

Kēkwān Ōma Nēyinoewēwin?



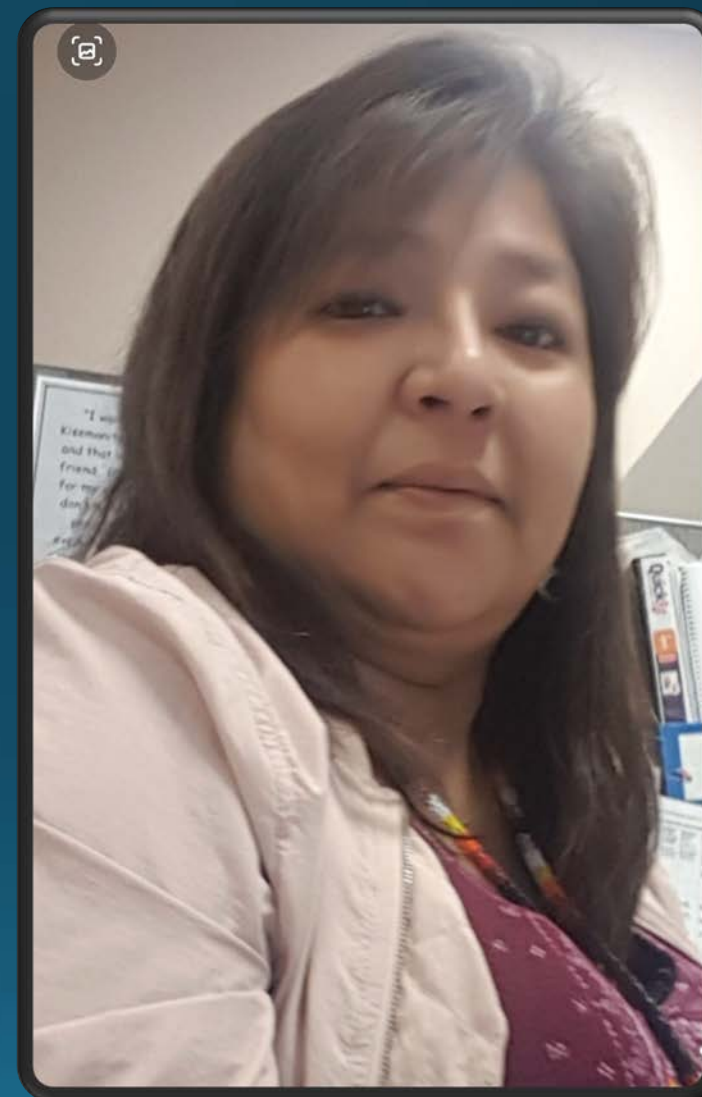
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Tansi, My name is Marsha Blacksmith. I am a Cree northern woman with three daughters (two grown ones and one still in the nest). I raised two nieces and a nephew and in the year 2020, I received a double blessing with the birth of my two grandsons, who are four months apart.

A brief history of my teaching career, I started as a classroom teacher in 2005 and two years later is when I first stepped into my own Early Years First Nation Language classroom. In between the years up until 2018, I worked in different grades Kindergarten to grade 12 in four different communities.

In 2019, I moved to Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre as a First Nations Language and Culture Facilitator. Today, I am an Instruction Resource Developer with the same organization.

I have my B.GS/B.Education Degree. My passion and my dream is to continue to work hard for my family, help others and bring awareness to help sustain and revitalize our Languages and Aboriginal Cultures.



My presentation today is about,

Kekwan oma neyinowewin/ Ininīmowin?

What is Language?

It is in our history, it is everything around us.

The Definitions of 'Language' in English version states:

1. the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing, or gesture
2. a system of communication used by a particular country or community.

"the book was translated into twenty-five languages"

The **English people** are an ethnic group and a nation native to England, who speak the English language of the Germanic language family and share a common history and culture. The English identity is of early medieval origin, when they were known in Old English as the *Angelcynn* ('family of the Angles'). Their ethnonym is derived from the Angles, one of the Germanic peoples who migrated to Great Britain around the 5th century AD.^[8] England is the largest and most populous country of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In the Acts of Union 1707, the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland merged to become the Kingdom of Great Britain. Over the years, English customs and identity have become fairly closely aligned with British customs and identity in general.

