

Indigenous Dual Language Education (IDLE)—A Journey and Some Considerations:

Keres Children's Learning Center

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In September 2012, the Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC) opened its doors guided by this mission statement:

KCLC strives to reclaim our children’s education and honor our heritage by using a comprehensive cultural and academic curriculum to assist families in nurturing Keres-speaking, holistically healthy, community-minded, and academically strong students.

The co-founders, founding board of directors, in partnership with the Pueblo de Cochiti Tribal Council took six years to plan and implement KCLC’s program, building from the tribe’s successful experience with the Cochiti Summer Youth Language Immersion Program. On September 19, 2012, KCLC opened its first Early Childhood Keres Immersion classroom with 10 2.5-6-year-old children. After three successful years, KCLC families understood that the next step would be to implement a dual language education program for the early-childhood students to continue through their elementary- school years. In the fall of 2015, KCLC implemented its dual language (Keres/English) elementary program. The board of directors, teachers, and Cochiti Pueblo tribal council have since learned (and continue to learn) a great deal about the successes and challenges of implementing an Indigenous Dual Language Education (IDLE) program that involves both a written language (English) and an oral language (Keres).

Dual Language Education (DLE) programming has offered much hope and inspiration to the movement to revitalize Indigenous languages. KCLC’s journey with DLE continues to show us all how DLE programming serves and supports the mission of our school. The successes and challenges KCLC has faced are detailed in this document to help clarify how DLE models differ for *Indigenous language* programming in New Mexico versus programming models for world languages, *such as Spanish or Chinese*. One critical difference is in the understanding of literacy. Literacy is often understood as reading and writing in English, but there are different forms of literacies, one of which includes oracy, or oral language development. For most Tribal communities, literacy in the Indigenous language may not be the focus—the Tribal language may not exist in written form or the ability to read and write the language is not a community priority. Rather, developing proficient speakers, or *oracy*, may be the goal. Oracy *is* the goal of KCLC.

In order to better understand the differences between DLE immersion programs for world languages and DLE programs for Indigenous languages, it may be helpful to provide a brief

explanation of the model itself. Dual Language Education (DLE) is a form of bilingual education where two languages, the dominant language (DL) and the target language (TL) are used to teach literacy and academic content in a school setting guided by three pillars: bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement, and sociocultural competence for all students (Howard et al., 2018). The TL is often considered the marginalized language or minority language—even other world languages can be considered as the TL; such is the case in English/Spanish or English/French dual language programs. At KCLC, Keres is the target language. Each program language is used to teach academic content for a portion of the day or week. Ideally, the DL and the TL are to be used at different times. Sometimes, the languages are separated by a teacher who is fluent in one or the other language, sometimes the languages are separated by days or by times of the day. The important point is that at each designated time, the teacher maintains the use of their designated language and does not translate. Instead, the teacher employs instructional strategies that support and scaffold the students' understanding of the content and the language of instruction. Though program models differ, the TL must be used a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 90% of the instructional day or week. According to the Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education: 3rd Edition (Howard, et al., 2018), there are four types of dual language programs identified **by their population:**

1. Developmental or one-way dual language immersion programs are made up of students **who are native speakers of the target language who need to learn the DL (or English)**. In these programs, students learn in their home language for part of the day/week and in English the other part.
2. Two-way dual language immersion programs are made up of **a more balanced number of both native English speakers and native target language speakers**. In these programs, children of two different language backgrounds learn together. During the TL part of the day, English speakers learn in the TL while TL speakers learn in their home language. During the English part of the day, TL speakers learn in English, and English speakers learn in their home language.
3. Foreign language immersion programs are made up of **English speakers who want to learn a foreign language** by being immersed in that language.
4. Heritage language programs are made up of English-dominant students who wish to regain or learn the heritage language of their family or community. In these programs, children are immersed in the heritage language, but also have a portion of the instructional day in English. Such programs often involve “stand alone” classes or times in which learners are immersed in the heritage language.

