

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

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FNLC Celebrates the Passing of Bill C-91, *An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages*

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – June 28, 2018) Today, Canada's Governor General provided Bill C-91, *An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages* royal assent, thus passing the bill into Canadian Law.

The FNLC celebrates this historic achievement as a significant first step in taking the urgent action needed to preserve, protect and promote endangered Indigenous languages throughout Canada, and particularly in BC. BC is home to the greatest diversity of Indigenous languages in Canada with more than 50 per cent of all Indigenous languages in the country.

Bill C-91 provides a tangible opportunity for Canada to honour and uphold its commitment to full adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The *UN Declaration*, particularly Article 13, articulates Indigenous Peoples' inherent human right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and person.

"The many Indigenous languages in BC form an intricate web of diversity and culture that holds unique worldviews and knowledges. With the implementation of this legislation and stable investments into community-based revitalization programs we hope to reverse the tide of destruction and loss for the 34 distinct languages, and more than 90 dialects. In addition, colonial laws, policies and doctrines that are driving this destruction must be removed," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "As we move forward, we hope to see an Indigenous Languages Commissioner appointed who will help promote First Nations languages and report on the adequacy of federal funding of First Nations languages initiatives and systemic changes."

"We welcome this significant piece of legislation which places a priority on preserving, promoting and revitalizing Indigenous Languages in Canada", said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit political executive. "Indigenous Languages are the essence and fabric of Indigenous cultures and are fundamental to our survival, dignity and well-being as Indigenous peoples. Language is our inherent right and is central to our cultural and spiritual identities. The passage of Bill C-91 will contribute to our collective efforts to prevent the extinction of the remaining Indigenous languages in Canada".



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“Indigenous languages form the bedrock of our cultures, communities and ways of life. The continued survival of our Indigenous languages means the continued survival of our communities as self-determining and sovereign Indigenous nations,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip. “The transmission and propagation of our Indigenous languages has been critically and intentionally endangered by the actions of Canada. This bill is the first steps along a long road to reconcile and account for Canada’s long history of abuse and oppression.”

The FNLC looks forward to assisting in any way we can to assist in the immediate implementation of this important bill. The FNLC maintains that the implementation of this bill must be aligned with the principles of the *UN Declaration*, and therefore must be done collaboratively, with the full participation of Indigenous peoples, with particular attention paid to the acute needs of the BC region.

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