

# DAKOTA IAPI TEUNKINDAPI CONSORTIUM LANGUAGE CONFERENCE

May 14 – 16, 2008

Victoria Inn, Brandon, Manitoba

Recorders: Sharon Sutherland (MFNERC), Holly Fontaine (MFNERC)

## **Opening Ceremonies**

Pipe Ceremony

Opening Prayer

Grand Entry

Opening Song, Host Drum

Opening Remarks, Master of Ceremonies: Harold Blacksmith & Oswald McKay

## **Grand Entry**

**Host Drum:**

**Master of Ceremonies: Harold Blacksmith & Oswald McKay**

## **Chief Ken Chalmers –Birdtail First Nation**

- Language makes us distinct, we need to protect our languages
- Casinos – Dakota communities – economic development - that is our new buffalo for our language
- We need to put significant monies towards language
- The language is the 1<sup>st</sup> priority
- I believe in programs like Headstart, we need to teach our children at a young age
- We have to encourage our mothers to speak in the language to their children, they are their first teachers, we need to begin teaching them at home
- I know funding is hard to get. This Conference alone cost \$10,000.00. For MOU's we get \$120,000.00 per year other ways we seek money is through proposals
- We have to put the money behind our children, our languages
- Our language is our survival
- People need to push the leadership to get behind the language
- The language is what will keep us strong for whatever we have to face in the future
- It is time we got the money ourselves, government or not, we need to start getting our own money
- Key words – Children/Mothers

### **Si Standing – Saskatchewan, long time Politician**

- While Education is not my portfolio, I was interested in attending because I am one of the few who can speak Dakota in my community
- If we loose our language we loose our ourselves
- We are loosing our language, we just need to really concentrate on saving the language
- To be a Nation we have to have our government, this begins with our language
- Our language is very important, I know our grandfathers say that is the only way we need to communicate in our language

### **Mary McDonald – AFN, Mohawk, Bear Clan, Ahkwesahsne, Language Manager**

- I can't over emphasize the significance of our languages
- Our languages are the only things that make us distinct
- Very honored to be here today

### **Ruth Norton, Language Specialist, MFNERC**

- Thank you for asking me to come
- I want to assist to make sure that our children's voices are heard
- What an incredible world that will be when we hear the little children speaking all the languages; Dakota, Cree, Anishinabe, Mohawk, Oneida,
  - Etc.
- That is my dream to have my grandchildren, great grandchildren; when I speak to them in the language they respond
- I want to thank the Dakota Singers – I feel a great peace when I hear them sing. There is healing through song, healing through prayers that is a feeling of peace, connectedness to our ancestors
- There is a feeling of connection to those people who have left us, Eli, Ron Hall, \_\_\_\_\_
- Thank you to the singers, songs heartfelt prayers go to our children

### **Greg, Representing Chief of Dakota Plains**

- Thank you for inviting me. Some people have been working since last September on this. I just want to thank to Noella and Elaine
- This will be an Annual gathering

### **MC announce the Honor Song to honor the present and past Chiefs and dignitaries**

### **Presentation of gifts to (Star Blankets): Noella Eagle**

- Doris Pratt, Sioux Valley
- Linda Eastman – Stan Harvey, Principal --- give brief presentation
- Ken Chalmers
- Ruth Norton
- The Late Ron Hall (blanket accepted by family member)

### **Stan Harvey, Principal, Goulter School, Virden, MB**

- Accolades' to Linda Eastman
- It is sad that some of the children do not speak Dakota
- It is important that our kids speak, the language, Linda is working hard to teach the Language
- Linda has been working on the development of a Dakota curriculum, we know how big an undertaking this is because if you look at the province they just developed a new math curriculum – they have a committee to develop this – Linda has been doing this on her own

### **Noella Eagle**

- We have to make a conscious effort to teach the language
- We need to stop blaming and take the initiative to teach our kids
- Ruth Norton - works for the MFNERC, has done a lot of work for all 5 languages
- We want to honor the late Ron Hall, who is not with us today in body but is here in spirit
- I am reminded of a conversation with Ron where he was saying “I would really like our languages in the school, it is really sad we are following the white ways, white curriculum. This is one reason why our children are confused. We need to bring back that sacredness of the language.

