Equity in language programs: Revitalizing indigenous languages in secondary school in Anchorage, Alaska

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EQUITY IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

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This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Dissertation Abstract

"Wherever there is a situation of domination and subordination between any two groups, whatever their color or religion, this will be reflected in the language relationship: one language dominating the other." —wa Thiong'o (2011, p. 244)

Indigenous language and culture education efforts in Anchorage, Alaska are limited by omissions in the public school curriculum. One of the many reasons for this is that policy makers believe there is not sufficient demand for Alaska Native languages in public schools. Further there is a perceived lack of language teacher-leaders and experts to build programs for Alaska Native language instruction. This study used a quantitative survey of 80 high school students, Native and non-Native, to understand actual student’s interest in Indigenous languages and their perceptions of the benefits in knowing an Alaskan language. The study also did a qualitative analysis of data from interviews from seven Indigenous language expert participants to explore who is doing revitalization work, understand their perspectives, and gather their recommendations for culturally responsive program format and content.

Quantitative data analysis from the 80 student surveys revealed; 1) both Native and non-Native students have a strong interest in Alaska Native language programs and 2) most students are unaware of the multiple cultural, academic, and employment benefits associated with Alaskan language study. The qualitative data from the Indigenous language experts generated three key findings: 1) The arts are foundational for indigenous curriculum, 2) Technology must be incorporated for language revitalization, and 3) Indigenous students require language and culture education for their formation of identity, pride, and world views. The study also confirmed that there is a strong community of language experts and teacher-leaders supporting Indigenous language revitalization work in Alaska, Oklahoma, and around the rest of the world.
Tribal Critical Theory explains how the contemporary language and culture education structure in Anchorage, Alaska reflects the colonization goals of status quo in Euro-centric language programs, ongoing erasure of Native languages, and a hegemonic perspective on the value of Native languages. Many of Alaska’s Native languages and cultures are now in jeopardy of extinction; timing is crucial for language preservation and revitalization. Successful language revitalization models from places like Canada, Hawaii, and New Zealand offer language and culture program roadmaps for Anchorage public schools.
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# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
- Background and Need
- The Purpose of the Study
- Research Questions
- Theoretical Framework
- Limitations of the Study
- Ethical Considerations
- Significance of the Study
- Background, Relationship and Positionality
- Definition of Terms
- Summary

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
- Theories on Language Assimilation and Revitalization
  - LangCrit: Critical Language and Race Theory
  - Tribal Critical Race Theory
- Settler Colonial History of Language Erasure in North America
- Indigenous Education, Language Planning and Models of Indigenous Language Programs
  - Indigenous Language Revitalization in North America
  - Language Planning and Policy
- Summary

## CHAPTER III: METHODS
- Research Setting
- Participant Overview
- Mixed Methods Methodology

### PART I: QUANTITATIVE APPROACH
- High School Student Participants
- Recruitment and Data Collection
- Measures
  - Survey
  - *Survey Procedures*
- Procedures and Methodology
- Quantitative Data Analysis

### PART II: QUALITATIVE APPROACH
- Participants: Introducing The Experts
  - Suzy
  - Liza
  - Peter
  - Rina
  - Sheri
  - Ward
  - Landon
- Data Collection
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS
Overview 88

PART II: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS
Student Subgroups 90
Interest in Alaska Native languages 94
Benefits and Interest 98
Analysis and Theoretical Connections 100

PART II: QUALITATIVE RESULTS
The Arts as Sacred Ancestral Ways of Knowing in Indigenous Language Education 103
Dance is Indigenized Curriculum 104
Song is Indigenized Curriculum 107
Storytelling is Indigenized Curriculum 110
Braiding Technology into Indigenous Language Education 112
Cultural Identity, Worldviews and Indigenous Languages 118
Discussion and Theoretical Connections 120
Discussion of Findings on The Arts as Sacred Ways of Knowing 122
Discussion of Findings on Technology and Language Revitalization 125
Discussion of Findings on Language, Cultural Identity, and Worldview 126

Summary and Conclusions 130

CHAPTER V: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION
Summary of the Study 133
Summary of the Findings and Results 136
Discussion Question #1: Is There High School Student Interest? 136
Discussion Question #2: What do the Language Experts Recommend? 138
Limitations 139
Conclusion and Implications 140
Recommendations 142
For K-12 School Districts, Administrators, Teachers 142
For Policymakers 143
Community and University Leaders 144
The University of Alaska and Alaska Pacific University 144
Future Research and Practice 145
Conclusion 146

REFERENCES 148
Appendix A: Student Survey 153
Appendix B: Indigenous Language Revitalization Experts 157
Appendix C Map 159
  Map of Alaska Native Languages 159
CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The United Nations dubbed 2019 as *The Year of Indigenous Languages* to increase understanding of the risks of language and culture loss (DESA, 2019). International organizations, linguists, and governments now recognize the dire circumstances of continued Indigenous language and culture erasure. The 2019 United Nations resolution is grounded on the awareness that language diversity is critical in shaping relationships between memory, identity formation, and establishing historical records. Regrettably, irreplaceable languages have already been made extinct. According to the United Nations, today there are around seven thousand languages spoken worldwide; of these, nearly twenty-seven hundred are endangered. Almost forty percent of the world’s languages are in jeopardy (DESA, 2019). International scholars, linguists, and human rights activists are working to preserve and revitalize languages and cultures in order to reduce the extinction, but time is running out for many of the last speakers of Indigenous languages. In North America as in the rest of the world, as Krauss (1998) warns, the issue is compounded by a denial of the problem (p.9).

In the United States, as McCarty (2015) writes, federal government policies like the 1819 Civilization Fund Act are particularly culpable for Indigenous language decimation (p.5). The boarding school projects advanced settler colonial goals of cultural assimilation through deliberate and organized language erasure, English-only policies, and excruciatingly harsh punishments for children in noncompliance at the schools. In addition to boarding school pressures on Indigenous children to assimilate, other organizations, churches, and government bodies collaborated with the schools to strip Native Americans of their linguistic and cultural rights (DeJong, 1993). The tenacious roots of settler colonialism in North America and the early stages of language erasure are evident in the following statements from the United States’ Commissioner of Indian Affairs: "Schools should be established, which children should be
required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted” (Atkins, 1887). A grim picture emerges of a young nation bent on systematically destroying the cultures and languages of Indigenous populations by instilling exclusively Judeo-Christian values in Native communities and practicing draconian mandatory English-only boarding schools.

Although Indigenous language erasure and cultural assimilation projects in North America began over 500 years ago with settler colonialism, disenfranchisement and silencing of Indigenous voices persists (McCarty et al., 2015). Key examples of cultural and academic losses are seen today in the lack of public-school language programs in local Indigenous languages. Most Indigenous students in the United States have no opportunity to formally study any subject, much less their own languages and cultures, in a program with culturally relevant curriculum or Indigenous languages. The lack of Indigenous language courses evidences structural biases and discriminatory practices in public schools that fail to place Indigenous language courses on par with European language classes in the course schedules. This is a complex inequity that begins with a simple, yet little-acknowledged, understanding that Indigenous languages are not foreign languages; Indigenous languages are local languages, fundamental to the formation of identity and culture, yet “rapidly eroding” (Jacob et al., 2015, p.56).

When the U.N., in 2007, supported the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People “to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages oral traditions and philosophies, writing systems, and literatures” (McCarty et al., 2018, p.160), a foundation emerged for international recognition of a profound right to, and importance of, language and cultural reclamation (UN General Assembly, 2007). Yet in North America, this right is still not upheld for Indigenous languages. However, there is public awareness of, and financial
support for, the academic capital gained by learning European languages and languages that are economically beneficial; districts systematically offer languages that align with capitalistic goals rather than linguistic equity (McCarty et al., 2019). The absence of Indigenous languages in public schools is firmly rooted in the historic elimination of Indigenous languages and cultures to achieve settler colonialism’s land acquisition goals. Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2009) writes that this language destruction is a killing, a linguicide. refers to this as linguicide “conscious acts of language liquidation”; its physical counterpart is “genocide” (p.17).

While most activists hold that schools have a responsibility to address the historical trauma and language erasure, “schools not only have a role to play in Indigenous language reclamation, they bear a responsibility in this regard” (McCarty et al., 2015), there are those who question the capacity of Western educational institutions to do the work. The ability of Western-model schools to do the job has been a concern for many critical language activists and Indigenous scholars: “What remains at issue is whether or how schools might be efficacious sites for language reclamation” (Teresa L. McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Language education issues are fundamentally racist, says Brayboy (2005), who developed Tribal Race Critical Theory. He further questions the willingness of the U.S. government to promote Indigenous culture and values given the historical records, “While trust, responsibility and sovereignty were supposed to be the guiding principles of Indian education, ‘appropriate’ education was that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo Values or ways of communication” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 436).

Most U.S. public schools do not rectify this injustice in their language programs. Yet Indigenous values of identity, self-worth, and living in community can be realized through language revitalization and preservation programs. Some educational institutions are beginning to support Indigenous language programs and are encouraged to do so in ways that are culturally responsive. A refusal of language assimilation practices, whether overt or covert, is
what Brayboy (2005) advocates for in establishing the critical framework, TribalCrit which he writes “TribalCrit explicitly rejects the call for assimilation in educational institutions for American Indian students” (p.437). McCarty expands the conversation to describe that although much assimilation has occurred, there is a moral imperative to educate children in the language of their culture and in the culture of their language, Although many Native American languages are no longer acquired as first languages by children, “they are nonetheless languages of heritage, affinity and identity, and . . . can and should be considered mother tongues” (McCarty & Littlebear, 2013, p. xxiv).

**Geographic Context: Anchorage, Alaska**

Indigenous language revitalization work in Anchorage, Alaska faces many problems and challenges, including the fundamental current omissions from the Anchorage School District’s language curriculum; adolescents in their secondary public-school years cannot choose to study an Indigenous language in high school. This deficit and inequity in Indigenous language programs perpetuates settler colonial projects of language loss, cultural assimilation, and the marginalization of Indigenous communities. The lack of Indigenous languages offered in Anchorage’s public schools perpetuates an inequity of opportunity, reflecting the same blindness and denial to the problem that Krauss (1998) writes of in his analyses of language loss. Where one small grant-funded elementary school program exists, it lacks the economic stability and status as of the state-funded European and economically tagged languages of French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Chinese, American Sign Language, and Russian.

In Anchorage, Alaska, language programs in general are already a high priority for public schools. The school district’s extensive work in language and culture programs is nationally recognized for its numerous language offerings (ACTFL, 2020). The Anchorage School District, under the direction of Landon, has been a transformative leader in immersion and traditional
language education programs (known in Alaska as “elective” classes and programs). This is in large part because of seven robust K-12 immersion programs and six traditional-format elective language programs (ASD World Languages, 2020). Yet, despite the noted depth in language programs, Indigenous languages of the region do not have the same status as the Eurocentric languages in the schools. There is only one Indigenous language, Yup’ik, taught in an elementary school program, and it is a grant-dependent federally funded program. The district language coordinator must apply for the grant and await approval every three years. This is different from the other languages that are taught.

The city of Anchorage is situated in South-Central Alaska on the ancestral ground of the Dena’ina land. It is predominantly home to those of Yup’ik, Athabaskan, and Aleut heritage, along with a number of other Indigenous language speakers. The Anchorage School District has seven Immersion Language programs which extend through high school but must be entered in kindergarten or early elementary years through an opt-in parent-driven lottery. The number of students who wish to enroll in these programs each year is much higher than the number of spaces or slots. The Anchorage School District’s solution to the demand is a blind lottery system that selects interested students’ names from computer-generated lists. These are public school programs, and fairness is paramount.

Yup’ik is one of the 20 Alaskan Indigenous languages and is the most widely spoken Indigenous language in the state. Although Anchorage is on the ancestral lands of the Dena’ina people, Anchorage School District chose to teach Yup’ik in its immersion program for several reasons, including the following: (1) there are non-profit Alaska Native corporate sponsors for two feeder pre-schools in Yup’ik, (2) there are currently licensed teachers, and (3) instructional materials are already available from Western Alaskan areas that are willing to share resources (Locke, 2020). Additionally, according to the State of Alaska, Yup’ik is the Indigenous language
spoken by the greatest number of people in Alaska (Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development’s Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council on Languages, 2019).

The issue is that other than one small elementary school program, Alaska Native language programs are still missing from secondary schools in Alaska’s largest urban center, Anchorage. There are no Indigenous language programs in any of Anchorage’s high schools. Though non-Indigenous classes of Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Russian, American Sign Language and Japanese are readily available for students depending upon the student’s home school’s location. This exposes a limited access to students who are interested in Indigenous language learning. There is one fledgling immersion elementary program and a few liminal spaces outside the school district for Indigenous language learning.

Immersion programs promote very important language and community goals and should be supported, but they are only one piece of a complex language revitalization project (Cantoni, 1996). Immersion programs offer access to the youngest learners but do not offer increased entry points to older students; high school electives can offer multiple entry points, can increase the numbers of Indigenous language learners, and can build speakers. These older-beginner speakers, alongside the future immersion speakers, will undoubtedly support language preservation and revitalization efforts. While immersion programs serve a valuable purpose, it is also worth recognizing the model’s serious limitations to accessibility, among them an undeniably high-impact reliance on word-of-mouth advertising, a lottery system, and burdensome transportation requirements restrict the pool of candidates. The immersion classes are generally made up of more economically privileged and knowledgeable families with children in their early years who can still begin Yup’ik in Anchorage’s only elementary program (CITCI, 2019).
In any given immersion program, two problematic issues of equitable program access emerge beginning in the kindergarten year. The issues are that the initial enrollment classes of most language programs demonstrate (1) low percentages of minority students and (2) a lack of additional entry points for students who wish to take advantage of language immersion programs after the kindergarten years (ASD World Languages, 2020). The system results in exclusive enrollment that privileges certain children and reflects the selection biases of a blind lottery skewed towards upper middle-class white parenting values, habits, and behaviors that continue to support Euro-centric language education. In this era of United Nations-endorsed Indigenous language revitalization, high schools are obligated to develop and offer more effective progress with a broader net of programs.

The University of Alaska in Fairbanks operates the Alaska Native Language Center which records and researches the twenty remaining Alaskan languages; Central Yup’ik speakers are the most numerous of all languages in the state (UAF ANLC Languages, 2019). In addition, Anchorage has become a major hub for employment and education and thus draws Alaska Native folks in from the villages, in 2010 there were around 30,000 Yup’ik citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). As of 2020, there are no high school programs for students to continue the elementary Yup’ik studies program. Nor are there any elective classes for high school students to begin learning the Yup’ik language. This system perpetuates the status quo of European language education and provides advantages to students of those languages while further marginalizing Indigenous students.

As a first step in establishing accessible Native language programs for all students in the Anchorage School District, the elementary Yup’ik immersion program was very well received by the community and parents (CITCI, 2019). The Yup’ik immersion program is the most recent addition to the numerous immersion language schools in Anchorage that were initiated over 20
years ago starting with a Japanese Immersion program. Yup’ik immersion is the seventh in the rollout of language immersion programs and the first in the district’s support for Alaska’s Indigenous languages. The format and model of instruction in the Yup’ik immersion program is popular and successful. It is also selective through a lottery and supports just 50 kindergarten students, who may reside outside the neighborhood district and therefore must provide their own transportation. While this is an excellent program, there are no traditional-format, open access, language programs providing Indigenous Language and Culture classes for any of the district’s other 8000 world language students (ASD World Languages, 2020). The notion of “open access” in this context means a language program offered with fair and equal access to public transportation, open entry for student’s grade levels ninth to twelfth, and unrestricted by program requirements for family participation. These nonrestrictive policies are not available for the Yup’ik immersion program, but are offered in the French, Spanish, German, Japanese high school programs. In short, there are economic barriers to Indigenous immersion programs that do not equally burden Eurocentric and Japanese or Chinese language classes.

The current imbalance between the educational support and accessibility given to European languages classes and Indigenous languages, is reflected in the number of courses offered, accessibility, and community or family involvement demands. A key example of this is the expectation that students in the immersion Yup’ik program provide their own transportation as the principal Darrell Berntsen explains in the Cook Inlet Tribal Council’s interview: “A lot of our parents don’t drive, so that provides a huge barrier. Whereas with other immersion programs, most of those parents are able to drive their kids to school” (CITCI, 2019). This economic and access-related inequality in Indigenous programs exacerbates the challenges for Indigenous communities to revitalize their languages. Indigenous language programs demand inclusivity of many socioeconomic groups. Additionally, the stakes are much higher for
Indigenous languages than for European languages. A funding reduction in a European language program will not cause the erasure of that language. Given the small numbers of remaining speakers, failing to support Indigenous languages programs will accelerate their demise.

The challenge of sustaining and revitalizing Alaskan languages is further complicated by Alaska’s vast geography and enormous cultural, political and demographic differences between the rural, or bush areas and the urban areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. The population of Alaska is approximately 730,000. Of these residents, 15-18% are Indigenous (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The western, northern, and southeastern rural areas are typically populated by 78-100% Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, the urban centers are home to between 10% and 20% Indigenous residents; the city of Anchorage is home to nearly 30,000 people who identify as Alaska Natives or American Indian and there are currently about 4300 Alaska Native students in the Anchorage School District (ASD Overview, 2019). These students represent 9% of the district’s student population. Linguistically and culturally, Indigenous Alaska faces the concerning reality that of the twenty Indigenous languages still in use in Alaska, only two are still transmitted as child languages (Krauss, 2015). Yup’ik is one of those two.

**Background and Need**

International organizations, linguists and governments have recently begun to recognize the damage and loss inherent in the disappearances of thousands of Indigenous languages. For many scholars and language activists, language loss is a matter of international concern. In Alaska, this problem is pressing even as Native languages become increasingly endangered, secondary schools still lack Native language programs, even in Alaska’s largest well-resourced urban centers like Anchorage. There are no Indigenous language programs in any of Anchorage's high schools, while classes of non-Indigenous languages like Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese are readily available for students contingent upon the school's zoning.
Students interested in Indigenous language learning are limited to one immersion elementary program and liminal spaces outside the school district such as museums, Native corporation programs and homes where languages are spoken. The very fortunate students periodically go to their villages to learn languages and culture as well. Immersion programs promote important language and community goals and should be supported, but they are only one piece of a complex language revitalization project (Cantoni, 1996). Immersion programs offer access to the youngest learners but do not offer increased entry points to older students; high school electives can offer multiple entry points, can increase the numbers of Indigenous language learners, and can build speakers. These older-beginner speakers, alongside the future immersion speakers, will undoubtedly support language preservation and revitalization efforts. While immersion programs serve a valuable purpose, it is also worth recognizing the model’s limitations to accessibility, among them an undeniably high-impact reliance on word-of-mouth advertising, a lottery system, and burdensome transportation requirements restrict the pool of candidates. The immersion classes are generally made up of more economically privileged families knowledgeable about the Anchorage School District with children in their early years who can still begin Yup’ik in Anchorage’s only elementary program (CITCI, 2019). These two issues of access emerge beginning in the kindergarten year of an immersion program. Initial enrollment classes demonstrate (1) shamefully low percentages of minority students in existing immersion language programs and (2) a lack of additional entry points for students who wish to take advantage of rigorous language-focused programs after the kindergarten years (ASD World Languages, 2020). The system results in exclusive enrollment that privileges too few children and reflects the selection biases of a blind lottery skewed towards upper middle-class White parenting values, habits, and behaviors that continue to support Euro-centric language education. Following the United Nations’ call for Indigenous language revitalization at every
level, high schools must be obligated to develop and offer more effective progress in the field of Indigenous language revitalization through a broader net of programs.

Language planners and educators understand that there are strengths and weaknesses in both immersion programs and traditional programs for language acquisition and proficiency. There are roles for traditional programs in cultural education such as expanding the older learner numbers and in capturing non-Indigenous learners. Castagno and Brayboy (founder of Tribal Critical Theory) in their work on culturally responsive programs, write that there are more culturally responsive options than immersion alone: “We have focused on programs that integrated culture, broadly speaking, and omitted programs that are more focused on language issues and bilingual or language immersion models” (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p.979). This is a key point supporting the addition of non-immersion language work in revitalization in secondary programs and it would expand the community of speakers. Both types of education are needed for the important goal of language preservation.

However, Anchorage’s immersion lotteries are inherently limited. The lottery selection process, inaccessibility of transportation, funding, and limited culturally and linguistically relevant curricula all contribute to the problem of developing more speakers. In considering how to multiply the numbers of speakers of Indigenous languages, high school programs can serve to fill in gaps and develop a larger speaking community. High school program entry points allow both primary and secondary students to be enrolled simultaneously in Alaska Native language programs. Siblings of all grade levels would be able to communicate and share the journey of language acquisition. A secondary Indigenous program will undoubtedly support language preservation and revitalization efforts in Anchorage, as seen successfully in Hawaiian language programs (Beyer, 2018) and in New Zealand (Smith, 2012). Immersion programs serve a valuable purpose and are very effective at promoting language acquisition in young children,
but the word-of-mouth advertising, lottery selection process, and burdensome transportation requirements restrict the pool of candidates to mostly privileged families already knowledgeable about the Anchorage School District and its offerings beyond neighborhood schools. Secondary Yup’ik programs would begin to address this disparity of opportunity, offering later entry to academic language studies for students, without the selection bias of a parent-driven lottery. Regular language education programs in public high schools are open access to all socioeconomic groups. These programs are open from the ninth through twelfth grade for all levels. Students could begin Yup’ik studies at level 1 at any point throughout their high school years. Some limitations of elementary immersion language programs, including restricted entry points and reliance on parent participation in transportation, would not apply to regular education secondary students.

The contemporary language education structure in Anchorage reflects the colonization goals of status quo in Euro-centric language programs, the erasure and assimilation of Native languages, and a hegemonic perspective on the value of Native Languages. Dr. Grande (2004) describes the historic U.S. education agenda as “imperialistic purposes were reflected in curriculum that included teaching allegiance to the U.S. government exterminating the use of Native languages and destroying Indian customs, particularly Native religions” (p. xx). Relative to dominant Western European and other economically tagged languages, Native languages are also viewed as economically worthless. This is a highly problematic neoliberal viewpoint that is empirically unfounded, particularly in the context of the Alaska Native corporation boom in which Alaska Native corporations have become some of the most prominent and resource-rich employers operating in the state of Alaska (Williams, 2020).

Moreover, the current value system displays a massive and frankly shocking blind spot: the business climate in the state of Alaska is teeming with Alaska Native business economic
opportunities. From a capitalist perspective and as a persuasive argument for those in power who still inhabit the settler colonial mindset, Native languages in the school system would align well with neoliberal goals of community economic development and job readiness in the state of Alaska, while also serving the critical aim of decolonizing of Indigenous language education and culture education. Anchorage’s business and education communities ought to support incorporating traditional elective format Yup’ik, Athabaskan or Aleut courses as a standard part of the curriculum in Anchorage’s public education system; this framework provides a potential persuasive angle for introducing the concept to decision-makers. More to the heart of the language matter are the comments by Michael Krauss, “…documenting (preservation of) endangered languages emanates from an awareness of the innate value of the world’s diversity of languages (Krauss, 1992). His work in Alaska on Indigenous languages honors the inherent worth and deep value in language preservation and revitalization that might be missed by neoliberal education policy makers, where the possibility of preparing students for work still holds a powerful sway and will not go unnoticed.

During the initial period of settler colonization, the United States government sought to assimilate Indigenous people; to accomplish this goal, the government launched violent campaigns for language erasure of Native American and Alaska Native languages (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). From the 1800’s to the late 1900’s the U.S. government, through churches, public schools and local governments, enacted assimilation policies that were designed to erase Indigenous languages and assimilate or destroy Indigenous cultures (Barnhardt, 2001). “Civilizing” policies like the 1819 Civilization Funds Act decimated Indigenous languages and created cultural identity struggles for American Indians and Alaska Native peoples (Grande, 2015). As a result, Indigenous languages in the Alaska Native community are either
dying or already gone and there are few courses to revitalize Indigenous languages currently in Anchorage’s high schools.

At that time the education policies of assimilation of language and culture, erasure of Indigenous culture, emerged powerfully in Alaska, were established and supported by the government. From that point until the 1970’s, Alaska Native families suffered language and culture loss through the draconian BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) education program that forced Alaska Native children to attend assimilation driven boarding schools. The schools were often far from the children’s homes and devoid of relevant Indigenous language and culture education (Krauss, 1998). Language extinction, suppression, and shaming policies were prevalent in the schools. The last forced school closed in the 1970s.

Since that time, there has not been a just and restorative measure to publicly fund revitalization of languages through traditional and immersion programs of Indigenous language and culture in public education for urban children. One pilot Yup’ik immersion program is funded contingent upon federal grants. This is a highly sought-after program but is limited to 50 students who enter in the early years of the program. Students in secondary programs have no opportunity to learn Indigenous languages in public schools.

Anchorage’s problems with linguistic inequality for Indigenous languages in funding, inaccessibility, and little culturally relevant curriculum are common among colonized Indigenous communities. These problems can be understood as a result of ongoing settler colonialism and capitalistic resource allocation. There are currently very successful models in places like Canada, New Zealand and Hawaii with language nests, immersion programs and liminal space language teaching. The majority of the programs in public schools are immersion. However, immersion models in Anchorage require self-transportation and very early entry. These programs attract economically successful families with resources and education. An additional format that can
create a larger foundation for language revitalization is the student-selected traditional high school format. There is very little literature for Indigenous language learning programs within a traditional school format. This gap in the literature will be looked at in this study.

Students deserve language and culture classes that are relevant in their schools. Parents, educators, and administrators know that colleges and postsecondary institutions look favorably on—and sometimes even require—several years of World Language classes for admission. Students too are aware that these courses serve as academic capital to gain entry to universities, so interviewing students about their perceptions around the demand for Indigenous languages is critical to understanding the role these courses will play in building opportunity and choice for students. There are around 48,000 students in the Anchorage School District who all make choices during middle school and high school about which languages they want to learn. Among these students, 7% are Alaska Native children. Unlike the White students, Alaska Native students in an urban setting culturally and geographically distant from rural villages do not have access to any culturally relevant curriculum that includes language study. The interests of Alaska Native and White students differ with respect to desired language courses. The district answers the question of “Why do we not already offer languages that are responsive to Indigenous students?” with the unfounded statement that “There is no demand.” In fact, demand is not heard because the marginalized voices are soft or silenced. Parents of Indigenous children do not often advocate for programs the way White privileged parents do. This exacerbates social reproduction and White academic capital hoarding (Bourdieu, 2002). Alaska passed a bill in 1998 designating English as the official state language. Finally, in 2014, this was revised to include 20 surviving Alaskan Indigenous languages, many of which have only a few Elders who speak them. The state of endangered and disappearing Alaskan Languages is a result of settler colonial policies that violated human rights of Alaska Native peoples, social and
cultural capital hoarding and replication by the dominant culture, intensified by racist attitudes which denigrated Alaska Native culture and punished those who would keep it alive.

