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## CURRICULUM & TEACHING STUDIES | REVIEW ARTICLE

# A brief history of language and cultural specialists in the state of Montana—Class 7 testing

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**Abstract:** In 1995, the Montana Office of Public Instruction supported the Class 7 Indian language and culture specialist license to allow experts in Indigenous languages/cultures identified and certified by their respective tribal nations, to teach in K-12 public schools. This article uses the example of a Class 7 certification process on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. With approximately 500 speakers, this process provides an opportunity for other language groups to emulate or modify it to fit their own language situation. If a language group has fewer fluent speakers and they are in their 80s, then perhaps a different process would be beneficial.

**Subjects:** Multicultural Education; Teacher Training; Education Policy & Politics

**Keywords:** Indigenous languages; policy; revitalization; qualification testing

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to recount the actions of the Montana state legislature and the tribal governments as they established a class of specialists who would be certified in their own tribal languages and cultures. Out of the cooperative efforts of the legislature and the tribes, Class 7 was born. This designation has been a boon to efforts aimed at saving Indigenous languages and cultures.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Richard E. Littlebear was born on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana and grew up in Busby, Montana. He holds degrees from Bethel College in Kansas and Montana State University and received his doctorate degree in education from Boston University in 1994. He is President and Interim Dean of Cultural Affairs at Chief Dull Knife College located on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Littlebear actively promotes bilingualism, advocating for bilingual education on a local, state, national and international level. He encourages the continued oral, written and reading usage of the Cheyenne language specifically, and of all Indigenous languages generally. He considers learning to read and write the Cheyenne language—his first language—as his greatest academic achievement. Littlebear was recognized during the 2015 Montana Governor's Humanities Awards Ceremony. “(He) has shown unstinting support for Native American educational efforts and for the revitalization of all Indigenous languages, but especially the Cheyenne language.”

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

When the U.S. Government acted to silence Indigenous languages, it was acknowledging how those languages empowered and united Indigenous people. Keeping Indigenous languages alive is challenging because all Indigenous languages across the United States are endangered. In fact, the 11 Indigenous languages in Montana are all critically endangered. How and why it is important to save these languages is an ongoing discussion. This article contributes to this conversation by explaining efforts in Montana to certify, place, and support Indigenous language and culture teachers in classrooms across the state in order to preserve these languages.

Those who are perpetuating Indigenous languages do so because they value their languages regardless of their levels of fluency or reading and writing proficiency in these languages. It is this “valuing” that provides the reason why all tribes must know about the inception of Class 7 for all of the Indigenous languages in the state of Montana. This recounting is of importance because those who were not involved in the legislative and tribal processes may forget why Class 7 was established.

A concomitant result of this recounting is that they learn legislative strategies that help them perpetuate Indigenous languages. They have to learn these strategies because they never expected their languages to die. They never established, for instance, a literature written in their own orthographies.

Literatures in Indigenous languages are needed especially since these languages are rapidly becoming classroom subjects and must now comply with state standards, assessments, curriculum development and lesson planning, and testing procedures.

The following expressive writing is an example of what Class 7 specialists must do for the classrooms and for all other audiences.

MÒXÒHOVA'HANÉHEHEOTSE TSÉHESENÉSTSESTÓTSE  
**(IF THE CHEYENNE LANGUAGE DISAPPEARS)**

Nahose tsetonésoneštse hovanee'e vo'éstane mésaa'eva Tséhesenestseese netao'e hestseohe ho'eva?

