MIIMAWÍT: OUR WAYS, OUR LANGUAGE, OUR CHILDREN, OUR LAND

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Miimawít: Our Ways, Our Language, Our Children, Our Land

Shix̲ páchway, ink nash waníksha Twálatin My name is Twálatin (Gregory) Sutterlict and I am Yakama and Chehalis. I am a language activist. I started this by speaking in **Ichishkíin** (the Yakama language) and, unfortunately, this language is endangered. This dissertation is focused on **Ichishkíin** language revitalization and preservation and gaining an understanding of how to start a Yakama School, **Miimáwit** Immersion School. This school will hold Yakama ways of life as its core and will teach using **Ichishkíin** only.

The plan is, as you read, you will learn a little about the Yakama Nation, the Yakama people, and the situation that the **Ichishkíin** language is in and why. We look at literature that discusses some of the issues that have caused language endangerment such as: boarding schools, erasure, marginalization, etc. We also look at literature that discusses how Indigenous people are striving for language revitalization, tribal sovereignty, and self-determination through education and immersion schools. We take an in-depth look at some of these Immersion schools to see how they were started, what type of school they are, what material is taught, how much of their traditional ways of life are taught, how much, if any, English is taught, and what the people think about their school.

I conducted a survey collaboratively through which we learn what parents/caretakers of Yakama children have to say about their children's education. I analyze responses through the

lens of nine Yakama virtues identified by one of our treasured elders (Wilkins, 2008). I also collaborated to collect narratives through community conversations with 1) a Yakama elder, 2) parent/caretakers of Yakama children, and 3) a representative from an Indigenous Immersion to learn more about how we might shape an immersion school of our own. Four themes surfaced to guide my presentation of these conversations: **Ichishkíin** Language Revitalization, Yakama Self-Determination, Spirituality and Prayer, and Love. These themes and voices provide a foundation for us to start building towards **Miimawít** Immersion School.

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Kw'ałanúusha matash inmí myánashma. I would like to thank my family and, especially, my children. There were times that we could have been enjoying life but instead I was doing school things. I will never get that time back! I hope you see the value of what I was trying to do. The Ichishkíin language could disappear never to be heard again; but, many of us Language Activists will step up and dedicate our lives to revitalize the language that our ancestors have spoken for so long. There are many issues and concerns in these times but that is why we need Language Activists to step up and make language revitalization equally as important as the air we breathe or the water that all life requires in order to live. A Language Activist will retire from this work only when they begin their journey to the next world. **Kw'ałanúusha mash** to **Tux̱ámshish** (Virginia Beavert) who helped me to see how beautiful and extremely important **Ichishkíin** is; it is more important than us now because those Yakamas that are not yet born should have the opportunity to speak this language. **Ichishkíin** is a language that connects us to our ancestors, our elders, our people, our communities, the land, the animals, the plants that feed us and that are medicine, and to our future unborn Yakama people. I would like to thank all those people that have been in my life and that helped me get to where I am at now. I wish to thank all those children that I have been able to witness begin to learn **Ichishkíin**; I have been blessed to be able to learn and practice using **Ichishkíin** with you all. It is never too late to begin learning your language. I would like to thank all the people from academia that have helped me stick to it and the people at Heritage University and at the University of Oregon have been very special to me. Lastly, I would like to thank the most amazing people on earth and that is to my fellow Language Activists! Our work is of the utmost importance and sometimes it feels like we have to convince people how important it is; but we keep moving forward because our

Indigenous languages demand this of us. **Kw'ałanúusha matash** to you Language Activists for never giving up. **Tux̲ámshish** has been doing this work since she was a child and is now over 100 years old and hasn't even slowed down. Our work cannot allow it.

I dedicate this work to my family, my people, and to the Ichishkíin language that I have come to believe is the most beautiful thing that I have ever heard. I could see now why our warriors risked everything in order to save our language, our traditional ways, and our future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

Chapter Page

Chapter Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Figure Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One afternoon we were gathered in one of the larger and notable auditoriums in the area and the place was filled. Leaders of the Yakama Nation, including the chairman of the tribe, the families of the children that were in our program, the teachers and administration were all there, and there were Yakama elders there, too. The chairman of the tribe just finished speaking to the crowd and I knew I was after him. I was supposed to not only discuss the tremendous success of this year's **Ichishkíin** Language Bootcamp, but to discuss ways in how year-round **Ichishkíin** programming would benefit our youth. The chairman finished and we passed each other and shook hands. I was slightly nervous but not for speaking alone in front of the large crowd on a giant stage; I was nervous because this was a chance to discuss in front of elders and leaders how vital our **Ichishkíin** language is to our community. It was an unusual opportunity to discuss **Ichishkíin** revitalization in an auditorium of attentive listeners of all ages and experiences. It was my opportunity to impart knowledge about our programs in a way that would inspire their support of the language. I took a deep breath and began to talk:

> I am very fortunate to be participating and witnessing something pretty special. Not just that these children gave up some of their summer break by waking up early and going to school while most kids are sleeping in, but they began learning and using a lot of **Ichishkíin.** They began learning more of the traditional songs, and they became able to re-tell more of the legends we were sharing with them. The parents enjoyed how much the children would share about what they had been learning. The staff enjoyed learning and using more **Ichishkíin.** The children became more confident when it came to using **Ichishkíin** and singing, and many parents and staff mentioned that they wish they had a bootcamp for them as adults to

go to. Being a part of this was like getting a glimpse of how things could be if Yakama people took control of our Yakama children's education and took them out of the public schools who have been failing to teach them about their Yakama ways and language. Public schools will never view Yakama ways and language as an equal to English/Western ways and the children see that everyday. Public schools are not allowed to pray or speak of Creator and if it was allowed Christianity would be viewed as the 'norm'. Public schools have a hidden agenda to demand students obey rules and this all works towards maintaining and respecting a social class system. Our Yakama school will focus on our ways and our language; singing and praying will be done all throughout the day; and the children will be loved for who they are as Yakama children.

Cheering and shouting came from the audience which was somewhat surprising because many Yakamas say that we don't clap. This was also reinforcing that the Yakama people are ready for some positive changes with the Yakama language, Yakama way of life, and a new focus for our Yakama children. I also spoke about this subject at another gathering of Yakamas, although it was a smaller crowd, but again people cheered to show how much they support the efforts toward this goal. I am encouraged to see the increase of wider spread community interest and backing for **Ichishkíin** programming.

Yakama Nation Bootcamp

I want to describe here what the Yakama Nation **Ichishkíin** Language Bootcamp is to Yakama youth, for the reader to better understand how it promotes change for the good. I was asked to work for the Bootcamp in its second year as an **Ichishkíin sapsikw'ałá́** (*language teacher*). There was a total of three different locations and I was assigned to teach in **Tx̲ápnish** (*White Swan*). The reason that I wanted to support this program was because it was a program

that ran four days a week 8:00am-5:00pm and it focused on using and promoting **Ichishkíin** language and a Yakama way of life. This Bootcamp gave children longer and more intensive language access than had been offered previously. It was a great thing to participate in.

The first week was challenging for everyone because we were trying to develop a routine and get adjusted to the focus on **Ichishkíin**. It is a typical occurrence for **Ichishkíin** to be focus for an hour or two then back to the "important" stuff so it was pleasantly different to focus on **Ichishkíin** all-day. Once we got into the swing of things it became really enjoyable. I heard from students, teachers, parents, cooks, helpers, and everyone that was involved that they were learning and using so much **Ichishkíin** language and that the families were so happy with how much the children were learning. Teachers, teacher aids, cooks, and even administrators began to say that if there were a Bootcamp for adults they would join. Many people expressed how they wished that something like this had happened when they were younger. I couldn't have agreed more!

We were curious about how much language children could learn in these two weeks. Around 80% of the children took an informal language assessment to measure their **Ichishkíin** language fluency before starting Bootcamp; after the two weeks, a post test was given. It confirmed our hunches showing that they were learning and using more **Ichishkíin** at the end of Bootcamp than before. Our hunches were based on seeing their growing day-to-day practice/use which the test was not aptly able to capture.

I have worked with and supported many different **Ichishkíin** programs and they usually have one thing in common: that is we, as Yakamas, have never had complete control of what took place in the program. The federal government, Washington state, or the school district usually were in charge of or at least had to approve our programming. They would not allow

certain ceremonies that they considered 'prayer'; we would not be allowed to cook or prepare our traditional foods because the cooks did not have a food service license. I remember, a time when I was teaching in an after-school language program and one day, a classroom teacher entered my room to tell a student, "That is not the correct way to sit on a chair now, is it? Please turn around and sit on the chair the proper way." We did not quite get back on track with our lesson because of this disrespectful interruption of learning and focus.

I feel that the Yakama Language **Ichishkíin** Language Bootcamp really gave me a glimpse of what it would be like to have our own school for our Yakama children. This dissertation demonstrates how time is not in abundance, the community is ready for positive change, and the **Miimawít** Immersion School I argue for here could be a major step towards making this dream of change a reality. Data from a parent and caretaker survey, elder interview, and parent interviews provide evidence of this, showing a desire within our community for Yakama children to learn more of their language and way of life. Chapter IV discusses this data at length and shows the prominence **Ichishkíin** language holds in participant responses from surveys and interviews and the community interest in teaching our children the Yakama language (**Ichishkíin**). During informal conversations, too, before conducting interviews and while explaining intentions for this work, participants expressed excitement at the idea of forming our own school focused on **Ichishkíin** and our Yakama way of living.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of this dissertation and its structure. It was important to me to begin by describing a personal experience which watered the sprouts for this work through reassurance from my community about providing significant change to benefit our Yakama children and their future through embedding their education in our language and way of life. This work is very personal, and I wanted to begin by situating us within that context.

Chapter II reviews academic literature beginning with ways formal schooling, and schools have acted as a site of colonization. I then turn to ways Native communities have worked to repurpose education to serve their own Indigenous language revitalization and self-determination, looking at examples from seven different schools along with a bird's eye view of other Indigenous Language Programs. This literature provides support in showing the success that immersion schools have shown in contributing to language growth and revitalization, as well as in educating children in more traditional and loving methods. I show how this literature illustrates the ways Indigenous Immersion schools vary as well as ways in which they are similar. I then turn to the theoretical framework and its application to this work. This includes how Yakama ways of knowing and being are important to include in education and education research, also presenting a picture of language revitalization specific to an **Ichishkíin** context, Yakama self-determination, and considerations of spirituality, prayer and love in an educational context.

There is a common misconception, including within our own Indigenous communities, that experts' hold degrees from universities. While it is true that many experts have been educated in Universities, many Indigenous communities, including Yakama, highlight that our experts do not need a degree to hold such a title; those who have spent the time and honored the relationship with the land, animals, our elders, and our people are 'expert' leaders. Any person considered an 'expert' in an area can expect to be called on to utilize their skills for the sake of the community in a variety of ways. Our Yakama community has a wealth of these leaders, university scholars and community scholars alike, and I also share insight from their work to help guide me in my work here.

Chapter III, Research Methodology, discusses the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying this work. I then describe my research design, the Elder, language program representative, and parents and caretakers, who contributed their voices in this study through conversations and/or a survey. I describe my methods of data collection and management, my approach to analyzing the data, my role in this work, assumptions and limitations of this study.

The Parent/Caretaker survey is discussed in depth in Chapter IV. It was a fun experience to put together and to successfully complete in collaboration with my partner and colleague, Regan Anderson. We put together gift bundles of **Ichishkíin** language materials we have developed over the years to share as thank you gifts for participants who lent their voices, time, and energy to this work. We were fortunate to have good discussions, formally and informally, with community members and other supporters throughout this process. Chapter IV begins with a presentation of results, shared with Regan, and followed by my own analysis of the survey data through the lens of our honored Yakama elder, **Kussumwhy**'s (Lavina Wilkins), Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation (Wilkins 2008).

Chapter V takes a look at Community Conversations. The surveys were very helpful but we also wanted to get more of an in-depth one-on-one conversation with three different groups: 1) a Yakama Elder, 2) eight different parents and caretakers of Yakama children, and 3) representatives of Tribal programs, one from the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS), an immersion school of the Mohawk people which serves as a stellar example of self-determination through schooling that aligns well with Yakama Nation's ideals for self-determination and educational sovereignty, and one from Yakama Nation who works with families and children in the community.

In my final chapter, Chapter VI, I present ways the survey and conversations work together to inform how we can structure education for Yakama children to connect with their language and culture and become strong and supported leaders in our community. I also discuss implications for next steps and future directions in this multi-generational work that is language revitalization. Finally I share why this work is of value in the field of Education and education research more generally.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review focuses on three areas. First, I provide an overview of literature concerning how Native peoples are taking the education of their children into their own hands more and more. Next, I present implications from these examples for my own work in developing a school at Yakama Nation, then outline my theoretical framework which comes from my language and teachings from Elders who were taught by their Elders for generations. Within this framework, I discuss **Ichishkíin** language revitalization efforts, Yakama self–determination, spirituality and prayer, and love. Finally, I provide a summary of this chapter.

Review of research and scholarship that informs the study

For over 500 years Indigenous peoples have had to struggle to save their people, their ways of life, and their languages. It started with outright genocide when settlers sought to eliminate all Indigenous people (Bastien et al., 1999). Indigenous people are resilient, however, and we survived those attempts by the simple fact that we still exist. Once the elimination phase ended, they tried to take away who we were through policies such as boarding schools. (Hornberger et al., 2016). Boarding schools were a horrific creation where over 100,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend (Smith, 2004). Generation after generation, Indigenous children were taught not to practice our traditional ways because they were considered evil and not to speak our traditional languages because they were simple and barbaric. We were supposed to be broken down with little hope; we were not supposed to have strong relationships within our community or to be connected with our land (Simpson, 2017).

Indigenous people are resilient, and you see more and more movements to strengthen our old traditional ways through language revitalization, education, and activism are a part of our

lives today. It is important that we remember how strong our people and our ways are and have always been. Jacob (2020) uses the metaphor of an apple to describe that our people and cultures "have all the best traits sought in apples: sweetness, beautiful varying skin color, resilience against the bruisings of life, and persistent shelf life, for sure," (p. 42). Many Indigenous communities are taking control of their children's education by starting their own schools where they can teach their traditional ways as well as their languages (Henne-Ochoa, 2018).

Indigenous people tend to have a strong connection with their environment and I have heard elders mention that the environment understands Indigenous languages better than English. An Indigenous language is meant to be taught with all its connections to the land and the people (Gomashie, 2019); it was never meant to be broken down like a code as a linguist might do (Henne-Ochoa, etal, 2020). Having this work take place at schools makes sense because children spend so much of their time there compared to the time they spend with parents and/or families. The amount of time it takes to learn a language is considerable which makes schools a fitting location for language learning and use (Wilson & Kamana, 2009). Because of these factors, many communities establish immersion programs in an effort to envelop their children in language, culture, community, and place, and to resist the influence of generations of harmful policies and practice.

Immersion teaching and learning is rigorous. With it comes challenges of building materials and curriculum to support both teaching and learning. This is an endeavor that requires commitment to our people's ways. Levina Wilkins (2008), a Yakama elder and fluent speaker, speaks to these values and reminds us to face our challenges with courage:

> **Yáych'unał** (*Not afraid of any type of challenge; courage; heroic perseverance*)
>
> To show courage. No matter how hard life gets, to never give up. To be willing to put up with negative behaviors and pressure from others in order to do the right thing. To be a leader when others hesitate to do something (p. 31).

Levina Wilkins **Kussumwhy**, is an elder that I have been fortunate to know and work with. She wrote the Nine Yakama Virtues with her students to help them and others live in a more connected traditional manner. I use these Virtues here in my research to keep me on a good Yakama path. I use each of the Nine virtues in this paper in my data analyses and all throughout the paper. This also demonstrates for others one way to utilize them in research.

The following sections present various topics discussed in the literature around Native education. Specifically, the first section considers schooling as a site of colonization and the impacts of boarding schools widely in Yakama, and in my own family. The next section looks at ways different Native communities are repurposing schools to better serve their children and communities and includes more in-depth descriptions of how six particular schools and organizations are resisting efforts of colonization. Schools included in these subsections are: Rough Rock Demonstration School, Akwesasne Freedom School, a variety of Hawaiian schools, Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School, Tse'hootsoi' Dine' Bi'olta' Dine', Navajo, School in Window Rock, and Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods. These descriptions are followed by a more bird's eye view of other Native education programs across Indian country. In the final section I discuss five themes that are prominent in the literature about the schools discussed.

Schooling as a site of colonization

The era of boarding schools/residential schools for Indigenous children of the United States and Canada was a traumatic chapter in history that is still impacting our Indigenous communities in many ways. Child (1998) describes how boarding schools affected Indigenous families. She writes about how children were being forced away from their families and taken far away. Some parents tried to hide their children and some tried to refuse but many times that ended up in jail time, Alcatraz prison, or worse. Some families wanted their children to attend boarding schools because they were struggling to survive on the reservations, or because that is where their siblings and cousins were. Not all boarding schools were the same, but they did take children away, forbid them from visiting home, change their names to English names, replace tribal clothing with uniforms, cut their hair, forbade them to speak their tribal language, enforced harsh punishments for disobedience, and attempted to "civilize" the children through the lens of White supremacy. Some boarding schools starved children some were very unsanitary some never sent the children home to visit and some parents never saw their children again after being taken away.

The US/European/Western hold what many people consider to be the highest standard of knowledge in the world. Simpson (2017) states "…the idea that we are naturally *less* than our white counterparts— continues to produce generations of Native youth that believe they are, or, perhaps more dangerously, believe that achieving what matters in settler colonial Canadian society—degrees, economic prosperity, home ownership, or whatever—makes them a more valuable Indigenous person. It does, but only through the lens of white supremacy," (p. 98). Colonization is so engrained that some Indigenous people have followed colonial ways of thinking even believing that we should not act the way we normally would because it may go

against the dominant society's view of how we should behave (Brayboy, 2005). A good example of this is a Yakama elder told me a story of when he was spear fishing, as our ancestors have done for generations, and then one day he was told "hey we can't fish like that anymore." He did not want to get in trouble so he stopped fishing the way that his grandparents taught him. Indigenous people's knowledge and views were denied and marginalized which allowed the colonizers to come in and do what they thought was best (Smith, 2013).

Many people nowadays will talk about boarding schools like they are the distant past and tell Indigenous people to let go of that past, but we cannot and must not. I have experiences resulting from some of my family attending boarding schools. The most obvious effect being that I, my children, and my father grew up speaking English and were disconnected from our traditional Yakama ways of life. My great-grandfather told my dad that he wished he would have taught him the language, but he did not want him to receive the punishment that he received for speaking his language at school. My brother and I started to develop a hunger for learning our traditional Indigenous ways at a young age. Later we found out that my dad supported our decision and participated with us to some extent, but in the back of his mind was a persistent thought that we were participating in evil practices. He fought those thoughts and realized that they were embedded deep into his being from attending boarding school from a young age. They tried to keep us from our traditional ways and our language but I am teaching my children now and from a young age they have been using our language. Now is a good time for Indigenous people to design and utilize a pedagogy that takes apart colonialism, strengthens communities, and heals (Grande, 2008).

Native Community Efforts to Repurpose Schooling

More and more Indigenous communities are taking control of their children's education around not only *what* they learn but *how* they learn it, though this undertaking is not without challenges. For example, Manuelito (2005) discusses how the Ramah people, a satellite community from the main Navajo reservation in New Mexico, created their own community school and describes many of the struggles they faced in the process. They bought back some of their own land for their school which began in the 1970s in deteriorating buildings and canvas tents, but they now have grown into a multi-million-dollar K-12 campus and the school is run in a way that largely supports their Tribe's self-determination. This is just one example of how one community fought to build programming for their children that aligned with their own lifeways. Underriner (2020) shares that academic institutions once used to eliminate Indigenous language and culture are now places to teach these same things.

The following six sections address this same theme describing six communities' efforts to strengthen schooling to better fit students' educational needs then a bird's eye view of several other Native education programs.

Rough Rock Demonstration School

McCarty (1989) discusses how the Navajo people were able to start the Rough Rock Demonstration School in 1966. The school has a unique story behind its beginning as it was the first locally run school with a governing board consisting of all Navajo. The majority of the Rough Rock community of about 1,250 people are herders and farmers and there was no actual permanent settlement in that location before the school began. As the school began to grow, people started moving there and a town and community grew. The premise of the school was to demonstrate whether 'uneducated' Indians could successfully run a school based on what they

thought their children should know. They determined the measures of success. Moreover, the school served more than the area's children, it served the community. It had an educational aspect to it but also had a community service piece that would help with economic development, cultural activities, school-community relationship, and more.

Rough Rock Demonstration School faced many struggles along the way including a high-turnover rate of non-Navajo teachers; financial instability where sometimes they could not pay the teachers; and even the weather and road conditions which caused students to miss a lot of days. Despite these challenges, the Rough Rock Demonstration School was a success in a variety of ways: it helped the local economy tremendously, brought the community together, received national attention, and inspired many other Indigenous communities to start their own schools.

Akwesasne Freedom School

The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS), of the Mohawk people, has it's own distinctive story that many people may not be familiar with. White (2015) discusses how the tribe was divided with traditional longhouse people on one side and tribal council and the police on the other side. In 1979 a chief and leader of the longhouse, Loran Thompson, was arrested for stealing chainsaws to prevent a fence from being built along the Akwesasne's border (including on Thompson's property). His arrest resulted in a two-year standoff with snipers, helicopters, pipe bombs, and moats. During this time parents started AFS behind the barricades. Children would play in the bunkers while their community was in this standoff. New York State threatened parents with jail if they did not send their kids back to public school, but AFS held their ground as actions of a sovereign nation and eventually kept their right to educate their children in their own way. "The AFS was started out of necessity but quickly became a symbol of Mohawk sovereignty and self-determination," (White, 2015, p. 58).

AFS had many struggles including funding. They never wanted to receive state or federal money because they did not want any outside organization to tell them how to educate their children. To support the school they charged tuition (when possible), fundraised, accepted donations, received grants, and utilized volunteers from the community. At times, the teachers would draw names to see who would get paid that week. Parents of the school went above and beyond for AFS including driving buses, cleaning the grounds, and trying to raise money (White, 2015).

Students from AFS receive an Indigenous Model of Holistic Education that serves the children's whole self. The school has small classes of mixed-ages, and it is more flexible without all the competition and hierarchies of most schools. AFS believes that much of their children's education should be done outdoors in an experiential and nature-based method. Typical core subjects that are taught as well, such as math and science. Standardized tests are replaced with student portfolios, teacher notes, and observations. Kanienke:ha, the Mohawk language, is the core of AFS. Graduates from the school have gone to college and been successful. As White writes, "[s]tudents at the AFS have shown high academic performance, but perhaps more importantly they are grounded in their individual and cultural identities, have high self-esteem and self-confidence, and are given the necessary tools to be successful in their future endeavors," (p. 17). This quote illustrates how Indigenous education supports our children to be successful both within their own community and in the larger social context (White, 2015).

Hawaiian Schools

The Language Revitalization work that has been done with the Hawaiian Language is well-known and also for the Hawaiian Language Immersion schools that operate across different islands. The Áha Pünana Leo began running 13 schools throughout the islands in different

spheres – some of the schools are private others are public charter schools some operate within the public school and some are laboratory schools.

The first official Hawaiian Language Immersion class was a preschool that opened in 1984 called Pünana Leo "nest of voices." This type of school would become known throughout the world as "Language Nests." The Nests are places where Hawaiian elders can teach their Native language to the children but also teach about Hawaiian culture and traditions. The Nests do not just focus on the children but also require families to be actively involved by attending Hawaiian language classes and school events, and to use Hawaiian language in their homes. Many of the schools start off as preK-6th grade charter schools then move to public schools for the remaining 7th-12th grades. Most of the earlier classes start off with total immersion then later offer varied levels of partial immersion as you get into the higher grades (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007).

Most of these schools assess students following state benchmarks but many of the classes are too small to collect data on as state benchmarks require 20 or more students to report scores. Of those who do report, overall scores for reading are low in many of the schools. One of the schools reported that no secondary students were proficient in math, and in general, the older students scored better than the younger students in all subjects. There are also some issues between the statistics reported from the norm-referenced tests (SAT) and the state benchmarks exams; for example, the norm referenced test reported proficiency in reading and math, for eighth and tenth graders, at 67% but the benchmarks reported 33% for the same group and content (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007). Akter (2014) was discussing how Indigenous languages are marginalized and says:

> ...the language of modern imperialism is English and that it has vested political, economic, and cultural interests in disseminating the language. In so doing, it continuously suppresses, marginalizes and displaces indigenous languages around the world, (p. 8)

McCarty (2003) was discussing Hawaiian immersion schools and mentioned:

> Although the programme has emphasised language revitalisation as opposed to academic achievement, Hawaiian immersion schooling has yielded significant academic benefits. Immersion students have garnered prestigious scholarships, enrolled in college courses while still in high school, and passed the state university's English composition assessments, despite receiving the majority of their English, science, and mathematics instruction in Hawaiian, (p. 154)

Academic scores are often viewed as the most important factor when comparing schools but there could be many reasons for the scores to vary.

Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School

Mary Hermes (2007) shares an inspirational story of participating in starting up the Waadookodaading Ojibwe school in Wisconsin. Hermes begins by claiming that her research is subjective and how she is both an insider and an outsider of the Native communities that she works with. Her collaborative research in this long-term project centered on culture-based curriculum development. Interviews showed that just about every elder wanted their Ojibwe language to be taught in schools and participants agreed on immersion as an excellent way to revitalize language. Charter schools, they recognized, allow more community control in addition to offering financial support from the state. From this research, with two other people, Hermes started an Ojibwe language immersion charter school.

She describes a major struggle in working with an endangered language is the feeling of a sense of urgency and that the work is never finished. A lack of language material and resources made them rely heavily on their parents/families to step up and help out. Waadookodaading Ojibwe Immersion school is much different from what the people are used to and that took a while for people to adjust. Finding Ojibwe language teachers is also a challenge. Fortunately, five Ojibwe language teachers that relocated themselves to be a part of Waadookodaading.

The school began with a year-long pilot program where elders, teachers, and students worked together to teach a kindergarten class. They used this time to plan their charter school which began the following year in 2001. The charter school's mission is to, "create fluent speakers, intergenerational relationships, and environmental awareness," (p. 59). The school now has 25 students and seven full-time staff. The status of the language has been raised from 'dying' to a language that is used every day by children. The school does not rely on data to demonstrate their success but instead defines it on their own terms by three factors: 1) the quick and successful implementation of their dream school, 2) the near 100% parent involvement with the school, and 3) the self-motivation of the students to learn the language, (Hermes 2007).

Tse'hootsoi' Dine' Bi'olta' Dine', Navajo, School in Window Rock

The Navajo Nation is one of the largest tribes in the US with more than 255,000 members and their lands reach out into three states. In the middle of the Navajo nation there is a public charter two-way immersion K-6 school that utilizes Dine' and English. The school has around 250 students, 15 Dine' language teachers, and 3 bilingual teachers able to provide instruction in Dine' or English. The school uses total immersion with the younger children and by the second grade 10% of the class is run in English. Each year, English instruction is increased by 10% until

the 6th grade where there is a 50/50 split in language of instruction. The Dine' language instructors focus on verbs for communication (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007).

Dine' Cultural Content Standards are utilized in all core subjects, but they also follow state benchmarks and report 36% proficiency in reading for third graders, 73% for math, and 59% for writing. The fifth-grade students had 50% proficiency in writing but 10% for reading and 30% for math. When Arizona measured state standards, they found that the students in the Dine' language immersion class did better in two out of the three core areas. In math 73% of the Dine' language immersion class were proficient as compared to 15% from the English language class. The Dine' language immersion class had 50% proficiency in writing whereas the English language class again had 15%. The English language class did do slightly better in English than the Dine' language immersion class. By using both Dine' and Western state assessments with students, the community is able to track success both on their own terms and in comparison, to Western standards (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007).

Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR)

Another example comes from the Yurok people of California who developed a small 6th-12th grade charter school, the Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR) (Ewing & Ferrick, 2012). KRECR does not run like other typical US schools as curriculum is highly tailored to individual student needs. Students are not divided by grade but are assigned to cohorts with an advisor. They learn to solve their own problems and aren't made to look at the teachers/adults like they have all the answers, and their advisor is ready to help as needed. The students learn the Yurok language as well as the culture, also working closely with the tribal council to learn how the tribal government works. Students develop a Learning Plan, working at their own pace, developed by the student, the teachers, and the advisor. Each student is given

some performance standards to work on, and they can test out of a standard whenever they are ready. Preparing the students for college is a big part of the school's mission as well as teaching them to solve their own problems.

The discipline at KRECR is not like your typical school. They try to mirror the Tribe's method and "settle up" in front of the whole school using a restorative justice process with parent involvement. These discipline methods have been very successful and eliminated most power struggles because they use a 'Love and Logic' model. The school regularly takes part in tribal council government, and they want their students to really understand sovereignty. The teachers like the way the school operates and are allowed to focus on building relationships rather than spending all their time building lesson plans, (Ewing & Ferrick, 2012).

