

CONFEDERACY OF TREATY SIX FIRST NATIONS



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For Immediate Release

February 05, 2019 – Treaty No. 6 Territory

Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Grand Chief of Treaty No. 6 and former Commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the Indian Residential School era recently returned from the Global Launch of the United Nations' proclamation of 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. He has worked many decades on international instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which in Article 14: '*Indigenous peoples have the right to preserve, use, develop, revitalize, and transmit to future generations their own histories, languages, oral traditions*'; and Article 6: '*the right to profess and practice their spiritual beliefs; to use their own (mother) tongues and languages...*'

Today the House of Commons introduced Bill C-91, legislation relating to Indigenous languages; the Bill includes "It is hereby recognized that the aboriginal peoples of Canada have the right to use, preserve, revitalize and promote their aboriginal languages and the freedom to share their cultural heritage through the use of those languages." Dr. Littlechild commented this is what has been fought long and hard for over the decades both nationally and internationally. "Our Indigenous languages connect us to our culture and our ceremonies" stated Grand Chief Littlechild, "Canada through the Indian Residential Schools tried very hard to eliminate our culture, our languages, our spirituality and our way of life. I believe the proposed Bill is a step forward to reconciliation by this government to correct the wrongs inflicted on our peoples for generations."

"In our territory, we have four Indigenous languages – Cree, Dene, Nakota and Saulteaux" stated the Grand Chief. "Our First Nations have the right to their languages; including declaring their languages of their official languages" citing the Maskwacis Cree Nehiyawewin Declaration; other First Nations are taking similar steps in passing their own laws to protect their languages. "Every two weeks an Indigenous languages is lost in the world; this is unacceptable. In Canada so many of the Indigenous languages continue to be on the verge of becoming extinct" reported the Grand Chief.

"I am very pleased that Canada is considering legislation that will recognize our Rights, in this case the right to our own languages" stated Dr. Littlechild. "Included in the Bill will be sustainable and long-term funding for the revitalization of our languages. This is important for us as we exercise our Right for the future generations of our peoples."

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