CCNETWORK Comprehensive Center Network

REGION 16
Alaska
Oregon
Washington

Literacy and Multilingual Indigenous Language Learners

ELEVATING THE VOICES OF EDUCATION LEADERS AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PRACTICES

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REGION 16 COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

Region 16 Comprehensive Center is one of 19 Regional Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Our center was created in 2019 to help state education agencies in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington implement their plans for the Every Student Succeeds Act. As a consortium of 29 educational service districts, we engage state, regional, Tribal, school, and community partners to create the conditions for students, educators, and communities to learn and thrive.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous methodologies for guiding, advising, and educating children have been in place since time immemorial. Those well-honed approaches to education were built to support whole and healthy individual development while also establishing a lifelong awareness and reverence for community, connection, kinship, and reciprocity. In Western cultures, literacy is narrowly defined as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. For many Indigenous peoples from oral cultures, however, the emphasis is placed on a different set of skills, including careful observation and understanding of both the human and natural world. The transfer of intergenerational, place-based knowledge through storytelling and other oral and social interactions and experiences creates a rich and meaningful learning environment in which children develop not only literacy skills but also a deep understanding of the connection between the people, the land, sacred waterways, and animal and plant relatives. In Indigenous cultures, literacy cannot be limited to the ability to read and write but must also include the capacity to understand, respect, and transmit heritage knowledge. The ability to communicate effectively and meaningfully fosters well-being and connection and supports Indigenous people in contributing to the world around them.

> *We can't teach literacy without teaching the context of our culture and our land. It's all interconnected—language, history, identity.*
>
> **– Dr. Julie Schillreff**

SEA leaders from the Offices of Native Education in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington met several times over a year as part of the Region 16 Comprehensive Center's (R16CC) Co-designing with Families and Communities initiative. These leaders have been grappling with the complex tensions between Indigenous language revitalization and literacy, particularly in the context of the state and national emphasis on the Science of Reading and the goal of ensuring every student reads proficiently by third grade—an approach that prioritizes English. At the same time, there is growing recognition from the nation's capital of the importance of multilingualism, which for Native families and communities means a focus on language revitalization.
This report aims to support SEA leaders as they navigate these tensions, balancing the push for early literacy in English instruction aligned with the Science of Reading while advocating for educational sovereignty, cultural integrity, Indigenous language revitalization, and authentic family and community engagement.

As the Co-designing with Families and Communities initiative came to a close, the SEA Native education leaders requested that R16CC create a report detailing the intersections, constraints, and insights related to Indigenous language revitalization and literacy approaches. This report draws on both research and the lived experiences of key leaders and experts, offering perspectives to advance the conversation around these inherent tensions while supporting state efforts to promote language and literacy for Native students in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington.

Methodology

Our goal was to gather diverse perspectives and insights on important considerations for approaching literacy with multilingual learners, specifically learners of Native languages in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. We carried out the work in three phases.

Phase 1. Literature review

With input from R16CC and other knowledge keepers in literacy and Indigenous education, we generated a list of resources that includes relevant publications within and beyond traditional academic literature. Our review included literature related to the following:

1. Approaches to literacy that reflect and promote culturally sustaining practices for multilingual learners, with an emphasis on Indigenous languages.
2. Literacy frameworks that align with best practices in Indigenous teaching and learning, including language revitalization and immersion work.
3. Examples of Indigenous approaches to literacy, prioritizing the Pacific Northwest but including Hawai‘i and other regions.

We reviewed the documents using a simple rubric to organize pertinent information such as authorship, geographic setting, cultural and linguistic framing, and emergent themes to integrate with themes from outreach conversations.

Phase 2. Outreach

We interviewed 13 people with knowledge and experience in literacy, Native language development, linguistics, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and other related areas. In keeping with R16CC’s ongoing work to center the wisdom of families and communities, we drew from an expanded definition of knowledge keepers during the outreach phase, which provided a more balanced representation of different types of expertise and lived experience.

