to accountability, participants believed that a requirement for yearly assessments should go hand-in-hand with multi-year funding in order to measure and show results for Indigenous languages initiatives.

Participants recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage learn from other federal departments that have moved to longer-term fiscal arrangements with Indigenous organizations representing off-reserve populations. They also want the Department to broaden its audience when it comes to discussions around funding processes for Indigenous languages.

Who should receive funding

Many participants thought funding should go directly to Indigenous people, communities and organizations, who can then partner with mainstream organizations as required. Some proposed that funding should flow through existing mechanisms and organizations (for example, the National Association of Friendship Centres) for further local distribution.

What the funding should look like

The funding process should result in adequate, sustainable, core funding through multi-year (a minimum of three to five years) agreements.

Defining and measuring success

First Nations

Impact of healthy Indigenous languages on wellness, identity and pride

Indigenous languages connect to identity, capacity and health. As such, it is crucial to remember the health and wellness aspects of language revitalization when thinking about and defining success. Reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining and strengthening languages taken away from First Nations is critical to rebuilding and achieving wellness.

In this context, signs of success will include children, young people, parents, and grandparents speaking their Indigenous languages comfortably, without fear or shame, understanding and valuing their cultures, and being proud of who they are. Healthy Indigenous languages will help heal individuals and the earth, and will have positive ripple effects in communities.

Communities to define, measure and be accountable for success

Success will not always be easy to measure, and it will look different for every group, language and community.

A clear message that came out of this discussion was that objectives should be self-determined and tailored to different realities. Indigenous peoples will define and measure success for themselves in the area of Indigenous language revitalization, and be accountable for results and funding.

Importance of reliable data

Participants talked about the importance of collecting quality data and sharing information on what efforts are currently underway, successful models and challenges; some suggested that co-developed surveys could help track success over time. Many agreed that reliable baseline data is required to measure success in the future.

Quantitative markers of success

One indicator that came up frequently during these discussions was an increase in the number of fluent speakers, particularly younger people, who are actually using the language in every part of their lives - in their homes, in schools and in the broader community. Another was the increase in the fluency levels of learners, including increased understanding, verbal and written proficiency and language retention. Some participants commented that fluency should be prioritized over literacy.

Other markers covered a broad spectrum:

- Ceremonies being held without interpretation.
- Increased exposure and visibility of Indigenous languages in all areas of life, including in public spaces.
- Amount and availability of printed and online materials and resources, including children's literature, in Indigenous languages.
- Standardization of orthography.
- Reliable access to languages, availability of services in Indigenous languages, and greater integration of Indigenous languages in the community, in the education system and in other institutions.
- Hearing Indigenous languages spoken more in the community.
- Sustainability or level of intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages.
- Concrete value and credit given to Indigenous languages in the mainstream education system, for example, high school credits.
- Indigenous peoples having the right to education in their Indigenous languages.
- Every Indigenous language having one home community.
- The development of a language plan or strategy for each language community.
- The establishment of a collaborative policy development process and priorities for Indigenous languages work.
- Funding for Indigenous languages education that is equitable to English or French-language education.
- Improved health and education outcomes and improved health and wellness of silent speakers in particular.
- Cultural revitalization and community building.
- Indigenous language schools.
- Place names identified by their traditional names.

- The identification and establishment of strong Nation-to-Nation peer networks.
- Increased natural, multigenerational transmission of knowledge.
- Endangered languages reach stabilization and extinct languages wake up. a
- More Indigenous language teachers.

Qualitative markers of success

Some of these more difficult-to-measure indicators spoke to the wellness and pride associated with healthy Indigenous languages, like children knowing their histories and being proud to be Indigenous and speak their own languages. Participants also discussed the positive impacts that learning their own languages can have on the individual lives of learners.

The level of community involvement, inclusion and connection in Indigenous languages and cultural revitalization work, and grassroots-level satisfaction with this work, are other ways to look at success.

Participants spoke about an increase in the awareness of, acceptance and recognition of the value of Indigenous languages more broadly in Canada, with some saying the first languages of the land should become official languages. Others talked about the relationship between Indigenous communities and government, specifically about increasing the level of trust, developing policy together, ensuring alignment across jurisdictions, and adopting a real Nation-to-Nation approach to Indigenous languages.

Another qualitative marker would be to see Indigenous languages moving towards better health, as some described as languages “waking up” and becoming more fully alive. A significant transformational change would be understanding, valuing and using Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing, being and doing.

Inuit

Impact of healthy Indigenous languages on wellness, identity and pride

Participants shared that successful Indigenous language revitalization efforts will lead to increased mental health and wellness, and that a signal of this health will be that Indigenous peoples see the value and worth of their languages, and have a sense of pride in them.

Importance of reliable data

Many participants spoke about the importance of developing solid systems, methods and tools to track data and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts made to revitalize Indigenous languages and to measure success.

Quantitative markers of success

Some of the concrete ways to measure success in Indigenous languages revitalization are to an increase in the number of fluent speakers, and an increase in the use of Indigenous languages in homes, in communities, in schools, in commercial spaces and workplaces.

Participants also thought that success could be measured by looking at the status of Indigenous languages. The official recognition or status of all Indigenous languages was part of this discussion, as was federal recognition of Inuktitut specifically as an official language, and the provision of services in Inuktitut in the health care and justice systems, and some commercial spaces, in Nunavut.

Qualitative markers of success

For some participants, a sign of success in Indigenous languages revitalization will be greater integration of culture in language transmission, including cultural schools and total language immersion in land-based activities such as hunting.

Participants also shared ideas about increased awareness by all Canadians of Indigenous cultures and good faith negotiations between Canada and Inuit on Indigenous languages as success indicators.

A final marker of success is that no more Indigenous languages go to sleep.