There is one immersion format program that is funded contingent upon three-year federal grants that were awarded in 2018. The enrollment happens in the first few years of schooling and while this is a strong research proven program format in Hawaii which has analogous language concerns, immersion is open to a limited number of younger aged students and is vulnerable to the whims of politics that funds it (Beyer, 2018). This is an urban issue in particular. Many rural places in Alaska have grandparents and schools with access to language and culture instruction in a variety of formats. Though the region of Anchorage was historically of the Dena’ina land and people, today the majority of Anchorage’s Alaska Native students are of Yup’ik origin as families have migrated to the city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) there are 19,780 Yup’ik speakers. Anchorage School District’s director notes, “Alaska officially recognized 20 official languages, even though there are over 100 languages (variations and dialects) in the state, so selecting Yup’ik was somewhat controversial. However, Yup’ik is the most prevalent Alaskan language in terms of number of speakers, quantity of printed and published materials, and teachers (Locke, 2019). The Yup’ik language is positioned for expansion into secondary schools in a format of a traditional elective to support older students.

As for other curricular offerings, the Anchorage School District’s Indian Education Department, has a required Alaska Studies course for all secondary students. However, the class is situated in social studies departments rather than within the language and culture departments that could do the program justice. Nor is the local University’s Native Studies department incorporated in the class. There is room and need for a Language and Culture class delivered in an oral tradition format. This is pedagogically in keeping with both best-practice second language acquisition theory, (Krashen 2006) and Alaska Native storytelling traditions: “In
this way, we generated stories together, everyone had some input” (Hermes, Bang and Marin, 2012).

The potential of offering elective courses in Native languages in secondary schools in the Anchorage School District invites both optimism and concern. The current language programs in rural Alaska, and the recent Yup’ik Immersion project in Anchorage, are funded from federal grants; $1.3 million was given for 3 years in the case of the Anchorage Immersion Program and Alaska Native corporations funded many of the rural programs. There is little state funding at the present for new programs; given Alaska’s dependence on the price of oil and its inconsistent per barrel price, it is unlikely that this will change or stabilize. Considering the instability of the funding structure and the difficulty of introducing new initiatives, one potential solution is structuring the outlined course offerings in Alaskan language and culture under the umbrella of the already existing Alaska Studies program. However, no matter the funding structure, it is clear that the impetus for language preservation has been coming from the Alaska Native community, University of Alaska and other academic language scholars, and educators. It must continue in this way. The role of the Native community must continue to be dominant and centralized to the program’s creation and implementation for the change efforts to be successful (McCarty, 2008).

The Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand which models of high school Indigenous language instruction are wanted and would best serve the Anchorage community language revitalization efforts. The study seeks to understand the current community demand for an Alaska Native language program at the high school. In doing this, the research can contribute to the gap in the literature on Indigenous language education program formats, specifically traditional-elective courses and immersion models, and explore equity in language education in order to advocate
for secondary language and culture programs that are culturally relevant and active in language preservation and revitalization. The study will look to the Indigenous language teacher-leaders in the state, to understand the issues in delivering high school Yup’ik language classes.

As noted above, despite recent policy developments that led to an improving political climate for Alaska Native language education, (Grande, 2014), there currently are no Indigenous second language courses for high school students. However, several successful models in other parts of Alaska, around the country and the globe may guide the creation of such courses which will begin to offer pedagogically relevant, decolonizing language programs. The academic opportunities are supplementary to, not in lieu of, current immersion programs, which are the gold standard but are limited to kindergarten entry and restrict second language learning from high school students, both Native and non-Native. Non-Native students are also an important alliance against continued Alaska Native racism and hegemony and can be educated through language and culture to support decolonization efforts. Revitalizing indigenous languages in Anchorage, Alaska, is not merely about acquiring a second language, but further centering indigenous culture and identity: “Understood in this light, Indigenous language revitalization is concerned not only with reclaiming the Native language as a gift but with reasserting linguistic self-determination as an inherent human right” (McCarty, Romero, Zepeda, 2006).

The starting point for this project is examining the work that is already in place in rural Alaskan immersion and traditional programs, Anchorage’s Yup’ik immersion school, and the programs in New Zealand and Hawaii to seek several key elements that foster Indigenous language revitalization. These programs are designed around incorporating the resources of the community, the elders and leaders, traditional ways of understanding and interacting with both the land and the environment, storytelling as a foundation for transferring history, and an emphasis on Indigenous values. In looking at opportunities for second language high school
programs and the Indigenous ways of knowing that are necessary if a curriculum is to be responsive to the goal of language and cultural preservation and revitalization, I turn to the scholars Teresa McCarty, Sandy Grande and Michael Krauss to understand my study and its implications for how to shape a second language curriculum for high school students in Alaskan urban centers like Anchorage.

Though the historical settler colonialism and deculturalization federal boarding school-education policies (Grande, 2014) decimated the language and foundation of many of Alaska’s Indigenous languages, recent federal policies promote an improved political environment for language revitalization. “In the last 30 years, these policies and practices have been replaced by ones intended to encourage Indigenous control over education and the meaningful incorporation of Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge into school curricula” (McCarty & Watahomigie 1998).

The Native American Languages Act of 1990 also adds weight and strength to the work of Indigenous language education. As cited by McCarty, the Act means that the federal government will ‘preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages’ (Public Law 101-477, Sect. 104[1]). “(McCarty and Watahomigie,1998).

Developing meaningful Indigenous language programs requires understanding the history of language loss, finding role models and templates and fitting the course elements into the Alaskan urban context. There are existing courses to provide students an education on Alaska’s history and people; Alaska Studies classes are already a required part of the history curriculum, but the classes are typically treated as an afterthought. They are taught by new teachers, not by the master teachers, and there is a weak curriculum, superficial and negligent in teaching Indigenous history and culture. This failure is often seen in lip-service Indigenous
education courses (Hermes, Bang and Marin, 2012). These classes do none of the decolonizing work and in fact perpetuate the ignorance and devaluation of Alaska Native languages. As a language educator and an Alaskan, I see an opportunity for the intersection of World Languages’ storytelling methodology, Indigenous language pedagogy and the need for secondary elective language programs in Alaska Native languages.

This mixed methods study\(^1\) will examine (1) the demand for (and interest in) Indigenous language programs among public high school students in Alaska, and (2) what Indigenous language experts believe indigenous language programs should comprise. I used one quantitative survey of 80 high school students to gauge the demand for Indigenous language programs, and I conducted interviews with seven Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska and Oklahoma to examine their views, beliefs, and recommendations about what public high school Indigenous language programs should include.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the level of demand for Alaska Native language programs among public high school students in Anchorage, Alaska?

   a. Do students want to take an Alaska Native language class? Are students (Native and non-Native) interested in taking Alaska Native language courses?

   b. What are (Native and non-Native) students’ perspectives on the benefits of studying Alaska Native languages and cultures (communication, education, employment, history, engaged citizenship)?

   c. Do students from varying demographic groups (how long their family has been in Alaska, Native/non-native identity, number of family members who speak

\(^1\) Conducted in English.
Alaska Native languages, home languages, and boarding school experiences) differ in their: (1) desire for Alaska Native language classes; and (2) perspective on the benefits of learning an Indigenous language.

2. What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska for public high school Alaska Native language programs?
   a. What would they like to see in an Alaska Native language program for world/foreign language non-Native high school students?
   b. What would they like to see in an Alaska Native language program for Indigenous high school students?
   c. What recommendations do these leaders have for curricular approaches and language program models?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study draws upon Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) to understand the racial and linguistic inequities in Alaska’s K-12 language policies and programs.

Brayboy (2005) developed Tribal Critical Race Theory, TribalCrit, as a branch of Critical Race Theory, that reflects the particularities of racism against Indigenous people. Brayboy’s (2005) “Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education” builds on CRT with the addition of Indigenous-specific legal, political, and social discourses. The framework begins with similar truths. These include recognizing ubiquitous, invisible structural racism, the Native American experiences of exploitation by White settlers, and that settler colonialism is structural, pervasive, and destructive. “While CRT argues that racism is endemic in society, TribalCrit emphasizes that colonization is endemic in society while also acknowledging the role played by racism” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430).
Brayboy (2005) argues that there are a large number of concerns that are unique to Native Americans, outlining a nine-point framework describing the inequities between the United States government and Indigenous peoples (pp. 429-430). These matters are particular to Indigenous peoples and can be explained through the TribalCrit framework: “Issues of language shift and language loss, natural resource management, the lack of students graduating from colleges and universities, the overrepresentation of American Indians in special education, and power struggles between federal, state, and tribal governments” (Brayboy, 2005, p.430). Brayboy developed TribalCrit to examine the role of colonization on the human rights of Indigenous people and to add to the existing critical theories. In addressing political relationships, TribalCrit originates in the power dynamics of Indigenous nations that are negotiating their way with the U.S. government from a position of sovereignty. Brayboy writes that "power through an Indigenous lens is an expression of sovereignty—defined as self-determination, self-government, self-identification, and self-education. In this way, sovereignty is community based" (Brayboy, 2005, p.435). This conception of community-based sovereignty and power has strong and specific implications for language teaching and control over curriculum and pedagogy. Language programs in Indigenous languages in the U.S. public schools must recognize, include and respect the role of sovereign nations in language and culture education. Assimilation and White culture norms are problematic features of bringing dominant culture school formats and Indigenous language revitalization programs together. The historical educational policies and boarding of the U.S. were attempts to “eradicate Indianness” (p.437) and assimilate. The memory of these policies remains as does the memory of failed promises of social services. Brayboy notes that “often ‘appropriate’ education was assumed to be that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo values and ways of communicating. All of these attempts at assimilation through “appropriate” education failed” (p.437). TribalCrit accounts for
this history in analyzing and explaining the current state of Indigenous language and culture
erasure. It calls it out and rejects it.

This study works towards framing expert perspectives and recommendations through
TribalCrit's emphasis on the value of story work in language revitalization (Brayboy, 2005).
Storytelling that “counts” as knowledge is often resisted by Western or non-Indigenous scholars
as simple and lacking credibility. Yet critical scholars counter these notions and advance
storytelling as knowledge; they value the role of story, the storyteller and the philosophy of oral
traditions in Indigenous communities (and in communities of color) (Christensen, 2012; Eder,
2008; Jimenez, 2020; Sium & Ritskes, 2013; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Indigenous ways of
knowing and thinking through story are meaningful and complex. The purpose of stories is to
hand down cultural knowledge, and in language work, to pass on the language. As Brayboy
writes, “contrary to recent calls for “scientifically based” research as being the only justifiable
form of research, the eighth tenet of TribalCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and
legitimate forms of data and ways of being” (p.439). In language programs this component of
the framework is ideal for pedagogy and methodology.

A brief overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT) emphasizes the main tenets and key
authors that are also important to TribalCrit. Racism is ubiquitous and structural, there is more
oppression in intersectionality, and dominant narratives exist and can be resisted by counter
narratives (Crenshaw, p. 212-213). Crump describes many spokes of the CRT wheel, including an
important framework for Alaskan Native language scholarship, Brayboy’s (2006) Tribal Critical
Theory (Brayboy 2005). This framework explains how the settler colonialism power base is
increased when some Indigenous speakers of English have less power to negotiate for social and
political positions because of their language cadence or accent if it does not align with White
linguistic expectations of English. Okun (2011) writes that White values of urgency, profit, binary
categories, individualism and so forth, are not consistent with Indigenous values. Brayboy (2005) expanded upon Critical Race Theory to include Indigenous experiences, with his groundbreaking article, “Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education.” The framework begins with similar tenets as CRT—including a recognition of ubiquitous and invisible structural racism—and adapts them to Native experiences (i.e., settler colonialism is structural, pervasive, and destructive).

“While CRT argues that racism is endemic in society, TribalCrit emphasizes that colonization is endemic in society, while also acknowledging the role played by racism” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). TribalCrit builds Indigenous-specific legal, political, and social discourses.

Brayboy also discusses the status of Native Americans as autonomous, sovereign nations and how that is different from other marginalized people in the United States. He writes that there is a disconnect between true sovereignty and the current relationship: “Self-determination rejects the guardian/ward relationship currently in place between U.S. government and tribal nations” (434). TribalCrit serves well to identify the differences in tribal discriminatory policies and general discrimination toward minoritized groups. It also creates an important lens for looking at the discrimination and inequities that Native Americans experience.

Inherent in Tribal Crit is the concept of social reproduction and capital hoarding. Bourdieu (2002) speaks to social reproduction and three types of capital in his piece, “The Forms of Capital.” Bourdieu captures the precise issues raised by the lack of Alaska Native language classes when he describes cultural capital generally: “cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (p. 17). The framework addresses the explicit involvement of the government in determining which investments are made in cultural capital education and consequently reproduce the values of a dominant class. In the case of language education in the Anchorage
School District, this theory may give an explanation for why the European and economically linked languages, such as Russian, Chinese and Japanese, are securely funded in Alaska by the state while Yup’ik is precariously funded under a three-year federal grant that requires ongoing renewal. Bourdieu’s writing is useful to this study to understand the unexamined district decisions to fund European and so-called “business” languages, but not Indigenous languages, in publicly funded schools. This framework challenges the power relationships between the state and the citizen in distribution of resources such as academic programs. Cultural capital takes a long time to develop and is not liquid in transmissibility. It translates to admittance to a “club” of those who know what counts in job interviews and advancement. Abilities such as classical musicianship, advanced proficiency in languages and the arts, and admission to selective academies are controlled by the government’s decisions around pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy and relevant academic capital for Indigenous students is an essential need not being met in language offerings. Scholars urge that a curriculum that meets these needs would be land-centric, collaborative (rather than competitive) in assessment, inclusive of Elders’ knowledge, and—critically—organized a calendar that respects hunting and fishing schedules rather than a reflection of the “deep structures of colonialist consciousness” (Grande, 2004, pp. 100-101). Most importantly, a decolonized classroom would be one of Indigenous languages (Grande, 2004, p.71). Bourdieu’s social reproduction work is descriptive of the assimilative goals in settler colonialism. This assimilation manifests in language program decisions in the squelching of Alaska Native languages and cultures while scaffolding European language programs.

Multilingual speakers hold cultural and linguistic capital that provides them with advantages; multilinguals are desirable college applicants, considered for different jobs and have access to communities beyond that of their monolingual peers. World language classes
offer competitive students windows into new cultures and can create a critical consciousness of other countries’ perspectives and the students’ heritage cultures. School districts support this education by offering Euro-centric and economically tagged languages, those languages in market demand, in public schools to provide benefits to students. This linguistic academic capital is offered in particular languages that reproduce linguistic and cultural knowledge which is similar to that of the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 2002). Cultural reproduction through language biases and discrimination maintains the status quo of inequity in language and culture courses offered to high school students.

Teresa McCarty, who works as an anthropologist and Indigenous language revitalization scholar, describes the fight against the hegemony found in language assimilation as a fight for human rights. “More fundamentally, language loss and revitalization are human rights issues. Through our mother tongue, we come to know, represent, name, and act upon the world” (McCarty, 2003). These are also my concerns as I work, from my positionality as an educated white teacher of Japanese, a boutique language, and as a second language acquisition teacher trainer in the Alaskan public-school context. There is an imminent opportunity for social justice through the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in high schools in Anchorage.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to data regarding Alaskan urban language programs, particularly based in Anchorage. My study is not geared towards solutions and systems that suit the vast rural areas of Alaska, but the unique needs of urban Anchorage high school public school students. The study is also limited to secondary programs and will not be looking into elementary Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs, university programs, or Master Apprentice Programs (MAP). My research is limited to the gap in information
surrounding traditional language programs for secondary students in Anchorage who are not coming into high school from immersion backgrounds.

**Ethical Considerations**

“When a child learns her ancestral language, you have strengthened the links to countless generations-those who have passed, those present, and those to come” (McCarty, 2018, p.170).

The unethical extractive research practices of some of the researchers who have come before me are cautionary lessons. I followed the advice of focus group research scholars who remind researchers to include Indigenous stakeholders, protect and treat all data according to guidelines and avoid misappropriation (Hall, 2020). I am responsible for knowing the historical context of Indigenous language loss and to know and respect Indigenous values. Hall (2020) admonishes researchers to include the stakeholders when “developing and implementing focus groups” (p.112). I reviewed my plan and sought suggestions from the experts and colleagues in the Indigenous community on the best practices for cultural sensitivity and safety.

The survey of high school students, interviews, and all data collection were conducted after an Institutional Review Board research approval was granted. In addition, I developed structures and practices for ethical guidelines by drawing on the many model studies of non-Indigenous allies (Krauss, 1998; McCarty, 2003; Smith, 2012).

**Significance of the Study**

The study seeks to contribute to the body of Indigenous language revitalization literature on Alaska Native language programs in secondary schools. This study explored and described the gap in the literature regarding general student demand for Alaska Native language revitalization programs. The study sought to determine Native and non-Native student awareness of the benefits associated with Alaska Native language proficiency. The study looked
at the recommendations and perspectives of Language revitalization experts for direction, guidance and structure in culturally relevant Alaska Native language programs. The overarching goal is to contribute to language preservation, revitalization and decolonization of the Anchorage School District’s language policies. In addition to these goals, the research can provide evidence for Indigenous student demand for Indigenous language education and Anchorage’s community interest in supporting culturally relevant language classes. A significant byproduct of an Indigenous language courses is fostering improved cultural competence among non-Natives.

Language reflects the core of a culture; in establishing secondary Alaskan language and culture revitalization programs in its high schools, the Anchorage School District provides a language and culture education that pedagogically meets the needs of Anchorage’s diverse community of Native and non-Native students. Alaska Native language revitalization programs, in the Dena’ina region high schools, offer respect for the people and land on which the District is educating students in locally meaningful ways.

Background, Relationship and Positionality

I hold a position as a member of a multigenerational Alaskan family with decades of deep roots in this community. This influenced the tenor, relationships and direction of the research. I am a white female, a high school Japanese language teacher, the World Languages Department Chair, a second language acquisition methods presenter, an Indonesian language speaker, and a lifelong Alaskan. My positionality is one of a non-Native, English speaking, White woman conducting research on linguistically colonized people. I operate from a place of awareness of white privilege and of the English language as a settler colonial weapon for subjugation and assimilation. I am connected as a friend, community member, and relation to Indigenous people whose Land I occupy and whose linguistic and cultural revitalization work I
support. Alongside the Alaska Native education community, I am able to collaborate in public school language equity. My perspective of fifteen years as a Japanese classroom teacher provides me with deep insights into world languages programs and the need for Indigenous language programs in public high schools. Therefore, in this work and in my lifelong engagement with language equity, I will serve as an “allied other” (McCarty et al., 2018a, p. 168).

I serve as a teacher trainer for language acquisition methods and understand language acquisition from both formal and informal contexts. My languages were formally learned Japanese in a university setting and informally acquired Indonesian in a home setting. These experiences provided a lens on equity in language acquisition. Methodology is not a neutral; teaching methodologies and approaches present inequities in access for students to some programs. Additionally, as a non-Native with a vested interest in Alaskan education, I am connected to both the white language educator community and the Japanese immersion language community. This positionality of these roles – white educated female, Japanese language and second language acquisition methods instructor, third-generation Alaskan, and deeply connected to my Athabaskan family members – places me in a liminal space. In Indigenous language teachers’ circles, I am a member of the inner circle while always inherently on the outside. I will remain vigilant to acknowledge and find ways to center Indigenous voices. I am sensitive that my position carries power and influence as I asked my community of Indigenous colleagues to share their traditional knowledge and pedagogical beliefs. Moving forward in studying the inequities and perspectives on Indigenous language programs, I will need to be vigilant in keeping my research respectful of and centered on Indigenous voices. My perspective of fifteen years in a Japanese classroom will both illuminate and limit my ability to see what is meaningful for Alaskan languages. Part of my preparation, therefore, is examining
where I must suspend my enculturated opinions and expectations in pursuit of what is relevant to the Indigenizing work I seek to support.

**Summary**

This chapter set forth some of the problems and issues facing language revitalization in Anchorage Alaska. The fundamental problems in high school programs are an absence of Indigenous language secondary programs and the new Yup’ik elementary program students experience a lack of access to participation. Further, the Yup’ik immersion program is dependent on precarious grant funding, though all eight other language programs are more securely state-funded. These inequities and limitations are root problems for the success of language revitalization efforts in Anchorage’s public schools.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Alaska Marine Highway**: “The story of the Alaska Marine Highway System starts with three men who had a dream to provide dependable marine transportation between Alaska's coastal communities. That dream expanded to become the only marine route recognized as a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road. The system currently extends across 3,500 miles of scenic coastline and provides service to over 30 communities, each with their own unique intrinsic qualities” (DOT, 2020).

2. **Alaskan Native**: In this study, I use this term interchangeably with indigenous peoples of Alaska, not to be confused with a person of White/European ancestry who was born and raised in Alaska.

3. **Anchorage School District (ASD)**: The public school district serving 48,000 students in the greater Anchorage area, one of the largest and most diverse school districts in the
nation with hundreds of languages spoken at home by its students. The district includes eight comprehensive high schools.

4. **Athabaskan People**: Indigenous Alaskan Indian people of the interior region. They are related to the Dene people and their languages are in the Athabaskan family of languages. The name "Athabaskan" comes from the large lake in Canada called "Lake Athabasca". The lake was given its name by the Cree Indians, who lived east of it. In Cree, "Athabasca" means "grass here and there", and was a descriptive name for the lake. The name was extended to refer to those Indian groups which lived west of the lake. It also refers to the large language family of which all the languages of Athabaskan Indians are a part (UAF, 2006).

5. **Comprehensible Input**: A set of pedagogical principles known as Comprehensible Input (hereinafter CI) require the learner to understand the language input though terms and structures they are practicing but may not yet be acquired. Comprehending the input of stories, songs, poetry or film is paramount in the methodology. Dr. Krashen is an expert in CI methodology in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production” (Krashen, 2017).

6. **Immersion Education**: a form of bilingual education that aims for additive bilingualism by providing students with a sheltered classroom environment in which they receive at least half of their subject matter instruction through the medium of a language they are learning as a second language, foreign, heritage or Indigenous language. In addition,
they receive some instruction through the medium of the majority language in the community (Lyster, 2007).

7. **Immersion, One-way Immersion**: Language courses that are entered in early elementary grades. These are chosen by parents. Require students to have their own transportation and students are chosen through a lottery. Method of instruction is internationally recognized to produce very good speakers. A language majority (English speaking) student audience, learning a targeted language to promote additive bilingualism and bi-literacy, academic achievement, and intercultural understanding (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012).

8. **Indigenous Values**: The traditional values of the Indigenous people of Alaska Found throughout Alaska’s First Nations, and that I have personally seen in my relatives and my students: Listen to your elders, respect the land and its resources, finish your work, attend to your community, cooperation is more valuable than competition, there is unity in diversity, oral history is valuable, and the application of skills and knowledge is important (Barnhardt, 2005). The traditional values that my Athabaskan nephews live in their first moose hunt, fish camp, stories, and with the Elders are each situated in their relationships to the Land (Styres, 2018). Subsistence lifestyles are mixed with Anchorage’s colonized culture and it is fascinating and hopeful to see the student families’ resistance to the Western agricultural model confined to a school calendar. This creates challenges for educators who are bound to the Eurocentric agrarian calendar and school format. Smith et al., (2018) outlines these values as follows:

- Respect for Elders
- Storytelling/Oral Tradition
- Spirituality
- Listening
- Subsistence living
• Community over Individualism
• Patience
• Non-linear viewpoint/ circles of time/Traditional Knowledges
• Tribalism
• Sovereignty
• Cooperation

9. **Language Acquisition** The stage of reflexively using a language as opposed to “learning” a language which entails a mental monitor and translation (Krashen, 1982).

10. **Native Corporations** Alaska Natives and congress formed an agreement in 1971 that settled Native claims on land and resources. The corporations are regional for-profit corporations organized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA, 1971).

11. **The “Road System/Off the Road System”**: Many rural villages are accessible by water or air but not by cars. Places “off the road system” are places without roads (DOT, 2020).

12. **Traditional Language Courses**: Courses that are chosen in 7-12th grade by the student as an unrequired and elective study. They are delivered through a variety of methods which include textbooks, storytelling and Comprehensible Input. These classes are non-immersion (ASD World Languages, 2020).

13. **Yup’ik**: Central Alaskan Yup’ik is the largest of the state's Native languages, both in the size of its population and the number of speakers. Of a total population of about 21,000 people, about 10,000 are speakers of the language. Children still grow up speaking Yup’ik as their first language in 17 of 68 Yup’ik villages, those mainly located on the lower Kuskokwim River, on Nelson Island, and along the coast between the Kuskokwim River and Nelson Island. The main dialect is General Central Yup’ik, and the other four dialects are Norton Sound, Hooper Bay-Chevak, Nunivak, and Egegik (UAF ANLC Languages, 2019).
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The previous chapter established two overarching problems hindering Indigenous language revitalization in Anchorage public schools: discriminatory practices against Indigenous languages and cultures that advance settler colonial projects of language erasure, evidenced by such features as a lack of curricular programs and limited student access to or knowledge of Indigenous language and culture programs, which arise as a result of historic oppression and disenfranchisement of Indigenous people. The literature review is organized according the following three themes: (1) critical theories on language assimilation and revitalization, (2) settler colonial history and language erasure, and; (3) Indigenous education, language planning and program models. This chapter delves into the literature that explains how we arrived at this point in language erasure and loss, and provides a foundation for my study on Indigenous language revitalization.