A Bird's Eye View of Other Indigenous Language Programs

My partner and colleague, Regan Anderson, and I collaborated on a previous research project to collect general information about several Indigenous education programs that use some level of language immersion. I adapt this work here with her permission. Out of 47 schools identified, we were able to obtain information about 30 different Indigenous language immersion schools answering eight (8) general questions around how they function in offering tribal language instruction. These questions include: program name, tribe and language, percentage of immersion instruction, grade levels and whether they have an infant/toddler program, western vs. Tribal frameworks for operation, school type (public, private, charter, etc), funding sources, and parent or community involvement. To compose this list, we turned to information available online through websites and social media as well as schools mentioned in the literature and through established connections and word of mouth. The 17 identified schools excluded from this list were only left out because we were unable to make contact or find enough information

online. There are still many schools we have not been able to learn about in depth, but we do intend to continue this work, expanding on this inventory, learning from and collaborating with other communities. Some had complete or partial information available online and some we contacted by phone to complete our inquiry. The 8 questions with responses are summarized below. Table 1, pp.43-48, presents information about the schools.

i. Program Names

We collected information for the following thirty (30) Native language immersion education programs, all of which practice varying levels of language immersion instruction (discussed more in question 3). They are listed here in (English) alphabetic order.

1) 'Ehunuikaimalino
2) ʻAha Pūnana Leo
3) Akwesasne Freedom School
4) Alo Kēhau o ka ʻĀina Mauna (Honokaʻa High & Inter)
5) Ānuenue
6) Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik Immersion School
7) Blanche Pope Elementary
8) Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy
9) Hāna High & Elementary
10) Hau'ula Elementary
11) Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo PCS
12) Kahuku High & Intermediate
13) Kalama Intermediate
14) Kamakau Lab PCS

15) Kawaikini PCS

16) Kihew Waciston Immersion School

17) King Kekaulike High

18) Lāhainā Intermediate

19) Lāhaināluna High

20) Molokai High: ’O Hina i ka Malama

21) Molokai Middle: ’O Hina i ka Malama

22) Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary

23) Nānākuli Elementary

24) Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Hilo High)

25) Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Iki Lab PCS

26) Pā'ia Elementary

27) Pūʻōhala Elementary

28) Salish school of Spokane

29) Tsehootsooi Dine Bi’olta

30) Waiau Elementary

ii. Tribe(s)/Language(s)

Of the thirty programs, seven different Indigenous languages are represented, listed here in alphabetical order. The number in parentheses represents how many of the schools teach in that language. The vast majority (24, or 80%) of languages represented is Hawaiian due to their implementation of language immersion programs in the public school system.

1) Cree (1)

2) Hawaiian (24)

3) Mohawk (1)

4) Navajo (1)

5) Salish (Colville Okanagan) (1)

6) Shoshone (1)

7) Yup'ik (1)

iii. Levels of Immersion

There are four major trends in the percentage of immersion offered through the schools. Three (or 10% of schools) offer 100% immersion through their entire program while sixteen (53%) of the schools offer full immersion up to a certain grade level after which point, they begin to incorporate English either as a subject, or in bilingual collaboration with their Indigenous language. Nine schools (30%) offer English as a subject but otherwise operate fully in the language. One school operates with 90% tribal language and 10% English, and one is 50% tribal language and 50% English all the way through the program. They are listed below in rough order of time spent in immersion from most to least. Given the tapered nature of immersion instruction for many of the schools, we list them according to the most at any point. Numbers in parentheses are provided after the language of instruction when there is more than one school operating in this way.

1) 100% Immersion
    a. 100% (Mohawk)
    b. 100% (Hawaiian)
    c. 100% babies-6 years (Hawaiian)
2) Begins at 100%, adding English over time
    a. 100% K-2nd grade, 50-50 3rd-5th, 100% English in 6th grade (Yup'ik)

b. 100% K-4th grade, ENG as 1 hour subject 5th (Hawaiian (2))

c. 100% K-4th grade, ENG as 1 hour subject 5th-6th (Hawaiian (4))

d. 100% K-4th grade, ENG as 1 hour subject 5th-8th (Hawaiian)

e. 100% K-4th grade, ENG as 1 hour subject 5th-12th (Hawaiian (3))

f. 100% PreK-4th, ENG as 1 hour subject 4th-12th (Hawaiian)

g. 100% K-4th, ENG as subject 5th – 6th, 50-50 7th-12th (Hawaiian)

h. 100% PreK-4th, ENG as 1 hour subject 5th-8th, 9th-12th instruction connected to community college (Hawaiian)

i. 100% babies-6th, 50-50 6th-12th (Salish)

j. 100% babies-4th, some ENG halfway through 4th (Cree)

3) English as subject

a. English as subject 6th-8th (Hawaiian (2))

b. 7th-8th (Hawaiian)

c. English as subject 9th (Hawaiian)

d. English as subject 7th-12th (Hawaiian)

e. English as subject 9th-12th (Hawaiian (4))

4) 90-10 (Navajo)

5) 50-50 (Shoshone)

iv. Differentiation - Grades/Levels/Ages

Four (13%) of the school's support programming for babies and young toddlers. Each of those four varies in the levels it extends to (4th, 6th, 8th, and 12th). One school serves PreK-12th grade. Sixteen schools (53%) begin at kindergarten and vary in the levels they extend through (up to 5th (2), 6th (5), 7th, 8th, and 12th (5). Finally, nine schools (30%) serve middle

and/or high school youth. Groups are listed by category of starting point (babies, preK, Kindergarten, and middle or high school) in order from youngest to oldest beginning ages/grades served. Associated languages are provided in parentheses along with numbers when more than one school of the same language is represented.

1) Beginning at babies
    a. Babies – 4th grade (Cree)
    b. 9 months – 6 years (Hawaiian)
    c. 1 year-12th grade (Salish)
    d. 18 months – 13/14 years (~8th grade) (Mohawk)
2) PreK-12th (Hawaiian)
3) Beginning at Kindergarten
    a. K-5th (Hawaii) (2)
    b. K-6th (Yup'ik, Navajo, Hawaii (4))
    c. K-6th (Navajo) – preschool on site
    d. K-7th (Shoshone)
    e. K-8th (Hawaii)
    f. K-12 (Hawaii) (5)
4) Beginning at middle or high school
    a. 6th-8th (Hawaii) (2)
    b. 7th-8th (Hawaii)
    c. 7th-12th (Hawaii)
    d. 9th (Hawaii)
    e. 9th-12th (Hawaii) (4)

v. Western Education or Tribal Education Framework

This question aimed to gain insight into the grounding frameworks from which schools operated but blurred at times with answers to question 6 and sometimes 7. Most of the schools are fully or partially under state jurisdiction (more on that in question 6) and obligated to follow mandates such as core classes and assessment methods. However, being immersion schools prioritizing language, several of the schools operating under these parameters reported language and culture as their grounding force despite the mandates. Formal interviews in the future will allow for more elaboration about this particularly nuanced topic and tension. The schools' practices in this way fall under three main categories: Those that follow primarily (1) a cultural framework (2) a mixture of Western and Tribal frameworks, and (3) Western Frameworks. Two of the schools (6%) are able to teach completely in their own cultural way, eight of the schools (27%) use a mixture, and twenty (67%) follow state standards.

1) Indigenous Cultural Framework
    a. Complete tribal control, they know what their children need and do not require outside guidance. (Mohawk)
    b. Teaches in own way (Hawaiian)
2) Mixture of Western and Cultural Frameworks
    a. Follows province's curriculum but works with tribe to teach in own way following four principles (language development, kinship, identity, and reminding youth who they are). (Cree)
    b. Focuses on own way of meeting standards (culture-based math, etc.). (Yup'ik)

c. Meets state standards but embeds them in language and culture. (Navajo)

d. Western standards embedded in language. (Salish)

e. Mixture – Western standards in math and science, etc. but infuses culture. (Hawaiian)

f. Teaches core classes but works with Elders, teach outside, focus on experiential learning. (Hawaiian)

g. Mixture of Western and traditional approaches. (Hawaiian)

h. Follows state requirements but has a period each day to teach in own way. (Shoshone)

3) Western/state Frameworks

a. Follows state standards (Hawaii (19))

b. Focus on core curriculum (Hawaiian)

vi. School Type – Public, Charter, Private

As mentioned, this question overlapped somewhat with the previous one. Schools fell under four types: Private, Tribal, Charter, and Public. Of the thirty schools, three (10%) are privately run, and one is run by the tribe. Of the six charter schools (20%), many operate in their own way but follow particular protocols, such as assessment and core classes. The remaining twenty schools (67%) are publicly run and follow state standards.

1) Private (Mohawk, Salish, Hawaiian)

2) Tribal (Cree)

3) Charter (Yup'ik, Shoshone, Hawaiian (4))

4) Public (Navajo, Hawaii (19))

vii. Funding Source(s)

Funding for schools came from a variety of sources ranging from completely independent, donations, tribal or band funds, grants, and state and federal funding. Many of the schools are funded through a mixture of sources as listed below.

1) State (Yup'ik, Navajo, Hawaii (20))
2) Independent (Mohawk)
3) Grants (Shoshone)
4) State and federal (Hawaii)
5) Grants and donations (Hawaii)
6) Grants, some from Dept. of Education (Hawaii)
7) Donation based, some tribe funds (Salish)
8) Band funds, some government funding for teachers (Cree)
9) Private, Federal, some from Dept. of Education (Hawaii)

viii. Parent and Community Involvement

All but two entities either strongly encourage or require parental involvement. Many of the schools offer language classes for parents (some even offering free childcare and family dinners to attend!).

1) No requirements/expectations
    a. (Navajo, Hawaii (19))
2) Encouraged
    a. Encouraged/supported – teachers make materials so parental involvement really helps (Yup'ik)
    b. (Highly) Encouraged (Cree, Shoshone, Hawaii)

c. Parent classes highly encouraged (Hawaii (3))

3) Mandatory Involvement

a. Family Program (Hawaii)

b. Mandatory involvement – language classes offered for parents 2 days per week with free childcare and dinner for families (Salish)

c. Mandatory involvement strongly encouraged – parents work in teams to clean the school on the weekend while children learn to care for the space during the week (Mohawk)

Table 1 presents the information outlined above in a more concise format. Future inquiry will include more information such as when and where the schools were founded, contact information/further resources, what kinds of credentials the teachers need to teach within each school or program, and who holds power over that credentialing (State? District? Tribe, etc.).

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools

#	Program Name, Tribe(s)/ Language(s)	% of Immersion	Grades/Levels (babies?)	Western or Tribal Framework	State Control over Curriculum?	Funding Source(s)	Parent/Community Involvement? Mandatory? Encouraged?
1	'Ehunuikaimalino, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-12th	K-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
2	ʻAha Pūnana Leo, Hawaiian	100	2-6 years, preschool infant toddler program (9mos-3years)	Tribal	No, nonprofit	grants donation	family program
3	Akwesasne Freedom School, Mohawk	100	18mos to 13/14 years old (~8th grade)	Mohawk way, don't need outside guidance	Independent, teach own way	non–recognized tribal organization independent	try for mandatory – 35-40 parents - teams, clean school on weekend. kids learn how during week.
4	Alo Kēhau o ka ʻĀina Mauna (Honokaʻa High & Inter), Hawaiian	English as subject	9	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
5	Ānuenue, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-12th	K-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools, continued

6	Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik Immersion School, Yup'ik	100 k-2nd, 3rd goes to 50-50, fully English at 6th grade	K-6	own language but meets standards (yup'ik math, etc.)	under school district charter school	state funding	lots of parent volunteers in classroom (teachers make own materials)
7	Blanche Pope Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-6th	K-6	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
8	Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy, Shoshone	50-50	K-7th	State requirements but period of own	Charter school	Grants	not mandatory but encouraged
9	Hāna High & Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-12th	K-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
10	Hau'ula Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-6th	K-6	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
11	Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo PCS, Hawaiian	100 introduce Eng. 1 hour 4th grade	prek–12th grade	all core program through Elders, taught through outside, experiential	public charter school, state has a little control (assessment)	grants, less from dept of ed per pupil	highly encouraged, not mandated most parents don't have language either, learn along with kids free classes offered

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools, continued

12	Kahuku High & Intermediate, Hawaiian	English as subject	7-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
13	Kalama Intermediate, Hawaiian	English as subject 6th-8th	6-8	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
14	Kamakau Lab PCS, Hawaiian	100 PreK-4th 5th starts 1hour English as subject 9th connect to community college (graduate w associates)	preK-12	mixture, infuse cultural but also math, science	public charter, some state control for assessment		highly encourage parent classes
15	Kawaikini PCS, Hawaiian	100 K-4th 5th -6th starts 1hour English as subject 50-50 7th-12th	K-12 (Feeder preschool, private not required)	core	charter	state, federal	encouraged, free classes

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools, continued

16	Kihew Waciston Immersion School, Cree	100 prek-4 halfway through 4th bring in English	Babies, prek-4	follow province's curriculum but work with tribe to do in own way: language development, kinship, identity, and reminding the youth about who they are.	Tribal school	started school with band money (not federal gov) but get $ for teachers from gov	participation encouraged
17	King Kekaulike High, Hawaiian	English as subject 9th-12th	9-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
18	Lāhainā Intermediate, Hawaiian	English as subject 6th-8th	6-8	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
19	Lāhaināluna High, Hawaiian	English as subject 9th-12th	9-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools, continued

20	Molokai High: ‘O Hina i ka Malama, Hawaiian	English as subject 9th-12th	9-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
21	Molokai Middle: ‘O Hina i ka Malama, Hawaiian	English as subject 7th-8th	7-8	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
22	Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th	K-5	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
23	Nānākuli Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-6th	K-6	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
24	Nā wahīokalani'ōpu' (Hilo High), Hawaiian	English as subject 9th-12th	9-12	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
25	Nāwahīokalani'ō pu'u Iki Lab PCS, Hawaiian	100	K-12	mixture	charter	partial through dept of ed, federal, private	encouraged
26	Pā'ia Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th	K-5	State standards	Public	State	No requirement

Table 1. Tribal Immersion Schools, continued

27	Pūʻōhala Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-8th	K-8	State standards	Public	State	No requirement
28	Salish school of Spokane, Salish - Colville Okanagan	100 babies-6th, 50-50 6th - 12th	1 year to 12th	Western standards in language	Private NA school not through tribe	some from tribes, donation based	mandatory - language classes for parents 2 days/week with childcare and dinner!!
29	Tsehootsooi Dine Bi'olta, Navajo	90-10	head start on site, K-6	public school so meet standard, but language and culture embedded	state school	state	
30	Waiau Elementary, Hawaiian	100 K-4th, English as subject 5th-6th	K-6	State standards	Public	State	No requirement

Common Themes Within the Literature

In learning about the schools described above (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007; Ewing & Ferrick, 2012; Hermes, 2007; McCarty, 1989; White, 2015), five themes emerged as prominent: 1) local control, 2) standards and accreditation, 3) funding, 4) finding qualified teachers and supportive administrators, and 5) parent and family involvement. I discuss each of these here in turn.

Local control

Given the history of Indigenous people's education with boarding schools, Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools, and public schools, it should be clear why Indigenous people might prefer a school where they have local control. The Rough Rock Demonstration School, in the Navajo Nation, had the world watching as they became the first school with control of their agenda and practices (McCarty 1989). There are varying levels of control that Indigenous Immersion schools have; the amount of control depends on many factors including the type of school and where the funding comes from. Many Indigenous Immersion schools are charter schools such as Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School that became a charter in May 2001 (Hermes, 2007) or the Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods, of the Yurok, which became a charter school in 2005 (Ewing & Ferrick, 2012). Local, Indigenous control works towards sovereignty, helping communities strengthen their children, language, lifeways, communities, and nationhood all at once.

State standards and accreditation

It is well documented that many Indigenous students struggle in mainstream schools (Riley et al, 2005); policymakers want students to be proficient in key areas of

education but Indigenous children, as well as other minority children, tend not to do well on standardized tests (Romero-Little 2010). For some schools, such as the Nāwahīokalani‘õpu‘u Laboratory School of Hawaii, their Hawaiian language immersion students outperform all other ethnic groups of the state on English standardized tests, and they have a 100% graduation rate (McCarty 2011). This trend supports tribes in defining their own standards and accreditation practices.

Funding

Schools of all kinds will struggle with funding and that is the same for most Indigenous Language Immersion Schools. The Rough Rock Demonstration school was a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded school (McCarty, 1989). The Native American Community Academy in New Mexico is a middle and high school that is a state-funded charter school (McCarty & Lee 2014). The Áha Pünana Leo of Hawaii charge parents tuition each month, but they also get money from the state as well as apply for foundation funding (Aguilera & LeCompte 2007). The Pemayetv Emahakv “Our Way” Charter School (PECS) of the Seminole people have a modern school that is run by the tribe who also covers 67% of the school’s funding (Ewing & Ferrick 2012). AFS does everything possible to be self–sufficient in their funding, raising money and taking pay cuts as needed so as not to have strings attached to their school’s governance (White, 2015).

Finding qualified teachers/supportive administrators

Staffing the schools with Indigenous language teachers was an issue for many of the immersion schools. It is particularly challenging when certification is required. To face this, Hawaiians end up hiring second-language learners as teachers (Aguilera and LeCompte, 2007) and the Waadookodaading Ojibwe school in Wisconsin must search in

neighboring reservations for Ojibwe speaking teachers (Hermes 2007). The Akwesasne Freedom School brings in parents and community members to help share teachings with their children when staffing falls short (White, 2015). The Pemayetv Emahakv "Our Way" Charter School (PECS) of the Seminole people hire highly educated teachers, non-tribal, to run their successful school (Ewing & Ferrick 2012).

Parent/family involvement

A common practice with the Indigenous language immersion schools is that parent, family, and community involvement is desired and greatly appreciated. At the Waadookodaading Ojibwe language immersion school parents are asked to volunteer eight hours a month (Hermes 2007). The Pemayetv Emahakv "Our Way" Charter School (PECS) of the Seminole people encourage family participation and the community is actively involved as a resource (Ewing & Ferrick 2012). Many of the Hawaiian schools offer language classes for parents and encourage involvement in school activities, such as helping with transportation, material development, and even helping out with the garden (p. 73).

Connection of Study with the Body of Knowledge in Which it is Grounded

Indigenous children have been forced to learn about Western/White/European history as told through the eyes of a White historian (Sabzalian, 2019). I have learned a lot about United States' presidents, the Greeks, the French, and even "war heroes" of the American Indian wars. I might actually know more about White history than I do my own Yakama history. I know about the famous Yakamas like Chief **Kamaikin** and **Smohalla**, but I do not know our history the way our elders do. The elders learned of our history the same way their elders learned – through intergenerational teachings.

Intergenerational teachings are what we ultimately aim to restore to aid a resurgence of our educational lifeways at Yakama Nation. Bringing elders into the classrooms and working with the children could be some beginning steps towards this goal. Having elders in the classes and helping everyone to stay in the language is immersion and it is one of the best ways to save an endangered language, bring a community together, heal the people, and strengthen the self-identity of Indigenous children. I am very grateful to the tribes that have blazed a trail for the rest of us to follow in resisting assimilation by reclaiming education through language immersion schools. When I learned about the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS), I was in awe! In my experience, from talking with other Yakama parents as well as from working at the Yakama Nation Bootcamp, I feel that Yakama people would want to build a school like the AFS. I have heard many Yakama officials proclaim resistance and state that we do things in our own Yakama way. I have witnessed delays in many dealings with the State because Yakamas were not willing to budge on the way we wanted something done. For these reasons, and because we are losing our Elders, language, and teachings rapidly, I believe our Yakama people would be proud to establish a school like AFS for ourselves.

Theoretical Framework: Application to present study

The Importance of Yakama Ways of Knowing and Being in Education and Education Research

When the Europeans first arrived here in what we now call the United States, they wanted the land. Colonization is the taking over of the land, natural resources, and erasure of the original people of that land by any means necessary (Smith, 2013;

Simpson, 2017). The killing of Indigenous women and children as a means to eradicating families was even viewed as a sport under this lens (Grzesiak, 2017).

Nowadays, kids are no longer being sent to boarding schools, but Indigenous children continue to experience colonization and erasure in the public schools (Sabzalian 2019). The public schools in and around the Yakama reservation have a high population of Yakama children which offer few opportunities for them to learn about their Yakama history and ways, language or culture. The focus, in public schools, is to teach Western traditions and narratives. Educational institutions across the United States are known to be molded by White supremacy (Simpson, 2017, Chadderton, 2013, Usher, 2018). It is important to discuss how and why we have come to this point but doing so is outside the scope of this paper. Rather, I intend to focus here on the many strengths of Yakama people and how our knowledge benefits not only Yakama children but also education and education research more widely. I want my research to benefit our community. Much of the research on marginalized people has focused on damage, and when the research is completed, scholars leave the community offering no benefit to the people (Tuck, 2009). Research studies that focus on the negative offer little to no value for Indigenous people. Research conducted in this way, focusing on detriments rather than resilience, furthers colonial thinking.

The schools I have discussed above and in Appendix 1, show that Indigenous peoples are taking control of their children's education and leading, by example, on how to revitalize their languages. When Indigenous children begin to learn their language, their self–identity is strengthened (Reyhner, 2010). Our language is important and so are the traditions that we practice. **Kussumwhy**, Levina Wilkins (2008), is a fluent Yakama

elder who was raised in her language and traditional ways, discusses how it was a tradition that values were taught every day. She talks about respect "[t]his one was a big one: "**Tma'áakni**." Growing up, that's all I heard. You hear it for the plants, you hear it for the water, you hear it for the animals that feed you. You hear it for the air you breathe, that breathes around you," (2008 p. 31).

> **Tma'áakni** (*Respect*)
>
> To maintain harmony and cooperation with all people, including those who have differing opinions from your own. To show care and regard for preserving and protecting the cultural traditions, beliefs, and unwritten laws of Native People (p. 31).

In this section I use Yakama Virtues (Wilkins 2008) as a guide to describe the significance of Yakama ways of knowing and being applying them to education and educational research. I present four categories: section (1) **Ichishkíin** language revitalization, (2) Yakama Self-determination, (3) Spirituality and prayer, and (4) Love. The Virtues that **Kussumwhy**, Levina Wilkins discusses (2008), is a framework for my work. The Virtues are similar to what you may find public schools consider important as well such as: trust, courage, compassion, etc.

In researching Indigenous Immersion Schools (this includes the 6 Immersion schools I describe earlier and those found in Appendix 1), I identified common themes that are not typically found in public school curriculum. First is language revitalization. Indigenous Immersion schools strive to be a learning environment for the community's language(s). Public schools on a whole do not even offer a language other than English until middle school. Second is self-determination. Indigenous people want to take back

some control over how their children are educated. Third is spirituality and prayer. Indigenous people typically incorporate spiritual practices from when you first wake up until you go to bed, and all throughout the day. Most songs and dances are usually a form of prayer along with a teaching to maintain good thought and feelings. Because spirituality is such a big part of Indigenous teachings, most of the Immersion schools I included discussed that their children were able to lead in spiritual ceremonies. In most public schools, praying is not general practice. Fourth is love. Some of the schools above talked about how they foster qualities of caring and love where teachers and staff are more like uncles and aunties. These schools embrace the value of being family. Young Yakama parents are often told, 'never stop loving your children, the children are our most important and cherished thing', and we are also taught to love ourselves and our community. I heard a Yakama elder say that their most important rule was to love each other; love has always been a very important lesson and loving your people is a sign of a true leader. Schools do not typically discuss or display love so openly. Because these themes surfaced and share characteristics with the Yakama Virtues, I discuss each of them as they pertain to our Yakama framework of education.

Ichishkiin Language Revitalization

The Yakama people speak a language that they call **Ichishkíin** which is critically endangered. In 2010, Jansen reported there to be fewer than 35 speakers who were born learning **Ichishkíin** as their first language. The numbers may very well be less than 20 now and especially after COVID as the pandemic took a number of our cherished elders. On and in the vicinity of the Yakama Nation (YN), **Ichishkíin** language is currently being taught at Heritage University, Wapato Middle and High School, Toppenish High

School, and on Zoom where a few classes are taught once or twice a week. Yakama Nation Tribal School (YNTS), a tribal public junior high/high school run by the Yakama Nation and affiliated with the Bureau of Indian Education, is a smaller school that teaches 7^{th}-12^{th} grades. As a smaller school, YNTS allows for close relationships, and promotes students to build relationships with their community through working in the community. The YNTS now has a full-time language teacher and is working on building a strong language program. Other schools in the area are also working to hire **Ichishkíin** teachers and we are needing to train more **Ichishkíin** teachers to fill these spots. These classes are important because they introduce Yakama children and their families to their tribe's language.

Even though they contribute to **Ichishkíin** revitalization, these types of language classes, however, are not successful in producing fluent speakers of **Ichishkin**. When you learn a language in a school setting it becomes a subject that you learn and use mainly in a school setting (Henne–Ochoa.etal 2020). We need intergenerational transmission of the language through immersion settings; we need homes to be using **Ichishkíin** as their main language; we need young people to become language apprentices; we need **Ichishkíin** language material to assist with language instruction; and we need more control of our children's entire education.

Our tribal languages are crucial in maintaining our identity, as Kovach (2010) states "[I]ndigenous knowledges have a fluidity and motion that is manifested in the distinctive structure of tribal languages," (p. 30). Our **Ichishkíin** language is beautiful and because it is so descriptive, you can see what you are saying in your mind (Wilkins 2008). Virginia Beavert (2009) has dedicated much of her 100 years of life to language revitalization, and

she states that she does not do the work was not for herself but rather "to encourage the younger generation to pursue an education, learn the language, teach their children to speak, read and write Sahaptin, and do their part to help preserve the native language and culture of the Sahaptin[1] people," (p. xvii).

The tribal worldview is found inside of your Indigenous language (Kovach 2010). Eugene Hunn, an anthropologist, struggled to learn **Ichishkíin** for ten years and he writes about learning a new language saying, "[i]t also requires learning a new way of thinking and adopting a different perspective on reality," (p. 78). When you speak a new language, it is like a door cracks open and you begin to realize how the ancestors of this language chose to view and interact with the world. The more fluent you become in the language the more that door opens.

Many Yakama people believe that the Creator gave us our language and put us on our land. Our **Ichishkíin** language and our traditional ways demonstrate our connection to the land and help prove that we did not come from another land via land bridge (Beavert 2017). Dr. Jacob (2021), a Yakama scholar, states "this land has known our Tribal people for countless generations, Since Time Immemorial, as our Elders say," (p. 58). I did not grow up speaking my tribal language, **Ichishkíin**, due to the colonial factors that made it that way. I have been trying to learn **Ichishkíin** for several years and,

[1] [1] The term "Sahaptin" is not the Indians' own name for their native language, but it comes from the Columbia Salish name s-hpt4noxw, which is the name that the Wintshapain and Kawaxchinma (who are Salish—speaking people) traditionally call the Nez Perces. However, the early White explorers mistakenly applied the name to all the various Sahaptin-speaking peoples, as well as to the Nez Perces. •Sahaptin" has since come into common usage among anthropologists and linguists in their journal articles and books to designate the native language of the Yakima, Warm Springs and Umatilla peoples, but it does not include the native language of the Nez Perce people. (Rigsby 1975)

as I become more fluent, I feel a stronger connection with my ancestors. That is a beautiful thing and the reason why I am so dedicated to helping others learn **Ichishkíin**.

Yakama Self–determination

Indigenous children were taken away from their families and in trying to eliminate their language and culture they received military regimentation (Davis 2001). This, unfortunately, happened for generations. I remember hearing my father, uncles, and grandfathers talk about being in boarding schools. Wilkins (2008) mentions how many of our children are struggling and "[w]e need more teachers, we need more counselors, we need more speakers. We need to regain our self-identity," (p. 30). I think it is good practice to look more towards what we know and how we were before colonization; to try and speak more of the language the Creator gave to us as Yakama people; to be more connected with nature; to become more and more self-determined. Of this, Wilkins's (2008) asks us to practice

> **Piná'iwaat Kwaláni** (*Self-denial and gratitude, humility*)
>
> To be humble. To be grateful just to be helpful to others. To give away all feelings of conceit or arrogance. To be the first one to apologize, to correct your behavior, and to forgive others (p. 31).

Albury (2015) states "decolonization must remain a matter of interpretation by indigenous individuals and communities themselves," (p. 262). Yakama people have already begun to take steps toward self-determination, but we have room still to move closer towards our own tribal sovereignty. For a better understanding of the terms self-determination and tribal sovereignty it may be best to look at some definitions now. Brayboy (2005) provides some definitions of some of the terms below.

> Tribal autonomy is the ability of communities and tribal nations to have control over existing land bases, natural resources, and tribal national boundaries. Autonomy is also linked to the ability to interact with the U.S. and other nations on a nation-to-nation basis. Self-determination is the ability to define what happens with autonomy, how, why, and to what ends, rather than being forced to ask permission from the United States. Self-determination rejects the guardian/ward relationship currently in place between the U.S. government and tribal nations, (p. 433, 434).

Shear, Sabzalian, and Buchanan (2018) discuss not only what it means to be sovereign but also remind us that sovereignty is inherent to Indigenous people.

