Preschool Immersion Education for Indigenous Languages: A Survey of Resources

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This article gathers and summarizes available information about preschool immersion education for Indigenous languages, including information about existing programs and other relevant resources. After briefly mentioning the Dakota language preschool program at Pezihutazizi in Minnesota, the impetus for the article, we survey available information about other programs. We first examine the two oldest and best-known programs of the last 20 years: Kohanga Reo in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Punana Leo in Hawai'i. Next we look at existing programs in the mainland United States, focusing in particular on the Arapaho preschools in Wyoming. Then we mention other relevant early childhood programs in North America, including a number in Alaska and Canada. To conclude we outline some of the major issues involved in setting up a preschool immersion program in an Indigenous community.

Introduction

The parlous state of Indigenous languages in the United States and elsewhere is well documented. The urgent need and critical importance of maintaining and strengthening those languages has been well argued. Needed now is effective practical engagement to support this process. This article arises from one such engagement and is intended to help others in their own practical struggles.

This article arose from the preparations for a Dakota language preschool immersion program at Pezihutazizi (Upper Sioux Community) in southwestern Minnesota. The program itself, which opened in October 1999 and ran for several months before closing for political (rather that educational) reasons, has been described elsewhere (Johnston, 2002; Johnston & Wilson, 1999); but as part of the process of setting the program up in the summer of 1999, we conducted a survey of research literature, descriptions, and resources relevant to preschool immersion in Indigenous languages. We believe that this survey may be of use to others interested in implementing such programs,[1] and so we offer it here separately. The reader should remember, however, that our research was not conducted with an eye to exhaustive academic coverage, but rather was guided by the practical concerns of helping to establish the program at Pezihutazizi.

First we should say a few words about why the community at Pezihutazizi chose to focus a significant part of its efforts and resources on this kind of program.

Communities like Pezihutazizi have taken a number of different approaches to language stabilization and reinvigoration. These approaches have been docu-

mented in the proceedings from the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages conferences (Cantoni, 1996; Reyhner, 1997; Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair, & Parsons Yazzie, 1999) and elsewhere. They include mentor programs (Hinton, 1994), dictionary and other language recording projects, programs for middle- and high-school students, adult language classes, and the development of CD-ROM and other technologies.

The community at Pezihutazizi was certainly not opposed to these approaches. Indeed, when the preschool program was conceived in 1997, two projects of this kind—a long-term Dakota-English dictionary project and a CD-ROM—were already under way. However, as these two projects developed, it became apparent that valuable as they were, they would not in themselves guarantee the survival of the Dakota language (Littlebear, 1996). Those involved came to believe that the only way the Dakota language is truly likely to survive is if it is spoken by children. Because the "intergenerational transmission" that Fishman (1994, pp. 4-5) talks about is not a realistic option, because none of the present parental generation speaks Dakota as a first language, it was decided that a school was the only realistic option.

Immersion education in turn was believed to offer the best hope. We do not here argue the case for immersion education as we believe this has been done effectively elsewhere (DeJong, 1998; Fortune & Jorstad, 1996; Swain & Johnson, 1996; and much of the literature referred to in this article). Briefly, the community at Pezihutazizi was convinced by the idea of a program that offers intensive exposure to only one language, focuses on learning the language through meaningful content, and is aimed at the youngest members of the community, who are best equipped to learn the language.

In addition, numerous other advantages were seen in the preschool immersion model. These included the relative ease of setting up a school outside the institutional constraints of K-12 schooling; the increased possibilities for a strong cultural component, along with a more general relative freedom in developing curriculum; and the fact that the preschool provides needed child care in the community, thus making it attractive to parents for practical as well as ideological reasons.

However, as Angela Wilson, the director of the school, and her staff began the preparations for the program, she realized that many questions had to be answered before the program could even get under way. Who would be the teachers? What kind of teacher training was possible or desirable? How could curriculum be developed? What kind of role would the parents of the children play in the school? What about the broader community? What sort of pedagogy was going to be most effective for this school?

Although it was clear that not all these questions could be answered immediately and that in many ways the situation at Pezihutazizi was unique and must be dealt with on its own terms, we also knew that other communities had gone through similar processes, and that wherever possible it would be better to draw on the wisdom and experience of those who had gone ahead of us rather than having to reinvent every detail ourselves. Consequently, those of us working to help Angela—Bill as program consultant, Kim as his research assistant—decided to survey the existing literature for anything that might be of help in figuring out how best to set up the school at Pezihutazizi. This article is the result of that survey. We offer it to Indigenous communities everywhere in the hope that the time and

energy we put into searching for relevant materials might prove useful to others who are thinking of establishing preschool or early childhood immersion education in an Indigenous language.

