

Native Language Immersion in BIE Schools Strengthened by \$6.5 Million in Funding

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education](#), the Congressionally chartered foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education, today announced additional funding totaling \$6.5 million to support nine BIE-funded schools in advancing Native language immersion initiatives.



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

These funds will expand the use of proven models of immersion instruction, teacher pipelines, and family and community engagement to reach more BIE students in more communities.

New research and longstanding community knowledge highlight the advantages of Native language instruction, including increased attendance, better academic performance, and safer, more connected schools. With fluent speakers in many communities now numbering in the dozens, these programs are a critical link in passing culture, identity, and strength to the next generation.

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:

-Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute (Wisconsin) will grow its own Ojibwe immersion teachers through a specialized training pathway that pairs teacher trainees with experienced immersion mentors in the classroom, adds a part-time language and cultural advisor, and supports trainee enrollment in an elementary education degree program at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University.

-Haak'u Community Academy (New Mexico) will expand its Acoma Keres language and culture class for students ages 3–14, bring community knowledge holders into instruction, and use

technology to document the language while inviting families into school-sponsored cultural activities.

-Standing Rock Community School (North Dakota) will strengthen Lakota/Dakota language and culture for K-12 students through summer immersion camps open to families, a digital library of multimedia language units, and teacher workshops led by fluent speakers and elders with materials shared across reservation schools through the Standing Rock Educational Consortium and Sitting Bull College.

-Many Farms Community School (Arizona) will develop a comprehensive Diné Bizaad curriculum with culturally relevant materials and immersion sessions, partner with local organizations on storytelling events and language camps, and create digital resources featuring 100% Diné Bizaad presenters.

-Chief Leschi Schools (Washington) will expand Lushootseed instruction with a full-time high school instructor and new licensed teachers at the elementary and middle schools. It will also launch a student internship program in which advanced high school learners teach Lushootseed in area schools in order to build a pipeline to language careers with the Puyallup Tribe.

-Navajo Preparatory School (New Mexico) will build on its highly successful language program by weaving Navajo language into all areas of campus life including classrooms, cafeteria, library, and dorms, expand heritage arts coursework, and roll out its Diné Values Framework school-wide for students from 52 communities across the Navajo Nation.

-Bread Springs Day School (New Mexico) will deepen Navajo immersion for Pre-K through third grade students and families through a yearlong Parent University guided by parent leaders and elders, monthly Family Culture Nights, a new Navajo Language & Culture Garden, a bilingual Family Language Library, and a two-week summer immersion camp.

-Jeehdeez'a Elementary School (Arizona) will launch a culturally grounded Navajo immersion program for its 80 K-5 students with daily classroom instruction plus Saturday and summer school components, strengthening Navajo language proficiency, reading and writing achievement, and cultural pride.

-Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School (Minnesota) will hire highly qualified Ojibwe language instructors, engage students in seasonal cultural activities that will reinforce language growth, and acquire technology to build a digital library of language resources for the school and Leech Lake community.

"This additional funding represents a significant expansion of the National Fund's model of language support," said Roo George-Warren (Catawba Nation) Language Program Coordinator at the National Fund. "Alongside supporting approaches anchored in each community's language, culture, and values, we're connecting schools with world-class experts in revitalization and

immersion schooling, sharing best practices from across the country, and working with partners to cultivate an ecosystem of language support."

Tony Dearman (Cherokee), Director of the Bureau of Indian Education, added: "This additional funding reflects the growing momentum behind language revitalization across BIE-funded schools. Tribal languages and cultures are important to Tribes and to the cultural identity of our students and communities. Each of these communities is finding its own path to strengthen language and culture, and these investments help sustain that work for generations to come. We are grateful to the educators, elders, families, and Tribal communities leading this work every day, and proud to support efforts that ensure our students can learn, thrive, and carry their languages and cultures forward."

About the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education. The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education (The National Fund) is the Congressionally chartered foundation for the Bureau of Indian Education and its 185+ BIE-funded schools. As a 501(c)(3) organization, The National Fund garners resources and partnerships that support community-led efforts to create educational environments where Native students thrive — grounded in their language, culture, and holistic well-being. Learn more at www.nfeaie.org or contact info@nfeaie.org.

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