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Two Sparks graduates the first to earn new biliteracy seal in Northern Paiute

Sparks graduates say Paiute languages classes brought them closer to their culture

Before she started high school, recent graduate Cecilia Gossett said she only knew a few words in Paiute.

During her junior and senior years, Gossett, who is Northern Paiute and Washoe and is a member of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, decided to take the Paiute language classes offered at Spanish Springs High School to get closer to her culture. She said they were the best classes she took in high school.

“My teacher brought in other people who spoke the language in other dialects, and taught us traditions all around Nevada,” she said in a Tuesday interview. “We made baskets, we made our own ribbon skirts, we did some traditional dances, we ate traditional food. It's the experience I'll cherish for the rest of my life.”

Jayla Ramirez, another recent Spanish Springs graduate, had a similar experience. Ramirez, who is from the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, had learned a little bit of Paiute from her family members, but not enough to fully converse.

Earlier this month, Gossett and Ramirez became the first two students to earn the new State Seal of Biliteracy in Northern Paiute.

“It’s really nice just to have knowledge of the language and possibly pass it down to later generations,” Ramirez said.

The State Seal of Biliteracy Program was created from a 2015 bill, [AB166](#), to recognize students who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. The State Seal of Biliteracy is affixed to their diplomas and their receipt of the seal is noted on their transcript.

Northern Paiute — one of Nevada’s native languages — was added to the list of 57 languages recognized through the State Seal of Biliteracy this school year through a collaboration between the Nevada Department of Education, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and the Washoe County School District (WCSD).

More than 2,000 students earned the seal during the 2023-24 school year, the latest data available. The majority of those seals, 88 percent, were in Spanish. Other languages include Japanese and French.

WCSD is one of four school districts — including Elko, Humboldt and Mineral — that offers Northern Paiute or Western Shoshone language classes at some of their schools. In addition to Spanish Springs, Paiute language classes are offered at Wooster High School in Reno and Reed High School in Sparks.

Last year, WCSD was awarded a three-year, \$1.2 million federal grant to provide Northern Paiute language instruction at Natchez Elementary School, located on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation.

But prior to this school year, there was no state exam that students could take to prove their proficiency in any of the Great Basin languages.

“The Seal of Biliteracy is very important as far as the language revitalization, the culture and keeping that heritage, which was once spoken fluently within our communities and then lost through [boarding schools](#),” said WCSD Native American Culture and Education Program Coordinator Fawn Hunter.

Hunter said she hopes that students who earn the seal will further their education in the Paiute language and pass it on to the next generation.

“I really hope that they are able to bring it, not only in their own home and teach their own families later as they grow into mature adults, but also bring it back to our school district ... into our classrooms and teach other students that want to learn the same,” Hunter said.



Spanish Springs High School graduate Jayla Ramirez poses for a photo in her tribal regalia.
(Jayla Ramirez/Courtesy)

Have a student or staffer who we should feature in the next edition of School Spotlight? Share your nominations with me at rocio@thenvindy.com.

Why warring Colorado River states could be headed for 'divorce'

Following months of deadlock, one proposal for the Colorado River has emerged.

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We're thrilled to invite you to the final part of our popular education series, **Immigration Justice Must be a Climate Fight, Too!** This three-part training series is focused on migrant justice, resisting mass detentions and deportations, and how the climate movement can show up for migrants and immigrants during this increasingly politically polarized time. This final session is focused precisely on action steps and we hope you can join us!

**[Register HERE to join us on July 2nd at 7:00 p.m. ET | 4:00 p.m. PT!](#)**

**PS:** You can watch the recordings of [Workshop #1 here](#) and [Workshop #2 here](#) if you missed them!

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For those into archeology: *Feature story shows some interesting comparative practices to Indian boarding schools but also view a series of articles at end of article. sdc*

https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/archaeology/a65187091/historic-black-school-discovery-virginia/?utm_source=firefox-newtab-en-us

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Tuolumne County Historical Society - **Sierra Me-Wuk Native Americans**

For more information, order *CHISPA*, Vol. 5, No. 4, April-June, 1966 and Vol. 6, No. 4, April-June, 1967.

<https://tchistory.org/sierra-me-wuk-native-americans/>



**Alaska Native woman, 'everybody's helper,' is Orthodox church's first female North American saint** | National Catholic Reporter <https://share.google/PGEFz4fZ9Gt0tqMvM>



## Leonard Peltier's Story Isn't Over Yet

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-new-yorker-interview/leonard-peltiers-story-isnt-over-yet>



**Leonard Peltier at his home on the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwa Reservation in North Dakota. (photo: Jaida Grey Eagle/The New Yorker)**

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Four Native American leaders sailed to London in 1710 to request military aid from Queen Anne. They were received as dignitaries, securing a vital alliance against the French.



