Creating a Language Learning Environment: Salt River...Pima-Maricopa Indain Community...Language Program

Jeffrey P Shepherd, University of Texas at El Paso

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jeffrey_shepherd/4/
One Voice, Many Voices — Recreating Indigenous Language Communities

Edited by

Teresa L. McCarty
Arizona State University

Ofelia Zepeda
University of Arizona

With

Victor H. Begay
Stephanie Charging Eagle
Sarah C. Moore
Larisa Warhol
Tracy M. K. Williams

2006 ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR INDIAN EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA AMERICAN INDIAN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
Tempe and Tucson, Arizona
One Voice, Many Voices — Recreating Indigenous Language Communities is a compilation of papers first presented at the Sixth Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference (SILC) hosted by the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) at the University of Arizona, Tucson, June 3-5, 1999.

SILC 1999 Planning Committee:
Karen Finaces Begay
Lawrence Berlin
Christian Cain
Maria A. Lopez
Joseph Martin
Teresa L. McCarty
Reza Molana
Luz A. Munlo
Tracy Smiles
Lucille J. Watahonomie
Tracy M.K. Williams
Akira Y. Yamaeoto
Alfred Yazzie
Ofelia Zepeda

1999 AILDI Faculty:
J. David Bates, University of Arizona
Mary Carol Combs, University of Arizona
Ken Hale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Teresa L. McCarty, Arizona State University (University of Arizona)
Sheelah Nicholas, University of Arizona
Errey Sekaquapwe, University of Arizona
Lucille J. Watahonomie, Hualapai Tribe (Peach Springs School District No. 8)
Mary Willie, University of Arizona
Akira Y. Yamaeoto, University of Kansas
Ofelia Zepeda, University of Arizona

Cover Art by Diego L. Romero

Copyright © by the Center for Indian Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

Additional copies can be obtained from the Center for Indian Education, Arizona State University, PO Box 871311, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Foreman Building Rm. 402, Tempe, Arizona, 85287-1311. Phone 480-965-6299. Reprinting and copying on a nonprofit basis is hereby granted with proper identification of the source.

Dedication
To the memory of Ken Hale – gifted linguist, lifetime language learner, language advocate, teacher, colleague, and friend – whose life work enabled the recreation of Indigenous language communities;

To the participants of the American Indian Language Development Institute, who are on the front line of indigenous language reclamation every day;

And to the Indigenous language teachers and advocates who have come before us – ‘Ahwaxt – S-ape’ 0.
– Thank you.
# Contents

Dedication iii
Foreword ix

Editors' Introduction xv
Recreating Indigenous Language Communities—Possibilities for a New Century Teresa L. McCarty and Ofelia Zepeda

1999 SILC Keynote Address 1
The “Goodness” of Bilingual Education for Native American Children Wayne Halin

Part I: Language Program Planning: A World of Ideas and Approaches 47

1 Using Oneida Language: Conscious Speaking Tracy Maria Kowichoki Williams 49

2 Creating a Language Learning Environment: Salt River Elementary School, Mr. Harris’s 1998-1999 Fifth Grade Class, and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community O'odham-Piipaash Language Program Gary Coven, Jr. and Jeff P. Shepherd 59

3 Wananga Reo—Maori Language Camps for Adults Jeannine King 73

4 Community-Based Immersion Programming: Establishing a Dakota Language Preschool at Pezihitazizi Asgein Wilson and Bill Johnston 87

