

MINNESOTA INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

2018-19



INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

THE MINNESOTA INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Established in 1963 as the first council of its type in the U.S., the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) is the official liaison between 11 tribal nations and the state of Minnesota. MIAC is mandated to make recommendations on legislation that is important to tribal governments and American Indian organizations, and improve services between the state and American Indian communities. MIAC provides a forum for and advises state government on issues of concern to American Indian tribes and communities, develops and advocates for state legislation, and administers cultural resource preservation programs and the Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grant and Appropriations program. MIAC also operates programs to enhance economic opportunities and protect cultural resources for American Indians.

MIAC'S MISSION

To protect the sovereignty of the 11 Minnesota tribes and ensure the well-being of all American Indian citizens throughout the state of Minnesota.

MIAC'S VISION

To strive for social, economic, and political justice for all American Indian people living in Minnesota, while embracing our traditional cultural and spiritual values.

Tribal nations

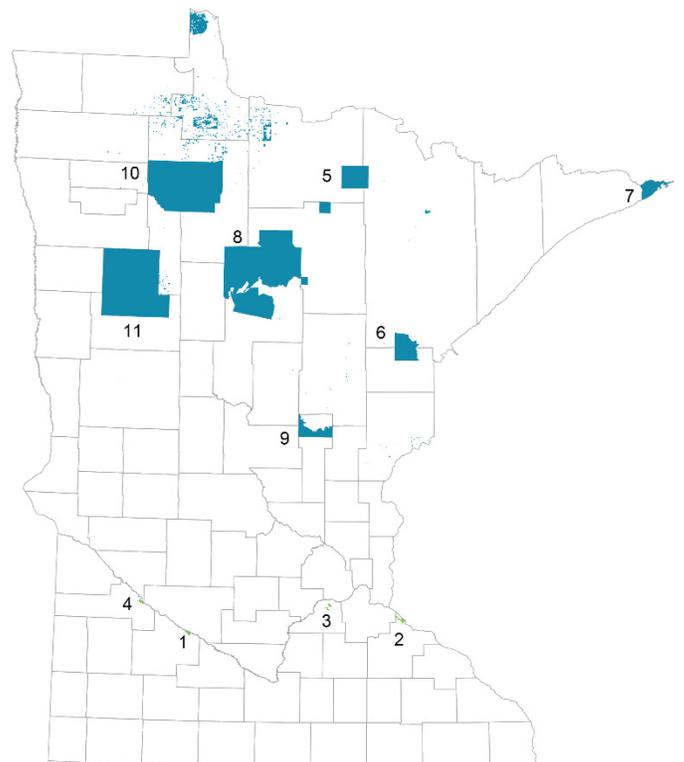
There are 11 tribal nations that share geography with the state of Minnesota:

Dakota nations:

1. Lower Sioux Community
2. Prairie Island Indian Community
3. Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
4. Upper Sioux Community

Ojibwe nations:

5. Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
6. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
7. Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
8. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
9. Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
10. Red Lake Nation
11. White Earth Nation



Board of directors

- Board Chair: Robert Larsen, Lower Sioux Community
- Board Vice-Chair: Shelley Buck, Prairie Island Indian Community
- Board members:
 - Cathy Chavers, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
 - Kevin Dupuis, Sr., Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Beth Drost, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
 - Faron Jackson, Sr., Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
 - Melanie Benjamin, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Samuel Strong, Red Lake Nation
 - Charlie Vig, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 - Michael Fairbanks, White Earth Nation

Urban Indian Advisory Board

The MIAC Urban Indian Advisory Board advises the council on the unique problems and concerns of American Indians who reside in urban areas of Minnesota.

Board members:

- Collette Maxwell, Bemidji representative
- Jason Loons, Duluth representative
- Charleen Ann Day-Castro, Minneapolis representative
- Dr. Kate Beane, Minneapolis representative
- John Day, Saint Paul representative
- Beverly Bushyhead, Saint Paul representative

MIAC Staff

- Dennis Olson Jr.-Executive Director
- Edward Fairbanks- Interim Executive Director
- LeRoy Staples Fairbanks- Executive Director
- Shannon Geshick—Legislative and Grants Director
- Melanie Franks—Executive Assistant and Education Liaison
- Melissa Cerda—Cultural Resources Specialist
- Tianna Odegard—Cultural Resources Specialist

About MIAC

MIAC has a unique role compared to Minnesota’s ethnic councils because, per MIAC’s legislative mandate, MIAC is a government-to-government liaison between the 11 sovereign tribal nations and the state of Minnesota. MIAC advocates for funding and administers a multimillion-dollar language and culture grant program. Additionally, MIAC responds to and monitors any disturbances of American Indian cemeteries. These legislative mandates create unique and important responsibilities for the MIAC staff to fulfill.

I hear it’s a continual challenge that [MIAC] isn’t given enough credit for their expertise or authority, especially when it comes to interagency kinds of communications, they are not given enough respect when it comes to the place they’re coming from...[They] bring tribal oversight to protection of [cemetery] sites, which they have the authority to do. They spend a lot of time to establish their right to be at the table.

– University of Minnesota professor

MIAC had many achievements in the 2018-19 fiscal year, even as they experienced turnover in leadership and, at periods, were without an executive director and other key staff positions.

Stakeholder input in this and previous years’ reports suggests that MIAC needs additional resources to meet their legislative mandates. Cultural preservation staff are stretched too thin and are not able to rigorously follow through on all possible cemetery site disturbances, especially when they are in the midst of a large project. Additionally, the grants coordinator and legislative director has traditionally been a combined role. However, each area has enough work and responsibility for a full-time grants coordinator and a full-time legislative director. Increased funding would allow MIAC to add staff and better fulfill the responsibilities of each role.

Recent efforts to strengthen MIAC's operations

During fiscal year 2018-19, MIAC worked to strengthen internal operations to be more effective and efficient. For instance, staff changed the structure of board meetings by adding time to the executive board meetings allowing for deeper dialogue, prioritization, and problem-solving among MIAC staff and tribal leaders. This additional time also permits MIAC to prepare responses for the public portion of the meetings, opening lines of communication between MIAC and the public. It also gives MIAC staff stronger direction from tribal leaders, which helps them to prioritize their efforts. MIAC staff will continue to work on strengthening a collaborative board culture and creating an inclusive and effective decision-making process.

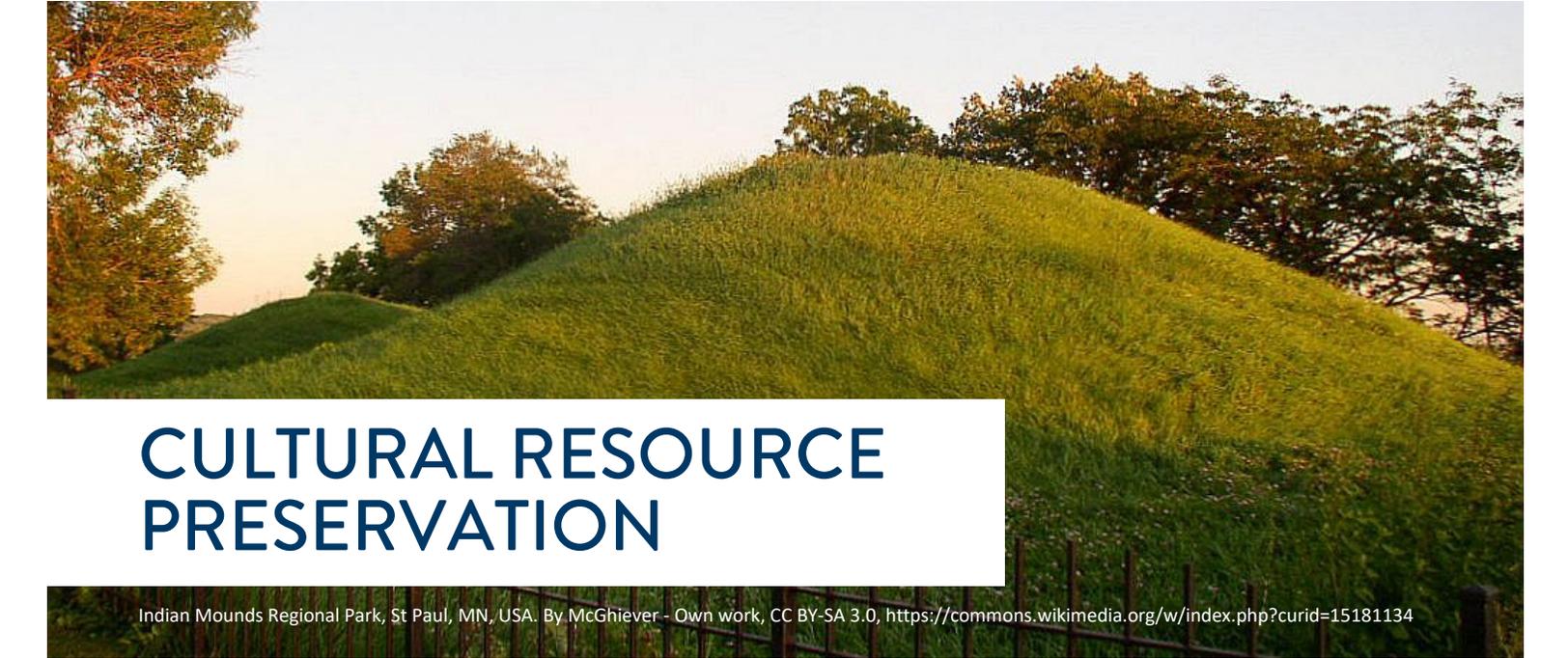
MIAC also increased the length of the board chair term from one to two years, allowing for better continuity of leadership.

