

BUILDING FROM WITHIN: CONSIDERATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING A PATHWAY FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

Introduction

Educators Rising New Mexico has played a pivotal role in middle and high schools across the state since 2012 and in the nation since 1906, a strong ally of public education. Despite the program's long-standing presence, it overlooked the critical aspects of bilingual and Indigenous education in its curriculum and practices, both at the state and national levels, despite a significant number of bilingual and Native youth participating in the program.

In the 2022-2023 school year, the PDK International Educators Rising national office received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to conduct a study in New Mexico. The study aimed to assemble a task force of New Mexicans dedicated to addressing the unique needs of bilingual and Native youth, not only in the state but also on a broader scale. Early task force meetings revealed a substantial knowledge gap in effectively meeting the needs of bilingual and Native students, with a particular emphasis on the challenges facing Native students. Consequently, the task force decided that one of the four white papers planned for the year would exclusively focus on Native communities in New Mexico.

Mishelle Jurado, the local lead for this initiative, recognized her limited knowledge of working with Native communities and sought guidance from Dual Language of New Mexico. Collaborating with Azul Cortés, Director of Heritage Languages, and Patrick Werito, Coordinator for Tribal Initiatives, they conducted individual interviews and group meetings with Native educators around the state. These interactions aimed to capture the educators' journeys into teaching, shedding light on the best ways to support Grow Your Own (GYO) efforts for Native teachers serving New Mexico's culturally and linguistically diverse students.

At the core of this paper is a pivotal question: How can Western expectations of academic success be harmonized with the needs of Indigenous communities, respecting the importance of their cultures and languages? This question emerged as the central theme, highlighting the challenges faced by teachers navigating Western constraints while striving to meet the unique needs of their communities.

This paper will delve into the collaboration with Dual Language of New Mexico, offering insights into historical and contemporary Indigenous education movements in New Mexico. It will share the narratives of educators that informed this paper, present a compelling example of GYO in Native spaces, and conclude with actionable recommendations for stakeholders engaged with Native teachers and aspiring Native educators. This comprehensive exploration underscores the commitment to bridging cultural divides and fostering an educational landscape that respects and integrates the rich tapestry of Indigenous communities in New Mexico.



Collaboration with Dual Language of New Mexico

Dual Language of New Mexico (DLeNM) is a grass-roots educational non-profit organization serving the professional and informational needs of New Mexican communities that wish to develop, refine, and/or implement dual language education programs. DLeNM's vision includes partnering with both bilingual and Indigenous communities in order to develop their linguistic and cultural resources as assets in district, school, and classroom contexts.

DLeNM's work with Tribal language communities is predicated on the understanding that the realities of both historical and current colonization have impacted Tribal communities in every facet

of their existence, including the vibrancy of local Indigenous languages that have sustained the way of life and cultural identity of its members. Therefore, Educators Rising partnered with DLeNM staff to conduct this study.

In both individual interviews and communal convenings, DLeNM and Educators Rising were able to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by Native American educators in New Mexico. The educators shared their personal stories, highlighting the obstacles they encountered as they navigated through a colonized education system to become teachers and serve their communities.

New Mexico's Indigenous Education

There are 23 federally recognized Indigenous nations, tribes, and Pueblos in New Mexico; each Tribal community has their own unique language and culture. Eight Indigenous languages are spoken in New Mexico; Keres, Tewa, Tiwa, Towa, Zuni, Diné, Jicarilla Apache, and Mescalero Apache, but all are suffering from language shift. Indigenous communities are detaching from the cultural and linguistic capital of their native languages and shifting the language used in their homes, their schools, and their communities to English. This shift results in language loss—it is estimated that every year multiple languages cease to be spoken and will become extinct (Fishman, 2012). As the language disappears, so does the culture of the local community. These Tribal communities are served by public schools, Bureau of Indian Education schools, Tribally controlled schools, and private schools. As the vitality of the local community language diminishes, most Tribal communities now allow their language to be taught within a classroom setting. These classes are taught by individuals who are proficient in the local language with a certain degree of cultural knowledge.

