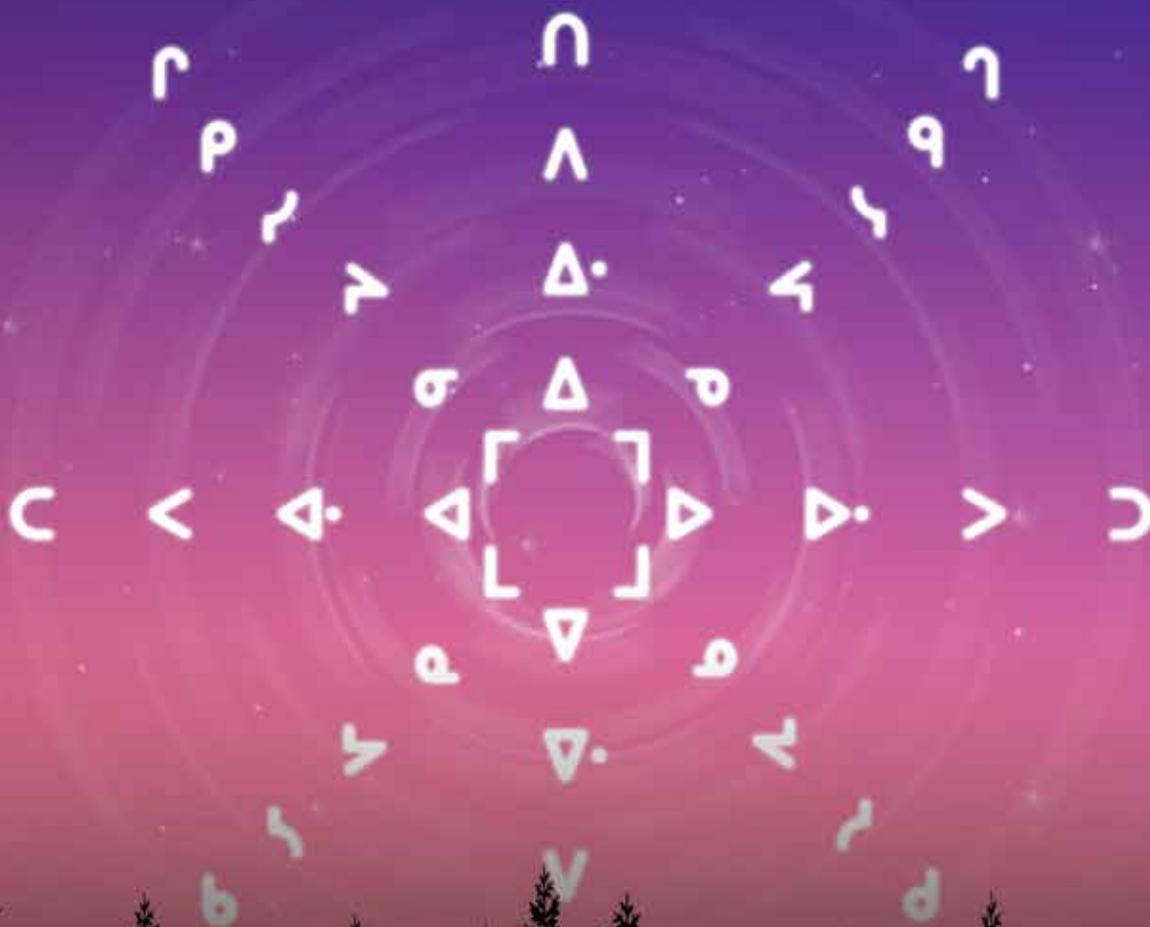


FIRST NATIONS

# LANQUAᑭᑦ KEEPERS

GATHERING



*Language First:*

*Keep the Spirit Alive*

**FINAL REPORT**





## FNLKG at a glance

**600**

delegates

**2**

panels

**15**

volunteers

**17**

trade show exhibits

**20**

breakout sessions

**19**

sponsors

**3**

keynote addresses

**41**

door prizes

All photos of the 2018 First Nations Language Keepers Gathering by:  
Cory Generoux

*2018 First Nations Language Keepers Gathering*



## 2018 First Nations Language Keepers Gathering

The Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC) hosted its 13<sup>th</sup> annual First Nations Language Keepers Gathering (FNLKG) on November 21-22, 2018 at the Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The gathering was attended by a diverse group of participants which featured many topics specific to this year's theme, *Language First: Keep the Spirit Alive*. Saskatoon was selected as the ideal location to host the event because of its central location in Saskatchewan.

