

Language Loss - Lydia Whirlwind Soldier - OSEU #3

One of the most important things is that we are losing our language. Our language is ingrained in our cultures and our culture is ingrained in our language. If we lose our language, we're going to lose quite a bit.

So we're concerned about our language loss. Most of our families are teaching the traditions and participating in ceremonies and all of that. Because of the boarding school system and the way that we were raised in boarding schools, we couldn't speak our language. The whole idea of assimilation was forced upon us. There was a lot lost. Those families that didn't reinforce it when the children went home...Fortunately, I was really lucky because I stepped right back into a community whose first language was Lakota. And everyone spoke Lakota. I stepped right back into that community of people for three months out of the year. I was able to retain my language.

Through my language, I was able to retain my culture and my traditions. Many schools are offering language classes. They are during very short periods of time. If you have one hour of language a week, it's practically...just learning nouns...you don't know conversational language.

Thought and philosophy blends into that...your values...your treatment of people...all of that is entwined. We can't just preserve one. We have to preserve them all.