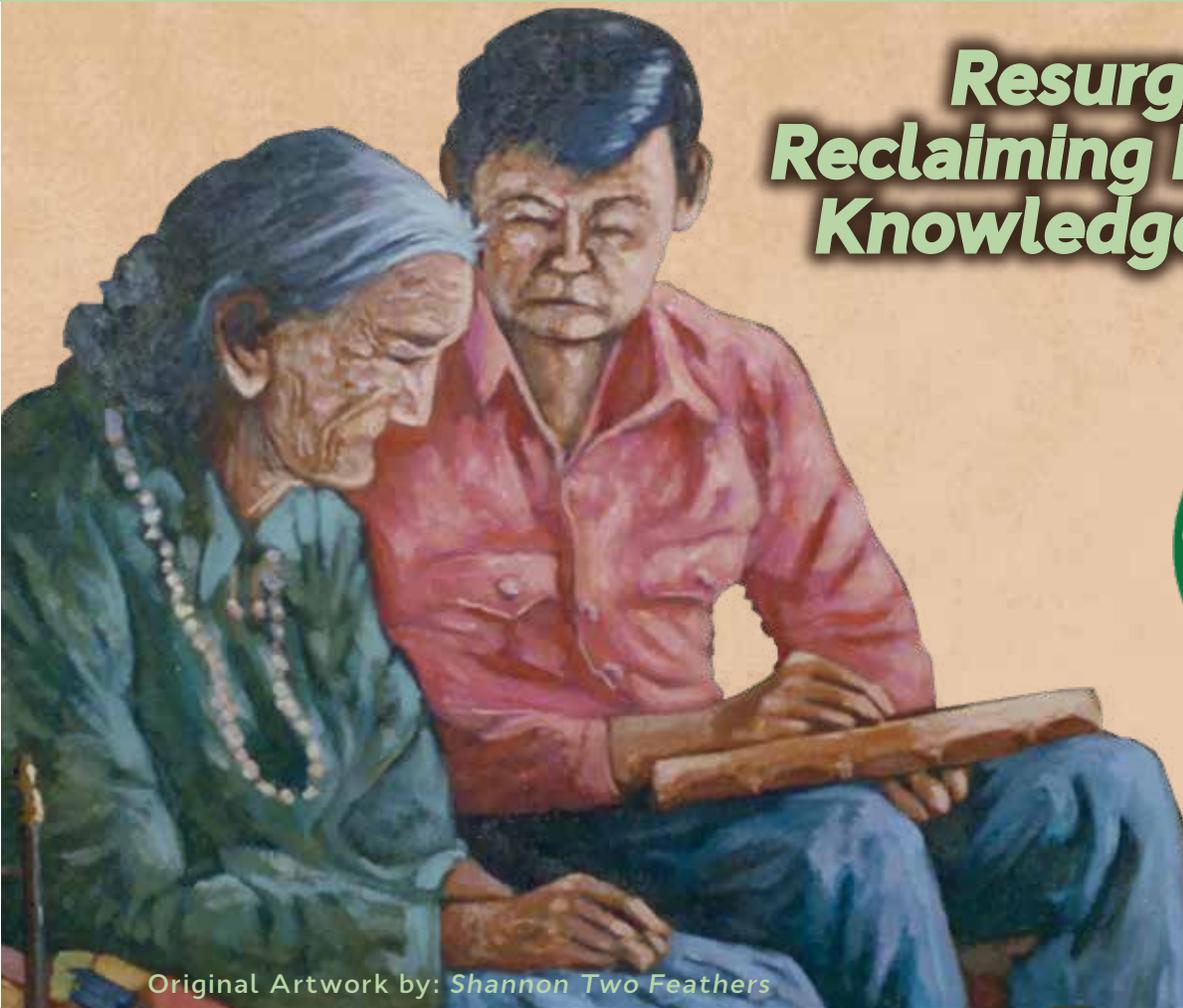


presents

FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE KEEPERS CONFERENCE

**Resurgence:
Reclaiming Indigenous
Knowledge Systems**



Original Artwork by: Shannon Two Feathers



NOVEMBER 22 & 23, 2017
SASKATOON INN, SASKATOON, SK

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

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



FNLKC at a glance

500

delegates

37

volunteers

20

breakout sessions

2

keynote addresses

2

panels

22

trade show exhibits

15

sponsors

52

door prizes

All conference photos by:
Curtis Cameron

The Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC) hosted its 12th annual First Nations' Language Keepers Conference (FNLKC) held November 22-23, 2017 at the Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The conference was attended by a diverse group of participants which featured many topics specific to this year's theme; Resurgence: Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Saskatoon was selected as the ideal location to host the event because of its central location in Saskatchewan.

The conference 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 speak and 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 22-23, 2017 in Saskatoon, SK. The event was filled with presentations, panel discussions and interactive dialogue. It brought together over 600 delegates from across Canada and US to witness the successes of community 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: (left to right)
JR (Robert) McArthur, Eric Tootoosis*

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 generally maintain the flow of the event.

