OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

We believe that when armed with appropriate resources, Native peoples hold the capacity and ingenuity to ensure the sustainable, economic, spiritual and cultural well-being of their communities.
First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) launched its Native Language Immersion Initiative (NLII) in late 2017 to build on its longtime efforts to support the revitalization and perpetuation of Native languages. Language is a vital asset for Native people and communities. It defines who we are, where we come from and our value systems that, in many ways, cannot be translated into English.

Language-immersion programs have been recognized as providing key benefits to Native communities by boosting educational achievement and student retention rates. They also support community identity, Native systems of kinship, and management of community, cultural and natural resources.

Thank you to National Endowment for the Humanities, Lannan Foundation, NoVo Foundation, Kalliopeia Foundation and thousands of individual donors across the nation for supporting this initiative. Because of this generous support, First Nations was able to provide 25 grants totaling more than $2.1 million in 2018 and 2019 through this initiative. We are pleased to share the initial results of Years 1 and 2 of this vital initiative with our stories of strength, resistance, resiliency and hope.
Why is language so important to Indian people and communities?

*Language is a core part of who we are as Indian people.* Each of us has our respective languages that connect us to our place of birth, teach us how to pray, and show us who we are as Indian people. *Language is sacred.* For many of us, the only way for our languages and ceremonies to survive was to take them underground. To this day, there are some of us who won’t even allow our languages to be written down. Each tribe has their own approach to preserving and protecting the language.

What impact will the language initiative have on tribal children and families?

Across the country, we’re seeing a renaissance of Indigenous languages. In our community, Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico, we established one of the first tribal Head Start programs in the country, and it changed the entire dynamic of our community. *Grandparents were able to talk to their grandchildren in their own language, which is something that many of them haven’t been able to do for a long time.*

What can individuals do to better support these efforts?

Support them in ways that allow the community to do what they need to do. At the end of the day, *the communities are the ones who have the answers.* They have the knowledge needed to help their communities flourish.

What should donors know about supporting Native language revitalization?

*Respect tribes and tribal communities.* Each tribe and language is different. It’s important to respect those differences and the different ways they choose to revitalize languages.

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*Benny Shendo, Jr.*

is a member of the Jemez Pueblo Tribe and a member of the New Mexico Senate since 2013. He was elected Chairman of the Board of First Nations Development Institute in June 2016 after serving many years as a Board member.
**YEARS 1 & 2**

**BY THE NUMBERS**

2018 & 2019 GRANTS AWARDED

25*

TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED

$2,185,000

GRADE LEVELS ADDED TO CURRICULA BY SCHOOLS

14

NATIVE LANGUAGES TAUGHT

17

149 INSTRUCTORS TAUGHT

3,748 HOURS OF LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

484 FAMILY MEMBERS AND PARENTS ALSO ENGAGED IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMING

*There was a total of 20 grantees, as five received funding for two consecutive years.

NLII was only able to provide funding for only 10% of requests, which highlights the tremendous ongoing need for more funding for language programs.

**THE NEED**

GRANTS AWARDED

25

$2.1 million

APPLICATIONS

192

FUNDING REQUESTED

$21.5 million

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi

Growing “Fluent Speakers, Sovereign Thinkers”

“This isn’t just a school. This is a movement.”

— YULIYA MANYAKINA, Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi Project Director

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Sitting Bull College partnered to establish Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi (Lakota Language Nest), a preschool language immersion program dedicated to teaching the youngest members of the tribe to speak the Dakota and Lakota languages. Its mission is to increase the number of Dakota and Lakota language speakers and equip Dakota and Lakota students with the knowledge and skills needed to be leaders and more conscientious citizens in their communities. Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi’s vision is: “Fluent Speakers, Sovereign Thinkers.”

In many ways, the Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi is just like any other preschool where toddlers learn and play with other students. However, at the Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi, all of the activities — books, games, songs, prayers and even meals — are conducted in the Dakota and Lakota languages. For eight hours a day, these preschoolers speak the Lakota language and then often go home at night and share the language with their families. “This isn’t just a school. This is a movement,” says Yuliya Manyakina, Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi Project Director.