In 2002, New Mexico State Representative Mary Helen Garcia sponsored legislation (HB60) that would allow the state licensure department to issue a Native American Language and Culture (NALC) certificate to a person proficient in a Native American language and culture of a New Mexico tribe or Pueblo. The individual would have to meet the standards and criteria set by the local tribe or Pueblo and then meet the licensure requirements

of the state. A baccalaureate degree was not required for any person applying for this certificate. The certification process later became known as the Native Language and Culture Teacher Pre-K-12 Certificate. Tribes and Pueblos began developing their own standards and criteria for certifying tribal members. Once certified by the local tribe or Pueblo, individuals would then apply with the NM Public Education Department licensure bureau and meet the licensure requirements. Once a Native Language and Culture Teacher Certificate is issued, individuals can apply with local schools to teach the language and culture only.

Some schools work with the local community to embed the local Indigenous concepts into the school curriculum. Others offer a bilingual education approach - with the goal of learners becoming bilingual in English and the local language. New Mexico is one of few states to have state-level educational legislation that addresses Indian Education: the [New Mexico Indian Education Act \(NM IEA\)](#) was passed by the state legislature in 2003 and has undergone two revisions. This Act aims to provide equitable educational opportunities for Native American students attending NM public schools and “ensure the maintenance of Native Languages.” The NM IEA created an Indian Education Division within the Public Education Department that was charged with multiple duties including providing assistance to school districts and New Mexico tribes in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of curricula in Native languages, culture, and history. In addition, the Indian Division

is responsible for ensuring that Native language bilingual programs are part of a school district's professional development plan.

While some communities have found ways to infuse Tribal culture and language into the educational opportunities available to students, most schools still maintain westernized structures, perspectives, methods, and beliefs that stand in stark contrast to those of Indigenous ways of learning. Many originate from a time in which Native languages and cultures were targeted for extinction and teachers were trained to become the primary agents of this policy. An Indigenous approach to learning is rooted in the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of the individual, the family, the community, and its land (Blum Martínez & Habermann López, 2022). It is a decolonizing process, a way to deconstruct the Western ideologies and reconstruct the local Indigenous knowledge base and ways of knowing. It is a tool embedded in its members' being to reclaim identity and unpack generational trauma.

Infusing and acknowledging community languages and cultures in the classroom is healing because it builds and rebuilds intergenerational connections, identity, and community. Native-language teachers have found ways to navigate through a system created to erase their ways of knowing, their language, and their culture to circumvent the system and reclaim their agency. They have found ways to take inventory and re-purpose knowledge systems of knowing and cultural literacies to bring the community values to the classroom.

Tribal Education Alliance (TEA), a coalition of Native nations, Tribes, and Pueblos, in their Tribal Remedy Framework Report, titled "[Pathways to Education Sovereignty: Taking a Stand for Native Children](#)" (December, 2020) centered on the constitutional rights of Native children to a sufficient education. Aligned with *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* of 2018 and endorsed by NM's 23 federally recognized tribes for reforming the State's educational system and address historical injustices for equitable college and career preparation, the report offers the following three strategic solutions: 1) shared responsibility and increased Tribal control over the schooling of Native children, 2) Community-based education, created by and centered within Tribal communities, and 3) a balanced, culturally and linguistically relevant education that revitalizes and sustains the strengths of children and their communities.

Within the three proposed solutions is the vital need for the creation of a Native teacher pathway.

Research shows improved outcomes of students when educational pedagogies reflect and respect the cultural and linguistic capital of the communities they serve (TEA December 2020, p. 14). Classrooms must foster an educational environment "that starts with children's existing knowledge and strengths, challenges implicit cultural and racial bias, and is accountable to Tribal communities" (TEA, December 2020, p. 15). This points to the dire need for teachers to reflect their students. A pathway must be created to increase the number of teachers, staff, service providers, and leaders that inculcates culture, language, and the community they serve. The authors suggest the need to narrow the teacher diversity gap by partnering with Tribal colleges and more Native higher education programs.

