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To Whom it May Concern:

I am delighted to have been approached to support the First Nations Education Foundation in its endeavour to preserve First Nations languages.

As Canada and Canadians journey through a process of Truth and Reconciliation, understanding the impact of the Residential Schools on Indigenous families and cultures and taking responsibility for our history as we work toward rebirth and revitalization of those families and cultures we must appreciate and honour the role of languages. Our languages carry with them the richness and the vitality of our cultures keeping us rooted in our traditions, our knowledge base and our understandings even as we grow forward into new experiences. While many often think of First Nations as one peoples, in truth we are blessed with a diversity of histories and traditions and a plethora of languages. But without action now many of those rich languages will be lost, and with them some of the richness and depth of understanding of who we are and where we come from.

My family history is not Indigenous. My family has its roots in England and Ireland. My father joined the Hudson's Bay Company in 1935 and, with my mother, spent 45 years with HBC Northern Stores in small, primarily First Nations and Indigenous communities across Northern Canada. He spoke two dialects of Cree and was one of the last HBC "fur traders" buying fur in his store. We lived in Pikangikum, an Ojibwe First Nation, in Fort Resolution with the Chipewyan and Metis people, Kitwanga and Hazelton with the Gitskan, and Fort Vermilion with heritages in Woodlands Cree, Dene Tha and Beaver. Our parents taught their seven children to respect and honour the people and the land and the richness of the heritage of which we became a part.

I have always felt that it is important, as part of that respect for tradition, that languages be preserved, not as relics but as part of the living history and the proud culture of a People. That is why I believe the work of the FNEF is vital. Prioritizing first those languages which are threatened with extinction as the last living speakers age, the FNEF will work with Indigenous communities and others to preserve and bring life and strength back to languages as the languages bring strength to their people.

Your support for the FNEF and these vital projects is essential if we are to succeed!

Yours very truly

Dave Hancock