By Standing Bear (kuuNUx teeRIt) Kroupa

In November, the First Nations Educational and Cultural Center hosted a symposium on Sustaining Indigenous Languages as part of National American Indian Heritage Month. Unfortunately, attendance was comprised of familiar faces—American Indian Studies Research Institute affiliates and linguists. Missing were others in the academic and Bloomington communities—both which are filled with ignorance concerning issues of contemporary American Indians.

In today’s society, most Americans seem to learn and think about Indian people in the past tense—modern ghosts who hunted buffalo and lived in tipis. From elementary school to higher education, Americans have learned American history through a biased lens fraught with misconceptions and divorced from cultural truths. Most of American society is unaware of modern American Indian people and their lives, issues, and concerns. Due to this ignorance, it is important to accurately promote American Indian heritage and modern-day issues of Indian people. A free film night won’t educate an uninformed audience about real Indian issues. It results in a “Dog and Pony show” that offers little information or content into daily lives of modern Indians. Instead, we need to pay tribute and focus on the continuing traditions and struggles of contemporary American Indians, such as movements of cultural revival.

Today, language revitalization is an issue of high importance in several communities throughout Indian Country. It is a “hot topic” that has evolved into a major cultural movement. From Indian reservation to pueblo, language warriors are battling the war against language extinction, with a shared vision of recreating Indigenous language communities. This newsletter aims to help readers understand an important part of the Indian present and future by discussing language maintenance and revitalization in Indigenous communities. Shared here are modern stories of dedication and adaptation, demonstrating the significance of language revival throughout Indian Country.
Revitalization of Endangered Languages
Serafin M. Coronel-Molina (Quechua)
Indiana University Bloomington

According to contemporary linguistic research, currently there are nearly seven thousand languages in the world, of which more than half are believed to disappear in the next century. This deplorable state of languages is called “endangered languages,” “sleeping languages,” “tongues in agony,” “moribund languages,” etc. The vast majority of languages that are considered within these categories are the Indigenous languages. Therefore, it is vital to revitalize and document them to prevent their extinction. Promoting the revitalization and documentation of languages from different perspectives should be a priority in order to safeguard the cultural and linguistic diversity of our planet. Documentation and revitalization are two faces of the same coin because they feed each other substantially, so they need to go hand in hand.

Language revitalization involves the restoration or strengthening of a particular language in areas where they prevailed before being displaced by another more powerful and prestigious language. Overall, the language revival has much to do with languages that were no longer used in everyday communication as well as with those with restricted use that vary depending on the context (Hinton 2001). Language revitalization means to teach, develop, cultivate, strengthen and disseminate a language to make it a vital instrument of communication in daily life, namely to restore and strengthen its pragmatic function in various spheres of society.

On the other hand, language revitalization is related to language policy and planning and their respective categories: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Therefore, this process must be approached from multiple fronts, taking into account the social networks that intertwine home, school and community (cf. Fishman 1991, 1996, 1999 and 2001). Language revitalization also involves restoring and reversing language shift. According to Fishman (1991), reversing language shift refers to the change in the opposite direction of the displacement process of a language in order to restore it as a means of communication in daily life. Fishman emphasizes the importance of the intergenerational transmission of mother tongue to ensure the success of language reversal, and highlights the fact that the community of speakers who want to preserve their language, they may need outside help in the planning and implementation process. The lack of a language transmission from generation to generation is, according to Fishman, a significant contributing factor to the loss of it, since that lack of transmission leads to “fewer and fewer speakers each generation” (1991).

It would be simplistic to say that the users of the Indigenous languages are the only ones ultimately responsible for transmitting their languages from generation to generation, whether employed in the various contexts of everyday life or expand its use in the various functional domains of society. The intergenerational transmission process is closely linked to a number of historical, social, political, economic and sociolinguistic factors that constitute insurmountable barriers to the detriment of Indigenous languages. To crystallize the goals of language recovery and revitalization, we need to take draconian measures at all levels. It is also fundamental to strengthen, unite, articulate and multiply efforts. For instance, a robust language and technology planning, and an innovative educational reform are needed in order to allow Indigenous languages to occupy the place that truly belongs to them in society. All this can be carried out with the active participation of Indigenous peoples, and other sectors and vectors of the society. For information on Quechua language planning and revitalization efforts in the vast Andean region, see Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004; Coronel-Molina, 2005. For other cases in the United States and around the world, see Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; McCarty & Zepeda, 2006; McCarty, 2005; Reyhner & Lockard, 2009; Teaching Indigenous Languages Website [online]; among others.