5 Revitalizing Indigenous Languages: Program Development Anne Goodfellow 113
Part II: Language Documentation

10 The Dakota-English Dictionary Project: A Minnesota Collaborative Effort
Chris Mele Nampa
203

11 Preservation Strategies: A Translation Paradigm
Susan Penfield and Amelia Flores
219

12 New Technologies for Talking — Lifeline or Noise?
Nicholas Ostler
235

Part III: Research Foundations for Language Planning and Programs

13 Indigenous Language Education and Second Language Acquisition (SLAT): Are They Compatible?
Lawrence N. Berlin
251

14 What Motivates Indigenous Language Learners?
Ruth S. Bennett
275

Part IV: Assessing and Credentialing Native-Speaking Professionals

17 Assessment of Candidates for Aboriginal Language/English Bilingual Jobs
Barbara Burnaby
369

18 The Dena'aelage Career Ladder Program: The University of Alaska's Role in Language Revitalization
Patrick E. Murie
395

Part V: Indigenous Language Planning Contexts and Issues: Constraints and Possibilities in Cross-Cultural Perspective

19 Revitalization of Kumiyaay in Tecate, Baja California: Four Scenarios
Paula L. Meyer
409

20 Fieldnotes from the Edge
Melissa Axelrod and Julie Gómez de Garcia
431

21 Land Security and Maintenance in the Central American Garifuna Nation
Genovea Langaordering
455

22 Historical Maintenance (and Fregility) of Basque as an Indigenous Language and the Pressures of the Spanish-Speaking World (1863-1936)
Xabier Erite
473

23 Strengthening Strategies for Funding Opportunities
Richard Lafontaine
495
Foreword

In fall 2000, Arizona's three public universities—Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and University of Arizona—united together and embarked on a truly groundbreaking journey. Upon the recommendation of Arizona tribal communities, American Indian staff and faculty members formally organized the Arizona Tri-Universities for Indian Education (ATUIE). This university-based consortium, working simultaneously in various related and significant arenas, is the first and only consortium in the country dedicated to improving the condition of American Indian students in higher education. Currently its membership also includes two tribal colleges in Arizona, Tohono O'odham Community College and Dine College.

Supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, ATUIE coordinated multiple information-gathering activities in an effort to bridge American Indian communities and institutions of higher education in Arizona. These activities were facilitated by the Center for Indian Education at Arizona State University. The information and insights provided by the tribal community participants are currently being used to inform improvement efforts within Arizona higher education.

Four prominent themes were identified during the information gathering process. In later discussions and
deliberations, these themes were not only found to be universal among Arizona tribes, but also uniquely interconnected within each tribe's own social and institutional context. These themes were:

- Restoring and promoting self-sufficiency and balance in tribal communities,
- Recognizing of language and culture in the community,
- Infrastructure and communication, and
- Rural and urban education.

The need to revitalize tribal language and culture was not only one of the primary themes elicited from the information gathering sessions; it proved to be a fundamental and core issue that was associated with the current and future integrity of the American Indian communities themselves. The loss of Indigenous languages and cultures is at a critical point and must be stopped in order to maintain vital cultural perspectives and tribal identity. Many participants in the ATUIE process asserted that there is neither basis nor context for cultural practices or language without tribal identity. Tribal communities find that the integration of language and culture, in a contemporary context, will be usable, valuable, and beneficial to American Indian students. To this end, participants overwhelmingly voiced the need for elders' involvement in these efforts. Elders are the holders of language, worldview, and cultural perspective. Willing to share and teach, they are vital to the revitalization of language and culture.

Based on these insights, the ATUIE drafted strategic directions for stakeholder tribes and higher education institutions derived from the issues, concerns, and recommendations expressed by participants at statewide conferences and regional focus groups and meetings.

These strategies require the cooperation and commitment of all stakeholders including tribal governments, faculty and administrators of institutions of higher education, private industry, civil society, and state legislators and administrators.

These strategic directions include:

- Create clearinghouses and research centers at institutions of higher education to support tribal community language and cultural preservation planning.

- Establish intern and externships for American Indian students to support revitalization and utility of their education in their home communities.

- Strengthen collaborations with tribal colleges through joint degree programming, community-based training opportunities, and research-related activities.

- Develop effective partnerships between community colleges and universities that are closely aligned with needs and aspirations of Native communities.