### **Mark Hall, Son of Late Ron Hall**

- As the people spoke here today, a lot of them spoke in the language, Dakota, Anishinabe, Mohawk, it is very inspirational
- This is a way to express kinship, it helps our children to understand that
- We need to speak Dakota to keep it alive
- Thank you on behalf of my dad

### **Keynote Speakers:**

### **Mary McDonald, National Language Update, AFN**

- Update for Languages on the National level in the last year.
- See Powerpoint

### **Ruth Norton, Manitoba Language Update, MFNERC**

- Update for Aboriginal Languages Initiative
- See Powerpoint
- Point made that the Chiefs need to make languages preservation as a priority
- There needs to be an implementation period for revitalizing and maintaining First Nations languages
- Briefing of new curriculum that is being developed by language teachers, elders, knowledge keepers
- There is a lot of interest in immersion – the problem is FUNDING – we really need language funding
- Next year, I want to ask the organizers to have little children speaking Dakota here, I will bring little Anishinabe children to speak, too
- Video presentation “WCNEC/Language Symposium: Code Talkers”

### **PM**

### **Morris (Swan) Shannacoppo, Grand Chief, Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO)**

- As young people, we stuck together, we used the language at school (I did not attend residential school, I attended day school). It is important that our children hear our language
- We need to speak in our own languages first, then translate it into English
- We have a standard that we need to bring up – fifteen minutes a day is not enough for our children to learn the languages – we need to secure funding for those who teach the language
- I am currently working with Ruth Norton to bring this issue to the forefront
- When I hear the elderly Dakota speak I am drawn into it and I feel a part of it, when you sit and listen you can pick out the good things that are being said, even if you cannot speak that language, you can feel what they are saying
- At one point, he sent a message to two leaders, he wrote in the language and said that it should be not translated into English – they understood the message and said thank you, this was a simple gesture to express their thanks and that we would support them but they must not forget the people – this was a gesture of how powerful the language was – this was not translated and the speaker spoke back in the language

- Message – be careful, there are those out there that would like to take everything from us and that included our languages
- I congratulate the Dakota Chief's because they put this conference on today – they did not want a handout instead they looked to the corporate for sponsorship
- There are a lot of fun things that can be done in the language, we need to bring out children into these fun activities
- Headstart is a good program to use to share the languages
- We need to start to teach the children even one word a day, they will begin to know the language
- Morris Shared the white horse dream/vision – the horse said it still carried four gifts, one is the gift of the language, the warrior society (the warrior horse) – people who will provide for their people again, the horse told him that he had to bring this back to the community – immersion is a way to bring the community back together again, even if you attend and only speak English – you will still be a part of this and you will be surrounded by language
- My community, we have a ten year plan, we have to look ahead and plan for our children
- It is hard to discuss how you feel when you are talking to elders, because if you speak English and they speak in the language, there is a disconnect because they cannot express what they feel in the English language as they can in their own language
- Our children have visions and many dream in the language, we need to give them the language so that they can understand their dream/visions
- Thank you elders, leadership, participants for all of your hard work

#### **Ken Chalmers, Chief, Birdtail Sioux**

- Closing remarks
- Thanked Chief Shannacoppo for his support of Dakota communities , he has stepped up to the plate for the Dakota people in Manitoba, so glad he was elected by SCO
- I am glad he grew up in one of our communities, thank you for being here and we will be needing your help in the upcoming year
- There is a lot of work the Dakota people and Chief's have to get done, language is one of them, and there is no one better to be a part of this

#### **Noella Eagle**

- Presentation of Star Blanket to Chief Shannacoppo, SCO

### **Doris Pratt, Dakota Language Update, Sioux valley Dakota Nation**

- Update in the Dakota language
- If you are going to learn the language children should learn it right away
- You are going to learn all you need to know in the first three years of life
- Anything that needs to be said on language has already been said
- Noella and Elaine I have done it all already I have no interest in doing it again
- I have been there when you start in the morning and see only a few people coming in and you wonder is anyone coming I have been there
- I have laid the ground work for you – if you want to take something of mine and make it a little better go ahead I have done the work for you
- I have always done things on my own, this video, I wanted to change things up a bit
- I want to thank the Dakota Chief and Council and Ruth Norton at MFNERC because you always to need money to get things done and I made this CD
- Presentation of project (video)
- In a new project I am working on I will sing – it will be a Christmas one, it will be done in Dakota
- Again I cannot say enough about the people who are doing the work in the language, Linda Eastman keep working
- There is not recipe, just do it, just keep using the language
- Don't just teach the language, use the language any where you can
- If this brings you happiness, do it
- If you hear something, and you want to do it in Dakota, get your pencil and write it out, just do it