Teaching, learning and acquisition of Indigenous languages pose great challenges because of their diglossic and multiglossic reality. Such a situation may be perceived in the absence of educational resources and a lack of application of contemporary theories and methodologies in the development of educational materials in Indigenous languages. Therefore, it is necessary to turn to linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, educational linguistics, linguistic anthropology, semiotics, semantics and pragmatics for research and pedagogical purposes, and for the development of educational materials. In fact, there are over thirty language teaching methodologies, which can be used as a basis to create an eclectic approach, which is a fusion of language teaching methods and its corresponding implementation in a comprehensive and holistic way. These theories and methodologies could be applied according to the context and characteristics of each language, and the diverse student population.

Another issue that deserves true attention is that in teaching, learning and language acquisition processes, there is a tendency to focus too much only on the theories of L1 and L2 acquisition. However, seldom it is mentioned the vital importance of C1 (First Culture) and C2 (Second Culture) acquisition. As we know, language and culture are
inseparable because they are closely connected, and to ignore that connection in our theoretical and pedagogical practices is, without doubt, a monumental mistake.

Teaching, learning and acquisition of Indigenous languages and cultures in a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic location around the world are of strong need for language development, revitalization, promotion and dissemination purposes. By the same token, all these tasks constitute an inalienable right according to a series of official documents, such as language laws, education laws, constitutions, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. Thus, teaching, learning and acquisition of Indigenous languages and cultures should be included in the implementation of top down and bottom up educational and linguistic policies as well as in any language planning initiative.

As noted above, school, home and society play a key role in language revitalization. The private and public spaces are a breeding ground for exercising linguistic rights and for the restoration of the functional domains of a given language. Apart from the intergenerational transmission of language and culture, school also plays a pivotal role in the process of language revitalization and language reversal. Unfortunately, asymmetrical power relations, negative language attitudes, competing language ideologies, language discrimination, linguistic shame, competing social, linguistic and cultural capitals, social condemnation, and even worse social self-condemnation have been at the expense of Indigenous languages and cultures across time and space. These sociolinguistic and sociocultural phenomena have spurred to keep Indigenous languages in a diglossic and multiglossic situation. In addition to all this, historical, social, political, economic, educational and technological factors continue forcing and condemning the Indigenous language speakers to linguistic displacement, that is to abandon one’s linguistic and cultural practices in order to assimilate into the mainstream society. For example, the various models of bilingual education in Latin America, are homogenizing forces of assimilation and transculturation since they do not go beyond elementary education. Any bilingual education program that does not include Indigenous languages at different levels of the education system, should simply be called Transitional Bilingual Education, which, as its name implies, it only contributes to the rapid transition to the dominant language and culture, that is to say, it leads to linguistic displacement and cultural erasure.

However, a true Maintenance Bilingual Education is a major challenge in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation. It is fundamental to have sufficient economic, human and pedagogical resources. This process requires innovation of the education system and language policies from holistic and inclusive perspectives. It also raises the need for the re-engineering of language planning (status, corpus and acquisition) at local, regional, national, international and transnational levels. For example, it is urgent to create laws to establish the teaching, learning, acquisition, promotion and documentation of Indigenous languages and cultures nationally and internationally. Moreover, these laws should protect linguistic diversity and Indigenous languages giving them the status they deserve in society, so that speakers of these languages continue to transmit them from generation to generation with full conviction, and also to make sure the Indigenous languages are used in different domains of society. National governments should also promote literacy in Indigenous languages, and develop multimodal pedagogical materials in Indigenous languages (in printed and digital formats), and make available mass media (in printed and digital modes) as well. Some examples of digital mass media are films, documentaries, e-newspapers, e-publications, e-newsletters, among others.

In addition to this, the New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as web radio, satellite and web-TV; the Internet in general such as Mozilla, Google Search Engines, websites, blogs, Facebook, chats, e-mails, Twitter, YouTube, ATM Machines; technological tools such as computers (One Lap Top Per Child) and transient technology such as cell phones, iPhones, iPads, CD-Roms and DVDs; software such as spell-checking, video games, Rossetta Stone, machine translations, Windows and Office, Open Office, Mozilla, AbiWord, Intrans.php, Hunspell and GNOME, can be powerful allies in language preservation, documentation, promotion, and revitalization.

