

Nuwu Language Access Plan Project + Deliverables IndigenousAF (IAF Inc.)

Project Background

Before U.S. colonization, Southern Nevada was home to Indigenous people and the predominant language in the Las Vegas Valley was Southern Paiute or Nuwuvi. Today, the population of proficient Nuwu speakers is rapidly decreasing as intergenerational transmission of the language has been disrupted. Quite simply, younger generations are not receiving enough exposure to the language to achieve proficiency. Language loss threatens cultural identity, traditions, and future sovereignty. The *Nuwu Language Access Plan* combines Indigenous oral traditions, art images, technology, and education. It is organized and directed by Native people. Therefore, this project is one of self-determination, as we seek first to speak with the elders and community, as we listen and learn, and move forward with language revitalization.

Images are powerful tools for immersive second language instruction, since they allow for communication of ideas and concepts without resorting to English. Visuals also add interest, as vibrant images from Southern Paiute artist Fawn Douglas appeals to different learning styles. Teaching visuals like flashcards are valuable for language instruction, as they serve as tools that can be used in a plethora of ways, from direct memorization to grammar drills, to countless games and activities.

Consultation and Creation

Fawn Douglas (Las Vegas Paiute Tribe) was the program coordinator and artistic director for this project. To start the project, Fawn met with elders and other culture bearers to learn what words, phrases, and concepts they found most useful to pass down to future generations. Throughout the project period, Fawn had multiple meetings to visit with Paiute elders and cultural leaders in Nevada and Utah, who have worked on similar language programs. These visits were important to have a stronger certainty of words and to figure out phonetic spelling for final card proofs.

Cultural consultation is necessary when working with Native American tribes, as due diligence with culture bearers is essential to meeting standard protocols. This is where she located the card deck title: Nuwu Um-buh-guh (Southern Paiutes Speaking). Fawn produced dozens of draft images throughout 2024 using the Procreate program on an iPad Pro and narrowed her list down to 54 images (number used in playing card decks). She attached 60+ phonetically spelled words in Nuwu to the cards – several cards have more than one word. These culturally-suitable artistic images were produced in a special box, distributed to families and childhood

development centers, and are now used to enhance primary education curriculum and instruction on both the Moapa reservation and Las Vegas Paiute communities.

Production

It took time to research various types of cards, pricing, and production businesses to choose the best option. This turned out to be Shuffled Ink (see photos below). It took much thought and care to properly select cards and prepare for production. Fawn chose both 3.5" x 5" and 4" x 6" as the 2 card sizes with 330 gsm (grams per square inch) on the smaller cards and 410 gsm for the larger cards to provide a thicker stock. Since 4" x 6" flashcards are used in classrooms, it was important to choose the most durable grade (300 gsm is a normal playing card stock, while casinos typically use 310 gsm). Larger cards best suit the target audience of the children at the pre-kindergarten child care centers. The smaller 3.5" x 5" card size was chosen as suitable for parents to take the cards on the go and for families to have in households.

Distribution

Interestingly, upon distribution, we found that even adults gravitated toward the larger card decks. Though it was clear that children wanted the cards as well (the first to come up to the distribution table was an 8-year old boy). This grant funding covered approximately 50x decks of each size which were given away for free, and priority went to the tribal Child Development Centers in Las Vegas and Moapa reservations. Tami Watanabe, director of LVPT Child Development Center, requested 15 of the 4" x 6" decks, as the children are drawn to the larger cards. The Moapa Paiute Childcare Center currently serves 19 children, who are also enrolled members on the Moapa Paiute Reservation, along with approximately 20 additional students at the childcare center who live in Las Vegas. This year, the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe has 14 children in attendance at their Childhood Development Center. The larger decks allow for teachers to read the cards to the children in a classroom setting, play games, and more. Fawn also handed out flashcard decks as holiday gifts to individual families at a series of events this winter. In total 100x decks distributed for free.

Goals

The following goals were met with this project. First, we collaborated with elders and knowledge keepers who speak Southern Paiute. Second, we gathered further information between the lead artist, educators and community members, as the artist (Fawn Douglas) produced a complete 54x card deck of beautiful images with corresponding Nuwu Words. Third, production and distribution of Nuwu Um-buh-guh (Southern Paiutes Speaking). visual flashcards that are culturally appropriate. Fourth, use of language acquisition flashcards in early Childhood Development Centers and communities of the Southern Paiute or Nuwu on their traditional homelands in Southern Nevada.