Native faculty at the University of New Mexico have created a distinct pathway for the Navajo Nation. In *Cultivating Diné Language Immersion Teachers* (Soleado, 2021) authors Tiffany Lee, Vincent Werito, and Melvetha Chee outline the development of a Diné Language Teacher Institute (DLTI) that addresses the language shift facing the Navajo Nation where the younger generation is no longer fluent in the Navajo language and instead speaks English. Various factors highlighted that have accelerated this shift include cultural assimilation policies, the influence of English as a high-status language, and the appeal of modern popular culture that predominantly uses English. With these systemic barriers, the number of Navajo speakers is rapidly decreasing, making the language endangered. To address this issue, a Diné Language Teacher Institute (DLTI) at the University of New Mexico has been developed to cultivate a group of Diné language immersion teachers through ongoing professional learning, instructional support, and curriculum development. The goal is to support Diné speakers who aspire to be teachers and promote language revitalization.

The authors share how "Immersion education," where at least 50% of content-area instruction is in the target language, has been adopted as an effective approach for language revitalization. In the aforementioned article for the issue of Soleado summer of 2021, Drs. Werito, Chee, and Lee state that Indigenous language immersion (ILI) schools, which teach 70-100% of content in the Indigenous language, have shown success in producing child speakers of the language. However, ILI programs face challenges such as a lack of Indigenous language speaking teachers and limited access to higher education. (Soleado, summer 2021, p. 2-3) The DLTI aims to address these challenges by providing coursework and certification in Diné

language education. The institute also hopes to inspire Diné youth to relearn their language and encourage Diné speakers to use their language through community language advocacy initiatives. The long-term goal is to establish strong

community- and school-based programs for Diné language education, including preschool language nests, dual language education, and full immersion programs.

The Study: Storytelling with Indigenous Teachers

Teachers interviewed individually and in community convenings shared their journeys through a colonized education system in which their Indigenous belief systems were ignored, rejected, or simply undervalued and dismissed. Despite these challenges, they persevered with tears and determination, fueled by powerful memories of teachers who looked like them and inspired them to pursue their own path in education.

The stories shared by these Native American educators shed light on the unique struggles they face within the U.S. education system. They serve as a reminder of the importance of representation and the impact that a single teacher can have on a student's life. These stories also highlight the need for continued support and resources to ensure that Native American educators are empowered to make a difference in their communities.

Process: Native language teachers were identified and interviewed to share their experiences of becoming an educator. All teachers interviewed are currently working in New Mexico schools. Most are Native-language teachers or have had experience as a Native-language teacher. Based on these interviews, several areas of consideration were identified that would provide guidance to schools and communities for recruiting and growing new Native-language teachers since the current generation is edging closer to retirement. As detailed in the various remedies presented here, the need for establishing multiple pathways for new language teachers is great. Here are the areas of consideration or themes that surfaced from these interviews:

1. Cultural and linguistic wealth at home and in the family were strong resources. Teachers were raised in homes in which the Native language was used every day.

The teachers interviewed were a product of a generation in which the vitality of the Native language in homes and communities was strong. The teachers felt fortunate to have parents who spoke the language and provided on-going

cultural knowledge support. That support fostered self-motivation and resilience to continue their education despite the challenges of time, resources, and family obligations.

Most of the teachers interviewed had an educational experience that focused on the English language without affirming or validating their heritage language. The goal of the schools was to push the English language onto the students while conveying a subliminal message that speaking their heritage would only hold them back from becoming academically proficient. The local community language did not have a place within the schools' contexts and students were discouraged from using that language in the school and classroom environment. For some, the English language slowly became the language used both at school and at home as its use was the de facto measure of status and power.

2. There are few programs or initiatives that are designed to help Native Americans become teachers and administrators, e.g., collaborative programs between philanthropic organizations, the Diné College, and Fort Lewis College.

Programs or initiatives that were available provided invaluable financial and emotional support to those fortunate enough to participate. Some of the teachers interviewed talked about various programs that support Native Americans to continue their educational career and become teachers. Resources included tuition waivers and monetary assistance with books and fees. Others offered instruction in the community language. Some programs included funds for college professors to travel to the Tribal communities on the weekends to teach classes. This made attendance very convenient since most of the participants were working in schools as educational assistants.