> This begins, first and foremost, with the recognition that sovereignty is not a "gift" to Indigenous peoples, but is inherent. Indigenous peoples' rights to utilize their homeland, whether for socializing, fishing, hunting, gathering, or visiting sacred/ceremonial sites, as well as the right to self-govern and sustain and renew their nations and cultures, are frequently inaccurately frames as "special" rights that were "given" to them by the U.S. government; yet Indigenous peoples' rights and sovereignty are not special, nor are they given—Indigenous rights are inherent, (p. 12)

I feel that Yakama, as a Nation, is already taking back control and exercising our rights but I feel it is the other side (the U.S. government and certain Americans) that want to hold on to whatever control power they can.

Racism and White supremacy are deeply embedded in the educational system; it is usually hidden and so the blame is placed elsewhere. As Yosso (2005) writes, "one of

the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools is deficit thinking. Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education," (p. 75). Indigenous people have much to be thankful for; we are wealthy with knowledge, wisdom, compassion, respect, spirituality, and love. Yosso goes on to say, "the main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower People of Color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities (p. 82)." Our Yakama communities are filled with expert basket makers, story tellers, hunters, fisher people, food gatherers, medicinal plant people, singers, dancers, teachers, scientists, and so on. We should never forget this. The "experts" in our communities are carriers of knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation; this knowledge originates from our ancestors who lived long ago. As Simpson (2017) articulates, "[o]ne draws upon a notion of authenticity, of a time before colonization in which we were intact as indigenous peoples. We had absolute authority over our lives; we were born into and lived in a universe which was entirely of our making. We did not ask, need or want to be 'discovered' by Europe," (p. 64).

Spirituality and Prayer

Do you remember any of these things that used to happen at school: square dancing for physical education, SAC (smoking and chewing) sections outside, putting brown paper bags around your books then decorating them, getting spanked with a paddle from admin, or talking about God or praying? The Supreme Court decided, in 1962, to ban prayer in public schools claiming that it was a violation of the first amendment

(Kauper, 1963). I could see how some parents might be upset if their child came back from school and prayed in a different way than they were taught at home. An honored elder **Tux̲ámshish**, Dr. Virginia Beavert, says "[p]rayer—it does not matter how you do it, as long as you believe in where your help is coming from. The Indian people believe in one God, the Creator," (Beavert, 2017, p. 97). Most of our ceremonies involve spirituality but even non-ceremonial events usually start off with prayer. Practicing in this way is an act of valuing the tradition of prayer within our community. The healing and decolonizing work occurring on the Yakama reservation is spiritual (Jacob, 2013). Again, Wilkins (2008) guides us here through one of the Yakama Virtues:

> **Átaw px̲wíni** (*Deep thought and feeling; meditation and mindfulness*)
>
> To practice looking at yourself, your thoughts and feelings. To meditate and pray regularly. To be constantly aware of all that is around you and within you. To grow in using your mind at all times, especially in getting an education (p. 31).

I used to work for the Yakama Nation Head Start program creating an **Ichishkíin** language and culture focused classroom from 2011-2014. We used the **Ichishkíin** language as much as we could and sang songs and prayed before every meal. The four and five-year-old children became good at singing the songs and really enjoyed doing it. The songs were taught in a traditional manner by singing when the song is supposed to be sung (for example, before a meal). Parents, relatives, and community members were surprised at how skilled the children were for being so young. After the kids went to kindergarten in a public school, many of their mothers mentioned that their child just wanted to go back to Head Start; some mothers also told me that the kids were shocked when the new school did not sing or pray before the meals. A part of colonization is to

weaken our spirituality so that we have a more difficult time to heal and lose our connection to our Creator (Simpson, 2017). At Head Start the children were learning their language, singing daily, and visiting with the two elders in the classroom. Some of the boys, with short hair, would say **Sapsikw'ałá** (*teacher*) I want to have **wápshash** (*braids)* like you. But after going to public school many of the boys that had long hair now have asked to cut it.

Yakama people are taught that you should wake up and greet the sun, braid your hair, sing your song, and give thanks for your life. We are also taught that you should end the day in a similar manner as to how you started it: with prayer, song, and by giving thanks. When a child first kills a deer, catches a salmon, picks a berry, or digs a root we must have a ceremony to honor the life that was taken. We believe these foods are our relatives and that is why we have our ceremonies. Before we eat, we always sing a song to thank Creator for the food. We also all take a small drink of water together to give thanks for the water that takes care of all things on earth. Yakama people will enter a **x̲wyách** (*sweat lodge*) regularly to give thanks to the Creator and ask for guidance to live a good life. When a baby eats his first traditional foods other than **lúlu** (*breastmilk*) there is a ceremony and gifts are given to all those that are present to witness this event.

How can we be expected never to mention the Creator, praying, or giving thanks in schools where our children spend so much of their lives? Spirituality and prayer are who we are as people of this land; it is a tradition to show respect and give thanks for the things provided to us on this earth. As Jacob (2020) writes, "a more tender and flavorful life also requires me to slow down and show gratitude to Mother Earth and the treasures all around me," (p. 57). Pease-Pretty on Top (2003) in writing about Native Language

Immersion schools discusses fifty immersions schools that were operating at the time. The schools had many similarities but a desire to involve spirituality and ceremony held true for nearly all of them.

Love

The topic of love may seem like it does not exactly belong in an academic work, but love must be discussed in considering Yakama ways and education. It is difficult not to talk about love when discussing children because children need to feel loved – they are children! Levina Wilkins (2008) discusses how the old traditions were; children were respected and were not talked down upon. Before colonization, families had much love for each other, and the families were closer because everybody lived together (Beavert, 2017). It used to be that the whole family stayed together and while adults gathered food and/or whatever else was needed, the grandparents would watch the kids. I am sure you can imagine some grandparents that just love and spoil their grandchildren. In **Ichishkíin**, the word that you call your grandparent and the word they call you is the same because that is how important that relationship is; so, your mother's mother would be your '**Káła**', and she would call you '**Káła**' as well. In pre-colonial times, Yakama children were constantly surrounded by love throughout our community (Beavert, 2017). One of Wilkins' (2008) Yakama Virtues highlights the importance of compassion and connection in relationships:

> **Tɨmnák'nik** (*Extending from the heart, compassion*)
>
> To show kindness and care at all times to others whether in listening, speaking, helping, or performing a service for them. To consider the feelings of others, to avoid hurting them, and to show concern for their feelings (p. 30).

I was raised off the Yakama Nation reservation and I went to a rather large school near the Nisqually Tribal Reservation. There were hardly any Indigenous students there and I was used to being the only Indigenous student in my classes. I remember sinking into my chair trying to become a shadow when the teachers began to talk about history and eventually discuss "Native Americans". I would hear about these White pilgrims that were so courageous by setting out to try and make a better life for themselves and their families. The teacher would usually mention "we actually have a Native American in class, right Gregory?" The other kids usually just gave me a look as if I was weird.

As I got older schools began to have clubs that you were required to join to foster shared interest with other students in things like chess, basketball, African American or Mexican club. Eventually we had a small handful of Indigenous students, maybe six or seven, and we thought it was a good idea to start our own Native American club. Just as we were getting started, the teachers gave our room away to the juggling club because they had more members, so we no longer had a designated place to meet. We asked if they could find us another room and they acted like it was the biggest inconvenience of their lives. They suggested that we just join with the Mexican club, and we refused that idea. Later, they offered an open section in a large storage closet with a large table. We gladly accepted because we were happy to be on our own and not combined with another group simply because we had similar features. I think back to that and cannot believe juggling enthusiasts were more important than Indigenous students. This story is but one from one person providing an example of structurally instigated erasure!

This type of treatment is what many Indigenous children continue to experience in public schools every day. I have expressed a need for Love when working with our

Indigenous children because of all the colonialism and erasure they experience in their schools. Have you ever had a teacher that made you feel not just good but better about yourself? It is comforting when you can feel that a teacher actually cares about you. Maybe having teachers that care and love the children they work with will provide some healing to them.

Schubert (2010) discusses how Love can help spark an interest in students' learning. It might awaken their imaginations; and Love could show some solidarity with those who have been marginalized. Verbos (2014) discusses the Potawatomi and Ojibwe relational ethic of the Seven Grandfather Teachings of *wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth*. Following these teachings will help you to have good relationships with each other and Nature. They also are connected so if you are being selfish then you are not using *wisdom*, which violates *love,* which is the principle for generosity. It is also said that if you do not follow the teaching then you are enacting the opposite value; so, if you do not care for other humans, *love,* then you are being hateful or indifferent.

Summary

The Yakama people are strong, funny, and caring; I can say this as a Yakama person. Our way of life shows respect to all life. When I hear the songs at the longhouse, when I see the children dancing around the floor, when I hear the elders laughing, and when I hear our elders speak **Ichishkíin**, I get a feeling of pride. I want to be alive to see a Yakama child be born a true speaker of **Ichishkíin** and only **Ichishkíin**. The last time a child was born this way was when our youngest fluent speaker was born. It is not impossible, and we can strive towards this goal. Taking up space in education and education research is one step towards this goal.

When Yakama people were the sole stewards of this land, we took special care of our earth and had a reciprocal relationship with our world. A person was not considered rich by how many possessions they acquired but rather by how much they gave away to the people. We followed the teachings of our legends, and we followed the natural cycle of our land. I know that it was not a heaven-on-earth but compared to how things are now, it almost sounds like it. One of Wilkins's (2008) Yakama Virtues reminds us to seek this balance:

> **Piná'tma'áakt** (*Taking care and being aware of one's total being; balance and harmony; integrity; honor; nobility in crisis*)
>
> To take care of yourself and to know yourself. To constantly seek to understand yourself. Self-respect. To stay in balance with what you believe. To behave with honor and refuse to get involved in behaviors that would hurt you or others (p. 31).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

I am a member of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and is located in what is now known as Washington state. I grew up with a strong teaching of respecting adults and elders. This teaching means that when an adult or elder are talking to me that I should pay close attention, not leaving until they are done. One of Wilkins's (2008) Yakama Virtues emphasizes the way our choices and behavior impact those we are connected to:

> **K̲'wyáamtimt** (*Honesty, being truthful*)
>
> To be honest and truthful in talking about yourself and your opinions, to avoid any behavior that could even appear to harm the honor of yourself or your family by being dishonest (p. 30).

I was taught also to have respect for the land and all life on this earth; the animals, land and plants were our first teachers and, if we did not pay attention, we would not have survived. These teachings are aligned with having good relationships with people and the world which allows you to be open always to new teachings. We are also taught that answers, knowledge, can be found in the stories, the songs, the elders, the land, the plant life, and the animal life if we pay attention and are respectful. We also gain clarity, insight, and guidance from our ceremonies such as sweats, dancing, singing, meditation, etc.

The research I conduct comes from a traditional Yakama way of knowing and being. Our Yakama ways are deep, complex, strong, and very old. Modern times might hold

Western ways as superior, but I choose to view them as equal, though different. I also draw on the work from other Yakama scholars who have helped blaze a trail for me to follow such as **Tux̲ámshish**, Dr. Virginia Beavert, who is not only our oldest Yakama elder (100 years old at the time of this writing) but she has two PhDs and has dedicated her life to **Ichishkíin** language revitalization. She shows us what it means to never give up because that is how important this work is to her. I have seen her teach **Ichishkíin** to a couple people as well as to a room full but she would always do great work because it is not just about the number of students in a class. **Kussumwhy**, Levina Wilkins, is also a Yakama elder dedicated to helping her people and **Ichishkíin** language revitalization. She has given many years of service as the Yakama Nation Language Program Manager and she was also a counsellor at Mt. Adams School District (located in the Yakama Nation reservation). I have seen her be the last person to leave one of her classes, long beyond the posted time, because she wanted to make sure that the students were able to complete their task. And Dr. Michelle Jacob, who is a Yakama scholar dedicated to Yakama self-determination and sovereignty has contributed powerful and meaningful research on and for our community and has published several books that highlight the strength of our Yakama people, ways of being, and our communities. For many students at the University of Oregon, including myself, we are nurtured by Dr. Jacob's love and knowledge and we know that she is there for us and wants us to be successful. I will do my best to build on their work in a good way.

Research Design

Kovach (2010) explains how the research question should "anchor and direct research" it should show there is a gap in the knowledge; and it should respond to a need,

(p. 114). My research inquiry tries to demonstrate that we need to acquire this knowledge about our past; it shows that we need this to happen for our future; and it describes our goal. Thus, my research questions in this project are: What does education mean from a Yakama perspective? How can community narratives inform the development of the **Miimawít** Immersion School? These questions align with the purpose of this study which is to engage elders and the community to learn more about Yakama ways of educating to inform future educational endeavors in our community.

My theoretical framework embraces Yakama Virtues (Wilkins 2008) at its center - the heart and guide of this work. This is a qualitative study; my database is these conversations. I coded them, employing the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser 1992), to see if and which themes arose. Four themes surfaced. They are the framework for my analysis; the lens through which I view this work.

The world, now, is going through some major changes due to the Covid19 pandemic; vaccines and boosters are available, but it is still recommended to limit unnecessary contact with people. The Yakama reservation has been hit hard by the pandemic and we have lost loved ones and even precious elders. The pandemic has forced many of our traditions have had to undergo temporary changes. Some of our ceremonies have been on hold and even funerals have been limited for everyone's safety. My research also had to be altered due to the pandemic; there were no gatherings with traditional foods as would be expected. While we usually enjoy sharing meals and gathering together to support each other, this had to wait until it was safer to do so.

In my original research design, I had planned to have conversations with four to five Yakama elders to discuss some of their input on the older Yakama ways of educating

our children: memories, or stories of our traditional Yakama way of living, traditional Yakama methods to encourage children to stay on track when they begin to become distracted or misbehave, and any suggestions and/or advice for starting this Yakama school. Because of the pandemic, I was only able to speak with one elder. I listened to this narrative carefully and analyzed it according to Wilkins' (2008) Nine Virtues of the Yakama People and on other teachings from Elders.

Additionally, we surveyed 97 Yakama parents and caretakers to hear first-hand their accounts of what Yakama values they believe their children should learn, traditional Yakama ways of life that should be maintained, any modern skills they feel their children should learn, any things that they wish they would have learned as a child that would help them to be a good Yakama person, and any other input that they felt was important to the Yakama virtues as well.

We also spoke with eight Yakama parents with young children to interview in order to have more of a conversation interaction that takes a deeper look into family efforts with **Ichishkíin**. The participants for these conversations were originally for Regan Anderson's work with **Ichishkíin** addressing parents and caretakers of Yakama babies and toddlers under four years old, but through our collaborations we realized the interviews also provided rich insight into Yakama language and education that could inform my research as well, too, so we reached out to the parents to gather consent for their voices to contribute to both projects.

Finally, I interviewed one person involved from the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) in Mohawk country. I was excited for the AFS interview because I really enjoyed reading about how their school started and what types of things they stand for. I would

like to go around and talk to as many of the Indigenous Immersion schools as possible but current circumstances will only allow me to interview one school.

IRB Processes

The Yakama Nation IRB process ended up taking longer than anticipated due to pandemic quarantines of office spaces. Regan and I both submitted our Yakama IRBs at the same time, July 2021, since our projects are so similar and we received verbal approval within a month. However, formal documentation was delayed after a COVID outbreak mandated office shutdowns and administrators were not able to access the documentation to process and send to us until November 2021. With that documentation in hand, I was able to continue with University of Oregon's IRB process, submitting that in December 2021 and received approval for the study the next month, January 2021. COVID numbers were still high at that time, though, so Regan and I waited to request to speak with Elders since they are among the more vulnerable populations in this pandemic. It was important, for myself and Regan, that we maintain a good, solid and trustworthy relationship with the Yakama Nation because this is where and with whom we want to be working in the future.

Once the pandemic surge lessened in March 2022, I began to approach elders that I knew held important roles within the Yakama Nation. I did this in a respectful way, stopping by in person to meet with them, and not wanting to rush the process because I knew that our elders are busy with other important work in our community. Eventually I met with one elder that I have known for a while and explained the projects and proposal request to her. She said that Yakama Nation IRB approval would not be enough to discuss some of these things and that I would have to approach Yakama Nation's Culture

Committee members for additional approval to speak with elders. Before she would speak with us, she requested documentation of an approved committee action from the Culture Committee giving me, and her, approval to continue with the interview. The Culture Committee needed to ensure that we were not writing about or sharing confidential and private information. I agreed with the precautions that they were suggesting because they also shared with me how other university researchers in the past have leaked sensitive information that should have not been shared with the public. They had to have the power to take out or change things before publication.

So that same day I began the process of reaching out to the Culture Committee, showing up at the members' offices and making phone calls. I was able to meet with one member who suggested I speak with a different member first, so I scheduled a meeting, but the committee member had to cancel due to unforeseen circumstances and we were not able to successfully reschedule in time to complete the process of committee approval for this project. This was a setback to the project and I needed to seek approval from my committee and advisor to continue the work which now would be with only one elder. As mentioned above, I am committed to this work and will continue to speak with these prominent elders as I move forward in language work beyond this dissertation project.

Participants

For this study, I sought input from three different sources who I believed would be the most helpful and knowledgeable. I talked with 1) Elders who grew up speaking **Ichishkíin** as their first language, 2) Parents or Grandparents of Yakama children who are currently in school, and 3) representatives from Indigenous language immersion

schools. Below I will explain why I chose these groups and what I hoped to learn from them.

Yakama Elders

A traditional Yakama teaching, also found in most Indigenous communities, is to respect your elders, but what does it meant to show respect? I was always taught that Yakama elders are carriers of our knowledge; they have a lifetime of experience; they have witnessed momentous changes in our world; and their words are more valuable than gold. Because of this view of our elders, when they talk we should be still and listening; we should make sure that they are comfortable; we should see if they would like anything to eat or drink; we should not interrupt them; we should give them a gift when they help us; we should simply disregard things that we do not agree with and keep it to ourselves; and we should keep our ears, mind, and heart open.

Regan and I prepared bundles to share with elders as a thank you for sharing their stories and time and did give one to the elder we spoke with. The bundle included traditional foods, a blanket, and some language materials that we have created through the years. We offered opportunity for follow up from the elder and asked permission to check in again if we had any further questions. Questions that guided our conversation can be found in Appendix A.

Parents and Caretakers of Yakama Children

I remember times hearing people in the community talk about what happened to them at school and it triggers memories for what I experienced as a kid in school. I am not trying to forget instances from school times, but they are not at the front of my thoughts anymore. That is why it is so important to hear from parents and caretakers who

have children going to school right now. These parents are on the front lines of what is happening in schools today. Being directly involved with their children's education, they should be able to talk about things that they would like to see more or less of; things that happen at school that they appreciate or cannot stand; things that happen at school that they see are getting better or worse; and anything else they notice about schools behaviors.

Because it is helpful to hear from as many parents as possible, and because I know parents are so busy, I worked with Regan again to design a parent/caretaker survey. A printed version of the survey is provided in Appendix B. We also shared the parent conversations which allowed us to get a deeper look at language use and learning on a family level. These conversations were originally intended for Regan's project so she collected the data but the information provided was so rich that we went back to ask participants' permission to use them in both projects.

Indigenous Language Immersion Schools

I also spoke with a representative from Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) from Mohawk territory because they have gone through the planning, the organizing, the hiring, the scheduling, the recruiting, and all the other things that a community must do to start their own language immersion school. AFS has its own strengths and weaknesses, but they have been there and done what so many of us are hoping to do for our Yakama children; they have their unique experience and can share valuable insights.

The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) has a completely unique start-up story and they literally fought each step of the way to educate their children in their own way. When the state was threatening to jail parents, they did not budge; when they were asked

to take the standardized tests, they refused. AFS wanted complete control of their children's education from top to bottom. They utilize a holistic system of education that connects with the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual sides of their children. This is important especially when you realize that many public schools only care about the intellectual and the physical. AFS does not use typical standardized tests but many of their graduates have gone to college and done well.

Gift Bundles

The giving of a gift as way of expressing ones gratitude has been a tradition amongst Yakamas, as well as many other Indigenous peoples, for a very long time. The contents of the gift bundle changes throughout the years. When I imagine a typical gift bundle I think of everyday useful items such as blankets, gloves, scarfs, flashlights, socks, and sometimes, when you are lucky, you may receive a jar of traditional foods. I have also seen a gift bundle that was a box filled with food such as flour, sugar, bread, canned foods, crackers, cereal, etc. I like how the gift bundles can contain things of use in this modern world. I remember hearing somebody say, "alright, I got some socks!" and I may have thought they were joking; but as I am getting older I realize I do get excited for the little things that I may need.

When Regan Anderson and I were discussing who we were going to interview, we also began discussing gift bundles. We talked about how we wanted to make the elders' gift bundles extra special to let them know how much we appreciate them. **Tux̲ámshish**, Virginia Beavert's Yakama legends book had recently been published, and an **Ichishkíin** student had just finished creating a mini-book mini book for a project so we thought it would be a good idea to include those items. We also adapted some

Ichishkíin Alphabet flashcards and an **Ichishkíin** children's lullaby coloring book. When we realized we had helped to create so many language materials, it seemed natural that the gift bundles would be made up largely of **Ichishkíin** materials. The **Ichishkíin** teaching and learning community has been working together to produce learning materials, so we wanted to showcase and promote this work that sometimes goes unseen.

In addition to **Ichishkíin** language materials, we utilized our community to include other items in the bundles as well. Instead of buying a blanket from Walmart we went to a Yakama owned business that creates their own blankets. A community member helped with contributing canned traditional Yakama foods; a student made cedar baskets and some cedar woven roses. We searched for a local artist who made bags that we could put all the material in but we had no luck. We decided to use paper bags printed with a hand-drawn landscape that included **Ichishkíin** names for tree, sky, sun, rainbow, etc. The bundle represented and acknowledged the larger **Ichishkíin** community's commitment to the language, see Figure 1 (page 64). Appendix C provides an inventory of the gift bundle items. Gift bundles were given to all those who participated in interviews/conversations for this work and two were given through a drawing for those who filled out the survey.

Parent Survey

Our goal was to reach 100 parent/caretakers of Yakama children. To encourage survey participation, we would entered the names of participants who completed the survey into a drawing for two gift bundles. In the past, I have utilized social media to get the word out for **Ichishkíin** events which has proven to be successful, so we turned to social media once again. The picture in Figure 1 above of the **Ichishkíin**

Figure 1. Gift Bundle Items for Participants

focused gift bundles was provided as well as a description of our project's design. We received appreciative comments about the gift bundles and we decided to use this as a chance to promote some **Ichishkíin** language work, promote local artists, and encourage language learning. We posted a different picture everyday of different aspects of the gift bundles: a picture of decorating the bags with **Ichishkíin** words, see Figure 2 (page 65); a picture of creating language materials for the bundles, Figure 3 (page 66), a picture of the laminated place mats filled front and back with **Ichishkíin** phrases, Figure 4 (page 67), and other pictures of the gift bundles.

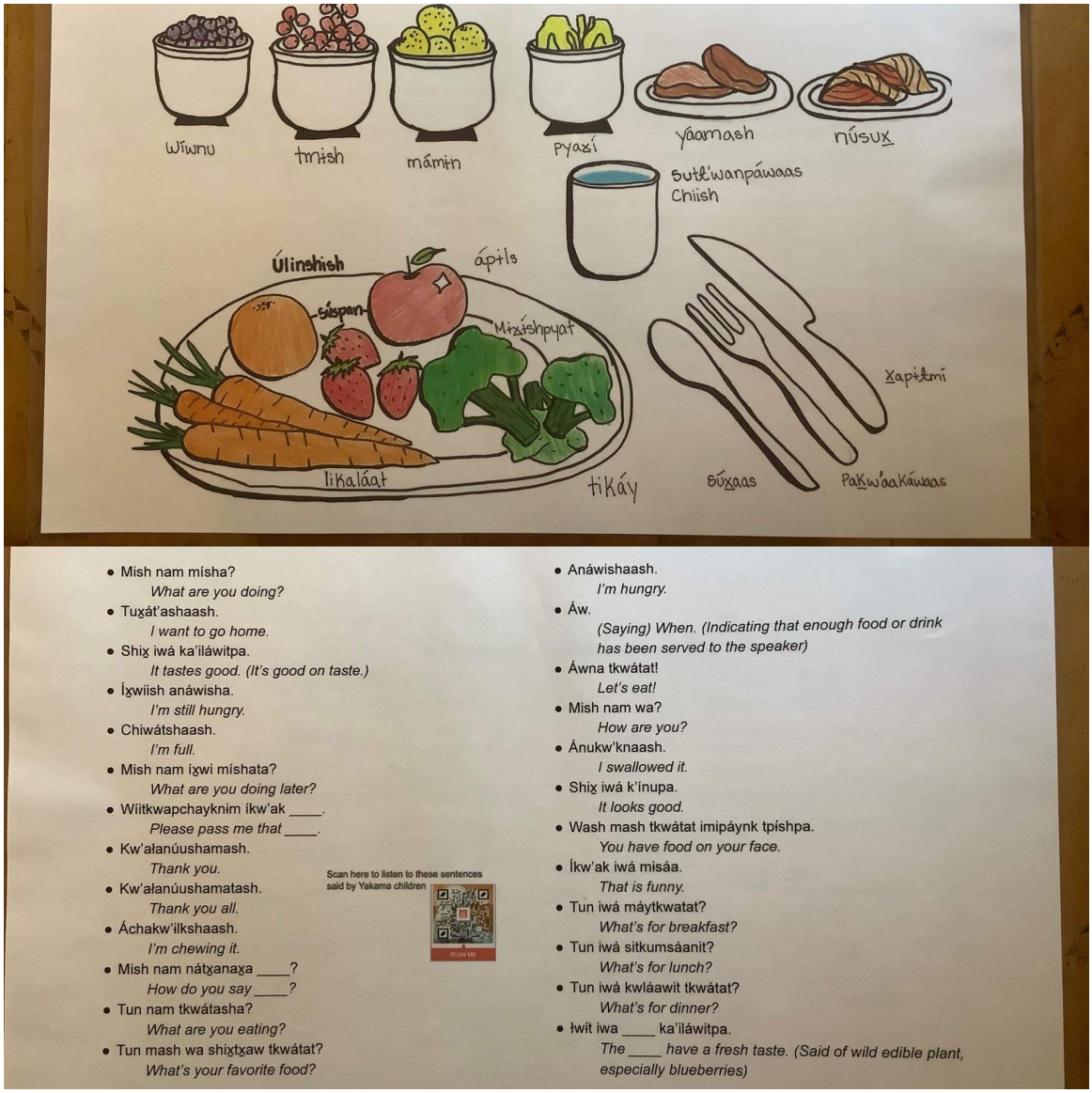
Figure 2. Hand-drawn Bundle Bag

We continued to share samples of these materials and their assembly until we reached our goal of 100 participants. In the process, people began to show a lot of interest in the **Ichishkíin** language materials so we decided that we should find a way to make these materials more readily available to the public. We wanted to help make it easy for a parent/community member to access this material to support their language learning. So, we decided to utilize my Heritage University Language and Cultural Center (H.U.L.C.) webpage as a location for easy access to this material. This process and interest, coupled with other requests through the years, sparked the beginning of what will become the

local **Ichishkíin** language resource center. The site will eventually be divided into three groups: 1) Families, 2) Teachers, and 3) Linguists. Together we have a richness of **Ichishkíin** language material that has been developed throughout the years but there is not a place to store them or for wide access to them. I had my first meeting with the Heritage University IT people, and they were excited to transform the site into a useful tool designed specifically for the community.

Figure 3. Creating Language Materials for Gift Bundles

Figure 4. Placemats Included in Gift Bundles



Data Collection and Management

Kovach (2010) discusses the importance of following protocols and ceremonial practices as a way of showing respect to the knowledge that they will be shared. If it weren't for COVID, I would have hosted a traditional meal for those willing to participate and take time for people to get to know me and the context of this project. As

mentioned, the pandemic interfered with this protocol. However, allowing people time to talk is very important to Yakama people. At the longhouse when somebody is speaking you should not move around. Sitting quietly shows respect for and to the speaker. I have never seen anyone interrupt somebody while talking on the floor. For this reason, it was my intention to meet with people one on one for conversations concerning education for our children and youth. Kovach (2010) explains how story gives voice and more control to marginalized people and it also allows the researcher to co-create knowledge. The data from conversations with Elders and parents are lengthy narratives. Kovach also discusses how the researcher must now accept guardianship of the narrative that has been received. This work is so important for us as Yakamas. It is essential to me that I do my best to properly take care of it. In doing so, I honor another of Wilkins's Yakama Virtues (2008):

> **Itma'áakshá** (*Cautious and careful of all things and others; restrained, peaceful, and responsible*)
>
> To be careful in your speech and other behavior so as to avoid harming or hurting anyone, including yourself. To be responsible and accountable for your behavior. To show care for maintaining peace and harmony with all people (p. 30-31).

The elder we interviewed allowed both video and audio recording of our conversation; parent conversations were recorded through Zoom and with audio back up. I have stored these highly valuable recordings in multiple secure locations: 1) on my personal password-protected laptop computer, 2) on my external hard drive, and 3) on a secure server with Heritage University. I worked with Regan to fully transcribe all conversations. Each session has a folder with their name (or code if they chose to be anonymous), date, and location of recording and it contains the original recording as well

as a typed version of the transcript. A copy of the transcription and/or a copy of the recording have been provided to those we spoke with so they can review; or in case they wish to share with their family or just to keep for themselves.

