

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

FOUNDING HEAD OFFICE
209 - 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way
Kamloops, B.C. V2H 1H1
Tel: 250-828-9746
Fax: 250-828-0319



VANCOUVER OFFICE
5th Floor, 342 Water Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1B6
Tel: 604-684-0231
Fax: 604-684-5726
1-800-793-9701
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

May 17, 2017

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Via email: pm@pm.gc.ca;
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca
Via facsimile: (613) 641-6900

Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Canada, P.C., M.P.
Terrasses de la Chaudiere
10 Wellington, North Tower
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4
Via email: Carolyn.Bennett@parl.gc.ca;
Minister@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca
Via facsimile: (613) 996-9736

Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Via email: Hon.Melanie.Joly@canada.ca

Honourable Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Via Email: premier@gov.bc.ca;
Christy.Clark.MLA@leg.bc.ca;
Via Facsimile: (250) 387-0087;

RE: UBCIC Resolution 2017-05 “Supporting Revitalization of Indigenous Languages”

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Bennett, Minister Joly, and Premier Clark

We are writing with respect to UBCIC Resolution 2017-05, “Supporting Revitalization of Indigenous Languages,” which was presented, affirmed and endorsed by consensus at the UBCIC Chiefs Council on February 15, 2017 (enclosed).

By Resolution 2017-05, we call upon the government of Canada to develop and implement the proposed *Indigenous Languages Act*, taking into full account and priority support for the BC region which is home

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to two thirds of Indigenous languages in Canada, including some of the most critically endangered Indigenous languages in the country.

Indigenous languages form the bedrock of continuity for the survival and well-being of Indigenous cultures from one generation to the next. This important intergenerational responsibility has been severely disrupted by colonialism and colonial practices, laws, policies and practices of discrimination, assimilation, forced relocation and residential and boarding schools, among others.

The report of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues confirmed the growing crisis of Indigenous language loss and in many cases an urgent, even desperate, need to preserve and revitalize languages.

Aligned with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which Canada has adopted without qualifications, which states:

- Article 13(1):** 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; and
- Article 14 (1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

And in the carrying out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action #14, which states:

We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

- 1. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.*
- 2. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties.*
- 3. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal language revitalization and preservation.*
- 4. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.*
- 5. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages.*

The UBCIC supports the immediate development and enactment of an *Indigenous Languages Act* co-developed with full participation of First Nations, organizations and relevant councils in British

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Columbia, as committed to by Prime Minister Trudeau on December 6th, 2016, in an address to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly.

Further we call upon the government of Canada and BC to ensure that all government funded efforts and initiatives respecting Indigenous languages are consistently guided by the objectives of revitalization, preservation and protection of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages in this country.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President

Chief Robert Chamberlin
Vice-President

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: UBCIC Chiefs Council
First Peoples Cultural Council

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
CHIEFS COUNCIL

FEBRUARY 15TH TO 16TH, 2017

MUSQUEAM COMMUNITY CENTRE, X^wMƏØK^wƏY^əM (MUSQUEAM TERRITORY)

Resolution no. 2017-05

RE: Supporting Revitalization of Indigenous Languages

WHEREAS as stated in the report of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues, Indigenous languages form the bedrock of continuity for the survival and well-being of Indigenous cultures from one generation to the next. This important intergenerational responsibility has been severely disrupted by colonialism and colonial practices, laws, policies and practices of discrimination, assimilation, forced relocation and residential and boarding schools, among others;

WHEREAS the report further states there is a growing crisis of Indigenous language loss and in many cases an urgent, even desperate, need to preserve and revitalize languages. It is estimated that more than half of the world's languages will become extinct by 2100;

WHEREAS the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, states:

Article 13(1): 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.

Articles 14(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action #14 states:

We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

- 1. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.*
- 2. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties.*

3. *The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.*
4. *The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.*
5. *Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages.*

WHEREAS a significant underlying objective of all preservation and revitalization efforts is the absolute necessity of producing ever-growing numbers of fluent language speakers;

WHEREAS on December 6th, 2016, in an address to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to the development and enactment of an Indigenous Languages Act, co-developed with Indigenous Peoples, with the goal of ensuring the preservation, protection, and revitalization of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages in this country; and

WHEREAS First Nations in British Columbia have a vested interest in ensuring that initiatives aimed at the revitalization of Indigenous languages are:

1. Developed collaboratively, with the full participation of First Nations in BC; and
2. Successfully accomplish revitalization for all Indigenous languages.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council supports the immediate development and enactment of an *Indigenous Languages Act*, co-developed with full participation of First Nations, organizations and relevant councils in British Columbia; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive to call on the governments of Canada and British Columbia to ensure that all government funded efforts and initiatives respecting Indigenous languages are consistently guided by the objectives of revitalization, preservation and protection of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages in this country; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive to call on the government of Canada to develop and implement the proposed *Indigenous Languages Act*, taking into full account and priority support for the BC region which is home to two thirds of Indigenous languages in Canada, including some of the most critically endangered Indigenous languages in the country.

Moved: Deb Foxcroft, Ehattesaht First Nation (Proxy)
Seconded: Chief Harvey McLeod, Upper Nicola Indian Band
Disposition: Carried
Date: February 15, 2017