The gathering brought together researchers, practitioners, language developers and cultural advocates providing delegates with a broad range of language issues from a variety of perspectives. Although strategies at all levels exist to promote and protect language, there are still barriers in moving forward as communities advance. Another important component of this gathering was that it allowed opportunity to engage in dialogue and networking with other community projects across the country; to enhance programming, policy and practice; and, to prevent further erosion and loss of languages. The theme showcased work and projects at all levels that have achieved success and how others can utilize these strategies to increase fluency.

### Gathering Objectives

The gathering objectives serve as a guide in the overall purpose and goal of the FNLKG. It is intended to provide and lead First Nations people and youth to understand that language plays a critical role in the sovereignty of First Nations people, as well as, asserting our inherent Treaty right to speak and use our First Nations languages. The FNLKG is committed to continue addressing language retention in the past, present and future. Listed below are the four gathering objectives which aim to:

- Bring together First Nations educators, leaders, Elders, parents and students to share ideas and experiences on how to effectively teach First Nations languages and cultures both in and out of the classroom and all levels of government;
- Assist communities and workplaces in developing strategies for revitalizing (their) languages and cultures;
- Provide participants with First Nations' worldviews, traditional practices, customs and oral traditions as tools to revitalize First Nations' traditional ways; and,
- Discuss strategies relating to the policy development, community advocacy, and administrative, technical and management support for First Nations language and culture programming.





## **Gathering Summary**

The two day gathering took place November 21-22, 2018 in Saskatoon, SK. The event was filled with presentations, panel discussions and workshops. It brought together over 600 delegates from across Canada and US to witness the successes of community, educational and governmental language projects, how they can adopt and utilize these strategies with their own communities, and provided an opportunity to network with other First Nations people from various communities at various stages of development.





## Master of Ceremonies

The master of ceremonies play a key role in the gathering with their ability to introduce speakers, presenters and performers, keeping the audience engaged while entertaining them, and generally maintain the flow of the event.

Noella Mitsuing-Moccasin (Plains Cree) is from Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation and currently works with Treaty Six Education Council. She is a Superintendent for 11 member nations and feels privileged to have met, learned, and worked alongside many local Elders.

JR (Robert) McArthur Jr. (Nakoda) is from Whitebear First Nation. In the past, he has worked as an independent contractor for 20 years. But, as language has always been a big part of his life, he now has chosen to pursue this passion full time. He hopes that Nakoda will be strong once again.





## **Welcome Addresses**

On the first day, the gathering began with a Pipe Ceremony, followed by Grand Entry with Arrows to the Future and welcome addresses. The Master of Ceremonies, Noella Mitsuing-Mocasin (Plains Cree) and JR McArthur (Nakoda) welcomed delegates. Welcoming remarks were provided by Chief Bobby Cameron (Plains Cree), Vice-Chief Heather Bear (Plains Cree) of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Tribal Chief Mark Arcand (Plains Cree) of the Saskatoon Tribal Council and, President Wanda Wilson (Nakoda & Plains Cree) of the SICC. Each of these leaders welcomed Elders, delegates and presenters and shared their knowledge on the importance of language and noteworthy initiatives relevant to the themes. On the second day, the gathering began with a Pipe Ceremony, followed by opening remarks and an opening song by Elder William Ratfoot (Plains Cree).





