

**Indigenous Languages Month 2021**

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is home to a diverse group of people who live in a vibrant landscape shaped by rich culture and heritage. Our nine official Indigenous languages and our cultures bear sacred values and traditional knowledge that have been passed on through generations, shaping our identity and defining what makes the North truly unique. As leaders and residents of the Northwest Territories, we share the responsibility of revitalizing our Indigenous languages through celebration and practice to preserve our traditional ways of life.

As Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I would like to wish all Members of this Legislative Assembly, and the residents of the Northwest Territories, a happy Indigenous Languages Month. This month is an opportunity for residents to honour the rich culture and heritage embodied by the Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Territories and our nine official Indigenous languages.

The theme for Indigenous Languages Month 2021 is Cook With Me, which supports the mandate of this government to increase food security and is inspired by the United Nations' International Year of Fruits and Vegetables in 2021. This unique theme was cooked up in partnership with the NWT Literacy Council and embodies messages of warmth, home, family, and cooperation.

Food and cooking are at the heart of our traditions, memories, identities, and togetherness. Food brings people from different cultures together, allowing us to learn about one another's backgrounds. We share our cultural heritage when we share food with others. Saying cook with me to our families and friends is an invitation to strengthen our togetherness, traditions, and customs.

Mr. Speaker, throughout February we encourage Northwest Territories residents to engage in the exciting activities and resources that have been organized for Indigenous Languages Month. In partnership with the NWT Literacy Council, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has prepared a number of initiatives.

You will see a social media campaign featured on the NWT Indigenous Language and Education Facebook page that will support the theme Cook With Me.

In addition, a Regional Recipe Book featuring recipes from individuals and families across all the regions of the Northwest Territories has been translated into all official Indigenous languages and will be made available over the course of the month on the ECE website and social media. This week you can view recipes in Tłı̨chʔ and North Slavey on our Facebook page.

Lastly, digital Indigenous language Valentine's Day cards will be available for sharing with friends and loved ones.

This month, we are also offering regional Indigenous governments celebratory grants to produce videos and other creative projects that promote, celebrate and engage in Indigenous Languages Month. We have also engaged with schools across the territory to encourage them to celebrate by creating food-themed lesson plans that are linked to the Our Languages curriculum by using Indigenized approaches to culinary arts classes, and by organizing celebrations of traditional foods in schools. Promoting food preparation-themed language education supports the Our Languages curriculum and provides the opportunity to learn Indigenous languages and culture, while also promoting food security for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, it fills me with pride to live in and represent our territory which has an abundant living history full of vibrant culture. Mahsi cho to the Elders, community leaders,

language advocates and teachers who continue to promote Indigenous language revitalization efforts across the Northwest Territories.

I encourage all Northerners to advocate for Indigenous languages and join me in celebrating Indigenous Languages Month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.