



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 13, 2019

**The First Peoples' Cultural Council Makes Record Investments in B.C.'s First Nations Languages**

*First Nations communities across B.C. receive critical support to build fluency and document languages*

BRENTWOOD BAY, B.C. – Thanks to new funding, the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) announced today that it has significantly increased programs, outreach and funding to Indigenous communities throughout the province to document and build fluency in B.C.'s First Nations languages.

Increases in FPCC's language program in the 2018/19 program year have been possible due to a recent significant investment of \$50 million by the provincial government to help preserve and revitalize First Nations languages in B.C. FPCC has increased language program grants by 178 per cent, from 60 language grants delivered in 2017/18 to 167 grants this year. The number of people who have received training to support their efforts in language revitalization planning, immersion programs and documentation has also increased substantially by 280 per cent, from 125 in 2017/18 to 475 in 2018/19. An additional 47 language grants are being delivered by FPCC through the federal Aboriginal Languages Initiative program in 2018/19.

"I'm very proud that the First Peoples' Cultural Council is greatly expanding critically needed support for B.C.'s First Nations languages," said Tracey Herbert, CEO of First Peoples' Cultural Council. "This year, thanks to unprecedented support from the B.C. government, we've been able to create exciting opportunities, mobilize capacity to create new and fluent speakers and reach Indigenous people and communities who have experienced challenges accessing funding in the past. Our goal is to ensure that the original languages of this land flourish again and today I'm very hopeful for their future."

The provincial funding has led to multi-year language grants of a substantially higher value, new grants and an expanded community outreach program to support First Nations across B.C. The new Language Gathering and Sharing grant program is funding language-based gatherings to encourage collaboration between communities. FPCC has also hired two new Language Revitalization Coaches, who have been travelling to First Nations communities throughout the province to support all aspects of project planning, grant writing and comprehensive language plan development. FPCC's intention is to reach all First Nations communities in B.C. to support their language revitalization work.

For Edōsdi (Dr. Judy Thompson), Director of the Tahltan Central Government's Language and Culture Program, the new FPCC funding means her community now receives more grants of higher value. In addition to their existing FPCC-funded language programs, they now have funding for programs through B.C. Language Initiative and to document their languages using FirstVoices, a digital platform developed by FPCC, which provides online tools for Tahltan speakers wherever they live. This is vital because, "the majority of Tahltan speakers are elderly, so there is a real urgency for adequate resources to build up our languages and maintain them for future generations," said Edōsdi.

"With multi-year funding, bigger grants and fewer limits on the number of grants that can be received, B.C.'s First Nations communities are no longer competing for much-needed resources. Now, we have more security and stability to make real progress towards the revitalization and reclamation of our languages – and that's very exciting."

---

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C.'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, ARTS AND CULTURES**

1A Boat Ramp Road  
Brentwood Bay, B.C.  
Canada V8M 1N9

Phone (250) 652-5952  
Fax (250) 652-5953  
Email [info@fpcc.ca](mailto:info@fpcc.ca)

[www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)  
[www.firstvoices.com](http://www.firstvoices.com)



Immersion programs, such as Mentor-Apprentice, which pairs a fluent speaker with a learner, are being significantly expanded as many fluent speakers age and passing on their knowledge becomes increasingly critical. For Tracey Kim Bonneau of the Syilx Nation in Penticton, the increased funding allowed her to join FPCC's Mentor-Apprentice Program in 2018 with her fluent Nsyilxcən-speaking uncle, Christopher Eneas. When her community lost some of its elderly fluent speakers, Bonneau experienced a deep sadness that she was not fluent in her Nsyilxcən language and felt an urgency to fill this part of her life with the goal of becoming a fluent language speaker and teacher.

The impact of learning Nsyilxcən and speaking more of it in her daily life has been far reaching for Bonneau. "I am now a holder of the language as a speaker," she said. "Language is at the core of who we are, our history and our laws. As Indigenous people, it sets the parameters for how we live and take care of ourselves." Bonneau feels that FPCC's Mentor-Apprentice Program is the "most forward-thinking program in Canada because it understands the needs of our community."

Only about three percent of First Nations people in B.C. are fluent speakers of their language. Language is fundamental to identity, so there is much work that needs to be done to revitalize Indigenous languages," said Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. "The United Nations has declared 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages and I am proud of how our government's landmark funding has led to such significant new opportunities for people in First Nations communities to learn their languages. Expanded programs, grants and new tools and resources mean First Nations can reclaim critical connections to their language and culture."

In 2019/20, FPCC will continue to increase the number of language funding grants available to communities and introduce new programs to support strategic language planning, digitization of language resources, and community development and collaboration initiatives. FPCC will also continue to provide training to individuals and groups in communities and increase valuable outreach and support by hiring two additional Language Revitalization Coaches, for a total of four. A new program – Silent Speakers – will be introduced to support individuals who know, but do not speak, their First Nations language due to barriers.