Métis Nation

Communities to define, measure and be accountable for success

Defining and measuring success cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach and it is up to communities to define and measure success for themselves.

Quantitative markers of success

Participants spoke about an increase in new and fluent Indigenous language speakers and qualified language instructors as a marker of success, as well as seeing and hearing more Michif in print, in the arts, in various media, in homes and in communities and more generally integrated into daily life, and introduction of new learning opportunities for currently underserved segments of the Métis Nation.

Qualitative markers of success

In the context of looking at the links between language, healing, wellness and culture, some ways to measure success include teaching language along with culture, and seeing increased pride in Métis Nation language and identity.

Other ways to recognize success is through an increase in the awareness of, and interest in, Indigenous languages, and more community engagement and involvement in efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages.

Participants also highlighted the importance of recognizing the accomplishments and successes of people and organizations working to revitalize Indigenous languages.

Urban and multi-distinction

Achieving results in the area of Indigenous language revitalization may take some time as significant front-end efforts are often required to hire and train staff, conduct initial research, and secure community interest and buy-in.

Quantitative markers of success

Participants spoke about increased fluency and ability for Indigenous peoples to speak and understand their languages and the re-establishment of a multi-generational approach to Indigenous languages. There was also some discussion about the increased use of Indigenous languages in families and communities, conducting more ceremonies in Indigenous languages, and increasing the use of Indigenous languages in educational structures.

Qualitative markers of success

What emerged from this discussion was an increased connection to Indigenous languages, including to the meaning and teachings they contain, in families and communities and an increased sense of pride in

Indigenous identity and culture. Participants also talked about greater community engagement in cultural and Indigenous language activities.

How to measure success

Participants suggested developing and implementing a peer review process to assess the success of Indigenous languages revitalization initiatives and programs.

Key themes emerging from the online consultation portal

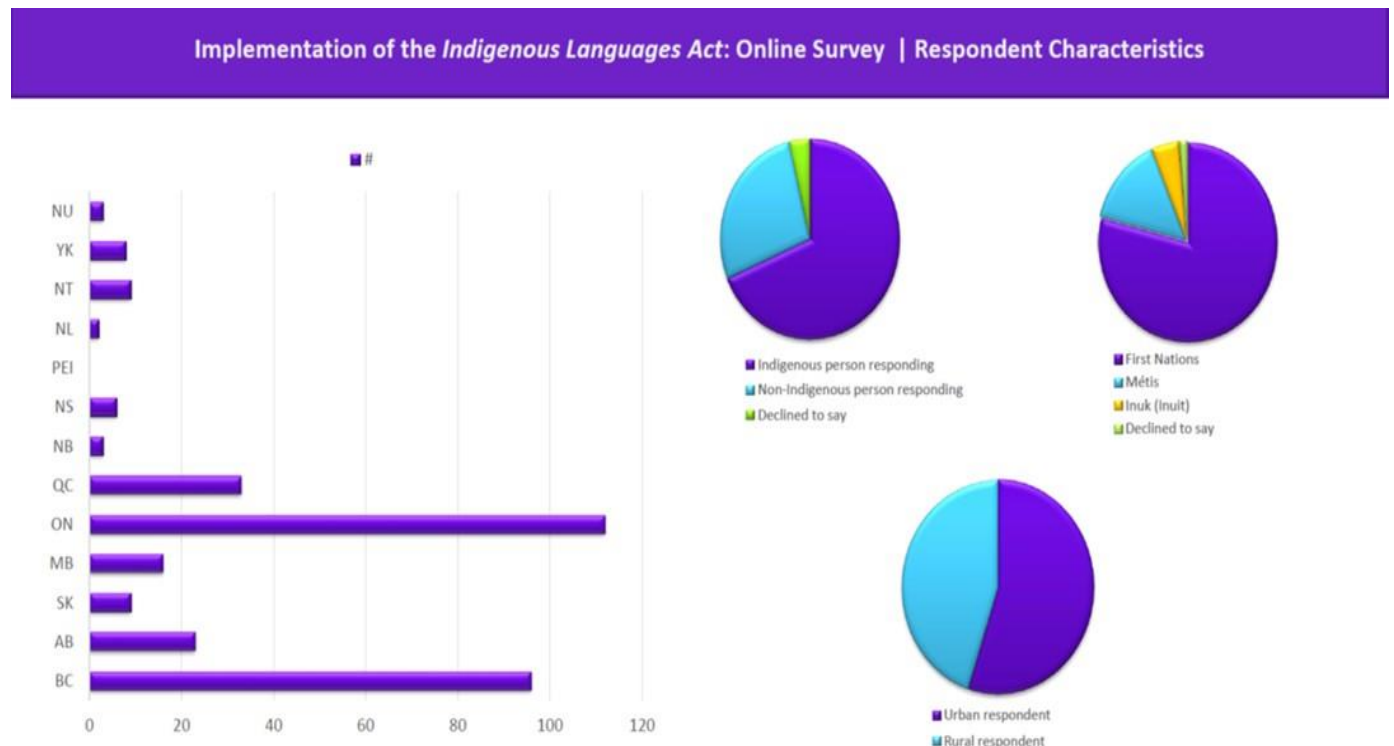
General

The Department of Canadian Heritage developed an online questionnaire to solicit feedback on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the Indigenous Languages Funding Model. Although similar to each other, two versions of the questionnaires made available during this time period, one from March to August 2020, and the second from September 2020 to January 2021. The information in this section combines the feedback obtained from respondents from both versions of the questionnaire.

In total, 321 respondents provided input through the questionnaire from March 2020 to February 2021. The chart below provides a brief description of the self-reported characteristics of the respondents.

