

# S. 1948 AND S. 2299

---

HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

---

JUNE 18, 2014

---

Printed for the use of the Committee on Indian Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

91-818 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2014

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Internet: [bookstore.gpo.gov](http://bookstore.gpo.gov) Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800  
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

JON TESTER, Montana, *Chairman*

JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming, *Vice Chairman*

TIM JOHNSON, South Dakota

MARIA CANTWELL, Washington

TOM UDALL, New Mexico

AL FRANKEN, Minnesota

MARK BEGICH, Alaska

BRIAN SCHATZ, Hawaii

HEIDI HEITKAMP, North Dakota

JOHN MCCAIN, Arizona

LISA MURKOWSKI, Alaska

JOHN HOEVEN, North Dakota

MIKE CRAPO, Idaho

DEB FISCHER, Nebraska

MARY J. PAVEL, *Majority Staff Director and Chief Counsel*

RHONDA HARJO, *Minority Deputy Chief Counsel*

## CONTENTS

Hearing held on June 18, 2014 .....	Page 1
Statement of Senator Barrasso .....	3
Statement of Senator Begich .....	19
Statement of Senator Heitkamp .....	15
Statement of Senator Johnson .....	3
Statement of Senator Murkowski .....	17
Statement of Senator Tester .....	1

### WITNESSES

Brockie, Clarena, Dean of Student Affairs, Aaniiih Nakoda College .....	28
Prepared statement .....	30
Delgado, Hon. Ed, Chairman, Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin .....	41
Prepared statement .....	43
Mendoza, William, Executive Director, White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, U.S. Department of Education .....	4
Prepared statement .....	5
Rawlins, Namaka, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Aha Punana Leo, Inc. ....	46
Prepared statement .....	49
Roach, Sonta Hamilton, Elementary School Teacher, Innoko River School; Board Member, Doyon Limited .....	21
Prepared statement .....	23
Robinson, Hon. Lillian Sparks, Commissioner, Administration for Native Americans, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services .....	7
Prepared statement .....	9
Shortbull, Thomas, President, Oglala Lakota College .....	35
Prepared statement .....	36

### APPENDIX

Ammann, Brooke Mosay, Director, Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School, prepared statement .....	79
Bundy, J. Michael, Ph.D., Superintendent, Two Eagle River Alternative School for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, prepared statement .....	65
Harper, Leslie, Director, Niigaane Ojibwemowin Immersion, prepared statement .....	77
National Indian Education Association (NIEA), prepared statement .....	69
Response to written questions submitted by Hon. Brian Schatz to:	
Hon. Ed Delgado .....	94
Clarena Brockie .....	93
William Mendoza .....	117
Namaka Rawlins .....	96
Hon. Lillian Sparks Robinson .....	112
Thomas Shortbull .....	90
Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. Jon Tester to William Mendoza .....	114
Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. Tom Udall to Hon. Lillian Sparks Robinson .....	111
Roman Nose, Quinton, Executive Director, Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA), prepared statement .....	81
Schatz, Hon. Brian, U.S. Senator from Hawaii, prepared statement .....	65
Sullivan Sr., Michael D., Professor, The College of St. Scholastica, prepared statement .....	80

# IV

	Page
Support letters submitted by:	
Pam Agoyo .....	86
Kamana'opono M. Crabbe .....	89
Jennifer Hall .....	87
Nokomis Paiz .....	88
Elizabeth Sahkahtay Strong .....	87
United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), prepared statement .....	85
Wilson, Ryan, President, National Alliance to Save Native Languages, prepared statement .....	73

## **S. 1948 AND S. 2299**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2014**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m. in room 628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jon Tester, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

The CHAIRMAN. I call this meeting of the Committee on Indian Affairs to order.

Today the Committee will discuss two bills that address an issue that is very important to me and to many of my colleagues on this Committee: Native student achievement. The first bill is S. 1948, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act. The second is S. 2299, a Bill to Reauthorize the Native American Language Program of the 1974 Native American Programs Act. Both of these measures share a similar goal of increasing Native academic achievement through supporting Native language instruction and ensuring Native students are college and career-ready.

Language matters. It is how we as human beings convey our ideas, our feelings and our hopes. I think about the power of language and words and the impact they have to effect change. Just think about Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or Martin Luther King's I Have A Dream speech. Words comfort and uplift us. That is why we sing lullabies to our children and Christmas carols during the holidays.

I am struck by what Chairman Delgado said in his testimony. He said that language is medicine. And when Oneida teaches their children of this medicine, the children in the community begin to heal. This is why these bills we are talking about today matter.

The history of Native languages in this Country is one of great tragedy and also great triumph. In the early years of this Nation, the Federal policy toward American Indians was forced assimilation designed to eradicate tribal cultures. Children were forced into boarding schools, and among other things, forbidden to speak their Native languages. Years later, however, during both world wars, the contribution of Native American code talkers speaking in their native language was instrumental in helping the Allied forces preserve freedom and democracy. To honor these American heroes,

their people and their long histories, we must preserve and maintain these languages.

Later this week, hundreds of Native language experts will convene in Arlington, Virginia, for the 2014 Native American Languages Summit, which is being held by the Departments of Interior and Education and Health and Human Services. This collaborative summit the interagency roles and responsibilities in support of Native language and Native language learning as a pathway to social and academic success for tribal communities. I applaud the efforts these agencies have made in moving toward an understanding of just how vital Native languages are, and for working on strategies to support language acquisition and revitalization.

We will hear from several tribal witnesses today who are on the ground and doing the hard work of saving tribal languages, which, as many of you know, is often a daunting task. Through decades of failed Federal policy, Native languages have been pushed to the brink of extinction. Some of the folks we have here with us today are working to change that. I would like to especially welcome Clarena Brockie, who comes from the Aaniiih Nakoda College at Fort Belknap Reservation in my home State of Montana. Clarena not only serves as dean of students at the college but she is also a State representative in the Montana legislature and represents her tribal community to the entire State. I want to thank you for coming and sharing your experiences on Native languages with us today, Clarena.

The two pieces of legislation that we will focus on represent a commitment to the language, culture and education of Native students and investment in Native communities. Language is at the very heart of culture. There is power in a child speaking the same language that her ancestors spoke. And any child's sense of self and where she comes from is enhanced by speaking her language.

At a time when there are too many words that tear communities down, it is important to have a language that helps to build up not only Native children, but all children. This is what these bills do and why they have widespread support of tribes. I look forward to hearing from the Administration and tribal leaders today about how those two bills will impact their respective agencies and communities.

Before I turn it over to Senator Barrasso, I just want to say thank you all for being here. Lillian, not to put you on the spot, but the testimony from your agency came in at 11:30 this morning. That is unacceptable. If you would take that back to them and tell them it is unacceptable.

I sit on Appropriations. If we can't get this stuff in time to fully analyze, we will deal with it through the Appropriations process and give them a reason not to get the stuff in on time. So please pass that along. It is unfair to the people on this Committee and totally unfair to the staff.

Ms. Sparks. I apologize.

The CHAIRMAN. That is fine. Senator Barrasso?

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BARRASSO,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING**

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I agree with your comments completely.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we are going to examine two bills that are intended to support and promote Native American languages. Native American languages are an important component of Indian communities and of American history. Native Code talkers were used in World War I and World War II to transmit coded messages in their native language. Over time, the fluent use of these languages has diminished, in some cases almost to the point, as you said, Mr. Chairman, of extinction. Fortunately, tribes have worked diligently to preserve these languages in schools and in their communities.

I look forward to hearing today how our Native languages are contributing to students' academic success and recommendations for improving the programs. I welcome the witnesses and look forward to the testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Barrasso.  
Senator Johnson?

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIM JOHNSON,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA**

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Vice Chairman Barrasso, for holding this important hearing on two pieces of legislation that aim to revitalize Native American languages.

I would like to give a very warm welcome to our witnesses who have strong ties to my State of South Dakota: Bill Mendoza, Lillian Sparks, and my good friend, Thomas Shortbull. All of our witnesses today have a deep understanding of the importance of education and the preservation of Native languages. The Native American Languages Reauthorization Act, which my fellow colleague, Senator Murkowski, and I introduced this year, will reauthorize the Native Languages grant program that is administered by the HHS Administrations for Native Americans.

The Native American Languages Act was established in 1992 and was recently reauthorized by the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. This grant program is vital to tribal communities struggling to maintain their Native languages. Across Indian Country, tribal organizations, tribal colleges and universities and Native American organizations access these important funds to create and implement programs that are saving Native languages from the brink of extinction. ANA has also demonstrated the significant impact this native language grants program has in Indian Country. In their 2012 Impact Report, ANA evaluated one-third of its grantees and found that nearly 5,000 youth and adults increased their ability to speak a Native language or achieved fluency. One-third of the total grantees also trained 178 Native language instructors.

The Native Languages Act has helped to save Native languages and encourages both young children and adults to develop fluency in their Native language. Across South Dakota and Indian Country, this vital grant funding gives the opportunity for our cherished Native elders to sit down with the younger generation to pass on

Native languages. We must continue our efforts to promote Native language revitalization programs to ensure the preservation of Native American cultures, histories and traditions.

The continuity of Native languages is a link to previous generations and should be preserved for future generations. I look forward to the testimony today. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

I want to now welcome our first panel to the Committee hearing today. First we have Mr. William Mendoza, who is the Executive Director for the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education at the Department of Education. Welcome. Next we are going to hear from Ms. Lillian Sparks, who is the Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans, at the Department of Health and Human Services. Welcome, Lillian.

I would ask you to keep your verbal comments to five minutes or as close to that as you can. Your entire testimony will be part of the record, and your full written statement will be entered in. With that, Mr. Mendoza, you may begin.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM MENDOZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND  
ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**

Mr. MENDOZA. Good afternoon, Chairman Tester, Senator Barrasso and distinguished members of the Committee. I greet you all in the Lakota language, I greet you all as relatives, both with my Lakota name, His Shield is Lightning, as well as my non-Indian name. I extend my heartfelt handshakes to all of you. I am learning the Lakota language, and please forgive me if I offend anybody by expressing the desire to learn my language.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S. 1948, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act. Although the Administration has not taken a formal position on this bill, we welcome the opportunity to voice our support for its goals; namely, working to meet the unique educational and cultural needs of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian populations.

Today, there are only 375,000 American Indian language speakers remaining in the United States. As Secretary Duncan in his commencement address last year to the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin, the loss of Native languages has alienated many American Indians from their own history and culture. It has taken away the path to knowing their own heritage. Revitalizing Native languages is the first step toward preserving and strengthening the culture, societal unity and self-sufficiency of tribal nations.

Research shows that being bilingual increases a child's mental flexibility and improves performance on academic assessments. Bilingual students tend to have better creativity and problem-solving skills and other research supports well-implemented language immersion approaches. In light of this important information, the Department has engaged in many activities designed to stem the decline of Native languages. As you mentioned, Senator Tester, the Native Language Working Group will bring together over 300 cul-



turally-diverse participants from all over the Country during our Native Languages Summit. These participants will share the challenges of teaching and preserving Native languages as well as the paths to success.

Additionally, the Department of Education administers a number of Federal grant programs designed to support this work. For example, Title VII of the ESEA provides funding to over 1,300 school districts and BIA-funded schools serving approximately 477,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students. Grant funds are used as a part of a comprehensive program for the linguistic and cultural academic needs of Indian students. Through ESEA's Title III, the Office of English Language Acquisition, we also administer programs that support schools in the pursuit of this goal. Title 3 formula grants permit schools to support efforts to increase the proficiency of American Indian and Alaska Native students in both English and Native languages.

The Office of English Language Acquisition's Native American and Alaska Native Children in School program provides \$5 million in discretionary grants to support the teaching and studying of Native languages. The program supports teacher training, curriculum development and evaluation and assessment. Funding for this program is contingent on participating students' simultaneous increase in English language proficiency. Additionally, under the Tribally-Controlled Colleges and Universities program funded under the Higher Education Act, many tribal colleges and universities have implemented Native language programs, including Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana. They offer Cheyenne language courses and a summer language immersion program, and the Fort Berthold Community College in Newtown, North Dakota, is working to prevent the loss of the Mandan language.

Title III also provides funding support to Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions in this area. Moreover, the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education have a number of programs that promote Native languages from cradle to career. These programs also provide funding to public schools, teaching American Indian and Alaska Natives through Johnson-O'Malley Assistance education grants. It is critically important that we work to preserve and maintain the unique education and culture of every American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian. We look forward to working with the Committee on how best to meet the goals of S. 1948. After my analysts, whom I also want to thank for having the privilege to present, I will be happy to answer any of your questions, Senator Tester and other members.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mendoza follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM MENDOZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WHITE HOUSE  
INITIATIVE ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION, U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Good afternoon, Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S. 1948, legislation introduced by Senator Tester and cosponsored by many members of the committee. The Administration has not taken a formal position on the bill but welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your staff to help meet the goals

of this proposal—to improve educational outcomes for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Native Hawaiian populations by helping to revitalize Native languages.

**S. 1948, “Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act”**

S. 1948 would amend Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to establish a grant program to support schools using Native language “immersion” education programs for preschool, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. Such schools use Native languages as the primary language of instruction for all curriculum taught. S. 1948 would authorize \$5 million for fiscal year 2015 for such grants.

Today, only 375,000 American Indian language speakers remain in the United States. Recently we learned that the last remaining Navajo “code talker,” instrumental in affecting the outcome of World War II, passed on. As Secretary Duncan stated in his commencement address last year to the College of the Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin, the loss of Native languages has alienated many American Indians from their own history, culture, and ways of knowing their heritage. Revitalizing Native languages and ensuring their continuity are the first steps in preserving and strengthening a tribal nation’s culture and encouraging social unity and self-sufficiency.

In addition, research shows that being bilingual increases a child’s mental flexibility and improves performance on academic assessments, and that bilingual students tend to have better creativity and problem-solving skills. Other studies support well implemented language immersion approaches.

The Department of Education (ED) is engaged in a variety of activities to promote the preservation and revitalization of Native languages, including the following:

- *Native American Languages Memorandum of Agreement:* We are partnering with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Interior to encourage programs and projects that include instruction in, and preservation of, native languages, as a part of the goal of the Native American Languages Memorandum of Agreement, signed in November 2012, which established the Native Language Workgroup. This Workgroup is planning a Native American Languages Summit this month that will bring together grantees of federal Native language programs across agencies to share challenges and paths to success. We expect over 300 participants to attend, representing Native languages from across the country. ED will also provide technical assistance to school districts to address the unique educational and cultural needs of Native students, and examine current and future funding programs to identify additional support and resources.
- *Title VII Formula Grants:* The Office of Indian Education has made important changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title VII formula grant applications for FY 2014 in order to emphasize the statutory requirement that grant funds be used as a part of a comprehensive program for meeting the linguistic and cultural academic needs of Indian students. Title VII grants provide funding to over approximately 1,300 districts and BIE-supported schools that educate approximately 477,000 AI/AN students.
- *Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Grant:* The Office of Postsecondary Education included an Invitational Priority to support activities that strengthen Native language preservation and revitalization in institutions of higher education in the Higher Education Act’s Title III Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions grant competition in fiscal year 2014.
- *Alaska Native Education Program:* The Alaska Native Education program (ANEP) under the ESEA supports efforts to help meet the unique educational and cultural academic needs of Alaska Natives and to support the development of supplemental educational programs to benefit Alaska Natives. In the fiscal year 2014 competition, ANEP included an Invitational Priority for preservation of Native languages. The goal of this priority was to stem the decline of Alaska Native languages by providing teachers with the skills they need to incorporate Native languages into formal instruction.
- *Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program:* Authorized under Title III of the ESEA, ED’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) administers a \$5 million discretionary grant program, the Native American and Alaska Native Children in School program. The program provides grants to eligible entities to support the teaching and studying of Native languages, contingent on a simultaneous increase in English language proficiency for participating students. Schools use these grant funds for teacher training and curriculum development, evaluation, and assessment to support student in-

struction and parent and community participation. There are currently 25 grantees under the program. The program does not prescribe any particular method for teaching Native languages, but some projects use dual language approaches.

- *English Language Acquisition State Grants*: The English Language Acquisition State grants, also under Title III of the ESEA, permit school districts to use the federal funds to teach Native languages to AI/AN students who are English Language Learners, as long as the outcome of the program is to increase those students' English proficiency.
- *Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Program*: Many tribal colleges that receive funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act have implemented Native language programs. For example, the Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Southwest Montana offers Cheyenne language courses, in addition to a summer Cheyenne language immersion program for youth. And the Fort Berthold Community College in New Town, North Dakota, is working on a project that will provide linguistic training to tribal members aimed at preventing the loss of the endangered Mandan language.

In addition to the Department of Education activities, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), have a number of programs that support Native languages:

- The majority of American Indian and Alaska Native students attend public schools and the Johnson-O'Malley Assistance Grants provide funds to public schools to promote Native languages.
- In school year 2013–2014, the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) provided \$23.3 million for language development in BIE-funded schools.
- The BIE's Early Childhood Development integrates Native language, culture and history in the preschool programming.

Again, we look forward to working with the Committee on how best to meet the goals of this proposal to preserve and revitalize Native languages.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your testimony, Bill.  
You may proceed, Lillian.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LILLIAN SPARKS ROBINSON,  
COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE  
AMERICANS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN  
SERVICES**

Ms. SPARKS. Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, Senator Johnson, Senator Heitkamp, my name is Lillian Sparks Robinson and my Lakota name is Flower Woman. It is my honor to testify before this Committee on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services on the Native American Languages Revitalization Act.

We apologize for the late submission of the testimony. This topic is incredibly important, not only to our agency, but to myself. We will prioritize finalizing testimony at a much earlier pace to make sure that you and your staff receive it in a timely manner.

ANA's mission is to support Native communities, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Native Pacific Islanders to be self-determining, healthy, culturally and linguistically vibrant and economically self-sufficient. We support three programs, Native American languages, environmental and regulatory enhancement as well as social and economic development strategies. We are pleased that this Committee is considering reauthorizing the Native Language provisions of the Native American Programs Act of 1974, which is the statute that authorizes

and governs ANA programs. ANA believes language revitalization is essential to continuing Native American culture and strengthening a sense of community. ANA funding provides opportunities to assess, plan, develop, implement, projects to ensure the survival and vitality of Native languages.

We have funded many successful projects that resulted in increased usage and fluency of Native American languages and are happy to see that the second panel includes many of our former grantees. For example, the Lower Brule Community College in South Dakota received an ANA grant to certify the Lakota language instructors for the Lower Brule education system, create a K through 12 Lakota language curriculum meeting State and national standards for language certification instruction, and promote Lakota language and culture in the Lower Brule community. Before the project, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe had no language curriculum for K through 12 students. At the project's end, there were four trained, certified, experienced, motivated and skilled instructors, all capable of making Lakota language classes meaningful and accessible to youth on the reservation.

Similarly, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe of Alaska used its ANA language grant to integrate Lingit classes into the Yakutat public school system, build the capacity of the tribe's Lingit language teachers, and develop electronic resources to be used by students and teachers. This project has resulted in 102 youth and 40 adults increasing their ability to speak Lingit.

Finally, an ANA grant helped the Fort Belknap College in Montana, who I am happy to see will be presenting on the second panel, produce young White Clay language speakers, building on the initial success of the White Clay Immersion School. At the end of the three-year project, the College held 185 language classes, trained two language teachers, and developed a language curriculum. As a result, nine people achieved fluency in the language.

Since 2010, ANA has held two separate annual competitions for language projects, those being the Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Program and the Esther Martinez Initiative. Between 2006 and 2013, ANA has received 853 applications for all of our Native American language projects. Of those, 80 applications were for Esther Martinez Initiative projects.

Although Congress has not made additional appropriations to expand ANA's discretionary program, ANA has doubled the funds for Native language programs by shifting funds from Environment and Regulatory Enhancement and Social and Economic Development Strategy competitions.

Listening sessions and tribal consultation indicate that the extra investment in Native American languages is critical to our communities. However, the Social and Economic Development Strategies program continues to be the grant program for which we receive the most applications. In fiscal year 2013, we reviewed a total of 298 applications, of which 192 were for Social and Economic Development Strategies. Of those 192 applications, we were able to provide funding for 39 new awards.

In fiscal year 2014, we expect to fund approximately 20 percent of our Esther Martinez applications and 60 percent of our Preservation and Maintenance grants. The unmet demand in both cat-

egories does remain high. In addition, based on grantee interviews, we believe the authority to fund Esther Martinez and Preservation and Maintenance projects for longer periods, up to five years, rather than the current three years, would result in increased sustainability of the gains made. Grantees would have more time to build a community of speakers, to strengthen partnerships and secure additional funding as projects move beyond planning and initial stages of implementation.

Additional feedback from our grantees also indicates that lowering the required number of participating students from 10 to 5 for language nests and from 15 to 10 for language survival schools would allow more communities to apply.

We are thankful for the continued support of this Committee in achieving the ANA mission. We look forward to working with Congress to reauthorize the Native American Programs Act, which does continue to receive appropriations. From a program administration perspective, reauthorizing NAPA as a whole would also provide an opportunity to update program regulations which track our current statute, which is necessary for improved program oversight and accountability.

We look forward to the day when all Native communities are thriving, and we look forward to working with you to make that happen. I am happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sparks follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LILLIAN SPARKS ROBINSON, COMMISSIONER,  
ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES

Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Committee, it is my honor to testify before this Committee on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services on S. 2299. I am a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, which is located in South Dakota. I serve as the Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), which is part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

ANA's mission is to support Native American communities to be self-determining, healthy, economically self-sufficient, and culturally and linguistically vibrant. We achieve our mission by providing discretionary grants, training, and technical assistance to tribes and Native American communities, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders. ANA supports three program areas: Native American Languages, Environmental Regulatory Enhancement (ERE), and Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS). We are pleased that this Committee is considering reauthorizing the Native American language provisions of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974 (NAPA), the statute that authorizes and governs ANA programs.

For fiscal year (FY) 2013, Congress appropriated approximately \$45.5 million to ANA, which distributed nearly \$40 million to Native American communities competitively. Funding for FY 2014 is \$46.5 million, which is an increase from FY 2013. In addition to providing competitive grants, ANA uses its funding to provide training and technical assistance to Native American communities, as required by Section 804 of NAPA. As a result of this training and technical assistance, 80 percent of applications for FY 2013 were considered of sufficient quality to be funded had additional funds been available.

ANA believes that language revitalization is essential to continuing Native American culture and strengthening a sense of community. Use of Native American languages builds identity and assists communities in moving toward social cohesion and self-sufficiency. ANA encourages applicants to involve elders and other community members in determining proposed language project goals and implementing project activities. ANA funding provides opportunities to assess, plan, develop, and implement projects to ensure the survival and vitality of Native American languages.

For over a decade, ANA awarded Native American language preservation and maintenance funds to eligible entities under the Native American Languages Act of 1992, but utilization of Native American languages continued to decline for a variety of reasons. In response to this dramatic and continued decline, Congress passed the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. The law amended NAPA to provide grants for language immersion and restoration programs, two methods that have proven to be highly successful in creating fluent speakers.

ANA has funded many successful projects that have resulted in increased usage and fluency of Native American languages. For example, the Lower Brule Community College in South Dakota received an ANA grant to certify Lakota language instructors for the Lower Brule education system, create a K–12 Lakota language curriculum meeting state and national standards for language instruction, and promote Lakota language and culture in the Lower Brule community. Before the project, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe had no language curriculum for K–12 students. At the project's end, the Tribe had four trained, certified, experienced, motivated, and skilled educators, all capable of making Lakota language classes meaningful and accessible to youth on the reservation.

Similarly, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe of Alaska used its ANA grant to integrate Lingit classes into the Yakutat Public school system, build the capacity of Lingit language teachers, and develop electronic teaching and learning resources. As a result of the project, 102 youth and 40 adults have increased their ability to speak Lingit.

Finally, an ANA grant helped the Fort Belknap College in Montana produce young White Clay language speakers, building on the initial success of the White Clay Immersion School. An objective of the project was to hire and train two language teachers, develop curriculum and training materials, and develop an advisory council to provide guidance on the curriculum. At the end of the three year project, the College held 185 language classes, trained two language teachers, and developed a language curriculum. As a result of these efforts, nine people achieved fluency in the language.

Since 2010, ANA has held two separate annual competitions for language projects, the Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Program and the Esther Martinez Initiative (EMI). Between 2006 and 2013, ANA received 853 applications for all Native American language projects. Of those, 80 applications (received between 2008 and 2013)<sup>1</sup> were for EMI projects. In 2014, we saw an over 100 percent increase in EMI applications, from 14 applications in 2013 to 30 applications reviewed this year. The total number of language applications received is close to the same as previous years, at 94 applications.

Although Congress has not made additional appropriations to expand ANA's discretionary program, the ANA has doubled the funds available for Native language programs by shifting funds from ERE and SEDS. In FY 2014, we provided nearly \$13 million (\$12,820,867) to roughly 60 communities, up from approximately \$6 million in FY 2010.

In FY 2014, we expect to fund approximately 20 percent of EMI applications and 16 percent of Preservation and Maintenance projects. The unmet demand in both categories remains high. In addition, based on grantee interviews, we believe that the authority to fund EMI and Preservation and Maintenance projects for longer periods (up to five years, rather than the current three years) would result in increased sustainability of the gains made. Grantees would have more time to build a community of speakers, strengthen partnerships, and secure additional funding as projects move beyond the initial planning and implementation stages. Additional feedback from ANA grantees also indicates that lowering the required number of participating students from ten to five for language nests, and from fifteen to ten for survival schools, would allow more communities to apply. ANA's total investment in Native American language projects for FY 2010 to 2014 will be approximately \$60 million.

Listening sessions and tribal consultation indicate that the extra investment in Native American language programs is critical to our communities. The Social and Economic Development Strategies program continues to be the grant program for which we receive the most applications. In FY 2013, ANA reviewed a total of 298 applications, 192 of which were for SEDS. Of these 192 applications, ANA was able to provide funding for 39 new awards at approximately \$10 million. This provided funding for one in five applications. This total included special initiatives like the Native Asset Building Initiative and the Sustainable Employment and Economic De-

<sup>1</sup> The Esther Martinez Initiative was enacted in 2006, but it was not its own funding category in ANA until FY 2008.

velopment Strategies grants that target ANA investment towards economic empowerment, but still within the framework of community-driven projects.

We are thankful for the continued support of this Committee in achieving the ANA mission. We look forward to working with Congress to reauthorize the Native American Programs Act including the Esther Martinez Native Languages Act, which continues to receive appropriations. From a program administration perspective, reauthorizing NAPA as a whole would also provide an opportunity to update outdated program regulations which track the current statute, which is necessary for improved program oversight and accountability.

ANA looks forward to the day when all "Native Communities are Thriving," and we look forward to working with you to make that happen.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your testimony, Lillian.

I am going to start with you, Mr. Mendoza. Your testimony was supportive of the language bills. Yet you led off your testimony by saying that you had no position on either of the bills. Could you tell me why wouldn't your testimony reflect that support?

Mr. MENDOZA. I think, Senator Tester, we have not yet had an opportunity to review these bills formally, between Congress and the Department. So we welcome that opportunity. We certainly wholeheartedly agree with the importance and the need to preserve and revitalize Native languages. I think the goals of this bill, both bills, are consistent with what we are hearing from both tribal leaders and tribal educators across the Country.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, so at what point in time would be a reasonable amount of time to give you to come back with either a year or nay recommending on these bills from the Department?

Mr. MENDOZA. I can assure you, Senator Tester, we will make it a top priority, given the importance of this issue, the current momentum. So I couldn't venture to give you a timeline right now, without coordination with some other program offices that I can't speak for right now. We will make sure we give you both an estimated timeline and ensure that it is a priority for us.

The CHAIRMAN. Here is what I would like to see. We are going to be in next week, and then we are going to be off a week for the 4th of July. If you could give us your recommendation, could you give us the recommendation that the Department has when we come back the first week we are back in July? That gives you two or three weeks to get it done. Thank you.

ESEA, I am sure you are aware, many folks are watching the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as to whether it is going to be supporting or not supporting Native American students. How is your Department, or is your Department working with the Health Committee to ensure that Native students and Native languages are supported through ESEA?

Mr. MENDOZA. Certainly through the ESEA Blueprint, we have already committed to the importance of looking at Title VII, looking at strengthening Title VII and the levers that immediately can affect the needs to address the unique cultural language-related needs of students. And one of the key areas for us from the standpoint of the White House Initiative is the work that is happening under numerous working groups, the culmination of some early activity on our Memorandum of Agreement is the Summit itself.

So some of these activities we point to in our testimony, and those are areas that we are building on. We have already invested tremendously in terms of technical assistance through regional

comprehensive centers. Over five years, that will be a \$5 million investment. We are seeing activities in the South Central Comprehensive Center where they have already looked at the languages being spoken in the State of Oklahoma and developed an alternative certification process for those teachers.

These regional comprehensive centers are also looking at data assets and how we can strengthen the information around these issues, including the definition of the English learners, the Office of English Language Acquisition has also made this a priority for them. And we have looked at every lever early on here as grant cycles are coming up, and looking at prioritizing the significance and importance of Native languages.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. There are those in the Native academic community who contend that reauthorization of the ESEA has complicated efforts to support Native languages because of conflicts between the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Native American Languages Act. Has your department received any of those concerns? And if you have, how are you dealing with them?

Mr. MENDOZA. I am not aware of specific comparisons in that regard. I could be wrong. There is an abundance of consultation and testimony related to the importance that tribal leaders and educators place on Native languages. The Native Languages Act, and its importance, was certainly a big part of our response to what we heard in consultations, and was therefore a critical component of our Memorandum of Agreement with our partners at HHS as well as Interior.

The CHAIRMAN. But you have not heard about the conflicts between ESEA and NALA?

Mr. MENDOZA. I have not, to the best of my knowledge.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Barrasso?

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Continuing with you, Mr. Mendoza, your written testimony noted that school districts may use certain Federal funds to teach Native languages. And the outcome, however, of the program, must increase the students' English proficiency. Can you elaborate a little bit on what outcomes you are seeing from these programs?

Mr. MENDOZA. Certainly. One of the things that we remain very committed to is how we can utilize these programs to achieve the goals of not only strengthening Native languages but also ensuring that our students are college and career-ready. We know that there are concerns in this area, whether we are talking about graduation rates, enrolment rates or retention rates. We certainly have concerns that although we are talking about achievement measures, we know they will look at the National Indian Education study that that area of the achievement gap, in some ways, has done better, in others is still stagnant.

So the performance of these programs related to that and how they relate to the measures for each individual program vary. I would feel more comfortable sharing with you follow-up information on each of these programs' performance relative to those Government Accountability measures.

Senator BARRASSO. I would appreciate that, as well as where you see it working, where you see it not working, what the best prac-



tices are and how you can share that with others, so you can get the desired outcomes in all locations. That would be helpful.

Ms. SPARKS, the written testimony from Mr. Mendoza, he notes that the research shows being bilingual has multiple benefits. I think you referred to that as well. It increases a child's mental flexibility, it improves performance on academic assessments. Can you talk a little bit about what type of academic achievements you are seeing from students who are served by the Esther Martinez Native Language program that you administer?

Ms. SPARKS. Sure. So, the ANA Native Language programs are community-driven and community designed. So we don't have the same types of benchmarks that a program funded by Title VII at Department of Ed may have. And there aren't the same types of standards or assessments that are required. But what we do is support the community, developing what their baseline language fluency may be and then helping them to achieve. That is one of the things we have incorporated, with regard to the three objectives, there also have to be some impacts they are hoping to be able to achieve.

We would like to see, for all of our immersion projects, whether they are funded under Esther Martinez or Native Language, that they indicate what their level of fluency will be after the end of the three-year project. And we provide training and technical assistance.

I can't give you any solid data with regards to the gains that we have seen. But I can tell you that we have seen an increased number of teachers trained. Our impact reports have indicated an increased number of students actually being able to use their Native language.

And I can tell you, outside of ANA, what the research has shown is that students definitely, by the time they reach third grade and they have been instructed in their Native language, that they are almost on par with their counterparts who are not receiving instruction in Native language. By the time they reach the eighth grade, they have certainly met and many times surpassed their counterparts. And by the time they graduate high school, they have just taken off and really are exceeding all expectations.

So we support the research. And one of the things that we are trying to achieve under that memorandum of agreement that we have with the Department of Ed and with Interior is actually being able to take a deeper dive into the research to support Native language immersion activities.

Senator BARRASSO. I think Senator Heitkamp mentioned this in a previous hearing, of that younger age group, the students are running to school, and then a little later on they are walking to school, and then a little later they are running away from school. It would seem that if we could continue with what you are proposing here, in a way that makes that student, increases mental flexibility, interest, interaction, engagement, that that may help in a lot of different ways, not just in this one specific language component of it, so that student would continue with that eagerness to go to learn.

Ms. SPARKS. Absolutely. That is something we want to be able to continue to support. We also want to be able to find a way that

the communities aren't having to piecemeal some of their language programming. That is one of the goals under our Memorandum of Agreement, is to find a way where a community or a school that is receiving Title VII funding or receiving BIA school funding, whether it is Johnson O'Malley or contract or compact or direct funding from the BIE, that they are able to apply their Native language grants to those settings as well.

And also with Head Start, we are finding that a lot of our best partnerships start in the Head Start classrooms, using Native Language funding from ANA.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson?

Senator JOHNSON. Ms. Sparks, in your testimony and in Mr. Shortbull's testimony, it is stated that the projects should be authorized up to five-year periods versus the current three-year periods. How would this impact the total grants awarded by ANA if changes were made to the program? Please elaborate.

Ms. SPARKS. Thank you for that question. So ANA strives to meet the required appropriations and the report language every year with regard to providing at least \$12 million to Native language activities, which at least \$4 million of that will go to immersion activities. We are happy to say that we have surpassed those levels every year since 2010 when we first started the Esther Martinez initiative.

What we have found, talking with our grantees, is that three years really allows them to be able to start and implement a project and really begin to see the gains, but five years would allow for the sustainability for the program to be even more sustainable, and for them to be able to really think about their planning after the five years. We did do some preliminary analysis on what it would look like three years to five years. We are anticipating that the level of funding would remain the same, but we would probably be able to fund about two to three less Esther Martinez Initiative projects a year. I think it is about five to six, and I can get you the exact number, for Preservation and Maintenance.

So new awards would be lower each year, because our continuations would be higher each year.

Senator JOHNSON. Mr. Mendoza, teacher preparation, recruitment and retention for tribal immersion programs is difficult at best. Aside from Title III discretionary grants, what efforts has the Department made to award tribal immersion programs in their efforts to hire and retain qualified teachers?

Mr. MENDOZA. I appreciate the question, Senator Johnson.

As you all know, all too well, it is tremendously difficult to recruit and retain highly-qualified teachers in general to some of the areas of the Country where these languages are thriving, in an effort to preserve and revitalize them. Especially in some of the areas such as up in Senator Murkowski's State, where the extreme conditions make it tremendously difficult.

As we look at the challenges around, regardless of the models of approaching preservation and revitalization of Native languages, those mechanisms, that capacity for that teacher preparation is just not there. One of the key areas for us, in addition to Title III, to focus on the dual goals of English and Native languages, is Title

VII professional development grants. Those are designed specifically to bring teachers, prepare teachers and bring those teachers in-service to tribal communities.

So we remain committed on working to try to address this issue in a new and different way. We are looking at it through our broader teacher preparation programs. Certainly this is a big part of this work that we are doing with regional technical assistance centers, as well as our State and Tribal Education partnership grants, to make sure that we are working with those critical networks, establishing that national network for individuals, being purposeful about that work. That is embodied, certainly, in some of the recommendations that have addressed BIE, they are a critical partner in that. Those teachers who are in those school systems as well as these tribally-connected school districts that are on or near reservations, we need to have greater definition around that area.

So Title VII professional development, as well as the Title III professional development program, as you just named, are the primary levers for this work.

Senator JOHNSON. Ms. Sparks, you mentioned that in order to increase the number of Esther Martinez Initiative grant applicants, we must consider lowering the required number of participants in language nests and survival schools. Can you expand on the reasoning behind this suggestion?

Ms. SPARKS. Thank you for that question. In my role as Commissioner, I have had an opportunity to visit numerous communities that are on the verge of doing Native language immersion or have been doing Native language immersion activities. But they just cannot meet the student threshold of a minimum of 10 students in a language nest or a minimum of 15 students in their survival school. Just like my colleague, Mr. Mendoza, said, I think the greatest examples are probably in the State of Alaska, where there are numerous remote and rural villages, where the school in itself might be 15 students, all of which may not be in immersion classroom settings.

I can give you an example of one community where they have applied several times and they are just on the verge of maybe being able to meet 15 students or 5 students for the language nest. They are doing some really remarkable things in that community and with their language. They have a dedicated administration, a dedicated tribal council, dedicated classroom teachers and dedicated parents. It is a shame for them to not be able to be eligible to apply just because they don't meet the student threshold. Certainly we want this to have the most impact and increase as many speakers as possible. But we also don't want to rule out communities that could still benefit from this Esther Martinez Initiative.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Heitkamp?

**STATEMENT OF HON. HEIDI HEITKAMP,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA**

Senator HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of questions, but before I start, I do want to remark that I had a meeting with a couple of elders on one of the reservations who was concerned about the quality of the education, the

quality of whether in fact these Native American languages that were being taught and spoken in immersion school was in fact traditional enough. So I want to raise that concern because I think it is really critically important that Native speakers, traditional speakers actually are involved in the creation of these programs, monitoring the quality. That is what you don't want to lose, it is such a critical part of the culture itself.

Mr. Mendoza, your written testimony details how the Department of Education is working, obviously, to support Native languages through ten separate programs in conjunction with three separate agencies. I think the tribes that I talk to would like to see more consistent funding streams to support these Native American immersion programs. Have you explored ways to consolidate these funding streams and programs to create flexibility in them so tribes can better utilize them?

Mr. MENDOZA. I appreciate the question, Senator. The short answer to that is no, we have not. It has been clear to us that in looking at the comprehensive needs of these learners and the complex issues related to not just teaching in a linguistically sound manner, but also the rich diversity that is across the Country, 566 different tribes, and the diversity even within that, which you pointed out, which I wholeheartedly agree with, that we need more information before we even talk about trying to collapse, consolidate, move. That is a big part of why we have invested in this collaboration with our partners, to bring together, and the 300 participants who will be joining us here in D.C., that represents our grantees, the people who have been navigating those funding sources that you mentioned.

So it is a critical first step for us to hear from them, to assess from what we are learning from them, to try to piece with what we have learned through consultation and then to look within to try to address those areas.

Senator HEITKAMP. And I can understand what you are saying. But I think all of us would agree that we would like to see as much efficiency in these programs, because those limited dollars will go a lot further.

Also in your testimony you highlight how the loss of Native languages can separate many Native Americans from their culture and their history. I have seen that directly. I think many languages have lost their last Native speaker, which creates challenges in finding classroom instruction. What efforts are you doing to identify and preserve the most vulnerable of languages? Do you prioritize the vulnerable languages? And how are you supporting instruction for Native languages, which, in my previous example, where you have somebody who can judge whether in fact that is the right program, whether that language actually reflects the language that is the traditional language? Here you don't even have that kind of ability to audit or to hold accountable those programs. How do you fix that issue?

Mr. MENDOZA. I appreciate that, it is such an expansive question there and one that I have to kind of err on the same side as your previous question. I apologize, there is just a lot more work here that we need to do than answers at this juncture. One of the statistics I cited is the 375,000 language speakers. If we take those num-

bers and apply that to the Native population as a whole, we come up with approximately 7.2 percent, and the percentage goes up even incrementally as we look at constraining the definition of who is an Indian based off of that.

