

First Nations Languages in British Columbia – Revised June 2019

Family ¹	Language Name ²	Other Names ³	Dialects ⁴	# ⁵	Communities Where Spoken ⁶
ALGONQUIAN ⁷	1. Anishinaabemowin	Anishnaabemowin Saulteau Ojibway ~ Ojibwe Plains Ojibway	Saulteau	1	Saulteau First Nations
ALGONQUIAN	2. Nēhiyawēwin	ᑭᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ Cree Plains Cree	Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree)	1	Blueberry River First Nations Fort Nelson First Nation Saulteau First Nations West Moberly First Nations Many urban areas, especially Vancouver
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE ⁸	3. Dakelh	CB ^u Carrier Taculli ~ Takulie	Nak'albun-Dzinghubun/ Stuart-Trembleur Lake (Tl'azt'en, Yekooche, Nak'azdli) Fraser-Nechakoh (Cheslatta, Sdelakoh, Nadleh, Saik'uz, Lheidli) Blackwater (Lhk'acho, Lhoosk'uz, Ndazko, Lhtakoh)	12	Cheslatta Carrier Nation Lheidli-T'enneh First Nation Lhoosk'uz Dene Nation Lhtako Dene Nation Nadleh Whut'en First Nation Nak'azdli Whut'en Nazko First Nation Saik'uz First Nation Stellat'en First Nation Takla Lake First Nation Tl'azt'en Nation Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation Ulkatcho First Nation Yekooche First Nation Urban areas, especially Prince George and Quesnel

¹ Please see the appendix for definitions of family, language and dialect.

² The "Language Names" are those used on *First Peoples' Language Map of British Columbia* (<http://fp-maps.ca>) and were compiled in consultation with First Nations communities.

³ The "Other Names" are names by which the language is known, today or in the past. Some of these names may no longer be in use and may not be considered acceptable by communities but it is useful to include them in order to assist with the location of language resources which may have used these alternate names.

⁴ Only dialects spoken in B.C. are included here. These are estimates based on our current knowledge. There may be variation in the spelling of dialect names and in the number of dialects for each language. We encourage people who share dialects of the same language to collaborate on language reclamation, revitalization and maintenance.

⁵ This refers to the estimated number of dialects.

⁶ This lists the main communities where a language is spoken but all languages may be spoken in other towns and cities across the province.

⁷ The Algonquian family is part of the larger Algic language family.

⁸ The Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit or Na-Dene family is part of the larger Dené-Yeniseian language family.

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ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	4. Dane-Ḷaa	ᑕᑭᑭ Dane-Ḷaa Ḷááǵé? Beaver Dunne-Ḷa	Blueberry River Doig River Halfway River Prophet River West Moberly Lake	5	Blueberry River First Nations Doig River First Nation Halfway River First Nation Prophet River First Nation Saulteau First Nations West Moberly First Nations
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	5. Danezāǵé'	Kaska Kaska Dena	Lower Post Moose Lake	2	Daylu Dena Council Dease River First Nation Liard First Nation
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	6. Dene K'é	Dene K'eh Slavey Dene ~ Dené Dené Tha' ~ Dháh Dene Zhatié Acha'otinne	South Slavey	1	Fort Nelson First Nation
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	7. Nedut'en / Witsuwit'en	Babine ~ Lake Babine Nadot'en Nat'oot'en Wet'suwet'en Babine-Witsuwit'en Bulkley Valley/Lakes District Language	Nedut'en Witsuwit'en	2	Cheslatta Carrier Nation Hagwilget Village Council Lake Babine Nation Nee-Tahi-Buhn Indian Band Skin Tyee Nation Takla Lake First Nation Tsil Kaz Koh (Burns Lake) Wet'suwet'en Nation Witset First Nation
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	8. Southern Tutchone	Tutchone	Southern Tutchone	1	Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN)
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	9. Tāttān	Tahltan Didene k'eh Nahanni	Iskut Telegraph Creek/Dease Lake	2	Iskut Nation Tahltan Nation The village of Dease Lake
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	10. Tse'khene	Tsek'ene Tsek'ehne Sekani Sékanais	Kwadacha McLeod Lake Tsay Keh Dene	3	Kwadacha Nation McLeod Lake Indian Band Tsay Keh Dene Nation