### **Harold Blacksmith, MC – sharing a personal story of his granny**

- Upon growing up with my grandparents – I remember when I was about 4-5 years old every morning I would get ready for school and my kushie would stand at the window to the east - I did not understand what she was doing - Sometimes that glass was empty and someone drank it, when I asked her, she went over and did it again, it was then that I understood that it was praying with that sacred water that she was doing – later in life I asked her about the glass of water and she told me - those days that those glass had became empty were days when she had become weak and had forgotten to pray, and that the sun had emptied the water

## **Angela Cavendar-Wilson, Oyate Nipi Kte**

- Decolonization and Dakota Language Recovery
- Has changed her name to Waziyatawin legally
- Is not a fluent speaker
- See powerpoint
- Dakota decolonization – there are two world views that are in conflict
- They are competing languages
- When you examine own oppression we don't really think about how it impacts our life on a day to day basis
- Everyday of our life's we bump up to colonizers oppression – this was created by the colonizer for the colonizer
- A question that I always ask when I teach a course is “what does it mean to be an American?” – 90 -95% say “freedom” inside I kind of laugh and think to myself that no one is free
- What if I were to raise my children in the traditional Dakota way? I would be reported to child and family
- If we decided that we would not allow our people to participate in the criminal justice system, or be involved in child services, we would be in trouble with the law
- What about religious freedom – what if we decided that we wanted to practice all of our traditional religious ceremonies? We would have to access all of our traditional sacred sites – these sites are claimed by the state, or private owners, we would be sited for trespassing
- Just looking at these examples you can clearly see that being Dakota in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is against the law – language us a very important piece of this
- What happens when we begin to view ourselves through the eyes of the colonizers – we begin to reflect what is presented to us in the mirror – it changes how we ask, how we think and how we live our lives
- Sioux is not a Dakota word – why do we continue to use it? It is part of the colonization process – it is what is reflected by to us
- Not everyone in our communities value our language – this is a direct result of the humiliation stage of the colonization process
- The eradication of language is linked to a quote eloquently put by;
- The late, Harriet Nahanee, “We were the Keepers of the land; that is the special job given to our people by the Creator....It's always been about the land.”
- If we forget who we are, we forget our obligations, we forget our love, the colonizer society want us to forget our languages because our languages will provide the key to our struggle

- Everywhere we turn we bump into the arms of the colonizers – we need to look at decolonization
- Decolonization is the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of the colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. It is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation.”
- We all know that the current system is flawed – we now need to imagine a new system of being – specifically in the area of language – these efforts are never a waste of time, every effort is valuable
- If that is the only thing we do, we need to struggle
- Because our people are scattered, our language efforts are difficult to achieve
- Factionalism, is another factor affecting language revitalization
- How do we begin this process?
- We need to work together; we need to ask ourselves “what does it mean to be Dakota?” is it based on blood? If you don’t speak the language, how can you call yourself Dakota? We need to begin to talk about this. What value is the language if you just want to follow the American Dream? There is no consensus about what being Dakota is. We need to figure out who is committed to being Dakota and those who are not interested
- We need to work with other decolonization efforts to overcome these global issues, we live in a society of consumption, exploitation of land, resources, people
- “The most urgent claim of a group about to revive is certainly the liberation and restoration of its language”. Albert Memmi

### **Noella Eagle**

Presentation of Star Blanket to Angela Cavendar

Presentation of Star Blanket to Mary McDonald

### **Closing, Harold Blacksmith, MC**

Overview of day two workshops.

