

SICC FNLKC Abstract

Workshop Title: Connecting Youth to Sights and Sounds of nēhiyaw Language

Name of Presenters: Reuben Quinn

Reuben Quinn is a nēhiyaw speaker from Saddle Lake, Alberta. He presently works for the Edmonton Center for Race and Culture as a nēhiyaw language instructor. He has been teaching this system for more than 20 years to youth and adults. He credits the female knowledge keepers of Saddle Lake and Goodfish Lake for doing research around the nēhiyaw writing system. When the administration of education at the Blue Quills Indian Residential School changed, those ladies were able to pass on what they found to the liberated students.

Abstract: The nēhiyaw writing system, composed of 44 atahkipeyihkanah also known as syllabics or spirit markers is arranged in a specific order, called a Star Chart. Through this, Mr. Quinn will demonstrate the validity of the nēhiyaw worldview. He will also demonstrate and discuss the importance of correct articulation. Youth today need to master these skills if they are to become our future language keepers. Youth have not mastered muscle movement in their mouths and proper pressure and placement of the tongue, lips and teeth when sounding out the language. Specifically, there are four consonant sounds in the nēhiyaw language which do not exist in any European language system. Although those sounds may be relatively close to p-t-k-c, they are inaccurate. Mr. Quinn will demonstrate the four consonant sounds, from words such as “(p)îyêsîs, (t)ânisih, (k)îyâm, and (c)îman” and their proper articulation. This gives an idea of the importance of ‘sounding like a native speaker’ and how that is attainable through exercise.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- Witness a demonstration of how to sound like a nēhiyaw speaker
- Participate in exercises on proper placement of tongue and lips
- Know the proper articulation
- Practice correct articulation
- Learn about the spirit markers/star chart as well as a snapshot of the worldview of nēhiyaw people
- Learn the significance of the directions and some of the teachings connected to the numbers in the star chart