**Chief Bobby Cameron**  
Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations



**Vice Chief Heather Bear**  
Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations



**President Wanda Wilson**  
Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre



**Tribal Chief Mark Arcand**  
Saskatoon Tribal Council

*Language First: Keep the Spirit Alive*



## Keynote Address Romeo Saganash



Language & Nationhood - Diom Roméo Saganash (Eeyou Cree) discussed how, during his time as MP, he addressed the House of Commons entirely in Cree without translation. He is pushing to make it possible for Indigenous members of Parliament to speak their own languages in the House of Commons and have them translated into English and French. He believes it would be an important recognition of the historical role of Indigenous peoples in Canada and a gesture of respect for their culture and heritage. It would allow First Nations MPs to speak out in their own voices and be fully understood. He asserted that speaking Indigenous languages is both a constitutional and a human right. He pushes and fights for Indigenous cultural rights, nationhood and self-determination. Reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians will be a long journey, one that consists of many steps, both large and small.





*Language First: Keep the Spirit Alive*



## Keynote Address Onowa Mclvor



**NETOLNEW** (one mind, one people): Building a National Network for Indigenous Language Revitalization & Maintenance in Canada - Onowa Mclvor (Swampy Cree) shared that **NETOLNEW** translates as 'one mind, one people' or 'doing things as one' in the Salish SENCOTEN language. It is the central principle of this first ever national, Indigenous-led, community-university, language revitalization research partnership. Adults are increasingly identified as the "missing generation" of learners who hold great potential to contribute to the revival of Indigenous languages in Canada by acting as the middle ground between Elders, children and youth within their communities. Yet, we know that language learning in Indigenous communities cannot be studied in isolation, so they developed an approach that engages the spaces in which adult learners are both learning and teaching Indigenous languages. Together with nine Indigenous partners from across Canada, they are working to achieve bold language revitalization outcomes and develop a national network of those working at the core of Indigenous language revitalization and maintenance. Her presentation highlighted the successes of these communities and explored ways we can all work together to maintain, revitalize and strengthen the Indigenous languages all across Canada.





*Language First: Keep the Spirit Alive*



## Keynote Address Chief Leroy Denny



Our Language Journey: Commitment, Awakening & Revitalization - Chief Leroy Denny (Mi'kmaq) talked about being Chief of the largest Mi'kmaq community in Nova Scotia. He feels a huge responsibility to do everything possible to keep language alive for future generations. Chief Denny shared his story about his lifelong commitment to learning the beautiful Mi'kmaq language and culture and how the efforts of the community of Eskasoni First Nation are making positive changes, historically and presently. Chief Denny highlighted the work that Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey and communities and what they are doing in language revitalization along with successes and challenges.





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## **Elders Panel**

Elders Panel - The Creator Gave Us Our Languages - The panel included Elder William Ratfoot (Plains Cree), Elder Phil Morin (Woodland Cree), Elder Melvina Eagle (Dakota), Elder Freda O'Watch (Nakoda), Elder Peter Nippi (Saulteaux), and Elder Margaret Reynolds (Dene). The panel was moderated by Milton Tootosis (Plains Cree). The Elders discussed how language comes first in each of their lives.





## Youth Panel

Youth Panel – Honouring Our Mother Tongue - The panel included Kaylene Waditaka (Dakota), Davis Horse (Plains Cree), Aandeg Muldrew (Ojibwe) and Cameron Lozinski (Swampy Cree). The panel was moderated by Milton Tootosis (Plains Cree). They discussed their language learning journeys and how each of them makes language a priority in their lives.



