

Hearts Gathered Waterfall School: An Indigenous language immersion Montessori on the Colville Reservation



Part 1: Intro to Indigenous Language Immersion Montessori Education

To have a full and positive life experience, we at Hearts Gathered believe that traditional knowledge and skill, including proficiency in our Native language, and an understanding of our ancestral heritage and our individual purpose are essential. Hearts Gathered (**ʔaluspuʔús**) works to provide an education for children that is strongly grounded in our rich cultural heritage and language and world academia.

ʔaluspuʔús operates the Waterfall School (**skʷant sən̄m̄aʔm̄áʔaʔtən**), a Montessori school approved as a private school by the State of Washington, that immerses children ages 2.5 to 12 in the Okanogan Salish language (**nsəlxcin**). These young emerging Native speakers hear, speak, read and write in nsəlxcin in all academic content areas. We incorporate the Montessori educational approach as a framework that fits beautifully within our cultural values.

Montessori supports and nurtures children's development in all areas, including intellectual, physical, and social-emotional. Similarities between indigenous culture and Montessori include:

- Recognition that all things are related
- Content integrated across subject areas
- Respect and value for the individual child
- Respect and value for the community
- Development of discipline, will, freedom and responsibility
- Scientifically based educational materials and content are proven to work
- Learning progresses from the concrete to the abstract
- Program based on stages of child development
- Teacher development is thorough, rigorous, transformative
- Educational setting is inclusive, warm and welcoming



Academic Rigor and Language Success

- Language immersion and Montessori children have an advantage academically and in social and emotional development. They are capable of achieving as well as or better than their peers.
- Academics and knowledge building are key qualities of Montessori education. The way we help children develop provides them with enduring intellectual capabilities that are best achieved through the framework of social and emotional learning.
- Teachers help children follow their interests and passions to develop strong skills in academics, leadership, self-discipline, responsibility, independence, and initiative.
- Our classrooms are hands-on, self-paced, collaborative, and joyful, creating a lifelong learner and doer.

Teachers are Key to Success

- Our teachers, supported by the cultural-educational philosophy and classroom environment, are the best possible partners with parents in the development of every child. We help parents develop children who are morally, emotionally, and behaviorally prepared for the real world.
- Our teachers are knowledgeable and compassionate, with a teaching practice grounded in a thorough understanding of tribal heritage, Montessori principles and child development. They complete Montessori teacher training programs that meet the parameters of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and/or the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE). These programs require rigorous training that ensures your child's distinct personality and independence will be nurtured into a capable and connected adult.
- Our elementary teacher has an Elementary Diploma from Montessori Northwest, a training program affiliated with AMI. AMI holds the mark for the highest quality Montessori training.
- Our primary teacher-apprentice will be taking the early childhood training course from Age of Montessori, a MACTE-accredited program, this fall. He will complete the program in the summer of 2020.
- We respect, support and empower our teachers in developing your child's full potential. Our teachers support your child's natural development, building the capability to become, productive, fulfilled adults who contribute to the world.

Part 2: Profile of Native Language & Montessori Practices

<p>a. Goals or Objectives of the Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Classroom provides nsəlxcin language immersion in authentic Montessori environment to at least 24 children ages 2.5 to 6 years. • Elementary Classroom provides nsəlxcin language immersion in authentic Montessori environment to at least 24 children ages 6 to 12 years. • Children in each classroom acquire a higher sub-level of language proficiency each year. 	
<p>c. Teacher and Classroom Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers with AMI-affiliated or MACTE-accredited training credentials and language instructor certification, and with a commitment to achieving the highest nsəlxcin proficiency they can. • Teachers who are certified as nsəlxcin language instructors or one their way to certification. • Following Montessori standards, we provide a carefully prepared environment that has a thorough set of nsəlxcin learning materials and a complete set of Montessori materials for each mixed age group of children. 	
<p>ċ. Application of Montessori and nsəlxcin language essentials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We allow the child to develop naturally, learning at their own pace and following their individual interests. • Children learn through hands-on use of scientifically prepared self-teaching materials. • They interact with the environment, indoors and outdoors. • They have the guidance of a specially trained adult. • They use nsəlxcin in conversation throughout the day. • They have guided nsəlxcin lessons using Montessori and other language transmission practices. 	<p>ə. Educational elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Montessori curriculum, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prepared environment, ○ Full complement of Montessori materials for each class and age group, ○ Uninterrupted daily work periods, lasting two and three hours, ○ Instruction characterized by a high degree of freedom given to student to choose what to work on, where to work, how long to work, ○ Small-group and one-on-one instruction. • Appropriately trained instructional staff defined as:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher in each classroom with AMI and/or MACTE credentials at level being taught, ○ Staff engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. ● Have classrooms with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate multi-aged groupings: 2.5-6 and 6-12 years of age, ○ Appropriate class sizes (24-35 children), ○ Appropriate adult-child ratios. ● Assess student progress through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher observation, ○ Detailed record keeping.
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γ. Outcomes or Indicators from the Practice:

- Children complete Primary Classroom program of nsəlxcin language immersion in authentic Montessori environment to at least 24 children ages 2.5 to 6 years, and are prepared for the Elementary Classroom.
- Children complete Elementary Classroom program of nsəlxcin language immersion in authentic Montessori environment to at least 24 children ages 6 to 12 years, and are prepared for middle school.
- Children in each classroom have acquired a higher sub-level of language proficiency each year.



Part 3: Sustaining and Stabilizing Promising Practices of ʔaluspuʔús

Preparing for the practice. The ideal training to be a Montessori teacher is through programs that are MACTE-accredited. Here are some training centers and organizations to learn more:

- Montessori Northwest, <https://montessori-nw.org/>
- Age of Montessori, <http://ageofmontessori.org/>
- Indigenous Montessori Institute, <http://kclcmontessori.org/indigenous-montessori-institute.html>
- Association Montessori International-USA, <https://amiusa.org/>
- American Montessori Society, <https://amshq.org/>
- Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, <https://www.macte.org/>

Assessing and tracking your progress:

- Montessori student record keeping of lessons, demonstrations and work
- Daily teacher observation and detailed notetaking
- Student journaling
- Regular language assessment

Organizational Overview:

The mission of Hearts Gathered is to revitalize the use of the Native languages of the Colville Reservation by operating Native language immersion schools. We operate the Waterfall School, located near Omak, Wash., which is an nsəlxcin immersion Montessori school for children ages 2.5 to 12 years.

We began incorporating Montessori into our elementary classroom in 2017, and fully implementing it in 2018. We have partially implemented Montessori in the primary classroom under guided apprenticeship since 2018, and plan to fully implement it in the 2020.



Here is how to reach us:

Hearts Gathered
PO Box 767
Omak, WA 98841

main office: (509) 422-5653
elementary room: (509) 422-5655
primary room: (509) 422-5654

website: www.heartsgathered.org
email: info@heartsgathered.org



Our first graduate. Our first student, who began as an immersion student in 2010 at three years of age, graduated from our elementary program in 2019.

She is now set to move on to middle school, with a strong foundation in her language and culture. As a lifelong learner, she has the tools to become highly fluent.

Elementary Years and Beyond

Montessori and language immersion works in every setting for the success of each child – for children in preschool throughout their high school years. At skʷant sənmaʔmáyaʔtən, we educate children from 2.5 years to 12 years old. We hope to someday serve middle and high school age children, as well as to expand into other communities on the Colville Reservation.