So the important work about identifying these languages is something that the Initiative has really been trying to grapple with and that we are talking about with our partners in the Memorandum of Agreement, particularly around the idea of less commonly taught languages that we currently look at for world languages. Where do Native languages fit in a conversation such as less commonly taught, where we have as many as 200 living languages right now that at various stages are in a state of crisis, if not extinction, where we have as well as areas of strength, where we are talking about the Anishinabe language, the Blackfeet language or else the Dine language as well, which Dine language constantly makes it onto the list of, when we look at State and the languages they speak.

So it is an issue that we are looking at really closely. It is only a matter of conception at this point in how we are grappling with that issue across Federal agencies.

Senator HEITKAMP. If I could just make one last comment. I think all of us who have spent time in Indian Country understand the significance of understanding the language to understanding the culture, the nuances and the variances. So if we are going to hopefully build our hope as a result of reestablishing or working toward building out community, the preservation of these languages is absolutely an essential building block to doing that. We are very interested in how we can participate, and I share Senator Tester's urgency that we get a response very quickly to the Administration's position.

Mr. MENDOZA. If I may, Senator Heitkamp, when we visited with the President to your State, we also were able, had the fortunate opportunity to visit the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's partnership with Sitting Bull College as well as the Lakota Language Consortium. What is happening there is for all intents and purposes happening in touch and go ways with our programs, either in ANA grantee at a certain point, in the Office of Indian Education grantee at some point, but clearly the tribes are investing in this area. That is what really keeps me up at night around these issues, is that we are going to miss the analysis of just the Federal impact of this, where there is such rich innovation and opportunity that is happening among tribes across the Country.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that you have both of these bills before the Committee. I am a proud co-sponsor, the lead Republican on these and share certainly the comments that so many have made here today about the significance, the real urgency as we work to ensure that our Native languages, our cultural heritage languages are not only preserved but that they are living. We are not locking them up, we are allowing our children to be immersed in the language of their culture,

the language of their heritage, develop pride in that and pride in who they are. So as we work to help foster these initiatives, know that I am committed to making it happen.

Commissioner Sparks, you mentioned the Esther Martinez grants. It is my understanding from data from HHS that we don't have any Esther Martinez grants in our State. Yet as you know, we have agreement of language preservation and education work that is going on within our regions. I am going to be asking our Native educators, our school districts, our tribal organizations, what barriers they are experiencing in trying to access these very important grants. You have mentioned the issue just of the small numbers that we have in some of our villages. That is true. But we have many other areas where we have, of course have significant numbers of students within our schools, whether it is in the immersion school in Bethel. So the number ought not be the barrier.

So I am going to try to drill down with this. I would ask that you as well work with us to see where we are putting these barriers up.

Mr. Mendoza, I didn't hear your oral testimony here today. I did read your statement. I have perhaps more of a statement than a question today. Your testimony really provides the whole array of Federal efforts on Native education. But I think there is a big picture that is missing from at least your written testimony. If I may be so bold as to offer some guidance here, I think that the White House Initiative on Indian and Alaska Native Education has to aggressively demonstrate the nexus between Native language revitalization from within our schools and increased academic achievement and the well-being among our Native youth. What I would have liked to have seen from your testimony is the strong reference to the very tremendous body of research that exists, whether it is drawing from the experience of the Maori in New Zealand to our own language revitalization efforts that we have in Alaska to what we will hear from our Native Hawaiian witness. In my mind, language immersion, culturally-relevant curriculum and place-based education are among the most important solutions to addressing low achievement and poor educational outcomes to many of our Native youth. Those responsible for improving the educational outcomes of our Native students I think have to understand and really take action, knowing the moral gravity of inaction is another generation that we would fail.

So I think we have clear opportunity here. I really would encourage the White House, through this initiative, to look to help States, educate States, educate school boards and those within the Administration regarding this very, very relevant and important link between our Native language revitalization, culturally-relevant curriculum and increased academic achievement. Hopefully what you are gaining from this hearing this afternoon is that urgency that Senator Heitkamp has mentioned. I certainly share in that.

Comment if you are inclined, but I would hope that you would take that back with you.

Mr. MENDOZA. Thank you, Senator. And you missed it, my oral statement was tremendously inspiring.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MENDOZA. But on a serious note, I just want to thank you for your conviction and that call for action around this. That is certainly felt and understood and at the forefront of the initiative's work. We are trying to approach this issue in as systemic of a way as we can, knowing that there are lots of moving parts to this work, lots of areas of the Country that are just not having the opportunity to leverage what opportunities we do have in front of us.

So we know there is a shared responsibility in this work, because it has an added value to the Nation as a whole to have this rich diversity within us and who we are as a Country. This really comes back to a statement made in my recent visit to North Dakota, where this is not an issue of knowing a language to get into college or knowing a language to expand your world view or enhance your skill set as an individual. It is about life and death. That is exactly how it was expressed to us. Our elders are dying and our children are killing themselves. We have to have this as a foundation to addressing these other critical issues in regard to who we are.

So I just heed that call to action from you and hope that we can continue to work together. That is the commitment that we are here to express, to continue to look at these issues with you all and to act on them for the future of our youth.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.  
Senator Begich?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARK BEGICH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions. Ms. Sparks, here is the question. We have a few schools that are kind of struggling financially. One of the issue is with Preservation and Maintenance grants at ANA. My question is, and we are trying to figure out some flexibility in this legislation that would allow us to go to potentially five years, more stability, more sustainability. Three years seems long to some, but for this kind of programming, it is somewhat short.

Do you think there is flexibility within the legislation or do you think we need to tweak it to create some different language in there to create that ability to go to five years?

Ms. SPARKS. Thank you for the question. We certainly have heard this, during the ACF tribal grantee meeting, that stability is very difficult to achieve in three years. So this message is coming across loud and clear to us at ANA.

With regard to the Preservation and Maintenance Grants, which you asked about specifically, we do have some flexibility for those grants. They can be one year to five years for Preservation and Maintenance. The Esther Martinez, we are tied to three years, because when it was drafted, by way of background, I worked extensively on Esther Martinez.

Senator BEGICH. So you drafted it for the three years.

Ms. SPARKS. I worked on it.

[Laughter.]

Ms. SPARKS. And I helped work with a lot of other people that are sitting behind all of you today. But we didn't realize that we were tying our hands to three years with Esther Martinez.

Senator BEGICH. You are in support of seeing it moved to five?

Ms. SPARKS. We are supportive of seeing it move to five. And down to one as well, because we are hearing from some communities that three years is too long to do some of the activities they would like to do under Esther Martinez, and for some, three years is not enough. So if we could have the same flexibility for Esther Martinez as we do for the Preservation and Maintenance Grants, I think that would make our grantees very happy.

Senator BEGICH. Very good. Let me ask you, Mr. Mendoza, and you may have answered this, I got in late because I was coming in from another event. Can you just give me a sense of how and what your engagement is with working with our Alaska tribes as well as, and I say tribes, as well as our village corporations and so forth? Because have a different set up. But our tribes specifically, can you give me kind of a sense on that?

Mr. MENDOZA. I appreciate the question, Senator. Our primary mechanism is of course through a number of programs that spend certainly Title VII as well as Title III HEA aid for strengthening institutional programs. And an overarching initiative as a whole, transition from building upon the success of the Tribal Colleges and Universities Initiative to looking at the comprehensive challenge and successes of American Indian and Alaska Native students nationwide. So in each step of our looking at what does that work look like, whether it is through the DOI Ed Memorandum looking at our Native Language Working Group, the other working groups that we are a part of, and certainly outreach and engagement primarily our responsibility to consult with Indian tribes around the Country. That work is threaded throughout there and in Alaska.

We have made trips to Alaska, my office has. I was just there for National Congress of American Indians to talk to both corporations and those villages that were able to make it. Through the Alaska Native Education Program, as well as the Alaska Native-Native Hawaiian Program in HEA Title III, we make sure we keep those conversations close in looking at how we can strengthen those programs to be consistent with what is happening and unique where it needs to be in regard to the work of the Initiative.

Senator BEGICH. Do you think as you are having those discussions or participating in those groups that will have Alaska Natives on them, do you feel there is some uniqueness to the way Alaska has to deliver some of its programs, from the way you handle others? Is that coming out or is it pretty much what you see is pretty consistent across Indian Country in the Lower 48 and Alaska Native communities?

Mr. MENDOZA. Tremendous uniqueness, not only geographic but diversity as well. The challenges facing Alaska Natives are very different, certainly, when you are talking about urban and rural. The notion of rural becomes to the extreme when you are talking about Alaska Natives. Urban, not necessarily on the same lens as a Seattle or Denver. So there are nuances in that regard as well. We see activity for the corporations in some of the urban areas, whereas we are really interested in looking at the partnerships and the strength of collaboration between the villages and some of the normal ways of looking at Lower 48 interests, local education agen-



cies, what do private and philanthropic collaboratives look like there.

And the one that always stands out the most with Alaska are certainly costs related to that. Certain geographical difference related to infrastructure realities. Accessibility around the same kind of assumptions that even our rural instances here in the Lower 48 enjoy, such as access to internet, libraries. So those challenges are very real, and those are some of the uniquenesses that I have been exposed to in my work. That guides the work of the Initiative.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I just appreciate especially your summary there of the recognition that there is some uniqueness, which means maybe there will be initiatives or policies or laws or regulations, we have to keep that all in mind when we are dealing with the Alaska perspective. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Begich.

I want to thank the two witnesses. I will be presenting some written questions for the record and there may be others up here too. Thank you both for your testimony. I appreciate it very, very much. If you can stick around for the tribal witnesses, it may be beneficial, but that is your call.

We will go to our second panel now. There are some logistical problems, so we are going to run this a little bit differently than what I had originally thought. We are going to hear from Sonta Hamilton Roach. Sonta is an elementary school teacher at the Innoko River School in Shageluk, Alaska, and a board member of Doyon Limited. What we are going to do, unless there is objection from the panel, Sonta is going to give her testimony first. Because of logistical problems, we will ask questions. I will start with Senator Murkowski and Senator Begich and the rest of us. Then she will be excused to be able to catch her flight.

Then we are going to hear from Ms. Clarena Brockie, who is the Dean of Students at Aaniih Nakoda College, in Harlem, Montana. Then we are going to hear from Thomas Shortbull, President of Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, South Dakota. We will also hear from the Honorable Ed Delgado, Chairman of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin in Oneida, Wisconsin. Finally, we are going to hear testimony from Namaka Rawlins, who serves as Director of Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, with 'Aha Punana Leo, in Hilo, Hawaii.

I want to welcome all the witnesses. I would ask that your verbal testimony be five minutes, and we are going to enter your entire written testimony for the record. Sonta, you can start.

**STATEMENT OF SONTA HAMILTON ROACH, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER, INNOKO RIVER SCHOOL; BOARD MEMBER, DOYON LIMITED**

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Thank you very much. The logistical challenge is I have a nine and a half month old waiting back home in Alaska.

Hello, everyone, Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee. My name is Sonta Hamilton Roach, and I live in Shageluk. I am Deg Hit'an Athabascan. In my community of Shageluk there are

approximately 80 people, who are primarily Athabascan. It is very isolated, as was talked about earlier, and is only accessible by air or by boat. I am happy to say that I returned home and am currently working as an elementary classroom teacher.

It is truly an honor to be here today, to carry the Alaskan torch, and to testify in support of Senate Bill 1948 and Senate Bill 2299, fostering the revitalization efforts of Native American language programs. At this point in time, and in the history of indigenous languages, these two bills will strongly and positively impact revitalization efforts. I would say that the timing is perfect, but in the same breath, I'd say that it is unfortunate that our languages were ever so endangered and that this time had to come at all.

Today across Alaska, the seeds have been planted and there are several successful language models and programs that have been developed, but only at a small scale. These seeds need water. To be successful in revitalization, we need systemic change from systems of power that includes schools, tribes, Native corporations and non-profits to work together in partnership with State agencies and the Federal Government.

In Alaska, we have made significant headway in adopting 20 indigenous languages as official languages of Alaska. This bill will also allow for that to happen.

Our indigenous languages have been endangered for generations. Our languages were especially impacted when that young girl or boy was first punished for speaking their language in BIA and mission-run schools. Language, being the closest thing to our identity and knowledge base we have, was stripped from us, for talking Deg Xinag, my people's language. This wasn't eons ago, this was my grandpa, this was my grandma. These were our grandparents. As children, they were not allowed to speak our languages all because they went to school.

This is the legacy I am living with as a teacher today. And today, we are a new generation, those of us in this room, we share a new and exciting view of ourselves, of our communities, and of our Nation and the potential that exists in all of us to speak and celebrate our languages. It is the view that we as Native people have to impact language learning from our cultural lens. It is the hook to keep students in school.

Schools in the Yupi'k region have very successfully developed and implemented early childhood education immersion models in early childhood education, and it is directly linked to higher student achievement and success rates. I had the privilege to visit Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Immersion School in Bethel, Alaska, and I have never felt so privileged to step into anyone's classroom before. The environment encouraged and nurtured cultural values, self-identity, and language. The sense of place was sacred, holistically nurturing students in their learning. It has helped to keep the language in the community alive. The proposed legislation can grow this experience, fostering success in our students.

Language is just like looking through the lens of someone's culture, the depth of who they are and their experiences, their relationship to the land and animals. Place-based and cultural-based education keeps students engaged. It is the hook that increases student achievement. This is known.

In rural Alaska our communities are plagued with high suicide rates, high dropout rates, which correlate directly with a loss in culture and loss of language. The key to changing this is support for relevant curriculum, support for programs like those in Bethel. If this Committee can encourage these efforts, we will have strengthened Native American languages across the Country.

Like our national parks, our indigenous languages and cultures are our national treasures. The ecological knowledge and understanding of living off the land and using resources is a treasure. The oral and traditional stories, told through the language, is precious and valuable. These bills will ensure that our precious treasures will not be lost, but used daily in the lives of many.

Michael Krauss, a linguist and expert in Alaska Native and indigenous languages, said that out of 300 North American languages, only 200 or 210 languages are spoken today, and in Alaska, there are 18 without any children speakers at all, including my own. In conclusion, this legislation is a positive turning point in our Nation that acknowledges the grassroots efforts that are being made to continue keeping languages alive today. It brings light to those elders who were beaten for speaking, and it empowers the young people to take the lead in solidifying our languages as national treasures.

It is my hope that this legislation is passed quickly and my belief that Native Americans will take this opportunity to truly revitalize indigenous languages to the fullest extent possible, that systemic change will occur, and elders will hear their grandchildren and great-grandchildren speaking their language once again. Our children will go to school not having to change thinking caps, or change the lens in which they view the world every single day. But rather, the systems are put into place to promote and foster educational and economic advancement that truly benefits the next generation.

I would say thank you, but historically in our language there is no word for it. Our relationship is based on reciprocity. I know that our relationship will continue to grow. [Word in native tongue.] That is good enough.

Goodbye.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hamilton Roach follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SONTA HAMILTON ROACH, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
INNOKO RIVER SCHOOL; BOARD MEMBER, DOYON LIMITED

Ade' (hello) Chairman and members of this Committee. My name is Sonta Hamilton Roach, and I am Deg Hit'an Athabascan from Shageluk. Shageluk is my hometown, with roughly 80 people, and where I currently work as a teacher. Add Shageluk info, more picture. Add words and language in Athabascan.

It is truly an honor to be here today, to carry the Alaskan torch, and to testify in support of Senate Bill 1958, and Senate Bill 2299, fostering the revitalization efforts of Native American language programs. At this point in time, and in the history of indigenous languages, these two bills will strongly and positively impact revitalization efforts. I would say that the timing is perfect, but in the same breath, I'd say that its unfortunate that our languages were ever so endangered and that this time had to come at all.

Today across Alaska, the seeds have been planted and there are several successful language models and programs that have been developed. But only at a small scale. These seeds need water. To be successful in revitalization, we need systemic change from systems of power that includes schools, Tribes, Native corporations and non-

for profits to work together in partnership with state agencies and the federal government. These bills allow for that to happen!

Our Indigenous languages have been endangered for generations. Our languages were especially impacted when that young girl or boy was first punished for speaking their language in BIA and mission run schools. Language, being the closest thing to our identity and knowledge base we have, was stripped from us—for talking Deg Xinag, my people's language. This wasn't eons ago, this was my grandpa, this was my grandma. These are "our" grandparents. These children cannot speak our languages all because they went to school. This is the legacy I am living with as a teacher.

And today, we are a new generation, those of us in this room. We share a new and exciting view of ourselves, of our communities, and of our nation and the potential that exists in all of us to speak and celebrate our languages. It's the view that we as Native people have to impact language learning from our cultural lens.

So what does language learning include? Language learning includes immersion camps, language nests, distance delivered language learning, and more! For example, schools in the Yupi'k region have very successful immersion models for early childhood education, and its directly linked to higher student achievement and success rate. Add citation for written record. I've had the privilege to visit Ayaprun Elitnaurvik immersion school in Bethel, Alaska, and I've never felt so privileged to step into anyone's classroom before! The environment encouraged and nurtured cultural values, self-identity, and language. The sense of place was sacred, holistically nurturing students in their learning. The proposed legislation can grow this experience, creating success in our students.

Language learning also includes the Koyukuk Athabascan language program through the Yukon Koyukuk School District that is taught via video conferencing to several isolated sites across the district, and very successfully. The Gwich'in have also recently taken significant strides in their language efforts, and have new programs underway. And in the North Slope Borough School District, students learn their Inupiaq language dialects online! And finally, just this spring the Alaska state legislature passed House Bill 216 adopting Native languages as official languages of the State of Alaska. Representative Johnathan Kriess-Tomkins stated for the record that the bill was, "An important step in recognizing the living, breathing Alaska Native languages of the state of Alaska, which continues to grow into daily use by many speakers around the state who both practice and teach and has been done for millennia prior to statehood."

How will this legislation change, impact, or improve language learning? First, it will be that hook that teachers use in the classroom to engage students in their lesson. It will keep students coming into school each and every day, that motivates them and maybe even gives them something to live for, literally. It's more than just cultural pride, or just learning a language, it's learning a knowledge base, a skill-base, and learning who they are!

Language is just like looking through the lens of someone's culture, the depth of who they are and their experiences, their relationship to land and animals. Place-based and cultural-based education keeps students engaged and increases student achievement. In Rural Alaska our communities are plagued with high suicide rates, and high drop out rates, which correlate directly with a loss in culture and language. The key to changing this, is support for relevant curriculum, support for programs like those in Bethel at Ayaprun. If this committee can encourage these efforts, we will have strengthened Native Americans across the country.

Like our national parks, our indigenous languages and cultures are our national treasures. The ecological knowledge and understanding of living off the land and using resources is a treasure. The oral and traditional stories, told through the language, is a treasure. These bills will ensure that our precious treasures will not be lost, but used daily in the lives of many.

Michael Krauss, a linguist and expert in Alaska Native and Indigenous languages said that out of 300 North American languages, only 200 or 210 languages are spoken today, and in Alaska, there are 18 without any children speakers at all.

In conclusion, this legislation is a positive turning point in our nation that acknowledges the grassroots efforts that are being made to continue keeping languages alive today, it brings light to those Elders who were beaten for speaking, and it empowers the young people to take the lead in solidifying our languages as national treasures.

It is my hope that this legislation is passed quickly and my belief that Native Americans will take this opportunity to truly revitalize indigenous languages to the fullest extent possible, that systemic change will occur, and Elders will hear their grandchildren and great-grandchildren speaking their language once again. Our children will go to school not having to change thinking caps, or change the lens

in which they view the world every single day. But rather, the systems are put into place to promote and foster educational and economic advancement and truly benefit the next generation.

I would say thank you. But historically, in our language there is no word for it. Our relationship is based on reciprocity, and I know our relationship will continue to grow. I appreciate your time. Language addition.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Sonta. Before we go to the other panel members, we are going to ask you questions, then we will release you to make your flight. Senator Murkowski?

Senator MURKOWSKI. Sonta, first of all, thank you for making the long trip back here. I can't imagine how stressful it is leaving a 10-month old behind, and certainly understand your urgency on getting on that Alaska Airlines flight here very shortly. So we will keep our comments brief.

I appreciate what you have said about the significance of this systemic change and also how you have outlined what we have seen as a State with repression of Native language historically. Not only were children discouraged, they were punished for speaking their Native languages. And then how you come back out of that hurt and repression is very difficult. It is generational.

But I do think we are beginning to see that change, and it feels so good. I too have been out in the Yupi'k school district and been to the immersion programs there. It is phenomenal what you see. But you also appreciate that what they are doing is they are building their own curriculum. They are working with elders, they are designing the flash cards. They are building it on their own.

I wonder, when you talk about support for relevant curriculum, we are making headway. But I also know that we do not have a number of Native, Alaska Native teachers within our schools. We don't see as many back in our villages as we would like. And I know that so many of our administrators, whether they are superintendents, our administrators, our principals, they are coming to Alaska from outside. They might not have that connection about how significant and how important it is to really make these languages come alive to these children.

Do you feel that you are getting the support to build these relevant curriculums, the support within the Administration to do the change that we need to see so that translates down to each student? Where are our barriers now?

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Thank you so much for that insight. Absolutely, you bring such an important point and question forward. There does need to be, we are on the cusp of so much more, I feel like the potential is really huge. We have a lot of young people who are leading and spearheading these new programs. There are kinds of these language nests or different models that are looked at. There is not one model that applies, and we can understand that today, to everybody, to these remote sites where I have 10 students. There are models where they are teaching students via distance delivery, video conferencing, Yukon Koyukuk School District. Languages and dialects are accessible online, students can click on their dialect and learn actively.

In terms of teacher preparation and maybe we have so many teachers that are not from the area. I am, it is a privilege to be teaching in my own community. So there is that need of teaching

teachers about the culture. Just recently, with the teacher evaluation for the State of Alaska, they now have to be evaluated on cultural standards and how they are acknowledging and celebrating culture in the classroom. So with this effort in language, I really see that blossoming and becoming more.

The potential is out there. I don't think we are where we want to be yet. There are barriers. I think getting the elders involved, the partnerships will be huge. I also want to stress the flexibility with these funds. I do like the idea of the five-year, the granting cycle. But the flexibility to have changes made I think would be critical for our communities and those elders that they work with.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I appreciate what you do as a teacher and again, the opportunity to be back in your village is so important. I wish that we could encourage more, I think we are making that change.

I asked about the support from superintendents and principals, because my children went to an immersion school in Anchorage. It was a time when immersion schools were not yet that highly thought of. It was very difficult in those initial years to get basically the respect from the district as to what it is that we were trying to do. And they wanted to take those very preliminary test results wherein the early years, when you have a child in an immersion program perhaps they are not performing at the same level that a child in an English-speaking program is. We had to demonstrate it.

But when you have resistance from the top, it makes it difficult. Know that we want to work with you to encourage our administrators to make the commitment to our immersion programs that will allow for, again, the successes that I think we will see within our particularly remote villages.

So thank you for what you are doing. I know, I think this is pretty neat that there is no work for thank you, it is based on reciprocity. What you are giving to your students is the most beautiful example of giving and thanks. So thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Begich?

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much.

I know you have to catch your plane, you are probably a little nervous about getting there. It is 15 minutes from here, that is the good news.

First, thank you very much for being a teacher. My parents were teachers, my two sisters are teachers, my sister-in-law just retired after 27 years of teaching in Anchorage. So we have very broad-based education in our household. And of course again, thank you very much.

Second, I have a question and you kind of hit on it, I just want to make sure there is enough of it. You mentioned some of the new technologies being utilized to explore and learn cultures, but also reminding us no matter where we live, we can access this information. It is a struggle in rural Alaska to have the right kind of technology, even the speed, the fiber and all the other pieces that get it to your classroom. Do you think we are making the right movements here, making sure we have enough technology, so when you want to access some of this for our students that it is there, not

having to struggle waiting to get connected? And there is not enough space on the line, tell me your thoughts there.

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Thank you for that. Definitely technology in our school district, we have several different villages. And small in scale, like Shageluk, with 15 students. I know that some districts have already successfully adopted the curricula that is tied to technology and learning online and also via distance delivery. There are gaps that exist that need to be addressed with certain districts. I think it is all uniquely there; in partnerships, those can be resolved. But the successful models are there for us to use. High speed internet connection is always an issue. That is something that is being looked at something that can be improved.

Senator BEGICH. And I am assuming, I think I know the answer, but for the young people that are getting connected, that is not an issue?

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Right.

Senator BEGICH. When they get the moment, they are beyond us.

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. They are very connected, and they are totally, they love to have access. I just want to also stress that that technology piece, for them it is the social part of their day. Because they are surrounded by their cousins and family or maybe younger grade levels. So that opportunity to connect via distance bridges their social interactions and allows for more of that to happen.

Senator BEGICH. I have a question, I am curious about your response. I agree with you, what the legislature did this year in Alaska was an incredible thing, we hope the Governor signs the bill. I think he will. But the grass roots effort was really unbelievable. And knowing that there is a continuing grassroots effort within the Alaska Native community to recognize the culture, the language, that it is not just about some people, everyone should understand it, know it and be part of it. One of the things I did when I was mayor, we built a convention center. It was another building, but we did something different. We named it after the Dina'ina people. But we also made sure every room had the native language for the description of that room. And people have told me, I know in Hawaii their convention center there is very similar. People say, well, people will never learn to pronounce these names. So that is part of the process of learning the culture, of understanding where the generation of the names comes from and so forth.

Do you think there is enough, and that was to me an experiment, to be honest with you. Because sure, we did have some conflict, to be frank with you. We tried to create, you have seen the facility has the rugs, to the colors, everything is about what the environment is about and what the culture is about. Do you think there is enough within Alaska and others that are not only educating Alaska Native people on regaining the culture, but non-Native people to understanding the culture? I was born and raised in Alaska, so I believe I understand it. But there are so many that may not understand it because they are not connected to it. Do you think there is enough of that, or are there some strides we need to be thinking about? It is critical that the Alaska Native people understand and know their own culture. There is no question about it. Yet there are so many that live in Alaska who have no clue.

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Absolutely.

Senator BEGICH. Do you get my question?

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Yes, I completely do, and the short answer is no, we need more. I can say that because the part about language or culture, recognizing it, the first thing you do is acknowledge that they exist and give it a voice. The second thing is using it and celebrating it, like I do in the classroom, dusting off those 1980s bilingual tools to use in reading. My students can read that level. So we go through it.

But it is celebrating it, using it, keeping it alive that doesn't just educate anybody in Alaska, but those kids who strongly need it. This also goes back to the need for more up to date, relevant curriculum that is alive, not stick figures in those books.

Senator BEGICH. Some real stuff.

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Yes, some new up to date, keeping in mind student learning and best practices.

Senator BEGICH. I will end by saying, that is the power of the technology, too. You can move that new information quicker than a textbook being printed and going through all that process. There is so much available online if you just have the high speed connectivity. You can access it and then your students will have more options and more choices and more opportunities. Is that a fair statement?

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. Absolutely, and cost efficient as well.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much. I know what the distance is like. So both Senator Murkowski and I have to fly back and forth to Alaska. So having you here, we cannot say enough to thank you.

Ms. HAMILTON ROACH. It is an honor. And thank you to the rest of the panel for allowing me to go.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Sonta. We appreciate your testimony and appreciate your answers to the questions. As a classroom teacher, like yourself, we will say, you are dismissed.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. We will move on to the other panel members. We will have all your testimony then we will ask questions when you are all done. Representative Brockie, you may proceed.

**STATEMENT OF CLARENA BROCKIE, DEAN OF STUDENT  
AFFAIRS, AANIIH NAKODA COLLEGE**

Ms. BROCKIE. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to address the Committee today.

My name is Clarena Brockie and I am Aaniih from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Both of my parents are Aaniih. I am also a proud member of the Montana House of Representatives. I represent House District 32, which includes the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation and the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. I am also the Dean of Students at Aaniih College.

Aaniih College is a small school with a big mission, serving 225 students each semester, most of whom are members of one of the two tribes on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

The Committee knows the dire situation we face as Indian people in terms of the loss of our languages, so I will not recite all the statistics. When Christopher Columbus and other Europeans first came to Indian Country, more than 300 different languages were



spoken here. Today, less than half remain. This tragic outcome is a direct result of prior U.S. government policy of assimilation, which sent many Indian children to boarding schools, where they were prohibited and often fiercely punished for speaking their own languages. This legacy is made even worse when you consider that once a language becomes extinct, it takes with it much of the history, the philosophy, ceremonies, culture and environmental and scientific knowledge of the people who spoke it.

It is difficult to imagine the degree to which such a loss will impact our Indian children and youth who already suffer from generational poverty and oppression, violence, abuse, neglect, a lack of self-esteem and lack of hope. Doing research for my graduate thesis on the oral history of the Gros Ventre, I learned how meticulously and systematically my own language had been removed from our homes and schools. It had a profound effect on me.

The Aaniiih nin became one of the many tribes that was in danger of joining the group of vanishing Indians. In 1997, only 25 Aaniiih speakers were alive and no children kindergarten through 12th grade spoke the language. Despite this, the Aaniiih nin have survived. Today, our language is beginning to thrive, thanks to an important project at Aaniiih Nakoda College.

In the late 1990s, our college wrote a grant to save our language through an immersion elementary school on our college campus. In 2003, we opened the White Clay Immersion School. Today the largest group of Aaniiih speakers are White Clay students. Since our immersion school began, Native children speakers has gone from zero to 30. Students attend a full day of White Clay Immersion classes, teaching and learning rely on Native knowledge and Native ways of knowing and being. Non-native ways of learning are incorporated to offer students the best of both worlds. The curriculum emphasizes the interconnections between the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being through cross-disciplinary integration, inter-generational learning and field-based learning experiences and community projects. This innovative partnership involving a tribal college taking ownership of K through 8 education is a transformative model for other American Indian communities.

White Clay graduates transition to public schools and are recognized as leaders in student government, academics and sports. For example, students graduating from White Clay in 2013 won the science, math, English literature and art awards as sophomores last year at their new off-reservation high school.

Unfortunately, financial support for White Clay Immersion School is sporadic. Most of our funding comes from private foundations and local support. In addition, we receive funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and Administration of Native American Programs, ANA. However, this is a competitive program and in some years, White Clay received no funding. White Clay does not receive funding from the State or any Federal formula funding. Instead, staff holds fundraisers to support school trips, lunch, supplies and other activities. Although it is always a struggle, our college is committed to the survival of our Aaniiih language. We know that because they are grounded in their culture and confident in their language, our White Clay students will en-

sure that our people, our language will thrive for many generations to come.

In closing, I want to join President Shortbull and all tribal colleges in making these recommendations. One, the Committee should include tribal college Native language research and education programs as an amendment to S. 1948. This is a provision that Chairman Tester included in a legislation introduced previously as part of his bill, THE PATH.

To revitalize our languages, we must work at all levels, pre-K to college, and we must continue to expand the critical need for Native language research. Second, to achieve lasting results, the ANA language grant program should award grants for 10 years or alternative, five years with an option to renew upon the demonstration of success.

Finally, I will echo the words and frustration which I heard from members of the Committee during your hearing last week on Indian higher education. It is so incredibly frustrating to know that the need is so great and the models of success exist to know that tribal colleges, more so than any other entities, are working to transform Indian Country, achieving success but being rewarded only with flat line or decreased funding. We are accountable institutions; we need the Administration to be accountable as well.

Mr. Chairman, we need your help, not just to acknowledge our treaties and the Federal trust responsibility, but take concrete action today to advance the proven successes of tribal colleges and increase our capacity to do even more in Indian Country. And we have a word for thank you, [thank you in native tongue.]

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brockie follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CLARENA BROCKIE, DEAN OF STUDENT AFFAIRS, AANIIH NAKODA COLLEGE

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Clarena M. Brockie, and I am Aaniiih (Gros Ventre) from Montana. Both of my parents are enrolled as Gros Ventre. I am proud to represent Montana's 32nd District, which includes the Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy Indian Reservations, in our state's House of Representatives. I am also the Dean of Students of the Aaniiih Nakoda College in Harlem, Montana. Aaniiih Nakoda College was chartered by the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council in 1984. We are a small school with a big mission, serving approximately 225 students per semester, most of whom are members of one of the two tribes on our reservation.

Thank for inviting me to testify at this hearing examining legislation to strengthen efforts to preserve and revitalize our Native languages. It is an honor to be given an opportunity to speak on behalf of the many people who cannot stand here today, but I know they are with me in spirit.

Aaniiih Nakoda College, along with the nation's other 36 Tribal Colleges and Universities, which collectively are the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, AIHEC, support S. 1948 and S. 2299, both of which would help us as we work to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American Languages.

**Current Status of Native Languages**

The Committee knows the dire situation we face as Indian people in terms of the loss of our languages, homelands, and identity, so I will not recite all of the statistics. I will just mention that when Christopher Columbus and other Europeans first came to Indian Country, more than 300 different languages were spoken here. Today, well less than half remain. Most of these are spoken only by a handful of elders and are in serious danger of disappearing—in fact, all but 15 or 20 of our Native languages are spoken only by adults who are not teaching their younger generations the language. This tragic outcome is a direct result of prior U.S. government policies, including assimilation which sent many Indian children to government-run boarding schools where they were prohibited from—and often fiercely pun-

ished for—speaking their own languages, their last tie to their homelands and their very identity. This terrible legacy is made even worse when you consider that once a language becomes extinct, it takes with it much of the history, philosophy, ceremonies, culture, and environmental and scientific knowledge of the people who spoke it. It is difficult to imagine the degree to which such a loss will impact our Indian children and young people, who are already suffering from generational poverty and oppression, violence, abuse and neglect, lack of self-esteem, and most tragic, lack of hope.

Fortunately, over the past few decades, greater attention has been focused on the need to preserve our Native culture and language, and a few modest pieces of legislation have been enacted at the federal level, including the Native American Languages Act of 1990 and inadequately funded Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006.

### **The Survival of Native Languages**

My graduate school thesis focused on the Oral History of the Gros Ventre, and in the process of conducting research, I learned how meticulously and systematically our own Gros Ventre language had been removed from our homes and schools. We were even prohibited from conducting our ceremonies. The Aaniiih nin became one of the many tribes that was in danger of joining the group of “Vanishing Indians.” In the early 1600s, there were more than 15,000 Aaniiih nin (White Clay People), but by 1903, there were less than 300. Anthropologist Al Kroeber visited the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation to collect as much of the culture and history of the Aaniiih as he could. He was soon followed by Clark Wissler, another noted anthropologist known for his work with supposedly dying tribes.

In 1997, the Aaniiih language, which is one of two Native languages spoken on the Fort Belknap reservation, was in the last stages of survival. Only 25 speakers existed, and no children—kindergarten through 12th grade—spoke the language. But despite the grim predictions and statistics, the Aaniiih nin have survived. Today, our language is beginning to thrive with more young language speakers, thanks to an important project at Aaniiih Nakoda College.

In the late 1990s, I was employed by Aaniiih Nakoda College (then called Fort Belknap College) as the Development Officer, and we decided it was time to write a planning grant proposal for a project to try to revive our language. At ANC, students are required to take language and tribal history classes for one or both tribes. In addition, Aaniiih and Nakoda language and culture classes are taught in the local public high schools and evening classes are held for community members who want to learn the Aaniiih and Nakoda languages. A speaker-learner project was also pursued. However, none of these efforts achieved the level of fluency we needed to ensure the continued vitality of our language into the future. It seemed that to be truly successful, the Native language needed to be spoken consistently in the home and at school. Without some kind of consistent reinforcement, many students retain only a portion of the words taught. I wrote the grant proposal, entitled “Speaking White Clay,” with all of this in mind; and we prepared it with input and support of the Gros Ventre Cultural committee and Native language speakers.

Fortunately for us, the funder stressed the need to focus on our youth and asked in the review process, “What are you doing for the youth?” The goal of our grant was to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of our language and culture. With a funded plan, Aaniiih Nakoda College President Dr. Carole Falcon Chandler, along with staff and faculty, set out to fulfill the dream of our elders to protect our language.

After researching the issue, we determined that our best hope for success was in the establishment of a full day immersion program. In 2003, Dr. Janine Pease, who conducted an extensive study of Native American language immersion initiatives entitled “Native American Language Immersion: Innovative Native Education for Children and Families,” writes:

- “Most intriguing about the Native and Indigenous language immersion models is the clear and positive connection between Native and Indigenous language and culture with educational achievement.”
- “For indigenous people, Native American language immersion activities hold great promise in the development of children, youth, family and community.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pease-Pretty On Top, Janine. “Native American Language Immersion: Innovative Native Education for Children and Families.” Publication of the American Indian College Fund with support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek MI. 2003. Page 12.

### **Establishment of the White Clay Immersion School**

In 2003, the White Clay Immersion School was established under the Aaniiih Nakoda College. The goals of the school are to: (1) promote the survival and vitality of the White Clay language; (2) provide culturally based educational opportunities that build cognitive skills and foster academic success; (3) instill self-esteem and positive cultural identity; and (4) prepare students to become productive members of society.

Unfortunately, since we wrote our proposal in 1997, we have lost our oldest Native speakers. Today, no fluent elder Aaniiih speaker lives on the Fort Belknap Reservation. There are a few younger people who have learned the language and speak it well. However, today the largest generation of Aaniiih speakers comprises the students of Aaniiih Nakoda College's White Clay Immersion School (WCIS). Since WCIS began, child Native speakers has grown from none to 30. Students at WCIS attend a full day of classes in an immersion setting. Teaching and learning focus on the White Clay language and rely heavily on Native knowledge and Native ways of knowing and being. Non-Native ways of learning are incorporated to offer students the best of both worlds and to help them become positive and successful members of the larger community. WCIS's curriculum emphasizes the interconnections between physical, mental and spiritual well-being through cross-disciplinary integration, intergenerational learning, and field-based learning experiences. Students participate in community projects, public events, and international exchanges.

The White Clay Immersion School is the first, and now one of two, full day Native language immersion schools operating within a Tribal College. Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, South Dakota operates the other TCU-based immersion school, through grade 5. WCIS now includes both elementary and middle school. The school is housed in the beautiful Aaniiih Nakoda Cultural Building. This unique and innovative partnership in educational self-determination serves as a transformative model for other American Indian communities across the United States that is facing the impending loss of their own Native language.

### **Administrative Leadership and Quality of WCIS Staff**

The White Clay Immersion School operates within Aaniiih Nakoda College's central administration, under the direction of the college president. Dr. Lynette Chandler serves as the director of White Clay Immersion School since its inception in 2002. She has extensive knowledge of and training in immersion teaching practices and has working with indigenous language experts from Montana, Wyoming, Hawaii, Peru, and Guatemala, Australia and New Zealand. Dr. Chandler earned her B.S. (English) and M.A. (Native American Studies) at Montana State University and her Ed.D. (Educational Leadership) at the University of Montana. Her accolades include being named "Montana Indian Educator," in 2012; awarded the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Career Enhancement Fellowship by the American Indian College Fund; and, in 2008 the White Clay Immersion School received the Commissioner's Outstanding Project Award from the Administration for Native Americans. Two of the classroom instructors have graduated from the Office of Indian Education Teacher Training Program. Both of the Aaniiih language teachers have their doctorate degrees, are fluent in Aaniiih.

### **Success and Academic Achievement for WCIS students**

Graduates from the White Clay Immersion School have transitioned to public schools and are recognized by these schools as leaders in student government, academics, and sports. For example, students graduating from WCIS in 2013 are now sophomores at a local off-reservation public school. Last year, two students from the White Clay Immersion Class received the Science Award, Math Award, English Award, Literature Award and Art Award for their grade at their new off-reservation high school. They also excelled in athletics, receiving the varsity basketball awards and were on the honor roll throughout the school year.

