



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **BC First Nations language report shows increase in semi-fluent speakers**

**Saanich, B.C.** – A comprehensive study of First Nations languages in BC reveals a decline in fluent speakers throughout the province yet an increase in semi-fluent speakers. While the results indicate some languages are at risk, researchers are optimistic about the future thanks to an almost 10 per cent increase in people who speak some of a First Nations language without being totally fluent.

“Language is an important part of our history, but also our future,” said Dr. Lorna Williams, chair, First Peoples Cultural Council. “This study shows that we have more work to do to vitalize our languages in the province but that our efforts so far are helping us have some success.”

The multi-year study by the First Peoples’ Cultural Council looked at more than 129,000 people in BC that speak a First Nations language. Within the province there are 34 different First Nations languages spoken, more than any other province or territory in Canada. While about 60 per cent of fluent speakers are aged 65 and over, nearly one in three semi-fluent speakers are under the age of 25. In fact, 88 per cent of all semi-fluent speakers are under the age of 65.

“The work we are doing is a coordinated effort to protect our languages throughout the province,” said Tracey Herbert, executive director, First Peoples Cultural Council. “We are optimistic of these results and proud of how far we have been able to stretch our resources to make an impact.”

The First Peoples’ Cultural Council has a number of programs in place throughout the province to help maintain and restore First Nations’ languages through funding provisions, training, and advocacy. Training and support for adult language immersion through a Mentor-Apprentice Program is one example of an effective strategy currently being used to create new fluent speakers.

The Royal BC Museum is featuring an exhibit on First Nations languages that runs throughout 2015.

**About First Peoples’ Cultural Council:** The First Peoples' Cultural Council is a First Nations-run crown corporation with a mandate to support the revitalization of Aboriginal language, arts and culture in British Columbia. The organization provides funding and resources to communities, monitor the status of First Nations languages and develop policy recommendations for First Nations leadership and government. The First Peoples’ Council is committed to establishing itself as the key source of current and accurate information on the state of First Nations languages in BC. For more information: <http://www.fpcc.ca>

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### **Media Contacts:**

#### **Rep Lab Communications**

Trisha Lees  
250-857-5655  
[trisha@replab.ca](mailto:trisha@replab.ca)

#### **First Peoples’ Cultural Council**

Susan DeStephanis  
250-652-5952  
[susan@fpcc.ca](mailto:susan@fpcc.ca)

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**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)