This project has had a clear path to success: consultation with tribal elders, visual artists, language teachers, and the Indigenous communities in which IndigenousAF serves. Through engaging the community and cultivating relationships with our Native relatives, we accomplished a language project that is a piece of revitalization of the rich heritage of the Nuwu, the original people of Southern Nevada.

Future Reach

While this project is at its completion, in many ways it is still ongoing. We plan to further deliver flash card decks directly to families at the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe's Child Development Center, Snowy Winter Gathering. The children and their families will be in attendance (½ of the targeted group) where more card decks will be passed out at the event. Funding from this project grant will ensure that all of these Southern Paiute families will receive free language decks. Our hope is that we will reach as many Southern Paiute households in Las Vegas and Moapa as possible.

Next, we are seeking out further funding to produce a second series of cards and are looking into options such as coloring books and games in the Southern Paiute language. As people continue to use these cards, we see them as a starting point for Nuwu language revitalization. This first language deck turned out so beautifully and the feedback was so positive, that we intend on planning more with proper funding.



Educators at the Las Vegas Paiute Child Development Center with Flashcards



Fawn Douglas using flashcards with children at the Las Vegas Paiute Child Development Center



Southern Paiute Language Access Cards, 54x card images and written phonetic pronunciations, with cardboard box. By Fawn Douglas (Las Vegas Paiute Tribe)



Guideline Key

Die	Safe	Bleed
Black	Green	Red
Fold	Glue	Trim

INSTRUCTIONS: Place your artwork on the template above being sure to account for the bleed & making sure that all important information and/or logos fall within the live/safe area(s). Please be sure that you have centered your artwork within the safe area(s) properly or that it has been placed exactly where you would like it on the template. Please make sure that all flat images are at least 300dpi for printing purposes, otherwise those images may print blurry and/or pixelated.

	FACES	FACES	FACES	FACES	FACES	
Filename: Douglas Fern - 363300 - Card 13.5x5 Project Manager: CH Artist: IO Date: 12.24.24	 pah-goon-nav / oo-wahd	 pah / pah-nu-quith	 pa-pow	 oots-sah	Filename: Douglas Fern - 363300 - Card 13.5x5 Project Manager: CH Artist: IO Date: 12.24.24	
	 oo-siv	 nu-wu-ee-uv	 nu-wu-pah-guts	 nah-poo		
	3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5"	3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5"	3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5"	3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5"	3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5" 3.5x5"	4

Word List

ah-see-vots	butterfly
ahkaw' dumpuhts	quail
ahkaw' dumpuhts eng (plural)	quails
ai-i / pikai	tortoise
ai-puts	boy
ai-puts nuh-kwe	boy running
aww-tho	rattlesnake
coo-suv	bird
chuh-guts	duck
choo-quats	red tailed hawk
ee-seev	gila monster
hoo-hoop-itiz	owl
hoo-kwa-veets-itiz	beetle
hoo-weens-itiz	desert squirrel
ka-vah	horse
kah-nee	home
kooch	buffalo
koh-ahn	cradleboard
ko-vah	face
kwee-er	screwbean
kwee-yets	snake
mah-nee-puts	eagle
mah-pitz	elder woman
mah-nav (prickly)	cacti
mee-yuda-gho-pitz	moon
nah-ainz-itiz	girl
nah-ainz-itiz wu-nu-mee-ah	girl dancing
nah-guv	ears
nah-poo	elder man
nah-gah	bighorn sheep
nu-wu-ee-uv	paiute grapes
nu-wu-pah-guts	moccasins
oo-siv	banana yucca
oo-wahd	cloud
oots-sah	roadrunner
pa-pow	bear
pah	water
pah-nu-quith	river/water in motion
pah-goon-nav	rain

pah-guts
pah-sood-ah-hemp
pee-gund
poo-eeng
poot-seev
poo-weens-itz
poon-goots
saw-duh-veen-guts
saw-eent
shu-goop-eetz
shu-nav
tah-vah-puts
tah-voots
too-veep
too-vup
toov
tum-bah
tux-soo-vum
ung-ah-pitz
ung-nav / tah-see-uv
wah-got-itz
wee-shee-ahv
wop-kwa-veets-sutz
ya-puts
yuh-up / wen-up

fish
gourd
toad
eyes
star
mouse
dog
dragonfly
flower bloom
lizard
coyote
sun
cottontail rabbit
earth
pine tree
pine nuts
mouth
friend
baby
ant
frog
feather
scorpion
kitfox
basket