

5 The Home-School-Community Interface in Language Revitalization in the USA and Canada

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This chapter emphasizes the significance of relationships for achieving language revitalization, academic success, and strong community and school partnerships. When relationships and partnerships are prioritized, education and language revitalization become focused on supporting communities for both linguistic/cultural continuity and academic achievement. K'é, a Diné term expressing the cultural relationships and dynamics with family and community, is an example of the cornerstone of many Indigenous people's values and cultural practices. Fostering relationships rooted in practices like k'é, can strengthen school-community connections. I share Indigenous language teachers' stories of their relationships with students to provide examples of the significance of k'é for strengthening schools and communities, for students' success in school, and for language revitalization. The teachers show that schools can forge a space for the holistic development and well-being of Indigenous children by attending to their academic achievement through Indigenous languages, knowledge systems, and values.

There is a Diné¹ term that is regarded with the utmost respect and value in Diné culture—*k'é*. *K'é* refers to family and relationships, but it connotes a deeper value for their importance in Diné culture. According to Kulago (2011), *k'é* is “the Diné term referring to the concept of family, compassion, cooperation, love, kinship, clanship, friendliness, kindness, unselfishness, peacefulness, thoughtfulness, and all positive virtues that constitute intense, diffuse, and enduring solidarity through respectful relations with nature and others” (p. xvi). In a sense, *k'é* is both a verb and a noun in that it signifies ways to conduct oneself in addition to its value when practiced. When Diné people meet one another, it is common to state your clans and where you are from before stating your name, in order to establish your relationship with the other person and to acknowledge your ancestors. At that point, your relationship with the person is often acknowledged

through kinship terms in the Diné language, such as *shímasaní* (my grandmother), *shítsilí* (my younger brother), or *shadí* (my older sister). This process is one way of expressing and practicing *k'é*.

I begin with this brief introduction into the significance of Diné kinship terms and relations as a way to initiate a discussion on natural connections schools can make with home- and community-based values and practices when engaging in Indigenous-language revitalization. Relationships are the cornerstone of many Indigenous cultural protocols and practices for supporting children's cultural identity across the United States and Canada (Cajete, 1994; Deloria and Wildcat, 2001; Mankiller, 2004). As Cajete remarked, "Relationship is the cornerstone of Tribal community; the nature and expression of community are the foundation of Tribal identity. It is through the community that Indian people come to understand the nature of their personhood and their connection to the communal soul of their people" (p. 165). His emphasis on community and relationships within those communities is the essence of *k'é*.

The introduction of colonial schooling in the late 19th century has disrupted relationships and community building for Native people. The Indigenous peoples of Canada and the United States share a similar history with the colonial schooling project. This project, aimed at achieving assimilation into Canadian and U.S. society through suppression of their Native languages, began with residential schools operated by Christian missionaries. The attempt at linguicide, "civilizing," and the negative impacts on Indigenous students by these schools in both Canada and the U.S. is well documented from historical times through present-day policies (Battiste, 2013; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; see also Hinton and Meek, and Skutnabb-Kangas et al., this volume).

However, despite these attempts and their colonial origins, schools for Indigenous peoples in Canada and the U.S. (and in many places around the world) are now, as Lopez explains, “the place and instrument to conquer the bastions of the hegemonic society ... but also ... the context and tool to recreate knowledge and local wisdom, to revitalize or even recover a vulnerable language” (2008, p. 60; see also López and García, this volume). Schools can forge a space for the holistic development and well-being of Indigenous children by attending to their academic achievement through Indigenous languages and knowledge systems. As demonstrated through recent research, schools that draw upon and are inclusive of home and community values, protocols, knowledge, and resources have shown the most success in language education and revitalization. In particular, this chapter will focus on the significance of *k'é* or relationships for achieving reciprocity, respect, responsibility, and success between home/community and school-based efforts in language revitalization. Academic achievement alongside language revitalization can be achieved through relationship building grounded in *k'é*. This chapter will highlight the important connections between community, school, academic success, and language revitalization through a foundation of relationships.