The Definitions of 'Language'

In First Nations perspective; it says, ayamiwin, nāheyawawin. (Anglican Cree Book, 1886)

so, in other words, our First Nation definition is; the way we are, the way we live, it is in all the things we see, smell, taste, hear and feel.

aya –means “to have/I have/you have”

ayami – means to talk, to speak and/or communicate.

miwin- it means to; give /share.

-First Nations languages have been on this land since time immemorial and it only took Great Britain/English over 100 years to almost drive our languages into extinction.

The purpose of my grandma's life was to teach her children and grandchildren;

-her language.

-her spirituality to always believe in prayers.

-to live clean and to be watchful of our surroundings.

-to work hard every day in order to become self-sufficient and independent.

-She told me many times, "kawina oci wanīta oma ki tinīwi pikiskwewin. Nāsits minwasin oma, Kisemanito kika sawehnimik. (Do not ever lose your language. It is a beautiful language, Creator will bless you)

-Tato kisikaw nanaskomo. Kawina mana nanaskomo, ininīmo enanaskomowan. (Be thankful everyday, do not be afraid to be thankful, use your language in your thankful prayers)

-Kawina naspaci naskwasi kikawi, ewītamask kekwan, intota poko". (Do not talk back when your mother tells you something, just listen).

.-She also said, "nasits kisewatisiwan oma kitayamiwinaw, ewko oci kapeh kwesk nitisipaminaw awiyak epehnasit". (Our language is kind and that is why I always show my kindness to everyone.)

-She also said, "every day is a sacred day, not just Sunday."

In honor of our ancestors who carried minwawin, I am glad I never seen my grandma drink alcohol in my life



Grandma's teachings:

What is Ininimowin? What does it look like?

- It is ayamiwin, it is the way we communicate to our families, our children, our animals and our entire environment.
- To preserve our Ininimowin; we need to reach out to our people through stories, quotes, songs and ceremonies.
- It is our responsibility to bring awareness and the rules of respect and to share what we have. This is the law of our people.
- Language revitalization is always a group effort, involving dedication of people.

What can we do to preserve our
Languages?

What can we do to preserve our Languages?

- Introduce stories and interviews about what language means to our people.
- Provide opportunity and training for our young people, young adults that are dedicated to help revitalize our languages.
- We need to bring awareness of the disconnection that our land is experiencing. We need to go back to the land to create the unity of our way of life.
- We need to bring back our ceremonies and our prayers.

What can we do to preserve our Languages?

-We need to bring back the Drum, hand drums and our songs, the language in our songs. The beat of the drum is the heartbeat of our Mother Earth. Whenever I hear the drum I feel something within me, something beautiful and touching and the feeling of healing surrounds me.

-We need to bring the history of our language, how our ancestors used the language since time immemorial. We need to teach what we have learned from the stories of Our Elders and Knowledge and Language Keepers.

What can we do to preserve our Languages?

-Create activities using the language. Use traditional teachings and integrate the language using the technology that we have at the moment. Ex. I made a stuffed wapos that talks in Cree, I recorded my voice to teach the body parts of the wapos and a greeting that says “kisakitiin, I love you.”

-Land-based activities are important but we need to remind teachers to always use the language everyday in your daily activities.

Here are some of our Elders voices that can spark one's mind and spirit to gain respect for one's self and your ancestors language.

We, the first peoples of this land now called Manitoba, are a people of indomitable will.....we are determined to remain a strong and proud and identifiable group of people....we refuse to have our lives directed by others who do not and who cannot know our ways....we are a 20th century people, not a colorful folkloric remnant. We are capable and competent and perfectly able to assess today's conditions and develop ways of adjusting positively and successfully to them. – Grand Chief of Manitoba, Dave Courchene.

Here are some of our Elders voices that can spark one's mind and spirit to gain respect for one's self and your ancestors language.

“We have been here since time began.” –The Late Anishinaabe Elder Mark Thompson

“Language learning starts at home, it is important to keep speaking at home.” – Edith Spittal, Sayisi Dene

“The power of language is the sacredness within the meaning of the words said and used, especially in the teachings of our Elders. We need the proficiency to be able to connect and communicate with the Creator and all of creation.” – Virginia Skye, Ojibway

In closing, I ask our Creator to bless our nation with change of hearts *to become “Ininiw” again, means to be “A self-sufficient, self-determined, clean, intelligent spirited People.”* our ancestors left us their legacy through stories and visions and they wanted us to live and how they looked way beyond our years for our survival and so, we should begin this journey again.

– Marsha Blacksmith, 2020 marshab@mfnerc.com