What these four programs have in common is *immersion*. *Immersion* requires that the teacher use each language for instruction without resorting to the other language. It is especially

important that during instruction in the minority language, the teacher does not revert to English. This is important in order to maintain the integrity of each language and to develop students' language skills. If it is TL time, the teacher speaks and uses materials in the TL. If it is DL time (English time), the teacher only speaks in English and uses English-language materials.

The case of Indigenous Dual Language Education (IDLE) programs in New Mexico requires rethinking DLE programs. Indigenous languages are being revitalized to be in service to their people; the people who historically speak Indigenous languages, not in service to English and or the dominant culture (i.e., whiteness). It is also important to note that these programs *are NOT in service to mastering English-based academic curriculums*. The **intent** is to ensure that students/children will be able to speak their heritage Indigenous language fluently in order to pass it on to the next generation and thereby sustain their Indigenous languages and cultures for generations to come. It is important to note that often, Tribal communities are faced with having to do two things with regard to the current status of their Indigenous languages: they must “maintain” their language by encouraging fluent speakers to continue to speak the language, and they must “revitalize” their language by reversing the shift to English through intentional efforts to teach, transmit, and use the heritage language with community members who never learned it.

As with, DLE Programs involving world languages, the most effective method for “revitalizing” an Indigenous language has been to create an immersion setting, immersing learners in their Indigenous language. Creating an Indigenous language-immersion setting calls for basic elements that include (but are not limited to):

- involving fluent speakers of the Indigenous language,
- creating protected environments for the Indigenous language,
- protecting time dedicated to the Indigenous language being used,
- not allowing English in the protected environment, and
- not translating the Indigenous language to English.

Understanding what a strong Indigenous language immersion setting looks like, sounds like, speaks like, and feels like will help in the implementation of a strong IDLE setting. It is critical that a significant portion of the day/week is dedicated to the Indigenous language (target language) meaning that 50-90% of total instructional time must be dedicated to the Indigenous language through immersion.

Indigenous Language Revitalization

Often, Dual Language Immersion Programs for Indigenous languages are linked to broader community revitalization efforts in which the tribe has given approval for the teaching of the

language in the school setting. IDLE programs typically are for heritage language learners whose language use has shifted towards English and are therefore losing and/or experiencing language shift of/by the language spoken by their parents, grandparents, and ancestors. During the development of IDLE programs, there are multiple opportunities for Indigenous-speaking community members to learn about and be engaged in sharing/teaching the language, especially with young children. Infants and toddlers are at an age where they can quickly learn phrases and expressions. Adolescents and adults know much about the world and about using language, and therefore make good language learners. Many adolescents may struggle with native-like pronunciation and a fear of saying something incorrectly, so it will be important for community members and IDLE educators to differentiate approaches and strategies for different-aged learners in order to create optimal language learning settings for each age group. These considerations can create opportunities for intergenerational learning and community building—all which contribute to increased use of the language across the community and language maintenance. Community members also learn that the revitalization of the language requires a communal effort. The language will ultimately be maintained by the community as a source of inspiration, purpose, and survivance. Revitalizing the language and increasing its role in the community provides an optimal opportunity to strengthen a tribe's traditions, beliefs, and practices. Individual community members can then revisit their tribe's Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Settler Colonialism, Education, and Its Impact on Tribal Nations

Tribal communities have long been faced the realities and impact of First Contact/settler colonialism and its threat to their Tribal lifeways, language loss, and shift to English (Morris, 2019). It is critical to understand the impact of First Contact with the Spaniards and American settler colonials and the education imposed (both in the past and currently) on Tribal/Pueblo communities through ongoing settler colonialism. The education imposed by American colonial settlers systematically focused on the ERASURE of the Indigenous people, the original inhabitants and caretakers of the land, as a way to continue to appropriate land and resources (as evidenced by tribes' complex relationship with the United States' federal government). Schools have been seen as the ideal setting to eradicate the linguistic and cultural richness and wealth already present on these lands by denying multiliteracies and intelligences with monolingual English-only policies and practices. Schooling is a federal and state mandate. As Dr. Joseph Suina, Professor Emeritus in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico and KCLC board member states, "one of the last wars waged on Indigenous people here in America was waged on our children which started with the boarding schools and continues today in public schools" (personal communication).

