



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

# Sustaining Tribal Languages

### ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Language**

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will understand

- Why it's important to sustain Native languages,
- Ways Tribes work to develop language speakers, and
- the similarities and differences between three Tribes' efforts to maintain their languages.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- Why is it important to sustain Native languages in Oregon?

### REQUIRED TIME

- 35 Minutes

### Overview

Students will learn about the importance of Native languages and Oregon Tribes' efforts to sustain their languages. Students will explore examples from three Tribes by participating in discussions, reading about their language revitalization efforts and completing a graphic organizer.

### Background for Teachers

Tribes in Oregon have many languages and dialects of languages. Language is simultaneously a creator, holder and transmitter of culture and thus critical for Oregon Tribes' futures. While some languages are sleeping, many are thriving, and others are being revitalized. Tribal members have worked to sustain these languages, but there is still more work to be done. More language speakers are needed as languages continue to fall asleep.

For Native students and communities, it is important to recognize that the speaking of Native languages in schools was outlawed in the U.S. The U.S. government also did not



recognize teachers of Native languages and permit them to teach in public schools without a specific degree until 2001.

Each Tribe in Oregon has their own languages, and individual Tribes may have multiple languages or multiple dialects. These languages are important, as they do more than just help people communicate. Languages carry the way people see the world, and their ways of being.

## Considerations for Teachers

### Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students.

- Focus on teaching the Essential Understanding through an analysis of today's Native language revitalization efforts.
- When sharing content with students, address the "why" not just the "what".
- Highlight the strengths and struggles of Oregon's Indigenous peoples today while also acknowledging their history and tradition.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students.

## STANDARDS

### Oregon English Language Arts Standard

- **2.RI.9.** Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.

## KEY WORDS and IDEAS

- **Sustain:** To keep something going or help it stay strong.
- **Tribe:** A group of people who share the same culture, language, and history.
- **Revitalize:** To bring something back to life or make it strong again.
- **Compare:** To look at two things and see how they are different or the same.
- **Contrast:** To find the differences between two or more similar things

## Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work independently and collaboratively to determine how their learning is progressing. Write down what you notice about what students say and do in relation to the success criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a self-assessment. Students can indicate their level of learning in relation to specific success criteria. They can also write out an explanation of why they feel they are at that learning stage.

## Success Criteria

- Students can explain the importance of sustaining Native languages.
- Students can describe two strategies to develop language speakers.
- Students can identify the similarities and differences between two Tribes' efforts to sustain their languages.

**For the following activities, use the slide deck to support your implementation.**

## Opening

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**Time: 10 minutes**

### Step 1:

Review learning outcomes and success criteria with students.

Ask students questions about their understanding of language, for example,

- What is a language?

## MATERIALS

**What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?**

- Slide deck
- Graphic organizer
- Reading
- Student self-assessment

- What languages have you heard?
- Does anyone know any words in another language?
- How many Native languages do you think are spoken in Oregon?

### Step 2:

Say to students, "Did you know there are many kinds of languages all over the world? Many countries have multiple languages. Native American Tribes also have their own languages, and some may have more than one language as part of their history."

Explain the following ideas to students.

- Tribes have and do work hard to sustain, or keep awake and alive, their languages, but it is not always enough.
- Some Native languages are in danger of becoming extinct and have only a few people who know them.
- Native languages have been under attack by laws that have tried keep the language from being taught or spoken.

### Step 3:

Explain to students that today they will learn a bit about three languages from different Tribes in Oregon:

- **Dee-'ni** (pronounced (DAY-u-knee): The Siletz Tribes language
- **Wadatika**: The Burns-Paiute language
- **chinuk wawa**: a shared language created by many Tribes in Oregon to talk with each other, including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Siletz, and other Native Tribes.

### Step 4:

Displaying a map of Oregon, ask students to locate The Confederated Tribes of



Siletz Indians, The Burns Paiute Tribe, and The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.



### Step 5:

Review the key words and ideas for today's lesson.

## Main Activity

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**Time: 20 minutes**

### Step 1:

Provide students with the handout, *Words Help Us Talk to Each Other*, and the graphic organizer included at the end of lesson.

