The Condition of Native American Languages in the United States

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Introduction

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the lands that are now the United States (the forty-eight contiguous states, Alaska and Hawaii), there must have been many hundreds of distinct languages. Fewer than two hundred remain, and the future of these is decidedly insecure, even where the remoteness of the location (in the case of Inuit in Northern Alaska) or the large size of the speech community (in the case of Navajo in the Southwest) might seem to protect the community from language loss. Yet even this vastly reduced reservoir of linguistic diversity constitutes one of the great treasures of humanity, an enormous storehouse of expressive power and profound understandings of the universe. The loss of the hundreds of languages that have already passed into history is an intellectual catastrophe in every way comparable in magnitude to the ecological catastrophe we face today as the earth's tropical forests are swept by fire. Each language still spoken is fundamental to the personal, social and – a key term in the discourse of indigenous peoples – spiritual identity of its speakers. They know that without these languages they would be less than they are, and they are engaged in the most urgent struggles to protect their linguistic heritage. The goal of this paper is to review the contexts and practices of this struggle, in the hope that people everywhere will support it.

History and Current Status of Indigenous Languages in the United States

It is impossible to enumerate precisely the number of languages found in the United States at the time of the Columbian contact.

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Old-World diseases swept miles and years ahead of the advancing frontier of the Old World peoples (Ramenovsky 1987). Some authorities (cf. Thornton 1987) estimate that these plagues left as few as one in twenty-five of the original populations. Groups who early adopted new European technologies such as horse travel and guns drove others before them, and new goods and trading opportunities altered traditional modes of interaction between peoples. New ethnic formations developed and old ones disappeared, not only at the frontier, but in the disturbed zones that extended hundreds of miles ahead of it. Thus the ethnohistory of the indigenous United States is cluttered with the names of 'nations' with wide reputation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which no linguistic trace remains (as in the case of the 'Jumano' of the Rio Grande basin: Hickerson 1988). While scholars estimate the number of language families represented in North America as ranging from three (Greenberg 1987) to sixty-two (Campbell and Mithun 1979), much genetic assignment must be speculative due to lack of information, not only about whole language families, but about missing links in families with surviving members.

It is difficult to assess the contemporary numbers of Native American languages and their speakers. Leap (1988: 290) believes that since the United States Census counts only speakers of the largest languages, Chafe's (1962) survey, based on questionnaires mailed to 500 consultants, remains the best source of information on indigenous languages and their speakers. Chafe's census included Canadian languages as well as those of Alaska. Table 1 includes these, but does not include Hawaiian, with about 2,000 speakers (Heckathorn 1987). At the time of writing, three decades later, it is almost certain that the 51 languages in Chafe's first category have disappeared. for instance, the last speaker[1] of Cupeño, Roscinda Nolasquez of Pala, California, died in 1987 at the age of 94. Languages identified by Chafe as having between

Table 1 Indigenous languages of the United States of America and Canada by number of speakers

Number of speakers	1–10	10–100	100–1,000	1,000–10,000	10,000+
Number of languages	51	35	75	43	9

Source: Chafe (1962)

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10 and 100 speakers are surely so moribund that revival for everyday use is highly unlikely. Thus, while Leap (1981, 1988) and Crawford (1989) have suggested that about 200 indigenous languages are still spoken in the United States, the number may in fact be below 150. Chafe found only 89 languages with speakers of all ages, and that figure also has surely changed. Thus Rudin (1989) found that for Omaha, one of these languages (Chafe thought it might have as many 3,000 speakers), few young adults knew the language, and tests of children entering kindergarten in 'the most solidly Omaha town on the Omaha reservation', Macy, Nebraska, 'indicate virtually no knowledge of the language' (Rudin 1989: 1). Even the largest indigenous communities are concerned about the future of their languages. Brandt (1988: 322) quotes Dillon Platero, Headmaster of the Navajo Academy, who observed in a public address in 1986 that although there are currently more speakers of Navajo than ever before, there are also more Navajos who do *not* speak their language than ever before. Brandt herself believes that the proportion of speakers may be as low as 50 per cent. However, many Navajo do not agree with these gloomy assessments.