Theories on Language Assimilation and Revitalization

Throughout colonized countries around the world, Indigenous languages and cultures in public schools have been historically marginalized and are only beginning to be revitalized in certain spaces. This review of the literature grounds its understanding in two key theories: Critical Language and Race Theory, or LangCrit (Crump, 2014), and Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). I draw on the theories of Critical Language and Race Theory (LangCrit) and Tribal Critical Race Theory, to examine the following aspects of Anchorage’s dearth of Indigenous language programs: a) Indigenous language loss through settler colonialism’s language erasure projects; b) sustained economic hegemony associated with social and linguistic reproduction; and c) the propagation of Whiteness and English as the norms. I specifically draw upon Language Crit (LangCrit) and TribalCrit to understand the racial and linguistic inequities in Alaska’s K-12 language policies and programs. Maintaining the status quo of language programs
also clearly connects to the White structural pressure. The current system reproduces Eurocentric languages education among students, reinforcing the disenfranchisement of Indigenous language speakers. This scaffolds academic capital hoarding among non-Native students.

**LangCrit: Critical Language and Race Theory**

Crump (2014) introduces the theory of *LangCrit* by first explaining the problematic and ongoing association of Whiteness as the standard for native English speakers. LangCrit, Critical Language and Race Theory, begins to identify an absence of linguistic analyses in the critical studies literature. The overlap of language studies and race are not thoroughly explored in CRT (Critical Race Theory); therefore, there is a need for more precise analysis in the scholarship of language, race, and identity. Crump writes: “I then propose LangCrit as a necessary offshoot of CRT for critical inquiries in language studies” (Crump, 2014, p.208). Crump expands the CRT conversation to include the audible, as well as visual, discriminatory practices that are revealed when dominant cultures discriminate against some languages and accents while showing biases for other languages particularly English spoken with White overtones. This work emphasizes how speakers use language and its nuances, not on the actual concept of language. Crump writes that LangCrit is centered around three key concepts: identity, language, and race. These three concepts form her framework’s foundation.

Establishing identity as a malleable social construct, Crump writes that the human’s formation of identity comes from societal and individual influences. Crump’s position that “we have overlooked that individuals enact and negotiate both fixed and fluid identities” (p.208) indicates that it is not possible to have an identity entirely built on individual will in the context of community. Further, this position emphasizes that it is important to remember that nations have self-interest in fostering identities of patriotism.
Language, and how language is defined, are always associated with power and privilege. Organizations and governments can control languages to garner power and maintain control. Political power and social control are expanded when languages, actually the speakers, are defined by dominant culture rather than the speakers. Crump (2014) writes, “We are interested in examining how boundaries around languages have been socially produced and maintained. This involves looking at how power has come to be clustered around certain linguistic resources...” (p. 209).

Crump further explains that identity, language, and race are fluid, interconnected concepts that are mutually shaping humans throughout a lifetime. Languages are not discrete objects that are in a fossilized state. The dynamic nature of language and identity prevents a definitive objectification of languages as a static concept. Therefore, Crump (2014) points out that the issues of languages are actually issues of the speakers who are using the languages and their identity, such that “the doing of language is intricately intertwined with the performativity of identity” (p. 210).

In discussing definitions of race, Crump (2014) identifies the two most common and contrasting viewpoints: the discredited biological definition and the socially constructed explanation for the formation of race. She draws on Crenshaw’s (1991) work to show how racial groups are shaped and organized to maintain hegemony, and how racialization and racialized language affect and perpetuate structural power imbalances.

LangCrit contributes to our understanding of how Alaska Native languages have been excluded, categorized, and underfunded by the structure of the statewide education system. The theory provides a framework for how the settler colonialism power base is increased when some Indigenous speakers of English have less power to negotiate for social and political positions because of their language cadence or accent if it does not align with White linguistic
expectations of English. Crump draws on Okun (Okun, 2011) to identify White values. White values like urgency, profit, binary categories, individualism and more, do not align with Indigenous ways of thinking and living. Other misaligned White values include “perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness and/or denial, quantity over quality, worship of the written word, the belief in one “right” way, paternalism, either/or binary thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, progress defined as more, the right to profit, objectivity, and the right to comfort” (Okun, 2011, p.29). Crump’s work is particularly useful in situating my positionality and identity as a White, cis-gendered, educated female. When I am working alongside Alaska Native cultures, my dominant cultural values play a part in my interactions and shape my perceptions of my public-school district’s Indigenous language revitalization effort. (Crump, 2014).

**Tribal Critical Race Theory**

Brayboy (2005) developed a nine-point framework, identifying the inequities between the United States government and Indigenous people in which he argues that there are many issues particularly relevant to Indigenous people (p. 429-430). These matters are particular to Indigenous peoples and can be explained through the TribalCrit framework. “Issues of language shift and language loss, natural resource management, the lack of students graduating from colleges and universities, the overrepresentation of American Indians in special education, and power struggles between federal, state, and tribal governments” (p. 430). Brayboy developed TribalCrit as a methodology for examining the role of colonization on the human rights of Indigenous people and to add to the existing critical theories. His starting point sounds in settler colonialism’s devastation of Native American cultural and capital resources. “This process of colonization and its debilitating influences are at the heart of TribalCrit; all other ideas are offshoots of this vital concept” (p. 431). Brayboy’s description of Western European
colonization’s impact includes power acquisitions, whose knowledge are counted, which cultures are esteemed or not, and how lives ought to be lived. One clarifying section of Brayboy’s article defines how Manifest Destiny, the Norman Yoke and White supremacy are linked to imperialism and hegemony (p. 432). Brayboy explains that there is a no-man’s land for Native Americans in politics and law even though this was not the promise. Race and power are key factors in American governmental relationships with Native Americans, resulting in a liminal positioning which discounts the legal and political rights of Indigenous people and only recognizes race. As Brayboy notes, “currently, the different circulating discourses around what it means to be Indian as well as what constitutes American Indian Education, establish a context in which American Indians must struggle for the right to be defined as both a legal/political and a racial group” (433).

Brayboy (2005) characterizes the duality of culture being both fluid and changeless: “In TribalCrit, culture is simultaneously fluid, or dynamic and fixed or stable” (p. 434). The notion of linear time and static cultural identity is antithetical to TribalCrit. In fact, the whole notion of knowledge and understanding in TribalCrit is one of evolving and adjusting to the flow of change. “Knowledge is defined by TribalCrit as the ability to recognize change, adapt, and move forward with the change” (p.434).

In addressing political relationships, TribalCrit starts with the power dynamics of Indigenous nations that are negotiating their way with the U.S. government from a position of sovereignty. "Power through an Indigenous lens is an expression of sovereignty—defined as self-determination, self-government, self-identification, and self-education. In this way, sovereignty is community based." (p. 435). This had implications for language teaching and control over curriculum and pedagogy. Language programs in Indigenous languages in the U.S. public schools must recognize, include and respect the role of sovereign nations in language and culture
education. Assimilation and White culture norms are problematic features of bringing dominant culture school formats and Indigenous language revitalization programs together. The historical educational policies and boarding of the U.S. were attempts to “eradicate Indianness” (p. 437) and assimilate. The memory of these policies remains, as does the memory of failed promises of social services. “Often ‘appropriate’ education was assumed to be that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo values and ways of communicating. All of these attempts at assimilation through ‘appropriate’ education failed’ (p. 437). TribalCrit accounts for this history in analyzing and explaining the current state of Indigenous language and culture erasure. It calls it out and rejects it. “TribalCrit explicitly rejects the call for assimilation in educational institutions for American Indian students” (p. 437). This tenet of TribalCrit must be central to planning and developing a successful language revitalization program.

Brayboy’s TribalCrit describes the value of the story. Non-Native scholars tend to resist “counting” storytelling as knowledge, considering it simple and lacking credibility. Yet in Indigenous communities, the role of story, the storyteller, and the philosophy of oral traditions is authentic knowledge. Indigenous ways of knowing and thinking through story are meaningful and complex. The purpose of stories is to hand down cultural knowledge, and in language work, to pass on the language. “Contrary to recent calls for ‘scientifically based’ research as being the only justifiable form of research, the eighth tenet of TribalCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being” (p. 439). In language programs, the storytelling component of the framework is ideal for pedagogy and methodology.

Activism is the last tenet of the framework. Like all critical theory, doing something to make positive changes and transform the world for the better is expected. “Praxis involves researchers who utilize theory to make an active change in the situation and context being examined” (p. 440). It is not enough to understand and theorize. One is exhorted to improve the
condition of their community. There is an understanding that work for equity and liberation is the goal. Indigenous language revitalization philosophy.

My study is informed by TribalCrit because it addresses the specifics for Indigenous students and identity that are not found in other critical theories. In the case of language education, this theory explains why the European and economically linked languages, such as Russian, Chinese and Japanese, are securely funded in Alaska by the state but Yup’ik is precariously funded under a three-year federal grant. Bourdieu (2002) provides a theoretical window on how and why the State of Alaska can fund European and trendy business languages as a form of capital for students, but not Indigenous languages, which are targets for erasure: “In publicly funded schools, the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital” (p.17). The capital investment in European languages ensures the reproduction of white values and a concentration of multilingual skills in the community of white children.

Culturally relevant pedagogy and relevant academic capital for Indigenous students is not being met in language offerings. Bourdieu’s ideas about social reproduction can be viewed as components of settler colonialism continuance in the classrooms through the squelching of Alaska Native languages and cultures in favor of European languages.

Settler Colonial History of Language Erasure in North America

Indigenous language erasure in North America is part of the continent’s long settler colonial history. The government, the church, and schools colluded to remove indigeneity through linguicide, decimating indigenous culture and knowledge, and the devastating damage of the boarding school projects (Grande, 2004). After the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, it extended these crushing strategies and policies upon Alaska’s first peoples (Kawagley, 1999). The languages of Alaska Native people predate Russian and U.S. colonization
and are critical to the Indigenous people’s sense of self and community (Jacob et al., 2015).

Alaska’s language and cultural diversity has a history “older than the city of Rome” (Anchorage Museum, 2020).

This literature review looks to historical explanations to explain that the present situation is not a natural evolution of language shift. The state of endangered and dying Alaskan languages continues historic settler colonial language erasure policies; these policies are in violation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People with respect to language rights. Article 13, points one and two, address language rights and the states’ responsibility to ensure them: “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons” (UN General Assembly, 2007). Status quo offerings in language course offerings reflect the values of cultural academic capital hoarding and social reproduction by the dominant culture, intensified by racist attitudes which denigrated Alaskan culture and punished those who would keep it alive (Bourdieu, 2002). Language erasure had already been a part of U.S. BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) policies in Indian boarding schools, colonial schooling projects focused on language erasure to assimilate (Jacob et al., 2015). Yet for Indigenous Alaskan children, the coerced English language campaign started in 1867 when Alaska was purchased in what was notoriously termed “Seward’s Folly” after the U.S. Secretary of State William Seward proposed the purchase for 7 million dollars. This was against the judgement of his peers. The condition of endangered and disappearing Alaskan languages was an intentional U.S. goal and was done with severity and lack of regard for the cultural and linguistic rights of Alaska’s children. “Until the 1960s, under state-sponsored educational policies Alaska Native youth were punished for speaking their languages in schools” (Krauss, 1998).
Alaska became a territory. At that time the existing Federal Indian policies in education began to affect Alaska Native families though the policies were created for American Indians. (Barnhardt, 2001) At that time, the education policies of assimilation of language and culture and the erasure of Indigenous culture emerged in Alaska as well. From that point until the 1970’s, Alaska Native people experienced the draconian BIA education programs that forced Alaska Native children to attend assimilation driven boarding school. The schools were often far from the children’s homes and devoid of relevant Indigenous language and culture education. Language extinction, suppression, and shaming policies were prevalent in the schools. Since that time, there has not been a just and restorative measure to publicly fund revitalization of languages through elective Indigenous language programs in public education for urban children.

The Indigenous language programs that are currently experiencing success look to the community for curriculum and teachers. In Western Alaska, McCarty describes a blending of a Yup’ik and Western education that creates a bridge between traditional ways of life and math and science tools from the school system (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998). In these communities there is a fusion of the Indigenous language and the dominant language in a sequence that attempts to avoid language interference and confusion. The programs in rural Alaska also incorporate knowledge of the elders. Only by honoring the elders, the land and the historical ways of being, can the pedagogy of a high school language and culture curriculum be culturally relevant. There are still issues of valuing the teaching Indigenous languages that persist in the urban center of Anchorage. Many administrators and teachers believe that teaching Indigenous languages is a peripheral concern and irrelevant to the community. However, McCarty reminds us that policy is changing in favor of new paradigms that scaffold Alaska Native language teaching and learning. “Moreover, these programs have created new
contexts for Native language literacy, facilitated the credentialing of Indigenous teachers, and elevated the moral authority and instrumental value of Indigenous languages in communities and school” (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998).

Indigenous language erasure and cultural assimilation projects in North America that began over 500 years ago continue to disenfranchise and silence Indigenous voices. Key examples of cultural and academic losses are seen today in the lack of public-school language programs in local Indigenous languages. Most Indigenous students in the United States have no opportunity to formally study in a program with culturally relevant curriculum or Indigenous languages. The absence of Indigenous language courses points directly towards structural biases and discriminatory practices in public schools, as these school systems are failing to place Indigenous language courses on par with European language classes in the course schedules. This is a complex inequity that begins with a simple, yet little-acknowledged, understanding that Indigenous languages are not foreign languages; Indigenous languages are local languages, fundamental to the formation of identity and culture, and, as Jacob (2015) writes, “rapidly eroding” (p. 56). The following scholarly writing on Indigenous language loss and revitalization often begins with descriptions of settler colonialism and racism, explanations of language loss, trauma and the impact on formation of identity, followed by ongoing structural language and cultural erasure projects and policies.

The scholarship by McCarty (2015) and her colleagues deeply explores the tenacious roots of settler colonialism in North America and describe the early stages of language erasure when the United States’ racist Civilization Fund Act (Civilization Fund Act, 1819) systematized a nation bent on destroying the culture and language of Indigenous populations (McCarty et al., 2015). The article discusses how in collaboration, the U.S. government took Indigenous land and resources while the churches and schools worked to implement language and cultural erasure
by instilling exclusively Judeo-Christian values in Native communities. This was done primarily through draconian mandatory English-only boarding schools. The authors explain that when the U.N. in 2007 promulgated the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People “to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages oral traditions and philosophies, writing systems, and literatures” (McCarty et al., 2018, p.160), a foundation emerged for international recognition of a profound right to, and importance of, language and cultural reclamation (UN General Assembly, 2007). Notably, the United States still has not ratified this resolution, meaning that for Indigenous languages in the United States, the UNDRIP’s right to language holds social and moral force but is not legally binding. However, there is great public awareness and financial support for the academic capital gained by learning European languages or languages that are economically beneficial; districts offer languages that align with capitalistic goals rather than linguistic equity (McCarty et al., 2019). The absence of Indigenous languages in public schools is firmly rooted in the historic elimination of Indigenous languages and cultures to achieve settler colonialism’s land acquisition goals. Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2009) writes that this language destruction is a killing, a linguicide. Thiong’o refers to this as linguicide, or “conscious acts of language liquidation”; “its physical counterpart is genocide” (p. 17).

The authors of “50(0) Years out and counting: Native American language education and the four R’s” reject the Eurocentric academic priority of “Three R’s” of “reading, writing, and ‘rithmatic,” replacing them with the “Four R’s” that are relevant to Alaska Native and North American Indian education: language rights, resources, responsibilities, and reclamation. The “Four R’s” reframe what counts as knowledge (McCarty et al., 2015). The authors situate their work during the 50-year anniversary of the 1964 U.S. Civil Rights Act (Civil Rights Act (1964)). The scholars look to the Hopi, Navajo and Yup’ik peoples to see how the “Four R’s” are applied
in language education. The authors also look to these communities and the context they provide for negotiating strategies and conversations about power and privilege in language education. The United Nations ratified the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14, and asserted that Indigenous people have the right “to establish and control educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UN General Assembly, 2007). The U.S. was prominent among four initially dissenting U.N. member states, alongside Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It was noted that all four dissenters were settler-colonial nation-states. Barack Obama reversed that negative vote in the next round of voting and, while the U.S. still has not ratified the UNDRIP as binding law, the US now supports the spirit of this document. This brought the U.S. closer to supporting Indigenous languages in public spaces and schools and there are now federal grants to be applied for and earned for Indigenous language programs.

Yet Indigenous languages are not on equal funding footing with Spanish, French, and German programs that require no federal grants.

Community involvement is foremost in Indigenous language program advancement. In an important Alaskan case in 1971, Alaska Native activists won Yup’ik rights to ancestral lands (McCarty et al., 2015 p. 241). These activists furthered Alaska Native language rights and advanced a bill requiring Alaskan schools, with 15 or more non-English-dominant students, to provide a “bilingual-bicultural program” (McCarty, 2015). The role of legislation was paramount in establishing Yup’ik programs in some villages and the passage of House Bill 216 (Alaska State Legislature, n.d.) when Alaska recognized twenty Indigenous languages as official languages. Alaska was the second state in the country to do this, Hawaii was the first.

Sociohistorical perspectives on language revitalization emphasize the critical role of history in the future of language revitalization. McCarty et.al. (2019) highlight recent
accomplishments in language revitalization projects that look backwards to move forward and use the term “language reclamation” (p.2). The editors compiled works from Indigenous writers who explore successful language programs from around the globe that are led by grassroots communities to preserve and revive languages. This scholarship offers past, current, and future images of what successful programs look like. The great value of this work lies in the exclusively Indigenous voices of the chapter writers. These scholars provide a picture of many global language challenges and pathways to address them. Boarding school policies and linguistic discrimination worked to create this erasure of language and culture between generations.

In *Indigenous Education: Language, Culture and Identity*, Jacob et al. (2015) present a clear and sobering picture of assimilation policies and projects that the United States enforced on Indigenous peoples. Jacob uses the metaphor of a tree with its roots, branches and buds to illustrate flexibility and vulnerability: “Global Indigenous Education Tree also highlights the seasons and cycles of Indigenous education, including the realization of how fragile indigeneity is” (Jacob et. al., 2015 p.3). The U.S. government pitched an exchange of services including education in exchange for land. What actually took place was an education system that actively and brutally worked to destroy Native American cultures. Critical theorists describe this betrayal by the United States in educational policy: "While trust, responsibility and sovereignty were supposed to be the guiding principles of Indian education, “appropriate” education was that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo values or ways of communication” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437). Jacob talks about capitalism and the economic forces at work when the United States’ policy goals of land acquisition were advanced through Indigenous people’s assimilation (Jacob et al., 2015). Linguicide accelerated the loss of cultural connections and identity and loss of control over natural resources.
McCarty et al. (2015) divided their guidebook on several core Indigenous schooling topics, *Indigenous Education: Language, Culture and Identity*, into three sections: education, language and culture. The book includes work on diverse global language issues as well as locally oriented identity topics. This work offers substantial content on identity and its relationship to language. The book sets out an intent to identify the unifying elements between Indigenous people, identity, the reality of sovereignty fundamental for language revitalization, and education. McCarty & Lee (2015) outline the historical legal foundation of work in American Indian and Alaska Native language education, and state that "we begin with the premise that understanding educational issues for Native American peoples must be coupled with understanding their unique legal and political status as tribal sovereigns" (p. 342-343). American Indians and Alaska Native people are not negotiating with the United States government as linguistic minorities; theirs is a relationship of sovereign nation-to-nation status, as recognized by the United States Constitution. This status was established from the late 1700’s through the mid-1800’s through hundreds of treaties, including 120 that were directly related to education rights and responsibilities (Jacob et al., 2015). Following failed governmental schooling projects, boarding schools and language erasure campaigns, American Indians pushed back against colonized education and began to exercise sovereignty over academics and schooling.

McCarty (2015) writes that for Indigenous-led education there are a new set of four R’s that offer a different vision of knowledge and what counts as knowledge, “the “four Rs”: language rights, resources, responsibilities, and reclamation” (p.288). McCarty’s book does important work in solidly connecting the three pieces of identity, language and education programs. It also reminds us that these three elements are intertwined with each other and with a violent history. Critically relevant to this study are McCarty’s frequent references to the Saami people, who experienced linguistic erasure policies that are similar to Alaska Natives; both
language communities have a gap in speakers between the native speaking grandparents and the heritage language grandchildren.

The Maori people are internationally recognized for their widespread Indigenous language revitalization successes. They are leaders for communities all over the world for Indigenous language programs and research. One of the most prominent Maori scholars today is Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) who writes that “research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary,” in her foundational text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, (p.1). Smith explains the historical devastating impact of Western research on both the Maori people and Indigenous people around the world. Smith also provides a scholarly Maori-situated viewpoint on settler colonialism’s long-term damage to language and culture and she offers warnings for the non-Indigenous scholar in approaching Indigenous research topics. Smith grounds many of her admonishments, toward non-Indigenous scholars, in the “othering” concepts informed by Edward Said (2003). Said’s work, *Orientalism*, Smith explains, reveals how Indigenous people are perpetually marginalized and “otherized” by the dominant culture and colonial world views. The views are held by non-Indigenous historians and researchers and they tell the stories that are not their own, “Indigenous peoples have also mounted a critique of the way history is told from the perspective of the colonizers” (Smith, 2012, p. 31). In these cases, there is no collaboration with Indigenous people for whose stories and which stories are included. Speaking from a feminist critical framework, Smith rejects the Western research and documentation of history traditions that assume positivism, objectivism, and linearity are truth (pp.30-33). Smith also questions the values of Poststructuralist history. "It is because of these issues that I ask the question, is history in its modernist construction important or not important for Indigenous people?... History is about power" (p. 35). Research by Western eyes is biased and otherizing for Indigenous people (pp.30-31); this emphasizes that the world is not post-
 colonial nor post-racial. Smith asserts that the current structures of educational research are not
decolonizing frameworks and, as patriarchal hierarchies, do not serve Indigenous people (p.33).
The author advocates for Maori researchers to do the work, if and when, research and historical
documentation is to be done. With respect to language and the role historians and current day policy makers have played in Maori language erasure the author writes, “The Indigenous language is often regarded as being subversive to national interests and national literacy campaigns and is actively killed off” (p. 149). Smith’s work is valued for outlining the steps for Indigenous language revitalization. One takeaway from the second half of Smith’s book is that Western ways of knowing, researching and documenting have failed to serve or protect Indigenous peoples, and that Maori scholars and Indigenous researchers are the rightful people for these jobs.

Carol Barnhardt (2001), an Alaskan historian and scholar at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, writes in “A History of Schooling for Alaska Native People” that Alaska Native education, which entails the brutal boarding school history, language, and other pedagogical issues, is situated uniquely when compared to other Indigenous peoples (Barnhardt, 2001). The author discusses The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Prucha, 1986, p. 369) work , explaining that in understanding Alaska Native relationships to the United States that are different from other Indigenous minority groups, there several key elements: Alaska’s geography proved challenging, no treaties were made with Alaska Natives, there were very few reservations (one Metlakatla, Tsimshian), and very few federal social services were provided in the way of health or education (Barnhardt, 2001). Further, Barnhardt writes that Alaska Native education is difficult to understand because of the uniqueness and diversity of Alaska’s particular history, politics, geography and economy. Alaskan Indigenous groups are diverse. Alaska Native people have different legal rights than American Indians and
Alaskan educational history is vastly different from that of American Indians (Barnhardt, 2001, p.2-3). Barnhardt’s work explains these key areas and identifies the ways educational programs were historically impacted (p.7-18). She concludes that these key areas of uniqueness and difference make the one-size-fits-all language revitalization and maintenance approach a poor fit for Alaska.

Barnhardt continues to explain the sequence of educational programs that were enforced in Alaska after the United States accepted Russia’s offer for purchase. Prior to the 1867 purchase of Alaska, Alaskan children were educated almost exclusively through the oral tradition in storytelling and writings by Indigenous people. As Barnhardt writes, “the large majority of knowledge about traditional Alaska Native education continues to come from Elder’s memories, such as those described by Koyukon Athabaskan, Liza Jones” (p.10). During an interview conducted with the respected Elder and scholar Jones, who has been credited with rich academic work such as the formation of the Koyukon Athabaskan dictionary, Jones said, “Our Native beliefs are inside those stories,” Liza explained, “It is like gospel to us. It is very much a part of my belief in living in harmony with nature, with the land, trees, water, animal and bird spirits” (Barnhardt, 2001, p.10).

The article describes the timeline of education in Alaska. Following the 1867 purchase of Alaska from Russia, Alaska Native children attended the United States’ federally established schools into the late 1800’s. The early 1900’s saw decentralized schools, but many communities could not operate their own schools and were supported by the federal Nelson Act for schools. Soon, widespread racism and discrimination closed entry for all but white and those who were partially white. This began the system of two programs, or dual-systems education. The federal Bureau of Education handled Native students’ education, while the white and mixed children’s programs were run by the Territory of Alaska (Barnhardt, 2001). Later, in the mid 1920’s, the
dual-systems approach for Alaska Native education was overtaken by the BIA boarding school atrocities that, to this day, adversely affect language survival and revitalization.

The significant Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the Alaska Reorganization Act 1936 established village governments that still fight for educational sovereignty. The American Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s and ‘70s provided additional support for Alaska Native students as dominant culture recently turned its attention to inequity and inclusion. Barnhardt describes the federal educational regulations and organizations that emerged to reform education at this time. The War on Poverty, Great Society programs and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 are pieces of this movement. Barnhardt describes the impact of oil on Alaska Native communities and the critically important Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, ANCSA, that the subsequent land compensation and corporation formation. The powerful 1976 Tobeluk v. Lind case (Barnhardt, 2001, p.22), an anti-racist anti-discrimination case, changed village education on a large scale. Alaska committed to building high schools in every village where there was an elementary school of more than eight students (Barnhardt, 1978). The children of Alaska are educated today in either Village Schools, Rural Regional Center and Road System Schools or in one of the three Urban School systems of Anchorage, Fairbanks or Juneau. This article covers specific legal cases, acts and policies that affect Alaskan education. This work is important because of its specificity to Alaska’s historical relationship to the U.S. government and education policy.

**Indigenous Education, Language Planning and Models of Indigenous Language Programs**

Finally, this section of this literature review draws from scholars who write about Indigenous knowledge and language revitalization programs from around the world. This is done in order to understand what is needed and effective in successful indigenous education across
contexts. The review will first look at North American revitalization projects and then the scholarly research on language planning and policy.

**Indigenous Language Revitalization in North America**

Indigenous people in historically colonized spaces in the world are galvanizing to preserve their vulnerable cultures. They look to language revitalization as the powerbase for this work. Grande (2004) writes that “Thus, just as language was central to the colonialist project, it must be central to the project of decolonization” (p.73). Revitalizing languages is an enormous task and there are many in educational positions of influence who see the languages of marginalized people as “subversive’ and would prefer to leave all transmission and education in languages of Indigenous people to the Elders and thus let the languages fade away. This is essentially advancing ‘language death” given that many languages are no longer spoken by enough elders to sustain language transfer.

