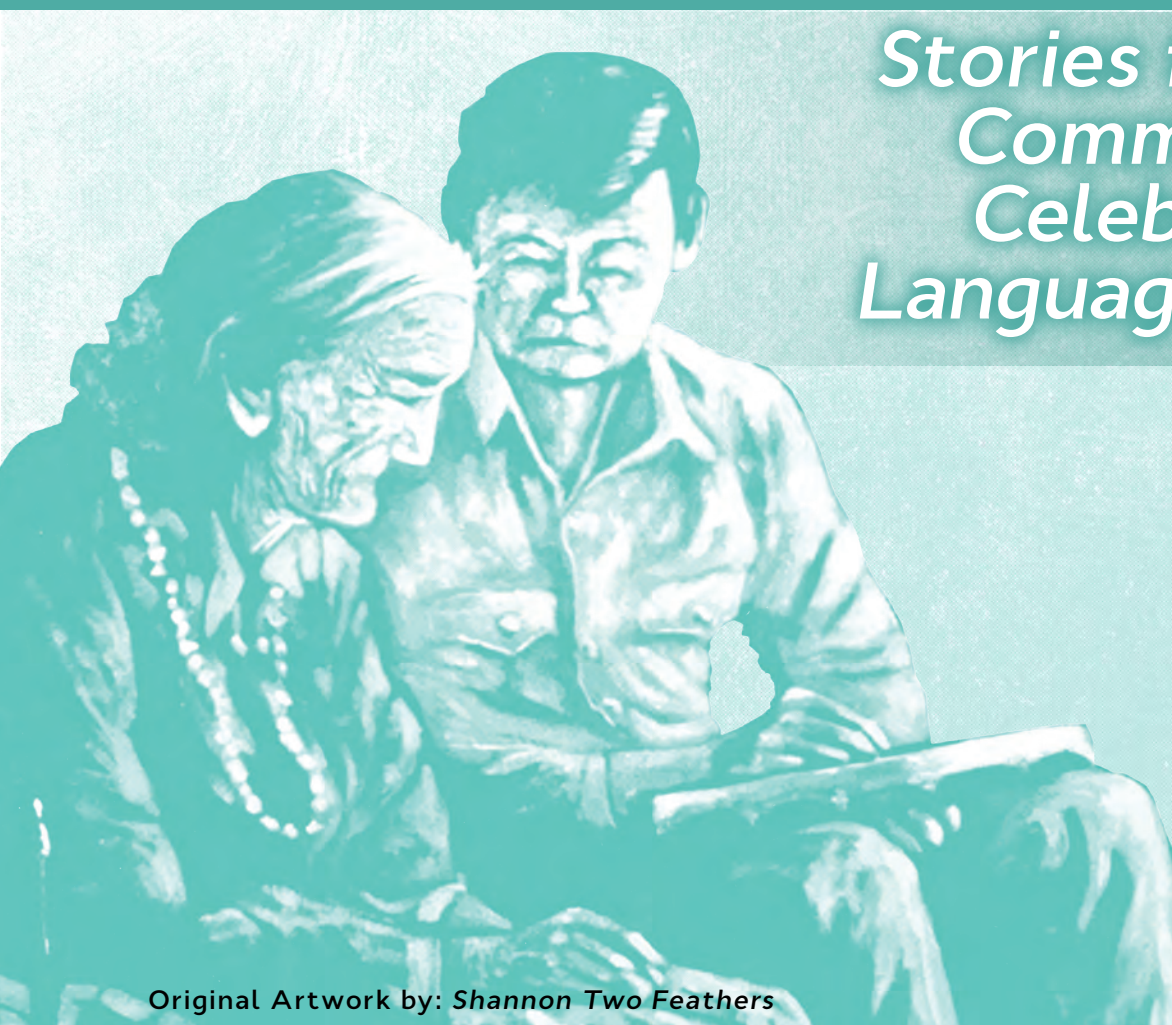


SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTRE

presents

FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE KEEPERS CONFERENCE

*Stories from the
Community:
Celebrating
Language Success*



Original Artwork by: Shannon Two Feathers



NOVEMBER 25 & 26, 2015
SASKATOON INN, SASKATOON, SK

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

tānisi • anīn šikwa • hau kona • hau kola • hau koda • edlanét'e



FNLKC at a glance

390+
delegates

32+
volunteers

20
breakout sessions

2
keynote addresses

21
exhibits

18
sponsors

11
prizes and awards

2
scholarship recipients

All Conference Photos by:
Curtis Cameron Photography

The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre's (SICC) 10th annual First Nations' Language Keepers Conference (FNLKC) was held on November 25-26, 2015 at the Saskatoon Inn, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The conference was attended by a diverse group of participants which featured many topics specific to this year's theme, *Stories from the Community: Celebrating Language Success*. Saskatoon was selected as the ideal location to host the event because of its central location in Saskatchewan.

The conference agenda brought together researchers, practitioners, language developers and cultural advocates providing delegates with a broad range of language issues from a variety of perspectives. Although community-driven strategies exist to promote and protect language, there are still barriers in moving forward as communities advance. Another important component of this conference 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 community projects that have achieved success and how others can utilize these strategies to increase fluency and personal growth.

Conference Objectives

The conference objectives serve as a guide in the overall purpose and goal of the FNLKC. 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 use our First Nations languages. The SICC FNLKC is committed to continue addressing language retention in the past, present and future. Listed below are the four conference 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;
- Assist communities 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.



Conference Summary

The two-day conference took place Nov 25-26, 2015 in Saskatoon, SK. The event was filled with presentations, panel discussions and interactive dialogue. It brought together almost 400 delegates from across Canada to witness the successes of community language projects, and how they can adopt and utilize these strategies with their own communities. It also provided an opportunity to network with other First Nation communities at various stages of development.