Closing prayer, elder

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Day II

## **Opening Ceremonies**

Frank Tacan, Pipe Ceremony

Opening Prayer

Opening Song, Host Drum

Opening Remarks, Master of Ceremonies: Harold Blacksmith & Oswald McKay

## **Harold Blacksmith, Recap of Chief's Messages**

- **Ken Chalmers, Chief, Birdtail Sioux**
- Spoke of language making us distinct, spoke of language being number one priority, believes in programs like headstart, need to encourage our mothers to speak in the language to our children, have to put money behind our children, the people need to push the leadership to get behind the language
- **Morris (Swan) Shannacoppo, Grand Chief, Southern Chiefs Organization**
- fifteen minutes a day is not enough for our children to learn the languages, we need to spend more time in school and out teaching and learning the language
- we need to secure funding for those who teach the language
- even if you cannot speak the language attend gatherings and listen to those who can speak, try to learn and to speak
- Message – be careful, there are those out there that would like to take everything from us and that included our languages

## **Oswald McKay, Recap of Keynote Speakers Messages:**

- **Mary McDonald, National Language Update, AFN**
- Done in Dakota language
- Thank you to Mary McDonald for all of the work she had done to protect and preserve native languages
- We need people like Mary McDonald at the national level to speak to those at the national level to preserve our languages

- **Ruth Norton, Manitoba Language Update, MFNERC**
- Done in Dakota language
- The Chiefs need to make language a priority
- There needs to be an implementation period for native languages
- Briefing of new curriculum – that is being developed by teachers, elders, community people, and MFNERC
- There is a lot of interest in immersion programming but there is a lack of funding
  
- **Doris Pratt, Dakota Language Update, Sioux valley Dakota Nation**
- She spoke in Dakota during her presentation, she is an example of how we should be using Dakota
- She presented her new project on stories in Dakota
- She gave an overview of curriculum that she developed while in Sioux Valley, Birdtail and other communities
- We need to value our language, put action to your word, to ensure that the language is going to be spoken in the future
- The project will officially be launched in the story telling months during the fall or winter

**We should value people like this, people who spoke yesterday, they are trying to unify all of our peoples, trying to bring our languages back  
- Oswald McKay**

- **Angela Cavendar-Wilson , Oyate Nipi Kte**
- Language was a tool that the conquering nation used to conquer us Indian people
- She is a valuable person to speak on behalf of the Dakota people, she has have that knowledge to speak at that level
- The colonizing peoples want us to forget our languages because the languages are the key to our survival
- Not everyone in our communities value our language – this is a direct result of the humiliation stage of the colonization process
- Factionalism is affecting language revitalization
- We need to work together; we need to ask ourselves “what does it mean to be Dakota?” is it based on blood? Is it based on speaking the language? If you don’t speak the language, how can you call yourself Dakota? We need to begin to talk about this. What value is the language if you just want to

follow the American Dream? There is no consensus about what being Dakota is. We need to figure out who is committed to being Dakota and those who are not interested

### **Harold Blacksmith**

- The teachings of our elders is to give what you have,
- When someone comes knocking in the nighttime, you always invite them in and given them something, coffee, tea, bread was always on the stove – you always give
- Yesterday there were presentations made to many people, we gifted our Chiefs, Keynote speakers and the late Ron Hall – this is the way of our Indian people, we give in our own humble way
- The star blankets were made with love and care, there is a story behind the blankets that get made by our Dakota women in the winter, sewing at night
  
- We Dakota never signed treaties, we saw what our brother and sisters the Ojibway and the Cree received and maybe that is why we did not take treaty, we were not happy with what they recieved

### **Keynote Speaker:**

#### **Ryan Wilson, President National Alliance of Saving Native Languages (N.I.E.A.) board member**

- We have to get over being victims, we have to figure out how we want to participate in the game
- Advocates of Indigenous Languages in America, California
  - ❖ they have about 50 language programs
  - ❖ they have no living speakers there
  - ❖ they are using tape recordings, anthropologists, linguists, to learn who to bring that language back
  - ❖ they are showing them how to put the words back together again
- We need to create dynamic situations where we bring together speakers, to share the languages, to speak together
- We need to bring non speakers here to participate and learn
- We can only learn the cadences, fluctuations, nuances, etc. of the language by fluent speakers
- When we get together for conferences like this, we feel really good, we are motivated when we leave, we are motivated and happy about what took place, but what happens when we return home?