The Contexts for Language Loss

The contexts in which this situation has developed include a complex intersection of ecological and cultural factors. We review here the reservation period, dating from about 1880. Of necessity we must summarise briefly, neglecting many detailed studies of particular cases.[2]

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a division of the US Department of the Interior, is the custodian of the wealth of Native American peoples and is responsible for their welfare. The BIA administers the reservations of the recognised tribes;[3] its agents have acted for them in contracting with non-Indians, determined the official shape of tribal governments, and established and implemented standards for health and education on the reservations. The relationship between the BIA and the tribes is currently in revision, and tribes are being encouraged to conduct many activities, such as education programmes, independently of the BIA. All indigenous people are United States citizens and

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are free to live anywhere if they do not want to live on their reservations.

The system of federal reservations was meant to provide land on which Native American people could earn their own living in ways thought appropriate by officials, including farming, the production of arts and crafts for the tourist trade, small manufacturing, and extractive industries such as lumbering and mining, with the latter two types of enterprise often conducted by non-Indian corporations, under concessions from the tribes.[4] Probably the major source of employment on reservations is with government agencies (of course, the proportion of people employed in government is also quite high in many non-Indian communities). Yet no reservation is really self-sufficient economically. Not only has employment been scarce, but public health conditions (access to decent health care, clean water, appropriate sewage disposal, industrial safety, etc.) and educational opportunities have deteriorated sharply on reservations in recent years. Hence many indigenous people must work and raise their children in off-reservation towns and cities. There they frequently encounter job discrimination, and their children are often tracked into low-level or even remedial school programmes, which offer little in the way of cultural enrichment or even adequate vocational preparation. Even where substantial numbers of co-linguals live in an off-reservation enclave, they lack the resources to provide alternative linguistic and cultural enrichment programmes for their children.

Most indigenous people single out educational policy as the most serious threat to the survival of their languages. Federal government policy held that Indians would be made 'civilised' only by moving children from the 'barbarous' atmosphere of indigenous communities to distant boarding schools. Thus many children were separated (sometimes by force) at an early age from families and communities in which their language socialisation might proceed. Often families could not afford to bring their children home, even during long summer vacations. In the boarding schools the use of Native American languages was absolutely forbidden, with shockingly abusive punishment and humiliation, even for very young children, being the routine institutional response to any breach of this rule. These prohibitions and punishments characterised all schooling options available to Indian children, including federal, parochial and local public schools, and continued in some areas until the early 1970s.

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Krauss (1979) summarises the situation for Alaska. Up until the early years of the twentieth century, schools administered by Jesuit, Moravian and Orthodox missionaries prepared materials in Aleut, Central Yupik and several Athabaskan languages; by 1912 the last Aleut church school had closed, and a complete ban on native language education continued for sixty years. Krauss (1979: 42) finds that this policy, which led indigenous people to believe that their own languages were simply without any future and were in fact damaging to their own children, was 'devastating'. In Southeastern Alaska, an area with a relatively small non-indigenous population, in 1979 only one 'Indian' (as contrasted with Eskimo-Aleut) language, Kutchin, still had child speakers. Aleut was spoken by young children in only one community, and even Eskimo languages (Yupik and Inupiaq) were seriously threatened. Iutzi-Mitchell, reviewing the Alaskan situation in 1990, found that it had continued to deteriorate.

While the climate for indigenous languages in schools has improved in recent years, especially with the federal support for bilingual education programmes that we discuss below, Brandt (1988) finds that it is still common for teachers and school administrators to urge parents to discourage their children from speaking native languages. Further, even where bilingual education is available, schools as institutions are heavily dominated by English, implying the subordination and lack of value of indigenous languages (Edelsky 1980: Iutzi-Mitchell 1990).

While a somewhat watered-down Protestantism, attended by the full range of economic and cultural implications proposed by Max Weber, dominates both secular and religious life in the United States, the Constitution guarantees every citizen freedom of religion (although perhaps the most serious threat to this freedom is faced by indigenous members of the Native American Church, who use the drug peyote as a sacrament). However, waves of fundamentalism have periodically swept the nation, and the practical effect of the constitutional freedom is that evangelical missionaries are free to pursue their goals in any community, including among indigenous peoples. While some evangelical groups (such as the Wycliffe Bible Institute/Summer Institute of Linguistics) have encouraged the development of indigenous languages as part of the missionary effort, others have strongly opposed them as reservoirs of paganism and satanic influence. Thus Brandt (1988: 324) finds that some fundamentalist churches

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on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona and the Alamo Navajo Reservation in New Mexico forbid any speaking of Apache or Navajo or attendance at any event at which the languages are spoken. Even where evangelical groups do not directly forbid indigenous language use, they strongly discourage members from participating in indigenous religious contexts, including healing, which are often major arenas for the use of native languages, especially of their most complex and creative registers.

