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State of Minnesota
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-FIFTH
SESSION

HOUSE FILE No. **779**

February 8, 2007

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Finance

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to Native American languages; establishing the Minnesota Indigenous
1.3 Language Act; establishing the Council on Indigenous Language; appropriating
1.4 money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 3.

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

1.6 Section 1. **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.**

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

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

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

2.3 **Sec. 2. [3.9228] COUNCIL ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE.**

2.4 **Subdivision 1. Creation; membership.** The state Council on Indigenous Language
2.5 is created and shall consist of one member from the following groups:

2.6 (1) Grand Portage tribe;

2.7 (2) Red Lake tribe;

2.8 (3) Leech Lake tribe;

2.9 (4) Boise Forte tribe;

2.10 (5) White Earth tribe;

2.11 (6) Fond du lac tribe;

2.12 (7) Mille Lacs tribe;

2.13 (8) Shakopee Mdewakanton tribe;

2.14 (9) Prairie Island Mdewakanton tribe;

2.15 (10) Upper Sioux Mdewakanton tribe;

2.16 (11) Lower Sioux Mdewakanton tribe;

2.17 (12) American Indian Policy Center;

2.18 (13) University of Minnesota American Indian Student Cultural Center;

2.19 (14) Anishinabe Academy;

2.20 (15) University of Minnesota Duluth Gekinoo' imaagejig;

2.21 (16) Dakota Wicohan;

2.22 (17) Niigaane (Bugonaygeshig School);

2.23 (18) Grotto Foundation;

2.24 (19) Elders Lodge;

2.25 (20) University of Minnesota American Indian Studies Department;

2.26 (21) Anishinabe Wi Yung;

2.27 (22) Dakota Language Society;

2.28 (23) Upper Midwest Indian Center;

2.29 (24) Indian Ministries;

2.30 (25) Wicoie Nandagikendan;

2.31 (26) First Nations Orphan Association;

2.32 (27) Mille Lacs Culture Camp;

2.33 (28) St. Paul Indian in Unity;

2.34 (29) MUID;

2.35 (30) Minnesota Indian Education Association;

3.1 (31) Minnesota Indian Education Department; and
3.2 (32) Dakota Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance.

3.3 Subd. 2. Duties. (a) The council shall promote activities and programs that are
3.4 specific to promoting revitalization of indigenous languages for Native American children
3.5 and adults. Since language revitalization is critical for the youngest Native American
3.6 children, the council shall focus on developing programs that meet the language needs
3.7 of children in prekindergarten through grade 12. In addition, the council shall work with
3.8 community groups, educational groups and institutions, and tribes to identify programs
3.9 that will promote the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages in order for
3.10 children to learn the speaking, reading, and writing of native languages.

3.11 (b) The council shall develop specific guidelines for funding community and
3.12 educational programs that provide language revitalization to meet the needs of the
3.13 community. In order to develop these guidelines, the council shall collaborate with
3.14 Native American community groups to develop the resources needed to provide native
3.15 language classes.

3.16 (c) The council shall provide grants to organizations, programs, and schools
3.17 that meet the guidelines developed by the council for programs that provide language
3.18 revitalization to children and adults.

3.19 (d) The council shall consult with tribal governments to maximize the effectiveness
3.20 and coordination of policies and programs that support language and culture, and
3.21 collaborate with tribal governments to develop an integrated language strategy.

3.22 (e) The council shall work in collaboration with the Department of Education to
3.23 develop a multitiered system for native speakers to be certified on special status by
3.24 the Board of Teaching to enable Native speakers to teach in all language revitalization
3.25 programs and schools.

3.26 (f) The council shall work in collaboration with the Department of Human Services
3.27 to enable Native speakers to teach in early childhood programs regulated under Rule
3.28 2 and Rule 3.

3.29 (g) The council shall develop a linguistic center to include language instruction and
3.30 immersion housing for people involved in revitalization programs.

3.31 (h) The council shall develop a statewide strategic plan to structure the development
3.32 of revitalization programs and schools throughout the state to include:

3.33 (1) Head Start;

3.34 (2) teacher training;

3.35 (3) prekindergarten through grade 12; and

3.36 (4) adult programs.

4.1 Subd. 3. **Powers.** The council may contract in its own name. Contracts must be
 4.2 approved by a majority of the members of the council and executed by the chair and the
 4.3 executive director. The council may apply for, receive, and expend in its own name grants
 4.4 and gifts of money consistent with the duties specified in this section.

4.5 The council shall appoint an executive director who is experienced in administrative
 4.6 activities and familiar with language revitalization. The council may delegate to the
 4.7 executive director powers and duties under this section that do not require council
 4.8 approval. The executive director and council staff shall serve in the unclassified service of
 4.9 the state. The executive director shall recommend to the council the appropriate staffing
 4.10 necessary to carry out its duties. The commissioner of administration shall provide the
 4.11 council with necessary administrative services.

4.12 Subd. 4. **State agency assistance.** Other state agencies shall supply the council upon
 4.13 request with advisory staff services on matters relating to the jurisdiction of the council.
 4.14 The council shall cooperate and coordinate activities with state agencies when feasible.

4.15 Subd. 5. **Elders advisory group.** An advisory group of elders from the Native
 4.16 American community shall be constituted by the council to provide guidance and
 4.17 suggestions to the council on language revitalization matters.

4.18 Subd. 6. **Conflict of interest.** A council member shall abstain from voting on any
 4.19 grant proposal or other matter in which the council member's tribe or organization has a
 4.20 financial or controlling interest.

4.21 **Sec. 3. THE MINNESOTA DAKOTA/OJIBWE LANGUAGE**
 4.22 **REVITALIZATION ALLIANCE (DOLRA).**

4.23 The initial meeting of the Council on Indigenous Language shall be called by
 4.24 the Minnesota Dakota/Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance to establish meeting
 4.25 guidelines, procedures, and priorities. The DOLRA facilitator shall chair the first meeting,
 4.26 and subsequent meetings until the council elects a chair.

4.27 **Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION; COUNCIL ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE.**

4.28 \$..... is appropriated from the general fund to the Council on Indigenous Language
 4.29 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2007, for the purposes of section 2. This appropriation
 4.30 does not cancel and is available until expended.