The creation of the Native American Languages Act of 1990 brought weight and strength to the work of Indigenous language revitalization and education (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998), and it established that the federal government will ‘preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages’ (Public Law 101-477, Sect. 104[1]). A pedagogically and culturally relevant format for Indigenous language revitalization is a model that requires a connection between the home and school, honors lived experiences, respects the land and its resources and includes multigenerational voices of the elders and youth. In successful Indigenous language revitalization programs, there is bilateral learning between elders and the youth. “This framework of relationship and reciprocity is embodied in practices of inclusion rather than hierarchy and exclusion” (Hermes et al., 2012, p. 390). In developing Indigenous language revitalization programs in the United States, the role of the Native community must continue to
be dominant and centralized to the program’s creation and implementation for the change efforts to be successful (McCarty et al., 2008).

Indigenous language erasure and cultural assimilation in North America continues to manifest in many deficits and inequities. One prime example is the public educational language programs for both Native and non-Native students. Most students in the United States have no opportunity to choose or opt into any language and culture programs that offer culturally relevant curriculum in Indigenous languages. The complete lack of Indigenous language courses reveals structural biases and discriminatory practices in public schools that fail to place Indigenous language courses on par with European language and culture classes and are, “extremely contentious places” (McCarty, Nicholas, and Wyman, 2015, p. 230). This is a complex inequity that begins with a simple, yet little-acknowledged understanding that Indigenous languages are not foreign languages. Further, Indigenous languages are situated locally, and are fundamental to the formation of a people’s identity and culture and these Jacob (2015) writes are “rapidly eroding” (p. 56). The scholarly literature on Indigenous language loss and revitalization often begins with language and identity formation, proceeds to address an historical context to provide background, and then addresses continued erasure policies. Language and identity loss is inextricably bound to settler colonialism’s assimilation projects (McCarty et al., 2019). This review of the literature includes scholarly work on a) settler colonial history, b) theoretical frameworks of social reproduction, critical language theory and tribal critical theory, and c) Indigenous knowledges that are pedagogically sustaining and relevant but largely absent from dominant culture public-school systems.

Fortunately, today there are models in the United States and Canada that serve as guides for how Alaskan’s can advance language programs. Among the nearly thirty programs with data on proficiency are Hawaiian, Cherokee, and Central Alaskan Yup’ik (Coronel-Molina &
McCarty, 2016). selected these programs from the thirty because they are closely related to Anchorage’s context in remoteness of geography, orthography challenges, and historical linguistic erasure. McCarty (2019) writes: “We cannot address the present moment without confronting historic and ongoing inequities that lead to language endangerment” (p.2).

One successful Hawaiian language revitalization model, Aha Punana Leo, is over 30 years old and was spearheaded by the Hawaiian Language Movement. This model is an immersion pre-K through high school, funded by tuition and grants and requiring significant parent involvement in language (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). This kind of immersion program plays an enormous role in developing a large base of speakers. Like Alaskan Native languages, Hawaiian was banned under settler colonialism’s land acquisition projects that strived for assimilation. And similar to Anchorage’s new Yup’ik immersion program, this program is tenuously grant-funded and does not have the same funding security as other programs. Hawaiian language programs “have received very limited state resources -not nearly equivalent to the resources provided to English-language programs” (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016, p.232). This inequity matters when a program is in the early stages because the programs are dependent on grants that can cease at any time. This precarious position was the case of the Hualapai bilingual program in Peach Springs, Arizona (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016).

Community support for language programs and Indigenous leadership are keys to long-term success. After 30 years of grassroots language activism, there are now many Hawaiian immersion charter schools, off-site programs, and university options that continue language revitalization work.

In the northwest Alaskan town of Bethel, a large number of elders and adults speak Central Alaskan Yup’ik, but the next generation does not. This community initiated a program in 1995 that was, like the Hawaiian program, a grassroots movement to bring language of the
elders back to the community through immersion in the early years of education (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). The Bethel program is important because the curriculum and model is uniquely Alaskan. The role of parents is primary in the success of the program as is the statewide funding. Because of its structure, “there is a sense of belonging and feeling of family through mutual respect and understanding. The program also is helping preserve the language and culture for the students to come” (ANKN, 1998). In 2006, Yup’ik education experts Williams and Rearden wrote that the successes of this program are district funding of teacher training programs, 13 of the 23 schools are still in operation, communities are speaking in Yup’ik and families are engaged in their children’s education (Williams & Rearden, 2006). This program is important in my study because the quality and volume of curriculum created along with teacher education support influenced the choice of Yup’ik as the language that Anchorage is teaching in its new immersion program. The Bethel school district Yup’ik language program also competes for federal funding, as does Anchorage’s program. However, program access for Bethel students is however more equitable: Bethel students do not face the competition for seats like the Anchorage immersion program lottery system. The success in Bethel emphasizes even more strongly that Anchorage’s limited access for students requesting an Indigenous language education is a critical social justice issue.

The Cherokee Nation language programs are critical to this study because of their stance on using a Native American orthography, an Indigenous syllabary developed by Sequoyah in the early 1800’s (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). In Alaska, “print literacy” is a colonizing tool played in issues around writing systems (McCarty & Littlebear, 2013). Alaskan elders lament the current lack of written Indigenous stories that resulted from an inconsistency in Western representations of Indigenous writing systems and confusion around alphabetic literacy (Conversation, 2020). A conflict arose between white university scholars and Jesuit priests on
which orthography was best for Alaskan languages. The elders preferred the Jesuit spelling, but the universities won the debate. This left many storytellers disenfranchised from writing projects, and they often abandoned writing all together. In contrast, the Cherokee are dedicated to an Indigenous writing system that honors the ancestors and elders and keeps them included in language projects such as written records of story. The city Tahlequah, Oklahoma, boasts dual signage in the Latin alphabet as well as in Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabary. The Cherokee teaching and learning model honors the elders and Indigenous knowledges. The programs follow Hawaiian models and add community and university spaces for language learning as well. The Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma also invests heavily in teacher development, supporting post-high school Master Apprentice Programs (MAP) and secure funding for its students' programs (Coronel-Molin & McCarty, 2016). I am familiar with this program as a teacher-trainer; I share my knowledge of Japanese methods to support the teaching of the Cherokee syllabary.

Lastly, the initial legal policy that legitimized assimilation through language erasure, the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, is an important element of Alaska’s position in the United States and education policies that was in place well before the U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia; it began an alliance of contracts between churches, the government, and schools to re-educate American Indian children to eradicate language and culture (Barnhardt, 2001). When Alaska was purchased in 1867, the U.S. practice of boarding schools and linguistic racism was already in place. The harshness of the government education policies are retold in the Indigenous community for generations. The schools and churches were complicit in the atrocities and they abused their power over the Indigenous children. “Removal of young children from their homes and communities and transporting them to a geographically and ideologically foreign place. Upon arrival children were subjected to English only and Anglocentric curricula and to a co-curricular that incorporated paramilitary structures of forced labor and "patriotic" propaganda.
In addition, children were often undernourished and subjected to overcrowded living spaces that encouraged "the spread of tuberculosis and trachoma" (Grande, 2015). Alaskan historian Carol Barnhardt writes that “one of the primary goals of boarding schools was to assimilate American Indian/Alaska Native students into mainstream society by separating them from their communities" (Barnhardt, 2001, p.9). Further complications of the problem are found in Alaska’s vast geography and enormous cultural, political and demographic differences between the rural, or bush, areas, and the urban areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau.

**Language Planning and Policy**

Language planning and policy work demands a recognition of the sovereignty of Native American peoples (McCarty & Littlebear, 2013). This starting point acknowledges the history and power dynamics of colonialism and language erasure. Indigenous peoples have historical relationships to the land, are tribal sovereign nations and have a particular political status that includes the rights of a self-governing. In fact, tribal sovereignty is “recognized in the U.S. Constitution” (McCarty, 2013, p. 3). From this perspective Indigenous language revitalization policy planning can proceed. Language erasure was fostered in part through settler colonial, capitalistic goals and globalization. The disappearance of languages was not a natural course of events for the Indigenous people of North America. Language Planning and Policy, (LPP) work involves remembering this history as it addresses three main categories in revitalization," how and where language will be used, who will use the language and for what purpose, and linguistic norms and forms"(McCarty et al., 2008). These three topics are foundations for language planning and policies.

**Summary**

Paradoxically, language revitalization work has become both more and less possible in recent years. Digitization, advanced recording methods, and technology now assist linguists in
the documentation and recording of Indigenous languages. However, in North America, the task becomes more daunting as many tribal elders who are among the last living speakers of some languages are passing away, taking their languages with them. This urgent work of language preservation and revitalization falls to the tribal teachers and language warriors in North America it demands great effort from a spectrum of language activists. To understand why Indigenous languages are in jeopardy, how history has factored in to the urgent need for Indigenous language programs, and what successful programs could look like, the following academic literature was presented in three components: (a) the critical theories and frameworks, (b) the history of language erasure, and (c) examples from Indigenous peoples from around the world who have created ideal programs for Indigenous language courses in secondary institutions. This review explored language revitalization programs from around the world such as immersion preschool programs in Hawaii (Beyer, 2018), post high school programs with a Master and Apprentice format, MAP (McCarty et al., 2019), and adult and college programs out of public high schools (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). The literature review is designed to present a historical perspective, why language devastation happened through the critical theories, and what is possible going forward in the language planning and policy section. This framework works towards presenting a robust picture of language revitalization challenges and possibilities for the work that is being done in Alaska in Indigenous language education in public secondary schools.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This is a critical mixed methods study with a two-fold intent: (1) to gain an understanding of high school student demand for Alaska Native language programs, and (2) to understand indigenous language revitalization leaders' views and curricular recommendations for an indigenous language course in a World/Foreign Language Program for secondary schools.

I used one quantitative survey of 80 high school students to gauge the demand for Indigenous language programs. I also conducted interviews with seven Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska and Oklahoma to examine their views, beliefs, and recommendations about what public high school Indigenous language programs should include.

I employed a critical mixed methods approach, which respects Indigenous values by listening to the voices of Alaska Native students, parents, and teachers, and the voices of non-Native community members who are aligned with Alaska Native language and culture interests. It is also a means of honoring and learning from the experience of Indigenous teachers, respecting Elders' wisdom and guidance and acknowledging Indigenous relationships to the land and water. The study was carried out from January through June 2021 and took place in Anchorage, Alaska and surrounding regions. Ultimately, the broad aim was an understanding of how students and Indigenous language experts view and support Indigenous language programs in Anchorage, Alaska.

This chapter is organized as follows: (1) research setting, (2) participant overview, (3) mixed methods methodology, (4) Part I: Quantitative Approach, and (5) Part II: Qualitative Approach. Parts I and II explore each methodological approach in depth, mirroring the presentation in Chapter 4 of the findings.
Research Setting

The study took place in Anchorage, Alaska. Anchorage is situated on the ancestral grounds of the Dena’ina people. It is the largest Alaskan city with a population of approximately 291,000 (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2018). In recent years, Anchorage has gained national and international attention as one of this country’s most racially diverse places; “over the past decade, the Anchorage School District has become one of the most diverse in the country, serving students who speak nearly 100 different languages” (Anchorage Schools’ Program for Immigrants Is a Model for the Nation, 2016). Anchorage has a population of 288,000 residents. Over the course of the study, the public school student population changed from 48,000 to 41,000 public school students, served by eight large comprehensive high schools. The high schools have populations of over 1500 students each, making Anchorage one of the United States’ largest school districts (Anchorage School District Overview, 2019).

The Anchorage School District’s 41,000 students fall into demographic categories including Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, biracial students, and white students. The student population is about 42% white, 17% Asian, 16% Biracial, 11% Hispanic, 9% Alaska Native, 5% African American (Anchorage School District Overview, 2019). Many of these students take world language classes in their high schools to prepare for their futures in higher education and employment.

The Anchorage School District has been rich in the academic capital of language programs due to funding from a robust oil economy and a diverse community. The Anchorage School District has long offered diverse language and culture programs to public school students. At the secondary school level Spanish, French, German, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese are all available. There are even state-funded K-12 immersion programs for Russian,
Japanese, Chinese, French, German, and Spanish. In short, the district demonstrates a clear commitment to certain kinds of language education for both first and second language learning.

Alaska is also home to over 220 Alaska Native village corporations and 13 regional corporations. Fifteen of these corporations are notably successful and have aggregated both wealth and opportunity for their shareholders. “Out of the top 49 companies in Alaska, the twelve regional Native corporations and several village corporations employ 58,000 people worldwide, with about 16,000 of those jobs here in Alaska.” (AKRDC, 2020). Leading thinkers working in Alaska Native corporations, city government, and private industry have agreed that these corporations are a key factor in the economic stability and future development of the state as oil revenues decline (Godfrey, 2015).

Nevertheless, the Anchorage public school community is not preparing its students to step into corporate roles where linguistic and cultural knowledge of Alaska Native cultures will be valuable to them personally and valuable to our state. Our district continues to perpetuate noticeable distinctions, including the precarious short-term grant-based funding for Alaskan language programs and the secure state-funded support for French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Chinese and Russian language programs.

**Participant Overview**

There were two groups of study participants: (1) the first was a group of 80 Anchorage, Alaska high school students; and (2) the second set of participants were seven Indigenous language revitalization experts. The high school students were subdivided into three groups: a) Alaska Native students (not in World Languages Program); b) Alaska Native World language students and c) World Language students both Native and non-Native. All students received the same survey questions, which appear in Appendix B. These adult participants included seven indigenous language experts, including five Alaska Native people, one Cherokee Nation citizen,
and a white non-Native. In the mixed methods methodology that follows, I have chosen to discuss each group and related findings separately for clarity.

**Table 3.0 Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>% (Number)</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Students (N=80*)</td>
<td>1. Alaska Native High School Students</td>
<td>1. 39%* (N=31)</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Alaska Native students in World Language classes</td>
<td>2. 19%* (N=15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. World Language students</td>
<td>3. 64%* (N=51)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Language Revitalization Leaders (N=7)</td>
<td>1. Native/Indigenous</td>
<td>1. 86% (N=6)</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Alaska, non-Native</td>
<td>2. 14% (N=1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There is some overlap between groups because some students fall into multiple categories (e.g., an Alaska Native high school student in World Language classes would fall into all three groups).

**Mixed Methods Methodology**

Given that mixed methods are used in “calls for change” research, it was the best philosophical fit for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used mixed methods in alignment with TribalCrit, which together could take into consideration Indigenous values of reciprocity in relationships, listening, respect for lived experience, storytelling, and multiple perspectives (Brayboy, 2005; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This pragmatic approach allows Indigenous values to be centered and mitigates the ever-present risk of biases by including quantitative data as well as qualitative data rigorously derived from conversations, interviews, and personal narratives. These open-ended text analyses lifted up the views of the participants, not the researcher. Therefore, as a mixed methods project, it blended both deductive measures, which included surveying the community’s demand for and perspectives on Indigenous language programs, and inductive data that was centered on Alaskan Indigenous voices. The quantitative
aspects of the study examined Indigenous language interest of Anchorage students to provide an understanding of what the student community wanted. The qualitative research presented a different focus and a deeper understanding of what the community has experienced through interviews, and semi-structured conversations.

As I interpreted the observations, I centered Alaska Native concepts, themes and values for a rich and complex picture of these language revitalization issues. Through this study, I hoped to build lasting relationships with the study’s participants and show respect for Alaska’s Indigenous community’s values. I intended to uphold the importance of centering the voices of the Indigenous elders and Alaska Native teachers in this study.

This study gave primary attention to the narratives and voices of Indigenous language experts and students on Indigenous courses and programs. LangCrit, (Crump, 2014) is rooted in Critical Race Theory and examines the racialization of languages and languaging. LangCrit, holds that “identity, language, and race” are central in the human experience (Crump, 2014, p.219).

Mixed methods research design attends to the LangCrit framework by seeking an understanding of the personal and professional experiences and voices of Indigenous Alaskan language activists. LangCrit informs the study by describing the power and privilege that “linguistic resources” confer upon certain people while also restricting others (Crump, 2014, p. 209).

**Mixed Methods Design**

This study was designed to follow a version of a mixed methods approach; it worked from two focal points, the perspectives of high school students on learning Alaskan languages and the perspectives of adult language experts who are currently working in Indigenous language revitalization. The design of this study used numerical data from students and narrative data from adult language experts which offered a look at data from both deductive, student surveys, and inductive, adult interview, perspectives. The quantitative research was
primarily to address the notion that there are not adequate student demand numbers to justify Alaskan language programs. The qualitative research was done to seek out themes and patterns in the vast wisdom from the Elders and leaders in the language revitalization community. The overall aim was to design a study that shows what is wanted and expected by students and language experts regarding Indigenous language programs situated in Anchorage’s high public schools. Mixed methods allowed collection of quantitative and qualitative data though this was from two separate groups; numerical information on student interest in language and the rich stories of language loss and revitalization were the two foci in the research. The reason for this design was to develop a picture of viewpoints from different generations, various communities and diverse positions on a public education issue that involves these players as well as the greater Anchorage community.

I used Creswell’s guidance in mixed methods procedures by collecting open-ended and closed-ended questions with research that is rigorous, thoughtful and systematic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to achieve a study limited in biases. In practical terms this means that some of the quantitative student questions will be predetermined, good for large numbers and useful for descriptive statistics while qualitative research questions will be open-ended, building from the views of the participants and good or text or image analyses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A convergent design timeline gathers quantitative and qualitative data at the same time. This is followed by merging of both types of results into a unified concept for analysis. I applied this converged design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) by collecting both quantitative data and qualitative information simultaneously then let the findings inform each other to shape the fuller story of the results. My aim was to conduct the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the research process, weigh the methods equally, analyze the two components independently, and interpret the results together (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011).
The actual results included two foci; a quantitative student focus and a qualitative adult focus. This data addressed the research questions and offered a multi-faceted picture of what the community wants from an Alaska Native, Indigenous, language program.

**PART I: QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

This part of the study aimed to understand high school students' awareness of the value of Indigenous languages and the impact a lack of Alaska Native languages can have on students' lives. This section outlines a survey issued to 80 high school student participants who are ninth-through twelfth-graders attending a public high school in South Anchorage. The section proceeds to describe the survey recruitment and data, survey procedures, and quantitative data analysis.

**High School Student Participants**

The group of 80 high school participants responded to a survey on Alaskan Language programs in high schools. The student participants were from three categories:

1. *Alaska Native high school students*: These students represent 8-12% of the Anchorage city-wide student population but their voices represent 39% of the students in this study. They ranged from the 9th to 12th grade. They are often underrepresented in world language programs in Anchorage public schools. I selectively surveyed this group because as culturally Indigenous students, their interests may better reflect the demand for Indigenous language offerings at the high school.

2. *Alaska Native World Language students*: These are typically college bound students, because they are taking a second (or subsequent) language, who know that many colleges require World Language classes for their candidates' admission. These students are most likely to connect the benefits, or capital, of multilingualism to academic and
employment opportunities. They are 19% of the participants in this study. (non-Native World Language students comprise 81% of those surveyed and their voices are also demanding Indigenous languages).

3. **High school World Language students:** They range from the 9th to 12th grade and are usually college bound because they are in World Languages classes. They usually take language courses to meet college acceptance requirements. selectively surveyed this group because they are already open to language/culture classes; in addition, in my experience as a world language teacher of 16+ years I have seen student interest in Indigenous languages offerings. These students include both Native and non-Natives and are 65% of this study’s student population.

**Recruitment and Data Collection**

The key data collection phase for students took place from February 2021 until April 2021. The tool was a survey of high school youth delivered online. I met with an expert validity panel in January 2021 to provide feedback on the survey questions.

The process of data collection began first by contacting my principal with a request for email addresses of Alaska Native student’s parents. I provided the approved IRB document to the principal who then directed the school registrar to send to me the email addresses of the parents and students who had registered with the school district as Alaska Native. This is protected information. The next step was to write an informational email that described to the parents and the students the purpose of the study, my intent for data usage, and an assurance that they could opt out of the survey at any time and that their responses would be anonymous. I also offered my contact information should they want an in depth discussion on the subject of the survey and my role. Several passionate parents did indeed continue the discussion via phone
and email which I welcomed. There were meaningful and encouraging conversations from parents who desired Indigenous language programs for their children.

The survey link was sent to students whose parents had agreed to allow participation in the survey. They received a link to the survey questions. All of the students answered the same questions. The students represent a relevant subset of Anchorage’s high school population. I sent the via school email on the Canvas platform in a Google form with the questions that are listed in the Appendix B of this study. The questions on the survey were designed to determine information including cultural identity, language interests, Indigenous community connections, knowledge of multilingualism’s impact on college and employment opportunities, and participation in or interest in Indigenous language programs.

**Measures**

The study used the information from the survey that measured the degree to which students self-reported an interest in taking Alaska Native language classes. Using a Likert scale, the participants indicated whether they wanted to take classes in Alaska Native languages. They could respond “not at all”, “a little”, “somewhat”, or “very much”. The categories were collapsed into “no interest” and “interested” for the data analysis. I measured their interest in taking Alaska Native language classes by the number of responses that were interested in any degree. The study also measured the degree of knowledge the students had regarding the beneficial aspects of Indigenous language skills; languages are established academic capital that facilitate admittance to many universities or employment. Students responded to questions about jobs and language proficiency specifically in Alaskan languages. The study measured their agreement or disagreement that Alaskan languages would help with college acceptance and job opportunities. Using a Likert scale of responses ranging from “disagree” to “strongly agree” the research examined student perceptions of college, employment, and how beneficial students
believed Alaska Native languages to be in each of those areas. I included open ended questions to allow students to explain their experiences with and desires for Alaskan languages. This also centered student voices and allowed them to be organically added to this study; the open-ended responses were both structured and unstructured questions related to identity and culture.

**Table 3.1 Measures: Survey Questions and Related Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populations</th>
<th>Key Survey Questions</th>
<th>Related Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Alaska Native Students</td>
<td>1. Do you want to take Alaska Native language classes in high school?</td>
<td>1a. Are students (Native and non-Native) interested in taking Alaska Native language courses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Alaska Native Students in World Language classes (i.e., likely college bound)</td>
<td>2. I would choose to take an Alaskan language elective if it would help me get into college.</td>
<td>1b. What are (Native and non-Native) students’ perspectives on the benefits of studying Alaska Native languages and cultures (communication, education, employment, history, engaged citizenship)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. World Language Native and non-Native students</td>
<td>3. Learning an Alaskan language will help me get a job in the future</td>
<td>1b. What are (Native and non-Native) students’ perspectives on the benefits of studying Alaska Native languages and cultures (communication, education, employment, history, engaged citizenship)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the academic and economic advantages gained from Indigenous multilingualism, the data from this study would serve all of the student subgroups. That is to say that, if high school optional, elective, Alaska Native language programs do emerge, more Indigenous language speaking Alaska Native students who are entering university programs will have required language credentials. This would also benefit non-Native students who take Alaskan language courses of study. Given that this is an issue of academic capital (Bourdieu, 2002), and
that selective schools use languages as a criterion for admission, this study could indicate the necessity for additional programs for Indigenous language education such as elective programs in Yup’ik. Access to language programs in high school impacts opportunities for higher education and employment. This study’s results, if disseminated to high school parents and students, could improve the low enrollments of Indigenous students in universities.

**Survey**

This study used one quantitative survey of 80 high school students who were Alaska Native students, World Language students, or both Alaska Native and World Language students. It looked for those student responses to questions regarding their interest in learning Indigenous languages in high schools and awareness of the benefits of being proficient in an Indigenous language. This yielded the numerical data to determine a level of demand which is a starting point for a structural shift in academic offerings. The study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic so much of the research was conducted remotely and online. The questionnaire used a Likert scale to measure students’ opinions, attitudes, and interest in enrolling in Indigenous culture and language classes in a high school curriculum. For a comparison of the proportion of voices in the study, there were approximately 48,000 students in the Anchorage district when I started the study; when I concluded the study in the spring of 2021 there were 41,000 (ASD, 2021). Of these students between 8-12% are registered as Alaska Native contingent upon the school. This study generated the percentage of students, Native (World Language participants and non-World Language participants) and non-Native, who are interested in enrolling an Indigenous language program but gave a larger percentage, 39%, than is representative of the greater population, a voice. It generated the demographics of the sample students and student perceptions regarding benefits college and jobs associated with
Alaskan languages. The study established percentages and demographics of students who are interested in studying Alaskan languages.

**Survey Procedures**

1. Define the population and sample: Anchorage High school students
2. Work with a validity panel to refine the survey questions
3. Design the survey questions in Google Forms
4. Distribute survey to participating schools who will distribute to high school students
5. Collect Responses
6. Analyze survey results
7. Write up survey results

In addition to giving voice to the student’s interests, it is important to include that the urgent and pressing need for revitalization of Indigenous language is already articulated in policy by the State of Alaska; in 2020 ANLPAC, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, reported to Governor Dunleavy that their statewide goal was to “Promoting more Alaska Native language programs, including language immersion education, language medium education, and other language courses from infancy to adulthood” (Counceller et al., 2020). The “language medium education and other language courses” aspect of this biennial report might be articulated to include, alongside immersion, access to traditional and liminal space programs for older, beginner students (Counceller et al., 2020).

**Procedures and Methodology**

The initial steps in collecting the data required first obtaining principal and parental permission contingent on a pre-approved IRB, then emailing the survey link to students via Canvas email. I did more than half of the surveys in classrooms to support the maximum number of students with Wi-Fi and computer access to the survey. The survey is anonymous, though students could ask for tech. support because they were in public school classrooms. The students selected were chosen to reflect Indigenous student views as well as those of World
Language students to look at Alaska Native languages from populations that are predisposed to language interest. This would establish a base for a program. The composition of the students in the study was intentionally weighted toward Indigenous students.

The quantitative student response data was then derived from the Google Forms survey of participants from Anchorage’s population of high school students. The Google Forms tool yielded spreadsheets and statistical information that was useful in describing student responses to the research questions. Descriptive statistics on student perspectives and interest in Alaska Native language study were collected from a questionnaire using a Likert scale. The data measured students’ opinions and attitudes on Alaskan language classes in a high school curriculum and language-associated future opportunities.