To learn more, find Lakhol’iyapi Wahohpi on Twitter at @LakotaLangNest.
Reviving a Long-Silent Language

“Our tribal children ... are showing tremendous potential as future bilingual speakers of Wôpanâak and English, and are the first generation to have the opportunity to attend school in their Native language in nearly 400 years!”

— JENNIFER WESTON, Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project Director

The Wampanoag Nation is one of the first tribes to reclaim an Indigenous language with no living speakers. The last speaker of Wôpanâôt8âök (the Wampanoag language) passed away more than a century ago, and there were no first-language speakers for many generations. To revive the oral language, the Wampanoag Nation studied extensive written documents recorded by their early ancestors and missionaries beginning in the 17th century.

In 1993, the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP), which consists of four tribes (Mashpee, Aquinnah, Herring Pond and Assonet), was founded as an inter-tribal cooperative project of the Wampanoag Nation. Co-founder Jessie “Little Doe” Baird, a Mashpee Wampanoag tribal citizen and linguist, began work on developing a modern orthography, producing a 10,000-word Wampanoag-English dictionary, and building her own fluency as a speaker. Baird also wrote a comprehensive grammar of the language, a 7-part workbook series, and developed instructional materials that she used to teach community classes and hold family immersion camps and youth programs. Beginning in 2010 she recruited a small group of second-language learners as her language apprentices who have since achieved fluency in the long-silent language. The teaching team continues to grow, and now offers a full-time language nest and elementary school, elder classes, community classes, summer camps, language-enrichment programming in the public schools, and daily high school classes for world language credit.

To learn more about WLRP visit: www.wlrp.org or facebook.com/wlrporg.
At the end of the day, language is tied to everything. It is a lens through which we see the culture.

— HALAY TURNING HEART, Project Administrator
For The Yuchi Language Project

In Sapulpa, Oklahoma, over 20 years ago, the Yuchi language was quickly disappearing. With the Yuchi people withstanding generations of trauma and annihilation, their language had dwindled to a few Native speakers, and it was on the verge of extinction. The Yuchi Language Project (YLP) has changed that.

YLP is a community-based organization dedicated to restoring the strength of the Yuchi language and thereby the cultural health of the Yuchi people. Since its inception, YLP has worked to produce written Yuchi materials where none had existed, document the knowledge and stories, and develop immersion practices that build fluency and create the next generation of Yuchi speakers. The project serves the entire Yuchi community through language classes for all ages, culture camps, master-apprentice sessions, curriculum development, and youth programs like sports and clubs at home, school and at the Yuchi Ceremonial Grounds for the first time in nearly a century.

Its new project gOnEEnû O’wAdAnA, meaning “A New Generation of Yuchi Speakers,” is designed to further sustain the Yuchi language by targeting young people (preschoolers and students in K-12). Project leadership is committed to expanding its programming in the coming years, reaching more students and continuing to build fluency for the next generations.

To learn more about the Yuchi Language Project, visit: www.yuchilanguage.org
Waadookodaading, Inc. is an Ojibwe language institute founded in 2000 by a group of Ojibwe elders, language activists and community members. Waadookodaading started as a small program with two language instructors and six kindergarteners. Today, it boasts 12 teachers and 65 students grades K-7.

Over the past 18 years, Waadookodaading has been fine-tuning its standards, assessments, teaching strategies and lesson plans. The next goal is to develop Ojibwe texts for beginning Ojibwe readers. To achieve this goal, the program established the Agindamaadidaa! “Let’s Read!” project to increase the next generation of fluent Ojibwemowin speakers. As part of the NLII grant, a team of linguists, language instructors and community members have been translating math, science and social studies textbooks from English to Ojibwemowin and are publishing a new series of books from scratch based on the Ojibwe oral storytelling tradition.

To learn more about Waadookodaading’s new reading program, visit www.waadookodaading.org.
A Comprehensive Approach to Language Revitalization

“We are trying to revitalize something that we know is vitally important to the survival of our families and communities.”

