**First Nations Public Libraries in Ontario**

* First Nations communities require public libraries just as much as any other community.
* Public libraries often serve as an **accessible gathering place** and **information sharing resource** for many First Nations communities, where they exist.
* There is broad recognition and support for the concept of continuing education at the community level as well as **increased accessibility to all educational outlets**, including public libraries.
* There are **133 First Nations communities** in Ontario. Of these, only **46 have public libraries**.

**Funding Ontario’s First Nations Public Libraries**

* The traditional source of tax revenue for non-native public libraries does not exist for public libraries in First Nations communities.
* Provincial funding for these libraries is administered by the **Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport** through the Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) and the First Nation Salary Supplement Grant (FNSS). These funds provide on average **$15,000/year** to each of these existing libraries.
* Federal funding for these libraries is taken from funds that are **allocated for on-reserve education**. Funding levels for on-reserve education are **more than 30% lower than off-reserve**, leaving little left to establish new libraries.
* **Band Councils** are therefore tasked with **providing essential support** such as rent, hydro, internet, fax and telephone service.

**Challenges Faced by Ontario’s First Nations Public Libraries**

First Nations public libraries are either governed by their Band primarily in the culture, recreation, or education departments.\* The location of the library in the school system can make it difficult to establish a public library identity in the community.

* A significant number of First Nations people **do not own or have access to a computer and the internet**. Many **cannot afford to buy books** for themselves and their families.
* Ontario’s First Nations students under the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada system face an **80% failure rate**.
  + Students who participated in provincial standardized testing in 2013-2014 showed an **average literacy score of 21% for boys and 32% for girls**.
  + In terms of overall literacy, these numbers place Ontario First Nations students **behind 205 other countries** -- at levels slightly higher than Sub-Saharan Africa.

\*Six Nations Public Library is a FNPL but is governed by a separate Library Board according to the requirement of Boards under the Public Library Act.