Television and radio broadcasting in the United States, while conducted under federal licence, is almost entirely the province of for-profit corporate effort. Thus, it is extremely difficult to find sponsorship for broadcasting in minority languages. Among indigenous languages, only Navajo and Yupik are regularly broadcast; other languages, if they are heard at all, are restricted to half-hour segments in the weekend-morning 'ethnic ghettos' of American broadcasting. Satellite technology and a new feature of reservation life, the video-cassette recorder and the video rental delivery van, mean that even people in the most remote corners of large reservations can watch English-language films and television. Indigenous-language publishing is limited almost entirely to primary school textbooks (from time to time a weekly newspaper in Navajo has been published). Exposure to mass media thus constantly reinforces the message of the prestige and dominance of English, to which young people are particularly susceptible.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a change in the political climate encouraged a new view of the worth of indigenous communities, and a series of judicial and legislative victories by US minority communities yielded a greatly improved status for indigenous languages in education; we will discuss this in more detail below. But the 1980s have seen a backlash of conservatism, led both by high officials at the federal level and by local movements across the United States. Powerful groups led by US English, headquartered in Washington, D.C., urge that the United States Constitution be amended to make English the official language of the nation. US English has mounted local initiatives, and voters have passed 'Official English' statutes in sixteen states.[5] While the US policy climate has always favoured a 'transitional' as opposed to a 'maintenance' role for bilingual education, William J. Bennett, the US Secretary of Education in the second term of Ronald Reagan's presidency, took an even stronger stance. Bennett

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strongly favoured total immersion in English from the earliest grades, and worked successfully to increase funding for English-immersion programmes under Title VII, the 1968 Bilingual Education Act that funds most bilingual education in the United States. In this effort he found an important ally in Senator Dan Quayle, later the Vice-President of the United States (Crawford 1989). Opposition to minority languages in the late 1980s seemed to extend even to scholarly study; the Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities proposed in a discussion paper in 1987 that the Endowment should not fund scholarly study of languages with small numbers of speakers and little or no written literature. This provoked an outraged reaction from the scholarly community and led to the issuing of a clarifying statement by the Endowment (Golla 1988). In summary, the current policy climate, far from being responsive to the obvious crisis of language extinction faced by American Indians, positively exacerbates the situation.

The strategies that indigenous groups and individuals have adopted for survival in the face of oppression and discrimination are diverse. While it must never be forgotten that every contemporary American Indian community testifies to the extraordinary strength and resilience of indigenous societies, it is important to recognise that some survival strategies themselves threaten indigenous languages both directly and indirectly. Commitment to language maintenance is by no means universal. Many people feel that indigenous languages are part of the past and must inevitably be replaced; they fear that their use in schools will 'hold back' children. Parents may decide not to teach their native language to their children, using English with them instead in order to increase their chances of success in school. Intermarriage between members of distinct Indian groups is increasingly common; in such mixed families, English is likely to be the principal home language. Even where an indigenous language is spoken in the home, the language socialisation of children may be largely in English. Young parents, working two jobs to support families, may have little time to spend with children, who are exposed to far more English-language television than to parental talk in the local language (although if over-worked parents place children with grandparents maintenance may be enhanced). Elders, in their deep concern for language preservation, may over-react to the normal mistakes of children, and be especially censorious of

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such manifestations of bilingual speech as code-switching and loan vocabulary. Thus they may inadvertently discourage young people from speaking. In some communities the language has been elevated to a quasi-religious status and may be shared only with young people who are felt to be spiritually 'promising'; in others, it has become a 'valuable', displayed only on special occasions (Moore 1988). Knowledgeable speakers are sometimes reluctant to work with linguists and educators (even other native people) in language maintenance programmes, feeling that their language is the last possession that they might hope to protect from the prying of outsiders (Leap 1988). In many Pueblo groups, there is strong resistance to writing down the native language (Brandt 1981; Donahue 1990).