Master of Ceremonies

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

Tommy Christian (Lakota) from Fort Peck Reservation linked the keynote and plenary speakers by providing introductions and relevant comments for each. His ability to think on his feet made him an ideal candidate to emcee the event by adjusting the schedule accordingly to ensure the event ran on time. His knowledge of language and culture, and public speaking skills proved to be a valuable asset in the conference's success.

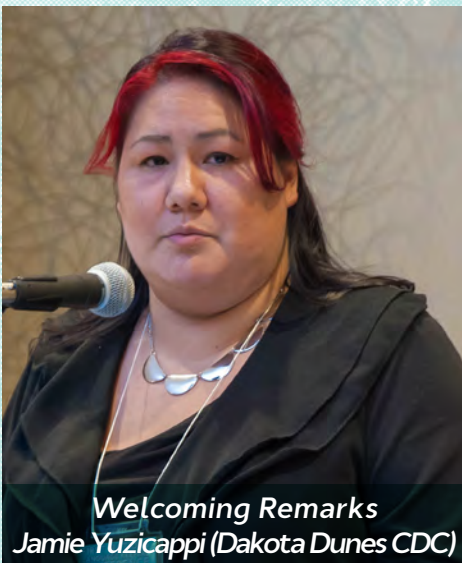
Howard Walker (Plains Cree) from James Smith Cree Nation, along with Tommy, are both well-known in many First Nation communities. The two have known each other for many years and have worked together on numerous occasions. Howard is a gifted story teller, a traditional knowledge keeper, a distinguished comedian and motivational speaker who has captured, captivated and engaged the attention of many audiences, from all ages for many years. His ability to communicate in Cree, Saulteaux and English also played a valuable role in the achieving the conference's success.



2015 FNLKC Master of Ceremonies
Howard Walker (Left) & Tommy Christian (Right)

Guest Speakers and Welcome Address

Each day, the conference began with a Pipe Ceremony, followed by opening remarks and welcome addresses. Elder William Ratfoot (Plains Cree) from Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation opened each day with a Morning Song & Prayer. The Master of Ceremonies, Howard Walker (Plains Cree) and Tommy Christian (Lakota) welcomed delegates. Welcoming remarks were provided by the Director of Education, Saskatoon Tribal Council of Treaty Six Territory Val Harper, Miss FSIN Maggie Eastman (Plains Cree) from Pelican Lake First Nation, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Chief Bobby Cameron (Plains Cree) from Witchehan Lake First Nation and SICC President Dorothy Myo (Saulteaux) from Saulteaux First Nation. Eagle sponsor addresses were made by the Community Engagement Coordinator of the Dakota Dunes Community Development Corporation Jamie Yuzicappi (Dakota) from Standing Buffalo First Nation as well as the Outreach Consultant of SaskCulture Damon Badger-Heit (Plains Cree) from the Mistawasis First Nation. 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.

