

NEWS RELEASE



FIRST PEOPLES'
CULTURAL COUNCIL



ROYAL BC
MUSEUM

February 12, 2015

Indigenous languages speak volumes at Royal BC Museum

VICTORIA, BC – Join the Royal BC Museum for a panel discussion on the value of learning, teaching and sharing Indigenous languages for **UNESCO's** International Mother Language Day, Saturday, Feb 21.

The Importance of Indigenous Languages includes a visit to the Royal BC Museum's *Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in BC* exhibition, examining the diversity of First Nations languages in our province, and a panel discussion featuring two prominent language educators and advocates.

The event is co-presented by the **Royal BC Museum and the First Peoples' Cultural Council**.

With 34 Indigenous languages spoken, British Columbia is the most language-diverse province in Canada. A recent report on the status of BC First Nations languages shows that while the number of people learning their mother language is at a record high, the dwindling numbers of fluent speakers continues to put languages at risk.

People can participate in the discussion, featuring Dr Lorna Williams, OBC, Professor Emeritus at UVic and recent Chair of the **First Peoples' Cultural Council**, and Dr. Peter Jacobs, faculty member in the UVic Department of Linguistics where he is part of a team researching adults learning their Indigenous language.

The discussion will explore topics such as the social and personal costs of losing a language, putting a value on the knowledge systems contained in Indigenous languages and translating the messages contained in the original languages of British Columbia about the history, plants, animals and geographic features that shape our province.

Dr. Williams, a member of **the Lil'wat** First Nation of Mount Currie, is an accomplished educator working on the issues of Indigenous language revitalization, curriculum design, the effects of colonization on learning and Indigenous ways of knowing.

Dr. Jacobs is of both **Skwxwu7mesh (Squamish)** and **Kwagwł (Kwakiutl)** ancestry. Prior to joining the faculty at UVic, he worked as a linguist for the Squamish Nation and was editor-in-chief of the first Squamish-English dictionary.

UNESCO International Mother Language Day at the Royal BC Museum: *The Importance of Indigenous Languages* runs from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$16 each (10 per cent discount for members) and are available online at www.royalbcmuseum.ca or in person at the Royal BC Museum box office.

Check out <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/events/international-mother-languages-day> for up-to-date event details.

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

About the First Peoples' Cultural Council

The First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) is a BC Crown corporation with the mandate to support First Nations in their efforts to revitalize their languages, arts, cultures and heritage. The FPCC is supported by legislations: the **First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act** and **serves: 203 BC First Nations;** 34 languages and 61 dialects; First Nations arts and culture organizations;

Aboriginal education organizations. For more information, please visit www.fpcc.ca

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