Program structure also allowed for the cohort of participants to develop a supportive community and rapport. College can be very demanding. Many participants who wanted to pursue a college

education and a four-year degree even had to leave their community or reservation for an extended period of time. The participants talked about the support they found in other participants and this learning community became an essential part of their successful completion of the program.

3. Education was one of the few institutions on Tribal lands that offered wage employment. With few work opportunities in Tribal communities, working in schools located on Tribal lands was a way for members to earn an income.

With high unemployment in Tribal communities, few institutions on Tribal lands offer steady employment. Some of the teachers interviewed began their career working in a school's front office or as educational assistants. When schools began receiving funds to staff and support bilingual programs, these individuals were able to transition into becoming a language teacher because they were speakers of their community language. However, this transition into the classroom usually did not include support to be a teacher in a classroom setting.

Many of these teachers did not attend teacher education programs or receive any professional development on the fundamentals of teacher education. In most cases, school personnel are chosen to teach the Native language because they are speakers of that language. The decision to enter the field of education was not necessarily planned out, rather, the opportunity fell into their lap. Since Native language teaching is a fairly new profession, professional development that supports the teaching of Indigenous languages is scarce.

4. In most Indigenous communities, cultural norms that foster, support, and emphasize community are valued ways of being and learning and have been transferred from generation to generation. Giving back to the community is important.

Through their own educational experiences and observation of how Native American students were treated in schools and classrooms, some teachers (as parents) convinced themselves that they could become a teacher. They were often shocked at the way that their children were being treated. Realizing that Native American students needed equitable educational opportunities and success in life, these teachers became focused and motivated to do whatever they needed to become a teacher. This often included significant personal sacrifice.

The teachers interviewed view their Tribal language as a gift from their parents and ancestors. They believe it is their obligation to pass the language and cultural knowledge to their students in the classroom. As new generations of Native American students enter schools, their first language is often English, with most unable to speak or comprehend their heritage language. This has led some to become Native language teachers as a way to address their concern for maintaining their language for the next generation. They understand that if Tribal communities do not elevate the urgency for language revitalization efforts, which includes new native language teachers, the result will be accelerated language loss for many tribal communities.

5. For the teachers and administrators interviewed, defending the community's norms, language, and knowledge against western systems has become their most significant motivation as a way to challenge the establishment.

The teachers had to personally go through a painful process of self-reflection regarding how they perceived their own culture and language and come to terms with deconstructing the myth that learning and speaking academic English makes a person smart and successful. This self-evolution has led to a sense of urgency to promote and teach the true history of their own communities, as well as the language that has sustained their people for generations. They are committed to affirming and validating students' language and culture and developing in them a sense of self and a sense of pride.



Decolonizing Spaces of Indigenous Education and Grow Your Own in New Mexico - Jemez Pueblo

Pueblo of Jemez' Vision:

A Native American Community Based Language Immersion School

Background

The Pueblo of Jemez is located in the north central part of the State of New Mexico, approximately 50 miles northwest of Albuquerque. It is one of 23 Native American tribes in the state with a tribal membership of approximately 3,900 and the only ones speaking the Jemez language. Jemez is a traditional community that has sustained cultural and religious practices since time immemorial. The Tribal Leadership is well aware of language loss within the community and how this directly affects survival of the traditional and ceremonial ways of Jemez tribal life. A community strong in tradition such as this facing a language shift within younger populations, results in the potential of language loss being very real. It is incumbent on Jemez to begin implementing innovative strategies to ensure the survival and strengthening of the Jemez Language and Culture. The time is now to prioritize Jemez language, while multi-generational speakers are present in the community to contribute to language immersion programs.

