

Policy Memo

To: President, Northwest Indian College
From: Nathaniel Gorman, Native Studies Leadership Faculty
Subject: Place Based Language Revitalization
Date: 2/14/2024

Summary

To practice place-based education within Northwest Indian College we need to incorporate Language (**Xwləmi-chosən**) wherever we can within the institution. Northwest Indian College's mission is *Through education, Northwest Indian College promotes Indigenous self-determination and knowledge*. Language is key for our students to move towards self-determination as it is a part of our cultures. Language holds knowledge of our culture and identity. This policy memo is intended to provide first steps to revitalizing the language within the institution and to begin building upon self-determination and knowledge.

Background

Tribal languages have been on the verge of going extinct after contact with non-indigenous peoples. Throughout history there have been traumatic events that have led to the loss of many tribal language speakers, one example is the Boarding School Era. The boarding school era was one of those traumatic events that took native children from their homes and replace their language with the English language. The impact of boarding school is still felt today among Tribal Languages. Today within the very community we serve there are few fluent speakers of Lummi language **Xwləmi-chosən**. Within our institution and our modern world, we are surrounded by English and utilize the English language as our means of communication. As the institution moves toward self-determination through education, I believe revitalizing tribal language is a very important aspect of self-determination. Tribal languages tell us of our worldview and holds vast amounts of knowledge unique to its peoples, cultures, and places. Tribal languages are deeply intertwined with culture and are deeply rooted in who we are as Indigenous People.

Policy Recommendations

1. *Provide detail evidence of each recommendation> First Steps to Revitalizing the **Xwləmi-chosən** language. Setting realistic goals and direction on where the institution can start revitalizing the language. Meet with the Lummi Cultural Department, Coast Salish Institute, and fluent community members/ teaching of the language to create realistic goals.*
2. *Start small approve a Language Revitalization policy institution wide to use small words in the language. Signs can be put up for location of places, names, greetings, etc.*

Conclusion

Northwest Indian College is continuing to serve Tribal communities as the vision was intended. There is an urgent need to bring back tribal languages due to the risk of language lost. As the institution moves

towards self-determination, we cannot ignore the importance of language revitalization. With these recommendations we can truly serve tribal communities as the institution grows.