

**White House Council on Native American Affairs Education Committee  
Framework for the 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization  
White House Tribal Nations Summit 2022**

**Statement of Policy**

It is the policy of the Federal government to protect Tribal sovereignty and revitalize Tribal communities, including through Native language revitalization and reclamation. The Federal government has a nation-to-nation relationship with tribes fulfilled through an affirmative treaty and trust responsibility. The treaty and trust responsibilities are duties born by the entire federal government and its branches and agencies. These powers and duties must be used for the good of Native communities in the fulfillment of their own self-determined Native language sovereignty, revitalization, and reclamation plans and activities. Therefore, the Administration is committed to developing and implementing a **10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization**.

**Introduction**

Native languages comprise part of the vibrant cultural tapestry of Native American communities. They are woven inextricably into traditional ways of life and shape contemporary perspectives. The health of Native languages in the United States, though, endures constant and serious threats, with some Native languages having no fluent speakers and others facing similar prospects. Without comprehensive and concerted action, languages – and the cultural practices and Indigenous knowledge tied to those languages – may cease to exist. Tribal leaders continue to advocate for support for the revitalization and preservation of Native languages, making clear that their languages serve vital purposes in all aspects of sovereignty, culture, governance, education, health, and identity. The Education Committee (Committee) of the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA) acknowledges the historic role of the United States in imperiling Indigenous languages, and the Committee seeks to work with Tribes and Native American communities on a renaissance of language through the 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization.

For more than a century, the United States imposed policies to deliberately dispossess Indians of their lands and targeted children through forced assimilation as one of many strategies. These educational policies designed to assimilate Native peoples into the predominant United States culture devastated Native American communities, families, and children with disastrous and destructive multigenerational impacts still felt today. Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, the United States enacted laws and implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the Nation. From 1871 onward, federally run Indian boarding schools were used in a calculated plan to assimilate Native American children and erode Indian families. Native American children were forcibly removed from their families, homelands, and communities and relocated to distant residential facilities where their Native identities, languages, traditions, and beliefs were forcibly suppressed. The conditions in these schools were usually harsh, abusive, and sometimes deadly. This attempt to remove the connection to their homelands and identities was intended to make it easier for the federal government and settlers to gain access to these lands.

Although it is no longer official U.S. federal policy to assimilate Indian children and separate them from their languages and cultures, much work remains to end ongoing impacts resulting

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directly from federal actions. Additionally, further work remains to end unintended and unintentional policies harming Native communities. These various policies have resulted in trauma felt by individuals and communities that have deep and far-reaching socioeconomic impacts such as low life expectancies, loss and disconnection from culture and land, and persistent poverty. Tribal communities and Indigenous people today are dealing with the historical trauma of boarding school abuse and being displaced. Tribal communities are seeing fewer and fewer fluent speakers pass the languages on to future generations.

For many years, Native language revitalization and preservation have been cited by Tribal leaders and Indigenous communities as important to their individual and collective identity, self-preservation, self-determination, and sovereignty. It is a critical priority because language is at the heart of a Tribe's unique cultural identity, traditions, spiritual beliefs, knowledge, and self-governance.

With its all-of-government approach, the Biden-Harris Administration is committed to supporting, preserving, and revitalizing Native American languages. President Biden, in his first year in office, recognized the importance of Native language and education and issued Presidential Executive Order 14049, the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities (White House Initiative).

In addition, the WHCNAA Education Committee renewed the Native Language Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which was announced at the White House Tribal Nations Summit in November 2021. Executive Order 14049 was a catalyst for additional federal agencies to sign the Native Languages MOA, which currently stands at four (4) lead agencies and sixteen (16) participating agencies. The work of WHCNAA will also leverage the Native American Languages Act of 1990, which declares that it is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American Languages. The federal government will build on this Congressional policy statement through this National Action plan that marshals resources toward this effort.

The United States has an opportunity to correct an ongoing wrong. The targeting of Native American children for forced assimilation was not fair, right, or just. It was unbecoming of a nation committed to freedom, equality, and the fundamental human right of the pursuit of happiness. Great nations, like great leaders, will always do what is right.

