

The use of copyrighted materials in all formats, including the creation, online delivery, and use of digital copies of copyrighted materials, must be in compliance with U.S. Copyright Law (<http://www.copyright.gov/title17/>). Materials may not be reproduced in any form without

Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 8: 365–368, 2009
Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
ISSN: 1534-8458 print / 1532-7701 online
DOI: 10.1080/15348450903305130



© Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
This article is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

of the boarding school era are evident, as with many of our neighbors “outside.” As Hopi people state (see Nicholas, 2009 [this issue]), “We are now interjecting English into our Hopi. Therefore, we are speaking a truly different language.” Indigenous Alaskans are facing a similar dilemma. More and more, our heritage languages lie in the minds and hearts of the Elders, and, in a very few cases, in smaller communities where economic development such as harvesting salmon and other natural resources seems absent—where there is no chance of drilling for oil, for example, the heritage language is more vibrant.

Nicholas addresses a theme around which many of the articles in this issue revolve: What role does the Hopi language assume in how Hopi youth define and assert their personal and

leave; they stayed to live with their own families. This created a mixed bag of emotions for parents and adolescents. No longer were children leaving home; they were staying home where they belonged. Yet adolescents also no longer had a sense of independence or peer contact with students from other Alaskan villages. Many of these adolescents had been in boarding schools since they were 6 or 7 years old. In most cases they'd lost their ability to speak the heritage language, although they could "get by" with simple commands (Wyman, this issue). At this point, it was more common for adolescents to communicate in English, creating a challenge for many Yup'ik parents, as well as the grandparents and Elders in the community.

While this was going on at home, the new school districts contracted new teachers, most of whom had never been to rural Alaska. The new teachers began their teaching in a new environment, with children of people about whom they had very little knowledge. Most of the new teachers had not had any training in teaching students of Indigenous heritage, or in working with students who had learned to survive in hostile academic institutions. The teachers struggled to find an adequate language to teach. From my own personal observation, the new teachers of the mid-1970s were frustrated because they wanted to teach, but felt they couldn't because of tensions from home and from the students. In most cases they felt inadequate to handle the trials of teaching in rural Alaska.

Accommodating students and parents by creating small high schools in larger villages of Alaska created many obstacles. First of all, at boarding school, the adolescent had professionals or paraprofessionals who provided guidance or discipline when needed. In the fall of 1975, when the students didn't leave for boarding school, the issues that came with the culture of adolescents became quickly apparent, yet parents didn't know how to accommodate them. There quickly grew a distance between parent and adolescent. "How can I talk with my child? I don't understand him/her. I don't know what to say to make him/her understand I'm trying to help, and, at the same time, I'm not able to communicate with him/her because he/she only speaks English, and I don't."

The new teachers faced their own predicaments: "Not only am I a new teacher in the commu-

NOW WHAT?

The articles in this issue are compelling. They tell of struggles similar to the situations in rural Alaska when the educational system attempted to provide “adequate” education for Indigenous students. What binds these articles is the fact that the authors have firsthand knowledge of the related challenges they continue to see amongst Indigenous youth, and in some cases, the stories are firsthand experiences.

What these articles have provided is a voice for the Indigenous youth vis-à-vis academics—most of us who are Indigenous to our own communities and some of us who are products of the historical educational traumas of the 1900s. The authors of this issue have created a language, a profound one at that, revealing the struggles that our youth had and continue to face, as we attempt to move forward toward positive change. In this issue, the voices of Indigenous youth are heard in a way that would not have been possible in earlier years of the academy. Today we have educational leaders—professors at universities Indigenous to the cultures of their homelands—beginning to address critically the silent voices of the youth in our communities and creating stories that reveal their needs and explore how we should prepare ourselves to assist in educating youth for a stronger tomorrow.

Language and cultural shift is evident—but yet, nothing on the inside changes among Indigenous peoples and youth. Justin (Nicholas, 2009 [this issue]) eloquently expresses the identity that resonates among Indigenous youth:

Since you’re a Hopi [by birthright], you’re brought

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Associates and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv

[Redacted]

[Redacted]