**What will happen when the Cheyenne language disappears from this world?**

Otaxa tseohkeveveoeo'e. O'kohmehehe otaxa tseevéhešéhoenátóheo'e  
**Those who spoke those languages will only be able to look around forlornly; those who spoke those languages will only be able to howl like lonely coyotes.**

Naa tsehe'eotsése Tsetseséstâhase TseohkekanomeTséhesebetovao'o,  
**Those who do not speak Cheyenne will still have Cheyenne bodies,**

Tseohkeso'Tséhesenoheo'o,  
**They will still look like Cheyennes,**

Tseso'kanome Tséhesevaxeeo'o...  
**The Cheyenne people will dress up in Cheyenne regalia to dance...**

Hestone'onevotse ta'se tsevehpáhanetotse...  
**But their dance outfits will seem empty,**

Heaxevóhonevotse mome'ókehenestoneva'hanetotse...  
**Their dancing bells will only thud nearly soundlessly,**

Tseohkés'o'Tséhesenoneo'o,  
**They will still sing Cheyenne songs,**

Tseohkékanome ve'ho'eo'e naa ova tseohkésaahene'enahenove  
Tseevéheševe'ho'évóse  
**They will still sing Cheyenne lyrics but they won't understand what they are singing.**

Naa ova tseohkésaamavovehpevonetotse henemenestovevotse,  
**And those Cheyenne songs will sound empty and lifeless,**

Noono'estótse naa he'koše'ěšeméstótse Tseohkeastomevonenéstse.

**War-whoops and ulutaions (lulus) will still be heard but will sound empty coming from mouths that do not speak the Cheyenne language.**

Naa mato honoxeaseo'o tseohkésó'Tséhesenestooheo'o naa ova vo'estanohe tseohkésaa'evananeahtooho.

**Even though the meadow lark will still sing in Cheyenne, no one will be able to understand her,**

Tsehe'eotsése Tsetséstâhase Tseastomáheo'o...

**Those Cheyenne who remain will be as nothing,**

Otaxa Tséhestoomo'eveo'o.

**They will be empty husks.**

Tsehe'eotsése Tsetséstâhase Tsevepáheo'o...

**The Cheyenne will be empty.**

Tseho'spetséhestâheo'o....

**They will almost be Cheyenne....**

These are harsh words but Indigenous languages are experiencing harsh times and, if they are going to be saved, we must use every means because we are essentially saving ourselves.

Those tribal members and the first language speakers of Indigenous languages are now in their fifties, sixties, and seventies. They thought their languages and the elders speaking them would be here always. As recently as the 1970s, these languages were not feeling language loss. These languages were robust and were being spoken in every nook and cranny of their cultures. Devising strategies to avert language loss did not enter their consciousness then and they were sadly, tragically astonished when their children and their children's children became monolingual speakers of the English language often within two generations.

Those tribal members who are 60, 70, or 80 years old were immersed in the Cheyenne language since the language was being spoken everywhere. It was every Cheyenne's first language. Governmental policies of language oppression, boarding school-induced separation from family and culture forced many Cheyennes to quit speaking their language. Many parents and grandparents did not want their children or grandchildren to experience the discrimination they endured when they spoke their own language. Elders did not want their children or grandchildren stigmatized, as they were, whenever they spoke the Cheyenne language. It is a miracle that the 60- to 80-year-old tribal members still speak the language. Much credit is due to their parents and grandparents who persisted in speaking their own language despite the many punitive strictures in place at school. Apparently, they too valued the language.

Today's Cheyenne and other Indigenous people are fully aware of the possibility that *all* of their languages could disappear as spoken languages from this planet. In a National Geographic article, entitled "Saving Lost Languages, Vanishing Voices," Russ Rymer wrote,

One language dies every 14 days. By the next century nearly half of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken on Earth will likely disappear, as communities abandon native tongues in favor of English, Mandarin, or Spanish. What is lost when a language goes silent? (Rymer, 2012, p. 60)

Yes. *What* is lost? Later in the same *National Geographic* article, its author provides what is lost to the people who speak the language that is being lost or is already lost. The loss of a language is a loss that is central to their being, as the following paragraph discusses,

Language shapes human experience—our very cognition—as it goes about classifying the world makes sense of the circumstances at hand. Those classifications may be broad—Aka [a language in India with 1,000 to 2,000 speakers] divides the animal kingdom into animals that are eaten and those that are not—or exceedingly fine-tuned. The Todzhu reindeer herders of southern Siberia have an elaborate vocabulary for reindeer; an *iyi dukgug myiys*, for example, is a castrated former stud in its fourth year. (Rymer, 2012, p. 60)

Similarly, the Cheyenne language makes sense of the circumstances at hand by classifying the world according to animacy or inanimacy, not according to gender as the English language does. Animacy and inanimacy do not indicate being alive or being dead. Some objects which logically seem to have animate characteristics are deemed inanimate and vice versa for inanimacy. For instance, a coat is animate while the head or the hair on the head of a human is inanimate.