The quantitative focus area sought an understanding of 80 high school students’ demand for, and interest in, Indigenous language programs. It also examined the level of student awareness of the academic benefits linked to Indigenous languages and the employment opportunities afforded speakers of Indigenous languages. The study looked at which demographics of students would participate in an Indigenous language program if it were available.

These students were from the following categories:

1. Alaska Native students (39%) both World Languages and non-World Language students
2. Alaska Native students in World Language classes (19%)
3. World Language students who were both Alaska Native and non-Native (64%)

The students were chosen to answer the three parts of research question number 1: What is the Alaska Native student demand for Indigenous language classes, what is the non-Native demand, and do these groups of students understand the benefits of Alaskan languages in their academic and employment opportunities? (The Alaska Native students were divided into
those who were in a World Language class and those who were not.) See table 3.2 for these categories.

These questions and the response data were explored for four months to build an understanding of Indigenous language education from student perspectives in high schools in Anchorage. The most important elements of the study were the perspectives and voices of the Indigenous students, so I centered them in the data and analyses by including them in a relatively high proportion of the respondents.

The quantitative portion of the study relied on surveys delivered by Google Forms through school Canvas email accounts. The Canvas delivery method was an accommodation made for the Coronavirus pandemic. The purpose of the survey was to establish data for the number of students who would fill the seats of Indigenous language and culture programs. These numbers might one day support school board decision making and provide support to substantiate the level of resources necessary. The results did not indicate an absence of interest among any of the surveyed populations.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

I carried out a 20-question survey of 80 Alaskan high school students and analyzed the findings as descriptive statistics on the level of demand for Indigenous language programs among high school students in Anchorage, Alaska. The quantitative analysis of the research and statistics provided numerical data showing relationships between the variables of student interest in Alaska Native language programs, interest in studying Alaskan Native cultures, and student awareness of university and employment opportunities linked to Indigenous language proficiency. In the city of Anchorage, good job opportunities exist with Alaska Native Corporations; the employers expect cultural competence and language proficiency (Ongtooguk,
1982). I used the tools in Stata, Excel, and Google Sheets to obtain descriptive statistics of student responses and me for analyses.

This data could increase community awareness of the need for Indigenous programs and courses in the school system. The survey questions were aligned to the research questions by inquiring about interest in Alaskan languages, awareness of cultural competence and job benefits, and college opportunities for speakers of Alaskan languages. This study added high school program-specific information to the body of literature on language revitalization in Alaska.

**Table 3.2 Data sources collection and procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Data</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>RQ’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey (N=80)</td>
<td>Alaska Native Students (39%) Both AK. Native and W.L (19%) World Language (64%)</td>
<td>15-20 min.</td>
<td>Feb-March 2021</td>
<td>E-Survey (Google Form)</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART II: QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

**Participants: Introducing The Experts**

In seeking a rich nuanced understanding of the recommendations and wisdom from experts in the field, I used a qualitative analysis from semi-structured interviews from adult language revitalization experts including Native and non-Native language revitalization leaders and elders. The qualitative data in this study was obtained from seven Indigenous language advocates. They work in urban Alaska, rural Alaska, and one in rural Oklahoma with whom I work closely on indigenous language revitalization teacher training and who is nationally recognized for excellence in Cherokee language revitalization. These language revitalization leaders are professionals who have spent their lives working toward language revitalization in their respective communities. Through Zoom and telephone conversations, necessitated by the
pandemic, I conducted seven one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each of the seven participants for approximately one hour each. Two of the participants requested additional conversations for approximately 45 minutes in the week following the initial interviews. The participants represent diverse institutions: K-16 educators, Indigenous community elders, university, and district wide administrators and included Alaska Natives, non-Native, and Cherokee Nation language experts.

Six participants were experts in the Alaskan language revitalization movements; one was a Cherokee language leader in Oklahoma. The seven participants I was honored to interview were: Suzy, Liza, Peter, Rina, Sheri, Ward, and Landon.

The following table provides an overview the language expert participants’ and their work.

Table 3.3 Demographics of Interviewees: Indigenous Language Revitalization Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Cultural/Racial Identity</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Years working on indigenous language revitalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suzy</td>
<td>Athabaskan</td>
<td>K-12 educator</td>
<td>Koyukuk, AK</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liza</td>
<td>Athabaskan</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>Fairbanks, AK</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Inupiat</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>Anchorage, AK</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheri</td>
<td>Alutiiq</td>
<td>High School Counselor</td>
<td>Anchorage, AK</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>High School, University, Community Work</td>
<td>Tahlequah, OK</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landon</td>
<td>White Non-Native</td>
<td>District level Administrator</td>
<td>Anchorage, AK</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td>Yup’ik</td>
<td>District level Admin. Indian Ed</td>
<td>Anchorage, AK</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Pseudonyms.
Suzy

Suzy is an Athabaskan educator and teacher trainer who hails from the village of Koyukuk in Alaska. Her work centers on delivering remote two-way lessons in Denaakk’e, the Koyukon Athabaskan language, for rural children in ten different villages. She teaches approximately 217 students of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District who are in 23 different classrooms learning traditional language (YKSD, 2018). She has been teaching for 17 years and is under the tutelage of Liza, her mother, in her work to create records of place names, memorial songs, stories and genealogy. Her keynote presentations at the Oklahoma Cherokee language training, IGNITE, supported Indigenous language revitalization efforts among those teachers (IGNITE, 2019). She has recently developed language workbooks and original curriculum to support the children who cannot access her video conferences. Suzy’s powerful Denaakk’e “Bird Songs” introduction was highlighted in the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Her advice to her people learning the language of Denaakk’e is “learn your language—it will help you with your own identity and self-esteem and communicating with your grandparents.

Liza

Liza, the greatly esteemed Athabaskan Alaskan elder, was the recipient of an honorary doctorate for her enormous work in documenting and teaching Denaakk’e, the Koyukon language, and the finalizing the publishing of the Athabaskan dictionary. She is known throughout Alaska through her work. She lives in her hometown village of Koyukuk, where she continues her work as a scholar and language warrior by documenting the names of the places in her village area of Koyukuk. Liza was inducted to the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame in 2016 (UAF, 2017). This interview will be conducted over Zoom as the village is restricted access under
current health mandates for Covid-19. Liza is the mother of Suzy, mentioned above. Liza grew up along the Koyukuk River in a traditional Athabaskan village childhood. She learned her language from storytellers, saw many of her close relatives succumb to Western epidemics, and learned traditional values and ways of living from her elders. When she moved to the university city of Fairbanks, she began her work with Dr. Michael Krauss on language preservation (UAF, 2017).

**Peter**

Peter has been a celebrated force in Alaska Native Education for more than 40 years. He is an Inupiat leader from the northwest city of Kotzebue. He earned several degrees in history, religion, and education. Peter has served as a teacher, curriculum developer, guest lecturer, councilman and advisor to corporations. One of his many areas of expertise is Alaskan political history. He taught and shared his expertise in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, ANSCA, which settled Indigenous land rights including both the land that would be used for subsistence, traditional “use and occupancy”, and the land that would be sacrificed (ANSCA, 1971). The importance of ANSCA cannot be overstated in describing Alaska’s political and economic landscape, “ANCSA is the most important legislation for Alaska since statehood. Its effects have been, and continue to be, felt by all the citizens of this state. Beyond our state, other countries and Indigenous groups around the world are carefully following the results of this historic document” (Ongtooguk, 2019.). Peter is a prodigious scholar and impressive spokesman. As a child he experienced the state-sanctioned trauma of removal from his community and placement in Oklahoma in a reeducation and assimilation boarding school. The sadness of interrupted Indigenous language acquisition and loss is particularly poignant in his stories.

Peter’s work is critical to this study because in addition to his sophisticated traditional storytelling gifts, he has developed Indigenous language programs, understands the historical
context of the state, knows most of the stakeholders at the university level in Anchorage, and has been highly successful in his leadership in both Indigenous spaces and white colonial spaces for many years. He is an expert on “all things Native”. He is also willing to support this research project with his academic and traditional knowledge.

Rina

Rina is the Senior Director at the Anchorage School District’s Title VI Indian Education program. Rina is a Yup’ik educator who has served on the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (Canfield, 2015). She has over 30 years of experience in work with Alaskan Indigenous education and services. She is dedicated to the success of Alaska Native youth. I have worked with her on Anchorage’s board that gives input to the superintendent, the Multicultural Education Concerns Advisory Committee (MECAC), and follow her work for Indigenous students’ achievement closely. As a member of a focus group, Rina would bring wisdom and vision that are needed to understand legal and contractual requirements for language programs and Title VI knowledge of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

Sheri

Sheri is an elder and an Anchorage school district community counselor. Sheri was born on Kodiak Island, Alaska to an Alutiiq mother and a U.S. Marine father, who was born in Illinois. Sheri is one of five kids raised on the island and was educated at St. Mary’s Catholic School and Kodiak High School. “After high school graduation I attended a CT&E school in Seattle, WA for dental assisting. Upon completion of that schooling, I attended UAF. My mother, my grandmother, my great-grandmother, etc. were all born on Afognak Island, just north of Kodiak. My mother’s father was from Wales, as was his father” (Reeves, 2020). Her grandfather was born on Afognak Island, as was his father before him. She describes her dad’s father’s parentage as more of a mystery. Sheri’s grandmother was the last generation to speak the Alutiiq
language, she never taught it down to her children. Her grandmother only had an 8th grade education and she was a multilingual culture bearer. She spoke English, Alutiiq, and Russian. Sheri moved to raise her two sons in Anchorage. She became a community volunteer and later went to work for the Anchorage School District as a Career Resource Advisor and is now an Indian Education Community Counselor.

**Ward**

Ward is a Cherokee Nation citizen, a Language Technology Specialist, an author, and a film producer. He is from a traditional community in Oklahoma. His master’s degree in education held an emphasis on both Native American students and Gifted and Talented students. Ward is a language revitalization warrior who believes firmly in the C.I. techniques and natural method acquisition concepts. The teacher training program he developed, IGNITE, is vital to the Cherokee Nation’s language projects and teacher development. I am humbled and fortunate to be a part of the IGNITE team of teacher trainers. In 2019 he was appointed to the Oklahoma State Department Education language advisory team. His philosophy of alignment of World languages and Indigenous languages is analogous to Anchorage’s format. For this study, Ward’s expertise in methodology and programs in addition to immersion will be valuable as will his work in development of competent teachers.

**Landon**

Landon serves as the Director of World Languages and Immersion Programs in Anchorage at the Anchorage School District. There are eight language programs in the district of over 48,000 students. He supervises programs that serve around 8,000 students. Landon wrote the grant that secured funding for the Yup’ik immersion program that began in 2018 at an Anchorage elementary school. Landon is a doctoral candidate and studies Indigenous Language Revitalization under Professor Serafin Coronel-Molina. Landon is an expert in the Anchorage
School District in program development and immersion methods. His insight will add to this study in explaining the landscape of the school district and how programs are initiated. He is an “allied other” in Indigenous education and is a mentor for many non-Natives in working respectfully in Indigenous spaces (Nicholas et al., 2018).

Data Collection

The interviews formed the core data for the qualitative portion of the study. Questions were formed around the following topics: curricular recommendations, delivery format desired, and culturally relevant pedagogy. The study interviewed seven language professionals from diverse institutions: elementary schools, high schools, universities, and district wide administrators. The interviews were focused on answering the following umbrella research question number two: What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska for a public high school Yup’ik Indigenous language program in Anchorage?

Research Instrument: Interviews

Table 3.4 Measure: Interview Questions and related R.Q.’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Related Research Question #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous language revitalization experts (N=7)</td>
<td>1. How do you see the role of public schools in Alaska Native language revitalization?</td>
<td>2. What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska for public high school Alaska Native language programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do you feel that there is a connection between public school roles and Alaska Native language revitalization?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What do you hope the younger generation of indigenous students learn about Alaskan languages and cultures in a public high school setting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What do you think an excellent program would include for Native students? For non-Native students?</td>
<td>2a. What would they like to see in an Alaska Native Language Program for world/foreign language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Could you describe an ideal learning environment within a public school setting? non-Native high school students?

**Interview Procedures:**

1. Develop criteria for participants (Alaskan Native Revitalization Leaders)
2. Develop interview protocol (script, open-ended research questions focused on RQ 2)
3. Work with a validity panel to refine the interview questions
4. Recruit participants and gain consent
5. Arrange date, time, and interview format (in person socially distant; phone; zoom)
6. Conduct interviews
7. Transcribe, code, and analyze
8. Write up findings

This study was conducted in varied Alaskan and North American spaces. I adhered to all regulations on mask-wearing and social distancing by conducting the study on virtual platforms and online surveys as was dictated by the pandemic. Importantly, in the study I tried hard to focus on Indigenous stakeholders in language and culture revitalization efforts. The Alaskan language experts and world language professionals were heard and honored as I tried to understand what is wanted for Indigenous language education in Anchorage’s secondary schools. I used recorded and transcribed Zoom sessions, and one recorded phone call, for the interviews and semi-structured conversations. In the following section, I detail how I planned for each interview.

**Procedure and Methodology**

I conducted a mixed methods research study interviews of adult language experts. The interviews were conducted with seven Native language revitalization leaders from Alaska or Oklahoma. I carried out interviews of approximately 60 minutes each via Zoom and phone as the pandemic required. I transcribed interviews and coded data inductively by developing codes and concepts as I read the data (Thomas 2006; Corbin and Strauss 1990) and used the tool MAXQDA. Then, I coded data by topics derived from my second research question. Finally, I
refined codes, themes, and work on data reduction. I examined patterns within and across data sources, as well as across participants.

**Table 3.5 Data sources, collection and procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Data</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>RQ's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (N=7)</td>
<td>86% Indigenous</td>
<td>1-1.5 hours</td>
<td>Feb-March 2021</td>
<td>Zoom/Phone</td>
<td>RQ #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14% non-Indigenous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mixed methods research is credited to John Creswell who discovered that mixed methods research could yield better data and greater insight than quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell found that there is a synergy that comes from using mixed methods procedures that look to narratives, focus groups and image data as well as quantitative data. Creswell (2018) writes that the methodology actually came into broad use in the 1980’s by educators, researchers in health sciences and sociologists and that the procedures are still developing and evolving (p.215). Although the name, mixed methods, sounds like a mere combination of the two concepts, Creswell (2018) cautions researchers to avoid analyzing both data types separately but rather to think of them as “integrated” (p.215). Looking at the data results in isolation will not be accurately applying the concept of mixed methods nor will it provide the fuller picture than an integrated analysis can. Mixed methods research requires “two forms of data integrated in the design analysis” which allows for a comparison between perspectives and contextualized measurements and “a more complete understanding of research problems and questions” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.216).

I chose mixed methods for my study in an effort to 1) gain that fuller picture and 2) to avoid the historical research methods that “positioned the cultures studied as the objectified and exotic” (Hall, 2020). The quantitative analyses served to establish numbers for students who
would participate in the programs while the qualitative components created an Alaskan contextualized and complex picture from Alaska’s Indigenous language experts.

Mixed methods research is always informed by theory or a conceptual framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.66). My study was grounded in Tribal Critical Theory (Brayboy, 2005) and LangCrit (Crump, 2014) to explain and understand the landscape of inequity and historical political context of Indigenous language programs in Anchorage’s high schools. Langcrit offers a lens on how languages are instruments of power and social reproduction and can be both offered and withheld as capital resources to the disadvantage of certain groups. “Languages have been socially produced and maintained. This involves looking at how power has come to be clustered around certain linguistic resources in certain spaces and exploring how this shapes what individuals can and cannot do in their everyday lives,” (Crump, 2014, p.209).

Tribal Critical Theory tenets as they relate to the role of story, “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430).

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, I organized topics that aligned with my main research questions but kept an open mind for themes and trends that I did not anticipate, in an effort to avoid prescriptive, biased methodologies that are associated with colonialism’s harmful research projects. This direction comes from Hall (2020) who describes decolonizing research as approaches that “share the goal of critiquing traditional, Western and deficit-based approaches to inquiry” (p. 5). Qualitative questions were included regarding participants’ lived experiences with language education and public schooling. There were difficult stories of boarding school trauma, distrust of the white educational systems, and anger toward researchers in the academy. TribalCrit founder Brayboy (2005) notes “While trust, responsibility and sovereignty
were supposed to be the guiding principles of Indian education, ‘appropriate’ education was that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo Values or ways of communication"(436). I prepared myself for this research by seeking an understanding of the historical language trauma and continued dominant culture’s colonization of education programs. I wanted to avoid the historical researchers’ pattern of extracting information and giving nothing back to the community (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020). This means that as a language activist, any meaningful research I did had to be aligned with the values, goals, and practices of the Alaska Native community.

The qualitative portion included the coding and analysis of seven interviews. Following the Zoom and phone conversations, I transcribed the interviews and used the software MAXQDA to support the coding. First, I coded all data sources inductively developing codes and concepts as I read the data (Thomas 2006; Corbin and Strauss 1990). Then, I coded data by topics derived from my research questions. Finally, I refined codes, themes, and worked on data reduction. I examined patterns within and across data sources, as well as across participants. I learned and used the qualitative analysis software, MaxQDA extensively. Table 3.5 shows the process of collapsing the topics that were most frequently mentioned in the interviews. I determined which terms and topics were most used by the participants and sought to organize them by themes. Then I use the power of MAXQDA to generate several reports showing who used the terms, where in the interview the terms appeared and what the contexts were. I cross references the reports by the participants regions and languages to see if there were patterns that would eliminate any of the topics from a consensus opinion or recommendation. This allowed the high-frequency topics that were consensus concepts to emerge under umbrella concepts that I was able to sort. This ensured that the study captured the data that was agreed
upon by all. In this way this study adheres to Indigenous values of collaboration and collective planning rather than competitive processes.

Table 3.6 Codes and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Coded segments</th>
<th>First Collapse</th>
<th>Final Collapsed Codes=3 Umbrella Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Codes=10</td>
<td>Cultural Codes= 5</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1 The Arts</strong> transfer Sacred Ancestral Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beading, Clothing, Paintings, Pottery, Storytelling, Song, Dance, Museums, Potlatches, Stomp dances, Ceremonies, Religion</td>
<td>Dance, Song, Storytelling, Religion, Ceremonies</td>
<td>Dance, Song, Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Codes =10</td>
<td>Media Codes = 5</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2 Technology</strong> Braids into Indigenous Cultural Identity and Worldviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television, Radio, Teaching Methods, Film, You Tube, Social Media, Public and Private Television, phone apps, public signage, Documentation of Languages</td>
<td>Social Media, Public and Private Television, Phone apps, Teaching Methods. Documentation</td>
<td>Modern Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Codes 10</td>
<td>Institutional Codes 5</td>
<td><strong>Theme 3 Language and Culture</strong> Anchor the Formation of Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics, Teachers, Clergy, Churches, Schools, Student Retention, History, Language, Curriculum, Textbooks</td>
<td>Teachers, Schools, Languages, Curriculum, Textbooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to data regarding Alaskan urban language programs. My study was not geared towards solutions and systems that suit the vast rural areas of Alaska, but the unique needs of urban Anchorage high school public school students. The study was also limited to secondary programs and did not look into elementary Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs, university programs, or Master Apprentice Programs (MAP). I limited my research to the gap in information surrounding traditional language programs for secondary students in Anchorage who are not coming into high school from immersion backgrounds.
Ethical Considerations

If a child learns her ancestral language, you have strengthened the links to countless generations—those who have passed, those present, and those to come (McCarty et al., 2018, 169).

The unethical extractive research practices of researchers who have come before me are cautionary lessons. I followed the advice of research scholars who remind researchers to include Indigenous stakeholders, protect and treat all data according to guidelines and avoid misappropriation (Hall, 2020). I am responsible for knowing the historical context of Indigenous language loss and to know and respect Indigenous values. Hall (2020) admonishes researchers to include the stakeholders when “developing and implementing focus groups” (p.112). I reviewed my plan and sought suggestions from the experts and colleagues in the Indigenous community on the best interview format for cultural sensitivity and safety.

The survey of high school students, interviews, and all data collection were all three conducted after an Institutional Review Board research approval was granted. In addition, I developed structures and practices for developing ethical guidelines by drawing on the many model studies of non-Indigenous allies (McCarty, 2018; Krauss 1998; Hall, 2020). The study received IRB approval from the University of San Francisco and from the Anchorage School District. I conducted the study according to the highest standards of ethical research as delineated in the IRB documents. I understood the responsibility of identity protection, data usage and ethical research methods.

Timeline

The study took place over the months of January 2021 to May 2021. The substantive data collection period was between January and March 2021. I analyzed the descriptive statistics, recorded, transcribed and coded the expert interviews. I was very interested in discovering what the degree of support for an Indigenous language program is and what folks
think it ought to include. The purpose of this project was to determine clearly what the Anchorage community wants in an Indigenous language program. I listened to and heard the voices of Indigenous language program experts in order to understand pedagogical expectations from the community for an education in Alaska Native languages in a high school setting. I sought quantifiable input from secondary school district students via a survey that asked if there was interest in taking Indigenous language classes, if students knew about jobs and other benefits inherent in knowing Alaskan languages, if students from Native language speaking environments preferred taking an Indigenous language or not. I tried to understand student perceptions regarding job and economic opportunities connected to Indigenous language courses. The catch-22 of Alaska Native language education is that many students do not consider or know to ask about Indigenous language classes. Without programs already in place, there is no perceived demand or opportunity for them. Further, there is a recently improved 2018 State of Alaska position of support for Alaska Native languages in Administrative Order No. 300 that is striving to:

“facilitate collaboration and coordination among the “ANLPAC”, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, the State university, State agencies, and other governmental, private, and nonprofit entities involved in Alaska Native languages to implement result-oriented options to promote Alaska Native languages in public schools and universities” (Walker, 2018).

However, most students do not know about the state’s mission, and so they don’t expect or request Indigenous languages when registering for classes. My ultimate hope is to align with Indigenous language experts, high school students, and the State of Alaska in its mission to “take steps to work actively to promote the survival and strengthening of Alaska Native languages, so that they shall thrive into the next century and beyond” (Walker, 2018).
This study is could reverse a catch-22; Alaska Native language classes don’t exist in Anchorage’s high schools, they are invisible in the community, so they are not requested by students in high school and continue to be absent from the offerings.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Overview

I'm so encouraged! The school districts wrote and submitted a grant (for federal funding for Indigenous language programs). Then out of the 40 that applied only five were actually awarded. It was six technically as one declined. And two of them were in Alaska, the other one is in the Yukon (Landon, 2021).

Indigenous language revitalization work in Alaska, as in other parts of the world, involves many smart and diligent players to advocate for funding and support for linguistic equity in public schools. This included two groups of stakeholders as participants in the study--high school students and language revitalization experts. This was a mixed methods study (conducted in English) to examine student demand for and interest in Alaska Native language programs in public high schools in Anchorage. It also sought to understand what Indigenous language experts believe a culturally responsive and relevant program in Alaskan language and culture should look like. The study was done to examine the key participants’ viewpoints, students and Indigenous language experts, on Alaska Native language programs in secondary schools with the goal of adding their voices to the existing body of literature. It also aimed to provide data advocating for Indigenous language and culture programs in Anchorage’s public high schools.

I used one quantitative survey of 80 high school students to gauge the demand for Alaska Native language programs among high school students. I surveyed both non-Native high school students and Native high school students. I also conducted interviews with seven Native language revitalization leaders to examine their views, beliefs, and recommendations about what public high school Indigenous language programs should include. I sought to examine what recommendations they have for culturally responsive approaches to language programs, as well as insights into curriculum and program models. This study took on two distinct focal points; it
examined the interests and perspectives of high school students and the advice of Indigenous language revitalization leaders.

The two-pronged study resulted in mutually validating findings that depict how the community perceives Alaska Native language programs in high schools in Anchorage. The quantitative findings revealed that most students, Native and non-Native, hold an interest in studying Alaskan languages. The research also showed that they are quite unaware of the rich benefits these languages will provide in terms of advanced education and employment opportunities. Likewise, the qualitative data from the Elders and language experts, showed there is great support available for Alaska Native language programs in public schools. The interview in this study revealed three driving forces the language experts believe must be included in any culturally relevant Indigenous language program; Indigenous arts, modern technology, and institutional knowledge of language’s impact on student identity formation are foundational components of an Indigenous language program’s curriculum.

The high school student and language professional adult data work together in quantitative and qualitative methods to fashion a clear picture of student interest in and language experts’ advocacy for Alaska Native language programs in Anchorage’s secondary schools. In terms of organization, I have structured the findings into two parts - first, I begin with the primarily quantitative results from the survey administered to high school students, followed by the qualitative interview data of language experts in part two.

**PART I: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

I hope learning native languages and cultures could be part of the languages in the school district (Student Survey, 2021).

This section examines the quantitative descriptive statistics from student surveys. In addition to the Likert scale questions on the survey, I included some open-ended questions for
the students to include their perspectives. Many of those comments are included in this study.

80 Anchorage public high school students responded to twenty questions, found in Appendix A, designed to address the study’s research question:

1. What is the level of demand for Alaska Native language programs among public high school students in Anchorage, Alaska?
   a. Do students want to take an Alaska Native language class? Are students (Native and non-Native) interested in taking Alaska Native language courses? And what languages do they want to take?
   b. What are Native and non-Native students’ perspectives on the benefits of studying Alaska Native languages and cultures (communication, education, employment, history, engaged citizenship)?
   c. Do students from varying demographic groups differ in their: (1) desire for Alaska Native language classes, and (2) perspective on the benefits of learning an Indigenous language.

**Student Subgroups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Students N=80</th>
<th>World Language students N=51</th>
<th>non-World Language students N=29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Native</td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Native</td>
<td>61 %</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for columns</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of all Students in study</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the demographic data generated, I was able to organize the student respondents into groups of Native and non-Native and also by students in World Language classes and students who were not. Then I calculated descriptive statistics on these populations to generate
a picture of interest and demand levels. Counselors, students, and their families know that admission requirements at many colleges are two to four years of high school World Language classes, so I looked at World Language students to understand the college bound typically and work bound populations viewpoints.

In Table 4.0 the study’s World Language student population shows 71% are non-Native World Language students and 29% are Alaska Native. This is important because it shows the viewpoints of students opting into language programs in order to prepare for college. The table also shows students who are not on track for college as indicated by not participating in World Language classes. This is significant information given that in varying degrees all of the groups in the study were interested in Alaska Native language programs. This is also valuable data because language revitalization efforts are not exclusively linked to college preparatory language courses and can offer benefits to both college bound and non-college bound students. This study gives voice to both communities of students.