- ❖ We run into hardships with Chief and Council, federal government, English only states, etc. who try to block us from achieving our goals
- How are we going to recover the critically endangered languages? What does it mean to be a critically endangered language?
- Critically endangered?
  - ❖ What does it mean when all of your speakers are over 60 or 80?
  - ❖ If you have 5 or even 500 speakers, if they are all over a certain age you are still in the same boat as those who have no speakers
  - ❖ We lose our elders – time waits for no one
  - ❖ If you do not have young children speaking and learning you will lose the language just as fast
  - ❖ You must bring everyone together
  - ❖ You will lose your language just as quick
- The N.I.E.A. went to the University and told them enough. We will not allow the university to pay and monopolize our living speakers anymore
- We also did this at Harvard University
- If every year you get a chance to attend the Peabody museum you will see that they have many of our articles, our artifacts etc., again we went there and we were saying the same thing
- Partnerships:
  - ❖ We went out and started to talk to anyone who would listen
  - ❖ We were trying to say to whites this is why you need to invest in our language programming
  - ❖ This is how you can help who do you invest in immersion schools
  - ❖ This is how you can help save a language
  - ❖ This is what your role is
- In Minnesota - only have 8 speakers (Dakota)
- In the states we have the Native American Language Act
- I admire the Anishinabe – they have come up with Building blocks - when they know they cannot run an immersion program right now (because of funding, space, building, resources, community road block) they use the building blocks to ask and address the following:
  - ❖ What is what we have to get there
  - ❖ This is what steps we need to take
  - ❖ This is how can we make this a reality
- As an Indian Educator I used to believe that we need to close the achievement gap with white American children – then it became clear that

that system did not support our children – it was missing something – the language and the values that we get from the language

- I like to use the term European American – it reminds them of where they came from
- We have been taught math, English, and we get assessed on our yearly progress – a system that does not help our children – it was a system that was not made by us or for us
- We have all heard of the Elementary and Secondary School Act – better known as the No Child Left Behind, it was signed in 2001
- I ask you,
  - ❖ When was a Native American ever consulted in this process
  - ❖ When were we ever apart of drafting this bill
  - ❖ We were never asked to sit at the table
  - ❖ They were told we have no say, we had no impact
- No Child Left Behind
  - ❖ This Law says that every child will be tested up against this model and its assessment tools
  - ❖ Tools that non Indians created
  - ❖ Was one of the most damaging things to Indian control of Indian education
  - ❖ Every child regardless of whether this child attends a state, federal or private school must use this model
  - ❖ What this law says is we meaning they, will again define the measuring bar for which all students will be measured against
  - ❖ This is damaging to Indian control of Indian education
  - ❖ We have no control this policy takes control from us over education
  - ❖ All of our curriculum had to change to align with state standards
- We began the long process of reaching out to show that we needed to be at the table when this law was readdressed and we came up with the State of Indian education address
  - ❖ This address called for field meetings where they come out to Indian schools and see what is happening
  - ❖ They get our input (Indians)
  - ❖ We also wrote the Ester (Martineze) House Resolution in 2006
  - ❖ Created a federal investment in Indians schools
  - ❖ We will not pay for the creation of dictionaries, we will no longer pay for curriculum, we will no longer pay for the recording of elders, etc. the government needs to start paying for this in light of the no child left behind

