

# First Nations **LANGUAGE KEEPERS** CONFERENCE

## 2013 Final Report



presented by





Dear Conference Participants,

As Chairperson of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre Board of Governors, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all the participants and supporters of the 2013 First Nations Language Keepers Conference. Once again, we were proud to host this conference to support all efforts to promote, protect, and preserve First Nations languages.

The many sponsors that contributed to making this event successful deserve great recognition. With so many competing priorities the Board of Governors wants to draw attention to those that demonstrated their commitment to language. First Nations identity and culture is embodied in our language and if we are to survive then so do our languages. Your commitment will support our young people in knowing who they are as First Nations citizens and contributing to the betterment of all society.

As a symbol of Kinship, we have used the star quilt design in the poster and materials for the 2014 Language Keepers Conference. This design holds a deep spiritual and cultural significance for First Nations throughout this territory. This design was used on buffalo robes in the past to record significant happenings within the family, community or as a nation. We continue to incorporate this design in recognition of those 'Kinship' ties which many of the presenters and speakers will be referencing in their presentations at the conference this year.

Finally, I extend an invitation to each and every one to attend the 2014 First Nations Language Keepers Conference and to join us once again in making it a success. The conference will be held in Saskatoon on November 26th & 27th. I look forward to seeing everyone again!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Allary".

Chief Ross Allary, Ochapowace First Nation  
on behalf of the SICC Board of Governors

A small illustration in the bottom left corner showing an elderly couple sitting together. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark jacket, and the man is on the right, wearing a light-colored shirt. They appear to be looking at something together.

*“The greatest tool we have is our tongue – speak the language every opportunity you have.”*

*Shirley Cardinal, Waterhen Lake First Nation*



Greetings, tānisi, Anīn Šikwa, Edlānét'e, Hau Koda, Hau Kona, Hau Kola!

On behalf of the Board of Governors, Elders Council and staff of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre (SICC) I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all those that have made this past conference a success. Once again, the conference was well attended by Elders, language practitioners, language teachers and academics from throughout Saskatchewan. As well, the SICC was proud to host guests from outside the province including the United States.

The Elders and traditional knowledge keepers play such an important role in guiding the way in which we learn our languages. One of the many highlights was the Elders panel. The Elders are all very engaging and the participants were eager to draw on the knowledge that has been passed on to these learned individuals. Inuk singer, songwriter and academic, Susan Aglukark, was our keynote speaker and DerRic Starlight, entertainer from Tsuu T'ina Nation was on hand to entertain. The audience was very appreciative of their talents.

SICC Staff work throughout the year to make this conference a reality. Almost every staff person takes on the responsibility of heading up one of the planning committees. Let me take this opportunity to thank; Dolores Sand, Sheila Buffalo, Ross Gardypie, Lloyd Martell, Melody Wood, Scott Missens, Mason Medynski, Joi Arcand, Harriet Chamakese, Audrey Ahenakew, Ernest Sanderson, Diane Peepeetch, Garry Anaquod, Evelyn Daniels, and the volunteers who have contributed their time.

Of course, this event would not take place without the commitment of the many sponsors and supporters that make it a reality. Your commitment to the First Nations culture, way of life and language will not go unnoticed by First Nations communities. We hope that everyone will join us again next year for the conference, the round dance and the book launch celebrations.

Respectfully,  
Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dorothy Myo'.

Dorothy Myo, President

***“Please do not let First Nations languages fade away. The language is the key to keeping culture and heritage for future generations.” Owen Nimetz, Stanley Mission First Nation***



# Conference Overview & Summary

This report is an overview of the 2013 First Nations' Language Keepers Conference hosted by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre (SICC). The conference took place November 27th & 28th at the Saskatoon Inn Hotel and Conference Centre. More than 350 participants, presenters and special guests registered for the conference this year. In addition to the various plenary and workshop sessions, there was a Book Launch the evening of November 26th and on the evening of November 27th SICC hosted a traditional Round Dance at Oskayak High School.

Kinship was the theme of this year's conference. We are all connected in the natural world, we are all related. It was important to our ancestors to know how each individual was related in their immediate families, their extended families and in the community. They spoke to people through relationships, saying, 'daughter, grandchild' rather than using given names. These bonds were sacred and were treated with great respect. Presenters were asked to include references to 'Kinship' and the 'Language of Kinship' in the delivery of their sessions.

Language is integral to keeping our cultures vibrant and true to our ancestral teachings. Kinship is a fundamental teaching that is taught best through our own languages and through our own stories. This year we invited presenters and sought to strike a balance of information from all of the eight cultural linguistic groups to present their worldview. As an example, how they see the world through Dakota eyes, or Dene eyes.