The Contexts for Language Maintenance

While supporters of the preservation of indigenous languages in the United States face serious obstacles, indigenous people are working very hard at both the local and the national level to create a climate of policy and opinion that will facilitate language maintenance and development, and to increase the level of skills and training of speakers of indigenous languages. Hundreds of indigenous-language maintenance programmes have been undertaken in the United States since the late 1960s. Unfortunately we have space to review only two with which we are familiar on a first-hand basis; these can hardly suggest the great diversity of efforts and contexts.[6] We review the Peach Springs Bilingual Programme, conducted in the Hualapai language of Arizona, and the Punana Leo Preschool system in Hawaii. We conclude with a discussion of recent policy initiatives by Native American people in support of their languages.

The Peach Springs Bilingual/Bicultural Programme

The town of Peach Springs, the administrative centre for the Hualapai Tribe, is located on the southwestern rim of the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona. Hualapai is a member of the Yuman language family. The tribe is relatively small, with approximately 1,000 tribal members living in Peach Springs and the surrounding area. The economy of the community includes ranching, the

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railroad, and offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Services and the other social welfare agencies. The tribe also sells hunting permits, and sponsors tourism in collaboration with the Colorado River rafting companies. The local elementary school, which teaches kindergarten through to eighth grade, is a major employer.

A 1976 survey of attitudes in the community towards bilingualism and bilingual education found that while almost half of the local population (48.9 per cent) spoke Hualapai as a first language, 45 per cent of the students spoke English as their dominant language. The Hualapai Bilingual/Bicultural Programme was designed to stop the erosion of Hualapai, and to provide first-language support for the intellectual development of Hualapai-dominant students.

The Peach Springs Bilingual/Bicultural Programme is noted nationally as a 'model'. Of the approximately 160 students enrolled, 90 per cent are Hualapai (the non-Hualapai students include children of school staff, and some children of Anglo ranchers in the area). Classroom content is given in both English and Hualapai. This bilingual setting reinforces the native language skills of the speakers, but also allows the non-speakers to learn Hualapai as well. The programme is 'community based'. This means that much of the curriculum, from kindergarten through the eighth grade, aims to develop understanding of the Hualapai students' own community and environment. For example, when students work on topics in botany, study begins with the plants common to the reservation and surrounding area. As content develops, other types of botanical information from other parts of the country are introduced, but the community's own botanical resources are continually emphasised, perhaps through contrasting them with those of other parts of the world.

Lucille Watahomigie, Director of the Peach Springs programme, argues that the elements that have been crucial for the success of the programme, and that are often lacking in indigenous language maintenance programmes, include community involvement, tribal council support and endorsement, close attention to staff training and professional development, and co-operative arrangements with linguists and researchers (Watahomigie and Yamamoto 1983).

The Peach Springs Bilingual/Bicultural Programme has a largely Hualapai staff, including the director, a situation which

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is very unusual even for reservation schools, one strongly conducive to full community participation, and one which has permitted the programme to function even when resources were very scarce. In the early stages of the programme's development the staff invited their own kin, including grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, to participate in it as language and culture resource people. While these 'consultants' sometimes were compensated financially, more often they were 'paid' with copies of the attractively printed books in Hualapai produced for the programme. Some helpers were also 'paid' with guaranteed rides to town for their weekly shopping. These 'payments' were such an incentive, particularly for elderly members of the community, that the programme often turned away eager prospective consultants.

One of the first administrators of the Peach Springs Elementary School was a Hualapai tribal member who went on to have an important career in Hualapai tribal politics. This connection perhaps set the stage for good and supportive relationships between the tribe and the school's bilingual/bicultural programme. Programme staff have relatives on the tribal council or otherwise involved in tribal politics, and school staff are themselves active in tribal politics. The programme's director has served on the Hualapai Tribal Council.

While the director of the Peach Springs Bilingual/Bicultural Programme is a native speaker of Hualapai with a Master's degree in education from the University of Arizona, most of the certified teaching staff at Peach Springs is still non-Hualapai, with Hualapai staff serving as uncertified teacher aides. When the teacher does not speak Hualapai, the Hualapai-speaking aide must present Hualapai materials: thus Hualapai aides may have the same responsibilities as the non-Hualapai teachers but do not receive equal pay. The sense of competence gained in the classroom, and the promise of better pay when certification is gained, has prompted several Hualapai speakers to pursue their teaching credentials. The Hualapai teacher aides have been encouraged to work towards their undergraduate degrees, mainly through Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff and Prescott College, which offer on-reservation classes.

