

Community voices: Best practices for Language Revitalization and Reclamation

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Language Ecology

- Akuzipik, aka St. Lawrence Island Yupik, aka (Central) Siberian Yupik
- Endangered Alaska Native language
- Spoken in the two villages (Sivuqaq/Gambell and Sivungaq/Savoonga) on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska
- Around 1400 people live in these two villages



Agenda

- Community Voices: Recommendations for Language Revitalization
- Best Practices in Language Revitalization across the World



Why Does Community Voices Matter?

Language revitalization should be
community-driven.

Solutions come from those who
speak and live the language.

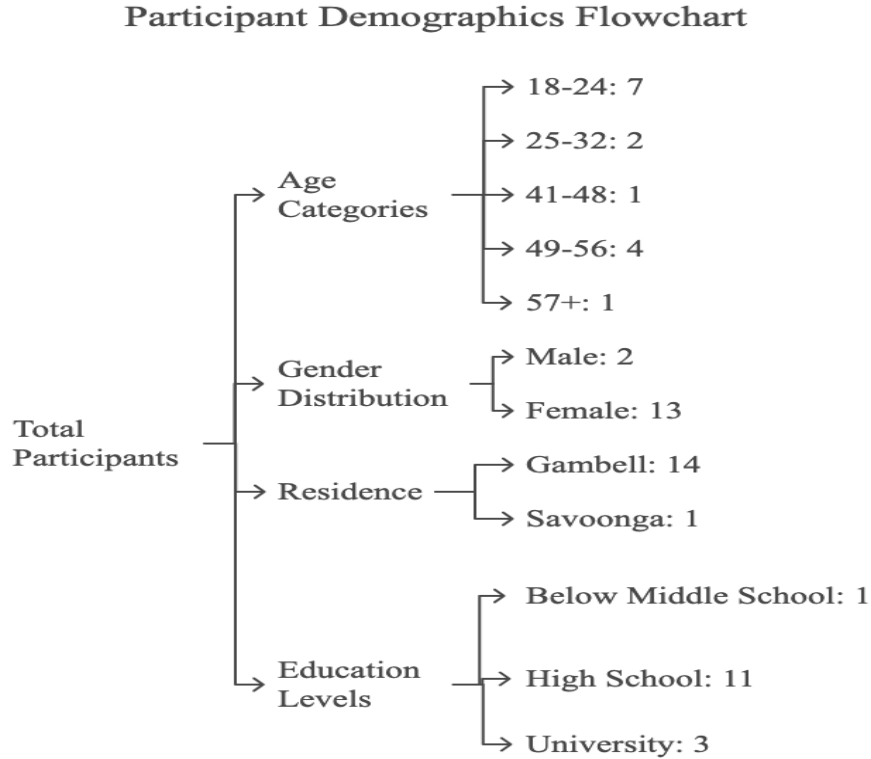


A Pilot Survey

Survey Objectives:

- Gain insights into the state of Akuzipik
- Identify prevailing attitudes towards Akuzipik within the community
- Determine whether the coexistence of Akuzipik and English indicates a robust bilingualism or raises concerns about language loss
- Gather practical and culturally sensitive recommendations from the Akuzipik community

Participants Demographic Flowchart



Made with  Napkin





Survey Findings

- **Status of Akuzipik**
 - Still in practice, but not used as widely as before
 - Younger generations tend more towards English
 - English is preferred for public and social communication
- **Attitude Towards Akuzipik**
 - Mixed but mostly positive
 - Strong cultural pride and emotional connection to Akuzipik



Survey Findings

- **Bilingualism or Language Loss?**
 - The languages coexist, but English dominates most settings.
 - English tends to be the default.
 - Positive views on bilingualism exist, but concerns about English dominance persist.
 - Trend suggests a language shift rather than sustained bilingualism.

Two Key Questions

1. What initiatives can be taken to encourage the younger generation to learn Akuzipik?
2. What initiatives could community members take to preserve Akuzipik?