Jemez works in partnership with the University of Hawai'i, Hilo and their Kahuawaiola Teacher Training Program, to develop and pilot a "Grow Your Own" Immersion model rooted in the Jemez language. Reaching the goal of creating fluent Jemez speaking (Native) educators is most important in developing relevant curriculum with rigor while building lifelong, meaningful relationships with students, families and community members. Much like the University of Hawai'i's Immersion Lab schools, the K-6 Language Immersion Pilot School serves as the training ground for teachers that will develop and grow Licensed Jemez Language Immersion instructors. Jemez educators are empowered to collaborate with elders, community resource people, tribal programs, traditional/secular leadership, and members of our Jemez Language Team. The overarching goal and priority is to maintain and strengthen our unique oral language in a full immersion setting.

A Community Approach

The Jemez community and awareness of language immersion programming is imperative to the long-term success and growth of fluent speakers. Through the community approach, hosting community meetings, the Pueblo of Jemez Education Department is able to steer and guide members of the community toward a full understanding of the "State of the Language". Through informal surveys and a town hall type approach, community members are able to share and ask questions. Based upon feedback, the department formulates strategic action plans for growth and community-wide implementation for language immersion initiatives and ensures our Jemez Language remains the community language.

Utilizing a core group of interested and committed community members, the Pueblo is able to gain momentum toward a new innovative approach based on the University of Hawai'i, Hilo. Only through continuous education and collaboration will growth and genuine understanding result. The momentum will come from the strength and voices from community members.

Jemez Teacher Licensure "Grow Your Own" Model

The success that Hawaii has had revitalizing and growing their language has a tremendous amount to teach others. Although Jemez community members realize the differences between their program, language and historical context, there are vital components to learn from to plan and further strengthen the Jemez Teacher Licensure Program, based on a "Grow Your Own" concept. The philosophy of taking community members, strong Jemez speakers and training them to teach, guide and grow others in the language seems to be a logical and systematic approach. With support from the Pueblo's leadership, transforming the community's education system to incorporate language and culture in all of our schools, classroom environments and

activities includes preparing high quality teachers through meaningful and intentional professional development and learning opportunities. There are currently nine college students pursuing Masters level degrees in Language Revitalization as part time students. The goal of this masters' level cohort is to develop faculty for the Jemez Teacher Licensure Program. This cohort will also focus on development of the Jemez Educational Philosophy and strengthening of the Jemez Language and Culture Curriculum. In addition, there are six teachers identified as the first cohort pursuing their Bachelor of Arts degree under the Jemez Teacher Licensure Program in Spring 2024.

Hemish Language Immersion (K-6) Pilot School

This school year Jemez has utilized a language and culture curriculum coordinated with the traditional calendar to support planning, creating curriculum alignment, and development of units and objectives. The addition of professional development training using the Developing Mathematical Thinking Institute (DMTI) model for mathematics has provided additional lessons providing skill building curriculum options. This is a fully aligned and research-based approach to mathematical instruction with a pre-organized curriculum by grade level standards centered on National and International Research. The partnership with DMTI is helping to develop a Jemez based math curriculum from Early Childhood to sixth grade utilizing current research and effective strategies. This instruction is delivered solely in Jemez language. The Hemish Language Immersion School is also working on science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) initiatives, weaving components into traditional lessons primarily geared toward culturally and traditionally based material.

Assessment

The Jemez Language Rubric & Oral Based Assessment tool, developed three years ago, through collaborative efforts of Jemez educators. In collaboration with the Pueblo of Jemez Early Childhood Immersion programs, the Pueblo of Jemez Department of Education administrative staff may better align the assessment tool to meet

instructional strategies employed. The pueblo is continuously striving for consistency in assessment across immersion settings to utilize such data measuring tools to gauge learning and speaking abilities of students. It is important to note that learning of “the traditional curriculum” of Jemez cultural life is continual and takes place throughout their lifetime. Assessments are used carefully and in a meaningful and authentic way honoring each child’s individual skills, knowledge, development, and learning.