Table 4.1 Alaska Native and non-Native students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count of Which category best describes your race/ ethnicity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 As described in the definition of terms, Alaska Native refers to indigenous populations and not persons who simply may have grown up in Alaska.
Table 4.1 shows the percentage of Alaska Native student respondents is at 39%, and the percentage of non-Native student respondents is 61%. I recruited a larger percentage of Alaska Native students than is representative in the greater student population to center their voices in the study. The district wide percentage of Alaska Native students is around 8% indigenous, and 13% for the schools in this study (ASD Overview, 2019). This numerical overrepresentation was done to elevate Alaska Native students and their interests in the responses and data. Both of these populations expressed a demand for and interest in Alaska Native language programs. The Indigenous students indicated greater overall interest than non-Native but both groups responded with interest.

World language students come from diverse backgrounds as shown in table 4.2. These groups often take languages to support their admission to institutions of higher education or because their counselors and parents have encouraged them to broaden their linguistic horizons. These are important to include because they show the broad range of students who want Alaska Native language programs and are taking other languages to serve requirements. Even while studying World Languages most of these students responded with interest in Alaska Native language programs.

**Table 4.2 World Language Students by Ethnicity Bivariate Distribution Table:**
Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of ethnic distribution of World Language students, with 35% White, 29% Alaska Native, 29% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, 6% African American/Black students, and 2% Hispanic/Latino. When I collapsed non-Native students into one category, they comprised 71% of the total, and Native students are 29% of the total. The 29% figure for Alaska Native students in World Languages is higher than the school district’s population of 8-12% depending on the year (ASD Overview, 2019). The Alaska Native student response percentage is similar to the category from Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Asian students. These results were taken from World Language programs in schools that are situated in spaces with less than 50% White students and large Pacific Islander populations.

Table 4.3 Gender of Participants Bivariate Distribution Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-spirit</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data shown in Table 4.5 indicates that 44% of all participants in the study identified as female, 56% as male, 2% students as two-spirit and 1% as non-binary. The larger male to female ratio is often seen in programs that have robust Asian language programs like Chinese and Japanese, as the one in which much of this study was conducted. There were no statistically different levels of demand based on gender.
Interest in Alaska Native languages

The World Language students’ demand for Alaska Native languages in Table 4.4, shows that 71% of World Language students hold some degree of interest, with 29% of students "not interested at all" in adding an Indigenous language to their language repertoire.

Table 4.4 World Language Student Interest

The study’s results among World Language students is important because it shows that there is significant interest and demand even among those already engaged in language studies. Additionally, these students are a substantial subset of high school students who are willing to take Alaskan languages if they had the opportunity. This data provided a positive answer to the research question, “Are Native and non-Native students interested in taking Alaska Native languages?”, and provides data that 21% are very interested. One World Language student noted the lack of opportunities to learn Indigenous languages, “It would be interesting to know how to speak any Alaskan Language because no one teaches it except for maybe people in villages and you can’t learn it on any language site” (Student Survey, 2021). The lack of language programs hinders Alaskan language revitalization efforts and limits student opportunities to enter beginning level programs in high school.

Among the students in the study who self-identified as Alaska Native, 84% expressed interest in taking an Alaskan language program as shown in Table 4.5. These are students who
may or may not be in World Language classes at the time of the study. Merely 16% of the Alaska Native students said they were not at all interested. This is a lower percentage of disinterest than the from World Language classes. This data answers Research Question 1a: Do students want to take an Alaska Native language class? Are students (Native and non-Native) interested in taking Alaska Native language courses, in the affirmative. In summary, 84% of Alaska Native students responded that they were interested in Alaskan languages, if they were made available, as did 71% of the World Language students. 55% of the Alaska Native students were “very interested”. This degree of student interest in a language program could reduce dropout rates of Indigenous students in the same way all high-interest school programs promote retention. Providing relevant language and culture programs to student lives would be a just and responsive curricular move that would positively impact Native and non-Native public school students.

During my whole life, which is not long, I’ve already had to endure the judgment of those who simply do not understand who I am and what my culture calls for. I’ve had my Native foods ridiculed and Native clothing appropriated by those who thought it was cute to simply dress like a Native, but not acknowledge the power they hold (Student Response, 2021).
Alaska Native students commented more frequently that non-Natives regarding the impact Indigenous language programs would have. One student said it clearly, “I really do hope Alaskan Native language do come available not only in the ASD district but other districts in Alaska. I hope it will educate future classes and make a difference the community” (Student Survey, 2021).

Table 4.5 shows the degree to which respondents were interested. This table specifically looks at Alaska Native students who responded to the survey. Their median response was “very
interested” category and the mode was also “very interested”. Alaska Native students are quite interested in learning about Alaska Native languages and cultures. One student participant wrote beautifully about their perspective in the open-ended question of the survey: “As an Alaska Native, learning a language that was used by my ancestors would make me feel closer to them and help me better understand myself and where I come from” (Student Survey, 2021). This student participant reflects the views of many Alaska Native students who want to know their heritage languages and cultures that existed before settler colonialism’s assimilation and erasure campaigns in Alaska.

This study looked at Native and non-Native students from the 9th-12th grades to understand the perspectives of secondary students and starting a language program such as an Alaskan language class. The mode of the data landed in the 11th grade category. It is significant that older students nearing the end of high school are still indicating interest in starting language programs.

One 12th grade biracial Two-Spirit student wrote thoughtful comments concerning Indigenous languages and high school: “I think our Native languages need to be incorporated in the schools. It seems as though we have adapted to western culture, but Western culture has not adapted to us” (Student Survey, 2021). This student is commenting on the assimilation that has erased languages from Alaskan peoples.
Table 4.6 Mode Participants’ Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The juniors, 11th graders, hail from the upper levels of high school, are more likely to show commitment to languages and understand the benefits of continuity in languages. These students are called “longevity” students on the study’s site. This is because they often take more than the recommended 2 years of a language. In terms of interest level indicated by the survey, 100% of the Seniors responded that they are interested in Alaskan language programs, 76% of the Juniors, 64% of the Sophomores and 60% of the Freshmen each expressed a desire to study languages from Alaska. The younger students may not have as much of an appreciation for Alaska Native languages as indicated by their lower interest level, but when the open response comments appeared, one freshman wrote poignantly, “Taking a class like this could benefit my personal goals for learning more of my own tribal Native customs and deepen my knowledge for different Native customs” (Student Survey, 2021).

**Benefits and Interest**

I do plan to become a high school history teacher in Alaska. Understanding these languages could help me become a better teacher (Student Survey, 2021).

Interest figures jumped when students considered college advantages related to Alaskan languages as is shown in table 4.7. 80% of all student respondents want Alaska Native language and culture programs when they learn there is a relationship to college admittance.
In fact, Indigenous languages, as prerequisites for admission, are gaining acceptance at prestigious universities across the country like Harvard and Yale (Berger & McCafferty, 2019). This data answers the research question on a demand for Indigenous languages for Native and non-Native student participants.

Students were less aware of the job opportunities that are currently available in the local Native corporations and more interested in college opportunities related to Alaskan languages. Only 53% knew that Alaskan languages are desired by Native corporations, who also desire such skills as cultural competency in Alaska’s cultures. In addition, non-Native corporations and the State of Alaska hire employees who are culturally competent in Alaska Native businesses. The opportunities are mutually beneficial for Native and non-Natives to understand Alaskan cultures. As jobs and job readiness are areas of major concern in the Anchorage School District and secondary education broadly, this knowledge gap is a prime area for growth and increased information dissemination to students, families, and the community.

Regarding the survey question 1c, which asks about student beliefs about the role of languages and engaged citizenship, 88% believe that knowing more about Alaska Native languages and cultures would make them more engaged citizens of Alaska. Student awareness of the link between civic engagement and languages was a powerful statement on their understanding of language and culture. What’s more, 94% connected Native languages and a
better understanding of Alaskan history. This speaks well of students' perceptions of the power of knowing a language.

Many who live in Anchorage have Native blood, and it would be amazing for those who aren't in touch with that part of them to be openly welcomed and be taught who they are, even if they're only a small sliver of Native. Teaching the language, culture, and beliefs helps teach people that different is ok (Student Survey, 2021).

Students shared numerous, wise, sophisticated, and thoughtful recommendations in the open-ended questions. One student participant asks that the adult educational leadership provide local languages with attention to the history and violence around Alaskan languages: “Alaska Native languages would be interesting and beneficial as long as the teacher acknowledges the history and trauma behind many Alaskan languages” (Student Survey, 2021).

This is the position of most of the Indigenous language experts and is in the scholarly literature on Indigenous language education and revitalization. Alaskan language trauma and history includes both Russian and U.S. political and religious projects (Dauenhauer, 1982; Haycox, 1984). Other students recommended classrooms include elders and Alaska Native speakers as part of the curriculum.

**Analysis and Theoretical Connections**

In this section I will analyze the quantitative findings in relation to the theory and scholars. Students who identified as Alaska Native showed greater interest, 84%, than the non-Native students in taking Alaska Native language courses. Alaska Native students’ higher interest reflects the importance of their identity formation through a culturally relevant language curriculum: Alaska Native students hold a higher stake in both linguistic rights and nation-to-nation treaty rights around language revitalization and education. (Jacob et.al., 2015). The student voices are supported by the academics in Indigenous language and cultural
revitalization work. For example, most students indicated that they desired language classes that reflected their Alaskan cultures. One student participant explained this in the free response section of the survey: “I think it would be really cool to speak a Native language. Hardly any of my family knows their language anymore and I wish we could be more connected with our culture” (Student Survey, 2021). Tribal Critical Theory explains the need students have to maintain a strong sense of their history and language, “In order to be successful as both academics and as Indigenous people, they must maintain a strong sense of their Indigenous identity as distinctive and as a source of pride (Brayboy, 2005, p.437).

The student survey results indicating low student understanding of benefits from languages is understood by the silence in schools regarding Alaska Native language speaker opportunities such as university admission and local jobs. According to Brayboy (2005) schools omit this information because they operate from a federal structure that is unsupportive of Native American students who experience, “issues of language shift and language loss, natural resources management, the lack of students graduating from colleges and universities, the overrepresentation of American Indians in special education...”(p.430). There are both Alaska Native students and non-Native in this survey who are ideal candidates for indigenous language and culture programs, and they would greatly benefit if programs were available. The data shows interest, colleges are welcoming indigenous scholarship, and the Anchorage community needs the skills.
PART II: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

There's a lot of value in our languages. It validates our language when a school honors the language and recognizes the indigenous people. You’re on the land of Indigenous people. And, having it spoken gives the students pride (Suzy, Interview, 2021).

This section of the chapter builds upon the ideas that Suzy eloquently raises about the inherent value of indigenous languages, and the role of honoring it especially on Native lands. Here, I present the qualitative findings from the interviews with seven leading Indigenous language experts on developing Indigenous language programs. The research questions guided the semi-structured interviews to focus on key elements for a culturally responsive Alaska Native language and culture program. Additionally, the participants also conveyed their perspectives and attitudes on the positive impact of pedagogically sound Indigenous language programs on students’ development and self-worth. Table 4.8 summarizes the language expert participants.

| Indigenous Language Experts | 1. Alaska Native (72%) N=5  
|                           | 2. Alaska, non-Native (14%) N=1  
|                           | 3. Oklahoma, Cherokee (14%) N=1  |

Research question number two guided this part of the study: (2) What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native language revitalization leaders for a public high school Alaska Native language program?

a. What would they like to see in a program like this for Alaska Native and non-Native high school students?

b. What recommendations do these leaders have for curricular approaches in how the Alaska Native language program is taught?
This second portion of this study complemented the youth perspectives by looking to the Elders and other adult leaders for understanding what is needed by the community. I organized the findings into three main sections describing key recommendations and perspectives from the interviews: (1) the central role of the arts in curriculum development; (2) the incorporation of technology and media in revitalization work; and (3) how Indigenous languages contribute to a strong sense of community pride and identity.

**The Arts as Sacred Ancestral Ways of Knowing in Indigenous Language Education**

*Specifically, for Indigenous kiddos teach all culture through art, and that kind of thing.* (Sheri, Interview, 2021).

In seven semi-structured interviews, Indigenous language and culture experts from Anchorage, Alaska and Tahlequah, Oklahoma emphasized that culturally responsive indigenous language and culture curriculum should be grounded in the arts. *These Indigenous leaders conveyed a strong belief the arts are central to a language and culture program for modern languages for both Native and non-Native students.*

The experts clearly and unanimously expressed that an excellent curriculum for high school programs must be centered on the arts. For example, Sheri strongly advocated for using indigenous arts like paintings in any language program to connect students with their cultural heritage; Liza urged language program developers to include song and dance; Suzy emphasized the use of beading to instill an indigenous sense of quiet attention and follow-through. This strong arts focus was an interesting element that amplified and acted in concert with key Indigenous education scholars’ strong emphasis on land and relationship to the land in language and culture classes (Styres, 2018). In fact, every expert interviewed for this study emphasized recommendations for building a rich foundation in the arts in Alaska Native language and culture curriculum. Three arts focus areas emerged from the leaders’ recommendations:
programs must include dance, song, and storytelling. Alaska Native language experts explained that dance, song, and storytelling relate to culture and identity and are language acquisition tools. Additionally, these tools are particularly appropriate because they are holistic and efficient. Further, there are already ongoing well-developed practices in teaching these three elements of the arts, which vary from tribe to tribe.

**Dance is Indigenized Curriculum**

The language is transmitted from one generation to the next through song and dance (Peter, Interview, 2021).

*The role of dance is integral to the formation of language and identity for Alaska Native people.* Each tribe has ceremonial dances and through expressive dances culture and language are passed down from one generation to the next. The sacredness of the dance, like Alaska Native songs and storytelling, brings traditional reverence into communal gatherings. Indeed, dances are always showcased at Alaska Native conventions such as the statewide annual AFN (Alaska Federation of Natives) convention. Since Alaska Native people value and respect dance greatly as an essential expression and demonstration of culture and history, Elders and language experts recommend its inclusion in a culturally relevant language curriculum.

One study participant, Peter, is a master teacher, revered professor of Alaska Native Studies, and teaches a local university. He is 64 years old and identifies as having tribal affiliation of a Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB,) from Bering Straits Native Corporation, culturally and traditionally Nome Eskimo, and is a Kotzebue IRA Council member. He raises the role of dance in response to questions about how languages were traditionally acquired by children and maintained in his hometown community. Specifically, he described the conveyance of language and culture in and through the dances: “The language is transmitted from one generation to the
next through song and dance - actually all the way through, like until the 60s this is how it was done in my village.”

Enculturated gender identities also play a critical role in dance and language. The ritual of dance also connects the men together as a community. In a conversation about the role of dance in shaping identity, Peter mentioned that in one of the most traumatic times in his life he was sent outside of Alaska as a small boy to become “re-educated” and linguistically “assimilated.” At this time, he held fast to his Alaska Native values and ideas. Even as his culture was dismissed disparaged by white teachers and the textbooks as uncivilized, he looked around the white community near the boarding school and saw no men dancing at celebrations. Though the schools tried to teach him that the dominant culture was more advanced than his own, he knew that “at least his people had a men’s dance.” Peter’s childhood understanding of the value in Alaska Native dances and the cultural sophistication inherent in dance supported his identity, cultural connection and self-esteem even during his traumatic boarding school English assimilation projects.

Another elder, Sheri also highlighted the sacred value of the arts, and dance in particular. Sheri is an Alutiiq elder from the Kodiak island of Afognak. Sheri identifies as a bicultural Alutiiq and white woman. She described the English-only schools on her islands as simultaneously empowering for her as a member of the white community and subtractive as a speaker of the Alutiiq language because she lost the artistic traditions of dance, along with sacred songs and stories. The schools brought an insidious hegemony: her people needed the skills of the U.S. federal schools to survive, but her people also lost parts of their own knowledge systems because of the schools’ invasion into the center of childhood and disruption of the existing ways of teaching and learning through dance.
Not surprisingly, Sheri also mentioned that her cultural dance was lost or forgotten for a time following the U.S. acquisition of Alaska. This was a source of great concern for the tribal elders. Lost stories and memories of the cultural dance served to advance English language assimilation projects because transmission of language is enhanced through Alaska Native dances as Peter explained. Fortunately, for Sheri’s people, the tribal community was able to regain their traditional dance along with language aspects therein. Sheri holds a strong belief in the role of all of the arts as fundamental to Indigenous curriculum. She turned 70 years old this year and as an elder, spoke of an urgency in cultural and linguistic revitalization. When describing the importance of Afognak Island history and the “lost dances,” she elaborated on the story. After many years of Western colonization and cultural erasure projects, on her hometown island of Afognak, people had forgotten their regional dance. This knowledge and memories of dance, a critical cultural element, would have remained tragically lost if not for a few of the Elders who worked hard to resurrect the dance. Fortunately, the Elders remembered and worked to resurrect the Alutiiq dance using historical documents. After reestablishing the validity and credibility of the Alutiiq dance, they began teaching it once again. Thereafter, great interest arose, and the forgotten Alutiiq Afognak Island dance was revived. Now, Afognak people can dance this in ceremonies and gatherings. The dance was revitalized as were the language elements held by dance. Sheri spoke with great emotion when she said:

> It is that kind of all-encompassing and the dance, we have the dance, the dance was dead. I mean there was no dance. So, we had to go back and resurrect it, ask people that knew us back in the day that had kept records, you know, and recognize that that was our dance (Sheri, Interview, 2021).

When Alaska Native people talk about dances—a frequent topic among culture and language teachers—pride and cultural identity are central to the conversation. People know
which dances are particular to which tribes. These are respected as cultural treasures. The language dance connection is a powerful reminder that while choreographed storytelling dance emerges in many cultures—including, for example, Western ballet, Indonesian Wayang puppet theater, and Japanese Kabuki—there is a particular poignancy, cultural weight, and power in the dances of people whose languages are in jeopardy. Dance is elevated to a critical role: a powerful force of language revitalization and cultural survival. This explains why dance is important enough to Alaska Native language experts to recommend it as primary in a language curriculum.

**Song is Indigenized Curriculum**

You know it's more than just a vocabulary you try to teach so that students can converse, and they can ask and answer questions they can sing songs they can tell stories (Suzy, Interview, 2021).

In addition to dance, many language experts described the significance of musical arts, particularly song, in an Indigenous language and culture program. Songs are essential to indigeneity and language revitalization. Study participant Suzy said that “one of the reasons that a lot of people are wanting to learn their language is because one they want to introduce themselves in a public setting and so they need to sing their traditional songs.” Song and self-introductions are linked in Alaska Native epistemologies. Music and self-introductions are important in all language classes, which often begin with self-introductions, and particularly relevant in Indigenous languages that have identity, song and introductions interwoven.

Ward is also among those who recommend songs in Indigenous language curriculum. He is educated as a linguist, a pedagogy and methodology teacher-trainer, and a classroom educator. He describes himself as a 48-year-old citizen of the Cherokee nation (in Oklahoma) whose work “is to help our language instructors be better prepared to revitalize and save our language and pass our language on.” As a teacher-trainer, he develops teachers so that they can
guide their students to higher levels of proficiency in the Cherokee language. Ward comments on the role of song in retention of lengthy verb dominant languages like Cherokee that are often difficult to remember: “When we learn the songs in Cherokee one of the side effects is the nice bridge between comprehension and production, because they (students) can produce when they're singing, they could remember” (Ward, Interview, 2021)

Ward praises the effectiveness of song in retention of words. His pedagogical background in Comprehensible Input (Krashen, 2017) methodology supports song as an excellent source of compelling input when the learner understands the meaning of the lyrics therefore song, and dance, scaffold each other as elements of input. Ward lives his positions on song and dance as relevant language curriculum, as he participates in Cherokee stomp dances, songs, and storytelling. He is not a heritage speaker of Cherokee, but he has become a highly proficient Cherokee speaker through these elements. In raising his family, he said that his own child is singing, dancing, and storytelling toward Cherokee and English bilingualism. Ward holds that song facilitates both cultural and language acquisition. He is convinced of the acquisition process as well as the cultural development achieved in music. “Yeah, it's really been fascinating to see some of these things come out. What causes acquisition? What facilitates acquisition? Yeah, it's music.” It is commonly understood among language teachers that songs facilitate accent improvement and cadence for second language acquisition. Ward offers an understanding of the complex role of song in Indigenous spaces, fusing culture with language while expediting retention. In this way, song accelerates all of his goals as a teacher and pedagogue for revitalizing language in the Cherokee community. Today, he works with elders to translate and transcribe songs into English and Cherokee so that there are Comprehensible Input versions of the songs for curriculum.
Ward’s perspectives are particularly valuable for this study because they point toward fundamental elements to teaching both language and culture in a public-school setting. Ward works to develop public school teachers and understands how to transition language teaching from traditional spaces to public institutions. His work serves as one model for successful and culturally responsive language instruction.

Like dance and storytelling, song among Alaska Native tribes is sacred and unique to each tribe. Athabaskan language elder Liza discussed this point in her interview. Liza is 83 years old, a Koyukon Athabascan and a native speaker of the central dialect of the Koyukon language, Denaakk’e. One of her noted accomplishments was the codification of the Athabaskan language dictionary in 2000 after 20 years of work with many Elders and language experts. She is highly recognized as an Alaskan treasure for her knowledge and work. She was recently given a Woman of the Year Award4 and gave a speech regarding her life’s work: “Life was changing so fast when more and more white people came to our village. By the time my children were born, everyone was starting to speak English. I had a strong passion that I wanted to preserve what I knew as a child.”

Liza advocates using song and song’s correlated gestures from the time children begin learning a language until they are very advanced. She is a celebrated expert in language and teaching. She urges program developers to consult with parents and tribal members before teaching an Alaska Native tribe’s song, dance, or story to show respect for the sacredness of each of these arts while incorporating them in classroom learning. Since Alaska has nearly 230 tribes with culturally unique songs and Anchorage is a crossroads for many tribes, this recommendation from Liza is of great value in developing a public school curriculum that

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4 Pseudonym for award.
respects and meets the needs of the Alaska Native community. Her perspective raises the
importance of recognizing the challenges of bringing the sacredness and power of Alaska Native
people’s art traditions into an institutional environment that has historically failed to respect
these cultural treasures.

**Storytelling is Indigenized Curriculum**

“It's slow, sometimes I say. they're not making much progress, but then they go around
surprise you, and tell a story (Suzy, Interview, 2021).

Vocal and performing arts in storytelling convey language and culture in traditional
cultures. This is still a powerful tool in Alaska Native cultures; storytelling is a performing art.

Language expert enthusiastically voiced that storytelling is fundamental to a good language
program. The skills and culture around stories are tribe specific as are the roles adults and
children play in the experience. Elders and language experts agree that performing storytelling
demands attention to cultural values, mores and beliefs.

Suzy is the Native language coordinator for Yukon Koyukuk school district. She has been
with them nearly 20 years. When asked about her work, she describes her role precisely and
succinctly: “I'm a teacher. I teach. To 20 different classrooms.” Her perspective on storytelling in
the language curriculum is a powerful reminder of the interconnection between language and
culture. “I guess that goes into the worldview, so languages have different worldviews, so this is
like teaching students, our belief system and the traditional stories of long ago, and how those
stories impact the world today. So, through language it’s not only just language it's also teaching
the culture.”

Other experts agree on the role of storytelling in language and cultural education.
Alaska Native Studies scholar-professor Peter described the year 1980 as the year his tribal
language was devastated by the arrival of television. “In the villages, entertainment, before T.V.
was still at the gym, basketball, the storytelling was in the cycle and speaking English was second.” Peter has performed numerous public storytelling events, to the delight of YouTube viewers and house audiences. His notable expertise in storytelling is derived from both his Indigenous upbringing and his adult academic professional work as a lecturer. He understands the Inuit culture and structure of storytelling. It was not an easily acquired ability, given the pressure from the U.S. government to erasure the Inupiaq language. “In Nome we were punished for speaking the Alaska Native language. However, the St. Lawrence Island kids had limited English and were fluent in Siberian Yup’ik. They tell embarrassing stories about themselves. And this was culturally correct.” The ability to tell stories in which the teller can tell self-deprecating vignettes is considered sophisticated and desirable in a story. Peter saw the St. Lawrence Island students were strongly connected to their culture because of this storytelling strategy.

Peter does not consider himself a speaker of his tribe’s language though he understands it and is a gifted communicator. His language acquisition phases were interrupted when he was a small boy by his father’s job transfer to Japan, the death of his mother after returning to the United States, and subsequent traumatic boarding school experiences outside of Alaska. He finally returned to his hometown, Nome, in northwestern Alaska in his late teens and discovered that English had replaced the local language of Inupiaq. He said, “Once the television came to Nome that was the revolution in language in 1980. That is the ‘cultural-language’ revolution.” In spite of the lack of exposure to Inupiaq during formative years, he has become one of the most successful storytellers from the community. His stories bring the culture to well attended programs in large venues in Anchorage. Storytelling links him to his traditional community and culture even when he is using the colonizers’ language.
The national organization of foreign language teachers is called ACTFL, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. It is made up of over 13,000 members and supports best current practices for teaching and learning world languages (ACTFL, 2021). This organization produces volumes of research and teaching guides for the nation’s world language teachers. In recent years ACTFL has awarded its highest honor, Teacher of the Year, to teachers who are using Storytelling as a method of teaching (ACTFL, 2018). The efficacy of storytelling in language acquisition, retention and proficiency is well known in ACTFL circles and recognized in the organization in the last 15 years. Indigenous communities have tapped into the power of storytelling for millennia.

Dances, songs, and storytelling are art forms that create culturally aware proficient speakers of Indigenous languages. Wisely, Liza reminds educators to “learn how they [Alaska Natives] live before teaching any material and discuss the dances with the parents first.” With these cautions in place, experts tell us that the arts are foundational in programs that reflect the cultures and languages being taught. Though each of these vehicles of language transmission are considered cultural treasures and require an institutional awareness of place and people, the experts all recommend them as foundations for curriculum development. Indigenous experts have stated this repeatedly; it is a key finding from their interviews in this study.

**Braiding Technology into Indigenous Language Education**

And so Maori regained that place of importance. So, until we can create media until we can create all these things that you could normally do in English, and do it in our indigenous language instead (through media and technology). To me, that’s a very vital piece that’s completely missing from our efforts (Ward, Interview, 2021).