- Develop K-12 partnerships with institutions of higher education for school improvement.

Given the priority status of preserving tribal cultures and the revitalizing of tribal languages among Arizona tribes, the strategic directions are aimed at creating partnerships with linguistics, anthropology, and education departments in Arizona's institutions of higher education to assist in the planning and development of revitalization efforts. Hiring and utilizing American Indian elders as experts and teachers to facilitate the language and culture curriculum development ensures authenticity. Coordination of these scholarly endeavors will evolve around clearinghouses to provide data collection/storage, knowledge dissemination, and professional relationships.
Associated with preserving tribal culture and languages, the strategic directions also call for creative new partnerships between universities, Arizona tribes and K-12 institutions. Many participants in the ATUJE process felt that school improvement needs to accommodate the traditional values of the community rather than reproduce a context of competition that is often alien to the values of the community. Schools need to be part of the deep dimension of cultural knowledge needed by youth for a healthy identity. There was great concern about low academic performance and failing schools in both urban and reservation settings and the fact that there is no system of education serving Native students that is truly under local control.

Partnerships to train and recruit Native students to be teachers in their home communities help preserve culture, tribal language, local values and worldviews vital to cultural integrity. Universities and community colleges can assist tribes to develop culturally appropriate materials that reflect the values and worldview systems of the community. Incorporating American Indian experience, language, and perspectives into social studies, history, literature, and other courses complements the learning process. These materials can be aligned with standards to ensure compliance with state legislation.

The ATUJE, in cooperation with the Center for Indian Education at Arizona State University and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), has supported the publication of the proceedings contained in this volume to serve as a compendium of ideas, resources, practices, and proven strategies that will guide the implementation of the strategic directions related to the preservation and revitalization of tribal languages in our state. Hopefully, others involved in Native language preservation and revitalization efforts will also find the contents of this volume a guiding resource.

David Beaudieu
Director, Center for Indian Education

Denis Viri
Research Professor, Center for Indian Education
Creating a Language Learning Environment: Salt River Elementary School, Mr. Harris's 1998-1999 Fifth-Grade Class, and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community O'odham-Piipaash Language Program

GARY OWENS, JR.
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

JEFF P. SHEPHERD
University of Texas - El Paso

O'odham nizk ap cu in wi hegem a'ali
O'odham nizk ap cu in wi hegem a'ali
Talk to the children in the people's language
Talk to the children in the people's language

This seems rather simple. And as we know, simple answers, applied with dedication, passion, and integrity, are often the most promising solutions to complicated scenarios. These words serve as an introduction to most of
the presentations, talks, and meetings I (Gary Owens Jr.) have attended in the last five years on Native language revitalization. They are also potential components for the basis of language instruction for the Salt River Elementary School. Reiterating this simple concept — actually talking with the children in the Native language — can also break through the dense (although necessary) thicket of bilingual curriculum, methodological philosophies, and linguistic assessment techniques that frequently obscure the fundamental issues we all face. Indeed, “talking to the children in the Native language” boils it all down to an essence.

Conversations with educators who teach their Native tongue in tribal and public schools across North America have supported the belief that actually using the language is the core issue of language revitalization. However, discussions at such conferences and gatherings about the trials and tribulations inherent in teaching the mother tongue have not seduced me into believing that talking to the children is the only method to adopt. As we swapped stories, shared anecdotes, and even misconstrued each other’s approaches, we still found solace in the knowledge that we are all engaged in a battle to save the Native languages. Ultimately, we helped each other by talking, and we will continue to revitalize the languages by doing the same. When we disclose our thoughts and ideas, and eventually connect our lives to one another, we follow the traditions established by the ancestors as they talked to the children before us.

The uncomplicated admonition to speak with the children in the Native tongue emerges from a central dilemma confronting all Native peoples: language loss. Only after people accept this as a historical development, rather than a foregone conclusion for the future, can Native communities begin to rebuild their language networks.