Description of the self-reported characteristics of the respondents– Highlights

Implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*: Online survey – Respondent characteristics



Implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act: Online Survey | Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

Highlights

TOP THREE ACTIONS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN TAKE TO ENSURE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' REPRESENTATION



- Include diverse Indigenous Peoples and organizations (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) in the recruitment process
- Nominate diverse Indigenous Peoples
- Let Indigenous communities decide and ensure Indigenous peoples' interests are taken into account



OCIL PRIORITIES

- Connect and engage with all Indigenous communities across Canada
- Influence education sectors: examples include curriculum, language training resources and apps
- Co-Lead research studies of Indigenous languages in Canada
- Identify and stabilize Indigenous languages funding streams
- Promote Indigenous languages
- Advocate for recognition of Indigenous languages as official languages in Canada



RESEARCH AND MONITORING PRIORITIES

- Work with Indigenous communities to collect accurate data (for example, number of current speakers, language vitality and progress made)
- Monitor and research education, training, teaching, and translating resources

REGIONAL PRESENCE



- Vast majority of respondents recommend the Office to work with existing Indigenous organizations, communities and individuals
- Indigenous communities to take the lead on regional presence and activities
- Online presence is key



EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Vast majority of respondents recommend a post-secondary education level. Mostly a masters' degree level
- Field of study should be languages, preferably Indigenous languages, or education



PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Hire Indigenous peoples with education and linguistics experiences, as well as a deep understanding of Indigenous communities, history and culture
- Proficiency in an Indigenous language
- Proficiency in English or French or both

Some respondents expressed reservations with respect to the creation of an Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and of the federal government's involvement in Indigenous languages generally, notably because Indigenous languages belong to Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Languages Funding Model – Highlights

Implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act : Online Survey | Indigenous Languages Funding Highlights

CHALLENGES WITH ONLINE QUESTIONS



- Many questions related to the Funding Model were complex and broad. As a result, responses were often not on point.
- However, all of the information, opinions and recommendations were captured and reflected in these summaries.



ELDERS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WANT TO BE INVOLVED!

- Key takeaway from the feedback received on the funding model.
- Indigenous communities should develop their own funding models and should receive funding directly.
- Indigenous communities and Elders expect to be involved in allocating and prioritizing funding.



VIEWS ON PROPOSED INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FUNDING MODEL FM

- A grading system should be developed and implemented.
- The funding model should be based on population and language vitality.

A DISTINCTIONS-BASED APPROACH: WHAT AND HOW TO FUND



- Multi year funding was emphasized.
- The main three areas of focus for Indigenous Languages funding are: training, teaching and immersion.



A DISTINCTIONS-BASED APPROACH: HOW TO ALLOCATE AND PRIORITIZE FUNDS

- Consider project or initiative costs, remoteness, location, number of speakers, and specific needs.
- Prioritize initiatives that involve key partnerships and educational efforts already in place.
- A small number of respondents recommended: prioritizing resource development, Indigenous languages that are most at risk, and conversely, the most spoken Indigenous languages.



DEFINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

- Short term success measures include: number of speakers teachers and translators for each language, number of language learners or students and grades achieved.
- Long term success measures include: Increase in use of Indigenous languages in Indigenous communities and broader society.
- Indigenous communities and researchers to discuss success measures further with the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages.

Responses on how best to prioritize funding for Indigenous languages showed a clear distinction between prioritizing those languages that are most endangered and prioritizing languages used by larger populations. Indigenous languages generally, notably because Indigenous languages belong to Indigenous peoples. Many comments expressed that success in the area of Indigenous language revitalization would look like languages becoming an integral part of daily life in communities and becoming mainstream with youth in particular.

Key themes emerging from written submissions

Introduction

The Department of Canadian Heritage received nine written submissions as part of the 2020-2021 consultation process. The submissions came from a variety of Indigenous groups and organizations and several individuals. This section provides an overview of the information contained in these written submissions.

Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

Structure and approaches

Many submissions received underscored the importance of a regionalized perspective and structure, informed by communities, for the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. There was some variation in how this could look precisely, from the creation of regional offices or secretariats or sub-committees to ensuring any regional presence reflects local Indigenous forms of governance, integrates existing networks and is as inclusive as possible.

A recurring message is that the Office must respect Indigenous governance structures and adopt a starting point that acknowledges that language, education and culture are the responsibility of Indigenous governments. Another key theme that came out frequently is that the Office should appreciate the uniqueness in each region and should know how to build effective relationships with them.

Some thought that a national Indigenous language organization would be in a better position to provide support to communities than the Office would. The Office should adopt both top-down and bottom-up approaches and a “whole-of-government” lens to Indigenous languages right away.

Communication in Indigenous languages

Some respondents shared their thoughts about the importance of ensuring the Office communicates and shares information and resources in Indigenous languages.

Stay focused on Indigenous languages

The Office should stay focused on revitalizing Indigenous languages rather than other functions such as dispute resolution.

Stay focused on communities

The Office should ensure that the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities remain at the forefront of discussions on Indigenous languages. Some examples of concrete ways that the Office can support Indigenous communities in their language efforts include:

- a. Facilitate collaboration among same-language communities (domestic or international).
- b. Develop and facilitating access to resource materials and experts.
- c. Support communities to manage their own language systems.
- d. Help to build capacity and learning infrastructure.
- e. Assist in community-based aspects of language planning and development, including assessment and sustainable language use.

Any funding made available by the Office for community-based efforts in Indigenous language revitalization should include an urban stream.

Partnerships

In addition to adopting a “whole-of-government” approach, the Office should take care to ensure that Indigenous communities and language experts are consistently involved in its work. As an example, the Office should work closely with Indigenous groups and provinces to support policy alignment in education, to include Indigenous language rights in provincial human rights codes and to increase Indigenous language use in public spaces.