A key finding about what should be included in an Alaska Native language program is the fusion of ancient cultural practices and modern technology; Indigenous languages leaders
emphatically shared that educators must use both simultaneously, and understand that they are not mutually exclusive.

The interview participants (language experts) strongly recommended that culturally relevant Indigenous language programs must include a wide range of content from traditional arts to modern technological tools (and back again from modern technology to the traditional arts). The participants spoke about this range in great detail and made many specific recommendations for technology and media. At one end of the spectrum lie the recommendations for ancient dances, songs, and stories and at the other end is social media, online classes, and all manner of video broadcasts. Indigenous language experts believe that these recommendations for Indigenous language and culture revitalization are necessary for a successful, place-based program. Decolonizing and indigenizing language education does not mean striving for a precolonial language and cultural education. Languages and cultures are dynamic and evolving, are not fossilized, and do not exist in museums so there is no reason for avoiding contemporary tools in revitalization programs for language technology, communication, language acquisition and documentation (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016, p. 270). Landon, the lead developer of the Yup’ik immersion program in Anchorage, offered this message on technology in Indigenous language programs. “It’s not looking at Native people and languages as an artifact or as historical figures, but as a part of who they are today. It’s experiential” (Landon, Interview, 2021).

The experts in this study recommend a pedagogy that blends Indigenous wisdom and contemporary tools for effective programs. For example, Ward, the coordinator for teacher development of the Cherokee Nation, passionately supported this idea. He described the links between the Maori language revitalization success and mass media like television. He also said the level of integration in podcasts, radio and other mass media that the Maori have achieved is
required for his own language. Ward advocates tech inclusion for all language revitalization programs. Ward feels that without mass media and social media in Cherokee, the Cherokee language will not achieve full restoration. Ward added reference to the revitalized Hawaiian language, now used in television, social media, and on radio. These kinds of technology and media are large influencers in the revitalization of languages. Ward believes that the same things that promote English language, podcasts, YouTube, and popular social media platforms of the moment like TikTok, must be ubiquitously done in indigenous languages by people of all ages for the best chance of revitalization. He is trying to spread this idea among his teachers and colleagues. “I also feel like we're also missing media in language. Our language is not going to be revitalized until we can create media, that which you could normally do in English, in our Indigenous language instead.”

Peter shares this position on language transmission methods rooted in technology and media. He hails from northwestern Alaska and has worked at the university level for more than 30 years. He saw the power of the media convert his entire community to English only in a very short time. “This is all before TV. Once the television came to Nome that was the revolution in language. TV in 1980. That was the ‘cultural-language’ revolution, in rural Alaska, as rapid levels of television suddenly, without any preparation, any discussions or what they would show. English became the language.” Harnessing media and technology can reverse language loss and facilitate revitalization. The converse is also true; ignoring the role of media and technology in language transmission can exacerbate language loss.

Online courses are gaining acceptance and traction, particularly as internet access throughout the state of Alaska becomes more available. Moreover, the pandemic of 2020 accelerated that process. Suzy delivers Indigenous language classes to twenty rural classes each week. She depends greatly on her tech. skills and the internet for her programs. Her students
are very young and still use technology for language acquisition. Her recommendation for teachers and professionals leans toward those who are technologically advanced:

I think it is important to have somebody with technical skills... I teach remotely. Oh, the kindergarteners, the students, you know would have their computers, where they can go online and create their material and send it back to you. So, they dial into my classes, my video conference classes and the other one. Others want to dial in, but I told them, they have to write to our superintendent to get permission (Suzy, Interview, 2021)

Anchorage school district’s world language coordinator Landon expresses perspectives in concurrence with Suzy’s, adding comments on the power of technology to support struggling students and families in a pandemic. Immersion language programs in Anchorage require family commitments that can be unwieldy at best and unworkable at worst. Families must not only provide their own transportation, but also must offer parental volunteer hours, involvement, and support for the language immersion community. In the marginalized communities these are particularly difficult challenges for children in immersion programs. Technology helps level the playing field for these children and offers support in equity. “You know, sometimes limited transportation, challenging housing. We provided those Wi-Fi hotspots for families so that they could access the curriculum and we made connections and continue those connections with families” (Landon, Interview, 2021). In a state like Alaska, even without a global pandemic, online classes and distance delivery are not going away. Families will always need accommodations so technology will be employed. Indigenous language programs will need to include technology to stay relevant and successful.

All of the language experts working directly in schools described teacher shortages. Given the enormous roadblocks in pedagogical training, statewide certification, and credentialization of first speakers who are often elders, finding teachers who are Indigenous and
native speakers into classrooms is a massive and urgent challenge. One vehicle for language delivery, online learning, is emerging as a partial, if temporary, solution. Online learning cannot replace the warmth and nuanced instruction that a master teacher can offer in person. However, online teaching can reach large numbers of new speakers in many geographic locations to establish a base of teachers. Still, people are skeptical of technology. It is not always welcome. Alaskan elders described the traditional relationship between learning and experience as very close and personal. Technology in traditional teaching and learning as well as in modern classrooms lacks the human touch that is a part of Indigenous values. Distance learning is inherently remote, in both the literal and metaphorical sense. [Add a transition to this next quote]

“The accrued knowledge associated with hunting caribou, he explained that in those days the relationship between the hunter and the hunted was much more intimate than it is now. With the intervention of modern technology, the knowledge associated with that symbiotic relationship is slowly being eroded” (Barnhardt & Kawagoe, 2005, p. 9).

Still, there is a time pressure that may temporarily override these concerns. There are so few Indigenous teachers to do the language work and so many people who need the language. Ward speaks of the dire circumstances in Oklahoma where universities are cutting language education programs as there are not enough teachers entering. “Our state is hurting for people, entering teaching professions for languages. We don’t have enough. Matter of fact, most universities in our state have closed their language education programs, because they don’t have enough people” (Ward, Interview, 2021).

Landon directs and leads an enormous project; the Yup’ik immersion program is in a large district with 43,000 students including 8,000 Alaska Native students, it is grant funded and is one component of many under the director’s care. The director recruits and trains the
teachers for eight comprehensive high school language programs, seven immersion schools, more than 15 middle schools. He is an expert in world language teacher recruitment, training and retention. The director said that the process for getting Indigenous-first speaker-teachers in classrooms is restrictive to the point of obstruction.

“So, say you're a native speaker of Yup’ik, 50 years old, but you never went to college. Or you are a Native speaker of Inupiaq, not only a speaker, but you are literate—you can read and write in Inupiaq. The District can only say ‘Oh, you don't have a bachelor's degree... Never mind.’ That’s not cool. That’s what we do. It's a huge roadblock.”

(Landon, Interview, 2021)

This is the current slow state of Indigenous teacher certification. The decline in language teachers is particularly dangerous for Indigenous languages because they are on the brink of extinction. Online delivery in these cases could bolster the student-to-teacher ratio and support the revitalization of languages until there are adequate numbers of teachers in the hiring pools for face-to-face programs. Technology can be used to fill in the gaps (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016).

In a digital world that is moving data faster and more smoothly every year, technology can catalogue and facilitate saving the languages whose first language speakers are aging and departing. The work of digitizing stories and cementing history in an acceptable and culturally appropriate orthography is much more efficient in this digital age than a generation ago. Digital transcriptions from recordings are now seamless in many languages and becoming stronger every year; this factor alone facilitates documentation and distribution of a language. These are good reasons language experts are suggesting the addition of technology to the list of important factors in language programs. Languages and cultures expand beyond the limits of printed material, and debates around the best orthography will continue. Nevertheless, scholars and
teachers advocate for technology in Indigenous language programs because they recognize that despite their flaws and growth points, current language tech tools clearly enhance documentation, dissemination, and accessibility.

**Cultural Identity, Worldviews and Indigenous Languages**

If we can get to the kids, then we can get to the families, then we can get to the communities, then we can get to the pride (Sheri, Interview, 2021).

Indigenous language experts interviewed in this study became very intense and deliberate when explaining their views on the formation of identity and dignity through languages. Recounting their experiences with language and identity was very personal and emotionally evocative for most of the study’s participants. Some were proud to have learned their languages. Some expressed shame and regret that they had not. Both perspectives revealed a deep love for their heritage language and culture. Each was very aware of the role language played in their own formation of identity and cultural pride. From their hearts, they shared their perspectives on how language knowledge creates a deep sense of cultural pride and self-worth. A few of the interview participants recounted the losses and traumas of historic language erasure projects. Two of the participants, Sheri and Ward, specifically shared their views on Pratt’s infamous Carlisle Native American (mis)education slogan, popular during violent U.S assimilation projects: “Kill the Indian and save the man” (Grande, 2004). The participants in my study maintain that languages and cultures are the most powerful forces in defining a person and fostering self-esteem.

Peter worked as a professor of Native Studies for much of his adult life. But when he was a boy, he remembers a division between the Alaska Native children who could speak their languages and those who could not. Some children had escaped the brutal linguicide (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 2009) tactics and maintained their languages. They were envied by those who no
longer could speak their mother tongues. They not only had their language, said Peter, but also knew what was culturally appropriate for banter and conversation. “In Nome we were punished for speaking Alaska Native language! However, St. Lawrence Island kids had limited English and were fluent in Siberian Yup’ik. They tell embarrassing stories about themselves which are culturally right on. They were telling stories. And then the speakers of Yup’ik well that was the next level, really the next level” (Peter, Interview, 2021).

Language reflects the core of a culture and there is a strong connection between fluency in language and social skill. This was evident to the experts as children. They spoke about how they admired their peers who knew how to use self-deprecating humor and storytelling. This entrance to “in community” was made possible by language, cultural savvy, and societal inclusion. Language proficiency is a form of social capital that buys respect, self-esteem and a sense of identity. I heard Cherokee Nation Elders speak similarly about “put-downs” during my work with them in Oklahoma. I was taught that self-deprecating comments and humor were signs of acceptance, culturally appropriate, and not disrespectful. There is great pride in the skillful usage of language.

Suzy voiced the link between languages and identity and pride. She works with 20 linguistically diverse communities in rural Alaska through online education. She preserves songs, builds curriculum and teaches all year long. Her words offer a clear position on identity and language. “There’s a lot of value in our languages. It validates our language when a school honors the language and recognizes the Indigenous people—you’re on the land of Indigenous people. And having it spoken also gives the student self-identity for them to recognize that this is, this is my language” (Suzy, Interview, 2021). Suzy’s life’s work has been to bring Athabaskan languages to remote villages, primarily over a distance model in recent years. She incorporates and lives all of the findings in this study. In her daily work, she teaches sacred songs, dances and
stories. She uses multiple tech tools to deliver online classes, and she teaches culturally relevant, Indigenous curriculum to bring a sense of pride and belonging to her students. Her depiction of the core values driving her is one of decolonization. “So, then I'm not only teaching the students the animal name, but also teaching the beliefs about it. That goes into the worldview, so languages have different worldviews. So, this is like teaching students our belief system. So, through language it's not only just language it's also teaching the culture” (Interview, Suzy, 2021). She teaches other important cultural touchstones through birdsongs, sewing classes, tanning workshops and canning projects. Suzy walked the path that she is advocating by learning her language as an adult. Suzy’s comment regarding world views and belief systems beautifully answers the research question on the perspectives of Indigenous language experts. Suzy’s pedagogy demonstrates Alaska Native values of respect for holistic knowledge, for elders, the land, and relationships. “For many Native educators, a culturally responsive (science) curriculum has to do with their passion for making cultural knowledge, language and values a prominent part of the schooling system” (Barnhardt & Kawagoe, 2005, p. 8).

**Discussion and Theoretical Connections**

In this section, I discuss my analysis of the qualitative findings in relation to the literature and theoretical frameworks in my study. I will examine how each of the three major findings connect with (or disconnect from), overlap, and contribute to the scholarship in the field. I organized my analysis as follows: (1) the role of the arts in Indigenous language education, with a focus on dance, song, and storytelling; (2) Technology as blending with the arts for Indigenous language revitalization; and (3) the role of Indigenous language in cultural pride and Identity.
Critical theorist Brayboy (2005), author of TribalCrit, exhorts American Indian students to “reject the call for assimilation in educational institutions” (p. 437). This is advice for Indigenous students who are in public schools to be successful in public school spaces and also maintain their cultural integrity and linguistic heritage. This advice can also be powerful guidance for schools to attend to cultural knowledge as well as Western academics in Alaska Native language programs. The intersection of both systems are necessary in an Alaska Native language education that is both culturally responsive and situated in Western model schools. Brayboy maintains that when participating in institutions such as public schools, “Indigenous people must maintain a strong sense of their Indigenous identity as distinctive and as a source of pride” (p. 437). Brayboy’s TribalCrit speaks to historic settler colonialism goals, capitalism, and hegemonic policies continuing to impact language revitalization efforts; US. policies are, “intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation” (p.429). In addition to the dark truth of schools and language erasure, TribalCrit also offers hope for a transformed institutional picture: “knowledge learned in school can be used in conjunction with tribal knowledge toward social justice for these communities (p.435). Brayboy (2005) describes institutional education spaces where Indigenous languages and cultures, in combination with western knowledge, are powerful, respected and hold influence. Defining one’s place is associated with power. Schools that attempt pedagogically sound Alaska Native language programs will need to draw on TribalCrit theory to build programs.

The findings from this study align with the existing scholarly literature (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2004; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Smith et al., 2018). The key scholars in Indigenous language and culture education hold aligned perspectives on the importance of centering the arts in an Indigenous language program, particularly dance, song, and storytelling. This pedagogical focus represents a decolonizing and indigenizing step and a departure from current
technology- and print-focused mainstream education. The message is consistent among the language experts in Alaska and Oklahoma as well. McCarty and Nicholas (2014) recommend that “songs, dances, and ceremonies are key pedagogic practices” (p.118).

**Discussion of Findings on The Arts as Sacred Ways of Knowing**

Wherever there is a situation of domination and subordination between any two groups, whatever their color or religion, this will be reflected in the language relationship: one language dominating the other. —wa Thiong’o (2011, p. 244)

Indigenous language revitalization scholars give voice to the importance of dance, song, and storytelling as components of language and culture education. Three key scholars—Dr. Sandy Grande, Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Dr. Teresa McCarty—write their positions on the arts in Indigenous curriculum. They are among the most prominent Indigenous education and decolonization experts whose collective voices reflect the front of the decolonizing education movement (Grande, 2004; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Smith et al., 2018).

Dr. Sandy Grande (2004), author of the foundational text *Red Pedagogy*, writes that there are knowledge foundations that exist outside of the print and text media which dominate Western academic culture but not Indigenous epistemologies. Dance, as a medium, offers meaning that is pedagogically important to traditional cultures. It is a symbol of cultural ideologies that carries meaning and offers’ expressions of meaning that are non-textually based, dance, ceremony, song” (Grande, 2004, p.82). Like Alaska Native Elders Liza, Sheri and Peter, Grande (2004) notes that Western reformers attempted to eliminate language and culture through villainizing Indigenous dances. Westerners reframed dances as blocks to assimilation, immoral, and “sacilegious” (p.130). Western perceptions of dance, song and storytelling were components of settler colonization projects that accelerated the loss of languages. Dr. Grande holds that revitalization of languages includes understanding Indigenous ontology in the arts of
dance, song, and storytelling: “Red pedagogy is historically grounded in local and tribal narratives, intellectually informed by ancestral ways of knowing” (Grande, 2004, p.35).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2018), New Zealand professor of decolonizing methodologies, created a roadmap for decolonizing education in her collection of writings, Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education. Sandra Styres (2019) is a contributing author who writes that the arts are powerful tools for keeping traditional knowledge such as languages alive. (Styres, 2019). She describes the connections between spiritual and physical awareness and memories of culture. Through the arts people are bound to their history and place, “ancient knowledge that are (re)membered and embodied experiences forming deeply intimate and spiritual expressions of our connections to Land” (Smith et al., 2018, p. 27).

American Indigenous scholar Dr. Teresa McCarty, a professor in the UCLA American Indian Studies department, works in linguistic and educational equity and Indigenous studies. Dr. McCarty describes the rich relationship between the arts and language revitalization in her piece on the responsibilities schools have in language revitalization (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). McCarty speaks to the teaching and learning practices of Mohawk people and offers the description of dance and song as “holistic and experiential learning” (p.118).

The findings from this study’s interview transcripts align with the existing scholarly literature from Grande, Smith, and McCarty. The key scholars in Indigenous language and culture education hold aligned perspectives on the importance of centering the arts in an Indigenous language program, particularly dance, song, and storytelling. This pedagogical focus represents a decolonizing and indigenizing step and a departure from current technology- and print-focused mainstream education. The message is consistent among the language experts in Alaska and Oklahoma as well. McCarty and Nicholas (2014) recommend that “songs, dances, and ceremonies are key pedagogic practices” (p.118).
Additionally, Tribal Critical Theory (Brayboy, 2005), or TribalCrit, aligns with the expert recommendations and perspectives on the central role of the arts in language and culture education. “TribalCrit emerges from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and is rooted in the multiple, nuanced, and historically- and geographically-located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 427). TribalCrit is one offshoot of Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1995) that specifically gives attention to the systemic injustices surrounding particular experiences of the colonized Indigenous. Just as Critical Race Theory emerged from Critical Legal Theory, so has TribalCrit evolved from Critical Race Theory. The foundational concept in TribalCrit is that colonization is ubiquitous and often unseen (Brayboy, 2005). Eight other key descriptors of TribalCrit theory make up the foundation for analyzing the political relationship between the U.S. and Indigenous people. These descriptors range from the endemic nature of colonization to the particular ways knowledge is transferred in American Indian communities. Brayboy speaks to many of the same concepts that the interview participants did in this study specifically on the role of stories. “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Song and dance in Indigenous perspectives are both academic language vehicles and as spiritual constructs. Brayboy (2005) writes that “The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens” (429). This describes the sacred status of each song and dance within a tribe. This sacredness requires program developers to respect each song and dance as a cultural treasure that must be understood in Alaska Native terms. This is the seventh point in Brayboy’s (2005) theory. “Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future, are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups” (p. 429). Considering application of this principle in the context of this
study, this tenet is vitally important because Anchorage is a hub for more than 230 different tribes of Alaska Natives with their own artistic traditions. Respectful inclusion of dance, song, or storytelling in a language program includes communicating with the families and community as children learn these arts.

Discussion of Findings on Technology and Language Revitalization

The scholarly literature also supports the study’s participants’ perceptions of technology in language revitalization work. Coronel-Molina and and McCarty (2016) are two leading, highly respected Indigenous education researchers, professors, and authors of a rich collection of articles examining the state of Indigenous languages in the Americas (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). Their work offers an understanding of contemporary transformations that are shaping language revitalization programs. The forces of educational change in Indigenous cultures are media and technology; these are being used to advance language revitalization goals in many successful language projects such Hawaiian. “Rapidly evolving technological advances have made local production and global distribution and communication (all in our Indigenous languages) possible on a scale not imagined 20 years ago” (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016, p. 269). The very act of disseminating print material and creating curriculum is streamlined by technology. Hawaiian, like Cherokee, requires its own unique orthography that is beautiful but cumbersome for rapid writing. Computer keyboards have eliminated the difficulty in representing the language. The online environment raises serious concerns about keeping ownership of Indigenous languages, but no longer are there worries about production and distribution of print materials. This means curriculum, correspondence, and libraries of languages are possible. Employing digital technology works toward the preservation of Indigenous languages (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016).
McCarty and Nicholas (2014) explain the evolving nature of languages when they are in living, working communities. They write that language will change and adapt in societies; this is a healthy and indeed desirable aspect of thriving languages. “To begin, we note that all languages change through time as a result of language-internal processes and as their speakers interact with other speech communities and cultural changes require new linguistic forms” (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014, p. 107). The cultural changes of 2021 are the ubiquitous usage of technology and mass media. Language revitalization experts all see the role technology must play in language and culture revitalization programs.

Language theorist Crump (Crump, 2014) writes that language is fluid, ever adapting to the cultural changes. “Drawing on poststructuralist and sociocultural theories, critical language scholars have argued that there is no such thing as a fixed, stable entity in linguistic terms” (p. 209). Crump’s work, LangCrit, also acknowledges that the ideology of languages is an entity tightly intertwined with the “doing” of language (p.210). Engaging in technology and media, requires attention to place and culture for cultural responsiveness; this is particularly true if the usage and spread of endangered languages is done through new tools (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016). Anchored in understanding the power structures inherent in technology which can influence language by erasure or revitalization, LangCrit “accounts for socially constructed and negotiated hierarchies and boundaries among social categories, such as language, identity, and race, which constitute a continuum of possibilities from fixed to fluid’ (Crump, 2014, p. 220).

Moreover, scholars like Coronel-Molina and McCarty express caution as well as enthusiasm concerning the role of technology in language revitalization.

Discussion of Findings on Language, Cultural Identity, and Worldview

And if we can get to the kids. Then we can get to the families and then we can get to the community and then we can get to the pride. (Sheri, Interview, 2021)
Pride and identity are valuable to all cultures. To understand Alaska’s particular indigenous communities and Native language educational challenges, I draw on the work of Alaskan Indigenous scholars Barnhardt and Kawagoe (2010) and Krauss (1998) to understand how language shapes identity and builds a sense of pride in Alaska’s First Peoples. These scholars posit that language is significant in establishing a sense of one’s humanity, self-esteem, and sense of belonging.

In 2005, University of Alaska education scholars Barnhardt and Kawagoe, in *Indigenous Knowledge Native Ways of Knowing*, articulated the interrelatedness between pride, identity, and language in discussions of Alaska Native knowledge systems as they relate to school and community ties. This is important because this study’s questions are asking about language specifically in Anchorage public schools. “Indigenous languages are an integral part of Indigenous knowledge systems and thus warrant particular attention in our efforts to understand how to better integrate learning in school with the cultural context of home and community in Indigenous societies” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2010). Barnhardt and Kawagley point out the intricacies and complexity of communication systems in varied contexts. One of those contexts, public schools, is the very place where the colonization project of language shaming and erasure attacked pride and identity. This makes schools suspect as places for revitalization. Sheri discusses that the Aleut, or Alutiiq, people were once heavily influenced by Russian priests and scholars. Prior to the U.S. purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, Russian priests educated children in local languages as well as Russian in Alaska’s first bilingual schools (Dauenhauer, 1982). Critically, cultural assimilation was not a Russian educational or religious goal. Cultural erasure was not an inherent, inevitable function of all religious education. Rather, cultural erasure was specifically a function of the U.S. political construct that English language and Western cultures were superior to Indigenous languages. Russian accommodations for
Alutiiq language in bilingual schools ceased when the U.S. took over. A stark difference emerged between the two colonizing nations' philosophies. Shelden Jackson led the U.S. education policies in Alaska. “By contrast the pursuit of acculturation by Jackson and his fellow Protestants through insistence on the elimination of native languages, and their replacement by English, was individually and culturally destructive” (Haycox, 1984)

As Krauss (1998) explains, the danger of superficial school-based language programs is that they trivialize language education, give it minimal time investment, create the illusion that languages are being preserved, and “can do more harm than good, insofar as they shift the responsibility for transmitting languages in the home where it is still possible to the school” (p. 17).

McCarty and Nicholas (2014) note remaining concerns about schools’ ability to be “efficacious sites for language reclamation” (p. 107). Critical pedagogy that looks at issues of power, privilege and capitalistic projects is necessary in order to provide programs for children that address historical injustices as Indigenous languages and culture programs that restore pride and identity (Grande, 2014, Krauss, 1998). Furthermore, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) recommend that school-based language programs should be “ideally employed in concert with family, community, and other governmental and non-governmental supports” (p.130). Alaska Native language programs must support Indigenous self-determination and justice and not replicate hegemonic practices of erasure and assimilation if they are to succeed as spaces for Indigenous belonging and pride (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Still, the final analysis among these scholars and this study’s participants is that because children spend such a large amount of time in schools, there are roles and responsibilities for public institutions in revitalization of languages in Indigenous-centric programs (Grande, 2015; Krauss, 1998; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014)
Critical theorists who examine the relationships and responsibilities that schools have speak to Indigenous language education, identity formation, and decolonization of pedagogy (Brayboy, 2005; Crump, 2014). Crump founded LangCrit on the concepts of “identity, language, and race” (p.219) and writes about multilingual children in Canadian preschools who see languages as a part of their assets for social interactions. They can connect on different levels in multiple ways in their play. Languages are assets, forms of capital, that provide advantages to those who have them. Over time in a student’s development, multilingualism becomes an identity and is “intricately intertwined with the performativity of identity” (Crump, 2014, p.210).

In other words, languages are “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992). LangCrit states that there are transformative social forces in speaking and living in multiple languages that shape human perceptions of self. Public schools are such social and political spaces that can hinder or support the development of multilingualism, identity and pride. Districts must be aware that their decisions to include or ignore and exclude Alaska Native language programs bear out in Alaska Native students’ and community members’ self-esteem and identity; the pedagogy of language revitalization and supporting culturally relevant curriculum in schools have great influence on Alaska Native students (Krauss, 1998).

Identity, pride, dignity and self-worth are formed in both family and community. The part that schools play in language revitalization programs ought to promote a sense of belonging and cultural inclusion. One expert said, beautifully, “having it (Alaskan language) spoken, it also gives the students and identity- for them to recognize that this is my language- they’re not only learning the language but they’re also learning the culture” (Suzy, Interview, 2021).

Indigenized curriculum, specifically language programs that reflect Indigenous children’s heritage languages, will include culturally responsive spaces that adhere to standards for indigeneity. These include Indigenous values such as spirituality, service, a sense of place,
and relationship to the land. In Alaska, there is also a set of similarly responsive standards that the Alaska Native Knowledge Network has developed. Alaskan culturally responsive standards require elders, varied assessments, and heritage language education, which are hallmarks of appropriate Indigenous curriculum (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). The work of Hermes, Bang and Marin, who describe a pedagogically solid format for language revitalization, offers one potentially successful design for an Indigenized classroom. The model they advocate requires a connection between the home and school, lived experiences, and elders and youth. In successful Indigenous language revitalization programs, there is bilateral learning between elders and the youth. “This framework of relationship and reciprocity is embodied in practices of inclusion rather than hierarchy and exclusion.” (Hermes, Bang and Marin, 2012). There is a dearth of family connections for so many of our Anchorage students. Even non-Native students in urban Anchorage, many of whom are new to the state and have only one generation present in the state, would benefit enormously from the assets of elders’ and grandparents’ voices. Indigenous language programs that connect home and school offer multiple layers of knowledge and perspectives for many types of students, Native and non-Native. Through culturally relevant Alaska Native language education, multilingual, culturally literate students can be a part of the decolonizing work to build a better community. Fundamental to the creation of programs is the inclusion of and respect for the voices of Indigenous communities (McCarty, 2009).