Investing in Indigenous language revitalization directly responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which recognize that knowing and being able to speak one's language is a human right for Indigenous people.

Learn more:

- FPCC's language programs, tools and resources: [www.fpcc.ca/language](http://www.fpcc.ca/language)
- A backgrounder detailing the allocation of FPCC's 2018/19 language program funding follows

Available to media:

- Interviews with representatives of FPCC as well as First Nations individuals who received 2018/19 grants for community-based language revitalization projects may be accommodated on request.



**FIRST PEOPLES'**  
CULTURAL COUNCIL

---

**About the First Peoples' Cultural Council:**

FPCC is a First Nations-led provincial Crown corporation with a mandate to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages, arts, cultures and heritage in British Columbia. The organization provides funding, resources and training to communities, monitors the status of First Nations languages, develops policy recommendations for First Nations leadership and government and collaborates with organizations on numerous special projects that raise the profile of arts, languages, cultures and heritage in B.C., Canada and internationally. Visit: [www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)

**Media Contact:**

FPCC Communications

Tel: 250-883-4077

Email: [media@fpcc.ca](mailto:media@fpcc.ca)

---

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C.'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, ARTS AND CULTURES**

1A Boat Ramp Road  
Brentwood Bay, B.C.  
Canada V8M 1N9

Phone (250) 652-5952  
Fax (250) 652-5953  
Email [info@fpcc.ca](mailto:info@fpcc.ca)

[www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)  
[www.firstvoices.com](http://www.firstvoices.com)



## MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

February 13, 2019

### **FPCC First Nations Languages Program Increases 2018/2019**

#### **B.C. Government funding for First Nations language revitalization**

In Budget 2018, the Province of B.C. invested \$50 million to address the language crisis facing B.C.'s First Nations languages. The funds are managed by the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation (FPCF) and the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) applies annually to FPCF to deliver funds to First Nations communities. This unprecedented funding is the result of many years of advocacy, educating policy makers and development of investment models by FPCC. The funding is being allocated towards Indigenous language revitalization using a community development approach, which responds to the needs and priorities identified by B.C. First Nations communities.

FPCC's language revitalization goals are to create fluent speakers through immersion programs, to record and document B.C.'s 34 unique First Nations languages and over 90 dialects for future generations, and to help B.C. First Nations communities strengthen their language rebuilding efforts through strategic language revitalization planning.

#### **Breakdown of increases to FPCC's language program funding and support in 2018/19 and plans for 2019/20 resulting from increased funding from the B.C. government.**

##### **Increasing Immersion Programming and Resources**

- The **Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP)** pairs a fluent language speaker (mentor) with a language learner (apprentice) to transfer language knowledge and increase fluency. In 2017/18, FPCC had 27 MAP teams, which increased to 60 in 2018/19. The program will be expanded further in 2019/20 with plans for 110 teams. (Aboriginal Neighbours also funds a portion of the MAP Program.)
- The **Language Nest Program** creates language and cultural immersion environments for children under five years of age and their parents. The goal of the program is to build fluency and strengthen the identities of First Nations children. In addition, language nests allow young parents to learn the language and bring it back into their homes and daily lives, which is necessary for revitalizing a language. In 2017/18, FPCC supported 14 language nests, which increased to 21 in 2018/19. More than 30 additional nests are planned for 2019/20.
- The **B.C. Language Initiative (BCLI)** is a flexible program that responds to the unique needs of individual First Nations communities that wish to access funding and design a variety of language revitalization projects and innovative strategies. In 2017/18, FPCC supported 8 BCLI projects, which was significantly increased to 62 funded projects in 2018/19. An additional increase to 75 BCLI projects is planned for 2019/20.
- (NEW) **Language Resources and Tools** are being developed in 2018/19 to support community language revitalization, including a Language Planning Toolkit and a Language in the Home resource.
- (NEW) **Reclaiming My Language: A Course for Silent Speakers** is a program for those who know but do not speak their language due to personal barriers. This new program is currently in the pilot phase with five courses in 2018/19. The full program will launch in September 2019.
- **Training** for more than 475 participants has been provided in 2018/19: 130 for Mentor-Apprentice, 60 for Language Nests, 30 for FirstVoices, 175 through language coaching workshops and an additional 80+ for additional training related to language programs.

---

#### **COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C.'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, ARTS AND CULTURES**

1A Boat Ramp Road  
Brentwood Bay, B.C.  
Canada V8M 1N9

Phone (250) 652-5952  
Fax (250) 652-5953  
Email info@fpcc.ca

www.fpcc.ca  
www.firstvoices.com



Additional 2018/19 community-focused language revitalization initiatives, funded from other sources, include:

- The **Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI)**: a program funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage that supports projects that maintain, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages. In 2017/18, 42 projects were funded, which increased to 47 projects for 2018/19.