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ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	11. Tsilhqot'in	Chilcotin Tsilhqut'in Tzilkotin	Tsilhqot'in	1	?Esdilagh T'esqox T'etinqox Tsi Deldel Ulkatcho First Nation Xeni Gwet'in Yunesit'in Urban areas, especially Williams Lake
ATHABASKAN- EYAK-TLINGIT or NA-DENE	12. Lingít	Łingít Tlingit Inland Tlingit	Inland Tlingit ~ Inland Lingít	1	Taku River Tlingit First Nation
KTUNAXA	13. Ktunaxa	Kootenay Kootenai	Upper Ktunaxa Lower Ktunaxa	2	yaqan nu?kiy (Lower Kootenay Band) ?akin'kum?asnuq?i?it (Tobacco Plains Indian Band) ?akisq'nuq (Akisq'nuq First Nation) ?aqam (St. Mary's Indian Band) Urban areas, especially Cranbrook and Nelson
SALISHAN	14. Éy7á7juuthem	Island Comox Mainland Comox Sliammon Comox-Sliammon	Q'ómoχ ^w s Éy7á7juuthem ~ ?ay?ajúθəm	2	Homalco First Nation Klahoose First Nation K'omoks First Nation Sliammon First Nation Urban areas, especially Courtenay and Powell River

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SALISHAN	15. Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem / hə́h̓qəmiḡəḡ	Hul'q'umi'num' (Island) Halq'eméylem (Upriver) ~ Halkomelem hə́h̓qəmiḡəḡ (Downriver)	Hul'q'umi'num' Halq'eméylem hə́h̓qəmiḡəḡ	3	Aitchelitz Band BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin) Chawathil First Nation Cheam First Nation Chehalis Indian Band Cowichan Tribes Halalt First Nation Katzie First Nation Kwantlen First Nation Kwaw-kwaw-aplit First Nation Kwikwetlem First Nation Lake Cowichan First Nation Leq'a:mel First Nation Lyackson First Nation MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat First Nation) Matsqui First Nation Penelakut Tribe Peters Band Popkum First Nation Qayqayt First Nation Qualicum First Nation Scia'new (Beecher Bay) Scowlitz First Nation Seabird Island Band Shxwhá:y Village Shxw'owhamel First Nation Skawahlook First Nation Skowkale First Nation Skwah First Nation Snaw-naw-as First Nation Snuneymuxw First Nation Soowahlie Indian Band Squiala First Nation Stz'uminus First Nation Sumas First Nation Tsawwassen First Nation Tsleil-Waututh Nation Tzeachten First Nation Union Bar Band xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Yakweakwoose Band Yale First Nation Urban areas, including the Metro Vancouver area, Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Nanaimo

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SALISHAN	16. Nteʔkepmxcín	Thompson Nlaka'pamux Nlha7kápmx	Lytton Merritt Nicola Valley Spuzzum	4	Ashcroft Indian Band Boothroyd Band Boston Bar First Nation Coldwater Indian Band Cook's Ferry Indian Band Kanaka Bar Indian Band Lower Nicola Indian Band Lytton First Nation Nicomen Indian Band Nooaitch Indian Band Oregon Jack Creek Band Shackan Indian Band Siska Indian Band Skuppah Indian Band Spuzzum First Nation Urban areas, especially Merritt
SALISHAN	17. Nsyilxcən	Okanagan	Northern Sinixt (Lakes) Upper Nicola	3	Lower Similkameen Indian Band Okanagan Indian Band Osoyoos Indian Band Penticton Indian Band Upper Nicola Band Upper Similkameen Indian Band Westbank First Nation Urban areas, especially Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton and Osoyoos
SALISHAN	18. Nuxalk	Bella Coola Nass	Nuxalk	1	Nuxalk First Nation