Community-School Partnerships and Academic Success

Kulago (2011) examined school and community partnerships to promote academic success for Diné students, investigating the effectiveness of these partnerships through the perspectives of Diné youth and how they define “community.” Kulago conducted her analysis and interpretation through a framework of *k'é* in an effort to return to “an authentic sense of who we are as Diné” (p. 130). The youth in her study shared various

perspectives of positive and negative images and ideas of community, yet overall, she found that the youth's definitions of community called for a return to *k'é*. Kulago asserts that community-school partnerships that are rooted in promoting *k'é* create a compassionate environment that aims to support the whole child and begin a healing process between schools and communities, given their negative histories and present-day distance from one another.

Alignment of community and school goals is important for students' academic success. Yet aligning the goals of Native American communities with schools is often difficult given many schools' historic and continuing assimilationist agenda, which contrasts with the culturally- and community-oriented goals of Native communities (Dozier-Enos, 2001). Kulago's work teaches us that employing and promoting *k'é* in schools may be the key to making relevant, positive, and beneficial connections and partnerships between schools and communities.

Similarly, Kushman and Barnhardt's study (2001) of educational reform efforts in seven Alaska communities found four key results involving the importance of relationships between schools and the communities they serve. They found trusting relationships between educators and community members were key for collaborating on and creating curriculum situated in the local context, language and culture. Active participation in the school by parents and shared leadership and decision-making between administrators and community members were significant for embedding ownership of reform efforts in the community. Finally, they found the value for education in rural Alaska is more than teaching academic skills and knowledge. Instead, it has a greater purpose for supporting communities.

Ball's (2004) work with the "Generative Curriculum Model," a component of the First Nations Partnerships Program with universities in Canada, is another example of partnerships that utilize community-based knowledge for creating relevancy and result in "successes in terms of student completion, community capacity, revitalization of intergenerational teaching and learning roles, and contributions to First Nations' social development goals" (p. 476). This curriculum model utilizes community knowledge and experiences in collaborative co-construction of curriculum with First Nations community members. The model is generative and inclusive, resulting in a curriculum that emerges through the consultation and connection to the university-based curriculum. Instructors help students make the connections across the community-centered and university-scripted curriculum.

Positive Community-School Relationships and Language Revitalization

In terms of Native language education and revitalization, research has shown that some of the most effective approaches connecting home, community, and school create and intersect culturally/community-based curriculum and pedagogy through the medium of the Native language. Similarly, language revitalization is most effective when done through culturally/community-based strategies and partnerships. For example, Graham (2005) investigated the development and implementation of a Cree and Ojibwe language program in a suburban Canadian school district in an effort to learn what facilitated intercultural understanding. Establishing the language program in a district with a growing Aboriginal population facilitated a productive, collaborative arrangement where the school district recognized, respected, and included community members as resources

and collaborators in the curriculum and pedagogic approach. As teachers, administrators, and community members worked to create the language program, they strengthened relationships based on reciprocity and respect, and drew upon the knowledge systems and cultural protocols to inform language educational practices.

There are many examples of the significance of community-school relationships for language education, particularly among language immersion schools. In a seven-year critical ethnographic study at Ojibwe schools, Hermes (2007) found that Indigenous language immersion approaches provide the means for creating fluent Native language speakers who are also academically successful. Language immersion teaches culture and academic content areas through the language, making their association more naturally integrated. Language immersion methods require knowledge of the cultural community and necessitate relationship building between schools and communities. Many other scholars have made similar conclusions with regard to the connections between language immersion, academic success, and cultural continuity in Native communities (Arviso and Holm, 2001; Peter, 2007; Sims, 2006; White, 2009; Wilson, 2014; Wong, 2011). In particular, Arviso and Holm (2001) demonstrated the significance of these relationships for academic success and language revitalization at a Diné language immersion school. Students who entered the school with primarily monolingual English skills or very limited Diné language skills showed tremendous growth in their understanding and use of Diné. Additionally, these students also performed on par or exceeded the achievement levels in English-based tests on reading, writing and math as their peers in nearby English-based schools. Teachers recognized a stronger presence and expression of Diné

cultural identity among their students, which they attributed to the language rich environment of the school.