Table 1. Contributors who participated in conversations

Name	Organization	Role
Dr. Megan Bang (Ojibwe and Italian descent)	**Northwestern University**	**Professor of Learning Sciences; Director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research**
Kari Shaginoff	**Alaska Department of Education and Early Development**	**Alaska Native Language Literacy Specialist**
Dr. Anthony Craig (Yakama Nation)	**U. of Washington College of Education**	**Director of College of Education's Leadership for Learning (Ed.D.) program**
Dr. Julie Schillreff	**Mt. Adams School District/White Swan Community Coalition**	**Director of School & Community Programs**
Dr. Maria Chavez-Haroldson	**Willamette Education Service District**	**EDI Regional Director**
April Campbell (Citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Brandon Culbertson (Northern Arapaho Associate Member, Southern Arapaho descent (maternal) Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of Fort Peck; Oneida and Kainai descent (paternal), and Nicole Barney	**Oregon Department of Education, Office of Indian Education**	**Assistant Superintendent; Senior Advisor Tribal Early Literacy; Early Literacy and Tribal Grant Specialist**
Dr. Angie Lunda	**School of Education, U. of Alaska Southeast**	**Assistant Professor of Education**
Dr. Emerson Odango	**National Comprehensive Center**	**Service Project Team - Native Education Collaborative**
Patricia Whitefoot (Yakama Nation/Diné)	**White Swan Community**	**Yakama elder, R16CC Advisory Board member, WA Tribal Advisory board member, NIEA board member, ATNI Education Committee Chair, activist and professional educator**

Name	Organization	Role
Kristy Ford and Jamie Shanley	**Sealaska Heritage Institute**	**Education Director; Assistant Education Director**

Phase 3. Sharing and making meaning

We shared preliminary takeaways with R16CC to make meaning from what we were learning. Collectively, we identified findings, examples, and resources to include in this summary report for those interested in developing, supporting, sustaining, or engaging in inquiry about Indigenous literacy practices in the Pacific Northwest. We also invited all interview participants to review a draft report to ensure we were sharing accurate and meaningful information.

THEMES AND INSIGHTS

> *When students learn in their Native language, they are also learning the values, stories, and knowledge of their ancestors. It's more than language; it's a way of thinking and living.*
>
> **– Kari Shaginoff**

Here we present what we learned by listening to education professionals with careers and lived experience in Native language revitalization, literacy development, education, and advocacy for Indigenous learners. Insights from conversations are interwoven with insights from published and unpublished literature (see the references section for a full list of the resources we consulted).

The following sections are organized into five themes that emerged:

- The Role of Literacy and Language Revitalization in Reclaiming Identity and Healing
- Educational Sovereignty and the Right to Define Literacy
- Literacy as Storytelling, Relationships, and Connection to Land
- Access to Culturally Sustaining Practices for Developing Literacy
- Developing Place-Based Literacy Frameworks, Standards, and Assessments

The Role of Literacy and Language Revitalization in Reclaiming Identity and Healing

Language revitalization has been described as a means of "pushing education beyond former iterations of culturally relevant curriculum and has the potential to radically alter how we understand culture and language in education" (Hermes et al., 2012, p. 381). Language revitalization allows Native students to reclaim their Tribal identity and promotes resilience through the interconnections of kinship, place, and storytelling. Indigenous communities are healing from the historical and ongoing systematic dismantling of Native learning and language systems at the hands of colonialism and federal policies and practices of forced assimilation. Indigenous students continue to encounter barriers to learning and well-being due to the disruption of cultural continuity and the resulting disconnection from their history, heritage and identity (Banister & Begoray, 2013).