- We have created an incentive for tribes to create their own immersion schools
- Remember we are going against policies like no child left behind, English only states, etc. we were also proposing these and had to compete for monies that were also behind redirected to things like Hurricane Katrina, the never ending war in Iraq
- We had a lobbyist - someone a tribe hires to lobby for them in Washington – 5 tribes hired, Jack Abraham
- Significance of languages – they are how we tell our stories, they are how we define ourselves
- We have established a grassroots alliance, the N.I.E.A. does not have a staff, we all have our day jobs, then we do this – we do things like going to Washington to make things better for our people
- The immersion movement is controversial to an extent – some of our people ask how are our kids going to support themselves because they don't speak English, we need to enlighten these people and let them know that our kids will be better off with two languages, we need to help them make the connection
- Some of our speakers have collaborated with schools to create language programs
- One school has been teaching Arapahoe in the schools for 30 years – but because it is taught as a class there has been no fluent speakers produced – instead they know the basics like colors, numbers, etc. but cannot carry on a conversation
  - We have to establish immersion schools – this is why
  - In Arapahoe country – 50 out of 100 kids that graduate, maybe only 5-7 will go on to college, and then only ½ will go on to mainstream university
  - How can anyone say with a straight face that our mainstream schools are a success
  - We have to be careful how we say this because many Indian educators get mad – they feel like we are attacking them for teaching the mainstream curriculum but we aren't we are just acknowledging the lack of success this system has within our communities
  - What they (these offended educators) fail to realize is that for everyone of them there are another 90 people who did not make it
  - They blame the families parents communities for this failure
  - Immersion is not there to replace our other schools - it is there as an alternative

- A Blackfoot Harvard graduate opened a school in Montana – he did not have certified teachers – he had fluent Blackfoot speakers
- He had had 100% graduation rates, many are now going on to graduation into university – this K to grade 6 school is a success story
- Master/Apprentice – Arapahoe – Fort Belmack is another
- In the state of New York – 100% private money is used for their survival school – they have had many graduates go on to Ivy League schools
- In Hawaii – many tribes have taken many elders to Hawaii and showed them what was going on – they were in shock – at their progress, their programming – they have a healthy outlook
- So long we have been told that it is either or – it does not need to be – our kids need to learn both languages
- They are learning the old songs, culture and are rebuilding communities
- How do we make this world a better place for our kids? – when you visit them and go into the kids rooms – they always have posters of Tupac, 50 cent, etc. – this hip hop culture is very popular – we underestimate the impact it has on our youth - they have an evil spirit, it sucks out kids right in
- The violence, the lyrics, the lifestyle - It has almost become a normal thing – we have normalized something that was never really normal – we have desensitized ourselves to it – all of the money, the jewelery, the bling – it is a spirit like drugs and alcohol – we have to fight for our kids – we have to combat this with our beautiful culture, we cannot give up on our kids
- We need to look at the conditions that created that – where he felt like he needed to do that – it is a total erosion of disrespect
- We have way more people dancing at pow wows and singing but we do not look at the undercurrent that is below it
- used to think how do we get Indian kids to compete with white kids
- They have an immersion schools in Cherokee – for babies and young kids – they share this school with the regular school kids – but they are sure that the recesses, lunch, etc are separate so that they are ensuring that the language is used all day
- We have become infected with English - it is like a cancer that is on use forever – we need to learn how to live with this cancer
- The cancer is like a poison – what do we do when you have cancer? You have to take another poison – you put another in your body to fight that poison - think of English like that – it is a poison that we put into our body
- In order for us to know what is going on - we have to speak truth to power – we cannot rely on the government – but – they are part of the solution

- In Pine Ridge, in the Northern Cheyenne – these classes are treated as Indian hour – it is sad
- When I saw the Arapahoe – teaching all subjects in Arapahoe it was moving
- There they teach English as a foreign language – as it should be
- We are never going to change the BIA, the churches, the states, the country they were the biggest perpetrators of violence - they tried and still try to take the language away
- We need to build our own schools - why do we keep asking for permission? We need to just do it – we have this pop culture use it to our advantage every day we surrender our kids everyday to this system, to this popculture to this whiteness
- there is an industry now for fluent speakers – every tribe tries to hire fluent speakers today
- they may not be the highest paid jobs but you can make a living
- young fluent speakers will never be without work
- in the last couple of years there has developed an academic argument for the use and implementation of immersion schools, teaching the language – kids don't drop out, there are less disciplinary problems, kids are more respectful, kids show a higher level of respect, they get taught this in these schools
- When I was young my dad used to talk about the old timers – he talked about those who were the last of the free people – hunting roaming the plains, they were the last to be raised by those kinds of people they said there will be a time when the tribes hit a brick wall – a profesy - there will be floods, sickness, etc. – the ones who hold on to the ways – they will be the ones who will survive – we are there now – we are killing , hurting, stealing , grandparents are afraid of their children
- it has come down to up – we need to carry on the fight for our languages
- we have to love our children enough to give them the gift of the language
- times have changed – older parents are now realizing that they should have taught the children the language
- who has the right to decide to hold back the language from our children
- master apprentice program – immersion grade schools, preschool immersion program called the – “Three Stands of the Same Rope”
- the tribes have put 400,000 a year towards this program
- we want to fight all the time when we do not get our way
- we need to be strong in our convictions - we need to use what has been proven to work
- In America – people talk about religious freedom , Indians do not have this