The article is divided into several sections. First, we look at the Maori and Hawaiian programs, which came first, and which remain a shining example to Native communities everywhere. Second, we look at the Arapaho preschools in Wyoming, which are to the best of our knowledge the only existing documented preschool immersion programs in the contiguous 48 states, and mention the existence of other programs. Next, we consider related programs in the US and Canada, which are not exactly preschool immersion programs, but which nevertheless had much to teach us. Finally, following this survey of specific programs, we suggest a number of central issues that must be faced by those engaged in preschool immersion education for Indigenous languages.

Maori and Hawaiian

Credit for the development of preschool immersion as a means to ensure the survival and viability of Indigenous languages must go to the two programs that remain a model for all others: the Maori *Kohanga Reo* in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the *Punana Leo* in Hawai'i. Both were developed early in the 1980s as parents, Native community leaders, and educators became increasingly active and persistent in their vision of establishing immersion preschools as a means to battle escalating language loss. Despite the hurdles faced both from within and outside of the Native communities, these programs have thrived and led to the establishment of immersion or bilingual education beyond the preschool, ranging from kindergarten to university. What were the challenges they faced, and how did they overcome those challenges? What would they credit as the key components of their success? Most important, what resources are available that can give insights and lessons learned that may be applicable and beneficial to other fledgling Indigenous preschool immersion projects? We begin with a review of resources available from the oldest of these programs, the Maori, before turning to take a closer look at the Hawaiian experience.

Te Kohanga Reo

The historical development of the Maori language movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand can be found in a variety of sources, many of which do an admirable job of summarizing the difficulties and challenges facing the development of the Maori immersion program, including Cazden (1990), Durie (1999), Keegam (1996), May (1999), Spolsky (1995), Stiles (1997), Tangaere and McNaughton (1994), and Tangaere (1997). Maori preschool immersion began in 1981 when the Department of Maori Affairs brought together Maori leaders to devise a means to revitalize the language. The result was the *Kohanga Reo,* the immersion preschool "language nests" that are the forerunner of many other Indigenous language preschool immersion programs. Here children were immersed in the language in a homelike atmosphere to "reattach the language to the people at the community level" (Stiles, 1997, p. 253). The first *Kohanga Reo* opened in 1982, with five more planned for that year, but the interest generated in the Maori community proved so great that this number grew to 107 by the end of that first year (Tangaere, 1997). By 1996 over 14,000 Maori children were enrolled in the *Kohanga Reo* (May, 1999). In addition to

the growth of the preschool programs, and due largely to the activism of the parents of these children, the development of more immersion and bilingual schools at both the primary and secondary levels have followed in the wake of the *Kohanga Reo* success.

Sifting through the plethora of resources available that chronicle the Maori revitalization efforts, and *Kohanga Reo* in particular, revealed much overlap and redundancy in content. So we have chosen to highlight a few that we found most helpful. This is not to discount the contributions of many other, often older resources, which as a whole can provide an overview of the development of the *Kohanga Reo*; rather, it is a reflection of our goal to limit this survey to those sources that we found most beneficial.

An insightful resource is provided by May (1999), who argues that the developments in Maori-language education are vital components of Indigenous claims to self-determination and need to be understood in the wider context of changes (social, economic, and political) that have occurred in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the recent past. In addition to establishing the Maori language and education movement in this larger social and political framework, he looks closely at the history and philosophy of *Kohanga Reo*. May outlines the guiding principles of the *Kohanga Reo* and summarizes the philosophy, or set of objectives, as:

1. total immersion in Maori language (*te reo Maori*);
2. the imparting of Maori spiritual values and concepts;
3. the teaching and involvement of the children in Maori customs (*Tikanga Maori*);
4. administration of each center by the extended family (*whanau*);
5. utilization of many traditional techniques of child care and knowledge acquisition (p. 53).

The establishment of *Kohanga Reo* began as a means to curtail continuing Maori language loss, and studies suggest that they have been successful to some extent in achieving this goal: Spolsky (1995) estimates that the Maori program between 1981 and 1995 had been successful in "reversing some 15-20 years of loss" (p. 183). But it is clear from the guiding principles outlined above that *Kohanga Reo* was also about the revitalization of culture and traditional Maori ways, and this may be an important aspect of their success.