These unique characteristics of these endangered languages are lost to the world at large. Perhaps the loss of these characteristics does not even make a ripple in the tide of language loss but they matter to the small groups of speakers whose collective identity and history are tied in with these references and when they are lost, the whole language and eventually the whole culture is lost.

Increasingly, as linguists recognize the magnitude of the modern language die off and rush to catalog and decipher the most vulnerable tongues, they are confronting underlying questions about languages' worth and utility. Does each language have boxed up within it some irreplaceable beneficial knowledge? Are there aspects of cultures that won't survive if they are translated into a dominant language? What unexpected insights are being lost to the world with the collapse of its linguistic variety? (Rymer, 2012, p. 70)

For instance,

If Aka, or any language, is supplanted by a new one that's bigger and more universally useful, its death shakes the foundations of the tribe. "Aka is our identity," a villager told me [Rymer] one day... "Without it, we are the general public." (Rymer, 2012, p. 77)

The foundations of many tribes are being shaken today. Their identities are being erased and they wonder why they are stuck in poverty, glued to illegal drugs, immune to the positive effects of education—any kind of education. Saving their languages may not be the answer to all of the dysfunctions they are presently experiencing but their loss is an insidious reminder that the US Government and its policies of language oppression are finally succeeding and if we do nothing we are complicit in this final slow motion massacre of who we are. The state of Montana and the tribal nations recognized the uniqueness of tribal languages and enacted Class 7 legislation for the benefit of all the language groups in Montana.

## 2. History of Class 7

In 1995, the Montana Office of Public Instruction supported the Class 7 Indian language and culture specialist license. This support enabled experts in Indian languages and cultures to be identified and certified by their respective tribal nations. This certification enabled these experts to teach their languages and cultures in Montana classrooms.

This article uses the Class 7 certification process at Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation since it is the implementation process the author is most familiar with. It is a

process that all language groups should emulate or, if they cannot emulate it, and many language groups may not be able to because the Cheyenne language still has approximately 500 fluent speakers, then they should modify it to fit their own language situation. If a language group only has five fluent speakers and they are in their 80s, then obviously a different process must be implemented. Implementing these language perpetuation programs is now much easier than it used to be.

Momentous changes occurred with Indigenous languages beginning in 1953 and continuing to this day. For instance, on the national level, the Native Languages Acts of 1992 and 1994, passed during the presidency of George H.W. Bush, reversed policies and practices which had oppressed the Indigenous languages in the United States (Senate Bill 2204, 1992; Senate Bill 2269, 1994). The approval of the Class 7 Certification by the Montana Board of Public Education lent further impetus to eliminating those oppressive language policies which had denied Indigenous Americans the total use of their languages.

Achieving Class 7 language and culture specialist designation for Montana's seven reservations and the Little Shell Tribe was a united effort by all of the tribes of Montana. The tribes, almost belatedly, recognized the enormity of losing their Indigenous languages and cultures. This designation—legislatively, tribally, linguistically, and academically—had to be done to counter these losses.

The 1992/'94 federal legislation ushered in a revolutionary change in attitude toward our Indigenous languages, a change that inspired other states like South Dakota, North Dakota, and Arizona to develop similar state legislation and programs. The Montana Board of Public Education on 30 November 1995 approved an addition to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) which added specialist certification for those identified by Montana Indian tribes as eligible for this certificate. This rule became effective on 22 December 1995, with the publication of the rule by the Secretary of State for Montana.

### 3. Legislative Audit Review

[This Item 4 Legislative Audit Review was not dated in the reference material but must have occurred prior to 22 December 1995. The author was unable to obtain references as to who attended.]

