

Honoring Educational Sovereignty Through the First Peoples' Certificate

way', limlmtx, and greetings to our Native education partners,

This Native American Heritage Month, we celebrate a profound achievement in educational sovereignty and language revitalization: the continued growth of Washington's First Peoples' Language, Culture & Oral Traditions Certificate program.

From One Page to 229 Certificates

When this program began as a pilot in 2003, the entire list of certificate holders fit on a single standard page. Today, we honor 229 certificates held by 126 unique educators across 14 Tribal nations. This expansion reflects our collective sacred responsibility to our languages, traditions, and youth.

The First Peoples' certificate program stands as a powerful exercise of Tribal sovereignty and government-to-government partnership. Built on the recognition that Tribes hold the expertise and authority over the transmission of Indigenous languages, heritage, cultural knowledge, customs, and oral traditions, this program honors what our communities have always known: our languages and ways of knowing are foundational to Native student wellness and brilliance.

Honoring Community-Based Educators

The First Peoples' certificate empowers our ancestor-built, community-educated language and culture keepers to hold an educator certificate as concrete as any other in Washington State. These educators hold knowledge, experience, and a commitment to our ways that is unwavering and unparalleled. They belong in educational spaces, ensuring the transfer of intergenerational knowledge and the cultural wellbeing of our youth.

Indigenous Knowledge Across All Learning

The First Peoples' course codes span the breadth of educational experience: Indigenous Language, Arts, Culture, Music and Performing Arts, Physical Education and Health, Science, and History. Specialized courses like Healing of the Canoe and Healing through Traditional Cultural Practices further demonstrate how Indigenous Knowledge Systems are comprehensive, interconnected, and essential to authentic education. From Salishan languages spanning throughout the state, from Wakashan traditions to Sahaptin cultural practices, from Lummi's Xwlemi Chosen cultural arts to Swinomish Indigenous Science, our certificate holders represent the interwoven strengths of Washington's Tribal peoples.



Carrying Forward Sacred Responsibility

Each certificate represents an educator standing in their sacred responsibility to carry forward the languages and knowledge of their ancestors to the next generation. This is language revitalization, cultural preservation, and educational sovereignty in action, led by Tribes, for Tribal youth, in partnership with the state.

To our Tribal education leaders and language warriors: limlmtx for your dedication to this sacred work. Together, we continue to honor the sovereignty of our Tribal nations and center Indigenous Knowledge Systems at the foundation of education for all our children.