

Indigenous Languages in Canada: KWL Chart and Infographic Analysis

When Chanie Wenjack was sent to residential school, he was forced to speak English - a language he didn't understand. Across Canada, thousands of other Indigenous children were forced to speak European languages in an attempt to make them forget their Indigenous languages.

While the residential school system did interrupt the transmission of Indigenous languages between generations, it failed to erase them completely. Indigenous people continued to speak their languages. Today, Indigenous languages continue to be strengthened through individual efforts and language revitalization projects.

In this activity, you will ask some questions and learn interesting facts about Indigenous languages in Canada.

Instructions:

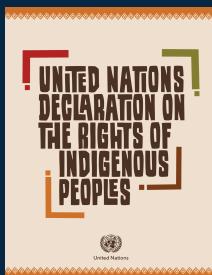
- 1) Before reading any of the infographics in this handout, look at the **KWL Chart** on the next page.
- 2) In the “Know” section of your KWL Chart, write down everything that you already know (or think you might know) about Indigenous languages.
- 3) In the “Wonder” section of the chart, write down questions that you want to explore or new things you would still like to learn about Indigenous languages.
- 4) Read over the **infographic pages** in this handout as a class, in a group, or on your own.
- 5) Fill in the “Learn” section with the new facts that you have discovered during this activity.
- 6) Tell your classmates, friends, and family what you learned to spread awareness of Indigenous languages and share the importance of Indigenous language revitalization!

Indigenous Languages in Canada**K**now**W**onder**L**earn

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES in CANADA

Indigenous Languages:

- Contain words that describe very specific natural phenomena, places, or events. This means that they can contain important ecological knowledge
- Were traditionally passed down orally, by hearing and speaking
- Are based around verbs and actions, rather than nouns
- Are extremely diverse!
 - 4000+ in the world
 - 60+ in Canada
 - And all of these can be broken down into smaller groups called “dialects”
- Are protected internationally by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007)



Did You KNOW?

In some Indigenous languages there are no gendered pronouns: no “he” or “she”, only “you”, “me”, and “them” or “that person”

Indigenous words for family members often include additional information about them, like whether they are maternal or paternal relations, or older or younger

Members of Parliament may address the House of Commons in an Indigenous language as of 2018

Some Indigenous languages contain sounds that may be imperceptible (or hard to detect) by non-speakers

Oral Traditions have been admissible as evidence in court since 1997

12 Language Families

■ Algonquian - 153,620 Speakers	■ Tsimshian - 1,890 Speakers
■ Inuit - 40,800 Speakers	■ Wakashan - 935 Speakers
■ Athabaskan - 19,715 Speakers	■ Michif - 640 Speakers
■ Siouan - 4,595 Speakers	■ Haida - 280 Speakers
■ Salish - 3,670 Speakers	■ Tlingit - 165 Speakers
■ Iroquoian - 2,065 Speakers	■ Kutenai - 145 Speakers

Values based on 2016 Census data

Most Commonly Spoken Indigenous Languages

1. Cree Languages
2. Inuktitut
3. Ojibway
4. Dene
5. Innu/Montagnais
6. Oji-Cree
7. Mi'kmaq
8. Atikamekw
9. Blackfoot
10. Stoney

According to National Household Survey 2011

Facts & Figures

260,550

Indigenous Language
Speakers in Canada

 96,575 Cree speakers

 Fewer than 20 Haida speakers

52,000

Number of speakers who learned
their Indigenous language
as a second language

63% of Inuit

speak their Indigenous
language, with regional
differences:

- 20% in Inuvialuit
Settlement Region
(NT and YT)
- 99% in Nunavik (QC)

1 in 6 Aboriginal people

are fluent speakers of
an Indigenous language

Indigenous Language Safety in Canada

35 languages are “critically endangered”

27 languages are “severely endangered”

5 languages are “definitely endangered”

23 languages are “vulnerable/unsafe”

No languages are considered “safe”

2.5% of Métis
are fluent in Michif

The number of Indigenous language
speakers has increased by **3.1%** in
the past decade

1 in 3 Elders and 1 in 10 children
speak their Indigenous language
BUT child speakers outnumber
Elders by double

11 Number of official languages
in the Northwest Territories

 **9** of which are
Indigenous languages

Sources

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