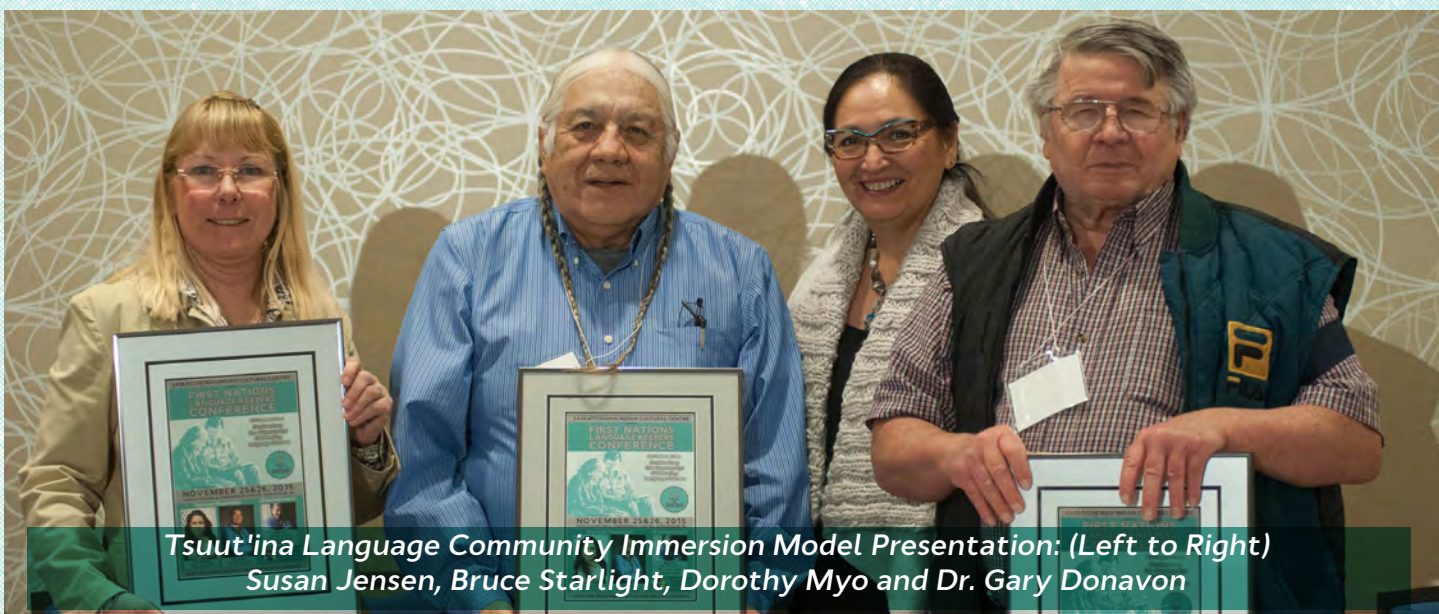




Elders Panel

The Elders Panel continues to be an important aspect of the conference because it represents the five linguistic groups in Saskatchewan. The Elders share their oral-based knowledge systems on various topics that connect the speaker and listener while at the same time building a sense of community amongst all those who attended the event. The SICC acknowledges the following Elders for their contribution, knowledge and perspective: (Left to Right in above photo)

- Elder Theresa Sapp (Plains Cree), Sweetgrass First Nation
- Elder Ken Crowe (Dakota), Wahpeton Dakota Nation
- Elder Peter Nippi (Saulteaux), Kinistin First Nation
- Elder Hartland Goodtrack (Lakota), Wood Mountain First Nation
- Elder Margaret Reynolds (Dene), English River First Nation
- Elder Olive McArthur (Nakota), Pheasant Rump Nakota Nation



Tsuut'ina Language Community Immersion Model Presentation: (Left to Right) Susan Jensen, Bruce Starlight, Dorothy Myo and Dr. Gary Donavon

Community Showcase

Tsuut'ina Language Community Immersion Model - Bruce Starlight (Dene), Dr. Gary Donavon & Susan Jensen. This community model addresses the rapid decline of First Nations' languages. Language retention and revitalization has reached a critical time in such a short period of time. Much has happened in the history of our First Nations languages and resources are scarce.

