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## RENO SPARKS INDIAN COLONY




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<b>Project Title:</b>	Reno Sparks Indian Colony Native Language Teacher Project
<b>Award Amount:</b>	\$88,553
<b>Type of Grant:</b>	Language
<b>Project Period:</b>	Sept. 2009 – Dec. 2010
<b>Grantee Type:</b>	Tribe

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### PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 job created
- 6 Native American consultants hired
- 5 elders involved
- 1 youth involved
- \$737 in resources leveraged
- 4 partnerships formed

### BACKGROUND

Reno-Sparks Indian Colony is a federally recognized tribe of just over 1,000 enrolled tribal members with a land base in downtown Reno, Nevada, and a larger reservation in Hungry Valley, about 18 miles outside of Reno. Three languages are spoken on the Colony: Washeshu (or Washoe), Newe (or Shoshone), and Numu (or Paiute). Numu and Newe are both part of the Uto-Aztecan language family while Washeshu is part of the Hokaltecan language family.

In 2009, there were 77 students of at least one of the three languages on the Colony.

Students learn the language through high school classes, community classes, and language classes for employees of the tribe, but there is no language training for pre-school, elementary, or middle school students. A long-term, community goal of the Colony is to train teachers from the community to teach the native languages on an introductory level to pre-school, elementary, and middle school students.

Prior to implementing this project, the project staff identified two unmet needs in the community: 1) the lack of a mechanism for increasing the number of native language instructors; and 2) the lack of native teachers for children and youth.

### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to identify how to train local community members to become teachers of the native languages. This was accomplished through two objectives over a 15-month project period.

The first objective of the project was to research at least eight successful native

language teacher training programs throughout Indian Country. Over the course of the project period, the project coordinator visited the Northwest Indian Languages Institute at the University of Oregon, the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin Language program, and the Halau Wanana Indigenous Center for Higher Learning in Waimea, Hawaii. The project coordinator and members of the community also visited the Umatilla Confederated Tribes in Pendleton, Oregon. The key lessons learned from these site visits included: a culturally-based language learning experience is necessary; stressing relevance to the learners; immersion programs are a priority; documentation is essential; and creative use of non-written teaching methods such as total physical response, accelerated second language acquisition, and immersion are effective teaching methods for second language acquisition.

The second objective was to involve the community in the design and planning of a teacher training program. To accomplish this objective, the Colony and project staff created a five-member language committee called the Community Advocates for Language Preservation and Revival. This language committee, made up of youth, elders, and community members with experience in language teaching and learning, discussed and worked to reach resolution on questions common in native language programs. Such questions included whether teacher certification or other accreditation by external sources should be included, and whether the training program also should include a focus on the academic linguistics and academic documentation of the languages. The language committee also was trained in teaching methodologies.

The third objective was to create a curricula template for training the local native

language teachers. The grantee received a three-month extension to finish this task and the curricula template was created by the end of the extended project period. The template can be used for each of the three languages in the community and is designed to increase the overall number of Washeshu, Newe, or Numu teachers. The template details a five-week intensive program that covers five core topics: native language immersion teacher training; second language acquisition for adult learners; second language acquisition for child learners; language assessment tools; and curriculum development. In addition, the template provides a budget for implementing the teacher training, criteria for selecting teacher trainees and language mentors, an accountability and coordination framework that details the roles and responsibilities of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Tribal Council, language and cultural program staff, language committee, and community members.

#### **OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

Through this project, Reno-Sparks Indian Colony created a plan to create more native language instructors. The plan provides the framework for the tribe to implement a teacher training program in the community.

While the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony has not secured funding yet to implement the teacher training program, project staff believe the plan developed through this project places the Colony in a stronger position to secure future funding.

*“The language committee is energized and optimistic about the potential the teacher training program holds for their communities in the future.”*

Debra Harry, Project Coordinator