1. INTRODUCTION

British Columbia (B.C.) is home to 60 percent of the First Nations languages in Canada with 34 languages and at least 60 dialects. This diverse wealth of languages is at risk of being lost due to the current state of the languages in the province, where fluent speakers make up only 5.1% of the total population, and the vast majority of them are Elders (Amrhein et al 2010). While many communities have mobilized to revitalize their languages, the revitalization work is often not coordinated between communities due to various challenges including the great diversity of languages, dialects and communities, the vast geographic territories they cover and the remote locations of many communities. Because of the lack of coordinated efforts, revitalization work in different communities sharing the same language may overlap in goals and expected outcomes, with the result that resources are not used as efficiently as they could be.

In B.C., as in the rest of Canada, there is insufficient financial support available for communities to fund their revitalization efforts. The success of language revitalization depends on using the limited resources efficiently and effectively. To address the scarcity of resources and to move forward in this situation of great dialect and geographic diversity, First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) has developed a language collaboration model along with resource and planning tools for B.C. First Nations communities.

This B.C. model is called the “Language Authority and Language Plan Development” program (also known as the Language Authority model) and has been in operation through

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1. The First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) is a crown agency that was formed in 1990. FPCC provides funding and support for the revitalization and maintenance of B.C. Aboriginal arts, culture and language, as well as advice to leadership on initiatives, programs and services related to Aboriginal heritage.
FPCC since 2007. Within this Language Authority model, all communities sharing the same language are asked to come together to collaborate in spite of geographical challenges and political, dialectal and community differences. The communities work as a language authority team, sharing resources, knowledge, funding, resource people, infrastructure, and expertise. In essence, these communities join together to form a new larger community dedicated to the revitalization of their language with the aim to develop more strategic, long-term and coordinated approaches to language and culture revitalization.

FPCC has developed several resource tools based on best practices from B.C. First Nations communities and well-established principles of language planning and language revitalization (e.g., Fishman 1991, Hinton and Hale 2001, Ignace 1998). Here, we outline three of the main resource tools: a visual model of a Language Authority, a 3-phase Language Authority development plan and “8 Steps to Community Language Revitalization”. These resources are outlined in detail in A Guide to Language Policy and Planning for B.C. First Nations Communities (Franks and Gessner 2013). As communities have been developing their language authorities over the last five years, their annual reports have yielded a number of best practices which we discuss in section 5. Section 6 concludes.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the language authorities whose experiences have contributed to this paper. At present, there are eleven language authorities funded through FPCC in operation in B.C. These are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Language Authorities in British Columbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secwepemc Cultural Education Society Language Authority</td>
<td>Eastern, Western &amp; Northern Secwepemc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meteltwécw-kət es Knucwentwécw-kət</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre Language Authority</td>
<td>Upper Stó:lō- Halq’eméylem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper St’at’imc Language, Culture and Education Society</td>
<td>St’at’imc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuu-chah-nulth Language Authority</td>
<td>Nuuaan̓uʔičə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 8 Dane-zaa Language Authority</td>
<td>Dane-zaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanagan Nation Language Authority</td>
<td>Nsyilxc̱in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xaad Kihlgaa Hl Suu Society Language Authority</td>
<td>Ḫaad Kil / Ḫaaydaa Kil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola Tribal Association Language Authority</td>
<td>Nleʔkepmxci’c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsilhqot’in National Government Language Authority</td>
<td>Tsilhqot’in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSANEC School Board Language Authority</td>
<td>SENĆOTEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tältän Language Authority</td>
<td>Tältän</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We continue to advocate for increased funding with the goal to establish a language authority for each of B.C.’s 34 languages.

2. Support for FPCC’s Language Authority and Language Plan Development program is provided by the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR), the New Relationship Trust (NRT) and First Peoples’ Cultural Foundation (http://www.fpcf.ca/). As of 2013, the program is called the “Language Revitalization Planning Program”.

