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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services

### **FIRSTVOICES FUNDING ENSURES LANGUAGES WILL CONTINUE**

VICTORIA – The Province has provided \$250,000 in funding to support the electronic preservation of B.C. First Nations languages, announced Olga Ilich, Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services.

“The FirstVoices project is vital to ensure that First Nations languages continue to thrive in British Columbia,” said Ilich. “Through digital technology, children will have the opportunity to learn the language of their elders for many generations to come.”

The project provides necessary support to digitally archive First Nations languages, some of which are currently known only among a few First Nations elders. Interactive teaching tools will then be accessed online by First Nations or other persons interested in learning the traditional languages.

“This funding will help us keep our online technology ahead of the growing demand for the archiving and accessing of First Nations languages,” said Tyrone McNeil, chair of the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council. “This technology is a very important tool as we support First Nations in documenting and revitalizing their Aboriginal languages.”

FirstVoices will target 18 First Nations communities and provide community-based B.C. First Nations language teams with support, nearly doubling the number of communities benefiting from language renewal.

“This ministry funding is a good example of the partnering that can result from the strategic investments of the New Relationship Trust,” said Cliff Fregin, chief executive officer of the New Relationship Trust. “In this way, we can continue to help enhance the technology of FirstVoices in service to First Nations throughout the province.”

Network BC, a division of Labour and Citizens' Services dedicated to bridging the digital divide in British Columbia, provided the funding in support of FirstVoices. It was matched by a grant from the New Relationship Trust, which has also designated an additional \$250,000 in funding for 2009 and 2010. The New Relationship Trust supports capacity-building for First Nations to effectively participate in land and resource management and social programs for their communities.

Network BC will continue to work with First Nations, federal and community partners to further develop connectivity in First Nations communities and bridge the digital divide.

The Province of British Columbia is building a new relationship with First Nations, founded on the principles of mutual respect, reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal rights.

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