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SALISHAN	19. Secwepemctsin	Shuswap Secwepemc	Eastern Western Northern	3	Esk'etemc First Nation Kenpésq't (Shuswap Indian Band) Llenlenéy'ten (High Bar First Nation) Pelltíq't (Whispering Pines / Clinton) Sexqeltqín (Adams Lake Indian Band) Simpcw First Nation Sk'atsin (Neskonlith Indian Band) Skeetchestn First Nation Skwlax (Little Shuswap Lake) Splatsin First Nation St'uxwtéws (Bonaparte Indian Band) Stswécem'c (Canoe Creek Band) T'éxel'c (Williams Lake Indian Band) Tk'emlúps (Kamloops Indian Band) Tsq'éscen (Canim Lake Band) Xats'uul First Nations (Soda Creek) Urban areas, especially Kamloops and Salmon Arm
SALISHAN	20. SENĆŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke	Northern Straits Salish	SENĆŦEN Malchosen Lekwungen Semiahmoo T'Sou-ke	5	BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin) MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Scia'new (Beecher Bay) SEMYOME (Semiahmoo) Songhees Nation SŦÁUTŦ (Tsaout) SXIMEŁEŁ (Esquimalt) T'Sou-ke Nation ŦJŦŦEŁP (Tsartlip) ŦSIKEM (Tseycum) Urban areas, especially Victoria
SALISHAN	21. She shashishalhem	Sechelt sháshishálem	She shashishalhem	1	shíshálh Nation The town of Sechelt
SALISHAN	22. Skwxwú7mesh sníchim	Squamish	Skwxwú7mesh sníchim	1	Squamish Nation Urban areas, especially in Squamish, North Vancouver and West Vancouver

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SALISHAN	23. Státimcets	Ucwalmícwts Státimc Lillooet Statimc Stl'at'imx Stl'at'imc Sł'ał'imxəc Stlatiumh Slatlemuk	Státimcets (Upper; Fountain) Ucwalmícwts (Lower; Mount Currie)	2	Líl'wat Nation N'Quatqua First Nations Samahquam Nation Sekw'el'was (Cayoose Creek Band) Skatin Nations T'it'q'et Ts'kw'aylaxw First Nation Tsal'alh (Seton Lake Band) Xa'xtsa (Douglas First Nation) Xaxli'p Xwísten (Bridge River Indian Band)
TSIMSHIANIC	24. Gitsenimx	Gitsanimx Gitksan Gitxsan Gitksen	Gaanimx (Eastern) Geets'imx (Western)	2	Anspayaxw Gitanmaax Gitanyow Gitsegukla Gitwangak Sik-e-Dakh Urban areas, especially Terrace and Prince Rupert
TSIMSHIANIC	25. Nisga'a	Nisga'a Nishga Niska' Nisk'a'	Nisga'a	1	Gingolx Village Government Gitlaxt'aamiks Village Government Laxgalts'ap Village Government Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw Urban areas, especially Terrace, Prince Rupert and Vancouver
TSIMSHIANIC	26. Sgüüxs	Klemtu Southern Tsimshian	Sgüüxs	1	Kitasoo / Xai'xais (Klemtu)
TSIMSHIANIC	27. Smalgyax	Coast Tsimshian Tsimshian	Smalgyax	1	Gitga'at Nation Gitxaala Nation Kitselas First Nation Kitsumkalum Lax Kw'alaams Band Metlakatla First Nation Urban areas, especially Terrace and Prince Rupert
WAKASHAN	28. diitiid?aa?tx	Ditidaht Nitinat ~ Nitinaht Ditidaht-Pacheedaht	diitiid?aa?tx paapaačidq	2	Ditidaht First Nation Lake Cowichan First Nation Pacheedaht First Nation

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WAKASHAN	29. Haíʔzaqv̄la	Híʔzaqv̄la Hailhzaqv̄la Haílhzaqv̄la Heiltsuk Heiltsukv Heiltsukv̄la Bella Bella	Haíʔzaqv̄la ~ Híʔzaqv̄la (Bella Bella) Xaiʔxais ~ ǂíǂís (Klemtu)	2	Heiltsuk Nation (Bella Bella) Kitasoo / Xaiʔxais (Klemtu)
WAKASHAN	30. Kwákw̄ala	Kwakwakaʔwakw Kwakiutl	Bakʔwamkʔala Gúʔsala Gwawaenuk Kwákw̄ala Liǂʔw̄ala Nakʔwala Tʔatʔasikʔw̄ala	7	Daʔnaxdaʔxw First Nation Dzawadaʔenuxw First Nation Gwaʔsala-ʔNakwaxdaʔxw Nations Gwawaʔenuxw Kʔomoks First Nation Kwakiutl Band Council Kwiakah First Nation Kwikwasutʔinuxw Haxwaʔmis Ławitʔsis (Tlowitsis) Nation Mamalilikulla-QweʔQwaʔSotʔEm Band ʔNamǂis First Nation Quatsino First Nation Tlatlasikwala First Nation Wei Wai Kai First Nation Wei Wai Kum First Nation Urban areas, especially Port Hardy and Campbell River