From its beginnings the *Kohanga Reo* has been parent-driven and based on traditional Maori principles of extended family (*whanau*) and collective responsibility. This means that parents and *whanau* have maintained a significant amount of local control over the education of their children. In fact, until 1990 the *Kohanga Reo* was funded almost entirely by *whanau* (May, 1999). Stiles (1997) credits the success of the program to this community support, asserting that this is "the main reason the current status of the TKR [*te kohanga reo*] programs is positive and growing" (p. 254). The significant contribution of the community becomes more obvious when one considers that only 10% of the staff—adults, teachers, and aides—are paid. Everyone else volunteers.

With support at the national level from the Kohanga Reo National Trust and following the establishment of a national early childhood education syllabus (*Te Whaariki*), the *Kohanga Reo* now receive state funding, but the principle of autonomy "remains a key feature" (May, 1999, p. 59). May argues that the movement

begun by the *Kohanga Reo* represents a shift for the Maori of Aotearoa/New Zealand that provides a "genuine educational alternative" and one that is "consistent with developments in international law concerning the educational rights of indigenous peoples" (p. 63). May includes extensive references that address many aspects of the Maori language movement and Maori bilingual and immersion programs.

Tangaere and McNaughton (1994) offer an interesting and illuminating study of a child participating in a *Kohanga Reo,* in which they follow the child's language development at home in an attempt to find generalization and to gauge the effectiveness of Indigenous language revitalization efforts. Their study includes a description of pedagogy and activities at the preschool as well as the preschooler's interactions in a home where English is still largely the language of communication. This study provides insight into the role and importance of the family in working with the preschool to share cultural as well as linguistic knowledge and the reciprocal learning that results.

Tangaere (1997) worked with the *Kohanga Reo* National Trust, and thus is able to provide a history of *Te Kohanga Reo* and a critical analysis of the role of the National Trust and the New Zealand Ministry of Education in the administration and funding of the immersion preschools. She writes honestly about the tensions created between existing state education policies and the policies of the Maori-controlled *Kohanga Reo.* A Maori pedagogy, based on principles that vary from those established by the dominant culture, created tensions most keenly felt where funding was concerned. Acceptance of state regulations and charters was necessary for recipients of state funding, but meant a further erosion of local, Indigenous control. This struggle is ongoing and requires cooperation by the government in adherence to principles signed in treaties with the Maori, as well as continual vigilance and involvement of the Maori people.

Resources are also available for those interested in *Te Whaariki,* or the national early childhood education curriculum of Aotearoa/New Zealand (for examples see Carr, 1993; Cullen, 1996; Guild, Lyons, & Whiley, 1998; Hamer, 1995). The guidelines "are designed to be humanly, nationally, culturally, developmentally and individually appropriate in their approach, reflecting both the multi-faceted nature of childhood and the diversity of our society" (Hamer, 1995, p. 2). The guidelines are not without their critics (Cullen, 1996): nevertheless they illustrate the potential of curricula to be developed at the national level that emphasize the importance of a social and cultural context that is inclusive and acknowledges the significance and role of both the dominant and the Indigenous cultures.

Guild et al. (1998) offer a succinct summary of the structure, goals, and principles of the curriculum available in the *Te Whaariki.* These stress the importance of involvement of both Native Maori principles and pedagogical understanding of early childhood education. Guild et al. argue that the curriculum is "inclusive—that is, it may be used in all early childhood centres, and is appropriate for all children" (p. 68). It may be relevant for other programs in that it is a curriculum guideline that provides "models for other ethnic groups who wish to support their cultural heritage within early childhood education" (p. 69).

Ritchie (1994) addresses the difficulties encountered by the Maori in the successful establishment not only of the preschool programs, but of language

revitalization in general. She focuses on the tremendous difficulties facing revitalization efforts when the language in the home is not Maori. The preschool faces the need to "ensure quality transmission of the language to young children" but to also "extend Maori language transmission from the *Kohanga Reo* children back to their families so that these homes also become Maori language domains" (p. 3).