In another example, Wilson (2014) and Wong (2011) shared how the success of the Hawaiian language movement began with parent-led Pūnana Leo preschools followed by Hawaiian-medium programs in public schools and eventually total Hawaiian language immersion schools and Ph.D. programs in and through Hawaiian. This movement was possible because of the community support and involvement that has directed and coordinated with school-based systems to create a collaborative model built on community and school relationships.

One of the key components to the success of these programs was their use of culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy (CSRP) (McCarty and Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris and Alim, 2014). McCarty and Lee (2014) assert that CSRP is defined by three characteristics of schooling: educational self-determination, revitalization of Indigenous languages and knowledge systems, and community-based accountability. Through the case-study examination of two schools, McCarty and Lee demonstrate that when schools employ CSRP, they are creating an atmosphere of respect, inclusion, and accountability to community through shared decision-making. The schools highlighted expressed educational self-determination through community-defined goals rooted in strengthening cultural identity, language revival, and community values alongside students' demonstration of academic success as measured by state tests and other school-based reports.

Counter-effects When Community-School Relationships Are Absent

In contrast to the studies described above, a great deal of research has also shown that when schools neglect or exclude Native student or community voice, involvement, and participation, the misalignment of the relevancy of the education to students' lives fosters students' indifference toward their education and even hostile environments for students, often resulting in their under-achievement. For example, in a study in an urban public school in the southwest, Martinez (2010) investigated the experiences of high school-age Native youth through an analysis of power operations in curriculum, extracurricular activities and daily interactions. One of her major findings related to how the youth's lived experiences and culturally based knowledge were often not validated or were "discounted" as knowledge by the school system. Youth felt disenfranchised, but not disempowered, and resisted and challenged those school-based acts that confronted their sense of identity and worth.

Similarly, Quijada-Cerecer (2013) examined the experiences of Native youth who attended a public high school adjacent to their home reservation or Native Nation's boundaries. She asserted the Native youth disclosed "how staff, teachers, and students dismissed their Indigenous knowledge through (a) the way(s) in which relationships are formed and sustained and (b) school policies and rules specifically related to order and discipline" (p. 593). Relationships between the Native youth in her study and the teachers they described often reflected one of teachers' inattention, neglect, and uncaring attitudes and the racialization of the students' identities as Native youth. Quijada-Cerecer explained that this treatment by teachers was one way for teachers to maintain order and to allow them to fail as opposed to legitimizing them as learners.

These examples of the negative relationships in school between youth and adults that counter their identities as Native youth highlight the significance of creating positive interactions and relationships for youth in order to support their heritage, their language, and their intellectual growth. The home-school-community interface in language education is crucial for effective language maintenance and revitalization, and for building commitment to language learning, language use, and transmission to younger generations. This interface not only draws on community resources and knowledge, it embodies *k'é* – the deep caring and healing process rooted in kinship, family, compassion, respect, and cooperation. The next section shares research findings from current initiatives and praxis that demonstrate the importance of relationships based on *k'é* between teachers and students for the purpose of language education and revitalization.

***K'é* in Home-School-Community Relationships—Examples from the U.S. Southwest**

The data for this section derive from two recent studies undertaken with Native American communities and schools in the Southwestern U.S. Between 2008 and 2010, the Indigenous Education Study Group (IESG), of which I was a part, conducted a statewide New Mexico study to examine “best” educational practices from the perspective of Native students, their Native and non-Native teachers, and Native parents and community members. We conducted focus groups and interviews with over 200 participants in 13 schools and communities where Native students made up a significant percent of the school population (25-99 percent) (Jojola et. al., 2011)

In this section I also draw from a smaller study of Diné and Lakota language teachers and learners at a summer language immersion camp. I conducted interviews

with the teachers on their philosophies, curriculum, and pedagogy as they related to language immersion methods. There were two Diné language teachers and two Lakota language teachers (McCarty and Lee, 2014). The analysis here utilizes both studies to explore teacher and student interactions and perspectives that illuminate the critical value of relationships and *k'é* in language education and for creating meaningful home-school-community connections.

