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Our Living Languages Exhibition WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

The "Our Living Languages" Exhibition, jointly created by the First Peoples' Cultural Council and the Royal BC Museum, has won an "Excellence in Exhibition Competition" award from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). The exhibition is one of only four entries from across the globe to receive the award this year.

"Our Living Languages" is a groundbreaking and unique showcase of Indigenous B.C.'s remarkable linguistic diversity. FPCC developed the story layout and content for the exhibition, in consultation with B.C. First Nations cultural experts.

"By consulting with First Nations community experts, we were able to capture the beauty of our languages and draw

attention to the many amazing community-based language revitalization efforts," says Tracey Herbert, Executive Director at the First Peoples' Cultural Council.

The exhibition respects and acknowledges the legacy of language loss in B.C., but at the same time celebrates the resilience of those languages – and the many people working in their own communities to revitalize them. Visitors have included First Nations people from all corners of the province as well as interested people from around the world.

"This exhibition has been successful on a local level and with international visitors because it tells the story of B.C.'s 34 First

Continued on next page ...

Celebrating **25 years**
of Support for
Indigenous Languages,
Arts and Culture!



A special "tea and tour" for First Nations Elders was held at the exhibition on October 1, 2014. Thirty Elders attended from a variety of Nations and organizations on southern Vancouver Island.

Report on the Status of Languages Shows INCREASE IN LEARNERS, SEMI-FLUENT SPEAKERS



Tracey Herbert, Executive Director at FPCC, holding a copy of the *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2014*. (Photo credit: Gord Kerr of West Coast Photographic)

When the First Peoples' Cultural Council originally published the *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages* in 2010, 8,948 study participants identified as being "semi-fluent." Today, that number has increased by 3,144 speakers to 12,092. The majority of these semi-fluent speakers are under the age of 65, and nearly 30% are under 25.

"We see this increase as a positive trend," says FPCC's Executive Director Tracey Herbert. "It shows that language learning is on the rise amongst First Nations in B.C., and is a reason for optimism about the future of the province's Indigenous languages."

The 2014 report is the result of a comprehensive, multi-year study carried out by FPCC, in which 185 out of 203 communities with a total population of 129,730 were surveyed. Like the original report in 2010, the updated version examined three key variables: speakers, education and resources.

Overall, the study discovered that there are 5,289 fluent speakers of First Nations languages in B.C. Representing just over four percent of the total population,

this number is down from 2010, a decrease that is predictable given the ongoing decline in the number of Elders.

"It's fair to say that the federal government's attempts at assimilation, and in particular the residential school system, are the largest contributors to language loss in B.C.," says Suzanne Gessner, one of the co-authors of the report. "We are losing an entire generation of people who spoke in the language as children."

Fortunately, in addition to the increase in younger learners, some language resources such as digital archives are on the rise. One hundred and seventeen communities – almost twice the number in 2010 – now have access to a **FirstVoices.com** archive of their language. These archives are an invaluable community resource for current learners and future generations.

In other areas, progress is slower. For example, just over half of communities have curriculum materials to teach their languages, and while some community schools have full immersion programming, average language

instruction is just 5.73 hours per week.

"We can see that our efforts are paying off, but there is still a considerable amount of work to be done," says Tracey. "These next few years are critical ones for us. While we still have remaining fluent speakers, it's imperative that we work together to pass on language through community-based programs that work, be they archiving, immersion or mentoring."

Tracey expects that the report will be a useful tool resource for FPCC in its fundraising efforts, as well as an important resource for First Nations communities and language stakeholders throughout B.C. To download the entire report, go to www.fpcc.ca and click on the "Status of Languages Report" icon.

Continued from cover ...

Nations languages from the perspective of its First Nations people," says Tracey.

For those who haven't been able to make it to the exhibition, or who would like to share it with others, elements of the exhibition are now available online. Visit <http://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/articles/our-living-languages/> to take a behind-the-scenes look at the stories and information from the exhibition, including the cradle theatre.