Eric J Tootoosis is Plains Cree from Poundmaker Cree Nation. He has spent number of years working with various learning institutions. He has contributed to cultural education by developing a bi-cultural approach to re-learning traditional knowledge.

JR (Robert) McArthur Jr. is Nakoda 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 again one day.

Welcome Addresses

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 day one with an opening prayer and morning song for both days.

The Master of Ceremonies, Eric J Tootosis (Plains Cree) and JR McArthur (Nakoda) welcomed delegates. Welcoming remarks were provided by Chief Bobby Cameron, Plains Cree of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Superintendent of Education Lori-Ann Daniels, 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.



*Opening Prayer & Morning Songs:
Elder William Ratfoot*



*Welcoming Address:
Chief Bobby Cameron*



*Welcoming Address:
Lori-Ann Daniels*



*Welcoming Address:
Wanda Wilson*



Keynote Address

When the 'Object' of Repatriation is Song: Confronting Archives, Navigating Copyright and Asserting Indigenous Laws – Dr. Robin R. R. Gray discussed how there is an incredible amount of Indigenous cultural material located in museums, archives and personal collections around the world, but Indigenous people are not considered the owners of their captured heritage by default of western property frameworks. This paper focuses on the efforts of Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams to repatriate songs and associated knowledge products from the archives of the Laura Boulton Collection of Traditional and Liturgical Music. It provides an overview of the socio-political context that created the conditions for the songs to be taken from the community, including an analysis of the contributing role of intellectual property laws in the dispossession of Ts'msyen knowledge, heritage and rights. Based on an ongoing community-based participatory action research project with, by and for Ts'msyen, this paper offers decolonial considerations on the topic of ownership, access and control from the vantage of Ts'msyen laws, ethics and protocols.



Keynote Address

Dágu ᑭhábikt "What Will We Be" - Roger White Jr. and Michael Turcotte discussed how our First Nations languages have survived despite the attempts to eradicate them. There is no single approach to ensure language continuation. We may have limited speakers in our communities, but it is with their guidance and past and present resources that have survived - language continuation is possible. Additionally, with the guidance of our families and successful language innovators, we will continue to strive to influence our younger relatives the way we've been influenced.



**Elder Freda O'Watch
(Nakoda)**



**Elder Melvina Eagle
(Dakota)**



**Elder Margaret Reynolds
(Dene)**



**Elder William Ratfoot
(Plains Cree)**



**Elder Hartland Goodtrack
(Lakota)**



**Elder Peter Nippi
(Saulteaux)**



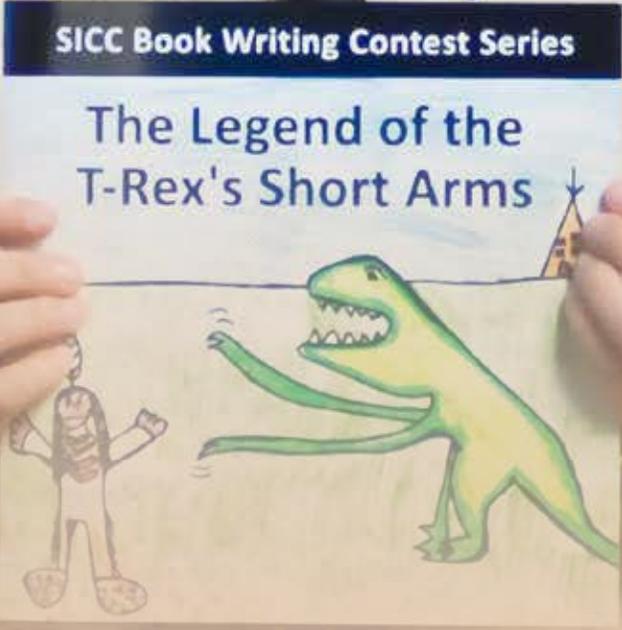
Elders Panel - *Emphasizing the importance of language as a vessel through which we understand protocols, customs, rituals, the land and each other.*

The panel included Elder William Ratfoot, Plains Cree, Elder Hartland Goodtrack, Lakota, Elder Melvina Eagle, Dakota, Elder Freda O'Watch, Nakoda, Elder Peter Nippi, Saulteaux, and Elder Margaret Reynolds, Dene. The panel was moderated by Eric Tootosis, Plains Cree. The Elders discussed how language is important to our identity and way of life.



Youth Panel - *Reclaiming Traditional Education*

The panel included Shannon McNabb, Plains Cree, Darren Courchene, Anishinabe and Jarita Greyeyes, Plains Cree. They discussed their language learning journeys and involvement in the community and classroom at all levels of learning.