3. The guide is available on FPCC’s website at: http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Programs/Language_Policy_Guide.aspx

4. We are also grateful to Xway’Waat (Deanna Daniels), former Language Programs Manager at FPCC, whose work contributed to the development of these resources.
2. VISUAL MODEL OF A LANGUAGE AUTHORITY

When communities feel like there is a race against time to revitalize their language, language planning can seem like a monumental task. During the process of establishing a language authority, it is important that the wider community is informed about the planning process and has a general understanding of what exactly a language authority is. For these reasons, we have found it helpful to have a visual model that provides a snapshot of the main goals of a language authority along with the types of activities that could take place under the umbrella of an authority. A language authority can provide this to community members as a way of explaining the model. This visual model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Visual Model of a Language Authority

This visual model is represented in five levels. Starting from the top, the first level shows that a language authority and planning team oversees, supports and advocates for all language related activity, language issues and language initiatives. The second level reminds language communities that their language is owned by their people and therefore speakers and community members (assisted by the Language Authority) are in control and responsible for what happens with the language. The third level emphasizes that collaboration, inclusion (of all dialects and communities) and consultation are crucial components of a language authority. By working together, progress will be achieved, and money, resources and time will be used more efficiently. The fourth level highlights that language is a part of all domains of daily life, including but not limited to family, home, child care, education, health, community, social events, spirituality, dancing and songs, arts, culture and food. The fifth level provides ideas for the many different types of pro-
jects that could be involved in language revitalization. These projects are a part of what the language authority team oversees, supports, advocates for and carries out.

Once a language authority is established, the language planning work can begin. The next section outlines a road map that language authorities can use to guide them through the planning process.

3. THREE-PHASE LANGUAGE AUTHORITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Language Authority Development Plan was developed in three phases based on the initial funding for the project, which was provided for a three-year pilot program. A language authority and a strategic plan for the language can realistically be developed within a three year period, but it is important to note that implementing the plan and carrying out projects will last much longer than three years. This is intended to be a general plan to help guide communities and is presented in draft form since it is continuously evolving based on the experiences of and input from communities. Each language community is unique and language authorities may adapt the plan based on their own needs. The three-phase plan is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Three-phase Language Authority Development Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE 1 (YEAR 1) GET READY</th>
<th>PHASE 2 (YEAR 2) GET SET, GO</th>
<th>PHASE 3 (YEAR 3) GOING!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONSULT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a preliminary interim language team/committee</td>
<td>• Encourage community participation and mobilization</td>
<td>• Mobilize more community Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gather community support</td>
<td>• Consult with community stakeholders regularly</td>
<td>• Consult with community stakeholders regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet with community language stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess the community language environment &amp; attitudes.</td>
<td>• Encourage positive attitudes towards all language revitalization work.</td>
<td>• Continue your work with a positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a plan for dealing with objections &amp; criticism.</td>
<td>• Include everyone, even those who were not supportive at first.</td>
<td>• Invite more community members to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand historical situations and different points of view</td>
<td>• Respect all opinions</td>
<td>• Promote inclusion and positive thinking towards language revitalization work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLAN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-Plan: set-up, prepare, schedule, plan meetings, budget etc.</td>
<td>• Identify funding sources</td>
<td>• Review and revise short-term and long-term plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a vision of language revitalization</td>
<td>• Create short-term and long-term plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess the language status - Community Language Needs Assessment</td>
<td>• Re-assess the language status - update Community Language Needs Assessment</td>
<td>• Review community language needs &amp; priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research previous/ongoing work on the language</td>
<td>• Research all work done on the language</td>
<td>• Evaluate the success of ongoing projects, revise and re-plan if necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This plan is a draft, and as the program evolves we will add details and finalize the three phases.
Each of the three phases includes the common elements consult, plan, assess, work and community language environment.

**Phase 1 (Year 1): Get Ready** involves the initial stages of consultation. This comprises several components: organizing an interim committee to start the process; gathering community support, meeting with stakeholders, pre-planning, and creating a vision for the language; assessing the status of the language, identifying needs and direction, carrying out research on current and previous language work; designating longer term team members, identifying the responsibilities and scope of the committee; and, identifying, assessing and addressing the community language environment including attitudes and historical issues around language. For example, Canada’s Residential School system has left a legacy of intergenerational loss related to language and attitudes towards language learning and retention. These issues need to be considered and addressed.

