

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Language Revitalization

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Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni'

Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation

Language Revitalization, Is the Challenge

- The Challenge of Endangered Language recovery is uncertain work. Endangered Languages are spoken and unspoken.
- Many languages are retrieved from manuscripts, publications, audio files, ethnographies and from the hearts and minds of speakers.
- What will reform the speech community?
- Most children hear English and Spanish not Dee-ni'.
- How can an Endangered Language wage against media, Colonialism and singleness?
- What methodologies and approaches support Endangered Languages?
- “Teach what you learn and speak what you know.”

The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni'

○ The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' are a Dene (Athabaskan) speaking people of the Pacific Northwest. The Taa-laa-waa-dvn lays across ten rivers systems that empty into the Pacific in southwest Oregon and northern California. The neighbors of the Taa-laa-wa are the Yurok to the south, the Karuk, Takelma and Kalapuya to the east and the Coos to the north. The Yurok language is Algonquian. The Karuk language is Hokaan. The Takelma, Kalapuya and Coos are Penutian. The Dee-ni' emerged following Genesis at Yan'-daa-k'vt, "*South-up-hill*", the center of the Dee-ni' world.

The Dee-ni' Homeland



Xatlh-srii-dvn - Genesis

○ The Three Beings; Baby Sender, Daylight and Thunder living above the Earth in the Sweat House of Knowledge *spoke* and made the water covered earth. The first tree, the white redwood, stood upon the knoll as it slid forth from the south out of the watery depths at Yan'-daa-kvt. The tracks of all the beings to exist appeared. The Dee-ni' emerged upon the land to join them.

○ Baby-Sender gave the Dee-ni' instructions on how to live upon the earth and then descended unto the heavens.

The Taa-laa-wa Civilization

- For the past ten thousand years the vast abundance of riverine salmonids; whale and mollusks from the sea; elk, deer and water fowl from the land and lagoons, supported ten thousand Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni'. The ten-based system of dentalia currency and ceremonial regalia controlled the economy and governance.
- Dee-ni' living in plank built towns and suburbs organized under the Xvsh-xay-yu' and their Mii~-xvsh-xay. Sea-going redwood canoes measuring 42 feet in length carried commerce across the seaboard that moved inland throughout the vast river systems.
- The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' thrived until the Natlh-mii~-t'i the *"Knife-Brandisher"* arrived.

Daa-nvth-xat – The Invasion

- The Spaniards in 1542 and then the Russians of the 1800s sailed unobtrusively along the coast looking for wealth. The Mexican missions did not reach the Taa-laa-waa-dvn. Gold was found at Sutter's Mill in 1849. Rough insatiable hordes invaded the west. Their invasions brought obliteration upon their civilizations.
- The second Governor John McDonald from 1851-52 wrote to the state militia and appropriated 1 million dollars to commit genocide against the Indians. His quote was: “...*if the Indians are still found to be obstinate and intractable a vigorous prosecution of the war is our most efficient remedy. This campaign must of necessity be one of extermination of the many tribes.*” Between 1851 to 1856 the Dee-ni’ populations plummeted from 10,000 to 2,000.

The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' Holocaust

- The Yan'-daa-k'vt massacre is the second largest single mass killings in American History. At the end of the Holocaust in 1856, 1,845 of the Dee-ni' survivors were removed to the Coast Reservation in the Oregon Territory. Others removed to the Klamath and Hoopa Valley Reservations in the south.
- Results caused by the Holocaust, Indian Slavery , the forced removal to Boarding Schools and sterilization, the remaining Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' population reached its lowest ebb of 116 to 250 citizens by 1906.
- Today the Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' enrollment has returned to 1,600 citizens. The question begs, ***"How come I don't talk Indian?"***

The Boarding School 1878

- Policies and practices of Federal subjugation continued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The off-reservation Boarding Schools for American Indian children that began 1878 by confiscating children from their parents. Dee-ni' children were incarcerated at "*re-education*" centers in order to assimilate them into the American culture. The operational philosophy was, "*kill the Indian, save the man*" by breaking their bonds with family, their religion, and their language.
- Dee-ni' children were shipped to Chemawa in Oregon, the Stewart Indian School in Nevada and to the Sherman Institute in Riverside California. If Dee-ni' children returned they could no longer speak to their parents or grandparents creating the first Passive User generation. Each generation pushed the L1 language speakers into the past, leaving Dee-ni' among elder passing generations.
- Children were brutalized for being and speaking Dee-ni'. This account describes a life experience of a Dee-ni' girl named Laura in the 1920s.

