



# Linking the Past With the Future

## Using Heritage Languages and Cultures to Promote Academic English Proficiency for Success in School, Higher Education, and Careers

*Trini Torres Carrion*

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, SEC. 3001, authorized Title III Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students and Immigrant Students. The focus of this law is to assist school districts in teaching English to English learners (ELs), traditionally referred to as Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, helping these students meet the same challenging academic state standards required of all students. OELA's mission is to provide national leadership in promoting high-quality education for ELs.

### **Title III Administered Discretionary Competitive Grant Programs**

The Native American and Alaska Native Children in School program provides grants for a period of no more than five years, to eligible entities to develop high levels of academic attainment in English among ELs in elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools operated predominantly for Native American children, and to promote parental and community participation in language

instruction educational programs. NAM priorities for new grants funded in FY 2011 are: Increasing Postsecondary Success; Enabling More Data-based Decision-Making; Increasing Parental Involvement to Improve School Readiness and Success; and Supporting Native American Language Instruction. Currently, there are 22 funded projects serving an estimated of 4,765 students from birth to college in the states of Alaska, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin. All these programs include heritage language and culture-based curricula, indigenous language standards, research-based literacy model programs, dual language instruction, and professional development leading toward Bilingual-ESL teacher certification.

The National Professional Development Program provides grants, for a period of no more than five years, to institutions of higher education (in consortia with state educational agencies or local educational agencies) to provide for professional development activities that will

improve classroom instruction for limited English proficient children, including Native American English learners, and assists educational personnel working with such children to meet high professional standards, including standards for certification and licensure as teachers who work in language instruction educational programs or serve limited English proficient children. Currently, three NPD projects train Native American professionals exclusively, and one included in their program Native American professionals.

### **NABE 2012, Indigenous Bilingual Education Pre-Conference Institute**

1. The Diné Dual Language Teachers Professional Development Project: Developing a Sense of Place

*Presenter:* Louise Lockard, Title III NPD Project Director, ArizonaThe Diné Dual Language Teachers Professional Development Project works with a consortium of public and the Bureau of Indian Education schools to prepare teachers with



Dr. Louis Lockard presenting at the 2012 NABE Indigenous Institute.

a proficiency in Navajo language and culture to teach in dual language programs. The schools in the consortium have been identified as seeking to implement the Diné language and culture teaching perspective; a perspective based on the premise that education is best when it reflects a sense of place, is based on the philosophy and values of those being educated, and reflects the Diné perspective of education in teacher preparation. The program recognizes that a culturally responsive teacher education program works to empower teachers to make instructional choices that honor their professionalism and language background. Knowledge learned in one language paves the way for knowledge acquisition in a second language.

## 2. Parental Involvement to Improve School Readiness and Success

**Presenter:** Cheryl Beaman, Title III NAM Project Director, Oklahoma

The Literacy Through Language Enhancement (LTLE) project is designed to improve child readiness for school by increasing parent knowledge of early childhood development and improving parenting practices; providing early detection of developmental delays and health issues; and preventing child abuse and neglect. This session provided an overview of the involvement of Native American district families with preschool aged children to increase the students' reading scores and the mastery of the Cherokee language and culture.

## 3. Turtle Mountain Community College Zhaabwii Learning Center Project

**Presenters:** Larretta Hall and Cathie Gladue, Title III NAM Project Directors, North Dakota

The Zhaabwii project responds to identified the needs of English learners entering college who are underprepared for academic English course-work, have difficulties or underachievement in reading, and have the need of expanding their remedial services. The program is designed to provide parental involvement activities for parents of students 18 and older. The presenter provided an overview of how the program focuses on ensuring high need students are academically prepared to succeed at postsecondary education.

## 4. Providing Culturally Responsive Professional Development

**Presenter:** Jon Reyhner, Diné Dual Language Teachers Professional Development Project, Co-PI, Arizona

Many studies have shown that teachers who link the content they are teaching to the background knowledge and culture of their students will improve their academic performance. This presentation summarized some of that recent research and provided examples of culturally responsive Indigenous ethnoscience and ethnomathematics pedagogy, including examples from Northern Arizona University's recently published monograph *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches for Teaching Indigenous Students* that is available online at <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/HOH/>

