OFFICE OF HEAD START
TRIBAL LANGUAGE REPORT

2012

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Head Start

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

In 2010–11, the Office of Head Start (OHS) began an effort to learn about the successes, progress, and challenges faced by a number of large and small tribal communities in various stages of preserving, revitalizing, or reclaiming their tribal language. Information was gathered from tribal leaders, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start leaders, tribal language and culture experts, and researchers during informal discussions with a select number of Tribes and grantees and at formal gatherings including the OHS Tribal Consultations and the OHS Tribal Language Preservation and Revitalization Roundtable. This report is not meant to be a comprehensive review of tribal language efforts. Rather, this report provides illustrative examples of tribal language efforts around the country and discusses the recommendations and implications for OHS.

A note to the reader: This project was undertaken when the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* (2006) were in effect. The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* are being revised at this time.

Basis for Action

Head Start programs serve approximately 42,500 children of AI/AN heritage. More than 23,000 of those children are served in the 152 AI/AN Head Start programs; the rest are served by non-tribal programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2010a). Over the last decade, there has been a steady decline in the number of Head Start children who speak a tribal language at home. According to 2009 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data, less than 4% of Head Start children speak Native North America/Alaska Native Languages—a 10% decrease from 2001.

Along with the Head Start Act of 2007, the current *Program Performance Standards* provide for the integration of tribal language and culture in Head Start classrooms, in the curricula, and across program systems and services. Yet during the course of this project, it became evident that some AI/AN Head Start programs and others that interface with AI/AN programs think that they will be out of compliance if they include tribal language and culture in the curriculum. Other programs are concerned about how to use tribal language speakers in their classrooms given the requirements for certified or credentialed teachers. At a time when both the Head Start Act of 2007 and the *Program Performance Standards* outline support for tribal language and culture, it is important for OHS to provide additional support and clarification to AI/AN programs.

State of the Field

Conversations with members of tribal communities and others indicate that tribal language efforts represent three different approaches. For the purposes of this report, the three approaches are defined as: *Preservation* of language with the help of elders and other native speakers; *Revitalization* of language when there are just a few speakers remaining; and *Reclamation* (or *Reconstruction*) of language when no speakers remain.

As expected, tribal language efforts vary according to a number of factors including where the Tribe falls on the spectrum of language loss; level of funding support for language and cultural efforts; as well as extent of community support. Some Tribes have successfully incorporated their tribal language and culture into the Head Start curriculum. Other Tribes have leveraged funding opportunities into successful partnerships with universities and foundations. Still, other Tribes have benefited from Federal grants to further their language efforts.

Key Aspects of Language Policies and Programs

Many of the individuals consulted in this project indicate that their Tribe or other Tribes have a language policy or proclamation, passed through tribal resolution, which clarifies the Tribe's intentions for its language usage and instruction. Tribes report a variety of factors and activities that have contributed to the success of their language programs, including:

- Many Tribes have developed strategic plans to set goals and to use as a roadmap for their curriculum.
- Support from the local, state, and national level is a critical element in a successful language effort.
- Some Tribes have conducted research on their own. Some have formed in-house technology departments to help with their language efforts, while others have partnered with local colleges to help capture and record language.
- Many Tribes report close working relationships with their Head Start programs.
- Other Tribes have formed language networks with other Tribes to exchange ideas and resources.
- Tribes have focused educational efforts on distance learning and master-apprentice approaches for adults and through Head Start curriculum and immersion classrooms for children.

Professional Development—Cultural and Language Efforts in Head Start

The AI/AN Head Start programs consulted in this project have taken a variety of steps to address challenges and opportunities for integrating language and culture, including:

- To successfully transmit a language, programs must have confident and competent teachers. Some programs have developed innovative ways to support teachers, including providing tools to help teachers integrate words, greetings, and phrases into everyday classroom activities.
- Many of the AI/AN programs face major challenges in hiring well-trained teachers who represent the tribal community and anticipate difficulty meeting the minimum teacher qualification requirements mandated in the Head Start Act of 2007.
- Although many tribal members acknowledge that preserving or reconstructing the tribal language is important, many parents still want their children to learn only English. Some programs have made efforts to engage parents in tribal language-learning activities.
- The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* provide for the full integration of tribal language and culture in Head Start classrooms, in the curricula, and in program systems and services. Many Tribes implement a culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum.

