

National Indian Brotherhood

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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**Assembly of First Nations
19th Annual General Assembly
Toronto, Ontario
June 23 – 25, 1998**

Resolution No. 35/98

SUBJECT: First Nation Languages

WHEREAS the survival of our languages is essential to our cultural survival as Peoples; and

WHEREAS the last thirty years have seen the most drastic decline in First Nation languages in Canada, to the point where all but three are on the point of extinction with few or no child speakers; and

WHEREAS drastic and immediate steps must be taken to begin to reverse the accelerating pace of First Nation language loss and to ensure the survival of First Nation languages facing extinction; and

WHEREAS experience has shown that immersion education, where it has been fully implemented (amongst the Mohawks, Hawaiians, Maoris, Shuswap, Blackfoot and Inuit) produces large numbers of child speakers and high rates of school completion, and is the fastest and most efficient means of reversing language loss;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chiefs-in-Assembly hereby declare a State of Emergency respecting our First Nation languages, and call upon the government of Canada to act immediately to recognize, officially and legally, the First Nation languages as part

Moved by:


**Chief Robert Levy
Big Cove First Nation**

Seconded by:

**Chief Lydia Hwitsum
Cowichan First Nation**

Carried

Certified copy of a
Resolution made June 25,
1998 at Toronto, Ontario



Phil Fontaine
National Chief

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of the official languages of Canada, and to make a commitment to provide the resources necessary to reverse First Nation language loss and to prevent the extinction of our languages; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Government of Canada, in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations, establish a national First Nation Languages Foundation as a vehicle for the promotion of our languages, in keeping with the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the aforesaid national institution be mandated, utilizing our own First Nation educators and educational institutions, to facilitate the conduct of research and documentation of First Nations languages, the development of First Nation language immersion curricula, the training of First Nation language immersion teachers, and the promotion of First Nation languages in our communities and in mainstream education institutions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the Chiefs-in-Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to allocate sufficient resources to enable the established Chiefs' Committee on Languages to conduct its work in keeping with its mandate.



Phil Fontaine
National Chief