

News Release

New interactive museum exhibition opens in St. Albert meant to inspire learning the history and evolution of Indigenous languages

October 31, 2023, St, Albert, Alberta – The Musée Héritage Museum (part of the Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert) is pleased to present its latest exhibition that showcases the original oral nature of Indigenous languages, and the challenges of also transitioning them to written form. [First Languages debuts October 31](#), featuring two travelling presentations from the **Canadian Language Museum**.

Beyond Words; Dictionaries and Indigenous Languages

The displays highlight the complex relationship between Indigenous languages and dictionaries over several centuries. From the earliest contact, wordlists, phrasebooks and dictionaries have been more than neutral bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous languages. They've also been used in colonization.

Cree; The People's Language

Visitors learn the fascinating story of Cree, the most widely spoken Canadian Indigenous language. These displays feature maps and images, exploring the syllabic writing system, word formation, animacy and the future of Cree.

"We have a large Indigenous community in the Capital Region and with Cree in particular spoken here, we felt that bringing in the travelling displays would interest many people," says Musée Héritage Museum Archivist, Vino Vipulantharajah. *"We are also adding our own local touches, with interactive activities."*

Visitors will enter a tipi and hear recordings of spoken Cree. Throughout the exhibition there are a series of stations with opportunities to listen and try to translate Indigenous languages, and identify and learn the meaning of the Indigenous names of some Alberta places, plants and animals.

A Syllabics Typewriter is also on display from the Provincial Archives of Alberta, which was once used to type documents in Cree. And, visitors will see dictionaries and books related to Cree, and displays showcasing two well-known local Métis women, Victoria Callihoo (one of the first local Métis matriarchs); and Dr. Anne Anderson, a dedicated author and teacher who was instrumental in preserving the Cree language and promoting Métis heritage.

"We hope our added features will inspire people to think about the original oral nature of Cree and other Indigenous languages and the challenges in making them written languages, and also entice visitors to actually learn them," adds Vipulantharajah.

First Languages runs from October 31 to February 24, 2024, at the museum inside St. Albert Place with **free entry**.
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Musée Héritage Museum

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Hours: Tuesday-Saturday: 10 am-5 pm, Sunday: 1-5 pm
Musée Héritage Museum is part of the Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert

