



LESSON 2

Takelma Language Revitalization

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will learn that the Takelma language is important to the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe.
- Students will learn why the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe is revitalizing its language.
- Students will participate in a vocabulary activity that supports Takelma language revitalization.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why does the Takelma language need to be revitalized?
- What are some steps the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe is taking to revitalize the Takelma language?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom or open space (e.g., cafeteria, media center)
- How are the students organized?
 - Whole class Teams: 3 – 5
 - Pairs Individually
 - × ×

TIME REQUIRED

70 – 100 minutes

Overview

While the previous lesson introduced students to the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe’s Takelma language, this lesson explores the broader topic of language preservation and revitalization—why it’s important and what the Tribe is doing to keep the Takelma language alive. This is an important issue for many contemporary American Indian tribes, who are attempting to save their Indigenous languages from near extinction caused by decades of colonialism and forced assimilation.

The lesson begins with a slide show that briefly explains the concept of Indigenous language revitalization and describes some steps the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe has taken to teach and promote the use of the Takelma language. Students are then asked to create a picture book that illustrates common Takelma words and matches those words to their English equivalents. The finished book can be displayed in class or given to the tribe as a gift.

Background for teachers

Language is an essential part of human identity and shapes how we view the world. For many American Indian tribes, however, language is a complicated and even painful subject. For decades, American Indian and Alaska Native people were actively discouraged from speaking their native

languages and were even physically punished for doing so. As a result, the amazing diversity of languages once spoken by Indigenous people in North America has been depleted, with many languages becoming extinct.

Oregon is a case in point. According to National Geographic, “At the time Lewis and Clark arrived in what’s now Oregon 200 years ago there were 14 language families, more than in all of Europe combined. Today only five families of languages exist [in the state], and most of them have only a handful of speakers.”²

The Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe’s native Takelma language was one of those in danger of becoming extinct, but in the past decade the Tribe has made significant steps to revitalize the language. As previous lessons have shown, the preservation and revitalization of ancestral heritage, culture, language, and customs is of utmost importance to the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe. By connecting to its ancestral past, the Tribe is able to thrive in the present day.

Teachers should approach this lesson with an understanding of this deeper cultural and historical context and should encourage students to engage with the Takelma language in a respectful manner. The Takelma vocabulary words students will learn in this lesson were spoken by tribal members thousands of years ago and have survived to this day only through the heroic effort of the Tribe to retain its language and traditions despite decades of repression and forced assimilation.

¹ Oregon is in the process of revising its social studies standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for grade 4.

² National Geographic. (2009). *Preserving Native America’s vanishing languages*. Retrieved from <https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2009/11/15/preserving-native-americas-vanishing-languages/>

STANDARDS

Oregon social studies standards¹

Ethnic Studies – 4.13

Oregon English language arts standards

Writing – 4.W.5

MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- A copy of the Takelma Language Vocabulary Word List (one per student)
- Lined notebook paper for drafting sentences
- Blank paper for book pages/illustrations
- Art supplies (crayons and/or colored pencils)

VOCABULARY

Takelma – The language of the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe.

Revitalize – To put new life or vitality into something or someone. To breathe new energy into something or someone to make it/them strong and healthy.



Considerations for teachers

Assessment: How will you know if students are learning?

- Students collaboratively create a Takelma language vocabulary book.

Practices (group roles, classroom routines). This depends on the activity. For instance, how do you rotate roles? Assign computers? Get supplies?

- *PowerPoint*: You will need a projector to show a set of introductory slides on how the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe is revitalizing the Takelma language.
- *Inside-outside circles*: Students share their thoughts in pairs and rotate to increase engagement with the content and provide opportunities to demonstrate knowledge of the key concepts. The process is described below.
- *Book creation*: You will want to review the section in which students create and illustrate sentences. Prepare for your approach to this activity. See the options/extensions section for more ideas.

Learning targets

- I understand what it means that the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe is revitalizing its language.
- I understand why the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe is revitalizing its language.
- I can create an example of language revitalization.

Options/extensions

- Present the book to the Tribe or a tribal designee. This can be done in various ways. You might have the images scanned to create a PDF version of the book that can be transferred electronically, or you could send a hard copy of the book. If resources permit, you could self-publish the book (Google the search phrase “self-publish class book” for multiple options) and have a copy made for the Tribe, your classroom or school library, and any parents who are interested.

- Alternative lesson: Create a story. Another way to approach the class book portion of the lesson is to make it a unified fictional story or a unified nonfiction text about a particular topic. This would require much greater coordination across the class. For example, if you have the class create a fictional story, you could have students brainstorm the basic plot, characters, and setting. Then you could divide students into groups to storyboard different sections of the plot (e.g., beginning, middle, end), write the text for their portions, and illustrate the Takelma words that go with their sections. This is a more complicated process but allows for deeper integration with the Oregon ELA standards for writing and speaking.
- Students could also create individual stories using the Takelma language. These could also be bound into a book.
- Have students research what other tribes in Oregon or North American are doing to revitalize their native languages and write a brief report to share with classmates.