All First Nations languages function similarly and the key to restore these languages lies solely on the basis of working together in our efforts to revitalize our languages and cultures. The federally-funded First Nations language centre is not meeting this goal, so there is a need to build on strengths we currently have and incorporating them using technology.



Keynote Address

The Importance of Teaching Indian Languages to Disconnected Indians - Gyasi Ross (Blackfeet & Suquamish). He is a father, an author, a speaker, a lawyer and a filmmaker. TV, radio and print media regularly seek his input on a variety of topics such as politics, sports, pop culture and their intersections with Native life. His spoken word/hip hop CD titled *Isskootsik* (Before Here Was Here) is available. Gyasi spoke on the importance of why youth should continue learning their languages and to work with Elders to address the urgency for some languages to be learned, spoken and written.



Keynote Address

Promoting Language Acquisition through Film - Zoe Hopkins (Mohawk & Heiltsuk) from Six Nations and Bella Bella. After 17 years of successful immersion instruction to adults, the program at Six Nations' Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa, developed an online Mohawk language instruction course. This institution revitalized the language in the community of Six Nations, thus, creating dozens of new second language speakers. The use of creativity and media arts to promote language learning has brought awareness to youth which made language learning an exciting and entertaining experience.

Breakout Sessions

The conference consisted of 20 breakout sessions divided into ten sessions each day. Below are the workshop titles, names of presenters and the applicable linguistic group:

Building Language Fluency through Community-Based Mentoring, Suzanne Gessner & Gisele Maria Martin (Multi-Linguistic)

Tinihki Nēhiyawēwin, Brent Dillon (Plains Cree)

Indigenous Languages Illuminate, Kevin Tacan (Dakota)

Lakota Language in Science Education, Darlene Speidel & Jeff Baker

CTK Language Revitalization, Model & Practices, Iris O'Watch & Students (Nakota)

Connecting Language, Culture & the Classroom, Chris Scribe, Gladys Wapass-Greyeyes, Mika Lafond & Edie Venne-Hyggen (Multi-Linguistic)

Cree Picture Word Inductive Model, Celia Deschambeault (Swampy Cree)

Dene Language Immersion Camp, Allan Adam (Dene)

Fort Peck Community College Nakón I'a, Mike Turcotte & Roger White Jr. (Nakota)

From the Page to the Stage, Language Translation in Theatre, Curtis Peeteetuce (Multi-Linguistic)

FNUniv Program Initiatives, Ida Swan & Dr. Angelina Weenie (Multi-Linguistic)

Teaching Cree as an ESL, Lessons Taken from a Local ESL, Belinda Daniels (Plains Cree)

Nēhiyaw Atahkipēyihkanah, Reuben Quinn (Plains Cree)

With Great Love & Hard Work: Lakota Language Nest Journey on Standing Rock, Tipiziwin Tolman, Thomas Red Bird, Alayna Eagle Shield & T Tolman (Lakota)

Revitalizing the Nakota Spirit, Language, History & Culture, Sherry Letendre, Eugene Alexis & Jordan Lachler (Nakota)

Bachelors and Masters of Arts, Indigenous Language Programs: Successes, Challenges & Progress, Wayne Jackson, Jessie Sylvestre, Marge White & Ferlin McGilvery (Multi-Linguistic)

Wanuskewin Revitalizing Indigenous Agriculture Project (RIAP): Food & Plants as Medicine, Glenda Abbott (Multi-Linguistic)

Utilizing Resources to Enhance Dene Language & Culture Projects, Julius Park (Dene)

SICC Language Projects, Melody Wood, Dion Tootoosis & Roman Young (Multi-Linguistic)