Few would dispute that a deliberate process of cultural genocide has guided federal language policy on this continent for centuries, whether it took root in early boarding schools or religious institutions. Fortunately, in recent years, Native communities have begun to gain control of the content used in tribally-run schools, and the future that confronts Native educators is not so bleak. So for those of us in “the language business,” we do not need to re-hash, re-anguish, or re-blame anyone. As Nancy Richardson (Karok), said in Glorieta, New Mexico during the Native American Language Institute Conference in 1994, “We need to get over this grief and growl period.” We just need to stop this language loss.

The perspective of this chapter comes out of the development of language revitalization on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, which is located adjacent to the greater Phoenix metropolitan area in central Arizona. Urban sprawl has claimed most of the surrounding desert land, and where rivers and streams once ran, we now have concrete canals and computer-controlled reservoirs that “deliver water” to Valley residents. The reservation, which was initially far from the non-Indian center of life, finds itself surrounded by housing divisions and unrelenting commercial development. One major thoroughfare hems in the western side of the community and separates agricultural land from track housing and strip malls; another bisects the northern fifth of the land, and a third threatens to overtake the southern portion, which abuts the suburban city of Mesa. In an interesting twist of historical irony, this enveloping of the 55,000-acre reservation reminds one of scenes in many popular Westerns where Indians surrounded the wagon trains. Perhaps the community simply needs an Indian cavalry to save it from the onslaught of progress.

The Salt River tribal government established an
O'odham-Piipaash bilingual program in 1993. The Education Department directed this program to preserve and revitalize the languages of the Onk Akimel O'odham and the Xalychidom Piipaash. In the fall of 1993, Emmett White from the Gila River Community, and Caroline Montana-Antone from the Tohono O'odham Nation, alongside several Elders, established the structure of community classes to teach the languages. With the direction of these individuals, as well as several dedicated staff members, the language program also started to draft a set of goals that focused on developing language curriculum for use in the classrooms of newly chartered tribal schools.

Now that we have provided the contours of the administrative and a brief historical background on the language program, we will discuss how we planned to create a language-learning environment in the classroom. My role as an educational specialist with the language program has been to teach the children in kindergarten through sixth grade at the Salt River Elementary School to speak their Native tongue. In 1995 we established a pilot program to bring both languages into the K-3 classrooms twice a week. The lessons in the pilot program were based on the cultural identity of the children—O'odham, Piipaash, or both. During 1996, the elementary school went from a Bureau of Indian Affairs-controlled institution to a grant-based charter school, and this conferred a degree of autonomy on teachers and faculty. It also heightened our expectations and hinted at the potential of the students to learn their language.

During the shift from a BIA school to a more independent institution, two important decisions were made. First, the principal decided to include all the grades in the language program. Second, the language program evolved to focus on the O'odham language in the school.

The latter choice struck most people as reasonable since more community members spoke O'odham and it had an established orthography based upon the Alverez-Hale language model. However, selecting the O'odham language failed to address the needs of those who spoke the Piipaash language.

In retrospect, one could have legitimately chosen the Piipaash language for the classroom because it possessed the opposite dynamics. Rather than benefiting from a critical mass of speakers, the Piipaash language is struggling for survival with few fluent members. Indeed, due to its precarious position, we decided to build up the language by reaching out to its speakers and establishing an orthography before it was to be placed in a formal classroom setting. The choice between focusing our energies on a language that offered greater promise of revitalization, versus committing ourselves to a delicate language that actually needed more assistance, represented only one difficult dilemma in a litany of others. Moreover, the decisions of the language program and school administration reflected the specific relationships between the students, teachers, and families at Salt River. This is an important caveat because the dynamics of one reservation do not always mirror the dynamics of another, so our programs may not work elsewhere. Different methods must be tried to find one that is suitable for each community. Indeed, we continue to grow from these lessons because, as most speakers recognize, learning a language is a life-long process.