Kim Kradolfer, assistant Attorney General provided the Board with a legal opinion regarding the Legislative Audit regarding Class 7 licensure. Ms. Kradolfer said she has reviewed the Legislative Auditor's report and talked with John Northey of the Legislative Audit Division to obtain further clarification of the auditor's position. Ms. Kradolfer's legal opinion was that the Board had constitutional authority to enact the Class 7 Certification rule. Ms. Kradolfer also cited statutory law from the School Laws of Montana that also provides authority to the Board for the Class 7 rule, copies of which were included in the agenda packet. Ms. Kradolfer said that since there is no institution of higher education in the state or the country that has an academic program available by which competency in fluency in tribal languages, culture and heritage could be measured. It is appropriate to delegate that to the entities that have that knowledge and ability to assess that knowledge. Ms. Kradolfer said that states will often delegate the responsibility of assessing a person's knowledge to obtain licensure as with the American Medical Association. Ms. Kradolfer said Mr. Northey indicated that the Legislative Auditor has no intention to go forward and make an issue of this with the legislature. A brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Ms. [Joyce] Silverthorne moved to refer the Class 7 issue to MACIE [Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education] to review the following options and any others that arise concerning Class 7.

- (1) Amend the Class 7 language;
- (2) Request an attorney general opinion on authority;
- (3) Do nothing at this time;
- (4) Seek legislative authority;
- (5) Approve Tribal licensure of specialists.

Or any other options. Mr. Anderson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Richard E. Littlebear, Vice President of Cultural Affairs, Dull Knife Memorial College (now Chief Dull Knife College) addressed the Board commending them on their efforts with the Class 7 rule to ensure that the Native American language and culture is not lost, stressing the importance of allowing the Tribes the freedom to take the initiative in this effort. (ARM, 2002, 10-57-436, p. 3309).

These actions by the state of Montana methodically provided legal authority for the establishment of the Class 7 Specialist certification. A brief history of the Class 7 certification rule follows in legislative language follows:

This rule was initially assigned as ARM 10.57.407 and was changed to ARM 10.57.436 as the brief history outlines: 10.57.407 Class 7 American Indian Language and Culture Specialist (Transferred). [History: 20-4-102, MCA; Imp, 20-4-103, 20-4-106; MCA; NEW, 1995 MAR. p. 2803, Eff. 12/22/95 to ARM 10.57.436, 2002 MAR. p. 3309, Eff. 11/28/02.]. (ARM, 2002, 10-57-436, p. 3309)

Translated from legalese to common English language, this paragraph simply states that ARM 10.57.407 was transferred to ARM 10.57.436, effective November 28, 2002.

After Class 7 certification requirements were established by the Board of Public Education, the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council approved Resolution No. 94(96) on 3 January 1996, approving the procedures and standards which now guide Northern Cheyenne Class 7 certification. This Resolution also designated Chief Dull Knife College (then called “Dull Knife Memorial College”) as the organization responsible for the development of curriculum, the implementation and administration of the certification and renewal of Class 7 of Northern Cheyenne language and culture specialists.

The standards and procedures of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe specify the application process, the eligibility requirements, competency standards, examination procedures complete with requirements that must be met before an applicant is eligible to take the test, the type of test to be taken, how often the test must be administered, who administers the test. The make-up of the Board of Examiners is detailed and comprehensive. The renewal process is also specific and detailed and follows the procedures of the other 7 classes of instructors as approved by the Montana State Office of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction. Even though Class 7 represents a set of specialists who teach their own languages and cultures, they must still abide by the certification and license renewal processes of the state of Montana since it is the entity granting the licensure to teach in Kindergarten to 12th grade schools.

There have been two modifications to the Northern Cheyenne standards and procedures since the time they were originally approved by the Tribal Council. One modification specified the writing system to be used. This system was approved in a resolution by the Tribal Council. The second modification sought to have the standards and procedures reflect the actual practices going on currently.