Many scholars have written about the importance of caring teachers for creating a supportive and intellectually inviting environment for youth (Eslinger, 2014; Noddings, 2005; Rabin and Smith, 2013). Students who experience caring teachers benefit academically, particularly if those teachers draw upon the students' home-based experiences and knowledge, or "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti, 2005).

The distinction I make here is that caring relationships between teachers and Native youth is deepened when it embodies the characteristics of *k'é*. The relationships become intricately connected to supporting cultural identity, community building, self-determination, and expressions of cultural sovereignty, meaning expressions rooted in ancestral (and pre-colonial) understandings of our selves and our culture. The relationships that the Native teachers in this study expressed and desired to have with their students were based on cultural protocols, such as their clanship system, and value for respect and kindness in their interactions with one another. The teachers also shared their goals to inspire their students to become change agents for their communities, expressing a *k'é* characteristic of community and kinship.

For example, in learning how to become a teacher, Sara (Pueblo)² shared that she sought the advice of her mother who was a long-time child-care provider. Her mother's advice focused on the relationship Sara needed to establish with her students. Sara said, My mom said, and something that I've been doing, she said, "You gotta be very conscious of how you're talking to the students. If you talk to your students with hostility, they're gonna shoot hostility right back at you. If you're gonna be angry, if you're gonna be frustrated, they're gonna reflect what you're – how you're talking to them. But if you talk to them with caring and love, even," she was like, "you have to check yourself sometimes because we're all human, we all get frustrated, we all get angry. You have to be very patient." (interview, April 16, 2008)

The advice from Sara's mother was rooted in building caring and loving relationships with students through positive oral communication skills, while recognizing students and teachers are human who need understanding and patience. The important association to language revitalization in Sara's statement is that the way in which language is expressed and communicated influences the relationship between teachers and students. Native language courses and revitalization efforts can benefit from embodying these values and ways of interacting and caring for students.

Another teacher, Darren (Lakota), discussed his method for creating a caring environment among his students in and outside of the classroom. He explained he was not only their teacher, but that he wanted them to view him as an uncle. He also wanted for them to treat each other as family and to carry that sense of family outside the classroom in their relations with classmates because it was their responsibility. He said,

It was hard for them to kinda think of like, “Dang, I have an uncle here,” or something like that, you know? But then like that, I said, “You guys are family as well in this class. You guys are gonna treat each other - you guys are gonna care for each other. Also, what you learn in here, you're gonna take it out into the [school] community and also you're gonna take it to your families.” I was like, “I want you – if somebody is being hurt, if somebody is being called names, I want you guys to stand up for them because that's your responsibility.” We talked a lot about responsibility in a society, to care for each other, and ... then we got into all the virtues that we have, you know, respect, wisdom, sacrifice, generosity.

(interview, April 16, 2008)

Darren’s goal was to establish relationships between and among his students as one based on values held in common by many Indigenous communities. It was rooted in *k'é* in that his goal was for students to develop family-like relationships based on their responsibility as community members and their value and respect for their community. Darren explained that these attributes and values for community are significantly embedded in the way in which students would use Lakota language as well, which is an important connection for language revitalization efforts.

