

Indigenous Languages in Canada

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Young/ Bignell Family

2016 Canada Census

- More than **70** Indigenous languages
- **12 Language Families:** Algonquian, Inuit, Athabaskan, Siouan, Salish, Tsimshian, Wakashan, Iroquoian, Michif, Tlingit, Kutenai and Haida
- **260,550** Indigenous people reported being able carry a conversation

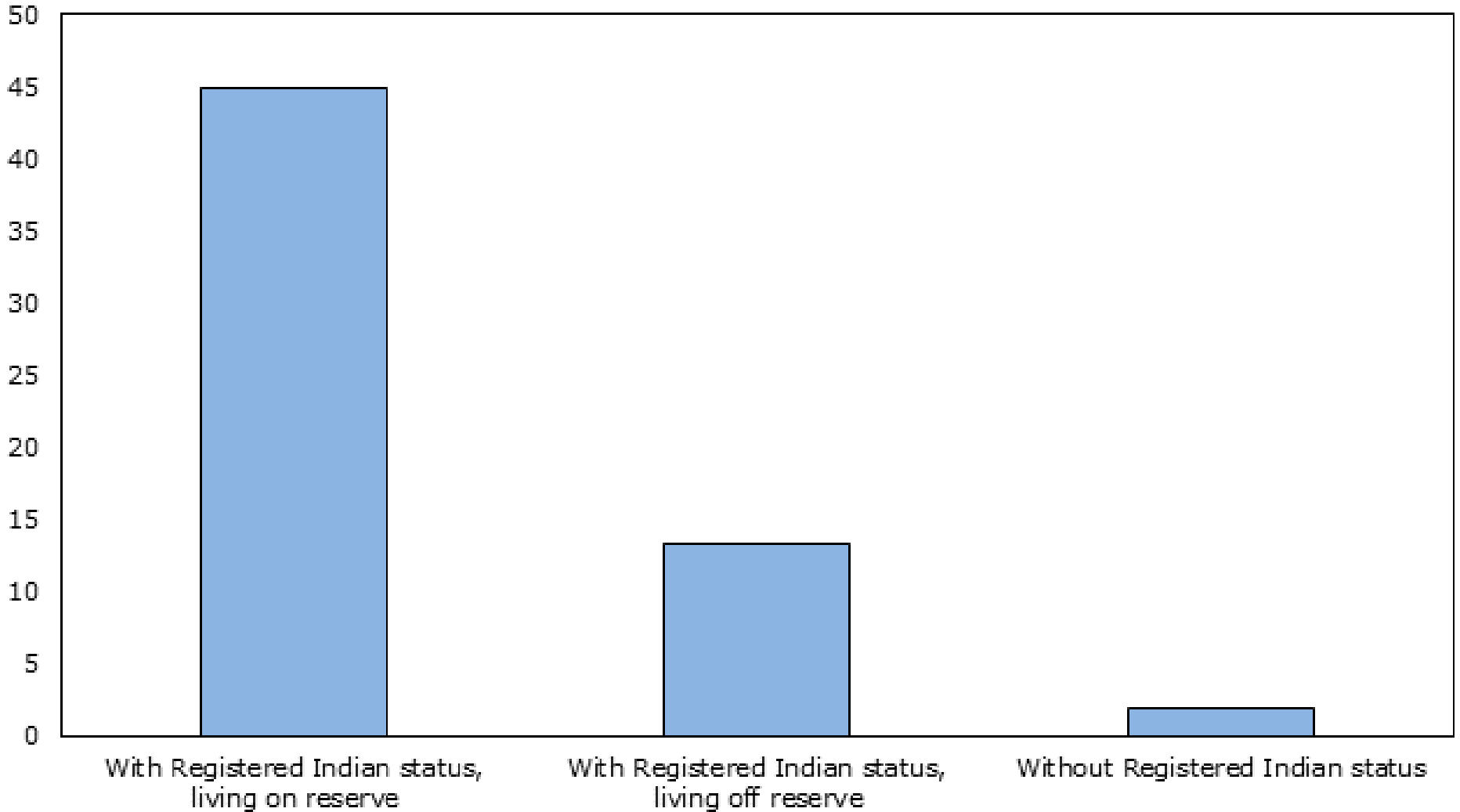


90 different Indigenous languages are currently spoken in hundreds of Indigenous communities across Canada

Source: Map based on revised NRI 2015 UNESCO linguistic Classification of 93 languages in Canada, including 3 Extinct, Norris Research Inc. (NRI)
<http://www.norrisresearch.com/maps.htm>

Chart 2
Percentage of First Nations population who can speak an Aboriginal language, by selected characteristics, Canada, 2016

percent



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

2016 Census Canada “Mother Tongue” Speakers

First Nations (164, 060)

65+ yrs = 33.3 %

0-14 yrs = 10.7%

Inuit (37,260)

65+ yrs = 60.6%

0-14 yrs = 55.8%

Metis (6,700)