Auntie Laura

- Laura Scott was born in 1908 at Nii~-lii~-chvn-dvn along the Smith River. Laura was an L1 speaker. She was kidnapped by the B.I.A. at the age of 12 years and sent to Sherman Institute. Laura was caught speaking Dee-ni' there. She was forced to peel a 500 hundred pound bin of onions. Due to the pungent stench her snot hung in her lap and she could not see by the end of her chastisement. She could only feel the onions with her hands and the knife to finish. In complete desperation she and four girls planned their escape. Each of the girls from reservations located across the state of California made their plan. Laura's home was the most distant, located 800 miles away at the other end of the state near Oregon.
- For several days, the girls snuck the counted and guarded food rations from the commissary. Then one night they cut the screen and slid down knotted sheets to freedom into the night. They traveled at night and hid during the day to hide from the Federal Agents who pursued them. Arriving at each Reservation they recuperated and then walked on north. One year later Laura and a Pomo girl reached Ukiah, California.
- She stayed there and managed to contact her mother Alice. Alice hired a car to drive to Ukiah for her rescue. Finally, Laura was home and safe deep in the virgin redwood forests at Nii~-lii~-chvn-dvn.
- Auntie would freeze up when she spoke Indian. She said her tongue didn't work right.

Wee-ya' Day-la haa~? What is Language?

- Dv-laa-ha~. Shii-du' Me'-lash-ne. Shii Nii~-lii~-chvn-dvn dee-ni' nvsh-li~. Dii srii-nis shii-du' nuu-wee-ya' wee na'sh-'aa-te.
- Language is a medium of exchange between two individuals based on a set of mutually agreed descriptions that represent an abstract world. Each language is an organic living biology that encapsulates a particular worldview and understanding of that world. Every grammar has an evolved and unique structure inherent to that worldview.
- *“Until one seeks out and learns to speak more than one language, they may not be able to perceive the multiple ways that human language describes the world and find the value of one’s own language.”*

Language Erosion and Writing

- Following the Holocaust and removals to various reservations the Taa-laa-wa community, by the 1960s, was the last remaining Dee-ni' speech community on west coast .
- In the 1950s the Dee-ni' attempted to write the language. The first renderings were written with the English alphabet. The English alphabet did not contain the letters and sounds needed to write the language. It could be read by the speakers but would be mispronounced by the non-speaking learners.
- By the 1960s the community leaders recognized the complete loss of the language and those who speaking it. They observed their children could only speak a few well known words, phrases and expressions. The leaders decided to document the language. Tape recorders were beyond financial reach of the Dee-ni' community.
- The resources of the university were removed far away in an unknown to the Dee-ni'.

The Uni-fon Alphabet

- In 1968 the writing of the Hupa Dene language began with the *Uni-fon* single sound alphabet. The Uni-fon Alphabet was immediately employed to write Dee-ni' for the first time.
- L1 Dee-ni' elders were brought together. For the next 15 years a litany of nouns, verbs, genealogies, songs and prayers were amassed. The return of Dee-ni' spirituality, song, ceremony and prayer became real and has a good and correct place in the world.
- Naa-yvlh-sri Nee-dash, the winter solstice Earth Renewal Ceremony was publicly reinstated at Nii~-lii~-chvn-dvn in 1976. Since the Flower Dance has returned.
- The arrival of the computer age limited the use of the Uni-fon alphabet.