Embodying and practicing *k'é* in school settings is not limited to Native teachers. Non-Native teachers who work with Native students have learned and utilized *k'é* in their interactions with their students, and it has strengthened those relationships. One teacher, Mark, in a school with a majority of Diné students talked about his relationship building and promotion of cultural understanding in a way that was representative of the qualities

of *k'é*. In his quote below, I note in parentheses the characteristics of *k'é* that connect with his comments. He said,

You have to want to get to know about culture, cultural differences, and you have to promote that and not just within your classroom. A lot of problems stem from lack of knowledge on both sides. ...I would boil it down to being a caring professional is what can help you the most (*love, kinship, compassion*).... I always like to interject geography into any lesson that I do, because the land makes the people. Everyone is tied to land (*land, community*)....One of the first challenges I run into every year is when the parents find out who is teaching Navajo history and government. What's a white guy doing teaching this? They usually open up by mid-year because they understand that I'm coming from an academic perspective, rather than acting like I know everything, which I don't and I never proclaim to be (*humility*). And I don't teach culture per se, but I do teach a lot about cultural history, which is very important in the classroom (*respect and responsibility*)... Each year I take my Navajo history class to Canyon de Chelly and take them to Window Rock for the tribal council meeting, and both those field trips have a profound impact on the students. If I could throw in a field trip that were culturally relevant, going to the Dinétah area... would be fantastic (*community validation*) (interview, January 30, 2009)

Canyon de Chelly, Window Rock, and Dinétah are significant sites in Diné history, sacred stories, and contemporary governance. Mark's involvement with his students, learning about their history and culture, his respectful disposition, and his caring stance toward his students emulate a relationship grounded in *k'é*. Knowing the culture and

teaching cultural history are central features for language revitalization efforts, where the language is taught through its historical, cultural, and social context. Students I interviewed at this same school talked about Mark with considerable respect and complimented him on his efforts to become involved in the community outside of school, such as by attending the local community fair and community meetings. Several of the students commented on the admiration they had for Mark's integrity in teaching Diné history, while realizing the obstacles he confronted as a non- Diné teacher. One student said, "I think he goes out of his way to understand it more. Even though he's discouraged to teach it because he's not Navajo, he still pursues it."

Teachers practiced *k'é* in their goals for their students, which were often oriented around working toward social justice and transforming their communities in positive ways, including language revitalization. They wanted to raise the critical consciousness of their students about the social and economic conditions in their home communities and provide them with an education that will positively contribute, which is a facet of practicing *k'é*. Lawrence (Pueblo) discussed it this way, "I base my class and my curriculum based on my experiences and the things that I see in my community and other Native communities... like the health problems, alcoholism, drugs, and I try to help tell the students it's there and you know some of the kids are around that all the time when they go home or even around (town), and I try to give 'em solutions or help them develop tools in order to realize the situation and actually give 'em the tools to change their communities" (interview, April 16, 2008)

K'é is also practiced by teachers when they need to discipline. Rebecca, a Diné teacher and school administrator, discussed the effectiveness of using familial and clan

relationships for reaching students who misbehave. The students acknowledge and respect this deeper relationship they have with school staff based on *k'é* and change their behavior. Rebecca said, “Being able to use, like clan systems and kinship rules. I can use that with the children, especially I think of it in an administrative role, when disciplining students. I have a lot of parents come in and they’ll say, ‘Oh, do you realize she’s your auntie?’ And after that I don’t have problems very much with students again... I do bring up a lot of like, ‘Would you have done this to grandmother? Would you have said what you said to your grandma?’ and many of them will shut up right then. They won’t say nothing. They’ll actually have respect at that point” (interview, January 30, 2009).

In this next section, I focus on how the practice of *k'é* by teachers fosters effective language education and revitalization and strengthens the bond with students. Practicing *k'é* in language courses and programs creates a culturally relevant way to connect home, school, and community for the purpose of Native language learning.

***K'é* and Language Revitalization**

Native language education is more than simply learning the mechanics of understanding and speaking the language. For Native youth, it is tied to their cultural identity and sense of connectedness to their heritage and community (Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2014). Many teachers understand the significance of integrating home and community values and knowledge for language education, and many utilize *k'é* to create relationships with their students that are rooted in those community practices and values.