> *Our languages are our worldviews, and if we don't teach through those lenses, then we are losing a piece of who we are.*
>
> **– Kari Shaginoff**

> *When we talk about language, [we are] taking care of the social-emotional needs and the attachment anxiety that I recognize.*
>
> **– Patricia Whitefoot**

An emphasis on holistic education, which integrates Native languages, traditions, and community values, can enhance both academic performance and emotional well-being. Well-being and the capacity to learn are deeply connected to having a strong sense of identity and belonging, which in turn is strongly influenced by how much educational environments respect and integrate the cultural identity, language, and history of the youth and families they serve. Revitalizing Indigenous languages involves integrating them into the fabric of everyday learning, establishing a broader definition of literacy that includes both oral and written traditions.

> *A student's sense of identity, belonging, and purpose is tied to how much they see themselves in the curriculum and how much their culture is respected.*
>
> **– Dr. Julie Schillreff**

> *The acquisition of Tribal languages serves as a vital conduit to traditional social-emotional learning embedded in our communities and passed down by our Elders since time immemorial, fostering positive identity development and empowering youth for academic success and lifelong wellness.*
>
> **– Brandon Culbertson**

Language immersion programs offer valuable insights into how Native languages can be revitalized and preserved, while also supporting broader educational goals, including literacy. Immersion programs often serve as models for culturally responsive, place-based education, demonstrating that students can thrive academically while learning their ancestral languages. By embedding language and culture in everyday learning, immersion programs foster healing, resilience, academic success, and cultural pride.

> *Immersion education is not just about learning the language; it's about reclaiming our identities and ways of being.*
>
> **– Dr. Anthony Craig**

> *Revitalizing our languages means revitalizing our spirits. It's a healing process that comes through learning and teaching in our own tongues.*
>
> **– Dr. Maria Chavez-Haroldson**

Educational Sovereignty and the Right to Define Literacy

Various literacy frameworks have been adopted by education systems across North America, with the science of reading being one of the more widely used current examples. While the science of reading is widely embraced by many literacy experts, some Indigenous scholars and educators have experienced challenges and frustration with using this type of literacy framework in schools serving Indigenous youth and families. For instance, the emphasis on phonics for decoding written text in English does not align with the diverse array of typologies and phonemic structures that often characterize different Indigenous languages, which can be as linguistically distinct from each other as they are from English (McCarty & Watahomigie, 2004). Nor do most literacy frameworks incorporate the place-based, oral, and social features that are central to Indigenous language learning. Furthermore, literacy models designed

for monolingual children from the majority group, such as white children in North America and Europe, do not account for multilingual students' need for "alternative competencies in their heritage language or dialect to function in two or more different cultures, to adapt to unique ecological circumstances, and to cope with challenges associated with stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression" (Xu & Hee, 2023).

> *Our languages weren't built to fit into their frameworks, yet we're being asked to bend them in ways that don't align with how we naturally teach and learn.*
>
> **– Dr. Emerson Odango**

> *Reading frameworks like the science of reading often ignore the cultural context, and that takes away the joy and connection to literacy for our Native students.*
>
> **– Dr. Angie Lunda**

Whether and how to integrate Indigenous literacy practices into a system that still prioritizes English literacy through homogenous educational standards and assessments are complex questions. We heard a range of perspectives during our conversations with education scholars and leaders. On one end, some argued that frameworks like the science of reading are tools designed to limit students' ability to develop higher-order literacy skills. On the other end, some suggested that Indigenous-led standards, curricula, and assessments can be developed in alignment with the science of reading and various state standards, suggesting that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

Regardless of the position, a recurring theme was that the transformation of educational systems toward recognizing Indigenous sovereignty includes the right to determine and control how literacy is defined, taught, and assessed. In subsequent sections, we provide several examples of reimagined educational contexts, including frameworks, curriculum, standards, and assessments for multilingual Indigenous learners.

> *We need to assert our educational sovereignty and set our own benchmarks for literacy that reflect our languages and values, not just those imposed by the state.*
>
> **– Dr. Maria Chavez-Haroldson**

Literacy as Storytelling, Relationships, and Connection to Land

Indigenous knowledge systems are inherently connected to the land, emphasizing oral storytelling, seasonal learning, and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. This approach stands in stark contrast to most state-run education systems, structured around school calendars and confined to classroom settings, where the teacher instructs and students passively receive information. Here, we highlight a series of features that emerged in both our literature scan and conversations about Indigenous approaches to literacy.