The Uni-fon Alphabet

TOLOWA LANGUAGE ALPHABET					
XUS WE-YÓ' MUH-D'GHÜT'H-DER'S					
ÆLÖ'	X	B	C	Ɔ	Ɔ'
one TL	XUS Indian gargle "H"	BÓ-SRE Seagull(s) bow	CE first cell	JUN stick(s) chair	Ɔ'O-GHÉ-SE' an egg —
D	E	E'	I	I'	G
DÖ no dip	TÉ-LON' whale(s) hen	MÍ-NE' back(s) —	IN-CT'UM small he	GÜ-I' pinworm(s) —	GÉ-LIS willow(s) goat
GH	H	H'	†	Δ	Δ'
GHE away —	HOT there hat	DOH' mouth(s) —	D†T-LON' where bit	Δ Δ W' yes bite	Δ'-GHÜT'H-IW' had married —
J	K	K'	L	M	M'
JO' again jaw	NÓ-KO sea bass kiss	K'WUC neck(s) —	LOT seaweed low	MUN for it music	C-K'UM' coyote(s) —
N	N'	W	W'	O	O'
NUN you do	DON' north —	T'RÖW-XE woman(en) king	NII' face(s) —	O-GÉ-YO ouch lot	O'-DÖ not yet —
Ø	Q	G	P	R	R'
MÖR'S-GHE' ear(s) look	GÖ swan(s) out	MÖN'-XÖ edge(s) boy	NÍ-POS cheek(s) pipe	SRUN dirty run	SÖR'S wood —
S	T	T'	T'C	U	Ü
SUM good sure	TE-NE road(s) table	XWÍ-T'I everyone —	T'CUN needle(s) —	ÜT'H-NIS taste(s) up	ÆLÖK salmon due
Ɔ'	W	Y			
Ɔ'O-GHÜ' hook(s) —	WÖ-DUN beside wig	YON' south yes			

The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' Alphabet

- Credit bearing Tolowa Language classes had been 1972. Young Dee-ni' were sent to college to become teachers, yet, a new speech community was not emerging. The use of the Uni-fon alphabet provided great documentation but was wrought with problems as the computer age advanced.
- The Dee-ni' community decided to leave the Uni-fon alphabet and replace it with a computer friendly font by using what ever was available the keyboard.
- The Tolowa Dee-ni' Alphabet was finalized in 1997 using Roman characters. The update allowed Dee-ni' to be used and produced in virtually every media.

The Taa-laa-wa Dee-ni' Alphabet

Mvlh-tr'ee-t'esh (alphabet)



The Tolowa alphabet has thirty (30) consonants, five (5) vowels and five (5) diphthongs. Six of the consonants are ejectives and two have glottalized features. The Ejective Consonants ch', k', kr', t', tr', and ts' followed by a apostrophe make an explosive breathy sound quality. The Glottal Stop Consonant Features n' and m' followed by a glottal stop are shortened. Three of the vowels are nasalized and four are glottalized.

The Vowel Chart illustrates where the vowel sounds are produced in the mouth.

	front	mid	back
high	i		u
mid		v	
low	e		a

Vowels	Nasalized	Glottalized	English	Dee-ni'	
1. a			awe	'aa-le	= olive
2. a~			---	'aa~-tvm'	= always
3. a'			---	'a'-du	= not yet
4. e			edge	'ee-pvlh	= apple
5. e'			---	mee-ne'	= home
6. i			Kja	'ii-lay	= scary
7. i'			---	si'	= hair
8. i~			---	'ii~-sdvm	= little/small
9. u			dye	'uu-shi	= it is called
10. u~			---	tr'u~k	= flicker (bird)
11. u'			---	nak-tu'	= tear
12. v			up	'vn-dan'	= yesterday

Diphthongs combine two sounds together.

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| 1. au- | as in <u>now</u> | nau'-delh | = you two go |
| 2. ay- or ai- | as in <u>sly</u> or <u>Thai</u> | tay-lesh | = s/he is setting a gill net |
| 3. eu- | | neu'-dash | = you two dance |
| 4. oy- | as in <u>boy</u> | moyn'-xu | = edge of |
| 5. uy- or ui- | | lha'-duy | = nine |