- In traditional Indian society you have to earn the titles you are given – we had highly structured protocols
- This was an issue for the old timers - our elders saw this society of protocols had collapsed and knew that there was no one to take hold of these ways
- If we cannot make immersion a reality right now – think about what we can do – now – what is it we have to do to get there? What are the steps we need to take to make it a reality?
- We have a lot of fear – we think to ourselves, what if I do this and people laugh, what if they do not support me?
- When you feel like that – ask yourself - What is going to happen to our languages if I do not do this?
- It does get discouraging when people make fun of you – you do not always get the support that you need from family, communities, etc. – don't get down – this is when we need to revitalize ourselves – don't stop, don't ask permission – we have to be fearless

## **Noella Eagle**

Presentation of Star Blanket to Ryan Wilson

**Breakout Session**  
**Ryan Wilson**  
**Day II**

**Techniques or strategies for Immersion schools**

I was asked to step in for Brian Charging Cloud (who sits on the American Indian Consortium) who was unable to make it, today I will be sharing some ideas, thoughts on how to begin the process of immersion schools

- Went around and introduced ourselves
- Glad some young people here – they need to be a part of this process
- How do we put the money together to make things like this happen
- I work a lot with safe schools, headstart, we started over 100 boys and girls clubs we used strategic plans, community organizing,

**How to Begin**

- We need to bring communities together and get everyone on the same page and set up priorities
- We often leave that with the leadership
- You have to have a core group of people with the same like mindedness
- If not you have to go out and find it
- You need help with funding, non profit organizations, Thomas Sills etc.
- Funding – we have a facility, teacher certification,
- Brainstorming Session
- Think about speakers – elders cannot walk as far so they cannot be expected to walk from class to class
- National alliance does not charge for anything – we want to help
- We like to ask how do we get tribes together to push this issue
- Need to fight, need to have a lot of heart

**Group Breakout – two groups**

Brainstorm about (three to four sheets) use symbols or art or pictures to create the most perfect learning environment

**Step One**

**The Perfect Immersion School Environment**

- Every parent who has a kid involved in that school they have to also attend that school
- Hands on
- Experiential

- What we hear is what we learn
- We need to start the immersion in the headstart programs
- Use of technology
- Use the experiential learning to show that they can harvest wild rice and they can have the option to sell their wildrice, eat their wildrice, share it with the community
- Intergenerational participation
- Government relations
- Afraid
- Do not know where to look for resources
- Need lots of helping hands
- Teach/learn through song, laughter, writing, hearing, repetitive, spirituality
- Positive thoughts/mindset
- Talking stick, sitting in a circle, truth
- Our students budding from a seed to a flower - growing

## **Step Two**

### **What are the Challenges You Will Face in Reaching This Dream**

- Losing speakers
- No community interest
- No core group to push it
- Money
- Lack of resources
- Lack of space
- Jealously
- Colonialism
- Technology/Instant gratification
- Desensitization, alcohol, drugs play a factor, peer pressure
- Family dynamics, community economics
- Casino/bingo
- Disconnect
- Parental support
- Limited exposure, lack of time, lack of patience
- In order to support the language – it begins with YOU
- We need to continue to fight the good fight

## **Step Three**

### **How Are Your Overcoming These Challenges**

- Step up to the plate and do it
- Seek outside support

- Record, tape, listen to speakers
- Use monies from bingo/casino's
- Involve parents/communities
- Develop resources
- Develop programs
- Need to change their paradigm shift
- Make learning language
- Show examples of how it can be done
- Pride

The purpose if this exercise was not to solve all of the problems, but to show that it can be done, it can get started – if it happened somewhere else – why can't we do it?