Last but not least, it is essential to develop all kinds of pedagogical resources and materials for different educational levels (pre-school, kinder-garden, elementary, secondary, and college if possible). Also, the training of bilingual teachers is imperative, who are and will be the agents of language maintenance and revitalization in the school domain. The issue is not only the implementation of education programs in Indigenous languages for their community of speakers, but also these programs should include the speakers of dominant languages, so they can develop linguistic and cultural awareness and learn to appreciate a wide range of invaluable knowledge and skills the Indigenous languages bring with them. More importantly, the community of speakers of endangered languages needs all sorts of support from different angles to make sure that the intergenerational transmission of language and culture, which is a cornerstone in any linguistic and cultural revitalization effort, continues vibrantly in the years to come.
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Arikara Language Revitalization
Standing Bear Kroupa

With our language nearing extinction, the Arikara people of the Fort Berthold Indian reservation in North Dakota have reached a critical period in the maintenance of our unique identity as Arikaras. Today’s youth are unable to speak our own language, and that inability prohibits us from rightfully attaining the distinctive cultural traditions of our ancestors. Thus, we are at an urgent period in the history of our people: Will we resuscitate and maintain our language and traditions or will we let them disappear?

Presently, among many in the Arikara community, there is a tremendous sense of urgency to insure the survival of the Arikara language. An endangered language that now has only a handful of partial speakers, it is at a critical stage that requires immediate action by tribal members. Its survival has become the responsibility of a core group of motivated individuals who must assume leadership positions in a revival effort that requires a fundamental change in attitude in the Arikara community. A group of younger people, some still in school and some now graduated, are developing a strong desire to learn their native language and contribute to its revival. All of these individuals have accomplished what no other younger people have done in several generations: they have developed a dedicated group of language activists, and, in addition to studying the language formally, they have begun to develop elementary speaking skills.

These individuals live in various locations on-and-off the Fort Berthold reservation, and in-and-out of North Dakota. It is a small, but certainly very dedicated, group that is determined to recover both the Arikara language and our cultural traditions. This Arikara cohort is contributing to language revitalization in several ways, such as by pursuing academic education and partnering with the American Indian Studies Research Institute in developing language projects, organizing immersion courses, developing language societies, creating songs, and in ceremonial life. The shared vision among these individuals is an Arikara awakening resulting in its language revitalization, cultural preservation and strengthening of an Arikara identity.
Guest Feature: Loren Yellow Bird, Sr. (Arikara)
Arikara Language Warrior

My name is Loren Yellow Bird Sr. I'm a member of the Arikara tribe and my interest in revitalization of the Arikara language has to do with ensuring our language survives. In my life time, I have seen the use of our language and cultural ways begin to disappear. My father had always encouraged me and the rest of my family to get educated; because that was the only way we could make it in the “white man’s” world. My true interest in language didn’t take off until I was in my 20’s and became more involved in the tribal community. I noticed there was a need for younger people to get more involved with many of the things we did as a tribe and community.

During this time I felt very lucky to get the support from elders like I did. They could have chosen not to include me or teach me any of the knowledge they possess. I think the fact that I grew up in the Arikara community of White Shield, North Dakota, came from a well known family, and was a well-mannered young person at the time showing a basic interest in the language, is what led to their consideration. Also, many of the elders I spoke with knew my parents very well, and even my grandparents, whom they considered leaders of the tribe during their life time. One of my extended grandmother’s Melvina Everett said to me when I brought her gifts for the third time so I could ask questions about the tribe, “you don’t need to bring me anything anymore, Nellie was my sister (Nellie was my paternal grandmother), and if you want to know anything just ask me.”

As far as language instruction, I never had any real formal training, only what minimal amount the current speakers I had as contacts were able to teach, including a semester at Fort Berthold Community College on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. I did contact Dr. Douglas Parks, professor of anthropology at Indiana University, in 1997 about attending school there and possibly studying under him. Dr. Parks has been very active working on the Arikara language. He’s assisted in preserving our language and developing language CD’s with interactive features. He did send me a copy of the first Arikara language program which helped me out a lot. However, I still didn’t have the grasp to learn as well as I could, but for my people I was (and still am) determined.

