The nehiyawak Language Experience - Creating a safe place to heal, speak and reclaim nehiyaw identity.


Landbased Symposium – Edmonton Ab Nov. 5 & 6, 2018
Hearing nehiyawewin (Cree Language) brings the voices of my parents, grandparents and ancestors alive. When the sun rises, I hear the language of my people. During moments of solitude, prayer and quietness, I hear the language of my people. Even in my dreams and search for purpose, I hear the language of my people. Their voices are strongest when I am physically and spiritually connected to the land. I breathe and language fills me with the knowledge of who I am. I am empowered and I feel complete. Language ties us to the past but anchors us in the present.
The *nehiyawak* Language Experience (14 years): Creating awareness and developing a safe space for language learning.
Why not create a Cree camp with Cree people and speak Cree?

So simple, yet...
What is the Language experience to look like?

- Finding (who) fluent speakers of a nehiyaw worldview.
- Involving *kehetyak* who are willing and able. (knowledge keepers/carriers).
- Figuring out which *nehiyawak* teachers are specialized in specific areas such as: linguistics, language methodologies, traditional & environmental knowledge.
- Asking is each teacher is trained in a specific language method?
- Land-based jedi’s – Masters in Education
- Location – Land and Water
- Being clear on the fundamental aspects of the experience, ie. Beliefs, protocols, ‘is it another culture camp?’
Getting started – Questions to ask ourselves

- Where to start?
- Who will join me? Join us?
- Where shall we go?
- How can others help?
- Where is there easy access to facilities?
- What is the Vision and then the Mission?
- Outcomes?
- What can we accomplish in a week, four weeks, a year when it comes to language?
- What are the costs if any?
- Where to find funds if necessary?
- How do we advertise? Do we need to advertise? Who is this for? Community? The Public? The School? PD? Etc?
Applicants for the positions of ‘Creertures’: All must be passionate about language revitalization.
All must be familiar with language revitalization theory and training.
Land-based education, which teachers have this type of knowledge? What will they do?
All must have a positive self image.
It is more than just ‘teaching’ a language, it is about making human and nonhuman connections for others to the environment and a specific worldview, philosophy, epistemology, etc.
okiskinwahamakewak, kehteyak and other resource people should be showing & sharing various ways of knowing and being at all times.
Participants? Who are they?

- adults.
- Youth.
- School aged children.
- Family.
- All ages?

- Waivers are important.
- Insurance – liability.
- Parental volunteers needed if school aged.
- Special custody cases if incarcerated youth are attending, need chaperones.
Time? nipin – Best time to learn with the land.
Deciding who is going to do what?

Gifts

Talents
Teacher: Language Technician
Teacher: Land-based educator/master’s program
U of S

- Andrea Custer
- Tenille Bear
Teacher: Language Revitalizationist – Master’s program U of V

- Randy Morin/ Boyce
Teacher: knowledge keeper

- Dorothy Thunder
Language revitalizationists 2018
Learning Language

- Make learning meaningful.
- Make learning practical.
- Make it fun.
- Make it easy and repetitious.
- Make it rigorous.
- Most important, make it safe.
There are a number of methods in teaching and learning a language:

- Direct Method.
- Total Physical Response + sign language
- Suggestopedia (done with music/relaxation) in our case nature.
- ASLA-accelerated second language acquisition.
Community language learning

- By the 70’s the affective method became of use when learning language.
- Based on counseled-learning, Charles Curran (1972) was inspired by Carl Rogers’ view of education in which learners in a class were regarded a group.
- Language work is healing therapy for the group at Language Camp.
- One of our primary goals is to create a natural interpersonal community for learning to take place, this is based on trust, anxiety is lesser, and teachers act as language coaches.
- Discovery learning eventually takes place, student-centered participation is needed for this approach and later student learning independence is achieved.
Another method - ASLA outdoors
“Role – Playing & Drama”
More role-playing & drama
TPR with sign language
Finally- The Language Experience!

- Coordinating, collaborating, planning and discussing is an ongoing annual thing.
- Use the environment of the outdoors, it is full of spirit and full of emotional intimacy in rain, wind or shine.
- Take advantage of the weather, take advantage of the morning, night, the moon and stars, the animals, and most importantly the food! Learn the language-Connect.
- Make learning moments of all of this. A teaching I learned a long the way from an uncle was that, why do we expect the weather to accommodate us, why not accommodate the weather?
Appreciation of ‘Spirit’

There is the spirit of nature, the spirit of the river, the spirit of the mountain. There is the spirit of the animals, of the water, the spirit of the ancestors. Spirit is everywhere.

