

Four Ukiah High School Graduates Earn Northern Pomo Seal of Biliteracy

Fifth-year partnership between tribal leaders and Ukiah Unified helps revitalize an Indigenous language once at risk of being lost.

UKIAH, CA, UNITED STATES, August 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Four graduates of Ukiah High School (UHS) have earned California's Seal of Biliteracy in Northern Pomo, bringing the statewide total to six students recognized in Northern Pomo just one year after the program celebrated its first Seal recipients.



Kala Wright, Izzy Garcia, Taliah Ramos, Taylor Feliz, Jr.
| Ukiah High School Class of 2026 | Northern Pomo Speakers

The [California Seal of Biliteracy](#) recognizes graduating seniors who demonstrate proficiency in English and another language. This year, Kala Wright, Taylor Feliz Jr., Izzy Garcia and Zach Martinez earned the distinction in Northern Pomo.

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“To be speaking words that were forbidden a hundred years ago, and to be learning them from the school system, is surreal,” said Taylor Feliz Jr., one of this year’s Seal recipients.

Their achievement marks an important milestone for [Ukiah Unified School District’s Northern Pomo language](#) program, now in its fifth year. Last year, the program celebrated its first two Seal recipients. This year’s

graduating class doubled that number, a progression tribal leader Julian Maldonado describes as a “waterfall effect” as each class builds on the success of those before it and more students reach proficiency.

The impact extends beyond the students who earn the Seal. Other UHS seniors, including Taliah Ramos, completed four years of Northern Pomo language study and developed proficiency even

though they did not earn California's Seal of Biliteracy. They are also part of the growing numbers of students helping to carry the language forward.

As Maldonado and Tribal leader Angela James explain in the video, generations of Native people were persecuted and beaten for speaking Northern Pomo. To protect their children, many families stopped teaching the language at home. Because Northern Pomo is traditionally passed from one generation to the next through speech rather than writing, the language came dangerously close to disappearing.

The high school program grew from years of collaboration between Ukiah Unified School District and the local tribal community. Maldonado and James worked with UC Berkeley linguist Kathryn O'Connor, whose doctoral research focused on the Northern Pomo language and whose work with fluent tribal elders helped shape the curriculum adopted by the district. Today, instructor Buffie Campbell guides students through the four-year course, connecting language learning with culture, history and identity.

Ukiah Unified recently released a 4½-minute video and four individual student videos where students share, in their own words, what learning Northern Pomo has meant to them and why they hope future generations will continue speaking the language.

"We are proud of every student who has committed to learning Northern Pomo and grateful to the tribal leaders, educators and families whose partnership has made this opportunity possible," said Superintendent Debra Kubin. "These students are helping preserve a language, a culture, and a history that will continue to benefit future generations."

A complete media package – including the overview video, student profile videos, photographs, background information, downloadable media resources and press materials – is available at: <https://www.uusd.net/northern-pomo-seal-of-biliteracy>

The videos feature the voices of students and tribal leaders discussing language revitalization, cultural identity and the importance of passing Northern Pomo to future generations.

Dan Dougherty
Ukiah Unified School District
+1 707-472-5005
[email us here](#)

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