

# **Gifts of Master-Apprenticeship: Development of the Revitalizing Endangered Indigenous Languages (REIL) Certificates**

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The Master-apprentice method is one of the most favored teaching methods for the Indigenous languages. It is suggested by Leanne Hinton (2002) as a one-to-one teaching method that is based on common-sense or experience rather than studying a grammar book. The key element of this method is the dynamics between a master and an apprentice. Since they need to spend a lot of time together, it is impossible if the pair doesn't get along. It requires tremendous motivation to keep language alive from both sides. If I were to describe my relationship to my own mentors and to my students, I would describe it as a 'master-apprentice' relationship, just like the teaching method that we are promoting in this field. When I had an opportunity to assist Dr. Akira Yamamoto's class at AILDI, 2001 (introduced by Dr. Terri McCarty), it turned out that I applied for my apprenticeship to him as well (when I looked back at that time). The AILDI had already existed for more than 20 years before that summer, providing rich and positive experiences for the Native language teachers who came to a desert from all over the world for these training experiences. I found something very valuable there, which I was eager to learn – how to engage with Native communities in a meaningful way. I was just about to graduate from the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at University of Arizona and was eagerly looking for a community I could serve using my professional training. My positive experience that summer at the AILDI has changed my professional and personal life. In celebration of 30 years of AILDI, I share my personal journey in language revitalization which include the lessons I have learned about the importance and goals of community-rooted efforts.

One of the most powerful aspects of the AILDI instructors is their ability to empower people, along with providing technical as well as political training and advice. Having both Native and non-Native participants in one class is very challenging since the teacher trainers/instructors need to fulfill the goals of both sets of participants and empower both groups who have different needs. Akira, that summer, showed me how to develop positive, trusting relationships with the Native teachers and the non-Native teachers/students (including myself) and to gain their trust over a course. That was such a crucial experience for me as an apprentice who would need to believe that kind of relationship is important and possible before s/he starts practicing it in the real world. This kind of teaching must be done through an "experience-based" knowledge transmission, and I witnessed that the AILDI instructors have provided these kinds of experiences for its participants for many, many years.

This "experience-based" or "empowering" model is also suggested by Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, known as "Critical Pedagogy" (Freire, 1998). In his literacy campaign, he suggests that literacy would be a key to connect those who are oppressed with other people facing similar struggles, would allow them access to the information that was withheld from them by their oppressors, and empower them through human connections and increased awareness (Freire, 1998; Freire & Macedo, 1987). He also suggests in his critical pedagogy that both groups would need to change in order to make a change to the world. Although, Paulo Freire's literacy campaign might not directly speak to Indigenous language promotion, his theory does speak to many similar aspects. In general, Indigenous education can benefit from critical pedagogy by adapting "experience-based" and "empowering" models. These principles can be a backbone for the education at the AILDI. Most importantly to me, these became an important essence for my professional activities including the development of the Revitalizing Endangered Indigenous Languages (REIL) certificate programs, which I later developed at Portland State University.

After my involvement with the AILDI, the positive knowledge transmission and experiences further lead me to apply for a position for the language program of the Warm Springs tribes. While I was working for the tribes and even before I started this position, many people at the AILDI gave me some useful advice including Akira Yamamoto, Terri McCarty, Ofelia Zepeda, Susan Penfield, Phil Cash Cash and Emory Sekaquaptewa. I was able to visit some of their communities through the kind introductions and generous support of Wayne and Agnes Holms and Chris Sims, who gave me invaluable and practical advice for working with the communities.

Both Warm Springs tribes and Portland State University (PSU) provided generous support while I was in the tribal language program (2002-2004), and, eventually, I moved to PSU after my international visiting scholar visa was expired. My 'experienced-based' learning and my apprenticeship to these instructors continued all through these years. The tribal language program allowed me to learn the communities' needs and also the struggles surrounding language and culture revitalization. My apprenticeship to the Warm Springs elders (particularly Adeline Miller and Gladys Thompson) and friendship with my former colleagues and friends has led to a series of partnership activities and conferences.