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In March, 2008, the American Indian Studies Research Institute hosted the first-ever intensive Arikara language course. It has provided an important cornerstone to the revival of the language. The active Arikara participants were (from left to right) Standing Bear Kroupa, Dancing Eagle “Wanbdi Waci” and Loren Yellow Bird, Sr.
In 2000 I came to work for a site in the National Park Service called Fort Union Trading Post. Historically, this site had members of my tribe come here for trade and interaction. By 2007, I applied for a NPS grant which encourages permanent park staff to submit a proposal for personal development. At this time, I learned that Dr. Parks and his staff were coming to White Shield to address the community and find out if there was still an interest to continue work on the language. The idea was to press the school into being more pro-active on helping with the language, as well as encourage community members to use the language more or let it die. Still, while the superintendent of the school and others were sympathetic to the community’s wish, they knew certain standards still have to be met. Also, in the past, I have heard from other school officials, none of which are from the community or tribe, say that the school needs to focus the funding resources in other areas, that the people themselves should be responsible for their cultural teachings, and that students will never use this language when going to a job interview or advanced schooling to be a doctor or lawyer, etc.

This kind of talk became a personal challenge to me as I didn’t want to hear there was no place for our language. I began to do my studying at Indiana University and spent some time with a young man of our tribe, Mr. Standing Bear (Brad) Kroupa, who was also making an effort to work on learning the Arikara language. I would come back to the National Park with a renewed desire to find a way where our young people had a place where their language studies paid off and gave them a pay check. It was at this time I would develop the Fort Union American Indian language and cultural plan at our site. This plan is specifically designed to work with tribal schools that need a platform where students come and interpret the history and culture of their tribe as well as stress the use of their tribal language. The program so far has been successful but is still a work in progress. I am determined to get these opportunities to the other parks in the state where students can go and interpret the history and culture as well as use the language. From that point of contact with the schools and students, I hope to create interest in the students to pursue employment at some of these sites where this kind of interpretation is badly needed. In return, these sites embrace these opportunities from the students and look to add to the preservation process as well.

I look forward to the challenge each day, as well as each year. We are in our second year of this program, and hope that this effort will help in the preservation of our Sahnish language. As long as I work here and for the National Park Service, I will continue to implement this opportunity and also work with my own children in speaking the language. We will succeed and revive our language again.

Nawah.

Over the past several years, there have been major advancements in the revitalization of the Arikara language. We are now witnessing a younger generation shaking off the apathy of the past and dedicated to reviving their native language and culture with a fervor not previously seen over the past century.

August of 2009 marked another progressive step for the revival of Arikara language when Dancing Eagle enrolled in the M.A. anthropological linguistics program at Indiana University. After living most of his life on the Fort Berthold Indian reservation, Dancing Eagle, along with his wife and three children, relocated to Bloomington, Indiana to begin advanced study on Arikara language and music. This move demonstrates extreme courage and an unwavering commitment to the revival of the Arikara language. If it were so easy, there would have been other Arikara tribal members doing so over the last thirty years while Parks has been at Indiana University. Dancing Eagle is currently in his fourth-semester here at IU.
In 1985 the American Indian Studies Research Institute (AISRI) was founded at Indiana University to serve as an interdisciplinary research center for projects focusing on the native peoples of the Americas. AISRI was founded in part on the premise that language, culture, and history are inextricably interrelated, and that to fully understand and describe the language, culture, or history of a people, a study of one of these topics must be informed by work in the others.

One of the primary goals of AISRI is to work cooperatively with American Indian educational institutions to make the products of scientific research available to the communities in which the research was conducted. Today the foremost concern of most communities is language loss and language retention. To address that concern, AISRI has worked for over a decade to develop language curricula and other materials that can support language instruction programs in elementary and secondary schools as well as in community colleges.

A major focus of AISRI research is language documentation and, as a means to that end, development of software tools and technical services that support documentary activities. Current faculty research focuses on five languages: Pawnee and Arikara, both northern Caddoan languages; Yanktonai and Assiniboine, both Siouan languages; and Passamaquoddy, an Algonquian language.

AISRI researchers provide public access to the current results of their ongoing projects. The AISRI Dictionary Portal allows the visitor to work with AISRI dictionaries for five languages. The AISRI Northern Caddoan Linguistic Text Corpora Portal is a gateway to texts and narratives in Arikara, Skiri Pawnee, and South Band Pawnee.

In addition, AISRI has also established the Center for the Documentation of Endangered Languages (CDEL) Sound Laboratory, which supports the various sound recording needs of research and educational projects as well as houses an archive for sound recorded materials.

CDEL was founded in 1992 by AISRI on the premise that oral records are essential for language documentation, preservation, and dissemination. CDEL uses digital sound recording technology to preserve audiovisual materials, to enhance the quality of older analog recordings, and to enrich multimedia educational resources. Digital sound recording technology now allows for optimal sound quality recordings, and with current software programs it is possible to isolate and save sound recordings as files that can be incorporated into multimedia formats.
Guest Feature: Susan Paskvan (Denaakk’e)

“Don’t Give Up!”

“Don’t give up!” I repeated these words in my mind as my arms and shoulders ached. This past year, my sisters and cousins tanned two moose skins. Saving our language is similar to tanning a moose skin, in that it is challenging yet very rewarding. Through this tanning process I learned our language, Denaakk’e (or Koyukon Athabascan, as it is formally known), our beliefs and appreciated even more the strength of our people. Susan Paskvan se’ooze’ dehoo Denaakk’e helde K’etsoo seeznee. ‘My name is Susan Paskvan and in Native they call me K’etsoo.’ I am learning our language Denaakk’e and also teaching our language through onsite visits to our nine rural Alaskan schools and over two-way video-conference.

The first step in tanning a moose skin starts out with skinning the animal properly. You have to leave some meat on it so fleshying the membranes off will be easier. This is similar to our language in that you have to have something of the original language to carry you forward. Whether your language is a living language, spoken by the youngest members of the family, or through documentation, you need something to start with. My family had the good fortune of working with my aunt Marie Yaska, who guided us along the way, taught us the language, and told us many stories. In my own language learning, I continue to have my mother, Eliza Jones, a renowned linguist, and many aunts, uncles and elders who constantly teach me so I can pass it on.

During spring break we started scraping the inside flesh off of the moose skin. The scraping tool, baa-haa k’elleyhylde ‘with it we scrape hide’ has a straight blade attached to the end of a foot long log, about 5 1/2 inches in diameter. The weight of the log helps remove the beggootl ‘fibers and bits of flesh on the inside of a hide’. This part of the process is where you toughen up – constantly lifted the scraper and bringing it down evenly. If you strike it at an angle you make cuts in the skin. This is similar to our language learning, because it takes hours and hours of practice. You make mistakes along the way, but through repetition you improve. Learning your language takes commitment and passion. Once you start scraping, you can’t stop. You have to be innovative in your learning.

The remaining steps to tanning a moose skin involve cutting the hair off, shaving off the black tissues, stretching and freezing the skin outside, scraping the beggootl and hair side again, and finally hanging the skin to wind dry and bleach. All of these steps take time. Sometimes we would get tired and we’d call on our family and friends to support us. My teenage sons helped every step in the process. This is like our language. It takes a community for the language to exist. You have to reach out and teach it to others because it will help you to understand it better. Sometimes the more you learn about your language the harder it seems to get. By working together, we shared many hours together telling stories, practicing our traditional memorial songs, and laughing.

After the school year I went back to the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) to learn more techniques and strategies to revitalize and teach our language. This year my colleagues, Kathy Wallen (Apache), Estafanita Calabaza (Keres Pueblo), Standing Bear Kroupa (Arikara) and I gave a panel discussion about our languages. The status of our languages varied from living languages undergoing rapid language shift (Apache) to endangered (Denaakk’e) to no fluent speakers left (Arikara). We learn from each other ways in which to revitalize our languages. One colleague’s language (Keres Pueblo) is strictly oral. In my own learning I had to put away my writing crutch for awhile to learn by hearing. This was a challenging exercise but it taught me to think in our language. Our Arikara colleague, Standing Bear Kroupa, reminds us that we each have to think of our languages through his perspective of having no living speakers left.

In Alaska, most of the fluent speakers of Denaakk’e are in their 60’s and older. I started learning our language through the grammar method from my mother at the University of Alaska. After I had children, I renewed my interest. By this time the strategies for adult learning focused on the mentor-apprentice method as taught by Leanne Hinton. I finally learned how to use the immersion strategies effectively when I took Jenny DeGroat’s immersion class at AILDI in 2009.

When tanning the moose skin we used a combination of old methods, such as brain tanning, to incorporating modern tools (knives, pick axe, ropes). In our language teaching we use the indigenous oral methods and calendar to guide our framework. Due to the vastness of Alaska and the age of our speakers, we use modern technology (two way video-conference, iTunes, PowerPoint) as vehicles to teach.

This age old process of tanning skins has been used by generations of Athabascans in Interior Alaska. It’s expensive, but possible to purchase tanned moose skins. That’s not possible with our languages. By learning our language, you learn about your world view, beliefs, relationship with the land, customs, stories and songs. Our elders encourage us to keep working diligently, offer classes, and speak Denaakk’e. No matter how challenging it gets, don’t give up. Edegoyeneegeluhdenee. ‘take care of yourselves.’

Susan Paskvan is a teacher of Denaakk’e in the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. For several years, Paskvan has coordinated the Yukon-Koyukuk School District’s Native language program.
Guest Feature: Deidre Otero (Santa Ana Pueblo)
Tamayame Language Program

The Tamayame Language & Culture Programs of The Pueblo of Santa Ana in New Mexico are working with the community and Bernalillo Public Schools to help revitalize the Santa Ana Pueblo (Tamaya) Keres language. The Pueblo of Santa Ana is located 20 miles north of Albuquerque.

The Santa Ana Pueblo developed a Community Language Program in 1988 with the help of volunteers and a small grant from the Chamiza Foundation. A memorandum of agreement with the Pueblo of Santa Ana and Bernalillo Public School district was first established a Tribal Council resolution to teach the Santa Ana Keres Language in Roosevelt and Carroll Elementary Schools. A second memorandum of agreement was established December 10, 2008 to include the Santa Ana Keres teachings in grades K-12. The Pueblo of Santa Ana currently has a memorandum of agreement with the State of New Mexico Public Education Department allowing the tribe to establish standards and criteria to determine competency of persons seeking certification in Native American Language & Culture.

The following community programs are offered: Tapestry Classes, Sewing classes, Beginning Language Classes, Women's Talking Circle and Pottery Classes. The latest project involved youth in the revitalization of the Tamayame language. Twenty Seven middle school and high school students who attend the Santa Ana Pueblo Language & Culture class at Bernalillo Middle and High School produced digital stories on topics such as Past/Present Rez life, The Journey of a Tamayame Boy, The Tamayame before Tamaya, Life after Boarding Schools. The students incorporated the Tamayame language and worked with the Elder language consultants to translate their English transcripts into the Tamayame language. Deidre Otero, materials developer who was involved in the project said, “The students enjoyed the digital storytelling method because it allowed them to research their own identity. The projects brought self-pride and motivated them to learn their language and culture. The students’ attendance at school has improved and they had fun developing the films. This opportunity has allowed the elders to work with the younger generation and we believe the elders feel good about their contributions to teaching the language.” The finished digital stories will be used in the Santa Ana Pueblo Keres class curriculum and will be added to the tribes Community Intranet Website. The films will also be available at the tribes Community Library so that it can be handed down to future generations.

Deidre Otero is the language materials developer for the Pueblo of Santa Ana Department of Education, Language and Culture Programs.
Santo Domingo Pueblo is one of nineteen Pueblos located in north central New Mexico, and is in between Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Within the boundaries, Sile and Pena Blanca are two small Spanish towns are situated northeast and northwest of the reservation. Santo Domingo Pueblo is one of seven Pueblos that speak the Keres language.

The Keresan speaking Pueblos refer to their dialect/language by their Pueblo name and are divided into two sub categories, Eastern and Western Keres. The name that is used when describing the language in Keres is wekanyi (This is according to my exposure to the Keres language and interactions with Cochiti and San Felipe speaking members). The Keres language is not a written language; however, in recent years some of the seven Keresan Pueblos are allowing their dialect to be documented. This too has created tension, questions and concerns of “who or which Pueblo has the right to decide and approve language documentation on Keres.” Although Santo Domingo Pueblo has opposed the documentation of their dialect, some Pueblo leaders are contemplating the possibility of language documentation.

Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Bernalillo Public Schools and the Santo Domingo Pueblo, language classes are currently offered at Santo Domingo Elementary and Middle Schools. The classes are managed by Santo Domingo Pueblo and are only offered to registered tribal members. The structure of these classes follows a combination of bilingual and immersion models. For example, students meet each day for one hour totally at least five hours of language contact time. In addition, from the community language efforts, individual families are being proactive and have created ‘Keres language zones’ within their households limiting English usage in the home.

Aside from communal language efforts, I have been working diligently on creating immersion lesson materials that may be used in the current Keres language programs. Importantly, these lessons introduce the language instructors to immersion technique teaching. The lessons focus on a book series that incorporate the Puebloan importance of color schemes in conjunction with the cultural importance and relationship it has to seasonal information, direction, location and numbers. Each story line is reflective of Santo Domingo Puebloan everyday life and concentrates on at least four specialized vocabulary words along with a story line focusing on culture and emphasizing Santo Domingo teaching techniques.

To promote a natural setting of conversational Keres speech, none of the books used are written in English or in Keres. By not allowing any written forms these books encourage creative approaches of expressing the story in the language. This advances language use and promotes the introduction of new vocabulary usage within the language. Additionally, the students are then asked to write a short story about their life and recite it with the language they have acquired. This is to actively engage them in creative language usage which will also promote natural conversational dialogue as well as incorporating the usage of specialized speech with their peers and teacher. These lessons should demonstrate that the immersion model is successful in transmitting language in natural forms. By demonstrating this approach the language programs will confidently promote a positive outlook at language retention, revitalization, and conservation and maintenance efforts.

These immersion lesson plans serve as a template for language teachers to continue to create culturally appropriate immersion lesson plans that focus and reflect on the culture, the teaching styles, and the language of the Santo Domingo Puebloan people.

Estefanita Calabaza, M.A., has a Master of Arts degree in Native American Linguistics and Languages from the University of Arizona.

Guest Feature: Kathy Wallen (Dishchii’Bikoh Apache)

Nowhiyati (Our language)

“My name is Kathy Wallen and I have been working at Dishchii’bikoh (Cibecue) Community School for over four years. I started out as a paraprofessional, and within a year started working as an Apache Language teacher. I have lived in Dishchii’bikoh my whole life, 27 years to be exact, and Apache is my first language. I attended Alchesay High School in a neighboring community on our reservation, where people my age don’t speak Apache. I am currently attending Northland Pioneer College part time, and I also attend the American Indian Language Development Institute every summer at the University of Arizona. “Dii jii shi yaa gozhoo dolleel” (may many blessings come to me today); I listen and watch as my students say their morning prayer. We get into our regular routine: I ask in Apache, “How is the weather today?” My students are starting to answer with no help at all. They describe the weather—hot, cold, windy, cloudy—and what time of the day it is. It warms my heart to hear them respond without my help.
A language immersion workshop was held at our school the first year I started at Dishchii’bikoh. All the Apache teachers and paraprofessionals were required to attend. The immersion workshop was directed by Ms. Jenny Degroat, who has done extensive work with the Navajo language, teaching language immersion methods, and spreading language revitalization efforts across Indian Country. Ms. Degroat came to our school at the request of the Apache Language & Culture director, Ms. Hedy Kelewood. Within the next couple of days, we observed and participated in immersion lessons and techniques. Furthermore, Ms. Degroat shared her experiences, and we had discussions about our language situation. I found myself intrigued by the whole idea of working with the language and was the center of almost every discussion we had, asking questions and contributing my ideas. I realized that I had found my passion. Some parents, elders, and members of the public also showed up; it was a successful workshop. Overall, it was an exhilarating, awakening experience that sparked my desire to teach and work with reviving and maintaining my people’s language.

After the workshop, I had heard that our school might start an Apache immersion pilot program for the kindergarten students. A few days passed, and two other teachers and I were called into the principal’s office for a meeting. The principal informed us that we had been selected to teach a pilot Apache immersion class after school. I was shocked, mainly because of my age. At first, I felt unworthy of the position. This type of instruction is usually the work of the elders, according to our traditions. Then I realized that there are no fluent Apache speakers of my age outside our community, and there are no youth of my age in Dishchii’bikoh who have shown an interest in teaching the language. I talked with some elders and my parents about my thoughts and concerns on teaching at such a young age. They all told me it was work given by “Bike’go’ihid’an” (God/Creator) and that they supported me. That was enough to persuade me to accept the position. I wanted to make a future for my language, and the younger I started out the better it would be.