The survey was designed using Qualtrics and collected digitally; no printed surveys were requested or returned. This data is also stored on my personal laptop, on an external hard drive, and on a secure server at Heritage University. Reports were generated through Qualtrics and they saved electronically as well as in hard copies at Heritage University.

Data Analysis

Kovach (2010) mentions how sorting the data in a way to show patterns is what builds a theory. She also discusses the possibility of having to utilize both Indigenous and Western approaches to interpret the data. As mentioned before, the elders' words are worth more than gold and I maintain this view towards the material collected for both elder and parent conversations. I use large chunks of their stories to allow the readers to hear it in the speakers' own words. I typed out the sections to include and contacted the participants to share and discuss my plans so they had the opportunity to stop, delete, or change anything that I planned to use. It was important to me that they have control over their contributions and know I respect their decisions. I also looked for themes that re-occurred across the conversations.

The Yakama community is my community, and I would like to maintain a positive relationship with the community. Indigenous researchers have mentioned the importance of relationships and I want to follow their suggestions, too. These teachings also follow with my Yakama teachings and the way that I was raised. We should help each other out in our communities as our people have done in the past and this value

certainly applies to research, too. Wilkins (2008) expresses this through the following Yakama Virtue:

> **Wapítat Ttáwax̲t** (*Help family growth; service to others*)
>
> To serve others by offering to help others in as many ways as you can think of. This might include helping elders and other family members and friends. It also includes taking part in positive community events and activities that prevent violence, helping people to heal from traumatic experiences, eliminating substance abuse and chemical dependency, promoting positive understandings and involvement in your Indian culture, modeling and encouraging education and the pursuit of life goals for others, and working to increase the unity of all people (p. 31).

In analyzing the data from elder and parent narratives and parent surveys, I return to Wilkins' Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation, organizing the information under these teachings.

Role of the Researcher

Kovach (2010) discusses preparing yourself for the research. As an Indigenous Yakama Researcher, I already have some connections within the community as well as a good reputation in my language work. Kovach also discusses research preparation and knowing your relationship with the community and explains cultural grounding as how you are connected to the culture and how you can follow protocols to ceremonial practices. On one hand, I may be an Insider with knowledge of such practices because I am an enrolled member of the Yakama Nation and I have been very active in the community towards language revitalization. I have a reputation as a **Sapsikw'ałá** (*teacher*) and even when I do not know somebody, they will ask me "Aren't you the guy

who teaches our language?" I may also be viewed, by some, as an Outsider because although I have always been connected with the Yakama people and our land, I grew up outside of the reservation. Kovach (2010) refers to universities as gatekeepers of what counts as knowledge. Some people may also be hesitant to work with me because I work for a university and that makes people feel uneasy. I have built trust with many people already, however, as I have been involved with language revitalization ever since I started taking my learning of **Ichishkíin** seriously in the late 1990s.

I have important responsibilities as a Yakama researcher and plan to do my best to follow through. I am a father of four children, one who is already in college. I want them to see that my work was done in a respectful manner. I am an apprentice to different fluent elders, two of whom have passed, and it is important to me that they see my work as important and done in a way that will benefit future generations of Yakama people. I come from a fairly large family, and I would like to conduct myself in a manner that my mother, father, grandparents, and all my family would see as respectful. The **Ichishkíin** language is more important than words could ever describe; I would like to know that I have done everything that I could, for as long as I could, to help revitalize the language for future generations.

Wilson (2008) discusses relational accountability and how Indigenous research is ceremony. There are major differences between Western ways of research as compared to Indigenous ways of research. Relationships are everything in Indigenous ways and it is important to always be accountable to your relationships. Wilson mentions that you must apply this relational accountability when you 1) choose your topic, 2) gather your data, 3) analyze your data, 4) and even when you present your data. Similar to Wilson's concept

of relationship accountability is how Wilkins (2008) demonstrates the Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation. The virtues were meant to help people, in a daily manner, to live more in a traditional Yakama way. When following the virtues, you will be more aware of the people around you, your community, yourself and the relationships that everyone and everything share with each other.

Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks may seem different to a Western researcher but to me they are another way of saying what I have always been taught. I have been told that you live your life as if your ancestors are watching your every move, you respect your elders, and you follow our ways even when they seem like a harder way to live. I, as a Yakama researcher, plan to continue my work with these teachings in mind.

Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes education now is very different from how it has been for the majority of history for Yakama people. It recognizes that the traditional Yakama way of educating children was to shower them with love. It was important that Yakama children grew up respecting their families, their communities, their land, their foods, and all life on this earth. There is an assumption that there are more people, like myself, that would want nothing more than to give their children/grandchildren this type of Yakama education. I would like to assume that there are other Yakama parents that would think that there might not be anything as beautiful as hearing children talking, laughing, playing, and living the **Ichishkíin** language. It also assumes people want kids to learn songs, how to conduct service, take care of and prepare foods, how to prepare tools

needed to take care of foods; that they want kids to have leadership, positive cultural identity, public speaking skills, etc.

Limitations of the Study

The greatest limitation to this study was that there are fewer speakers to interview given the effect of COVID on the community. There was a time where **Ichishkíin** was the main language in Yakama families' households. I have heard stories of non-Yakama business owners who knew enough **Ichishkíin** in which to conduct business and have a friendly conversation. People spoke of how the **Ichishkíin** language was the only language you heard in our longhouses and while running our Tribal government. First time fluent **Ichishkíin** speakers were so plentiful and of all ages that this project would have been much easier. I cannot believe how many **Ichishkíin** speakers I have talked with that are now gone. Hermes (2007) discusses that the greatest challenge of Waadookodaading Ojibwe Immersion school is knowing that their language is endangered which creates a sense of urgency for this work. I can relate to that feeling and COVID has increased it dramatically.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed my theoretical framework which embraces Yakama Virtues (Wilkins 2008) at its center - the heart and guide of this work. This is a qualitative study pulling on interviews and conversations with Yakama elders and community members and teachers from Indigenous immersion schools in other communities which comprise my database. I coded the data, employing the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser 1992), to see if and which themes arose. themes surfaced. They are the framework for my analysis; the lens through which I view this work.

I hope I have conducted my research in a respectful way. Yakama teachings emphasize the importance of respecting all life and that is how I have always been raised; I would not like to stray from these teachings now. This way is a part of who I am, so even in the academic world I wish to follow my teachings. I feel my vision is a shared one with many people from the Yakama community. Hermes (2007) discussed how elder after elder mentioned the importance of their children learning their language, so they came together and started the Waadookodaading Ojibwe Immersion school.

As a Yakama researcher, I think about the statement I refer to frequently 'that the elders' words are worth more than gold' and I feel compelled to conduct my research in a way that lives up to that claim. I cannot stress enough the importance of the **Ichishkíin** language. To me, it is the most beautiful language in the world and our children's children deserve to hear it, to speak it, to teach it, to raise their children in it and love it. That is the reason that I do this work. **Kw'ałanúusha matash** *(thank you*) to the Yakama Elders who shared and live their knowledge scholars that helped blaze the way for us; to the Indigenous scholars that have shared their experiences; and to those of you who are reading and supporting this work.

CHAPTER IV

YAKAMA EDUCATION PARENT AND CARETAKER SURVEY

I collaborated with my colleague Regan Anderson to design and distribute a survey for parents and caretakers of Yakama children to share their thoughts about **Ichishkíin** language use and important components of a Yakama education that would inform both of our dissertation projects. The printable version of the survey is provided in Appendix B. This survey is meant to provide a preliminary look and understanding of descriptive data around each of our topics rather than undertaking a heavy statistical analysis. More details and discussion are provided here in the sections below. Results are presented first in the order questions were asked, providing information about number of total responses per question and the breakdown of those responses. Six of the eleven questions were open ended though all questions offered parents and caretakers space to add any additional information they wanted to their responses. Presentation and discussion of any additional information provided is included with each question and a more robust analysis follows the presentation of results.

Though our survey was intended for parents and caretakers of Yakama children, there was much larger interest at a community level. Grandparents in particular were interested which speaks to the intimate relationship still present in Yakama culture between grandparents and grandchildren and the parameters around what it means to be a caretaker. In the old days, the grandparents used to watch the children, teach them important life lessons, and show them much love; the parents would typically be out gathering food and families all stayed together in one home. The **Ichishkíin** language demonstrates the strong and close bond that grandparents have with their grandchildren

by them calling each other by the same name. For example, your dad's dad was called **Púsha** and he would call his same grandchildren by the same term **Púsha***;* the same is for the dad's mom is **Ála** and she would call her grandchildren **Ála**. The same thing, with different terms, are true for the mom's side and this does not happen with parents-child relationship terms. The large interest in our survey also speaks to the community caretaking as a whole and the responsibility of all to care for and educate Yakama children and youth. We were pleased in the end not to have imposed a restricted definition of what it means to be a caretaker and might even solicit community descriptions of such a role in future inquiries.

Results

In total, we received 107 survey responses. Out of these, ten completed less than 20% of the survey questions, with six people filling out only the first two of the 11 questions (18% of the survey questions) and four completing only the preliminary consent form. We will not be using these 10 incomplete responses in our analyses and instead will focus on the remaining 97 responses (91% of the original total). It is difficult to determine the total number of potential survey responses (in other words, 107 people out of how many responded). There are approximately 12,000 enrolled members of the Yakama Nation including babies, children, and Elders. If we calculate the percentage of responses according to enrolled members, there was less than 1% response rate. I do not know of any reported numbers outside of enrolled members to include as a total potential count. Counts based on enrollment are problematic since Yakama membership is complicated by the implementation of blood quantum measurements imposed by the U.S. government. Our survey did not require participants to be enrolled members or even

descendants but self-identified parents and caretakers of Yakama children. Our outreach was also limited due to pandemic restrictions so most of it occurred through electronic means, such as social media platforms and email, and word of mouth. This may have excluded some parents and caretakers who do not use or have access to these mediums or who are not in our networks or extended networks. We did our best to reach as many parents and caretakers of Yakama children as possible and encouraged the survey be shared widely through their networks as well.

The survey consisted of nine sections, seven of which were the main area. A printed version of the survey is included in Appendix B. The first section is the consent form to participate in both Regan's and my projects. Here, participants chose whether or not they would like to be acknowledged by name in the projects, and whether or not their words may be quoted directly. This is also where they opted into the drawing for one of two gift bundles and signed and dated their consent. The second section is a welcome page, thanking parents and caretakers for lending their voices to our projects. The third section, General Information, includes survey questions 1 and 2 asking parents about the number and ages of kids they have, and how satisfied they are with their schooling. Three questions, questions 3, 4, and 5, were included under the fourth section, Language Experience, Use, and Goals, and asked about daily **Ichishkíin** language practice, supports to help use **Ichishkíin** language in the home, and which kinds of supports they consider more and less helpful. Section five, Educating with Yakama Knowledge and Lifeways, moves into an open question format for all of the remaining questions (questions 6-11). It has only one question, question 6, which asks parents to share what Yakama teachings they believe are most important for their children to learn. The next two sections also

have just one question each, around what seasonal activities and daily practices they would like to see incorporated into their children's learning, respectively. The eighth section, Community Resources, includes questions 9 asking parents and caretakers to share which Yakama Nation entities they would like to see involved in Yakama children's education, and question 10 which asks what knowledge or skills they themselves would be willing to share. The final section, Final Thoughts, includes just one question offering space to parents and caretakers to share anything else they would like to with us. A discussion of each question's results in turn follows. The full survey is included in Appendix B.

Question 1 – How many children do you have and how old are they?

All 97 parents and caretakers who responded to this survey provided an answer to this question. This was an open question and provided space for parents and caretakers to write their responses in. Number of children spanned from one to ten in the following order of most to least responses: 25 parents and caretakers (about 26%) reported having two children, 16 (16%) have three, 15 (15%) have one child, 13 (13%) have four children, 12 (12%) have five, 9 (9%) have six, three sets of two parents and caretakers (2% each) reported having seven, nine, and ten children, and 1 (1%) shared that they have eight children. Table 2 shares this same information in table form.

Table 2. Number of Children

Number of Children	Response Number and Percentage
Two	25 parents/caretakers, 26%
Three	16 parents/caretakers, 16%

Table 2. Number of Children, continued

One	15 parents/caretakers, 15%
Four	13 parents/caretakers, 13%
Five	12 parents/caretakers, 12%
Six	9 parents/caretakers, 9%
Seven	2 parents/caretakers, 2%
Nine	2 parents/caretakers, 2%
Ten	2 parents/caretakers, 2%
Eight	1 parent/caretaker, 1%

Ages of kids ranged between those still in the womb up through adulthood. Since Regan's project is focused on children under 4, and mine is focused on school age children, we present age ranges here in three groups: 1) children 0-3 years of age, 2) children and youth 4-17 years old, and 3) adults 18 and over. Four parents and caretakers (4%) reported caring for grandchildren without specifying their ages as did one great-grandparent (1%). Most parents and caretakers (69, or 71%) have children and youth between the ages of 4-17 years. Fifty-one parents and caretakers (53%) have adult children, and 29 (30%) have children under four years old. This information is presented in Table 3 below in order of most to least responses.

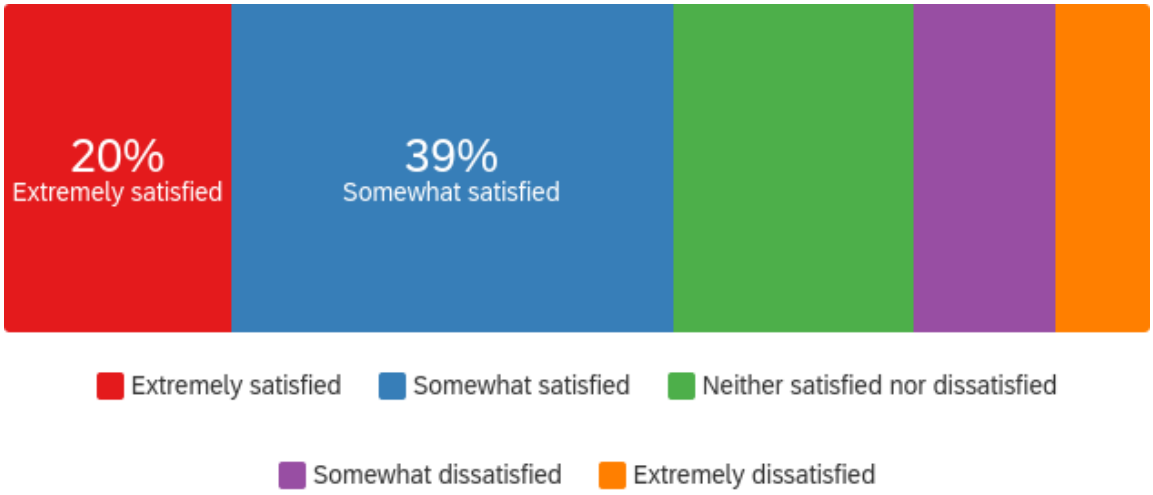
Table 3. Age Ranges of Children

Age Range	Response Number and Percentage
4-17 years old	69 parents/caretakers, 71%
Adult children	51 parents/caretakers, 53%
0-3 years old	29 parents/caretakers, 30%
unspecified ages	5 great/grandparents, 5%

Question 2 – How satisfied are you with your child/children's school?

Question 2 asked parents and caretakers to share how satisfied they are with their children's school. Answers were multiple choice options ranging between 'Extremely satisfied' to 'Extremely dissatisfied'. Of our 97 respondents, the majority, 39% (37 respondents), reported being somewhat satisfied with their children's school. The second largest group at 21% with 20 respondents, were parents and caretakers who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their children's school. A close third at 20% (19 respondents) reported being extremely satisfied with their children's school, 13% (12 respondents) are somewhat dissatisfied, and 8% (eight respondents) reported that they are extremely dissatisfied with their children's school. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of this breakdown. Answers also provided space for parents and caretakers to write in more information about their choice if they wanted and responses to each category are discussed in more detail below.

Figure 5. School Satisfaction Breakdown Bar Chart



Extremely Satisfied

Of the 19 parents and caretakers who reported being extremely satisfied with their children's school (20% of all respondents), seven added additional comments elaborating on their choice. Two of these seven mentioned part of their satisfaction coming from Yakama language being taught or supported at the school. One parent spoke about the language support that is offered even though it is not formally part of the school's curriculum. Another noted close involvement with their children's learning through their own work at the district as a source of extreme satisfaction. Two remarked on the quality of academics, one sharing that their children all attended college directly after completing high school. One attributed their extreme satisfaction with their grandchildren's education to them not yet being in school.

Somewhat Satisfied

Of the 37 parents and caretakers (39% of all respondents) who marked being somewhat satisfied with their children's school, 16 added additional information to their responses. One parent/caretaker attributed their moderate satisfaction to their children

having access to Yakama language in school. Two cited teachers' support as an influencing factor to their choice of response on this question. One wished for more Yakama language for their five-year-old at school or through summer programs while another mentioned a desire for more Yakama language and Native representation working within the district, and a third called for "more true native culture inclusion". Similarly, a parent wrote about a lack of trust in the school's "infrastructure and staff" and another shares that "[t]hey don't have much curriculum around Tribes." Another writes, "It is upsetting to know they overlook Native American applicants to fill vacant positions...despite having a predominantly Native American student population." One wrote about the unprecedented times and expectations "during a worldwide pandemic" while another shares that their child's school had great online study and support in place since before Covid. Another wished for smaller class sizes. Finally, a respondent wrote, "we're tired of the Western Education system in general".

Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied

Out of the 20 parents and caretakers (21% of total respondents) who selected that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their children's school, 11 offered additional comments around their choice. Four of them chose this response because their children are not in school at this time. One highlights the need to improve district wide support for Native American students and shares there is current advocacy for this. Another echoes this, pointing out a lack of culture in schools with a "majority of Native American students". Another parent cites satisfaction that her child enjoys school but notes frustration around setbacks due to Covid. Another draws attention to the need for Yakama language to be taught at all grade levels, beginning in preschool. And another

has a young one who does have access to Yakama language but shares that there is an imbalance of Native students at their older child's school.

Somewhat Dissatisfied

Twelve parents and caretakers (13% of total respondents) selected being somewhat dissatisfied with their children's school. Of these, eight shared additional comments, seven of whom shared a lack of cultural representation to varying degrees – from racial biases and differences in values to a lack of diversity in leadership and curriculum, along with no access to language, traditional programming, or appropriate context and history.

Extremely Dissatisfied

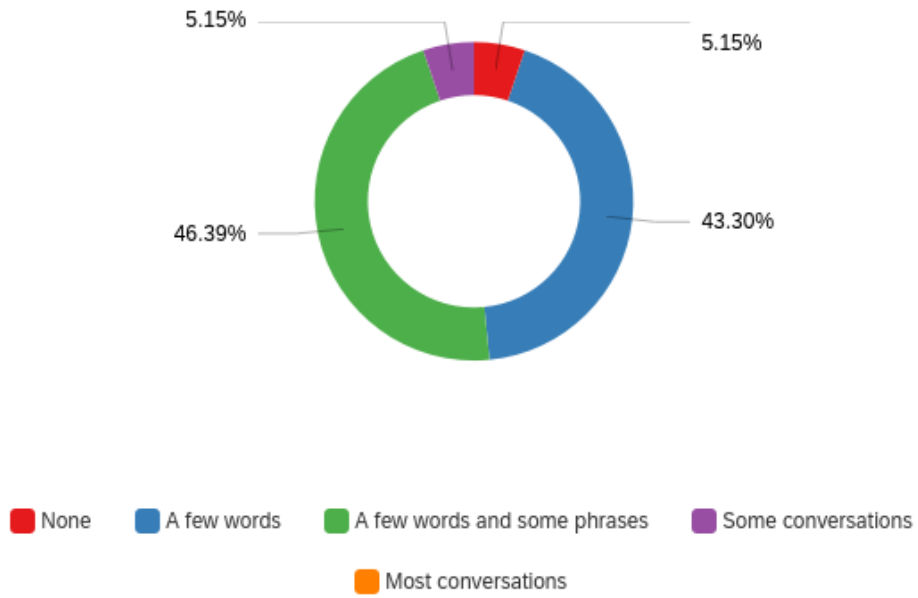
Eight parents and caretakers (8% of total respondents) reported being extremely dissatisfied with their children's school and all eight provided additional comments about this choice. One parent wrote about a lack of access to Yakama language in schools as their source of extreme dissatisfaction, writing, "[t]hey need to add the Yakama language in all the schools on the reservation. I believe the loss of the Sahaptin language is a great loss and it needs to be brought back starting with our younger generation." Another wrote about a language teacher being let go and a need to retain good teachers. Another reported that Native students are treated badly by other students and staff while others wrote of a lack of trust in administration including a "lack of follow through, communication, and transparency...".

Question 3 – How much Ichishkíin language do you use daily?

Question 3 was a multiple-choice question asking parents how much **Ichishkíin** language they use daily. Five options were presented, ranging from 'none' to 'most

conversations'. The slight majority, 45 parents and caretakers (approximately 46%), responded that they use a few words and some phrases of **Ichishkíin** language on a daily basis while 42 (approximately 43%) use a few words. Five parents and caretakers (approximately 5% of all respondents) reported using no **Ichishkíin** language in their daily lives while another five reported engaging in some conversations in the language daily. No respondents reported engaging daily in most conversations. Figure 6 illustrates this contrast below. Put another way, approximately 90% of the parents and caretakers who responded to the survey use a few words and/or phrases while only about 5% have daily conversations, and 5% use no **Ichishkíin** language daily. As with other questions, space was provided for parents to elaborate on their responses in a text box if they chose. Responses to each choice are discussed in more detail below.

Figure 6. Daily **Ichishkíin** Use Pie Chart



None

Of the five parents and caretakers who reported that they use no **Ichishkíin** language daily, two added additional information to their choices, one sharing that, while they do know some words and phrases, they do not use them on a daily basis.

A few words

Out of the 42 parents and caretakers who marked that they use a few words daily, 15 added additional thoughts. Many remarked that they use just a handful of 'basic' words, often common commands, greetings, and numbers, and sometimes using multiple dialects.

A few words and some phrases

Twenty-one of the 45 parents and caretakers who marked that they use a few words and some phrases daily elaborated on their answer choice. Several of these elaborations mentioned the kids leading the usage from what they have learned in school or summer camps. As with those who marked that they speak a few words daily, topics mentioned include greetings and numbers, but also family, food, animals, body parts and some basic questions around meals or elaborating on greetings. One specified daily usage of words but phrases on a more weekly basis.

Some conversations

Of the five parents and caretakers who use some conversation on a daily basis, four added more to their answers in the text box. Two wrote that they use greetings and words around daily activities, one listing examples of many of the phrases that they use throughout the day with their children. Another remarked that his daily usage occurs mostly at work through teaching high school students.

Most conversations

No parents and caretakers marked that they practice daily usage of language in most conversations.

Question 4 - Do you have support for using language at home?

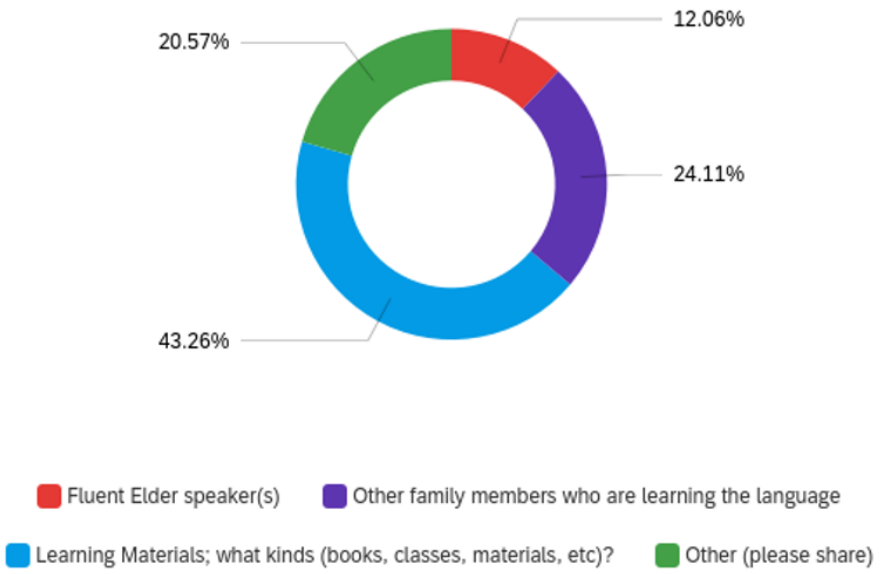
Question four asked parents and caretakers to share what kind of resources they have in their home to support their use of language. We asked that they choose all options that apply to their household and share any additional supports not listed, again allowing space for them to elaborate on their responses if they wished. The four options of support to choose from were largely relational and included 'Fluent Elder Speakers', 'Learning Materials', 'Other Family Members Learning the Language', and 'Other'. The majority of parents and caretakers (about 43%, 61 participants) reported having language learning materials such as books, classes, or other materials. Behind that, 34 (about 24%) shared that they have other family members in the household learning the language. At a relatively close count, 29 parents/caretakers (about 21%) marked that they have other supports not listed. Seventeen (about 12%) shared that they have fluent Elders to support them in using language at home. Figure 7 (page 87) provides a visual for this breakdown and responses to each are discussed in more detail below according to their categories.

Fluent Elders

Of the seventeen parents and caretakers who shared that they have fluent Elder speakers in their households to learn **Ichishkíin** from, eight added additional comments. Two of this set checked the box that they have this resource but wrote simply 'no' in the text box, and another remarked only that there are "few left". Others shared that they

have (or have had) Elder family members – parents, grandparents, an uncle – in their household.

Figure 7. Home Language Use Support Breakdown Pie Chart



Other Family Members who are Learning the Language

Thirty-four parents and caretakers marked that they have other family members in their household who are also learning **Ichishkíin**, 18 of which added additional information. As with the 'Fluent Elder' choice, one respondent wrote 'no' in the text box. Several identified that their children are the ones learning the language. Other family members mentioned include spouses, parents, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, aunties, and uncles.

Learning Materials (books, classes, materials, etc.)

Of the 61 parents and caretakers who marked having **Ichishkíin** learning materials in their homes, 42 added additional comments. The majority of these, twenty-one, wrote that they have various types of materials from their or their children's current or previous **Ichishkíin** language classes. Eighteen mentioned having one or multiple dictionary resources and 16 mentioned having books besides the dictionaries. Seven mentioned that they reference **Ichishkíin** YouTube videos and five talked about creating their own materials. Another five wrote that they use the **Námi Sínwit** language app and four shared that they have things like posters or other visuals up in their house. Three people talked about having audio materials like cd's, tapes, and recordings to learn from. One mentioned songs as learning materials and another talked about things around their home that their children only know the **Ichishkíin** names for (e.g. plants, necklaces, etc.).

Other

Twenty-nine parents and caretakers indicated having other supports for learning **Ichishkíin** than the four that were listed. Of these, 25 shared more information about what those supports are. Six mentioned technology or electronic supports like apps, online access, and cd's. Another six mentioned family members, friends, teachers, or other people outside of their home that they can turn to for help. Three wrote about having resources from previous classes (theirs or their kids') and another mentioned being able to see and hear language in the community (e.g. on the radio or up on signage). Another three cited their knowledge from memories of growing up with fluent speakers as support for using language now in their homes.

Question 5 - Rank the following supports in the order that they would be helpful for you to use more Ichishkíin language at home.

Question 5 asked parents/caretakers to rank how helpful particular supports would be in using more **Ichishkíin** language at home with 1 being the most helpful and 6/7 being the least helpful. The seven supports available to rank consisted of 1) written supports (books, flashcards, posters, etc.), 2) games & activities, 3) songs & videos, 4) electronic supports (e.g.: apps), 5) classes (online or in person), 6) practice with Elders/speakers, 7) other. The 7th support was optional so not all people included it in their ranking. Each choice also provided room for people to elaborate on their choices. More information about responses for each category will be shared briefly below.

Table 4 shows the breakdown for each category and ranking. The rows list each individual category, with the percentage and response count for each with the total number of respondents for that category in the right-most slot. For example, the top row, category 1 - written supports, shows that its highest ranking was ’most helpful’ (ranking 1 out of 7) at about 28% of all respondents, or 26 out of 92 total responses for this category with its lowest ranking of 6th helpful by just 7 out of 92 parents/caretakers (about 8%). In contrast, the columns show where each category falls under each ranking. For example, under ranking 1 in the first column, you see category 6 – practice with Elders/speakers, was ranked the highest as ’most helpful’ (1 out of 7) by 30% (27 of 95 total responses) of the parents and caretakers who provided rankings. Category 1 ’written supports’ came in next, followed by category 5 ’classes’ (17%), then category 4 ’electronic supports’ at about 12%, category 3 ’songs & videos’ (11%), category 2 ’games & activities’, and finally category 7 ’other’ at about 4%.