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WAKASHAN	31. nuučaahut	Nuu-chah-nulth Nootka ⁹ Nootkans Tahkaht	Northern: Chicklisaht Kyuquot Ehattlesaht Nuchatlaht Mowachaht Muchalaht Central: Hesquiaht Ahousaht Tla-o-qui-aht Southern: Ucluelet Toquaht Tseshaht Huu-ay-aht Uchucklesit Hupachasath	15	Ahousaht First Nation Ehattlesaht First Nation Hesquiaht First Nation Hupacasath First Nation Huu-ay-aht First Nation Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tlles7et'h' First Nation Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations Nuchatlaht First Nation Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation Toquaht Nation Tseshaht First Nation Uchucklesaht Tribe Ucluelet First Nation Urban areas, especially Port Alberni
WAKASHAN	32. 'Wuikala	Oowekyala 'Uikala Oweek'ala Oweke(e)no	'Wuikala	1	Wuikinuxv Nation (Rivers Inlet)
WAKASHAN	33. X̱enaksialak'ala / X̱a'isla'kala	Haisla Kitimat Kitlope Northern Kwakiutl	X̱enaksialak'ala (Kitimaat) X̱a'isla'kala (Kitlope)	2	Haisla Nation Urban areas, especially Kitimat
X̱AAD KIL / X̱AAYDAA KIL	34. X̱aad Kil / X̱aaydaa Kil	Haida	X̱aad Kil (Masset) X̱aaydaa Kil (Skidegate)	2	Old Massett Village Council Skidegate Band Council
Total	34 languages	–	95 dialects	95	–

⁹ This is an outdated name which has been replaced by nuučaahut or Nuu-chah-nulth. We have included it for reference purposes for people who may want to look for older resources that could be listed under this name.

Summary

- There are **7** distinct language families in British Columbia.
- There are **34** First Nations languages indigenous to B.C.
- In addition, **Michif**, the language of the Métis people, is spoken in B.C. There are also many other Indigenous languages from other places which are now spoken in B.C.
- The trade language (pidgin/creole) **Chinuk Wawa** (Chinook Jargon) was also spoken in B.C in the past. To our knowledge there are no remaining speakers of Chinuk Wawa in B.C. but there are learners.
- Sleeping languages include **Nicola, Pentlatch, Tāgizi Dene (Tagish)** and **Tsetsaut (Wetah)**.
- This is not a permanent, fixed list. Just like our living languages, this is a living list which is updated every four years. If you have suggestions for changes, please contact us: info@fpcc.ca

APPENDIX: Definitions

English is used as an example to explain the terms, but these terms are relevant to *all* languages.

LANGUAGE

A language is a system of communication used by a particular nation or people. Languages include one or more different dialects.

Example: English is a language.

DIALECT

Dialects are varieties of a language that differ based on geographical region or social group. Each dialect has differences that make it unique. There might be differences in pronunciation, in words used for certain things, in sentence structure or even in the meaning of certain words. But dialects of the same language are **mutually intelligible**. This means that speakers of one variety can understand speakers of another variety and vice versa. This is the main way to tell the difference between a dialect and a language. If speakers can understand each other, in spite of differences in their speech, they are speaking dialects of the same language.

Examples: British English, Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English, etc. are some examples of dialects of English from different geographical regions. Even though there are differences, we (speakers of Canadian English) can understand speakers of British English (and other English dialects) and they can understand us. Our dialects are mutually intelligible so they are dialects of the same language, English.

Before colonization, we know that speakers of First Nations languages in B.C. tended to be familiar with other dialects of their language and it was even common to be multilingual, speaking several different languages. We encourage people who share dialects of the same language to collaborate on language reclamation, revitalization and maintenance.

LANGUAGE FAMILY

All languages change over time. A community might start with one language but some members of that community might move to a different place. After a long period of time passes, there will be changes in the way people in the two places speak which results in different dialects of the same language. There might be so many changes over time that the dialects may no longer be mutually intelligible. This means they have become different enough to be considered different languages. All languages that come from a common ancestor language are related to each other in the same **language family**. We can figure out which languages are related to each other because their grammars share similarities. Language families may also be divided into subfamilies based on shared characteristics.

Example: English is in the Germanic language family, related to languages like German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and others. The Germanic language family is part of an even bigger language family called the Indo-European language family.

Example family tree of a language family with languages and dialects:

