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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**International Indigenous languages conference set for June in British Columbia**  
*Gathering organized by and for Indigenous people to support language revitalization best practices*

**FEBRUARY 21, 2019 – COAST SALISH TRADITIONAL TERRITORY / BRENTWOOD BAY, B.C.**

– In celebration of the United Nations 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation (FPCF) and the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, will host a major international conference on Indigenous language revitalization in British Columbia this summer.

The *HELISSET TFE SKÁL* (pronounced ha-LEE-sut-te-skwayl) – 'Let the Languages Live' – 2019 International Conference on Indigenous Languages will be held at the Victoria Conference Centre in Victoria, B.C. from June 24 to 26, 2019. Indigenous language experts and advocates from around the globe will gather to celebrate, honour and share expertise in Indigenous language reclamation, revitalization and maintenance.

The United Nations declared 2019 as the Year of Indigenous Languages as an important mechanism to raise international attention about the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize, promote and mobilize urgent and coordinated action at the national and international levels to protect them.

Indigenous languages around the world continue to disappear at an alarming rate. Approximately 40 per cent of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken around the world are in danger of disappearing. The fact that most of these are Indigenous languages puts the cultures and knowledge systems to which they belong at risk.

More than 60 Indigenous languages exist in Canada and all are considered endangered. The greatest language diversity exists in British Columbia, which is home to more than 50 per cent of all Indigenous languages in the country. Despite B.C.'s rich diversity of 34 unique First Nations languages and more than 90 dialects, currently, only three per cent (or fewer than 4,200 people) of First Nations people in B.C. consider themselves fluent in their mother tongue.

The *HELISSET TFE SKÁL* - 'Let the Languages Live' conference will offer multiple workshop streams, including practical training in language immersion, archiving and documentation techniques; language policy and legislation; language revitalization program planning; models for language revitalization and education; language and technology; and storytelling. Participants will gain practical skills and knowledge to apply to their Indigenous language revitalization work.

Indigenous leaders and community members, and language experts, speakers, learners and advocates from B.C., across Canada and the world are invited to attend the conference.

For more information about:

- *HELISSET TFE SKÁL* - 'Let the Languages Live' conference, visit: [fpcflanguageconference.com](http://fpcflanguageconference.com)
- International Year of Indigenous Languages, visit: [en.iyil2019.org](http://en.iyil2019.org)

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**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C.'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, ARTS AND CULTURES**



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**QUOTES:**

**Wanosts'a7 (Dr. Lorna Williams), Lil'watul, Member of the Board of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and Professor Emerita of Indigenous Education, University of Victoria**

*"With the declaration of the 2019 Year of Indigenous Languages, the UN recognizes that Indigenous Peoples will be silenced no more, and so begins a global shift in the history of Indigenous Peoples on this planet. Here in B.C. and around the globe, Indigenous Peoples are continuing their work to remember, reclaim, restore and revitalize their languages, knowledge and wisdom – the voices of the land and our ancestors. We look forward to welcoming Indigenous Peoples to join us at HELISET TFE SKÁL - 'Let the Languages Live' conference to join in teaching the world about the beauty, wisdom and power in our languages to heal the spirit, community and the land."*

**Tracey Herbert, Chief Executive Officer, the First Peoples' Cultural Council:**

*"The First Peoples' Cultural Council is very proud to be partnering with the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation to host this important conference. While B.C.'s First Nations languages are all severely threatened, FPCC and FPCF are incredibly proud of the work being led by many brilliant First Nations language champions in this province whose commitment to re-building our culture through language is an inspiration to Indigenous language advocates across the globe. We look forward to hearing from Indigenous language experts and advocates from around the globe and to showcasing our own expertise and successes in creating fluency and documenting our unique languages."*

**Grand Chief Edward John, member of the First Nations Summit Political Executive and Co-chair of the UNESCO IYIL2019 Steering Committee**