Table 4 – Ranking Language Supports for Helpfulness

#	Field	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Total
1	Written supports - books, flashcards, posters, etc.	28.26%	26	20.65%	19	17.39%	16	16.30%	15	9.78%	9	7.61%	7	0.00%	0	92
2	Games & activities	2.22%	2	11.11%	10	23.33%	21	15.56%	14	22.22%	20	22.22%	20	3.33%	3	90
3	Songs & videos	11.83%	11	23.66%	22	15.05%	14	22.58%	21	18.28%	17	8.60%	8	0.00%	0	93
4	Electronic supports - apps	13.19%	12	14.29%	13	14.29%	13	26.37%	24	9.89%	9	19.78%	18	2.20%	2	91
5	Classes - online or in person	17.20%	16	20.43%	19	13.98%	13	10.75%	10	24.73%	23	12.90%	12	0.00%	0	93
6	Practice with Elders/speakers	29.67%	27	12.09%	11	16.48%	15	8.79%	8	12.09%	11	20.88%	19	0.00%	0	91
7	Other	3.57%	1	3.57%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	14.29%	4	78.57%	22	28

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Table 5, by contrast, shows the overall preference order of categories according to their average ranking across responses.

Table 5 – Language Supports Helpfulness Ranking Order

Ranking Order	**Language Speaking Support Categories**	**Average Ranking (from 1-7)**
1	Written Supports	2.82
2	Practice with Elders/speakers	3.24
3	Songs & Videos	3.38
4	Classes	3.44
5	Electronic Supports	3.74
6	Games & Activities	4.24
7	'Other'	6.46

Category 1 - Written Supports – average ranking 2.82

Order of percentage of ranking: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Of the 97 parents and caretakers who completed the survey, 92 put a ranking on category 1 'written supports' which includes things like books, flashcards, posters, etc. The average ranking amounts to a mean score of 2.82. Out of these 92 people, 26 (about 28%) ranked this type of support as a 1 out of 7 (most helpful), seven of whom added additional comments often mentioning that the written visuals align well with their learning preferences. Nineteen people (about 21%) ranked it 2nd out of 7, five adding more information, largely regarding written supports as beneficial in supplementing other methods of learning. A ranking of 3 out of 7 was marked for 16 parents and caretakers (about 17%) with three adding additional thoughts such as the visibility of written language reinforcing and contextualizing language learning and use. Fifteen people (about 16%) ranked this category 4th out of 7 and two added more information about this ranking, both mentioning a desire for supports around labeling their homes and time as a barrier from having done this themselves already. Nine people (about 10%) ranked it as 5th with two adding additional comments, one of whom points to the learning curve of seeing sounds and knowing the pronunciation. Seven people (about 8%) ranked it at a 6 out of 7 with one adding comment around it being more helpful to hear the language spoken. There were no rankings of 7th for this category, though category 7 'other' may not have been considered by some of those ranking these supports since it is not a specific listing.

Category 2 - Games and Activities – average ranking 4.24

Order of percentage of ranking: 3 5/6 4 2 7 1

Category 2 ’Games and Activities’ was ranked by 90 parents and caretakers, the lowest number of responses of all the categories. The mean score compared to other categories was 4.24 with the highest number of rankings a 3 out of 7 by 21 respondents, or about 23% of the total who ranked this category. Three of these 21 elaborated on their ranking for this category mentioning the enjoyment games can bring to learning. The second highest ranking was tied by both 5 and 6 out of 7 with 20 parents and caretakers (about 22%). Of those who ranked it at a 5, six wrote additional notes on their entry again largely mentioning fun for kids. One offered concern around games or activities that rely too heavily on written language, and one wrote a preference for one-on-one supports. Two of the 20 parents and caretakers who ranked this category at a 6 added more thoughts, one remarking that they might be helpful to children. Fourteen people (about 16%) ranked this support at a 4 out of 7, three of whom added more thoughts to their entry sharing the benefit to engage kids in language use with this type of support. Ten people (about 11%) ranked it at a 2. Of these, five added additional comments generally mentioning the kids and, like those who ranked it 3rd, the fun games can bring to learning. Three parents and caretakers (about 3%) ranked it last at a 7 out of 7 for ’least helpful’ with one adding hopes for more community involvement. Two parents and caretakers (about 2%) ranked it ’most helpful’, or 1st out of 7, neither of whom added any additional comments to this ranking.

Category 3 - Songs and Videos – average ranking 3.38

Order of percentage of ranking: 2 4 5 3 1

Ninety-three parents and caretakers chose a ranking for category 3 ’songs and videos’. The mean score compared to all categories lands at 3.38, just slightly behind category 6 ’Practice with Elders/speakers’ and just ahead of classes. Of all the rankings, the highest for this category was **2** out of 7 with 22 parents and caretakers (about 24%) ranking it here. Of these 22, five elaborated, mostly on songs over videos, commenting on appreciation for repetition, singing along, and acting out. Close behind that, 21 parents and caretakers (about 23%) ranked it 4th out of 7, four of whom added additional thoughts to their entries sharing that singing and/or videos are not part of their daily lives, and that they can take a while to learn. The next highest was a ranking of 5 by 17 parents and caretakers (about 18%) and one added additional comment elaborating that careful consideration for learners is necessary in offering these supports.

A ranking of 3 out of 7 was chosen by 14 parents and caretakers (about 15%). Of these, six provided additional information sharing that both they and their children learn well in this way, one remarking it would be especially helpful as they road trip. Eleven parents and caretakers (about 12%) ranked it as the most helpful support, or 1st out of 7. Four commented, some expressing appreciation for the built-in pronunciation help this type of support offers and that it is a successful support for kids. Finally, eight people (about 9%) ranked this category 6th out of 7. One person elaborated, echoing others’ advice that these types of support are often too advanced for a beginning learner. There were no rankings of 7 for this category.

Category 4 - Electronic Supports – average ranking 3.74

Order of percentage of rankings: 4 6 2/3 1 5 7

Ninety-one parents and caretakers provided rankings for category 4 'Electronic Supports' with a mean score of 3.74. Of these, the highest number, 24 (about 26%), ranked this support **4th** out of 7 with seven adding additional information to their entries, largely commenting on the potential ease of access to language with this type of support. The next highest ranking came from 18 parents and caretakers (about 20%) who ranked it as 6th out 7. Five of those who ranked it 6th added more information. One parent shared that some of their younger children watch **Ichishkíin** YouTube videos. Another suggested adding onto the current app while another talked about utilizing the online dictionary to hear pronunciation of words and wished there was an app for easier access. One shared that electronic resources are just not their preferred means of learning and rarely get used and one remarked that these types of resources are not available. A ranking of 2 and 3 was tied with 13 people (about 14%) ranking at each of those levels. Of those who ranked it at a 2, four added more thoughts speaking to the ease of access and enjoyment of this type of support, specifically mentioning the **Ichishkíin** app available at this time on iPhones and iPads. Twelve parents and caretakers (about 13%) ranked this support category as 'most helpful', or 1st out of 7 with one adding additional information remarking on the tech skills of their children. Of the equal number of parents and caretakers who ranked it at a 3, two added additional comments mentioning the benefit of access to pronunciation in this format. Nine parents and caretakers (about 10%) ranked it at a 5 out of 7, three of whom commented further, again mentioning the resourcefulness and access to pronunciation support in addition to appealing to younger

generations. Finally, two people (about 2%) ranked it as 'least helpful', or 7th out of 7, neither elaborating on their choice for ranking it here.

Category 5 - Classes – Average ranking 3.44

Order of percentage of rankings: 5 2 1 3 6 4

Ninety-three parents and caretakers ranked category 5 'Classes' with a mean score of 3.44. The highest ranking for this category was a 5 out of 7 with 23 parents and caretakers (about 25%) choosing this ranking. The second highest was a 2 out of 7 by 19 parents and caretakers (about 20%) while the third highest number, 16 people (roughly 17%) ranked it as 'most helpful', or 1st out of 7. This category was ranked at 3 out of 7 by 13 parents and caretakers (about 14%), and at a 6 out of 7 by 12 people (roughly 13%). A ranking of 4 out of 7 was chosen by 10 parents and caretakers (about 11%). There were no rankings of 7 out of 7 for category 5.

Category 6 - Practice with Elders/speakers - average ranking 3.24

Order of percentage of ranking: 1 6 3 2/5 4

Ninety-one of the 97 survey respondents provided a ranking for category 6 'practice with Elders/speakers. The average ranking for this type of support lands at a mean score of 3.24. The majority, about 30% or 27 of the 91 parents who ranked this category, named it a 1 (most helpful) out of 7. The second largest for this category's ranking was 6 out of 7 with 19 participants, roughly 21%. Fifteen people, about 16%, ranked this category at 3 out of 7. A ranking of both 2 and 5 were chosen by 11 (about 12%) parents and caretakers for each. The smallest ranking for this category was a 4 out of 7 by 8 respondents, or roughly 9%. There were no rankings of 7 for this category.

Category 7 - Other - average ranking 6.46

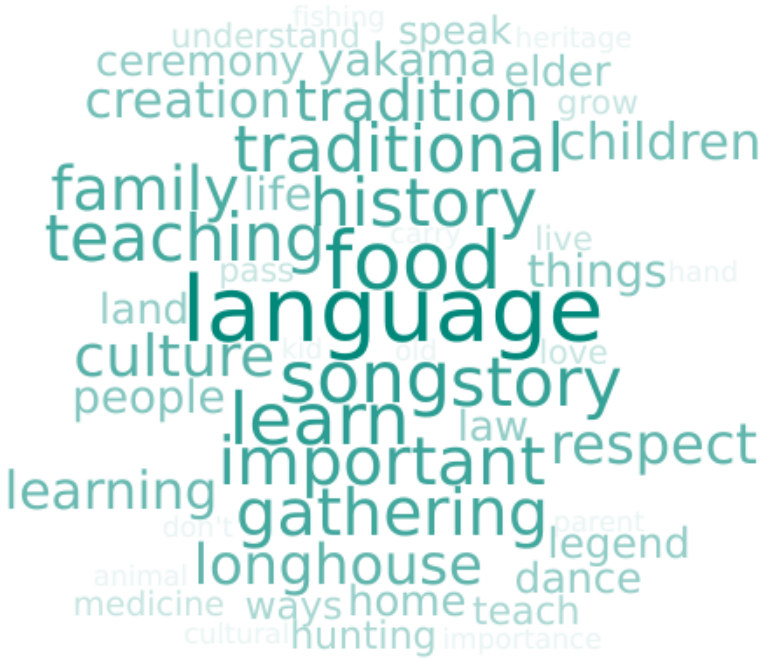
Order of percentage of ranking: 7 6 1/2

In contrast to the other rankings, only 28 parents and caretakers ranked category 7 'other'. The mean score of these rankings was 6.46. Twenty-two (about 79%) of the 28 respondents ranked it at a 7, or 'least helpful'. Four people (about 14%) ranked it a 6 out of 7. Rankings of 1 and 2 out of 7 were chosen by one person (about 4%) each. There were no rankings of 3, 4, or 5 for this category.

Question 6 – What Yakama teachings do you think are important for your children to learn?

All 97 parents and caretakers (about 90%) responded to question 6 which asks what Yakama traditions they feel are important for their children to learn. Figure 8 features a word cloud which shares words mentioned in the responses more than others, with the largest words moving from the center out representing ideas were mentioned the most by people. For example, we see 'language' at the center being the largest of all words because it was talked about more than other words throughout the responses. 'Food' was also frequently mentioned as was 'song', 'story', 'teaching', 'history', and 'family', etc. I really like word clouds for this type of survey because I like to see a visual, when it comes to a large amount of people, of what are people saying? Is it the same for most? And I want to see the answer to this by a simple glance of the Word Cloud.

Figure 8 – Important Yakama Teachings Survey Word Cloud



Front and center in the word could is ’language’ and that is great to see because I also believe that **Ichishkíin** should be in the center. There are other words that, when discussing Yakama teachings, that the Yakama community may know what is meant and an outsider may not be as aware such as: ’culture, story, song law, and family.’ Of course, ’culture’ is most likely to be Yakama culture and ’story’ is most likely Yakama stories and legends. Some of the other words may not be as familiar such as ’song’ is usually pertaining to Yakama **Wáashat** songs. These songs are our longhouse songs and sung typically from our leaders in the community to open up a function. When Yakama people use ’law’ they are typically referring to our unwritten laws that we follow and they are, of course, not intended to be written. In **Ichishkíin** ’family’ is fairly complicated and a fluent speaker and elder once said that it could take a whole year to teach all of the family terms. There also are important words that have been mentioned by fewer people, so are peripheral as well as fainter, but are still important such as

’medicine, ceremony, and creation.’ Yakama elders talk about our traditional foods being more like ’medicine’ than food and we use a lot of ’medicines’ in ceremonies that come from roots and/or leaves (for example). Yakama people have many ’ceremonies’ that must take place at certain times such as with death, marriage, having a child, hunting, fishing, etc. When Yakama people talk about ’creation’ then many times they are referring to our ’creation’ stories and the lessons and teachings that go with them.

Question 7 – What seasonal activities should Yakama children learn?

Ninety-four of the 97 survey respondents (97%) provided an answer to question 7 asking what seasonal activities Yakama children should learn. A word cloud featured in Figure 9 (page 99) shows which words were mentioned most by the parents and caretakers who responded. As you can see in the figure, ’gathering’ and ’food’ are featured as the most central and largest words meaning that they were the most frequently talked about. Other ideas circling those and moving outward from the center include ’fishing’, ’hunting’, ’traditional’, ’roots’, and ’berry’, among the others that continue to move outward.

I began to realize that many of the things that we Yakamas understand how complicated things could be when they hear ’berry, root, digging, roots, and gather’ but that it would not be understood by outsiders. To pick blackberries, for example, one might hear simply “fill this bucket with ripe blackberries not the green ones or old looking ones” but that is not what is being referred to here. If you come across a traditional Yakama food gatherer, who picks berries or digs roots, then they should know what to do the first time you ever ’gather’ our traditional foods; when you can and cannot

Figure 9. Seasonal Teachings Survey Word Cloud

'gather,' when you could 'gather' for your own family; and even how to take care of their foods for a traditional feast at a longhouse. We do not have to do these types of things for all foods but with our traditional foods there are many specific protocols that must be followed.

Question 8 – What Yakama activities would you like your children to practice daily?

Question 8 asks parents and caretakers to share what Yakama activities they would like their children to practice daily. Ninety-three parents and caretakers (96%) of our survey's 97 total respondents shared answers to this question. Figure 10 shows which words were mentioned most in their responses. As with question 6, 'language' is featured at the center with the most mentions throughout responses. We also see 'prayer', 'song',

'speak', 'family', and 'conversation' surfacing as other prominent mentions, working their way outward from the center.

Figure 10. Yakama Activities Survey Word Cloud

It might be that some of the larger more frequently mentioned words, such as 'prayer, song, and singing,' may be referring to a similar thing that some of the less frequent words, such as 'sing, dance, drum, and **washut**.'Our **Wáashat**, or longhouse way of life, consists of a large amount of drumming, singing, dancing, and praying. There could be situations where we may need to have ceremonies that could last a couple of days and in that time there, most likely, would have been a lot of singing, drumming, dancing, and praying. As an Indigenous language teacher, when I see or hear 'color, numbers, basic, greet, time, or animals,' I know that these are the types of things that beginning language

learners want to start out learning. Single words such as ’color, number and animals’ can be used to help with pronunciation practice and even reading and writing in the target language. ’Greetings and time’ are good subjects to begin practice with conversational use of the language. Indigenous language teachers may try to encourage use of the target language outside of the classroom such as at home, with friends and family, in the community, and especially when doing everyday activities. So when I see words like ’chore, home, meal, cooking, every day, and craft,’ I see these as strategies to learn and expand their language fluency.

Question 9 – What entities within the Yakama Nation would you like to see working more with our children?

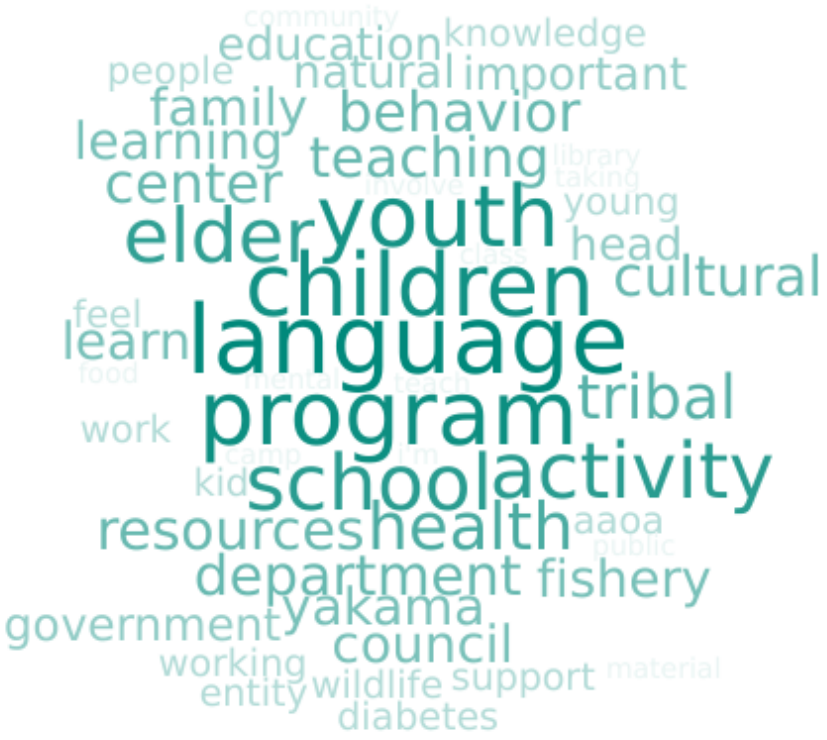
Ninety-one parents and caretakers, or 94% of all who completed the survey, provided answers to question 9 which asked what entities within the Yakama Nation they would like to see working more with our children. Figure 11 (page 102) provides a visual of thoughts that were mentioned most where, again, we find ’language’ holding space at the center with the most frequent mentions with ’program’ falling just underneath it. Other words with prominent mentions were ’youth’, ’elder’, ’school’, ’activity’, and ’health’ moving out from that language center.

Question 10 – What knowledge or skills would you or your family be willing to share with children in our community?

Question 10 asks parents and caretakers to answer what knowledge or skills they or their family would be willing to share with the children in our community. Eighty-nine of our 97 respondents answered this question, a response rate of about 92%. As you can see in Figure 12 (page 103), the idea to ’share’ was mentioned most throughout the

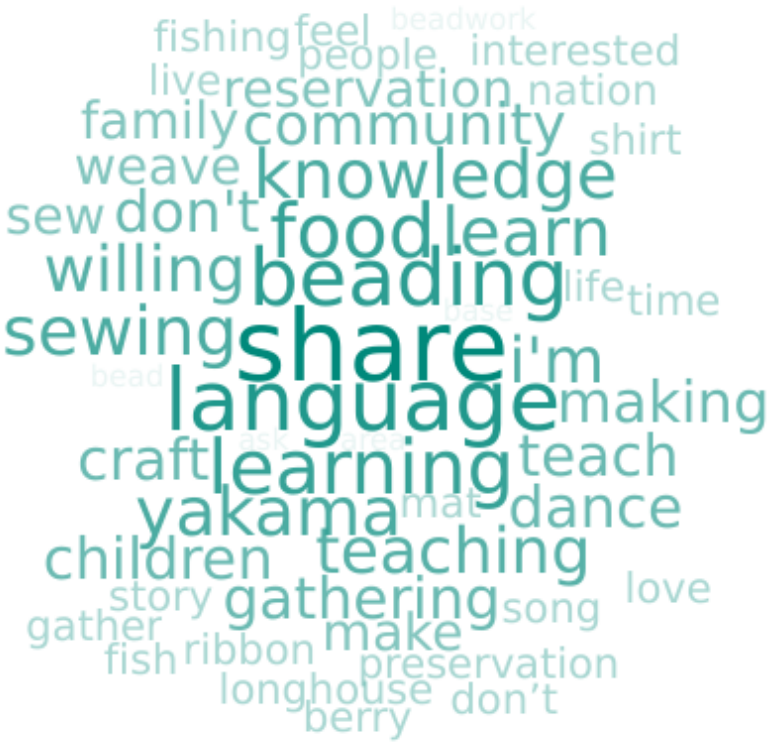
responses. ’Language’ also holds a prominent spot, as do ’beading’, ’food’, ’learning’, ’sewing’ and ’knowledge’.

Figure 11. Yakama Nation Entity Education Partnerships Survey Word Cloud



This question is asking about the parents and family knowledge/skills so these questions could be a little different but I do like how ’share’ is centered and ’language’ is a close second. When it comes to taking your children to the longhouse, there are a lot of items that participants are expected to be wearing. If somebody wanted to dress up, maybe for a special occasion, they would typically wear some leather clothing; for a regular day, then there are cloth forms of the same clothing such as ribbon shirts and wing dresses. The benefit of living on or near the Yakama reservation is that longhouse

Figure 12. Parent and Family Knowledge and Skills Survey Word Cloud



services happen regularly and there are also special events that happen periodically such as name givings and memorials. If I were to hear somebody offering classes on ’sewing, beading, weave, or a mat,’ then I would assume ’sewing and beading’ would be to prepare the clothing worn at longhouses. Traditional longhouse clothing is typically handmade and classes are offered frequently to help people make traditional clothing for their families. When I hear ’weave and mat’ I would think weaving traditional hats that women wear at the longhouse; weaving baskets used to gather traditional foods for the longhouses; or weaving tule mats that are used for many reasons at the longhouse such as: it was the traditional table we ate on and still do and to stand on when getting married. There may be some people who are actually referring to things that have nothing to do with longhouses such as weaving a wicker basket; sewing modern clothing; beading a

modern necklace; or making a welcome mat for your home. But there are many of classes that happen in, on, and around the Yakama reservation that help families make their own longhouse items.

Question 11 – Is there anything else you'd like to share to help Yakama children become speakers and leaders in our community?

Question 11 asks parents and caretakers to share any final thoughts around ways to help support Yakama children in becoming speakers and leaders in the community. There was an 87% response rate for this question with 84 parents and caretakers providing responses. Once again, 'language' holds the center space across responses, as shown in the word cloud in Figure 13. Other words that stand out in this final question include, 'children', 'people', 'learn', and 'speak'.

Figure 13. Final Thoughts Survey Word Cloud

It is good to see that 'language' is centered on most of the word clouds and for the final thoughts 'children, people, learn, speak, school, and community' are also common responses. I feel that having our own school like **Miimawít** Immersion School would help address each of these. Elders have been known to say "it takes a village to raise a child" and I think that is a good reflection of our old ways of education. In public elementary schools, it is typical for children to have one main teacher for that entire year and then a new one every year. If a Yakama community member wanted to learn some Yakama ways then they may be advised to see this person about making baskets, this person for medicinal plant identification, or this person to make a dip net for fishing. Different community members are known for their expertise in certain areas and the old teachings say that we help each other out as a community or maybe more correctly would be as a family.

Analysis

In this section I will be looking at the data with **Kussumwhy**'s (Wilkins, 2008) and the Nine Yakama Virtues. She put the virtues together to help guide younger people to proceed in a good way and I feel that they have become more than just that. I feel that the Virtues could be used to help any age and even any type of person to give them some guidance. They are also special to me because she is my elder, she cares for her people, she is a fluent **Ichishkíin** speaker, and she is a great leader.

Kwyámtɨmt - ***honesty, being truthful***

Kussumwhy (Wilkins, 2008) discusses **k̲'wyáamtɨmt** (*honesty, being truthful*) and how being honest about yourself and even your opinions of others is important, also reminding that being untruthful might bring dishonor to you and your family. One of the

participants of the Parent and Caretaker Survey mentioned how the children should learn "the value of family circle and their place within their circle, and duties they will uphold." Many of us Yakamas are taught that our ancestors are watching us and that we should conduct ourselves in a way that will bring honor to our family. Of course, honesty is probably something that is taught in all schools, but the guiding reasons likely vary. You might begin to learn in elementary school that you will get in trouble being dishonest and this is probably true for many children's homes as well. Being truthful to bring honor to your family, rather than to avoid trouble, is a way of looking at it that **Kussumwhy** reminds us is of value to our families and community as a whole. Because she names **kwyámtimt** as one of the Nine Virtues and because it has been mentioned in different ways through parent survey, this is an essential value to include in the development of **Miimawít** Immersion School.

Truth is valuable for other reasons, too; truth can help us decide how best to proceed through difficult contexts. In response to question 11 of the survey, sharing final thoughts, one parent wrote, "we really don't have time to waste, we need to treasure our language and fluent speakers.' The truth, as difficult as it may be to hear, is that our language is at a critical point where it may go to sleep soon. Some Indigenous people do not like to call their language "dead" but would rather say it is sleeping because there have been tribes that have revitalized their language after it had been asleep for over 100 years. Hearing these parents say these hard truths out loud and being honest together about the critical status of our language might help us to move more quickly into the action needed to turn this around.

Tɨmnáknik – ***extending from the heart, compassion***

Having compassion for your people, for the land, and for all of life is an important virtue with Yakama people. I have heard people talk about how much of an honor it is to be a tribal council person because you get to be of service to your people. Some of the more famous tribal council people that I hear elders talk about was around how much they loved their people. Having compassion for the people is a big part of being a leader. The food gatherers will usually talk about how the deer, elk, salmon, roots, berries, and all of our traditional foods are alive, and we must take care of them because they take care of us. Many people will sing songs, make an offering, or do something to show respect to our foods. Having compassion for all life is often a teaching from elders. One participant from the parent survey spoke of the compassion we should have for our children by saying "it is our job and responsibility to instill pride, teach meaningful lessons and truly care about our kids."

It is respectful to be compassionate when it comes to teaching and learning **Ichishkíin** because people learn better when they are in a friendly and supportive environment. One parent speaks about this "I would like to see open, compassionate, and learning spacing for all. Spaces to be taught in a loving way with grace as everyone learns and makes mistakes in learning." I have heard many people talk about, and many mentioned in the survey, that when a speaker corrects them it can be discouraging. As a **sapsikw'ałá** (*teacher*) of **Ichishkíin**, I address this issue in the very first day of class. I tell them that this space will be a friendly space where we will make mistakes with the language and where we can let our guard down. I tell them that we want to think about how children learning to talk will use the language without worrying about making

mistakes. I also tell them that we should have thick skin when elders correct us; they know the language and their corrections should be welcomed. I say that you have heard somebody mispronounce a word in English and it sounded funny, and everybody may have chuckled. I also tell the students to memorize this saying: **Pamíshpamish nash pinásapsikw'asha sínwit chíishkin** and it means *I am trying to teach myself (learn) to speak* **Ichishkíin**. Elders usually like hearing that and will say **kúumish** (*alright*) or **shix̲** (*good*) then encourage you to keep it up.

As mentioned, many people have brought this up as a concern and as a way to describe hopes for a better learning environment. One parent even said, "this is a mindset that needs to change or people will be afraid or ashamed to say they don't know our language." People discuss **Timnáknik** (*compassion*) when talking about our leaders that were considered great. **Miimawít** Immersion School will also follow **Kussumwhy** in teaching about this so that we can all live life in this way.

Itmá'aaksha – *cautious and careful of all things an others, restrained, and peaceful*

Being cautious and careful with what you say or do to maintain harmony is an important

virtue to Yakamas. I once heard a Yakama elder say something like 'you must be careful of what you say because you can't just say sorry and it is forgotten, you must be held accountable for the words you say'. The teaching serves to encourage you to be cautious and think before talking, not about a punishment or anything like that, we should care about how what we say affects people. Marian Squeoch, an elder and participant in the survey, said, "be kind to each other and yourself. Need to teach children and others by

example, learn to respect each other." I also appreciate how she mentions being kind to yourself as well because that is important and is sometimes overlooked.

Your words and/or actions can have an effect on others so it is good practice to be mindful of that. People will say that our tribe is like a big family, and this also includes the land, plants, and animals. One of the parents in the survey was discussing what children should learn and said, "respect for oneself, others and all the creator has provided." This is another way of looking at the statement that we are all connected/related in this world. I think **shtúkshshtuksh** (*spider web*) is a good visual of this teaching of all living things being connected because all strands are connected to each other from the sections furthest away down to the center; if something is moving around on any part of the web then the spider could feel it because it affects the whole thing. Lavette Holman, an **Ichishkíin** student and parent, said "it is also important that he learn how to help preserve the old ways and be a steward of the natural resources and foods of his homeland.

Miimawít Immersion School will continue with the teaching of **itmá'aaksha** (*catious and careful*) and teach how we are connected to our world. I like visualizations and the way they expand your understanding of something so I think the **shtúkshshtuksh** could be used to help express this teaching.

Yáych'unał – ***not afraid of any type of challenge, courage, heroic perseverance***

To not be afraid and to be courageous is a virtue that is discussed a lot with Yakama people. I remember hearing uncles say 'don't be afraid of your mountains' when younger people start to act scared while up in the mountains. They said that is what their grandma used to tell them about our mountains. I also like how **Kussumwhy** discusses

being a leader by doing what is right. Sometimes the people in your surroundings will make poor choices and being a leader helps encourage others to make better choices. Patricia Ashue, a Yakama parent, was discussing what children should learn and wrote, “I would say for the young ones to learn how to be in the longhouse or shaker church. sometimes they can be backwards. I suppose I need to be the one to step up for mine.” Sometimes a leader is the one who takes the first step so others can follow. I have also seen this with language where one person stepping up to learn their language triggers others to learn as well. An **Ichishkíin** teacher from the parent survey wrote, “We want to empower our kids to speak and not be afraid of using the language in everyday life.” This teaching is very important with language instruction.