Information-sharing and consulting

One of the important functions that the Office should take on is to establish mechanisms for sharing ideas, initiatives, solutions and best practices from one community to another. The Office should also consult with Indigenous peoples, local Indigenous governments and expert groups regularly to ensure any of its work has the most impact possible, and is of most benefit to Indigenous peoples.

Funding Indigenous languages

Some submissions indicated that the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should not play a role in the distribution of funds. Other Additionally, other respondents saw several oversight functions that the Office could perform, such as ensuring fairness and transparency in the funding process, and that funding is predictable, flexible and provided through facilitative funding arrangements.

Holding the government to account

The theme of holding government to account emerged from many of the written submissions received. Examples of actions the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages could take to ensure accountability include:

- Proactively conduct audits of federal institutions to ensure compliance with the *Indigenous Languages Act* and making recommendations.
- Ensure the federal government act on the language priorities of urban Indigenous communities and involve urban Indigenous decision-making in policy, program planning and implementation.
- Coordinate with provinces to uphold Indigenous language rights in urban communities, including education rights.
- Work with Canada on UNESCO’s Decade of Indigenous Languages and providing feedback on Canada’s progress and policy.

The Government of Canada should seek to ensure the Office has increased authority to create binding recommendations and obligations with respect to the federal government. Others saw the primary roles of the Commissioner as being an ombudsperson, auditing, reporting, and identifying and mediating issues preventing Indigenous persons from fully exercising their language rights.

Research

Many of the research recommendations related to language vitality and how best to measure this. Suggestions included using the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, making use of distinctions-based Census data, and building upon existing tools, methods and indicators.

Other areas for examination included:

- language ecology and sustainability.
- the connections between Indigenous languages and culture and health, education and well-being outcomes.
- the dynamics of Indigenous language transmission, learning and use across generations, families, communities and areas of residence.
- best practices and community-based language development.
- the role that Indigenous language revitalization may play in reconciliation.

In addition to quantitative studies, the Office should use qualitative research techniques such as ethnographic studies, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews with Indigenous peoples and those interested in learning Indigenous languages to determine impact and areas for improvement.

Respondents proposed that the Office establish a working committee composed of Indigenous government representatives from all regions to make decisions based on the research needs expressed by Indigenous people and their representatives. The Office should also respect all principles and protocols related to research that involves Indigenous peoples and partner with post-secondary and research institutions.

In a “whole-of-government” context, research findings can help with the development and assessment of other government programs that relate to Indigenous languages and culture such as Aboriginal Head Start, Urban and Northern Communities and On Reserve.

Plans and priorities

Set up office, establish and communicate mandate

Respondents indicated that the Office should, early on, articulate its role and mandate and raise awareness about it with a broad audience. The Office’s role should not interfere with Indigenous self-determination.

The Office should also establish its structure and assemble a team with the right kind of knowledge and expertise, and make sure Indigenous communities know how to engage and get in touch with officials. Some suggested that all staff of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages should undertake ongoing cultural competency training, including competency on urban Indigenous matters.

Determining language vitality

A number of the submissions received discussed the idea that, as an early priority, the Office should establish a solid understand of the situation of each Indigenous language, including their linguistic characteristics, challenges associated with each, their national vitality status, and the variation in their state of language across different communities. Baseline data for each of the different languages and associated communities (on reserve, settlements, rural and urban areas) will in turn inform benchmarking, planning, policy, assessment and evaluation.

Planning

Many submissions referred to the importance of planning the work ahead. Some wrote about developing a national strategy and sharing it broadly. Specific ideas on this topic included the need for a

plan that is not “one-size-fits-all”, but rather takes into account complexities and local contexts and reflects the needs expressed by Indigenous peoples and their representatives, including the specific needs of each language and community. Planning priorities should go to community-based language development and supporting Indigenous-led and designed solutions to the challenges of Indigenous language revitalization. Once a strategy is in place, the Commissioner should report annually on progress.

There were also suggestions to develop a national communications strategy, with the goal of spreading awareness about the *Indigenous Languages Act* to communities.

One respondent thought a National Indigenous Language organization would be in a better position than the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages to develop a national strategy, with regional action plans.

Establish relationships and networks

One of the first tasks the Office should undertake is to establish relationships with local Indigenous governments, ongoing consultation mechanisms and networking committees to enable people to learn from each other, work collectively and support continued engagement with Indigenous peoples.

Selection of the Commissioner and Directors

Qualities and abilities

Some respondents shared that the Commissioner in particular should be empathetic, have a strong sense of the urgency required for the work of revitalizing Indigenous languages, be flexible in their thinking and equipped with solid management skills. The Commissioner should also speak French, English and an Indigenous language. Directors should preferably have some fluency in an Indigenous language and be passionate and invested in the issues involved.

In terms of other skills and attributes, appointees to the Office should have:

- The ability to use a Canada-wide, unbiased lens on the issue of Indigenous languages.
- Integrity, strong interpersonal skills in communication, building consensus, and facilitating collaborations and partnerships.
- The ability to navigate and negotiate across all levels of government.
- Leadership skills and experience from an Indigenous perspective within an Indigenous-led language organization.
- A personal and professional connection to Indigenous language revitalization.

Knowledge

The submissions indicated that the Commissioner and Directors should have a deep understanding of, and relevant experience working in the revitalization of Indigenous languages. For example, they should know about the history of Indigenous languages and the challenges they face both in Canada and worldwide, and the diversity of languages and communities across Canada, representing distinctive histories, cultures, identities and priorities.

Appointees should understand how the federal government and Indigenous governance structures operate and should be knowledgeable about Indigenous and Western ways of doing things. Specific

knowledge about language planning, consensus-building and best practices related to community-based language development, acquired through community experience, should also be required.