Recommendations and Implications

The recommendations and implications outlined below represent diverse courses of action, some might be considered for immediate implementation, others might involve longer range planning on the part of OHS.

Culture and Language in Curriculum

- Continue efforts of OHS, the Administration for Children and Families, and the training and technical assistance providers to clarify misunderstanding and ensure a consistent message about the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and OHS's commitment to and support for culturally and linguistically responsive curricula.
- Make all Head Start programs aware of the recently developed *Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue: Native and Heritage Language Preservation, Revitalization, and Maintenance.*
- Implement a pilot program with AI/AN Head Start programs to explore locally developed curricula that integrate language and culture along with school readiness goals.
- Identify successful strategies for teaching native languages to young children.

Training/Certification To Teach A Language

- Consider an initiative to allow Tribes to determine whether an individual can be certified to teach the tribal language.
- Consider whether existing University language revitalization certificates for language revitalization can count toward an early childhood certificate/credential.

Teacher Qualifications

- Consider whether Tribal colleges and universities can provide credit for "life experiences, skills, and knowledge," with particular consideration for teaching staff who may not be in a position to earn a degree but who have tribal language skills.
- Explore options for distance learning for Head Start staff who live far from the nearest college.
- Promote different staffing patterns, such as using elders or other native speakers to fulfill a classroom position other than that of the head or assistant teacher (who must be qualified according to the Head Start Act of 2007).

Funding

- Explore options for increased collaboration among Federal and state agencies to provide funding opportunities for language programs and curricula development.

Conclusion

This Tribal Language Report provides a snapshot of the successes, progress, and challenges faced by some programs and Tribes. They may be in the process of language preservation, revitalization, or reclamation, or none of the above. The statutory requirements and regulations that govern Head Start agencies require support for children's and families' cultural and linguistic diversity. OHS is committed to working with tribal communities in moving toward the adoption and implementation of the recommendations.

II. BASIS FOR ACTION

Head Start programs serve approximately 42,500 children of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) heritage. More than 23,000 of those children are served in the 152 AI/AN Head Start programs; the rest are served by non-tribal programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2010a).

According to 2009 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data, 94% of the children enrolled in AI/AN Head Start programs speak English as their primary language at home. Another 2% speak Spanish, and less than 4% speak Native North America/Alaska Native Languages—a 10% decrease from 2001. In short, between 2001 and 2009, there has been a steady decline in the number of Head Start children who speak a tribal language at home.

To promote children's language and literacy development, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 requires that programs provide professional development in "methods to promote vocabulary development and phonological awareness in a developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate manner and support children's development in their native language" (inclusive of tribal languages spoken at home) (Head Start Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. 9832, Section 648 (3)(d)(2)(B)). Promoting school readiness includes supporting the teaching and learning of AI/AN children in ways that affirm their language and culture. The Act includes a provision for demonstration grants to Tribal colleges and universities, and also calls for an Indian Head Start Study to be undertaken with a focus on curriculum and services.

"It takes three generations to lose the language. But by focusing on children, you can get it back in one generation."
—Michael Skenadore, Director, Menominee Nation Early Childhood-Head Start/Early Head Start, Wisconsin

The current *Head Start Program Performance Standards* (2006) require programs to support all children's home languages and cultures. Specifically, they require that programs, including AI/AN programs, in order to help children be successful their approach to child development and education, must "be developmentally and linguistically appropriate, recognizing that children have individual … languages, cultural backgrounds and learning styles (45 CFR 1304.21 (a)(1)(i)). Programs must provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity, and family composition (45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(iii)). Other regulations also require that when a majority of children speak the same language, at least one classroom staff member or home visitor be able to speak the children's home language (45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2)). Equipment, toys, materials, and furniture must also be supportive of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children (45 CFR 1304.53 (b)(1)(ii)). The regulations provide for the integration of tribal language and culture in the systems and services of Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

OHS uses the term *dual language learners,* defined as children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first or home language. Many tribal communities as well as native researchers go even further by differentiating between *dual language learners* and *heritage language learners*—the term refers to individuals learning their tribal language.

Why Take Action Now?

The impetus for this report is the Office of Head Start's recognition that among AI/AN Head Start programs, there are concerns related to fully integrating their tribal language and culture into their Head Start programs. Some AI/AN programs think that they will be out of compliance if they include their tribal language and culture in the curriculum. Other programs are concerned about how to use tribal language speakers in their classrooms given the requirements for certified or credentialed teachers. At a time when both the current *Program Performance Standards* and the Head Start Act of 2007 outline support for tribal language and culture, it is necessary for OHS to provide additional support and clarification to AI/AN programs.

