

Opening Group Discussion Question Summaries:

pute'nt khwa isqwa'qwe'el Honor Your Language

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

September 16th - 19th, 2019

Question #1: What does it mean to be a Coeur d'Alene (or use your tribe) and what does that have to do with language learning?

- If your identity is closely tied to your community, there is a strong understanding of who you are and where you come from
- Dancing, song, and ceremonies provide opportunities for using language in cultural context
- Passing down knowledge, teaching traditional song/dance, strengthening tribal identity and pride
- Language stewardship maintains and preserves knowledge
- Language learning connects you to other learners and members of your community
- Language helps you understand what your ancestors were thinking
- Language learning helps understand your history and what it means to be of your tribe
- Language expresses relationships inextricable to tribal identity and practice
- Tribal identity is about being generous, respectful, involved in one's community and in traditional activities
- Using language is an exercise in sovereignty
- Identity and language important for one's vision of the future and to overcome challenges
- Honoring and respecting your life and your relationships
- Language holds communities together
- Creation stories involve animals speaking and preparing land for people; language is not man-made and songs come from the other side
- Language helps communities to be resilient in who they are
- Don't be "gisee," don't be weak, give up easy; be crafty, rebellious, resilient, no pity
- Language learning fights against a colonized mindset
- To know and embrace your identity; to know what was lost in tribe's history and honor the suffering of your ancestors
- Practicing your language is a right
- We can find commonality in our uniqueness and learn for the sake of our grandchildren

Question #2: *How can language support the cultural aspirations of our communities (songs, traditions, oratories, etc.)?*

- Language communicates worldview. Aspects of the culture, of communication with the land and its resources, and of a tribe's ways of being cannot be translated nor captured in languages non-native to that tribal community; songs, stories, speeches make more sense in their own language.
- Community cultural spaces and discussions not always translated efficiently in English. Cultural aspirations are embedded in language and how it is expressed.
- Language intimately connected to song and story; each reinforce one another and bridge intergenerational gaps
- To learn about one's language is to learn about one's history
- Land provides us with language and language embeds us in land.
- Language cannot be separated from culture
- Language expresses process, purpose, and relationships to plants, animals, land, and thus to passed-down knowledge and connection to one's ancestors
- If you can't say it in your language, it's not yours anymore
- Opposes colonial culture and creates space for expression of tribal cultures
- Language expresses process and meaning in art forms and crafts, reinvigorates practice
- Experience is enriched by learning traditional practices in their own language.
- Language creates teachable moments in cultural spaces
- Language is crucial for identity, distinction, and resilience
- Language use is a reminder of whose land this is; it expands sovereignty and territory
- Language connects you to homeland, keeps you balanced, grounds you in tradition and identity, and counters distractions of modern world
- Language can help with negative feelings surrounding personal relationships to culture and cultural community
- Sharing cultural knowledge is easier in its own language
- Language allows you to think through the worldview of a culture and see through its eyes
- Language is healing and connection, and learning one's language connects you in a way that colonial languages cannot

Question #3: *What do language learners need to help them?*

- To find out what the roadblocks are to participation i.e. what prevents tribal members from going to classes
- Effective scheduling, surveying for prospective student availability times, asking what the language program can do to bring the classes to the people

- Ways to reach elders and sensitively navigate intergenerational trauma
- To make explicit the needs that one's ancestral language fulfills for children and young people
- To place value on your language and address why it is important to young people
- Strategies for speaking in the home and identifying/building immersion environments
- Direct instruction, guidance, and faith in student learners; goals and vision
- To take language learning out of the classroom and into the land
- Community and family support, initiative
- Access to fluent speakers and elders, and strategies aimed at helping elders to participate and work together
- To effectively navigate learning despite dialectical differences, disagreements, and language politics
- To play with words, make jokes, play games, and make language learning fun
- To have the hunger to learn and teach instilled in younger generations
- To integrate the language wherever and whenever we can
- Shifting discourse about language learning away from perceptions that it is too hard, and instead focusing on how beautiful the language is and how it is possible to learn
- Interdepartmental collaboration and intersectionality in approach; linking language learning to instruction in another area, ie. cooking, wilderness survival
- Encouragement from instructors, community, family
- Repetition, daily exposure, and multiple points of contact with language
- Help navigating the emotional and identity complexities related to learning one's language
- To be involved in language learning, documentation, and reclamation practices from the beginning
- More teachers and support for those teachers so they are not overloaded
- Time, patience, determination, enthusiasm
- Changes in state certification laws and policies surrounding language education and fluency thresholds
- To be taught the language in cultural context; not like English
- More opportunities to learn
- Access to learning materials and resources; audio and video; a cultural "library"
- Self-love, acceptance, flexibility, and pride in who you are and what you know
- To link language learning to cultural conduct, core values, land, stories, etc.
- Signs, place-names, and daily reminders of language in student's environments to empower and validate language
- Blended teaching methodologies, learning strategies, and incorporation of technology
- Community and social events with language use

- Spaces of meaningful practice to use and test skills in an unstructured, low stakes way
- Parents and adults to be examples of language respect and learning for their children
- Safe spaces for students to learn, make mistakes, and get motivated
- Spaces that meet students at different levels in their language learning journey
- Council support and encouragement
- Workplace support for language learning and use

Question #4: *How does your tribe define successful language learning?*

- When children are happy to be learning
- When Instructors are sufficiently prepared to teach and pass on the language
- When there is mandatory language requirement for tribal employees and native/non-native daycare workers
- Humor is a good way to see success
- When there are tools and resources available for student learning
- Success is when the children speak the language
- When language is spoken in the home
- Hearing the language spoken at ceremonies, in public, at the store, etc.
- Success is relatively defined between and within communities, and across individuals; for some contexts, just an awareness of the language could be considered a success
- Success is when you can pass the language on to someone else
- Is it exposing as many people to the language as possible, or about seriously investing in fewer students to create fluent speakers?
- Tearing down rigid definitions of success and cross-community comparisons; meeting people where they are at in their language learning process
- When student learners eventually take over as teachers