Wa aas Weaving Connects People WITH NUU-CHAH-NULTH HERITAGE



Weavers picking grasses at Fanny Bay.

When Witchita – as Bertha Paull prefers to be called – found a traditional Nuuchah-nulth basket at the side of the road more than four decades ago, it turned out to be what she calls a “serendipitous coincidence.” Finding the basket prompted Witchita to promptly enrol in a local class taught by renowned Nuuchah-nulth weaver Mabel Taylor to learn the little-known art of basket weaving. The class was starting the following week – another lucky coincidence.

As it turned out, the connection to weaving was personal for Witchita. “My mother and grandmother were both weavers, and I didn’t even know,” says Witchita. “My father made my mother quit weaving in her ‘20s to have children.” Witchita’s enthusiasm to learn inspired her mother to take up weaving again, too. “When I went to see my mother, she was

so excited. I was amazed when she added about a half inch to my basket in no time – it took me so long at first.”

Today, Witchita teaches the Wa aas weaving class in Victoria B.C. Funded through FPCC’s *Sharing Traditional Arts Across Generations* program, the class teaches the art of mamook, or making traditional Nuuchah-nulth grass baskets that were once used by whalers to carry himix – sun and windscreen made from rendered deer fat and ground shells.

The baskets are unique to the west coast of North America and many people are unaware of their traditional use or significance. “After contact, we weren’t allowed to whale anymore, but there were still weavers,” explains Witchita. “So the weaving became more decorative – to cover vases, make earrings, that sort of thing.”

The class teaches every aspect of making the baskets, from selecting and harvesting the grasses to choosing a mold, then preparing the grass by cutting and dying it and finally weaving the basket from the base all the way to the lid. “A lot of work goes in. It’s a long process just to get the grass ready.”

Last year’s *Sharing Traditional Arts* grant allowed the class to happen, including a field trip to harvest the two types of grass, which are found in swamplands. According to Witchita, the grasses are getting harder and harder to find as a result of changes to the ecosystem caused by global warming as well as land and water pollution.

“I was able to rent a car and go to Fanny Bay and Toquart Bay to pick the grass with some of the ladies in the class,” says Witchita. “It was such an adventure.”

The class had 30 students last year and 5 are returning this term to create finer pieces, like lids, for their baskets. Students include both First Nations and non-First Nations people of all ages, and in 2014, 3 of the 30 students were men. In addition to teaching the weaving, Witchita incorporates cultural knowledge in the lessons. “I teach them to say all the words in language – the grass names and the tools. Plus we learn a lullaby about weaving.”

In this way, the Wa aas class helps reconnect Nuuchah-nulth people living away from home to their own culture and homeland. It also teaches others about Nuuchah-nulth heritage in a way that is rewarding and fun. “Once you start learning a weaving process, the options are endless,” says Witchita.

Continued on page 5 ...

Mentor-Apprentice Teams

SHARE TIPS FOR SUCCESS

We spoke with three apprentices as their second year in the Mentor-Apprentice program came to a close. Adam Manson, Crystal Tom and Jaskwaan Bedard were asked to share two things:

- What learning strategies are working best for their team, and
- The impact of their language work on the community

The Mentor-Apprentice Program is funded by the New Relationship Trust and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation.

ADAM MANSON AND GARY MANSON



Apprentice Adam Manson, a Hul'q'umi'num teacher at Stz'uminus Community School in Ladysmith, is working with his father Gary. Here's what Adam had to say:

We are following First Peoples' advice to try and stay within the Hul'q'umi'num language and to learn survival phrases. We have fun testing ourselves to see how long we can talk in language. When we get stuck we just laugh, and then we know what we have to work on. Also, we try to keep it relevant – to bring back everyday conversation. When we can say “how are you doing?” and talk on the telephone – those things mean success to us. The majority of people know the ceremonial terms, but the language is dying – the challenge is to be able to use language every day.

I've been working with youth in the community for years – coaching soccer, running youth nights and teaching grade fours and eights in the neighbouring community. So, youth look up to me as a role model, so that makes it cool for them to ask questions and be curious [about the work]. A few have started to text me – others have approached me to talk about it. I hope that when I am more fluent I'll be able to teach them to talk amongst each other too.

