

FRAMING PAPER
NATIONAL/FEDERAL PLAN ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES
DISCUSSION DRAFT

We are at a critical juncture for Indigenous languages. National Geographic reported in April of 2018 that between 1950 and 2010, 230 languages went extinct. This was according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. Today, a third of the world's languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers left, which is the case for many of the Indigenous languages of the United States. Somewhere in the world, every two weeks a language dies with its last speaker, and 50 to 90 percent of languages are predicted to disappear by the next century. Native Languages are a critical and sacred part of Tribal/Indigenous communities. Native languages provide the backbone of Native culture and are vitally tied to traditional ways of life.

In acknowledgment of the cultural devastation caused to Native communities with the early policies of the United States, such as the boarding school and allotment eras, the federal government seeks to strengthen its support for the preservation, reclamation, and protection of Native and Indigenous languages. This work began with 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 and the Interagency Native Language Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) announced last November 2021.

The federal government plans to continue and strengthen this work via a comprehensive National Plan on Native Language Revitalization and Reclamation for the next 10 years (2022-2032), similar to that of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages that many Tribal and Indigenous communities are participating in already.

While the work has already begun from ideas generated for this plan from targeted listening sessions, the plan cannot and should not be done without consulting with Tribal Nation leaders and Native language experts identified by Tribes themselves.

The plan will be developed in collaboration with the Departments of Interior, Education, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture as lead agencies in the MOA, and others as a whole of government approach is necessary.

We seek your input on developing a framework during consultation and listening sessions.