Additionally:

- Increased participation from state commissioners at MIAC board meetings, ensuring the board meetings create stronger partnerships with state agencies.
- Increased communication with the Governor's office to create policies and structures and to maintain lines of communication in the future. For example, MIAC's director will attend meetings of state agency tribal liaisons and work closely with the Governor's office and their tribal affairs policy advisors.
- All MIAC staff have either completed a master's degree or are currently working toward a master's degree, which allows staff to interact with partners on a professional level; MIAC brings extensive expertise to the table.
- MIAC hired a new cultural resource staff member.
- MIAC updated their website to make it more user-friendly and informative.
- MIAC staff partnered with the Governor's office during the government shutdown to hear concerns tribal nations had due to the shutdown.
- MIAC staff engaged with many community groups, such as attending the Linking Leaders partnership meeting. Linking Leaders is a group of culturally specific leadership organizations that received funding from Bigelow Foundation to address leadership race equity in the Twin Cities East Metro area. This allows MIAC staff to build relationships between MIAC and different organizations that are working towards racial justice and equality, including organizations that serve urban American Indian communities (Tiwahe Foundation is a Linking Leaders partner). These efforts are expanding MIAC's capacity to bring forward unified legislation with communities of color.



Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Flanagan at the Linking Leaders partnership meeting. Photo credit MIAC staff.



CULTURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

Indian Mounds Regional Park, St Paul, MN, USA. By McGhievery - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15181134>

Threatened sites

The MIAC Cultural Resources team aims to protect and preserve all American Indian human remains and cemeteries older than 50 years in the state of Minnesota, to fulfill the requirements of the Field Archaeology Act (M. S. 138.31-.42), the Private Cemeteries Act (M. S. 307.08), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Pub. L. No. 101-60, 104 Stat. 3048 [1990]). The MIAC team and osteology lab staff respond to unintentional disturbances of cemeteries to identify, analyze, repatriate, and rebury remains, in collaboration with the Office of the State Archaeologist and tribal nations.

The MIAC team advocates for tribal interests and the respectful and culturally responsive treatment of human remains, while mediating between stakeholders to identify mutually beneficial solutions. This includes incorporating American Indian knowledge into the archeological process. This requires proactive relationship-building with tribes and state agencies, as well as consulting, monitoring, and reviewing proposed construction projects and projects in process (e.g., conducting cemetery assessments to delineate legal boundaries). MIAC staff ensure compliance with state and federal laws and provide culturally responsive preservation and repatriation activities. MIAC staff also support Tribal Historical Preservation Officers (THPOs) in these efforts.

They've always been a strong voice for the tribes, especially when they have required other agencies to consult with tribes, making sure their viewpoints are heard, especially with making sure to not impact sites and making sure tribal knowledge is also used on top of archeological or historical documentation at different cultural properties within Minnesota.

– Hamline University employee

[In reference to training around American Indian cemeteries] It's critical, even myself who has worked with MIAC in the past on other projects...to hear them talk about what they felt their role is. It has been enlightening to me and other staff at our agency who are not cultural resource staff. It's completely new to them, extremely helpful to have them listen and understand, not only to technically [know] what the statute is, but also to hear some of the more cultural impacts on Native communities and what sensitivities are required to do this sort of work.