Sometimes when you hear about our Yakama ancestors, from not too far back, you think ’wow, they were really courageous’. In the old days, sometimes the children were taken up to the mountains, dropped off and told to find their way back home. They had to stick together to get food and water, build shelters, and navigate themselves back home. I could not imagine doing this to my kids these days even now that they are older. We also have a saying **chaw nam pináchaḵukta** (*don’t be backwards*) and it is used to encourage people to not back away from something because they don’t know how; when you don’t know how to do something that is exactly why you should step up to learn. One of the parents in the survey discussed making their ancestors proud, saying, “I remember that I still can and must reclaim as much as I can so I can share it with my children and grandchildren. I want my elders to look down and say, **íi**. When an elder agrees with something in **Ichishkíin** they say **ii** (*yes*).

I would like to see the value of **yáych'unał** (*not afraid, courage*) taught in the **Miimawít** Immersion School. This would be done in many ways, and I think it is important to simply point out and commend children when they conduct themselves in this way. For example, if someone said 'I need a volunteer for this next activity' when somebody steps up, you might simply say *'***kw'ałanúusha mash** (*I thank you*) for bravely stepping forward'.

Pinátma'áakt – ***taking care and being aware of one's total being, balance and harmony***

To take care of yourself and try to keep balance and harmony within yourself is an incredibly valuable teaching for our children. When you are acting wrong you might hear someone say to have some self-respect; they want you to care enough about yourself that you would think again about acting another way. When it comes from inside yourself it is much stronger than just being told to do something or not. In response to question 6, a parent in the survey suggested children should be taught, "how to walk in balance with all things-how to be a centered human being." Centered, in peace, and harmony are goals we all should strive for in being a good human in this world. Mariana Harvey, an **Ichishkíin** learner and parent, also discussed what children should learn, writing, "'our foods take care of us, and in return we must care for them', is a big value in our home. And taking care of ourselves and each other." I like when people mention taking care of themselves because it can be easy to forget in the world we live in today.

This virtue also reminds me of a Yakama legend about a girl struggling to complete a task and she gets advice to slow down, meditate, and find some peace within and then try again. The girl fails again and again but eventually completes the task. This

teaches us that sometimes we must step back and take care of ourselves first. The legend is a reminder to not only take care of yourself but to remember that the land, trees, bushes, animals, and all of the life surrounding you is connected to you. Some people do not view nature this way, but it is an important teaching to Yakamas. Elese Washines, a Yakama woman and educational leader, wrote about what children should learn and she said, “We introduce ourselves not only to the people around us, but we acknowledge the land and introduce ourselves to the land.” Having peace within yourself and to be out in nature is an excellent example of a harmonious environment, an important practice to remember.

The **Miimawít** Immersion School will regularly encourage everyone to strive to have peace and harmony inside. Students from **Miimawít** will also spend much more time outside amongst nature. When surrounded by nature, teachings of our connectedness usually appear because they are important to teach and reteach basically until you pass on.

Tma’áakni – *respect*

Tma’áakni (*respect*) is a widely used virtue for Yakamas as well as other Indigenous peoples. Having respect applies to many different areas and I have heard elders say many times to respect yourself, the land, the water, all life, etc. I think the reason that many times environmental movements are led by Indigenous peoples is because of how we were taught to respect the land, water, plant life, and all the animals. An **Ichishkíin** teacher was asked what we should teach to Yakama children. He said, “Another is respect all creations and not take/harvest any more than you need. I believe it would be beneficial to current and future Yakamas to identify all of the "unwritten laws"

and teach them in the language (**Ichishkin**).” Respect is also shown towards the people as a whole, too, like how we are always taught to respect our elders. A Yakama woman, said that “Everyone should treat each other with respect and be kind”.

A Native veteran friend of mine was telling me how he took his White veteran friend to a Native American function and afterwards the guy got emotional and said he had never seen so much respect given to the elders or veterans before whereas it is common practice in our culture. So many times children do not even need to be reminded at functions and will just get an elder a plate to be respectful. Respect is shown in many different ways to many different things. In the **Ichishkíin** language classes we encourage everyone to respect each other because a supportive environment for everybody helps people to learn better. One parent from the parent survey mentioned an important teaching to share: “Respect for others who want to learn, not making fun of mistakes made while learning.”

The **Miimawít** Immersion School will ensure the teaching of respect because it is an integral part of our ways as Yakamas. **Miimawít** will also teach to show respect to our communities by recognizing our families and community members as the experts when it comes to our Yakama ways. When we reflect on our communities we realize that collectively we have many highly respected and skilled experts. Maybe the Western world would not view them as experts since they did not become experts through Western education but we want to bridge the gap between our children’s education with who we hold as our experts in our ways.

Átaw pxwíni – ***deep thought and feelings, meditation and mindfulness***

Praying and meditating is an important virtue with many Yakama people because we are taught to give thanks at many different times of the day. Many Yakama people, and other Indigenous people, sweat regularly throughout the week and meditate, pray, sing, or just sit still. With this virtue **Kussumwhy** discusses looking at yourself and growing your mind; this happens in the sweatlodge. **Tuxámshish** (2017) talks about the sweat and prayer in her book:

> "Thus the Elders taught me when I was still young: no one can ask for help for you; you yourself must talk to the Grandfather and explain your problem. That is God's law. Everything—the fire, the rocks, the weather, the land—it is all connected. You talk to them just like you talk to your mother or your father when you ask for something. Speak for yourself," (p.97).

As mentioned, I used to teach at the Yakama Nation Head Start and we used to sing and we would pray before every meal. The children really enjoyed doing this and it became their normal procedure for meals. Parents used to tell me that they sing at home, and some even tried to sing before a meal. But after they go to public schools many of the children could not believe that they do not pray or sing before eating. Praying is an essential part of Yakama ways. One parent on the survey mentioned it being important on "how to walk in balance with all things-how to be a centered human being. I have heard elders say that praying is important and can help protect you and your family. A Yakama woman, talks about how the old teachings are important, saying, "we have a natural curriculum and lessons that keep us safe. The basis of learning is a safe environment. The safe environment is in Creator's world. We as parents need to nurture this idea".

The **Miimawít** Immersion School will teach of **Átaw pxwíni** (*deep thought, meditate*) in as many ways as possible. I think that sweating should somehow be incorporated since it is such an important tool for Yakamas. Yakama elders say our language and our ways are connected and our ways are very spiritual. Nurturing our language, our children, our spirituality all of these things are important and connected. A Yakama woman, discusses "many of us are Language Learners (Life Long Learners) and we should try to be as supportive as possible when our youth are learning, writing, and speaking our Language. If we work together, we can revitalize our Ways, our Language, our Culture, and our Traditions!! ".

Piná'awaat kw'ałáni – *self-denial and gratitude, humility*

Piná'awaat kw'ałáni (*being humble and grateful*) are important virtues for Yakama people. I know a common **sápsikw'at** (*teaching*) is to not boast about yourself. They say if you are really good at something, you let others talk about how good you are but not you yourself. An elder once said that you should always be grateful for what you have and how you are because there are always others who are having a hard time. Amelia Morrison, a Yakama woman, said "I like the idea of giving thanks and appreciation for the life that we are living".

I appreciate how **Kussumwhy** mentions the importance of helping others because we as a community are all in this together so helping others will help everyone. A Yakama woman, wrote about helping our community by forming "a committee that includes language learners, language teachers, council, or anyone who have ideas and suggestions as to develop a system where we can improve on how we reach out and include community members to learn the language."

The **Miimawít** Immersion School will teach this important virtue daily and find different ways to do so. I think involving the community more in the school's day-to-day activities will help us all. Sloane Seelatsee, a Yakama woman, talks about what she wants children to learn, writing, "just want them to have some pride in themselves, know that there is a big world out there, respect one another, be careful, thoughtful, be the best you, you can be, so that you can help others around you too.

Wapíitat ttáwax̲t – *help family growth, service to others*

Wapíitat ttáwax̲t (*helping family, service to others*) is the last virtue listed and it plays such an important role in our community, especially with language. Increasing the unity of the community by helping others to heal, being involved in community events, or just encouraging each other keeps us healthy and thriving. This is the way things used to be and a parent from the survey wrote, "Learning how we live together as a family even if it grandparents, moms dads and grandkids or cousins in one home. Taking care of each other, whether it's cooking meals, cleaning the little kids or helping take care of them if parents are working." Families and communities should help each other and love each other because it makes us stronger.

I like to hear the elders talk about the old days and the old ways and I could spend hours listening. One thing I have heard about the old days is that everybody looked after one another more than we do today, and that there was not homelessness because everybody shared everything and looked after each other. I know food gatherers are always talking about how they do not just gather food for themselves but also for those that cannot gather for themselves. There are certain times that people should not be gathering foods for instance, if one is a widow/er, pregnant, elders, or have circumstances

that keep one from being able to gather, then people should be helping out with getting them the foods one needs to be well.

The **Miimawít** Immersion School will always strive towards improving the overall well-being of our community. Involving the community with **Miimawít**'s day-to-day activity will help children get to know their communities better. One of the parents said in the survey that through teaching we can "Develop our own heroes, mentors, and leaders. The children from **Miimawít** will be encouraged to model these good teachings by being active in and acting for their community." Finally, another parent said "Always encourage them to be the best they can be. There is nothing they can't achieve with hard work".

Tying it All Together

The survey was able to bring the voices of many parents/caretakers of Yakama children and that has been very helpful to this research. I am happy to confirm that the community does very much want the **Ichishkíin** language and the Yakama ways of life to be taught to their children. There were no comments that said: I wish they would learn the capitol to all the states; I wish they knew their times tables up to twenty; I wish they could name all the presidents in order, as examples. People wanted their Yakama children to learn some Yakama education! Wilson (2008) discusses that Western research prefers to separate the information from the person but that is not the typical way of Indigenous people. In discussing an Indigenous research paradigm he mentions that "[R]elationality seems to sum up the whole Indigenous research paradigm to me. Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with

relationships," (p. 70). Tuck (2009) was discussing the importance of a framework that holds sovereignty at its core:

> A framework that accounts for and forwards our sovereignty is vital. We can practice our sovereignty within a framework of desire but cannot within a damage framework. By this I mean that a framework of desire recognizes our sovereignty as a core element of our being and meaning making; a damage framework excludes this recognition (p. 423).

The survey provided some valuable information but it also had a disconnect with the participant and the researchers. Interview will allow for a better relationship to be built. As we move deeper into our discussions with the people then we will also be able to look deeper into our framework. The next section will get more personal than the survey and allowing participants to share their story.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Introduction

The parent surveys were very useful in hearing a wide range of voices of Yakama parents/caretakers, but interviews took a more in-depth approach by engaging in one-on-one conversations. Kovach (2010) discusses how utilizing story and personal narratives as an Indigenous researcher honors our rich ancestry and oral history stating, "the oral rendition of personal narrative or formal teaching story is a portal for holistic epistemology. It is the most effective method for capturing this form of knowing in research," (p. 96). She also mentions how other methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, also center story. All narratives were collected through a conversation format and took place individually via zoom in February and March of 2022 and were recorded with explicit permission in that platform and on audacity as a backup. Conversations lasted anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on availability. Through a question on the consent form, parents indicated whether or not they would like their name shared and if they may be quoted directly. Three of the eight chose not to be acknowledged by name in this work while the other five granted permission for their names to be used. All eight gave permission to share their quotes directly.

As with the survey, I look in part to the Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation (Wilkins, 2008) as a guide to analyze the stories of eight parents of Yakama children, a Yakama Elder, and a representative of a tribally run immersion school through a Yakama

lens. These Virtues can be over-lapping, and that becomes clear when we look at their **Ichishkíin** roots grammatically. For example, below are three of the Virtues that contain the same word **tma'áak-** but in different grammatical ways. The different grammatical forms lend slightly different meanings. Example 1, with the suffix –**ni**, expresses a stative nature of the verb; example 2 shows **piná-** a prefix that expresses the reflexive notion,"of one's self" and the –***t*** suffix changing the verb into a noun. Example 3 shows the –**sha** suffix on the verb, indicating a present progressive tense or the beingness of "careful, cautious."

1. **Tma'áakni** – *respect*
2. **Pinátma'áakt** – *taking care and being aware of one's total being, balance and harmony*
3. **Itmá'aaksha** – *cautious and careful of all things an others, restrained, and peaceful*

Many of the Nine Yakama Virtues also overlap with some of the values public schools advocate for, for example, public schools might encourage 'respect' and 'deep thought' but they do so using different methods or for different purposes.

Kussumwhy (Levina Wilkins) introduced us more formally to the Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation (2008) which Sutterlict and Anderson (2021) use to elucidate 'tule mat' to honor its representation as an important tool in our culture which serves many uses, one being a protective layer of our traditional homes of teepees or longhouses. This illustration also represents how all these things are tied to our language and our values. Tule mats are laid onto poles that act as the support of the structure; poles which serve as

the strong core components that hold everything together. In this section, I use these poles to represent core components of our Yakama ways lending to a framework that is Yakama specific. This Yakama framework is where **Miimawít** and public schools take separate paths. Respect might be taught at all schools, but **Miimawít** will embrace, as an example, prayer and spirituality when public schools often must avoid this topic. Just as the interviews go a little deeper than the survey was able, this Yakama framework takes us a little deeper into Yakama ways of being, to learn more about what supports our values in a Yakama educational context. It is with this culturally rooted framework that I analyze data from the interviews presented in this chapter.

To provide further context of my positionality in this work, I first share an overview of my teaching experience in and for my Yakama community beginning as a teaching assistant to **Tux̲ámshish** to my current position as Director of the Heritage University (HU) Language Center (HULC) and the Mellon Endowed Chair of the HU Sahaptin Department.

Teaching Experience in the Yakama Community

When I first began wanting to learn **Ichishkíin**, I started asking around for classes in the communities. I experienced some of the difficulties of teaching **Ichishkíin** both for the **skuuliłá** (*student*) and for the **sapsikw'ałá** (*teacher*). Many times, participants would get busy and not show; many new students would show up one day, and some people struggled with the material that was just covered; the **sapsikw'ałá** would have to keep starting over with the basics to satisfy the majority of **skuuliłáma** (*students*) that were there. That sounds fine except for the people who showed up regularly, like **inák**

(*myself*), and already understood the material and were ready to get more advanced. The other main issue was if the **sapsikw'ałá** didn't show for a couple days, then the **skuuliłáma** would quit showing. I suppose having a substitute would have been helpful and I know having a substitute is even an issue now with some of the **Ichishkíin** classes at the different schools. This speaks to the need of more **Ichishkíin** teachers. Somebody eventually advised me to take the **Ichishkíin** classes with **Tux̲ámshish** (Virginia Beavert) at Heritage University (then Heritage College) and that is when things began to change dramatically for me.

I have had the experience with **Ichishkíin** classes from being a beginner only knowing a handful of words and memorized phrases to being the **sapsikw'ałá**. Learning a new language is a very difficult task for most people especially with a variety of: learning styles, fluency levels, ages, and teaching methods. I have had experience in teaching a wide variety of **Ichishkíin** classes and they all have contributed to my better understanding of how best to teach **Ichishkíin**. As an example, a young child needs regular exposure to the target language and they will learn quickly, but adults can benefit from reading, writing, and learning some of the grammar rules to help speed the acquisition of target language.

The Yakama community is a very diverse community, such as most, and the wants and needs of our community is also very diverse. The different types of **Ichishkíin** classes that I have taught helped reach out to various groups of the community to see what works and what does not. I will share a little about the different types of **Ichishkíin**

classes that I have taught here to help position myself within this context before jumping into the interview data.

Family Ichishkíin Classes for University of Washington Families/University of Washington Ichishkíin Course

I began teaching classes to the Yakama families and friends at the University of Washington; a number of Yakama people were separated from their homes and going to school at UW so the classes were to help us come together and learn some language together. I was not very fluent at the time but folks said that I knew more than most people so I should teach. The UW Native American Studies program heard about these classes and asked me to teach the class so that the participants could take the classes and get college credit for them, so I did. I had never taught an **Ichishkíin** class on my own before so I followed along with how **Tux̲ámshish** ran her classes. I taught in a way that the students should have a good understanding of the writing system and how to put together basic sentences. Pictured on page 124 in Figure 12 is the actual Native house where I started teaching **Ichishkíin;** it also is the very first picture I ever uploaded on Facebook.

Ichishkíin Teacher Assistant at Heritage University

Prior to my teaching at the University of Washington, I taught **Ichishkíin** at Heritage College (now University) when I was taking **Ichishkíin** classes as a student and **Tux̲ámshish** was the teacher. I began to learn **Ichishkíin** very quickly because I felt I had been waiting for so long to learn my language and now I finally had the opportunity

Figure 12. Picture of my daughters standing in front of the Native House

to really learn **Ichishkíin**. Quickly I became **Tux̲ámshish**'s assistant and taught when she had commitments. I eventually became her official teaching assistant and then became an **Ichishkíin** teacher. She observed my teaching to make sure I was doing everything correctly. Figure 15 (page 125) are some older pictures showing me being lucky enough to have been working with **Tux̲ámshish** for so long.

Figure 15. Working with **Tux̲ámshish**

Ichishkíin focused Summer Camp

Tux̲ámshish always dreamed of having an **Ichishkíin** language summer camp and so I gave it a try one summer. It was held in the closed mountain area of the Yakama Nation and at the Camp Chaparral camping facility. There were a small handful of families involved and we stayed a week there. Once again, in teaching families, there were multiple ages and multiple **Ichishkíin** language fluency levels. We spent much time outdoors learning about our surroundings. It was an opportunity to learn about our environment, what was around us.

When inside, we met in the Camp's Hall. A mural with a traditional scene proved a learning tool for us. We utilized the mural for classes in talking about the environment while inside. Everyone took turns coming up and using **Ichishkíin** to describe the mural. My **Ichishkíin** fluency level was not that high at this time so classes were not too advanced. We had a few **Ichishkíin** classes throughout the day and then we spent time hanging out and playing in the mountains. I notice that children's smiles tend to be bigger and brighter when they are outdoors versus learning inside of a classroom. Below, in Figure 16, one photo shows a section of the mural, and the other two photos show children having fun outside during the **Ichishkíin** Summer Camp.

Figure 16. Picture of part of the mural and people having fun outdoors

University of Oregon Ichishkíin Courses

I left the University of Washington to begin taking classes at the University of Oregon and to teach **Ichishkíin** classes with **Tux̲ámshish**, Virginia Beavert. These courses were housed in the Yamada Language Center (YLC) and we received professional development from the Center that has changed the way that I teach **Ichishkíin**. It was a great experience to teach with my elder once again and in a class that met five times a week instead of two. The YLC is a center that houses less commonly taught languages and they help to provide with professional development for language instructors who are fairly new to the teaching languages with few to little teaching and learning materials. They know how frustrating it can be to see huge departments, such as Spanish and French, that have been around for a long time and have countless language materials. To assist us with our teaching, Jeff Magoto, YLC director, helped us determine when in our teaching plan it best to record a few sessions. We recorded early on and then later in the term in order for us to gain a sense of our teaching and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the class. Jeff also provided language teaching advice and guidance from which we benefited.

Yakama Nation Head Start

Upon returning home from University of Oregon, I started an **Ichishkíin** language focused classroom for children 2-5 years old. The majority of the children in the other programs were 3 years old and up in order to get them "kinder ready." They wanted me to move around from class to class and among the three centers but I told them that I would never make progress with that schedule. I would be spread too thin. Materials I

made were available to use in other classes. In that way, other teachers could assist in teaching what I was teaching in my class. I also started teaching all employees of Yakama Nation Head Start (YNHS) as a professional development. I provided **Ichishkíin** classes to the staff at the monthly meetings. I told them to use **Ichishkíin** when picking up the kids, dropping them off, giving them food, or passing them in the hall. I encouraged them to use **Ichishkíin** to greet children.

I tested the staff periodically and offered incentives for the top scoring people. The incentives were donated from the local businesses such as: movie rentals and a weekend getaway at an Airbnb. I was able to work with two different elders/speakers **átway X̱nak̲’ít**, Leroy Hudson, and **Ayatútanmay**, Carrie Schuster, who both spoke different dialects than I have learned; we would switch back and forth between the three. The pictures in Figure 17 (page 129) are examples of how we made signs in **Ichishkíin** for many of the signs that we saw daily in English.

Heritage University Ichishkíin

I eventually went back to Heritage University to teach classes as the Mellon Endowed Chair of the Sahaptin Language Department. The main difference between then and now was **Tux̱ámshish** was no longer assisting and I had much more experience as a teacher. I began opening up my classes to the community to take for free if they simply wanted to learn the language and were not interested in College credits. This became very popular and the Yakama Nation even began to offer educational leave for employees that wanted to learn the language while at work. When I began offering this online via Zoom, many people that did not live near the Yakama reservation began to

take the class. I feel that these people were the most happy for this opportunity because they have not been able to take the class before but with Zoom, can finally begin to learn their language. The classes met twice a week and **Ichishkíin** 101, 102, 201, and 202 were taught. In addition to learning **Ichishkíin**, but it also did more than that: 1) it provided Yakama members (and community members) an opportunity to learn **Ichishkíin** and 2) it connected Heritage University students to the Yakama community to work together at learning **Ichishkíin**.

Figure 17. Picture of **Ichishkíin** all around Head Start

Siiɬáma, Zillah After-School Ichishkíin Language and Culture Club

Zillah, a town located just outside of the Yakama Nation reservation holds a large population of Yakama families. I knew the school did not have any **Ichishkíin** classes at all and my kids were now going to go to school there. This was the first time that I started an after-school program and it worked out very well. When children go to school they are on a very tight schedule and trying to add another class into their schedule could be difficult. When they entered into my class, held in the library, all the typical school rules and expectations went out the window and I wanted them to feel relaxed. We met five times a week and the classes lasted a couple years so they became pretty advanced. They were able to introduce themselves; describe animals; talk about what they like to do; describe their family; ask and answer questions; retell stories from the past; predict actions in the future; and talk about the weather. In this class, we were able to practice more advanced material. For example: it was typical to teach learners how to discuss weather such as **it'íx̲wt'x̲wsha (***it is raining*) or **wíwanikshaash (***I am reading*) but **Siiɬáma** (*persons of Zillah*) would be able to ask **Mish nam míx̲a anakú it'íx̲wt'x̲winx̲a**? (*what do you usually do when it rains*?) and they could answer **anakú it'íx̲wt'ix̲winx̲a wíwanikinx̲aash inmípa pnutpamápa (***when it rains I usually read in my room*). In doing this activity, they would be able to be introduced to an **Ichishkíin** irregular pattern called "n-stem" so n-stem verbs have extra added letters in the habitual tense. I never told them the grammatical rules or names but in practicing with this activity they would practice using regular verbs and n-stem verbs alike. If I ever said **chaw** (*no*) then they knew they did something wrong and they would change stress, change vowels to a "barred i," switch from verb mode to non-verb mode, or other unique **Ichishkíin**

characteristics. This group demonstrated how a class could learn to use **Ichishkíin** advanced grammar patterns without having them taught to them but rather just from repetition and demonstration. The class also focused on other things, besides **Ichishkíin**, such as: stretching and exercise, eating healthy foods, arts and crafts, and getting along with each other. Below, in Figure 18, are some pictures showing the **Siiłáma** group involved in various activities.

Figure 18. Pictures of **Siiłáma** group




Heritage University Early Learning Center Ichishkíin Focused Classroom

I started an **Ichishkíin** program with the HU Early Learning Center and again with **átway X̲nak̲'ít**, Leroy Hudson, Yakama elder and we worked with seven 2-year-olds. The 2-year-olds would have **Ichishkíin** classes for half of the day in the mornings and this took place from Monday-Thursdays. This class ended up being known as the youngest **Ichishkíin** class that has happened thus far. Given that we were teaching a half day, there was not much time for writing lesson plans as we mainly focused on teaching **Ichishkíin** of daily language such as: come sit at the carpet; be nice to your friends; let's put everything away; line up to wash your hands and so on. The Heritage University Language Center (HULC) donated a large number of stuffed animals that were local to this area and the children really enjoyed working with the **kákyama** (*animals*). In Figure 19 on page 133 are some pictures of the two-year-old **Ichishkíin** focused classroom, some of the parents, the elders, and the local stuffed animals.

Yakama Nation Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility Ichishkíin Classes

I saw a friend of a friend doing push ups and he could do more push ups and very quickly than I had ever seen and he told me that he was locked up and there was nothing else to do. I began thinking that it might be a good experience to teach **Ichishkíin** to young people who had a lot of time and could benefit from learning some of their language. I taught one class to the males and one to the females Monday-Thursdays. Many of the inmates really enjoyed learning their language and some of them really studied and were doing good work. The inmates told their family and their family began to mention to me that they were enjoying the classes; the newspaper even did a little

Figure 19. Picture of the 2 year old class, stuffed animals, and using a puppet with elders

write-up about the classes. The problem was that as inmates were released, new inmates arrived, (or whatever else was going on) and that caused me to just re-teach the first week of class again and again. Because of this, not many inmates were building any proficiency. Below, figure 20, is a picture of the **Ichishkíin** class with the male inmates.

Figure 20. The class at the Correction center (Yakama Nation Review)

Ichishkíin Family Immersion Classes

I tried to start a new kind of class based on what I heard people saying that they wished would happen to learn and teach the language; people said they wanted a language class that was in the home and involved the entire family with a meal. The class had four to five families who wanted to dedicate the time for the class, and we met twice a week for a meal and some **Ichishkíin** immersion. We had two rules: the meal had to be one that just needed to be heated up only so no one would be busy in the kitchen during **Ichishkíin** immersion time; and at mealtime, when we moved to the table to eat, English had to cease being spoken. I began to learn quickly how to get people talking in **Ichishkíin** or else it would be just me talking all night. For example: everybody would dish themselves (one at a time) so they would say **anáwishaash (***I am hungry*), **páyu nash anáwisha (***I am very hungry*), or **kw'ítsk nash anáwisha (***I am a little hungry*). I also would assign some more advanced learners to randomly demonstrate requests such as: **ánach'ax̲i (***again*), **mish nam nuu**? (w*hat did you just say*?), or **mish nam nátx̲anatax̲nay maykłwáyki (***could you say it slower*?). After hearing demonstrations of how to make these requests then other people began to use that language. I also always tried to start with the more advanced students so they could provide examples that the others could hear and prepare for their turn. Everybody enjoyed the class and the parents liked that their children began learning more songs. But when I reflected on how much **Ichishkíin** was being learned the amount was not that much and I knew it was because we only met twice a week. When you have five days off of **Ichishkíin** either you practice on the other days or you basically start over each week. In Figure 21, below, the children are smiling and having fun during the **Ichishkíin** Family Immersion dinner.

Figure 21. Picture of children during an Immersion dinner

Wapato After-School Ichishkíin Classes

I started an **Ichishkíin** after-school class at one of the elementary schools in Wapato and we would meet four days a week. Students learned how to introduce themselves; how to describe animals; how to talk about their family; how to talk about things they do daily; sing different songs; and ask and answer questions. I worked with the school and they provided snacks for the students and a place to meet - we met in the gymnasium. Meeting in the gym was convenient because if and when they finished the daily lessons then they would have some free time to play basketball or just run around. Having the goal of finishing the daily lesson helped to catch their attention and help them focus. When the weather was good we went outside to play on the toys and that also was a good goal that motivated students. Snacks and free time for them to play together was a very important

part of the class because it helped them to focus; if there were days when there was not a snack available, which rarely happened, then there was a lot of complaining about being hungry. Below, in Figure 22, are some of the **Ichishkíin** Wapato after-school students who did an **Ichishkíin** performance at Heritage University and were given gifts from one of the provosts.

Figure 22. Provost Kazuhiro Sonoda honoring the Wapato group at Heritage University

Yakama Nation Ichishkíin Language Bootcamp Language Teacher

I have witnessed many programs that involved children that included an **Ichishkíin** language class that students attended for an hour a two a day. From these programs, discussions happened about a program that would focus on **Ichishkíin** all day for four weekdays. The intense focus on the **Ichishkíin** language and ways of being why the name *Bootcamp* came to be. Bootcamp occurred at three locations **Wíx̱włała** (*Toppenish*), **Waptú** (*Wapato*), and **Tx̱ápnish** (*White Swan*); I was the **Ichishkíin** teacher at **Tx̱ápnish**. There were three classes that the children rotated around in: **Ichishkíin** language class, arts and crafts, and physical fitness. The **Ichishkíin** teacher worked with everybody to help utilize **Ichishkíin** in both of the other classes as well. There also was a collaboration with the different language **sapsikw'ałáma** to try and teach as similar materials as possible. In Figure 23 (page 139), are pictures of the **tk'u** (*tule*) gathering field trip as well as the wall of artwork after hearing a Yakama legend.

