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## **FIRST VOICES - PROTECTING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE**

WHITEHORSE – The Han, Southern Tutchone and Tagish languages are being revitalized and protected through an innovative, on-line approach that becomes accessible by the public today.

FirstVoices, a native language computer database and web-based teaching and development tool, has been tailored by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Kwanlin Dun and Carcross/Tagish First Nations. Each First Nation provided a live, interactive demonstration on how to utilize their individual web sites at the Fireside Room of the Yukon Inn this morning.

“Without initiatives like FirstVoices, indigenous languages and cultural knowledge are at risk of disappearing forever,” Premier Dennis Fentie said. “Now we can utilize FirstVoices to assist communities in the preservation and revitalization of their languages with sound, images and videos.”

“Engaging First Nations students in the classroom is one of the first steps to increasing student success,” Education Minister John Edzerza said. “FirstVoices will play an important role in creating a more culturally relevant curriculum in Yukon schools, and it will increase accessibility and learning opportunities for everyone.”

An agreement was signed with the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation of British Columbia and the Yukon government in December last year for the three First Nations to develop their web sites, and the departments of Education and the Executive Council Office each contributed \$75,000 to the project.

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Contact:

Peter Carr  
Cabinet Communications Advisor  
(867) 667-8688  
[peter.carr@gov.yk.ca](mailto:peter.carr@gov.yk.ca)

Samantha McCulloch  
Communications Analyst  
(867) 667-5341  
[srmccull@gov.yk.ca](mailto:srmccull@gov.yk.ca)