



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Dr. Freda Ahenakew Honoured in Renaming of Saskatoon Public Library Branch**

SASKATOON, SK – Saskatoon’s Public Library (SPL) is renaming one of its branches on the city’s west side to the Dr. Freda Ahenakew Branch. Located adjacent to Station 20 West and currently named The Library on 20<sup>th</sup> Street Branch, this facility was renamed as part of SPL’s commitment to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. The new name was chosen following consultation with Elders representing Indigenous peoples living in Saskatoon and area.

“Dr. Ahenakew was a truly inspiring woman whose tireless work preserving Indigenous languages, particularly Cree, has had profound and lasting effects throughout Canada. Our organization is truly honoured and pleased to be able to acknowledge her outstanding efforts and perseverance in this meaningful way,” says Carol Cooley, CEO and Director of Libraries with SPL.

From a young age, a love of Cree language and culture was instilled in Freda Ahenakew. Later, as an internationally recognized scholar, she would become one its greatest advocates and keepers. Ahenakew returned to high school at the age of 38 to serve as a role model for her 12 children. She graduated in 1969, and afterward received a Bachelor of Education degree (1979) and Master of Arts degree (1983). Her graduate thesis, *Cree Language Structures: A Cree Approach*, became her first published work and has since been reprinted 18 times. She taught at various universities and linguistic organizations throughout the 1980s and 90s, including serving as an assistant professor in Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan (1983 – 85) and as director of the Saskatchewan Indian Languages Institute (1985 – 89). Ahenakew also served as the Director of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba until her retirement in 1995. She became a prolific academic author and achieved high regard in international scholarly circles. Ahenakew received numerous honours and awards throughout her life, including two Honorary Doctorate of Laws degrees—the first from the University of Saskatchewan (1997) and the second from the University of Manitoba in 2009—and a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in Education (2001). She was also made a member of the Order of Canada (1998) and awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit (2005). She wrote many publications including *Kôhkominawak otâcimowiniwâwa – Our Grandmothers’ Lives*, as told in their own words, and books for children including *Wisahkecahk Flies to the Moon*, which introduce stories and language being printed in Cree and translated to English. Ahenakew passed away in 2011.

“The family of the late Dr. Freda Ahenakew are extremely pleased that our mother, kohkom and cāpān (great grandparent) is to be honoured for her life’s work by dedicating a library in her name,” said Dolores Sand, Dr. Ahenakew’s daughter. “She was a great believer in the power of education and of leading by example. We hope that many people will be inspired by this dedication in her honour as an Indigenous woman, scholar and leader in Cree language and culture preservation.”

SPL will hold an official renaming ceremony on February 10, 2017.

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