Almost all of the teaching staff of the Peach Springs programme have attended the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI), co-founded by the programme's director. This summer institute offers college-credit courses in linguistics and

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bilingual and bicultural education, emphasising the needs of American Indian communities, and attracts students from all over the western United States. AILDI offers courses on a variety of Southwestern indigenous languages, and teachers who are not Hualapai are encouraged to take its courses on Hualapai language.

The Peach Springs school, as is typical of reservation schools, serves as a crucial point of contact for researchers involved in all types of investigation about the Hualapai tribe and its environment. The bilingual/bicultural programme at Peach Springs has set a precedent in requiring that these researchers leave 'useful and usable' materials with the school or community. Researchers must deposit copies of data and publications with the school, and the data must be in a form usable by lay people. Linguists have also been asked to provide linguistic training to many of the Hualapai speakers, working with them to produce reference grammars and lexicographical studies of the language. Peach Springs School has thereby developed a staff that is unusually linguistically sophisticated. Some linguists have met their responsibilities by sending their graduate and research assistants to Peach Springs to work for the school if they couldn't carry out their charge themselves. Geologists, botanists, medical researchers, and computer and media technicians work under the same conditions. Peach Springs staff suspect that researchers regret the loss of weekends for hiking and enjoying the Grand Canyon that they must give up while they work with the staff in the school, but overall the level of co-operation between outside researchers and school staff has been very fruitful.

As a result of access to highly trained consultants and researchers the Peach Springs bilingual/bicultural programme has produced a great many highly accurate, culturally relevant and attractive books and materials in the Hualapai language. The programme's publications include books on Hualapai ethnobotany, cattle ranching, hunting, traditional foods, and traditional Hualapai history and stories. The children in the school have also been involved in creative writing programmes, creating contemporary short stories, life-experience writing, and poetry in the Hualapai language.

The Peach Springs school has a sophisticated computer laboratory that would be the envy of many a university department; recently the Apple Corporation's educational foundation donated

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new equipment to the programme. Much course content, especially in language arts, is on computers for self-guided study by the students. The school also has a state-of-the-art media centre and its own television station. The bilingual programme takes advantage of this facility by producing language programmes for the school and the community.

The Peach Springs Programme has enjoyed unusual continuity since its founding in 1975; the director has been with it since the beginning. Even with the changes in administration at the national level the Peach Springs programme has beaten the odds when it comes to funding, largely from the Title VII Bilingual Education Act Programme.[7] In spite of the ups and downs of United States federal budgets, Peach Springs always receives excellent evaluations and regular funding. The amounts, unfortunately, have been smaller each year, but Peach Springs personnel think they have learned the trick of how to use funding creatively.

The Punana Leo Language Immersion Programmes

The three Punana Leo immersion preschools in the state of Hawaii were inspired by the 400 *Kohanga reo*, 'language nests', schools in New Zealand. The *Kohanga reo* programme has taught some 6,000 Maori children the Maori language. Hawaiian, like Maori, was on the verge of total loss. In real desperation members of the Native Hawaiian community initiated total language immersion schools. As a result children are now learning to speak Hawaiian: in 1987 fifteen children between the ages of two and five learned to speak Hawaiian in the three Punana Leo preschools.

The Punana Leo preschools were created initially as private schools with a non-profit status. The schools were regulated by the 'Aha Punana Leo, a formal governing agency created specifically for overseeing the three schools and headed by Kauanoe Kamana, a faculty member in Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. In the Punana Leo preschools, Hawaiian is the only language spoken. Teachers present content for ten hours a day, five days a week. Parents of children in the schools are required to learn Hawaiian and use it in the home; language courses are also offered to parents by the same teachers that teach the children.

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In 1987 the state department of education for Hawaii recognised the Punana Leo preschools by granting them state funding. This recognition was a hard-won victory, since in the early phase of the programme its organisers faced a major problem in justifying the quality of its Native Hawaiian teaching staff, who largely lacked state-required teaching credentials. Organisers of the immersion schools and parents of children in the programmes (a group which grew very quickly) joined together to lobby the Hawaiian state legislature. The outcome was a law passed in 1986 which states: 'Staff members of programs taught solely in Hawaiian which promote fluency in the Hawaiian language shall be exempt from any regulations requiring academic training or certification' (Hawaii: Legislature of the State of Hawaii 1986).

The organisers of the three Punana Leo schools plan to implement immersion schools for children in upper grades, and intend to encourage the state department of education to mandate the teaching of the Hawaiian language in the upper grades and at the college level as well. This addresses a demographic problem: while a growing population of preschoolers are learning Hawaiian, the only other Hawaiian-speaking population is the elders, few in number and declining still. Upper-level instruction can help to bridge this gap.