Ritchie (1994) describes the development of the Maori Immersion Early Childhood Education Programme (MIECP) that prepares students to teach Maori immersion early childhood education: this to counter one difficulty facing most Indigenous language revitalization efforts, the lack of qualified teachers who are also proficient in the language. The program emphasizes Maori and western pedagogies as well as the development of Maori language fluency for future teachers. To maintain Maori control of the program and to prevent the usurpation of Native power by the dominant culture, Maori educators and experts in the field of Maori immersion education were involved closely with the development of the program.

This has implications for other programs and underscores the necessity for programs to encourage and foster creatively the development of the qualified teaching staff so often lacking in the Indigenous community. Ritchie (1994) illustrates the struggle to balance theory and practice from the dominant culture with traditional and cultural values of the Indigenous culture. The Maori seek to blend the

> best of overseas theory and research in the area of second language learning, whilst maintaining a high quality early childhood education programme, and, most importantly, reflecting Tino Rangatiratanga, Maori control of educational processes for Maori children and families which will contribute to the revitalisation of *te reo Maori*. (p. 8)

Punana Leo

Along with the Maori, the Hawaiians have one of the longest running and most successful Indigenous language preschool immersion programs. The first *Punana Leo* preschools were opened in 1984 and were modeled after the Maori *Kohanga Reo*. As with the *Kohanga Reo*, the *Punana Leo* preschools proved so successful that a kindergarten was started in 1987 to further the immersion project for graduating preschoolers and has been followed with the development of Hawaiian immersion at the primary, secondary, and even tertiary levels.

A variety of resources offer a history of the development of the Hawaiian language preschool program and Hawaiian immersion programs in general, including Benham and Heck (1998), McCarty and Watahomigie (1999), Schütz (1994), Slaughter (1996), Wilson (1999), Yamauchi and Ceppi (1998), and Yamauchi, Ceppi, and Lau-Smith (1999a, 1999b). Although credit is rightly given in these histories to the influence and assistance of the Maori *Kohanga Reo* that led to the creation of the *Punana Leo* in 1984, the growth of the Hawaiian immersion movement "is distinctly a grassroots effort that has touched a chord in the lives of the people" (Slaughter, 1996, p. 105). The activism of parents that has led to the establishment of immersion programs at the primary and secondary levels is evidence "of how parents can wield power in the politics of education" (Yamauchi et al., 1999b, p. 43).

Despite the numerous resources that focus on the Hawaiian immersion experience, we were a little surprised at how many deal almost exclusively with the experiences of K-12 education (Benham & Heck, 1998; Slaughter, 1996; Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter & Lai, 1994; Schütz, 1994; Yamauchi et al., 1999a, 1999b) and only peripherally mention the preschool program. In the section below, we look at a few of the resources that we found most helpful. Although some do focus on K-12, we believe that they have insights to share for preschool programs.

For a history of the subjugation of the Native Hawaiian language and the policies that effect cultural and educational policy in Hawaii, see Benham and Heck (1998). They describe the particular difficulties and barriers encountered by Native cultures that attempt to coexist without loss of identity with the majority culture. This history emphasizes the necessity of involvement by Native people in the design and implementation of the programs in order to integrate culture effectively with the language and to ensure Indigenous control (Henze & Davis, 1999; McCarty, 1993; Warner, 1999).

Kamana and Wilson (1997) provide a succinct overview and history of the Hawaiian language immersion programs. They spell out clearly the expected responsibilities of parents participating in the *Punana Leo* program, which include income-based tuition, monthly service hours, attendance at monthly governance meetings, and attendance at weekly language lessons (p. 154). Faced with a lack of funding and an inability to secure public funds as a result of the language of instruction—Hawaiian had been outlawed as a medium of instruction in 1893 (Sorenson, 1998)—these measures were first adopted simply to ensure survival of the program. More than survival, however, the shared involvement of staff and parents has become a key to the success of the *Punana Leo.*

Yamauchi and Ceppi (1998) review the history of Indigenous peoples and language policy and provide a valuable overview of the variations of language immersion programs found in communities today. This article outlines some of the difficulties facing the establishment of the Hawaiian immersion program in its first years and the challenges it continues to face, particularly the shortage of prepared materials and the lack of qualified language-proficient immersion teachers.

Few resources give voice to the immersion preschool teachers themselves, but Sorenson (1998) is an exception (see Yamauchi et al., 1999a, for K-12 teacher perspectives). Two *Punana Leo* teachers provide examples of classroom activities and articulate those aspects of classroom practice most valuable to them. By viewing the teachers' perspectives, readers gain insight into the values those teachers believe most necessary to impart to the children. The teachers define the goals of the program as both linguistic and cultural, "to have children leave at the end of the year with knowledge of their culture and the beginning stages of fluency in their language" (p. 37).