CRYSTAL TOM AND DORIS WEGET



From Crystal Tom, who is working with Mentor Doris Weget to learn Gitsenimx:

Language learning strategies that I have used so far with my mentor include learning the survival phrases recommended in the MAP training, starting small and using language in everyday activities like folding clothes, washing dishes or baking. As an example of starting small, when describing pictures, we started by using three to four words in a sentence and then added words and sentences as I became more confident.

At home, I say a prayer with my children before bed every night. The prayer started out small – three lines long – and now it's

10 lines long and I'm working on another prayer to say before we eat. Repetition with me has been key. Involving my children in the process has also helped me grow because they are constantly asking questions.

Within the community, I have encouraged one person to sit with their parent and ask language questions as well as to learn a new word a day. I would love to see more language immersion classes here for our adults who are interested in learning.

“The biggest impact of our language work is the amount of language I bring into my home and teach to my children. They in turn bring this to the schools, and the language teachers there are amazed at the level of competency they have as a result.”

—Jaskwaan Bedard

JASKWAAN BEDARD AND
PRIMROSE ADAMS



From Jaskwaan Bedard, Xaad Kil apprentice who is working with Elder Primrose Adams:

The immersive approach of Mentor-Apprentice works well for myself and my Elder-Mentor, Primrose Adams, or Naanii Bibsy as I call her. This means leaving English behind, putting the pen and paper away and using everyday language in a meaningful way. We also find that the wordless picture books have been extremely helpful, as Naanii talks about what is happening in the pictures from a "Haida" point of view, instead of translating from English. I have successfully transferred this strategy by using drawings of locally relevant activities – such as smoking fish and

gathering seafood – as wordless comic strips. This also works well for us.

The biggest impact of our language work is the amount of language I bring into my home and teach to my children. They in turn bring this to the schools, and the language teachers there are amazed at the level of competency they have as a result. Also, the members of our panel evaluation have seen our successes and progress and are hopeful that the language can survive through this method. They are supportive and have been our biggest cheerleaders in the community.

Continued from page 3 ...

To learn more about the Wa aas weaving class, email Witchita at: witchita13@gmail.com or visit the Wa aas Weavers group on Facebook.

The *Sharing Traditional Arts* program is funded by the New Relationship Trust and the BC Arts Council. The new deadline for all FPCC arts programs is October 5.



A group trip to Toquart Bay to collect grass.

Nuxalk's Youngest Speaker

CONNECTS WITH HIS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE



Clyde Tallio in the *Our Living Languages* film from the exhibition of the same name at the Royal BC Museum.

At 27, Clyde Tallio is the youngest fluent speaker of his Nuxalk language. Born and raised in Bella Coola, Clyde was around the language as a child, but didn't begin learning to speak it until he completed high school at 17, when he started working with Elders in a more or less immersive and ongoing process. In 2011, Nuxalk hereditary chiefs and Elders granted Clyde the status of *alkw* – a legally recognized position that gives him the authority to act as speaker for his community chiefs and to conduct ceremony on their behalf.

In a recent interview with FPCC, Clyde shared his story, and some advice for others striving to reconnect with their cultures and languages. Clyde is an FPCC Advisory Committee member representing the Nuxalk language.

Q. Can you describe your learning process and some of the people who taught you?

A. When I started taking my first language class, I soon realized it wasn't going to give me what I needed, so I tagged

along to classes with Elders Clarence and Beatrice Elliot – language teachers who have recently passed on. They thought I was brave, so they said, “if you are serious, come see us every day after school.” Beatrice was raised with language and Clarence was sent to residential school. They were very strong people and able to teach in a traditional format; that was our success.

Also, they brought me to other, older speakers, such as Nunanta – Beatrice's mother – who was born and raised in a longhouse in our village. I developed a great relationship with Nunanta; when I met her I blew her away by responding in Nuxalk and she never spoke in English to me after that. Other Elders I worked with are my aunties Amma, who is still with us at 94, and Daisy Tallio.