- African oral tradition
Resonating...
Relationships
wahkohtowin

In language learning, here is no TOP student, it is COLLECTIVE learning!!! Let's teach each other.
Scheduling

- From Sun rise to Sun set- (The first day should very much look like your last day).
- Keep scheduling simple.
- Keep Repetition in mind. Remember to Scaffold the learning of learners. It is highly technical and procedural.
- Using nehiyaw values as learning moments: Prayer is a teaching of faith, humility and oneness. Setting up camp and sitting in circles is another teaching of connectedness. Fire keeping is yet another teaching ... etc. All of this seems to happening naturally in a culture bound space.
Example of more scheduling

- Details, details, details, but keep it simple.
- Day 1 morning rising, prayer, song, cook, eat, clean up together, make this a class! Make this a session! (it will take a big chunk of time).
- Use the language.
- Morning routine... after breakfast. Start with language building activities...verbs, feelings, weather.
- Break... just to down load new words. (20 mins or so)
- Do morning routine again!
- Go for a walk, hike, swim, but in the language.
- Lunch – menu’s make this a part of class, work in teams and take turns cooking for the group.
- Break.
- Go over morning routine again.
- Add new vocabulary, more verbs, nouns, repeat!
- Play a game, tell a story, (but remember it has to be the same for tomorrow and the day after).
- Break
- Review all vocabulary throughout the day.
- Quiet time for reflection and writing.
- Supper- again make it a class, food is a communal process-learn vocabulary again for cooking, preparing, eating and cleaning.
- Sunset activities.. Songs, stories, games, practice simple dialogues... and repeat for the next day.
- Make time for special planned events such as: basket making, deer skinning and preparing, picking sage or sweetgrass, blueberry picking (depending on season), etc. one special activity a day is efficient.
Tracking trails, checking snares, searching/finding teaches patience and wisdom – Learning the vocabulary for these excursions/experiences.
kwaskwepicihihikewin
Key points to remember for teachers

- Repetition is key!
- Use the language, be in the context. Teach what is relevant.
- Don’t be afraid that others won’t understand what you are saying, (don’t give in to English), that’s what you are there for.
- Don’t criticize, however correct in a respectful kind way. Learning a 2nd language is ‘risky’ to those learning, provide a safe environment.
- Language loss is emotional, be prepared to be supportive because learners may feel vulnerable and incredibly sad.
- Make the language camp exciting, motivating, and busy!
- Keep groups small.
Why are people coming? Why are they interested? Learners

- People are coming because they are interested in the language.
- People are coming because they want to understand the language of Cree.
- People are coming because they want to learn how to say words and phrases.
- People are coming because they want to talk to their relatives.
- People are coming because they want to reconnect or find their nehiyawin and get some insight into how they belong and connect.
- People are coming because they realize the value of one’s ancestral language.
- People are wanting to find an identity.
- People are coming because there are no other options like this.
Listen to current pod-cast

- https://soundcloud.com/nccah-ccnsa/sets/voices-field
More video clips

- http://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=404632
I rated this camp at a 10! For the camp size perhaps a camp deputy is required to help keep the camping logistics on track better and to help garner key conversations with campers (if needed).

**Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns to share about the Nehiyawak Summer Language Camp Experience?**

- I would like to say that this experience gave me many ideas as a Cree teacher, it helped me understand language learning from a student perspective and enabled me to learn from fabulous experts in teaching our language. All while creating a support for continued learning back home and in the community. It was a fabulous learning experience, and I hope to go back again next year.

- I enjoy the experience and camp so much. I miss it and wish I was still there. I wish I could be there now.

- Kinanaskomitan- I am greatly thankful

- Great Job. Keep up the great work!

- Great camp! Great learnings! Great experience! I am humbled and in great gratitude for the planner and organizers doing this work! Keep up the great work Belinda and team!
Sturgeon Lake 2009
nehiyawak Summer language camp 2015
nehiyawak summer language experience gets bigger/larger every year, interest is snowballing!
Another nehiyawak summer language experience 2016
nehiyawak summer language experience, La Ronge, Sk. 2016
nehiyawak Language Experience 2017 – La Ronge, SK.
Where are we going?

- Award winning program summer 2018 – Recently received a Provincial Lieutenant Governor Award.
- Moving into a non profit organization.
- Board of governors created.
- Language House/Space is the new vision. Working on grants and research.
- We can go where we are needed.
- Teach language for all ages, not just in schools or universities.
- Train teachers, help write curriculum, add to research.
- Share best practices, methods and programs.
Toronto May 2018
Feedback after the first road trip!

- Belinda’s switching from methodology to methodology in her teaching was amazing, made sure everyone learned.
  - such a generous and non-intimidating teacher! (this from everyone)
  - loved the warmth and safety of communal learning
  - love being able to pronounce Cree words finally
  - love the emotional resonance of the images on the flash cards, it helps to remember the words
  - learned far more than nay other language course in the same amount of days
  - I can introduce myself in Cree now and am doing it! (Danis did it in the US and Kent did it in Paris)
  - would like to learn more sentences
  - would like to learn more root words, or parts of words that are added at the end, and beginning to affect a word’s meaning
  - would like to break down the long words to understand little parts
  - length of days good, maybe learn simple phrases for eating together to practise and lunch or dinner?
  - love the location
  - have 2 of the 4 days be over the weekend
  - learn a song day
Creating a Resurgence, an awareness, a comeback! Nehiyawak Language Experience Inc.

T-shirts for sale

Logo design