



FIRST PEOPLES'
CULTURAL FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The First Peoples' Cultural Foundation (The Foundation) understands that Indigenous languages, arts and cultures are critical for the ongoing survival of Indigenous people and our ways of knowing and being. They shape our existence, identities, expression and how we see, interact with and experience the world. They are the underpinnings of our governance systems and at the heart of Indigenous sovereignty. The Foundation is dedicated to rebuilding and restoring the cultural systems that have sustained Indigenous people for generations.

OUR VISION

Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage are strong, supported and being passed on from generation to generation.

OUR MISSION

To provide funding and support for the vitality of Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage.

OUR VALUES

As a Foundation, our individual and collective values connect us to our sacred responsibilities. These values guide our work, and it is our role to uphold them in all that we do.

Indigenous-led: We are an Indigenous organization working with Indigenous people

Knowledge: We draw on and share knowledge with communities and partners

Resilience: We focus on and honour the strengths of Indigenous people

Helping one another: We take care of each other through providing resources and funding

Responsibility: We act with respect and thoughtfulness towards all living and nonliving relatives to do our work in a good way, as all things are connected

Cultural continuity: We give thanks as we learn from past generations and share with future generations



INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MATTER

The Foundation promotes and invests in the inherent value of Indigenous languages, arts and cultures for Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

The land known today as British Columbia is one of the most culturally diverse areas in the world. There are approximately 34 Indigenous languages and over 90 language dialects within seven language families that are Indigenous to B.C.

The vitality of our languages, arts and cultural heritage is linked to social, economic and ecological well-being in our communities. Cultural revitalization programs build skills and create jobs. Our languages, arts and cultures contain valuable ecological knowledge that inform solutions to complex issues the world is facing today.

The impacts of Indigenous cultural resurgence are innumerable and deeply felt. Our languages, arts and cultural heritage are at the heart of self-determination and self-governance and demonstrate our connection and inherent rights to the lands and waters we call home. Supporting the resurgence of our languages, arts and cultural heritage is holding up our inherent rights in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) calls for strong support for the revitalization of Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage as a path towards healing and moving forward together. Supporting Indigenous-led revitalization efforts is a way that non-Indigenous allies can take effective action in partnership with Indigenous peoples to promote reconciliation.

The languages of our lands are spoken nowhere else on the planet, so when they go, they're wiped from the land. And we cannot let that happen. Our languages are the voice of our lands. Our languages keep our connections to the ancestors. They're our connections to the descendants, and we need to keep clear about those responsibilities that we have to our descendants.

– Wanosts'a7 Dr. Lorna Williams, Lil'watul, Chair of the Board of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation, professor emerita of Indigenous Education, University of Victoria and recipient of the Order of Canada



It is a dream for me to help people, to help others find what I've found in our language. I've found freedom in our language. We're going to a place where we have freedom; we can think, pray, hope and dream in our language again, and I call that freedom to be who we were meant to be.

– J, SINTEN John Elliott, Elder Knowledge Keeper, SENĆOTEN, Southern Vancouver Island



Having that history being passed down to the next generations is vital. And we're doing all we can to revitalize through technology, through teaching and immersion, and being innovative in the different ways to get it out to community.

– Renée Sampson, SENĆOTEN Program Facilitator for the WSÁNEĆ School Board



I was grateful and I was proud of her for asking me, choosing me to teach her. Not too many kids would come and say what she did. You know? She's always willing to learn. I think she'll be able to stand up in front of everybody and speak it fluently. You know, like we do in the ceremonial house. The chiefs get to speak and sometime, this girl can do it.

– Udzistalis Johnny Speck, Hereditary Chief, Tlowitsis, Campbell River; Speaking of his granddaughter, Hi?liqila?gelis Natasha Green.

Seeing the many nations working together to restore fluency and normalize our languages is an act of reconciliation, pride, and nation-building and is a key element in self-determination. Our languages are a reflection of who we are as First Nations people. They are essential to our ceremonies, traditional laws and to the land and water – to our very identity. I want to acknowledge the role of the HELISET TFE SKÁL 'Let the Languages Live' Conference in bringing together both our speakers and learners to ensure our traditions, beliefs, ceremonies and cultures are passed on from generation to generation. Kininaskomitin from me to you in continuing this most important and essential work.

– National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

For more than 20 years, we have provided funding to Indigenous-led language, arts and cultural heritage programs. We will expand and deepen our support for Indigenous communities that are working towards cultural revitalization. We will focus on providing all First Nations in B.C. with opportunities for language learning and will expand our funding for arts and cultural heritage programs.

INDIGENOUS-LED REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS

We envision a day when efforts to support cultural revitalization are obsolete because our languages, arts and cultures are being seamlessly passed on from one generation to the next. We fund programs that support the natural transfer of knowledge between the generations.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The Foundation envisions a new cultural centre dedicated to celebrating cultural vitality and facilitating collaboration among diverse communities. This centre will house spaces to create art, learn languages, practice culture, demonstrate and develop new technologies and gather together for shared learning and reciprocity. The centre will showcase Indigenous cultures to the general public, helping to build relationships and increase understanding of and appreciation for Indigenous cultures in B.C.

CULTURAL HUBS

Most of the few fluent speakers of languages Indigenous to B.C. are Elders, and so it is of critical importance to document their language knowledge. The Foundation has demonstrated foresight and innovation through the development of FirstVoices.com, an internationally recognized suite of web-based tools and services designed to support Indigenous people engaged with their languages. The Foundation will continue to update and enhance FirstVoices technology and will fund and train communities to record their irreplaceable language knowledge so that languages are accessible for current and future generations.

ACCESSIBLE FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES



OUR ROLE

GENERATING LONG-TERM SUPPORT

The Foundation is growing a long-term endowment fund to ensure Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage programs continue to thrive for future generations. Sustainable and Indigenous-led funds are needed to resource the hard work communities are doing to rebuild cultural vitality and counter the impacts of generations of colonialism. The Foundation partners with government, organizations, private individuals and the philanthropic sector to generate resources that support strong and vital Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE, PLACES AND PLATFORMS

The Foundation honours Indigenous expertise by supporting specialized professional development that increases the technical competencies needed to rebuild Indigenous cultural systems. The Foundation funds spaces to gather, share and develop networks of support for Indigenous cultural vitality. The Foundation's support for innovative technology platforms has created opportunities for all First Nations to document their language data in a secure and accessible format on [FirstVoices.com](https://www.firstvoices.com).

INCREASING UNDERSTANDING

The Foundation celebrates the diversity and resilience of Indigenous languages, arts and cultural heritage. The Foundation honours the work that is being done by communities and promotes understanding and recognition through telling stories of success. By hearing these stories, the general public can increase their knowledge of Indigenous cultures and engage in reconciliation that supports the rebuilding of cultural systems.

ENABLING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Foundation drives innovation by sponsoring the development of groundbreaking research and state-of-the-art resources to support Indigenous languages, arts and cultural revitalization. The research that we invest in has informed the development of evidence-based programs with proven results. Our research has also helped to influence new policy and legislation grounded in Indigenous perspectives.



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