Ichishkíin Family Zoom Classes

When the pandemic first started, it was difficult to adjust to staying away from people and staying home. After a while I realized that I needed to try and get things back to a more "normal" situation so I could at least feel a little more normal. I saw that other people were feeling similarly and being isolated was taking its toll on many people; I started an **Ichishkíin** family Zoom class in the evenings and we met six days a week. When it comes to family, of course there will be a variety of ages as well as language fluency levels so I chose to focus on the children. Children need daily exposure; it should be fun for them; pictures and cartoons of things they know help a lot; smaller attainable

Figure 23. Picture of students gathering **tk'u** (*tule*) and drawings after hearing legends

goals are encouraging; and it is important to point out that this could also be beneficial for adults and young adults as well. For the adults that wanted things written or some basic grammar to help them follow along better, it was made available. The children had fun and they were learning **Ichishkíin**. I do not like to teach basic things like counting and colors to children because they can learn complicated material much easier than adults. They learned how to introduce themselves, talk about their family, talk about what they like to do, ask and answer questions, and their favorite was singing songs (two lullabies; if you are happy and you know it; head, shoulders, knees, and toes) all contained hand and body movements. At this time, Zoom meetings were not so well-known but of course the children already knew a lot of the little tricks and fun stuff to do while on Zoom. The parents mentioned that they really enjoyed that their children were learning so much **Ichishkíin** and having fun. Figure 24, below, is a screenshot of one of

the actual Zoom classes as it was happening. Behind me you can see the whiteboard I used to help keep everyone on the same section of the songs that we sang.

Figure 24. Picture of the family gathered around for Zoom **Ichishkíin**

Northwest Indian Language Institute Ichishkíin Language Teacher/Linguist

The Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI) has a summer program for folks that are working with language revitalization or are interested in starting this type of work. It started out by servicing the tribal languages and people from this area but as it's reputation grew, folks from Puerto Rico and the South-eastern United States started coming. The day would consist of linguistic classes, language classes, teaching material development classes, teaching strategies classes, computer classes and a language

advocacy class with all participants attending. The difference between **Ichishkíin** and other languages present at NILI is that many **Ichishkíin** speakers, learners, teachers and youth from the **Ichishkíin** speaking Tribes attended participants so we had a linguistic class specifically dedicated to **Ichishkíin** linguistics. The course was designed to strengthen **Ichishkíin** speakers/learners grammar knowledge to support speaking the language. For example, some of the topics were: the grammar of transitive verbs; a closer look at noun cases; or if there were more beginners then maybe alphabet and pronunciation. **Ichishkíin** language classes would focus on a specific area to teach **Ichishkíin** in all the different **Ichishkíin** dialects present. Topics included: gathering and preparing **wáḵ'amu** (*camas*); personal elder's story; reclaiming domains in the home or community; advanced conversations; and so on. The summers I taught at NILI, I would bring my kids to participate and take classes. They were an inspiration to NILI developing programming for youth. Figure 25 (page 142) shows my children attending NILI with me since they were little until now when they are much older.

I have been fortunate to be able to teach **Ichishkíin** to many different people of different ages, backgrounds, fluency levels, and learning styles. Some of the classes lasted a long time and some were shorter but I always learned a great deal from each of the classes. I was always very grateful whenever I was able to have a fluent speaker involved in any of the classes and, of course, I wish I could have a fluent elder in every class. There have been times when somebody was struggling to learn or understand a phenomenon in **Ichishkíin** so I would be able to try different strategies such as how I would teach it with children or with adults. Having a wide variety of experiences has

proven to be so helpful that I want to continue to try new and different things to help get **Ichishkíin** out there.

Figure 25. Pictures at NILI teaching with my children and reenactment photo

Integrating Yakama Values, Community, and Experience

In this next section, we will move into a more in-depth conversation with my Yakama elder (who I will refer to as 'my elder' from this point on), parents/caretakers of a Yakama child, and a representative of the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS). We will be looking specifically for information to support the essential components of the Yakama framework: **Ichishkíin** Language Revitalization, Yakama Self-determination, Spirituality and Prayer, and Love. One-on-one interviews help interviewees to share their

story and go more in-depth with what they wish to elaborate on. Looking at these four components will also provide useful discussion and give some direction that **Miimawít** Immersion School could benefit from. The representative from AFS is important because they also will be able to relate with their experience with their own Indigenous Immersion school.

The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS), discussed previously, has been a strong example of an Indigenous Immersion School that took complete control over the education of their children. Their graduates are fluent speakers of their Indigenous language; they are able to assist an elder or even conduct some if their traditional ceremonies; they are strong academic students; and they are considered to be very respectful to their teachers and elders. While doing an assignment at the University of Oregon, Regan Anderson and I came into contact with Alvera Sargent a representative of AFS. Alvera was very enthusiastic about sharing the ups and downs of her school. She was very friendly and very helpful in our assignment so we decided to hold on to her contact information in order to get her experienced voice to assist us with our dissertations.

It was an option to analyze the Yakama elder, parent/caretaker, and the AFS representative separately and then connect them in a summary; but all three of these groups had such good things to say about our four essential components of the Yakama framework that it seemed better to look at them together.

Ichishkíin Language Revitalization

Indigenous people from all over believe that revitalizing their tribal language is one of the most important issues because of how our languages connect us to who we are. I heard a Yakama elder say that our language was more connected to the natural world; we had more of a relationship with the land, animals, and plants, for generation upon generation, by using **Ichishkíin**. Because Yakama people are speaking **Ichishkíin** less, we have become more separated from the natural world, as it was used to hearing **Ichishkíin**. My elder, in an interview, was discussing the connection we must maintain with the land saying,

We have to protect everything now - our fish, our game we have in the mountains and the berries, the roots. The root areas are disappearing. And how to dig the right way. I used to see them, I just get so upset sometimes and I'd go dig **sawítk** and somebody would be digging there and they'd leave the dirt up where they took the **sawítk** out. And there's a whole bunch of little seeds in that **sawítk** they'd just leave it like open like that and it dries up and all those little seeds die. Your supposed to put that back into the Earth. Put seeds all over there and they'll kill them if you don't. The meadows you know they don't stay wet very long, they dry up. Where the roots grow. We need to teach our children science. To protect the plants and food plants, berries.

I have also heard an elder explain that when we begin conducting our traditional Yakama ceremonies in English, we will become shadows of Yakama people. Of course, language revitalization is a very difficult thing to accomplish when dealing with endangered languages; language endangerment is a world-wide issue. McCarty (2003) discusses "[a]t

the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world's linguistic and cultural diversity is under assault by the forces of globalisation—cultural, economic and political forces that work to standardise and homogenise, even as they stratisfy and marginalise," (p. 147).

I have shared the many different types of **Ichishkíin** classes I have taught to different ages and different fluency levels with **Tux̲ámshish** (Dr. Virginia Beavert) and most of them have all taken place inside of a classroom though **Tux̲ámshish** has advised that we need to get the language out of the classroom and back into homes. In an interview with my Elder, she mentioned,

Well fluency...I'd like to see the students talk to each other. They don't talk to each other. Carry on a conversation just like you do English but use your own language. That's what I'd like to see the most.

The fact that she said **Ichishkíin** conversations are what she would "like to see the most" really shows how we need to eventually move out of the typical language classroom setting and into the places where the language has always lived; where it and where we come from. This is supported by research from Henne-Ochoa etal (2020) who says "[i]ndigenous understandings of language are intertwined with Indigenous concepts of land, identity, and thought, and as such, cannot be successfully compartmentalized and transmitted," (p. 482).

Miimawít Immersion School will be one of the ways we can make this elder's dream of **Ichishkíin** conversations become a reality. It is important not only to save the

language so we can preserve it for future use, but also because it has a positive impact on Yakama people when they begin to learn their language and ways. As my elder shares,

> When I first started teaching, language...they said that I shouldn't be doing that, you know? That they have to survive. But we're not surviving very well. And if learning, you know, the language and learning all about the culture would help, I would like to see that.

I feel confident, based on experience, on our elder's words here, on what this project shows parents saying, and on what other Indigenous Immersion schools have shown to be true, that a school like **Miimawít**, one that educates children in our own language and in our own way, will help our Yakama people grow our language once again. Research supports this idea of the connection between language and wellness, too, as we hear from Reyhner (2010):

> The goal of these efforts is to heal the historical wounds suffered by colonized peoples and to help them move beyond a mentality of victimization. Native language immersion schools have become a key part of the post-colonial healing process that aims to restore and strengthen Native families and communities (p. 139).

We should not be just using our language to talk about modern things because our ancestors had a rich way of life that I hope we can strengthen along with the language as well; ways of life that are deeply intertwined with the language. Below, my elder discusses one of our traditions, how a **sk'in** (*a baby board*) was made for a young family's first child:

> The other responsibility in raising a child is that the women and the men had responsibilities for making the first baby board. The man took the board from the forest, shaped it. The mother made the cover. The grandmothers made the mattress. Sometimes the grandmother did the whole covers in the mattress if that mother was not able to do it. But it was always the father that had to build a (form) frame for the board.

This procedure is a bit more complicated and requires intricate family involvement. Many people nowadays will just buy a **sk'in**. A family working together in this way reflects one of the Nine Virtues, **Wapítat Ttawaxt** (*Help family growth; service to others*) "To serve others by offering help others in as many ways as you can think of. This might include helping elders and other family members and friends..." (Wilkins 2008, p. 31)

The desire to want to learn your Indigenous language is powerful for some Indigenous people, and I have heard many parents mention that their desire to learn and speak their language became much stronger once they became parents. I suppose it is similar to the common notion that parents always want their kids to have what they were never able to have. Another way people might say it is that they want their children to have a better life than they were able to have. One parent, who has a baby just a few months old speaks about this stronger urge to learn more of their culture after having children. They said,

> Now having a son, I want to go back to there [to the longhouse] so he can hear those songs and be a part of that. And then just learning different cultural things

> like right now this weekend I'm going to make him a ribbon shirt…So like having him makes me excited to do things, like more cultural things, and so I I've always sewn but like learning to sew a ribbon shirt like ok, that's actually fun. Now I want to learn to do that.

This parent may not have grown up in a more traditional manner but now that they have a child the desire for them to learn their Yakama ways and language has increased their motivation. Anyone who has been involved with revitalizing an endangered or sleeping language knows that there is always a sense of urgency. It also is difficult to keep up with everything else in one's life at the same time you are trying to prioritize learning your language. When you have kids, as the previous quote pointed out, the urge to help them become a stronger speaker than you is also profound. Mersaedy Atkins, a mother to a two-year-old son and who has been involved in language revitalization for a long time discusses this, saying,

> I want to become more fluent, become a better speaker…it's something that I wanted for myself, but after having him, I mean, it's like the push is even more. I had that time to learn but now I have him and I gotta do this. I wanna do this, the drive is even stronger but it's more like right now, like immediate, they're gonna do something right now because now is the time, when they're little sponges and they could pick it up and not be bashful about speaking it. They'll just be ok to speak.

It is important to remember that we cannot change the past but we can reflect on our past and recognize that we are still here, and while we still might be struggling, we

persevere. This is a quality of Yakama people. The Virtue of "**Yáych'unał** (*Not afraid of any type of challenge; courage; heroic perseverance*) To show courage. No matter how hard life gets, to never give up." reflects the efforts of learning one's language. (Wilkins 2008, p. 31)." My elder spoke in our conversation about our history and how we were almost eliminated and would have been if it weren't for our warriors. In my elder's words,

> I'd like to see the them learn to respect the children that are in their class. But how do they learn Indian history? How the Indians barely survived if it wasn't for some of the warriors that defended the...the...their land that finally overcame the army. Where they had to turn to writing treaties.

Yakama people, as well as many other Indigenous people, struggle in different ways but in these times I remember an elder who told me once that being a warrior is not just fighting in a war, but it is protecting your family, elders, children, community, and land. I think it is good for parents to recognize that the desire to want more Yakama language and ways of life for your child is a positive thing and there should be less guilt. They should be constantly reminded of and supported for the good and important work they are doing for their children, language, and people every day. Gomashie (2019) discussing Mohawk students and their families mentions: "[t]he most successful students were those who wanted to participate in community events (for example, in those tied to the longhouse) and did not want to raise their children only in English," (p. 160). It is important, in most Indigenous communities, to be involved in the community and to be of service to your people when possible.

The **Miimawít** Immersion school will put **Ichishkíin** language revitalization at its heart while also remembering that language loss affects the whole family; the last speaker in the family who feels guilty that they did not pass on the language; the parents from then on feeling guilty for not learning more of the language; or the children who feel less connected because they do not know any or that much of their tribal language. It is common for people to feel these things, but we must also remember what our ancestors went through to get us to where we are now. Our ancestors were strong in a way that is different than the strengths we see today, and they were also intimately connected with their environment. My elder, who we spoke with, discusses watching her grandmother do all this work for gathering **tk'u** (*tule*):

So she said, go sit down. So I went and I stayed and watched her. She took a whole wagon full home. But there were just lots. And they were tall and she sized them up when we got home. And she bundled them and let them dry. She dried, she set them up this way. So something else too to learn how how to set things up straight so that when they dry they're going to be straight. If you lay them, uh, they get out of shape.

I have gathered with young people and I could not imagine many of them able to keep up with this Yakama grandmother. If the government succeeded with our elimination, then we would not only not have our language in any capacity but also we would not even exist anymore. For us to still be here striving to save our language and our ways says a lot about us as a strong people. Smith (2013) discusses how difficult it can be for Indigenous people:

> Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly. Indigenous peoples as an international group have had to challenge, understand and have a shared language for talking about the history, the sociology, the psychology and the politics of imperialism and colonialism as an epic story telling of huge devastation, painful struggle and persistent survival (p. 1)

There is a Still Here movement that has been happening across the country and in those two simple words speak a lot towards Indigenous resiliency. It is pretty sad that Indigenous people must remind people across the world that the US government did not completely eliminate all of us Indigenous people.

America is known for viewing English as the most important language in the world and since most Americans already speak English as their first language, learning a second language is considered less important. I have talked with many different language activists from all over Indian country and many times they mention how difficult it is to hear people are too busy to try and learn the language of their nation and their ancestors. When I was reading about some of the different Indigenous Immersion schools, I was in a state of awe learning about a school that had language revitalization as their number one goal. The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS), as discussed above, is one of these schools that holds language revitalization as its core. Alvera Sargent, a longtime advocate and representative of the school discusses the importance of language revitalization here:

> ...everyone's thinking is different, so we have to constantly bring back why we're here. Why is this school here? Uhm, like they wanted to…have a real fancy school built and my thinking is that, ok is that fancy building gonna help us learn

> our language? Will it help us maintain what we have of our culture and to revitalize that, too, so that our kids know it and they can grow up with it? So, it's constantly like bringing people back down to Earth into the basics. Why we're here…And I always felt like if you have this huge fancy building, we're not going to play outside anymore. We're not going to learn what's on, what we need to learn about our, our land here; what we need to do to protect it, too, at the same time.

I cannot express how much I appreciate this sentiment as many people might not understand turning down a brand-new building for the school so as not to compromise the integrity of their goals, especially after persevering through financial hardship. My take-away from this is to never lose our way or the reasons behind wanting to start our own school and to always hold the language and our traditional way of life at the center as the number one goal. Brayboy (2005)

Yakama Self-Determination

The U.S. government tried to justify the genocide, the taking of the land, and claiming control of natural resources by claiming that Indigenous people were incapable of governing ourselves. Albury (2015) discusses self-determination and how it is a component of language revitalization:

> "Self-determination has legal and political concerns for the restoration, practice, and uninterrupted continuance of things indigenous and includes not only language and culture, but also indigenous ontologies if indigenous peoples so

choose. Self-determination, like postmodernism, can therefore be achieved by questioning and removing modernist power structures that inhibit the realization of traditional indigenous ways," (p. 270, 271)

But Indigenous peoples from all over are taking back control of our lives and our world. Chapter II shared many examples of Indigenous people who have taken control of their children's education through their Language Immersion schools such as Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School, Piegan Institute, and Tse'hootsoi' Dine' Bi'olta': Dine' Language-Immersion School and I am grateful to the community members who have shared their voices in this project to help shape an education for Yakama children that is led by Yakama people.

It is very important to take control of our children's education because the public schools have had control of our children for too long. I did not want my children to go through 12 plus years of education that promote White/Western culture and make Indigenous people out to be the bad guys. Usher (2018) discusses the difficulties in the United States "...the costs of White supremacy are increasingly evident. Among children and adolescents, these costs are often first felt in the place where they spend most of their lives—school," (p. 131). I experienced it and unfortunately my children have had to as well though we talk openly about the racism and hardship they face as instances come up.

Yakama people believe that family and community are very important. Here, my elder speaks about the importance of family relationships and their connection to survival,

> People had to survive a long time ago. They had to know how to provide for their families. They didn't only take care of their family, their main family. They had to look out for old people. It didn't matter if they were not a member of your family, some elder might be living by herself. They would go and drop off some food for that old lady, because at a certain age you're not able to go out there and, do, take care of yourself.

Our families and our community were the center point through which Yakamas were educated and respect for everybody was an important teaching. This is validated by **Tma'áakni** (*Respect*) which **Kussumwhy**, Wilkins (2008), describes as: "To maintain harmony and cooperation with all people, including those who have differing opinions from your own," (p. 31). In the above quote, my elder explains the importance of family and community and the **Miimawít** Immersion School would strive to look more like what one of our Yakama elders was describing. Our school should not be made to look like those in Western education, with rows of desks, raising of hands to talk, needing teacher permission to use the restroom, and all of the typical structures found in public schools. Our **Miimawít** students should be spending a lot of time outdoors, learning from elders, singing and praying all throughout the day, speaking Ichishkíin, leaning on our own ways to survive together in this modern world. My elder emphasizes how long ago we lived in a traditional manner, and we made sure to take care of everybody, not just your own family. She discusses how the fish were divided up to ensure everybody had food, "They would see how many people were there then they would portion, make little portions and give everybody each so that everybody had equal amounts depending on their size of their family so that they could…take it home."

In this world we live in now, there seems to be more of an "every man for himself" kind of mentality but I would like to strive for **Miimawít** children to be more like our ancestors and look out for everyone in their community. However, I do recognize that things have changed and now the person who fishes for salmon will have expenses - gas, car maintenance, insurance, coolers, ice, food, etc. As a salmon fisherman myself, I know that sometimes I do not get a lot of salmon and that it takes a lot of money, supplies, and time just to make an attempt at fishing.

When I was a child I did not wonder too often, 'why is this happening?' because I was just figuring out how to get by and make the best of things. As a parent, who now knows more of the how and why of things, I have felt bad knowing that my children would have to go through some of the same things that I experienced as a child – I want better for them. I was able to explain to them a little more and encourage them to stand up for themselves against mistreatment from teachers and schools. I could only imagine what it was like to experience the horrors of boarding schools firsthand and then to know that you would also have to send your children and grandchildren there as well. This is the reason we must strive more and more towards enacting our Yakama Self-determination. Upon hearing this, I am saddened, too, to recognize that what I went through in public schools is still similar to the children's experiences my elder describes as well as my own children's experiences. We have all experienced injustices that have endured time and continue still to thrive in public schools. Simpson (2017) discusses how we could work against colonialism:

> Engagement changes us because it constructs a different world within which we live. We live fused to land in a vital way. If we want to create a different future, we need to live a different present, so that present can fully marinate, influence, and create different futurities. If we want to live in a different present we have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us (p. 20).

As mentioned, Yakama Nation created a school-like environment over which it had complete control of what we do and how we do it with the start of the Yakama Nation **Ichishkíin** Language Summer Bootcamp. Traditional teachings usually involve the seasons, the land, the medicines, the foods, and other things tied together with the natural environment. Brayboy (2005) discusses how Indigenous view power differently than the Western world:

> Power through an Indigenous lens is an expression of sovereignty—defined as self-determination, self-government, self-identification, and self-education. In this way, sovereignty is community based (p. 435)

Indigenous Immersion schools often have their children spend more time outdoors. One of the parents who was interviewed talked about the importance of spending time outside:

> Future dreaming of an ideal school would be an outdoor immersion camp or school where there is language. I could see us doing some hands on activity with rose, share some teachings about rose, how to identify it and then we'll make something together with rose or we go root digging and use some of the cultural curriculum people already have like how to identify, dig and process roots..there

> are endless ideas for educating and engaging our children outside with culture and the land, a lot of it is already within our traditional, pre colonial way of life. I am personally really interested in being a part of any outdoor education with our language

Elese Washines, a mother of two and an educator herself, discusses the importance of knowing and interacting with your environment and how, as a learner, it is difficult to embed language into these activities,

> But with little ones, it's almost like you have to be ready to explore the environment just as much as just as much as they are, you know, being new to an environment. And then be able to talk with them about whatever is going on in that environment. And have those words already available that's it's tough sometimes.

I have heard a food gatherer answer a question about when the root feast would be and her response was something like, 'when it comes to our traditional foods and medicines, they do not follow a schedule like we do. The factors that come into play are things like temperature and the weather and all we could do is keep checking on their readiness'. I like to think about how the environment should dictate what needs to be done and when. My elder also discussed in our conversation how children had to help take care of things that were in their environment,

> When they were too small, they always stayed home. And they of course they had other ways of learning. Teaching themselves, you know around the yard because they had pets, and they had horses and places to explore. They used to learn

everything you know kids were curious, they're always curious. Wanting to know things.

As a parent, I always wished I had more time to teach my children more of our language and our Yakama ways but with work and school there is not much time left at the end of each day. I know many parents, and we have heard it from parents through the survey and these conversations, who would think it was a dream come true to have our own Yakama school that was 100% supportive of Yakama self-determination. So many of our traditional teachings come from our longhouses and one parent, who has four children, mentioned the importance of longhouse:

> …the longhouse is where the kids would hear a lot of the language, I mean spoken not just single words or phrases so that was, that was, I really liked that because they got to hear when my Uncle and them would get up and talk about the land and where the songs come from…so if we could go to the Longhouse every day that would be awesome.

Miimawít Immersion school would incorporate our traditional teachings all throughout the day. I have worked with young children that learned to sing the songs involved in our longhouse services, so I know that it is possible. To see those children out in the community leading our songs for our foods is the ultimate representation of educational self-determination. Reyhner (2010) discusses curriculum in immersion programs:

> "Just translating a non-Native curriculum into the Native language and focusing on vocabulary and grammar is in no way part of a decolonization agenda. In fact,

> it could be viewed as nothing more than a new way to approach colonization," (p. 143).

Learning how to teach our Yakama children in a way that teaches them the beauty of our different life and ways is very much needed. My elder, in an interview, talks about the importance of learning how to properly do things the right way.

> And there were people had to learn how to pack and travel pack their horses the right way so that you don't lose your pack when you're when you have an accident or something happens. The horse stumbles, or you know, I know it's hard to learn packing. Seem like I always tied things the wrong way. They'd come and correct me.

There are different Indigenous Immersion schools out there and they all are unique in their own ways. I appreciate hearing how each one of them takes control of their children's education. I know some form of self-determination is important in order to start your own school, and I am inspired to hear how the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) takes self-determination to the highest level. AFS representative Alvera Sargent reminds us there are other issues that can come up when you take on such an undertaking such as funding. On this she shared,

> For one, we don't report to the state or the federal government. When the school started, those people that started it had the vision that we would never be beholden to the federal government, U.S. government, so we've kept up with that mission in not asking them for money or help to fund us. The only one that we've

> asked for money from is the ANA – Administration for Native Americans to enhance projects or to enhance ours.

In Chapter II, I discussed many of the things I admire about AFS so I was very grateful to be able to interview Alvera who has been involved with the school for such a long time. I also was grateful because of how dedicated is to language revitalization because I also feel that language revitalization must always remain our bottom line as it carries our culture. AFS has been around since 1979 so they are going to have experiences that would take **Miimawít** Immersion school a long time to learn about on its own. I guess there are always going to be people, even your own people, who are concerned that learning the Indigenous language might somehow leave the children less prepared for the 'real world'. In the following quote, Alvera shares how there are still people who hold this concern for the children when it comes to spending so much time on the language saying,

> It's not that they have to work with young kids from you know 8-8 hours a day. It takes a lot of energy to teach, teaching the language because we don't have all these other resources that other schools have. The uniqueness…we're just unique because we don't, I guess we don't listen to what other, all these voices tell us, you know, 'well how are the kids gonna be when they go out there? How they gonna handle it? How can they? Will they know what to do?' There is nothing that...it doesn't hinder. Knowing your language is not going to hinder anything. Uhm, and I don't...I thought it that kind of thinking was all gone, but I recently learned it's

not, you know, like within our own community it's not gone and I'm like it's 2022 why is that thinking still here? I just don't get it sometimes.

The fact that AFS has been successful for so long and is successful but still have people concerned in this way is a reminder; it reminds me that **Miimawít** must always be on it's own, separate from the tribe, because there will always be people who would change it if they could. Just recently I was discussing **Miimawít** with an employee of the tribe and they expressed their concern with not having enough English being taught. English is called a killer language for a reason and, especially in America, all kinds of people would have it in their head that success is something that happens in English. I have heard Yakamas say that they feel we waste time trying to teach **Ichishkíin** because, to make it today, you must speak English. **Miimawít** must never allow people who think like that to be in charge of the school.

I recognize now that, at times, I have this feeling of let's make the best of what we were given but I also want to change that to demand better for the sake of our children. I know that part of it is a traditional teaching of being happy with what you have and making the best with what you have; but, I also know that I cannot always stay in this mind set. There are times when not accepting things is the better way to go. For example, when I hear my children have to sign a paper to go to the bathroom at school but they just tell the White children to hurry back, I have to demand better for my kids. Yakama Self-determination is: not allowing our Yakama children to continue to be treated like they are less than the dominant society; treating our children the way that our ancestors would treat their children; helping to ensure our teachings and ways of life do not disappear;

taking back control of how our children are raised; and saving our Yakama language and way of life for future generations. My elder, in an interview, was discussing how young children were raised a long time ago:

> The child, of course you know they grow up listening to legends. Legends were like books. The storyteller would talk about certain animals, or just about anything that she knew. About nature. But it always had a lesson. They taught the child like a picture just like a TV they'd describe everything.

I have always heard that the real little ones were raised in this way and I actually wished that I grew up hearing legends like this; I know that our legends also need some revitalization and the **Miimawít** Immersion School could be a great place to begin this work.

Spirituality and Prayer

I have traveled all across the United States and have participated in ceremonies and events with Indigenous peoples from many different tribes, and I think the one thing that is very common amongst Indigenous peoples is how spiritual we are and how much we pray. I have been involved in multiple ceremonies that expected a state of prayer for days with very few who were not praying, usually just during meals and bedtime.

It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to practice Yakama ways of being without being spiritual and/or without praying. People may be surprised to go to church and not be asked to pray. Many Yakama people have been taught to pray and give thanks each morning that you wake; pray before you eat a meal; pray before gathering our

traditional foods; pray before gathering plants for medicine; to pray and give thanks before going to bed; and these are just some examples of how much spirituality and prayer are involved when participating in Yakama ways of being. My elder and I spoke, below, about a specific type of prayer that is similar to what many might think of as a vision quest, saying,

> Someday you'll go to the mountains, and you'll sit and…they'll make you sit all by yourself, they'll just give you water, you'll sit there for several days without eating and you'll pray. They had their own way of teaching prayer.

This type of praying is not practiced much anymore around Yakama area from what I have seen and heard, but it does still occur elsewhere, although it may also be less frequent than it used to be.

I would like the children and families of the **Miimawít** Immersion School to be very aware of when, how, and why to pray throughout the day. I have heard elders speak about certain kids saying they must attend a lot of ceremonies because they really know how to act and be respectful at these types of ceremonies. I would like to imagine that the elders would say the same thing about the children from **Miimawít** in the future.

Many of us, as parents, hope that our children will learn how to pray, be spiritual people, and give thanks for the gifts provided in our lives. I know this might be the same with other races of people too because I heard a country song that said something like 'talking to God like you're talking to a friend'. I know that there are Atheists and even

Yakama people that do not have interest in those types of ways but when it comes to traditional Yakama teachings, you cannot avoid spirituality and prayer.

Councilmembers, longhouse leaders, and elders are our leaders of the Yakama Nation and they are expected to be able to lead prayers and services amongst the community. When people would hear the children singing our traditional songs and conducting themselves in a traditional way, they say something like 'wow a future leader of the people'. Elese Washines shared some about her uncle and how he was a leader of the tribe and how he would use prayer to guide him in that role. Elese retold it like this,

> …and they said, well they asked him during the interview, he said how are you going to lead? how are you going to – what's your priority? And how are you going to lead this tribe? And he had said in his interview, he said, 'with prayer. That's how we lead'. And so, every day of the pandemic was, it's fascinating and a little bit of a struggle but every day we started with that same kind of teaching that my uncle was, my uncle indicated that, you know, you start your day with prayer.

I know, from experience, that when Yakama people get together for something big or small if it is important work that is about to happen then starting and ending with prayer is very important.