Socio-Linguistic State of Saulteaux Language, Lorena (Lynn) Cote (Saulteaux)



Conference Presenter
Tipi Tolman



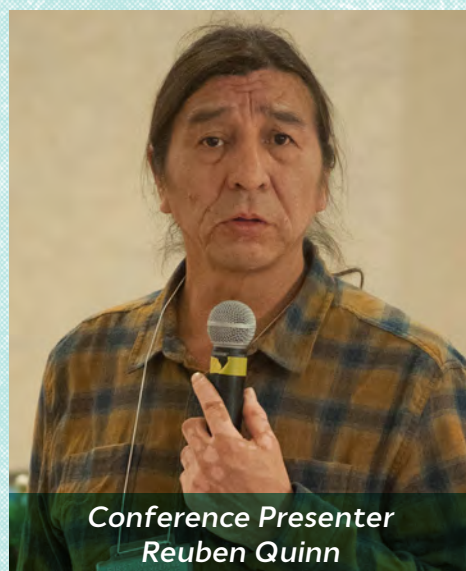
Conference Presenter
Roger White Jr.



Conference Presenter
Curtis Peeteetuce



Conference Presenter
Chris Scribe



Conference Presenter
Reuben Quinn



Conference Presenter
Sherry Letendre



Conference Presenter
Belinda Daniels



Conference Presenter
Lorena (Lynn) Cote



Conference Presenter
Glenda Abbott



Ceremonies and Round Dance

Traditional First Nations ceremonies are integral part of the SICC FNLKC and include a Sweat Lodge, Feast, morning songs and prayers, Round Dance and Give Away. The conference organizers hosted a Round Dance on the evening of November 25, 2015 at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge in Saskatoon. The Round Dance was the largest to date, with over 500 participants, Elders, community members and youth. The SICC is pleased with everyone involved in making the Round Dance another successful component of the conference and would like thank the following:

Elders: Jane Tipewan (Plains Cree), Leonard Eyahpaise (Plains Cree), Betsy Gamble (Plains Cree) and Harold Bear (Plains Cree)

Master of Ceremonies: Tommy Christian (Lakota) and Howard Walker (Plains Cree)

Stick Man: Rocky Weenonis Sr. (Plains Cree)

Whip Man: Ken Eagle (Dakota)

Guest Speakers: Gyasi Ross (Blackfeet & Suquamish) and Barney Tipewan (Plains Cree)