With respect to formal education, some respondents said these could vary, but should tie back to a social science discipline, while others thought that credentials in Indigenous studies, linguistics or conflict resolution would be assets.

Representation

Many submissions included the point that appointees to the positions of Commissioner and Directors should be Indigenous, or at the very least seen by Indigenous communities as experts on the topic of Indigenous Languages and as having verifiable passion and dedication to the issue.

There were different recommendations on how best to structure the representation and roles of the Commissioner and each of the Directors in the Office. One view was to ensure distinctions-based representation at the Director level, with one each representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation people, and all of whom should have expertise in language revitalization. A submission included a suggestion to add an additional Director to ensure fair representativeness of First Nations, given their population and number of languages under a distinctions-based structure.

A different view was to structure the roles of the Directors along the lines of skills rather than distinctions. For example, one Director could be a specialist in community-based language revitalization, another in immersion specifically and the third in language policy issues.

Selection process

Respondents recommended full transparency in the hiring process, including the involvement of urban Indigenous constituents, and that candidates be knowledgeable about the needs and priorities of urban Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Languages Funding Model

Building blocks for a funding model

Funding factors: language vitality and organizational capacity

Many of the submissions received indicated that Indigenous language vitality and organizational capacity should be important considerations in the development of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model. There were different ideas about how best to measure these criteria.

For some, measuring language vitality is the responsibility of Indigenous governments and communities and it should help inform next steps, goals and strategies in terms of community-based Indigenous language objectives.

The range of vitality should cover all languages regardless of their state, including dormant languages, and languages that only have second-language speakers, and should note each language's vitality overall, at a national level, as well as variations in vitality for the same language from one community to another.

Possible evaluative frameworks to assess vitality and develop corresponding measures are Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, the UNESCO Framework of Language Vitality and

Endangerment Factors, the Ethnologue Language Vitality Categories, and the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.

Some submissions reflected the idea that the basis for the development of the funding model should be the demonstrated needs of communities rather than language vitality. For example, in many urban areas, the vitality of Indigenous languages is quite low yet the desire from the community and the need for language revitalization is high.

Many submissions also pointed to the need to consider organizational capacity within communities. Some of the tools that could help assess governance, planning and delivery capacity include the Community Well-Being Index and other census-based and community-based measures. Organizational capacity could include the following elements:

- Reach and community-determined legitimacy of organization.
- Holistic programming approach that situates Indigenous languages in broader community context and integrates language learning into childcare, early learning and youth programming, for example.
- Strong partnerships with all levels of government and solid networks.
- Strong internal capacity, including training and professional development, and research and policy development capacity.
- Governance structures that promote youth participation.
- Verifiable record of achieving outcomes, as determined by the community.

Some respondents thought that priority should go to organizations that are able to demonstrate high capacity.

Other criteria to keep in mind alongside language vitality and organizational capacity are sustainable language use, making use of best practices in Indigenous language revitalization, and creating opportunities for collaboration, especially among same-language communities.

[Funding factors: equitable distribution](#)

Many of the submissions contained ideas about how to ensure equitable funding distribution. Some respondents commented that the funding model has to take into account regional language distribution, including dialects. Others thought that basing a model on the number of speakers only is too simplistic and that more flexibility is required.

All Indigenous peoples, regardless of where they live, have the right to receive support and access learning and maintenance programming for their languages. A number of submissions highlighted this point specifically with respect to urban Indigenous communities, and urban Indigenous youth in particular, with some proposing that an “urban stream”, at least partly based on population, be included in the funding model.

Within in First Nation context in particular, there were suggestions to consider the following when developing models for funding distribution, per language: the number of First Nations, communities and Tribal Councils affiliated with a language, and the location of speakers of the language, including on or off reserve, rural and urban areas.

What to fund and funding types

Flexibility

Funding should be flexible enough to support methods and processes determined by communities to meet their long-term language objectives, in the context of different language situations, different types of intervention and activities, and different language settings.

Range of initiatives

A number of submissions referred to a broad range of Indigenous language revitalization efforts that should receive funding support. Some of these efforts include the following:

- Focusing on the language needs and supporting the contributions of various groups like residential school survivors, Language Keepers, Language Authorities, language advocates, languages planners, pre-school children, Elders, speakers, youth, families, parents, adult learners, and teachers.
- Community-based language development and planning for sustainable language use, and community capacity building.
- Technological tools, innovation and infrastructure, including connectivity and access infrastructure.
- Language nests, programs that help create new fluent speakers, increase the intergenerational transmission of languages and address the shift in home-use patterns from a main to a secondary language, early learning immersion and language programming, before and after school programming, second language immersion.
- Regular evaluation and assessment activities, research initiatives.
- Proven methods like the “*Rapid Word Collection*” methodology.
- Partnering and collaborative work with same-language communities, Language Keepers, Language Authorities, language advocates, Tribal Councils, educational institutions, child care organizations, employment supports, Friendship Centres, and other Indigenous organizations and communities.
- Financial support for language learners.
- Training, resources, language teachers.

There were some comments that, although there is a need for research and language awareness activities, priority in funding should go to applied language revitalization work.

Who should receive funding

There were different ideas in the submissions about who should receive funding. While some respondents indicated that funding should flow primarily to Indigenous governments, others thought that the people doing the work, First Nation, Inuit and Métis Nation language organizations, should receive funding directly. Others shared that funding according to political designations alone will make it difficult for many working on Indigenous language revitalization to obtain the support they need. There were proposals to flow funding to regional bodies via multi-year agreements, who could then administer funds for their respective regions.