The federal government plans to strengthen this work via a comprehensive National Plan on Native Language Revitalization and Reclamation for the next 10 years (2022-2032). This will be a long-term, all-of-government strategy that works with Tribal sovereign Nations and the Native Hawaiian community, and as appropriate, non-profit organizations, subject-matter experts, and other entities for the revitalization, protection, preservation, and reclamation of Native Languages.

### **Statements of Fact**

- Native Americans have fought in every American war, and Native languages have contributed greatly to the defense of the country, including but not limited to, the Native American Code Talkers in World War I and II.

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- Proficiency in two or more languages, as a general rule, aids in student achievement and overall richness of life.
- Native language proficiency, as a general rule, contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of Native Americans and their communities, including addressing historical and intergenerational trauma resulting from U.S. assimilation policies.
- Native language proficiency, as a general rule, contributes to Native American student achievement, academic success, and improved socioeconomic status.

### Partners Involved

The 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization is being developed in collaboration with Tribal Nations and with the lead agencies on the Native Languages MOA (Departments of Interior, Education, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture) and will include other signatories to the MOA with input from Native American Language advocates, practitioners, and experts.

Input from Tribal leadership and communities is integral to the success of this plan. Native American communities know what is best for themselves. The federal government is dedicated to working in partnership with and supporting Tribal and Indigenous-based solutions and language sovereignty. As a result, the initial 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization that follows integrates feedback received through Tribal consultation from the following meetings:

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - Native Language Listening Session
- June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - White House Council on Native American Affairs Tribal Leader Engagement Session on Native Languages
- September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization Consultation for Tribal Leaders
- October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - Native Language Summit: Speaking Sovereignty

### Planning Framework

The 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization's framework is built upon the following four pillars:

1. **Awareness:** Create national awareness of the importance of Native languages to tribes and the country, the current crises of Native language loss, and the urgency for immediate action.
2. **Recognition:** Formal policy recognition of the role the U.S. government played in erasing Native languages, the state of crises, and the need for federal resources and support for Native language revitalization.
3. **Integration:** Integrate Native language revitalization in mainstream society, including U.S. federal policies and outline the need for the creation of Native language revitalization ecosystems.
4. **Support:** Identify funding, including federal and philanthropic, for Native language revitalization.

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### Planning Principles

In developing the plan, the following principles are acknowledged:

- Every Tribe and community are different. One size does not fit all. The plan must provide flexibility for tribes and their communities to develop and implement what works best for them.
- Tribal sovereign Nations, Native Hawaiians, and their communities have the solutions to their own challenges. It is the federal government’s responsibility to support those solutions.
- Native language revitalization and reclamation is multidimensional and interdisciplinary in its nature, requiring an all-of-community approach that is not separated from other aspects of community. Therefore, Native language revitalization is:
  - Agriculture
  - Art & Culture
  - Conservation
  - Economic development
  - Education
  - Healthcare
  - Job training
  - Public safety
- Tribal sovereign Nations, Native Hawaiians, and their communities have a right to own their own Intellectual Property (IP). The plan must empower tribes and their communities to develop and own their own IP. The sharing of data and information must be on the tribes’ terms.

### Breadth of Plan

Native language revitalization and reclamation happens across a range of ages, grade levels, and ability levels, in formal and informal places and settings. The following plan will address learning for the following ages and settings:

- **Early Childhood:** This includes all education that occurs from birth. It includes, but is not limited to daycare, pre-school, Early Head Start, Head Start, and pre-K.
- **Elementary School:** This generally includes Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grades.
- **Middle School:** This generally includes 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- **High School:** This generally includes 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.
- **Post Secondary:** This generally includes college and university levels.
- **Adult Learning:** This includes formal and informal learning outside of academic settings throughout adulthood and a person’s entire lifetime.