New Native American Language Policy Initiatives

The United States currently has no official languages, and the status of minority languages here derives not from language rights as such, but almost entirely from constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and equal protection under the laws. These guarantees have led to federal legislation requiring court interpreters, publication of public service information and ballots in minority languages, and the provision of bilingual education. However, in 1983 a new lobby group, 'US English', emerged from a parent organisation that had as its main platform the restriction of immigration (Crawford 1989). US English has pushed state by state to make English the official language of the United States, with its goal to prevent the 'institutionalisation of immigrant languages in competition with English' (US English 1984).

The position of US English on indigenous languages appeared to be more tolerant; in an official policy statement, the organisation affirmed that

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> Native American languages are not spoken anywhere else in the world, and some would surely disappear without affirmative encouragement. This would be a loss to all humankind, and not just the affected tribes. We believe that the preservation of Native American Languages is an intellectual obligation we must assume (US English 1984).

Very few Native American people were aware of this aspect of the US English platform, which has received almost no publicity. However, it was abundantly clear to most of them that US English, by opposing the funding of bilingual education and other language maintenance programmes, threatened American Indian languages by virtue of the fact that the funding agencies for immigrant languages are the same ones that fund indigenous language programmes, especially the federal programme under Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act (most recently renewed in 1987). The US English threat has thus provoked a burst of language policy initiatives among Native American peoples. The fear that English might become the official language of the United States, perhaps by amendment of the Constitution itself, prompted the tribes to consider a variety of legal avenues for opposition. Some tribes have adopted official language policies, tribal laws which state that the tribal language is the official language for that tribe, and that English is the second language. They base their legal grounds on their status as sovereign nations and their unique government-to-government status *vis-à-vis* the states and the US government. By 1990 the Standing Rock Sioux, the Red Lake Band of the Chippewa, the Southern Ute, the Yaqui, and the Tohono O'odham had all developed such policies (Leap 1988). Other tribes, such as the Apache, Navajo and Havasupai, make reference to an official language tribal policy in other documents such as tribal education codes and standards.

Indigenous groups have also responded to the US English threat outside the framework of tribal governments. The first major effort was organised by participants in the 1988 Native American Indian Languages Issues Institute (NALI) in Tempe, Arizona. This was the summer that Proposition 106, a US English-sponsored amendment to the Arizona State Constitution that would make English the state's official language, was being debated throughout the state. Institute participants drafted an official statement opposing Proposition 106, and presented it to the Arizona legislature with appropriate media coverage. The

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conference also drafted what seemed at the time to be a somewhat 'longshot' resolution whereby American Indians would ask the United States government to recognise American Indian languages as critical and vital languages of the country. This resolution was based on earlier legislation passed by the state of Hawaii, a 1978 amendment to the State Constitution that recognised English and the indigenous Hawaiian language as the two official languages of the state. It was apparent that such a piece of legislation would be unlikely to prevail in most US states, so the alternative was to encourage a federal-level law that would supersede state law.

Late in August of 1988, William Wilson, Director of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, who had helped draft the NALI resolution, shared the draft with a committee worker in the United States Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. The committee staff believed that with some revisions legislation based on the resolution stood a good chance of passing in the US Senate. The resolution was therefore reshaped into legislation, a Joint Resolution labelled S.J. Res. 379, which proposed 'To establish as the policy of the United States the preservation, protection, and promotion of the rights of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages, to take steps to foster such use, practice and development, and for other purposes' (United States: Senate of the United States 1989). In the autumn of 1989 S.J. Res. 379 was passed without opposition by the Senate. However, the resolution failed to be introduced in the House of Representatives, and thus no action was taken on it by the 100th Congress. Supporters of S.J. Res. 379 were encouraged to re-introduce it in the 101st Congress.

