



**FIRST PEOPLES'**  
CULTURAL COUNCIL

## Indigenous Language Legislation: The Path Ahead

*National Colloquium: Canada's  
Indigenous Language Policies in the  
Wake of Bill C-91, Dec. 6-8, 2019*

Suzanne Gessner, Tracey Herbert & Aliana Parker

## PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF FPCC

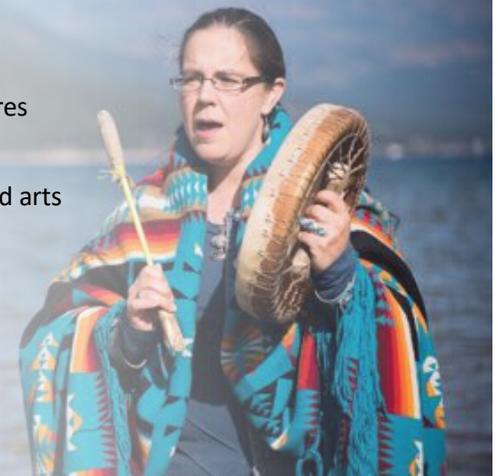
### WHO WE ARE

- FPCC is a B.C. Crown Corporation that supports the revitalization of Indigenous arts, languages and cultural heritage in British Columbia
- FPCC was established in 1990 when First Nations leaders, together with government, decided it was the best way to guarantee support
- FPCC has mandated authority through the [First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act](#)

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### OUR VISION

B.C.'s Indigenous languages, cultures and arts are thriving. The cultural knowledge expressed through Indigenous languages, cultures and arts is recognized and embraced.



## OUR GOALS

Sustain and invest in the lasting vitality of Indigenous language, arts and cultural heritage in B.C. through successful revitalization strategies.

Support Indigenous communities and individuals in B.C. to meet their arts, language, culture and heritage revitalization goals.

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## OUR GOALS, CONTD.

Build awareness and appreciation for Indigenous languages, arts and culture in B.C., and promote the work of FPCC to communities, funders and leadership

Provide leadership on a provincial, national and global scale to support Indigenous arts, language, culture and heritage revitalization

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## FPCC IS INDIGENOUS-LED

We gather community input through the following approaches:



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## CONTEXT: FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN B.C.

The greatest language diversity exists in British Columbia, with more than 50% of all Indigenous languages in Canada.

B.C. is home to 34 First Nations languages (90+ language dialects).



## FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN B.C., CONTD.

Only 3% (or fewer than 4,200 people) of First Nations people in B.C. consider themselves fluent in their mother tongue.

The number of L1 fluent speakers is declining rapidly, while both the number of learners and the number of fluent speakers under the age of 24 are **increasing**.



## WHY THIS WORK IS IMPORTANT

- Language, arts and culture are interconnected with every part of life for Indigenous people and are essential to our well-being.
- Language, arts and cultural practices are fundamental to Canada's heritage and identity.

**“Strong links to Indigenous language and culture are the foundations for personal identity and sense of belonging. They support healthy individuals and communities with improved health, economic and educational outcomes.”**

–Tracey Herbert, FPCC CEO

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## PART TWO: CURRENT INITIATIVES



## INCREASED SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

- In March of 2018, FPCC successfully advocated for a \$50 million investment by the Province of B.C. in the revitalization of B.C. First Nations languages.
- New funding more than doubled the number of language immersion opportunities and expanded the capacity of FirstVoices to document languages.



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## GRANT FUNDING

- In 2018-2019, FPCC distributed \$11.4 million in grants to communities across the province.
- The increased funding has created more opportunities and greater stability for communities with multi-year grants.
- As of October 2019, FPCC has 9 language grant streams, 9 arts and music grant streams, and 2 heritage grant streams.

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## LANGUAGE GRANTS

- ✧ Digitization Grant Initiative (DiGi)
- ✧ Aboriginal Languages Initiative
- ✧ Language Nest Program
- ✧ Language Revitalization Planning Program
  - Language Gathering and Sharing, and Community Mentorship Grants
- ✧ Mentor-Apprentice Program
- ✧ B.C. Language Initiative Program
- ✧ Reclaiming My Language: A Course for Silent Speakers

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## RESEARCH, MONITORING AND DOCUMENTATION

- FPCC conducts research on the status of Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage, and the costs and benefits of language funding
- FPCC gathers input from communities through workshops, surveys and conferences
- Research is used to communicate the urgent need for revitalization and support
- FPCC's *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages* is released every 4 years

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## TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF LANGUAGE LEARNERS, ARTISTS AND COMMUNITIES

- FPCC develops innovative technologies that are recognized as global best practices
- FirstVoices is FPCC's online language archiving website, which hosts 38 archives of B.C. First Nations languages and dialects
- FirstVoices has apps and tools to support language documentation and learning
- The First Peoples' Language Map and Arts Map are interactive online tools that promote First Nations languages and Indigenous artists in B.C.