My uncle Willie, Amma's husband, instilled the seeds when I was young. He would tell us stories and gave us our traditional names. My aunty Annie initiated me to be speaker of the house when my uncle took up the Chieftainship. This allowed me to learn potlatch language and core spiritual beliefs – how culture and language all fit together. I was surrounded by Elders – good and healthy people.

Q. What advice do you give to others who are working to learn their language?

A. I believe we can create the [learning] foundations for ourselves. Too often we use western culture to try to revitalize our culture. I never went to university ... I suggest that you learn your language and traditions first. A western education can come later.

Also, we need to create the environment for ourselves. I went to Clarence and Beatrice's because it was a safe place. Going on the land was a big part – taking Elders for drives, asking names of mountains. You need to get out on the land, go with your Elders on daily chores – develop a relationship. Naturally, we come from a mentoring community. Instead of the western idea of three Rs, practice the three Ls: look, listen and love.

Finally, I would say that we need to support each other. Too often, our bright lights get turned down. Realizing how much suffering we've had in our community, our ancestral teachings may be why we succeed.

Q. What are you working on now?

A. I'm looking at repatriation of our material culture from around the world. We used to have 5,000 masks and hundreds of songs and months of dancing ... now we just have a handful of each. I'm trying to bring them home – to pull together all of our information and determine what makes us function as Nuxalk people.

It's an exciting time. We don't need to isolate anymore – we can do things more publicly. We are creating signs and totem poles – we have a radio station. This is more successful. We are hands-on people. We need to connect people to their lands and mountains and show them that it's a privilege and also a responsibility – and to encourage them to live full and happy lives by doing cultural things and returning to a cultural calendar.

FPCC Releases Report ON CULTURAL PROTOCOLS



One of the breakout groups discusses existing protocol models and tools.

The First Peoples' Cultural Council is pleased to announce the release of the ***Proceedings of the Cultural Protocols @ the Arts Forum***, hosted at the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, British Columbia in March 2014.

The Cultural Protocols and the Arts Forum brought together 70 Indigenous artists, cultural people, and allies in Penticton, B.C. to facilitate meaningful and solutions-focused discussion about how cultural protocols influence, inform, challenge and support artistic practice.

"The goal for the forum was to move toward a clearer understanding and assertion of our protocols – both within our communities and for our neighbours and the broader society," says Cathi Charles Wherry, Arts Program Manager at FPCC. "This document is meant to inspire the continued conversation, and the ongoing generation of ideas, resources and tools."

Participants came from across Canada, with B.C. having the strongest representation.



Visit www.fpcc.ca/about-us/Publications to download a copy of the report.

Adams Lake Band Play

ENGAGES YOUTH IN THE ARTS, PROMOTES CULTURE



The cast of *Coyote and the Salmon Brothers* at the Adams River Salmon Run opening ceremony.

Last year, FPCC piloted the *Aboriginal Youth Engaged in the Arts Program*, a new funding initiative designed to encourage more young people to participate in artistic and creative activities, and to connect them to their cultures. This pilot program was so successful that it has now become an annual program offered by FPCC.

We received 59 applications and, of those, we were able to fund 37 community projects in a variety of artistic disciplines – from visual to performing arts, music, dance and literature. Support was focused on initiatives that connected youth with established artists through community-

based workshops and collaborations.

One of the projects funded was a play conceptualized and created by the Adams Lake Indian Band in Chase, B.C. Spearheaded by the Band's Community Facility Director, Denise Michel, the project was an ambitious undertaking that saw participation from 126 community members, 77 of whom were youth between the ages of 15 and 24.

"We decided to develop a play to present at the annual Adams River salmon run opening ceremony," says Denise. "We wanted to bring more of a First Nations focus to the event." In the hopes of engaging as many youth as possible,

Denise organized several community workshops led by local artists that would eventually lead to the development and production of the play.