Language Shift

It is important for IDLE educators to reflect on this history, and to re-discover Indigenous Knowledge embedded in their language and ways of learning so as not to replicate the educational systems that have led to the oppression and erasure that our children so often face in public, private, Head Start, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schooling. (Fishman, 1991, 1999, 2001; Blum Martínez, 2000; McCarty & Nichols, 1996; Pecos & Blum Martínez, 2001; Sims, 2001). It is equally important to be aware of the shift towards English and its detrimental effects to Indigenous languages, and ultimately, the people, the children who experience language shift.

Language shift occurs when parents stop using their Indigenous (heritage) language and replace it with the language of prestige (in our case, English). It can happen when grandparents stop using their Indigenous language and revert to English when communicating with their grandchildren. It also happens quietly and widely across the community as children enter public schools. Settler colonial education sends the silent message that children will be more successful if they learn to read and write in English. This false narrative of “success” continues to be demonstrated in the publication of test scores like those of the National Association of Education Progress (NAEP). New Mexico’s 2019 data reflect Indigenous students’ proficiency at only 11%; a number that has not changed significantly since 2005. The false analysis of this data continues to be that our children’s English-language development is adversely affected by efforts to learn and maintain our own Indigenous languages.

Language shift affects our very hearts and spirits. It is detrimental because our values, beliefs, worldview, relationality, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems are all embedded in the language. When the language shifts and becomes weakened, everything else becomes weakened, particularly our knowledge systems regarding relationality, parenting, and familial responsibilities.

For example, in the Cochiti way, there is a strong tradition of acknowledging people whether that be in passing one another, passing someone who is stationary, seeing someone at a place in the village and/or in town, passing someone on the road, or sitting next to someone. One should always acknowledge the other person’s existence—their presence, their humanity, their spirit. When the language started to shift, particularly in the 80’s, we saw (and the elders continue to notice), that this practice is not as strong as it used to be. This practice of acknowledgement is foundational; it gives context and expression to, and encompasses the values of respect, acknowledgement, community, and relationality, not just to one another, but to the land, the elements, the living and non-living.

Unfortunately, being removed from valued behaviors like the one outlined above, positions us closer to being/becoming a product of a settler colonial education or colonized schooling. As

Indigenous people, we need NOT replicate those forms of teaching as they are deficit based and “damaged-centered” (Germán, 2018). We must re-examine how to teach in a way that matches how our Indigenous languages and teachings were shared in our homes and in the community, what the language was used for, and how Indigenous knowledge was passed down to us *apart from* what was learned in American schools. With this Indigenous approach and idea in mind about how we have historically taught and worked with our children, we can construct what the language teacher should “teach” so that it is more aligned with our Indigenous languages and worldview on teaching, learning, and being with children.

First and foremost, it is imperative to deconstruct those notions of “schooling” and “learning” and “teaching”. We must ground community members in how they learned to cook, or hunt, or fish, or go for wood, or dance in their Indigenous language. Dr. Christine Sims (a woman from Acoma Pueblo and a Professor at the University of New Mexico) reminded me of the purpose and power of retelling children’s books in our Keres language. I then worked (and continue to work) with our elders at KCLC to practice retelling storybooks in Keres. The elders would read the book in English first, look at the pictures, and then leave the book for a while. A bit later, they come back and look at the pictures and retell the story in the Keres language using appropriate oral Keres language structure. If the words written on the page are distracting, we simply cover up the words. We are very careful to try not to translate, but rather retell the story in Keres. Ultimately, planning as a community requires decision making around what aspect of language to teach and how to teach it. The language and important aspects of the language will help guide the language teachers to remember how and what they were taught as children and teach that to the children. This process *is* curriculum development according to our Indigenous languages and needs as Indigenous/Tribal peoples.