What kind of funding

Many submissions advocated for the bulk of the funding to be ongoing core funding, with established baseline amounts, or at the least, multi-year funding, with some project-based funding made available for time-limited initiatives. Canada should co-develop reporting requirements with Indigenous organizations.

Funding process

Decision-making on funding for Indigenous language revitalization should be Indigenous-led, and should take into account whether the objectives are achievable based on plans put forward. The process should also not be too onerous in terms of application and reporting, should better support those applying for funding, and should be timely. There should also be a mechanism to enable urban Indigenous representatives to review funding proposals and ways to encourage the use of Indigenous languages in the process.

Successes

Community-defined short-term and long-term successes

A number of submissions stressed the point that defining and measuring success in Indigenous language revitalization needs to reflect a community-defined vision as goals will vary from one community to another, depending on the language situation.

Short-term goals could include increasing the number of second-language speakers, while long-term goals set in the context of increasing intergenerational transmission of the language, could include increasing the number of first-language speakers.

Communicating success

Many submissions highlighted the importance of documenting and communicating results and proposed a number of different vehicles such as annual reports, websites, podcasts, conferences, journals and newsletters, for this purpose. Respondents saw a role for the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages in this regard and suggested sharing a broad range of perspectives on successes, best practices, achievements and challenges. These views should reflect those of communities, regions, Indigenous people on reserve and in remote, rural and urban areas and settlements, teachers, youth, families, schools, and Indigenous organizations including Friendship Centres. The results should also speak to different languages, different language states, goals and strategies used, and partnerships and collaborations.

Additional comments

Submissions emphasized the connection between Indigenous languages and land, culture, spirituality, well-being, pride and governance, and shared the following overarching ideas about Indigenous languages work:

- Communities must be at the heart of Indigenous-led language revitalization efforts.
- Provinces should be encouraged to support Indigenous language work.
- All Indigenous languages, communities and treaty rights holders, including urban Indigenous communities, are important, deserve support, and must be involved in the implementation and review of the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

In terms of consultations, local is better than regional. Some respondents indicated that more advance notice for consultations is required as is a greater Nation-to-Nation approach in terms of preparing for consultations. Regarding the development of the Indigenous Languages Funding Model specifically, Canada should consider additional conversations with non-government organizations who are experienced in administering funding specifically designed for Indigenous communities. There were strong reservations expressed about the authority of some distinctions-based advocacy organizations to speak or act on behalf of the communities they purport to represent, and Canada was urged to speak to rights holders and Indigenous governments directly as it moves forward with implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act*.

Next steps

Further collaboration

A common message from the consultation sessions was that a collaborative approach is needed to continue the implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act.

The Department of Canadian Heritage intends to continue to work closely with the Joint Implementation Steering Committee and other Indigenous representative organizations to ensure the effective implementation of the Act.

This includes working with Indigenous peoples to develop the Indigenous languages funding model, drafting agreements and accords under the Indigenous Languages Act and supporting the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The process will also include future work to draft regulations under the Act, contribute to parliamentary reviews and other audits, and conduct further consultations on various implementation issues. Finally, ongoing efforts include strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments, representative organizations, provinces, territories and other federal departments to ensure a comprehensive and horizontal approach to the implementation of the Act.

Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages

Consultation participants provided valuable feedback on the main roles and responsibilities of the Office, early priorities and desired qualities and qualifications for appointees to the Office, which helped inform the selection process.

The selection process for the Commissioner and Director positions was led by the Privy Council Office and included a Selection Committee to assess and identify highly qualified applicants. To reflect the unique nature, scope and role of the Office and the Commissioner and Director positions, the Selection Committee included First Nation, Inuit and Métis Nation representatives, thereby ensuring Indigenous interests were taken into account in the selection process and had a direct voice in the recommendation of candidates. The Selection Committee members comprised, and brought to the process, varied and diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

On December 7, 2020, the Government of Canada posted the Notice of Appointment Opportunity on the Governor in Council Appointments website. The Notice of Appointment Opportunity was available in nine Indigenous languages – Inuktitut (North Baffin), Michif Cree, Michif French, Western Ojibway, Plains Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene, Innu and Mik'maq. The Application Review Date was January 25, 2021.

The Government of Canada implemented an extensive outreach strategy for the Commissioner and Director positions, starting with the consultations in the fall, in an effort to promote the positions and encourage qualified individuals to apply. This strategy included an early email distribution, and subsequent reminder email, to more than 1600 recipients and various social media posts, notifying Indigenous organizations and individuals of the posting of the Notice of Appointment Opportunity and encouraging recipients to share amongst their networks. The strategy also included outreach to Indigenous media, including community radio and newspapers. In addition, the AFN, ITK and MNC conducted their own outreach and awareness activities.

The Selection Committee reviewed and assessed applications and applicants in order to identify highly qualified individuals that possess the knowledge, experience, attributes and competencies required to perform the functions and duties of Commissioner and Director of Indigenous Languages with integrity and the highest levels of ethical behaviour and professionalism.

Canadian Heritage intends to provide summaries of the consultation sessions and this “What we Heard” report to the Commissioner and Directors, once they are appointed and take office, to inform, among other things, priorities for the first term of the Office.

The establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages achieves a concrete milestone in the implementation of the Act. The selection process is now completed, and the Government of Canada is working towards supporting the set up of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages including three Directors as quickly as possible.

[Indigenous Languages Funding Model](#)

[Development of an Indigenous Languages Funding Model](#)

During the consultations, Indigenous peoples consistently pointed to the inadequacy of current funding levels and models. In particular, participants stated that proposal-based funding processes and mechanisms do not allow for manageable planning and implementation of programs, they do not address capacity-building needs and they require communities to compete against each other. Indigenous peoples highlighted that funding to support Indigenous languages must be accessible, ongoing, consistent and sustainable. Furthermore, participants called for funding that is flexible enough to address a wide range of circumstances and levels of language vitality, and responsive to the diverse situations and goals of Indigenous peoples. Discussions also emphasized the need for greater Indigenous autonomy, including more Indigenous control over funding decisions and the definition of reporting requirements and success indicators.