"In the first workshop we developed the story. We had [Secwepemc storyteller] Ralph McBryan come, and he told the story of coyote and the salmon brothers to the group," says Denise. The story tells the tale of a hungry coyote who awakens from a winter slumber and goes in pursuit of something to eat. He eventually makes a deal with the four salmon brothers – sockeye, Chinook, pink and coho – that gets him a grand feast and establishes the first sockeye run for the river.

“In the first workshop we developed the story. We had [Secwepemc storyteller] Ralph McBryan come, and he told the story of coyote and the salmon brothers to the group.”

—Denise Michel

Based on that workshop, emerging playwright Laura Michel-Evans, who is an actor with a degree in drama, wrote the script. Subsequent workshops included:

- An airbrushing workshop with visual artist Isha Jules (visual artist) to create the backdrop / scenes for the play
- A singing and drumming workshop where Shane Camille taught 3 songs
- A rap workshop led by Tekawus where children wrote songs and made background sounds to accompany them
- Print-making with Tania Willard, where the salmon brothers puppets were made by carving their shapes on rubber and then printing them on cardboard

One of the biggest challenges for the project was getting youth to be comfortable with some of the more performance-oriented roles. “The air brushing workshop was the best attended,” says Denise. “We had a lot of youth artists come out for that.”

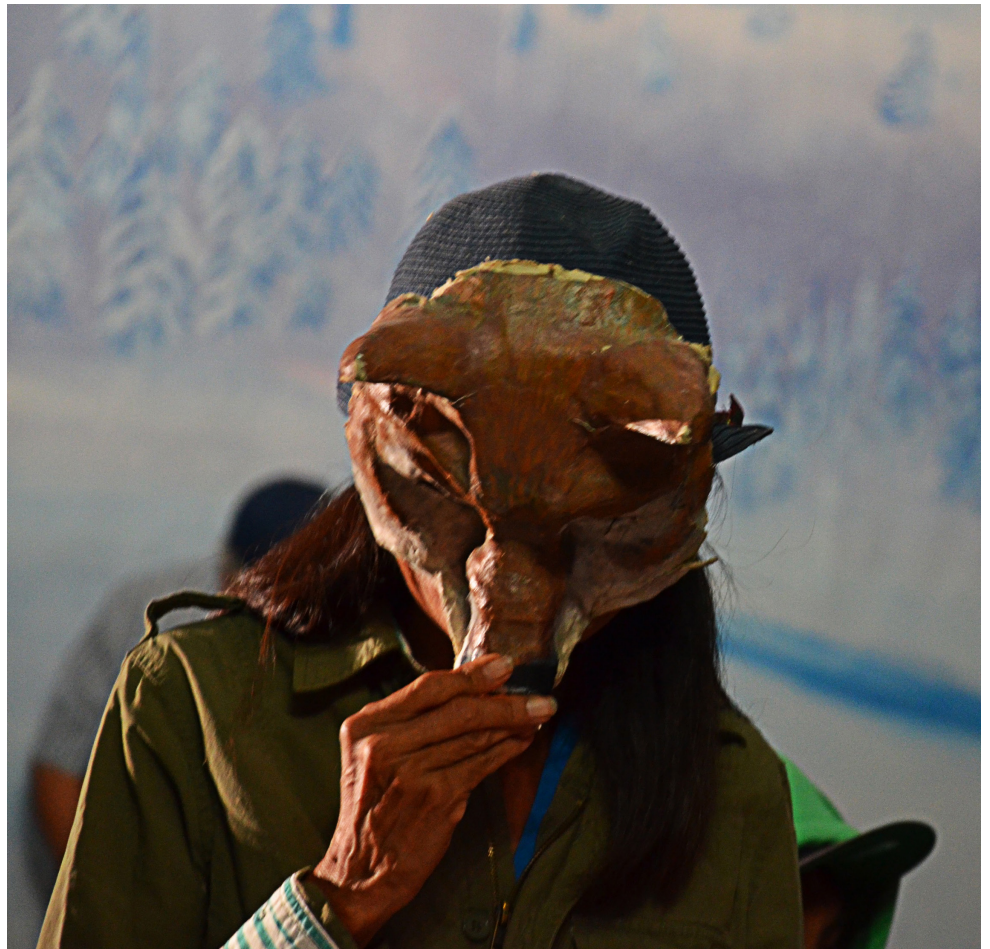
After two practice performances, the play was presented on October 5, 2014 for the salmon run opening. “It really worked out in the end,” says Denise. “The impact was great and the youth actors gained a lot of confidence.” For Denise, who had never done anything like it before, developing the play was both

challenging and rewarding. “I’d do it again and next time it would be a lot easier – I learned a lot!”