The pilot program began to grow and more parents started enrolling their children in our afterschool classes. We had children from different grade levels other than Kindergarten who wanted to join. This resulted in the need to develop a permanent classroom and expand the grade levels being taught. Our director took action and started meeting with the school board to develop an immersion program for the elementary and middle school grade levels, and also to hire the pilot program teachers, Mrs. Lolita Endfield, Ms. Vivian Burnette, and I. The school board approved this effort and the first immersion program on the White Mountain Apache reservation was born.

Immediately, Ms. Degroat was contacted and hired as a consultant. She assisted with our immersion training and helped develop a curriculum specifically for our program. We spent our intercession breaks with Ms. Degroat discussing what we wanted to focus on teaching our students. The language teachers and I researched our Apache history, our teachings, beliefs, and how we were brought up as Apache children. We found that the elders wanted us to follow a lifestyle that showed us what path they want us to walk, and how to carry ourselves as strong Apache women and men. All in all, we came up with a simple, yet complex philosophy in our language, “gozhoo doleel.” This simple phrase made up our whole curriculum. It has many powerful meanings and describes everything that is good and sacred in our language. The phrase does not lend to a good English translation, but it can mean that we are to live “a good lifestyle” and “let everything be well.” These are only some of the ways to describe that word. To help us utilize this phrase in a meaningful way, we broke our curriculum down into four major concepts. We decided that our youth should learn the language first as it relates to the self, family, environment, and universe.

In the beginning of our language program, it was agreed, that immersion would be the best way to teach Apache. Although it was a challenge trying to stay in Apache and not use any English at all, we started a “No English” rule in the classroom. As the weeks and months went on it became easier to not speak English to the students. The students absolutely loved our classes! In Apache, playing games like “Simon Says” and singing songs is fun for the kids and helps them retain what they’ve learned.
After several years, we now have our routines in place. First, we start our day off by praying in Apache and describing the current weather. Then, we do the lesson of the day and an activity that goes along with the lesson. Our students are now automatically responding in Apache, it’s an amazing feeling to hear the students actually speaking. Throughout the years we have had some skeptics that have told us immersion isn’t going to work, and that have expected fluency in a month or less. However, we have learned to ignore the negativity that some may bring, and to embrace what we have achieved, even if it is only one word that was learned in a whole lesson. The parents and other family members of our students were offered workshops with Ms. Degroat to understand immersion and we as teachers have had chances to speak with the parents as well to explain the process of immersion.

As I reflect on the years that have gone by we are still making changes to our program to improve our teachings. But I also see the success we have made in creating students that understand Apache and enhancing some of our students’ Apache vocabulary—we are progressing in creating future fluent speakers. We have had a lot of positive feedback from parents who say their children are attempting to use Apache in their homes. In hearing that and seeing that I know our work is worth it all to save and maintain our Apache language. After all, we were the last to resist submission and with that same mentality we are refusing to lose our language. Gozhoo doleel ahiyi’e.

Thank You

Language revitalization is a large commitment with heavy demands. I understand your struggle and commend your efforts. Let’s continue to create an environment that assists in efforts of language revival and encourage others to maintain their historical and cultural heritage.

I thank our contributors and other language leaders for the wonderful job they are doing. Stay strong and keep fighting to develop and secure the strong language communities we dream of. Nootuhnaanu’.
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Curriculum and Indigenous Educational Communities

SPRING 2011
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SECTION# 31029
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This is a seminar designed to provide an introductory examination of existing research and knowledge about curricular projects within Indigenous educational communities, such as Native language learning programs and culturally appropriate/relevant educational practices. Seminar participants are encouraged to consider knowledge, purpose of research, theoretical frameworks and analysis in their own areas of research within curriculum studies and education in cross-cultural contexts. Building upon students’ current research interests, each participant will have the opportunity to develop their own research inquiry informed by the research conducted by Native and Indigenous scholars.

**This course counts toward the Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) Ph.D. Minor credit. If you would like this course to apply for the Ph.D. Minor in NAIS, enroll in the course G-751 – see above for section number.

Please contact Dr. Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz if you are interested in taking this special topic seminar in the Spring of 2011(tyazziem@indiana.edu).