After we finally agreed on the O’odham language for the entire school, the language program determined methods of teaching to the children based on the dynamics relevant to them. For instance, many reservation schools had programs that utilized the traditions, art forms, and crafts of the people to teach the children. While trying this
in our own school with our own lessons, we found that the language was at times inextricably attached to a particular craft or task we had utilized as a vehicle for teaching the children. In fact, this simply underscored what we already knew: the language was a continuation and extension of ancestral traditions.

Unfortunately, this type of lesson lacked the resonance with the students’ upbringing that we had hoped for. Teaching the language through traditions has been complicated by urbanization and popular culture, which shape contemporary life here in central Arizona. Moreover, the language program in the school lacked the means to reinforce language use outside the classroom. For instance, very few children had an active, knowledgeable willow basket weaver in their home. If more children had had relatives who still practiced these traditions, they might have had a better chance of learning the language as well as the skills. For that matter, how many children could listen to the wonderful O’odham songs and stories before they went to bed every winter night? We found that after we taught the language lesson in the classroom, the language left with us. Without the continuity between language, traditions, classroom, and community, our objectives became all the more daunting.

The school program faced other obstacles as well. Teaching the children from curriculum based on an orthography that approximated their Native tongue appeared wonderful when it was on the conceptual drawing board, but when we implemented the program, we discovered more challenges. In addition to the lack of reinforcement at home and the waning of traditional culture, 75 percent of the teachers in our elementary school were non-Indian. Out of the four Native teachers, only one spoke the O’odham language fluently. Another had basic comprehension of the language, and two came from different tribes. In all fairness, the teachers did what they could to reinforce the language, but without basic conversational skills in the Native tongue, not to mention fluency, their reinforcement fell short.

Our daily schedule for the first three years slowly came together, and went as follows: We visited the classrooms, taught O’odham vocabulary for an average of ten minutes, and then worked on a planned activity with the children until the end of the class. This approach struck us as a promising one, and it appeared fruitful until we hit a small bump in the road. As we went into the classrooms as part of the cultural program for the school, our subject matter did not always coincide with the school curriculum. This made it difficult for the children to connect the daily lessons with the regular visits made by the cultural group. This point did and still could elicit mild debate, which hopefully has a healthy and useful purpose. Part of the issue was the underlying relationship between traditional culture as it has existed long before public schooling, and the nature and scope of the school curriculum. Sometimes it was difficult to articulate a particular aspect of the cultural program within the confines of the class and their curriculum. This led us to wonder about the social basis for teaching our children: should we fit the community into the curriculum or fit the curriculum into the community? These were and still are complex issues that demand consideration.

Several years of working through the incongruities between the school’s curriculum, the cultural program (where the language component was housed), and the lack of language reinforcement in the home, convinced us to devise new methods to teach the children. After two years of working with the students and wondering why they lacked a basic vocabulary for the O’odham language, we stumbled into an area that we had ignored: the creation of a
normal or natural context for language use. In the spring of 1998, Mrs. Berdina Burke and I were teaching a very old dance to the children in Mrs. Ray's third grade class. The dance had a wonderful background story about Ban (Coyote), and the children enjoyed it immensely. At the teacher's insistence, we presented the dance as a learning activity two times a week for half an hour each class period.

We chose this particular dance because the children had to dance together in pairs to perform it. It taught the children social skills and gave them an opportunity to associate with each other in a culturally appropriate manner. This showed the children that when you are O'odham, this is what you do. During the first two weeks as the children familiarized themselves with the basic dance, they began to look forward to the days when we visited their classroom. The dance activity gained so much popularity among the children that the teacher asked us to return and rehearse with them every other day. While the children danced, Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Ray and I used the O'odham language (me, in a limited context; I'm still learning) to give certain directions to the children. After they adjusted to the instructions in O'odham, we also conversed in the language in front of the children (well, as best I could).