Of the original 2011 graduating class for WCIS who have gone on to local public schools, three of the four students have been inducted into the National Honor Society. All four are on the honor roll; they excel in sports and are involved in community activities; they work after school and will be employed this summer. All of these students will be seniors in fall 2014. For the last three years, these students have been at the forefront of leadership within their school. They are on the student council; participate in Jobs for Montana Graduates, Indian Club, Yearbook, volunteer programs and lead the class awards at the end of school year. Two of three students who have graduated from WCIS in 2012 have been inducted into the National Honor Society and all are on the honor roll. They have received numerous awards in high school and are working summer jobs current for the City of Harlem. These students excel in their specific clubs, are managers on sports teams excel in

track, basketball and volley ball. They volunteer in the community or school on a regular basis.

#### **Financial Security for WCIS**

Financial support for the White Clay Immersion Schools has been sporadic. The bulk of funding has come from private foundations and local support. In addition, we have received funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration of Native American (ANA) program. However, this is a competitive program and in some years, WCIS has not been funded.

WCIS does not receive funding from the state or any federal formula funding. Instead, the staff host fund raisers to support schools trips, lunches, supplies and other school activities. Although it is a struggle at times, Aaniiih Nakoda College remains committed to our goal for the survival of our Aaniiih language, and we remain committed to all current and future students of the White Clay Immersion School, who hold the future of our people in their hands and hearts. Grounded in their culture and confident in their language, we know that through them, our people and our language will thrive for many generations to come.

#### **Other Successful Native Language Models: TCUs Lead the Way**

American Indian education scholar Jon Reyhner brings perspectives from American Indian leaders and educators on the critical role and value of tribal languages in the lives of tribal people and the health and well-being of their communities:

- Cecelia Fire Thunder, former Oglala Sioux Tribal President, stated "I speak English well because I spoke Lakota well. . .our languages are value based. Everything I need to know is in our language. It is bringing back our values, and good things about how to treat each other." (2005 at NIEA).
- Richard Littlebear, President of Chief Dull Knife College said, "Our youth are apparently looking to urban gangs for those things that will give them a sense of identity, importance and belongingness. . .But we (the Cheyenne) have all the characteristics in our tribal structures that will reaffirm the identities of our youth."
- Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat, in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, 2001, outline a framework for Indigenous language revitalization programs. Deloria writes, "power and place produce personality. . .the Native American sacred view contrasts with the material and pragmatic focus of the larger American society."
- Lanny Real Bird, Crow and Arikara Professor at Little Big Horn College notes, "Many of the participants, facilitators, or teachers of the native languages are elders, who bring a wealth of knowledge not just limited to the languages. Their experience provides interaction with cultural practices or experiences, values, protocol, and holistic awareness that includes spiritual and traditional teachings."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, despite the documented need and proven value, funding for language immersion and revitalization programs has been particularly problematic for American Indian people, particularly because funding sources are categorical (have specific departmental priorities, have extreme dollar limitations, and are short-term). A study conducted by Dr. Janine Pease in 2003, and discussed above, reports on 50 language immersion projects in Indian Country and documents the serious challenges language program have in acquiring sustained support:

- American Indian language revitalization programs are a difficult fit for programs most often designed for other language groups, Hispanic serving schools, colleges and communities.
- Language programs funding is several federal agencies have a severe limitation in funding, making competition stiff and discouraging applications altogether.
- Grant terms of three to five years limit the language programs sustainability, thereby limiting language learning as well.
- Granting agencies have little or no support for planning or start-up costs; language programs benefit from plans well-done and substantial startup cost support.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these difficulties, some excellent programs are in place at Tribal Colleges, which can serve as models for others.

<sup>2</sup>Reyhner, Jon. "Indigenous Language Immersion Schools for Strong Indigenous Identities." Northern Arizona University. 2011. Page 8–10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Pease-Pretty On Top, Janine. 2003

- *Aaniiih Nakoda College's White Clay Immersion School*, our own highly successful full-day immersion school, on the ANC campus, for kindergarten through 8th grade—the successes and challenges of our program are discussed above.
- *Little Big Horn College and Fort Peck Community College* in Montana have developed a tribal languages acquisition program using the Plains Indian Sign Language as the means for learning and using four hundred terms and phrases in the Crow, Nakona (Assiniboine) and Dakota languages. This initiative has classroom strategies, DVD for viewing at home on the TV and CD for listening in the car or on mobile listening devices.
- *The Piegan Institute of Browning MT* developed three K–8 language immersion schools: Cuts Wood, Moccasin Flat and Lost Child. The schools instruct all subjects in the Blackfeet language. Founder Darrell Kipp says, “the school’s graduates are the first young fluent speakers of the Blackfeet language in a generation. . . the school is not only resuscitating the language, but also help to preserve Blackfeet culture.
- *At Turtle Mountain Community College* in Belcourt, North Dakota, a key institutional goal is for all college employees to engage in 100 hours of language instruction, with 20 percent of staff reaching fluency.
- *Aaniiih Nakoda College and six other TCUs* in Montana have collaborated in the Learning Lodge Institute to develop best practices in language teaching and to create a certification process to enable language instructors to teach in public school classrooms.
- *Oglala Lakota College*, in Kyle, South Dakota, has also established a successful k–5 Lakota language immersion school, while also working to expand the number and effectiveness of language instructors through inter-departmental collaboration of the Lakota Studies and teacher training programs.

As these examples demonstrate, preserving, revitalizing, and teaching Native languages are fundamental priorities of the nation's Tribal Colleges. In fact, many were established specifically to protect and preserve a tribe's language. Over the years, the TCUs have broadened their programming beyond college-aged students to impact younger children.

### Closing Recommendations

Mr. Chairman, I join President Shortbull and all of the Tribal Colleges, in making these recommendations:

(1) *Include Senator Tester's TCU language research provisions:* The Committee should include the important Tribal College Native language research and education programs, which he included in legislation he introduced in the 110 and 111th Congresses as part of THE PATH legislation, as an amendment to S. 1948. To revitalize our languages, we must work at all levels, pre-K to college, and we must continue to expand critically needed Native language research.

More support is needed for Native language immersion programs, classes, community-based programs, and enrichment activities. However, equally important is the need to invest wisely in research and pedagogy and how Native Language use improves the academic achievement of Native American students. Tribal Colleges simply cannot continue to be asked to do more with less.

(2) *Increase ANA language grant periods:* To achieve significant results that will truly impact the future of our people, the DHHS–ANA language grant program should be modified: rather than awarding grants for a period of three years, grants should be awarded for a period of 10 years. Alternatively, DHHS–ANA could adopt the model used with success by the National Science Foundation. NSF currently makes awards under its Tribal College and University program for period of five years, with the option to award an additional 5-year grant upon a demonstration of adequate progress. NSF has determined that to address systemic challenges, sustainable funding for at least 10 years is needed.

In closing, I will simply echo words of frustration, which I heard from many members of the Committee during your hearing last week on American Indian higher education: it is so incredibly frustrating to know that the need is so very great and the models of success exist; to know that Tribal Colleges—more so than any other entities—are working every day to transform Indian Country, achieving success but being rewarded only with flat-line or decreased funding; to be asked by our people, the Administration, and Congress to do more and more with less and less. We are accountable institutions. We need the Administration to be accountable as well.

Mr. Chairman, our struggles will continue. We need your help and that of the Administration not just to acknowledge the existence of treaties and the federal trust

responsibility, but to take concrete action—starting right now—to advance the proven successes of the Tribal Colleges and increase our capacity to do even more for the betterment of Indian Country. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Representative Brockie.  
Mr. Shortbull?

**STATEMENT OF THOMAS SHORTBULL, PRESIDENT, OGLALA  
LAKOTA COLLEGE**

Mr. SHORTBULL. Mr. Chairman, I am Thomas Shortbull, President of Oglala Lakota College. Thank you for inviting me to address the Committee today. I appreciate the opportunity to personally acknowledge my good friend, Senator Tim Johnson, and to thank him for being a dedicated champion of the Nation's tribal colleges and universities during his 28-year tenure in Congress. I speak for all the members when I say he will be greatly missed when he retires later this year.

Mr. Chairman, the tribal colleges support passage of S. 2299. This modest legislation is helping tribal colleges as we work to preserve and sustain our tribal languages and cultures. Greater funding is needed now because once the language is gone, it is lost forever. Ironically, in some ways the loss of our Native languages mirrors that experience by immigrants who came to this Country more than 200 years ago. When immigrants spoke broken English, they were made fun of. As a result, almost all immigrants chose not to speak their native language to their children and grandchildren. This is the same choice that many American Indian parents made generations ago, because they were made fun of and worse, summarily punished for speaking in their native languages around non-Indians.

These immigrants and American Indians concluded that to succeed in this Country, there was no choice but to forego speaking their native language. The result is that native languages have all but disappeared on some reservations. This is not the case on Pine Ridge, where most elders still speak our language, but not our children. Today on 5 percent of 4 to 6 year olds on my reservation can speak Lakota. This change in only two or three generations is a direct effect of the cultural genocide which was perpetrated against Native people.

The Federal Government has a moral and legal responsibility to correct the consequences of its appalling practices of the past. Native language programs need to be immediately and adequately funded, so that future generations of Indian people will be able to experience their own Native language and culture and know where they come from and who they are. Several years ago, OLC staff began to notice a troubling trend. Every year, fewer of our entering students could speak Lakota. Most of these students had attended local schools, some of them speaking Lakota language classes for 8 to 12 years. They could recite on average about 20 words and a few phrases.

However, the sad fact is that on my reservation, language instruction in our K to 12 schools has not produced any Native language speakers over the last 40 years. We knew that if our people had any hope for reversing this trend, it was up to OLC. It was time for OLC to open our own elementary Native language school.

We applied for the first of two three-year grants from ANA, but we spent most of the first three years of our project researching methods for achieving greater Lakota language proficiency while teaching the language.

We came to understand that to maximize our effectiveness and make systematic change, an immersion program is the only solution. Based on our experiences, we have two recommendations. First, the ANA language grant program should award grants for a period of 10 years or in two five-year periods, rather than the three two-year periods. It takes at least 10 years to establish a strong and successful program.

Second, the TCUs, as Clarena said, we need to follow your recommendation in THE PATH so that we can be included in S. 1948.

I would like to use my final minute of time to bring to the Committee's attention a very important issue. Adult education is critically important for adults seeking a second chance in life. That chance was given to our World War II veterans right after World War II, when they could get GEDs and go on to college. American Indians have the highest high school dropout rate, highest unemployment and poverty rates in the Nation. I strongly support dedicated Federal funding to tribal colleges to provide adult education programs, including GED training. Today we have no dedicated funding. It all goes to the States, even though they count our people in a State funding formula.

I want to alert the Committee to a very serious threat to the success of any GED seekers. This January 8th, the organization entrusted with creating the GED exam over 70 years ago unveiled a new GED test that focuses heavily on math skills and it excessively difficult. In my view, the new requirement would be at the expense of those seeking to join the military, attend a vocational school or take advantage of other employment opportunities that require a high school diploma. These people would likely have the skills needed to pass the old GED test, but the doors of opportunity will be closed to them because they may not pass the new GED exam.

We asked graduating high school seniors on the Pine Ridge Reservation to take the new GED practice test. The result, 61 percent could not pass it, yet they are graduating from high school. This experiment demonstrates that the new GED exam could negatively impact American Indians and other minorities, and will greatly reduce employment opportunities for the poor in this Country. I ask that this Committee and other committees of jurisdiction examine the ramifications of the new GED exam, including the impact on Americans who are at the greatest danger of having doors of opportunity closed to them, simply because they cannot pass the new GED exam. We need to ensure that the GED and other equivalency tests are fair and relevant to all Americans.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shortbull follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS SHORTBULL, PRESIDENT, OGLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, on behalf of my institution, Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, South Dakota and the 36 other Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in the U.S. that compose the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing



examining legislation to strengthen efforts to preserve and revitalize our Native languages.

My name is Thomas Shortbull. I am a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, President of Oglala Lakota College in South Dakota, and a member of the Board of Directors of AIHEC. It is an honor to speak with the members of this Committee about Tribal Colleges and the work we are doing to transform Indian Country. I am grateful to have this opportunity to recognize my good friend, Senator Tim Johnson, with whom I served in the South Dakota State Senate in the mid-1980s, and to thank him for being a dedicated champion of the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities during his 28-year tenure in the United States Congress. I speak for all of the AIHEC member institutions in wishing him a retirement that is all he envisions and indeed, deserves. He will be greatly missed.

Mr. Chairman, this afternoon, I will speak briefly about the Tribal College Movement and the legislation that is the subject of this hearing, including some recommendations that we are confident will advance our collective efforts to preserve and strengthen Native languages and culture. I will also take this opportunity to discuss the need for Adult Basic Education programs in Indian Country, and lastly, I will describe some of my concerns about the newly implemented GED test. I ask that my written statement, submitted on behalf of Oglala Lakota College and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, be included in the Hearing Record.

#### **Background: The Tribal College Movement**

Mr. Chairman, you and the members of this Committee have visited Tribal Colleges; you have walked on our campuses, met with our leadership, and spent time with our students. All of this must have given you a fairly clear picture of the often tenuous financial situation facing many of our TCUs, when compared to state colleges and universities. Through visits to our campuses, you have gained an appreciation for the danger that inconsistent and inadequate funding presents to our efforts to attract and retain American Indian students and high quality faculty, to hire grant writers with the ability to compete against Research 1 institutions (as we are required to do), and to learn about and adopt the latest teaching, data collection, and management strategies required to maintain accreditation with regional accrediting bodies. These are issues we grapple with on a daily basis, even as we work to rebuild self-esteem and instill hope, a strong work ethic, and purposeful engagement within our students, many of whom have known little except lives of extreme poverty, unemployment, violence, abuse, and neglect. We are doing all of this work and more in conditions that rival third world countries—amidst often dysfunctional governments and failing social systems, broken families, and oppression from both without and within. Yet, we are resilient, and we are succeeding. We are changing the lives and futures of students and their families for generations to come through a holistic and supportive educational environment that is culturally-based and relevant to our students and their families. We are building stronger and more prosperous Tribal nations through the restoration of our languages, community outreach programs and applied research on issues relevant to our land and our people, workforce training in fields critical to our reservation communities, and community-centered economic development and entrepreneurial programs. We are transforming our education systems—training early childhood educators, successfully managing once failing Head Start programs, rebuilding schoolhouses and children's lives; reforming K–12 science and math programs and providing summer and Saturday enrichment alternatives; preparing an American Indian K–12 teacher workforce; and transforming Native language instruction at all levels. We are growing a Native health care workforce—from behavioral health to emergency room nursing, to serve our people and provide care in our language and according to our customs.

We must be doing something right, because despite the lack of adequate funding and many other challenges we face, the Tribal College Movement has grown tremendously since Oglala Lakota College was established by my tribal leaders 43 years ago. To support our young and developing institutions, in 1973, Oglala Lakota College and the five other TCUs in existence at the time came together to establish the American Indian Higher Education Consortium—AIHEC—enabling us to more effectively address the unmet higher education needs of American Indians and Indian country.

Today, 37 Tribal Colleges operate more than 75 sites in 16 states. TCUs are located in the Plains, the Southwest, the Great Lakes, the Northwest and even the North Slope of Alaska and have advanced American Indian higher education—and all Indian people—significantly since we first began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Let me give you just one example: before Oglala Lakota College launched our nursing program, none of the nurses employed by the Indian Health Service to work on the Oglala reservation were American Indian. Today, more than 50 percent of

the nurses on our reservation are American Indian and 85 percent of them are graduates of Oglala Lakota College.

Yet despite these advances, the lack of adequate funding that I mentioned earlier remains a serious obstacle to the sustainability, independence, and competitiveness of TCUs. A number of factors contribute to our ongoing funding challenges.

- While Tribal Colleges are public institutions, they are not state institutions, and consequently, we receive little or no state funding. In fact, very few states provide support for the non-Indian state residents attending TCUs, which account for about 20 percent of all Tribal College students. However, if these same students attended a state institution, the state would be required to provide the institution with operational support for them. This is something we are trying to rectify through education and public policy change at the state and local level.
- The tribal governments that have chartered Tribal Colleges are, for the most part, not among the handful of enormously wealthy gaming tribes located near major urban areas that one reads about in the mass media. Rather, they are some of the poorest governments in the nation. In fact, seven of the 10 poorest counties in America are home to a Tribal College.
- Finally, the Federal Government, despite its trust responsibility, binding treaty obligations, and the exchange of more than one billion acres of land, has never fully-funded our primary institutional operations source, the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act (TCU Act), and overall, funds TCUs at levels far below that of other institutions of higher education. Today, the TCU Act is appropriated at about \$5,850 per full time Indian student, which after more than 30 years is still only about 73 percent of the level authorized by Congress to operate these Tribal institutions. Faced with ever rising costs of day-to-day operations, to continue to thrive and expand as community-based institutions, TCUs must stabilize, sustain, and increase our basic operational funding. While our per student funding is higher than it has been at times in the past, it is still considerably lower than the operating support received by other public 4-year institutions, which is the direction that many TCUs are evolving. In fact, 13 TCUs currently offer several bachelor's degrees each and five, including Oglala Lakota College, offer master's degrees.

Tribal Colleges are first and foremost academic institutions, but because of the number of challenges facing Indian Country—high unemployment, poorly developed economies, poor health status, and lack of stable community infrastructures, Tribal Colleges are called upon to do much more than provide higher education services. Tribal Colleges often run entrepreneurial and business development centers; many TCUs are the primary GED and Adult Basic Education provider on their reservations, and most if not all TCUs offer a variety of educational and training programs for tribal employees, BIA and IHS staff, K–12 schools, tribal courts and justice system staff, and many others in a manner to suit their work schedules. TCUs run day care centers, elementary immersion schools, Head Start programs, health nutrition education programs, community gardens, and often, the only community library and tribal museum or archives. Mr. Chairman, Tribal Colleges are by any definition engaged institutions, intricately woven into the fabric of our respective communities.

*S. 2299: Reauthorizing the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to continue a provision to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.* We strongly support this reauthorization, and we urge the Committee to work toward its enactment this year. Tribal Colleges are actively and aggressively working to preserve and sustain our tribal language and culture. All TCUs offer Native language courses. In some cases, the tribal language would have been completely lost if not for the local Tribal College. Turtle Mountain Community College in Belcourt, North Dakota, was established primarily for this purpose, and over the years, its success in writing and revitalizing the Turtle Mountain Chippewa language has been truly remarkable. Aaniiih Nakoda College in Montana runs a K–6 language immersion school, right on campus. At the White Clay Immersion School, children learn the White Clay language and culture in addition to subjects they would routinely study at any other school. Oglala Lakota College does the same, operating the successful Lakota Language Immersion School for kindergarten through fifth grade, next door to our main campus. Other TCUs are teaching and providing care in our Native language to our youngest children, as a regular part of the college's day care program for infants and toddlers.

Additionally, many TCUs offer unique associate and bachelor degree programs that include Native language instruction, as well as in-service teacher training in

language and culture. At the TCUs, teacher education programs follow cultural protocols and stress the use of Native language in everyday instruction.

Some Committee members might wonder why Tribal Colleges, as academic institutions of higher education, would be focusing on language revitalization, running Head Start and day care programs, and establishing our own elementary immersion schools. Why? Because we are holistic institutions. TCUs focus on the whole student—mind, body, spirit, family, and community. We know that just as we are succeeding in higher education, we can “put our minds together” and implement strategies of success for our babies and children. Where others might fail, we have the commitment and the stability to succeed.

Several years ago, we began to notice a troubling trend at Oglala Lakota College: every year, fewer and fewer of our entering students were fluent in—or could even speak—our Lakota language. The vast majority of these students had attended schools in the local area, some of them taking Lakota language courses for eight, 10, or even 12 years. Yet, their mastery of the Lakota language was missing. They could recite a few words, *ina*—*ahte* (mother—father) and some simple phrases, sing a few Lakota songs, and count *wánci*—*wikcémna* (1–10). *The sad fact is that is that on my reservation language instruction in the K–12 schools has not produced any language speakers over the last 40 years.* Even more troubling, we conducted our own survey within our local communities and learned that while 70–80 percent of our elders could speak Lakota, only about 5 percent of our tribe’s 4- to 6-year-olds could speak the language.

We at Oglala Lakota College knew that if our people had any hope for reversing this trend, it was up to our college. The responsibility—and what’s more, the will—to act was ours. It was time for OLC to open our own elementary school.

Oglala Lakota College applied for and received the first of two 3-year grants from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration on Native Americans. Because of the depth and complexity of the language issues facing our people, we spent most of the first three years of our project (Grant 1) researching different methods for achieving greater Lakota language proficiency. We opened our Lakota School teaching about one-half of the curricula in Lakota and the other half in English. However, after studying other elementary education programs, including highly successful Maori and Native Hawaiian programs, as well as monitoring the progress of our own students, we realized that to maximize our effectiveness and make systemic change, an immersion program is the solution. Last fall, in the second year of Grant 2, our Lakota Immersion School provided Lakota language immersion instruction to our K–5 students.

Based on our experience at Oglala Lakota College, we have two recommendations for this Committee:

- (1) To achieve significant results that will truly impact the future of our people, the DHHS–ANA language grant program should be modified: rather than awarding grants for a period of three years, grants should be awarded for a period of 10 years. Alternatively, DHHS–ANA could adopt the model used with success by the National Science Foundation. NSF currently makes awards under its Tribal College and University program for period of five years, with the option to award an additional 5-year grant upon a demonstration of adequate progress. NSF has determined that to address systemic challenges, sustainable funding for at least 10 years is needed.
- (2) Because of the extensive work that Oglala Lakota College and the other TCUs are already doing to determine the most effective strategies for teaching our children and preserving our endangered languages, and more important, to expand this urgent work, a TCU research grant program should be included in S. 1948, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act. Such a program would enable TCUs to continue to work to identify the best language pedagogy to achieve systemic change and ensure the survival and revival of our Native languages.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, we believe that you understand the critical need for this type of program because in both the 110th and 111th Congresses, you included such a provision in legislation you sponsored known as THE PATH. This legislation was developed to support the work of TCUs in Native language research and practice; health professions workforce development; and Native health and wellness health research and programs. We strongly urge you to include the Native language provisions of THE PATH in S. 1948. It is vital that TCUs be included in this legislation, which currently excludes us.

### **American Indian Adult Basic Education and the New GED Test**

In the mid-1990s, Congress eliminated a modest set-aside within the Adult Basic Education (ABE) block grant program, which funded vitally-needed TCU GED and ABE training programs. These programs had a specific purpose: to help put more unemployed American Indians—who had little or no chance of getting a job—into the workforce. With the elimination of this modest set-aside, all federal funding for ABE, literacy training, and GED preparation goes to the states, which rarely fund tribal GED programs.

Despite the absence of dedicated funding, TCUs have attempted to find means, often using already insufficient institutional operating funds, to provide adult basic education and GED preparation for American Indians in need of a second chance: young or old, all of whom the K–12 Indian education system has failed. Oglala Lakota College has done its share. Over the past 43 years, OLC has awarded more than 3,000 GEDs to our people. Three thousand tribal members now have a chance to go on to college or to simply get a job, pay taxes, and contribute to the future of this nation because of OLC's GED program.

As this Committee knows, many more of our people are in need of a second chance. American Indians have the highest high school drop-out rates in the nation. On some of our reservations, well more than 50 percent of all youth drop-out. Later, often when it is too late, they realize that they need a high school degree to secure even a low level job. So they turn to the only alternative: the GED.

This is exactly the intent of the GED program. Since it was developed in the 1940s, the GED has always been a second chance. First, it was designed to be a second chance for returning GIs, men who left high school before graduation to become the Greatest Generation. When they returned home, they found that they could not take advantage of their GI Bill education entitlements because they lacked a high school diploma. So the GED was developed to be their second chance. Congress created the program and the American Council on Education (ACE) was entrusted to develop the test and preparation program.

For decades, the GED has served as a second chance for thousands and thousands of American Indians, many of whom join the work force immediately or go on to become Tribal College graduates, often continuing their education to earn bachelors' and advanced degrees. In fact at OLC, some of our most successful students hold a GED. But today, our ability to continue to provide GED preparation and testing is tenuous. In fact, some TCUs have already stopped providing this vital service, including several in the Chairman's home state of Montana. They simply cannot afford to provide it any longer, particularly with recent sequestration cuts on top of years of flat-line funding and labor-intensive reporting requirements imposed by states (if the state even allows TCUs to participate).

As I mentioned earlier, American Indians have the highest high school drop-out rates, highest unemployment, and highest poverty rates in the nation. We ask only for the same opportunity for a second chance—the same chance to succeed—that is available to others in this country through the federal ABE block grant program. Tribal Colleges must have sufficient and stable funding to continue (or resume) providing essential GED and ABE services.

### **The New GED: Congressional Oversight Needed**

With the launch of the new GED, the need to address this challenge is even more critical. Today, adequate funding is only part of the problem. Tribal Colleges are concerned about the significant changes made to the GED test in 2013. The new GED exam, which was instituted in January 2014, has shifted its focus from being "second chance" for those who did not complete high school to being an academic, college preparatory examination. With a much stronger focus on mathematics, science, and writing, the new GED is widely acknowledged as being significantly more difficult to pass than the previous test. In fact, the 7.5 hour exam has become so difficult that even high school graduates often cannot pass it. This May, we conducted an experiment involving seven feeder high schools to Oglala Lakota College. We asked graduating seniors to take the official, ACE-developed practice exam for the new GED test. Of the 68 graduating seniors who took the test, 61 percent did not pass. Yet, they all earned a high school diploma. If those of us in this room today took the exam, the results would probably be similar, if not worse. Some states have become so concerned about the shift in focus and difficulty of the GED that they are abandoning it in favor of other high school equivalency tests.

As Tribal Colleges, the new GED poses a serious dilemma for us. Without question, we want students to enter our institutions academically prepared for higher education, and the new GED test may help ensure this. But it also may ensure that many, if not most, of our tribal people will never have the opportunity for a second chance. They will never gain the most basic tool needed to lift themselves out a

cycle of generational poverty and oppression: a high school equivalency diploma. Currently, about 70 percent of entering TCU students need developmental courses in math and more than half must take one or more developmental courses in reading and writing. The fact that these students would not pass the new GED exam may not be significant nationally. But in communities with 50 to 80 percent unemployment, extreme poverty, the nation's highest suicide and domestic violence rates, the impact could be devastating.

The academic focus and rigor of the new GED is not our only concern. The new exam is fully electronic, and it is costly. While younger GED seekers may be comfortable with computer-based testing, older members of our community are not, yet their need for employment and their desire to make their lives better is real. To adequately prepare them academically and at the same time develop their computer literacy will require greater preparation, in terms of training and practice, which will be an unfunded expense for our institutions. Finally, the fees for taking preliminary practice tests and the actual GED exam have risen sharply, placing yet another obstacle to low-income individuals, or in our case, to the Tribal Colleges.

We ask that the Committee work with the Tribal Colleges and our AIHEC Office to make the GED and other equivalency exams fair and relevant to all Americans. We urge you to hold oversight hearings on the implementation of the new exam. I believe we may even need to consider two or three tiers of tests, which individuals could take depending on their aspirations and needs. This may be viewed as a controversial statement, and it is not one with which all of my colleagues agree, but it may be a reality, and it certainly should be discussed, depending on the outcome of this year's GED exams.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Johnson, thank you for this opportunity to share our story, successes, and concerns with you today. We look forward to enactment of legislation to advance the preservation and revitalization of our Native languages and to a day when all Americans—including the first Americans—seeking to further their education and career goals have full and fair chance at success.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Shortbull. I appreciate your bringing up the GED situation. That definitely gets it on our radar screen.

Now, Ed Delgado, you may proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ED DELGADO, CHAIRMAN, ONEIDA  
TRIBE OF INDIANS OF WISCONSIN**

Mr. DELGADO. I don't know if I heard this story a few years ago or if I read it. But I recall during a period in Gallup, New Mexico, the Navajo Code Talkers walked, had a parade. And there were a couple of young Navajo youth there, troubled youth, gang member youth. Where the Code Talkers walked, there was one youth who said to the other, take off your hat. Those are Code Talkers, Navajo Code Talkers, show respect. In that one moment, those tribal youth became better. They became people that we would be proud of in that few moments.

I say that because there are things in my culture, in Indian culture and in Indian language that we hold dearly. And language and culture is truly good medicine. It makes you better.

Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Barrasso and members of the Committee, Shekoli. I am Ed Delgado, I am from the People of the Standing Stone, the Chairman of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify about the importance of preserving Native languages. With the enactment of S. 1948 and S. 2299, this Committee will have helped to achieve that goal.

We continue to feel the negative impacts of our grandparents and our great-grandparents being taken from their families, sent away to boarding schools and punished if they spoke the Oneida language. We were forced to assimilate into a non-Indian culture be-

cause, as they were told, it was best for their future. Thus, they refused to speak and teach the language to their children, and as a result, our language, culture and traditions have suffered.

It is our belief that the Oneida language is a key component of our cultural identity. We are slowly regaining what we lost. But we need our help to continue our long-term commitment to language revitalization. Today, the Oneida currently have only six functional speakers in our community, as the last fluent speaker passed away one year ago. The Oneida language has not been the first language spoken by our people in over a century. And we continue to face obstacles to keep our language alive.

The majority of Oneida children attend public schools and are faced with their own challenges of meeting curriculum goals. Our language is simply not a top priority in those schools. Fortunately, progress has been made with the local university and some of the local public school districts to offer accredited Oneida language courses. Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction awarded the Seymour and Pulaski Community School Districts with a grant. Both partly reside within the reservation boundaries. The grant is used for the Oneida language curriculum as an elective course for high school credit.

The legislation under consideration today will advance Oneida into a new era of language preservation. S. 1948 will help students learn native languages by funding language immersion programs, such as those our tribe has put in place. We share your view, Mr. Chairman, that this instructional method enhances participation in educational outcomes, and we commend you for encouraging other tribes to adopt this model.

We agree, as stated in the bill, that tribes must be responsible for certifying that the school has the capacity to provide the Native American language education. The stakeholders involved in the planning and development of Oneida's language program in 2010 reached a similar conclusion. We sincerely appreciate this acknowledgement in the bill.

S. 2299 will reauthorize a number of the important programs that are being successfully used in Indian Country. Funds from the Native American Programs Act will provide for the continued development and success of our language program. One approach that could be incredibly beneficial is the opportunity for paid internships and job opportunities for young people working in the language department. Students who possess a passion for learning the language would become vested in the future of the Oneida language. Unfortunately, Oneida's job training program has a waiting list and we have had to turn away several star pupils as the language department lacks the resources to hire them.

In closing, our language is a necessary component to the very being of our people and our tribe. Unfortunately, we do not possess enough resources to accommodate the need. We so desperately need the legislation and the support of members of Congress who share our values.

Further, it is our hope to continue to refine our language program and close the Oneida achievement gap in public schools. With additional resources, not only can the Oneida language be sus-

tained, but the People of the Standing Stone will persevere.  
Yaw – ko, thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Delgado follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ED DELGADO, CHAIRMAN, ONEIDA TRIBE OF INDIANS  
OF WISCONSIN

Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Committee:

Shekoli. Ed Delgado niyukyets. On<sup>o</sup>yoteaka ni'i. Hello. I am Ed Delgado. I am from the people of the Standing Stone and chairman for the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin in Oneida, WI. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon about the importance of preserving native languages.

The Oneida language has not been the first language spoken by our people for over a century. Thus, the Oneida language is now considered to be very much endangered. It is extremely unfortunate that the last fluent speaker passed away two years ago, and Oneida currently has only six "functional" speakers in our community.

For 80 years, we have made several attempts to revitalize the Oneida language. The Oneida Language Revitalization Program began during the Works Program Administration (WPA) era in the 1930s, by simply documenting our language.

In the 1970s, Oneida worked with a linguist from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay to develop an Oneida dictionary. This dictionary is still in use today. The Oneida Language Project established in 1974 began with four Oneida language trainees who worked on language preservation and curriculum development with over 80 native Oneida speakers. Forty years later our greatest resource is no longer available and we must now rely upon our audio and written documentation of the language and our functional speakers to keep our language alive. Since the 1970's, the tribe has continued to work with the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, and Oneida language has become an accredited class for students and community members.

In 1996 the Oneida Language program developed in earnest, as we began a 10-year language immersion plan focusing on best practices, refining skills, and developing an Oneida language curriculum for both Tribal and public schools to utilize. This effort evolved into our current program: we now offer Oneida Language to approximately 400 students in our tribal school

system as well as to 611 students in the various school districts within the reservation boundaries: Seymour (150), West De Pere (71), Freedom (70), Ashwaubenon (106) Green Bay (169), and Pulaski (45).

Oneida has a vision to increase the number of second language speakers of the Oneida language. In 2010, the Cultural Heritage Department applied for and was awarded an ANA Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Grant. The purpose of the grant was three-fold: 1) disseminate culturally relevant language learning materials to tribal members, employees and both Tribal and Public schools; 2) Create a mentorship program and 3) Establish a community of practice where language learners can meet and develop their language skills in a learning environment.

The current ANA language grant has been used to develop and implement an 18-unit course curriculum and has also developed a language learning program online, providing access to language learning tools to thousands of students and Oneida members. On'yote'a'ka Tsi Nitwaw'no-t' (Oneida Language Development Plan) is a comprehensive curriculum to be used in communities, schools, and colleges with students of all ages. In addition, the Oneida language classes must conform to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's foreign language curriculum standards to be accredited.

Another exciting development we would like to share with you today is that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction recently awarded the Pulaski Community School District a grant to use the Oneida Language curriculum as an elective course for high school credit. Within the Pulaski Community School District, grant funding is used to continue to sustain the language program within the school district. This language program currently consists of an Oneida I Language Course that is offered at Pulaski High School, a similar age-appropriate language course offered at Pulaski Community Middle School, and a morning and afternoon language program at Hillcrest Elementary School. The Pulaski Community School District partly resides within the Oneida reservation making the Pulaski Community School District the perfect place to have and continue an Indigenous Language Program.

Within this program, there are many goals and objectives set in place to help identify and measure the retention of the Oneida Language with students in these courses. These goals were established based on an assessment of the Oneida Language Program's objectives and the current foreign language courses (French and Spanish) in the Pulaski Community School District. The Wisconsin DPI Academic Standards for foreign languages were also used as the basis and foundation for the Oneida Language Program. These goals will be valid throughout the continuance of the course of this language program. With this grant, the Pulaski Community School District and the Oneida Community will be able to continue the language program in order to create more language speakers, so that the language can live on for many generations to come. Therefore, the benefits from this program will be great and this grant will positively impact many students and families with language acquisition.

The legislation under consideration today will help Oneida enter a new stage of On'yote'a'ka Tsi Nitwaw'no-t'. S. 1948 will help students learn native languages by funding language immersion



programs such as those our Tribe has put in place. We share your view, Mr. Chairman, that this instructional method enhances participation and educational outcomes, and we commend you for encouraging other Tribes to adopt this model. We would also like to acknowledge the application criteria stated in the bill that the Tribe is responsible for certifying that the school has the capacity to provide the Native American language education. The stakeholders involved in the planning and development of Oneida's Language Program in 2010 reached a similar conclusion that it was Oneida who could most appropriately speak to the capability of the school to provide the necessary resources and environment and we sincerely appreciate this acknowledgement in the bill.

Should our Tribe be fortunate enough to be awarded a grant under this program, we can continue to refine our language program in order to improve instructional time that will meet the needs of our public school partners, which may close the Oneida student achievement gap in the public school districts.

Additionally, S. 2299 will reauthorize a number of the important programs that are already being successfully used in Indian Country. The Native American Programs Act funds would provide for the continued development and success of our language program. One approach that we think could be incredibly beneficial for our language learners is the opportunity for paid internships or job opportunities for young people in the Oneida Language Revitalization Department. An internship or job in the language department would not only be a relevant placement for students with a passion for Oneida language, it would allow the student to develop a personal investment in the future of the Oneida language by their engagement in the planning and operation of the program. Unfortunately, Oneida's Job Training Program has a waiting list and we have had to turn away several star pupils, as the language department lacks the resources to take them on.

#### Closing:

Our long-term commitment to language revitalization reflects our belief that the Oneida language is a key component of our cultural identity. We believe language is medicine, and when we use *kanukwatsliyo*, the good medicine of our language, we will begin to heal our students and community. Additionally, the Oneida Language is a unique language which has been used as a tool by the United States in military conflict. Oneida men serving in World War I and II were "code talkers," using the language as a secret code. By utilizing the Oneida language, the enemy was unable to decipher the codes, giving the United States and allies an enormous advantage, enabling victory. The U.S. Department of Defense has credited the code talkers for saving countless American and allied lives, and recently the Oneida Tribe was presented a Congressional Gold Medal for the heroic efforts displayed by our Oneida warriors.

In our experience, the creation of the Oneida Language Program has been very beneficial to our students, families and the community as a whole. As our youth study and learn the Oneida language, we have seen gains in their confidence, self-identity and performance across the academic spectrum. The self-confidence and pride that Native American students receive from knowing and speaking their language is a critical quality in young students that contribute to both

their academic and social success.

Assistance is needed in our language program development. It is our hope to refine our language program, and close the Oneida student achievement gap in public schools by continuing to improve and increase instructional time.

I am proud to report that for the first time in recent history, both Valedictorians of the Oneida Nation High School Class of 2013 and 2014, Jessica House and Natasha Stevens gave their commencement speeches entirely in the Oneida language. The significance of the event was not lost on our tribal leadership; with no native speakers left, we hope to be able to look back on that day as the turning point in the revitalization of our language.

Our stakeholders are every Oneida anywhere in the world who want to learn their language and culture. But currently, we do not possess enough resources to accommodate the need. That is why we so badly need this legislation and the support of Members of Congress who share our values. With additional resources, not only can the Oneida language be sustained, but the Oneida families and community will persevere. The benefits of revitalizing our language are Strengthening On'yote'aka nationalism, sovereignty, identity, well-being, and ensuring our human rights as Ukwewhuwe continue for future generations.

Yaw<sup>o</sup>'ko and sawehnisliyo'hak.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ed.  
Namaka Rawlins, you may proceed.

**STATEMENT OF NAMAKA RAWLINS, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION, AHA PUNANA LEO, INC.**

Ms. RAWLINS. Greetings, good afternoon Chairman Tester, and I see that the others have left, but Vice Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. My name is Namaka Rawlins, and Senator Tester, and I see that Senator Johnson has also left, but I want to thank you very much for introducing S. 1948 and S. 2299.

It is an honor to testify before you in support of these bills. My full testimony was provided.

I am the Director of Outreach and Partnerships for the 'Aha Punana Leo. The 'Aha Punana Leo is the oldest Native American language immersion non-profit organization in the United States. Over 30 years ago, our organization grew out of a dream to save our language. We started with non-certified but highly-qualified and knowledgeable elders and teamed them with dedicated, youthful language learners to run our preschools. Our curriculum was and is grounded in best practices relevant to our own language and culture.

Those Hawaiian-speaking preschoolers moved into the public schools, following our same successful teaching methodology of exclusive use of Hawaiian. In 1999, we graduated our first seniors, who by the end of high school were highly fluent and literate in both Hawaiian and English. Today there are 2,500 children in such schools in Hawaii, by far the largest number of any Native American language program.

We have also established a Hawaiian language college within the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Besides the undergraduate program, it has three graduate degrees and an immersion teacher, education

certification program, all taught in Hawaiian. Our organization worked with the college to develop a total Hawaiian immersion laboratory school. That laboratory school has a record of 15 consecutive years of 100 percent graduation rate. That laboratory school has an 80 percent college-going rate.

