

# čišaaʔath



## Language Strategy 2020-2030 Adopted March 3, 2020



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## Introduction:

The Tseshaht Language Strategy 2020-2030 provides direction for the Tseshaht Administration, Language Team, and Community's actions and decisions over the next 10 years to support the activities of our Nation for our language. Grounded in community input and research, the strategy outlines the path forward for our community towards holding up and strengthening our language.

Our strategy is a living document to be reviewed once a year and includes background information on the state of our language, a brief history of Tseshaht's language efforts to date, lessons learned and recommendations from other indigenous communities, our planning process, vision and goals, and next steps.

We acknowledge all of the hard work and all of the people that created such a strong foundation for our community to move forward towards our language vision. We have many language resources including audio recordings, video, books, FirstVoices that are essential to all the work over the next 10 years and beyond.

**“You know values, teachings, but language gives you permission to be yourself and be proud” – community voice**

## Our language is important because...



## Status of our language:

c'íšaaʔaṭḥ is one of the communities who speaks the Barkley Dialect of the Nuučaañuṭ language that is a part of the Wakashan language family.

According to the First Peoples Cultural Council's (FPCC) Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages (2018), the nuučaañuṭ language reported a population of 7,895 with 1.4% fluent speakers, 6.3% semi-speakers, and 10.1% active learners.

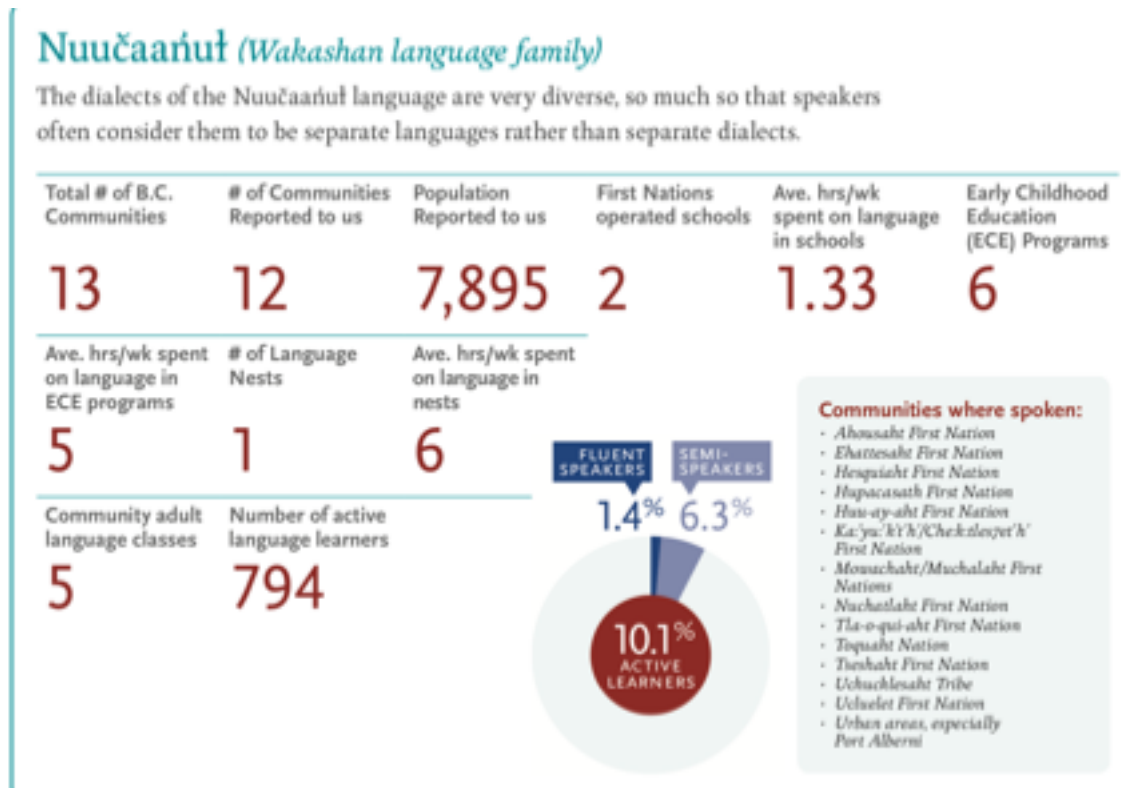


Figure 1: First Peoples' Cultural Council (2018), Report on the Status of B.C First Nations Languages. P.53.