These dealt with a grace period to allow applicants time to learn to read and write the Cheyenne language. The grace period of 10 years may allow sufficient time for Class 7 applicants who have successfully passed the oral examination portion of the Cheyenne language test.

These 10 years take into consideration that in 1995 only 5 people were able to write the Cheyenne language in the Tribal Council-approved writing system. The policies and procedures of the Northern Cheyenne ruled that Class 7 applicants must pass the oral language and written language tests in order to qualify for Class 7 certification. At the first testing session, no applicant would have passed the test. This grace period enabled applicants time to learn how to read and write the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council-approved writing system. At subsequent tests, applicants would still not have been able to pass the test; thus the 10-year grace period.

#### 4. Opposition to Class 7 Certification

There was state-wide opposition by school boards and teacher unions to the establishment of the Class 7 certification. In response to this opposition, in January of 1997, the Editor of Montana Education Association (MEA) wrote:

A number of MEA local associations have asked the inevitable question, “Why? Why should MEA bargaining units include Class 7 certificate holders in their unit recognition clauses and thereby provide Class 7 certificate holders all the rights and privileges of the bargained agreement?”

They did not ask, but could have, “Why should Class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 certificate holders consider Class 7 certificate holders as professionals empowered to do business in our school communities?”

MEA knows very well how sensitive, confounding, divisive, and controversial this issue can be. But, by act of the Board of Public Education, Montana Indian tribes can indeed determine who shall be certified Class 7, and the State of Montana must recognize that certificate, just as it must recognize Classes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. 6. Our bargaining units cannot and dare not pretend Class 7 certification does not exist nor has no meaning under the law.

**Preservation of Cultural Integrity: The Constitutional Obligation**The Board of Public Education based its decision on the duty of the State of Montana to comply with Article 10, Section 1, Subsection 2, Montana State Constitution, which states: “The state recognized the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” [Montana Const. art. X, § 1, 2]

Article 10, Section 9, Subsection 3, states: “There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law. Other duties of the board shall be provided by law” [Montana Const. art. X, § 9, 3]. [The Montana Code, Title 20, § 4–104,] states: “To affect an orderly and uniform system of teacher and specialist certification, the board of public education shall prescribe and adopt policies for the issuance of teacher or specialist certificates.” (MCA title. XX, § 4–104, 2015, 2015). A lot more related law follows.

In short, the Board of Public Education acting from the premise that it has a constitutional obligation to preserve Indian language and culture and the constitutional and statutory authority to take appropriate action, decided to grant each Montana tribe the authority to determine for itself what constitutes a Class 7 certificate.

*The board, however, determined the Class 7 certificate is a “specialist” certificate and Class 7 certificate holders may only “teach” Indian language and culture.*

Consequently, MEA believes Class 7 certificate holders are as endowed with professional license to do what they do as are any other certificate holders. This is the law.

Further, MEA believes Class 7 certificate holders are performing unit work, that is, they are “teaching” within the parameters of their certification. Since they are doing unit work, they must be embraced in our bargained agreements to protect them and all other certificate holders who are already embraced in our bargained agreements. Excluding Class 7 certificate holders from our bargained agreements would foster erosion of bargaining unit work; create disparate levels of compensation, work load, supervision, and evaluation and deny the bargaining unit the one real avenue it may have to correct alleged violations of the bargained agreement and state law as it pertains to specialist certification and school accreditation.

### **The Bottom Line**

No one should expect the Office of Public Instruction or the Board of Public Education to immediately address and correct issues that may arise as to how Class 7 certificate holders are employed, assigned, compensated, and protected in their employment. We must do these ourselves.

Bottom line, if MEA local associations want a voice in how Class 7 certificate holders are employed, assigned, compensated, and protected in their employment, then they must embrace them in their bargained agreements. In fact, if existing unit recognition clauses already state something to the effect that members of the bargaining unit are all those who hold a teaching certificate or professional license and provide direct student services, and are not administrators, then Class 7 certificate holders are already embraced by those bargained agreements. In this circumstance, Class 7 certificate holders are immediately eligible for all contractual rights and privileges. And they are immediately eligible for membership in our local associations and MEA/NEA. We should be asking these new members of our profession to join our and their professional association.