Storytelling and Oracy

The ability to tell stories, recite oral traditions, and engage in verbal arts is a deeply metacognitive and culturally enriching process, not just a steppingstone toward a literacy that emphasizes vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and comprehension of written text. Integrating different modes of communication, specifically speaking and listening, enhances students' potential for literacy learning by allowing them to construct meaning through multiple sign systems—including oral ones—embedded in social activities that reflect their current understandings of the world (Banister & Begoray, 2013). Many education systems, however, prioritize literacy and numeracy over orality, sidelining the importance of oral traditions and in many ways "colonizing the very experience of listening" (Bang, personal communication, August 2024).

> *Literacy education has been too focused on written English, and it ignores the rich oral traditions that have been our method of teaching for generations.*
>
> **– Dr. Anthony Craig**

The incorporation of Indigenous literature—both historical and contemporary works—are valuable for Native and non-Native students alike. For Native students this inclusion provides connections to the rich emotional, cultural, and place-based landscape that they are often familiar with. Joann Archibald's Indigenous Storywork, is one example of an existing resource that can help educators understand Indigenous pedagogies, the role of storytelling in Indigenous education, ways to help children and other learners make story-meaning, protocols for using Indigenous stories, contexts for storytelling, and educator considerations for using Indigenous stories today. The website offers teachings from elders, videos for educator professional development, and a list of resources that includes free lessons.

It's a matter of getting to know your family tree. Then you would begin to know where they came from, what their communication style was, and what their history was, and dialect, and their family relationships with one another.

– Patricia Whitefoot

Relationships

Human literacy encompasses more than academic or technical skills. Just as important is the ability to be a good relative, to work well within the community, and to learn from elders. The skill of being in right relationship is central to healthy individual and group development and dynamics.

Our definition of literacy goes beyond reading and writing in English. It's about teaching our children how to think, communicate, and engage with their community.

– Dr. Anthony Craig

Every opportunity that children are exposed to the language being spoken is important, and that's going to be in our traditional teachings.

– Patricia Whitefoot

The involvement of elders and the broader community through multigenerational learning is also essential in developing culturally rooted literacy programs. Elders are often the keepers of Indigenous languages and play a vital role in teaching both oral and written traditions. Community-based education models that involve elders and other cultural knowledge bearers are more likely to succeed in revitalizing language and fostering a deeper understanding of literacy as a communal practice.

The best literacy teachers are the ones who live the language every day. Our elders hold the key to teaching literacy in a way that connects to our identity and our history.

– Dr. Anthony Craig

When elders are involved, literacy education becomes more than just reading—it's about learning who we are as a people and what our responsibilities are to each other.

– Dr. Emerson Odango

Connection to Land and the Environment

Geoliteracy encompasses the ability to read and interpret the environment, such as weather patterns, seasonal rounds, and complex landscapes (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2020). This skill is deeply embedded in Indigenous cultures, especially in Pacific Islander and Native American communities, where it plays a critical role in survival and maintaining cultural identity. Indigenous geoliteracy often challenges colonial definitions of literacy, which tend to prioritize written language and formalized education as being superior to other ways of teaching and learning.

You can physically see what is meant by the language, and you can hear what the elders are saying, by watching the salmon swim in the water.

– Patricia Whitefoot

In many Indigenous communities, geoliteracy involves understanding and interpreting natural phenomena that are essential for survival. For example, skills like reading tides or current shifts in a river, sudden changes in temperature, and recognizing seasonal changes in the environment are forms of literacy that are not traditionally recognized in colonial educational frameworks. This type of knowledge is crucial for life-saving decisions and cultural continuity.

The ability to interpret what the clouds mean, what the tides mean, the agroforest changing seasons has life-saving impacts.

