



When the Rug is Pulled Out

**Language Revitalization Under
Anti-DEI Legislation**

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Background Context: Anti-DEI

The past few years have seen a pushback in the US against diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices

Since 2022, 442 anti-DEI bills have been introduced (MAP 2022) and take aim at:

- Hiring and admissions practices
- Curriculum and school-related activities
- Books and language
- Healthcare

Such anti-DEI policies can add additional barriers to language revitalization

- At the university level, offices and initiatives that collaborate with local speaker communities may be dissolved
- Funding may also be (further) limited
- Where initiatives and funding remain available, 'language policing' may be in place to ensure compliance with anti-DEI policies



Background Context: Indigeneity + DEI

Indigeneity is *not* DEI (Agoyo 2025; Schmerle 2025) and thus projects and initiatives may be able to utilize the verbiage of Indigenous rights and sovereignty, as well as traditional knowledge to continue despite anti-DEI efforts

DEI initiatives traditionally discuss race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality

- These categories do not work naturally alongside the concept of Indigenous sovereignty
- That being said, Indigeneity has historically racialized in US contexts (Darrah-Okike 2020; McKay et al. 2020; Wolfe 2006)

Indigenous people and languages have been loosely placed under DEI programs

- DEI programs can include or exclude Indigenous people and cultures under the umbrella of 'diversity'
- Anti-DEI policies, however, serve solely to exclude



The background is a solid green color with a pattern of stylized leaf veins. On the left side, there are two vertical stems with several diagonal veins branching off. On the right side, there are several horizontal, wavy lines representing veins. The overall effect is a textured, organic pattern.

Discussion



Discussion Prompts

- What are some ways you can think to continue language and cultural revitalization projects when subject to anti-DEI legislation?
- Do you think rewording proposals, projects, etc. ('traditional knowledge' vs. 'cultural heritage') can help language and cultural revitalization activities avoid anti-DEI bias?
 - What are some language workarounds you can think of?
 - What might be lost by doing this?
- Is turning to nonprofits and private entities for funding, in full or in part, a realistic way to subsidize government funding?

Themes

- Bringing language revitalization into other fields (i.e., health/medicine, ecology + botany, music, etc.)
- Incorporating community engagement models

The background is a solid orange color with a pattern of lighter orange, wavy, horizontal lines that create a sense of movement and depth. On the left side, there is a faint, stylized silhouette of a tree with a vertical trunk and several branching limbs, also in a lighter shade of orange.

Discussion

Thank You!

Interested in today's discussion? Scan the QR code so I know to send you a write-up!





Resources

- Agoyo, A. (2025, Feb. 3). 'Collateral damage': Indian education roiled by President Donald Trump's anti-DEI directives. *IndianZ.com*
<https://indianz.com/News/2025/02/03/collateral-damage-indian-education-roiled-by-president-donald-trumps-anti-dei-directives/>.
- Darrah-Okike, J. (2020). Theorizing race in Hawai'i: Centering place, indigeneity, and settler-colonialism. *Sociology Compass*, 14(7). <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12791>.
- MAP. (2024, July). Dismantling DEI: A coordinated attack on American values. *Movement Advancement Project*. <https://www.mapresearch.org/file/2024-dei-report-map.pdf>.
- McKay, D. L., Vinyek, K., & Norgaard, K. M. (2020, Jan. 15). Theorizing race and settler-colonialism within U.S. society. *Sociology Compass*, 14(9). <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12821>.
- Schmerle, Z. (2025, Jan. 30). Trump axed support for tribal- and Hispanic-serving colleges: They're not happy about it. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2025/01/30/trump-tribal-hispanic-colleges/77910584007/>.
- Wolfe, P. (2006, Dec. 21). Settler-colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.