## Breakout Sessions



**Swampy Cree**  
**Walking In Two Worlds: Using  
Traditional Knowledge in a  
Contemporary World**  
**Celia Deschambault & Sienna  
Deschambault**



**Plains Cree**  
**Total Physical Response Training**  
**Julia Oullette**



**Nakoda**  
**Nakon I'a: Who? What? Where?  
When? Why?**  
**Juanita McArthur-BigEagle, Peter  
Bigstone, Shayna McArthur, Freda  
O'Watch and Leslie Anne Wilson**



**Dene**  
**Keeping Language in Place**  
**Mark Klein**



# Breakout Sessions



## Multi-Linguistic

**Creating Decolonial Space for  
Language Learning & Indigenous  
Knowledge Revitalization**

**Chris Scribe**



## Plains Cree

**#CreeSimonSays: Teaching & Learning  
Cree Using Social Media**

**Simon Bird with guest  
Cameron Lozinski**



## Saulteaux

**What We've Learned So Far From  
Establishing a Mentor-Apprentice  
Language Project**  
**Cheryl Quewezance, Ted Strongquill,  
Ralph Keshane, Alvin Quewezance,  
Cuthbert Keshane, Anna-Leah King,  
Andrea Sterzuk**



## Dakota

**Teaching Paperless**  
**Noella Eagle**



# Breakout Sessions



**Woodland Cree**

**Cree Resources, Land & Language  
Revitalization**

**Edie Venne & Minnie McKenzie**



**Plains Cree**

**Traditional Medicines**

**Daphnie Pooyak**



**Plains Cree**

**āsōnamākēwin**

**Dr. Angelina Weenie & Ida Swan**



**Lakota**

**Evolution & Healing through Lakota**

**Language Learning**

**Tipiziwin Tolman**



## Breakout Sessions



**Plains Cree**  
**Language & Puppetry**  
**Brian Waskewitch**



**Plains Cree**  
**Reconciliation with Mother Earth**  
**Bernadine Graham**



**Saulteaux**  
**How to Smudge!**  
**Albert Scott**



**Plains Cree**  
**kā-nēyāsihk mīkiwāhpa**  
**Cree Immersion Program**  
**Matilda Lewis & Patricia Alexander**



# Breakout Sessions



## Dene

**Dehcho First Nations Language Revitalization & On the Land Programming**

**Violet Jumbo & Kristen Tanche**



## Mi'kmaw

**Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey: Language Strategy Planning & Mentor-Apprentice Programs**

**Blaire Gould**



## Plains Cree

**Measuring Success in Revitalization**

**Sylvia Weenie**



## Saulteaux

**Baby & His Wah Wah: Language Revitalization through Lives Experiences**

**Denise Asham**



## Entertainment



Ira Horse aka Neon's kokom is from Thunderchild First Nation. Ira is a Knowledge Keeper in training. Over time, she tried several videos of utilizing a character, Neon or osima (her grandchild) whom she is constantly calling mise maywecisk (dirty butt). The videos are humorous and have cultural teachings that were passed on to her by her parents and grandmother. She uses that opportunity to pass on cultural teachings. She is a "shoot from the hip kind of kokom", tells it like it is and has made a name for herself.







## Closing Ceremonies

The gathering ended with closing remarks by Vice-Chief David Pratt (Plains Cree) and SICC President, Wanda Wilson (Nakoda & Cree) followed by retiring of the flags with Arrows to the Future.



*Language First: Keep the Spirit Alive*







## Summary

In addition to summarizing the highlights of the FNLKG program, this report analyzes their implication for future research, policy and programming.

The agenda involved researchers, practitioners, and language advocates giving the audience an opportunity to go over a broad range of language issues from various perspectives. Efforts to continue promoting and protecting First Nations languages are constantly faced with challenges and barriers in moving forward. This gathering is an opportunity to create dialogue to discuss and share important issues pertaining to advancements made in areas such as community developments, programs, policy and practice, and to continue working towards language revitalization with special attention focused on putting our First Nations languages first. Delegates heard how many people are putting languages first in the communities and at all levels of government.





## **Closing Remarks**

The SICC President Wanda Wilson conveys her sincere thanks to all of those who were involved in various stages of the gathering including, but not limited to, the hosts, delegates, guest speakers, presenters, Elders and youth. She thanks the organizing committee for their tremendous effort to make this gathering another great success.



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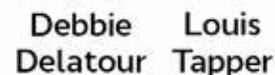
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