Summary and Conclusions

The language experts in this study all concurred, without direct collaboration, that public schools have a responsibility to provide culturally relevant language and culture programs for students in high schools to begin language study. In her succinct response to the research question on her recommendations for programs, one participant said emphatically, “the bottom line is you just have to do it” (Rina, Interview, 2021). Rina, like the other experts in this research,
expressed a sense of urgency. The interviewees indicated that Indigenous language programs cannot be postponed any longer given the rate of Native first speaker loss and the time constraints on Indigenous identity formation in the youth.

On a side note, there were several references made to a Yup’ik language study done in Anchorage that established Yup’ik as the best choice for Alaskan languages given available resources and materials. Several of the interviewees also knew of a different research project that had been an anchor in deciding on Yup’ik immersion for the elementary school program. I searched for this study and uncovered one 20-year-old, 2001 document, research project that was sponsored by Alaska Federation of Native’s First Alaskan’s Foundation (McDowell, 2001). This professional study looked at the attitudes and values of Alaska Natives toward education. It omitted the viewpoint of students. I did not find the language study on Yup’ik, though came across many Yup’ik teachers and materials that corroborate the information.

The quantitative and qualitative data from this study which presents the views of high school students and adults working in language revitalization spaces, point out that a majority of the surveyed students are interested in Alaskan languages, many students do not understand the university and employment opportunities afforded to those with Alaska Native cultural competencies, and many students need to be informed of the high status of Alaska Native languages in college admissions decisions. One hopeful finding in the quantitative data is that nearly all students perceive that their community engagement will be improved by knowing more about Alaska and its history through language and culture studies. This truth can begin to influence new speakers and heritage speakers to enter a new space of mutual understanding and cultural respect where languages lead. There are also numerous career opportunities for public school students with Alaska Native Corporations if students are educated as culturally aware and competent citizens. A governor’s mandate to prepare our youth for this work is on
the state record (Counsellor et al., 2020), indicating support for this approach at the state level. Furthermore, the data indicates that students believe that their engagement to the Anchorage community would be improved by a language and culture program. Students in the community are speaking to a need for education in linguistic and cultural connections to the Anchorage area Dena’ina land. Students want to do this in part through studying its language which has for millennia reflected the core of its culture.
CHAPTER V: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the demand for Native language program models in secondary schools in the Anchorage Alaska School District. The purpose of this study was also to explore which models of Indigenous language instruction are wanted in the Anchorage community and would best serve Indigenous language revitalization efforts in high schools. This study worked towards an understanding of how Indigenous language experts advise Alaska Native language programs be designed to meet the various needs of secondary language learners. The mixed methods used a survey of the students and semi-structured interviews of the Indigenous language experts. This chapter holds an overview of the study, the findings and discussion, limitations, conclusions and implications for language revitalization, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Summary of the Study

I embarked on the research on language equity in Anchorage’s secondary schools beginning with the background understanding that Anchorage Alaska’s public schools are nationally recognized for their commitment to language education (ASD, 2020). ASD is very proud of the numerous immersion and traditional language programs offered to its students. These language programs provide rich cultural and academic capital to many college-bound students and the language skills profoundly impact their lives (Bourdieu, 2002). Yet there are no Indigenous language programs that are available to all students in high schools. How has this inequity arisen? Decades of omission of Indigenous language programs indicate that school boards and policy makers in the district hold that students will not benefit from Alaska Native languages as much as from European languages and economically beneficial languages like Japanese, Chinese, and Russian. This position is justified with two fundamental underlying beliefs: 1) that students do not want Alaska Native language programs in their schools and
would not take them if offered; and 2) that Alaska Native languages are not useful for university admittance or future employment. It also perpetuates the ongoing settler colonialism projects of cultural assimilation and language erasure; schools are marginalizing Alaska Native students and discounting Indigenous identity as an educational value. This study challenges those underlying beliefs, arguing that they are no longer true, if they ever were. The study looked at two groups of stakeholders, high school students and adult Indigenous language experts, to examine student interest, student perceptions of Indigenous language and culture benefits, and language experts’ recommendations for high school Alaska Native language programs. This study looked to answer the following two overarching research questions:

1. What is the level of demand for Alaska Native language programs among public high school students in Anchorage, Alaska?

2. What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native language revitalization leaders in Alaska for public high school Alaska Native language programs?

The first question was answered using a quantitative approach, a survey, for the 80 students and the resulting descriptive statistics were analyzed to understand student interest in Indigenous languages by the categories Native and non-Native, and students in World language classes and not in World Language classes. The researcher had 15 years of experience in World Language programs, understood the typical motivation for opting-in to those classes. This study was intended to examine attitudes on indigenous language classes by those already inclined to study languages other than English, usually for college requirements, and those who were not.

The total number of high school students who participated 39% were Alaska Native students and 61% non-Native students. World Language students made up 64% of the total students and non-World Language were 36%. Of the World Language students surveyed, 29% were Alaska Native respondents and 71% non-Native. The students grade levels were as
follows: 19% were in 9th grade, 18% were in 10th grade, 47% were in 11th grade and 16% were in
12th grade. The data from these groups was analyzed to understand interest in Alaskan
languages and awareness of linguistic benefits related to education and jobs. I used bivariate
distributions, mean and mode calculations, frequency charts and other descriptive statistics to
address the first research question. I was keenly interested to see if students who were not in
any World Language classes would be interested if offered Alaska Native language classes. This
information is useful for both Native and non-Native students who could fill up a program that is
culturally responsive.

Question number two, *What are the perspectives and recommendations of Native
language revitalization leaders in Alaska for public high school Alaska Native language
programs?* was answered using a qualitative approach of Zoom interviews for approximately
one hour. One participant was in a remote village in Alaska and could not access Zoom, so we
spoke on the phone. The seven Indigenous language experts were from various regions of
Alaska, and one was from Oklahoma. Their language revitalization work ranges widely from
distance delivery of language and culture education, program directing, teacher development,
University Native Studies teaching, and language preservation and documentation. They made
recommendations regarding what a relevant Alaska Native language programs should include,
what key factors must be attended to, who ought to be involved and offered their perspectives
on the power, politics, and dark history of U.S. language assimilation projects. Zoom offered
automatic transcriptions of the interviews and I used the Zoom tech to transcribe the recording
of the one phone interview. Next, I procured, learned and applied the software, MAXQDA, to
code and organize the transcriptions into themes, which I used to develop the three main
qualitative findings.
Summary of the Findings and Results

The findings, from the study’s quantitative and qualitative data, answer the research questions one and two and most of the subcomponents of those questions. Briefly, there is great interest in Alaskan language and culture programs among high school students and profound recommendations by Indigenous language experts center on an inclusion of the art and technology in the curriculum and strong focus on the role of language in the formation of identity.

Discussion Question #1: Is There High School Student Interest? Do They Know the Benefits?

The data answered research question number one with 71 percent of all World Language students responding they would like to take an Alaskan Native language course. The number of Alaska Native students saying “I would take an Alaskan language course” was even higher at 84%. Looking at the findings by grade level for all students, 60% of 9th graders, 64% of 10th graders, 76% of the 11th graders, and 100% of the Seniors responded that they are interested in Alaskan language programs. It is noteworthy that as students mature their interest in Alaskan languages increases. The differences in grade level and increases in percentages of interest is also important given that students usually do not start languages as they advance through high school. Interest in Indigenous languages in older students requires multiple entry points for language programs. Thus, the need for a format of high school elective programs is supported by this finding.

This study’s student survey data reflects two things: 1) students clearly want to take Alaskan Native language classes; and 2) some of the students understand the educational and employment benefits, but not enough. The total student interest in Alaska Native languages jumps from 71% to 80% when they believe, learned, that there are college benefits associated with Alaska Native language courses on high school transcripts. Only 53% of students knew that
that many Alaska Native corporations seek culturally competent employees such as those who have taken Alaskan language and culture courses. This is an opportunity to educate and inform the future workforce of Anchorage that can be done in high school Alaskan language courses.

With respect to connecting language learning and deeper understanding of history, students responded at 94% that language learning increases knowledge and understanding of a history. This is particularly important for a place like Anchorage where many students consider the U.S. 1867 purchase of Alaska or the early 1900’s Alaskan Gold Rush a starting point for Alaskan history. Dramatically, the Indigenous Dena’ina people’s history is over 2000 years old but has become invisible in Anchorage outside of museums. TribalCrit speaks to this complex relationship between the U.S. government and Alaska Natives; it explains assimilation of tribal histories, languages and cultures under settler colonialisms projects for land acquisition (Brayboy, 2005).

On a societal level, these students’ responses reflect the very human drive for connection and belonging to a community. They are interested in the local traditions of Anchorage, including its history and original cultures. The unifying concepts from these student survey findings are the need for cultural affiliation, family belonging and pride. There is a longing among Anchorage’s students for cultural continuity and language preservation. This longing has survived the traumas of settler colonialism in North America. Students write that they wanted to understand their grandparents and speak their languages in the villages. Many student participants spoke about an “invisibility” of Alaskan cultures and history in schools and hoped language and culture classes would reverse that condition.

In fact, contrary to the deficit narrative that there is not enough demand for Alaska Native language programs, this data shows broad student interest for such classes in public secondary schools. This interest is reflected across many student populations, including both
Native and non-Native students. There is also strong evidence that many students need to be made aware of the role that proficiency in Alaskan languages plays in their future educational opportunities and employment. The Indigenous language experts corroborated this theory. The experts urged that since students are in school for so much of their lives, notwithstanding the public school system’s problematic Western structure and values, the school system has a crucial role to fulfill in the work of language revitalization. Schools should teach Alaska Native languages, and teach them in a way that is in alignment with Indigenous values. McCarty et al (2015) supports this study’s language expert recommendations with the same advice: “In short, when informed by Indigenous leadership and vision, schools can be crucial resources for language and culture reclamation” (246). The students have spoken and answered research question one in the affirmative; students are willing and interested in learning Alaskan languages.

**Discussion Question #2: What do the Language Experts Recommend?**

The findings from the study included the qualitative results from interviews of seven venerated elders, teachers, and scholars working in language revitalization projects. Through carefully re-listening to the interview recordings, rereading the interview transcripts, and pulling in the power of qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, I was able to see patterns across the seven Indigenous language experts. The patterns revealed many commonly mentioned topics, so I had to pare them down. In an effort to manage the data, I initially limited the coded segments to 10 related phrases per code, then 5, then a clear theme emerged from the data for each collection of coded interview text. The responses to the interview questions evoked great emotion from the interviewees; they were passionate about revitalization, saddened by the losses, and hopeful that schools could be a part of a better linguistic and cultural future for all of Anchorage’s children.
The study evidenced three structural recommendations for Indigenous language programs in high schools: the arts are essential curriculum, most importantly including the sacred, ancestral Indigenous arts of storytelling, dance, and song. Second, technology must be harnessed to the benefit of language preservation and dissemination. Third, student identity and pride must be recognized as elements that are created in language and culture. These experts’ positions reinforce the student survey results, showing a central need to develop and implement a curriculum that is culturally relevant and a pedagogy that places Indigenous values at the heart of Indigenous language and culture education. Indigenous values are the driving force behind the language experts’ recommendations. This tracks with the theoretical foundations established by Alaskan Indigenous education professors and authors, who describe Indigenous knowledge and ethics as the required underpinnings for all school-based endeavors with language revitalization programs (Barnhardt, 2005; Grande, 2015; Smith, 2018).

Limitations

This study’s limitations are as follows: First, I am a non-Native researcher seeking understanding in Indigenous spaces. I entered the research from a White, urban, female educator who does not speak any Alaskan languages. This study is also limited to only data regarding Alaskan urban language programs, particularly based in Anchorage. My study is not geared towards solutions and systems that suit the vast rural areas of Alaska, but the unique needs of urban Anchorage high school public school students. The study is also limited to secondary programs and will not be looking into elementary Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs, university programs, or Master Apprentice Programs (MAP). My research is limited to the gap in information surrounding traditional language programs for secondary students in Anchorage who are not coming into high school from immersion backgrounds.
An additional limitation was the pandemic of COVID-19 and the restrictions this placed on my research. Given that schools in Anchorage were only opened in the 4th quarter of 2021, I was unable to cast a wider net for high school student data collection. The instrument, Google Form survey, was online and thus there were students without technological access or know-how to participate in the study. Given the very brief 4th quarter time frame, this study did not query a statistically large number of students.

Further limitations included the Zoom platform for Indigenous language expert interviews. Given the requirement to socially distance from communities outside one’s “bubble” I conducted all interviews remotely. This is counter-cultural to Indigenous values during normal conditions, but was a consequence of COVID-19 and protocols necessary for mitigating the spread. Establishing trust relationships over Zoom was challenging and several of the hour-long conversations metamorphosed into two-hours as I slowed my pace, waited for the trust to build and tried to follow Indigenous values in my listening, tempo, and respect for the story.

Conclusion and Implications

This study investigated high school student demand for Alaska Native languages and their perceptions of associated benefits. The study also examined the recommendations and perceptions of Indigenous language experts for establishing high school Alaska Native language programs in Anchorage’s urban schools. Through student survey results and the language expert interviews, a picture of strong student demand and Indigenous language expert advice-themes emerged. There are ways to meet the demand and interests of students through a braiding of Alaska Native language programs with existing language programs in Anchorage’s public high schools. The data shows that this is wanted by students and language experts in the community and that they want to make space in public high schools for Indigenous languages and cultures.
and values. An indigenized space will foster a healthier more engaged student experience for all students and in particular for the marginalized students.

The implications of this study are that if the district does provide linguistically relevant curriculum through Alaska Native language programs, there will be a stronger, more culturally competent community. Elders may have a stronger role in public schools where Tribal knowledges might be taught alongside Western knowledges. This could evolve through fostering linguistic connections, cultural identity, and regional pride. Further implications of this study might be that Native and non-Native students will be enriched through developing multiple linguistic lenses for understanding the Indigenous ancestral land and community on which they all live.

School language programs might look very different in twenty years if local languages become a district priority. In addition to Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish, Anchorage high schools might offer Yup’ik, Dena’ina, and Tlingit. The local implications include that a larger population of students will be using their language funds of knowledge to attend selective colleges. Then after returning, seek to use their academic degrees in jobs in Anchorage. This in turn would feed the job pipeline with local, culturally competent, and highly qualified employees for Alaska Native corporations. Hiring local might be less challenging if the pool of applicants is better prepared for work in Alaskan-culture corporations. Further, those multilingual students will value their languages, support them in schools as they begin to have children, and create a wave of indigenous language revitalization for Anchorage’s local languages.

Nationally, Anchorage could join the ranks of Hawaii, Canada, and New Zealand as a role model for language revitalization and cultural revival. Researchers would align with local Elders and Indigenous language experts to understand best practice methods, teacher development,
and culturally relevant curriculum. Public school language programs could all prioritize their indigenous languages and turn back the tide of devastation and loss. This researcher can imagine these implications and hope.

**Recommendations**

**For K-12 School Districts, Administrators, Teachers**

I recommend that the school district, administrators, and teachers in Anchorage look to the data in this study along with the numerous professional studies (*ANKN Publications*, 2001) on this subject then prepare and implement a secondary level Alaska Native language and culture program in Yup’ik.

I further recommend that all educational professionals become knowledgeable about the history of language erasure projects and how this impacts Alaska Native student high school graduation rates, university attendance, and self-esteem related issues. These are generated by an education system that ignores Alaska Native students by omission of culturally relevant content and role models.

I also recommend that they work in collaboration with Native Corporations, State leaders and the University of Alaska to create a stably funded secondary language program for Anchorage’s public high schools.

There is an immersion Yup’ik program that will send students to secondary schools in five years. It is important to prepare for articulation with those students who will be in high school. The influence of high-profile immersion programs often influence non-immersion students to enter traditional programs later in school. This means there will be demand for Yup’ik non-immersion programs in high schools. The demand may come from students who were unable to participate in immersion programs but still want to learn Yup’ik.
I recommend that the district leadership consult with Anchorage’s Native leadership for guidance on culturally relevant pedagogy to include classrooms with a language and culture curriculum taught by Alaska Natives and informed by Alaska Native ethics and values.

One suggestion comes from several language and culture experts, who advised me to advance this study to the school board and school district administration. As one expert said, “It might save somebody thinking, ‘I’m Native but I haven’t been to my village...I don’t know what our songs are or what our beliefs are. It might ground that person. It might save them.”

Finally, this study clearly shows that schools must better educate students on the benefits—personal, economic, community engagement, relational and otherwise—of learning an Alaska Native language and culture. This study particularly indicates that many students are not aware of the substantial benefits an Alaska Native language brings for both higher education and employment, two key motivators for students.

**For Policymakers**

This study urges that any proposed Alaska Native language and culture program be fully state funded rather than dependent on federal grants; this is the current status for the Yup’ik program. This program is important to the Alaska Native students’ identity and connection with culture therefore insecurely funded programs that are unstable could harm students’ social-emotional wellbeing and language revitalization efforts. Funding contingent upon grants is inequitable given that other languages are state funded and do not need special advocacy; non-Native language programs enjoy the status of funding without grant-writers.

Further, this study indicates that best practice would require Alaska Native language and culture classes be mandatory for high school students. This class would serve as a class that meets university requirements and creates a knowledgeable base of engaged citizens as the data in this study indicates.
Community and University Leaders

There are many opportunities to strengthen ties between an Anchorage School District Indigenous language program and the statewide community. In an interview, one astute and passionate language expert shared this vision of partnerships between businesses and students studying Alaskan languages in ASD:

I can imagine that in an ideal world, in a Yup’ik class, we’ve got corporations coming in to say these are the jobs we have for you, and these are the trips you can take out to this river and work on this fishing and use the language. I can kind of picture all that happening, the way it happens in all of our successful language programs (Landon, Interview, 2021).

The University of Alaska and Alaska Pacific University

The statewide University of Alaska system has a robust Alaska Native Studies program. Students matriculating from ASD in Yup’ik studies could begin work at the college level in advanced language classes and achieve higher levels of competence in language and cultural proficiency. Alaska Pacific University, a small liberal arts school in the city, has recently committed in its mission statement to serve Alaska Native students: “Honoring Alaska’s Indigenous heritage, exemplifying excellence, and preparing paths” (APU, 2021). APU is currently striving for the status of becoming a part of the federal TCUs Tribal Colleges and Universities. As of 2021, APU does not have an Alaska Native language and culture program. One of the main foundations of any TCU, as stated in the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, is language and culture:

By expanding educational opportunities and improving educational outcomes for all AI/AN students in order to fulfill our commitment to furthering tribal self-determination and to help ensure that AI/AN students have an opportunity to learn their Native
languages and histories and receive complete and competitive educations that prepare
them for college, careers, and productive and satisfying lives (U.S. Dept. of Education,
2011).

This is an opportunity for collaboration and articulation between higher education and
secondary programs to build language and culture programs that meet the needs of the
community and fulfill the terms of TCU status.

Finally, moving forward, widespread stakeholder engagement and cooperation is
essential to the success of these efforts. As interview participant Rina, Indigenous education
leader, said about collaboration and language revitalization in the school district, “There's a
federal trust responsibility. In order for this to happen there's got to be an agency collaborative
approach, and that's going to have to include the Department of Interior, BIE, and really look at
the comprehensive needs of Alaska.” In fact, the study’s participants voiced their beliefs that the
same governmental political coordination that devastated Alaskan languages must now work
together in restitution to revitalize Alaska's Native languages.

Future Research and Practice

This study opens the door for many areas that need further research including giving the
survey to all high school youth; developing an age-appropriate survey for younger students in
dual language programs 3-8th grade; and surveys/interviews with both indigenous and non-
indigenous families of school aged youth. This study identifies a number of pressing research
questions to pursue, including, but certainly not limited to, the following:

● Are there unique tools for language acquisition methods for Indigenous
  languages?

● How ought we to incorporate Elders in the spaces of public schools?
● What teacher training programs are available? How can they facilitate and support teacher retention?
● What impact might Alaska Native language and culture programs have on student retention and attrition rates, particularly among Indigenous students?
● What are place-based educational strategies that support language acquisition?
● How do indigenous rural students and urban students unite and share leadership of these programs?
● How can Alaskan high schools articulate with other state’s indigenous communities to create unity in diversity?
● How can Alaskan Native language programs learn from and support Native language revitalization efforts across the U.S.?

Conclusion

Anchorage’s secondary schools lack equitable language and culture programs for the community it serves. This study’s language expert participants and students concur with Indigenous language authors and theorists: with appropriate guidance from the Alaska Native community, public schools hold a significant role for Alaska Native language revitalization. Students and the language professionals in the Anchorage community desire Alaska Native languages in schools. Further, these programs represent a number of profound benefits for the students and the community. The participants recommend that public institutions, among other organizations, hold responsibility to support Alaska Native language revitalization efforts. This is because public schools are, in part, culpable for the devastation and erasure of Indigenous languages (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Smith et al., 2018).

The United Nations advanced the same recommendation, promulgating the position that it is incumbent on schools to teach Indigenous languages and provide a place-based,
culturally relevant curriculum to students who deserve to learn local languages and cultures as a human right (UN General Assembly, 2007). All of these tiers of stakeholders—local, national and international—recommend schools provide language and culture education for students.

As the youth and Elders in this study remind us, the role of public schools in the work of language revitalization is vital to the community. Linguistic branches were removed from the tree but there are still roots that can feed a language revival. We have seen this in many parts of the world like New Zealand, Hawaii and Canada. In Anchorage, Alaska in linguistic equity and justice is also achievable through a public commitment to support educational programs in Alaska Native language and culture. Languages have the power to restore identity, self-esteem and purpose, but revitalization of languages demands full and consistent support. Public schools in urban areas like Anchorage hold a powerful opportunity and responsibility to decolonize language programs, answer the United Nations call for human rights through linguistic justice, and make Indigenous languages a priority. Languages are a critical part of the necessary process of restorative justice for Alaska Native students who had their languages erased. Further, Alaska Native languages can create a road to academic and economic opportunity, and mutual respect for all students. It is time to build that road.
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Appendix A: Student Survey

Sample Survey

Questions for the 80 Anchorage School District students who responded to the Google form format survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Likert Scale Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student interest in Alaskan languages and cultures</td>
<td>1. Do you want to take Alaska Native language classes in high school?</td>
<td>Not at all, a little, somewhat, very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How interested are you in taking an Alaskan language course in high school?</td>
<td>Not at all interested, a little interested, somewhat interested, very interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. If you could take any language courses that you want, which languages would you take? (check all that apply)</td>
<td>ASL, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Yupik, Dena’ina, Inupiaq, Alutiiq, Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I would choose to take an Alaskan language elective if it would help me get into college.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Please describe your thoughts about taking an Alaska Native language class in high school.</td>
<td>Open ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Alaska Native language and culture study</td>
<td>6. Knowing more about Alaska Native languages and cultures would make me a more engaged citizen of Alaska.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Learning an Alaskan language will help me get a job in the future.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Learning an Alaskan language and culture will help me understand Alaskan history.  

9. Learning and Alaskan language will prepare me to work cooperatively in my community.  

10. Please describe in your own words the benefits in taking Alaska Native language and culture classes.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open response</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship to Alaska Native community</th>
</tr>
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</table>

11. How long has your family lived in Alaska?  

Multiple choice  
A) We are new to Alaska  
B) We have been here for several generations  
C) We are indigenous to Alaska (Alaska Native) and have always been here  
D) Other ____________

12. Which groups are you part of?  

Check all that apply  
Non-Native  
Native (Inupiat, Yup’ik, Aleut, Tlingit, Haida, Athabascan, Eyak)  
Non-Native and Native
| Language Background | 13. In your family, who speaks an Alaska Native language? | check all that apply  
no one  
sister  
brother  
mother  
father  
aunt  
uncle  
grandmother  
grandfather  
elder  
cousins  
close family  
friends  

14. Were any of your family members educated in English-only boarding schools? |

15. What languages do you speak or hear at home? |

check all that apply  
Alutiiq  
ASL  
Chinese  
Dena’ina  
English  
French  
German  
Haida  
Hmong  
Inupiaq  
Japanese  
Korean  
Russian  
Samoan  
Spanish  
Tagalog  
Tlingit  
Tsimshian  
Yupik |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>16. What is your gender?</th>
<th>Female, Male, Non-binary, Two-spirit, Other__________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>18. What grade level are you in now?</td>
<td>g) 9th 10th 11th 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Are you currently in a World Language Class?</td>
<td>Yes or No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Please add any additional comments that help describe your Alaskan family.</td>
<td>Open Response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Indigenous Language Revitalization Experts

Interview Questions: for the seven Indigenous language experts.

Semi-structured Interview questions:

A. Background info/demographic info.
   1. Please share with me your age, tribal affiliation/tribal heritage.
   2. Tell me about your work with Alaskan Native language revitalization efforts?

B. Alaska Native languages in Community Setting
   1. Tell me about your childhood? What were your experiences like in public schools?
   2. Tell me what you know about the traditional ways of how native languages were learned and preserved in your tribe?
   3. How, if at all, do you think language acquisition has changed in your tribe over time?
   4. Can you tell me about language revitalization efforts in your tribe now?

C. Recommendations for Alaska Native Language programs in Secondary Public Schools
   1. How do you see the role of public schools in Alaska Native language revitalization? Do you feel that there is a connection between public school roles and Alaska Native language revitalization?
   2. What do you hope the younger generation of indigenous students learn about Alaskan languages and cultures in a public high school setting?
   3. What do you think an excellent program would include for Native students? For non-Native students? Could you describe an ideal learning environment within a public school setting?
   4. In your opinion, why do you think that indigenous languages are not found in most high school language programs in the United States or in Alaska? What are the roadblocks to Alaska Native language programs in public schools?
D. Do you think colonialism has impacted your tribe’s language and culture? In what ways?

E. Do you have any other recommendations for Indigenous Language programs in Secondary Public Schools?

F. Is there anything else you would like to share?
Appendix C Map

Map of Alaska Native Languages

Map of Alaska Native Languages
Language Experts and their Tribal Affiliation