**Phase 2 (Year 2): Get Set, Go** involves more community mobilization, and a continuation of consultation with stakeholders; securing sustainable funding and finalizing a strategic long- and short-term plan for the language; re-assessing and carrying out more research on the language; reviewing priorities with the language authority team and stakeholders; and, planning and implementing projects based on the community’s priorities. The environment element for this stage will depend on the work done in phase 1 to identify, assess and address the community language environment including attitudes and historical issues around language. It is important to keep the language environment in mind throughout all language revitalization work.

In **Phase 3 (Year 3): Going!**, the language authority continues to mobilize and consult with community members, reviewing and revising short- and long-term plans, reviewing community needs and priorities and evaluating the success of projects so far; implements projects based on the strategic plans developed in phases 1 and 2 and meets regularly.
with the language authority team to plan more projects and move towards the goals set in phase 1. As before, the environment element for this stage will depend on the work done in phases 1 and 2. As the language authority work proceeds, assessment and evaluation becomes a much bigger part of the process. In order to determine whether goals are being met, an objective evaluation of progress must be made.

The Three-phase Language Authority Development Plan can provide a general road map for the language authority team. The specific details of the process is laid out in *A Guide to Language Policy and Planning for B.C. First Nations Communities* (Franks and Gessner 2013).

4. EIGHT STEPS TO COMMUNITY LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

An extension of Language Authority and Language Plan Development involves *implementation* of the plans and projects for community language revitalization. Following a cycle of the eight major steps we have identified (repeated many times, over many years) will assist communities in the implementation process. We have created a visual model of these eight steps which is illustrated in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: 8 Steps to Community Language Revitalization**
The centre of our visual model shows that First Nations language and First Nations language speakers should be at the centre of all work towards language revitalization. Political, personal and historical issues must be worked through, and the focus of all language revitalization work should be towards reviving the language, creating more speakers, and increasing language use in the community.

Since each community and language is different, the ideas we provide are intended to be suggestions for language authority members to reflect upon their own community’s situation, needs and goals. The eight steps are summarized below.

**Step 1: Language Status**

Knowing the status of your language helps you decide what your community’s language needs are. Use Language Needs Assessments\(^6\) and surveys to find out about the status of your language. Before starting revitalization projects, find out:

- How many people speak or use the language in your community?
- How often is the language used?
- What language resources are there in your community?
  - people (speakers, teachers, semi-fluent speakers, linguists);
  - materials (dictionaries/books, teaching materials, recordings).

Surveys can be used to find out: the number of speakers; the age of fluent speakers, semi-fluent speakers and age groups that don’t speak at all yet; when and where the language is used; attitudes towards the language; who wants to learn the language; and, who can teach the language.

**Step 2: Community Support**

Community support is vital. Find ways to encourage support and to mobilize your community:

- Have meetings with Elders and local government.
- Contact speakers to get them interested.
- Talk to community members to gather support.

It takes only a group of committed community members to get the ball rolling. Once the idea of language revitalization is sparked, more and more community members will take interest.

The key team might be small at first, but it can do a lot to begin. For example:

- Learn the language. Learn as much as possible from the resources available.
- Make the language visible and prominent in the community.

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\(^6\) Language Needs Assessments can be completed online at FPCC’s website: http://maps.fphlcc.ca/fphlcc/user/register/LNA
UNIT 1: LOCATING LANGUAGE

- Find out what documentation exists.
- Identify fluent speakers.
- Develop learning materials that others can use to learn the language themselves.
- Try to develop community interest through meetings and language gatherings.
- Incorporate the assistance of a linguist if necessary to document the language, to help with interpretation of existing documents, and to develop learning materials. Or, obtain the assistance of a linguist to train community members to do this work themselves.
- Speak only in the language when you see other speakers.
- Speak at home with your children and families.

