

Tec professor promotes conservation of native Mexican language



What began as a school project at **PrepaTec Sonora Norte** has become an **initiative with statewide impact** for the **preservation of *Cmiique litom***, the native language of the *Comcáac* ethnic group in Sonora.

Fany Muchembled, a teacher at PrepaTec Sonora Norte, heads a project that has been nationally recognized as part of CONAHCyT's [National Strategic Education Program \(Pronaces\)](#), a medium- and long-term research and advocacy program that seeks to promote social inclusion and the autonomy of individuals.

As part of their classes with the teacher, students from Sonora Norte help document traditional *Comcáac* **narratives** and then transform them into **picture books** to **promote literacy** in *Cmiique litom* and to **share knowledge** about indigenous communities and cultures.

Muchembled explains that the project not only **develops intercultural competencies** in students but also promotes **recognition** and **respect** for **diversity and inclusion**.

Students **exchange perspectives**, acquire **didactic skills**, and broaden their **knowledge of indigenous cultures**.

“The current situation of linguistic diversity in the world brings together my interests to work on preventing the loss of languages.”

Transcending through innovation and commitment

Muchembled, who currently teaches French at PrepaTec, is recognized for her dedication and quality of teaching, not only because French is her native language but also because of her passion for bringing **innovative and educational experiences** to her students.

Her interest in linguistic diversity is not a recent development. She studied a **PhD in Language Sciences** and specialized in **French as a Foreign Language (FLE)** for her undergraduate degree and in the **description of indigenous languages** for her master's and doctoral degrees.

"I've been interested in teaching and the study of languages for a long time. The current situation of linguistic diversity in the world brings together both my interests to work on preventing the loss of languages," she says.

Inside the classroom, her passion for teaching and cultural diversity drives her to create a **learning experience and interaction** between her **students** and the **youth of Punta Chueca**, one of the settlements in the *Comcáac* community.

"The project started in 2018 purely as a school project, with the main purpose of bringing PrepaTec students closer to linguistic and cultural diversity through a trip to Punta Chueca," Muchembled recalls.

When she saw what an impact this had on the students involved, the proposal evolved into **documenting traditional community narratives** and transforming them into **picture books** in **Spanish** and **Cmique litom**.

Although the **main objective** of this proposal is to **preserve and share the language**, the professor says that everyone involved communicates and learns.

*"It was very interesting to see how the process continues to impact **the intercultural competencies** of the students, and now it also involves the speech community by conducting intercultural writing and **digital editing workshops** to make them participants in the process," she says.*



</> width="900" loading="lazy"> The importance of linguistic diversity in preserving culture

Muchembled explains the correlation between **linguistic diversity** and **cultural diversity** as a process to **preserve and form a community**. Indigenous peoples use speech to convey their cultural practices and the knowledge that shapes them.

According to **UNESCO**, there are **6,700 languages** spoken in the world, and about **40%** of them are in danger of **disappearing**.

*“The **disappearance of native languages** represents the loss of an **irreplaceable expression** of the human experience, affecting the **ethnic and cultural identity** of indigenous peoples,”* says the professor.

This situation of risk is often due to a **reduced number of speakers**, as well as a **decrease in its use** in the community and family spheres and its absence from the media, which **limits the reproduction** of the language and complicates its **transmission to young people**.

*“The **disappearance of native languages** represents the loss of an **irreplaceable expression** of the human experience.”*

Mexico has speakers of **68 indigenous languages** belonging to 11 linguistic families, among which **Cmique litom** stands out as an **isolated language** since it is the only one belonging to its linguistic family and has no variants.

With just over **700 speakers**, the *Cmiique litom* language is at **high risk of disappearing**. Although its speakers maintain a **rich oral tradition** that preserves their history and culture, only a small part of this tradition has been presented in written form.

Because of this, a **very small number of speakers** of *Cmiique litom* **know how to write** their native language, making initiatives like Professor Muchembled's project crucial to its preservation.



Transformational Impact: Making a mark on diversity and inclusion

The basis of this project's importance is the **shared learning** experience and **cultural legacy** that it generates in the students and the *Comcáac* community, said Muchembled.

Its recognition and funding as a **national project** of **Pronaces Educación 2021-2024** has allowed the Sonora team to move forward with this initiative.

Currently, the project is in **search of funding** to achieve its proposed development goals in order to impact and reach more people inside and outside the community.

*"The idea is to look for organizations and other ways to finance it. We also seek the **support of students** to work on these projects through scholarship services, collaborating with **language specialists** and **community illustrators**."*

Muchembled believes that the **incorporation of technological tools and resources** will contribute to the dissemination of the project, whether through **educational platforms** or the ongoing construction of its own [web page](#).

YOU'LL ALSO WANT TO READ:

<https://conecta.tec.mx/en/news/sonora-norte/education/tec-sonora-student-wins-fellowship-study-masters-mit>