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## KNOWLEDGE SHARING LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

- FPCC holds a leadership role in the Endangered Languages Project (an international effort to document Indigenous languages) and collaborates with UNESCO to support work related to Indigenous languages
- FPCC hosts local and province-wide gatherings of language experts, artists, musicians and heritage experts in B.C.
- In 2019, “HELISSET TFE SKÁL - ‘Let the Languages Live’ International Language Conference” brought together Indigenous leaders and language experts from around the globe

HELISSET TFE SKÁL

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## PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES

FPCC develops new programs, tools and resources in response to community needs and research on best practices, including:

- New grant streams
- Language learning resources and handbooks
- Language immersion outreach and training programs
- Arts outreach workshops
- Artist portfolio handbook
- Videos, guides and individualized support for grant writing



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## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

FPCC provides:

- Training to support language immersion, language teaching, learning and documentation
- Community support for language planning and collaboration from regional coaches
- Workshops in communities to support arts grants and artists' portfolios
- One-on-one support for grant writing across all programs

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## PART THREE: Bill C-91 *Indigenous Languages Act*



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## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES LEGISLATION

- In June 2019, the federal government passed Bill C-91, the *Indigenous Languages Act*, to protect Indigenous languages in Canada.
- FPCC advocated for and supported development of C-91 in several ways...



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## NATIONAL LEGISLATION, CONTD.

- Held five regional engagement and information sessions in 2017 to inform people of the proposed legislation and provide an opportunity for input to the federal government.
- Conducted research on the costs of language revitalization to support co-development and implementation.
- Presented to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the Senate Committee reviewing Act.
- Serves on the AFN's Technical Committee on Language, established to advise on co-development and implementation.

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## NATIONAL LEGISLATION, CONTD.

Significant challenges remain:

- Act does not call for a **National Indigenous Languages Strategy**: critical for goal-setting and assessment
- Gaps in HOW funding is to be delivered -> no national body
- 4 year funding forecast in Budget 2019 does not come close to meeting adequate costs

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## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES STRATEGY WHY?

- Outlines goals & priorities with clear actions designed to meet each goal
- Provides a framework for practical measurement and evaluation of the efficacy of actions undertaken to make prudent use of government investments
- An effective measure to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding
  - Research of Indigenous language policies in 10 countries (Bliss, 2019)
  - Where legislation mandates a defined action plan or language strategy, this is a predictive factor that positively and negatively correlates with high and low levels of government spending respectively

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## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES STRATEGY WHO?

- NOT the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages: conflict of interest
- NOT the Department of Canadian Heritage: Indigenous control of Indigenous languages
- NOT the role of political organizations
- A national Indigenous languages organization could develop the strategy
  - We hear concerns about too much bureaucracy but a small, focused organization is needed

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## RATIONALE FOR NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Provide broad, comprehensive management of C-91 implementation
- Keep the work at arm's length from government, the Commissioner or political organizations
- Protect funding, programs into the future if government changes (e.g., model of the Tri-Agency, Canada Council for the Arts, etc.)
- Create, connect and support regional organizations
- Coordinate and collate reporting from regional and community levels to inform reporting on the national language strategy

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## ROLE of NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Develop national strategy
- Manage and distribute the annual budget transfer from the government (direct transfers and proposal-based streams)
- Provide a central repository for language resources (collection, organization, archiving)
- Act as a liaison for the government and general public (educate, promote use of languages, coordinate translation and interpretation services where required for federal services)

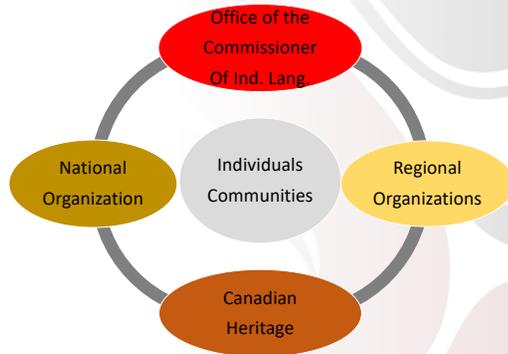
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## ROLE of REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Community capacity-building
  - Assist communities with the development and assessment of language plans
  - Provide training, mentoring, program support and oversight to Indigenous communities and urban organizations & individuals
- Research, development and monitoring
  - Research, resources, monitor status, knowledge transfer activities with national organization
- Government and public liaison (esp. with provincial education sector)

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## WORKING TOGETHER FOR THRIVING LANGUAGES



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## NEXT STEPS: PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION IN B.C.

- *Bill 41: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* – to implement UNDRIP – royal assent on Nov. 28/19
- UNDRIP article 13.2 calls on states to take effective measures to ensure that Indigenous languages rights are protected.



## PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION IN B.C. CONTD.

- In addition to Bill 41, provincial Indigenous language legislation will solidify those rights and complement the new federal legislation.
- Together with the BCAFN, we are working to engage the provincial government on this issue.
- A discussion paper has been developed and a working group is being formed.
- Hope to reach all 203 First Nations & urban communities to support their language revitalization work

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## QUESTIONS?

Contact us: [www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)  
[Suzanne@fpcc.ca](mailto:Suzanne@fpcc.ca)  
[Tracey@fpcc.ca](mailto:Tracey@fpcc.ca)  
[Aliana@fpcc.ca](mailto:Aliana@fpcc.ca)

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