Contributing to the timeliness of this report is a common thread heard from the Tribes—native speakers often make up a small fraction of the population and they are aging. Who will be left to teach the tribal language to the young children? The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages has identified 22 hotspots around the world where languages are vanishing most rapidly. Two of those hotspots are in the United States: Oklahoma and the Pacific Northwest (Lovgren 2007).

Three Tribes in Oklahoma reflect this demographic shift and demonstrate the urgency for tribal language efforts. Among the Choctaw Nation's 200,000 members, only 500 are native speakers. Among Citizen Potawatomi Nation's 27,000 members, there are only three speakers, one of whom learned it as a second language. And among Osage Tribe's 14,000 members, there are no speakers. Choctaw Nation and Osage Tribe operate Head Start programs.

Recent ACF Efforts

The Office of Head Start (OHS), formerly the Head Start Bureau, and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has long recognized the importance of providing culturally responsive services to children and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In recent years, Head Start, along with ACF, has engaged in a number of activities to support tribal language development in AI/AN Head Start, as well as dual language efforts for all of Head Start.

Highlights include —

- *Head Start Higher Education Partnership grants (HEGs).* In 1997, the Head Start Bureau launched an effort to increase the number of Head Start and Early Head Start teaching staff with degrees in early childhood. The first grants were awarded to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Over the years, these grant awards have expanded to include Tribally Controlled Land Grant Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Latino Service Institutions.

- *Tribal Touchpoints initiative.* In 2001, the Brazelton Touchpoints Center, with funding from the Head Start Bureau (now the Office of Head Start) established the Tribal Touchpoints initiative to develop partnerships with tribal communities to support child and family development by strengthening families of young children, improving the quality of early education and social services, and building communities. Since its inception, Tribal Touchpoints has reached more than 7,000 young children and their families.

- *American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start Research Center.* In 2005, ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) funded the American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start Research Center at the University of Colorado at Denver in response to the lack of representation of AI/AN Head Start and Early Head Start programs in national research. The goal of the Center is to influence future research efforts and to expand the network of university researchers qualified to conduct research that is scientifically and culturally rigorous in tribal communities. The Center is committed to expanding the base of research that focuses on children's development in AI/AN programs.

- *National Head Start Family Literacy Center (NHSFLC).* From 2005 to 2010, OHS funded NHSFLC's SPARC-Literacy (Strengthening Partnerships and Resources in Communities) Team Training. The purpose was to support Head Start and Early Head Start programs, including eight AI/AN programs, to become leaders in family literacy. One AI/AN program leveraged its SPARC training to implement systemic modifications to significantly enhance local language preservation efforts for children. The effort involved parents, family members, and elders who spoke the tribal language.

- *Cultural Responsiveness and Dual Education (CRADLE).* In 2006, the CRADLE Project was launched to assist Early Head Start programs in deepening their relationship with parents and young children in the area of language acquisition. Two AI/AN Early Head Start programs were among the 44 programs selected.

- *OHS Dual Language Report—Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?* The report, issued in 2008, focused primarily on Head Start children whose home language was a language other than English and who were acquiring English as they continued to develop their home language. Among the many recommendations, some referred to expanded support for tribal language acquisition.

- *OHS National Dual Language Institute*. Held in 2008, following the release of the *Dual Language Report,* the Institute offered several sessions featuring tribal researchers, elders, and program staff who described their literacy efforts and work with families. One large event featured tribal storytellers. It was the first effort by OHS to help other Head Start programs see that there was much to learn from AI/AN Head Start programs with regard to supporting language learning.

- *Ready for Success: Supporting Dual Language Learners in Head Start and Early Head Start.* In 2009–10, OHS presented an online series of professional development opportunities intended to help programs support the healthy development and learning of dual language learners. Strategies for promoting language and literacy development and for family engagement in tribal programs were woven throughout the Webcasts.

- *Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five.* In 2010, OHS updated the *Multicultural Principles* that were originally released in 1990 and subsequently incorporated into the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* in 1996.

- *OHS Tribal Consultations.* Annual OHS Tribal Consultations have provided opportunities for tribal leaders and AI/AN Head Start directors to meet face-to-face with OHS leaders in order to voice their concerns and to exchange ideas. Since 2010, OHS has held eight Tribal Consultations.

