



Thunderbird, by Art Thompson

August 1st, 2017

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To whom it may concern:

This letter is intended to voice my support for the First Nations Education Foundation (FNEF), and their mission to work with First Nations' communities to preserve and revitalize endangered indigenous languages.

Revitalization of endangered indigenous languages is a crucial step towards reconciliation in Canada, and a necessary foundation for the effective self-determination of First Nations. The work being done by the FNEF builds on the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement that I helped negotiate in 2005 and responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action by first, recognizing that First Nations cultures were systematically attacked and degraded for centuries by colonial powers and then, providing methods and processes in support of indigenous language rights.

My first language is Ojibwe, a language that is classified as "Threatened" by Google's Endangered Languages Project, with only 1,500 native speakers worldwide. Many indigenous languages around the world and in Canada have far fewer fluent speakers; some only a handful. The FNEF is working with indigenous communities to revitalize their languages - such as collaborating with the Yuułuꞑiꞑath Government (YG) of the Ucluelet First Nation to revitalize their endangered Nuu-chah-nulth Barkley dialect which has only 9 remaining fluent elder speakers; one of whom at this time is in intensive care. Without the FNEF's efforts and your support, these languages will be extinct along with the knowledge and culture encoded within.

Success with these early FNEF pilot projects is key to empowering this organization to expand its language revitalization efforts and methodology across Canada and internationally; to collaborate with the Sagkeeng, Yuułuꞑiꞑath, Gitksan, and other indigenous peoples the world over. The FNEF's cultural diversity is a testament to the capacity for cooperation on this issue - one that will benefit all Canadians as the history of Indigenous peoples in this country is reinforced rather than eroded and a true Canadian narrative is adopted by us all.

I urge you to lend your support to the FNEF in any way that you are able. They have mine, as a friend of threatened and endangered indigenous language speakers everywhere.

Sincerely,



Phil Fontaine