*"It is fitting in this International Year of Indigenous Languages that this important conference will take place in British Columbia. This province's history is rich with Indigenous languages that aren't spoken anywhere else in the world. These are the original languages of this land and are intrinsically tied to First Nations people. Preserving Indigenous languages is a top priority for B.C. First Nations. The First Peoples' Cultural Council, First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and CCUNESCO are connected with a vast network of Indigenous language experts around B.C., Canada and the globe. This international conference provides a great opportunity to bring these people together in our collective efforts to save and rebuild Indigenous languages worldwide."*

**Minister Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, B.C. Government**

*"Our government passionately supports the critical work of the First Peoples' Cultural Council and First Peoples' Cultural Foundation to revitalize Indigenous languages at serious risk of being lost forever. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is clear that Indigenous peoples around the world have the right to revitalize and speak their languages. So in this Year of Indigenous Languages, I am proud that Victoria will host this important conference and we can witness first-hand how Indigenous language experts are breathing new life into the spirit of the UN Declaration."*

**Sébastien Goupil, Secretary General, Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO)**

*"I believe that we all have a responsibility and a role to play in supporting Indigenous-led activities and initiatives that contribute to the revitalization, maintenance and preservation of their languages. Languages are vital to the identity, well-being and futures of our Indigenous friends and partners from across the globe. HELISET TFE SKÁL promises to be a highlight of the International Year of Indigenous Languages. For these reasons, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO is proud to support the FPCC and the FPCF in their leadership and efforts."*

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FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL FOUNDATION



FIRST PEOPLES'  
CULTURAL COUNCIL

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### **About the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation:**

The First Peoples' Cultural Foundation is a First Nations-led not-for-profit charitable organization that supports grassroots efforts to revitalize Indigenous arts, languages and cultures unique to British Columbia, Canada. Over its 10-year history, the Foundation has worked closely with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, delivering millions of dollars to Indigenous and First Nations artists and First Nations communities, cultural organizations and educational organizations for Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage initiatives. For more information, visit: [fpcf.ca](http://fpcf.ca)

### **About the First Peoples' Cultural Council:**

The First Peoples' Cultural Council is a First Nations-led provincial Crown corporation with a mandate to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages, arts, cultures and heritage in British Columbia. The organization provides funding, resources and training to communities, monitors the status of First Nations languages, develops policy recommendations for First Nations leadership and government and collaborates with organizations on numerous special projects that raise the profile of arts, languages, cultures and heritage in B.C., Canada and internationally. For more information, visit: [fpcc.ca](http://fpcc.ca)

### **About Canadian Commission for UNESCO:**

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO connects Canadians with the work of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It aims to create a society in which Canadians share knowledge and learn from each other, locally and globally, in order to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable futures. It does so by supporting collective reflection, identifying priorities and facilitating concerted action in the fields of education, sciences, culture, communication and information to address some of the most complex challenges facing humanity. Recognizing that this mandate can only be fulfilled by engaging a broad range of partners, a spirit of cooperation is at the core of the Commission's work. For more information, visit: [ccunesco.ca](http://ccunesco.ca)

### **Media contacts:**

Megan Lappi  
Communications Manager  
First Peoples' Cultural Council  
250-652-5952 ext. 214 [megan@fpcc.ca](mailto:megan@fpcc.ca)

Alex Russell  
Communications Advisor  
First Peoples' Cultural Foundation  
604-562-9262 [alex@russellstrategy.com](mailto:alex@russellstrategy.com)

Colin Braker  
Communications Director  
First Nations Summit  
604-926-9903 [cbraker@fns.bc.ca](mailto:cbraker@fns.bc.ca)

Sarah Plank  
Communications Director  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
250-258-9621 [sarah.plank@gov.bc.ca](mailto:sarah.plank@gov.bc.ca)

Angèle Cyr  
Public Affairs Manager  
Canadian Commission for UNESCO  
613-566-4414, ext. 4168  
[angele.cyr@ccunesco.ca](mailto:angele.cyr@ccunesco.ca)

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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)