

Saved by AILDI

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Maiku, nünei nia Stacey Oberly. Nünei nuunia Wachimamachi. Nünei pi Pinunuuchi. Nünei mu Kwachi. Nü ara' Pinuvaati. Nü pö'ötimitü University of Arizonavaati. Nü nuu'apag'avaachi asti'i. Nü nuu'apag'anavi sapigai. AILDI tüvüchi tüü'ai. AILDI iyevini nuuchiu püarikya.

Since the summer of 2003, I have attended the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) at the University of Arizona first as a student and then as an instructor. AILDI is a four-week institute focusing on developing Native language teachers, speakers and researchers. AILDI is mainly attended by Native people from all across the United States, Canada and Mexico. AILDI has been my saving grace as a Native graduate student and new faculty at the University of Arizona.

After ten years of teaching Ute, I was frustrated with my inability to teach my students to produce a simple sentence with the vocabulary they knew. I decided in order to be the best Ute teacher I could be I needed to learn more about Native languages and how best to teach my Native language. AILDI provided me with these skills and so much more. The AILDI faculty such as Lucille Watahomigie, Dr. Akira Y. Yamamoto and Dr. Ofelia Zepeda are renown for their work in Native language revitalization.

AILDI is a safe, nurturing institute that celebrates the beauty of Native languages, cultures and people. It provides relevant and culturally-appropriate education for community language workers. As an AILDI participant, I have been extremely blessed to have known Native elders such as Danny Lopez (Tohono O'odham), Stan Lucero (Laguna), Cecilia Lucero (Acoma) and Virginia Beavert (Yakama) who openly and generously shared their wisdom, courage and prayers. As an AILDI instructor, I have learned much from my students. Most importantly, they remind me that as a Native person, I must advocate for my community, culture and language. AIDL I has helped me to contribute to the next generation of Native language workers. It from this AILDI community which I have drawn enough strength and encouragement to complete my graduate studies and begin my academic career.