– Dr. Emerson Odango

We should be living by our seasons, not by a 180-day school calendar. These settler logics get in the way of our oral tradition.

– Dr. Anthony Craig

Access to Culturally Sustaining Practices for Developing Literacy

Ensuring equity in language and literacy education means addressing the systemic inequities Indigenous students face, including access to culturally relevant education, materials in their languages, and teachers who are fluent in those languages. Literacy education must be equitable not only in access but also in how it values and includes Indigenous languages and literacy practices. For this reason, Indigenous communities and literacy educators have argued for the use of resources and strategies that are culture-based and address the social and spiritual realities of Indigenous learners (Kulnieks et al., 2013).

> *Real equity in literacy education is when our children can see their language and culture valued in the classroom, not just as an afterthought, but as a central component … Language is more than just words on a page. It's a way to reclaim who we are and where we come from.*
>
> **– Dr. Angie Lunda**

Language and culture are inextricably linked. It would be wrong to assume a single, monolithic culture that reflects the innumerable distinctive social-ecological environments and rich and varied traditions across Indigenous communities (McCarty & Watahomigie, 2004). However, themes did emerge in the literature and in the interviews regarding features of culturally sustaining pedagogy for literacy development with Indigenous learners. These include using Native-authored texts, giving youth agency to create meaning from a range of texts that include artifacts and the natural environment, and engaging students in collaborative, multimodal learning activities that emphasize the social nature of literacy.

Using Native-Authored Texts

Drawing from Native-authored texts can deeply connect to children's emotional landscape, provided the content is authentic, grounded in genuine Indigenous voices, and reflects the complexities of Indigenous cultures. This must go beyond superficial representations or "adding beads and feathers" to existing curricular materials (Bang, personal communication, August 2024). Educators must prioritize materials that reflect Indigenous histories, values, and contemporary realities, avoiding reductive stereotypes and honoring the depth and richness of Indigenous knowledge systems.

The theories we need are in our stories. And our stories are clearest in our languages. They're great in English, but they're magical in our languages.

– Dr. Anthony Craig

Giving Youth Agency to Create Meaning from a Range of Texts, While Taking an Expanded View of What Constitutes a Text

Cultural artifacts and elements from nature are central tools in identity work, allowing students to engage in different ways to understand patterns of cultural meaning they encounter within their worlds (Banister & Begoray, 2013). Teachers need to help build Indigenous students' agency in their literacy learning by creating opportunities for students' own expertise, interpretations of their lives, and Indigenous knowledge to emerge. This helps not only to promote literacy skills, but also to mitigate the underlying assimilative nature that may characterize some reading and writing assignments. Before diving into writing tasks, for instance, learners and teachers can take "wondering walks" and become inspired to turn ideas and observations into text (Bang, personal communication, August 2024). Literacy practices that invite students to choose their own writing content offer opportunities to link writing to their own community contexts, including social relationships, behaviors, and traditions (Banister & Begoray, 2013).

When kids are excited about telling stories, it produces the motivation for literacy and language development and that comes from learning your own culture at the core.

– Dr. Megan Bang

Using Multimodal, Relational Reading and Writing Activities

Indigenous adolescents need teachers who establish relationships with them and design literacy activities that are participatory, relational, communal, and narrative-based. Engaging with Indigenous learners in non-hierarchical ways (i.e., diverging from the classroom format in which the teacher stands in front and instructs the students) demonstrates respect for their ways of knowing (Banister & Begoray, 2013). In an example from Hawai'i, August and colleagues (2006) described a reading lesson in which students engaged with texts, peers, and teachers in a variety of ways: "Analysis of a twenty-minute reading lesson at Kamehameha Schools indicated there were nine different participation structures…on a continuum ranging from those that resembled conventional classroom recitation to those that resembled the Hawaiian 'talk story.'" (August et al., 2006, p. 25).

Equity in literacy doesn't just mean providing the same curriculum for all; it means creating space for Indigenous languages and knowledge systems to thrive in the classroom.

