A number of preservation efforts are emerging. Salish language specialist Tom Hukari at the University of Victoria, for example, is acting director of a five-year project financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to aid language revitalization among First Nations groups along the B.C. coast.

"Our challenge is to find a context in which language learning is going to be successful," says Hukari, whose program includes training young Aboriginal people to videotape elders in order to document their language.

Mary Jane Norris, Manager of Research at the Aboriginal Affairs

Branch of Canadian Heritage, says that many factors influence how language is transmitted as a mother tongue. "It's community, it's education and it's the family. You can't do it in isolation."

Policy and legislation could play roles in preserving Indigenous languages, says Pamela Shaw, Manager of the Liaison Unit for the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of Canadian Heritage. Laws directed at preservation or recognition could increase government support for Aboriginal language programs and elevate the profile of Aboriginal tongues within Aboriginal communities, she says.

"It isn't just about the loss of a language," Shaw points out. "It's a capacity to transmit a belief system, to parent the next generation, to retain a culture." *

To learn more about Indigenous language preservation, visit the Woodland Cultural Centre at www.woodland-centre.on.ca and the Canadian Heritage Aboriginal Affairs Branch at www.pch.gc.ca/progs/pa-app.

Preserving Northern Ways

Between the circumpolar home of Canada's Inuit and the cities of North America and Europe are distances greater than a geographer can measure.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in Aboriginal hunting practices in Canada's North, particularly sealing and whaling. Those practices have continued, at times despite considerable international pressure.

The reasons for tensions range from sober conservation concerns focused on such species as the bowhead whale to largely emotional reactions to commercial sealing activities. On one side are film celebrities and animal rights groups decrying the harvest of marine mammals. On the other is a people whose existence depends on—and whose culture is kept alive through—that harvest.

We train and educate our children to survive on the land," says Ben Kovic, Director and Chairperson of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in Igaluit. "It's part of our teaching, it's part of our spiritual life."

Aboriginal subsistence is protected federally in this country, explains Brian Wong, Program Officer in Resource Management at the Fisheries and Oceans Canada in Ottawa. "Canada. particularly internationally, has adopted the position that we will recognize [Inuit] treaty rights and will act accordingly."

Those rights state that Aboriginal peoples may pursue hunting, trapping and fishing practices except when conservation, public safety or public health considerations are involved.

Canadian conservation groups have largely endorsed the traditional use of wildlife by Aboriginal people—at times even in contrast to their own international organizations.

We have been working very closely with the [Inuit] communities, particularly in Nunavut," reports Susan Sang, a biologist and senior manager for Arctic conservation at World Wildlife Fund Canada in Toronto. "Aboriginal hunters have respect for wildlife. They are true conservationists. They use all parts of the seal. Nothing is wasted, nothing."

Aayu Peter in Iqaluit will attest to that. Peter grew up with seal hunting, her five



children learned to hunt, and she now earns her living crafting garments from seal pelts while she studies law.

"We out of necessity have to hunt, whether the rest of the world likes it or not," says Peter, who wants to work in the field of international law to give her community a larger voice. "It's a necessity for our culture. We have to be out there."

To learn more about Northern subsistence, visit the Web sites of Fisheries and Oceans Canada at www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami at www.itk.ca and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board at www.nwmb.com.

Prepared seal pelts: Surviving on the land is part of cultural and spiritual life.