This went on throughout the winter months and in the fifth week of working with the students, Mrs. Burke and I heard a wonderful sound. While we were leading the group in the dance, they had begun to sing the song by themselves. It was not perfect because the children were never introduced to the words, but it was beautiful nonetheless. Previously, we had asked the teacher to play an audiotape of the song for the children whenever they studied. Now the students had begun to pick up the song and were even following the exact pitches and intonation that make O'odham so unique. The children had finally learned some basic language skills as part of a daily activity: reinforcement. And the lack of a lesson plan made their acquisition even more exciting. Finally, their accomplishments supported the idea that language use in the normal context of the school was possible.

What we got out of our lesson from the third grade was this: Speak to the children in a normal context based upon their daily activities in the classroom. In Mrs. Ray's class, the third graders picked up the language and vocabulary through dancing. The exercise served as a focal point and entertainment to the children, but we could not simply dance and sing all day long. What would happen if we elaborated on the premise of creating a place where the language wove itself into the regular classroom experience? Instead of dancing as a daily activity, why not use the normal classroom activities? But even more specific, what if we tackled the language learning onto the everyday tasks that the children did? It seemed exciting.

In the wake of the achievement with the third graders, we began to create a normal place where the children could learn and use the language. The decision to start this began after the spring semester of 1999. We developed a pilot program for the fifth grade class that would last for eight weeks. It included 18 students: ten boys, eight girls, and one non-Indian teacher, Mr. Cameron Harris. We did not tell anyone about this because we wanted little fanfare. The only ones with any knowledge of our plans were the teacher and the students.

The plan was somewhat subversive, but we kept it professional and tried to document our efforts. We began by diagnosing the language capabilities of the students and the teacher with an open-ended oral assessment. The test was simple. We had a collection of drawings and pictures, common to the up bringing of the students, and we asked two basic questions: "What is this?" and "What color is
"This?" in the O'odham language. We wanted to determine whether or not they: (1) could understand the question and respond in O'odham; (2) could understand the question but respond only in English; or (3) failed to understand the question and failed to respond in either language. Out of a total of 13 possible objects only one of the students responded in English when the questions were asked in O'odham. We concluded that language production was non-existent and comprehension was nearly absent.

After assessing the students, we constructed the program so that it surrounded the children with verbal and visual reminders of the language. The classroom walls were covered with pictures of their ancestors in ancient dwellings to remind them of their traditional upbringing. With their ancestors looking on, we labeled the modern school equipment in the classroom: chanukal - pencil; tapal - paper; ha mascomman - teacher; cipkawinokad - desk (something that you do your work on); etc. Our goal was to teach the children a basic vocabulary for objects and materials surrounding them everyday. We also wanted them to recognize phrases and familiar settings so we could place them in casual conversation, such as "Sa cuu isda - What is this?" "Sa mas isda - What color is this?" "Gi'iy mak hegai - Give me that...", or "A'ai aq ab ce gii - My name is..."

The regular culture and language program schedule, outside of this pilot study, was a 35-minute visit, once a week. I knew that the success of our plans required more time than that. For the first three weeks I visited the classroom whenever there was a free moment from my regular duties. The teacher was usually able to allow a minimum of 15 minutes at a time, three times a day. It all depended on what he could manage. The premise was natural: we wanted the children to respond in O'odham with a predictable phrase: "Gi'iy mak hegai ..." (Give me

that...). We hoped that having the children ask each other for familiar things would open the normal paths of communication. By the fourth week it was beginning to take shape, but only when I was in the classroom. They still needed the prodding and encouragement on a consistent basis. When I was there the students would try to communicate in O'odham because they knew that I expected them to speak it. By the fifth week the teacher and I realized that the class needed a fluent speaker to work with them on a consistent basis. But these modest gains still gave us hope.