In response to this feedback, Canadian Heritage is working jointly with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation on the development of a distinction-based Indigenous Languages Funding Model. The Funding Model will take into account the following elements:

- Identification of the scope and nature of programming to be transformed.
- Complementarity of agreements concluded under sections 8 and 9 of the Act.

- Comprehensiveness and alignment with other existing federal funding.
- Governance mechanisms, delivery methods and capacity requirements.
- Definition of core and ongoing approaches to funding, including associated activities and funding benchmarks for the most effective interventions.
- Determination of key influential factors and methodologies for funding support for Indigenous languages.

Transitional approach to funding

Until the Indigenous Languages Funding Model is final and ready to implement, Canadian Heritage is adopting a transitional approach to ensure that program funds continue to flow to Indigenous communities and organizations to support language revitalization efforts. This transitional approach to funding delivery, developed in partnership with JISC, responds to some of the critical issues identified by Indigenous peoples, and better positions funding to ensure funding stability in the interim until the Funding Model becomes operational.

Two-year funding

One feature of the transitional approach is to make two-year funding available under the Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program's Indigenous Languages Component. The January 2021 Call for proposals included the option of applying either for single-year funding for 2021–22 or two-year funding for 2021–22 to 2022–23.

Indigenous partners have regularly expressed that single-year funding for Indigenous languages runs at cross-purposes with the results they are trying to achieve. Two-year funding enables strategic planning, continuity in activities, and reduces disruptions in language revitalization efforts, which can have a negative impact on results. Two-year funding may also be more conducive to building capacity in the area of Indigenous languages revitalization. The Department of Canadian Heritage is working towards making even longer term funding available within the next few years.

Amended terms and conditions

The second feature of the transitional approach are recent amendments to the Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program Terms and Conditions. These changes help to reduce the administrative burden on funding recipients and support a transition to greater Indigenous control over funding, including the introduction of fixed contribution agreements, an increase in grant authority, and more funding flexibility.

Indigenous review committees

The third feature of the transitional approach is the establishment of distinction-based Indigenous Review Committees in 2020-21 to increase Indigenous control over funding decisions. Indigenous Review Committees, composed of Indigenous language experts from across all regions, review applications received for the Indigenous Languages Component and make funding recommendations to Canadian Heritage.

Timely funding decisions

Work is underway to build upon efficiencies put in place over the past several years with respect to improving timelines for decision-making. For example, plans are underway to launch a Call for proposals in fall 2021 for the 2022-23 funding cycle in order to provide funding decisions as early as possible.

Funding priorities

Funding priorities identified by Indigenous peoples under the 2021–22 Call for proposals reflect feedback obtained during the 2020 consultations and include prioritizing the following:

- Indigenous communities or Indigenous organizations with a long-standing history of funding from Canadian Heritage and that deliver services to Indigenous communities.
- Language-learning activities that strongly support reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining and strengthening Indigenous languages, such as mentor-apprentice programs, immersion programs, language nests and the development of language plans.

Language plans can help communities define their objectives and determine how best to attain their goals with evidence-based strategies. They can also be key to mobilizing stakeholders and strengthening the capacity of Indigenous communities to undertake new language revitalization activities.

Budget 2021 announcement

In Budget 2021, the Government of Canada announced new funding totalling \$275 million over five years in support of the *Indigenous Languages Act*, in particular, to support the efforts of Indigenous peoples in the reclamation, revitalization, and strengthening of Indigenous languages as a foundation for culture, identity and belonging.

Costing analysis

In addition to the funding model, work is also underway to undertake costing analysis on the level of funding required to support adequate, sustainable and long-term funding to support Indigenous languages.

Agreements under the *Indigenous Languages Act*

Canadian Heritage continues to work with Indigenous peoples and other partners towards the conclusion of agreements and arrangements with Indigenous governments or organizations, or of tripartite agreements that also include provincial or territorial governments under sections 8 and 9 of the Act. These agreements will support the provision of Indigenous language programs and services in areas such as education, health and the administration of justice; improve the coordination, efficiency and/or effectiveness of Indigenous languages activities; or generally help advance the purposes of the Act.

Canadian Heritage will work collaboratively with a variety of Indigenous partners to explore opportunities for such agreements or arrangements on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the unique circumstances and needs of Indigenous groups, communities and peoples while developing a framework to support agreement development.

Other *Indigenous Languages Act* implementation activities

Indigenous Languages Symposium: Building on Strengths and Successes

Canadian Heritage worked jointly with the Joint Implementation Steering Committee to design and deliver a five-day Indigenous Languages Symposium from January 25 to January 29, 2021. The Symposium, entitled “Building on Strengths and Successes” brought together approximately 300 practitioners, experts and academics from Canada and from around the world, as well as Indigenous,

federal, provincial and territorial government representatives. Participants shared their knowledge, experience and best practices in the reclamation, revitalization, strengthening and maintenance of Indigenous languages.

The Symposium also provided another opportunity for Canadian Heritage to hear a broad range of perspectives on the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*, including thoughts on the Indigenous Languages Funding Model and the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, complementing the 2020-2021 consultations. Participants at the Symposium also exchanged ideas on preparations surrounding the upcoming International Decade of Indigenous Languages. A final report on the Symposium is being prepared for publication in spring/summer 2021.