– State of Minnesota employee

EXAMPLES OF MIAC CULTURAL PRESERVATION WORK IN ACTION

ARLINGTON AVENUE IN DULUTH

In August 2018, crews began archeological exploration for a road-widening project for Rice Lake Road and Arlington Avenue in Duluth, where they unearthed empty coffins and possible human remains. This archeological exploration was part of an effort by St. Louis County to take proactive measures to lessen the potential of disturbing human remains before the main construction for the project started. The county took proactive measures because the area served as the Greenwood Cemetery for those who died at the former St. Louis Poor Farm.

While this site is not an American Indian cemetery, archeologists believe some remains from the Greenwood Cemetery may be American Indian individuals, leading to MIAC Cultural Resource Preservation staff and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa's involvement with the site once possible remains were found.

To ensure proper cemetery recovery, MIAC staff helped winterize the site, and moved the soils into a secured building. Then, archeology staff from Hamline University screened more than 30 cubic yards of soil. Next steps for the project will be a cemetery assessment and reburial.

Overall, this project demonstrates components of a model cemetery recovery because of the proactive archeological explorations of the local jurisdiction leading the construction project, and development of a long project timeline to allow for careful mitigation planning and sensitive mitigation techniques to ensure the respectful repatriation of any disturbed American Indian remains.

OTHER CULTURAL PRESERVATION SITES

- Review of building projects with two businesses, a nonprofit, several private landowners, four cities, and the state
- On-going monitoring of building projects
- Working to coordinate a controlled burn and grass reseeding on the Shaver Mound Group site

FOND DU LAC CEMETERY DISTURBANCE UPDATE

Starting June 2017, MIAC Cultural Resources staff began working on a cemetery disturbance within Fond du Lac neighborhood in Duluth on Highway 23. The burial recovery team worked outside the first half of winter months, but then moved soils from the site to an indoor facility. This move increased the amount of soil being screened per day. MIAC recently sponsored and coordinated an osteological training for the burial recovery team conducted by Dr. Sue Myster.

There have been a number of challenges that have arisen during the duration of this project including: figuring out and defining the boundaries of the cemetery and its soils, identifying the contents of the disturbed soils that were moved to a number of other locations and stockpiled across the site, and security and site protocols for the recovery site. Priority on site has been the prevention of additional damages or disturbances to the site. Staff has been attending weekly working group meetings to help bring everyone involved in the recovery effort on the same page. MIAC Cultural Resources staff will take what they have learned from navigating the challenges in this reburial process to create recommendations for future reburial projects.

MORE EXAMPLES OF MIAC CULTURAL PRESERVATION WORK IN ACTION

IMPROVING INTERNAL PROCEDURES TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE AND PROACTIVE

MIAC staff, in collaboration with intern Dylan Goetsch, a University of Minnesota graduate student in Heritage Studies and Public History, developed educational material that clarified MIAC's mandated role in cemetery disturbances. Dylan's capstone project is a workbook that explains state law in plain language, so any Minnesota resident can use it to help them proactively prevent disturbing a cemetery or correctly respond to a cemetery disturbance. For example, the workbook contains a Mound Management plan, procedures for buying and selling houses with potential or known cemeteries on the property, and what to do if you inherit American Indian remains. In the future, this material will inform outreach materials to encourage wider knowledge of MIAC's role, the resources they provide, and proactive measures to prevent cemetery disturbances.



Osteology lab and osteological trainings

The MIAC osteology lab at Hamline University is the only lab in the state focused on identifying, caring for, and repatriating American Indian human remains. In consultation with tribal nations and in compliance with federal standards, the lab provides culturally appropriate care of remains from cemetery recovery sites that are found through public construction projects and by private residents, as well as consultation with other entities and direct repatriation efforts. The lab also houses human remains that are culturally unidentifiable or have yet to be repatriated and reburied.

MIAC staff have been working across states and with the Governor's office to repatriate remains from the Southwest U.S. currently housed at the University of Minnesota (UMN). This has been an extended process where MIAC staff are consulting with tribes in New Mexico and UMN to return the remains to Southwest tribes.

