

CONNECTING THE YOUTH TO THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE NEHIYAW LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This presentation will incorporate the 44 major atahkipeyihkanah (spirit markers/syllabics) and 14 minor spirit markers used the writing system of the nehiyaw people to demonstrate the validity of the nehiyaw world view. The symbolism of the number of spirit markers will be explored using turtle island worldview standards. The participants will come away having an understanding of the writing system and its significance in holistic learning.

Articulation will also be demonstrated: proper pressure and placement of the tongue, lips, and teeth when sounding out the language. The four consonant *sounds*, from words such as “(p)iyêsis, (t)ânisih, (k)iyâm, and (c)imâsin”, and their proper articulation will be explored thereby giving the audience an idea of the importance of ‘sounding like a native speaker’ and how that is attainable through exercise.

Participants will learn to write some basic words and will also have an opportunity to give their input. Recording and sharing the information in this presentation is not only recommended, but encouraged.



Biography

Reuben is the Program Coordinator/Instructor for the nehiyaw Language Lessons offered through the Center for Race and Culture in Edmonton. He grew up in the residential school era. When the Blue Quills School was taken over by the Turtle Islanders (nehiyawak) of that area, there was a resurgence of language and cultural teachings. Reuben credits the late Mrs. Rosanna Houle for reviving the nehiyaw cahkipeyihkanah (nehiyaw spirit markers) and teaching them to all the students who had been liberated from residential school. The nehiyaw cahkipeyihkanah, or, as some refer to it, ‘the Star Chart’, is a tool Reuben uses for teaching the Cree language.