[International Decade of Indigenous Languages – United Nations](#)

On December 18, 2019, at the conclusion of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that proclaimed the International Decade of Indigenous Languages from 2022 to 2032. The Decade intends to draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages and to take urgent steps to this end at the national and international levels. These goals align with the purposes of the *Indigenous Languages Act* and Indigenous peoples in Canada are actively engaged in planning for the Decade, along with Government of Canada representatives.

The Decade represents a unique opportunity to demonstrate Canada's strong engagement towards the revitalization of Indigenous languages and, more generally, towards better outcomes for Indigenous peoples. The international governance structure set up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the organization and implementation of the Decade, the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, includes distinction-based Indigenous representatives from Canada as well as federal government officials. Canadian Heritage will work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples, including through JISC, and with federal partners to develop a national action plan for the Decade.

Appendix A: Sample agenda for the consultation sessions

Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act*

Virtual consultations

November 24, 2020

10:00 am to 2:00 pm (Regional Time)

12:00 pm to 4:00 pm (Eastern Standard Time)

- In addition to your participation in this virtual consultation session, you can also provide additional comments to the discussion on the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act*. An [online consultation portal](#) is open, which includes the questions we will be discussing today. You can also provide written submissions if you prefer.
- If you are not familiar with the *Indigenous Languages Act*, please visit the [Indigenous Languages Act web page](#).

Implementing the *Indigenous Languages Act* – virtual consultation sessions agenda

Time	Item	Lead	Description
Introductions			
10:00	Opening Invocation	Chair: Grand Chief Elder	Welcome participants and introduction of Elder Opening welcome by Elder
10:05	Introductions	Chair: Grand Chief	Opening comments Introduction of participants
10:10	Welcoming Remarks	The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister Of Canadian Heritage	Opening comments
10:15	Discussion with the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Chair: Grand Chief	Participants are invited to share key points to the Minister on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, • the Funding Model, • the implementation of the <i>Indigenous Languages Act</i>, • any other key considerations on Indigenous languages
11:00	Close of Opening Session	Chair: Grand Chief	Minister of Canadian Heritage Departs Technical sessions begin after 10 minute break
11:00- 11:10	Break		

Technical discussion 1: Office of the commissioner of indigenous languages – appointment of the commissioner and directors

In preparation for the appointment of a Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and up to three Directors, the discussion is intended to help us understand what the Office of the Commissioner can do to support the needs of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation in reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening and maintaining Indigenous languages.

Time	Item	Lead	Description
11:10	Context Setting	Director General Indigenous Languages, Canadian Heritage	Brief overview of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and the Appointment of the Commissioner and Directors of Indigenous Languages

11:15	Roles and Responsibilities	Participants	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the Office best support Indigenous Peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages? • What kinds of research should the Office undertake or support? 	<p>Background:</p> <p>For information on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, please consult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • page 11 of the Guide for Consultations <p>For information on the Proposed Key Accountabilities for the Commissioner and up to Three Directors, please consult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • page 27 of the Guide for Consultations
11:35	Plans And Priorities	Participants	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think a successful first year for the new Commissioner and Directors would look like? • What should their short term priorities be? What are the first things that the Commissioner should consider with respect to Self-Governing First Nations? 	<p>Background:</p> <p>For information on the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, please consult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • page 11 of the Guide for Consultations

11:55	Selection of A Commissioner And Directors	Participants	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What qualities do you think the Commissioner and Directors should have? • How can the Office best represent the interests of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation? 	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational background? • Professional development? • Degree of management experience? • Proficiency in an Indigenous Language, English, French? • Specific training or education required for the dispute resolution function? <p>Background:</p> <p>For information on the Appointment Process of the Commissioner and up to Three Directors, please consult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • page 31 of the Guide for Consultations
12:15	Break	All	30 minute break.	

Technical discussion 2: Indigenous languages funding model

The discussion is intended to help us understand how an Indigenous Languages Funding Model can best meet the needs of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation in reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening and maintaining Indigenous languages.

Time	Item	Lead	Description, questions and considerations	
12:45	Context Setting	Director General Indigenous Languages, Canadian Heritage	Brief overview of the Indigenous Languages Funding Model.	
12:50	Indigenous Languages Funding Model	Participants	<p>Question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about basing the model on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language Vitality; and 	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your views on what the different points along the “Language Vitality” and

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governance, Planning and Delivery Capacity? 	<p>“Governance, Planning and Delivery Capacity” scales look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What funding mechanisms should be in place at various points along the scales? • Timeframes, funding need, differing circumstances, etc. <p>Background: For information on the funding model, please consult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 18 of the Guide on Consultations; and • Page 34 of the Guide on Consultations
1:05	Indigenous Languages Funding Model	Participants	<p>Question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should be funded and how should it be funded? 	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of recipients (e.g. Indigenous communities, Indigenous organizations, other Indigenous bodies) and the different roles they play and supports they need. • How are Self-Governing First Nations defining

				<p>their own funding needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that determine when they should be funded on a time-limited basis (single or multi-year) or on an ongoing basis. • What funding needs are not currently being met? For example, are there certain kinds of programming which are needed but not currently funded?
1:20	Indigenous Languages Funding Model	Participants	<p>Question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should funding be allocated and prioritized? 	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors should be considered – e.g. regional distribution; per capita; language vitality; other factors? • What considerations should go into projecting costs and developing formulas for calculating funding amounts? • Are funding levels inadequate for some types of programming that are currently funded?

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you identify as priorities for funding?
1:35	Indigenous Languages Funding Model	Participants	Question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way to define and measure success? 	Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you define success in the short and long term? • How should results be assessed, communicated and shared?
1:50	Summary of Next Steps	Director General Indigenous Languages, Canadian Heritage	Closing remarks	

1:55	Closing Remarks	Chair: Grand Chief Elder	Final remarks Closing prayer
2:00	Technical Session Ends		