– Dr. Emerson Odango

Despite the desire for more culturally inclusive literacy practices, barriers persist. These include rigid curriculum, static assessment systems and standards, insufficient access to resources and fluent speakers who can teach, and systemic resistance within federal and state education policy and systems that prioritize English literacy. Schools struggle with incorporating bilingual education, and Indigenous language teachers may lack formal teaching credentials, making it harder to integrate them into schools.

Our schools are set up to fail Indigenous language teachers because they don't fit into the Western qualifications. The system doesn't understand the cultural capital that they bring.

– Dr. Julie Schillreff

Developing Place-Based Literacy Frameworks, Standards, and Assessments

The work of developing Indigenous-led, place-based literacy frameworks, standards, and assessments is emergent. In the Pacific Northwest, there are examples of state and local education agencies working in partnership with Tribes to develop and implement new approaches to curriculum and accountability. In Oregon, Indigenous languages are "a consistent priority for Tribes and therefore for the Oregon Department of Education" (Campbell, personal communication, September 2024). The department created a Tribal Language Advisory Committee aimed at ensuring Indigenous voices guide language revitalization efforts from curriculum development to teacher certification. As of 2024, Tribes can access funds for language revitalization programs and for developing alternatives to frameworks like the science of reading.

If we're truly going to be culturally responsive, then it's up to the community to determine what proficiency is, what they're looking for.

– April Campbell

Indigenous literacy efforts have been underway for a long time in Alaska, where the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska has long supported resources such as the Kobuk Inupiaq Literacy Manual (1980). Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development has designed and is implementing a strategic plan that supports districts, teachers, families, and staff members in collaborating to develop literacy in Alaska Native Languages. Components of these statewide efforts include publishing an Alaska Native Language Literacy Guidebook, engaging a Nudench'tidałtey Gathering Community of Practice, developing K-3 Alaska Native Language Arts Standards for reading proficiency, and facilitating an Alaska Native Language Summit.

Example from Alaska: Tlingit Oral Narrative Standards

In southeast Alaska, Juneau School District is working with the Sealaska Heritage Institute to develop Tlingit Oral Narrative Standards to guide instruction according to Tlingit cultural values and beliefs. The standards are organized into the four topics of Listening, Cultural Understanding, Comprehension, and Retelling. The standards reinforce students' understanding of how to act, survive, remember, and connect from a Tlingit perspective that has been passed down orally for generations.

> *The expectation that learning and retelling this knowledge will continue for future generations is embedded in these standards.*
>
> **– Tlingit Oral Narrative Standards: Tlingit Culture, Language, and Literature Program, Kindergarten through Fifth Grade**

The standards are accompanied by a set of expected outcomes providing grade-level benchmarks for learners to demonstrate their achievement in identifying, interpreting, and synthesizing the four topics. Here is one example from the Cultural Understanding standard:

Table 2. Example of expected outcomes from Tlingit oral narrative standards

Standard Goals and Objectives	Kindergarten/ First Grade Outcomes	Second Grade/ Third Grade Outcomes	Fourth Grade/ Fifth Grade Outcomes
ON.CU.1- Understand the responsibility that comes with hearing oral narratives.	*Identify*	*Identify and interpret*	*Identify, interpret, and synthesize*
Understand the concept and responsibility of being a **witness**.	Identify what it means to be a witness in Tlingit culture.	Identify what it means to be a witness and why it is important (not letting words fall on the ground).	Identify what it means to be a witness, why it is important in Tlingit culture and what the responsibility is when you are a witness.

Source: Tlingit Oral Narrative Standards

The success of the work in Juneau is supported by the involvement of the community in school board activities, the resources that Sealaska Heritage Institute offers, and support from the Language Nest (Ford, K. and Shanley, J., personal communication, August 2024).