— LISA WADE, Chickaloon Native Village Health, Education, And Social Services Director

Alaska is home to 229 federally-recognized tribes. Chickaloon Native Village is the first and only federally-recognized tribe in Alaska to own and operate its own full-time, year-round school: Ya Ne Dah Ah School or “Ancient Teachings” School. Formally established in 1992, Ya Ne Dah Ah School is intended to help to teach, preserve and rejuvenate Ahtna Athabascan culture, language, history and traditions. Only a handful of elders still speak the Ahtna language today. “Our elders are passing too quickly,” says Health, Education and Social Services Division Director Lisa Wade. “Our language is passed down orally, and we are working hard to develop curriculum to continue teaching the language. Without the language being written down and taught in a very methodical and culturally meaningful way, we risked losing it.”

Today, the tribe is preserving the language through the use of the Traditional Physical Response (TPR) method.

To learn more about TPR and the Ya Ne Dah Ah School, visit www.chickaloon.org/departments/education/yaschool/.
**Benefits of Language-Immersion Programs**

- Increases educational achievement and student retention rates.
- Deeper cultural relationship between the educator and the student.
- Supports community identity, Native systems of kinship, and management of community, cultural and natural resources.
- Strengthens cultural awareness and practices.
- Sharpens cognitive, creative and social skills.
- Students who learn in an immersion environment not only gain an additional language, they strengthen their identities.

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**Salish School of Spokane**

**Building Opportunities for Salish Language Interaction & Transmission**

“We strive to give students a total connection to their true and full heritage, which has roots that go back 10,000 years on the Columbian Plateau.”

— CHRISTOPHER PARKIN, School Principal

The Salish School of Spokane is a Native-led nonprofit organization that offers childcare and elementary school for families in the City of Spokane and surrounding areas. It is one of the few urban-based Indigenous language-immersion schools in the country. “For 90 years, our children have not been raised with the Salish language,” says Christopher Parkin, Principal of the school. “Interior Salish is only spoken by 24 surviving fluent elders in the United States, and most of them are in their 70s or 80s.”

The school officially opened its doors in September 2010 with a commitment to stem language loss and enrolled six students and one full-time employee. Over the past nine years, the school has grown substantially to 58 students and 30 full- and part-time employees. The school has produced 17 new fluent Salish language speakers and has been well-received by the community. It is expanding its elementary school to a middle school by translating seventh- and eighth-grade math books into Salish and training more language teachers.

Parkin notes that 100% of the third- through seventh-grade students are reading English at or above grade level, with many of those students actually reading two or three grade levels ahead.

Visit [www.salishschoolofspokane.org](http://www.salishschoolofspokane.org) to learn more.
The Ahtna Nekenaege’ Ugheldze’ Ghitnaa Pilot Project serves Pre-K-8 students of the Ya Ne Dah Ah Tribal School. After the passing of the last fluent language speaker/teacher, the Chickaloon Village Tribal Council prioritized the preservation of cultural lifeways through the implementation of a curriculum and testing assessment standards developed over the past three years for Ahtna culture and language immersion instruction.

The project is guided by the rediscovery of Hawaiian scientific terminology and concepts found in ancestral texts and their integration into Pre-K-12 school curriculum, online resources and training for Hawaiian language-immersion teachers. The goal is to provide culturally-responsive teaching grounded in Hawaiian knowledge in order to better support student learning in the subject areas of language, math and science.

The goal of this project is to expand and increase the capacity of staff to develop children, ages 2.5 to 6, into healthy, responsible, Keres-speaking adults in the primary Keres-immersion classroom. Training will be provided in best language-immersion and Montessori practices and by refreshing the classroom materials and equipment to better nurture and revitalize the Keres language, culture and traditions.

The project, Indooziitaamin, primarily focuses on the Migiziinsag preschool program. It strengthens the current program through increased use of language and cultural activities, and prepares teachers to encourage more frequent Ojibwe language use by providing recurring training, evaluation and a curriculum. Additionally, family-oriented events are held to promote language use between community members and increase cultural awareness.