The student population for that school is 95 percent Native Hawaiian and 75 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch.

These two bills are very important for the survival of Hawaiian and all Native American languages. Every one of our Native American languages are at various stages of endangerment. Some only have one or two elder speakers remaining. For Hawaiian, there were less than 50 children 18 or younger fluent in our language when we began. We now have several thousand. Native language immersion and revitalization efforts have had a positive impact on communities that extend beyond proficiency to include cultural and family engagement and community support. And they have had very positive academic outcomes.

Senator Tester, when your press release was read to our 21st Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium held earlier this year in our town of Hilo, resounding applause erupted from the general assembly, consisting of representative from 25 States and 10 countries. In attendance were the majority of the representatives from Native American schools and programs using their languages as the medium of education. They included Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, other charter schools, regular public schools and non-profit administered schools. Those schools held a special meeting at the symposium to review your bill, S. 1948, and decided to focus its potential to further align the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with the Native American Languages Act.

Like S. 2299 and S. 1948, NALA, the Native American Languages Act, was a product of this Senate Indian Affairs Committee. NALA resulted from a bipartisan response supported across Native America. We indigenous peoples, Native Hawaiians, American Indians and Alaska Natives, worked together at a grass roots level to pass NALA. NALA established the United States' Native American language policy including educational policy but NALA was not fully reflected in the ESEA. Attached amendments to S. 1948 were developed as a result of our January symposium and provide for distinctive Native American language pathway for education. Such a distinctive Native American language pathway would be parallel to the distinctive pathway accorded by NCLB to education in Puerto Rico through its official language, Spanish.

Senator Tester, Hawaiian is the official language of our State. Other Native American languages are also official of their State and their reservations and villages. At present, because NCLB is not fully compliant with NALA, NCLB has presented huge discriminatory challenges to all of our Native American language schools throughout the Country. Those challenges, I believe, are due to an oversight when NCLB was drafted over a decade ago. That oversight result in applying an inappropriate one size fits all to our highly distinctive schools taught through indigenous Native American languages. That one size fits all approach ignores our needs for distinctive standards and assessments and determining qualified teachers for our Native American language schools.

That one size fits all approach is moving our languages back toward extinction. One size does not fit all.

All me to give you a specific example of the importance of the proposed amendments to S. 1948. Our Hawaiian medium preschool to grade 12 laboratory school, described earlier, is where we demonstrate best practices in education through a Native American language. Again, this school boasts a record of 50 consecutive years of 100 percent high school graduation rate and 80 percent college enrolment rate. Our students graduate full fluent and literate in both Hawaiian and English, with an additional six years study of Japanese, a foreign language of unique importance to our State.

Yet, under NCLB and its flexibility waiver, this same high achieving laboratory school has incredibly been designated as the second lowest performing school in the State. NCLB threatens the very existence of our school. The one size fits all educational pathway set out in NCLB needs to be changed if existing Native American language immersion schools are to survive and continue their good work. That one size fits all needs to be changed so that more communities throughout the Country can provide a future for their children based on the knowledge and language of the ancestors.

I heard it earlier stated that this is an important solution that we find, is a way going forward. Our amendments align NCLB to NALA and make it possible for Native American language medium programs to collaborate with higher education, tribal colleges, experts, therein aligning accountability measures to the unique linguistic and cultural features of the language of instruction, including assessment of academic content through the language of instruction. Realigning the accountability framework of NCLB supports the good work being accomplished across the Country to reverse language loss and to save our Native American languages.

Mahalo, thank you very much. We do have a word, it is mahalo. Mahalo, Senator Tester and members for holding this hearing and we ask for our support to move these bills forward I assure you that schools taught through Native American languages, grounded in the policies of NALA, will not only reverse the effects of past policies of government bans on the use of our languages but will also produce higher outcomes in terms of high school graduation, college attendance, community service and national service.

Mahalo.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rawlins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NAMAKA RAWLINS, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS  
AND COLLABORATION, AHA PUNANA LEO, INC.

Aloha 'auinalā, e ka Lunaho'omalū Konekoa Tester o ke Kōmike Kūleana 'Ōiwi o ka 'Aha Konekoa a me nā lāla hanohano o ke Kōmike.

'O wau 'a Nāmaka Rawlins, Laekahi Kuleana Kōwaho o ka 'Aha Pūnana Leo, e kū hō'ike mai no ka kōkō'o i kēia mau pila me nā loi i loko o kekahi.

**GREETING**

Good afternoon, Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barnasso, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. My name is Nāmaka Rawlins. I am here representing the 'Aha Pūnana Leo. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo is the oldest Native American language immersion focused non-profit organization in the United States. Over 30 years ago, the 'Aha Pūnana Leo established its language nest preschools modeled on the Maori Kohanga Reo. Hawaiian is used exclusively and is the medium of education. We are the sole statewide provider and have 11 preschool sites. This is the model proven successful in reversing language loss. It is through this system that we are improving our teaching and learning in public education to ensure the success of our children and families in an education that makes sense and that comes from communities committed to building a future for their children based on the language and knowledge of the ancestors.

I want to begin by thanking those who introduced the bills being heard today. We support S. 2298, that ensures the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages. Native language maintenance and revitalization efforts have had a positive impact in our communities that extend beyond language proficiency to include cultural and family engagement and community support. Dedicated advocates with the support of elders take on the daunting task of reversing language loss. The reward comes when the little ones speak our languages again. S. 2298 provides the mechanism to support these efforts.

Senator Tester, thank you for introducing S. 1948, a bill to promote the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native American language grant program within the Department of Education. We also very much appreciate the coordination with Senator Schatz's office in introducing S. 1948 at the same time. Hawai'i hosted the 21st Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium held in January of this year in Hilo. Ms. Rosalyn LaPier, enrolled member of the Blackfeet nation and board member of the Piegan Institute Immersion program from Montana, read your press release to the audience. There was a resounding applause from those in attendance, representing 25 states and 10 countries. And as declared within your statement recognition of honor for Darrell Kipp, co-founder of the Piegan Institute Blackfeet Immersion school, we too paid tribute to our dear friend and warrior for the survival of our Native American languages. There were representatives at the symposium from the majority of American schools and programs using their languages as the medium of education, that is to say, immersion and mother tongue Native American medium schools. All of our languages are at various stages of endangerment. These schools and programs are quite diverse. They include Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, public charter schools, regular public schools and non-profit administered schools. Following the symposium, the group held a special meeting to discuss overall challenges under federal education legislation related to schools using Native American languages as the medium of instruction. There was an opportunity to review S. 1948. My testimony is aligned to the discussion and outcomes of that meeting.

**Native American Languages Act Compliance**

S.1948 is of particular interest to us as it provides amendments to the ESEA, the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I want to state at the onset, strong support for S.1948 and its provisions for a new grant program under the Department of Education. However, I want to focus my testimony on including in S. 1948, amendments to ESEA that align to and are fully compliant with US Native American language education policy as defined in the Native American Languages Act of 1980 (NALA).

Because it is not fully compliant with NALA, the current ESEA has presented huge, discriminatory challenges to all Native American language schools throughout the country and to those communities that wish to establish such schools. Those challenges, I believe, are due to an oversight regarding our distinctive needs when NCLB was drafted over a decade ago. That oversight resulted in applying an inappropriate "one size fits all" approach to all schools in our huge diverse country, including our highly distinctive schools taught through endangered Native American languages. That "one size fits all" approach is moving our language back toward extinction by discriminating against the students, families and professionals in our schools. That "one size fits all" approach ignores our needs for distinctive standards, for distinctive means of assessment and for distinctive means for determining qualified teachers for our Native American language schools. "One size" does not "fit all."

It is essential that the ESEA align to the NALA and address the need for a distinctive Native American language-aligned approach if our Native American language schools are to flourish and to serve more students and communities.

Hawai'i is the site of the oldest and largest effort to revitalize a Native American language using immersion methodology. Our organization, the non-profit 'Aha Pūnana Leo, began that groundbreaking effort in 1983. We have had an advantage in knowing what is possible when an indigenous language is the medium of education. Our Islands have a history where in the 1800s, Hawaiian was the original language of public education. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century our distinctive Hawaiian language medium education system produced an exceptionally high level of literacy among Native Hawaiians. At the time of annexation to the United States, Native Hawaiians had the highest literacy rate of any of the many Asian and European ethnic groups in our Islands.

However, with annexation came a law making it illegal to use our Hawaiian language in schools. Once the most literate of ethnic groups, Native Hawaiians fell to the least literate. Furthermore, the Hawaiian language was essentially exterminated among those born within a generation after annexation, as children punished for speaking Hawaiian in the schools, stopped speaking it. Loss of the language then led to a loss of values encoded in the language and considerable social breakdown among our people.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo grew out of a dream to save our language and to provide high quality education to Hawaiian-speaking children. We began with preschools taught through Hawaiian. We used non-certified but knowledgeable elders teamed with dedicated youthful language-learners to run the schools. Our curriculum was, and is, grounded in best practices relevant to our own language and culture as supported by research from Hawaiian-speaking university experts. From our preschools, we moved our Hawaiian-speaking children into the public schools, where we trained year by year, their teachers in the same teaching methodology of exclusive use of Hawaiian in teaching academic content.

We moved forward and upward, grade by grade, until we graduated our first seniors in 1999. We opened more schools statewide. And we continued further with the establishment of a Hawaiian language college within the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and developed a graduate program, a teacher education certification program, and a model preschool through grade 12 (P-12) laboratory school all taught through Hawaiian. Today, approximately 2,500 children from preschool to grade 12 are educated through Hawaiian in our state. Our college also provides outreach and assistance to others working in schools through other Native American languages.

Our P-12 laboratory school is where we demonstrate best practice for education through Native American languages. This school boasts a record of 15 consecutive years of 100% high school graduation rate and 80% college-going rate. These rates surpass the state averages of 82% graduation and 63% college-going rates. In addition, the student population consists of 95% Native Hawaiians and 70% qualify for free and reduced lunch. In the English medium public school system, Native Hawaiians have academic outcomes lower than the state average, with our laboratory school graduation rate approximately 25% higher than that for Native Hawaiians in the English language public schools.

We are fortunate that we began our movement and graduated our first seniors before passage of NCLB. Those successes before NCLB produced the solidarity and data to resist challenges from NCLB. NCLB establishes a single box with "one size for all" for all public schools in the United States, except for those of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is the sole jurisdiction in the US, where the majority of public schooling is through a language other than English. However, Puerto Rico is not the only political jurisdiction where more than one language is official, nor is it the sole jurisdiction in the United States where an official language other than English is used as the medium of education. Hawaiian is an official language of our state and fully used as the medium of education in some public schools, such as the laboratory school described earlier.

I believe that it was an oversight in Congress to not include distinct provisions for schools taught through Native American languages throughout NCLB parallel to those provided Puerto Rico. Not only Hawaiian is an official language within the United States, nearly every Native American language is official for its tribe. Our Native American languages have already been recognized with distinct policies under the Native American Languages Act of 1990. Indeed, we are in great need of distinct policies for our Native American languages, which are considered smaller world languages similar to policies made for Puerto Rico for its official language Spanish, a larger European language.

#### **Align NCLB to NALA with S.1948 Amendments**

To give you an idea of the level of challenges – indeed discrimination – our schools face under NCLB, I draw your attention to the P-12 laboratory school I described earlier with 15 consecutive years of 100% high school graduation and 80% college-going rate. The State of Hawai'i has recognized our school for its high academic achievement. Yet, under NCLB, this same laboratory school has incredibly been designated as the second *lowest performing school* in the state! The lowest performing school is another school taught through Hawaiian. There are consequences that come with that NCLB's poor-performing categorization, including closure of the school, take over of the school and conversion to a curriculum that is based in English and the Common Core. All of these "corrective actions" threaten the very existence of our language, our culture and inevitably, our Native identity. Again, none of this is related to ultimate academic outcomes, much less the maintenance and revitalization of the Hawaiian language, but to the mandatory, biased and stigmatizing pathway of education set out for the state in the federal NCLB.

NCLB has not appreciably improved the position of Native Hawaiians in English medium schools nor have those English medium schools restored the Hawaiian language as a living language among Native Hawaiian families. NCLB has, however, held a sword over the head of our state government requiring it to discriminate against schools taught through Hawaiian for Hawaiian speaking families or lose over \$90,000,000 in congressionally approved educational support. The amendments we provide align NCLB to NALA and makes it possible for Native American language medium programs to seek out and to work with university experts in aligning accountability measures to the unique linguistic and cultural features of the language of instruction including assessment of academic content through the language of instruction.

NCLB has moved Hawai'i back toward the time when the federal government outlawed our indigenous language in territorial schools in our language and culture's own homeland. This is a new century, a century in which the United States has called upon such countries as China to protect the use of their indigenous languages in their schools. This year again the U.S. State Department reiterated our country's strong support for the preservation of Tibet's unique cultural and linguistic heritage in its schools. Our country, through Congress, needs to do the same for its own indigenous languages and cultures. NCLB needs to be amended now to protect its own country's schools taught through its own Native American languages. As stated in the Findings in S. 1948, Section 2, Part (4) "There is a critical need that requires immediate action to support education through Native American languages to preserve these languages." I have attached amendments to my testimony to strengthen the bill to meet those goals.

Mahalo nui loa, thank you very much, Senator Tester and members of the Committee for holding this hearing and for your support for the survival of our languages. I assure you that schools taught through Native American languages grounded in the policies of NALA as clarified in the attached amendments will not only reverse the effects of past government bans on use of our languages, but will also produce higher outcomes in terms of high school graduation, college attendance, community service and national service.

S. 1948	Draft Amendments Native American language medium programs 2014 SILS discussions	Rationale June 2014
<p>115th CONGRESS 2nd Session S. 1948 IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES January 16, 2014 Mr. Tester (for himself, Mr. Schatz, Mr. Begich, Mr. Johnson of South Dakota, and Mr. Baucus) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.</p> <p>To promote the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native American language grant program.</p> <p>Be It enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled,</p> <p>SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the "Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act".</p> <p>SEC. 2. FINDINGS "Congress finds the following: "(1) Congress established the unique status of Native American languages and distinctive policies supporting their use as a medium of education in the Native American Languages Act (Public Law 101-477). "(2) Reports from Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal, public, charter, and private schools and colleges that use primarily Native American languages to deliver education have indicated that students from these schools have generally had high school graduation and college attendance rates above the norm for their peers. "(3) The Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1966 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) includes policy barriers to schools taught through Native American languages and a lack of adequate funding support opportunities to support such opportunities. "(4) There is a critical need that requires immediate action to support education through Native American languages to preserve these languages.</p> <p>SEC. 3. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1966 (20 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following: "PART D – NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS</p>	<p>ADD NEW # 3 and change number 3 and 4</p> <p>"(3) Such successful schools include Native American language medium schools focusing primarily on children who enter school speaking Native American languages and immersion schools that focus primarily on teaching Native American languages to children who enter school with little to no knowledge of a Native American language, as well as programs combining features of both types of schools, such as Native American Language Nests and Native American Language Survival Schools.</p> <p>Renumber (3) Number (4)</p> <p>Renumber (4) Number (5)</p>	<p>House Majority companion bill Introduced by Representative Cole</p> <p>Acknowledge work to date in reversing Native American Language loss</p> <p>To clarify the nature of these schools and avoid being mischaracterized with Foreign Language Immersion</p>



<p>*SEC. 7401. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS.</p> <p>“(a) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are—</p> <p>“(1) to establish a grant program to support schools using Native American languages as the primary language of instruction of all curriculum taught at the school that will improve high school graduation rates, college attainment, and career readiness and</p> <p>“(2) to further integrate into this Act, Federal policy for such schools, as established in the Native American Languages Act (Public Law 101-477).</p>		
<p>“(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—</p> <p>“(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts made available to carry out this section, the Secretary may award grants to eligible entities to develop and maintain, or to improve and expand, programs that support schools, including prekindergarten through postsecondary education, using Native American languages as the primary language of instruction of all curriculum at the schools.</p> <p>“(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this section, the term ‘eligible entity’ means a school or a private or tribal, nonprofit organization that has a plan to develop and maintain, or to improve and expand, programs that support schools using Native American languages as the primary language of instruction of all curriculum taught at the schools.</p>	<p>“(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—</p> <p>“(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts made available to carry out this section, the Secretary may award grants to eligible entities to develop and maintain, or to improve and expand, programs that support schools, including prekindergarten through postsecondary education sites and streams, using Native American languages as the primary language of instruction of all curriculum <del>[(REMOVE: at the schools)]</del></p>	<p>Some of the current models exist as multiple sites or as “streams” within schools.</p> <p>Also, in some cases, children move from one school to another e.g. preschool to elementary to middle to high</p>
<p>“(c) APPLICATION.—</p> <p>“(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that desires to receive a grant under this section shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require, including the following:</p>		
<p>“(A) the name of the Native American language to be used for instruction at the school supported by the eligible entity.</p>	<p>“(A) the name of the Native American language or languages to be used for instruction at the school or schools supported by the eligible entity.</p>	<p>Includes programs with multiple sites e.g. preschool to elementary to middle to high</p>
<p>“(B) The number of students attending such school.</p>	<p>“(B) The number of students attending such school or schools.</p>	
<p>“(C) The number of present hours of Native American language instruction being provided to students at such school, if any.</p>	<p>“(C) The number of present hours of instruction in or through one or more Native American language being provided targeted students, if any.</p>	<p>“Targeted” means the children being instructed in the Native American language in the program or school.</p>
<p>“(D) The status of such school with regard to any applicable tribal education department or agency, public education system, indigenous language schooling research and cooperative, or accrediting body.</p>	<p>“(D) The status of such school or schools with regard to any applicable tribal education department or agency, public education system, indigenous language schooling research and cooperative, or accrediting body.</p>	<p>One school or program will apply and follow the students.</p>
<p>“(E) A statement that such school—</p>	<p>“(E) A statement that such school—</p>	<p>Make available for Native</p>

<p>"(i) is engaged in meeting targeted proficiency levels for students, as may be required by applicable Federal, State, or tribal law; and</p> <p>"(ii) provides assessments of student using the Native American language of instruction, where appropriate.</p>	<p>"(i) is engaged in measuring and meeting targeted proficiency levels for students, as <del>may be</del> established as best practice for such schools by a qualified researcher from a college or university with expertise in education through Native American languages.</p> <p><del>[[Removes required by applicable Federal, State, or tribal law; and]]</del></p> <p>"(ii) provides assessments of student oral use of the Native American language of instruction, where appropriate.</p>	<p>American language medium programs the opportunity to seek out and to work with experts in aligning accountability measures to the unique linguistic and cultural features of the language of instruction including assessment of academic content through the language of instruction.</p> <p>Make available additional measures for oral fluency goals. Some languages, Keres for example, are solely oral languages.</p>
<p>"(F) A list of the instructors, staff, administrators, contractors, or subcontractors at such school or schools and their qualifications to deliver high quality education through the designated Native American language or languages.</p>		
<p>"(2) ADDITIONAL APPLICATION MATERIALS.—</p> <p>In addition to the application described in paragraph (1), an eligible entity that desires to receive a grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary the following:</p>		
<p>"(A) A certification from a Federally recognized Indian tribe, or a letter from any Native American entity, on whose land the school supported by the eligible entity is located, or which is served by such school, indicating that the school has the capacity to provide education primarily through a Native American language and that there are sufficient speakers of such Native American language at the school or available to be hired by the school.</p>		
<p>"(B) A statement that such school will participate in data collection conducted by the Secretary that will determine best practices and further academic evaluation of the school.</p>	<p>"(B) A statement that such school will collect data relative to high school graduation and college attendance of students who matriculate through its programs and provide such data to the Secretary along with other data relevant to career and community participation. For programs and schools that have not yet had 5 years of students of high school graduation age, the school will provide information from a school of its choice which follows a program model similar to its own and which has agreed to work with an eligible entity. <del>[[participate in data collection conducted by the Secretary that will determine best practices and further academic evaluation of the school.]]</del></p>	<p>Strengthens tracking (former or current) students through graduation.</p> <p>Provides a means to predict high school graduation and college attendance for schools that have not yet produced sufficient years of students of high school graduation age. The model will predict likely outcomes until such time that the school or programs has its own data. High school graduation and college attendance are the ultimate academic outcomes sought by these programs rather than standardized test scores on English language assessments used in mainstream schools. Anecdotal evidence is that these Native American</p>

		language schools are producing above average high school graduation and college attendance rates.
<p>“(C) A demonstration of the capacity to have speakers of its Native American language provide the basic education offered by such school on a full-time basis.</p>		
<p>“(d) AWARDING OF GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall—</p> <p>“(1) determine the amount and length of each grant;</p> <p>“(2) ensure, to the maximum extent feasible, that diversity in languages is represented; and</p> <p>“(3) require the eligible entities to present a Native language education plan to improve high school graduation rates, college attainment, and career readiness.</p>	<p>“(d) AWARDING OF GRANTS.—In</p> <p>“(1)</p> <p>“(2) ensure, to the maximum extent feasible, that diversity in languages, states served, and program types is represented;</p> <p>ADD new “(3) give priority to eligible entities that have been unfunded by this section over the past ten years and which have the longest record of operation following practices that have an exemplary record for high rates of high school graduation and college attendance. <del>[(REMOVE) end.]</del></p> <p>Renumber “(4) require the eligible entities to present a Native American language education plan that integrates high achievement in the Native American language with improved high school graduation rates, college attainment, and career readiness; and</p> <p>ADD now “(5) reserve half of all funding for automatic distribution equally on a per student head basis among eligible entities funded under this section anytime over the previous ten years provided that they submit to the Secretary evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the schools and programs supported through them have continued to report high school graduation and college attendance rates that are on average above those for Native American student peers in mainstream public schools, or</li> <li>b) the schools and programs supported through them produce high school and college attendance rates similar to those for Native American student peers in mainstream public schools along with distinctive exemplary outcomes such as military service and community cultural roles, or</li> <li>c) they support a school or program that has not yet had 5 years of students of high school graduation age and which is following a program model that meets (5) (a) or (b) as verified through data from a school or program that has agreed to work with an eligible entity.</li> </ul>	<p>When this bill passes, all entities will be considered unfunded. This section gives priority to the most established programs, provided the diversity in program types, languages and states is accommodated. Once the program is operational successful programs will receive continued funding under (5) below and Section 8 will provide a pathway for new programs to receive initial funding.</p> <p>Similar to (original #3) but focuses on achievement in the NA language.</p> <p>(5) Accomplishes the goal of formula funding successful established programs.</p> <p>Expands the successful models to include other exemplary measures for the Secretary to recognize.</p>
<p>“(e) ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED.—An eligible entity that receives a grant</p>		

under this section shall carry out the following activities: "(1) Support Native American language education and development. "(2) Develop or refine instructional curriculum for the school supported by the eligible entity, including distinctive teaching materials and activities, as appropriate. "(3) Fund training opportunities for teachers and, as appropriate, staff and administrators, that would strengthen the overall language and academic goals of such school. "(4) Other activities that promote Native American language education and development, as appropriate.		
	ADD new "(f) MEETING REQUIREMENTS OF TITLES OF THIS ACT.— Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, any school funded under this Part or otherwise meeting its requirements for use of a Native American language in instruction shall have the option of fulfilling federal requirements of this Title and other Titles of this Act relative to uniform state standards, student assessments, and the employment of highly qualified teachers through either the standard system applied to states, or through some other school specific method with Native American language of instruction-appropriate standards, assessments of students, and assessments of teachers developed together with a college or university with appropriate expertise chosen by the school for such purposes and consented to by such college or university.	<b>VERY IMPORTANT</b> USDOE Blueprint for Reform on Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native section. <a href="http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsecd/ie/g/blueprint/blueprint.pdf">http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsecd/ie/g/blueprint/blueprint.pdf</a> This section complies with the Native American Languages Act 1980. This section provides a new option for fulfilling federal requirements relative to uniform state plans. It opens a pathway and a "safe harbor" for these struggling programs to choose to work with experts in aligning the unique linguistic and cultural programming to teacher training, curriculum development and assessments in the Native American language.
	At minimum the Secretary shall recognize as having "appropriate expertise" any college or university that offers a degree at the baccalaureate level or above that is specific to developing high-level skills in one or more Native American languages and the use of that language expertise in immersion schools seeking to produce high academic achievement combined with language revitalization.	Assures that the Secretary agrees to (f) above. There are several universities nationwide that meet this criteria and would be willing to assist schools.
"(f) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—	CHANGE (f) "(g).	
"(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—	CHANGE (g) "(h)	

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, thank you very much. Thank you all for your testimony. I very much appreciate it.

Don't let the fact that there aren't a lot of people up here discourage you. The important time for them to be up here is when we vote for these bills and pass them out of Committee. So it is good.

This is a question for all of you, so we will start with Clarena and just go down the line. At this point in time, I don't think it is any surprise that many Native language programs struggle with finding teachers who are not only qualified to teach but also have the required certification from the State boards of education to do so. Hopefully this will change over time as your programs become more successful.

The question is this. Would you support legislation that would exempt teachers of Native American languages from needing to be highly qualified under State certification standards, and allow them simply to be highly proficient in a Native language?

Ms. BROCKIE. Mr. Chairman, I think they can already do that in Montana. You can get certified through the State, I think it is called Class Seven, and teach in the colleges. But at Aaniiih Nakoda College, we have used our Indian teacher training program and we have hired both of the teachers there that are teaching currently. The two teachers are from the teacher training program and so they are certified.

But for language, yes, we would support that. I know in Montana you can already do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shortbull?

Mr. SHORTBULL. I think that you need to probably not exempt them but to have them have a college degree and also their language emphasis be enough to certify them to teach in the school system. So not an exemption, but a special category for them.

I want to take this opportunity to deal with one more thing with GED. That is, I think that they should have done a random sampling of 100 high schools in this Nation to see how many of the high school students could have passed it. I believe that as much as one-third of the 100 schools, the students would not be able to pass the exam.

And also at this time I want to issue a challenge. I want to ask all the U.S. Senators to take the new GED exam and let's see how many of the U.S. Senators can pass it.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SHORTBULL. And two, the staffers are laughing, and I would ask all the staffers to take the new GED exam and see how many of you can pass it. I think the results will be pretty alarming, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. We will give it a go.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ed, the question about teacher certification, do you want to take that up?

Mr. DELGADO. As a classroom teacher for 17 years, all 17 years, one non-Oneida, non-Indian student, the rest are all Indians. I would, like Mr. Shortbull, there have to be parameters there. Learning the languages is very fundamental. But you also have other qualities, too. You have the temperament, and you learn that often in your classes. You have to know about the certain techniques about kindness and understanding and patience.

So maybe they didn't have to have a four-year degree, but maybe there is something else they could use.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Rawlins?

Ms. RAWLINS. I guess I am going to go in opposition. That is how we started. We started, as I explained earlier, our elders were not certified. We needed to get that exemption so that we could get them into our schools and be counted as our teachers in our preschools. So we were bringing them in as language speakers first, because that is the first thing that you need, you need to have that high fluency in the classroom.

Then we brought them together with the youthful learners to run the schools. Eventually, as time goes on and you start to have those youthful learners who end up becoming teachers, certified teachers, getting degrees, then you can kind of move on and then you keep building up. You have to have a way of bringing in those

that will take over, and you need to keep replacing them with your highly fluent first teachers. Then find a pathway for them to continue the skills.

I agree with you, you need to have some of that passion for teaching. Our teachers need to first of all love our children and take care of our families and be able to work with families and take care of the children that you are responsible for in providing an education. So you identify those skills and look at high language fluency, then you build your program to continue the education and what-not to get them further.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. This question is for Clarena. Tribal colleges and universities play a critical role in keeping Native students connected to their culture as well as providing necessary educational options in Indian Country. So the question is, what role do tribal colleges and universities have in Native language preservation and revitalization in Indian Country?

Ms. BROCKIE. For Aaniiih Nakoda College, part of the mission is to try to retain the culture. When you talk about the culture, you are talking about the language, the history, their ways of how they live, going and being. So that is really important, I think, as a tribal college. I think they have to maintain it. I believe that most tribal colleges' mission statement is the same.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Following up on that, and this question is for all of you, what kind of success have you folks observed in academic behavior of students who are enrolled in immersion and dual language programs?

Ms. BROCKIE. If you look at my testimony, it really makes a difference, it really does. We had two groups of students this year who are going to be seniors this fall and we have another group who have just finished their sophomore year. These students are on the honor roll, three-fourths of them have been inducted into the Honor Society and all of them who are on the honor roll have done well in math, science, they are active in sports, they are on the student council. So you know that this immersion school, including their culture and history, it is important to children as they are growing up.

If I could have brought two of our students, I would have sneaked Cici and Serena in my luggage with you, so they could have stood here and told you all the things that they know. These are fourth graders and they know about our history, it is not just limited to the classroom, but they know where all our sacred sites are, they know where to go get roots. They know the roots. They know how to do sweetgrass, they dry tobacco, they know the historical stories, our cultural mythical characters. They know the trickster stories, they know about He Who Starved Himself to Death.

To grow up and know the same things that their great-grandfathers and mothers knew is really something. They know these stories. Twenty years ago, not even 20, 10 years ago if you asked someone about, who is He Who Starved Himself to Death, they wouldn't even know about it. The average student wouldn't have known about it. But you are seeing more of this history, culture being taught, not just in immersion school but in the local schools as well.

So I think it is important for them, and I think once they are grounded in that, I think they become really secure in who they are and they advance from there. I have big hopes for those students when they graduate next year.

The CHAIRMAN. We will get them to testify next time, Clarena. Mr. Shortbull?

Mr. SHORTBULL. Mr. Chairman, I would prefer to speak to your previous question. It may be only tribal colleges or some grassroots efforts that are going to save our languages in this Country. The reason for that is the schools are now into what is called Common Core. They have to meet all of these requirements and it is going to be, the schools make the choice, do they want to preserve the language or do they want to meet Common Core. Most schools are going to choose Common Core over the language.

So that is the reason I believe that it will end up being either tribal colleges or grassroots organizations like Namaka, whom I consider a legend as far as language preservation and revitalization. We really respect the work that she does.

The CHAIRMAN. Ed?

Mr. DELGADO. Since my mid-30s, and I am almost 70 now, I have been an Oneida first and an American citizen second. Before that, I was an American citizen first. And that was it. I was heavily grounded in American, my American history. And that made me a better person.

But being Oneida also makes me a better person, to know about our cultural stories and our cultural heroes and there are many. And our history helping create the United States. That is something that makes me better, knowing that. Just like prior to my mid-30s, learning all George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and all that stuff made me better.

So learning about where you where you are and about your people and your history makes both Indian people proud and better, just like American people. Your proud history makes all of you better.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Rawlins?

Ms. RAWLINS. I want to focus, I consider that our students who have graduated have done well. We usually give the statistics on the colleges they have attended and from. They have attended some of the most prestigious colleges. A former student today is a professor at Oxford. I don't know how much more we can be providing that information.

And this year we have our first doctor. We have a medical doctor who has graduated. She will be doing her internship some place in Virginia.

But more than that, what we find and what our teachers tell us is that our students are very respectful, they are engaged, they are eager to learn. Somebody said earlier, they run to school and then they walk to school and then they run away from school. That was said earlier, and when I heard that I was thinking about our school and our laboratory school program. Our children come to school, our families are engaged and we get them right through.

It is not only what we find but here in the audience today we have other school representative who came from the conference down at Crystal City who are here. I want to recognize them, be-

cause this is hard work. I believe that because of the dedication, but I know all of you here today are the cheerleaders for our programs back home. So I want to recognize and give honor to the work that has been done, all the good work, and just share the need. We find our students, as I said, the teachers are telling us that they are very respectful and eager to learn.

The CHAIRMAN. Just for the heck of it, if you are representing a school that teaches Native languages anywhere in the Country, stand up.

[Some audience members stand; applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Just for the record, there are too many to ask where you are all from. I would run out of time. Thank you.

For the panelists, raise your hand if you have ever run out of ANA funding. Clarena, if you have ever run out of ANA funding.

[Show of hands.]

Mr. SHORNBULL. We are about to, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. So you all can answer this, because you can talk about it. What do you do? What are your options if you run out of ANA funding? Clarena, we will start with you?

Ms. BROCKIE. We struggle, of course, but we have people who are committed to keeping the program open. As I said in my longer testimony, we have private donors. We have foundations that are funding us. But we don't have any Federal or State dollars, and we do our own fundraising for school supplies, for lunches. Donations are made in that way.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shortbull?

Mr. SHORNBULL. Well, right now the issue is, when our funding runs out it is going to be a dilemma for us. Right now we can support it. But if we go through another sequestration bout, or we go through some Congressional people are on a different bent on things, we get loss of funding, then there is really going to be a question mark as to if we can sustain these programs, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Delgado?

Mr. DELGADO. As stated earlier, we lost our last two speakers a year ago. When I was teaching, we had three in the school who taught us, so we could teach our students. We also took students in and taught the functional speakers, who now teach. Without them, without our functional teachers, without being able to create more, we will be handicapped in being able to transmit our language, not only to our schools but to our elders and those who want to learn.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Rawlins?

Ms. RAWLINS. We also fund-raise, as a non-profit. We are fundraising all the time. And we stretch our dollars. When we get an ANA grant, it is for a specific project to develop what is a need at that point.

But I do know that there are programs that when they lose that funding or when they end their grant, they have no way of sustaining, we may have to let go their director or some very crucial part of leadership in the program. That is not good. That is not sustaining some of the good work, some of the good momentum.

The CHAIRMAN. Losing continuity.

Ms. RAWLINS. Yes.



The CHAIRMAN. So this question is for those who want to answer it. I don't know if it applies to you or not, Ms. Rawlins, but it might. By more securely tethering Native students to their heritage, immersion programs may also be able to connect speakers of Dakota and Salish and Cherokee and other languages across Native communities. I say it may not apply to you, but it might, too. And if it does, I want you to answer this.

Do you believe that immersion programs serve to connect Indian students throughout Indian Country in addition to strengthening inter-tribal connections? Clarena?

Ms. BROCKIE. I am not sure I know what you mean.

The CHAIRMAN. What I mean is that you are teaching White Clay, the fellow beside you is teaching Lakota. Are there connections between those two languages and between those two heritages that allow the tribes to inter-connect?

Ms. BROCKIE. Well, we are both in the Plains area, we have some connection. But I think that, I don't know how I would say this, but we share a lot of ceremonies together with other tribes. I think these people who are sitting up here know that. You go to a lot of people in our areas, we have sweats and we have pipe ceremonies, powwows. We have the Pan Indian thing going on that everybody does the jingle dress. So yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shortbull?

Mr. SHORTBULL. In the 1970s, Dr. Bride wrote a book that said, once the students take the first four grades, they do very well. And all of a sudden, an identity crisis hits. We don't want that identity crisis to hit our Indian students. We want them to be strong in their culture.

As it relates to the interconnectivity between tribes, you see it at powwows all the time. People talk about their language, their culture. So there is that connection that they have in both trying to preserve their culture.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, anybody else?

This is a question for you, Mr. Delgado, but it could be for any of you. Have you seen interest from non-Native folks in learning your language?

Mr. DELGADO. I understand that in Pulaski, there are some classes going on right now and that some non-Indian students are participating in those, because they have friends who are Indians, and there are Indians and non-Indians going to school together, with a reservation right next to them. Also if you go back to 40 or 50 years ago, the Oneida Reservation, we were just formulating into a constitutional reservation.

There were actually, non-Indians and Indians all speaking the language.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Mr. DELGADO. They worked together, really close together.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shortbull?

Mr. SHORTBULL. Mr. Chairman, a great irony of this, and there are American citizens, but we get a lot of Europeans that come to our Country and they live with Indian families. They become fluent speakers. The great irony is that the American citizens don't want to do that. But the Germans, they dress up like us, they have clubs

and all of this stuff. So we have kind of an international impact on the reservation, but not an American impact.

The CHAIRMAN. Clarena?

Ms. BROCKIE. Mr. Chairman, I think in a way, you have to do something to protect your culture, your families, so they are not exploited. That is my way of thinking. There are some ceremonies that you have that non-Indians are not allowed to go into. And some ceremonies on some tribes that non-members are not allowed to go into. That is part of your tribal sovereignty. You have to decide for yourself what you are going to protect.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

Ms. RAWLINS. For us in Hawaii, we have a history of island and kingdom and nation of Hawaiian as the language. So we had commerce and people all over, Hawaiian was the language of the land.

The CHAIRMAN. This is a question for you, Ms. Rawlins. Some of the discussion around my bill, S. 1948, revolves around distinction of funding for only immersion programs, rather than funding alternative methods of language instruction. Could you explain the importance of using immersion in teaching Native languages and how this method impacts language acquisition and learning?

Ms. RAWLINS. The method of full immersion of the use of the language of instruction, that is the method, the methodology is the use of language and instruction in all content area. So over the 30 years we have been doing this, the best practice is the full use of the language in reversing language loss and increasing fluency, and being able to deliver that all the way through in the curriculum through high school.

The CHAIRMAN. Basically as a technique, immersion and its effect versus other methods of teaching tribal languages that are out there.

Ms. RAWLINS. Right. That is our best practice, is full immersion.

Mr. SHORNBULL. Mr. Chairman, I would like to answer that question. In the first year that we had our language program, we went bilingual, 50-50. Then the next year we said the majority will be in Lakota. But we finally concluded that the only way to learn the language effectively is through immersion. So that is where we are today. I believe that no other program will produce fluent speakers other than through immersion.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. Thank you.

I want to touch on this very quickly, Ms. Rawlins, if you could. You touched on it in your testimony a little bit. Could you elaborate on some of the difficulties created or aggravated by ESEA as it concerns Native language instruction?

Ms. RAWLINS. The challenge that we have is that, and I mentioned it as a one size fits all, is that the State of Hawaii has put in place, because of the Federal law, because of No Child Left Behind, that there is only one assessment, one statewide assessment, one State plan and one statewide assessment. And it is in English.

So the challenge there is to have the assessment in the language of instruction. You have a State with an official language, yet we are not allowed to have that assessment in the language of instruction. And Puerto Rico is allowed to have their State assessment in the language of Puerto Rico, which is Spanish. So that has caused our parents, our families, to boycott the exam, because that does

not give the results, the good data that you need for the language of instruction.

So because our families are not taking these exams, we are now at the bottom, as a school we are second to last as an under-performing school. And with that comes the consequence of being an under-performing school. Then it kicks in, you need to change your curriculum, change out your teachers, all of that.

The CHAIRMAN. I hear you. And I agree with you.

So Clarena and Tom and Ed and Namaka, I appreciate your being here today. I appreciate your testimony, I appreciate your commitment to tribal languages and culture. I think it is critically important.

I have said it many times in this Committee, that there are many tribes that are facing third world conditions out there economically. I think that this is yet another opportunity to help pull up Indian Country economically and improve the quality of life.

I want to thank you all for being here, thank you for traveling the distance you have. I know you believe in the importance of Native languages.

Thank you all. For the record, the hearing record will remain open for two weeks from today. With that, the hearing is adjourned. One more thing, I want to thank the folks from the Department of Education and Health and Human Services for their testimony and thank you for sticking around to hear the second panel's testimony. Thank you very much.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:42 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]



## A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN SCHATZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

I want to thank Chairman Tester and Vice Chairman Barrasso for holding this important hearing today to consider S. 1948 and S. 2299, two bills that matter significantly to the indigenous people of America.

For centuries, Native Americans faced unjust federal policies of relocation, assimilation and termination. Their homelands and communal lifestyles were targeted, families were torn apart; unique traditions and cultural practices were endangered and sometimes lost forever. In Hawaii, children were punished for speaking Hawaiian, in the same way that American Indians and Alaska Natives were punished for using their own native languages in school. By the early 1970s such policies had effectively pushed the Hawaiian language to the brink of extinction.