Consonants	Ejectives	Glottalized	English	Dee-ni'	Meaning
1. b			bat	baa-sre	= seagull
2. br			brain	brv-shish	= bra
3. ch			chair	chvn	= stick
4. ch'			---	ch'a'	= again
5. d			dew	duu	= no
6. f			fender	Sfen-ki	= Frank
7. g			gutter	gee	= away/up
8. gh			---	ghee	= concerning
9. h			home	hat	= there
10. k			catch	ken-di	= candy
11. k'			---	k'aa~-sra	= crow
12. kr'			---	kr'vt-lhts'u	= canary
13. l			luck	lat	= seaweed
14. lh			---	lhuk	= salmon/fish
15. m			money	mvn	= for it/that
16. m'			---	sk'vm'	= coyote
17. n			not	naa	= for you
18. n'			---	mvn'	= house
19. p			pun	nii-pash	= cheek
20. s			say	see	= stone/rock
21. sh			shut	shvn	= song
22. sr			shrew	srvn	= dirty
23. t			tub	tvth-xvt	= water
24. t'			---	t'uu-ya~	= bear
25. tr'			---	tr'vt	= money
26. ts'			gets	ts'vn	= needle
27. w			with	wan'	= piece/part
28. x			---	xan'	= fast/quick
29. y			yes	yun'	= yonder
30. i			uh' oh!	ta'	= father

Waa-tr'vslh-'a~ at Work



Teaching Dee-ni' Wee-ya'

- Language Instruction began as a grass roots movement with no linguistic methodology strategies .
- Improved instruction was needed. Past language courses were taught as enrichment electives rather than a language of use. The California Master Apprentice Program expanded the Total Physical Response model. MAP placed a speaker and a learner together to create concrete contexts for language use. The loss of the L1 speakers has become a challenge for the MAP approach .
- The new approach is to secure funding design plan for the development of a language program to augment the ongoing courses.
- Immersion is the best approach with direct contextual meaningful speaking.

The Language Plan

- Recognize the use of language is real
- Support Dee-ni' spirituality and cultural practices
- Initiate Immersion Programs at the Daycare , Headstart , Preschool and First Grade programs
- Plan for Middle school
- Support High School and Community Classes
- Curriculum Development
- Archive Language Data
- Negotiate with Public Schools English only mandate
- Use the AB 544 Eminence Credential
- Move Dee-ni' into the home

Language and Culture In Use



Teacher Training Programs and Support

- AICLS – Advocated for Indigenous Language Survival
 - The Breath of Life
 - Language Is Life
- LYLA – Living Your Language Alliance
- NILI – Northwest Indian Language Institute
- TDN – Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation
 - Tolowa Dee-ni' - Language App Apple Store
 - Wee-ya'-dvn – Tribal Website <http://weeyadvn.com>
 - Online Dictionary – www.weeyadvn.com/tolowa-dictionary/
- AB 544 Credentialing
- The University
 - Linguistic Certification
 - Linguistic Degree

The University



Language Expansion

New Terminology and the Grammar

- The creation of new words and vocabulary to express these concepts and experiences in Dee-ni' are vital. New vocabulary is either composed from the Dee-ni' grammar or phonologically shifted in Dee-ni' from another language.
- New vocabulary allows a speaker stay in the language.
- Most new words are nouns.

The Curriculum Plan and Training

Curriculum

- Immersion
- Total Physical Response.
- Master and Apprentice
- Accelerated Second Language Acquisition Skill Sets
- Domains
- Games
- Evaluation

Training

- Grammar
- Student Management
- Professional Development
- State Requirements
- College Graduates

Finding and Archiving Language Sources

“The Language Hunter”

- Language Hunters stalk the language. They are resourceful and dedicated. They understand that Native Language speaking requires research and tenacity. They locate sources and self teach themselves the language and share it with those around them.
- FLEx Database
- Ethnographic Sources
- Elder Recordings
- Articles and Publications
- Universities and Linguists

Mee-ne'-dvn - The Language Nest

- Teaching language in the school is supportive but remains unsuccessful. Thereby, language communication must reenter the home. Language taught and spoken in the home rebuilds the speech community.
- Dedicated family groups willing to communicate in Dee-ni' are taught and supported in their efforts to become Dee-ni' speakers.

Funding and Tribal Dynamics

Funding

- Administration for Native Americans
- Tribal
- Endowments
- Foundations
- Language Programs

Dynamics

- Shame Backlash
- Turning the Tide Against Language Death
- Tribal Funding
- Language Use in the Workplace

Auntie Sii~xuu-tes-na, Her Daughters and Granddaughter



Knowing the Value of Your Language?

- What is a language?
- Why Dee-ni'?
- What is its value?
- Isn't talking Dee-ni' a word for word translation from English to Dee-ni'?
- How is that going to help me?
- Does it have value to the greater world?
- Knowing your Indigenous self, Genesis to Present