

# The National Fund (BIE Foundation) Awards \$6.6 Million in Grants to Strengthen Native Language Immersion in BIE Schools

*Eight BIE schools receive \$6.6M from the National Fund to grow Native language immersion and connect students to culture, identity, and community.*

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[The National Fund for Excellence in](#)

[American Indian Education](#), the Congressionally chartered foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education, is proud to announce its inaugural round of grant awards totaling \$6.6 million. These investments will support eight BIE-funded schools in advancing Native language immersion initiatives.



The National Fund is the Congressionally Chartered Foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education



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*Tony Dearman (Cherokee),  
director of the Bureau of  
Indian Education*

New research and longstanding community knowledge highlight the advantages of Native language instruction, including increased attendance, better academic performance, and safer, more connected schools. As many Native languages are at risk of disappearing, these programs also play a crucial role in preserving culture and identity.

A cooperative agreement between the National Fund and the BIE enables flexible, locally driven investments, bringing new resources and innovation to support

priorities like language revitalization, teacher recruitment, infrastructure and technology, and expanded learning opportunities.

Funded Schools and Program Highlights:

-Mescalero Apache School (New Mexico) will hire six language teacher assistants, develop K-12 Apache language materials, and engage families and elders in immersive classroom and cultural instruction.

-Santa Fe Indian School (New Mexico) will expand Pueblo language classes, create an Native Language Philosophy and Framework, and increase student use of Native language in both academic and cultural settings.

-Pine Hill Schools (Ramah Navajo School Board, New Mexico) will implement a unified K-12 immersion program, build a Navajo language teacher pipeline, and host monthly cultural events to promote intergenerational oral fluency.

-Ojo Encino Day School (New Mexico) will develop a Diné Language Immersion Program for early childhood to grade-8 students, provide extensive teacher training, and create a community language center in partnership with Arizona State University.

-Turtle Mountain Community High School (North Dakota) will serve 1,300 students and 100 educators over two years with Ojibwe language classes, community language tables, and immersive activities including VR storytelling.

-Enemy Swim Day School (South Dakota) will expand Dakota language immersion with a new K-8 curriculum, professional development, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages-aligned assessments, and monthly family language nights.

-Shoshone-Bannock School District (Idaho) will create grade-level materials, dual-language signage, and immersive cultural events under the "Creating a Space to Belong" initiative to elevate Shoshone language use.

-Kha'p'o Community School (New Mexico) will strengthen its Tewa-English dual language model by expanding a mentor/apprentice program, offering evening language classes to families, and aligning all language instruction to a scaffolded, culturally grounded curriculum.

"These grants are a powerful step toward ensuring our Native languages and cultures thrive in the hearts and minds of our students," said [Heath Clayton \(Chickasaw\), lead executive officer of the National Fund](#). "We're proud to support these schools as they build stronger, language-rich environments for future generations."

Tony Dearman (Cherokee), director of the Bureau of Indian Education, added: "This first round of grant awards from the National Fund represents a meaningful investment in culturally relevant education. These projects reflect the dedication of our communities to preserve and revitalize Native languages for the benefit of all students."

Kara Bobroff (Dine'/Lakota), [chair of the National Fund's Board of Directors](#), stated: "These grants are a testament to the brilliance of our students and leaders who are ensuring that Native language immersion programs flourish as an essential foundation of education and we are grateful to the educators who are leading this important and vital work."

The National Fund will continue to support high-impact initiatives focused on improving academic performance and preserving Native languages and cultures within the BIE system. For more information, visit <https://www.nfeaie.org/>.

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