

**Culture and Language Progress Update**

Mr. Speaker, our cultures and languages are the foundation of our work in Education, Culture and Employment. When our languages and cultures are strong, our people are strong, and our work is much more successful. I am pleased to report that we are seeing progress in our efforts to retain, preserve, and promote Northwest Territories languages and cultures.

We are currently finalizing a multi-year action plan as a companion piece to the Strong Cultures, Strong Territory Framework. The Action Plan contains 25 categories of actions needed to ensure the Government of the Northwest Territories is inclusive of all the culture and heritage in the North. We expect these actions to be underway until 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the arts are integral to Northern cultures and identity, and the NWT Arts Council is a key organization in supporting the arts. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment increased the funding for the Arts Council to \$700 thousand annually.

In partnership with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, we have begun to develop a new arts strategy. We anticipate a 10-year strategy will be completed by the spring of 2019 following engagements with stakeholders. We are seeing great successes from artists and artisans employing many different media. Supporting their efforts will be a focus of the new strategy.

Mr. Speaker, partnerships across cultures and languages are crucial. Recently, the Northwest Territories Archives was honoured to receive 25 years of stories, photos and records from the Gwich'in Tribal Council. These valuable pieces of Gwich'in history are currently being catalogued and preserved for generations to come.

The Native Communications Society also recently transferred ownership of approximately 200 thousand pictures from the Native Press, taken from 1970 to 1990. The NWT Archives

are responsible for the active preservation and stewardship of these invaluable historic records.

During the Minister's Culture and Heritage Circle induction ceremony this morning, we honoured the contributions of nominated NWT residents and groups. The Circle, which is in its eighth year, celebrates people and groups who have made a lasting contribution to culture and heritage in the North.

Mr. Speaker, as Members are aware, we recently tabled the Indigenous Languages Action Plan, A Shared Responsibility, which includes numerous actions for the preservation, promotion and revitalization of the territory's nine official Indigenous languages. The Action Plan also emphasizes the value of partnerships, and the shared responsibility of all NWT residents to preserve, promote and strengthen the Indigenous languages of the NWT.

Much of the work we are doing in languages focuses on integrating languages within our education system. This includes a new Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 Indigenous Languages and Education Policy, which promotes respecting Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages in the community in which the school is located.

The Our Languages curriculum continues to guide Indigenous language learning in NWT schools. Last month, we held our first comprehensive in-service and training on the curriculum with 75 Regional Indigenous Language Coordinators and language teachers. The participants were enthusiastic and engaged. This event was a defining moment in our efforts at Indigenizing education, and it strengthened our partnerships at the community and school levels.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of NWT Indigenous Languages Framework and Action Plan, A Shared Responsibility also includes the administration of the annual \$5.9 million received from Canadian Heritage. Out of the \$5.9 million, we provided a total of \$4.8 million directly to Regional Indigenous governments to design and deliver Indigenous language programming in their communities. The remainder of the funding continues to support several other Indigenous language programs, such as the Community Radio Broadcasting Support, the Territorial Strategic Indigenous Languages Initiatives, and a program called

Revitalizing Indigenous Languages in Communities. We continue to support the broadcasting of Indigenous languages on air across the NWT through the Native Communications Society and the Inuvialuit Communications Society.

Mr. Speaker, we have also reached a milestone in the delivery of French language services and programs by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Five years ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories released the French Language Communications and Services Strategic Plan, a five-year plan focused on ensuring the government was providing services in French to the populations in the significant demand communities of Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. The plan has recently been independently evaluated, and the report is publicly available.

With the results of the evaluation, we have now begun the work of developing a new strategic plan with our partner, the Fédération franco-ténoise, to meet the expectations of the French first language speakers and francophone communities of the North.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the 2017-2018 Official Languages Annual Report, which provides further information on the status of all official languages in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, while there is much work to do in preserving and promoting the cultures and languages of the Northwest Territories, every partnership created makes our initiatives stronger. I look forward to working with all of our partners as we continue to strengthen our languages and cultures in the coming year.

Masi, Mr. Speaker.