The teachers' practice of *k'é* creates a compassionate and caring environment. It fosters a sense of solidarity between teachers and youth that extends beyond content knowledge and academic performance, particularly in language courses. Henrietta, a Diné language teacher, utilizes Diné spiritual beliefs to connect to her students' learning abilities. Her words to her students in this regard come from her lived experience as a Diné woman and mother, and she activates *k'é* in the classroom to help her students learn the importance of their appearance and their behavior as it relates to showing respect and being ready to learn. In sharing her message to her students who wear black t-shirts, she said,

I said, 'in Navajo philosophy, if you look at the colors, black indicates death. And when you come in already from your home, you get up in darkness, you go through the whole day in darkness... You know, you go through darkness and you end up there again.' I said, 'There's a Navajo saying,' I said, '*t'óó bittl'éé'* - that person is *t'óó bittl'éé'* meaning he or she is always in darkness, and that's the way you're modeling that color now,' I said. (interview, January 29, 2009)

While her words may sound scolding in nature, this teacher's relationship with her students was similar to one of a mother to her children. The students understood her as coming from a place of care, respect, responsibility, and kinship – *k'é* – and they responded to it in a positive way. For example, the teacher shared how students would come to school with different clothes just for her class, and how they smiled, and joked with her as a result of her bond with them. She often took them to language fairs and contests, and the trophies they earned were proudly displayed throughout the classroom.

She remarked that the awards the students win provide her with a means for self-assessment of her teaching.

Another Diné language teacher shared how the ideal language classroom would be one that teaches and utilizes cultural protocols. Similar to Henrietta, Sharon felt students need to be mentally, physically, and spiritually prepared to learn their language. She attributed this to a connection to community practices and values. When discussing how a language program might begin, Sharon said,

starting the program a little earlier, maybe starting a prayer or making the kids run, just to get them into the groove of things, and also us, as well, and just having a circle of prayer, maybe before, like on the field, and have them run and — always to the East (interview, July 3, 2008)

The practice of rising early, saying a prayer, and running East is a Diné-centered practice common in many daily activities and ceremonies and signifies the practice of *k'é*. Sharon also felt Native students should interact with elders for language learning to promote learning the language through natural, home-like contexts. She put this into practice by having her students participate in “situational Navajo” (Holm, Silentman, and Wallace, 2003), a form of role-playing using everyday situations and contexts for speaking the language. She described one situation she has her students role-play and thereby learn the culturally appropriate way of interacting with visitors to your home. She said they learn,

the etiquette of when someone comes to visit you, how you tell them come in, *wóshdéeé'*, and they shake your hands, and you also address them by who they are

to you. If it's an aunt, uncle, grandma, grandpa, then you always ask them to have a seat and offer them a drink and something to eat. (interview, July 3, 2008)

Again, this context is rooted in practicing *k'é* and helps students learn their Native language through a culturally relevant and appropriate method that contributes to cultural continuity.

The teachers' practice of *k'é* stimulates community-based language learning. The home-school-community interface plays out well with a community-based approach. Teachers in this study created experiential opportunities for students to learn their language in community settings or by creating community contexts within their classrooms, while maintaining an emphasis on *k'é* throughout the learning experience

Darren implemented this type of experiential language learning through the set-up of a tipi during the language immersion camp. The Lakota language teachers in the camp took their students to one teacher's home, and through the Lakota language, followed by English translation, had students set up a tipi and discussed the significance of the tipi in Lakota culture. Darren said,

We went in, put up the tipi and tried to stay in the language the whole time, and kind of the incentive of that particular activity was to look at gender differences within traditions historically, and also to learn languages not associated with classroom, necessarily... so they can hear kind of some of the subtleties, and also, just to kinda look at socially, and get a glimpse of it because we did some reflection about tipis and what they mean, you know? And what they mean within Lakota culture, who puts them up. The women put them up and carry them. They're the caretakers of the home and what it is, how many people live in there,

typically. Is there other designs on there, and if so, where and how those designs get put on there, and also we had the chance to cover a little bit about stereotypes and misconceptions. (interview, July 7, 2008))

While the students learn and practice Lakota language through the process of setting up a tipi, the cultural significance and value of the tipi in Lakota culture are also reinforced. This is an example of practicing *k'é* in the emphasis placed on gender roles, the home, and the traditions associated with the tipi. The language camp included other experiential activities for the students such as a sweathouse experience, sports activities, cooking, and a family meal, all conducted in the Native languages through an immersion approach (for more on immersion, see Hinton and Meek, this volume).

