



## NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES DAY

March 31, 2013

Since 1993, Indigenous peoples in Canada have celebrated March 31<sup>st</sup> to honour the strength and endurance of our languages and cultures. While National Aboriginal Languages Day is a single day to honour the legacy we have inherited, there are thousands of Indigenous Language Champions creating and delivering Indigenous languages programs and traditional teachings every day.

We celebrate the work of our Indigenous Language and Culture Champions to revitalize and seek ways to sustain survival of our languages. We acknowledge the difficult burden they have carried to reverse more than a century of attempts, primarily through residential schools, to erase our languages and identity.

Twenty-seven years ago, the Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i had only 50 surviving fluent speakers. Today, their education system supports Language Nests and Immersion Programs. Their language and culture is taught in all grade levels, and into college and university programs – from early childhood education to PhD. They now have more than 10,000 fluent Hawaiian speakers.

It is our legacy, as our Hawaiian and Maori brothers and sisters have done, to sustain the struggle to ensure that our communities have equality of opportunity to live and learn in our Mother Tongues – to have access to Language Nests, Immersion Programs, Language and Cultural Camps, and to offer Master-Apprentice Programs for our Teachers and those who want to become fluent speakers and Language Teachers.

From coast to coast to coast, we will take action with even greater determination to assert our languages, our identities, and to seek equitable recognition and support to that which is provided to the official languages in this country.

Together, let us agree that all learners will have equality of opportunity to live and learn in our Mother Tongue.

Join us in celebrating National Aboriginal Languages Day, every day!