Oracy: Another Form of literacy

Few Indigenous languages in New Mexico are written, therefore, in many heritage, Indigenous one-way language programs the focus is on ***oracy, the spoken language***. As happens with all language development, children must first develop understanding and speaking abilities to interact with those people closest to them. For this reason, Dr. Sims reminds us of the importance of using the heritage language for social purposes, “to communicate in the ways that our grandparents and their grandparents did” (personal communication). Languages cannot survive and be passed on to future generations if there are no speakers. For this reason, Tribes/Pueblos must focus on the speakers of the language and put all of their energy and resources towards creating new speakers. There is little sense in creating a written form of a language if there are no speakers. Our focus should be in creating a communication bridge between generations with our precious languages.

IDLE programs must also consider the rich cultural heritage of their communities. As mentioned above, rather than recreating the pedagogy and curricula of the colonizers, language revitalization and maintenance efforts should focus on creating a culturally sustaining education (Django, Alim, 2017) that is inclusive of the Indigenous language and culture through a strengths-based and community-based approach. Curriculum can be drawn from our Indigenous languages and the IKS embedded in them. Elders and fluent speakers play a critical role in accessing the possibilities of what to teach through our Indigenous languages.

Recognize the Critical Role of Elders and Other Fluent Language Speakers

Elders who have the knowledge of the language, the wisdom of the culture, and life experiences are critical to IDLE efforts. They carry many of the memories, experiences, and history of the community and they are the most connected to their grandparents and great-grandparents who were ultimately *even more* connected to ancestral ways and practices. They may also be the ones who know how to speak in different settings, those places or instances with more formal language requirements, and those settings and situations with specialized knowledge. For these reasons, elders must be a critical part of the planning and the development of any IDLE program. Elders and fluent speakers of the language can deliver the language in different ways, outside the four walls of a classroom, in the corn fields, in the mountains, hilltops, rivers, lakes, and in other important sacred settings of the community, homes, and lands. Additionally, they can provide access to their vast store of cultural knowledge of our Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that many elders/fluent speakers have experienced trauma because of being punished for knowing and speaking their language at boarding schools, public schools, BIE (Bureau of Indian Education) day schools, and in early childhood settings such as Head Start. It is equally important to acknowledge and understand that their Indigenous language, their heart language, was a protective factor that contributed to their ability to thrive in their own lives. Leaders of IDLE programming need or must find ways to support elders and practice compassion for the fluent speakers' experiences within the settler colonial educational system. It is useful to remember that settler colonial education's objective was to "Kill the Indian and save the man". The settler colonial education system did not and will not succeed.

Non-Negotiables

In implementing IDLE, we have learned that there are some **non-negotiables**. Some of these non-negotiables, include but are not limited to the following guiding points:

1. First and foremost, Indigenous languages are the intellectual property of the Tribe.
2. Instruction in the Indigenous language must follow one of the following models with allowance for changing circumstance and expanded learning:

- a. 50% of the day must be conducted in the Indigenous Language (IL-TL) - 50% in English, or
 - b. 60% IL-TL - 40% English
 - c. 70% IL-TL - 30% English
 - d. 80% IL-TL - 20% English
 - e. 90% IL-TL - 10 % English
3. The decision to teach the Indigenous target language (TL) must be determined by a joint agreement between the Tribal leadership, the community, and the school.

These non-negotiables are key to the stability of IDLE programming as they protect the language environment of the Indigenous language, the marginalized language.

In Conclusion

For our IDLE program at KCLC, the definitions and technical assistance provided by Dr. Sims, Dr. Blum Martínez, Dr. Bird, and DLeNM have helped us to develop our IDLE elementary program with the target language being Keres. DLeNM has made it clear that their goal has been to support KCLC in the ways we needed to be supported and has never prescribed to us what an IDLE program should look like.

