Activity 4a
Vowel Differences in Plains Cree “Y” Dialects

In activity 4, you were introduced to the vowel sounds of the Cree-Innu dialect continuum. In particular you observed how the Proto-Algonquian long vowel *e: (often spelled e, ee, ê, or ē) can differ across the dialects. However, sometimes that variation can cross-cut what is otherwise a major dialect difference based on other features. In Saskatchewan, a major dialect difference is usually recognized between Plains Cree or the “Y” dialect and Woodland Cree or the “TH” dialect (see also activity 1). With this in mind, let’s take a look at the occurrence or non-occurrence of ē in the dialects of Saskatchewan.

Instructions:
► Open the Linguistic Atlas found at www.atlas-ling.ca.
► Go to the ‘family’ category.
► Select the phrase “this is my older brother”.
► Click on each marker on the map and listen carefully.
► When you find the speakers listed below, copy the first word on the corresponding line.

What do you notice about the last vowel of the first word for each speaker?
► Martha Michell - Woodland Cree - North - Kinosaoo ___________________
► Minnie Mckenzie - Woodland Cree - South - La Ronge ___________________
► Leda Corrigal - Plains Cree - Northern - Beauval ___________________
► Robert Eyahpaise - Plains Cree - Southern - Beardy’s ___________________
► Jean Okimasis - Plains Cree - Southern - White Bear ___________________
► Butch Carriere - Swampy Cree - Western - Cumberland ___________________

Answer:
► Woodland Cree - North - Kinosaoo nistís
► Woodland Cree - South - La Ronge nistís
► Plains Cree - Northern - Beauval nistís
► Plains Cree - Southern - Beardy’s nistês
► Plains Cree - Southern - White Bear nistês
► Swampy Cree - Western - Cumberland nistês

ī Plains Cree - Northern
ě Plains Cree - Southern
Woodland Cree Swampy Cree