

A bill for an act
relating to Native American languages; establishing the Office of Indigenous
Language; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 2006, section
3.922, by adding subdivisions.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.**

The status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and part of
the rich heritage of the state. The state shall collaborate with Native Americans to ensure
the survival of these unique cultures and languages. The legislature further recognizes
Native American culture and language as a vital state treasure and resource. In order to
maximize the potential of Native American language resources, the legislature recognizes
the need to encourage indigenous language development and continuation, especially
among children.

The legislature recognizes that one-third of indigenous tongues have disappeared
since the coming of Columbus. Of those that survive, nine out of ten are no longer spoken
by children. If this erosion continues, virtually all Native American languages could be
extinct within two or three generations. Along with this erosion goes part of the history of
our state. There are many benefits to preserving indigenous languages. These include:
cognitive and academic growth among students; help with identity conflicts; preservation
of family values; increased cultural vitality; preserving unique traditional tribal ecological
knowledge; preserving Minnesota's indigenous native history; and increased student
self-esteem and self-sufficiency. These benefits reflect in greater community involvement
in tribal communities and for the state. Children who are schooled in their native language

2.1 will demonstrate greater creativity and participation in the community and the state as
2.2 a whole.

2.3 Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 3.922, is amended by adding a subdivision to
2.4 read:

2.5 Subd. 8a. **Office of Indigenous Language.** (a) An Office of Indigenous Language
2.6 (office) shall be operated under the structure of the Indian Affairs Council. The office shall
2.7 promote activities and programs that are specific to promoting revitalization of indigenous
2.8 languages for American Indian children and adults. Since language revitalization is
2.9 critical for the youngest American Indian children, the council shall focus on developing
2.10 programs that meet the language needs of children in prekindergarten through grade
2.11 12. In addition, the Office of Indigenous Language shall work with community groups,
2.12 educational groups and institutions, and tribes to identify programs that will promote the
2.13 preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages in order for children to learn the
2.14 speaking, reading, and writing of native languages.

2.15 (b) There shall be a director of the Office of Indigenous Language that is authorized
2.16 to manage the operation of the office, the activities of the office, and programs sponsored
2.17 by the office. The director of the Office of Indigenous Language may hire needed staff to
2.18 carry out the functions of the office.

2.19 (c) The office shall develop specific guidelines for funding community and
2.20 educational programs that provide language revitalization to meet the needs of the
2.21 community. In order to develop these guidelines, the office shall collaborate with
2.22 American Indian community groups to develop the resources needed to provide native
2.23 language classes.

2.24 (d) The office shall administer grants to organizations, programs, and schools
2.25 that meet the guidelines developed by the office for programs that provide language
2.26 revitalization to children and adults.

2.27 (e) The office shall consult with tribal governments to maximize the effectiveness
2.28 and coordination of policies and programs that support language and culture and
2.29 collaborate with tribal governments to develop an integrated language strategy.

2.30 (f) The office shall explore funding opportunities with the United States Department
2.31 of Education and other federal agencies to meet the special needs of students for native
2.32 language learning.

2.33 (g) The Office of Indigenous Language shall work with existing government and
2.34 tribal agencies to integrate funding and remove barriers to enable statewide language
2.35 revitalization efforts to be successful.

(h) The office shall work in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Office of Higher Education, and the Department of Human Services to develop a multitiered system for native speakers to be certified on special status by the Board of Teaching to enable Native speakers to teach in all language revitalization programs and schools.

(i) The office shall develop an Indigenous Language Institute to develop standards on curriculum, critical pedagogy, and scope and sequence as it pertains to indigenous language learning.

(j) The Office of Indigenous Language may contract in its own name including contracting for office space and equipment. Contracts, including grant contracts, must be approved by the Grants Advisory Board and executed by the director of the office. The office may apply for, receive, and expend in its own name grants and gifts of money consistent with the duties specified in this subdivision.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 3.922, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 8b. **Grants Advisory Board.** The Dakota/Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance (DOLRA) shall act in the capacity of the Grants Advisory Board. DOLRA shall ask each Minnesota Indian Tribe to select a tribal representative to represent the tribe on DOLRA. In addition to tribal representation, DOLRA shall select American Indian representatives from the urban Indian community to participate in DOLRA. A Grants Advisory Board member shall abstain from voting on any grant proposal or other matter in which the board member's tribe or organization has a financial or controlling interest.

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 3.922, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 8c. **Director of the Office of Indigenous Language.** The director shall be appointed by the Indian Affairs Council and DOLRA shall assist in hiring the director of the Office of Indigenous Language who is experienced in administrative activities and familiar with language revitalization. The director and office staff shall serve in the unclassified service of the state. The director shall report to the Grants Advisory Board and the Indian Affairs Council shall provide any requested assistance. The director shall recommend to the Grants Advisory Board the appropriate staffing necessary to carry out the office duties.

Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 3.922, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 8d. **Appropriations and money received for the Office of Indigenous Language.** All money and appropriations received for the Office of Indigenous Language must be directed to the Office of Indigenous Language and used to further the purpose of language revitalization. Money and appropriations received for language revitalization shall not be transferred or reallocated for any other purpose.

Sec. 6. **APPROPRIATION; OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE.**

\$..... is appropriated from the general fund to the Indian Affairs Council for the biennium beginning July 1, 2007. This appropriation must be allocated in total to the Office of Indigenous Language for language revitalization.