Step 3: Research

Research involves looking inward and outward. If work on your language has already been done, it could serve as a good starting point for new projects. Discover what museums and archives have stored away. Over the years, many different projects may have been done. For example, missionaries or linguists may have done documentation work, and families may have documents, knowledge, recordings or projects in their possession. Check what neighbouring communities (other dialects of the same language and closely related languages) have done. Seek out other people working in language revitalization, such as staff from programs already in operation in your community or in other communities (language nests, immersion programs, language classes, documentation work, etc.), community language champions, and especially Elders.

Look to other parts of the world where language revitalization has been successful. For example, Hawaii, New Zealand (Māori), Ireland, Spain and California have had great successes in different areas of language revitalization. Use other successful projects as models and choose methods that would work well for your First Nations language.

Step 4: Language Goals

Based on the status of your language, community support and research, identify your language community priorities. Priorities might include creating fluent speakers, improving the fluency of semi-fluent speakers, training teachers in the language and getting parents to learn the language and speak to their children in their homes.

Once the priorities have been identified, decide on some language goals. Goals might include:

- To increase the capacity and number of language teachers;
- To create new speakers of your First Nations language and to improve the fluency of semi-fluent speakers.
Set realistic and reachable goals. For example, it is not realistic to expect that everyone will learn to speak the language perfectly within a short time period. It is more realistic to have smaller, reachable goals. For example, you may start by targeting a particular age group, such as establishing a preschool language nest to immerse young learners.

**Step 5: Planning**

After you have set some language revitalization goals, decide what kind of projects and approach will best help to achieve your goals. Ask yourself:

- What will the projects look like?
- What is needed to make projects a reality?
- Where will each project take place?
- What staff and organizers are needed? What training will they need?
- What kind of curriculum or learning materials will be used?
- How can the projects be maintained and become self-sustaining?

Planning a project requires a key team of motivated people. Details to be considered include: budget, project participants, language resources, language learners, Elders, staff, language environment and project logistics.

**Step 6: Implement Language Projects**

Language projects could include the following:

- Early childhood language nests: immersion daycares modelled after home-life in the language;
- Master-apprentice programs: fluent speakers are paired with motivated learners to be immersed in the language and live life in the language. This is an intensive language learning experience and requires high levels of motivation and commitment;
- Language and culture immersion camps: opportunities for First Nations families, Elders, parents, youth and children to be immersed in the language through traditional cultural activities;
- Language immersion programs in schools: language and culture incorporated into the school day;
- Teachers/instructor training: facilitate certification of speakers of the language who can then teach the language;
- Documentation through audio and video recordings (songs, stories, conversations);
- FirstVoices archiving: document the language on firstvoices.com;
- Orthography development: writing systems can be modified or standardized;
UNIT 1: LOCATING LANGUAGE

- Newsletters in the language celebrating and promoting language revitalization projects;
- Events, sports events, meetings and celebrations held in the language to encourage participation in language revitalization projects;
- Educational materials development: curriculum development, learning materials, dictionaries; and
- Multi-media materials development: DVD, CD, or online resources.

Step 7: Use the Language More

Increase the domains where language is used. Encourage community members to use the language daily, including:

- At home (parents and children, whole families);
- At social gatherings;
- In the schools, daycares and other early childhood education facilities;
- During traditional activities, ceremonies, games, feasts and celebrations;
- In local government, used by leadership at all community events;
- On signs and street signs; and
- In media (newsletters, radio, TV).

Continue using the language on a daily basis. Encourage language use in homes and communities as much as possible for it to thrive. Encourage project participants to feel proud that they have gained special knowledge that they can share with others. Remind project participants that they can use the language at school, in the community and at home.

Involve the whole community. There are numerous ways to do this.

- Project participants can become teachers. They can involve friends and family by teaching them what they have learned.
- Project participants can gather with other speakers to continue using the language.
- Project participants can make an agreement to speak only the language when they see each other on a daily basis.
- Parents can speak in the language with their children on a daily basis.
- Community gatherings, feast and celebrations can be held in the language.
- The language can be used in local media, in government, in schools, at home, at social gatherings, on signage, at sports events, for place names, at the store, etc.
Step 8: Keep the Language Alive

Create long-term plans. Aspects of the plans may include the following ideas.