For more than thirty years, Hawaiian educators, families, students, and the Native Hawaiian community have fought to save and revitalize their indigenous language. They began with early childhood language nests and added primary and secondary grades as the children advanced in grade levels. Now multiple generations have progressed through Hawaiian medium schools. Hawaiian medium education is available from preschool to the doctorate level. In fact, Hawaii is the only state in the nation that grants doctorate degrees in a native language. Hawaii also produces the most native language learners in the national public education system, with a record of 40 percent.<sup>1</sup> The immersion schools and language nests in Hawaii have become aspirational models for native language preservation in the United States and worldwide.

The revival of the Hawaiian language has led to a cultural renaissance that revitalizes the Native Hawaiian arts—visual arts, performing arts, and language arts. It also strengthens and preserves a rich culture and identity that both Native Hawaiians and Hawaii residents embrace and appreciate. Today, a growing population of Native Hawaiian speakers helps to sustain and preserve the language. However, the hard work of revitalizing the Hawaiian language requires an ongoing and conscientious effort. The immersion schools and language grant programs supported by S. 1948 and S. 2299 will help to ensure the continued success in improving education and preserving native languages not only for Native Hawaiians, but also for American Indians and Native Alaskans.

I look forward to advancing these bills to help reverse the loss of native languages and cultures in America. The diversity of native languages in our country is a unique cultural treasure that enriches us all.

---

PREPARED STATEMENT OF J. MICHAEL BUNDY, PH.D., SUPERINTENDENT, TWO EAGLE RIVER ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FOR THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

### Introduction

Our school is the Two Eagle River Alternative School for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). Established in the 1970s, the school was developed out of concern for tribal students dropping out from local reservation public schools and having no other educational opportunities available to them.

In my current role as superintendent for the Two Eagle River School and as the former superintendent for the Northern Cheyenne Tribal School, I bring my experience and perspective to the issues surrounding the leadership and management of two BIE funded tribal controlled schools within Montana. With over thirty years of experience in education in Alaska, Idaho and Montana, I have extensive knowledge and understanding of the causation and remediation required to improve student achievement. After only one year, our math scores raised 22 percent and our reading scores 19 percent at Two Eagle River School. Our school serves the CSKT Flat-

---

<sup>1</sup>40 percent of all students participating in native language immersion programs are in Hawaii.

head Reservation and any tribal or Indian student who wishes to attend may do so. Of a special note, there are seven public schools within the boundaries of our reservation and yet students choose to attend our school for varying reasons. Parents and students who apply to our school report to us that they are not comfortable, are having difficulties fitting in or are seeking more acceptance than the public schools can offer. Students and parents want a greater connection to their culture and many public school teachers are not accepting or understanding of their unique needs.

The purpose of this paper is to shine a light on issues BIE funded grant schools are facing and struggle with daily. Our mission is clear and our goals are attainable, but if Indian education and student achievement are to rise in a sustainable way, certain problematic issues must be addressed. For example, salaries for teachers and administrators differ significantly within BIE funded schools by region and state. Our teachers' and paraprofessionals' salaries have been frozen for three years and they are paid less than all surrounding public schools. Benefits such as health insurance and retirement are critical for the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers. Working conditions and facilities vary greatly which adds to the challenge of recruiting to teach in a tribal school. Technology is absolutely essential for a modern school but without a reliable source of equipment or technology funding, computers become old, outdated and unreliable. Teachers want and expect the tools to teach students properly each day. Our school currently has a budget of \$245.00 for technology and all of our computers need updating or replacing. Technology requires IT staff to maintain or administer instructional software yet most schools give this responsibility to a staff member who may or may not have the expertise to adequately perform this task. Administrators are told to just go write a grant in order to add a new program or update computers. Educational technology is not an elective function to be purchased by a windfall of grant dollars but requires a systematic process for continual maintenance and replacement.

As the educational leader for our school and tribal community, the following issues I wish to share with you. I realize certain issues or programs that require funding are dependent on congressional appropriations, however equity and fairness is an important element in the responsibility to raise student achievement.

#### *1.) Lack of Adequate ISEP Funding*

Two Eagle River Alternative School (TERS) serves students 8th through 12th grade in Western Montana. Our ISEP weighted student fund average is \$8,925. In Montana, with equalization payments, basic Average Daily Membership (ADM), teacher quality payments and impact aid, public schools on the reservation receive over \$14,600 per student in attendance. TERS receives \$5,773 less per student compared to the public schools on our reservation in Montana. This past fall, our 2013 enrollment was 104 students for which an equivalent amount of funding as the public schools would require an additional \$577,000. Our ISEP funds every element of our school including personnel costs (salaries and benefits), instructional supplies, textbooks, student organizations, student activities, and other general fund expenditures. This disparity is difficult to overcome when trying to offer instructional programs of equal merit to students of a tribally controlled grant school. This year, due to changes in health insurance costs to the tribe under the affordable care act our school budget increase for this item was nearly \$200,000. This additional expense comes at a time in the same year 6 percent of funding was withheld due to sequestration. No allowance for increased benefit costs are planned or adjusted for in ISEP or administrative funding with the new health care law implementation.

#### *2.) Title I Funds*

To date, Two Eagle River School has not received this year's funding for Title I. In years' past funding was received in July or early fall but always much earlier than this year. Communication between TERS and BIE has been slow or absent. It is difficult to count on and pay employee salaries when we do not know if a problem exists or if funding has been reduced or eliminated. We have been requested to prepare our Title I budget which we have done using last year's information, but we are still unsure if changes are occurring. Since Title I funds are such a large and important part of our school budget, I cannot imagine why we have not received our funds. Title program funding needs to be available at the beginning of our school year in order for us to effectively plan and use this towards assisting our students.

#### *3.) Vocational Funding*

An extremely important aspect of any public high school is the preparation for the world of work beyond graduation. Many students may choose to enter college but

most will seek training in vocational programs. Currently, the BIE does not fund any form of vocational education. Although a year of vocational education is a graduation requirement in Montana, as well as in most states, no funding is allocated for this area of education. With a national emphasis on jobs and job-related skill development, I find this to be a missing link for many of my American Indian students. Resources must be found to support this important aspect of Indian education, and at this time this is not occurring.

#### *4.) Impact Aid/Johnson O'Malley*

At present, 100 percent of our students reside on tribal reservation lands, however, as a BIE funded school our students are not eligible for impact aid. Public schools inside of our reservation are eligible for impact aid in lieu of taxes to offset loss of funding. We have seven public schools on our reservation and they receive both state aid and impact aid. Grant schools are similar to charter schools and charter schools are eligible under the impact aid law. Tribal grant schools same as charter schools should be allowed to apply for impact aid to supplement their budgets. Tribal grant schools should be given the same consideration as other 'heavily impacted' districts similar to districts with military or defense property. Although not a taxing authority, a tribal school's expenditures does require higher costs for both additional essential staff positions and for a high quality teaching staff. Additional personnel costs for positions such as dean of students, instructional coach, school family liaison, school resource officer and counseling services are required to address the unique social and cultural needs of our students and families.

From the DOE website:

Since 1950, Congress has provided financial assistance to these local school districts through the Impact Aid Program. Impact Aid was designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt Federal property, or that have experienced increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children, including children living on Indian lands. The Impact Aid Law (now Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)) provides assistance to local school districts with concentrations of children residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other Federal properties and, to a lesser extent, concentrations of children who have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties who do not live on Federal property.

Further, Johnson O'Malley funds supplemented schools with Indian students for years and was a valuable part of providing supplemental assistance for Indian students. Today as an example, school funding at TERS has been reduced in the last few years from approximately \$11,000 to \$2,000. This small amount is not enough to effectively be weaved into any instructional program.

We currently are a SIG improvement grantee and have made valuable gains in reading and math. The concern is sustainability beyond year three of the grant. Schools tend to balloon during grant years but have to scale back once the last year of funding is complete. Without sustained funding, programs and personnel are trimmed and the school returns to a former state of struggle and minimal accomplishment.

#### *5.) Administrative Costs*

Although our administrative costs are reasonable, the CSKT tribe requires all indirect funding and administrative funds remain with the tribe. Additional administrative costs are supported from our ISEP Funds. By having to use ISEP funds for this purpose, less ISEP funds are available for teacher salaries, benefits, technology purchases and school supplies etc. Administrative funding should be adequate to cover all expenses and need to be available to the school.

As in our previous example, with additional healthcare costs and the necessity to recruit and retain high quality teachers, administrative costs should reflect the reality of increased expenses all schools are experiencing.

#### *6.) Timeliness of Funds*

Stable funding is necessary to plan and budget for effective school management. Consistent and reliable schedules for the planned deposit of these funds into school accounts are also necessary for good school management. Funds currently arrive at undetermined and different times due to the ineffective manner in which funds are released. Presently, TERS has not received any Title I funds and has only received limited maintenance and operation funds. Employee salaries are being paid from other funds and a request to the Tribal Council is being prepared in order to purchase heating oil for the upcoming winter if maintenance and operation funds do

not arrive soon. In addition, I am not able to adequately present to my school Board an annual budget. Without predictable funding amounts early enough to plan prior to the start of the current school year, I am unable to present to my school Board a well-developed budget based upon the needs of my students. Earlier this fall, I received a budget amendment that was incorrectly assigned to a reading program we do not have at our school. I called my ELO and have sent the amendment back for correction and have not received any correspondence as to its status in over three months. Even with follow up requests no reply has been received. A more efficient and timely funding schedule needs to be developed. Discretionary funds do vary as grants are approved, but entitlement funds require a more effective fiduciary mechanism of accountability and tracking of deposits into school accounts.

#### *7.) Teacher Recruitment and Retention*

With less funding per student than public schools in our region, high quality teachers have numerous choices to accept positions with a public school or a BIE funded school. Even if salaries were relatively the same (which they are not), benefits in nearby rural and urban communities in the areas of health insurance and state retirement programs lure our teachers away. For example, while at the BIE funded Northern Cheyenne Tribal School, I initiated new staff development programs and fully enriched my staff in innovative ways of increasing student achievement. However, by years' end my teachers were being recruited away to nearby public schools. I asked the superintendent of a nearby school why he wanted my staff and his comment was, "You have the best trained staff and we need help with our underperforming students". Therefore, as I invest in my staff with necessary staff development, and if salaries and benefits are not competitive, I lose them to nearby schools. This is a serious problem considering how important consistency is in instructional delivery and continued implementation of programs.

#### *8.) Professional Development for Administration*

Lastly, in my four years as superintendent of a BIE funded tribally controlled grant school, I have been offered very little training in the area of BIE procedures and guidelines. Conflicts have arisen due to certain expectations or reports not being completed in a timely manner. I was unfamiliar with federal procedures which are quite different from my training in the public school sector. This lack of training sets the stage for poorly managed schools and schools that may not operate efficiently. I understand the vastness of the BIE operating in twenty three states; however, with high turnover, some mentorship by senior administrators or trainers would have been very helpful. I had to seek private training because the BIE held no trainings or orientation throughout my last four years of service. This can be very frustrating and will lead to high turnover of administration.

I cannot speak exactly to the internal workings of the BIE as I am not a BIE employee. After a very successful career in public education, I sought a new challenge and wanted to make a difference by helping minority or Indian students be successful. I had experience in working with Alaska Native students and served as the superintendent of School District #304 on the Nezperce Reservation in Kamiah, Idaho before taking the superintendent position at the Northern Cheyenne Tribal School. What I now know is that the BIE is an organization tasked with managing Indian Education, but is not directed by professional educators and administrators but rather by individuals that are more business or compliance oriented individuals. A heavy reliance on consultants and vendors seems to be necessary to oversee schools rather than assist and develop school site based leadership specific to Indian community schools. It is always the people in the field that are in daily contact with students and parents that ultimately move successful schools forward. A closer working relationship with tribal community schools and the BIE needs to be cultivated. The BIE needs to culture an organization perceived by tribal communities in partnership through education and support rather than only compliance monitoring. At present, the BIE is seen as a source of funding but with little respect as a professional learning and educational agency. Schools are a place of learning and most importantly a people business. Education is a business of nurturing future leaders, citizens and scholars, not building widgets on an assembly line.

Working to improve student achievement requires several factors including thoughtful use of resources, strategic planning, and effective administrative leadership. Issues surrounding funding are of a concern because schools should focus their time and energy towards professional growth of staff and the improvement and execution of instructional programs. I present these comments in hopeful manner that consideration will be given to each of these items.



## PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NIEA)

Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Committee, tribal leaders and Native advocates have consistently listed education as a top priority for our communities. As such, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is excited that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs has heard the collective call and is working to highlight the condition of Native education across all grade levels in order to find solutions to persistent problems. As NIEA and Native education stakeholders have stated for years, equal opportunities from early to higher education are critical to the future of tribal nations and Native communities.

The renewed commitment of this Committee and its focus on improving all education systems serving Native students is critical. We are happy to see legislation introduced that supports the strengthening of these education systems through language immersion and cultural teaching models. As part of our continuing partnership to ensure equitable education opportunities for Native students, we are excited to echo the broad, overwhelming support we have heard from Indian Country and provide this testimony in staunch support of the following Senate Bills:

- S. 1948—A bill to promote the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native American language grant program; and
- S. 2299—A bill to amend the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to reauthorize a provision to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

NIEA, founded in 1969, is the most inclusive Native organization in the country representing Native students, educators, families, communities, and tribes. NIEA's mission is to advance comprehensive educational opportunities for all American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians throughout the United States. From communities in Hawaii, to tribal reservations across the continental U.S., to villages in Alaska, to urban communities in major cities, NIEA has the most reach of any Native education organization in the country. By serving as the critical link between our communities and education institutions, NIEA hopes the Committee will take our testimony into consideration as you act on this legislation.

#### **Native Education Crisis Due to Federal Mismanagement**

As all of us realize, Native education is in a state of emergency partly due to the inability of the Federal Government to uphold its trust responsibility. Native students lag behind their peers on every educational indicator, from academic achievement to high school and college graduation rates. In 2010, only one in four Native high school graduates who took the ACT scored at the college-ready level in math, and only one in three for reading. In the same year, more than half of the majority students in high school tested at college-ready levels, illustrating the persistent readiness gap among Native and non-Native students. As Native students leave high school underprepared for higher education, academic failure or extensive remediation become commonplace for Native students. In the last decade, only 52 percent of Native students enrolled in higher education programs immediately after high school graduation and fewer than 40 percent of those students graduated with a bachelor's degree in six years. In contrast, nearly 62 percent of White students graduated within six years.

#### **Native Student Demographics Snapshot**

- 378,000, or 93 percent of Native students, attend U.S. public schools, comprising 0.7 percent of the total public school population, with the remainder attending federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operated, charter, or tribally-controlled schools.
- Of all Native students, 33 percent live in poverty, compared to 12 percent of White students.
- 29 percent of these students attend high-poverty city public schools, compared to 6 percent of White students.
- In 2012, 17 percent of Native students age 25 and older held at least a bachelor's degree in comparison to 33 percent of White students.

- In 2012, 6 percent of Native students held an advanced graduate degree (i.e., M.A., M.S., Ph.D., M.D., or J.D), as compared to 12 percent of the White population.<sup>1</sup>
- Of the 210 Native languages still spoken in the United States and Canada, only 34 (16 percent) continue to be taught as a first language to Native children.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Trust Responsibility to Native Education**

Since its inception, NIEA's work has centered on reversing these negative trends, a feat that is possible only if the federal government upholds its trust responsibility to tribes. Established through treaties, federal law, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions, this relationship includes a fiduciary obligation to provide parity in access and equal resources to all American Indian and Alaska Native students, regardless of where they attend school. Under the federal government's trust corpus in the field of Indian education, it is important to state that the obligation is a shared trust among the Administration and Congress for federally-recognized Indian tribes.

To the extent that measurable trust standards in Indian education can be evaluated, NIEA suggests this Committee refer to the government's own studies encompassing Native test scores, treaty-based appropriation decreases, and Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports, among other reports, which illustrate the continued inability of the federal government to uphold the trust responsibility and effectively serve our students. Too often, the trust responsibility is broken as Native-serving institutions are unable to receive the funding they require to support critical educational services, such as language immersion programs.

As the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Commissioner Lillian Sparks Robinson outlined in her recent testimony to this Committee, "the unmet demand [for language immersion] remains high." Although tribes and Native communities have consistently provided broad-based support for language immersion education models, the existing investment opportunities are not meeting demand and therefore, should be increased. Unless the federal government provides Native students equal education opportunities and learning through immersion, it will be nearly impossible for our future generations to be prepared for academic achievement and consequently, success in college and careers.

### **Strengthen Native Language and Culture to Raise Student Outcomes**

Native language revitalization and preservation is a critical priority to tribes and Native communities because language preservation goes to the heart of Native identity. In many ways, language is culture. Learning and understanding their own languages helps Native students thrive and is a critical piece to ensuring schools serve Native students effectively. Immersion programs thereby serve the dual purpose of increasing academic achievement and guaranteeing that a student's language will be carried forward for generations.

For example, students with sustained, cumulative Native language and cultural instruction perform as well as, or better than, their peers in mainstream classes on completing academically challenging tasks.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, those students who enter school with a primary language other than the school language (i.e., English) perform significantly better on academic tasks when they receive constant and cumulative academic support in the primary language for a minimum of four to seven years, illustrating the need for sustained, longitudinal immersion funding.

As comprehensive academic achievement remains elusive for many Native populations, language immersion courses provide an opportunity to improve student outcomes. Strong programs with elements like Native language and cultural immersion, language and culture maintenance, and dual language and one-way immersion programs contribute to improved attendance and college enrollment rates, lower attrition, and enhanced teacher-student and school-community relations.<sup>4</sup>

For example, longitudinal data from the Rough Rock English-Navajo Language Arts Program, which serves approximately 200 students each year in Kindergarten

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, United States Department of Education. National Indian Education Study. 2011. (NCES 2012-466). <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/>

<sup>2</sup> Contents largely drawn from McCarty, T. L. (2011). *State of the field: The role of Native languages and cultures in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian student achievement*. Tempe, AZ: Center for Indian Education; and Demmert, W.G., Jr. (2001). *Improving academic performance among Native American students: A review of the research literature*. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small School.

<sup>3</sup> McCarty, T. L. (2011).

<sup>4</sup> McCarty, T. (2013). *Language planning and policy in Native America: History, theory, praxis*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.

through sixth grade, illustrate that after four years in the program, average student scores on criterion-referenced tests of English comprehension increased from 58 percent to 91 percent. On standardized reading tests, Native students' scores initially declined, but then rose steadily, in some cases, approaching or exceeding national averages. When individual and grade cohort data were analyzed over five years, students attending the Rough Rock Program demonstrated superior English reading, language arts, and mathematics performance compared to a matched peer group who did not participate in the program.<sup>5</sup>

### **Congressional Intent over Agency Interpretation**

Unfortunately, legal barriers and agency interpretation often inhibit our communities from providing such services to Native students. While our communities' unique cultural and linguistic traditions are critical cornerstones for providing relevant, high-quality instruction as part of an education, current education statutes and improper agency interpretation often gravely obstruct Native students from attaining the same level of academic achievement as the majority of students.

P.L. 100–297, Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act, and P.L. 93–638, Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act, as well as P.L. 109–394, Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 and the Native American Languages Act of 1990, all promote a policy of self-determination and investment in Native languages, including language immersion schools. Further, the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education promises to support opportunity expansion and outcome improvement for Native students by promoting education in Native languages and histories. Yet, legal and regulatory structures that undermine these aims persist.

NIEA is proud of the exemplary immersion models, such as those at Niigaane Ojibwemovin Immersion Program and School serving the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Rough Rock English-Navajo Language Arts Program serving the Navajo Nation—both of which have won the prestigious NIEA Cultural Freedom Award for their efforts in full-day language immersion. Unfortunately, federal agency interpretation under varying Administrations as well as enacted administrative procedures produced under No Child Left Behind—the current iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—often restrict tribes and Native communities from running such schools because language programs are often interpreted to be at odds with the “one-size-fits-all” model mandated under the ESEA.

ESEA's performance standards do not take into account language diversification. As such, successful language programs, like those listed above, as well immersion programs in Hawaii, are often considered underachieving. While Puerto Rico—the only exception allowed under ESEA—has the authority to provide education instruction in a language other than English, tribes and Native-serving schools are not afforded this same understanding and deference when providing assessments to their students. Too often, the regulations created under ESEA require testing to take place only in English—even if the Native language is utilized as the primary medium of instruction and recognized as a state's official language. This drives down assessment scores and initiates interventions for schools that were considered successful prior to ESEA. Such obstacles are simply unfair for schools that are working successfully to protect and strengthen Native languages and increase student outcomes through immersion instruction.

### **NIEA Legislative Recommendations: S. 1948 and S. 2299**

To begin addressing this issue, NIEA requests that the congressional intent of self-determination and Native language support behind statutes, rather than the agency interpretation of ESEA and other law, be enforced so that tribes and Native communities have the ability to deliver effective education programs. NIEA was excited to see Senate Bills 1948 and 2299 introduced because these legislative measures provide some necessary resources for strengthening language immersion and cultural learning. While NIEA has several minor suggestions for improving the bills under consideration, the recommendations do not negate our stalwart support for the legislation.

NIEA has decades of testimony and membership resolutions that support Native languages and learning through language immersion (NIEA Resolutions 2007–08; 2008–03; 2009–07; etc.). To accompany those official NIEA actions, we request the recent June 2014 NIEA support letters be submitted for the record to accompany this testimony. We also recommend that the Committee utilize the numerous support letters submitted by Native communities, tribes, and organizations as it works to move the bills. Prior to the introduction of this language, large organizations such

<sup>5</sup> McCarty, 2011, pp. 6–7.

as the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) provided broad-based support letters calling for increased immersion resources and many tribes have since submitted letters supporting the introduction of the bills. As such, we hope the Committee will move quickly to incorporate our recommendations, garner additional congressional support, and move the bills toward Senate passage.

### **I. Senate Bill 1948**

While we have stated concerns with Administration and agency actions that diminish the ability to institute language immersion programs, we were excited to see President Obama endorse Native language immersion programs during his speech to Indian Country on June 13, 2014. As such, we hope this will usher in a new level of support for Native language learning. Now is the time to turn the initiatives described in the December 2, 2011 Executive Order 13592—Improving American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Opportunities and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities—into action and support Native languages through this critical legislation that works to support immersion learning.

Senate Bill 1948 works toward the Executive Order and provides a means to strengthen Native languages and increase academic outcomes. Native language immersion—one of NIEA’s key ESEA reauthorization recommendations—is a critical priority to tribes and Native communities and is a crucial piece to ensuring schools educate Native students effectively. NIEA also supports the bill’s corresponding appropriation authorization of \$5 million to fund its new immersion program.

This is critical because additional funding ensures that existing programmatic funds under ESEA Title VII are not reduced. It is the policy of NIEA that any new programs or authorizations must do no harm to existing Title VII programs. While immersion schools need and deserve federal support, this funding must be additional to and separate from that which currently exists under Title VII as there is already inadequate funding under the ESEA Native education title. NIEA looks forward to working with the Committee to identify suitable offsets for S.1948 to support the bill’s goals to advance immersion schools.

Furthermore, NIEA submits our joint organizational comments with this testimony requesting that S. 1948 include greater tribal authority over immersion programs by defining Indian tribes as “eligible entities” to receive grants. We also recommend the elimination of the requirement that grant monies correlate to language immersion success via increased graduation rates. This could be misconstrued to contradict the original intent of Title VII, which is based on enhancing the cultural traditions of students, not outcomes. While increasing outcomes could be the result of language immersion programs, the original intent of Title VII should be upheld as Congress initially stipulated.

While we are strong supporters of the language in its current iteration, we hope the suggested additions will be incorporated to ensure inclusivity as well as reinforcement of the original intent of ESEA Title VII.

#### *NIEA Recommendations*

- Enforce congressional intent of self-determination and Native language law, rather than agency interpretation of ESEA, so that tribes and Native communities have the ability to deliver effective education programs.
- Work with NIEA to identify suitable offsets for S. 1948 outside of ESEA Title VII to support the bill’s goals to advance immersion schools.
- Include NIEA joint organizational recommendations within the language to ensure tribes are “eligible entities” as well as uphold the original intent of Title VII.
- Collaborate with NIEA to create a “Dear Colleague Letter” to garner support for marking up the language and moving the bill to a full Senate vote during the 113th Congress.
- Ensure any ESEA Reauthorization that progresses includes the Native language immersion grant program.

### **II. Senate Bill 2299**

While Congress continues to appropriate funds to the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) under HHS, this bipartisan bill is crucial for reauthorizing a non-controversial program that efficiently and effectively provides grants to revitalize Native languages. Currently, ANA provides competitive grants, training, and technical assistance to tribes and Native communities. Under the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006, ANA administers grants for language immersion and restoration programs, which are attributed to saving endangered Native languages and providing culturally-respectful education systems.

Due to continuing unmet need and insufficient funds under these programs, NIEA supports the recommendations highlighted in Commissioner Sparks Robinson's testimony provided before this Committee that highlights the need to extend funding cycles for Language Preservation and Maintenance projects in order to increase sustainability and effectiveness. Funding should be provided for five year intervals, rather than the current length of three years. This extension would provide grantees the opportunity to develop fluent speakers, build and strengthen partnerships, and secure funds to track success and best practices, rather than participating only in the initial planning and implementation stages.

Furthermore, we request that the required number of participants be lowered from ten to five students for language nests and from fifteen to ten students for survival schools, so that smaller communities, such as remote Alaska Native villages with small populations, have the opportunity to apply and compete for crucial language preservation funds. We also think it sensible to review the timeframe for the reauthorization of Esther Martinez. While a five year reauthorization is often standard, due to the recent partisanship in Congress and the non-controversial nature of the ANA program, it could be prudent to extend the reauthorization period from five year intervals to seven or ten year authorization periods.

*NIEA Recommendations:*

- Work with NIEA to garner support for marking up the language and moving the bill to a full Senate vote during the 113th Congress.
- Analyze the opportunity to extend the reauthorization period from five years to a longer period of time.
- Extend the programmatic grant period from three to five years to ensure sustainability.
- Decrease the required number of participants so that smaller communities have the opportunity to participate.

**Conclusion**

We appreciate the hard work of Chairman Tester, Senator Johnson, and the bipartisan group of co-sponsors for introducing these critical legislative pieces, and we look forward to seeing these bills move out of Committee to become law. Furthermore, NIEA appreciates the continued support of this Committee and the leadership it has provided to receive comments on S. 1948 and S. 2299. NIEA enthusiastically supports both measures, and we look forward to working closely with the Committee to move these bills forward. In addition to this legislative hearing, we also appreciate the 2014 education hearing series because we cannot confront the challenges facing our Native students one facet at a time. Only by working with all stakeholders in all education systems will we increase our students' preparedness for success. Once again, thank you for this opportunity.

---

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RYAN WILSON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO SAVE  
NATIVE LANGUAGES

**Introduction**

Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and Members of the Committee. My name is Ryan Wilson, President of the National Alliance to Save Native Languages. I am honored to submit written testimony before the Indian Affairs Committee to provide the views of the Alliance on the importance and benefits of Native language immersion schools as they relate to S. 1948.

The Alliance is highly supportive of the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, and believes it supports a distinct purpose separate than that of ANA Language programs authorized under the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act.

**Current Crisis in Indian Education**

Improving the educational achievement and academic progress of American Indians is a high priority of Indian country, this Committee, and the Obama Administration. The United States has a unique political and legal relationship with American Indian tribal governments and a special historic responsibility for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Recent reports carried out by the U.S. Department of Education continue to reiterate the academic failure of American Indian and Alaska Native students. See National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011); National Indian Education Study (2011); The Education Trust, "State of Education for Native Students," (2013).

In order to further the Federal Government's commitment to improving the educational outcomes of American Indian and Alaska Native students and improving the quality and performance of schools and education programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives, a comprehensive Native Language Development and Culturally Based Education policy is needed to: (1) help tribal governments meet the linguistically unique educational needs of their children, including the need to preserve, revitalize, and use Native languages; (2) promote American Indian and Alaska Native tribal language immersion schools and develop the capacity of tribal communities to build successful immersion schools; (3) protect tribal language immersion schools from the promulgation of adverse rules, assessments, and regulations from federal agencies that are incongruent with existing statutes concerning Native language use; and (4) promote intergovernmental (tribal/federal) collaboration and partnership.

*S. 1948, "Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act"*

The Alliance views S. 1948 as a response to broad based concern that Tribal Immersion Schools receive both support and legitimacy from the Department of Education and in particular inclusion within the broader Elementary and Secondary Education Act. S. 1948 is correctly placed in Title VII of the ESEA, the Indian Education Act title. S. 1948 aligns appropriately with Title VII and honors the Congressional Intent of Title VII.

Federal Indian education policy and trust responsibility is derived from the special legal and political relationship between Indian nations and the federal government. Title VII within the ESEA is the primary statute charged with the responsibility to discharge the federal trust responsibility for Indian education within the Department of Education.

The severe criticism of Indian education in the 1969 report of the Senate Special Subcommittee on Indian Education "*Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge (Kennedy Report)*" elicited a substantial response from Congress. In the Education Amendments Act of 1972, a special title "*The Indian Education Act*," provided extensive support for the education of Indian students and established new administrative structures in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to carry out the work. The Indian Education Act was signed into law June 23rd 1972. The act has survived numerous ESEA reauthorizations and budget challenges but has never been fully implemented. The No Child Left Behind Act has diminished Title VII and circumvented the Congressional intent of the Indian Education Act. It is time to strengthen Title VII and modernize the statute to reflect a growing body of research that substantiates immersion schools as a best academic practice for Native students (See "*State of the Field*" by Dr. Teresa McCarty).\*

The National Indian Education Association conducted under President David Beaulieu an extensive investigation into Title VII programs that included 11 field hearings in 2005. What NIEA documented through acquiring testimony of over 100 witnesses was that Title VII programs specifically the 1300 formula grant programs were being directed/steered towards sponsoring academic activities clearly authorized under Title I of the ESEA. Impactful and meaningful supplemental cultural programming including Native language instruction were being eliminated and the statute to address the unique cultural needs of Native learners was not being implemented.

The Alliance believes that passage of S. 1948 will strengthen the Indian Education Act and protect Title VII from being a surrogate of Title I. If Title VII continues to emulate Title I the threat is very real that it loses its unique purpose as a standalone title in the ESEA. Prior to introduction of S. 1948, the Alliance, National Indian Education Association, National Congress of American Indians, Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, United Tribes of North Dakota, Alaska Federation of Natives and numerous individual tribes and organizations called for the introduction of legislation that would create a grant program in Title VII of the ESEA to support Immersion Schools. After Chairman Tester introduced S. 1948 the Navajo Nation, Eight Northern Pueblos and Affiliated Tribes Northwest Indians endorsed this legislation. There is broad based support for strengthening The Indian Education Act through passage of S. 1948 which would amend Title VII.

---

\*The information referred to can be found at [http://center-for-indian-education.asu.edu/sites/center-for-indian-education.asu.edu/files/McCarty,%20Role%20of%20Native%20Lgs%20&%20Cults%20in%20AI-AN-NH%20Student%20Achievement%20\[2\]%20\(071511\).pdf](http://center-for-indian-education.asu.edu/sites/center-for-indian-education.asu.edu/files/McCarty,%20Role%20of%20Native%20Lgs%20&%20Cults%20in%20AI-AN-NH%20Student%20Achievement%20[2]%20(071511).pdf)

### **Existing Authorities**

Executive Order 13592, “White House Initiative on Improving Indian Education,” promises Native learners the opportunity to learn their Native Languages. Additionally, Public Laws 93- 638, 100-297, offer the promise self-determination and tribal control of BIE schools. The Native American Languages Act of 1990 Public Law 101-477 and the Esther Martinez Native American Preservation Act Public Law 109-394 promote a policy of investing in Native languages and supporting Tribal Language Immersion Schools. Finally, the Snyder Act Public Law 67-85 broadly authorizes Congress to appropriate resources for such activities in the Department of Interior and grants considerable flexibility to the Administration to support and initiate new activities in the area of Indian Affairs.

None of these existing statutes and the Obama Executive Order protect immersion schools from the policy in-congruence that NCLB creates. This statutory conflict places immersion schools and tribal communities who wish to organize/create immersion schools at a distinct disadvantage. S. 1948 would codify in statute both support through resources and as a matter of federal Indian education policy an endorsement of immersion schools as legitimate educational venues worthy of federal investment.

Common Core, Race to the Top, assessment models utilized by states and the proposed BIE realignment will not accommodate immersion schools or make room for them. This places a heightened importance on S. 1948 and the urgent need to create a place for immersion schools.

### **Widespread Calls for Native Language Immersion Schools**

Education Secretary Duncan and former Interior Secretary Salazar met with Indian education experts during the first year of the Administration to gain advice on Indian education issues. All in attendance including myself articulated the urgent need for the Administration to engage in a meaningful way on Native language immersion schools and incorporating Native languages into culturally based education. The Administration met with tribal leaders and formed a National Tribal Leaders Education Task Force. This Task Force echoed the same concern regarding immersion schools, Native languages, and culturally based education. The Administration also engaged Indian Country in Indian education consultation hearings and received volumes of testimony supporting immersion schools and culturally based education. Further, the National Advisory Council on Indian Education has included in its annual reports recommendations supporting immersion schools for Indian Country. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and National Indian Education Association (NIEA) joint recommendations for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization call for a formula grant program for Native language immersion schools. Broad based support exist for tribal language immersion schools, Indian country could not have expressed support for these schools any clearer to the Administration.

It is the position of NCAI and the coalition of Native organizations that are a part of the NCAI Native Language Working Group/Task Force, including the National Alliance to Save Native Languages, that language plays a significant role in influencing academic performance and general well-being of Native peoples. This position was first reflected in the Meriam Report of 1928 and reinforced in each of the following: the U.S. Senate Report, Indian Education: A National Tragedy, A National Challenge (1969); the Indian Education Act of 1972 (Title VII, NCLB); the Indian Nations At Risk Report (1991); the White House Conference on Indian Education (1992); federal policy through the Native American Languages Act (1990); federal policy through the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act (2006); and three Presidential Executive Orders (Clinton, 1998, Bush, 2004, Obama 2011).

### **Shortcomings of the Current Approach**

Unfortunately, Executive Order 13592 has not been effective in achieving its proposed policy goal because it does not offer a program or pathway to execute a strategy for supporting or creating venues where Native learners have an opportunity to learn their Native languages. Furthermore, budget cuts and assessment models that do not account for culturally based education or instruction have meant that the unique linguistic needs of Native learners have not been met, stalling development of tribal language immersion schools and immersion programs. Unstable leadership within the BIE, the pending restructuring of the BIE, and difficulty forecasting budget challenges have created a climate of retreat. Native language instruction under the Obama Administration has decreased, not increased.

Additionally, there exists no support for continued development of tribal language immersion schools within the leadership of the BIE/BIA and Department of Interior,

the White House Initiative on Indian Education and the Department of Education. The Obama Administration appears to be confused on this issue despite the clear message Indian country has repeatedly sent. The Administration has co-mingled Native language instruction, history, culture and immersion as if they are one in the same. The Administrations' approach to supporting existing immersion schools is at best in-coherent and at worst in opposition.

The White House Initiative on Indian Education Executive Director Bill Mendoza's testimony during the June 18th hearing was symptomatic of a deeper systemic problem within this Administration. Director Mendoza listed a number of programs within the Department of Education and Interior that support language instruction but none of these programs directly support Immersion schools, none exist exclusively for immersion schools. It appears the Administration supports Indian being taught as a course (presumably for 50 minutes a day), but not Indian languages being used as the medium of instruction as they are used in immersion schools. All of the programs Director Mendoza listed existed before the life of the current Administration.

The inability of the Administration to have a position on S. 1948 despite the bill being introduced on January 16th 2014 nearly half a year ago is reflective of this Administrations apathy towards Native languages and immersion schools.

In his historic visit to Indian country on June 13th President Obama stated "and even as they prepare for a global economy, we want children, like these wonderful young children here, learning about their language and learning their culture, just like the boys and girls do at Lakota Language Nest here at Standing Rock. We want to make sure that continues and we build on that success—and you don't have to give up your culture to also be a part of the American family. That's what I believe and coming here today makes me believe it that much more".

The President was referring to an immersion school the Lakota Language Nest, yet the Administration was unable to have a position on S. 1948 the following week (even though S.1948 is the only legislative effort in the 113th Congress supporting immersion schools). In the context of the Administration's ESEA Blue Print which promises support for Immersion, the White House Initiative which promises Native students an opportunity to learn their Native languages, and existing statutes which could advance immersion schools. This is unacceptable to Indian country.

#### **Need for Increased Federal Support**

The Administration for Native Americans, housed in the Department of Health and Human Services, does offer planning grants to launch immersion efforts through its Esther Martinez programs. Although these investments are vital to initiate immersion activities they are not sustainable because they have a three year maximum award. These hotly contested dollars are among the most competitive and are not designed to ensure programs' long-term solvency. Sustainable federal support for tribal language immersion schools simply does not exist. BIE, Public, and Community Based schools that wish to engage in the development of tribal language immersion schools need federal support. This federal support must be additional to and separate from that which currently exists to support school operations. If Congress is to carry out its commitments to self-determination, sovereignty, and protection and revitalization of Native languages, it must provide resources for tribal language immersion schools. This funding is also essential to enabling BIE to complete its mission, Title VII to execute Congressional intent as well as to fulfilling the promises of President Obama's Executive Order on Indian Education.

#### **Conclusion**

Indian Country believes that we have a sacred birthright, treaty right, policy mandate, and existing statutory vehicles for continued use and development of our tribal languages, cultures, and ceremonial practices—all of which are essential for our general well-being and identity as American Indian, and Alaska Native peoples. Our interest in achieving high levels of academic performance requires support for S. 1948, which is required by the demands of a multi-cultural and multi-lingual world. Native learners and their communities/parents who are seeking the benefits of tribal language immersion and culturally based education must have the opportunity to attend and participate in educational venues that promote fluency in their heritage language. By any education and socioeconomic measure American Indian and Alaska Native children lag behind the general population. This deficit in equality of educational opportunity has grown during the Obama Administration. The Native American Languages Act, Indian Education Act, Tribally Controlled Schools Act and when enacted Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act need to co-exist with the ESEA, BIE realignment and Common Core. Both Congress and the Administration must ensure the continuation of the federal governments trust



responsibility and permit an orderly transition from exclusive English based instruction to Native language as the medium of instruction for those tribal communities who have both the capacity and desire to engage in Immersion. S. 1948 makes a significant commitment to do so and offers America an opportunity to grant its Indian nations their fullest and freest use of Native languages.

We affirm with the highest conviction that there are significant cognitive, psychological, and academic benefits for our children and communities who can participate in tribal language immersion schools. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony and for considering this much-needed legislation The Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act.

---

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LESLIE HARPER, DIRECTOR, NIIGAANE OJIBWEMOWIN IMMERSION

Gidanimikooninim, esteemed Committee Members. I greet you all and thank you for introducing the proposed bills, and for the opportunity to testify in support of the importance of our Native Languages, Culture-Based Education, and their connection to success for Native students. I will present testimony that describes, through our in-service field experience of the last ten years, the ways in which funding and public policy incongruence both supports and interrupts the transmission of educational content through the medium of our identified indigenous language of Ojibwe, and will reinforce needs that the proposed S. 1948 and S. 2299 can serve to meet.