SICC Short Story Writing Contest Winner

Annually, to encourage First Nation children to write in their First Nations' languages, the SICC launched an annual book writing contest in 2011. For 2017 and beyond, SICC renamed this contest the SICC Short Story Writing Contest. This contest promotes First Nations' language development, revitalization and retention and is open for students from grades K to 12. The first place winner is a Nakoda short story written by Bronte Big Eagle from Ocean Man First Nation, entitled *The Legend of the T-Rex's Short Arms* and was launched at the 2017 FNLKC.

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:

What Do Our Traditional Stories Tell Us?, Solomon Ratt (Woodland Cree)

Language Revitalization through Hand Signing, JR McArthur & Michael Turcotte (Nakoda)

Cree Land Based Curriculum of kâniyâsihk Culture Camps, Dr. Kevin Lewis & Matilda Lewis (Plains Cree)

Our Drum Beats into the Future, Allan Adam (Dene)

The Impact of The Language Conservancy's Revitalization Model on Native US Languages, Wilhelm Meya (Multi-Linguistic)

Land Based Elder Driven Curriculum, Sylvia Weenie & Noella Mitsuing-Moccasin (Plains Cree)

Iyekiya Un Iapi, Noella Eagle (Dakota)

The Poetics and Politics of Reclaiming Ts'msyen Cultural Heritage, Dr. Robin R.R. Gray (Ts'msyen & Mikisew Cree)

Website Preview: Access to Teaching, Learning & Researching Indigenous Language Learning Resources, Bill Cook, Denise Runns & Andrea Sterzuk (Multi-Linguistic)

Young Women Are Our Future: Let's Put Indigenous Knowledge, Language and Culture First, Rochelle Starr & Heather Blair (Multi-Linguistic)

Classroom Essentials for First Nations' Educators, Celia Deschambault (Swampy Cree)

Reading and Writing in Nakoda, Tuffy Helgeson (Nakoda)

Kà Ganawenindamodjig Kitigàn Zìbì Anishinàbemowin: Language Camp, Laurie Decontie (Algonquin)

Total Physical Response Training, Noella Mitsuing-Moccasin, Priscilla St. John & Julia Oullette (Multi-Linguistic)

Nakota Vocabulary & Phrases Book, Vincent Collette & Armand McArthur (Nakota)

Language Instructional Strategies Utilizing Dene Morphology, Agnes Carlson (Dene)

Saulteaux Anishnabe (Nakawe) Worldview & Language, Peter Nippi (Saulteaux)

Cree Learning Strategies kiyam style, Simon Bird (Plains Cree)

Indian Control of Colonial Education, A System Rethink on Indian Education, Chris Scribe & Edie Venne (Multi-Linguistic)

SICC Working Workshop on Aboriginal Languages Initiative, Garry Anaquod (Multi-Linguistic)



Conference Presenter
Allan Adam



Conference Presenter
Solomon Ratt



Conference Presenter
Agnes Carlson



Conference Presenter
Chris Scribe



Conference Presenter
Noella Eagle



Conference Presenter
Bill Cook



Conference Presenter
Noella Mitsuing-Moccasin



Conference Presenter
Tuffy Helgeson



Conference Presenter
Simon Bird



Update on the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Languages Initiative

Dakota Kochie provided an update of the 2017 summer Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Indigenous Languages Legislation Engagement Sessions. The objectives were to garner input into the Indigenous Languages Legislation from First Nations leaders, fluent speakers and language champions and to inform First Nations leaders, fluent speakers, language champions and policy makers about the opportunities to provide input into the Indigenous Languages Legislation. The sessions included a review of purpose and use of session with a description of objectives, scope, plans and status of this joint policy development process. As well, there was an update on the state of Indigenous Languages and how we got here. Provided, was a historical background of languages Initiatives in the past leading up to the December 2016 announcement of an Indigenous Languages Act. There was also information provided about the legislation and the process and principles including the steps involved in creating federal legislation and the approach. The AFN will provide an summary update as a result of those engagement sessions.

Vegas Vacation

Humour is a part of First Nations culture and is always prevalent in the kohkomak of Kiwetinohk theatre plays. The entertainment piece of the conference incorporates humour along with First Nations language with the help of Gordon Tootoosis Nīkānīwin Theatre (GTNT) through their theatre play Vegas Vacation. The play features kohkomak Sihkos, Zula and Clare who make their holiday return. This year, Zula, Clare and Sihkos are determined to have a Christmas vacation. The ladies head off to Vegas to hopefully catch a glimpse of Tom Jones and play the biggest game of bingo ever. This show is a hilarious comedy and a must see during the Christmas Season. Note: this theatre production is recommended for ages 12 and up.

Volunteers

There were over 35 volunteers with the majority of the volunteers were students from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the University of Saskatchewan who assisted with various stages of the conference including: conference registration, distributing and gathering conference and workshop evaluation forms, serving Elders at the conference and set up and take down at the Saskatoon Inn.



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

The SICC President Wanda Wilson 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.

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2018

FIRST NATIONS
LANGUAGE KEEPERS
GATHERING

November 21 & 22, 2018
Saskatoon, SK. Canada

SAVE THE DATE



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