After note: Sadly, Blaine Sampson, who played the role of Coyote in the play, passed away on March 12, 2015. He is missed by his family, friends and community.

The Aboriginal Youth Engaged in the Arts program is funded with \$200,000 in new funds from the BC Arts Council. The new deadline for all FPCC arts programs is October 5.

Mary Dennis as Fox.



Staff and Board Changes

AT THE FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL COUNCIL

DR. LORNA WILLIAMS RETIRES

It was with fond memories and profound gratitude that we said goodbye to Dr. Lorna Williams Wanosts'a7, who retired from her position as Chair of FPCC in December 2014. Lorna joined the FPCC board in December 2008 and was elected to the position of Chair in June 2009. Over the course of her term on our Board, Lorna worked tirelessly to steer the organization's development and champion language and cultural revitalization.

"We wish Lorna all the best in her future pursuits and, from all of us at FPCC, a deep thank you for her guidance over the past six years," says FPCC Executive Director Tracey Herbert. "She has been a consistent and strong voice for the people and communities we serve."



WELCOME TO MARLENE ERICKSON: NEW CHAIR



Assuming the position of Chair with FPCC is Marlene Erickson, an FPCC Board member for more than four years and a long-time champion of First Nations cultures and oral histories.

Marlene is Yinka Dene/Dakelh from Nak'azdli (Fort St. James) and is a member of the Lasilyu (Frog) clan. In addition to her new role as Chair with FPCC, she is the Director of Aboriginal Education at the College of New Caledonia (CNC).

"I am truly honoured and excited to take on this leadership role," says Marlene. "Language and cultural revitalization are very important for our people, and I plan to continue what Lorna and those before

her have done to guide FPCC in its work advocating for arts and language funding for our B.C. communities."

In her ongoing efforts to revitalize culture, Marlene has been involved in ongoing efforts to develop Aboriginal curriculum content and Aboriginal policy at CNC, focusing on Yinka Dene culture and oral history. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from Western Washington University and a Master of Education degree from Simon Fraser University.

MEET KYLA: A NEW FACE IN THE ARTS PROGRAM



A member of the Squamish Nation and the oldest of four siblings, Kyla Schorneck has completed her business degree and worked at several Aboriginal organizations. She studied, worked and travelled in several countries before joining the FPCC team as the Arts Program Assistant.

“Working in this position, I realized how many arts opportunities are available to Aboriginal people and the amazing things people are doing to engage their communities in the arts,” says Kyla.

“It has even inspired me to start using chalk pastel and acrylic paint again. I look forward to meeting more artists, attending local events and hearing more about the inspirational things Aboriginal people are doing in B.C.”

Welcome Kyla!



FPCC staff at a recent professional development workshop (Photo credit: Jessica Wood)

BOARD AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Board and Advisory members gather together for a photo at the 2014 Annual General Meeting in Victoria, B.C.

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 T'łalis Mike Willie, Kwakwaka
 Bernice Touchie, Nuuchaanuł
 Lena Collins, Oowekyala
 YAAHLDAJII Gary P. Russ, Xaad Kil / Xaaydaa Kil
 (Haida)

VACANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE POSITIONS (BY LANGUAGE GROUP)

Anishnaubemowin
 Dene K'e
 Ktunaxa
 She shashishalhem
 Secwepemctsin
 Skixs
 Xenaksialakala / Xa''isalakala

Advisory Committee members are listed with the language group they represent (list current as of June 2015).

FIRST PEOPLES' news

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