Additionally, Jemez is revisiting research findings from the Jemez PhotoVoice project with Arizona State University – “Becoming Jemez.” This research focuses on how Jemez language acquisition in home and community settings and traditional socialization and teaching methods inform and guide classroom strategies. In the 2009 “Becoming Jemez” Photovoice Project, Jemez Parents identified seven Early Learning Foundations of Jemez children based on the questions posed: What should Jemez children learn in order to be Jemez? How do they learn these things? How does Head Start support or not support this learning? The final question needed more time. The findings reveal a complex socialization process based on Jemez beliefs, values, practices and perspectives about the understanding and expectations of children and their abilities and capabilities.

Conclusion

The overarching goal of the Language Immersion models utilized in Jemez is to maintain the language amongst current native speakers, while growing and strengthening the abilities of newer language learners. This will improve fluency and comprehension while growing the number of fluent speakers living within each household. The long-term desired results of these efforts include revitalizing Jemez as the primary language of the children and ultimately Jemez existing as the common language spoken by all tribal members within our community. A large portion of the efforts to achieve this entail educating parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family, caregivers, traditional and secular leaders, and the community at large on the benefits of learning Jemez first, supported by research, and focusing on multilingualism, positive academic outcomes and sustainment of socio-cultural and linguistic identity unique to Jemez People and way of life.

Recommendations: Our Future and Our Now

- Speaking the Tribal language is an everyday triumph. A Tribal communities' survival, being present, is a triumph. This everyday triumph creates a healing cycle that continues to the next generations. It builds resilience. It helps to heal traumas imposed on Indigenous peoples. Any and all efforts to revitalize and sustain a community's heritage language is critical to the well-being of its people. Every year, Indigenous languages around the world are at risk of extinction, therefore it's imperative for external agencies to be flexible and work with Tribal communities to find ways to keep their Indigenous languages alive for future generations. This includes helping them find ways to grow their own teachers, leaders, and speakers by taking into consideration the local Tribal expectations and protocols.
- Institutional system practices that have a basis in the genocidal policies of the boarding school era must be identified and removed. Educational institutions must then develop policies that reflect the communities they serve, adopting ways that validate and affirm the languages, cultures, and traditions of the people. Empowering and building the capacity of local Indigenous teachers and leaders can help decolonize institutional racism and build an appreciation and validation of the local Indigenous language and ways of knowing.
- The need for general education, special education, and language teachers who understand and know a community's values and traditions is critical for all nations, tribes, and Pueblos. If local candidates with this knowledge are not available, schools and districts are forced to recruit from outside their community, even hiring some who are not Native. While they may be well-intentioned, the disconnect may force these non-Native teachers to rely more heavily on colonized systems that ultimately harm the students and do nothing to dismantle racist practices. Therefore, Tribal communities must develop a plan to recruit school-age students into a teacher preparation pathway. For example, this may resemble the PDK Educators Rising Program in which school-age students are encouraged to become teachers. However, it is imperative that the Tribal community defines the specific framework based on their cultural and linguistic needs. This might include such opportunities as internships for class credit working as day-care workers or language nest or teacher assistants. This would ensure a steady stream of available candidates from the local community.
- Rarely do Individuals who obtain the NALC PreK-12 certificate attend the educational foundation college courses that would provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills needed for the classroom. Therefore, they must have the opportunity to develop an effective and supportive pedagogy based on research and best practices through professional development offered by their districts or schools. Professional development opportunities must include lesson planning, instructional practices, and behavior management strategies that align with an Indigenous approach to teaching and learning. This issue can be addressed by helping tribes develop and plan to grow their own teachers and making it a part of the process.

Conclusion

We have learned that an effective "Grow Your Own" teacher program identifies and recruits individuals from the local community who share a passion for education. It offers training opportunities and provides ongoing mentorship and support. Financial assistance and incentives, such as scholarships and loan forgiveness, help alleviate the financial burden of returning to the classroom. For effectiveness, collaboration with the local schools and organizations ensures a seamless transition for program graduates into teaching positions. For ongoing improvements, continuous evaluation and

feedback will help assess the effectiveness of the program.

In DLeNM's field work and in these interviews with Indigenous teachers, we have identified five recurring themes that should inform Grow Your Own pathways for Native American teachers. The cultural and linguistic wealth within homes and families has proven to be a strong resource. Many teachers were raised in households where the Native language was spoken daily. How do we capitalize on this? How do we create a pathway to

prepare teachers with the linguistic and cultural knowledge to support their community and their students?