I support S. 2299, a bill to amend the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American Languages. This Act and according funding has supported our community to build capacity to deliver Ojibwe language revitalization and maintenance efforts across multiple generations and multiple entry points at our Leech Lake Nation. I would like to focus the remainder of testimony on support for the newly introduced S. 1948 and I urge amendments to the bill that will align the Native American Languages Act of 1990 (NALA) with the No Child Left Behind, as the current ESEA is also known. I support the amendments to S. 1948 as provided in the testimony by Namaka Rawlins today in her testimony to this Committee. I was present at the 2014 Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium, and participated in the examination of the proposed bill, and articulation of the amendments that will align the intent of S. 1948 with the delivery at our local levels.

I am an enrolled member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. I serve at Niigaane Ojibwemowin Immersion, an elementary education site that provides over 1,000 hours per year of Ojibwe-medium education to 40 students of our Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe communities. Our students enter our site speaking English as the language of the home, so our site serves a two-fold purpose to revitalize Ojibwe language and to express our educational sovereignty. We are in our tenth year of operation at our site, during which we have grown a grade per year from Kindergarten to 6th grade. Niigaane operates within the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe tribally-chartered Bureau of Indian Education Bugonaygeshig School at the Leech lake reservation in Minnesota.

Expressions of our indigenous Native cultures have led to deeper examinations of leadership and decisionmaking ideals and community operations systems that are specific to our Native communities. We are broadly expressing an alternative decisionmaking structure in operating our immersion education sites, as is the original intent of educational sovereignty. However, policy mandates create barriers to operating our tribal schools in our languages as a tribally designed way. We are unfunded, essentially, due to Highly Qualified teacher designations and assessments in a language other than Language of Instruction, among other ESEA requirements. Jurisdiction of our schools is not tribally controlled or determined, nor even BIE-monitored, but is individually determined by states. Title I Accountability factors supercede Title VII and Native American Languages Act (P.L. 101-477) policies that are supposed to support our student success by recognizing the unique linguistic and cultural needs of our Native students. This clearly values the American monolingual systems over our multilingual systems. At our Niigaane site, we have created a pathway to success in a way that looks different, but works as well as or better than monolingual English-medium education. Our students matriculate out at 6th grade to other English-medium schools in the region, and we informally track their progress. 100 percent of our students who have matriculated from our program are performing at or above the level of their English-monolingual peers on English-medium measures of academic progress in the high schools to which they have transferred. These students have the added benefit of being functionally bilin-

gual at an age much younger than the average Minnesota student. Research on multilingualism has long recognized that language learning produces higher-level cognitive functioning and higher-level social and cultural competence than does monolingualism.

Our school requires a family to commit to volunteer at the school in order to improve our site and offerings, thus involving multiple generations of our people in our education site; only a few decades ago, our families were intimidated or uninterested in participating in the public school educational sites because they did not reflect our Ojibwe community. This amazing turnaround results in up to 1,000 hours per year of volunteer resources, which we could not afford to purchase within our already insufficient level of funding. To report on HS graduation rates of our students will require a ten-year longitudinal data collection system; however, we are confident in our strategies because we have adapted successful strategies from other indigenous immersion education sites that are showing success in this area.

There does not currently exist in statute an annual funding stream exclusively for Native Language immersion schools. S. 1948 must maintain the intent to create a dedicated fund for Native language immersion site efforts.

We need to strengthen language in this bill to serve students in immersion education sites to teach and measure in our languages in a way that is linguistically and culturally congruent to our educational goals.

- Contract between the Department of Education and Language Immersion school site LEAs. This will allow us to forecast funding to support our operations, and we can use grant funding for capacity-building projects. We must guarantee that the funding will go to the targeted students who are being educated in the medium of the Native language, and not just being swallowed up by school districts. Strengthening the language in the proposed bill to require application and reporting on targeted students will ensure this.
- Definitions and guidelines exist in NALA regarding the use of Native American languages as the medium of instruction to encourage and support student success. However, it is unfunded. Subsequent amendments in 1992 and 1996 provided an amount of funding, but landed in a competitive grant process, which does not provide stability for the programs or schools. Secure funding is necessary to support self-determination through education.
- We must recognize that these schools or programs operate in different structures such as BIE schools, public schools, and tribal or locally operated programs and ensure inclusion for all varied program types, languages, and states.
- Site-specific targeted proficiency standards must be trusted. Oral proficiency included in academic achievement assessments in the Language of Instruction (rather than a language in which the students are not educated, English).
- High school graduation rate and other data relevant to career and community participation standards should be included in the reporting by the language immersion site. For our people, educational outcomes include High School graduation rates and the consideration of career and community integration to sustain our local communities. Standardized test scores on English assessments will never accurately predict educational outcomes for students who are educated in the Native Language for all academic and social content.
- We need a new option to fulfill federal requirements relative to uniform state plans. Our Native language immersion education sites must describe a school-specific method with Native American language of instruction appropriate standards, assessments of students and teachers.

We feel that our locally determined route to language and culture revitalization through the medium of Ojibwe language immersion education for all academic and social contexts will benefit our nation far into the future by developing new members of the Ojibwe Nation who are grounded in Ojibwean ideals of citizenship. These benefits will extend to any context or community in which these Niigaane Ojibwe Immersion students—Ojibwe citizens—may find themselves, and will continue to positively contribute to the knowledge base of the world.

We have determined locally that our population will be well-served by Ojibwe-culturally based education, and we seek the funding support to continue to develop our efforts, and continued investigation into public policy and funding appropriations that support our efforts.

Miigwech weweni gaa'inendamag, thank you for your kind consideration.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BROOKE MOSAY AMMANN, DIRECTOR, WAADOOKODAADING  
OJIBWE LANGUAGE IMMERSION SCHOOL

Boozhoo Anishinaabedog, Aaniin gakina awiya. Niiyogaabawiikwe nindizhinikaaz. Migizi nindoodem. Inaandagokaag indoonjibaa. Odaawaa-zaaga'iganing indaa dash indanokii iwidi. Miigwech bizindawaiyeg.

Thank you for listening to me. I am specifically addressing and testifying in regards to S. 1948, a bill to promote the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native American language grant program within the Department of Education. Senator Tester, I appreciate your introduction of the bill and all of the lawmakers who have taken the initiative to support its movement.

My name is Brooke Mosay Ammann, and I am the Director of Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion School on the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe reservation in northern Wisconsin. I am also the parent of two students at the school. The mission of our school is to create proficient speakers of the Ojibwe language who are able to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world. We do this through teaching our children grade level skills in standard academic subjects through the medium of the Ojibwe language. Our students are proficient in both Ojibwe and English.

Waadookodaading ended our school year with fifty-three students in the preschool through fourth grades. We have twenty-four students on the wait list for next year that we will not be able to accommodate. Although our school is a public charter, we are located on tribal lands and our authorizing school district is only obligated to offer us pass through funds for each student. We hold classes in federal surplus modular building units that are aging and worn, held together by determination and hope. We are responsible for finding the funding to support ourselves.

Our school is in the fourteenth year of operation. We have thus far only gone through the fifth grade, starting with just eight students in preschool and educating them for as long as we could before we sent them off to mainstream English language medium classrooms. As I was present for the meeting at the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium referenced in the testimony delivered by Namaka Rawlins of 'Aha Punana Leo, I must record that I concur with her sentiments regarding the difficulties federal policy creates for those of us revitalizing our Native American languages through a school based model. Waadookodaading also had the chance to review the bill and contribute to the changes she has submitted, with which we also agree.

Although we are not able to provide graduation and college attendance data at this time, I would like to outline the impact of the Ojibwe language immersion school on our community. Waadookodaading is not just revitalizing our Ojibwe language it is revitalizing our community.

The Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation is located within Sawyer County, which has the second highest poverty rate in the state. The Tribe's BIA Labor Force Report for 2013 documents an unemployment rate of 50 percent. Like many rural impoverished communities, we have seen the brightest students and community members move on from the small town life to seek personal economic and career opportunities elsewhere. This "brain drain" is especially evident in the education field, as rural school districts struggle to attract quality teaching and administrative talent. And as is the case nationwide, indigenous communities and rural reservation areas feel the impact of this trend the most. American Indian teachers are not teaching American Indian students, and our youth struggle with making connections to these important role models either because of a cultural disconnect or because teachers use reservation schools as stepping stones on the path to higher paying assignments.

Though on a small scale, our school is reversing the brain drain. At Waadookodaading, 100 percent of the staff is Ojibwe, 83 percent of the teaching staff have a Master's Degree or higher, 100 percent of the staff considers Ojibwe their 1st or 2nd language, and 81 percent are enrolled in federally recognized tribes, with half of them representing their home community of Lac Courte Oreilles. The other half moved to the community with the goal of working at Waadookodaading. Beyond attracting dedicated teachers and staff to the community, there are students currently enrolled in teacher training programs with the explicit goal of becoming certified teachers fluent in the Ojibwe language. Their goal after program completion is to return to the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation to teach at Waadookodaading. We have parents and consultants who are working on Doctoral degrees in linguistics with a focus on the Ojibwe language who were inspired by the work of Waadookodaading teachers. Skilled first language Ojibwe speakers who were once physically and emotionally abused by schoolteachers have found their way back to the classrooms to create stories and curriculum and develop teacher vo-

cabulary. Our young adults see that speaking Ojibwe is an asset, and can be the foundation of a career in which a person can earn money and build a career in our beautiful Wisconsin homeland. Ojibwe language medium education is the type of teaching and education reform that historically disenfranchised people are willing to support, and even devote their lives toward advancing.

In closing, S. 1948 is a much needed, natural step in the progression of growth of the Native American language medium school movement. While we are grateful for and support the continuation of the Administration for Native American Native Language Revitalization funds, and especially those of the Esther Martinez Initiative, those funds are limited and recent changes favor new initiatives. Those of us that have led the way in piloting the American Indian language medium schools have proven that this is a valid approach to improving community school engagement and American Indian student outcomes. This past school year, Waadookodaading had six programs from the United States and Canada visiting and observing, looking for guidance as they begin their own Native American language medium schools. It is time for the Native American language medium school to be recognized and funded as the vital component of the American educational landscape it has become.

Miigwech miinawaa bizindawiyeg. Thank you for listening to me.

---

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL D. SULLIVAN SR., PROFESSOR, THE COLLEGE OF  
ST. SCHOLASTICA

Boozhoo ogimaadog! Giwii-miigwechiwi'ininim weweni omaa gii-pi-nakondameg da-bizindaweg agiw Anishinaabeg endazhiikangig yo'ow sa indanishinaabemowininaan. Mii omaa wendimaang yo'ow mino-bimaadiziwin gaa-pi-inenimiyangid a'aw Manidoo. Aaniish naa ogii-maamiinaan aniw akina bemaadiziniin odinwewini da-inwenid. Mii sa yo'ow sa gaa-pi-miinigoowiziyaang enishinaabewiyaang. Apegish sa noo naa wii-pi-onjiniketaageyeg da-wiidookawegwaa agiw Anishinaabeg waakwajitoojig da-bi-giiewewidoowaad odinwewiniwaan.

Greetings respected leaders. I would like to thank you all for taking the time to hear from those Native peoples who are working hard to stabilize our indigenous languages. It is from our precious languages that we are able to life the good life that our Creator intended us to live. After all, it is our belief that our Creator has given each walk of life their specific way to make their sound, to communicate with their babies, and maintain a connection with our spiritual realm. I hope and pray that each of you take the time to make an effort to assist with this most important work of bringing our languages back into our homes and schools.

As a young Ojibwe man raised on the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation, I have witnessed first-hand the decline and subsequent revival of our Ojibwe language. As a boy, everyone of my grandmother's generation spoke Ojibwe yet no one of my mother's generation can communicate in the language of their parents. Year after year, we consistently lost speaker after speaker as our elders grew old and were eventually called home by our Creator. Year after year our language declined, both in quantitative numbers of speakers and perhaps more importantly, in the domains in which our language is used. That all changed 14 years ago with the birth of Waadookodaading, our Ojibwe language immersion school and the shining pearl of the Ojibwe language revitalization movement. We no longer are losing speakers; we are producing them. Because of this school, we now have over 60 children that have achieved advanced proficiency in their heritage language. Though this not a massive number, it is the highest percentage of Ojibwe speaking children in the United States. Not only is our language used in the school, but also through the school we have been successful in expanding the domains in which we use our language.

As a college professor and linguist, I have a unique perspective to provide to your committee. I have personally witnessed the benefits of Waadookodaading in our community. It has often been said that regaining our indigenous languages does something magical to our heart, mind, body, and soul. For the first time ever on our reservation, our children are educated by young, healthy, sober, traditional individuals who want nothing more than to pass on this healthy lifestyle to our children. Having 3 children of my own in the immersion school has been an uplifting and motivating journey for myself as a warrior for our language. I have a 10-year-old son that, among other things, can explain technical concepts such as mathematics and geography in our Ojibwe language. I have a 6-year-old son who can inquire about the world in our Ojibwe language. I have a 5-year-old daughter who knows the days of the weeks, months of the year, and places in our community only

by their Ojibwe names. All of this we have gained from the school, the number one domain in which our language was never spoken.

It should be stated that our children in immersion do not only learn their tribal languages while engaged in their academic content, but they also learn about and engage in a healthy lifestyle. From our seasonal subsistence harvest activities to the songs and dances of our people, our children are taught to be proud of who they are, where they come from and where they are going. This is a new direction in American Indian education. As advocates for our languages and activists amongst our people, we no longer point the finger at “the man” for what has been done to us; we now look inward, pointing the finger at those who perpetuate the dysfunction that has plagued our communities since the birth of the boarding schools. Indeed, this is a new direction in American Indian activism.

As elected officials with significant Native populations within your respective constituencies, I assume you are all well aware of the tragic history of American Indian educational policy and the unspeakable experiences that our elders endured. It is a miracle that our language has survived. It is a miracle that we as a people have survived the effort to eliminate the “Indian Problem”. Ironically, it is schools, the very institutions put forth to make us better Americans have now become the place where we make ourselves better Indians. In a country that was founded on the principle of freedom, especially that of the freedom of religion, it is rather disturbing that practicing our own spirituality has only been legal since the passing of the *American Indian Religious Freedom Act*, (Public Law No. 95-341, 92 Stat. 469 1978). Coincidentally, many of us engaged in language revitalization work grew up with this newfound freedom. Had our colonizing founding fathers considered the “American Dream” for us too, perhaps an educational policy advocating for our own pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness would have been implemented. Perhaps our nation is now ready to share that dream with us.

I ask you to keep in mind when dealing with our respective nations and the policies that will affect our educational agenda and ultimately, our language effort, consider how poorly the system put in place has failed us. We have the highest dropout rate for any race or ethnicity in America. The overwhelming majority of American Indian people have lost faith and trust in this imposed system of education that has taught us to hate ourselves. Perhaps if we could only be allowed to drive the car we could then get to where we need to be.

Sadly, many of our schools operate on a year-to-year basis with no long-term reliable funding source. I urge you to consider the proposed modifications to S. 1948. With the success of indigenous language immersion education, such efforts should be supported, perhaps even mandated. I sincerely thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony, and for considering the proposed modifications to S. 1948. God bless.

---

PREPARED STATEMENT OF QUINTON ROMAN NOSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TRIBAL  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (TEDNA)

Chairman Tester and Vice Chairman Barasso, I am Quinton Roman Nose, Executive Director of the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA), a national non-profit membership organization for the Education Departments of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today, and I thank Senator Tester and sponsors of the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, S. 1948. TEDNA strongly supports S. 1948 and asks that the act be amended for additional strength, by defining and including Indian tribes and Tribal Education Departments or Agencies as “eligible entities” to receive grants. This amendment would allow for increased tribal control over language immersion programs and provide opportunity for increased educational success for American Indian students.

A vital component of American Indian student success is culturally relevant curriculum that includes language immersion programs. The importance of language immersion programs has long been recognized by Congress in the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, P.L. 93-638, the Native American Languages Act of 1990, the Native American Programs Act of 1974, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. More specifically, the Native American Languages Act of 1990 explicitly stated policies to “preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages,”<sup>1</sup> as well as to “encourage State and local education programs to

---

<sup>1</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 2903 (1) (2014).

work with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes, and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect.”<sup>2</sup> Long established Congressional policy further recognizes that traditional languages are an integral part of American Indian cultures and identities and form the basic medium for the transmission, and thus survival, of American Indian cultures, literatures, histories, religions, political institutions, and values. S. 1948 furthers these policies.

Nationwide, over 92 percent of American Indian students in K–12 are educated through State Education Agencies and public schools.<sup>3</sup> About 740 of these public schools are located on or near Indian reservations and over a dozen states have amended their laws to recognize the role that tribal histories, language, culture, and governments have in state public education. Even with these statistics, and numerous states actions to incorporate culturally relevant curriculum, today there is no federal law that explicitly recognizes the important role tribal governments should play in public school education. With the addition of tribes as eligible entities, the enactment of the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act will be a powerful move in the direction of tribal government inclusion in American Indian education.

An avenue to increase success for American Indian students in elementary and secondary education is enhancing the capacity of Tribal Education Departments or Agencies (TEAs). The first TEA was created in 1991, when the Rosebud Sioux Tribe with the help of the Native American Rights Fund, enacted a tribal law creating a TEA in order to contribute to how and what public schools teach. Since then, more than 200 tribes across 32 states have formed TEAs as administrative agencies within their tribal governments and charged them with implementing educational goals and policies. Although TEAs have successfully improved educational services to American Indian public school students, they are constrained by existing law and hampered by a lack of resources. If amended to include Tribes as eligible entities, S. 1948 will enhance the capacity and role of TEAs.

There are many examples of why tribes should be included. The Cherokee Nation Education Services, a TEA located in Oklahoma, operates the Sequoyah Schools system through a contract with the Bureau of Indian Education. The Sequoyah Schools language program has proven to be a successful model, graduating 6 sixth-graders and 10 kindergarten students in 2014.<sup>4</sup> In California, the Hoopa Valley Tribal Education department operates the Hoopa Valley Learning Center, a state and tribally funded program that provides student support services. 80 percent of the students begin the program as “at risk” students with failing grades, while 90 percent of these students finish the program with passing grades. The success of these programs show why tribes need to be more involved in American Indian education departments and to incorporate tribal histories, culture and language into the curriculum.

As the Honorable Lillian Sparks, Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, pointed out, many tribes have successfully developed language programs with grants received from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA).<sup>5</sup> The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, using an ANA grant, successfully increased Tlingit language skills in 102 youth and 40 adults by incorporating the Tlingit language into the Yakutat public school system.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in Montana, the Fort Belknap College built upon the success of the White Clay Immersion School by hiring and training language teachers, developing curriculum, and creating an advisory council to guide curriculum.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Thomas Shortbull, President of the Oglala Lakota College likewise testified to the success of the Lakota Language Immersion School, operated by the Oglala Lakota College, which educates students, kindergarten through fifth grade, in the Lakota language.<sup>8</sup> Many other language programs and immersion schools operated by tribes across the country could benefit from being considered eligible enti-

<sup>2</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 2903 (4) (2014).

<sup>3</sup> The State of Education for Native Students, The Education Trust (2013), 4, [http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/NativeStudentBrief\\_0.pdf](http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/NativeStudentBrief_0.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Cherokee Nation, Keeping Language Alive: Immersion School Graduates More Students, Indian Country Today Media Network, (2014), <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/05/24/keeping-language-alive-immersion-school-graduates-more-speakers-154888>.

<sup>5</sup> *Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act: Hearing on S. 1948 Before the S. Comm. on Indian Affairs*, 113th Cong. 3 (2014) (statement of Lillian Sparks, Commissioner, Administration for Native Americans—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act: Hearing on S. 1948 Before the S. Comm. on Indian Affairs*, 113th Cong. 3 (2014) (statement of Thomas Shortbull, President, Oglala Lakota College).

ties under S. 1948. However, ANA grant funding alone is not sufficient to support the need to expand existing immersion programs and replicate these successes for tribes where language immersion programs do not yet exist.

The Yurok Tribe has developed a language immersion and education program which has become the model for many California tribes.<sup>9</sup> The Tribe has partnered with local school districts, bringing the Yurok language to the neighboring public schools. The Yurok language is now offered as classes, and one school offers a new Yurok immersion program.<sup>10</sup> The Cherokee Immersion Charter School, within the Sequoyah School system of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, graduates students who have learned grade level state standard curriculum while speaking only Cherokee.<sup>11</sup> These programs are taking significant steps to improve the educational statistics for American Indian students, as well as creating partnerships with public school districts. The success of these programs has greatly increased student success. However, there are not an abundant amount of programs and the existing programs struggle to continue. S. 1948 would allow further development and financial stability of established, as well as new, language immersion programs.

In 2011, for the first time, Congress authorized direct federal appropriations for TEAs in the FY12 Appropriations Act. This was recognition by Congress of the important role TEAs have in operating and contributing to elementary and secondary education. Washington State also made an important recognition when WA HB-1134 was signed into law May 15, 2013. That bill provides for a co-governance model of education through the development of state-tribal compacts.

The Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act recognizes the importance of Native American languages in delivering education to American Indian students. Not only has Congress found that the use of Native languages is an effective education tool for American Indian education but it has also found that the use of these languages in education also helps preserve the language itself. Both improved education and preservation of Native American languages is of utmost importance to the culture and identity of all tribes.

Tribal governments will help save our Native languages. Under tribal law, under the laws of some states, and increasingly even under federal law, tribes and TEAs are in the best position to coordinate resources from tribal, federal, and state programs to focus on language immersion programs in schools and communities. Many TEAs are even developing and implementing the needed language preservation and immersion programs. As TEAs grow in numbers and capacity, they are successfully taking the lead in meeting the need for tribal language, culture, and history programs. As they grow in numbers and capacity, TEAs are consistently taking the lead in meeting the need for tribal language, culture, and history programs and curricula.

TEDNA strongly supports the Native Language Immersion Student Act, and urges the Committee to strengthen the bill by adding Indian tribes and TEAs as “eligible entities” to receive grants and I have attached proposed amendment language to this written testimony for your review.

Again, I thank Senator Tester and the co-sponsors of S. 1948 for taking leadership on this vitally important issue.

#### **Attachment**

<sup>9</sup>Norimitsu Onishi, *In California, Saving a Language That Predates Spanish and English*, N.Y. Times, April 13, 2014, at A13.

<sup>10</sup>*Id.*

<sup>11</sup>Cherokee Nation, *Keeping Language Alive: Immersion School Graduates More Students*, Indian Country Today Media Network, (2014), <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/05/24/keeping-language-alive-immersion-school-graduates-more-speakers-154888>.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE NATIVE LANGUAGE IMMERSION STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT ACT – S. 1948**

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) are in favor of and support the *Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act – S. 1948*. The Act, however, could be strengthened to include greater tribal authority over language immersion programs by defining Indian tribes as “eligible entities” to receive grants. Further, inadvertently tying Title VII to Native student graduation rates through S. 1948 could potentially misconstrue the original intent of Title VII as a supplemental education title intended to address Native students’ unique cultural and linguistic needs.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

**1.) Tribes as eligible entities**

In order to provide equitable opportunities and access for all Native students, tribes should have equal opportunity to apply for language immersion grants. Indian tribes, typically functioning through a tribal education department or agency (“TEA”), understand their students better than any other entity. As self-governing bodies, they are uniquely prepared to assist their local schools in the development and enhancement of immersion programs by providing expertise and access to fluent speakers in the local language for which education instruction would be provided.

“Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act”.

Sec. 7401. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

...

**(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED. -**

...

23     “(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this section,  
24     the term ‘eligible entity’ means an Indian tribe  
25     or a school, or a private or tribal, nonprofit  
26     organization, which ~~that~~ has



- 1 a plan to develop and maintain, or to improve and
- 2 expand, programs that support schools using Native
- 3 American languages as the primary language of in-
- 4 struction of all curriculum taught at the schools.

**2.) Eliminate language immersion plans direction to increase graduation rates**

It is the purpose of Title VII to support eligible entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students, so that Native students can meet challenging academic achievement standards. Directing Title VII language immersion grants to improve Native student graduation rates under eligible entity plans could potentially misconstrue the original intent of Title VII as a supplemental education title. An amendment to strike graduation rates would not result in the reduction of coordination or collaboration in developing education plans, rather it provides the impetus for tribes and Native communities to actively work to ensure cultural and linguistic needs are efficiently and effectively addressed as intended by Title VII.

“Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act”.

**Sec. 7401. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

...

**(d) AWARDING OF GRANTS. –**

...

- 15 “(3) require the eligible entities to present a
- 16 Native language education plan to improve high
- 17 school graduation rates, college attainment, and ca-
- 18 reer readiness the academic achievement of American
- Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students
- by meeting their unique cultural, language, and educa-
- tional needs.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE (UTTC)**

United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) submits this statement in support of S. 1998, the Native Adult Education and Literacy Act of 2014. The legislation would provide a statutory allocation of funding under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act for tribal colleges and universities and Native Hawaiian education organizations. Likewise, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, of which we are a member, is strongly supporting a funding allocation under this Act for tribal colleges and universities.

We thank Senators Hirono, Moran, Begich, Heinrich, and Schatz for their leadership in recognizing the need for more resources for Native education institutions to provide adult and literacy education for our constituencies. We expect others will join as cosponsors.

For 45 years, United Tribes Technical College has provided postsecondary career and technical education, job training, remedial, literacy and family services to some of the most impoverished, high risk Indian students from throughout the nation. We

are governed by the five tribes located wholly or in part in North Dakota. We are not part of the North Dakota state college system and do not have a tax base or state-appropriated funds on which to rely. We have consistently had excellent retention and placement rates and are a fully accredited institution.

Students at UTTC come from 75 different tribes, the preponderance from the Great Plains, the area of highest poverty in Indian country. Many are first generation college attendees. Eighty five percent (85 percent) of our students receive Pell Grants. Many of our students need developmental reading and/or mathematics courses. Over the past five years, 60 percent of our incoming freshmen took developmental math courses and 55 percent took developmental English courses. Twenty five percent of students took both developmental math and English. As you know, students must have a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) before continuing in college, and this year the GED requirements for mathematics were substantially increased. We need the resources to help our students meet those requirements.

In addition to the remedial courses noted above, we are trying to be pro-active in encouraging students to finish high school and to be ready for college. We have a dual-enrollment program targeting junior and senior high school students, providing them an introduction to college life and offering high school and college credits. And our elementary school, Theodore Jamerson, which is located on our campus and funded through the Bureau of Indian Education, has a FACE program, a family literacy program.

We are glad to offer remedial and other services for our students. Our core operating funding comes from the Bureau of Indian Education and the Section 117 Perkins program but these sources do not pay for remedial education. We cobble together funds from other sources for remedial education as we know that such an investment is needed in order to help ensure that our students succeed at the post-secondary level.

The prospect of applying for a dedicated source of tribal college funds under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act would be of substantial help. Currently the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funds are distributed via formula to states. Some of it does benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives, but a dedicated source that would fund tribally-designed programs could have a significant impact. In this Committee's hearing of June 11, 2014 on Higher Education for Indian Students, witnesses provided a statistically dire picture of the status of Indian education even though good work is being done by the tribal colleges and organizations providing scholarships to Native students, both undergraduate and graduate. The need simply outstrips the resources by a long way.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing and others on Indian education. We are hopeful that S. 998 will be included in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization agreement that has been reached between the Senate and House Education committees. We are pleased that the agreement reached on WIA took the Indian program provisions of the Senate, rather than the House, bill; the inclusion of the text of S. 998 or something similar to it would improve it even more.

---

NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
Washington, DC, June 16, 2014

Hon. TIM JOHNSON,  
U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

RE: NIEA SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 2299—THE NATIVE AMERICAN  
LANGUAGES REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Dear Senator Johnson,

On behalf of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), I am excited for the introduction of the Native American Languages Reauthorization Act (S. 2299). This bipartisan bill is crucial for reauthorizing a non-controversial program that efficiently and effectively provides grants to revitalize Native languages. As the most inclusive Native education organization in the country, we are working hard to support your efforts to see this language become law.

According to UNESCO, 74 Native languages stand to disappear within the next decade. Equally as alarming, scholars project that without immediate and persistent action, only 20 Native languages will be spoken by 2050. The Esther Martinez Initiative funds immersion programs that are successfully passing on Native languages to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. Native language revitalization is a critical priority because language preservation goes to the heart of Native identity. In many ways, language is culture. Learning and understanding

traditional languages help Native students thrive. And, immersion programs ensure the survival of a student's language and cultural identity for generations.

NIEA appreciates your attention to protecting and strengthening Native languages and looks forward to working with the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to move the bill to the full Senate. We also appreciate your continued dedication to our Native communities. Through our concerted efforts, we know that negative statistics representing our Native students will begin to reverse.

RE: SUPPORT FOR S. 1948—THE NATIVE LANGUAGE IMMERSION STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT ACT

Dear Chairman Tester and Vice Chairman Barrasso,

On behalf of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), thank you for the renewed focus and energy of the Committee on Native education. The recent hearings on the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and public schools serving Native students created a strong foundation for collaboration. To build upon this momentum, NIEA respectfully requests that the Committee hold a hearing on Native languages and pass Senator Tester's bill, S. 1948—The Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act.

NIEA, founded in 1969, is the most inclusive Native organization in the country—representing Native students, educators, families, communities, and tribes. NIEA's mission is to advance comprehensive educational opportunities for all American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians throughout the United States. From communities in Hawaii, to tribal reservations across the continental U.S., to villages in Alaska and urban communities in major cities, NIEA has the most reach of any Native education organization in the country.

NIEA supports Senate bill 1948 because it ensures that Native language immersion—one of NIEA's key Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization priorities—is not overlooked, but strengthened. Native language revitalization and preservation is a critical priority to tribes and Native communities because language preservation goes to the heart of Native identity. In many ways, language is culture. Learning and understanding traditional languages helps Native students thrive and is a critical piece to ensuring schools serve Native students effectively. Immersion programs not only increase academic achievement, but guarantee that a student's language will be carried forward for generations.

Once again, thank you for your continued support of Native education.

Sincerely,

PAM AGOYO,  
*President, National Indian Education Association.*

Dear Senate Committee on Indian Affairs:

I am a member of the red lake band of Chippewa Indians. I am in support of S. 1948, a bill to support academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native Languages grant program. Committee members should support the amendments to S. 1948 as provided by Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium participants in the testimony submitted by Namaka Rawlins for hearing on 6/18/2014.

S. 2299 reauthorizes the Native American Language Preservation Act to 2019, which provides funds to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony,

ELIZABETH SAHKAHTAY STRONG

Dear Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,

I urge support of S. 1948, a bill to support academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native Languages grant program. Committee members should support the amendments to S. 1948 as provided by Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium participants in the testimony submitted by Namaka Rawlins for hearing on 6/18/2014.

Please also support S. 2299, which reauthorizes the Native American Language Preservation Act to 2019, which provides funds to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

Time and again studies have proven the economic and cognitive benefits for children learning multiple languages. I can personally attest to the restorative effect it has on Native communities, which as you know are still healing from generations of mistreatment and outright assimilation attempts from the United States govern-

ment. It is beyond time for the U.S. to make amends to these sovereign nations, and it can begin by supporting indigenous language learning via S. 1948 and S. 2299. Please, do the right thing and vote yes to the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium amendments to S. 1948 and to both bills.

Please also urge your colleagues to support the House companion bills H.B. 4214 and H.R. 746.

Best regards,

JENNIFER HALL,  
*Leech Lake Ojibwe descendant, proud Ojibwemowin learner.*

---

To Whom It May Concern,

I urge support of S. 1948, a bill to support academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children with the establishment of a Native Languages grant program. Committee members should support the amendments to S. 1948 as provided by Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium participants in the testimony submitted by Namaka Rawlins for hearing on 6/18/2014.

S. 2299 reauthorizes the Native American Language Preservation Act to 2019, which provides funds to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

NOKOMIS PAIZ  
Red Lake, MN.



June 30, 2014

STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
737 WILHELM ROAD, SUITE 200  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Vice-Chairman  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: S. 2299 and S. 1948

Dear Chairman Tester and Vice-Chairman Barrasso:

As the Ka Pouhana (Chief Executive Officer) of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), I am writing to thank you for the opportunity to express my support of S. 1948, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, which Chairman Tester introduced, and S. 2299, a bill to reauthorize a Native American Programs Act of 1974 provision that ensures the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages, introduced by Senator Tim Johnson.

By way of introduction, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is a quasi-independent state agency created by the constitution and laws of the State of Hawai'i. Our mandate is to improve the lives of Native Hawaiians, Hawai'i's indigenous people. Like our American Indian and Alaska Native counterparts, Native Hawaiians exercised sovereignty over land that is now a part of the United States, and presently maintain a trust relationship with the federal government.

While most Native Hawaiians reside in our homeland of Hawai'i, members of the 500,000-plus Native Hawaiian community are found in all 50 states. Keeping OHA's mandate and the aforementioned trust relationship in mind, I commend the Chairman as well as Senator Johnson for introducing legislation that will significantly assist in the perpetuation of this country's native languages, including the Hawaiian language, which all share similar stories of survival.

Just 30 years ago, it was widely believed that 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (the Native Hawaiian language) would become extinct. While a number of factors contributed to the deterioration of the use of the language, perhaps none was more devastating than an 1896 law mandating English

instruction in public and private schools. In practice, this law essentially banned Hawaiian children from speaking their native language in the classroom. By the 1980s, the community of fluent speakers of the Native Hawaiian language had dwindled to a few elders and a geographically isolated population on the island of Ni'ihau. At that time, the number of Hawaiian language speaking children under the age of 18 was less than 50.

Fortunately, a number of grassroots, community-led efforts began to turn the tide for the Hawaiian language. In 1978, Hawai'i voters approved a constitutional amendment establishing 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as one of the two official languages of the State, making Hawai'i the first state to provide such recognition to its native language. Then, in 1983, a small but passionate group of Hawaiian-language educators founded Pūnana Leo (Language Nest), an organization whose mission in part was to revitalize and re-establish a living Hawaiian language by opening pre-schools that used the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction. This program was based on the efforts of New Zealand's indigenous Maori people in revitalizing their own native language. In 1987, the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HI-DOE) opened pilot kindergarten programs at two HI-DOE schools at the insistence of Pūnana Leo parents who wanted their pre-school children to continue their education in the Hawaiian language.

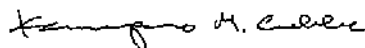
The HI-DOE pilot program grew, and is now known as the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program (HLIP). Today, HLIP instruction is offered at 20 public schools and educates approximately 2,400 students in grades K-12.

Today, I am so proud to say, "E ola ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i" (the Hawaiian language lives). In Hawai'i, a student can now choose to be entirely taught through the Hawaiian language from preschool all the way to a doctoral level. Despite the success of re-establishing a Hawaiian medium education, challenges continue to arise, as one might imagine. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its assessment requirements have definitely presented numerous hurdles, which we are working diligently to overcome. We continue to collaborate with HI-DOE as well as the United States Department of Education on this critically important issue.

As S. 2299 and S. 1948 move forward, I would urge the Committee staff to work closely with some of our very own Native Hawaiian language experts, who have successfully developed a model that has proven itself over the years. There could also be opportunities for future collaboration, including perhaps an opportunity to address some of the NCLB assessment challenges facing the Native Hawaiian language movement.

Again, thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to working with you in the future.

'O wau iho nō me ka 'ōia'i'ō,



Kamana'o M. Crabbe, Ph.D.  
Ka Pouhana, Chief Executive Officer

---

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
THOMAS SHORTBULL

*Question 1.* What is the best proven method to support language preservation and to ensure that native languages remain living languages, spoken by children as well as elders, in schools and in homes across native communities throughout the United States?

Answer. In our tribe, the language has sporadically been taught in schools using methods that were inspired by methods used to teach foreign languages in mainstream schools. After thirty years these approaches have not produced any new speakers. The same can be said of language teaching at the college level. OLC is also working toward a modified immersion method for adult learners. We have tried a number of demonstrations and will be trying more.

The Full Immersion method developed and implemented by the Maori and the Hawaiian communities has, by contrast, shown an undeniable success over thirty years of practice. The Full Immersion concept reenacts the conditions of the natural acquisition of the first language of a child. It utilizes fluent speakers, usually Elders, as teachers, and involves the families of the children. It ultimately involves

the communities as the language becomes again a more widely and spontaneous way of inter-generational communication in private as well as in public.

*Question 2.* Can you discuss the importance of having living languages and name some of the benefits as they relate to cognitive development, literacy, academic achievement, college attainment or other education and development goals?

Answer. The language is the foundation of the identity as it carries the culture that is specific to it and is the element of distinction between one culture and others. This distinctive character is active and actual in the life of the speaker to the contrary of "blood degree" that is passive and abstract for the life of the individual. A child who is recognized as a Lakota and is brought up in and with the living language is de facto rooted in his/her very culture. The language spoken around him/her by adults who are the current carriers of the unaltered culture validates the culture, and reinforces his/her personality, self-esteem, and motivation. The child has the best chance to become a productive member of the community as a leader, maker and/or a role model.

The mastery of two languages, each relevant to part of the dual reality of life for the Native nations, allows the individual to comprehend and help others comprehend this complex reality and to figure out and model how to deal with each side of this reality. This helps the person maintain the authenticity of the identity and, at the same, time be able to efficiently address the necessities of life in 21st century America. Research shows that bi- or multi-lingual individuals have an enhanced ability to embrace complex realities, comprehend differences, and produce creative and effective ideas in problem-solving situations.

*Question 3.* Can you address concerns expressed by critics of immersion or bilingual education programs that exposure to two or more languages simultaneously at a young age may delay or hamper language acquisition or proficiency? Does a child's ability to speak multiple languages impact developmental milestones or academic achievement in later years? If so, how? Are there benefits of training a child to communicate in two or more languages?

Answer. As the child learns simultaneously two different languages, the processing of information and acquisition of skills takes more time than if the child was working with one language only. However, as the child progresses in the one and the other language mastery, the processing of information becomes more effective, faster and the child develops original strategies to keep on progressing; this is particularly true of the memory functions [like storing/recalling] and mnemonic process [like associations, linear or circular links, formal or semantic connections for instance].

We refer you to the following research done by NEA:

Regarding World Language Education NEA Research, December 2007

**The Benefits of Second Language Study** Research Findings with Citations

Status of U.S. second language study 1

Research Findings: Second language study:

- . . .benefits academic progress in other subjects 2
- . . .narrows achievement gaps 3
- . . .benefits basic skills development 3
- . . .benefits higher order, abstract and creative thinking 4
- . . .(early) enriches and enhances cognitive development 4
- . . .enhances a student's sense of achievement 4
- . . .helps students score higher on standardized tests 5
- . . .promotes cultural awareness and competency 5
- . . .improves chances of college acceptance, achievement and attainment 6
- . . .enhances career opportunities 6
- . . .benefits understanding and security in community and society 6
- . . .barriers 6
- Bibliography 7
- Web References 12

*Question 4.* What are some of the spillover benefits of having immersion programs? Can you discuss any impacts or progress toward:

a. Creating leaders

Answer. The Lakota Language is carrying the culture, view of the world, values and meaning of life of the Lakota people, and, as such, is determinant in the choosing of men and women who will lead their people into the future in accordance with the deep Lakota identity. As leaders speakers of the language will be able to continue the mending of the society, communities and families by understanding what to restore to achieve the ability to successfully live in two worlds. Many of the great-

est modern leaders of the Lakota are, or were, fluent in English and Lakota including Gerald One Feather, founder of Oglala Lakota College.

