



American Indian Language Instruction Executive Summary

2025 Minnesota Public Schools and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Schools

Midwest Indigenous Immersion Network (MIIN) conducted its second bi-annual survey of K-12 public schools and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools in Minnesota for the 2024-25 school year. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about American Indian language teachers, curriculum, and instruction in Minnesota schools. A total of 194 public school districts, including all four BIE schools, in Minnesota completed the survey for a response rate of 99%. MIIN also sent a survey to 87 American Indian language teachers who were identified by administrators in the school district survey. Fifty-five teachers completed the survey for a response rate of 63%. The survey data represents the vast majority of Minnesota public and BIE schools with 20 or more American Indian students and their American Indian language teachers. This summary highlights the key findings from these surveys, including strengths and gaps in American Indian language instruction in Minnesota. See the [full report](#) for more information.

What is the Midwest Indigenous Immersion Network? MIIN is a MN-based Indigenous-led nonprofit focused on increasing the access to, quality and quantity of Ojibwe language instruction in the region. MIIN facilitates collaboration among organizations, provides professional development, teacher licensing, and develops, stewards, and disseminates materials and curriculum.

American Indian students in Minnesota public school districts and BIE schools

The Minnesota Department of Education reports that in 2024-25 there were 31,105 American Indian students in 327 Minnesota public school districts and four BIE schools. This makes up 3.5% of the state's total K-12 student population. Minnesota schools or districts that have 20 or more American Indian students are eligible to receive funding from the American Indian Education Aid Formula Grant. A total of 197 districts, including the four BIE schools, in Minnesota were eligible for this funding in 2024-25. There were 29,365 American Indian students who attended these districts and schools in 2024-25.



6 out of 10 school districts in Minnesota have funding and associated obligations to the American Indian students and families in their district.



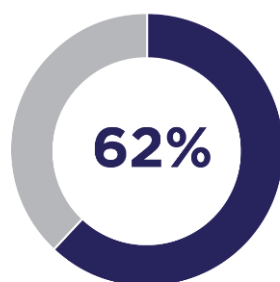
9 out of 10 American Indian students attend a school district that receives funding from the State specifically for Indian Education.

Key finding #1: There is a shortage of American Indian language classes and teachers in Minnesota schools

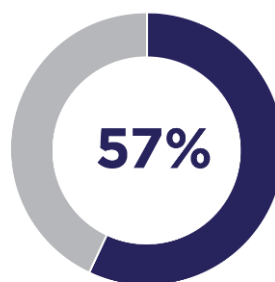
Per Minnesota law, 140 schools and districts in Minnesota *should be* providing American Indian culture and language classes, but only 51 districts *are* providing these classes.¹ There is an immediate need for over 150 new American Indian language teachers to fill this need in all districts.

Funding shortages and a lack of qualified American Indian language instructors creates barriers for some school districts to meet this obligation. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the school districts that responded to this survey indicated that **teacher recruitment** is a challenge, and over half (57%) reported that **funding** is a challenge for their district.

Teacher recruitment



Funding



¹ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124d.79>

Key finding #2: American Indian language teachers need more training and support

American Indian language teachers need and want more support and training to improve their language proficiency to the level needed for immersion classroom and higher-level language classes. More than half of the districts we surveyed want help with professional development specific to American Indian language instruction (53%) and teacher training (51%). In addition, nearly half (41%) want to have access to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for language instruction. When we asked teachers, 40% said they want to develop their network of partners in American Indian language instruction.



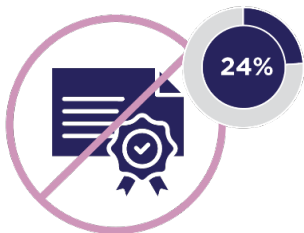
Professional development



Teacher training



PLCs



About one-quarter (24%) of the school districts that reported having American Indian language teachers said their teacher(s) is/are unlicensed.

Key finding #3: More curriculum and resources are needed to strengthen American Indian language instruction

No comprehensive curriculum (including standards, assessments, scope and sequence, materials, resources, lesson plans, etc.) exists for teaching Ojibwe language at any level, from early childhood through high school.

- 60% of the school districts we surveyed said that lacking a curriculum is a challenge for their district in terms of providing American Indian language instruction.
- 78% of the American Indian language teachers we surveyed reported being responsible for all or most of their curriculum, and 20% reported that they are responsible for some of their curriculum; only one American Indian language teacher reported being given sufficient curriculum from their district.

What else should the State of Minnesota, Tribal Nations, school district leaders, and funders do?

This survey reveals a significant gap in American Indian language access for students across the state. There is great need for all interested parties to work collaboratively to quickly address this need. MIIN recommends the following solutions to address the challenges in language access for American Indian students in Minnesota.

First, we recommend increasing the American Indian Education Aid formula grant to allow school districts to hire qualified American Indian language teachers in accordance with Minnesota Statute 124D.74.

Second, we encourage the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Tribal Nations, postsecondary institutions, and other interested agencies and parties to provide more support for teacher training specific to the needs of American Indian language and immersion teachers.

Third, we recommend that MDE consult with Tribal Nations and American Indian language experts, including MIIN, to establish academic standards, curriculum, materials, and assessments for the primary American Indian languages in Minnesota (Ojibwe and Dakota/Lakota).

What is MIIN doing?

MIIN is ready to get to work and excited to partner with Tribes, schools, districts, and the State of Minnesota. We have already started working on many of the issues identified in this report: MIIN has developed partnerships with Bemidji State University and Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University to offer Ojibwe language specific teacher licenses. We also support individuals who are working to become Ojibwe language teachers through recruitment, financial assistance, retention, job placement assistance, and access to MIIN professional development opportunities.

MIIN offers online Professional Learning Communities and in-person professional development opportunities for Ojibwe language instructors and immersion teachers.

In 2026, MIIN will be working with current American Indian language educators, the State of Minnesota and Tribal Nations to develop Ojibwe language standards and curriculum. We will also hire a Curriculum Coordinator to develop curriculum specific to the needs of Minnesota and BIE school Ojibwe language educators.

