



Briefing Note on the Federal Language Legislation for B.C. Political Representatives

April 27, 2018

Purpose: to provide an update and technical advice to the B.C. political representatives on the proposed language legislation.

The key issues for B.C. in the context of the language legislation are:

1. **Acknowledgment of the diversity** and level of endangerment of B.C. languages by the federal government.
 - a. FPCC has developed a paper on language diversity and the issues that have arisen due to the fact there is not a First Nations approved list of all the languages in Canada. Only a few provinces and territories have a definitive list. This poses a problem for the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) who uses an outdated and inaccurate list from UNESCO to determine funding formulas. As B.C. has the largest number of languages this impacts our allocation. See diversity paper (attached). FPCC, with B.C. First Nations as partners, have developed a list of B.C. languages and a B.C. language map that has been vetted by the nations. This map and list is dynamic, and First Nations can recommend changes as new information becomes available.

Recommendation: Recommend that the diversity of B.C. languages be recognized and that a plan be developed to create a list of Indigenous languages in Canada based on the model used by B.C.

2. **Costing models** must be based on research of community needs and on successful language revitalization strategies that will develop speakers across all demographics.
 - a. FPCC has successfully demonstrated to the B.C. government that there is an immediate need for a large investment in B.C. languages through demonstrating the need with research and a revitalization costing model. The FPCC staff are expanding the revitalization costing models to include all domains for languages such as education and post secondary. Once completed a toolkit for language planning with models will be available to all communities. FPCC is also contributing to the costing work by supporting the Chiefs Committee on Languages with research and papers on the true cost of language revitalization.
 - b. The B.C. government has provided \$50,000,000 for languages over three years and the Department of Canadian Heritage has allocated \$3,600,000 per year for three years. The Aboriginal Languages Initiative (DCH) was extended until a new program can be developed as part of the language legislation. INAC is in negotiations to provide language funding to B.C. First Nations schools through FNESC as part of the TEFA agreement.

Recommendation: B.C. has the highest number of languages in Canada and all the languages are severely endangered. Recommend the B.C. Chiefs advocate for equitable funding from DCH and INAC to support all of the languages. As well, as per recommendation 9 from the *Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Culture*, **additional resources** must be made available for endangered languages for the urgent work to preserve the languages.



3. **Level of engagement and consultation in B.C.** which has more than 50% of Canada's languages.
 - a. Last May there was a round of information sharing events about the legislation. FPCC held five regional information sessions and the National and B.C. AFN hosted a large engagement session in Vancouver last May.
Link to FPCC's framework report on legislation: <http://www.fpcc.ca/files/PDF/Language/FPCC-LegislationFrameworkReport.pdf>
Link to FPCC's report on community engagement sessions: <http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Legislation/Regional-Engagement-Sessions.aspx>
Link to the AFN's report on national engagement sessions: <http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Legislation/AFN-Engagement-Sessions.aspx>
 - b. The Department of Canadian Heritage staff have also been meeting with language experts across Canada. However, the formal consultation process with Canadian Heritage has yet to happen. There is a concern that the consultation will take place in July and August and fewer people may be available at that time.

Recommendation: Push for the Department of Canadian Heritage consultations to take place from June to early July 2018. It is suggested there be at least 3-5 regional sessions in B.C. The rationale for this is B.C. has 34 languages and more than 90 dialects, so we need those represented at the table and we will get more participation if people don't have to travel as far to participate. FPCC can work with the BCAFN and leadership organizations to promote the regional events and ensure our language experts are invited.

4. **Institution Models:** The committee for co-development is looking at models for some type of body to implement the language legislation and the resulting programs. One of the options being explored is the creation of a foundation. This is a concern as a foundation would likely get a one-time allocation and then be expected to fundraise the resources needed. In B.C., the FPCC experience with the foundation model is that the principal never makes enough interest to support the real cost of the language work. The numbers are not yet final but we estimate it will take between \$2-4 million per year for each community to revitalize their language.

Recommendation: Recommend that government create an institution that must be funded with a long-term investment (i.e., annually, not a one-time investment). If a foundation is developed, it is recommended that it be a supporting organization for fundraising with the private sector not solely responsible for funding the language work.

5. **Autonomy of B.C. First Nations:** At the community consultation sessions, concerns were raised about the legislation potentially hindering the ability of First Nations to make their own language laws and to decide for themselves what to do with their languages. It is our understanding that the goal of the legislation is to protect and support all Indigenous languages in Canada, but it will not impede anything that a nation decides to do for itself at a nation level. Protection through legislation is needed at all levels (federal, provincial/territorial, nation-level) and these protections will complement rather than conflict with each other. There has been resolution passed at the UBCIC AGM supporting stating that nations should have the ability to create our own language laws for each language group. Kukpi7 Ron Ignace has the details on this resolution.

Recommendation: Recommend that each nation develop its own official language policy and or official language laws and work to develop a language plan for its language(s). That we continue the process of engaging in the development of the national language legislation and influence the national legislation, so it meets the unique needs of B.C. First Nations.



6. **Time is of the essence:** Only about 4% of B.C. First Nations people can speak their language fluently and 59% of fluent speakers are aged 65 and over. However, many communities are having great success with increasing the number of younger semi-fluent speakers. With adequate support, this can be done in all communities. The status of B.C. languages is outlined in our 2014 report (with the new report to be published this summer): <http://www.fpcc.ca/language/status-report/>

But action to support languages is needed now. We have limited time to act and get resources to communities and develop plans for our languages. It is imperative that the federal government support this work and we get recognition for the languages before the next election. The government has stated its support for protecting and revitalizing the languages and is taking this action to develop legislation as a key part of reconciliation.

Recommendation: Recommend that leadership support the AFN to move this legislation forward and take a role in ensuring that the planned consultation meets the expectations of the B.C. political representatives.

Contact Information

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Chief Ron Ignace is Chair of the Chief's Committee on Languages, National AFN. He is a strong advocate for language and his experience with the language task force is very valuable to this process. Contact Ron at: kukpi7.ignace@gmail.com

First Peoples' Cultural Council Resources

Information on the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) language programs such as Mentor-Apprentice, Language Nest, and Language Revitalization Planning programs: www.fpcc.ca/language/Programs/

Information on FirstVoices, FPCC's internationally recognized online Indigenous language archiving and teaching resource, which allows indigenous communities to document their language for future generations: www.fpcc.ca/language/FirstVoices/

Handbooks on all FPCC language programs: www.fpcc.ca/language/Resources/

This Toolkit is a collection of resources for language learners, First Nations communities wanting to develop language revitalization projects and people looking for information on the First Nations languages of British Columbia: www.fpcc.ca/language/toolkit/

The Endangered Languages Project is an online resource to record, access and share samples of and research about endangered languages: www.fpcc.ca/language/ELP/

The First Peoples' Cultural Council has partnered with the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, B.C. to deliver a three-year language exhibition entitled "Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in B.C.": www.fpcc.ca/language/exh.aspx