LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION POLE
In recognition of the UN International Year of Indigenous Languages

2018 – 19, CEDAR, OIL PAINT, OTHER MATERIALS
About This Project

First Nations Education Foundation, in recognition of the importance of Indigenous language and culture and the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, has commissioned a Language Revitalization pole from renowned Nuu-chah-nulth carver, Tim Paul.

FNEF collaborates with First Nations governments to develop language revitalization programs for at-risk Indigenous dialects using contemporary educational practices and innovative, interactive technology. With a language revitalization pilot project already underway in partnership with the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ First Nation, FNEF wants to raise awareness about the state of Aboriginal languages in North America.

British Columbia will serve as a fitting home for the Language Revitalization Pole as within its borders exist 34 Indigenous languages, making up over two thirds of the Indigenous languages spoken in Canada.

"Oral history, songs, dances, ceremony, and art were and continue to be the vehicle for transmitting history, knowledge and sovereign rights from generation to generation. Through storytelling we are also reminded of our family ties to neighbouring tribes and Nations," says Nuu-chah-nulth artist Tim Paul.

The stories and themes featured on the pole have been chosen by the master carver. They honour ten relatives of the Nuu-chah-nulth people: sky, sun, moon, mountains, rivers, lakes, land, sea, wind and stars. There is also an eleventh relative, earthquake, which is sent to teach humility and remind human beings of the all-encompassing power of the Creator.
"When we use our language," Tim Paul explains, "it is not just another way of saying something; the principles of our culture are embedded in the language and many words simply cannot be translated. It is only by understanding our language can we unlock the most important values, principles, and concepts of who we are."

Carving the Language Revitalization Pole will not only bring attention to the threats facing Indigenous languages, but will create content for the language pilot project underway in Yuulu'il?ath community dialect. As carving begins, documentary cameras will follow the entire process – with footage to later be turned into Virtual Reality language lessons on the First Nations Education Foundation platform.

About Filmmaker Dale Devost

Dale Devost has been behind a camera for over 30 years. His programs have been broadcast on CBC, APTN, and Knowledge Network and he has produced numerous documentaries including two projects that feature master carver Tim Paul: Dr. George Clutesi Curriculum Project and New Moon a Gift for the Spirit.

Devost has been running his own production company out of his home on Hornby Island since 1985, with a focus on telling stories of cross-cultural understanding, arts, and the environment.

For more information about the Pole and language revitalization please visit: www.fnef.ca
Our 10 Relatives

This pole honours ten important relatives of the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

Moon (hupał), Stars (tatuus), River (čaʔak) and Earthquake (ťaqiiƛ) will also be depicted on the back and sides of the pole.

1. hinaayił, Sky Chief: oversees all.

2. hupat, Sun

3. yuʔi, Wind

4. tiickin, Thunderbird: has the power to keep human arrogance in check – a few flaps of his wings shakes everything up and new paths are revealed.

5. nučii, Mountain Chief

6. ūʔuk, Lakes: Everything in life comes from the fresh waters.

7. nisma, Land: Represented by the Grizzly bear, land has the ultimate power of bringing everyone together.

8. ḥawitasum, Sea Chief: Especially important to the Nuu-chah-nulth people who have always made their living by the sea, he controls all resources in the sea.
About Master Carver Tim Paul

Tim Paul was born into the house ?a?ihiʔtaqm?at, part of the Hesquiaht Tribe of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations. In his early days he was taught and nurtured by family elders in accordance with ancient principles of family cultural teachings, but like all Aboriginal children of his generation was removed from his family home and taken to an Indian Residential School where he was forbidden to speak his language, practise his culture, and worse. He relied heavily on his cultural education in his healing and began carving in 1975. He went on to produce prints, silkscreen designs, masks, sculptures and ceremonial paraphernalia as well as poles.

Tim Paul is contributing his vast knowledge and understanding of tradition and history to this project by carefully selecting appropriate Nuu-chah-nulth symbols to tell the story of language revitalization for his Nation.

As one of Canada’s preeminent artists, his work can be seen all over the world, including at the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, at the Museum of Art and Design in New York, in Exeter, England, on the grounds of Stanley Park in Vancouver, at the Vancouver International Airport, and most notably in Auckland, New Zealand where his Nuu-chah-nulth-style pole was given by the People of British Columbia to the city of Auckland in celebration of the 1990 Commonwealth Games.

In addition to carving, Tim Paul has developed cultural curriculum for the Port Alberni School Board and held positions at the Royal BC Museum. He has also been the subject of several documentary films about his life and works and was awarded the BC Creative Achievement Award for First Nations Art in 2010.