Those interviewed benefited greatly from initiatives and programs that understand the needs of prospective Indigenous teachers. There is a respectful and validating focus on the community language and culture and offers participants opportunities to improve their proficiency and familiarity with community traditions. These programs also offered various pathways for becoming a teacher. Some focused on preparing participants for the NALC pre-K-12 certificate (520c) offered by the state. Others supported participants in gaining their baccalaureate degree in teaching with an emphasis on the Tribal language.

The pathway established by Jemez Pueblo that extends to building capacity for undergraduate students to reach the graduate level through a dedicated cohort pursuing a master's degree in language revitalization was motivated by the success of Hawaii's language revitalization efforts. Jemez Pueblo's leadership has focused their efforts on integrating language and culture into their community's entire education system.

Because there are few employment options available on Tribal lands, any pathway to becoming a teacher must include provisions to support candidates financially. This may include making entry-level school positions available to potential candidates. For those taking classes or attending professional development opportunities, providing stipends for living expenses and the purchase of required books is invaluable. The pre-service classes or professional development sessions should be offered in the community itself, so that participants do not need to move away from their community or travel far in order to participate. And most importantly, the content shared with participants must reflect the importance of community and cultural norms deeply ingrained in Indigenous communities. These values have been passed down from generation to generation and emphasize the significance of giving back to the community, the very essence of these teachers' efforts. A primary motivation identified across all of those interviewed was the defense of community norms, languages, and ways of knowing against western or colonized systems. Challenging those systems and establishing norms that reflect the community's values and beliefs is paramount.

It is important for Indigenous educators to establish networks and support systems with other Native teachers. This provides the opportunity to share

resources and materials and exchange best teaching strategies. This may be a good entry point for Western entities such as Educators Rising to provide a space for this collaboration to occur. Additionally, it is important to build relationships with administrators and leaders to help them understand the impact of their decisions on our classrooms and our children. Critical relationships should also include Tribal leadership, government officials, local community leaders, and elders. By establishing strong connections with ancillary services and community resources, such as social services, comprehensive support to our students and their families is made available.

In looking to build these connections, the silo mentality of current educational practices is challenged and collaboration is embraced, drawing on Indigenous beliefs of interconnectedness. By building strong relationships with fellow teachers, administrators, community leaders, and support services, a system of support that benefits our classrooms and communities can be created. In addition to building relationships with other language teachers, administrators, and community leaders, it is crucial to also establish connections with parents and guardians. By involving families in the educational process, valuable insights into our students' backgrounds, cultures, and individual needs are gained. This collaboration can help create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment and will ensure that instructional strategies align with the values and aspirations of the community, ultimately fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the students' education.

In this paper, we shed light on the need for more Indigenous teachers. We emphasize the significance of implementing a "Grow Your Own" program that capitalizes on community strengths and is guided by the cultural, linguistic, and communal wealth inherent in the autonomy and sovereignty of the Tribal community. In crafting policies to address these issues, we recommend the following:

Foster Strong Government-to-Government Relationships:

- Strengthen connections between the state and Tribal governments to ensure that the autonomy and sovereignty of the community are duly respected.

Allocate Adequate Funding with Tribal Trust:

- Provide sufficient funding to Tribal communities to establish teacher pathways, entrusting them with the autonomy to decide how best to allocate and utilize their financial resources.

Support Community Teachers' Aspirations:

- Offer financial and other forms of support to community members aspiring to become teachers, recognizing and nurturing their dedication to education and to their communities.

Establish Pathways for Indigenous Teachers:

- Develop and reinforce clear pathways for Indigenous individuals seeking to become teachers and educators specializing in

Indigenous languages. This initiative aims to promote and sustain Indigenous representation in the education sector.

Devise policies that value Indigenous languages and cultures:

- Increase recognition of the value of Indigenous languages and the cultures they reflect and focus efforts to support their revitalization as a way to reverse language loss.

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