*b. Community building*

Answer. As carrier of the traditional language, these individuals will naturally be the point of crystallization whenever the community expresses a desire or need to revitalize a larger part of the culture. The original societal structure of the Lakota is the Tiyoospaye (extended family), and the current communities reflect this specific aspect of the culture to which the Lakota Language confers meaning and significance much more than the English language does.

*c. Cultural identity/pride*

Answer. As we know that a language carries the culture and that without the language the culture cannot carry on, the speakers are acknowledged and recognized as the perpetuators of the true culture that is so distinctive of the Lakota people as a people (as is true for Cheyenne speakers for the Cheyenne people, Dine for the Dine people, etc. . .). The speakers incarnate the identity, pride, self esteem and self assurance of their people.

*Question 5.* Maintaining living native languages takes an immense amount of time, energy and resources to design appropriate curricula and learning materials. It is similarly challenging to cultivate native language instructors and professionals who can successfully educate pupils in the native language. Moreover, piecing together annual budgets from a number of different funding sources can be difficult. Are more resources needed to support the immersion language programs? And if so, why?

Answer. Most immersion language programs are small, and face expenses that are comparatively greater than those of larger conventional schools. The utilities cost is more expensive at a per child ratio for a 40 child program than for a 300 child school, and so is transportation. Extra curricular, sports, and cultural activities impose various types of expenses including gas for transportation, participation fees, acquisition of equipment, and meals. Very often this is either a barrier or at least limitation to these activities. Donations in monies and in kind are very often what we depend on in order to give our children the opportunity to partake in a hand games tournament or in archery. We are very limited at this time in terms of budget to provide continued training to our teaching staff which is crucial for the success of the full immersion programs. Oglala Lakota College makes a large contribution to just assure that we can continue a quality program.

*Question 6.* Language is closely tied to one's identity and self-confidence, and in communities, language teaches and reinforces the traditional culture and values. Do you have evidence or data comparing the psychological well-being or academic achievement of immersion students versus non-immersion native students?

Answer. On this topic, I cannot provide verifiable data as the students who are enrolled in conventional schools do not fall into our data recording. However, our students show an effective internalization and practice of traditional cultural values such as respect of others and self respect. Outside observers such as an Administration for Native Americans "Impact Visit" agent and Lannan Foundation visiting team noted as striking the culturally relevant behavior displayed by the children, individually and as a group. Most students take an ostentatious pride in attending the school, "their school" in their own words, and in having a working knowledge of the their language. Some of them have been "importing" some language in their home. Some others proudly speak of using the language at home with their relatives, mostly their grandparents.

Two former students have been transitioning from our program to conventional schools outside the reservation. One is in 5th grade in a rural area school not very far from the reservation and was a "straight A student" for the first year in the conventional school as a 4th grader. The other one finished her 4th grade in a conventional school in New jersey. She struggled for the first 4 months but passed on to 5th grade, and based on a recent phone conversation with the parents is now totally adjusted and performing well.

*Question 7.* In your work, have you noted whether native language proficiency and native cultural familiarity have any impact on the self-esteem and resiliency of native immersion students?

Answer. Our program is still young and the observation of this type of impact is limited. However, we see most of our older students [4th and 5th graders] having a positive image of themselves as individuals, as members of a traditional family, and as a group by contrast with other children from conventional schools. This is observed in several families who reported the fact to us on various occasions like our Winter (Christmas) Celebration and Family Puppet Making workshop . Families



report often on their student spontaneously singing traditional songs at home that they learned at the school.

---

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
CLARENA BROCKIE

*Question 1.* What is the best proven method to support language preservation and to ensure that native languages remain living languages, spoken by children as well as elders, in schools and in homes across native communities throughout the United States?

Answer. Immersion Schools not only revitalize the language but preserve the cultural heritage, ceremonies, traditions and history. Native languages survive when it is spoken on a continual basis, in the home as well as in schools. In some communities the language is center when traditional ceremonies are conducted.

*Question 2.* Can you discuss the importance of having living languages and name some of the benefits as they relate to cognitive development, literacy, academic achievement, college attainment or other education and development goals?

Answer. In 2002 the White Clay Immersion opened a full Native Language immersion school operating under the Aaniiih Nakoda College in direct response to the reality that only 25 Aaniiih language fluent speaker remained in 1997. With research and planning the school was opened in 2002 under the direction of Dr. Lynette Chandler. Today there are no fluent elder Aaniiih speaker lives on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Graduates from White Clay Immersion School have transitioned to public schools and are recognized by these schools as leaders in student government, academics and sports. They have received awards for Science, Math, English, Literature and Art. Of the original 2011 graduating class for WCIS, three of the four students have been inducted into the National Honor Society. These students are also on the student council, participate in Jobs for Montana Graduates, Indian Club, Yearbook, volunteer programs and lead the class awards at the end of the school year.

*Question 3.* Can you address concerns expressed by critics of immersion or bilingual education programs that exposure to two or more languages simultaneously at a young age may delay or hamper language acquisition or proficiency? Does a child's ability to speak multiple languages impact developmental milestones or academic achievement in later years? If so how? Are there benefits of training a child to communicate in two or more languages?

Answer. As expressed in question two, the White Clay Immersion students have excelled beyond the average student. These students have transition without any difficulty and have continued to excel in the public school setting.

*Question 4.* What are some of the spillover benefits of having immersion programs? Can you discuss any impacts or progress toward: (a) Creating Leaders (b) Community building (c) Cultural identity/pride.

Answer. It is essential to the survival of the language that every effort is made to assure the continuance of the language that is in danger of being lost. It is more than a "spillover benefit." The Language reveals who we are as Native people, building pride and cultural identity. However the Immersion schools provides a rounded education, including knowing the oral history, those that sustained the people, provided them guidance and knowledge on culturally what was important such as respect, generosity, listening to your elders, how to survive, learning from your mistakes, believing in the Creator, and spiritual guidance. With a good foundation, they become leaders in the community.

*Question 5.* Maintaining living native languages takes an immense amount of time, energy and resources to design appropriate curricula and learning materials. It is similarly challenging to cultivate native language instructors and professionals who can successfully educate pupils in the native language. Moreover, piecing together annual budgets from a number of different funding sources can be difficult. Are more resources needed to support the immersion language programs? And if so, why?

Answer. Yes. Financial resources are limited. Some private Public schools have restricts that immersion schools don't always fit under.

If language revitalization had to wait for funding, it would be very difficult to implement. When a language is in danger of being lost, those people must do whatever they can to assure that it continues. Sometimes it starts with classes in the home or from a small private grant to implement whys of retaining the language by hosting classes, paring language speakers with learners, having after school pro-

grams. But at some point immersion is needed to insure the retention of the language.

Funding is sporadic, with constant grant writing meeting with foundations and local fundraisers. The Administration of Native American programs (ANA) has specific language that limits what you can do or every three years a new objective or direction is required. If the basic goal is to learn the language, the measure should be how many students have learned and retained the language. And the funding is limited to three years.

*Question 6.* Language is closely tied to one's identity and self-confidence, and in communities, language teaches and reinforces the traditional culture and values. Do you have evidence or data comparing the psychological well-being or academic achievement of immersion students versus non-immersion native students?

Answer. The evidence we have is the success of the WCIS and how they are progressing. The first class of 2011 will be graduating next year and we will summarize their success academically, socially and culturally.

*Question 7.* In your work, have you noted whether native language proficiency and native culture familiarity have any impact on the self-esteem and resiliency of native immersion students?

Answer. The ANC White Class Immersion School had its first graduating class in 2011 with only one other class and we have evaluations and measures in place for reviewing the success of the program. We realized that tracking graduates and gathering data is an important tool in measuring success.

Summary: My answers are based on the White Clay Immersion School student's success, experience and transition into the public school.

---

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
HON. ED DELGADO

*Question 1.* What is the best proven method to support language preservation and to ensure that native languages remain living languages, spoken by children as well as elders, in schools and in homes across native communities throughout the United States?

Answer. The best-proven method to ensure the survival of native languages is Indigenous Language Immersion. This form of immersion includes incorporating the Indigenous culture and using the Indigenous language as the medium of instruction for all subjects.

*Question 2.* Can you discuss the importance of having living languages and name some of the benefits as they relate to cognitive development, literacy, academic achievement, college attainment or other education and development goals?

Answer. The importance of having a living language is paramount for the survival of Indigenous identity, worldview, knowledge, ceremonies; in fact, a living language holds a whole world that includes every bit of information and knowledge about the universe from the point of view of the Indigenous people speaking that language. The language provides invaluable information of how to heal the Indigenous people physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually from the historical trauma experienced over many generations. The benefits for cognitive development are acquiring more complex skills at an earlier age and cognitive flexibility. In an environment where one's own ancestral language is living and thriving it has positive impacts on the following cognitive skills: critical thinking, memory, problem solving and decision-making. Indigenous literacy includes oral tradition, culture, art; Indigenous literacy is beneficial to supporting a thriving, living language. The works of William Demmert cite that academic achievement is much higher in Native American children who know how to speak their language and participate in their culture. It provides them with a foundation of how to see the world and helps them navigate in the culture of academia from kindergarten to college and beyond. A living language affords the Indigenous community the ability to provide their young people with necessary tools to give them success in both their culture and mainstream society's culture.

*Question 3.* Can you address concerns expressed by critics of immersion or bilingual education programs that exposure to two or more languages simultaneously at a young age may delay or hamper language acquisition or proficiency? Does a child's ability to speak multiple languages impact developmental milestones or academic achievement in later years? If so how? Are there benefits of training a child to communicate in two or more languages?

Answer. The concerns expressed by critics of immersion or bilingual education are usually centered on students acquiring English and one other language. In the

arena of Indigenous Language Immersion, it only benefits a young person to have their ancestral language as their first language and/or bilingual in both their language and English. There are no delays or hampering of language acquisition or proficiency when it comes to educating Indigenous youth in their own language as well as English. A child's ability to speak multiple languages only improves their success in reaching developmental milestones and achieving academically throughout their lives. Training a child to communicate in two or more languages provides the critical thinking skills to adapt intelligently to any environment whether academically or socially.

*Question 4.* What are some of the spillover benefits of having immersion programs? Can you discuss any impacts or progress toward: (a) Creating Leaders (b) Community building (c) Cultural identity/pride.

Answer. Some lasting benefits of having immersion programs are strengthening the community as a whole. The nature of Indigenous Language Immersion includes the participation of wide range of age groups. Within our families, we have experienced destruction of relationships via boarding schools and mainstream education. With immersion, families will need to work together to mend and maintain those relationships. When family relationships are strong, it builds a strong community. When our communities are strong we see a decrease in social ills and an increase in cultural identity and pride.

*Question 5.* Maintaining living native languages takes an immense amount of time, energy and resources to design appropriate curricula and learning materials. It is similarly challenging to cultivate native language instructors and professionals who can successfully educate pupils in the native language. Moreover, piecing together annual budgets from a number of different funding sources can be difficult. Are more resources needed to support the immersion language programs? And if so, why?

Answer. Yes, indeed, more funding resources are needed. In the particular, the language community in Oneida, WI is in the process of creating second language speakers in order to have an immersion or a bilingual program intended to create first language speakers of Oneida again. The amount of time and energy it takes to maintain one's course to become a second language speaker at this point in our language's history is a massive challenge. Our audio resources must utilized in the most efficient manner possible because we have no more first language speakers who are able to help us. New and creative media must be made with the previously recorded material in order to mirror the language exposure that one would have naturally. Strategic planning of funding resources must be based on producing quality resources and functional second language speakers. The work involved in growing our own fluent speaking Oneida teachers and then re-educating our community and youth is the most important effort that will echo for generations to come.

*Question 6.* Language is closely tied to one's identity and self-confidence, and in communities, language teaches and reinforces the traditional culture and values. Do you have evidence or data comparing the psychological well-being or academic achievement of immersion students versus non-immersion native students?

Answer. We are in the beginning stages of documenting the kind of evidence and data that will compare Oneida students who are being taught with our current curriculum to those who are not using our current curriculum. Our community does not have Indigenous Language Immersion at this time. However, the current curriculum produced by the Oneida Language Revitalization Department, is being offered for credit at a nearby high school where data is being collected and will show improvements in academic success for the Oneida students learning language.

*Question 7.* In your work, have you noted whether native language proficiency and native culture familiarity have any impact on the self-esteem and resiliency of native immersion students?

Answer. The impact that native language proficiency and native cultural familiarity has on students is definitely positive. They show a pride in themselves that is authentic and not constructed from mainstream society's culture. They know whom they are, where they come from and where they fit in or belong. Their self-confidence and self-esteem soar, which helps with behavioral, issues as well as managing school work. Students show resiliency when faced with life's problems or trauma because they have their traditional ways to rely on to get them through whatever kind of issues they may have.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
NAMAKA RAWLINS

*Question 1.* What is the best proven method to support language preservation and to ensure that native languages remain living languages, spoken by children as well as elders, in schools and in homes across native communities throughout the United States?

Answer. The short answer to this question is that use of the language as the medium of instruction in schools and medium of communication between staff in native communities is the best-proven method to support language preservation and maintenance as living languages. I will address this question first with information from other countries, followed by our experience in Hawai'i and then discuss the spread of the model through our network of Native American language medium/immersion schools on a national level.

Providing education through the medium of small locally distinct languages is a growing international phenomenon. The countries with the most experience in use of small autochthonous languages as the language of education are found in Western Europe, especially Scandinavia. Even for those countries, educational use of such small languages as the medium of normal public education is less than a century old. The advantage that Western Europeans have in developing this sort of education, however, is their long history of developing high multilingualism in their national school systems for their majority populations. These countries, therefore, have a high sensitivity to language use in schooling that makes it easier for them to see the benefits of education through small languages.

Some examples of small Western European autochthonous language-speaking populations similar in size to Native American languages are the cases of the Faroese language, the dialect network of Romansh and the Sami languages discussed below. This is followed by the example of New Zealand Māori and then a detailed description of the Hawaiian situation. The spread of the model to states outside Hawai'i closes this section.

#### **The Faroese Language of Denmark**

The Faroese language is spoken in the Faroe Islands, to the north of Scotland. These small islands are a part of Denmark, but run with a semi-autonomous government. That autonomous government has some similarities to tribal governments in the United States. The population of the Faroe Islands in 2013 was estimated to be 49,709, living in an area covering 540 square miles. Over fifty American Indian reservations are larger than the Faroe Islands, but most have smaller populations.

In the early 1900s, there was fear that the unique Faroese language and culture would die out. The language had formerly been suppressed in the schools, churches and government. The people were considered backward and the education level was considered quite low.

Today, both the language and the socio-economic situation are quite different. Almost 100 percent of the population of the Faroe Islands now speaks Faroese, with those who do not being residents who recently moved to the islands. The language is widely used in local religious institutions and also in the local government. The survival of the language is attributed to Danish government change in 1937, when Faroese replaced Danish as the language of instruction of all schools in the Faroe Islands. The language is spoken by all born and raised in the Faroe Islands, a demographic that makes up the vast majority of the some 50,000 people living in the islands. Education through Faroese includes preschool, K-12 education, and vocational training. There is also a small university similar to a tribal college in the Faroe Islands. The university offers a small set of courses at the bachelors, masters and doctoral level for the student population of 142. Teacher training through Faroese is also available.

Although education is through Faroese, all Faroe Islanders also learn Danish and English in schools and are highly proficient in Danish. The government of the Faroe Islands provides special support for university students to study in mainstream Denmark through Danish and also to attend English medium universities outside Denmark. The Faroe Islands were once a socioeconomic backwater, but the community has done well educationally and socio-economically. Its Human Development Index (HDI) as rated by the United Nations is 0.950 (considered "very high"). This is higher than that of Denmark as a whole at 0.900 (also considered "very high") and also that of the United States at 0.914. The revitalization of the Faroese language from the late 1930s using a modern educational system immersed in the local language can be considered very successful.

### **The Diverse Dialects of Romansh in Switzerland**

Romansh is spoken in southern Switzerland. There are five regional dialects. The dialects are very different from each other and each has its own writing system, making them effectively five different languages. This is similar to the situation with certain American Indian languages, which are closely related, or considered dialects of each other, e.g., Ojibwe dialects, Tohono O'odham and Pima, Lakota and Dakota, etc. The dialects are separated from each other, often by areas where most of the population speaks German. This, again, is similar to certain American Indian languages which are spoken on several reservations in an area with intervening populations of non-Native Americans, e.g., Ojibwe reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin and Lushootseed (Salish) speaking peoples on multiple reservations in western Washington.

The most widely spoken dialect of Romansh has about 18,000 speakers and the smallest dialect has about 1,000 speakers. In all dialects many of the speakers are older people. Similar to a number of Indian Reservations, the Romansh are not the sole people living in their home areas. Besides the German speakers living among them, the Romansh have considerable contact with Italian and French speakers who inhabit nearby areas of Switzerland where Italian and French are official as well as bordering countries of Italy and France. Finally, the home area of the Romansh including St. Moritz is popular with tourists from many countries, including English speakers.

Education through Romansh is rather new in the Romansh area, beginning in earnest only in the later half of the 20th century. Not all Romansh villages have education through Romansh. However, where education through Romansh is in effect, it has resulted in increasing numbers of children using the language. In 2000, there were 6,411 students attending school in Romansh. Although each area uses its own dialect in school, there is also an overarching school dialect that has been established as a bridge among dialects. Students in Romansh medium schools also learn this bridge dialect in addition to their home dialects. All students from these Romansh schools graduate highly fluent in German and often speak French, Italian and English. Jean- Jacques Furer, who has done extensive research on Romansh, concluded in 2005 that there are still enough speakers to ensure that Romansh will survive in the long term. He considers the Romansh-language school system the single most crucial factor in the survival of Romansh. Creating school materials and teacher training in Romansh and its various dialects has been a challenge but the government of Switzerland has been supportive.

At one time the Romansh were considered to be very backward and children were punished for using Romansh in the schools. The Romansh area today, however, is an economically vibrant area and the Romansh are full participants in the highly multilingual society of Switzerland. Their population concentrations, however, tend to be small villages, whose small local governments the Romansh control simply by being the majority population in these small villages. They do not have any special political autonomy in the sense that the Faroese of the Faroe Islands of Denmark do.

### **The Sami Languages of Norway, Sweden and Finland**

The Sami are the sole people of Europe who are both "indigenous" and "autochthonous." The term "autochthonous" (of the land) is appropriate for the Faroese and Romansh who originate in their home areas. However, the Faroese and Romansh are similar to the majority populations of their counties in their origins and historical life style—that is standard European agricultural and pastoral life. In contrast, the Sami are similar to many American Indians and Alaska Natives in being an indigenous people with a highly distinct traditional life style from the majority populations of their countries, while also "autochthonous" that is originating in that part of their home countries. The Sami were originally northern hunter-gatherers and herders of semi-domestic reindeer similar to the caribou whose herds were followed by certain Alaskan Native peoples. The traditional homes of the Sami were analogous to those of the Alaska Athabaskan peoples and not unlike the American Plains Indian tipi. The Sami share with American Indians a long period of persecution of their language and distinctive shamanic religion. Unlike the Faroese and Romansh, the Sami had their children taken from them and placed in boarding schools. This history has resulted in many individuals of Sami ancestry being unable to speak their ancestral language and some Sami languages going extinct.

Also similar to Native Americans, and different from other autochthonous peoples of Europe, the Sami have numerous land rights and traditional subsistence rights issues with the governments of the countries in which they live. Norway, Sweden and Finland have accorded Sami distinctive political rights similar to those of Native Americans in the United States. This autonomy is exercised through "Sami par-

liaments." Norway was the first country to establish this autonomy in 1973 with Sweden the latest in 1993. The small numbers of Sami living over the Russian border from Finland are not recognized as a distinct people by Russia.

There are ten distinct Sami languages, which are incomprehensible one from the other. Within the various Sami languages there are also dialect divisions. The largest Sami language is Northern Sami with 15,000 speakers in Northern Norway. Northern Sami is official in two Norwegian counties and in six towns, where the language is used in local government where the majority population is Northern Sami. An official writing system was adopted in 1979. There are also some Northern Sami living in adjoining areas of Sweden and Finland. In Norway, approximately 1,000 children have Northern Sami as their primary language (mother tongue) and attend school through the Northern Sami language through secondary school. These children and schools are located primarily in the core Sami areas of Karasjok and Kautokeino. These children also graduate fully fluent in Norwegian. Like students in mainstream Norwegian schools, they typically study two foreign languages, one of which is English before graduation from high school. There is also a Sami university college with an enrollment of about 150 students. That university uses Northern Sami as the primary language of education with some courses offered through other languages including English, due to the high multilingualism of the Sami youth enrolled.

The other Sami languages are much smaller than Northern Sami. Some have less than one hundred speakers left; yet the governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland recognize the right of the distinctive Sami peoples speaking those languages to education in their own languages. Most groups aspire to school systems through their own languages such as those that currently exist for the Northern Sami, but lack sufficient teachers fluent in the languages. In such cases, courses in the language as a second language are offered for children and the community in mainstream schools as an initial stepping stone toward education through the medium of the local language. A similar situation exists in areas where Northern Sami was formerly spoken and the local Northern Sami are seeking to return the language to their children. For example, in Finland in 1998, approximately 115 children at the primary and secondary level were receiving almost all their education through Northern Sami, even though they generally did not enter school knowing the language.

The efforts of the Inari Sami of Finland are an example of a very small Sami language being reestablished by its community. The Inari Sami was never a very large group of people and once faced extinction. Today, theirs is a growing language of approximately 300 speakers out of a total ethnic population of 800. While most of that population lives around Inari Lake, many are scattered elsewhere in Finland and thus not able to participate in the efforts of language revitalization.

By the end of the 20th century, the only people who spoke their language were elders. In the late 1980s, an Inari Sami organization was established to revitalize the language focusing on including the language in the modern life of the area where the Inari Sami lived. In 2000, they began a "language nest" program similar to the Hawaiian Pūnana Leo to produce young speakers. They also established programs to produce adult speakers using the "masterapprentice" system combined with college credit courses in Inari Sami. Inari Sami youth in the local high school were also provided the opportunity to study their language as a course. The Inari Sami language organization combined the development of second language speakers with efforts to produce materials and develop modern terminology. Through this they were able to begin Inari Sami medium elementary education for children in their community located on Inari Lake in northern Finland. By 2004, they had reached grade 4 with a population of 18 students in their small Inari Sami language medium school with plans to expand to higher grades. All those children are also fluent in Finnish. Inari Sami medium education is producing a population of fluent speakers and making it possible for families using the language in the home to maintain the language as a first language in cooperation with the educational system. While the Inari Sami medium school began much later than efforts in Faroese, Romansh and even Northern Sami, it is making good progress in a context of high support from the Finnish government. The familiarity of Scandinavian governments with producing high quality modern education with high fluency in several languages is where Inari Sami language schooling has an advantage over Native American language medium schooling. The Finnish language itself was not generally seriously used in education until the turn of the 20th century, requiring much development of new terminology and development of teachers. Furthermore, Finland has two official languages within its mainstream population, Finnish and Swedish. The Swedish population is located on the western edge of the country and has full preschool through doctoral (P-20) education available to it in that language. In addi-

tion, all students in Finland learn the other official language in school along with English and at least one foreign language. The Sami schools produce similar results with the addition of Sami as well.

Although the United States does not have the experience with multilingualism in schooling that Finland does, quite a few Native American peoples are positioned by their populations to follow the example of the Sami peoples in terms of developing education through their own languages. These positioned Native American groups also have larger populations of speakers than the larger and medium sized populations of Sami peoples. Examples include the Choctaw ("ethnic" population: 103,910—"speaker" population: 10,343), Navajo ("ethnic" population: 286,731—"speaker" population: 169,471), Yup'ik ("ethnic" population: 28,927—"speaker" population: 18,950), Pueblo-Keres ("ethnic" population 49,695—"speaker" population: 12,945), Tohono O'odham ("ethnic" population: 19,522—"speaker" population: 7,270), Crow ("ethnic" population: 10,332—"speaker" population: 3,705), Sioux ("ethnic" population: 112,176—"speaker" population: 18,616), Chippewa/Ojibwe ("ethnic" population: 112,757—"speaker" population: 8,371), Hawaiian ("ethnic" population: 156,146—"speaker" population: 24,042). Several of these large to medium Native American groups also have their own tribal colleges similar in size to the college of the Northern Sami in Norway.

With the smallest Sami groups having suffered complete language loss or near total loss with only a handful of elder speakers left, there are also parallels in very small Native American groups, especially those of the West Coast and Alaska. Among the Scandinavian countries, even the smallest Sami languages are supported in developing into the medium of education for their schools, with intermediate steps of support as shown in the example of Inari Sami described above.

#### **The Example of New Zealand Māori**

New Zealand is a former British colony in the Southern Hemisphere that is approximately the size of California with a population  $\frac{1}{8}$  of that of California. The indigenous Māori of New Zealand are the largest minority at approximately 15 percent (600,000 individuals) of the overall population of 4.5 million. The Māori are not only a large group for an indigenous people but they also have a unique political position within the country due to the Treaty of Waitangi through which Britain gained political sovereignty over the country. As is the case with other indigenous groups elsewhere in the world, Māori students tend to perform more poorly than other groups in New Zealand mainstream schools.

Traditionally, all Māori spoke a single Polynesian language, but use of the language was greatly eroded through schooling in which only English was allowed. In spite of inroads made against the use of Māori language at least until the end of World War II, most Māori spoke the Māori language. The language then began a rapid demise among children resulting in efforts to teach it as a language course in universities and high schools. In the early 1980s, a movement began in the country to use the language in schooling. The national government provided major financial support for this and large numbers of children were enrolled first at the pre-school level and then in elementary and secondary schools. Māori medium television and radio also developed rapidly and today provide high quality programming for Māori speakers.

The Māori language revitalization movement has had very positive results in terms of revitalizing the language and in developing students with fluency in both Māori and English. The initial growth of these schools in the 1980s and 1990s, however, was exceedingly rapid creating some challenges in terms of quality control. The quality issues led to excessive government regulation along mainstream lines that failed to account for unique features of education through the language. Excessive government regulation and the internal quality questions led to disillusionment within the movement at the same time that communities were experiencing the emotionally discouraging effects of the loss of fluent Māori speaking elders. Cooperation among schools and also between them and university programs in Māori and teacher training was less than optimal. Coupled with all this were economic challenges in Māori communities leading to large Māori emigration to Australia for employment. All these issues led to a decline in enrollments in Māori language schooling in the early part of the 21st century.

There is now, however, the beginning of another increase in enrollments as news of the positive academic as well as linguistic results of Māori schooling is beginning to spread through the Māori population. An example of an especially successful school is Nga Taiatea Whare Kura located in Hamilton, New Zealand, where students are performing well above the national average for Māori students. Even with the effect of the period of decline, the enrollment in Māori language medium schooling is larger than that of any indigenous group in the world. In 2013, over 17,000

students were being educated through Māori for more than half the day in over 280 school sites, with well over 95 percent ethnically Māori student population. An even larger number of students are studying Māori in English medium schools, either as a course or attending classes for less than half the day through Māori. In 2013, there were over 140,000 such second language style learners of Māori, of which some 55 percent were ethnically Māori. Most students in New Zealand, regardless of ethnicity, also learn simple Māori words, greetings and songs in Māori sometime within their education even if they do not study Māori as a full language.

### **Hawaiian, an Example from the United States**

Within the United States, Hawaiian has the longest history of being used as a regular government medium of education, both historically and in the contemporary period. Hawai'i has the second oldest government public education system in the United States, having been established in 1840 shortly after that of Massachusetts. The Hawai'i public education system was originally taught and administered entirely through Hawaiian. It included a small college that prepared teachers. The level of literacy of Native Hawaiians produced in this system was higher than that of any other country and only exceeded by a few cities in Scotland and some parts of New England, but not by any other country. There was also high literacy in other languages, especially English among Hawaiian speakers. Public education through Hawaiian was made illegal in 1896 as part of the process of the annexation of Hawai'i to the United States. That ban was not removed until 1986. Between those two dates, Native Hawaiian academic achievement plummeted, with Native Hawaiians the least academically successful among all ethnic groups by the 1980s.

In 1983, the non-profit 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Inc. was established to revitalize Hawaiian. At that point, a careful count of fluent Hawaiian speakers aged 18 or younger was numbered at 36. Older highly fluent speakers were either born before 1920 or from a tiny isolated community on the small island of Ni'ihau. Hawaiian, therefore, had a much more endangered profile in the 1980s than most other Native American languages as there were many reservations and isolated communities in other states where the languages were still being regularly spoken by all adults and most children at that time. The potential for Hawaiian surviving was also more dismal than that of the related Polynesian Māori language, for which there were many speakers born before 1950.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo began by establishing "language nests", a concept pioneered in 1982 in New Zealand for the Māori language. Language nests are full day and full year centers operated five days a week where children under the age of public education are gathered together with fluent speakers of an endangered language to use that target endangered language exclusively throughout the day. They are very much focused on the family and rely on community expertise, especially elders, to deliver a program that integrates use of the endangered language for contemporary purposes, but based in the traditional culture and worldview of traditional speakers of that language.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo's language nests are called "Pūnana Leo" and include a system that serves communities throughout the state of Hawai'i. In 1986, the state legislature passed legislation allowing Pūnana Leo to function under state day care and preschool legislation with an exemption for any certification requirements for those teaching in the Pūnana Leo. This recognizes the fact that early childhood education qualifications used in English medium preschools do not prepare teachers for the unique language and culture requirements of Pūnana Leo nor for the unique features of teaching academic content through Hawaiian. The Pūnana Leo carries out internal teacher training through on-site apprenticeship-like learning, through an annual live-in week long in-service summer training, and through two weekend live-in in-service trainings annually. All Pūnana Leo training is through Hawaiian and conducted in cooperation with the state Hawaiian language college. Among the highly distinctive features of that training is preparing Pūnana Leo teachers to develop early literacy in Hawaiian using a syllabic method highly distinctive of Hawaiian and not applicable to English. This methodology has resulted in the majority of four year-olds in the Pūnana Leo able to read in Hawaiian before entering kindergarten.

Contemporary education through Hawaiian was developed from the 'Aha Pūnana Leo. In 1987, the state Department of Education agreed to incorporate a Hawaiian language medium kindergarten established by the 'Aha Pūnana Leo at two different sites. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo in turn committed to finding families and teachers as well as providing teaching materials. The state provided the salaries of those teachers and the classrooms. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo produced teaching materials using Hawaiian language speaking college faculty and students along with parent volunteers to cut and paste into the resulting texts. The programs expanded in this man-



ner from grade to grade through elementary school and also to other sites where language nest educated children were ready to enter into elementary kindergarten classes. Education at the elementary school level was, and remains, totally through Hawaiian with English introduced to a single English language course beginning in grade five. Students enter grade five, however, fully fluent in conversational English and having transferred their literacy skills in Hawaiian to literacy in English.

At the intermediate and high school levels, different models were adapted in different communities based on the availability of resources. At one extreme are communities where education through Hawaiian to grade 12 is confined to a stream of two or three courses per semester within a mainstream English medium school. Students take other courses through English with the general population of the host school. In other cases, separate full Hawaiian medium intermediate and high school sites have been established, typically with attached full elementary programs. At these sites, education at the intermediate and high school level can be totally in Hawaiian, with the English class begun in grade 5 continuing as a single course through to grade 12. The English class in some sites, such as that of the Hawaiian language college laboratory school site Nawahi School, is taught through Hawaiian. Some sites are standard public schools, while others are charters.

In 1996, the state legislature mandated the establishment of a Hawaiian language college to serve schooling through Hawaiian with undergraduate and graduate training in the Hawaiian language. The college, located at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, works in partnership with the non-profit 'Aha Pūnana Leo to produce curriculum materials, train K–12 teachers, provide inservice, provide new vocabulary, and provide electronic access to those resources. In addition, the state legislature mandated that the Hawaiian language college operate a laboratory school program with the P–12 Nawahiokalani'opu'u School (Nawahi) site as its primary site. The Hawaiian language college itself is operated and administered entirely through Hawaiian and requires its faculty to teach in the P–12 level in its laboratory school in order to obtain tenure, thus creating an integrated program from preschool through the doctorate. The college also works closely with the 'Imiloa Science Museum on the university campus to provide bilingual Hawaiian and English signage and tours as well as displays on education through the Hawaiian language based in Hawaiian traditions. This not only provides additional access to educational resources through Hawaiian, but also allows the larger community to learn about developments in education through Hawaiian.

Among qualifications provided in the College through Hawaiian are a B.A. in Hawaiian Studies, a teaching certificate, an M.A. in Hawaiian Language and Literature, an M.A. in Hawaiian Language and Culture Education, and a Ph.D. in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization.

Another unique feature of the Hawaiian Language College is its outreach mission to other indigenous peoples of the United States and the world. The college provides a B.A. in linguistics taught through English to allow other Native peoples to come to the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and study language revitalization with Native Hawaiians. The College's Ph.D. program in Indigenous Language Revitalization is open to other indigenous peoples and allows for students to continue studying their indigenous languages as part of that program. There are plans to implement support at the teacher certification and masters' level for other indigenous peoples parallel to the presently operational track taught through Hawaiian.

The movement to revitalize Hawaiian is just over 30 years old and began at a period when it was still illegal to use Hawaiian in public schooling. For the 2013–2014 school year, there are 2,642 enrolled from preschool (Pūnana Leo language nest) to grade 12 in schools taught through Hawaiian. Unlike Māori, enrollments in Hawaiian medium schooling has never declined but has instead continued to grow steadily since its initiation. Most encouraging for the movement has been the establishment of Hawaiian language speaking homes where children are being raised with Hawaiian as their first language. While still very much a minority of the children enrolled in schools taught through Hawaiian, this population is the result of graduates of schools taught through Hawaiian deciding to use Hawaiian as the first language of their children.

When the movement began, there was great concern within the educational establishment that the children in these schools would grow up to be adults unable to speak, read and write English and lacking the academic skills expected of students graduating from the public schools. This concern was not limited to educators, but was also very strong in the general community and even among many Native Hawaiians. One argument against the schools was that the nonstandard English dialect spoken by many Native Hawaiians (popularly called "Pidgin") made it especially important that Native Hawaiian children attend schools where only Standard English was used. There were also those who saw attention by the government to

Hawaiian in school was inappropriate when other languages such as Japanese were of major importance to the state economy. Many thought that children educated in Hawaiian in elementary school would become dropouts in high school and contribute to already dismal high school graduation results of Native Hawaiians.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo took the stand, however, that maintenance of the Hawaiian language among their children was a right of Native Hawaiian parents who saw primary fluency in Hawaiian as essential for maintaining Native Hawaiian identity and cultural practices—including religious practices—that were expressed through the language. Hawaiian language medium education was seen as the only way in which this right could be protected. Evidence for this position was based on the experience of the loss of the Hawaiian language in schools where only English was used, and also the observation of loss of Hawaiian among Hawaiian speaking children who entered the bilingual education program designed for immigrant children. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo also argued that the academic achievement of Native Hawaiians relative to other ethnic groups actually decreased after the elimination of schooling through Hawaiian in 1896.

While the right of Native Hawaiians to maintain the language in its homeland has been at the center of the movement in Hawai'i, the programs have produced strong academic outcomes. Indeed, some of the most impressive outcomes have been in the areas where naysayers were most adamant in insisting that such schooling would be a failure. Furthermore, the sites that have been strongest in use of Hawaiian have also been those that have had the highest level of academic success.

We have especially good data from Nawahi School, the P-12 laboratory school of the Hawaiian language college. This is also the school that is strongest in use of Hawaiian and the school where there is an especially high number of children entering from homes where they have spoken Hawaiian from birth. The P-12 enrollment at the Nawahi campus for the 2013-2014 school year was 350 students. The graduating class represented the fifteenth graduating class of the school. Since its first graduating class, Nawahi has had a rate of 100 percent high school graduation and over 80 percent continuing on to college. 100 percent of the class of 2014 is enrolled in college for the fall of 2014. Students are concurrently enrolled at the university or at the Hawaiian language college, earning college credits upon completion of high school. The success of Nawahi has resulted in communities requesting to establish satellite campuses of Nawahi in other areas and still other schools being included in the laboratory school system as a way of recognizing their programs. The World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) has confirmed the overall strength of the preschool to tertiary programs of the Hawaiian language college through international accreditation.

Upon graduation, the majority of graduates from Nawahi enroll in the University of Hawaii system. However, there have been students from Nawahi who have graduated from the University of Portland, Northern Arizona University, Seattle University, Loyola Marymount University and Stanford, among others. The fact that upon high school graduation students from Nawahi can function in English medium universities is evidence in support of the school's contention that restricting English to a single course from grade 5 produces a high level of English proficiency by high school graduation. We have also discovered that students at Nawahi approach learning Standard English with keen interest as an "additional" language to Hawaiian eliminating the often times observed identity conflicts between the local "Pidgin" (Creole English) and Standard English use amongst Hawai'i's youth.

The full use of Hawaiian as the medium of education at Nawahi has had the opposite effect predicted by detractors relative to mastery of foreign languages. Since the founding of the school, it has sought to have all students graduate with experience in learning at least one additional language to Hawaiian and English. At present, all students in grades 1 through 6 study spoken and written Japanese for 1 hour and 40 minutes per week. This is more time than is provided in Japanese International Baccalaureate programs in the public schools and even exceeds the amount of Japanese studied in elementary school in the state's sole private Japanese Buddhist school. In the past, Nawahi has provided instruction in Latin, Spanish, and Marquesan for intermediate and high school students, but presently lacks the resources to maintain such programming. The skills that its students have in learning languages are also evidenced by the accomplishments of some of its graduates upon leaving Nawahi. One graduate completed a B.A. in political science in three years with minors in French and Spanish. Another studied Italian and then worked as a translator of English articles into Italian for an Italian magazine. Still, a third was a Peace Corp volunteer in Kazakhstan where he was recognized as the best learner of the difficult Kazakh language among those working in that country.

While records are especially good for Nawahi, other programs taught through Hawaiian have also done well academically. Over the past 15 years, there have been

graduates of the overall system including Nawahi who have gone on to become journalists, doctors, lawyers, nurses, contractors, members of the military, television reporters, policemen, musicians, firemen, teachers, and professors among other professions. The strengths of the program have resulted in one of the challenges of schools taught through Hawaiian being the loss of high school students to recruitment of prestigious private schools. In such private schools, Hawaiian-speaking students provide a unique resource in terms of strengthening private school connections to the Native Hawaiian community and its culture.

Often overlooked in evaluating the contribution of Hawaiian language medium/immersion schooling in Hawai'i has been the social impact. Hawai'i, the Native Hawaiian community in particular, faces a "brain drain", that is those who do well academically are especially prone to move away from the islands and the Native Hawaiian community. The graduates of schooling through Hawaiian tend to stay in state at state colleges and universities and those who leave for education come back to Hawaii after graduation. A considerable number of them are involved in services to the Native Hawaiian community through work in government and private foundation offices involving Native Hawaiian people, including education. Others are involved in distinctive Native Hawaiian cultural activities in which language fluency is especially important.

Positive social impacts have been observed beyond simply the students themselves. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo requires all parents in its programs to attend weekly meetings, contribute their time to running the language nests and also study the Hawaiian language themselves. This committed behavior of parents to their child's education continued as they entered into the public schools resulting in high parent involvement in the education of children in schools conducted through Hawaiian. In quite a number of cases, this has resulted in parents going on to college to earn a degree, often in the area of education and themselves becoming teachers in the Hawaiian language medium/immersion school system.