Encouraging the Younger Generation to Learn Akuzipik

Encouraging Everyday Language Use

- Start with small talk in Akuzipik
- Children need to hear and use Akuzipik
- Use Akuzipik at home as much as possible



Picture: Bering Strait School District Website

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

1

Teach children why language is important

2

Encourage and celebrate every effort to speak Akuzipik

3

Incorporate daily language activities beyond special events

Formal Education & Immersion Programs

- Establish bilingual education programs
- Involve Akuzipik-speaking teachers alongside Western educators
- Develop language nests at Head Start and early childhood centers





Community-Led Efforts to Revitalize Akuzipik

Community Involvement in Language Preservation

- Increase awareness and encouragement
- Offer more Akuzipik classes & immersion programs



Educational Resources

Increasing
Availability of
language Learning
Materials

Increase Number
of Language
Classes

Bilingual and Immersion Programs

Integrating Akuzipik with English in education

Developing immersion programs at school

Creating bilingual class opportunities



Role of Elders & Community Spaces

Create gathering
spaces where
elders share
stories

Encourage more
Akuzipik-
speaking spaces
in the community

Language in Public & Digital Spaces



Use Akuzipik in social media



Put up public signs in Akuzipik
(schools, churches, city buildings)



Support traditional music, dance
(*atuq*) & storytelling

Media Expansion

Expanding media content in Akuzipik

- TV shows in Akuzipik
- Radio programs in Akuzipik

Key Takeaways

- Community engagement and encouragement are essential
- Daily language use, formal education, and public visibility all contribute to revitalization



Best Practices from Other Language Revitalization Efforts



Lessons from Other Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts

Why Look Beyond?

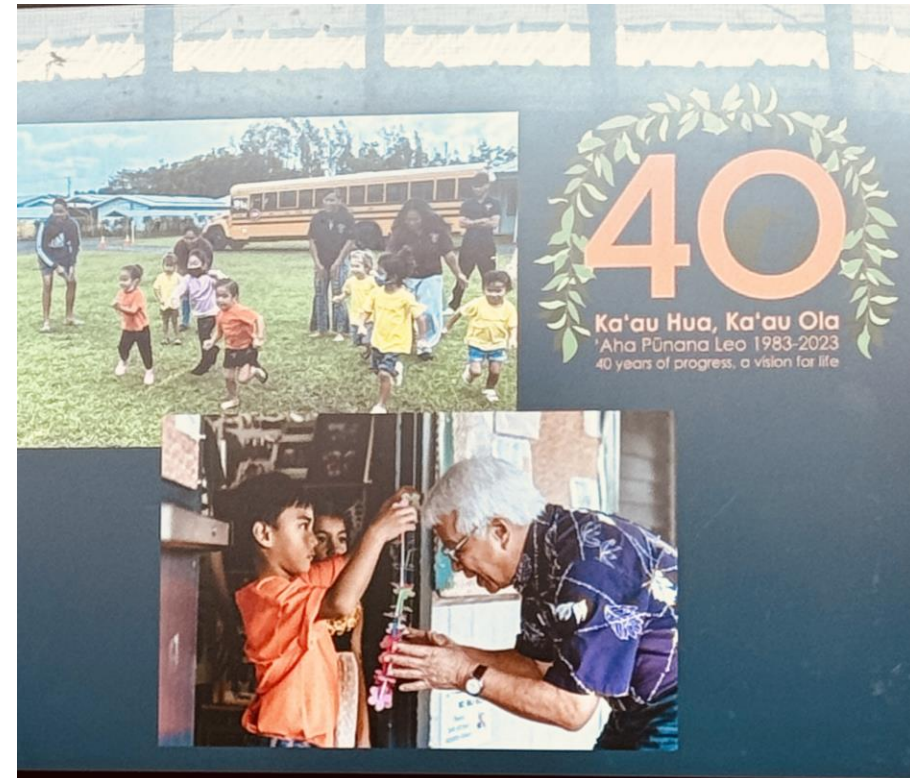
- Many Indigenous communities worldwide have successfully developed language revitalization strategies that could inspire Akuzipik initiatives.
- Learning from other cultures allows us to adapt proven methods to local needs.