Alaska Youth Regional Summit

July 23-24, 2025 | Anchorage, AK

We're excited to announce that the Alaska Regional Youth Summit is scheduled to be held on July 23–24, 2025 in Anchorage, Alaska. Hosted by the IAC Youth Program, this two-day event brings together Native youth from across the Alaska region to connect and learn about agriculture.

Whether you're already involved or just curious, join us to gain resources and make connections to help shape strong, sustainable Tribal food systems. Interested in attending? Space is limited—apply now.

REGISTER

Northwest Regional Summit

August 19-20, 2025 | Airway Heights, Washington

Register for the 2025 Northwest Regional Summit at a new location! We're excited to announce that the 2025 Northwest Regional Summit is taking place this year at Northern Quest Resort and Casino in Airway Heights, Washington, on August 19-20.

Whether you're an experienced producer, just getting started, or working to strengthen Tribal food systems, this summit is your chance to connect, learn, and access resources.



REGISTER

Ni'ihau is the 7th largest island in Hawaii, but it's often called "The Forbidden Island" for good reason, almost no outsiders are allowed to step foot on it. The island was purchased by a wealthy Scottish widow, Elizabeth Sinclair, in 1864 for \$10,000 in gold, and it's remained in her family ever since. The current owners have made it their mission to preserve traditional Hawaiian culture and language, along with the island's ecosystem. With no paved roads, no internet, and no commercial development, life on Ni'ihau moves at a pace that has barely changed in over a century. The native population still speaks Hawaiian and lives off the land with minimal modern interference. It's one of the most extreme and fascinating examples of cultural preservation in the modern world and it remains largely hidden from the public eye.



Please help spread the word about this up-coming Columbia College Community Education class instructed by Katherine Glick.

Plight of the Pacific Salmon

Salmon have had a tumultuous history in California and their populations have been steadily declining over the past few decades. They are particularly sensitive to temperature variations and have been hindered by population booms, agriculture, California's need for water storage, and wildfires. Salmon are a life blood to tribal nations in the state and even some of the local words such as "Consumnes" come from the Mi Wok words for "Place of the Salmon."

In this course we will explore the historic plight of the salmon in a fun, engaging, and interactive way, and discuss what the future of the species may look like in our state.

Note- This course has both a lecture portion and a field trip included.

Lecture Dates: Mondays and Wednesdays, July 14-23, 2025

Time: 4:30pm-6:30pm **Location:** Columbia College, Cedar 101

Cost: \$50

Field Trip Date: Saturday, July 26, 2025

Location: Mokelumne Fish Hatchery

<https://events.hometownticketing.com/boxoffice/claimjumpers/L2VtYmVkJ2V2ZW50LzMwMw==>

The Nevada College Kick Start Program awards every Nevada public school kindergartener with a free \$50 scholarship in the form of a Nevada sponsored 529 college savings account. The program helps Nevada's kindergarteners begin their path to college and assists Nevada families with saving for post-secondary educational expenses. The Kick Start scholarship is provided at no cost to eligible Nevada families and students are able to utilize the funds after high school graduation at a variety of eligible educational institutions.

The Nevada College Kick Start Program began in 2013 in 13 of Nevada's rural counties and expanded statewide in 2014. Today, over 373,000 students have program accounts.

How it Works

Nevada College Kick Start scholarship accounts are created automatically based on information provided by the Nevada Department of Education to the Treasurer's Office. The information includes the student's name and school district ID number.

The program uses a portion of private program management fees, **not taxpayer dollars**, to set aside a \$50 scholarship in the form of a 529 college savings account for every public-school kindergarten student in Nevada since 2013. The funds are held in a master account which is owned by the State Treasurer's Office. The master account is managed by Ascensus College Savings, the program manager for the College Savings Plans of Nevada.

Kick Start scholarship accounts are not set up to accept any additional contributions outside of the initial \$50 added by the State. Families must [open a separate 529 Account](#) to contribute additional dollars and in order to utilize the funds, a social security number may be required upon redemption.