Slaughter (1996) also provides a history and overview of the Hawaiian language revitalization effort. Although the focus is on K-12, Slaughter touches on issues that are relevant to any Indigenous immersion program: the lack of Native speakers, most of whom are Elder members of the community; the lack of certified teachers, few of whom are Native speakers themselves; and the shortage of curriculum materials. She identifies "two overriding problems" facing the immersion programs in Hawai'i: a shortage of "teachers who are both trained in ... teaching

methods and sufficiently proficient in the Hawaiian language to teach in an immersion program" and "a constant need for more attractive, varied, and more complex curriculum materials translated into Hawaiian" (p. 117). To this last, Hawaiian, unlike many Indigenous languages, has the distinct advantage of having flourished for some time as a written language (throughout the last century) leaving behind a legacy of authentic language texts. Although teachers have been able to tap into these resources, the materials are linguistically and culturally dated and sometimes limited in their helpfulness.

The *Punana Leo* also have their own Web site at http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/. The Web site, with unfinished links, provides an excellent history of the founding and evolution of the preschool immersion program from 1983 to today, seeks to expand knowledge of the Hawaiian language through materials and information about learning Hawaiian as well as links to internet Hawaiian language broadcasts, states specifically an interest in fostering and encouraging other Indigenous communities to establish similar programs for their own languages, and includes contact information for those interested in the *Punana Leo* program. "Our organization assists Native Hawaiians and Indigenous peoples world wide who share our quest to maintain and develop traditional languages and cultures for life today" (Web site homepage).

The *Punana Leo* program in fact was extremely helpful and forthcoming when they learned of the potential for an immersion program on the Dakota reservation. They sent video, curriculum materials, and hosted a member of the Dakota community who visited the program in Hawai'i. Like the Maori, they see outreach to other Indigenous communities as a part of their mission.

Preschool Immersion Programs in the Contiguous 48 States

The only preschool immersion program in the contiguous 48 States about which we were able to find detailed information is the Arapaho immersion program described by Stephen Greymorning (1997, 1999).

The Arapaho program began as a pilot program in 1994, and now includes two preschool programs in the Ethete and Arapaho communities in Wyoming. Steven Greymorning, an Arapaho educator at the University of Montana, has been primarily responsible for setting up the programs, and has been closely involved in every aspect of program development from funding and staffing to curriculum development and teacher training.

Greymorning (1997) describes the long, slow struggle to design a program capable of producing fluent speakers of Arapaho. He emphasizes the particular importance of certain factors. One is the importance of extensive exposure to the language: Based on his observations of the Hawaiian programs, he estimates that 600-700 contact hours are needed for children to become fluent, a notion that he takes to mean having "the ability to independently use and manipulate speech forms," or more simply "the ability to use Arapaho to speak what was on their minds" (p. 27). As a result, he has sought to ensure that the school day in the Arapaho programs is at least six hours long.

Another key factor is the need for appropriate pedagogy. This includes the crucial component of excluding English completely from the classroom (something that the Arapaho teachers found it hard to enact) and the need for the teachers to

expose the children to all the richness and diversity of the Arapaho language, not merely the simple sentences of everyday classroom use. Along with this comes the need for teaching methods that will "systematically expose them to speech forms in a way that ... requires them to verbally respond to such speech acts by using a full array of speech forms" (p. 28). In other words, an appropriate immersion pedagogy should support rich language production as well as comprehension.

The concerns of pedagogy bring us to another point that Greymorning makes: the vital role of staffing and of teacher training. He writes frankly about the paradoxes involved, including the fact that the best speakers do not usually have training as teachers and the fact that Native-speaker teachers, though obviously better speakers of the language than those who have learned it as a second language, are sometimes not as sensitive to the needs of learners or as aware of the damaging effect of mixing English and Arapaho in the classroom.

Finally, a set of concerns that Greymorning (1999) mentions several times involves the relationship between the the preschool program and the community. This includes the importance of explaining the need for immersion education to the community. It also means at times the need to combat opposition actively in the community, for example, from those who believe that the language is sacred and "it should not be in cartoons, in books, or on computers" (p. 10). Finally, Greymorning mentions the importance of including the parental generation in the language efforts; inspired by the Maori philosophy of "language from the breast," the Arapaho Language Lodge has instituted a mother-child language program for the mothers of young children.