Example from Alaska: Lower Kuskokwim Yup'ik Immersion Curriculum and Assessment

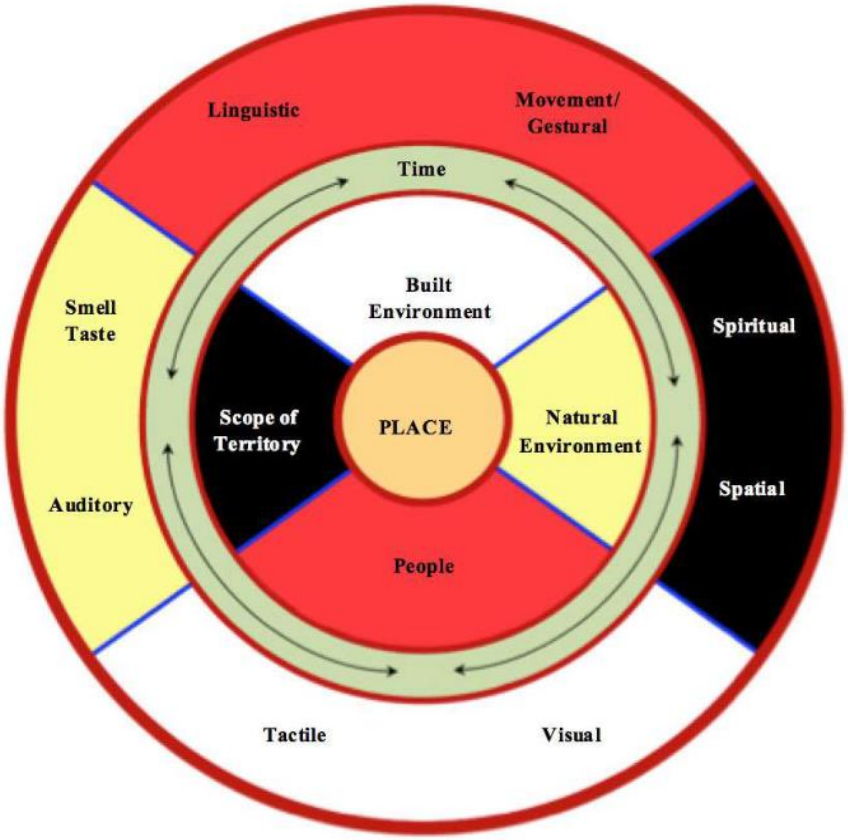
Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) introduced a comprehensive Yup'ik immersion curriculum in 2010 to preserve and revitalize the Yugtun language, the most widely spoken Native language in Alaska and second only to Diné in the United States. The curriculum teaches Yugtun language through the use of Yup'ik stories in the classroom and is designed to not only promote fluency and literacy in the Yugtun language but to ensure that learners are literate in nonverbal communication, values, and the Yup'ik worldview (Bean, 2023).

In 2024, LKSD rolled out an innovative Yup'ik proficiency test for kindergarten through grade 6 students in the district that addresses six areas for language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking, listening, non-verbal communication, and Yup'ik worldview. The district has received support from WIDA, the University of Wisconsin-Madison group that produces English language proficiency assessments used widely in the United States, and is actively developing a similar assessment for grades 7–12.

Example from Oregon: Place-Based Multiliteracies Framework (PBM)

Inglebret and CHiXapkaid (2014) authored a chapter called "Place-Based Multiliteracies Framework" in *Honoring Tribal Legacies: An Epic Journey of Healing, Volume II—Guide to Designing Curriculum*, a publication by Oregon State University in collaboration with the National Park Service. The chapter describes a framework that encourages educators to help students connect with their "natural, historic, and cultural surroundings by designing their own ways of knowing, being, and doing by creating learning communities actively working together to arrive at creative responses to challenges faced in real world contexts" (Inglebret & CHiXapkaid, 2014, p. 78). Since the place-based multiliteracies framework is grounded in a sense of place—specifically, in this publication, the places that settlers came to call the Lewis and Clark Trail—elements of place serve as resources central to its implementation, and learners engage with a range of resources, learning modalities, and text types. Students design their own learning experiences by adopting a "metalanguage" for talking about language, images, texts, and meaning-making interactions.

