

Second Language Learners - Stephanie Charging Eagle - OSEU #3

My whole career has been based on really...putting out the word about the learners who are now coming into our schools as second language learners of Lakota language. And that's a concern because it's unlike English as a second language or any language as a second language...because indigenous languages are connected to kinship...to the land...to everything. It goes back to being connected with the...who we are...our homelands...we say there's a saying that...the people who...the immigrants who came to this country can go home to wherever their ancestors are from. But we have no homeland. This is our homeland. Our homeland is where we are. We don't have the luxury of being able to going somewhere and saying, "We're going home." So we have to make the best of the situation. And education is one avenue for that.

Education has become, for me, an avenue...a manageable tool to do a lot of the work that needs to be done. There has been a lot of work that has been done, but we still have plenty to do. And as I think about my colleagues...the people who I worked with in the eighties, nineties, early two-thousands...we...I look at them...and some of them are gone now... some are retired, semi-retired...and we're sitting on a whole treasure chest of people who have the knowledge...the wisdom. And we're not tapping into it. The people who need to be tapping into those resources are not.

I would like to see education...it's the best thing we can do right now. We always say we want to go back to the families to do this. But we also have a problem there. So we have to go with what is best and the most practical...and that is using our educational institutions...and that is how we share.