Stabilizing Indigenous Languages

arrive at a village, whether they have been expected or have arrived unexpectedly, arrangements are immediately made for an Ava Ceremony. The leading orator (tulafale) will notify all available matai (chiefs) that guests have arrived and all are to gather at a place of welcome and to bring an Ava root for the reception. The ava root from which ava (kava) is prepared is the treasured possession of a Samoan Matai (chief). This very possession becomes the material link and bridge uniting us, one to the other, in friendship.

Beauford-Delta Divisional Board Of Education
Pauline Gordon

The Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board of Education is located at Inuvik in Canada’s Northwest Territories. Its educational programs include teaching Inuvialuktun and Gwich’in at most schools, teaching and learning centers, aboriginal heritage, and teacher education. Secondary aboriginal language programs were offered at Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Inuvik and in all junior high schools. There is also a language component to the Northern Studies course offering. Preschool programs with an emphasis on Inuvialuktun and Gwich’in language instruction were offered at Tuk, Paulatuk, and Fort McPherson. Inuvialuktun/English bilingual programs were offered in kindergarten in Tuk and Inuvik. Aboriginal heritage programs included Inuvik’s Wilderness Training Program, Aklavik’s On the Land Program, Tuk’s Elders Program, and Paulatuk’s Elders Data Project. A teacher education program to train bilingual teachers operates out of Tuk, Inuvik, and Aklavik and was in its second year of operation in 1995.

Hawaiian Language Programs
Kauanoe Kamana and William H. Wilson

During the first two decades of this century Hawai‘i underwent a massive language shift from its indigenous Polynesian language to Pidgin (Hawai‘i Creole English) as the primary home language of Native Hawaiians and also large numbers of locally born non-Hawaiians. This shift was the result of English-Only legislation that closed down the Hawaiian medium public schools of Hawai‘i. The legislation not only nearly exterminated the Hawaiian language and culture but also had disastrous effects on literacy, academic achievement, and even the use of Standard English among Native Hawaiians. Out of nearly 200,000 Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i, the 1990 census listed only 8,872 speakers of Hawaiian. While there still remains one small island where Hawaiian is the language of the entire community, elsewhere Hawaiian speakers are scattered and often elderly. There is, however, a coordinated community and state government effort to save the Hawaiian language and culture from extinction.