In spite of the huge role that these schools have had in assuring the survival of the Hawaiian language and culture and their academic and social impacts, they still face challenges. One of these is the lack of congruence between best practice as developed for them and the educational policies and laws of the federal government and the state government. These laws relate to assessment of educational progress, provisions of support for students with academic challenges, definitions of "highly qualified teachers", and programming eligibility and reporting requirements for grant funds. Such lack of congruence pushes schools taught through Hawaiian away from the types of programming that have produced the highest language revitalization, academic achievement, and positive social results. Rather than disillusionment as occurred under similar pressures on Māori language medium education in New Zealand, Hawaiian medium education has been rather resilient and considerably successful in overcoming such pressures. Part of the reason for this may be the history of interethnic relationships in Hawaii that has resulted in both leaders and administrators of public education and the leaders of Hawaiian language revitalization more open to addressing issues from a shared history and cultural honoring from both sides. Another source of support has been from external Native Hawaiian entities that have helped move through periods of difficulty as answers to challenges are sought.

#### **Other Native American Language Medium Schools**

The general movement to revitalize Native American languages has spread throughout Native America with inspiration coming from programs in Hawai'i and foreign countries, especially New Zealand and Canada. The overall movement has also built from experience during last half of the 20th century with bilingual education that approached contemporary Native American language medium/immersion education in some features. During that period, certain Navajo bilingual programs such as that of Rough Rock made extensive use of Navajo with first language speakers of the language in the earliest grades, but then switched to primary use of English as the medium of education. The academic and English proficiency outcomes were quite strong, but the use of Navajo in schooling was organized in such a way to gradually lead students away from use of Navajo as a language of contemporary life and therefore raising their own children in it. Contemporary Native American language programming is explicitly focused on having students use the target Native American language as their language for raising their own children upon adulthood.

There are currently programs in fourteen states besides Hawaii, with programs planned for implementation in the near future in several other states and also in US Pacific Island territories. The number of languages involved in these efforts is now over twenty. Many other communities with other languages are also interested

in starting these programs. Most of the existing programs are still at the preschool and lower elementary school stages and none have full high school programs as exist for Hawaiian and the languages in Europe and New Zealand described earlier. Only a few of the US programs besides Hawaiian have been in existence long enough to have had students who moved on to English medium high school and on to graduation. However, preliminary results are positive for these students and communities. These families have rallied behind the movement to save their languages and are investing in the future with their children. Difficulties exist, however, with funding and also in the interface with policies and legislation that conflict with the goals of Native American language revitalization.

*Question 2.* Can you discuss the importance of having living languages and name some of the benefits as they relate to cognitive development, literacy, academic achievement, college attainment or other education and development goals?

*Answer.* As illustrated above, it is possible for very small groups to maintain living languages through schools taught through those languages. It is also the case that in the contemporary world such schools taught through small languages produce exceptionally high proficiency in the mainstream language (e.g., Danish in the Faroe Islands, German in Romansh villages, Norwegian in the Northern Sami area, etc.) with that high fluency acquired at a very young age simply by the high level of interaction with the mainstream language in interaction with the mainstream community and government outside school itself. This has sometimes been called the “minority official language medium education advantage” as these small languages have a certain distinctive political status in their homelands. Students attending school in the country’s majority language find it much more difficult to learn a second language and usually do not do so until later in their school careers, even when there is extensive teaching of a second language in early elementary school. (Countries with small official languages such as Finland and Denmark share something of the “minority official language medium advantage” in that from an early age students in those countries realize that they need to learn large international languages such as English, which are readily available to them through international mass media and popular culture.)

Contemporary brain research has shown that high fluency in two languages, especially at a young age, results in higher cognitive development. That higher cognitive development is especially critical in what is called “executive functioning.” Executive functioning relates to the ability to concentrate and avoid distractors in focusing on a task. This cognitive advantage is useful in academics, and also in general adult life. It is an especially useful skill in higher education.

A further advantage of proficiency in two languages is an enhanced ability to learn other languages and cultures. Not only is there an ability to learn languages and culture, but an appreciation of how languages and cultures differ and thus a sensitivity that reduces the potential for misunderstanding even when encountering someone from a new language and culture for the first time. Linguistic and cultural skills are especially important in the contemporary world where there is so much economic and political interaction between highly diverse peoples. Such skills are also highly valued by the American military as it can find itself operating in an isolated area where there is no knowledge of English in the local population and no knowledge of the local language and culture within its own ranks.

A major advantage that Native American peoples have relative to the cognitive advantages to high multilingualism is the distinctiveness of Native American languages relative to English. The greater the distinctiveness between languages and cultures proficiently used by a student the greater the understanding of the breadth of differences possible in human languages and cultures.

Schools taught through Native American languages have an additional advantage relative to the development of literacy, as learning initial reading through a Native American language is easier than learning to read through English. There are several reasons for this. First, English is the most difficult of the European languages in which to learn initial reading. The reason is its highly irregular spelling system and also the phonotactics of the language with the “blends” of up to four consonants together that make it difficult for children. Native American writing systems are much more regular than that of English. The regularity of a writing system makes a huge difference in rapid mastery of reading by children. For example, the most regular writing system among European languages is that of Finnish. In a study on reading mastery, by the end of first grade, children in Finland can read Finnish with a rate of just 2 percent mistakes. This contrasts with a rate of 66 percent mistakes for first graders in England reading through English (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006).

An additional advantage of some Native American languages such as Cherokee, Ojibwe, Yup’ik and Hawaiian is phonotactics with relatively few consonant clusters

making initial reading rather easy to acquire. Children can generally learn to read syllabically earlier than they can learn to read by individual letters, but reading through languages with many consonant clusters as the case with English cannot be taught syllabically. The Cherokee writing system is distinct in being a syllabary, which is one reason for the high literacy among Cherokees in the 19th century. The strong identification of the local Native American language and culture with academics that develops through Native American language medium schooling encourages students in such schools to continue their schooling, both within the school and beyond it. While such schools are new in many Native American communities, the schools that have been in existence the longest—those for Blackfeet and Navajo for example—report higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance compared to other schools in their communities.

Although national educational goals of high school graduation and college attendance are being attended to and reached through Native American language medium schools, there are other important goals being reached as well. First, the focus on the traditional language and culture in these schools naturally incorporates character education from a base in the local indigenous traditions. This leads to a healthier community in terms of respecting and caring for others, including elders and younger children. The products of these schools feel a responsibility to uphold community values and thus are a positive force against the importation of criminal activity including gang culture into Native American communities. The products of these schools have been noted for their participation in community indigenous cultural activities and governments at a high level, as they are often the youngest individuals fluent in the traditional languages in which those highly regarded activities are conducted. Another area where these young people have participated is in military service, an occupational field where many Native Americans participate. Students from these schools have been able to pass the examinations for military service and serve honorably for their country. Their knowledge of their traditional languages may be of use to the government at some point in the same way that earlier generations of Native Americans used their languages as “code talkers”, including tribal members of the Navajo, Choctaw, and Comanche once did.

*Question 3.* Can you address concerns expressed by critics of immersion or bilingual education programs that exposure to two or more languages simultaneously at a young age may delay or hamper language acquisition or proficiency? Does a child's ability to speak multiple languages impact developmental milestones or academic achievement in later years? If so how? Are there benefits of training a child to communicate in two or more languages?

*Answer.* There has been considerable research into multilingual education over the past three decades that has discredited former commonly held views that education through a less dominant language will result in educational deficits. Much of this research has come out of Europe and Canada where all school children are required to study at least two languages, but there has been considerable research conducted in the United States as well. In short, rather than being a detriment, learning through a less commonly spoken language and thus learning two (or more languages) very well, has a positive academic effect. However, those effects are best seen in the long term, rather than in the short term, and are best realized in programs that involve a student over the many years of compulsory education. Furthermore, programs such as Native American language medium schooling are a distinct category within such schooling and produce results that are even more encouraging than programs in immigrant languages relative to academic achievement within the racial subgroup that is attracted to them.

### **U.S. Foreign Language (and Canadian French) Immersion**

Much of the research in education through more than one language has been done in foreign language immersion (German, French, Japanese, Spanish, etc.) in the United States and Canadian French immersion (for English speaking Canadian children) in English speaking Canadian communities. This type of immersion differs in several ways from Native American language immersion, but is similar to it in that it produces students with proficiency in both the oral and written forms of two languages. The research has shown that initially there is a lag in reading English as the children focus on learning to read through the foreign language. The gap between these children and those in mainstream school later closes and the students who were enrolled in the immersion program often go on to exceed mainstream education peers in all academic areas, including English. The challenge for these immersion programs has not been the development of proficiency in English, but instead in the “target language” (French, German, etc.). In the early years of foreign language (and Canadian French) immersion, there was concern that the children would not learn English and the amount of use of the target language was some-

times only half the day beginning in kindergarten with a rather rapid change to all English except for one or two classes in the immersion language. Research has shown, however, that the English outcomes were the same regardless of the amount of English used in the school, due to the role of English outside school, while reduction of the amount of the target language greatly reduced the proficiency in it and thus the overall benefits of high proficiency in two languages.

The research has also shown that such children who enter a school with a foreign language immersion program knowing only English develop a high level of proficiency in the target language, while maintaining English as their primary home language, out-of-class peer group language, and language of their later adulthood and family life. Indeed these programs are specifically designed for this outcome, with proficiency in the non-English foreign language a secondary level goal relative to maintenance of identity with the English language, primary fluency in English, and grade level academic programming parallels with children being educated totally through English. To give an example, in German immersion in the United States, early elementary education is conducted through German, but the animals studied are those of North America not Europe (e.g., the white tailed deer not the roe deer, the cotton wood tree and not the linden, etc.), the cultural holidays observed are American not German (e.g., Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day etc. and not Fasching, Pfingstmontag, Stephanstag, etc.), and the literature read is often German translations of the same stories read in corresponding English grades rather than what is read in corresponding grades in Germany. While foreign language proficiency in Foreign Language Immersion is high, it is still considerably below that of native speakers, and the cultural base is lower still. Yet when compared to foreign language and culture proficiency produced in mainstream English medium schools, the skills in foreign language and culture are very impressive indeed. Again, the foreign language immersion programs that use the foreign languages the most, had the highest outcomes in terms of the foreign language and had English outcomes ultimately as high as or higher than those immersion programs that used more English. Fear that English would be replaced by the foreign language or be negatively impacted by the foreign language has been the primary force in holding back foreign language immersion programs from reaching even higher outcomes.

Native American language immersion has a distinctly different set of goals and thus when implemented properly, potentially even higher outcomes in terms of high proficiency in two languages than foreign language immersion programs. The most distinctive goal is that the school is seen as the means by which the Native American language and culture is developed and maintained as the primary language and culture of the child for later life. That school programming is designed with the goal that the Native American language and culture be the primary language and culture of peer group life and later adulthood and family life of graduating students. This goal envisions the immersion student graduate being able to raise his or her future children in the language and culture, something that was not possible for their own parents. This goal requires an even stronger use of the "target" Native American language than "target" foreign language use in foreign language immersion. Native American language immersion programs, however, have very high English outcome goals and academic goals for their programs. They seek to produce English outcomes as high as, or higher, at the end of high school, than English medium programs serving the peers of their students in the local community. This is a realistic goal due to the experience of strong foreign language immersion programs and even more so the highly local culture oriented experience of minority official language medium education in Europe (Faroese, Romansh, Sami, etc.). Furthermore, a high level of understanding of their own traditional culture and environment is seen as leading to a high level of interest in the surrounding English language and its cultural base. As we will see later in the Hawaiian example, there is evidence that this high level of interest in English does indeed occur as the students mature. While the language and culture educational base in such schools are strongly Native American, there is also an especially strong focus on the overall history and civic culture of the United States within which such Native American language schools have developed along with distinctive tribal governments that find their base in the Constitution of the United States.

These Native American language schools have had considerable academic success. By way of contrast, English medium teaching of Native American children has not had very positive academic results. Over the past decade, the National Educational Assessment Program (NAEP) results produced by mainstream English medium education for American Indian/Alaska Native education in areas where students have strong Native American cultural identities have been especially very poor and little changed from year to year.

High quality Native American language medium/immersion education is envisioned as producing students similar to those from foreign countries who are entering U.S. universities and graduating with exemplary academic records. Students from Scandinavia especially enter United States universities having learned English as a second language, and yet outperform American English medium educated students in English language arts courses and assessments. Large numbers of students are graduating from American universities with advanced degrees in mathematics and science fields after being educated in foreign countries such as China where P-12 education is through a language totally different from English in its linguistic structure and cultural base. Students being educated through Native American language medium/immersion schools have a major advantage over such foreign students in terms of acquiring English simply from having English language and culture so readily available to them through the media and through the surrounding general American life.

*Question 4.* What are some of the spillover benefits of having immersion programs? Can you discuss any impacts or progress toward: (a) Creating Leaders (b) Community building (c) Cultural identity/pride.

*Answer.* The driving force in developing schooling through Native American languages and cultures has been community efforts to prevent those languages and cultures from going extinct. The developers of such programs realize that they have had to assure high quality academic and social outcomes as well for these languages and cultures cannot survive in the contemporary world if they came to be identified as the languages and cultures of peoples in the lower strata of the overall society of the United States. While great accomplishments have been made in language and cultural revitalization as well as academic and social outcomes for students in the programs, there have been some other important spillover effects that have had a positive effect on indigenous communities.

#### **Leadership Development**

The very decision to revitalize languages and cultures has required community members to step forward as leaders of such efforts. The intricate relationships involved in the overall effort has required an ever growing number of leaders and levels of leadership that has expanded outward from what have always begun as just a handful of people and children. The sort of leadership required for education and for cultural revival requires a solid base in knowledge about the local community from its very oldest historical roots until the present. It also requires research into the successes and failures of other indigenous communities elsewhere both in the United States and abroad. Finally, it requires a strong understanding of policy and law and how it can evolve to embrace something new such as Native American language medium/immersion education.

The type of leadership that develops out of Native American language medium/immersion education is also very diverse. Successful programs involve contributions from Native Americans from outside the Native American community in which the school is located, of non-Native Americans with specific skills in linguistics and academics, and other supporters who assist in fund raising and staff training. Rather than fulfilling the negative predictions of detractors, Native American language medium/immersion schooling development has resulted in leaders who are global in their contacts and extremely broad-minded and open in seeking solutions for their communities. They also learn to "wear many hats" as efforts such as these that begin small scale require leaders to be able to take over tasks that in other systems might involve hiring external specialist.

#### **Community Development**

Besides the primary leaders who have emerged from Native American language medium/immersion education efforts, a large number of others have emerged to take on important roles in the resulting education systems that grow from them. The first need is teachers who are highly fluent in the local Native American language. This obvious need leads to local parents and young people seeking out higher education and language skills to take on this responsibility. As programs grow, there are needs for curriculum developers, school secretaries, organization accountants and grant writers/fundraisers and other support positions all of which require a background in the language and culture. Again, this leads to local community employment and permanent employees versus the general situation in English medium school of employing newcomers who stay at a school for a few years before moving on. The need to plan for growth and address problems distinctive of the community builds confidence among program parent volunteers and paid workers relative to their own capabilities for community development. Individuals who worked in a school then move on to other positions in the community and apply the skills and

positive attitudes they developed at the school to move the community further ahead.

### **Affects of Increased Sense of Positive Identity and Pride**

A typical experience of Native American language medium/immersion schools is that their initial plans and efforts are met with considerable resistance in their own communities. Generations of having the indigenous identity denigrated result in those very ideas being internalized within the community itself. Others worry that efforts spent on the disappearing language of earlier times would be time that could be better spent on mastering other skills. However, once these schools begin to produce results in terms of children speakers who demonstrate their language skills, especially with elders, a profound sense of pride begins to grow in the larger local indigenous community. That pride grows even stronger when the children from such schools become known for their academic and social strengths. It becomes impossible for the overall Native community to see their heritage as debilitating, and the local language and culture and the community strengthening values found within them begin to spread into other areas of community life, including the mainstream schools. All of this has an overriding positive effect on raising the belief of the community in themselves and their sense that their unique identity is a strength useful for dealing with the larger world, rather than a detriment.

For individual student products of these school programs and for their families, these effects are multiplied. Where often the most successful students seek to leave their communities, products of these programs are highly oriented toward returning from college and contributing to them. Their ties to the growing local use of the traditional language and culture to develop the community and economy provide them with a natural place for them to begin their contributions back to the community. The use of the local language and culture in schooling also engenders skills in them for separating cultural features into categories of what is appropriately shared in a public venue and what is not. Such a skill in separating out what is appropriately public culture can be used in locally controlled economic development in Native American communities attractive to domestic and international tourists. In addition, the sensitivity to multiple languages and cultures engendered through participation in such schools produces individuals well prepared to work with foreign tourists who bring new income into the United States as a whole.

*Question 5.* Maintaining living native languages takes an immense amount of time, energy and resources to design appropriate curricula and learning materials. It is similarly challenging to cultivate native language instructors and professionals who can successfully educate pupils in the native language. Moreover, piecing together annual budgets from a number of different funding sources can be difficult. Are more resources needed to support the immersion language programs? And if so, why?

*Answer.* Native American language medium/immersion programs are definitely in need of additional funding. The types of resources and methods of resourcing also need to be carefully designed to meet the distinctive needs of these programs.

Programs often begin with no, or very little, funds. There are certain benefits to this as it guarantees that the initial efforts are led by individuals with a strong vision and dedication to the distinctive goals of language revitalization. However, once a program has started and is on a positive path, it is crucial to provide appropriate funding for the program. While private foundations have a very important role in starting programs and providing supplementary support, the basic needs of programs are appropriately funded by government entities.

A challenge in developing government funding is that law makers are accustomed to directing funding along certain pathways and for certain purposes. Sometimes those pathways are poorly prepared to administer funding to support Native American language schools. Sometimes, the funded purposes are not those most needed in operating a Native American language medium/immersion program. A further challenge is the lack of regular funding for standard needs (such as state block grants) of those immersion programs that are successful parallel to the regular funding that English medium schools obtain for their standard needs.

Directing funding for Native American immersion schools to standard government entities rather than to those actually on the ground operating the programs can result in funds being misspent and even being redirected away from the intended programs. These programs require knowledge of languages and cultures beyond the normal expertise of staff of government and educational systems, and thus administrators who also handle other responsibilities can be poorly prepared to spend such funds properly. Furthermore, there is often turnover in such government and educational offices resulting in major disruptions in understanding of the distinctive features and needs of immersion programs.



The most successful Native American language revitalization efforts in the United States have been those led by small non-profit organizations that work with tribal, local, state and federal governments in developing, operating, and resourcing programs. The reason that these nonprofits are important is because they are highly focused on language revitalization and its specific needs and issues. As non-profits, they are also much more nimble in working on language and culture issues and yet they are very stable in terms of their staff and leadership. It is therefore useful to provide a means for federal funding to be directed toward such organizations with those organizations then working closely with government schools.

*Question 6.* Language is closely tied to one's identity and self-confidence, and in communities, language teaches and reinforces the traditional culture and values. Do you have evidence or data comparing the psychological well-being or academic achievement of immersion students versus non-immersion native students?

*Answer.* One of the most common remarks that I have heard about children who attend Native American language immersion schools, be they in Hawaiian, Navajo, Ojibwe, Yup'ik or other language, is how impressed visitors are with the respectful behavior of the students. Teaching through a Native American language necessarily conveys with it the deeply held cultural values passed on by ancestors and elders. The schools are clean, with attentive children interested in contributing to their own communities and mankind in general. There have not been many studies of wellbeing specific to Native American language medium education but I am aware of one study by Dr. Shawn Kana'iaupuni. The Hawaiian cultural influence on education research study looked at the impact of culture-based educational strategies on middle and high school students in public and private schools. Hawaiian medium schools were included in this study. It was hypothesized that culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies have a positive impact on students' socioemotional development and contribute to positive education outcomes (e.g., school engagement, academic performance). The results showed that the overall "well-being" (feelings of self-worth and engagement with schooling) of Native Hawaiian students was highest in schools where teachers implemented "intense" language and culture as found in Hawaiian medium schools and that positively related to both reading and math outcomes of these students. The researchers also concluded that culture-based strategies is seen as an issue of social justice in aligning what goes on in these things that we call "schools" and what goes on in communities and showing in fact that schools are an important and integral part of the community. (2009, Thomas, Scott & Heck, Ron)

*Question 7.* In your work, have you noted whether native language proficiency and native culture familiarity have any impact on the self-esteem and resiliency of native immersion students?

*Answer.* As I stated earlier, Native Hawaiian language medium/immersion schools have higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance than mainstream English medium schools. A larger percentage of children in these schools come from what would be considered disadvantaged backgrounds—over 70 percent student population at Nawahi School, for example. Studies have found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to graduate from high school or attend college, but Nawahi School's statistics are higher than the state's average.

The cultural teachings that form the basis of education through Hawaiian promote a mindset of resiliency. Students then experience first hand the successes of this form of education in spite of having a resource based many times smaller than that of mainstream English medium schools.

*Question 8.* In your written testimony, you stated that the nonprofit organization which you represent is the oldest Native American language immersion program in the United States. What are some of the most important lessons you have learned as a pioneer in native language medium education? Do you think the number of Hawaiian immersion students would grow if more support was provided by the federal government?

*Answer.* Native American peoples, be they American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, or Native American Pacific Islanders, have a history as "involuntary minorities", that is groups forcibly incorporated into the United States. Furthermore, they are all indigenous peoples with cultures and traditional life styles highly different from those of the majority population of the United States. It is widely observed that throughout the world "involuntary minorities", especially involuntary indigenous minority peoples, have experienced very low-level educational and socioeconomic outcomes compared to the majority populations of their countries. Sometimes it is assumed that this low level of achievement is due to an incompatibility between the traditional culture and language of those peoples and modern development. Historical and comparative studies have shown that this assumption is false.

For example, several Native American peoples had higher literacy rates and also high socioeconomic outcomes previous to having their local education systems and economies fully incorporated into the United States. The Cherokees are the best known example with their highly successful school system producing literacy in two languages (Cherokee and English) at a higher level than surrounding Euro-American communities produced in one language (English). Native Hawaiians also have a long history of a strong education system through their own language producing high literacy and a strong socio-economic position. Various groups of Northwest American Indians were also very strong economically as they integrated aspects of Euro-American farming into their traditional salmon fishing economies. All of these systems, however, were destroyed as these groups were fully incorporated into the United States, during periods when certain philosophies and legislation relative to racial minorities had a huge negative impact on Native American peoples.

The challenge for Native Americans is to maintain their identity while still participating in the larger national society of the United States and the "global village" where people throughout the world participate with each other economically and in aspects of popular culture. When an indigenous language and culture are excluded from education, or marginalized in it, young people who identify with that language and culture do not identify with the educational system. For those who have especially strong connections to the ancestral language and culture from the home or community, there is often a sense that education is intended to eliminate one's identity. The history of Native American boarding school education and punishment for use of Native American languages and cultures in schools has reinforced such feelings in Native American communities. The manner in which even Native American language enrichment courses in mainstream English medium schools have been marginalized into the present times has confirmed for many young Native American students that their languages and cultures are considered inferior and academically worthless compared to English.

Establishing schooling totally through the medium of Native American languages using the cultural heritage of those languages as the basis of education makes a bold statement that Native American languages and cultures are fully valued and equal to English within the framework of the American Constitution. This has a positive effect on the self-image of the students.

Furthermore, the use of the target language is based in the local Native American culture rather than mainstream American culture. Many Native American peoples have their own traditional festivals and observances that are incorporated into these schools as central parts of learning, along with their own local flora and fauna and own distinctive literature. This results in a much more distinctive academic curriculum than found in mainstream English medium schools.

As with the European, New Zealand, and Hawaiian examples, these schools have been making good progress in meeting their core goal of developing children speakers of the endangered target languages with a commitment to the cultures and communities associated with those languages. There have also been positive results in terms of academics and social outcomes. One of the oldest programs is that of the non-profit Piegan Institute of Montana founded in 1987. Using Blackfeet as the language of instruction in a small private school on the Blackfeet Reservation, the school graduates students from a total Blackfeet language program into ninth grade at the local English medium high school. Piegan students have consistently been some of the highest performing students in that high school. Contrary to fears among tribal leaders, these students have also gone on to college at a higher rate than their peers. Especially encouraging to the founders of the program has been products of the school taking on ceremonial responsibilities that require use of the language and which had been feared would be lost with the passage of Blackfeet speaking elders. The school, however, faces major funding challenges and challenges in obtaining Blackfeet speaking teachers and curriculum materials.

Another early Native American language medium/immersion school is Tsehootsooi Dine Bi'olta Immersion School in Fort Defiance, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation. This is a public school founded in 1986 with a full K-8 program. There are pressures on the school from the broader society that do not exist in a private school such as the Piegan Institute. For example, the school is subject to Arizona state assessments beginning in grade 3 and must consider "highly qualified" status designed for English medium schools in hiring teachers. This has pushed the school to use more English in its program than is generally considered best international practice for language revitalization-based schooling, attention that is not expected to make a difference in ultimate English outcomes in high school, but expected to weaken indigenous language outcomes. Even with this pressure the school is 100 percent Navajo medium in K-2, with English introduced for the first time in grade 3. The school has produced English medium test results from its students as good as, or

better than, their peers in local English medium schools. The school has a large enrollment and plans to move into a college preparatory high school program similar to that of Nawahi School in Hawai'i.

Niigaane Ojibwe Immersion Program at Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota Niigaane was founded in 2003 as an Ojibwe language immersion stream within Bug-O-Nay-Ge- Shig School, a Bureau of Indian Education School. The program added grades year by year to a full elementary school within a school. Challenges remain for resources in the development of curriculum and staff and teachers.

These programs and schools would flourish with supportive policies and resources.

\*The attachments to this prepared statement have been retained in the Committee files\*

---

\*Response to these same questions submitted to Sonta Hamilton Roach was not received before this hearing went to print\*

---

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TOM UDALL TO  
HON. LILLIAN SPARKS ROBINSON

- 1. How are the best practices evaluated, identified and incorporated in funding decisions for the ACF language immersion program grants?**
- 2. How are best practices learned from grant programs disseminated throughout Indian Country and academic training programs?**

**Question 1 response:** The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) selects projects to be funded based on peer panel review scoring as statutorily required by the Native American Programs Act. Accordingly, ANA relies primarily on the peer panel reviewers' expertise to evaluate the proposals, including best practices. Once the reviewers' scores are received, ANA is able to rank the proposals and begin their internal review process. As part of the internal review process ANA identifies best practices that may be incorporated during negotiations and before funding decisions are finalized.

**Question 2 response:** ANA disseminates best practices learned from grantee programs throughout Indian Country by various methods. ANA provides project planning development training free of charge and open to all potential grantees. These trainings are held throughout Indian Country several times through the year in each of ANA's regions. During this training, participants learn the best practices on how to develop a successful and competitive project approach to meet the needs of their community.

ANA also provides weekly webinars, many of which are focused on best and promising practices in each of their program areas. Grantees are routinely the presenters during these webinars that focus on topics such as partnering with other federal programs to promote Native languages, how to conduct community assessments, collecting data to support projects, and strategies to effectively evaluate programs.

Additionally, ANA leads an annual Tribal Grantee meeting that regularly highlights best practices and showcases successful grantees.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
HON. LILLIAN SPARKS ROBINSON

1. **What ratio of 5 year programs to 3 year programs to 1 year programs for language immersion do you recommend?**
2. **What percentage of ANA native language grants support immersion? Can you tell me what level of need is currently funded by the Administration for Native Americans?**

**Question 1 response:** The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) selects Esther Martinez Immersion (EMI) and Preservation and Maintenance (PM) projects to be funded based on peer panel review scoring as statutorily required by the Native American Programs Act. ANA's application evaluation criteria include scoring of applicant's objective work plan (OWP), including consideration of the time and resources dedicated to each project objective and evaluation of the sufficiency of such to meet such objectives. Currently, ANA's application review process gives no weight to proposed project duration other than the reasonableness of the time and resources allotted to achieve stated objectives. This varies on a project to project basis based upon the expertise and resources available within the community and allotted to the project.

ANA intends to continue to rely on the peer panel review process and to fund EMI and PM applications according to the scoring and ranking list. Due to the nature of this process, ANA cannot recommend a ratio of EMI or PM projects to fund based on the number of project years if EMI projects were to be authorized for up to 5 years. The Native American Programs Act (NAPA) currently authorizes EMI projects only on a 3-year basis while PM projects are authorized for 1, 2, or 3 year projects. In consideration of Native language project durations of up to 5 years, ANA believes that increasing the maximum project period for EMI projects to 5 years would result in greater positive impacts for the program based on data indicating that ANA-funded projects of longer duration are more successful in meeting all project objectives compared with projects of 1 or 2-year duration. In addition, while youth can develop age-level fluency in a year (given sufficient time and instruction), parents develop new language skills at a slower rate since they're past the critical language learning period. The latter factor is especially important for EMI projects given the parental/guardian involvement component that is critical to their success in revitalizing and restoring Native languages. Therefore, ANA supports authority permitting language immersion projects with longer periods of financial support.

**Question 2 response:** Typically, one-third of the new language awards funded each year are for immersion activities and these include both grants awarded under the Esther Martinez Immersion (EMI) grant competition and the Preservation and Maintenance (PM) grant competition. While EMI grants must support immersion instruction, PM grants are authorized to

include immersion activities in addition to a broad range of other activities supporting the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.

The following statistics illustrate the demand versus the funded applications for ANA language competitions.

- *Esther Martinez Immersion(EMI)grants –*
  - FY13 demand for dollars was \$7,343,203; ANA funded 6 out of 15 proposed projects for a total of \$1,490,979.
  - FY14 demand was \$13,732,621; ANA funded 8 out of 34 for a total of \$1,813,313.\*

\*The demand for EMI grants roughly doubled from FY 13 to FY14. Previously, the number of applicants remained fairly constant, approximately 10 to 15 per year. It is not possible for ANA to determine at this point in time whether this is the start of a trend or an isolated spike in demand.

- *Preservation and Maintenance grants –*
  - FY13 demand for dollars was \$29,437,078; ANA funded 13 out of 93 proposed projects for a total of \$2,617,229.
  - FY14 demand was \$33,171,048; ANA funded 13 out of 79 for a total of \$2,637,386.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JON TESTER TO  
WILLIAM MENDOZA

1. *How is the Department of Education working with the HELP Committee to ensure that Native students and Native languages are being supported through ESEA?*

In March 2010 the Administration released its principles for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which authorizes the Department's Title VII Indian education programs. This proposal provided a framework to guide deliberations and inform the work of Congress in reauthorizing Indian education programs and included priorities to ensure that these programs meet the unique needs of diverse learners including American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students. For example, our reauthorization proposal for the Title VII Part A, formula grants to local educational agencies and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-funded schools would clarify the list of authorized activities to specifically include native language immersion and native language restoration programs, which may be taught by traditional leaders. The proposal would also require grantees to report on Title I academic achievement measures for the students served by their projects. The Department looks forward to continuing to work closely with the HELP Committee during the reauthorization process.

2. *In your opinion Is the Department of Education and the rest of the Administration doing enough to save native languages that are in a race against the clock? What more should you be doing and why aren't you doing it?*

The Department of Education and the Administration are committed to the preservation of native languages.

In November of 2012, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Native Americans (ANA), the Department of the Interior's BIE and the White House Initiative for American Indian and Alaska Native Education signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to collaborate on programming, resource development, and policy. The MOA encourages programs and projects that are supported by any of the MOA partners to include instruction in and preservation of Native American languages. The partners formed a Native Language Workgroup (NLW) and each of the partner agencies worked both internally and externally to identify barriers, levers, and promising practices that will help communities implement successful programs and projects that further the goal of language preservation and revitalization.

Members of the NLW identified areas for collaboration and resource-sharing with each other and partner communities. This has resulted in better dissemination of funding announcements and resources and cross-promotion at events. For example, the ANA made a presentation at the Office of English Language Acquisition Native American Program Directors Meeting, and we also have collaborated on webinars of benefit to our shared audiences.

A major milestone in this partnership was the development of the Native American Language Summit, which in June, 2014, brought together grantees and staff from the various federal agencies to share challenges and paths to success.

The goals of the Summit were to provide updates from federal offices on current efforts to provide support to Native American Communities seeking to revitalize Native American languages; share successes from the field in two areas that have been previously identified as challenges (integrating Native Language Immersion in schools and developing assessments); and discover through small group discussions ways to further support Native American communities teaching their Native languages while also improving accountability for educational progress and measurable success.

In addition to the Summit, the NLW developed the Federal Agency Resource Assessment Document to gather information from federal agencies on the barriers, levers, and best practices within each agency that will help the federal agencies further the goals described in the MOA. These findings can be used to replicate successful programs, implement high-quality improvement efforts, and disseminate information and provide technical assistance to Federal, State, and Tribal governments; schools; or other entities carrying out Native language activities. These findings will further the coordination and collaboration between federal agencies to support tribal goals of revitalizing and sustaining their home languages.

The NLW is identifying research that explores educational attainment and Native language retention and/or revitalization and is reviewing current training and technical assistance that is provided related to efforts to preserve Native languages. The NLW is gathering data about effective and/or exemplary Native language instruction both in terms of the administration of funds and programs, and in terms of program impact on educational achievement.

ED's Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) included an Invitational Priority to support activities that strengthen Native language preservation and revitalization in Institutions of higher education in the Title III Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions grant competition in FY 2014. Five of the 14 institutions awarded grants addressed the priority to support the preservation of Native American languages.

ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) is working to obtain information from States, LEAs, schools, tribes, and other public parties pertaining to the accurate identification of Native American students who are English learners so that these students can receive services through language instruction educational programs.

Also in OESE, the Office of Indian Education, which administers Title VII, Part A programs, modified its Electronic Application System for Indian Education (EASIE) for the formula grant program to emphasize that project activities should all be conducted in a culturally responsive manner, and to permit applicants to include cultural competence, including language and history, as a specific project objective, in addition to Indian education. We expect this shift of emphasis to have a dramatic impact, and we will continue to provide technical assistance to grantees to clarify that Native language programs and activities are appropriate services for these formula grant projects.

3. *If the Department of Education is supportive of programs that help prevent our Native American languages from going extinct, why doesn't the Department support the Native American*

*Language Immersion Achievement Act? What changes need to be made to the Bill in order for the Department to approve it?*

The Administration supports the goals of S. 1948, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, which would authorize a new Native American Language Schools program as part of Title VII of the ESEA.

We are concerned, however, that the bill raises expectations that can't be met given the modest resources and guidance on the challenges involved (such as, the availability of appropriate Native language content assessments, the availability of qualified teachers that can effectively teach content using Native American language as the primary language, and the corresponding incorporation of content proficiency in English also needed to be college and career ready). We think that Native language programs used to improve AN/Al student persistence and academic results are very promising and worth exploring, however, a program for Native American Language Schools (given the challenges) may be best suited to a more focused study or special demonstrations program. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Congress in developing AN/Al student programs within the context of reauthorization of Title VII of the ESEA.

Indeed, in supporting changes to Title VII of the ESEA, the Administration proposed: (1) that local educational agencies (in whose schools the overwhelming majority of Indian children are taught) be specifically authorized under Title VII's formula grant program to use funds for activities that support native language immersion programs and native language restoration programs, which may be taught by traditional leaders; and (2) that eligible entities (which include Indian tribes, Indian organizations, federally supported elementary schools or secondary schools for Indian students, Indian institutions (including an Indian institution of higher education)) be authorized under Title VII's demonstration grants to use funds for activities that recognize and support the unique cultural and educational needs of Indian children, including Native American language immersion programs and Native American language restoration programs, which may be taught by traditional leaders. We prefer this approach. It provides grantees the opportunity to support Native language programs and the flexibility to balance activities based on the educational needs of the students.

*4. How would the Department of Education respond to legislative language to waive State requirements for "high" qualification beyond fluency or advanced proficiency in a Native language to account for Native elders who are fluent speakers and teachers of their language?*

As evidenced by our ESEA Title VII proposals mentioned above, the Department does support concerted and cooperative efforts among State and tribal educators and policy makers to ensure that Native Languages are offered and to allow tribal or traditional leaders to teach those languages. We think that this could improve the overall school attendance and academic performance of tribal students.

Every State has its own requirements for teacher qualifications; some States have taken action to facilitate the hiring of Native language teachers and the Department is supporting those efforts. For example, in 2013 the South Central Comprehensive Center (SC3), under a grant from the Department that includes supporting States in the education of AI/AN students, helped the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) develop a Native Language Certification process and is continuing to provide technical assistance during statewide implementation of an alternate pathway in Native language certification. The SC3 Native Language Revitalization Initiative is

working to improve the pathway for Native Language Certification to address the critical need for fluent Native language instructors in order to enhance Native language revitalization among 39 Oklahoma tribes. SC3 supported modification of OSDE's World Language Certification to provide access to classroom instruction by fluent tribal language speakers in districts and schools.

The Department would be pleased to review and provide technical assistance on specific legislative proposals.



RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO  
WILLIAM MENDOZA

1. *According to witness testimony, hard fought gains in Hawaii, Alaska and through Indian Country in K-12 are threatened by inconsistencies in federal education laws and policies regarding native language immersion education. For example, the landmark Native American Languages Act of 1990 (NALA) requires that federal policies support native language education; however, the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) require states to administer a single test in English to assess students. What is the U.S. Department of Education doing to work with Hawaii and other states and school districts to align NCLB standards and assessment tools with the policies of NALA?*

For English learners, the NCLB Act (ESEA as amended) provides specific authorization and direction to States to develop academic content assessments in languages needed (ESEA 1111(b)(6), 34 CFR 200.6), and this can include Native American languages. The Department has approved the use of assessments in a student's language of origin based on state content standards in 10 States. These assessments range in breadth from every grade level and every subject (New Mexico) to a particular grade level and subject (Colorado). Though Spanish is the most common language of origin used, some States have developed assessments in Russian (Oregon and Washington State) and Arabic (Michigan). Review of language of origin versions of these assessments will be part of the peer review process guidance, required by the ESEA, currently being revised by the Department.

Hawaii has developed the Hawaiian Aligned Portfolio Assessment (HAPA) and a translated version of the Hawaii State Assessment (HSA), which was abandoned because of technical issues in the HAPA and problems in translation of the HSA. An association of Hawaiian Language Immersion schools inquired about a four-year waiver of assessment and accountability requirements to give them time to develop a technically sound and culturally appropriate assessment of academic content in Native Hawaiian. The Department has not typically approved a waiver for such a period of time, however, the Department is willing to discuss this issue with the Hawaii Department of Education and the Native Hawaiian Language Advocates in order to reach agreement on an acceptable strategy and timeline with the goal of developing a technically sound Native Hawaiian assessment.

The Navajo Nation and the Micosukee Tribe have requested an alternate method of determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools under Title I of the ESEA. These requests reference their work in using Diné and Micosukee, respectively, in curriculum and instruction, and their desire to develop assessments in Native languages. The Department is working with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to consider these alternate definitions of AYP. These native language assessments would be in addition to, not in place of, assessments in English.

We look forward to working with the Congress to help address any statutory inconsistencies within the context of reauthorization of the ESEA.

2. *Considering that many native language immersion students are high-performing in their native language, some have argued that mandatory assessment tests and unitary testing requirements written in English are unfair to the immersion students. What is your view? What is the Department of Education doing to address concerns that testing native language immersion students in a language other than their language of instruction provides an inaccurate assessment of the students' educational progress?*

The Department agrees with the professional assessment community that testing in the language of instruction is essential for a valid and reliable assessment of educational progress. This is why assessments of mathematics and reading in Puerto Rico are conducted in Spanish. However, the NCLB Act specifically provides that for the reading/language arts assessments, for students attending schools in the U.S. for more than three years, the assessment must be in English (ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(C)(x)). This provision does not apply to the math and science assessments, and it includes an exception that permits an additional two years of reading assessment in the native language for certain English learners.