



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #ATL-14-081

**TITLE: Honoring the Life and Legislative Recommendations of Kaagoowu, the Late Dr. William Demmert, by Supporting the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, through its unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu was Tlingit and Oglala Lakota, received his Ph.D. in education from Harvard in 1973, and was a clan member of the Eagle Clan of the Tlingit. He was a lifelong champion of Native language and educational issues; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu was a founding member of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and contributed to NIEA through board participation, developing the artwork for the seal of NIEA and general Indian education policy advocacy; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu had collaborated with U.S. Senators Walter Mondale and Ted Kennedy as well as Dr. Will Antell NIEA President, when Kaagoowu was NIEA board secretary insuring that American Indians were actively involved in the legislative process to advance the historic 1972 Indian Education Act making Kaagoowu the first American Indian to develop a piece of federal Indian legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu became in 1973 the first Deputy Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Indian Education in the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare and simultaneously served as the Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs Department of Interior; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu was the principal author of the groundbreaking Indian Nations At Risk Report and leader in organizing the White House Conference on Indian Education; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu received the prestigious NIEA Educator of the Year Award in 1977 and NIEA Life Time Achievement Award in 2004 and received the posthumous honor of NIEA naming its immersion recognition in his name will Demmert Cultural Freedom Award; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu authored many NIEA resolutions promoting immersion instruction and culturally based education including resolutions that support immersion funding in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and

**WHEREAS**, Kaagoowu promoted to the NIEA board in 2008-2009 a legislative proposal to create a new Part D of Title VII that would support American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian immersion schools; and

**WHEREAS**, this legislative proposal became the basis for NIEA ESEA reauthorization recommendations addressing immersion provisions which were promoted in NIEA congressional testimony and briefing papers; and

**WHEREAS**, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) Chairman Jon Tester has introduced the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, S. 1948, and the SCIA has passed this legislation out of committee and hot lined the bill and Representatives Tom Cole and Betty McCollum have co-sponsored an identical companion bill H.R. 4214 in the U.S. House of Representatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act would create a new grant program in Indian Education Title VII to support American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian immersion schools; and

**WHEREAS**, there is broad based support for this legislation including the following inter-tribal organizations: National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association, the Alaska Federation of Natives, Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, Coalition of Large Tribes, Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, Navajo Nation, Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, United Tribes of Michigan, United South and Eastern Tribes, Affiliated Tribes Northwest Indians, and United Tribes of North Dakota representing over 2 million American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous Native language advocacy organizations and Indian education organizations have endorsed the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI honors and recognizes the remarkable lifetime work, efforts, and accomplishments of Kaagoowu (Dr. William Demmert) and respectfully request that the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act be renamed to include Dr. William Demmert's name in the long title of the bill; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NCAI supports the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act and directs the NIEA board and its Executive Director to pursue passage of this legislation in the 113th Congress and future congressional sessions until becomes law; and

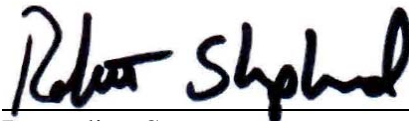
**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2014 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, October 26-31, 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia, with a quorum present.

  
President

**ATTEST:**

  
Recording Secretary