The Leading First Nations Language Conference in Canada

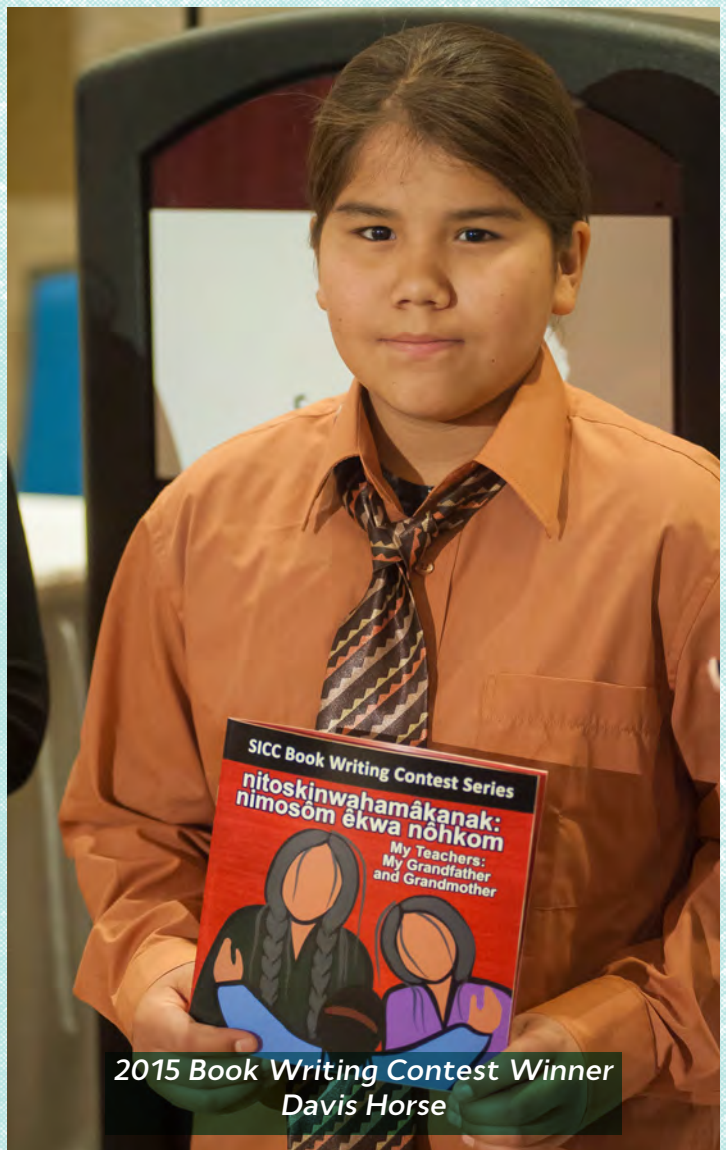


2014 Book Writing Contest Winner
Derrick Oesch

2014 & 2015 SICC Book Writing Contest

The SICC Annual Book Writing Contest first and second place winners were announced at the conference for the 2014 and 2015. The 2014 winner was a Woodland Cree book titled *pahkwēsikan* or *Making Bannock* by Derrick Oesch of the Little Red River School. Derrick received \$500 and 20 published copies of the book. The runner up is also a Woodland Cree book titled *pwātisimowin* or *The Sturgeon Lake Pow Wow* by Lacey Turner-Halkett of the Little Red River School. Lacey also received 20 published copies of her book.

The 2015 winner was a Plains Cree book titled "*nikisinamakawak-nimosom ekwa nohkom*" or "*My Teachers – My Grandfather and Grandmother*" by Davis Horse of the Piyesew Awasis School. Davis received \$500 and 20 published copies of the book. The 2015 second place winner is also a Plains Cree book titled "*mosom maskwa*" or "*Grandpa's Bear Story*" by Eryn Nelson & Shianne Primeau of the Muskoday School. Eryn and Shianne received 20 published copies of their book.



2015 Book Writing Contest Winner
Davis Horse



Video Presentation

Tipi Tolman presented the film, *Rising Voices*, which tells a great story about the journey of a Lakota community on their efforts to preserve the language which shows their daily challenges and their successes. The trailer is available online at <http://risingvoicesfilm.com>. They also have current info on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Rising-Voices-Hóthanjippi-247952931905552/>

SICC First Nations Language Scholarships

Students registered in the First Nations Language Instructor's Certificate Program (FNLICP) were also recognized at the conference where scholarship recipients were rewarded the SICC First Nations' Language Scholarship. Each scholarship is valued at \$2,500 and is awarded to an outstanding student in the program who proven their commitment and dedication for academic achievement. The 2015 scholarship recipients are Rebecca George (Plains Cree) from Big Island Lake Cree Nation and Sherry Deschambeault (Swampy Cree) from the Cumberland House Cree Nation.

Volunteers

There were over 32 volunteers that participated in the conference. The majority of the volunteers were students from the University of Saskatchewan and assisted with various stages of the conference including: Conference registration, distributing and gathering conference and workshop evaluation forms, serving Elders at the conference and preparing the midnight lunch at the Round Dance, and set up and take down at the Saskatoon Inn and White Buffalo Youth Lodge.

Summary

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

The conference 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 conference is a great opportunity to create an open 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 advancement. The FNLKC delegates heard the latest developments at the community level – with a shift toward the goal of addressing the need for more educators to become speakers and to address the need for families and communities to continue their efforts to involve children, youth and their communities in language learning and revitalization.



Closing Remarks

President Dorothy Myo conveys her gratitude to all of those who were involved in various stages of the conference including, but not limited to, the hosts, delegates, guest speakers, presenters, Elders and youth. She also would like to thank the organizing committee for their tremendous effort to make this conference another great success.

Thank you to the Sponsors of the 2015 FNLKC

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