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Nevada State Treasurer    <https://www.nevadatreasurer.gov> > CollegeSavings > CSP\_Home

#### **[Nevada College Savings Plans](#)**

The **Nevada College Savings Plans** Program offers families across the nation a wide variety of **college savings** options, with the benefits being able to be used at any eligible institution of higher learning, including universities, **colleges**, and trade schools.

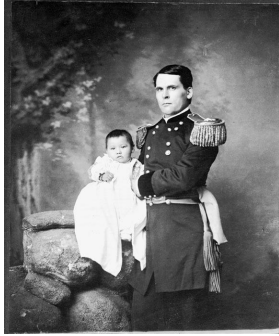
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"The future does not belong to the cynic or to those on the sidelines. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams and are changemakers."

"You can't separate the life you live from the words that you speak."

"The idea that politics wasn't about left, right or center, wasn't about big money or power game, it was about the improvement of people's lives,"

—US Senator Paul Wellstone (MN)



General L. W. Colby holding Little Lost Bird, found tied to her dead mother's back in the snow covered Wounded Knee field four days after the army killed nearly 300 Lakota there. Nineteen medals of honor were awarded for the massacre. (1891)

I was in the burial party That went back to Wounded Knee
With rock hammers and ice picks To chip the dead ones free
After the massacre and the blizzard They'd been frozen to the ground
Mother's and children and warriors We found them all around
They were frozen in their agony Or shock and terror as they fled
The army's giant howitzers That sang their song of death
We found Chief Big Foot His scarf around his face
The ice was frozen blood From his neck down to his waist
The bloody footprints along the creek
Did the ghost dance for the dead?
And I hoped that it was true What all the legends said
That there'll be a new spring coming And our families will come home
And game will fill the prairies And the crops will always grow
We wrapped the bodies in red blankets And placed them on our sled
And left their stacked up rifles And the few things that they had
"Crazy Horse is buried here" Someone said as we were due to start
"Just his heart" I told him "It's only just his heart"

Charlie Parr, "1890"



Gary Wilcox with the American Indian movement blesses and cleanses environmental advocates and protesters at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport on Tamiami Trail E, Ochopee, Fla., on Saturday, June 28, 2025. (Mike Stocker /South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

Protesters line highway in Florida Everglades to oppose 'Alligator Alcatraz'

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A coalition of groups, ranging from environmental activists to Native Americans advocating for their ancestral homelands, converged outside an airstrip in the Florida Everglades to protest the imminent construction of an immigration detention center. Florida officials have forged ahead in constructing the compound dubbed as “Alligator Alcatraz” within the Everglades’ humid swamplands. Cars passing by honked in support as protesters waved signs calling for the protection of the expansive preserve that is home to a few Native tribes and endangered species. [Read more.](#)

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PBS Reno (Ch.5) on Tuesday, July 1 at 8 pm:

“*Fathers and Sons*” Henry Louis Gares, Jr. introduces LeVar Burton and **Wes Studi** to the family they’ve never known (Repeata at 1 am and Mondy, 7/7 @ 2pm)

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### St. Paul’s Xcel Energy Center, home of the Wild, to become Grand Casino Arena

[https://www.startribune.com/article/601346002?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=evening\\_update&utm\\_term=Evening%20Update?utm\\_source=gift\\_email](https://www.startribune.com/article/601346002?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=evening_update&utm_term=Evening%20Update?utm_source=gift_email)

## Don't Miss the Opportunity - Applications Close Soon — Native Leadership Training in Seattle

There's still time to apply — but the window is closing fast!

Applications for the **Regional West Native Leadership Institute Training** close **this week**, and we do not want you to miss this opportunity.

Hosted by Advance Native Political Leadership, California Native Vote Project, and Native Action Network, this **first-of-its-kind regional leadership training** takes place:

 **September 5–10, 2025**

 **Seattle, Washington**


 Travel, lodging, and meals are all **fully covered** for participants.

This training is specifically for **Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian leaders** from **California and Washington** who are ready to rise, lead, and build power in civic and political spaces.

 **Native leadership is urgently needed for these roles:**

- **City Councilmember**
- **School Board Member**
- **County Supervisor or Commissioner**
- **Mayor or Vice Mayor**
- **County Clerk or Recorder**

Whether you're already engaged in community work or just starting to explore public leadership, this training is for you.

 [\*\*Complete our application today\*\*](#) and a member of our team will follow up with next steps.

Let's ensure Native voices are shaping the future — from the local level up.

**[Submit Your Application Today!](#)**

Let's build power together!

In solidarity, Thomas Sills [tsills@canativevote.org](mailto:tsills@canativevote.org)