Yakama Rising

Michelle Jacob (2013)

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What the book’s about

This book mainly focuses on the cultural revitalization of the Yakama Tribe from Washington. The Yakama culture has become Westernized, and the book deals with teaching the youth of the tribe their culture and how to revive it.
Teaching the Youth

- The Wapato Indian Club established in 1973 by Sue Rigdon and a group of her students
- Goal was to bring community closer together
- Would teach the children dances in order to teach history of tribe and encourage unity among the children
- As of April 2016, the Wapato Indian Club has closed
Language loss is one of the most important contemporary issues facing indigenous communities today (Meek 2010; Silver and Miller 1997).

In the federal policy era of “termination” and with the continual assault upon indigenous people’s lives and rights, Yakama people made difficult decisions about how to raise their children, including whether and where they should attend school, and which language or languages should be spoken at home.
- Activists are mindfully working to resist the issue of language loss.

- Greg Sutterlict: A Yakama tribal member who has dedicated his life to preserving and revitalizing the tribe’s language.

- He has collaborated to create tapes and CDs of language lessons and recordings to distribute within the community.

- Their work to recover, reclaim, and revitalize the language is a powerful form of resistance to the ongoing effects of colonialism.
Intergenerational Responsibility

“Indigenous resistance is inherently intergenerational. Without the guidance of elders, younger generations will not have a pathway to follow.”

- Efforts to resist the ongoing effects of colonialism continue to be undermined by the overall lack of resources within Indian country.

- Federal funds, or the leadership of the tribal government, are not sufficient answers to the people’s language loss problem.

- The lack of material resources available on the reservation led language activists to partner with educational institutions and linguists.

- The activists feel responsible to learn and teach all they could so that the future generations can have a greater connection and sense of empowerment with their language.
University of Oregon Northwest Indian Language Institute

Partnership work with tribal peoples to support language revitalization.

-Led to a long-term partnership in which both the university and tribal peoples benefited through language revitalization efforts that were dedicated to practical and applied work.

-The institute was not looking just to teach educated people, they are interested in teaching people at all levels, and to help them discover that sense of identity, that being a Yakama is important.
Building a Moral Community

- The Yakama-NILI partnership promotes a vibrant form of community-empowered language revitalization. As such, it is supporting a grassroots effort to revive Yakama cultural traditions.
Xwayamami Ishich Ch. 3

- Non-profit organization with goals for revitalizing the culture
- Organization started in 2003 and is based on the Yakama Reserve
- Teaches the tribe about traditional practices and way of life through workshops
- Emphasizes on two themes
  - Prophecy of the Seven Generations
  - Women’s Roles as Cultural Bearers
Values of Xwayamami Ishich

1. Humility
2. Faith
3. Grassroots empowerment
4. Place-based teaching
5. Intergenerational teaching and learning

These values are represented by a golden eagle, that serves as a protector.
Prophecy of the Seven Generations:

A way of life that teaches all generations to think about how their actions will affect the long term, and the entirety of their tribe.

Most learning is done through storytelling from the elder of the tribe who helps the younger generations build on their learning to help teach future generations.
The Role of Women as Culture Bearers

Women are seen as “complementary but equal” to men. The goal of XI is to encourage women to be a bigger part of the tribe, like women were before Westernization. The elders in the tribe are female, and women are in charge of the economy within the tribe as well.
Teaching the Young

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- The “Whip Man” someone used to discipline the younger generation

- Molding thoughts to be more appreciative of Native American culture/ancestors

- Children think in the present and the future
Teaching Methods

-The Whip Man to teach stories and to pass on knowledge

-Learning sign language

-Dancing

-The mothers knowledge
Man vs. Woman

- Women hold a very strong position
- Equal to their counterpart
- Upbringing the children in a respectful manner, to become fully functioning additions to society
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

15. Right to a nationality
17. Right to your own things
18. Freedom of thought
19. Freedom of expression
26. Right to education
28. A fair and free world
29. Responsibility

No one can take away your human rights.
References


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