



Rationale for Supporting Federal Indigenous Languages Legislation

First Peoples' Cultural Council supports the proposed federal Indigenous language legislation for several reasons. Most importantly, the legislation will mandate the creation of an entity (such as a foundation, council or commission) which will be responsible for the provision of permanent stable funding for Indigenous language initiatives. Legislation will protect the mechanism by which funding is delivered so that there will always be financial support from the federal government for revitalization and maintenance of our languages. Without legislation, there is no way to guarantee government funding for Indigenous languages; funding that is put in place by one government can just as easily be removed by the next. The legislation will make it more difficult for unsupportive governments to remove funding for languages.

Second, in jurisdictions where an Indigenous or minority language has been given official status or similar recognition, it has resulted in an increase in the status of the language. This involves greater awareness of and general knowledge about the language and increased respect and support for the language (among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people). Some examples include New Zealand, Hawaii, Wales and South Africa, to name a few.

Third, at our engagement sessions held around the province in spring 2017, we heard that some people feel that their own nations should be making their own languages official, rather than leaving it to the government to do. We agree that every nation should declare official status for their own language(s) on their own territories. First Peoples' Cultural Council has sample templates that your community may want to use for this purpose. Find these online:

Template 10: Official Language Policy and

Template 11: Resolution of Support for Language

<http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Resources/>

It is important for nations to make their own language policies but this does not mean that federal legislation cannot be useful too.

Fourth, Indigenous language legislation will not negate any Aboriginal and treaty rights protected in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, so that should not be a concern.

Finally, the proposed legislation is not a new initiative on the part of the federal government but rather a response to multiple requests from First Nations for this very thing. Over the last decade, First Nations leaders across Canada have raised the need for language legislation through the Task Force report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and through resolutions from various leadership organizations. The current government is now responding to these requests. In the past, efforts to have language legislation came to a halt due to a change in government. The next federal election is in 2019. We do not want to miss this window of opportunity to support legislation which could improve circumstances for our languages. **Our languages are living languages** but we must do all we can to ensure they stay that way.

For more information, please contact us:

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