Ask students to turn and talk about the importance of sustaining Native languages to a friend.

### Step 2:

Ask students to read about three Tribes who are working to sustain their languages. As they read, they complete a graphic organizer that compares the actions of the three Tribes. Students will answer the questions:

- What is the Tribe?
- What is the language of the Tribe?
- What is the Tribe doing to keep their language alive?

Below is an example of a completed graphic organizer.

What is the Tribe?	What is the language of the Tribe?	What is the Tribe doing to keep their language alive?
Burns Paiute	Wadatika Neme Yaduan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little kids learn words at school.</li><li>• Families play fun games to learn the words.</li></ul>
Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians	Dee-'ni (Athabaskan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kids learn Dee-'ni in school.</li><li>• The Tribe made books.</li><li>• The Tribe made videos that show how to say Dee-'ni words.</li></ul>

What is the Tribe?	What is the language of the Tribe?	What is the Tribe doing to keep their language alive?
Confederated Tribe of the Grand Ronde	chinuk wawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids learn the language in school</li> <li>• The Tribe made an app to help people learn chinuk wawa</li> <li>• People can watch videos to learn chinuk wawa</li> </ul>

Ask students to turn and talk and explain how the Tribes are taking similar actions, and how they are taking different actions to keep language alive. Potential student responses include:

- All three Tribes teach their language to students in school.
- All the Tribes use the internet and their tribal website to teach language.
- The Burns Paiute Tribe is the only tribe to use fun games to learn words.
- The Confederated Tribe of the Grand Ronde is the only Tribe that uses an app for people to learn their language.

## Closing

**Time: 5 minutes**

### Step 1:

Ask students to turn and talk and explain why it is important to keep languages like Dee-'ni and Wadatika Neme Yaduan alive. Possible responses include:

- Languages help people communicate.
- Languages help people describe and show their traditions and ways of life.

Ask students to also share with one another two strategies Tribes are using to develop language speakers.

Explain that languages like English are taught in schools for these very reasons: to help people communicate, describe their world, and describe their ways of being. Yet, for many years, Native languages were made illegal to learn in school, and Native young people were punished for speaking these languages in schools. This is why it is so







important to learn about these languages and to support Native leaders to keep these languages alive.

### **Step 2:**

Have students do the self-assessment based on the Success Criteria. Go over the Success Criteria as needed.

### **Additional Resources:**

K-1 lesson, [Introduction to Dee-ni Wee-ya'](#), by the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians

### **Student Text Sources:**

- <https://burnspaiute-nsn.gov/departments/culture-heritage/language-nobi/>
- <https://ctsi.nsn.us/heritage/language/>
- <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/videos.php>



## Handout: Words Help Us Talk to Each Other

People use words to share what they think and feel. We can tell stories and say important things like, "thank you" with words. Long ago, people in Oregon spoke many different words. Now, not all of these old words are still used. Oregon Tribes are working hard to save these words.

The Siletz Indians want to save their **Dee-'ni** words. Dee-'ni is very old. At school, kids learn Dee-'ni. The Tribe made books to help students learn the words. They also made videos that show how to say Dee-'ni words.

The Burns Paiute Tribe is saving their **Wadatika Neme Yaduan** words too. These words help them remember who they are. Little kids learn these words at school. Families play fun games to learn the words too.

**chinuk wawa** is a set of words many Oregon Tribes used to say when they were shopping. The Grand Ronde Tribe wants to keep chinuk wawa alive. Kids go to a school to learn it. The Tribe made an app to help people learn chinuk wawa. You can watch videos to learn chinuk wawa too.



## Handout: Graphic Organizer

Name:



What is the Tribe?	What is the language of the Tribe?	What is the Tribe doing to keep their language alive?



## Student Self-Assessment

**Name:**

**Directions:** Read the lesson success criteria in the first column. Then decide, can I do this now or not yet. If you chose Not Yet, share one thing you can do as a next step. If you chose Yes, share what you did well.

Success Criteria	Not Yet	Yes
		
I can explain the importance of sustaining Native languages.		
I can describe strategies to develop language speakers.		
I can compare two tribes' efforts to sustain their languages.		