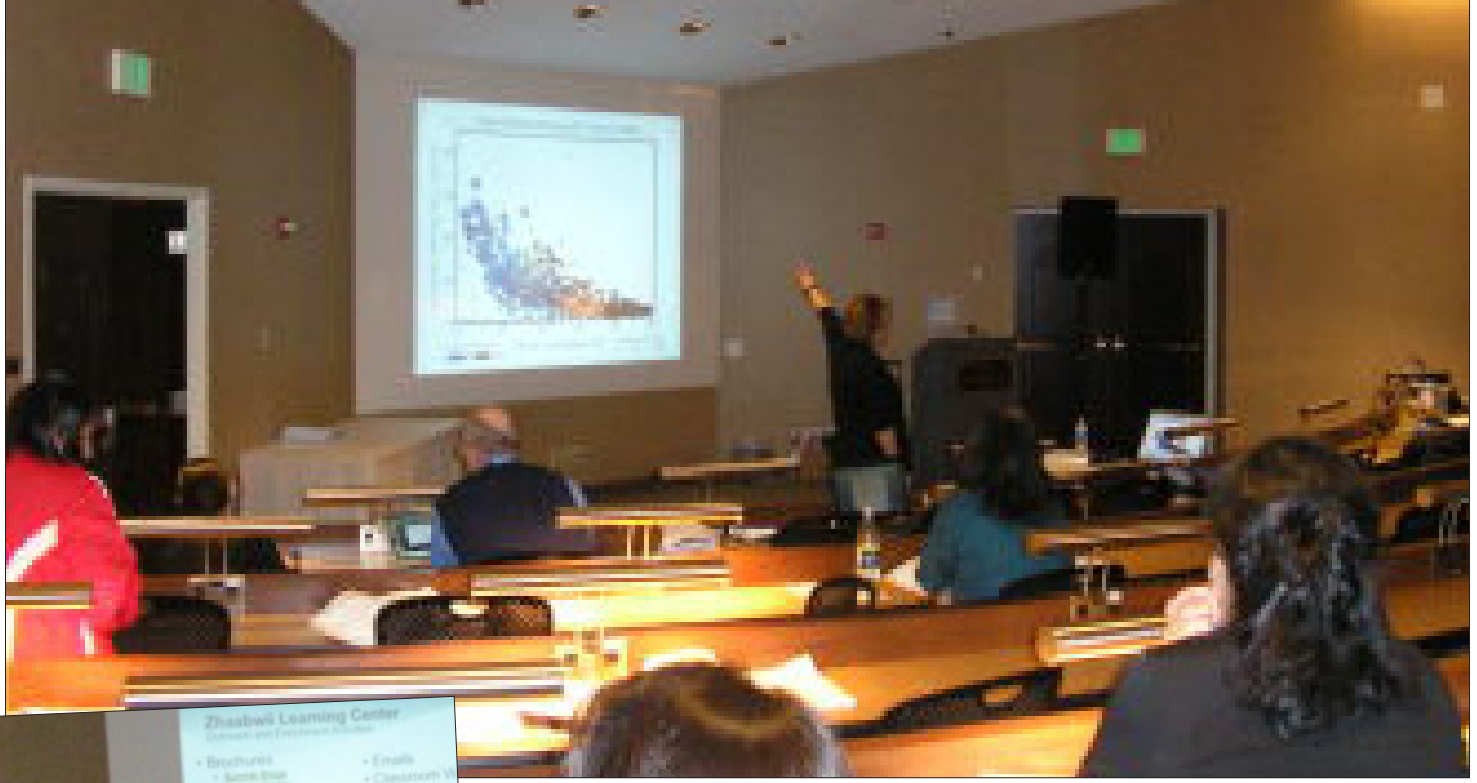


Dr. Jon Reyhmer delivering a presentation.

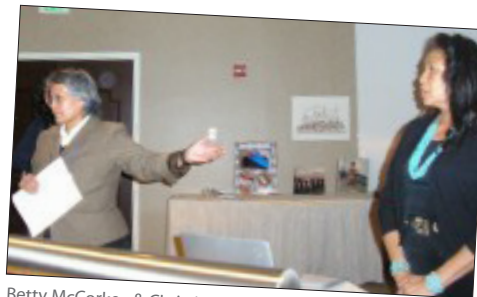
## 5. Algodones Elementary School (AES), Native Language Program, K-5, Bernalillo Public Schools District, New Mexico

**Presenters:** Betty McCorkey, Title III NAM Project Director; Laura Greenleaf, Principal; Christine Golden, Teacher

The Native Language Program at AES has been implemented for the past five years. Though it serves to maintain the native language, the primary purpose is to increase student academic proficiency. Ms. Golden, a classroom teacher certified by the local tribe to teach the native Keres language, consults with the regular classroom teacher to plan her lessons for vocabulary development in reading and math. The presenters demonstrated techniques on how difficult concepts are taught to children in their language with pictures and with examples from their life in the village.



Larreta Hal & Cathie Gladue co-presenting a session on learning centers.



Betty McCorkey & Christine Golden at NABE 2012



Cheryl Beaman at the 2012 Indigenous Institute in Dallas.

## 6. The Talking Stick

**Presenter:** Trini Torres, Education Program Specialist, U.S. Department of Education, OELA

The presenter provided an overview of the online community practice created to connect NAM grantees serving similar populations or facing similar challenges; link novice grantees with experienced grantees; and give grantees the opportunity to interact with OELA staff and experts. Participants also learned about FY 2013 funding opportunities.

## Conclusion

Important themes reflected in presentations included:

- Family involvement, beginning early and continuing throughout a child's education, is critical to student success.
- Linking content to background knowledge and culture improves academic performance.
- OELA's mission is to promote high-quality education for ELs, but its goal is not achievable without the partnership with the grantees. Commitment to ELs was demonstrated in each of the presentations. ★

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To learn more about the beauty of these projects, visit  
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