Greymorning's (1999) descriptions of the Arapaho program are helpful for others setting up Indigenous language programs. His work comprises an admirable blend of principled theory and practical detail, and his enthusiasm is tempered with an honest appraisal of the difficulties and conflicts involved. We especially recommend his work.

In addition to the Arapaho program, in our literature search we found references to other preschool immersion programs in the US and Canada, but despite lengthy library searches, Web searches, telephone calls, and e-mails, we were unable to find much concrete information about the makeup of these programs. We record the fact that these programs exist, first, to demonstrate that preschool immersion education has been attempted in a number of communities, and second, in the hope that someone connected with these programs will come forward and share experiences in a form accessible to communities around the country and the world.

The programs we heard about but were unable to investigate further included the following.

Cherokee. A brief report in *News From Indian Country* (Moore, 1996) mentions a Cherokee language program at Cherokee Elementary School in Cherokee, North Carolina, in which "preschool children are being taught the Cherokee language and will continue in this program until they graduate from high school." However, when we called the school we were told that Mr. Tom Belt,[2] the teacher, had left, and that there was at that time (summer 1999) no replacement.

Cree. Stiles (1997) reports on a Cree preschool immersion program in Quebec founded in 1988, described in more detail in Feurer (1993). Blair (1997) writes of a

"10% English and 90% Cree" nursery and kindergarten program due to start at Red Earth community in Saskatchewan in fall 1996.

Dene. Blair (1997) mentions a nursery and kindergarten Dene immersion program at Black Lake community in Saskatchewan.

Mohawk. Jan Hill, a Mohawk community member from Tyendinaga in Canada interviewed in February 1994, reports on "a full scale Mohawk immersion daycare program [that] was available to children from three to ten years of age, and operated for six weeks" in the preceding year (Freeman, Stairs, Corbiere, & Lazore, 1994, p. 60), part of a wide range of language preservation efforts in her community. Given other promising developments involving the Mohawk language (Jacobs, 1998; Stairs, 1999), we are curious to know how the programs at Tyendinaga have developed.

Navajo. McLean (1996) refers to a presentation at one of the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages conferences by Dorothy Denetsosie and Ellavina Perkins about a Navajo day care center in Flagstaff, Arizona. However, the description provided does not give any details of the center, either concerning use of the language there or whether the child care component was supported by any organized language or cultural curriculum.

Ojibwe. We heard rumors of an Ojibwe preschool or early childhood immersion program in northern Minnesota, and Evelyn Corbiere, an Ojibwe/Odawa educator and administrator from Wikwemikong in Ontario, reports that in her community, "a language immersion program is used in the daycare and nursery center for part of the time" and that "partial immersion programs are also utilized in the nursery and kindergarten" (Freeman et al., 1994, p. 57). However, we were unable to find more detailed information about these programs.

Pascua Yaqui. McLean (1996) also includes a brief mention of a report by Rosa Achondo on efforts at early childhood immersion programs in the Yaqui or Yoeme language (also Crawford, 1996) among the Pasqua Yaqui of southern Arizona. We have also heard by word of mouth about this program, which came to fruition at about the same time as the Dakota program at Pezihutazizi, but we have not been able to find any written description of it (see Trujillo, 1997, for a general description of the language situation of the Pascua Yaqui).

Tohono O'odham. The Tohono O'odham, formerly known as the Papago, have included early childhood education as part of broader plans to sustain and support their language. McLean (1996) summarizes a report by Phyllis Antone about the Tohono O'odham early childhood programs as part of the same session as the Navajo and Pascua Yaqui reports.

If any readers of this article can provide more information about the programs mentioned here, we urge you strongly to make that information accessible to others engaged in Indigenous preschool education.

Other Relevant Programs in North America

In addition to immersion programs at the preschool level, a number of programs were designed for slightly older children—typically K-2—which we felt were also relevant for us to investigate.

These programs are relevant because they involve the education of Indigenous children through Indigenous languages. However, they differ from the programs

mentioned above and from the Dakota program in two crucial respects. First, they are situated primarily in remote areas where the Indigenous population is typically in the majority, thus taking place in a different sociocultural and political context. Second, and more important from the point of view of language education, in many cases in the communities involved the Indigenous language is still a first language for parents and children. The purpose of immersion education, then, is not language revitalization but language maintenance.