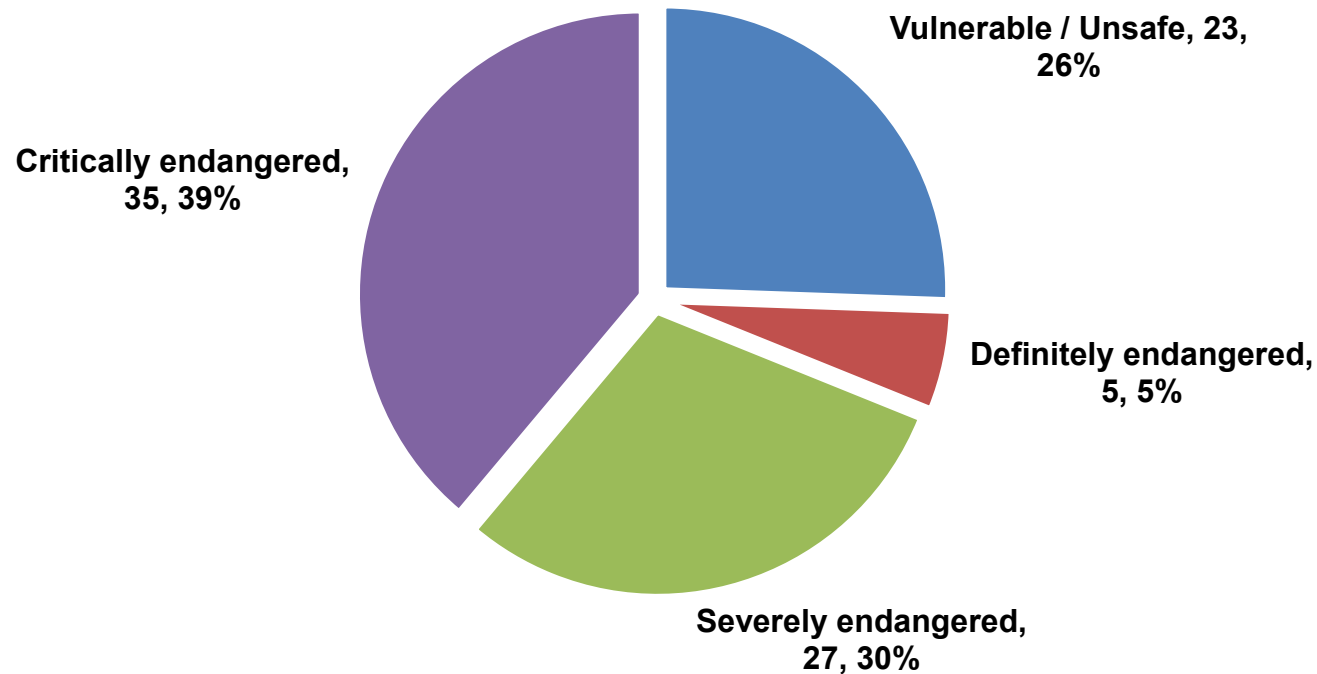
65+ yrs = 3.4%

0-14 yrs = 0.5%

Three out of four of the 90 different Indigenous languages spoken in Canada are endangered...

Most Aboriginal children are no longer learning or speaking the traditional languages of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents as their mother tongues

Number and Percentage Distribution of the 90 Indigenous Languages Spoken in Canada by Their Level of Endangerment



Linguicide



1. Residential School System
2. Current: “Imposing Dominant Languages” as “Medium of Instruction”
(Bear-Nicholas, Skutnaab-Kangas & Dunbar)

Result:

- Destroying Indigenous Languages
- Separates Children from Proficient Speakers
- Indigenous children no longer see their identity in what they learn

Indigenous Languages Legislation

- Senate: Bill S-212
- Heritage Canada: Indigenous Languages Act

Bill S- 212

An Act for the advancement of the Aboriginal languages of Canada and to recognize and respect Aboriginal language rights

First introduced by Senator Joyal in May 2009 Reintroduced Dec. 2015

... Recognizes the right of the aboriginal peoples of Canada **to use, preserve, revitalize and promote** their languages and expresses the Government of Canada's commitment to preserve, revitalize and promote aboriginal languages in Canada by protecting them and using them where appropriate.

It requires the designated **Minister to ... encourage and support** provincial and territorial governments and municipal, local and **educational authorities to support** aboriginal languages; to increase opportunities for aboriginal persons to learn ... and **to foster a positive attitude** among all Canadians toward aboriginal languages.

Indigenous Languages Act

November 2015 – Trudeau directed Canadian Heritage and Indigenous & Northern Affairs to support and provide funding for Indigenous Languages

December 2015 – TRC Final Report and Calls to Action

- a) Aboriginal Language Rights “pre-existing, distinctive and continuous”
- b) Canada played a central role in the “destruction” of Indigenous languages

Indigenous Languages Legislation

June 2017 - Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that they would be co-drafting language legislation with:

- Assembly of First Nations (AFN)
- Metis National Council (MNC)
- Inuit Tapariit Kanatami (ITK)

What the Legislation Should Say:

Parents the right to educate their children in the language of their ancestors through language courses or immersion programs made available in both on reserve and off reserve schools at the expense of the federal government

Canada's Constitution Act, 1982

Part 1 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms – Minority Language Education Rights

23 (1) Citizens of Canada

(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French

(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French....

have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

Aboriginal Languages Legislation

Formally acknowledge that section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes and affirms the aboriginal right of Canada's first peoples to transmit their languages from generation to generation

Off Reserve – Provincial Agreements

Enter into legal and funding arrangements with provincial and territorial governments to ensure that such education is made available to parents whose children are not residing on reserve

National Institute of Aboriginal Language Education

- To collect and disseminate information about the teaching of aboriginal languages, whether in Canada or elsewhere
- To conduct and publish the results of research into the teaching of aboriginal languages

National Institute of Aboriginal Language Education

- To assist federal, provincial and territorial governments required to provide education in aboriginal languages
- To train and certify teachers and teachers' aids to provide instruction in aboriginal languages.

TOWARDS A NEW BEGINNING



A FOUNDATIONAL REPORT
FOR A STRATEGY TO REVITALIZE
FIRST NATION, INUIT AND MÉTIS
LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Indigenous Languages Matter

- Our languages are more than just tools of communication. They also describe who we are as peoples and tell us of our relationship to each other and to the land.
- Our languages were born here and are profoundly different from languages spoken and developed elsewhere in the world.
- The deepest structures of our languages reflect our distinctive philosophies as uniquely North American peoples