- *Tribal Language Preservation and Revitalization Roundtable.* Held in 2010, this first-of-its-kind meeting brought together tribal language experts from numerous Tribes, AI/AN Head Start staff, tribal language and culture experts, and researchers to discuss their efforts and recommendations with ACF representatives.

- *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.* The revised 2010 preschool outcomes *Framework* includes a new Domain, English Language Development. This Domain encompasses the development of receptive and expressive English language skills for children who speak a home language other than English. Importantly, the *Framework* also states that "programs need to ensure that children who are dual language learners can demonstrate their abilities, skills, and knowledge across other domains in any language, including their home language."

- *National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR).* Established in 2010 as part of the revised OHS training and technical assistance (T/TA) system, the Center provides the Head Start community with research-based practices and strategies to ensure optimal academic and social progress for linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families.

- *Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue: Native and Heritage Language Preservation, Revitalization, and Maintenance.* This catalogue, produced by NCCLR in 2011, provides programs with evidence-based materials, research briefs, promising practices, and other resources to help develop culturally and linguistically responsive systems and services. Catalogue entries identify resources and practices on topics such as early childhood language nests, the use of technology in language learning, immersion preschool programs, and culturally responsive curricula.

- *OHS Summit: On the Road to School Readiness.* In February 2011, the Summit provided Head Start leaders, including directors and other staff from AI/AN programs, with information, tools, and strategies to promote program quality and positive child outcomes. At a plenary session, one AI/AN program described its use of data to inform program self-assessment and program improvement. Tribal programs also met to discuss their T/TA needs, and AI/AN representatives met to discuss school readiness in AI/AN programs.

With this rich history of supporting language and culture in the Head Start community, OHS in 2010–11 set out to learn more about tribal language efforts among AI/AN Head Start programs. What follows is a profile of the efforts and issues facing the diverse Tribes and AI/AN Head Start programs around the country. This report is not meant to be a comprehensive review of tribal language efforts. Rather, the examples included in this report illustrate the successes, progress, and challenges faced by a number of large and small tribal communities in various stages of preserving, revitalizing, or reclaiming their tribal language. The examples were gathered from tribal leaders, AI/AN Head Start leaders, tribal language and culture experts, and researchers during informal discussions with a select number of Tribes and grantees and at formal gatherings including the OHS Tribal Consultations and the Tribal Language Preservation and Revitalization Roundtable.

III. RESEARCH BASE

Why is it important to hold onto language? According to researchers, much of humankind's accumulated knowledge of the natural world is encoded in languages that have never been written or documented and are now facing extinction (Anderson & Harrison 2006). Language and culture are inseparable. Language proficiency fosters cultural knowledge and learning, and at the same time, cultural experiences shape the way children learn and see the world (Gutierrez & Rogoff 2002).

The 2000 U.S. Census (Ogunwole 2006) reported that 72% of individuals 5 years and older who were American Indian/Alaska Native spoke only English at home; 18% spoke a language other than English at home, yet spoke English "very well;" 10% spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English less than "very well."

"Without language, the canoe, paddle, water, seat, the birds you hear are different than what our ancestors experienced. If you know the language, then you know what our ancestors heard, saw, felt, and experienced."
—Zalmai "Zeke" Zahir, Language Instructor, University of Oregon

Additionally:

- Ninety percent or more of Cherokee, Chippewa, Creek, Iroquois, Lumbee, and Tlingit-Haida spoke only English at home.
- Navajo had the highest percentage (25%) who spoke a language other than English at home and reported they spoke English less than "very well."
- Ninety-one percent of Tlingit-Haida spoke only English at home, compared with 53% of Eskimo.

Of the 175 indigenous languages still spoken in the United States, only about 20, or 11%, are still being transmitted to children in the traditional way (Krauss 1996). The language loss may be even greater since the reported numbers reflect only those Tribes that are recognized by the U.S. government (Berlin 2000). A cursory review of research finds that there is little available research on the impact of language loss on young children in AI/AN communities and even less research focused on AI/AN Head Start.

In a presentation at the OHS Child Development Institute, Nila Rinehart (2000), former Head Start director of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, identifies effective approaches for fostering the progress of linguistically and culturally diverse learners, including:

- Connecting generations of knowledge (particularly supported by oral traditions in native populations);
- Encouraging relationships between children and other significant adults—intergenerational connections are important to the well-being of children;
- Acknowledging ancient links to past history, thought, emotions, and practices still relevant today;
- Encouraging spiritual grounding;
- Fostering connections to community participation and history;
- Developing (and/or honoring) a unique worldview; and
- Opening pathways that allow Native children to be successful in many ways.