- Have a cultural place to go where the language can be spoken and learned.
- Encourage the spread of the language outside of specific revitalization projects.
- Continue to promote a positive and proud attitude about the language and culture.
- Create a need to use the language. For example, if the language is used on signs and at community gatherings, people will have a stronger desire to learn and use it.
- Celebrate the language!
- Work to secure an ongoing budget.

In addition, language authorities should carry out community policy-making. Develop a community policy, declaration or mandate around the language and in the language. Officially use the language in schools, daycares, local government, on signage and at community gatherings.

Step 8 is not the last step or the end of the process. The eight steps to community language revitalization are part of a continuous cycle. At this point, it is necessary to reassess and plan to plan again. Reflect on your revitalization projects. Assess the status of the language regularly. Measure your success by evaluating what worked and what didn’t work. There are always opportunities for improvement.

5. BEST PRACTICES FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

As language authorities work through the eight steps of revitalization as part of their planning process, they regularly report back to FPCC on their progress along with challenges they have encountered along the way. These best practices were collected from community reports on Language Authority and Planning submitted to FPCC. They were compiled for the purpose of distribution to all communities involved in the Language Authority and Planning program to provide support and encouragement to tackle common challenges. The best practices identified by our communities include several important areas: community inclusion, representation, roles and responsibilities, communication, orthography, and teachers and training.

Community inclusion:

- Include and consult with all the nations with the same language, even if they are not officially part of the organization (e.g. where nations are part of the same language but not necessarily part of the same tribal association).
- Whether or not they are participating, all bands receive copies of all resources developed. All bands also have access to language resources.
UNIT 1: LOCATING LANGUAGE

• If a band is not officially affiliated, individual community members should still be encouraged to participate.

• Take fairness and equality into consideration at every point in planning and implementation.

• Consider that political differences within the tribe may make communication and collaboration challenging.

• Consider that logistical issues such as road conditions may not allow many community members to attend the meetings as scheduled.

• Dialect differences need to be dealt with. Communities must work towards a way to share resources and overcome differences, such as by using shared templates.

• Some communities are ahead of others with respect to language revitalization activities. Therefore, sharing is important.

**Representation:**

• Allow each band or nation to decide how they will choose representatives.

• Peer selection of committee members works well to avoid political intervention and nepotism.

**Roles and responsibilities:**

• The meaning and value of the term “Language Authority” needs to be clear to all community members.

• Develop a clear understanding of the role of the Language Authority.

• Local governments’ roles in language revitalization also need to be clearly defined.

• Decide on clear responsibilities of individuals involved.

• Create a new name for your team. “Language Authority’ may carry negative connotations.

**Communication:**

• Have representatives from each area consult with their community members and stakeholders, and then bring the information to a central meeting when it is feasible.

• Communicate with Elders directly and personally, not through bands and administration.

• Use personal contact when collecting information for language surveys.

• Meeting directly with the people involved in language revitalization in the communities is effective for gathering information, assessing needs and setting priorities.
- Communication may be difficult due to geographic separation. Use technology such as teleconferencing, internet and Skype when in-person meetings are not feasible.

**Orthography:**
- Revisit orthography issues. Find ways to overcome problems with differing opinions.
- If possible, agree upon one writing system for all the dialects, but do not get hung up on this. It is ok to use more than one system.

**Teachers and training:**
- Teachers need curriculum. Both curriculum development and standardization is important.
- Immersion-based programs work best for creating new speakers.
- Work towards training more teachers to overcome shortages.

Although language planning work can be challenging, once the process is established, our language authorities have expressed satisfaction in having a framework and clear plan to guide their ongoing revitalization efforts.

6. CONCLUSION

The Language Authority model and the associated resource tools were created so that language community members could have a framework to apply to their community’s unique language revitalization needs, in the hope that resources are shared and used efficiently. Currently, eleven different language communities in B.C. effectively use this model, and the resource tools have been shared and used beyond B.C.’s borders in the Yukon, Ontario and Hawaii. It is our hope that more community members, practitioners, politicians, researchers and language revitalization experts will gain understanding of the importance of collaboration and find it useful to apply this model in their communities which will in turn lead to more successful language revitalization.

REFERENCES