Song is an important component of the conference beginning with the Morning Song by Elder William Ratfoot, Glen Chamakese and continuing with the clear, pristine voice of Inuk entertainer and scholar, Susan Aglukark. The values of kinship are not only contained in the spoken word but also in the making and the singing of songs. Beyond this, the tradition of passing on ceremonial songs strengthens kinship ties amongst those who carry on this tradition.

Registration for the Conference was at capacity again this year. More than 350 participants, presenters, Elders and students registered for the event and were in attendance. The dates for the conference for 2014 have been set as November 26th and 27th again in Saskatoon. Staff of the SICC have already begun compiling suggestions that came out of the conference survey this year and will be busy planning throughout the year for another successful conference. So save the dates and we look forward to seeing everyone again in 2014.



*“Wopida to all our Dakota, Nakoda & Lakota speakers and teachers.  
To parents who talk the language to their children and grandchildren.”  
Patrica Yuzicappi Buffalo, Whitecap Dakota First Nation*

# Book Launch

The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre welcomed conference participants, community members and special guests to an evening of celebration on November 26th for the annual Book Launch associated with First Nations Language Keepers Conference. The winners of the 2012 Book Writing Contest – Buffalo River Dene School launched the newly published title, 'Nítéle Chogh – The Giant Mariah' which was read to the audience by Jessie Sylvestre who was the supervising teacher of the students who submitted last year's winning entry.

As well, the SICC launched two newly animated versions of the children's books, 'What I Do in the Morning' and 'I Walk in the Forest' which will each be available to the public through the SICC website. The Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company delivered a staged reading of 'Mekewin: The Gift' by playwright Curtis Peeteetuce. And finally, author Robert Henry presented his book 'Brighter Days Ahead' and was on hand to sign and sell copies of the book. Errol Kinistino provided the audience with some entertainment to close off this evening of celebration.



2012 Book Writing Contest Winners Chelsea Sylvestre, Ashley Bekkattla & Jessie Sylvestre with SICC President Dorothy Myo and SICC Director of Communications Lloyd Martell

*“Let’s retain & maintain our precious languages. It’s a beautiful way of expressing ourselves.”*  
*Beatrice Henry, Pelican Lake First Nation*



# Day One Overview

The First Nations Language Keepers Conference 2013 began with a traditional First Nations pipe ceremony and a Morning Song sung by Elder William Ratfoot from Makwa Sahgaihecan First Nation. Following this, the audience was brought greetings by Vice Chief Mark Arcand of the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Vice Chief Bobby Cameron of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Dorothy Myo, President of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre delivered opening remarks on behalf of the conference hosts.

The audience was entertained by DerRic Starlight and his puppet characters in the introduction of the keynote speaker Susan Aglukark. Susan delivered a presentation where she talked about where the Inuk people originated and the kinship ties that connected them as family in her home territory. The story she told of her upbringing and the values she was taught through her language was interspersed with song performances.

Miss FSIN 2013, Faith Ketchemonia brought greetings and welcome to participants at the start of the luncheon. The speaker for this part of the agenda was Alan Adam from Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation who delivered a presentation on the use of technology in teaching language in the classroom.

## Afternoon's Concurrent Sessions

*"Language and Traditional Arts of Basket making and Quillwork"* - Eugene Ross, Geraldine Semaganis

*"The Role of Cultural Centres in First Nations Education"* - Claudette Commanda

*"Dene Teachings of the Medicine Wheel"* - Elder Margaret Reynolds

*"Teaching Language and Stories"* - L. Lynn Cote

*"State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada"* - Kelsey Manimtim

*"Dakota Worldview and Traditional Foods"* - Elder Lorraine Yuzicapi

*"nēhiyawitāpisinowin & Sacred Sites"* - Tyrone Tootoosis

*"Sākēwēw Substance Awareness and Empowerment for Youth"* - Celeste Tootoosis and Students

*"Saulteaux Worldview"* - Albert Scott

*"Incorporating First Nations Languages into Theatre"* - Curtis Peeteetuce and Elder John Sugar



*"I love our languages and I am grateful to my parents and Elders  
who taught me to speak Cree at a young age."  
Charlotte Ross, Montreal Lake First Nation*

# Wednesday Nov. 27, 2013



Conference participants enjoy Susan Aglukark's Keynote presentation.