An interesting study examined the language and cultural practices in ten AI/AN Head Start programs; five also offered Early Head Start (Willis and Edwards 1999). Each program director interviewed emphasized the importance of introducing tribal language during infancy. Most respondents noted that the role of elders in preserving language and working with the youngest children (in Early Head Start) and their parents was a top program priority. Three notable issues raised by the study still hold true today: 1) AI/AN Head Start programs face the question of how best to provide developmentally appropriate education practices that are respectful and supportive of the tribal culture; 2) tribal leaders often equate loss of tribal language as loss of a way of thinking; and 3) some tribal education leaders expressed divergent viewpoints within the community about the value of implementing traditional cultural practices and use of tribal language in Head Start classrooms.

It is important that the culture-based curriculum be "individualized to support the philosophy, history, culture, and language of the tribal setting in which the children are served" (Kennedy 2000). AI/AN Early Head Start (EHS) programs identify a number of strategies for incorporating tribal language and culture. Some programs have created immersion settings where teachers speak only the tribal language to babies and toddlers; other programs rely on elders to visit regularly to speak the tribal language and sing tribal songs. Still, other programs have constructed culturally appropriate environments to highlight the Tribe's cultural traditions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006).

ACF Research Efforts

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, promotes academic research related to AI/AN programs. In 2005, ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) funded the American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start Research Center at the University of Colorado at Denver in response to the lack of representation of AI/AN Head Start and Early Head Start programs in national research.

"The language is your world view. The way you see the world that is so different than thinking in English. Every single sound of the language has a meaning to it, and unless you can understand those meanings, it is really hard to put that world view together."
—Jonathan Ross, President and CEO, Alaska Native Heritage Center

The goal of the Center is to influence future research efforts and to expand the network of university researchers qualified to conduct research that is scientifically and culturally rigorous in tribal communities. The Center is committed to expanding the base of research that focuses on children's development in AI/AN programs. Several projects related to culture and language are described below. Because these projects are ongoing and to ensure confidentiality, the names of specific Tribes and researchers are withheld.

- *Culture and Tribal Head Start Curricula.* One project focuses on the importance of language and culture in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms. Focus groups with parents and classroom staff, classroom observations, and Photovoice methods (such as using cameras to document child rearing traditions and practices) have been used to understand communities' hopes and opportunities for infusing programs with tribal language and culture. To date, this work has been conducted in four Head Start programs and one Early Head Start program. This research underscores considerable opportunity for addressing a community's priorities within the context of Federally-funded early education.

- *The Development of Culturally-Appropriate Measures and Methods for Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start Research.* This project has involved the evaluation of standardized methods and measures for multi-site studies of children and families enrolled in tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These investigations will inform the selection and use of standardized measures of children's early development, classroom quality, and family environments; provide descriptive data on children, families, and programs; and inform our understanding of how children's development is related to both their home and Head Start and Early Head Start environments.

- *Career Development for Native Investigators.* The Center has supported the career development of three junior AI/AN researchers through mentored research fellowships. Two of the projects were qualitative and involved the use of Photovoice to understand the perspectives of Head Start staff on the role of language and culture in the classroom as well as their broader views on the role of Head Start/Early Head Start in the lives of tribal children, families, and communities. One of the projects was quantitative and focused on the relationship between children's behavior and speech and language delays.

In summary, the AI/AN Head Start Research Center has made great strides in developing and implementing key lines of research in Head Start and Early Head Start programs serving AI/AN communities. Work continues with the goal of identifying findings related specifically to the progress of AI/AN Head Start children and outcomes for their families.

IV. STATE OF THE FIELD

Conversations with members of tribal communities and others reveal that tribal language efforts represent three different approaches. For the purposes of this report, the three approaches are defined as: *Preservation* of language with the help of elders or other native speakers; *Revitalization* of language when there are just a few speakers remaining; and *Reclamation* (or *Reconstruction*) of language when no speakers remain.

