



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #TUL-13-047

### **TITLE: Support to Develop Bureau of Indian Education Pilot Programs for Language Immersion in Elementary and Secondary Schools within Indian Country**

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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**, education of all tribal citizens in a culturally relevant meaningful manner, in accordance with tribal customs and traditions, and with due regard for the scientific, technological and pedagogical advances of the modern world, is the cornerstone of economic development and progress for all tribal nations; and

**WHEREAS**, Native languages are the repository of the collective wisdom and culture of tribal Nations, containing both ceremony, indigenous knowledge and mechanisms for social governance that have been thousands of years in the making, and can lead to positive reinforcement of traditional values essential not just to tribal nations but to the United States as a whole and beyond; and

**WHEREAS**, teaching students in their native language has proven in several studies to be an effective way of improving achievement of Native American children, even on standardized tests, in part because such a teaching mechanism raises self-esteem and places value on the culture and traditions of the Native nation whose language is being spoken and used in everyday life; and

**WHEREAS**, because of budget cuts and limitations, the use of language immersion programs, as they are called, using funds under the Esther Martinez Act and other sources to preserve and promote Native languages, has been severely limited throughout Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS**, within the Department of Interior, discretion exists to use available funds to assist and enhance both existing language immersion programs and to fashion a pilot program in which additional language immersion programs could be created and developed to further demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs; and

**WHEREAS**, as speakers of many Native languages become older, it is increasingly critical to the preservation and promotion of Native languages to use these older speakers as teachers of the language to impart their knowledge to the next generations, and to continue the use of language immersion programs in educational settings for this purpose.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NCAI hereby requests that the U.S. Department of Interior identify funds from non-local sources that can be used to promote a pilot project for additional language immersion schools in selected preschool programs, and elementary and secondary schools in Indian Country, with the understanding that existing immersion programs will be part of the pilot project using existing funds; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI urges the President of the United States to take significant steps to work with Congress, including seeking additional funding, to enhance language immersion programs that can help improve achievement for Native American children in elementary and secondary schools throughout Indian country; 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 2013 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Cox Business Center from October 13 - 18, 2013 in Tulsa, Oklahoma with a quorum present.

  
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President

ATTEST:

  
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Recording Secretary