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First Nations Information Governance Centre
Le Centre de gouvernance de l'information des Premières Nations

FNREEES: DID YOU KNOW?



The FNREEES Did You Know? feature data from the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES). Providing an unprecedented perspective on life in First Nations communities, the FNREEES helps fill data gaps in the areas of early childhood education and development, youth employment and education, and adult employment and labour force conditions.

This series brings FNREEES national findings to bear on pressing policy questions in areas the survey addresses. Its purpose is to help ensure that the collective views and experiences of First Nations people, as expressed in the FNREEES, point the way to positive change.

REVITALIZING FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES: The State of First Nations Language Use

In its final report the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) called for the preservation, revitalization and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures. TRC recommendation #14 calls on the federal government to fund this work, which is best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.¹ Revitalizing Aboriginal languages will help address the legacy of residential schools and promote reconciliation.

Preliminary national level data from the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES) suggest that First Nations languages are still in use. This is itself an achievement, in light of past attempts to erase them. Yet the language knowledge and use of First Nations adults, youth and children also shows intergenerational decline. These data suggest that communities will require sustained effort to preserve, revitalize and strengthen First Nations languages for the next generation.

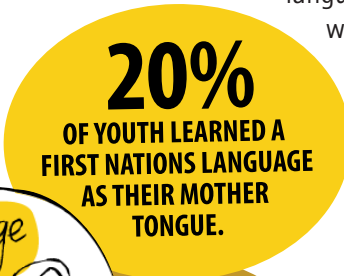
Adult Language Use

According to preliminary national data from the FNREEES, more than 2 in 5 (43%) First Nations adults reported that a First Nations language was their mother tongue (the first

language they learned). When asked

what language they spoke most often in

daily life, more than 1 in 5 (21%) First Nations adults said they most often used a First Nations language.



Language Use of First Nations Youth and Children

Compared to First Nations adults, only half as many First Nations youth reported knowing or using a First Nations language. This marks a steep decline in language use and knowledge. When asked which language they learned at home growing up, 1 in 5 (20%) First Nations youth stated a First Nations language. When asked which language they most often used in daily life, 1 in 10 (11%) said that it was most often a First Nations language.

¹Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Call #14. Available at http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf



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THE STATE OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE USE

Like youth, First Nations children also learned a First Nations language as their mother tongue at half the rate of First Nations adults. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) First Nations parents said that their child's mother tongue is a First Nations language.

Sources and Barriers

Where are children and youth learning their languages? FNREEES data indicate that home and community remain the primary sources of First Nations language learning and use. More than one-third (35%) of First Nations children are exposed to a First Nations language at home all or most of the time. More than one-quarter (28%) of First Nations children are exposed to a First Nations language in their community all or most of the time.

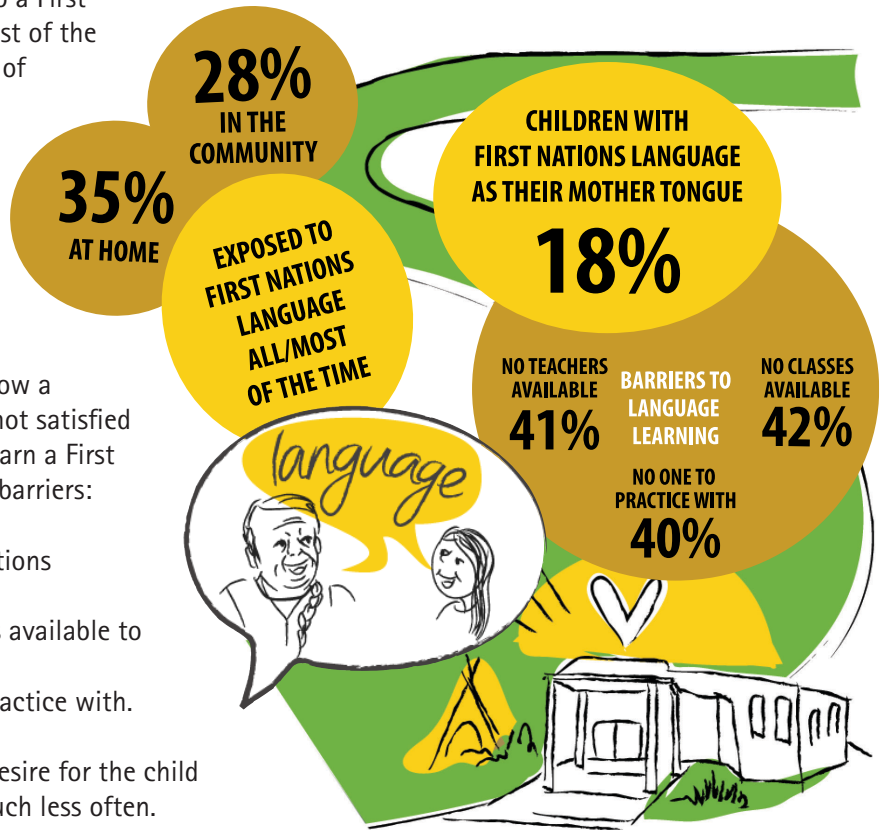
By contrast, only 5% of First Nations youth report using a First Nations language most often at school. First Nations parents/guardians whose children do not know a First Nations language, or who are not satisfied with their child's opportunities to learn a First Nations language, cited three main barriers:

- 42% said there were no First Nations language classes available;
- 41% said there were no teachers available to teach a language; and
- 40% said there was no one to practice with.

Barriers cited suggesting a lack of desire for the child to learn the language were cited much less often. This finding suggests that parents would welcome the opportunity for children to learn a First Nations language if instruction were available.

Bringing Languages into School

The FNREEES data indicate that lack of language instruction is the primary barrier to First Nations children and youth in learning their languages. Improving classroom opportunities could build the contributions families and communities are already making to revitalizing First Nations languages for use by future generations.



For more information about the FNREEES & FNIGC, please visit FNIGC.ca