We urge our members to keep us informed on how things shake out. There is plenty of room here for folks to disagree, but we should not deny or ignore the legal and contractual issues at hand. (Feaver, 1997)

Opposition occurred from school boards and from teachers in the 6 other classes. The opposition reasoned that school boards did not have policies applicable to Class 7 specialists or did not have funds, so they claimed, to compensate the new Class 7 class of specialists. Some teachers did not want Class 7 certified specialists to have rights equal to those who had gone to college for four, six or more years, as many mainstream teachers had, and did not want to share classrooms with Class 7 instructors. Some mainstream teachers felt that another set of responsibilities, represented by Class 7 instructors, was being imposed on them over and above their regular duties.

Over the years, since 1995, this opposition has dissipated and now, for the most part, Class 7 specialists are accepted the same as other classes of specialists. The backing of prestigious persons, like Eric Feaver and Dr. Alonzo Spang, has helped this acceptance along with the dedication and professionalism of Class 7 specialists.

The following are comments made by Dr. Alonzo Spang to the Certification standards and practices advisory council meeting on 19 July 1995:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about a topic that is very important to us at Northern Cheyenne. Before continuing, I want to point out that I am representing the Northern Cheyenne Tribe per letter from President Levando Fisher. Also, I am here as interim President of Dull Knife Memorial College.

The advisory council requested that each reservation make a report on the current levels of fluency of and teaching practices of language and culture. We have with us Mr. Burt Kaline who is the language director for Lame Deer Schools and he will report on what is extant at that institution. Accompanying him is Bertha Other Bull, member of the Board for Lame Deer Schools. Also, with us is Mrs. Norma Bixby who will share her impressions as well.

So, I will share with you what generally is happening on Northern Cheyenne as it relates to the schools at Busby, the St. Labre Schools at Ashland; and Colstrip Schools at Colstrip.

With respect to fluency in the Northern Cheyenne language, we can only make some educated guesses as the only survey or study done to determine that empirically was conducted in 1988–89 by Dull Knife Memorial College under contract with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe’s Education Department. This survey involved a total of 2399 persons. The results were:

Thirty-eight percent or 914 persons reported that they speak or can understand Cheyenne.

In comparing six age groups who speak Cheyenne, the data show that the percentage of Cheyenne speakers increases with each age group:

- About 13% preschoolers
- About 16% school age
- About 32% ages 19 to 24
- About 51% ages 25 to 44
- About 68% ages 45 to 65
- About 77% 66 and older

Breakdown of Cheyenne speakers by districts on the reservations:

- 45% Busby-----538 persons (298–240 equals 538)
  - 40% Birney-----84 persons (50–34) equals 84)
  - 38% Lame Deer-----1338 persons (835–503) equals 1338)
  - 33% Ashland-----244 persons (164–80 equals 244)
  - 29% Muddy Creek-----195 persons (138–67 equals 195)
- (Spang, 1995)

In the “Breakdown” section above, the percentages do not precisely add up but they are close enough so that the total number of speakers at the time the survey was taken was approximately 924.

Ever since the enactment of Class 7, there has been a steady reduction of Cheyenne speakers who spoke Cheyenne as their very first language. This reduction is not the fault of Class 7 (as the first sentence implies) but is primarily because of elders dying naturally.

An informal survey of current Cheyenne language speakers yielded the following results: Out of a population of approximately 11,000 enrolled Northern Cheyenne, only 566 speak the Cheyenne language. This number includes people whose first language was/is the Cheyenne language from all five districts. Since then, the Northern Cheyenne have experienced the departure of many first language speakers so that the number is now probably closer to 500. This number puts the Cheyenne language at really high risk of loss within the next 20 years, unless they keep trying to save it. And one of the ways they can continue saving it is by providing their youth with literature they can read and learn from. Specialists must provide outlets for their oral history and their stories so that Cheyenne youngsters aren’t being taught a dead-end language.

