

I often consider myself a silent, fluent speaker of my Diné language when I engage with fellow Diné and Indigenous peoples, as well as when I strive to communicate the personal effects of settler colonialism to non-natives. The decline of spoken Indigenous languages is a pressing concern, as it poses a risk to the acknowledgment of our ancestral lands and heritage. We are exploring innovative methods to revitalize our Indigenous languages in response to this challenge. I firmly believe that this revitalization can align with the Indigenous planning principle of "no translator," which emphasizes the importance of expressing our aspirations and community needs independently, without the need for translators.

This principle could also serve as a valuable perspective for library staff and leadership, encouraging the incorporation of more Indigenous language materials into library collections alongside the growing body of BIPOC scholarship and creative works. Together, we can endeavor to create safer and more vibrant communities that celebrate and preserve our Indigenous languages.

As such, I, Michaela Paulette Shirley, a Diné Indigenous planning practitioner and emerging scholar, respectfully advocate for libraries to enrich their offerings with Indigenous language materials accessible to the community. These additions will not detract from existing resources; rather, they will broaden perspectives and enhance awareness. We must cultivate a deep understanding of our Mother Tongue to reinforce the unique identities within our communities. Furthermore, libraries should curate collections that include literature on Indigenous planning, design, architecture, and landscape architecture, reflecting the diverse ways Indigenous peoples inhabit our world.

I also encourage libraries to ensure that all plans developed by local governments and their consultants are publicly accessible, especially those incorporating Indigenous languages, worldviews, and values. This commitment to transparency will empower citizens to become informed stewards of the places they cherish and wish to protect. Throughout the years, I've observed that many well-intentioned plans often go unnoticed, gathering dust in local government offices despite the considerable effort invested in shaping these critical visions. Understanding our past and recognizing its influence on our present is crucial for charting a course toward the future we aspire to create.

I hope these reflections inspire further dialogue on the vital role that libraries will play in fostering fluency in Indigenous languages for generations to come. I hope to see more Indigenous languages represented in print while also respecting the traditions of those languages that are traditionally spoken rather than written. Ahé'ee' (thank you).