

SICC FNLKC ABSTRACT

Presenter: Solomon Ratt

Title: Telling our Traditional Stories to Recapture Culture

Solomon Ratt was born on the banks of the Churchill River just a few kilometers north of Stanley Mission. As a young child his parents told him the traditional stories of the Woodland Cree. At the age of six he was taken away to attend the Prince Albert Indian Student Residential School where he stayed until he went on the boarding out program in the city. He graduated from Riverside Collegiate then went on to the University of Regina and obtained his BA in English and a BA in Advanced in Cree Linguistics and a MA in English. His recent publications include *nîhithaw âcimowin: Woods Cree Stories* and *mâci-nêhiyawêwin – Beginning Cree* through the University of Regina Press.

Abstract: What is storytelling about anyway? Before Solomon was whisked off to the residential school, his parents (mostly his mother) would share our traditional stories of wîsahkîcâhk. He was home only in the summer months and traditional stories were only told in the winter months. When he was at the school, he no longer heard these stories which contain lessons on how to survive in our world which is always in flux. In the first story of the wîsahkîcâhk cycle called 'cihcipiscikwân - Rolling Head' can be found all the teachings of the Circle of Life: Four cardinal points in the flight of wîsahkîcâhk and his younger brother as they flee from the evil Rolling Head; Four modes of mobility are the walkers, swimmers, flyer, and crawlers; Four stages of life of infancy, adolescence, adulthood, and old age; Four orders of life which are humans, animals, plants, and minerals; Four elements of earth, fire, water, and air; Four essential requirements for a healthy life which are protection, nourishment, growth, and wholeness; Four aspects of human nature which is emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual; and, That the flight of the boys is essentially a Cree migration story from east to west, to north to south of North America.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this workshop, participants will:

- Understand the importance of storytelling
- Understand that when we no longer tell our stories we lose all this