When I was young I wanted to learn our Yakama ways so bad, and it took a long time to make that happen, but my oldest son already knows all the songs I can sing and even knows some that I do not. It makes me feel good to know that my children did not have to work as hard to learn because they have gotten more Yakama teachings than I did since the time they were little. Many parents talk about wanting their children to know

our Yakama longhouse ways. Jasmine Yellow Owl, a parent to two children, talks about how she wishes her children weren't in a position to have to learn the language but that it is just where they are:

> I would want my kids to have that exposure, I'd want my youngest to know that it's a place where you can pick up the language, they speak the language, they do their teachings, they'll teach you in the language first if they have something to say, then they will translate it to you in English…so I would want that to be something that that's part of my son, my youngest son's way of life...I would want that for my future for my grandkids to have that, like that's who they are, that's their way of life. That's not something, you know that you're having to relearn or something, it's who you are…

I have had lots of experience teaching children of all ages how to sing our songs and how to conduct themselves appropriately. I know that children can learn those ways just as quickly as they soak up the language. **Miimawít** Immersion school will continue with this teaching of being a spiritual person and knowing how we as Yakama people pray to **Tamanwiłá**, (*the Creator*).

The pride that some parents feel when their children are participating in their tribe's traditional way of life is very high. When my oldest son **Lawyce** sat up with me on the drum line to help sing for the funeral of my **Shísha** (*aunty on the father's side*) I was very proud. My whole family was proud of him, and everybody kept telling him how proud they were and even gave him gifts. I believe every Indigenous language immersion school that I have researched is teaching their Indigenous ways in addition to general

academics. When following Indigenous ways, I believe, there will be some spirituality is involved and some schools may teach this more than others. I appreciated hearing how the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) students may be called to conduct their Tribe's ceremonies in the community when the leaders/elders are not able to. AFS teaches their Tribe's culture to the extent that their children have a reputation for being able to conduct ceremonies. Alvera Sargent discusses AFS students and culture sharing,

> Yes, of the Cultural Longhouse teachings, like, the students start every day with what we call [Mohawk Language] and it's the words before all else and it's, it's to express gratitude to everything that creator gives us to be here on Earth. He gives us whatever we need to survive here, but every day it's getting more and more, um, we're losing a lot of that. Not just here, not just us Native people, but the whole world though. Yeah, that's the – culture and longhouse teaching is a big part of the school, but also there is academics involved, too.

It may be true that we might never be able to go back to the way we once lived but I feel that we must hold onto as much as we can for as long as we can. There might be some things that people nowadays would not be able to accept such as arranged marriages but there is much of our ways that do need to be revitalized and brought back into strong practice, like educating our children in spirituality and with prayer. Kovach (2010) discusses the importance of prayer, ceremony, and sacred items: "[t]he pipe, the drum, the songs, and prayer are integral parts of Plains Cree ceremony, and ways in which to honour the Creator and seek blessing. Once an act is carried out with the sanction of the pipe, it is considered sacred," (p. 67).

Love

Whenever I hear elders talk about their famous leaders, they talk about how they loved their people, from the religious leaders to the homeless people equally. Sometimes and somehow love has become a taboo word in education. I heard an elder say once that boarding schools made it difficult for her to be as loving as her elders were. I know that I did not grow up saying 'I love you' very much but I remember my cousins and I deciding we would change that. From that point, many of us started saying I love you a lot more freely than our parents did.

I have always enjoyed hearing elders talk and could just sit and listen to them talk for hours. It is always nice to hear sometimes when they talk about a past in which the entire family stayed together and helped each other out to survive, doing whatever tasks or labor needed to be done. I remember seeing my **Ála** (*dad's mom*) run around taking care of her children and grandchildren; I would think, 'she loves her family so much that it seems like she would do anything to take care of them'. My elder and I spoke with for this project talks, below, about how a man and a woman should care for each other,

> They were born to take care of each other, that's why they were born, you know, was to show respect for each other. And to raise a family, that is something I see, it's really needed…they need to learn that.

There might not even be the word **átawit** (*love*) in the quote but the sentiment behind it seems to speak louder than the words. You could tell somebody that you love them and then never do anything special for them but if you are taking care of each other and

respecting each other then those would be strong actions. The word **átawi-** could be (*to love*) or (*to value*), **átaw** means (*important*), **átawish** means (*gift*), and **átawit** could actually mean either (*love*) or (*loved one*).

Miimawít Immersion School will make sure that this lesson is taught, and the children will have plenty of opportunity to witness the type of behavior we are discussing. I would like the children to also feel love from the teachers and the school; to know they are valued no matter what. Public schools and boarding schools have worked hard to convey that feeling loved is something that should happen at home. There may be some teachers that love their students, but it is not usually an overt goal of the classroom or the school from what I have seen, witnessed, and experienced.

If you have ever tried describing to somebody who doesn't speak English well what love is, you know how complicated it is. There is the love between partners, within the family, for your people, for your community, and there is even some much less complicated love like 'I love pizza', for example. As a parent, I want my children to know that I love them, but I also want them to love their people, their elders, their **Ichishkíin** language, their Yakama way of life, and so on. Yakama children are taught, at a young age, to show respect for their elders and in doing so they show that they love their elders. I see children always being told to give up their chair for an elder; to always ask them if they need anything; to shake their hand; to be quiet and still when they talk; to treat their words like they are gold; and much more instruction like this. We hear again from a parent to an infant here who talks about how important her elders are, saying,

> Yes, I love those elders, I'm always trying to make them like come to my events so they'll be there. I feel like they – I work with a lot of younger people, and I feel sometimes they don't include them and maybe they don't know how to talk to elders. But I grew up, my grandma raised me, so I grew up with elders all the time. So I'm just always including them.

I know that there is a huge push to have 'intergenerational transmission' of our old ways and our language. When I hear this phrase, 'intergenerational transmission,' I think of how in these modern times there is a disconnect between elders and children that did not exist for us before colonization. This parent captures this and does what they can to bring the generations together through their work in the community.

It is not enough to simply say the words **átawisha mash** (*I love you*), but you must show it in actions, too. The phrase **átawisha mash** also means more in **Ichishkíin** than what it seems to mean in English. Showing the proper respect for our elders is a way to show them that we love and value them. My elder shared some of the ways one can show respect to our elders saying,

> They were told at home to always, you know, be kind to the elders and also respectful. If you happen to be around an elder you ask her or him if they want water. If nobody is paying attention to them you just go over and ask them would you like some water, you know? Elders, too, were kind to the children.

This teaching of respecting and loving your elders is a very important and old teaching. I know it pains people to witness young people disrespecting our elders.

The **Miimawít** Immersion school will teach the old Yakama ways of living and in doing so will better teach the different ways to show love and even teach how to interact with elders to help repair that practice too. Schools, nowadays, by comparison, can seem like such a sterile environment where you go to get educated in White culture and then go home but Yakama education showers their children with love. It will also be important for **Miimawít** children to learn how to love their elders, communities, the land, the animals, the plant life, and themselves.

I have enjoyed imagining a school that no longer is entangled in a power struggle to conform to public school standards and requirements. When Indigenous Immersion schools mention that their teachers are viewed more like uncles and aunties I know that there is a loving relationship in the classroom. Elders cannot stress enough how important it is to shower your children with love and that was how they were raised. Ewing & Ferrick (2012) discuss the Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR) of the Yurok people and in an interview one of the employees explain:

> I want this place to be a home. I want this to be a family. I want students to be able to make mistakes, take responsibility for those mistakes, and for them to experience forgiveness and grace. And for them to realize that they have hope, and when they dream about their future they don't see...somebody telling them what to do (p. 27).

Having a classroom where the children feel loved, valued, and respected is healing to the children as well as to their families and the community. I appreciated hearing how not all of the children in the community go to AFS, and that you can tell a difference from the

ones who do by the amount of respect they show upon entering high school after attending AFS. Alvera shared,

> You know, that's not, it's not a problem though, because…a lot of our students have been on the honor roll. They do have an initial like, maybe the first semester it's like they run into a culture shock because you're coming from a school of 75 students to 1500 students that move around all day long, you know, into different periods and all that. Where these kids have been with the same group of students for their last ten years…So they do tend to stick together when they transfer to the public schools…they're amazed at the disrespect to teachers in the public school…So that's the biggest thing, one of the biggest things of our school is that kids respect teachers and elders and people that work with them.

I get excited thinking that **Miimawít** may be doing this type of work in our community and that maybe my future grandchildren will be able to attend this type of school and people will be able to tell that they did. Alvera shared some parting advice to keep in mind as we begin to build **Miimawít** into reality. She said,

> Have a good savings plan for yourself, because it takes, you know, it's gonna take money. I think it'll take money. A lot of people don't work for free anymore. But to stay with it, not like try it for two years and then oh, this is too hard and – but also finding like-minded people who are, are very committed to language and culture. And learn as much as you can from others, you know, like we're where we've always been open to sharing, uhm, how we've done things here but I know there's other places, that are, that are less willing to share.

I appreciate the “stay with it” advice because this is something that is too important to abandon. She was very willing to talk to us, advise us, and offer future support and that was very helpful; as **Miimawít** Immersion School gets started then I will also want to be open to help other Indigenous groups looking for help.

Tying it all Together

Language revitalization, self-determination, spirituality and prayer, and love all come together to strengthen the **Miimawít** Immersion school as culturally grounded pillars. These four pillars are not typically highlighted in public schools but will be used to help shape the **Miimawít** school. My elder, interviewed for this project, dreamed of Yakama people having conversations once again in **Ichishkíin**, the parents want their children to learn **Ichishkíin**, and Alvera from AFS dedicated her life to this extremely important task of language revitalization.

My elder talked about how the old ways made sure everyone was taken care of, the parents wish their children would learn more of their Yakama ways of life, and Alvera talked about how successful their dream was when they enacted their self-determination and took complete control of their school. This ties also to what White (2015) says about AFS:

> ...the AFS continues to serve as a model for education self-determination and as a reminder to the Canadian and US governments of Native sovereignty over education. Gaining control and administering successful education programs isn’t

> an easy task and requires facing and overcoming a long history of oppressive legislation aimed at diminishing tribal sovereignty in all arenas (p. 8)

I think more people, even non-Indigenous people, should be learning about these schools and why they were started. Tribal sovereignty should also be taught in public schools because I know that many people do not really understand what it even means to be sovereign.

My elder talked about Yakama ways of praying that are being lost because they are no longer practiced anymore, the parents want their children to be very familiar inside the longhouses, and Alvera discussed how confident AFS students are in their spiritual events that they could take over leadership when the elders are away.

My elder talked about a way of being where everyone was taken care of and loved, the parents want their children to love their people and Yakama ways of life, and Alvera mentioned how AFS students are known for the respect and love that they show for their elders and teachers. Ewing & Ferrick (2012) discuss the Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School and a teacher interviewed said "we love to teach, we love the kids, we love what we are working towards," (p. 53)

The **Miimawít** Immersion school will learn from the knowledge that has been shared here from my elder, parents of Yakama children, and Alvera Sargent. In using these four pillars as a foundation, we may be able to have success similar to AFS. The **Miimawít** Immersion school will look at AFS as an ally but will become as unique as the Yakama Nation is to its people.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As discussed earlier, in America, because we speak English, learning another language is not a priority or even considered important when the majority of the world's commerce and education (more and more) are conducted in English. If language classes were offered at the earliest levels of education, the children would still be able to more easily learn multiple languages as their brains then are more responsive and elastic to learning. I have seen in Indigenous language classrooms that lessons and teaching strategies often do not reflect that children are capable of learning more complex grammatical structures if they are given this input. In fact, it seems adults will assume that it is necessary to teach only words and less complex language material (such as counting, colors, names of animals, etc.) to children and the advanced language material for older youth and adults. I have found that children are like sponges and can learn language rapidly in a language rich environment.

The Parent/Caregiver Survey and the Community Conversations both revealed the importance of learning **Ichishkíin.** A follow up study might expand from Question 2 of the survey, 'How satisfied are you with your children's school?' to ask 'how satisfied are you with Ichishkíin programming at your children's school?' This study would be beneficial since, at this point in time, the only type of **Ichishkíin** language classes that happen in and around the Yakama reservation come as an additional course added onto the general education curriculum yet many of the parents who responded to this question mentioned language as a contributing factor. More evidence is needed to determine how

family levels of satisfaction in schooling are specifically related to a lack or inclusion of language programming.

Many parents may not even be aware that there are schools that produce children who are fluent in their Indigenous languages. I never knew about them because my only exposure to schools was the typical public school system. If I was asked to rate my children's school when I was younger I would likely have said 'fairly satisfied' because I also wouldn't want to offend when I think that the teachers are doing the best they can for their students. But after learning about hidden curriculum and how they work to maintain classism, then now I would say 'extremely dissatisfied.' Usher (2018) discusses schools in the US: "...institutional racism and White supremacy have made it more difficult for students of color to feel like they belong in U.S. schools," (p. 136). I now want much more for our Yakama children. It is a traditional Yakama teaching to not complain about what you get and to simply be grateful for it but I no longer want to simply accept what is offered in terms of education for our Yakama children - I now want the best for them and I know it is overdue and they are very much worthy of it. So, the bottom line is I would have marked 'somewhat satisfied', when my children were in school, but now, knowing what I do, I would mark 'extremely dissatisfied'.

I was happy to hear parents' thoughts when it comes to language revitalization and to learn how passionate the majority of them are. When you look at the Word Clouds (Figures 3-5) that represent the most frequently shared words in Questions 6-11 of the Survey, you find 'language' largest and at the center of many of them. For **Tux̲ámshish**, language is and has always been one of the most important things in her life's work and I also would say that, thanks to **Tux̲ámshish**, it is the most important thing in my life as

well. I know that I cannot expect the same view towards the language from everyone or even from the majority of people but, again, I was pleased to learn there is substantial support for **Ichishkíin** from parents in my community. More than once I have heard some Yakama people say things like, 'I don't know why they even still teach the Yakama language anymore; We should be focusing on English and things that will help in the real world; What good would it do anyways to be able to speak **Ichishkíin**; and similar comments. I have heard similar things said by other Indigenous people from other tribes as well. It is hard not to read in this that colonization efforts have been successful. I know when I hear somebody speak like that, I usually say something like, 'If we all jump into the big melting pot and become just like any other typical American then what is the point of even calling ourselves Yakama? What do you think our ancestors would think knowing that they fought so hard for us to be able to keep our **Ichishkíin** language?' I have seen some tribes that have lost so many of their traditions that the annual Pow-wow, or something like it, is considered one of their most traditional activities.

The community conversations have proven that, with Yakamas, revitalizing **Ichishkíin** is an important goal. There are varying degrees and/or desires with Yakama people, as well as any tribe, as to how much time and effort should be put towards revitalizing **Ichishkíin**. The **Miimawít** Immersion School will want to find the people/families that consider **Ichishkíin** revitalization one of the most important priorities and work with them to grow the language in their families and our community. I also believe that after **Miimawít** Immersion School begins to produce fluent children, more people will support **Ichishkíin** revitalization efforts and will want the school to grow and/or have similar schools established.

Indigenous peoples' first experience with America's educational system was devastating with forced boarding schools. This was a terrible time in our history when Indigenous families were torn apart and it is very sad and difficult to think about. We could fast forward to the present day and Indigenous families may not be torn apart in the same manner but the modern educational system still does not help the Indigenous children be the best they can be. Much research has been done to uncover the hidden curriculum of the public schools and Simpson (2017) even mentions how non-White children are made to feel like they are not equal to their fellow White students. Sabzalian (2019) discusses how colonization, in schools, contributes to the erasure of Indigenous people. Brayboy (2005) also says that colonization has been going on for so long that many of our own Indigenous people are supporting their erasure from the dominant society.

My elder mentioned in our conversation that we are not doing very well and that teaching the Yakama language and Yakama way of life could help our people. Question Two of the survey of Yakama parents/caretakers asked about overall satisfaction with their children's school and the responses varied but the expression of the importance of Yakama language and culture was shared by many. Some satisfaction was mentioned positively when Yakama ways were taught, and some dissatisfaction was mentioned when a there was a lack of Yakama ways being taught. Again, this would be a valuable follow up study to this work. Many of the parent/caregivers of Yakama children went into more detail about their desire to have their children learn Yakama ways in the interviews, and one parent said that they would like their children to be raised to know Yakama ways and longhouse ways. Many Yakama adults have mentioned how difficult it

is to learn longhouse ways as an adult when you were not raised in that way. Alvera Sargent from the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) mentioned how AFS students have been successful in their school learning the Mohawk language and way of life. She said that it does not take away from their ability to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the modern world. Manifest Destiny, boarding schools, colonization, erasure, all these agendas, and the modern English-speaking world have had a devastating impact on Indigenous people and unfortunately language endangerment is an example of their ongoing effects.

Survey Question Three of Yakama parents/caretakers asked about **Ichishkíin** use at home and it is clear that, although the desire to learn **Ichishkíin** is there, the use of the language is very low. In the conversation with my elder, we learned that she would like to see children being fluent in **Ichishkíin** and using it in conversation more than anything else. Grande (2008) discusses how healing it could be and how it could strengthen a community to have Indigenous people design and teach in a way that dismantles colonial teachings.

Question Six of the survey with Yakama parents/caregivers asks what they think is most important for their children to learn and the most common responses were Yakama language, Yakama ways of life, Yakama history, and our traditional foods. In their conversation, one parent mentioned how important teachings and language come from the longhouses and if children could go everyday, as opposed to every Sunday, that would be ideal for them. I am very happy as I see more and more Indigenous people put their language, their way of life, and their traditional foods at the top of the list when it comes to importance. Henne-Ochoa, etal, (2020) mentions how Indigenous languages

were not meant to be taught with a linguistic breakdown and Gomashie (2019) says that Indigenous languages should be taught in a way that shows the connection that the language has with the land as well as with the people. The Yakama Parent/Caregiver Survey showed that traditional teachings and traditional foods were among those considered most important for their children to learn.

My elder discussed how important it is to show respect to the elders by always checking on them, bringing them traditional foods, or seeing if they want water or anything when you see them in public. A Yakama parent mentioned how she loves her elders and wants them to be a part of everything she does. My elder also mentioned how important it is for partners to love and respect each other and she went so far as to say that is the reason they are born. These are the types of traditional teachings that occur when you are at the longhouse or when you focus on teaching our Yakama language and way of life. Alvera, from AFS, stated that their traditions and their longhouse teachings are a central part of their school. Our Yakama teachings are integral to who we are, and I would never want them to be forgotten because they are what makes us who we are; the traditional teachings and the Indigenous language go together hand-in-hand; many say they cannot be separated.

Children spend six hours or so a day in school. Schools that take this much time and do not offer indigenous language and culture do a disservice to children and families who value their Indigenous ways. Over the past 20 plus years, tribes are exerting their sovereign rights to educate their children as their language(s) and culture teaches. More tribal-school district partnerships have developed in schools to bring Indigenous languages and cultures into the schools and classrooms. Underriner (2020) discusses how

these institutions that were once used to erase traditional ways are now being used to teach tribal languages and culture while White (2015) remarks that the Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) became an excellent example of self-determination for many of the Mohawk people and Hermes (2007) mentions how the mission of Waadookodaading Ojibwe charter school in Wisconsin is to "create fluent speakers, intergenerational relationships, and environmental awareness," (p. 59).

The Yakama Parent/Caregiver Survey reveals the consistent desire of parents and caregivers to have their children to learn **Ichishkíin**, Yakama ways of life, longhouse teachings, our traditional foods, and even the crafts that Yakama people typically make. My elder stresses the necessity for children to be taught through our traditional Yakama teachings. Many of the parents/caregivers in the conversations, too, expressed how their motivation to learn **Ichishkíin** and Yakama ways of life have increased dramatically after having children. One of the parents even said that these things need to be taught when the children are very young because that is when they are like little sponges. Elese Washines, a Yakama parent and educational leader, mentioned how important the environment is as well as the importance of prayer in teaching our children. **Miimawít** Immersion School could provide a focus on what many of the Yakama parents are wanting the most for their children to be taught.

Literature and community voices work together to supports these ideas, too. For example, Ewing & Ferrick, (2012) describes how the Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods eliminated power struggles between teacher and student by using a 'Love and Logic' model as well as mimicking the tribe's method for conflict resolution, and Alvera Sargent from AFS, shared how when their school started they did not want anything

(including funding) to do with the US federal government. White (2015) discusses how the children from AFS get high grades in academia but also have high self-esteem and confidence. Alvera, in the interview, shares that the commitment to focus on children learning their traditional ways and language was so strong that they were hesitant to accept a big brand new school building that might take away from their mission since the children spend a lot of time outdoors a new building might influence them all spend more time indoors.

I traveled a lot when I was younger and met a lot of different people but during that time I rarely heard about schools being utilized to save their language. I am very thankful that there are individuals who have written about their experiences with Immersion schools and contributed to the academic world. There have been so many different struggles and success stories that have been shared that it can help guide other individuals, such as myself, on how to get started with our own Immersion school and better serve our children both academically and culturally.

It is important to know what happens in the different immersion schools, but it was also helpful to learn how they were planned – where they started their schools, who they asked for help from for their schools, and even what types of difficulties they have experienced after successfully running for several years. Having the opportunity to read about several schools within academic literature has enabled me to contribute to it myself to benefit my own community. I hope that this work in turn helps other Indigenous scholars follow their paths in helping their home communities through other areas. It is never too late to revitalize your Indigenous language as I have witnessed other Indigenous scholars bring back languages that have not been spoken in many years.

Future Direction

I have already begun discussions with Heritage University, to implement new programs designed to more directly support **Ichishkíin** language revitalization. Teaching **Ichishkíin** in the classroom cannot be the only method available for learning **Ichishkíin** because we have seen that this will never produce fluent speakers and/or it will take a long time, time that we do not have. I believe that teaching **Ichishkíin** in the classrooms should not cease to happen but having an **Ichishkíin** Immersion environment, like **Miimawít** Immersion School will help supplement what is lacking to become fluent in **Ichishkíin**. Part of these discussions include an **Ichishkíin** Language House to serve as a center for materials development and community gathering, and where programming can be piloted in preparation for the **Miimawít** Immersion School. It is also a place that can help train teachers to work in an immersion setting. As discussed previously, the Heritage University Early Learning Center used to have an **Ichishkíin** focused classroom with two-year olds and this space would allow us to restart this program with more support where mornings would be dedicated to this program and gathering language for child-centered **Ichishkíin** immersion inviting Elders to participate and just use their **Ichishkíin** language in context together and with the children. Afternoons would be spent developing materials in preparation for the **Miimawít** Immersion School, and to share with families and other **Ichishkíin** classes in the community. There also has been a plan to start **Niichtpamá** (*place to store things*), that will help make existing and future materials accessible to families, teachers, community, academics and linguists.

This project allowed us to learn from parents/caregivers of Yakama children about their children's education. We also learned from one Yakama elder about what

education means more traditionally from a Yakama perspective and I was very grateful for the guidance we received. Yakama elders, however, have not all been raised in the same manner and there is so much more to learn from those willing to teach us. A future project speaking with more elders will be a high priority project moving forward. It is unfortunate that, just as we were ready to begin planning elder and community conversations, COVID disrupted our plans. This work will certainly continue and speaking with elders is one of the next steps I am most looking forward to.

The voices of the youth and the children are another exciting extension yet to come. Hearing from them is another crucial step in shaping our future of Yakama education. I have heard elders reminding people that we should not forget to listen to the children. Yakama children will have the best insight around what is going on in the schools currently and supports they would like to see moving forward. This work would certainly be enhanced by their voices. We might ask questions like:

- What would your dream school look like?
- What do you wish you could do every day as a part of school?
- What would you like to see more/less of in school?

I have shared stories of incidents that happened to me while I was in school, but I did not share them with anybody until much later in life. We must let them know that we want to hear from them now and follow through on what we learn in a good way.

Concluding Thoughts

The Yakama ancestors have shaped **Ichishkíin** to where it is today and that is why it is such a beautiful language that deserves to be revitalized. I am sure they would be happy to know that **Ichishkíin** is being preserved for future generations of Yakama

people to be able to use. A Yakama tradition is to always think about future generations and we must do that with language, too. If we do not try harder and do more, our current elders could be the last ones to speak **Ichishkíin** fluently. It would be a dream come true to one day have a child born speaking only **Ichishkíin** as a first language; with **Ichishkíin** speaking parents; going to an **Ichishkíin** speaking school; reading **Ichishkíin** books; watching **Ichishkíin** videos; and eventually bringing an **Ichishkíin** community back to life. This dream of bringing **Ichishkíin** back to life is within reach and other Indigenous people have demonstrated that for us by bringing their languages back to life, sometimes with less resources than we have now.

My research question was: What does education mean from a Yakama perspective? How can community narratives inform the development of the **Miimawít** Immersion School? The surveys showed us that the Yakama people wish to learn **Ichishkíin** and also wish to learn their traditional ways. The conversations from the parents/caretakers of Yakama children showed that parents want their children to learn **Ichishkíin** and traditional ways in more ways, in many cases, than they were able to themselves. The conversation with a Yakama elder showed that the old teachings are still relevant and **Ichishkíin** is always going to be one of the most important pieces of education. **Kussumshy**'s (Wilkins, 2008) Nine Yakama Virtues also showed us that our old teachings are still relevant and parent responses and narratives demonstrated how they are still very active in families today. They also showed how great of a need and desire there is for education in our community that teaches our language and aligns with our own way of educating, methods that have been passed down from our ancestors, refined through countless generations, and which treat our children well. Language

Revitalization, Self-Determination, Spirituality and Prayer, and Love surfaced as components central to a Yakama way of educating.

I am grateful to all the people out there that decided to write about and share about some of the great work towards language revitalization that is, and has been, happening. Learning about the other Indigenous Immersion schools has been inspiring. It is always easier to attempt something after watching somebody else try it first; it is even greater when those who tried something first then go on to encourage and give advice to help others succeed. I am grateful to the Yakama people past, present, and future; we have come a long way and we have been through a great deal, but we are still here! Lastly, I am grateful for my family and friends. This is important work, but it also required a great deal of my attention for a long period of time. My final note is keep an ear out for the **Miimawít** Immersion School in a handful of years and I will be glad to share where we are at and tell our story.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH ELDERS

- How were children taught traditional manners/what lessons took place (ex: what was taught in a sweat vs. around dinner table)?
- What kinds of methods did Yakamas use for educating (ex: Coyote stories, personal experiences)?
- What were some of the most important values that were commonly taught to children?
- Are there any traditional Yakama teachings that are not taught today?
- Do you remember hearing about any traditional teachings from your own Elders from when they were kids? How was life as a child when your Elders were children?
- What are some of the differences between the way children were raised a long time ago versus today?
- How are children from long ago different from children now?
- How are parents different from long ago versus now?
- What would you hope to see in a school built for Yakama children?
    - What kinds of teachings would you like to see there?
    - What activities would you hope the children would partake in daily? seasonally?
- What advice would you give to Yakama people wanting to learn more about a Yakama way of educating/living/knowing/being?

APPENDIX B

YAKAMA EDUCATION SURVEY

Yakama Education - Parent/Caretaker Survey

Kw'ałá nam wyánawi! Welcome!

Kw'ałanúushamash for taking the time to complete this survey! It should take approximately 15 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and greatly appreciated. Your answers will be used to help guide how Yakama children learn their language and cultural ways.

General Information

Q1 How many children do you have and how old are they?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2 How satisfied are you with your child/childrens school? (add any additional information you would like)

- ○ Extremely satisfied (1)
- ○ Somewhat satisfied (2)
- ○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)
- ○ Somewhat dissatisfied (4)
- ○ Extremely dissatisfied (5)

Ichishkiin language experience, use and goals

Q3 How much Ichishkiin language do you use daily? (add any additional information you would like)

- ○ None (1) _____
- ○ A few words (2) _____
- ○ A few words and some phrases (3)

_____

- ○ Some conversations (4)

_____

- ○ Most conversations (5)

_____

Q4 Do you have support for using language at home? If yes, what kinds of support? (check all that apply and add any information you'd like)

☐ Fluent Elder speaker(s) (1)

_____

☐ Other family members who are learning the language (2)

_____

☐ Learning Materials – what kinds (books, classes, materials, etc)? (3)

_____

☐ Other (please share) (4)

_____

Q5 Rank which supports would be most helpful for you to use more Ichishkiin language at home? (1 being most helpful, 7 being the least helpful) (add any additional information you'd like)

_____ Written supports - books, flashcards, posters, etc. (1)

_____ Games & activities (2)

_____ Songs & videos (3)

_____ Electronic supports - apps (4)

_____ Classes - online or in person (5)

_____ Practice with Elders/speakers (6)

_____ Other (7)

Educating with Yakama knowledge and lifeways

Q6 What Yakama teachings do you think are important for your children to learn?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Seasonal Activities

Q7 What seasonal activities should Yakama children learn?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Daily Activities

Q8 What Yakama activities would you like your children to practice daily?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q9 What entities within the Yakama Nation would you like to see working more with our children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q10 What knowledge or skills would you or your family be willing to share with children in our community?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q11 Is there anything else you'd like to share to help Yakama children become speakers and leaders in our community?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q12 In thanks for sharing your thoughts here, we are offering entry into a raffle. If you would like to be entered, please share your name and preferred contact information. Your name will ONLY be used for the raffle.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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