### Barriers To Be Addressed

Within this framework, the plan acknowledges the sophistication and efforts required to revitalize and reclaim Native languages. There is no one size fits all solution, as each Native community holds the answers to their own challenges. With this, the plan seeks to recognize the need to overcome, at a minimum, the following barriers:

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- **Strategic Planning:** Tribal sovereign Nations and the Native Hawaiian community should be empowered to develop and implement strategic language revitalization plans to align government, schools, NGOs and the community.
- **Reference Materials:** Reference materials assist in formal and informal learning, creating a holistic language community learning environment. Reference materials are infinite, including but not limited to dictionaries, song collections, grammar handbooks, mobile apps, computer programs, books, etc.
- **Teacher Training:** Teaching is a calling that is simultaneously an art and science. Rigorous and consistent training programs for certified and uncertified language teachers are necessary with special consideration for elders and Native knowledge keepers.
- **Pedagogical Materials:** Curricula and instruction materials, including textbooks, that are owned and developed by, and with, Tribal and the Native Hawaiian communities are critical to formal learning at all ages.
- **Sequenced Curriculum:** Sequenced curricula, for learners of all ages, grades, and language proficiency levels are important to create support for all language learners.
- **Tribal and School Standards:** Development and implementation of rigorous standards at all grade levels is critical to ensure mainstream school programs implement effective learning in and out of Tribal sovereign Nations and Native Hawaiian communities.
- **Assessment:** Development and utilization of assessment materials and methodologies is critical to success.
- **Teacher Effectiveness:** Ensuring that revitalization programs join Native language expertise with expert teaching.
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Regular and consistent communication with and empowerment of community stakeholders ensures community wide support.
- **Community Support:** Generating and maintaining community support requires intentional outreach and reinforcement.
- **Language Activists:** Language revitalization must be driven by all within a community. Those not sitting within formal organizational systems, such as Tribal government and schools, must be empowered to learn and provide support.
- **Public Relations:** An effective language ecosystem requires public relations, including but not limited to social media, press articles, videos, and podcasts.
- **Funding Knowledge:** Tribal communities should be empowered with the knowledge about where and how to access government and philanthropic funding to support their language revitalization and reclamation efforts.

### Commitments Made

In response to requests received from the aforesaid meetings, the developing partners of the 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization are committed to:

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- Honoring the unique political identity, status, sovereignty, and self-determination of Tribal Nations.
- Acknowledging the federal government's commitment to protecting the rights and ensuring the well-being of Tribal Nations.
- Reaffirming the trust and treaty responsibility the federal government has to Tribal sovereign Nations, which has been upheld through numerous statutes and regulations.
- Strengthening consultations on the issue of Native languages with Tribal sovereign Nations and the Native Hawaiian community.
- Identifying statutory or regulatory barriers that impede federal implementation of Native language activities and address changes as necessary to overcome these barriers.
- Aligning federal language preservation programs to ensure the viability of Native languages.
- Identifying current and potential research areas that explore/could explore educational attainment and Native language retention and/or revitalization.
- Simplifying the process to integrate Native language instruction, Native languages, and other cultural activities into educational settings, including libraries, museums, cultural and historic preservation programs, and in the arts.
- Creating an ecosystem of language revitalization efforts that are led by Tribal Sovereign Nations, the Native Hawaiian Community, and supported by the federal government.
- Co-determining metrics with our Native Language Revitalization Task Force and monitoring progress in collaboration with the Native Language Summit annually.

### Outcomes

The WHCNAA, the Native Language MOA signatories, and the White House Initiative have committed to delivering the following products, which can also be found in the Native Language Revitalization Implementation Plan below.

- ***10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization.*** The WHCNAA Education committee will finalize the 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization in 2023, after consulting with Tribal Nations on the draft released at the 2022 Tribal Nations Summit.
- ***New Resources Guide for Native Languages.*** The National Endowment for the Arts, in coordination with the WHCNAA Education Committee, is releasing an updated Resources Guide that provides a comprehensive overview of federal funding sources, including agency contacts and program descriptions, that can be used to support Native arts and cultural activities, including Native language revitalization.
- ***New Research on Native Language Retention and Revitalization.*** The White House Initiative is releasing a summary of research that explores educational attainment and Native language retention and revitalization to identify evidence-based approaches that will inform the National Plan on Native Language Revitalization. This research will be released at the conclusion of the 2023 Fiscal Year.