## 5. Overarching Questions, Recommendations, and Admonitions

What do the Northern Cheyenne need to do to develop and support language specialists who will design or expand immersion programs in order to revitalize the culture and Indigenous languages of their tribal nations?

An oversight in the ARM authorizing the Class 7 specialists is the mandating of professional development. Successful Class 7 applicants are required to abide by state certification renewal requirements and to attend training mandated by the school district in which they work. Yet, many of those who are now Class 7 specialists often have had no classroom management experience, no experience in teaching languages, and no experience in how schools operate. At Northern Cheyenne, we have tried to mitigate or eliminate this oversight by providing classes to address these issues. We offer college credit courses that can be converted to the Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for renewal. The whole school at which the Class 7 specialists are employed needs to provide these kinds of very basic trainings to their Class 7 specialists so that the students get the maximum benefit of the instruction being offered in language and culture.

Trained Algonquian-oriented linguists and specialists have taught classroom management, reading and writing oral language approaches, and basic linguistics to make up for this lack but they cannot be mandated to attend them; only the school that they work for can do that. Fluency, while being a much-needed skill, is often not adequate. If a Cheyenne language specialist cannot teach the Cheyenne language, no matter how high their fluency level may be, then it leads to failure for the student, the specialist, the College, and the whole Cheyenne language-speaking community. Furthermore, the Cheyenne must respect the language enough to set personal standards that meet or exceed the standards of the English, Spanish, French language specialists. Finally, we cannot and should not allow a tribal official to simply approve Class 7 applicants. Often, the tribal officials do not speak the language themselves. The applicants must pass a rigorous testing process. This testing is no different from rigorous tests that instructors of English, French, Spanish, Chinese languages must pass if they want to teach those languages.

### ***5.1. The following items suggest best practices in facilitating Indigenous language professional development to sustainable language teaching***

Each language group should establish standards and procedures for Class 7 applicants. These standards and procedures should be rigorous. In addition to these standards and procedures, each language group should establish a rigorous test and testing process that examines both fluency in conversational language and proficiency in reading and writing. The language group should also establish one writing system based on a scientific linguistic system so that all members know which standards of language usage they must meet.

There are usually very vocal proponents of using phonics. However, the problem with using phonics is the proliferation of writing systems. Each person has a pronunciation system which does not individually lend itself to standardized testing, to teaching one writing system, to learning to write so that all students, language specialists, and community members have one system to refer to.

## 6. Future Efforts

The Class 7 certification has had the attention of some of the Montana state legislators and they wanted a legislative audit. Legislative audits examine and possibly eliminate some regulations and rules. Class 7 certification is always vulnerable to these audits. Because of this attention, we must have a rigorous system of testing our Class 7 applicants. We must not leave it to the tribal personnel to merely sign Class 7 applications. This process is not paying respect to the language and doing

immeasurable harm to the Class 7 certification processes and standards, and possibly giving students a language teacher only capable of substandard instruction. Many Cheyenne students are eager to learn the Cheyenne language and if the specialist “turns them off” they may never make the effort to learn to speak the Cheyenne language again. If the Northern Cheyenne do not establish a system, then we are not fulfilling the Administrative Rule that sustains this class of specialists.

We must respect our languages enough to learn how to read and write them and quit squabbling about writing systems. There are five political districts on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, each district was once a band and as such represented variations of the Cheyenne language. These variations often have champions who are often uncompromising of others’ variations. Such intransigent attitudes often delay and hinder language preservation processes by diverting attention from the on-going language loss.

We must train our specialists to be better than the specialists of English and other languages. Our specialists must be as professional as or more professional than the teachers in the 7 other teacher classifications because they lack the four, six, or eight years of college preparation that others have had and, consequently, Class 7 specialists are looked down on as being of lesser professional stature. We as Class 7 instructors must be reliable, dependable, punctual, and accountable in our personal and especially in our professional lives. The Class 7 certification may not save all of the Indigenous languages but it is giant step in the right direction.

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