My first reach towards expanding partnerships came when I invited many of the scholars who previously worked with the Warm Springs community to join together in a workshop, "Working Together: Warm Springs its History and Future". This was based on the wishes of a dear Warm Springs elder, Adeline Miller, who is one of handful of fluent Sahaptin speakers and whose mother was also an oral Sahaptin teacher who worked with Virginia Hymes years ago. Adeline remembered that her mother enjoyed working with Virginia and wished to see Virginia and others in the community once more. People heard her request and gathered in summer 2003 including Dell and Virginia Hymes, Michael Silverstein, Robert Moore, Henry Millstein, Susan Phillips, Kay French and some new revitalization supporters including Leanne Hinton, Wayne and Agnes Holmes. This gathering invited the neighboring Native language communities and their collaborators, such as the Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI), University of Oregon and Grand Ronde tribal language program. This event reminded us how important it is to stay connected to each other and to share and pass on valuable knowledge. It also remains a memorable event to me personally since we have lost several colleagues/friends from this circle after the event.

After one of only two fluent Warm Springs elder speakers passed away, the Wasco language found another apprentice: Pam Cardenas and added her as the third Wasco language apprentice in addition to Radine Johnson and Valerie Switzler. It has been Gladys Thompson's wish, as the Wasco language carrier, who is the most and only fluent speaker, to see her language being passed onto the next generations and to keep supporting her apprentices. Pam and I flew to the University of London and studied the language documentation methods and started to document conversational Kiksht through a series of grants, working together with the other apprentices (Radine and Valerie), the previous tribal linguist, and Henry Millstein with Myra Johnson as a language program director. These projects have all centered on building or enhancing a masters-apprentice environment, and I hope that these methods (and the relationships they cultivate) will continue to grow.

When scholars and experts work with a Native community, a crucial element for the success is the development of a long-term relationship between the community and the outside expert (Spolsky, in personal communication). In this spirit, I spent the next several years, following my move from the tribes to PSU, creating partnerships between the Native communities and PSU. In the process of partnership development, it has become apparent that 'Research Ethics' is one of the most critical issues facing the academic who would like to engage with the Native communities. How can outside specialists work with the community? Why is it so important for the Native communities to claim the language ownership (Ostler, 1998)? These questions deserve to be met with compassion and examined through critical eyes – not only theories but through experiences. Through this collaboration process I learned that integration between theories and practice "praxis" (Freire, 1998) is one of the important aspects of language revitalization.

The new certificate programs at PSU (one in-place for undergraduate students in 2009 and the other for graduate students is imminent) are offered by the Department of Applied Linguistics and the Native American Studies Program (NAS). Applied Linguistics can offer some training for curriculum development, teaching methods, language acquisition, language documentation, language policy and teacher training whereas the NAS can provide some Native historical backgrounds. One of the characteristics of the certificate is that the students will have opportunity to work with a community as an intern, so they will gain "hands-on" experience. The graduate students, further, will have an option to combine the internship course with a grant development course as their choices. It is based on my belief and vision that "community-based" and "experience-based" approaches

are necessary to build the confidence and skills students will need to engage in this field. Through programs like ALDI and other teacher training based centers, I hope students are encouraged to pursue the opportunities afforded by these places. I hope students will be able to transfer classes between institutions in the future.

Empowering learners, serving communities, collaborating with each other, and immersing ourselves in real experiences are some of the core values embraced at AILDI. It is these values that I have been seeking to promote in my classes, through my partnership developments, and through my interaction with communities and students. I hope that I can return some of the favors given to me by passing on new seeds to the next generations and be of help in sustaining their process of growth. However, without the seeds of caring mentorship I was gifted by the AILDI about 9 years ago, and without the nutrition and blessings that my mentors have provided me all along the way, I wouldn't have known this rich, humane field, which is known as 'Native language revitalization' or wouldn't have met my life and spiritual partner, Tim Finch, who also dedicated his tremendous work to this field while we were in Warm Springs.

### **References**

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