



**First Nations Language Keepers Gathering
Elders Panel**

**Elder William Ratfoot, Elder Hartland Goodtrack, Elder Melvina Eagle,
Elder Freda O'Watch, Elder Peter Nippi, Elder Margaret Reynolds
Moderator: Milton Tootoosis**

Title: The Creator gave us our Languages

Biography: Milton was raised on the Poundmaker First Nation with nêhiyawêwin as his first language. He is part of the last generation of fluent Cree speakers in his community. As a nêhiyaw speaker, Tootoosis is very concerned about language retention and has become a strong advocate for Indigenous language and cultural revitalization. With 30 years' experience in Indigenous policy development at all government levels, Milton has served on numerous projects with a focused attention to skills development, attraction and recruitment of human beings, enhancing capacity building, effective leadership, governance and community economic development/cultural tourism within Indigenous communities. Tootoosis has been the Director of Livelihood for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner for the past decade and serves as an elected Headman for the Poundmaker Cree Nation. He resides in Saskatoon, SK.

Biography: Elder William Ratfoot is Plains Cree from Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

Biography: Elder Hartland Goodtrack is Lakota from the Wood Mountain First Nation.

Biography: Elder Melvina Eagle is Dakota from the Whitecap Dakota First Nation.

Biography: Elder Freda O'Watch is Nakoda from Carry the Kettle First Nation.

Biography: Elder Peter Nippi is Saulteaux from the Kinistin Saulteaux Nation.

Biography: Elder Margaret Reynolds is Dene from the English River First Nation.

Abstract: First Nations Elders have always shared that in order to fully understand our First Nations cultures; we need to understand our First Nations languages. In this increasingly modern world, English has taken over our communities and schools. The Elders will discuss how First Nations languages are tied to culture and our ways of life and inspire our people to put our languages first.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this panel, participants will:

- Begin to understand why we need to put our languages first.