Communities that have moved toward immersion models in early childhood education include some Yup'ik schools and school districts in Alaska (Hartley & Johnson, 1995; Lipka & Ilutsik, 1995, 1997); Cree and Dene communities in Saskatchewan (Blair, 1997); and the Cree of Quebec (Stiles, 1997).

It is interesting about language education in these communities that there has been a shift in recent years from bilingual to immersion models. A commonly expressed view (Holm & Holm, 1995) is that bilingual education has in many cases not fulfilled its promise for Indigenous communities, and that the erosion of the Indigenous languages has continued and in many cases has been exacerbated by the continual presence of English in the schools. Immersion education is seen as offering a more intensive engagement with the Indigenous language, and thus as being a more effective tool in the battle to stem the tide of English. Holm and Holm state outright that "only an intense immersion-type program has any hope of enabling students to acquire" the community language (p. 156). Hartley and Johnson (1995) describe a situation where an immersion model for the early grades was introduced to replace "submersion English" in an effort to overcome significant social problems in the village through "the maintenance and augmentation of the Yup'ik language" (p. 574). McCarty and Watahomigie (1999) stress the importance of "establishing secure boundaries around communication in the heritage language, protecting it from intrusions in English" (p. 8).

As well as among the Alaskan and Canadian communities mentioned above, this trend has been seen in the Navajo nation with the introduction of the immersion school at Fort Defiance Elementary School in Arizona (Holm & Holm, 1995; Nave, 1996) and the Mohawk immersion schools described by Jacobs (1998) and Stairs (1999). Finally, as in the above section, we found tantalizing references to other immersion programs that may or may not be in existence, including a Cherokee program in North Carolina (see above), a Choctaw program among the Mississippi Band of Choctaw (Kwatchka, 1999), schools in Inuktitut in the newly created Inuit province of Nunavut in Canada (Wolforth, 1998), and a Washiw program in Nevada (Fillmore, Jeanne, & Smokey, 1998).

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from these sources regarding preschool immersion education for Indigenous languages? The following themes run through many of the stories told here and seem particularly important to bear in mind:

1. More and more communities are embracing the immersion model as the most effective way to counteract language loss. Furthermore, more and more are also coming to appreciate the importance of early immersion in the heritage language. For this reason, it is our great hope that we will see a growing num-

ber of preschool immersion programs in Indigenous communities throughout the world.

2. In every case, we encountered mention of the crucial role played by the parents and the community. We cannot emphasize enough the important role that parents play in the development and maintenance of these preschool programs. In many cases it has been the parents who have insisted on the establishment of immersion programs for their children and who have fought to maintain those programs. Successful programs, whether or not begun by activist parents, have found it invaluable to involve parents in a variety of ways ranging from adult language classes and evening activities for families and preschoolers, to required volunteer hours for help with administrative tasks. And because the goals of these programs extend beyond the language development of the preschooler to the larger goal of the transmission and revitalization of culture and tradition, support must come not only from the preschool families, but the broader community as well. Community involvement in the form of financial, ideological, and logistical support is vital to program success.
3. At the same time, all programs report conflicts of one kind or another in the community, with other communities, and with educational authorities at various levels. It must be accepted that this is an inevitable part of the process of setting up and maintaining programs. A certain amount of energy and resources will need to be devoted to winning over opponents both inside and outside the community and to what Nicholson (1997) calls marketing the language and the program.
4. In any program of this kind, there is likely to be a certain dynamic tension between traditional ways of teaching and learning and practices from the outside. These may at times lead to conflict—this was certainly the case in the Dakota program and in the Arapaho programs described by Greymorning. Although such clashes of values are inevitable, we urge those involved on both sides to keep an open mind. In Hawai'i, for example, although many traditional modes of interacting with children are practiced, a popular model in teacher training has been that of critical pedagogy, an approach to education that has been brought in via predominantly White higher education. In this case, Indigenous and western practices are combining to provide the most effective education for the Hawaiian children.
5. The importance of maintaining a monolingual classroom for an immersion program emerges again and again in the accounts of programs. When Steven Greymorning visited a Maori immersion program, he was told that if he felt the need to talk at all, he should do so in Arapaho, not English, so intent were the Maori on keeping English out of the classroom. All the published accounts suggest that even draconian measures such as these may be necessary.
6. Another repeatedly encountered issue is the problem of finding or preparing teachers. Heimbecker (2000) examines two North American examples of Native teacher education programs trying to address this need (the Navajo in the US and the Nishabe Nation in Canada), but it remains safe to say that in virtually no community are there experienced and qualified preschool immer-

sion teachers sitting around waiting for an immersion program to start. In every case, teachers need to be both recruited and trained from among the Elders, and also among younger people who may not have native-like language skills, but may be quicker at mastering pedagogical practices that are likely to lead to successful language learning. We suggest first, that communities be prepared to invest time and energy in the teachers; and second, that serious thought be given to working with non-Native-speaking teachers (often younger tribal members), while acknowledging the crucial role that Elders have to play in keeping the language alive.