## Strategic Approaches to Revitalization Efforts:

### Fishman Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Joshua Fishman, who studied endangered languages around the world developed an 8-stage scale (1 being the strongest like English, 8 being the most endangered) that measures the health of a language and the recommended actions. The scale helps us think of the best most strategic approaches based on where our language is on the scale. Many Indigenous communities use this scale to assist their language planning efforts.

According to this framework our c’išaa?atḥ language is in the most endangered category at a stage 7 and 8. Our efforts should focus on documentation, developing second-language speakers, supporting relationships between our speakers and learners, and bringing language into the home.

|   | Description  | Revitalization Efforts  |
|---|--|---|
| 8 | <p><b><i>The most threatened stage</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language is rarely spoken</li> <li>• No new speakers being created</li> <li>• Few learners</li> <li>• No children have been raised in the language in 2+ generations</li> <li>• Few isolated elderly speakers left</li> </ul>                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Document as much as possible</li> <li>2) Work with existing elders and/or reconstruct language from documentation</li> </ol>  |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All remaining speakers are over child-bearing age</li> <li>• No new children are being raised in the language</li> <li>• Some learners</li> <li>• Language is still heard at cultural events</li> <li>• There is a culturally active population of speakers, mostly over the age of 60</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Create second-language speakers of child-bearing age who will become teachers and start and lead programs</li> <li>2) Elders are an active resource<br/>Strengthening bonds between existing speakers and learners.<br/>Create opportunities for learners to speak and hear the language.</li> <li>3) Bring the language into the home</li> </ol> |

Figure 2: Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

## Lessons and Recommendations from other Nations:

**“Learn from others, don’t reinvent the wheel”** – community voice

We looked to other indigenous communities who are successfully creating speakers and strengthening their languages.

### **Summary of Nsyilx (Interior Salish), Kanyen’keha, SENĆOTEN ((WSÁNEĆ),**

- Develop adult language speakers - adult speakers will create other speakers and start other programs
- 1800 – 2000 hours of immersion to go from beginner level to intermediate speakers.
- Programs of up to 12 students maximum
- Commitment of learners
- Support for learners and speakers
- Use proven method such as curriculum (Paul Creek), Where Are Your Keys, Mentor-Apprentice

### NSYILX (Interior Salish – Revelstoke to Northern Washington)

- Language House, dedicated just for their language
- Four-year part-time Language Immersion Program using Paul Creek Curriculum (Spokane Salish School). Focused on creating adult speakers, 1800 hours to create intermediate speakers.
- Students are supported to attend the program.  
[www.thelanguagehouse.ca](http://www.thelanguagehouse.ca)

### Kanyen’keha (Mowhawk, 6 Nations – Ontario, Quebec, northern New York)

- Began in 1999
- Two-year full-time adult immersion program “we do not teach language we create speakers”
- 1000 classroom hours per year total of 2000 hours for the full program. Runs from 8:30am – 3:00pm
- Limited to 12 students, band members are supported to attend the program

### SENĆOTEN (WSÁNEĆ - Tsartlip, Tseycum, and Tsawout)

- Created a new generation of teachers with SENĆOTEN language proficiency program – Mentor Apprentice and Bachelor of Education
- Created a SENĆOTEN immersion elementary school
- New children are being raised in the language in the school and in the home

## History of language efforts:

Many resources have been developed through the work of Kathy Robinson and Caroline Little who gave us a strong foundation. Along with them, many skilled individuals have worked throughout the years developing curriculum, printed books, video, audio, and language classes that Tseshaht is able to draw from and use.