By the sixth week, the teacher and I decided to introduce certain aspects of the culture to the students in class. I brought in items that could bridge the present language lessons with traditions that a few people still practiced today. This was an important point: to create a connection between present and past, as represented by language and material culture. I put the items from my house on the table in the back of the classroom: Twelve rings of willow shoots, one wanom or tshuł (hat of devils claw), one masuk (grinding stone) and malax (grinder), one hua (basket) and a bag of ga'iska (roasted, dried corn) patiently awaited the arrival of the curious children.

When I arrived the next day, the O'odham-Pipaash Language Program was planning to hold a graduation dinner that night for the community language classes. I was taking popo, a mixture of beans, wheat and cracked corn. I walked into the class four hours before I was to go home and get ready for the dinner. After I entered, I began to talk to the children about the items on the back table. The children were nonchalant about the things I brought in because they thought that they came from a museum. As their uninvolved eyes patiently followed me from the table to the front of the class, I held up the willow bundles and said, "I picked these with Mrs. Manuel about ten months
ago. We call it ćeul'. They began to murmur. I then held up the devil's claw and said, "I gathered these about six months ago; we call it thungi. Last night I put it together and made what we call a vavonim (hat)." This bit of information surprised them.

After a few moments of silence, they began to talk amongst themselves and it continued. "This is my maszud and my mada. I got it near the river when I gathered the ćeul. In four hours I have to get home to cook for a dinner, inhido (cooking) and I am going to take pesho. So I need to grind some corn. But first I have to clean it, get the shaft out. This is what you do." I put the cracked corn in the basket and started to throw it in the air and catch it once more in the basket. There was no breeze in the room so I blew on the shaft and it all fell away. There was not a sound in the room, as I continued to clean the corn. Then I spoke: "You thought that these things were from a museum didn't you?" They all nodded their heads, "they came from my house. I use these things in my life. They are not put on the shelf to just sit there. I'm telling you this and showing you this because your language is like this. It may seem that it belongs in a museum but if you use it every day, it will still work. Do you understand?" They nodded and I said "Sap e. em pend." And so it went.

It was the last week of the pilot project and we were not going to have an assessment. It was not feasible because we could not decide what to test them on. All we could do was to ask them the two questions: "S̱a c̱u̱ḻ i̱ḏa̱?" (What is this?) and "S̱a m̱u̱s̱ i̱ḏa̱?" (What color is this?). We did this in the open classroom. They yelled back in a happy, childlike roar, "S̱e̱ṉ ki̱ṣ̱p̱a̱ḵu̱ḏ!" That was all we could ask for.

Epilogue

On August 31, 1999, a rainstorm hit the Salt River
one of the door openings in the plaza. They couldn't go forward because the rain was washing into the open hallway before them. The class stood huddled, plastered against the wall. They were becoming very restless and a little scared with all of this magnificent activity going on around them. I started to yell over the din, "This is a rainstorm! Juges! Juges! Can you say juges?" "Juges!" they yelled back!

The language and traditions of our ancestors brought us to this point. Our children, by knowing who and where they are in this world, will carry them into the future.

"You are O'odham or Piipaash, you come from Salt River, this is what you do."

Gary W. Owens Jr. is a former education specialist with the Salt River O'odham-Piipaash Language Program. Labeled a "language activist" by many, he worked with the development of language learning materials and methodology in the program. He remains a member of the steering committee for the Yuman Family Language Summit, a life-long language learner, and a strong supporter of the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference. He co-chaired the 8th annual event and the keynote speech that he gave at the conference clocked in at 6 minutes and 36 seconds, an all-time record for language conferences everywhere (Gary.Owens@SRPMC-nsn.gov).

Jeff P. Shepherd is currently teaching at the University of Texas-El Paso. His doctorate is in the field of American Indian history with an emphasis on Hualapai history in the latter 19th century. In addition to helping Mr. Owens with the academic language in this paper, Dr. Shepherd is an accomplished vegetarian chef and a good chum. "He vopokam na:voc" (jshepherd@utep.edu).