The teachers recognized the effectiveness of drawing upon community resources, knowledge, and *k'é* in language education that they recommended it for everyday practices in the school. Henrietta suggested the school connect more with the community by having parent-teacher conferences in the local community centers, known as chapter houses, rather than asking parents to always come to the school. She said, “The school needs to reach out to the parents and send the staff on a rotating basis to each chapter so that the staff will know the parents, too, then the community and, you know, work with them that way.” She also suggested that the school work with the local community leadership to address problems that affect both the school and community, such as gang activity. She acknowledged the importance of a strong community and school relationship for the benefit of the students.

Challenges in Practicing *K'é* for Language Revitalization

One of the biggest challenges in connecting home, community, and school through the practice of *k'é* for the purpose of Indigenous language education and revitalization is the compartmentalization, isolation and separation of language courses and programs from school-based priorities and emphases. Often schools offer Native language courses as electives and teachers are not treated equitably (Suina, 2004). This is particularly prevalent given the heavy emphasis on English-based standardized tests in the content areas of English reading, writing, and math (McCarty, 2013). Students recognize the separation of language education from their “academic” education in English, math, history, and other content areas. This compartmentalization and displacement of Indigenous-language education coerces students to choose between their heritage language and home/community values and “academics.”

Compounding the problem, the displacement of Native languages in school positions Indigenous languages in the past, associated with “tradition” and excluded from the progress of present day society (Hermes, 2007). Indigenous languages, traditions, and cultures are then often referred to as a separate “world” from the English-based dominant society. This false dichotomy of living in “two worlds” makes it difficult for Indigenous language revitalization to find an equitable place in schools and for these language programs to be effective. As Wilson (2014) acknowledged, “In order to succeed, language revitalization must overcome the two worlds philosophy’s placing of Indigenous languages and cultures solely in the past” (p. 191). Similarly, Wyman, McCarty, and Nicholas (2014) assert that Indigenous languages have to be viewed as integral to the present-day evolution of our society and as interconnected to the language practices of dominant non-Native languages as demonstrated in Indigenous youth

communicative repertoires. In response to this assertion, Garcia reflected, “In the 21st century, we can no longer hold the static views of American Indigenous languages as autonomous languages completely separate from English or Spanish or other languages” (p. 209).

A second challenge has to do with the consistent effort and motivation it takes on the part of Indigenous communities to sustain language revitalization efforts over time. In an overview of the efforts in Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico, Romero-Little and Blum-Martinez (2012) shared a summary of the over 20-year history of community-wide language renewal efforts to bring the Cochiti Keres language back to its children. Recent efforts have declined to a few select programs and individuals, and thus there is a need to re-energize and re-engage the community – to re-stimulate critical language consciousness and awareness (Lee, 2014) and collective communal involvement. This situation is representative of a challenge for all Native communities with regard to the sustainability of language revitalization efforts.

The significant language shift across North America raises the immediate, timely nature of communal responses. Of 169 Native languages still spoken in the United States, only one in ten young people age five to 17 reported speaking one of these languages (Siebens and Julian, 2011). Of 60 Native languages spoken in Canada, most children age five to 14 predominantly speak a language other than their heritage language at home (Langlois and Turner, 2012). Thus the challenge for sustainable language revitalization efforts becomes multifaceted and complex, with these layers of factors compounding those efforts.

Future Directions For Practicing *K'é* for Language Revitalization

We have learned from Hermes (2007) that culturally based and relevant curriculum, which draws on home and community knowledge and *k'é*, can best be approached when integrated into academic curriculum. Language immersion methods provide the means for integrating and achieving academic and cultural success. There are good examples of this approach, and I will highlight two, which can serve as models for future directions of practicing *k'é* for the purpose of language revitalization.

