



Creating Futures

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lutsel K'e Elders Give the Gift of Language

Lutsel K'e in partnership with the South Slave Divisional Education Council released the Chipewyan Dictionary – Lutsel K'e Dialect

Lutsel K'e, NT – The dedication on the first page of the Lutsel K'e Chipewyan Dictionary reads “This Dictionary is dedicated to the elders of Lutsel K'e and all those who speak their language every day. May you continue to share so that all may enjoy the gift of language.” Completed this autumn, the Lutsel K'e Chipewyan Dictionary is to be officially launched in Lutsel K'e at a community celebration on December 16th.

“This project was conceived as a community project and it provided an opportunity for the elders to share and preserve their language with the children of today and generations to come,” remarked SSDEC Assistant Superintendent Brent Kaulback. “A couple of years ago we completed our work on the Fort Resolution Chipewyan Dictionary. I brought copies to Lutsel K'e when I visited. I showed an elder a copy and she said ‘Good job, when are you doing ours?’” remembers Kaulback, “That’s when the work for the Lutsel K'e Chipewyan Dictionary began. I was so pleased to witness the involvement of many – the elders, community members and the children coming together to share in this wonderful experience.”

Chipewyan, or Dëne Sǫłiné as it is referred to in Lutsel K'e, is spoken in several northern communities including Fort Resolution, Fort Smith and Lutsel K'e, but in each community some of the words are spelled and pronounced differently. With the desire to capture the unique dialect of the Lutsel K'e Dene, and preserve it in both written and spoken form, this project was born. Elders met many times over two years to review the wordlists, discuss translations and spellings and the children from Lutsel K'e Dene School contributed with hundreds of additional words. Another collection of words came from lists written in a series of personal notebooks kept by Celine Marlowe, former Chipewyan Language teacher in Lutsel K'e. Over the decades she has collected thousands of words as spoken by the elders of a bygone era. One elder referred to these as “sleeping words” and many have been included in this dictionary.

The dictionary is a 500-page, full colour hard cover book featuring the dynamic cover image of the Old Lady of the Falls or Tsǫkui Thedá- a sacred site among the Lutsel K'e Dene. The book contains English-Dene translations for thousands of words, phrases, sentences and even full conversational scripts. All words have been recorded so the users can see the words and hear them spoken by a fluent speaker as well. The dictionary also includes dozens of pictures

capturing the beauty of the community and its people. In this sense it is a true community dictionary.

The book launch will be held in Lutsel K'e on December 16th at Lutsel K'e Community Centre and will coincide with their Community Christmas feast. "It's fitting that we would be sharing this gift of language in the season of giving", remarked Kaulback. Copies of the dictionary will be given out for free to members of the community at the book launch.

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