The project creates a formal immersion training program for future Nez Perce language teachers, who serve students in preschool through college in the three main on-reservation communities of Lapwai, Orofino and Kamiah/Kooskia. The key points of this project are mentoring, job and life shadowing, curriculum methodology, curriculum development, and professional development training.

The project offers an additional opportunity for tribal members ages 6-17 in the public and tribal schools’ current language-immersion programs to continue Tewa immersion through after-school programs. Programs include connecting with tribal elders through mentoring activities, community service, and cultural-retention activities. Language immersion will be provided by community members who have obtained the tribe’s certification as Tewa teachers.

The tribal language department expanded the Oneida immersion program to include the 10-16 students in the Oneida Head Start program. This class is structured to utilize On’yote’aka Tsi Nitwaw^not^ and Head Start “as it happens” curriculum objectives, along with additional cultural components, and serves children in a setting where Oneida is the first language they learn.
### Intergenerational Immersion School Expansion Project
**Salish School of Spokane**  
**SPOKANE, WASHINGTON**  
$90,000

This project increases intergenerational use and transmission of Salish language. This is achieved by expanding the Salish immersion school programming from K-5 to include grades 6 and 7, deepening and expanding the Salish immersion teacher training program, sustaining the Salish language training program for parents and community members, and creating new Salish-language math, science and literacy materials.

### STAR Early Learning Diné Language-Immersion Project
**STAR School (Painted Desert Demonstration Project)**  
**FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA**  
$90,000

The project intensifies Navajo language-immersion efforts in early childhood (ages 3, 4 and 5). The Alchini Bighan (children’s house) serves 36 Navajo children and follows the Montessori model of “learn by doing” with the language-immersion approach that entails conversational learning rather than direct instruction. In addition, the project provides a six-day Diné language-immersion camp for students in grades 1-8 that will focus on plant knowledge and traditional food.

### Thakoza kin kilakhotapi kte: "Our Grandchildren Will Return to Traditional Ways"
**Sitting Bull College**  
**FORT YATES, NORTH DAKOTA**  
$90,000

The project creates a comprehensive, coherent Pre-K to 1st grade immersion curriculum based on Dakota/Lakota immersion activities and materials developed since 2012. The curriculum serves teachers and students at Lakho’iyapi Wahohpi or any D/Lakota preschool or daycare centers interested in creating an immersion environment, along with parents and community members who want to support language learning in the home.

### Agindamaadidaa! Let’s Read!
**Waadookodaading, Inc.**  
**HAYWARD, WISCONSIN**  
$90,000

The Agindamaadidaa! “Let’s Read!” project develops a sequence of Ojibwemowin leveled reading books that align with new Ojibwe literacy assessments being developed. Leveled readers match a student’s reading ability level, or “lexile,” with texts written at that level. Although these are commonly available for reading series in English, this will be the first series in Ojibwe. The focus of the first readers will be sets for students in K-1, 2-3 and 4-5.

### Mukayuhsak Weekkuw Wôpanâôt8ây Pâhshaneekamuq (The Children’s House Immersion School Project)
**Wopanaak Language and Cultural Weetyoo Inc.**  
**MASHPEE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
$90,000

Mukayuhsak Weekkuw Wôpanâôt8ây Pâhshaneekamuq supports expansion of the Wôpanâôt8ây Pâhshaneekamuq (preschool/kindergarten) to serve lower elementary students (grades 2-4) through teacher certification and fluency training, parent literacy development, and comprehensive planning to ensure a family and community-driven school design grounded in Wampanoag culture. Community planning will engage all four Wampanoag tribes and governing councils that contribute to the vitality of the Wampanoag Language Reclamation Project’s immersion and other instructional programs serving 4,000 citizens among the greater Wampanoag Nation in southeastern Massachusetts.
Ahtna Nekenaeg'e Ugheldze' Ghitnaa (Our Ahtna Language is Working Good) Pilot Project
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
CHICKALOON, ALASKA
$90,000

This project expands upon current efforts to revitalize the Ahtna language at the Ya Ne Dah Ah or “Ancient Teachings” Tribal School. With this grant, the tribe created new culture and language curriculum to meet Alaska’s requirements in the areas of history, science and social studies.