As Tribal communities, we need space to grow and create. Having guidance and support has helped us to be successful in producing the end goal—speakers of our Indigenous languages. Developing strong speakers of our Indigenous languages will sustain us in powerful ways. For us at KCLC, having a good foundational understanding in language immersion techniques and DLE (primarily supported by and through Dr. Sims and Dr. Blum Martínez) and visiting the Aha Punana Leo model in Hawaii with Namaka Rawlins was key in helping us to understand IDLE. At KCLC, our work stands on the shoulders of the recognition and mandate developed 27 years ago by the Pueblo de Cochiti Tribal Council that something be done to revitalize our language, beginning with the creation of the Cochiti Summer Language Revitalization Immersion Program. KCLC has built from the best practices of that program and extended that work, continuing a humble legacy of practice, reflection, and culturally appropriate implementation of our language for the “sake of our children”, our people, and our future.

We recognize each Tribe each community is different and will need to adjust program design and implementation to meet their linguistic and community needs. We hope that it is helpful to see our work at KCLC, as we too continue learning from our experiences and from our mentors. Ultimately, what has helped me as the Education Director and Co-Founder of KCLC to do this work is the *love* I have for our children, our families, and our people. Here are some guiding principles or critical elements for reflection that have continued to hold us accountable to our work in implementing an IDLE approach at KCLC. These guiding principles may be helpful to

others who will need to reflect upon their own community's needs and strengths in thinking about and structuring IDLE programming for the sake of their children, community, and beyond.

Critical Elements for Reflection

The number-one end goal of KCLC is oracy- that is, developing future speakers of the language. The following points were/are considered in developing and maintaining our IDLE program to best serve our community's need for children learning our precious Keres language.

Determine Your Goals

Oracy-Fluent Speakers

- Who are the fluent speakers of your language?
- Are they able to be language models for younger people?
 - If not, could they be language models for future language teachers?

Oracy-Learners

- How old are the learners you are targeting?
- What kinds of language expectations does the community hold for that age group? Everyday language? Conversations with older speakers? More formal uses of the language?
- How will you bring learners and speakers together? And for how long?
- Who will lead this program and what kind of training do they need?

Identifying Resources

- Supporting elders/fluent speakers
- Understanding 2nd language acquisition of children
- Understanding 2nd language acquisition of adults
- Understanding the importance of intergenerational learning and creating opportunities for interaction
- Understanding how to promote language use among learners without criticizing or laughing at them
- Understanding how lateral violence (abusing one another in our own communities in similar ways the colonizer/boarding schools abused our people) has impacted your community

Community Building to Support Stamina Needed to Revitalize and Maintain the Language

- What is community building?
- Why is it needed?
- What are the resources available to support language development?

Identifying Resources

- In the community?

- In the schools?
- In the state?

Identify the structure of your IDLE. What kind of structure will this program have and what kind of structure is needed to support a solid IDLE?

Considerations for Teaching the Language

- Where will the language be taught?
- How can thematic teaching help with language learning?
- How does one develop culturally based curriculum and materials?

What are the ways of teaching and learning that are natural to the Tribe/community?

- Culturally relevant practices
- Culturally sustaining practices
- Historical precedents of language development

IDLE Program—Are you considering a traditional literacy program?

- Who in the community reads the heritage language?
- Who will teach others to read this language, and how?
- What materials are available in the heritage language?
- What role will heritage literacy play in the program?

Organize the Instructional Setting

- Are two or more Indigenous language speakers present?
- Do learners have opportunities to hear fluent interactions in the Indigenous language?

What will be the role of English, and English literacy?

- What portion of the day/week will be devoted to English?
- What kind of English language curriculum will best fit with the Indigenous curriculum? (It is important that the Indigenous curriculum be developed first so that it leads, rather than the English curriculum leading).
- Who will teach the English portion of the day/week?
- What kind of training will these people need so that they understand and respect the importance of the Indigenous curriculum?