Backers of S.J. Res. 379 worked without the help of professional lobbyists, and the passage of the resolution in the Senate surprised many Indian-affairs lobbyists with Washington experience. Many Washington observers credit the success of this legislation to a four-way network of 'grass-roots' supporters that included indigenous people in Hawaii, Arizona, Oklahoma (where NALI has its central office) and Washington, D.C. Before the 101st Congress began meeting, members of the network sought and gained additional political support from major national organisations: These included the American Anthropological Association, the Modern Language Association, the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education

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Association. S.J. Res. 379 was reintroduced in the 101st Congress as S. 1781, the 'Native American Language Act', and was incorporated in the re-authorization act for Tribally-Controlled Junior Colleges, H.R. 5040. The bill was passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President in October 1990.[8]

Conclusions

The survival of Native American languages in the United States hangs in the balance as we write this essay. Many languages have been lost, and all are threatened. But a small network of determined and energetic speakers of indigenous languages is struggling against enormous odds to create contexts in which the surviving languages and the cultures that they frame can be maintained and developed to enrich the lives of their speakers, and enlarge the cultural wealth of all humanity. We hope we have shown that they have a chance to succeed.

Notes

1. 'Speaker' is a value-laden term. Several people remember a few words and phrases of Cupeño; one elderly woman might even be characterised as a 'semi-speaker'. The skills of such people should not be lightly dismissed, but they do not constitute a secure foundation for language revival or maintenance.
2. Case studies of language loss and maintenance situations include Aoki 1971 (Nez Percé), Bergsland 1979 (Aleut), Bills 1974 (Apachean), Cooley 1979 (Oklahoma Delaware), Elmendorf 1981 (California), Haas 1968 (Biloxi), Hill 1978, 1983 (Cupeño), Kari and Spolsky 1978 (Apachean), McLendon 1980 (Eastern Pomo), Miller 1971 (Shoshoni), Mithun 1989 (Cayuga), Mithun 1990 (Northern Pomo), Moore 1988 (Wasco-Wishram), Rudin 1989 (Omaha), Spolsky 1975 (Navajo), Taylor 1989 (Gros Ventre, Voegelin and Voegelin 1977 (Tubatulabal); in addition to these references, a forthcoming special issue of *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, edited by Allan Taylor, will review a number of North American cases. Classic papers include Bloomfield (1927) and Swadesh (1948).
3. Not all groups claiming indigenous identity and privileges are recognised by the federal government. An example of a non-recognised

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group is the Mashpee Tribe of Massachussetts, currently suing for recognition of tribal identity and rights to land (Clifford 1988).

4. Many indigenous communities refer to themselves as 'confederacies', 'nations', or by other terms. We use 'tribe' here as a term of convenience when referring to indigenous communities in general.
5. In April 1990 the Federal Court for the Arizona District found that the most restrictive state statute, an amendment to the Arizona State Constitution, was in violation of the first amendment of the United States Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech.
6. Reviews of other language maintenance programmes can be found in Leap (1981, 1988), Donahue (1990), St Clair and Leap (1982), Feeling (1989), Patterson (1990), Brandt (1988), Brandt and Ayoungman (1988), Britsch-Devany (1988), Renker and Arnold (1988), Palmer (1988), Norris (1988), Crawford (1989). In addition to bilingual education programmes, a number of tribes are working on grammars and dictionaries of their languages. An example is the development of a dictionary of Hopi by a team led by Emory Sekaquaptewa of the University of Arizona, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
7. The 1968 Bilingual Education Act is technically Title VII of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary School Education Act. While Title VII provides much of the funding for all bilingual education programmes in the United States, programmes on Indian reservations are especially dependent on this source. This occurs because US schools are funded mainly through local property taxes. Reservation property is not taxable; school funds thus come almost entirely from the BIA and other federal programmes (Crawford 1989). Title VII funding is received in the form of grants with a funding period of one to three years; the need to prepare new grant proposals so frequently is a considerable burden on the staff of bilingual education programmes.
8. The text of S. 1781, the Native American Language Act, is too long to include here. Highlights include the recognition of the special status of Native American (Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Native American Pacific Islander) languages and cultures, and recognition of the responsibility of the United States to act together with Native Americans to ensure their survival. Oppressive federal actions of the past are recognised as not consistent with the policy of self-determination for Native Americans. Evidence that young people do best in school if they are taught to respect their natal language and culture is noted. US policy will be to preserve, protect and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice and develop their languages. This policy will be facilitated by granting exceptions to teacher certification requirements for federal funding where these requirements hinder the employment of qualified teachers who speak the languages. The use of the languages as a medium of instruction

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will be encouraged. Native American governing bodies are permitted to adopt them as official languages. The inclusion of Native American languages in curricula at all levels, and the recognition of proficiency in them by academic credit similar to that given for foreign language proficiency, are encouraged.

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