Susan Aglukark is presented with a gift from SICC President Dorothy Myo



Curtis Peeteetuce



DerRic Starlight



Lynn Cote

*“Look to the future where everyone speaks and uses the language at home, work and play.”  
Lynda Minoose, Cold Lake First Nation*



# Day Two Overview

For the second day of the First Nations Language Keepers Conference, a pipe ceremony was conducted and the Morning Song was sung by Glen Chamakese of the Pelican Lake First Nation. Howard Walker from James Smith Cree Nation was the Master of Ceremonies for day two and DerRic Starlight, Tsuu Tina Puppeteer, offered lighthearted opening entertainment for the audience.

Jerry Saddleback delivered the second keynote address of the conference, “Origins of Cree Syllabics” to an engaged and appreciative audience. Through his presentation he offered the participants greater insight on the structure of the Cree language and the meaning contained within words that are spoken in his language. Following the keynote, an Elders Panel made up of Lorraine Yuzicapi, Margaret Reynolds, Barney Tipewan and Peter Nippi and moderated by Milton Tootoosis took place. These traditional knowledge keepers spoke of the worldview and reflected on the conference theme in respect of the worldview from the various nations from which they originate.

The winners of the 2013 SICC Book Writing Contest were announced at the start of the luncheon on the second day. They were as follows:

**1st place** - Dene book titled “Sëł Ędla?nodher?á?” or “What’s Wrong With Me?”  
By Krista George - St. Louis School - Patuanak, SK

**2nd place** - Plains Cree book titled “nahkatëyitëhtan kitaskiyinaw” or Protecting Our Mother Earth”  
Mrs. Joseph-Knutsvik’s Grade 2/3 Class and Pearleen Baptiste - Chamakese Education Centre  
Pelican Lake First Nation, SK

**3rd place** - Plains Cree book titled “kanitawi-kiskinohamasoyan” or “The Time I Went to School”  
Grades 1 – 6 and Beatrice Henry - Chamakese Education Centre - Pelican Lake First Nation, SK

Lunch entertainment was provided by the St. Mary’s Dance Troupe and another entertaining performance by DerRic Starlight. A lighthearted audience enjoyed the performances prior to moving to the afternoon breakout sessions.

## Morning’s Concurrent Sessions

“Origins of Cree Syllabics” - Jerry Saddleback

Elders Panel:

Margaret Reynolds, Lorraine Yuzicapi, Barney Tipewan, Peter Nippi, with Milton Tootoosis, moderator

“History of Treaty Making” - Lyndon Linklater and Brenda Ahenakew

“Kinship” - Chief Ben Weenie

“Using Technology to Teach Denesuline” - Lynda Minoose

“Language, Culture and Math” - Stavros Stavrou

“Cree Worldview” - Judy Bear

## Afternoon’s Concurrent Sessions

“Drum and Song” - Ted Whitecalf, Allan Bonaise, Glen Chamakese, and Howard Walker

“Community Framework for Language and Culture” - Darrell McCallum

“Mass Media and Languages” - Allan Adam

“Language and Traditional Arts” - Eugene Ross, Geraldine Semaganis

“Bringing Metis Children’s Literature to Life” - David Morin

*“Lots of laughter. Love it”*

*Lena Smith Tutin, Asheyi, Yukon Territory*

# Thursday Nov. 28, 2013



SICC President presents the Elders Panel members with a gift. Elders Panel members includes: Lorraine Yuzicapi, Margaret Reynolds, Barney Tipewan and Peter Nippi with moderator Milton Tootosis



Eugene Ross



Jerry Saddleback



Keela and Sage Campeau  
St. Mary's Dance Troupe

*“Very good keep it up. Never give up, we need to keep our language going and be good language keepers.”  
Brenda Kayseas, Fishing Lake First Nation*



# Round Dance

One of the major highlights of the First Nations Language Keepers Conference is the Feast and Round Dance that is held every year. Round Dance is a winter tradition and is always well attended by young and old alike. Singers travel throughout the territory to perform their songs as a contribution to the Round Dance tradition. Without the personal commitment of these singers this celebration would not be possible.

This ceremonial gathering is put on by SICC staff for participants in the conference and for the entire community. Youth from throughout the city make an effort to attend and take part in a cultural event where they can learn more about their tradition, history and identity. In addition to the feast, the SICC sponsors a traditional First Nations Give Away to share the blessings with those in attendance.



*“Continue the work of publishing and translating books to the different languages of Native people. You’re doing a great job!”  
Florence Roberts, Stanley Mission First Nation*

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## First Nations Language Keepers Conference Objectives:

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 in and out of the classroom.

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To assist communities in developing strategies for revitalizing their languages and cultures.

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To provide participants with First Nations' world views, traditional practices, customs, and oral traditions to revitalize and invigorate First Nations' traditional ways and.

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To discuss strategies relating to the policy development, community advocacy, and administrative, technical and management support for First Nations language and culture programming.

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