Non-Indigenous staff who work in IDLE

- *must* remember that they work in service of the IDLE program/Tribe
- must remember to decenter themselves
- must remember to decenter English

Indigenizing the Curriculum and Instruction

Recognition that Indigenous Knowledge Systems are

- embedded in the language
- land based/culture based
- community based

Recognition of a Tribal view of giftedness

- According to Eunice Romero-Little in her article *Identifying Giftedness Among Keresan Pueblo Indians: The Keres Study* (1994), the Pueblo concept of giftedness focuses on the sharing of a person's gifts and talents with the community.
 - **Domain One:** A'dzii ayama' guunu—Humanistic Affective Qualities
 - Endurance, perseverance, inner strength, self-discipline
 - Self-initiation, motivation, inner drive, desire, and willingness to participate
 - Generosity (effort, time, material, knowledge), sharing
 - Empathy
 - Cooperation, sacrificing for others
 - Conviction in Native culture
 - Consistent participation in Native activities
 - Modeling behavior
 - **Domain Two:** Weeka'dza—Special Linguistic Abilities
 - Speech delivery
 - Song composition
 - Singing
 - Traditional advisement
 - Bilingual proficiency
 - **Domain Three:** Dzii guutuni—Ingenuity-Cultural Knowledge
 - Knowledge
 - Keen interest
 - Hunting
 - Housekeeping
 - **Domain Four:** Kaam 'asruni—Creativity Associated with Special Psychomotor Abilities
 - Creation of Traditional Art Forms, i.e., drum, pottery, and jewelry making
 - Drumming
 - Dancing

Recognition of Needed Areas Not Part of the Gifted Domains

- Seeing gifts through our own languages and worldview

Recognition of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1983)

- Interpersonal
- Verbal/Linguistic
- Intrapersonal
- Visual/Spatial
- Naturalist
- Verbal Linguistic
- Logical/Mathematical
- Musical
- Bodily/Kinesthetic

Settings

- Classroom
- Community
- Mountains
- Hills
- Rivers
- Where else?

Relationships

- Intergenerational
- Application of community relations
- Tribal clanship and kinship systems
- Family and community support

Time and space

- Western calendar
- Tribe's traditional calendar
- Quiet time for reflection and being still for self and others (a value of Pueblo people) (C. P. Bird - personal communication)
- Time for developing curriculum and instruction
- How is space made available for demonstrations, presentations, active engagement for song and dance?
- How are visitors, i.e., parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, Tribal leaders, and others made to feel welcome?



Definitions:

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

“What are Indigenous knowledge Systems (IKS)?

Indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and Indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. Sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Societies from all parts of the world possess rich sets of experiences, understanding, and explanations. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource-practices, social interactions, ritual, and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world’s cultural diversity and provide a foundation for locally appropriate sustainable development.

What are the characteristics of Indigenous Knowledge System?

Indigenous Knowledge is: 1. Local: It is rooted to a particular set of experiences and generated by people living in those places. It has been said that transferring that knowledge to other places runs the risk of dislocating it. 2. Orally transmitted or transmitted through imitation and demonstration. Writing it down changes some of its fundamental properties.

(<https://www.herald.co.zw/indigenous-knowledge-systems-explained/>)

Settler-Colonialism- The goal of settler-colonization is the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity. Historically, so. The settler-colonial agenda involved committing genocide by murdering Indigenous peoples. That agenda also meant stealing land through treaties that were later broken or ignored. Today, settler-colonialism plays out in the erasure of Indigenous presence. Understanding settler-colonialism as both a historical position and a present-day practice helps students see how they fit into a settler-colonial system—and how that system shapes the impact of their actions, regardless of their intent. Those of us with primarily European ancestry, in particular, continue to benefit the most from that initial colonization and erasure of Indigenous presence. As you teach students about settler-colonialism, it is important that they understand that this isn’t about guilt. Rather, this is a reckoning. (Morris, 2019)

Survivance- Anishinaabe scholar and writer Gerald Vizenor defines survivance as ‘an active sense of presence, the continuance of Native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion of an estate, and in that sense, the estate of Native survivancy’. “Survivance is more than mere survival—it is a way of life that nourishes Indigenous ways of knowing.” (Vizenor, 2008)

Whiteness- *Whiteness* and white-racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal. (nmaahc.si.edu)

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