Language Nests – Māori (New Zealand) & Native Hawaiian

Te Kōhanga Reo (Māori) & Pūnana Leo (Hawaiian)

How It Works:

- Elders and fluent speakers lead daily activities entirely in the Indigenous language.
- Programs extend into higher education, ensuring continuity





Master-Apprentice Programs–California Indigenous Languages

- Developed for Native Californian languages, this program pairs a fluent elder (Master) with a language learner (Apprentice) for intensive one-on-one immersion
- Learners spend 30+ hours per week engaging in daily activities using only the Indigenous language.

Key Features:

- Non-classroom-based learning occurs in real-life contexts (cooking, fishing, storytelling).
- Focus on conversational fluency rather than strict grammar drills.

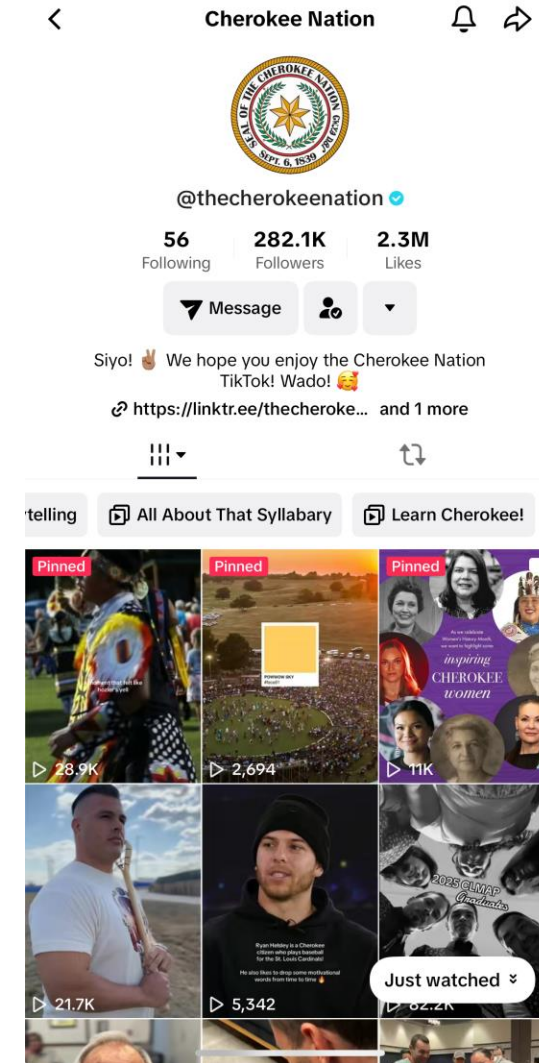
Digital & Media-Based Revitalization-Hawai'i, Ojibwe, Cherokee & Others

Digital Language Revitalization Initiatives:

- Ojibwe People: Developed Ojibwemodaa software to make the language more accessible. They create original language content based on everyday conversations
- Cherokee Nation: Developed language immersion video games and started social media campaigns.

Key Features:

- Social media engagement to increase language visibility.
- Apps and podcasts for self-paced learning.



Community Ownership & Policy Support – Sámi & Welsh

Sámi (Northern Europe):

- Sámi language centers to train community educators and develop new teaching materials
- Sámi media networks to promote language use in news, music, and entertainment.

Welsh:

- Government-supported initiative “Cymraeg 2050” aims for 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050
- Includes language laws, workplace language rights, and public signage in Welsh.

Key Takeaways from Global Efforts

What Works Across Cultures:

- Immersion-Based Learning
- Community Mentorship
- Digital & Media Presence
- Policy & Infrastructure
- Support

The success of these programs shows that language revitalization is possible with sustained effort, creativity, and strong community involvement.





Igamsiqayugvikamsi!
Thank You!



Questions?
Suggestions?

Walrus ivory carving by Malcolm
Oozevaseuk

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