



## FIRST PEOPLES' HERITAGE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE COUNCIL

# Background Information About the Amended First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act

### What Is the Purpose of this Act?

This Act protects, revitalizes and enhances First Nations heritage, language, culture and arts in B.C.

### Why Was It Amended?

The 1990 Act was outdated and changes were needed to meet the needs of the First Nations people that it represents. The original Act:

- Only allowed for 24 reps
- Did not include First Nations arts
- Did not allow the First Peoples' Council to be as responsive and modern as it needed to be

### Why Were There Only 24 Reps Under the Original Act?

The Act only allowed for 24 reps on the Advisory Committee because in 1990, a tribal or area council represented most First Nations languages in B.C.

Since 1990, some First Nations have expanded to come under a second tribal council, thereby gaining additional representation. Others assumed different forms of governance such as treaty groups or independent First Nations for which there was no representation.

### How Did the First Peoples' Council Go About Seeking Amendments?

We canvassed our key stakeholders and the First Nations community before recommending to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation that amendments be put forward for legislative change. Approximately 700 stakeholders were contacted throughout June and July, 2009.

## What Was Our Stakeholders' Response?

The 240 stakeholders who responded to our survey gave us a strong mandate to pursue these amendments. Their responses to the following proposed changes were:

### **The First Peoples' Council should include a representative of each B.C. First Nations language group on its Advisory Committee.**

94.2% of respondents agreed.

### **The legislation should contain clear reference to the arts as a component of First Nations' culture.**

93.8% of respondents agreed.

### **The legislation should provide the First Peoples' Council with the flexibility to adapt to governance changes within First Nation communities?**

90.4% of respondents agreed.

### **The legislation should accurately reflect the broad range of the First Peoples' Council's activities.**

96.7% of respondents agreed.

### **The First Peoples' Council's bylaws should distinguish clearly between the functions of the Advisory Committee and the Board.**

86.7% of respondents agreed.

## When Was the Act Amended?

April 1, 2011.

## How Many Language Groups Are Recognized Now?

There are now 34 active First Nations language groups recognized for the purposes of this Act.

These 34 language groups have been determined by the First Peoples' Council, based on extensive input from a wide range of First Nations organizations and language experts.

Please see the attached list of all 34 First Nations language groups, the dialects within them, and their communities.

## How Are Dialects Within a Language Group Represented?

Dialects are included under the umbrella of their specific language group. The role of Advisory Committee members is to represent all the dialects within their language group.

## **Why Are Non-Active Languages and Those Originating Outside B.C. Not Included?**

The Act focuses on the 34 active First Nations language groups in B.C. to:

- Target funding at the languages most likely to benefit from activities and programs, and
- Keep the size of the Advisory Committee manageable in terms of providing advice and support

The First Peoples' Council recognizes that several First Nations languages originating from outside the province are actively spoken in B.C. We encourage speakers from these groups seeking support to contact their First Nation and visit FirstVoices. ([www.firstvoices.com](http://www.firstvoices.com))

## **What Is the Role of the First Peoples' Council?**

Our role is to provide leadership for the revitalization of Aboriginal languages, culture, heritage and arts throughout B.C. We provide a key source of current, accurate information on the state of First Nations languages in B.C. and program coordination and funding for arts, cultural and language programs. We also co-ordinate the First Peoples' Advisory Committee.

## **Who Do We Serve?**

We serve 203 First Nations in B.C., 61 language dialects and numerous First Nations arts, culture and educational organizations.

## **What Is the Board's Role?**

The Board governs the First Peoples' Council by setting direction and policy, providing us with leadership and advocating in support of B.C. First Nations.

## **What Is the First Peoples' Advisory Committee's Role?**

The Advisory Committee provides the "peoples' voice," acting as a bridge to First Nations communities and bringing community-based ideas and issues to the attention of the First Peoples' Council. Its members each represent one of the 34 active First Nations language groups in B.C.

Its members help the First Peoples' Council to protect, revitalize, enhance and share First Nations arts, heritage, language and culture. They also make regular reports back to their communities about the work of the First Peoples' Council.