#### **Support to Archive and Document Languages**

- **FirstVoices**: FPCC's internationally recognized online Indigenous language documentation and teaching platform, designed to support Indigenous communities to document their alphabets, dictionaries, phrases, songs and stories in their own customized online archives, which they own and curate. There was no available funding for training in 2017/18, but as a result of the B.C. government investment, the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and FPCC were able to fund 6 grants for documentation, with 4 new B.C. language archives and training for 30 participants in 2018/19. In 2019/20, 20 grants will be available for language documentation.
- (NEW) **Digitization Grants**: FPCC is working to digitize its in-house language resources. In addition, there are plans to launch a new digitization grant stream in 2019/20 for First Nations communities in B.C. to digitize their language resources.

#### **Support for Language Revitalization Planning**

- (NEW) **Language Gathering and Sharing Grants** provide funding to support B.C. First Nations communities and organizations to come together to share their current and future language revitalization projects and plans. In 2018/19, 41 grants were awarded. This funding will be available year-round for 2019/20.
- (NEW) **Regional Language Revitalization Coaches**: two new coaches have been hired with funding from the provincial government designated specifically for community engagement. They have been travelling to First Nations communities across the province to support individuals and groups with their language revitalization efforts and to increase access to FPCC programs and resources. To date, FPCC's language coaches have held nine sessions for 175 delegates representing no less than 32 First Nations across B.C. Two additional coaches will be added in 2019/20 for even more outreach support.
- (NEW) **The Language Planning Program** will be launched in 2019/20 with comprehensive training and at least 10 grants for community language planning.

#### **Why Indigenous language revitalization matters**

Restoring connections to Indigenous language and culture can have huge positive impacts, building resilience and supporting healthy individuals and communities. Supporting the revitalization of Indigenous languages is critical to beginning to address the wrongs that were perpetrated against First Nations peoples for decades by previous Canadian and provincial governments, including the systematic forced removal of languages through the residential school system. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) *Calls to Action Report* outlines the need to protect and invest in the restoration of Indigenous languages as a concrete step toward reconciliation.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations, their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons. FPCC has been supporting the Assembly of First Nations and the federal government to advance the recognition and protection of Indigenous language rights in federal law, which is expected in early 2019.



FPCC's investment and support of British Columbia's First Nations language champions and learners comes at a critical time due to the considerable diversity of languages (B.C. has more Indigenous languages than any province or territory) and the loss of aging fluent speakers. FPCC's *Report on the Status of Languages in B.C. 2018* found that currently, only 3 per cent (or fewer than 4,200 people) of First Nations people in B.C. who reported, identified themselves as being fluent in their language, a decrease since the 2014 report, and over half (52 per cent) are aged 65 and over. However, language experts are optimistic as the report also shows that language learners are increasing and the majority (78 per cent) of learners are young (ages 0 to 24).

### **The First Peoples' Cultural Council and First Nations Language Revitalization**

FPCC is a First Nations-led provincial Crown corporation created in 1990 to provide leadership for the revitalization of Indigenous languages, arts, culture and heritage in British Columbia. It is the only Crown corporation of its kind in Canada. FPCC is currently the primary source of funding, training, support and resource development for First Nations language, arts and culture revitalization programs in B.C., as per its mandate.

The organization responds directly to the needs and priorities identified by the First Nations communities it serves by providing funding, programs, resources and training. FPCC also plays an advocacy and promotional role, developing policy recommendations for First Nations leadership and government and collaborating with organizations on numerous special projects that raise the profile of Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage in B.C., Canada and internationally.

Together with its community partners, FPCC maps and documents B.C.'s First Nations languages; builds tools and programs for communities, which strongly support language learning; creates partnerships with communities throughout the province; and facilitates the sharing of pioneering and proven approaches to language reclamation, documentation and revitalization with Indigenous people and organizations around the globe. FPCC is the key source of current and accurate information on the state of First Nations languages in B.C. For more information, visit: [www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)

Learn more about First Nations language revitalization, including FPCC's work and programs:

- FPCC's language programs and funding: [www.fpcc.ca/language/Programs](http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Programs)
- Current calls for FPCC language funding: [www.fpcc.ca/Grants/Language](http://www.fpcc.ca/Grants/Language)
- Media materials on B.C. government funding of Indigenous language revitalization: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018IRR0006-000422>
- FirstVoices, FPCC's online Indigenous language resource: [www.firstvoices.com](http://www.firstvoices.com)
- Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2018: [www.fpcc.ca/language/status-report](http://www.fpcc.ca/language/status-report)
- Map of B.C.'s First Nations languages: <http://maps.fpcc.ca>
- Indigenous languages legislation in Canada: [www.fpcc.ca/language/Legislation](http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Legislation)

### **Media Contact:**

FPCC Communications

Tel: 250-883-4077

Email: [media@fpcc.ca](mailto:media@fpcc.ca)