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- ***National, Comprehensive Study of Native American Education.*** In 2023, ED will launch a national, comprehensive study of Native American education, in both public and Bureau of Indian Education settings, in accordance with the National Plan on Native Language Revitalization. This national study will examine the educational landscape from birth through lifelong learning and provide baseline data from which the National Plan on Native Language Revitalization will derive measurable outcomes.
- ***National Native American Language Resource Center.*** The Department of Education will launch the National Native Language Resource Center and conduct Tribal consultation and targeted listening sessions with Tribal Nations and language communities beginning in early 2023 to ensure its meaningful design. The center will serve as a comprehensive online resource to support Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian schools, language programs, and individuals engaged in the reclamation, revitalization, preservation, and instruction of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages.

### Native Language Revitalization Implementation Plan

An initial Implementation Plan has been developed for Fiscal Years 1-3 utilizing guidance provided through consultation and listening sessions to date. Development of outward years (4-10) will require additional Tribal consultation and initiation of the Native Language Revitalization Task Force, noted in Fiscal Year 2.

Throughout, and by the completion of each quarter of the following fiscal years, the Inter-agency team will:

#### ***Fiscal Year 1 - Fall 2022 - Summer 2023***

- *Fall 2022* – Initial Framing Document for 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization released.
- *Fall 2022* – Resources Guide for Native Languages published and available from National Endowment for the Arts.
- *Fall 2022 - Fall 2032* – Strengthen Tribal consultation and create national awareness by holding several listening sessions, webinars, and roundtables on the importance of Native languages.
- *Spring 2023* – Begin development of the National Native American Language Resource Center.
- *Summer 2023 - Summer 2025* – Launch and conduct a National, Comprehensive Study of Native American Education.
- *End of Fiscal Year 2023* – New Research on Native Language Retention and Revitalization released.

#### ***Fiscal Year 2 - Fall 2023 - Summer 2024***

- *Fall 2023* – Full 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization released.
- *Fall 2023 - Fall 2024* – Development and convening of the Native Language Revitalization Task Force.

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- *Winter 2023* – Develop and publish a formal recognition/affirmation of the role the U.S. government has played in erasing Native languages, the state of crises, and the need for federal resources and support for Native language revitalization.
- *Winter 2023 - Summer 2024* – Co-determine metrics for progress monitoring of 10 Year National Plan.
- *Spring 2024 - Summer 2024* – Identify and align language preservation and revitalization resources, as well as the statutory or regulatory barriers that impede their implementation of Native language activities. The inter-agency team begins addressing and remedying identified barriers.
- *Spring 2024 - Summer 2025* – Prepare and release a Request for Information (RFI) to determine an estimate of total language revitalization needs for Tribal Nations.
- *Summer 2024 - Fall 2032* – Collaborate with Native language experts and educational institutions to develop and begin enacting a plan to simplify the process of integrating Native language instruction and other cultural activities more substantially.
- *Summer 2024* – Develop and disseminate a report and plan outlining policy, regulatory, and statutory changes necessary to increase access to federal and philanthropic resources with an aim to better meet the total language revitalization needs.

### ***Fiscal Year 3 - Fall 2024 - Summer 2025***

- *Fall 2024 - Summer 2025* – Collaborate with appropriate Tribal, inter-agency, and policy-making partners to address appropriate policy modifications.
- *Fall 2024 - Fall 2032* – Provide report on progress at Native Language Summit annually. Utilize results from the Native Language Summits to modify the Implementation Plan appropriately each year.

### ***Fiscal Years 4-10***

- *Fall 2025 - Fall 2032* – Continue national awareness campaign on the importance of Native languages.
- *Fall 2025 - Fall 2032* – Track US investments in Native languages.
- *Fall 2025 - Fall 2032* – Provide report on progress at Native Language Summit annually. Utilize results from the Native Language Summits to modify the Implementation Plan appropriately each year.

## **Moving Forward**

While it is clear that work has already begun, it is based on feedback received through targeted listening sessions inclusive of Native American language experts identified by tribes themselves, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian community leaders. The plan should and will not continue without consulting with Tribal Nation leaders.

Moving forward, we are committed to authentically consulting with Tribal Leaders to shape the 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization and engage in robust and meaningful consultation.



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