

Browning Native American Studies (BNAS) Board Report April 2025

Starlab Presentations

In mid-March, BNAS hosted a series of Starlab presentations at Bullshoe Elementary. Over 200 students and most of the faculty participated in these interactive lessons and light shows. The presentations offered students a unique opportunity to experience how our ancestors viewed the constellations, while also incorporating key vocabulary and phrases in the Blackfoot language. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the sessions were enjoyed by all.

We were especially pleased to include our Little Learners program and SPED students in these experiences. On April 4th, we were given accommodations by the Buffalo Hide facility to present the Starlab to our daycare-aged children. Although the content was adapted for their age group (1–3 years), the experience was magical. One 15-month-old girl pointed to the stars and let out a joyful coo, reaffirming the value of exposing our youngest learners to culturally rich and awe-inspiring experiences.

East Glacier Public Schools (EGPS) also expressed interest in hosting the Starlab. In collaboration with their administration, we established a modest \$200.00 fee for the presentation. On April 23rd, 40 students from EGPS participated in the program. They learned how to identify **moōto'yiss** (the belly button/the North Star), continuing our mission to blend cultural knowledge with scientific exploration.

Language Development

Teaching and revitalizing the Blackfoot language remains a central focus and passion for our department. Recently, we completed the transcription of a new traditional story: "**The Origin of the Buffalo Stone**". This story is a meaningful addition to our growing repository of language and cultural resources.

oōmāk akkaiipiikūniwa iitā·pāōko'nnaiwā	Long ago the ancient Pikani were camped about.
āōtāmākō'kūnnai·niiwā	They were nearly all dead,
māa'ksōōwātā'pi	For [want of] something to eat
māatsskssino'yiiwūts, iinnii māanisstā·poō'pi	They did not know where the buffaloes went.
oōmā kimmātsisō'kiimāan iitoōto'koōtāwā	There was a poor second wife, [that] went after wood.
oōmiim o'ttsito'koōtā'pi iitoō'to'yiiwā āmo'iissk ain'kii·n	While she cut wood, she heard there some one singing.
iitā·pāasāmiiwāiyi	She looked for him.
oōmiisstsim mō'm'koōtsipiiissts	There were big willows

iitsino'yiiwă oōmiim iinisskimi·nai	She saw, there was a buffalo-stone
iitoōto'yiiwă	She took it.
ii'pitsūpōkāwāniiwāyi	She put it in her bosom.
iitu'kīyiiwă	She went home.
iitāanisstsiiwă oōmii oōm: āamis ninnaiks	She said to that husband of hers: Invite the men.
nittīyāakāato'iiinaii.	I shall-sin and pray
oōmă ninnăwă iitāanisstsiiwă: māksinnaiss kīssisă, soōtāamitsikimōpais.	That man said to [his first wife]: Dress up your younger sister, set her at the upper end of the lodge.
āmoōksi ninnaiks āō'kūnniipiimiyyāawă	These men all came in.
oōmă ninnăwă iitāanisstsiiwaiks: āmō nittō'kiimāan iyyākāato'yiin·aiiwă	That man said to them: This my wife will sing and pray.
oōmă āakīiwă iitāaniiwă: imāksinākă'tsi ātsinaiiwă āmătă'koōtākik'.	That woman said: Try to get even a small piece of fat.
iitāa'koōtāwă oōmii iinūkă'tsiwă ātsinaiiwă	That small piece of fat was given to her.
iitāaniiwă: nittāaksin'ki	She said: I shall sing
nittāakō'po'no'āwă, nittāaksikyoōto'āwa āmo'i iinisskimă.	I shall grease [and] paint this buffalo stone
iitāmāatoōsimăwă.	She made incense
litain'kiiwă	She sang
āaniiwa: Nittāakoōtsitsimissts ūnn'k kīyoōkoōyi'k.	She said: this night I shall cause to come [animals for food].
kūnnāattūpiwa āanisstōōk,	Tell all the people,
O'ttoōmiiitāamiiks kūnnaiipoōto'ii·pissťs.	To tie the mouths of all their dogs up [that they don't bark and scare the buffalo].
ă·pissťoōtsik āmō pisskāan	Harden this corral
nāatsittūpiiwă să'oōmaiso'po'yinăkoōsisstoōtāwăkisăwă	Before day-light two persons must go out to lead the buffalo
soōtāmiksistāato'yiinaiiwă	Then she had finished her singing and praying
sťāmăttiāaniiwă: kōōko'aissts mistoōtsik'	Then she said another thing: Fix your lodges well
iyyāaksissťo'yiiwă	It will be cold
ksiskānnāto'nni ninnaiks o'ttsipo'ă săwă, iitsisăppiiyāawă	When the men got up in the morning, they looked out

ittāmsōkitsino'yiiyāawă	They suddenly saw,
stāmikiiks o'ttoōto'itsitōkipō'yiiis mo'yissts	That there were bulls standing all over camp
tāmisōksino'yiiyāawă, iinnii oōmă'tă'păwăaniis oōmi pisskāan.	Then suddenly saw, that buffaloes were jumping off [from the bank] into that corral
kinnyayi	And that's it [the whole story].

Currently, we have developed a wide variety of interactive word and sentence lists that are being utilized by staff, students, and community members. However, these materials are not yet well-organized for consistent classroom implementation. A key goal moving forward is to consolidate these resources into a more structured format and integrate them into daily instructional routines. This work is already underway and is on track to be completed before the beginning of the next school year.

	Content
Unit 1	
ASLA	Man, woman, boy, girl, dog, cat, mouse, horse, cow, rabbit, chair, table, ball, car, airplane, cup, duck, goose, and door
TPR	Commands: sit down, stand up, listen, touch, line up, go to ____.
Activities	Duck, duck, goose
Unit 2	
ASLA	Transitive verbs: run, walk, dance, sing, jump, sleep, etc...
TPR	Commands: jump, run, walk, dance, sing, jump, sleep, etc...
Activities	Naapii says, what color is this? Grab this color?
Exercise	Morpheme: First, second, third person, and commands Body parts, colors
Unit 3	
ASLA	Eating, drinking Colors
TPR	Commands: eat, drink
Questions	May I go to bathroom, may I get a drink, who is ____? and what is ____ doing?
Activites	Năapii says 2

	Content
Exercise	Morphemes: placements
Unit 4	
ASLA	Placements: top, under, front, behind, near, in water, etc...
TPR	Commands: stand/sit under, in front, behind, etc.
Activites	Năăpii says 2
Exercise	Morphemes: placements
Unit 5	
ASLA	Plurals and numbers
TPR	Do something x number of times
Activities	Numbers, counting, We (in) v. We (ex), năăpii says
Exercise	Plurals, pro-noun plurals, skirts, money
Unit 6	
ASLA	Conjugations, reverse translation (go from English to Blackfoot), clothing
Activities	
Exercise	Names and clans
Unit 7	
ASLA	Story telling.

Professional Development & Outreach

In late March, BNAS sponsored both BNAS staff and additional BPS faculty to attend the Indian Education for All (IEFA) Best Practices Conference in Helena. The conference provided valuable opportunities for professional development and networking with educators from across the state.

As BNAS Director, my primary focus was on establishing and strengthening connections with Blackfeet students and educators beyond our immediate community. I was able to share several of our Blackfoot language resources with fellow educators in Great Falls and Missoula, who expressed deep appreciation for the materials and the opportunity to collaborate.

Fostering a strong, supportive network across Blackfeet Country is vital to the continued growth and success of our language and cultural revitalization efforts. We look forward to expanding these relationships and working collaboratively to support Blackfeet education throughout the region.