## <sup>כ</sup>-Δ·ΔלΔ"ס nehiyawewin

"Speaking  $\nabla \cdot \Delta \cdot^{2}$  nehiyawewin (the Cree language) is the way to being Cree." Elder Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018

As a principle, つ<sup>II</sup>ムウマム<sup>.o</sup> *nehiyawewin* may provide the lens through which Cree people perceive themselves and through which they understand the world around them. It is used to communicate Cree people's history over the ages, providing knowledge of their roots and of their Nation's foundational principles (Jobin, 2018).<sup>2</sup> All interviewees spoke of their native language, a distinct Cree dialect spoken by the majority of the Nation's population,<sup>3</sup> as a core aspect of their life and of their identity. It is described by most of them as being closely associated with っピムゥ ハレロマムゥ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin* (Cree way of life).<sup>4</sup>

Living according to the principle of  $\nabla^{\mu}\Delta^{\mu}\nabla^{\lambda}\Delta^{\lambda}$  nehiyawewin entails specific responsibilities and obligations. One Elder and a knowledge keeper emphasized the importance of preserving the quality and accuracy of  $\nabla^{\mu}\Delta^{\lambda}$  nehiyawewin to maintain the relevance of  $\nabla^{\mu}\Delta^{\lambda}$  $\wedge L \cap^{\lambda}\Delta^{\lambda}$  nehiyaw pimatisiwin as the Aseniwuche Winewak adapt their lifestyle to the external world.<sup>5</sup> There are many resourceful ways that people have found to keep  $\nabla^{\mu}\Delta^{\lambda}$  nehiyawewin flourishing, such as speaking their mother tongue on a daily basis, sourcing and sharing newly-acquired vocabulary with others and reviewing written documents with those who have expert knowledge in the Cree language to ensure language accuracy.<sup>6</sup>

> Many interviewees expressed a heightened sense of urgency in their personal and collective responsibility of teaching  $\neg \Delta \neg \nabla \cdot \Delta^{, 3}$ *nehiyawewin* to their children in order to ensure that their language continues to thrive.<sup>7</sup> Some community members assume the role of advocate with public education officials, speaking for the right of the Nation's children to be

taught  $\neg " \Delta \forall \nabla \cdot \Delta^{\cdot 2}$  nehiyawewin in a manner that ensures the linguistic proficiency of future generations.<sup>8</sup> An Elder suggests that another powerful means of ensuring the successful transmission of their mother tongue is by speaking only  $\neg " \Delta \forall \nabla \cdot \Delta^{\cdot 2}$  nehiyawewin to children and others even though they may not be fluent in this language.<sup>9</sup> This act asserts in a gentle and respectful way the critical importance of  $\neg " \Delta \forall \nabla \cdot \Delta^{\cdot 2}$  nehiyawewin in maintaining the collective identity of the Aseniwuche Winewak.

## Endnotes

1 From interview with Elder Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018.

2 Jobin S. (2018). *Nehiyawak narratives: Upholding Indigenous economic relationships.* [Unpublished manuscript]. Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta.

3 According to a survey completed by Aseniwuche Winewak Nation in 2018, over 60% of community members identify Cree as either their first language and/or the primary language used at home.

4 From interviews with Elder Mary Delorme, August 24, 2018; Elder Adelaide McDonald, April 24, 2018; Elder Jane McDonald, July 11, 2018; Tom McDonald, July 23, 2018; Elder Philomene Moberly & Carol Wanyandie, April 26, 2018; Elder Russell Wanyandie, April 25, 2018.

5 From interview with Elder Russell Wanyandie & Carol Wanyandie, April 25, 2018.

6 From interviews with Elder Mary Delorme, August 24, 2018; Tom McDonald, July 23, 2018; Elder Philomene Moberley, 2018 and Elder Russell Wanyandie & Carol Wanyandie, April 25, 2018.

7 From interviews with Elder Adelaide McDonald & Carol Wanyandie, April 24, 2018; Elder Jane McDonald, July 11, 2018; Tom McDonald, July 23, 2018 and Elder Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018.

8 From interview with Elder Adelaide McDonald & Carol Wanyandie, April 24, 2018.

9 From interview with Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018.

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