> "Teaching language is about teaching respect for land and ancestors, how to survive, pride, and confidence in who they are."
> —Tara Bourdukofsky, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Alaska

Preservation and Revitalization are time-sensitive given that the number of tribal elders who remain fluent in a language is getting smaller and smaller. Preservation and Revitalization often go hand-in-hand. As one example, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin views its language effort as two-pronged, with Preservation focusing on elders and Revitalization focusing on young people. On the other hand, Reclamation has no time pressures, and programs that are reclaiming their language can explore different approaches with an emphasis on getting it right, rather than rushing to preserve language before it is too late.

The next section highlights a sample of the efforts underway in some Tribes to preserve, revitalize, or reclaim their tribal language. In particular, their efforts targeting young children and their families are highlighted. Many of these Tribal communities operate Head Start programs.

Language Programs

Tribal language efforts vary according to a number of factors including –

- where the Tribe falls on the spectrum of language loss;
- level of funding support; and
- extent of community support.

Among the Tribes that have lost their native language is the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, which lost its language, Myaamia, in the 1960s. The Tribe began language reclamation in the 1980s. The Myaamia Project at Miami University was created in 2001 and is directly funded by the Tribe and the University. Language reclamation efforts focus on laying the infrastructure and foundation for future generations to regain the language. In particular, they have used technology to assist their reclamation efforts.

Language preservation is underway among the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota. The Tribe operates a Head Start program. A Language Preservation Department was created in 2007 to develop language materials including books based on recordings of elders speaking the Dakota language and telling traditional stories. A Language Preservation Committee meets regularly with the Department and with tribal elders, and is tasked with creating new words to keep the language current and useful. Tribal leaders have made the language very prominent in public places, such as local stores. As a result, the language is meaningful to the community. Additionally, efforts have focused on culture and the physical environment. The Tribe has begun to develop a natural playground on 2.5 acres to facilitate children's natural learning and to demonstrate who they are as a

Tribe. The design incorporates historical dwellings, water features characteristic of this fishing community, cultural legends and symbols, as well as the Dakota language.

Some Tribes, including the Kenaitze Indian Tribe in Alaska, have successfully incorporated their tribal language and culture into the Head Start curriculum. The Kenaitze's language efforts began in the early 1970s after a linguist, working with three elders, developed an orthography, a representation of the sounds of a language by written or printed symbols. Today, the Dena'ina language is the cornerstone of the Tribe's education system starting with the youngest children.

Among the Tribes that have leveraged funding opportunities into successful partnerships is the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma. In 2007, the Tribe received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Science Foundation (NSF) to participate in the Documenting Endangered Languages partnership. Native speakers are asked to speak about traditional activities such as fishing. These recordings are archived by the NSF and will be made available to the Tribe. The Tribe possesses a dictionary of approximately 10,000 words translated into English and French that was prepared by missionaries. Since the 1960s, the Choctaw Nation has worked with a linguist with a focus on language use. The Tribe is working toward producing certified teachers who understand the language, culture, and history of the Tribe. Members of the Choctaw Language Department regularly travel to meet with members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to collaborate on language activities.

Another example of a successful funding effort is the Language and Culture Department of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Wisconsin. With a three-year Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant, the department oversees a number of language preservation efforts, including parent and community engagement through evening classes designed to make the Ojibwe language valuable in their everyday life.

Language Nests

ANA currently funds 14 immersion programs, one restoration program, and more than 30 preservation programs. ANA is preparing to fund additional grants to support three-year projects that contribute to the social development and self-sufficiency of tribal communities through the preservation and maintenance of Native American languages.

Among these projects are language nests. As defined in the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-394), a language nest is a site-based educational program that provides native language instruction and child care through the use of a Native American language for at least ten children under the age of seven for an average of at least 500 hours per year per student; provides classes in a Native American language for parents (or legal guardians) of students enrolled in a Native American Language Nest (including Native American language-speaking parents); and ensures that a Native American language is the dominant medium of instruction in the Native American Language Nest.

Key Aspects of Language Policies and Programs

Many Tribes have a language policy or proclamation, passed through tribal resolution, which clarifies the Tribe's intentions for its language usage and instruction. Their efforts may have wide-ranging effects on the institutions and the everyday life of the Tribe. For example, the San Felipe Pueblo Government in

New Mexico requires that the Keresan language be the only language spoken during the first hour of each day. Key aspects of language policies and programs mentioned below include planning, tribal and other government support, research and documentation, collaboration, and education.