The first example, the Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC) in northern New Mexico, illustrates the re-engagement and re-energizing of the community as discussed by Romero-Little and Blum-Martinez (2012). Keres is the Indigenous language of seven Pueblo communities in New Mexico, including Cochiti, where KCLC is located. In 2012, KCLC opened as Keres language immersion program integrated with Montessori teaching philosophy and methods for children ages three to five. The school's approach is described as a "Montessori school that uses the Cochiti Keres language for daily instruction across all areas of learning, with the goal of educating the whole Pueblo child using the Keres language as the medium of instruction" (KCLC, 2012). Being a community with strong oral language traditions, orality is emphasized through totally oral-based methods integrated with the Montessori emphasis on educating the "whole child" in a designed environment in which children's interests guide their growth at their own pace. Combined with Cochiti language immersion, this method is intended to ensure that children will "participate in culturally relevant, age-appropriate activities every day that will build their Keres vocabulary, Cochiti identity, self-discipline, and

sense of community, assisting them in developing a Pueblo worldview” (KCLC, 2012).

This description is the practice of *k'é* in the Cochiti Pueblo context.

The second example is the well-documented and successful effort at Tséhootsooí Diné Bi'ólta (The Navajo School at the Meadow Between the Rocks, hereafter TDB), located on the Navajo Nation's eastern border in Fort Defiance, Arizona. With more than two decades of applied research on the program, TDB has shown success in producing academically prepared Diné speakers among formerly English-dominant Diné children through Diné-language immersion and a rich Diné language learning environment (Arviso & Holm, 2001). Starting with two kindergarten classes attended by children with only passive knowledge of Diné language, the program has expanded to a K-8 total immersion school that gradually adds English-language instruction as the students progress into higher grades. Former school leaders Florian Johnson and Jennifer Legatz state that, “TDB is a unique school instructing Diné [Navajo] students who speak mostly English using the Diné language to gain proficiency in thinking, speaking, reading, and writing in the Diné language as a heritage language” (2006, p. 27). TDB stands as an exemplar in producing Native American students who perform on par with their peers in English-only schools in English reading, and at higher levels in mathematics, while becoming bilingual and biliterate in their heritage language (Arviso & Holm, 2001). The success of TDB is also attributed to the parents and community who support the school over time and who provide valuable community-based resources to the school. Both programs are good example of future directions in that it demonstrates how educational control is key to creating an environment rich in language and cultural protocol, while integrating academic content.

Conclusion

Indigenous peoples have experienced the disruption to intergenerational language transmission for decades, and across North America they are turning to schools to help reverse language shift, strengthen cultural identity, and improve the overall well being of their children. As illustrated by the examples in this chapter, schools cannot work in isolation. Partnerships with families and communities are essential for grounding language education in particular in the cultural worldview and practices of each Native community.

When schools and communities develop a reciprocal relationship based on collaboration, respect, and shared decision-making, the practice of *k'é* becomes more tangible and more readily realized. Additionally, the practice of *k'é* in schools fosters both language revitalization and academic achievement. When academic content is taught through the Native language such as through an immersion approach, the school environment becomes inclusive of cultural values, knowledge systems, and community-oriented goals that are embedded in the language and more naturally integrated into the academic content areas.

Continued research on school-home-community partnerships in Indigenous educational contexts is greatly needed, particularly in this era of test-driven educational accountability. More importantly, however, is the accountability that schools and communities have to Indigenous children. For the security and continuity of Indigenous lands, languages, cultures, epistemologies, families, and resources, language

revitalization grounded in *k'é* represents a solid and promising foundation for ensuring our future.

Notes

¹ Diné is equivalent to Navajo. However, Diné is the original self-referential name and is translated to mean “the People.” I use the term Diné unless I refer to the formal sovereign tribal government of the Navajo Nation, which is the official name.

² All participant names are pseudonyms. I also identify participants’ Native heritage by naming their tribal affiliation. However, among the Pueblo participants, I do not list their specific Pueblo community’s name due to the small size of many of these communities and to add further protect participants’ identities.

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