Reflection/closure

- Review the learning targets.
- Ask students to talk about what they have learned.
- Have students think-pair-share about questions they have based on what they have learned and how those questions might form the basis for their culminating project. Ask each group to come up with two or more questions and examples, and then let a few groups share out loud with the class.

Appendix

The following files are associated with this lesson.

- 01.M4_L2_Slide-Deck_Takelma-Lang_Revitalization.pptx
- 02.M4_L2_Takelma_Lang_vocabulary word list.docx

Activity 1

Introducing Takelma revitalization efforts

Time: 10 – 15 minutes

Project the slide deck for students and explain the following.

Say:

There were many traditional languages spoken in Southwest Oregon. As we learned last time, the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe speaks the Takelma language. For many years, the Takelma language was only spoken by a few people. As elderly tribal members passed away, the language was in danger of dying out with them. The younger generations were forced to integrate into the culture of non-Indian settlers, which meant being forced to learn English and being cut off from their ancestral language. In many cases, children were physically punished for speaking Takelma. In recent years, the Tribe has been working hard to preserve and revitalize the Takelma language.

*In an earlier lesson, we looked at the word **revitalize**. Tell a neighbor what it means to revitalize something. (Give students partner time to recall what they learned. Call on a student afterward to share the meaning.) That's right. Revitalize means to bring something back to life again. The Tribe is taking important steps to revitalize its native language. We're going to learn about some of those efforts and about why it's so important to the Tribe to keep its language alive.*

[Click: Historical Documents slide]

In 2012, a group of tribal members began researching important historical documents that could help them reconstruct the Takelma language. So few tribal members spoke the Takelma language that the group had to consult historical documents.

This slide is an example of what the Takelma language looks like in writing and how it is spoken. It is a story told by a tribal member in 1906. The story was known as "Chicken-Hawk Revenges Himself on Medicine Men."

Activity 1 (Continued)

[Click: NII slide]

The Tribe has also been working with the Northwest Indian Language Institute at the University of Oregon. This institute partners with tribal members to strengthen language preservation efforts and to provide teachers with language development training. The Tribe's goal of working with the institute is to not only describe and catalog the Takelma language (as some anthropologists did in the early 1900s), but also to revitalize the language so that future generations can speak it.

[Click: Dictionary slide]

Takelma is an ancient language, but as you may remember from earlier lessons, the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe comes from an oral history tradition. For thousands of years, the Takelma language was spoken but was not written down. One way the Tribe is revitalizing the language is by putting it in writing and developing rules of grammar and syntax to explain how it's structured. The Tribe is also creating a Takelma dictionary, which includes audio examples of how to pronounce various words and phrases.

[Click: Takelma Together slide]

The Tribe also wants to make the language easy and fun for kids to learn, so they created a children's book called *Takelma Together*. It uses pictures to show how common words are written and spoken and how to count using the Takelma numbering system.

[Click: Taphòytha' Hall slide]

The Tribe's goal is to promote the use of the Takelma language and to make it highly visible to all tribal members. For example, the local Umpqua Community College named a new building *Taphòytha' Hall*. *Taphòytha'* means "to prosper or to be blessed." The Tribe is also thinking about naming a preschool and other facilities in the Takelma language.

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

[Click: Tribal Elder Teaching slide]

The Tribe creates many different opportunities for tribal members to learn the Takelma language. The elders lead the way. There are many classes, summer camps, and afterschool projects the Tribe has been offering for members of all ages, but particularly for elders and youth. These and other efforts will continue for many years to come as the Tribe brings its language back to life.

Activity 2

Participating in revitalization

Time: 60 – 90 minutes

Continue to project the slide deck provided for this lesson. (Slide: *Create a Takelma Children's Book*)

Say:

We're going to create our own children's book that will help others understand vocabulary words in Takelma. It will be a collection of one-page illustrations drawn by each of you, with sentences in English that describe the picture. Each page should have at least two Takelma words that can be put in the picture. Let's work through each step together. You'll each get to create a page and then we'll put them together into one big book!

STEP 1: REVIEW WORDS

Pass out the Takelma Language Vocabulary Word List. Also, project a copy on the screen to show students how to read it.

[Click: Animal Words slide]

Say:

Here is a list of Takelma vocabulary words. It's important to know that these are not all the words in the Takelma language. These are just a few of the common everyday words, but they're a great starting point for us. I would like each of you to review the entire list by reading through the English translations. As you review the words, make note of any you find particularly interesting and that you might want to write about. For example, in this list of animal words, I see the word "squirrel." I could definitely write a sentence about what I see squirrels do: "Every day, I see two or three squirrels running around my back yard."

Activity 2 (Continued)

[Click: Campfire slide]

Say:

*I want you to pick between two and four Takelma words that you could write a sentence about. Here's an example. The person who made this picture saw the words **salmon** and **fire**. That made her think about the pictures we've seen of the Tribe's salmon ceremony and also reminded her of camping and cooking fish over a campfire. She saw that the words **sky** and **black** were also in the list. In her experience, campfires were usually made under a dark night sky, so she wrote: "I roasted my salmon on the fire under the black night sky." Then she drew a picture to go with the sentence. OK, your turn. On your paper, circle or put a smiley face next to two to four words you think you could write about.*

Give students time to review the list and select their words.

STEP 2: WRITE A SENTENCE

Say:

Great! Now, let's take out a blank piece of paper and draft a sentence that uses your words. We're going to create three drafts before we decide on our final sentence. When you're done with each draft sentence, you'll share it with a classmate who will help you make it even better. OK, take a moment to write your first sentence.

Give students time to write their first sentence. Monitor their work to be sure they are understanding the task. Help students generate ideas if they get stuck.

Activity 2 (Continued)

[Click: Directions slide]

When students are done, project the following directions on the board and explain them to students:

1. Partner A: Share your sentence.
2. Partner B: Help your partner improve the sentence.
 - a. Suggest one thing that you think would give your partner's sentence more detail. Or ...
 - b. Ask one question about something you'd like to understand better about your partner's sentence.
3. Switch and repeat.
4. Write an improved version of your sentence.

Assign students to their first partner. Repeat this cycle of feedback three times until students have four versions of their sentence. Review the sentences for spelling and punctuation and use the final versions for the illustration.

STEP 3: CREATE AN ILLUSTRATION

[Click: Campfire slide]

Say:

Now we'll create a picture to go with each of our sentences. A picture that accompanies text is called an illustration. You'll notice in this example of the campfire that the sentence is at the bottom of the page and the illustration is at the top. I'm going to give each of you a piece of paper, and the first thing I want you to do is write your sentence. You can choose to write it at the top or at the bottom of the page—that's up to you.

After you get your sentence written, you're going to do one more thing before you start drawing. I want you to underline or write in a different color every English word in your sentence for which you have a matching Takelma word. Then you'll write the Takelma word under it, as you see in the example. I want you to do this



Activity 2 (Continued)

first, before you start drawing. In the example, you can see that the picture has Takelma words also, but first I want you to write them under your sentence.

Let's look at the example sentence. Tell your neighbor which English words in the example are emphasized. (Give time for partner talk. Students should identify salmon, fire, black, and night.) Now tell your partner which English and Takelma words you're going to emphasize. (Give time for partner talk.) OK, go ahead and write your sentence with the matching Takelma words. Don't draw the picture yet. I want you to show me your sentence and Takelma words before you draw the picture.

Give each student a blank sheet of paper. Have them write their sentence at the top or bottom, leaving room for an illustration. Give students time and monitor their work. When everyone is done, give directions for the illustration.

Say:

OK, here is how to approach your illustration. You can see in the example that they made an outline first. Look at the logs in the fire. You can see an edge. Take time to draw an outline of your picture first using a pencil. That way you can change it if you need to. Once you're happy with the outline, use crayons or colored pencils to complete it. Sometimes it's helpful to go back over your pencil outline with a dark crayon or colored pencil to highlight it.

As you draw, I want you to write each Takelma word next to the part of the picture that illustrates it. In this example, you can see that the word "p^hím" is written both below the English word "salmon" in the sentence and next to the picture of the salmon. In other words, each Takelma word should appear on your page twice. Remember: Try to fill most of the page with your drawing. Bigger drawings are more pleasant to look at in this kind of book.

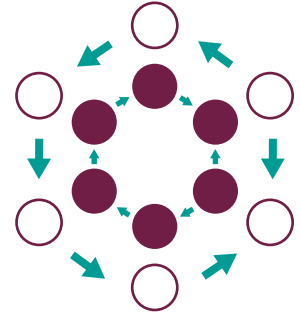
Ready? Please explain the directions to your neighbor. (Give partners time to explain how they will approach the illustrations.) Are there any questions about the directions? (Allow time to clarify and summarize the directions as needed.)

Give students time to create their illustrations. Walk around the room and provide feedback and constructive advice as necessary.



Activity 2 *(Continued)***STEP 4: SHARE OUT**

When all students are finished, divide the class in half. Have one half form an inner circle and the other half form an outer circle. Everyone should have a pair in the opposite group (inner-outer pairs; see diagram). Have each student from the inner circle share their illustration and sentence, then have each student from the outer circle do the same. Shift the outer circle counter-clockwise by one person. Repeat so that each student shares their illustration and sentence three times total.

**STEP 5: COLLECT AND BIND**

At the end of the lesson collect all student work. Bind the pages into a book with whatever means you have available (e.g., spiral bound, notebook, hard-cover binding). Display the book in an accessible place, such as the classroom library, where students can read it and look at the illustrations during free time. Explain any expectations you have for students to use it in the future.