Planning

- Strategic Plans—Many Tribes have developed strategic plans to set goals and use as a roadmap for their curriculum.
- Language Surveys—Often cited as a key foundational piece for a strategic plan, language surveys can determine whether the tribal community is interested in supporting the language and whether parents want their children to learn it.
- Language Departments—Depending on the scope of a Tribe's language efforts, language departments may range from a group of elders to a sophisticated department that provides translation.
- Human Resources—Tribes have relied on elders, language program staff, and consultants to help drive their efforts. In some Head Start classrooms, fluent speakers are coupled with teachers.

Support from Tribal Nations, Federal, and State Governments

- Community Support—For many Tribes, a history of being forced to speak only English has had a profound effect on elders. Garnering community support has meant asking elders to confront their painful past. Some Tribes have been very lucky to have elders willing to share what they know. Elders have visited Head Start classrooms to tell stories; others have recorded their stories.
- Federal and State Support—Tribes report a range of Federal and state-level support for their language efforts from ANA grants to state education grants.

Research and Documentation

- Research—Tribes reported conducting research on their own, through partnerships with universities, and others including regional, state, national agencies, such as the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Sam Noble Foundation, U.S. National Archives, Smithsonian Institute, and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Efforts include linguistic research to determine language elements such as verb tenses, pitch, and tone.
- Documentation—Language programs vary widely with respect to documentation, ranging from gathering to archiving to digitizing resources.
- Technology—Many Tribes have found that technology offers the best way to archive and disseminate critical documentation. Some have formed in-house technology departments to help with their language efforts, while others have partnered with local colleges to help capture and record language.

Collaboration

- Head Start—Many Tribes report close working relationships with their Head Start programs.
- Language Networks—An example of networking is the Oklahoma Inter-tribal Language Committee, which comprises 12-15 Tribes in Oklahoma that share ideas and resources for language efforts.

Education

- Distance Learning—Due to the wide dispersion of many Tribes, including those where the majority of members live off-reservation, Web-based distance learning of tribal language is catching on.
- Master-Apprentice—An adult-focused fluency initiative, this one-on-one approach between a fluent speaker and a student has proved to be effective.
- Target Audiences—While many language programs have targeted adult learners, many Tribes are recognizing that it is just as effective or more effective to focus on young children.
- Early Education—A number of Tribes have incorporated culture and language into their Head Start curriculum. Head Start staff are receiving professional development in the tribal language.
- Language Immersion—Widely recognized by Tribes as the most effective approach, language immersion classrooms have been established in some Head Start and/or child care programs. In some cases, language immersion classes occur in the elementary schools on the reservations.

"Although you can lose language over a few generations, it is possible to regain it in a single generation by immersing children with speakers. Language loss is more of a social issue than just a language issue. The community must support and value the language to keep it alive."
—Daryl Baldwin, Director, Myaamia Project, Ohio

Professional Development—Cultural and Language Efforts in Head Start

Supporting Teachers

To successfully transmit a language, programs must have confident and competent teachers. For many AI/AN Head Start programs, this has proved to be a challenge. Teachers can be reluctant to use the language in their classrooms if they are unsure of their own skills and are worried that they will mispronounce or misuse words. Some programs have developed innovative ways to support teachers.

In one case, teachers at Oneida Head Start in Wisconsin have access to the Tribe's language Web site and CDs. Plans are underway to give teachers incentives for integrating words, greetings, and phrases into everyday classroom activities. The incentives are intended to help lessen teachers' anxieties. Other examples include Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Head Start in South Dakota, where a language specialist works with staff to help them integrate Dakota language activities, games, phrases, and words into the classroom. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma conduct language immersion camps for teachers, aimed at teaching them to use simple phrases in the tribal language.

Teacher Credentialing

The Head Start Act of 2007 minimum requirements for center-based classroom teachers in preschool programs will go into effect October 1, 2011, and those for Early Head Start (EHS) teachers went into effect in September 2010. Under these requirements every Head Start center-based classroom must have a teacher who has at least an associate's degree. There is limited waiver authority for individual

teachers, but only if they have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an equivalent state-issued certificate/credential and are enrolled in a program that grants an associate's degree. Every EHS teacher needs a minimum of a CDA as of the date of hire in EHS programs. Many Tribes anticipate difficulty meeting this requirement. Most speakers of tribal languages are elderly and are not interested in returning to school to earn their degree. It could take years to develop fluency in an adult teacher. Programs that currently have native speakers in the classroom worry that they will be forced to replace them with credentialed staff who are in the process of learning the tribal language.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

Although many tribal members acknowledge that preserving or reconstructing the tribal language is important, many parents still want their children to learn only English. Some programs have made efforts to engage parents in tribal language-learning activities.