Chickaloon Village Traditional Council

Chickaloon, Alaska

$90,000

The project restores the vitality of the Yuchi language through The Yuchi House, a year-round, language-immersion program for students grades K-12. Additionally, this grant provides support for producing an archive of Yuchi language videos and assists with tribal language instructor certification.

Euchee Yuchi Language Project
SAPULPA, OKLAHOMA
$90,000

This teacher-training program is designed to increase the capacity of current and new teachers of the K’aniyenkeh’a (Mohawk) language. Master language educators are developing a training program for 10 new elementary school teachers and teacher aides that focuses on the Akwesasne Freedom School’s unique language curriculum.

Friends of the Akwesasne Freedom School
ROOSEVELTOWN, NEW YORK
$89,320

This project provides expansive professional development to nine teachers through one-on-one and group training sessions on language acquisition, language immersion, cultural knowledge and advocacy. Additionally, this funding provides resources to purchase supplies and other materials for elementary classrooms that have recently doubled in size.

Keres Children’s Learning Center
COCHITI PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO
$90,000

This project helps preserve and promote tribal traditions through the development of a Nisqually Lushootseed-specific language curriculum. With this grant, the tribe is developing and publishing 200 new resources, including Lushootseed alphabet and language books. Additionally, the tribe is training up to four more Lushootseed language teachers and creating a Lushootseed font application.

Nisqually Indian Tribe
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
$70,836

This project supports the development of a master-apprentice language program to educate and empower Northern Arapaho tribal members. Tribal elders are developing Arapaho language curriculum (i.e., Arapaho words, phrases, stories, history and conversational pieces) that they will share with prospective Arapaho language teachers who will, in turn, share that knowledge with students.

Northern Arapaho Tribe
FORT WASHAKIE, WYOMING
$90,000

This project increases the number of proficient first-language speakers within the Oneida community by creating an immersion-only classroom that utilizes the current On^yote’aka Tsi Nitwaw^not^ and Head Start “As it Happens” curriculum. Twenty students are participating in this language program. Their parents are required to attend bi-monthly classes and pass a basic assessment to foster an at-home language environment for their children.
This project will build the organizational and professional capacity of the Yaqui Language Immersion Program. Eleven teachers will engage in the study and practicum for their professional development as language instructors.

This project provides Salish training to four interns recruited and hired from among parents of current students at the Salish School of Spokane. Interns participate in 60 hours of evening/weekend Salish classes per year, with the goal of eventually hiring them as Salish immersion instructors.

The project utilizes the newly created immersion curriculum to pilot educational best practices in the classroom, create an immersion teacher training strategy, increase access to high-quality professional development, and leverage existing staff and resources to transition from a program of Sitting Bull College to a community-serving school through the Standing Rock Community Development Corporation.

This project provides 26 language instructors with professional development training. Additionally, this grant provides the opportunity to open a second Lakota Immersion Childcare Center to provide immersion education to 15 more Lakota students.

This project utilizes new and existing resources to provide language immersion to 50 to 60 children in grades K-8. With this grant, the project team set up an outdoor classroom to introduce students to indigenous plants. It is developing curriculum to teach words and phrases about traditional plants, fruits, tools and ecology. The grant will also offer the opportunity to provide professional development training, and encourage parent and community engagement.

This project lays the groundwork to expand the Wôpanâak's language immersion school to the 8th grade. The school currently serves students from pre-K through 4th grade. With this grant, the school will partner with five regional colleges and universities to provide comprehensive state and tribal language teacher certification. This will allow the school to recruit and hire new language teachers.
“We are all so thankful for this program, and it feels as though we are one big happy family. The elders tell us that our language is sacred, and so we know that each time we meet it will be a blessing in so many ways. Our language is changing our apprentices and transforming them into wonderful teachers who will continue to pass on this knowledge whether they teach their families in the homes, at community language classes, or in local schools. The overall goal is to create new teachers in every aspect, and I see them transforming before my eyes as each week passes.”

— Elvera Sargent, Executive Director 
FRIENDS OF THE AKWESASNE FREEDOM SCHOOL