7. A continual problem expressed by those involved in programs is the need for materials in the Indigenous languages. We suggest that the ongoing production and adaptation of materials needs to be built into the structure of programs. Even at the preschool level written materials can provide important linguistic support for teachers as well as fostering emergent literacy for the children.
8. Last, we address research and the dissemination of information about programs. Smith (1999) makes a cogent and passionate plea for research that is grounded in the values and priorities of Indigenous communities and that is undertaken by those communities rather than being imposed by outside, usually White, researchers. We wholeheartedly endorse Smith's position. Furthermore, as is mentioned several times in this article, detailed information about practices and experiences in preschool immersion education is often extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. To a large extent this is a function both of the marginalized position of Indigenous communities across the world and their geographical separation from each other. We suggest, though, that all those involved in preschool programs in the Indigenous languages have a great deal to learn from each other and from experiences of what has worked and what has not. We appeal to everyone involved in such programs, and especially the directors, teachers, and community members most closely engaged in them, to share their work in whatever way possible. It has largely been a policy of divide and rule that has led to the subjugation of Indigenous peoples. We suggest that the best chance of reversing the insidious spread of English and the other majority languages of the world lies in the coming together of these peoples and communities.

Notes

[1]In surveying the literature, we have continually encountered reference to communities who are beginning to envisage some form of immersion education as part of their language preservation and revitalization efforts. Examples, chosen more or less at random, include White Mountain Apache in Arizona (Adley-SantaMaria, 1999), Gwich'in in the Northwest Territories in Canada (Dinjii Zhu', 1999), Kwak'wala in British Columbia (Anonby, 1999), and Sm'algyax, the language of the Tsimshian Nation of British Columbia (Rubin, 1999).
[2]Mr. Belt also gave a presentation at the Fifth Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference in 1998 (Belt, Mills, Lossiah, & Terrell, 1998).

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Appendix: Selected Web Sites Related to Indigenous Language Revitalization

The following Web sites offer a range of information concerning various aspects of work on indigenous languages, and include links to many other sites, including a great number devoted to specific languages, schools, and communities.

http://webpages.gse.upenn.edu/faculty/hornberger/proflink.html
This is part of the Web page of Professor Nancy Hornberger at the University of Pennsylvania. Under the heading "Indigenous Languages of the Americas," she provides a large number of links to sites of interest.

http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL.html
Information about the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conferences, proceedings from previous conferences and other related information. This site includes the texts of many of the articles referred to here.

http://sapir.ling.yale.edu/~elf/index.html
The home page of the Endangered Languages Fund.

http://www.sil.org/lla/
The Living Languages of the Americas page of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Contains information on languages and resources in a large number of indigenous American languages.

http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAlanguage.html
A set of resources in many indigenous languages.

http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/resources.html
The resources page of Terralingua, a nonprofit organization devoted to, among other things, linguistic diversity.

http://www.cal.org/db/immerse/
The Center for Applied Linguistic's database of immersion programs in K-12 schools in the U.S. Mostly concerns immersion programs in European languages, but there is some information about indigenous programs.

http://www.pitt.edu/~lmitten/natlang.html
A page of information about, and resources for, Native languages, maintained by Lisa Mitten, a librarian at the University of Pittsburgh.

http://ctspc05.cphk.hk/lapolla/el.html
A useful handout put together by Randy J. LaPolla of City University of Hong Kong which includes information about organizations, funds, and so forth worldwide concerned with the preservation and revitalization of endangered languages.

http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/
The homepage of the Aha *Punana Leo* includes history, language materials, links, and contact information for anyone interested in the preschool immersion program in Hawai'i.

http://ed-web2.educ.msu.edu/voice/
This is the *In our Mother's Voice* Web site. It includes a database of indigenous education programs and a variety of links to research, community programs, journals, and other educational programs and resources available on the Web.