One example of an AI/AN Head Start program that has successfully integrated tribal language and culture into its Head Start program is Kawerak Head Start in Alaska. A committee of Kawerak elders and Head Start parents was formed in 2001 to work with a consultant to develop a culture-based curriculum. Together, they developed the Sharing and Learning Place curriculum, which infuses Eskimo language and culture throughout the curriculum. The curriculum includes strategies for supporting teachers and children who do not have a command of the tribal language and also urges parents to learn the language along with their children.

Brazelton Touchpoints Center Tribal Touchpoints initiative sought to address parent involvement in AI/AN Head Start. Nine programs in Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Washington, and Wisconsin participated in the initiative to build upon their strengths and cultural values of family and childrearing practices.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the preceding overview of some of the tribal programs and policies related to culture and language, the following recommendations are being proposed to the Office of Head Start (OHS). They represent diverse courses of action, some might be considered for immediate implementation, others might involve longer-range planning on the part of OHS.

Culture and Language in Curriculum

While many AI/AN Head Start programs have successfully implemented culturally and linguistically responsive curricula, others do not think that the regulations including the current *Head Start Program Performance Standards* support locally developed culture-based curricula.

- Continue efforts of OHS, ACF, and T/TA providers to clarify misunderstanding and ensure a consistent message about the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and the Office of Head Start's commitment to and support for culturally and linguistically responsive curricula.
- Make all Head Start programs, including AI/AN Head Start programs, aware of the recently developed *Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue: Native and Heritage Language Preservation, Revitalization, and Maintenance.* The Catalogue is posted on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC).
- Explore locally developed curricula that integrate language and culture in support of local agency-determined school readiness goals.
- Identify successful strategies for teaching tribal languages to young children, and develop and disseminate a compendium of such strategies. Given the differences in structure, symbols, and sounds of tribal languages, these strategies may differ from those used to teach other languages.

Training/Certification To Teach A Language

In some communities, elders who are fluent in their tribal language work in Head Start classrooms. In California and other states, Tribes determine the requirements for certification of a language teacher. Other states bar individuals who do not hold state teaching certification from teaching in the classroom.

- Consider an initiative to allow Tribes to determine whether an individual can be certified to teach the tribal language.
- Consider whether existing University language revitalization certificates can be counted toward an early childhood certificate/credential or can be accrued toward AA requirements for Head Start center-based classroom teachers.

Teacher Qualifications

Many Head Start programs have already met the minimum center-based classroom teacher requirements mandated in the Head Start Act of 2007. However, nationwide, AI/AN programs, as well as Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, fall behind their regional Head Start counterparts on this requirement due to a number of factors. In some communities, the population is so small that it is difficult to recruit qualified teachers. Many AI/AN communities struggle with a shortage of qualified teachers who know the tribal language.

- Work with Tribal colleges and universities to support the development of professional development ladders to enable Head Start and Early Head Start teaching staff to accumulate education and training including those programs that can provide credit for "life experiences, skills, and knowledge," with particular consideration for teaching staff who may not be in a position to earn a degree but who have tribal language skills.
- Explore options for distance learning for Head Start staff who live far from the nearest college.
- Support Head Start programs to explore alternative staffing patterns, such as using elders or other native speakers to provide language enrichment in Head Start classroom and home-based settings. These individuals work alongside the classroom teacher or assistant teacher (who must meet the education credential requirements specified in the Head Start Act of 2007).

Funding

Establishing a successful language program is very costly. Many programs rely on grants from the Administration for Native Americans for their initial start-up. Most programs rely on a combination of tribal funding, grant funding, and other sources.

- Explore options for increased collaboration among Federal and state agencies to provide funding opportunities for language programs and curricula development.

Conclusion

This Tribal Language Report provides a snapshot of the successes, progress, and challenges faced by some programs and Tribes. AI/AN Head Start programs may be in the process of language preservation, revitalization, or reclamation, or none of the above. A sense of urgency was conveyed throughout the conversations and consultations. And it is clear that now is the time for OHS to address these concerns—before more language is lost, and along with it, native culture.

The statutory requirements and regulations that govern Head Start agencies require support for children's and families' cultural and linguistic diversity. OHS supports the Tribes' efforts to share their heritage with the children and families in AI/AN programs. OHS is committed to working with tribal communities in moving toward the adoption and implementation of these recommendations.

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