Figure 1. Inglebret and CHiXapkaid's (2014) Place-Based Multiliteracies Framework



Source: Inglebret and CHiXapkaid (2014).

The authors state that the Place-Based Multiliteracies framework intersects with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, the Department of Education's accountability system in place at the time of publication) through each of the four phases, with one primary difference found in "how the concept of text is viewed" (p. 104). In the CCSS, texts are categorized as either literature or informational text. In contrast, PBM conceptualizes text as "any verbal, recorded, constructed, or observed item that represents a meaning [including] patterns of nature, stories told through artwork, music, the oral tradition, tools of survival and daily life, written symbols, and various forms of digital media" (p. 104).

Excerpts from Place-based Multiliteracies Framework (Inglebret & ChiXapkaid, 2014, pp. 78-84): "Learners take on roles as designers of their own knowledge systems … As members of learning communities, teachers and learners actively work together in using, combining, and transforming various design modes to construct meaning related to the past, present, and future… An observer would see a classroom

busy with activity as students worked in small groups around tables interacting to learn about and address concerns of importance to their local community. Through the curriculum unit, Discovering Our Relationship with Water, young students may be conducting experiments with water as they learn about its significance to a healthy planet. They would be coming to understand that water is sacred and a living entity so as to develop strategies to ensure that clean water is available to peoples for the next seven generations. As part of the Tribal Legacies of Pathfinding curriculum unit, students may be exploring records of plant life before, during, and after the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They would be learning how traditional plant knowledge contributed to the survival of the expedition members and might be exploring its implications for promoting health and wellbeing today … On another day, an observer would see students honoring multiple perspectives by listening to presentations given by community members, as they sought viewpoints related to the real-life concerns they were investigating … later in the month, an observer might see an empty classroom as students were out learning from the place where they live."

The Place-Based Multiliteracies framework has been adapted in other settings, such as the University of Kansas, where it informed an education personnel preparation program called Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Intervention (CRELI). The CRELI grant, funded by the Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, supports speech language pathologists (SLPs) with four-day curriculum units, each centered on a different Native-authored storybook, that address different domains of language. This helps more educators provide culturally and linguistically appropriate early language and literacy development for Native students.

INVITATION FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

> *I think about what would our day-to-day be if we learned through our stories, and it feels so powerful.*
>
> **– Dr. Anthony Craig**

This review of literature and series of conversations, while small in scope and exploratory in nature, surfaced a range of perspectives, insights, and reflections about literacy for Indigenous students, particularly those who are Native language learners. Because each language is unique and distinct, we heard no call for a blanket approach to literacy development that will work for every Tribe or every region. Throughlines that emerged were the importance of having Native-authored, place-based texts and more multilingual teachers trained to work with Indigenous learners. Most

foundational is the need for Indigenous education leaders to be able to exercise sovereignty, self-determination, and resources to decide on and implement literacy practices that work for their communities.

Key questions for education leaders to consider alongside these perspectives and themes include:

- How do existing policies and rules support or hinder the development of culturally based and sustaining literacy frameworks, practices, and curricula? What barriers need to be addressed?
- What are the financial requirements for state, Tribal, regional, and local education agencies to effectively implement these literacy practices?
- What relationships should state leaders cultivate to co-design literacy approaches and curricula with diverse Tribal communities?
- What specific considerations should system leaders address when implementing state and district policies related to multilingual learners, especially those focused on Indigenous language development?
- Where are good things happening in your state, and how can state and district leaders work to remove barriers and clear the pathways to grow those practices and programs that are working?

Across the interviews, many leaders expressed a desire to hold convenings as a critical step for meaningful collaboration and progress. For instance, a community of practice could amplify the collective impact of these efforts by fostering deeper understanding and aligning shared goals or potential resources through co-designing with communities. Continuing to provide opportunities to come together will allow space to address education and community challenges holistically and with concerted attention to ensure the overall success and well-being of Native students.

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