



**First Nations Language Keepers Gathering  
Workshop  
Denise Asham**

**Title:** Baby & His Wah Wah: Language Revitalization Through Lived Experiences

**Presenter:** Denise Asham

**Biography:** Denise Asham (Runns) is a mother of three sons, a language teacher, a student and partner. She is a member of the Pasqua First Nation, where she grew up and where she has been teaching the Saulteaux language for the past 10 years. Her passion is language revitalization and implementing Indigenous knowledge wherever and whenever possible. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Regina, attaining a Master's degree in Instruction and Curriculum with the focus on Indigenous language revitalization. Her goals are to eventually attain a PhD, which will allow her to learn more and teach more about Indigenous languages of Canada.

**Abstract:** In Denise's community, Saulteaux is on the brink of extinction. This is particularly alarming because she is a community language teacher using linear techniques to teach Saulteaux goes against Indigenous knowledge and does not lead to language revitalization. Indigenous languages should be taught in a manner that is natural and holistic, in the homes and community, rather than as a subject in school. The use of Elders, knowledge keepers, ceremonial practices and community are essential to learn their language. Her session shares what she has learned from a study of a language nest, which is an immersion model that is intended for children in their early years. The nest allows children to learn in a safe home-like environment, to be totally immersed in the language and to learn from Elders from either their own families or from the community. Language nests are not meant to "teach" a language but, instead provide an environment where language is involved wholly and naturally (First Peoples Cultural Council, 2014). She will share how she created a mini language nest in my home with her mother and her sons. She will also touch on how ceremony is used as a base of her research and study.

**Learning Outcomes:** Participants will learn:

- How can language nests have helped my family and community;
- The challenges of using a language nest for Indigenous language revitalization; and,
- How Elders, lodges, and homes can be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization.