

BNAS Board Report February 15, 2022

The BNAS department did a walk through in all buildings to observe if classrooms have posters, signs, and/or any culturally relevant materials on the walls. This is our findings: We walk through 104 rooms spread between the KW, Vina, BES, Napi, BMS, BHS, and WBH. (graphs included at the bottom)

40% of classrooms have smudge boxes (majority coming from KW and Vina) and 28% said they would like one.

Just over 25% of our classrooms have a Blackfeet flag, less than 20% for the USA flag, and less than 12% for the Montana Flag.

Less than 12% had the IEFA poster (which the BNAS coach has shared)

25% of classes have maps relevant to BNAS/IEFA studies

nearly 90% of classes had culturally relevant materials or posters in view

as for BNAS posters

less than 25% of classrooms have the official writing system our district is using, which is a low number. But it is a system being used more than any other system. When only counting immersion classes this percentage jumps up to 90%

30% classes have colors

25% classes have animals

40% have numbers

55% have some Blackfoot language visible

all BNAS classes and immersion classes have ASLA (accelerated second language acquisition) pictures for teaching Blackfoot

There was a few building that had materials produced by Native American Teaching Aids, which is not approved by the BNAS.

I take it very seriously how sensitive nitsiittüpii are when it comes to our language, speaking it and teaching it. It is understandable that our historical trauma mixed with language loss and the fact the reading and writing language was introduced to our people through boarding dorms in a horrible way. I believe that this aspect mixed with the phenomenon of the phonetics of our language (trained Linguists were never able to create a sufficient writing system) and the fact that our elders would say stuff like, “don’t worry about writing it, I never had to” or “write it the way you feel” that it would result in a disconnect in how Browning Public Schools, an academic institution, would end up with multiple spelling systems with respect to Blackfoot Language. So, I have empathy and learned to have patience with respect to classrooms and building using the writing system the BNAS department approves of.

As for the materials produced by Native American Teaching Aids, there are things that are concerning and inconsistent. First of all, it writes the word for “rules” in two approaches, iikaktsimaanistsi and ee-kah-ks-tsi-mah-nist. (picuture attached below) Both these writing ought to reflect the same oral production but do not. In the first example the k and t are

touching iikaktsimaanistsi but in the other there is an 's' between them ee-kah-**ks**-tsi-mah-nist. The first word ends with an '-si' but the second one does not. Further, it is probably assumed that when you spell ee-kah-ks-tsi-mah-nist like so that each hyphen indicates the syllables in the word, which is inaccurate if that is the case, it would be writing as ee-kahks-tsi-mah-nist. It's also problematic how the 'h' is placed after the vowels for a vowel that does not include the guttural tone. This makes the writing system a guessing game and not an act of literacy.

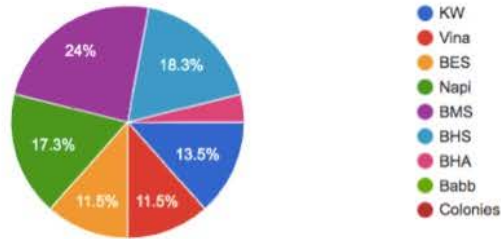
another example is the spelling for 'Ask to use the restroom, which is spelled twice: aaniikit kipiitapoomakaapoyis and ah-knee-kit key-pee-tah-poo-mah-cop-poo-yis. Again, the usage of the 'h' in the second example is confusing. Also, one defense I've heard for writing Blackfoot in the manner of the second example is that it is 'phonetic' but it is not. First of all, when we isolate 'key' or 'pee' our English literate brains will recognize English words and often pronounce these parts of the word as the English words for key and pee. We need a literate system to ensure that the neurons in our brain stay away from English when learning Blackfoot, *that is the goal!* Further, the example spells a word as ah-**knee**-kit, again an English reader will recognize an English word there- but also, *why are we allowing Blackfoot to have silent letters?*

Lastly, rouge spelling styles do not showcase the morphemes of Blackfoot, as a matter of fact we have seen in these two examples that these spelling styles *favor English words* when writing Blackfoot. One may not know where the Blackfoot word begins and ends but they'll see knee, key, and pee.

This is only nitpicking two words from these posters. The question comes now what do we do next? Well, it's not our way to tell people to stop using this and that. You never know, their relative could have been part of the process in making these and nothing good comes from insulting one's families, so the intent is not to shame these posters or the people using them but to point out that they have a flaw and can very likely be misleading, especially in their help in oral production. We are not going to demand people take these down but we suggest that it is in the best interest of our program. We have been making posters that are available and are now making more (they are attached). It is in the best interests for Blackfoot Language to gift our students with a consistent system they can use K-12 within our district. As an academic institution who promotes the power and importance of reading we must show the Blackfoot Language the same integrity and embrace the reality that we have a spelling system that will invite literacy and language development.

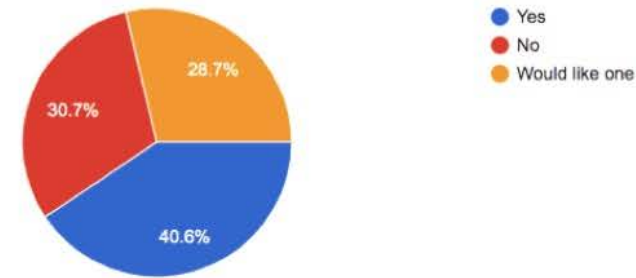
SCHOOL

104 responses

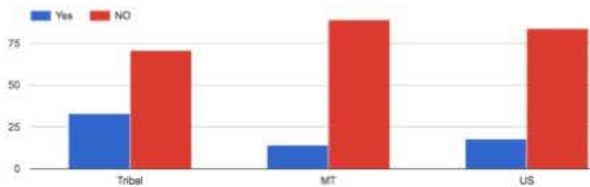


Smudge Box / Kit

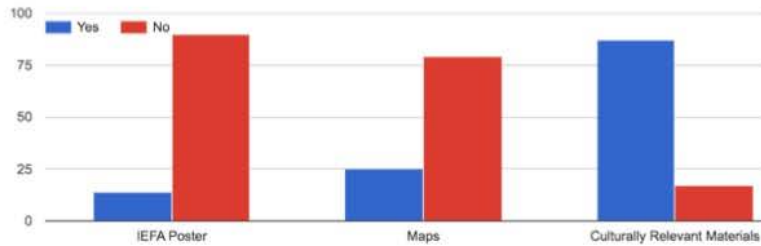
101 responses



Flags



IEFA Poster



BNAS POSTERS