- The development of our community school Haahuupayak and the curriculum developed and delivered by Kathy and Caroline among others has generated generations of passionate language learners.
- Tseshaht has prioritized the documentation of our remaining fluent speakers over the past 10 years and has built an extensive archive on FirstVoices including 1100 words and 1100 phrases.
- Barkley Sound Dialect Curriculum
- Tseshaht Word and Phrases book and CD
- nuučaañuñic ciciqi Christmas Carols in nuučaañuñ
- Youtube language lessons
- Language classes – in community, at North Island College,
- And many more we are discovering as we go through the Tseshaht Archives, this is not a complete list.

## Planning process:

Honouring the input our community has already provided through the work done on the DRAFT 2017 Comprehensive Community Plan that outlines our community's vision and goals for our language (page 18), approximately 257 community members helped to form this plan. We used the vision and 5 goals outlined for language as the foundation for the strategy and checked in with our community if these were still true and received input on how we should get there.

Through one-on-one interviews, a pre-band meeting session, elders lunch, input at language classes, engagement at the Halloween party, and online and in-person surveys we connected with approximately 100 community members who confirmed that the vision and goals outlined were still true and through their input further prioritized the goals and provided important input on how to get there.

**Our strategy is a living document and to be reviewed once a year. We will continue to connect with our community to build and plan forward.**

## Opportunities and Partnerships

### Indigenous Languages Legislation

Bill C-91, an Act respecting Indigenous language's, became law on June 21, 2019. The legislation was co-developed by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the three national indigenous organizations: The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Metis Nation of Canada (MNC).  
(<http://www.fpcc.ca/language/Legislation>)

### Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada outlines five main points associated with our languages in their report Call to Action. These invoke our government to: acknowledge our birthright to our languages; legislate an Aboriginal Languages Act; employ a position in government that advocates for our languages; remove fees associated with re-claiming traditional names; and ask that educational institutions provide post-secondary opportunities in our languages (2015).  
([http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf))

### The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) outlines actions for indigenous languages in Articles 13, 14, and 16 and that include the right to: strengthen our languages and maintain our original names for ourselves and our territories; communities having power and representation over our languages in institutions such as schools and government; and have access to and be able to develop our own mass communication in our language (2008).  
([https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf))

### Potential Partnerships:

- Quuquatsa Language Society
- Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
- University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Island University, North Island College,
- School District 70
- City of Port Alberni
- Other Nations nationally and internationally: Nsyilx (Interior Salish), Kanyen'keha, SENĆOTEN ((WSÁNEĆ), Skwxwú7mesh



**Vision: To have Tseshaht of all ages speaking and understanding our Tseshaht Language.**



## How we are going to get there: Goals and Actions

The goals outlined below are in order of priority as identified by the community.

**Goal 1: We have language resources to support learners and teachers.**

- Use and translate a proven immersion-based language curriculum drawing on all our Tseshaht resources
- Document and record fluent speakers
- Continue to develop on-line learning tools
- Continue to develop and distribute hard copy resources
- Translate and create language games and activities

**Goal 2: We are building a fluent community**

- Develop and implement immersion programs using proven methods
- Host language camps/retreats
- Develop language nests/daycare
- Explore the development of an immersion house
- Language classes in the schools from K-12 and in Universities
- Inspire all generations to speak and understand

**Goal 3: Our fluent speakers are supported to share and teach**

- Use the people we have who are willing and able to share their time and knowledge, get support from speakers from other Nations.
- Encourage the administration and schools to have elders in residence

**Goal 4: Our families are encouraged and supported to use language in their homes.**

- Support a language community where learners and speakers can practice and use language
- Provide family language learning opportunities

Goal 5: We encourage the use of language in everything we do.

- Promote the use of language at all community functions
- Support language in our community and the broader community to make language visible
- Offer language activities throughout the community
- Support youth to work with speakers to create new words

**“Language is healing and empowering; we need to do it our own way, need to express it, hearing prayers is our language – may not understand them, but my spirit does / it is deep in all of us – gets stronger by learning more” – community voice**

Next steps:

- Use the strategy as guidance from our community to plan the Tseshaht language programming into the future.
- Take the specific suggestions and ideas the community has provided through this process and through other planning processes such as the Comprehensive Community Planning to develop an implementation strategy.
- We will review and update the language strategy every year, this is a living document

