

Fifth Grade

Write Your Name

A – SCIENCE – Wolves at the Edge

What if your neighbor disappeared – and nobody could agree on whether to bring them back?

Gray wolves once lived almost everywhere in North America. Then people hunted, trapped, and poisoned them. Forests were cut down and wild land became farms. That is **habitat loss**: the place an animal needs shrinks or disappears. By the 1960s, wolves in the lower 48 states were **endangered**, meaning they might die out. Almost none survived outside northern Minnesota.

More than Science For the Ojibwe people, who have lived in Minnesota for centuries, the wolf – **Ma’iingan** – is a brother and a relative with a sacred role in their teachings. They teach that Anishinaabe people and wolves walk parallel paths. What happens to one, happens to the other. When wolves nearly vanished, it was not only a crisis for nature. It deeply hurt Ojibwe culture, too.

What’s Been Done – and What’s Still Unsettled In 1974, the **Endangered Species Act** protected wolves, making it illegal to kill them. Wolves recovered. Minnesota now has about 2,300 wolves. Many scientists call wolves a **keystone species**, an animal that keeps its ecosystem healthy. Some states, including Minnesota, pay farmers when wolves kill their farm animals.

But some ranchers want wolves to lose their protection. Some biologists worry wolf numbers could fall again. And many Ojibwe elders say any plan that treats Ma’iingan as a pest, instead of a relative, misses the point.

Some solutions exist. None satisfy everyone. What would you recommend and why?

WRITING ACTIVITY Use the sentence starters below to help. Use extra paper if you need more space.

- The wolf population declined because...
- One thing people are doing to help is...
- I think the best solution is... because...
- Indigenous people are preserving their language by...
- One reason this matters is...
- In Minnesota,...

B – SOCIAL STUDIES - What Would You Do If Your Language Was Taken Away?

Imagine being punished for speaking your own language. For more than a hundred years, that’s what happened to **Indigenous people** – the first people to live in a place – in the United States. The government forced Native children into boarding schools, took away tribal lands, and banned sacred traditions. Many Native languages nearly disappeared forever. But what happens when people decide to take it all back?

Today, Indigenous communities are fighting back through classrooms, songs, and laws. Many tribes now run **language programs** – ways of keeping a language safe so it isn’t lost. Some have special schools where children learn entirely in their Native language. When a language comes back to life, so does everything connected to it: stories, ceremonies, and culture.

Language revival is also tied to **sovereignty** – a group’s right to govern itself. In California, the Yurok Tribe has gotten back 47,000 acres of its ancestral land along the Klamath River, returning it to the tribe’s care.

Meet Deb Haaland Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo people of New Mexico, made history in 2021 as the first Native American to serve in a president’s Cabinet. She overcame poverty as a single mother, graduated college at 33, and earned a law degree. As Secretary of the Interior, she helped create a 10-year national plan to **revitalize** – or bring back to life – Native languages across the country.

It’s Happening in Minnesota Too! Right here at home, the Midwest Indigenous Immersion Network helps bring Ojibwe back to life. In 2025, the Minnesota Wild even broadcast an entire hockey game in Ojibwe! A language comes back one word, one child, one hockey game at a time.