Osteological trainings:

- MIAC staff, assisted by staff from Hamline University, conducted a training for Mankato State University and MNDOT staff.
- MIAC staff presented at a conference to the Minnesota Council of Archeologists with the state archeologist; their presentation helped clarify each agency's roles and responsibilities. Reaching out to non-agency groups is important because these are private contractors who also need to understand the role of MIAC.
- Training at Hamline University about tribal consultation mandates (Executive Order 13-10).
- Tribal member certification program: MIAC will work with UMN to conduct a pilot program over the summer that will include a field school and two weeks of academic training.

Osteology Database

In collaboration with the Office of the State Archaeologist, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office, and the archaeology lab at Minnesota State University Mankato, MIAC helped create a combined database of each agency's archaeological and cemetery files to streamline cultural resource preservation work. This one-of-a-kind database is tailored to MIAC's needs by making documents searchable in ways most commonly needed in Minnesota American Indian cemetery recoveries. Once the database is complete, both MIAC's cultural resource preservation staff and state of Minnesota archeology staff will be able to electronically search through all documents, some of which were previously only in paper form. This electronic archive will greatly increase MIAC's capacity to prevent and respond to cemetery disturbances. Next steps for the archive are to scan paper documents currently stored in Bemidji. Additionally, MIAC staff are working with Minnesota office of the State archaeologist, Minnesota IT Services, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office to develop a spatial component to the archive. This added component will allow users to augment the currently archived information by creating visuals of areas that have known or potential cemeteries. This will help build maps to proactively inform development projects to reduce the possibility of unintentional disturbance.

2019-20 MIAC Cultural Resource Preservation Priorities

- Work with the Office of the State Archeologist to reintroduce 307.8, to clarify MIAC's role in preventing and reacting to cemetery disturbances. (See more on the bottom of page 10.)
- Implement and disseminate Dylan Goetsch's workbook, and develop more outreach about MIAC's mandated roles and responsibilities to increase awareness of MIAC as a resource that can expedite cemetery recovery and repatriation in the future.
- Develop an internal project management tracking and reporting system to increase efficiency and standardize reporting internally
- Increase budget to hire a new staff member. Interviews with external partners indicate that increasing the budget and staff is critical to facilitate the work MIAC's cultural resources staff does.
- Update the cultural resource section of the website to include educational materials, frequently asked questions, and public outreach materials.

They are way understaffed, the folks that are there work, work, work. They work very hard and they are very dedicated to what they do, but the number of people they have to address all the responsibilities they have is way out of proportion.

– State of Minnesota employee



LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION GRANTS AND APPROPRIATIONS

Gordy Adams demonstrates how to clean fish at Spring Camp in Nett Lake. Photo credit Charles Wagner

MISSION FOR THE LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

Protect and empower American Indian children, parents, and elders in the continuing development of our language, thus maintaining tribal sovereignty.

Language revitalization is a critical aspect of American Indians revitalizing their culture and maintaining tribal sovereignty. It is particularly important and time-sensitive for Dakota tribal nations because there are only a few Dakota first language speakers still living in Minnesota. In continuing the state's effort to revitalize Dakota and Ojibwe languages, in 2018-19 MIAC distributed and oversaw \$2 million in grant funding for language revitalization programs. Grants were distributed to programs that are working to revitalize both Dakota and Ojibwe languages, and they operate across a wide geographic area and serve a diverse group of American Indian communities.

American Indian language immersion schools in Minnesota are creating young Indigenous language speakers, acting as a model for schools in other states and in Canada, and turning language students into language teachers. As youth participate in immersion schools or language programs, they are able to bring what they have learned into their home and community. In this role, they are able to impact a greater population and spread access to the language even further throughout their communities.



Deanna StandingCloud instructs lacrosse and language classes at Spring Camp in Nett Lake. Photo credit Charles Wagner



Robert Larsen, Lower Sioux President and MIAC Board Chair, in front of Dakota language sign in the Lower Sioux Indian Community.

NEW FUNDING POLICY FOR IMMERSION SCHOOLS

To support immersion and language programs, there was an important change to the distribution of funding for immersion schools in 2018-19. Two new direct streams of funding were signed into law, so now language program funding goes directly to immersion language programs and to tribal nations. The competitive grant funding is still in place, but the new law means tribal nationals will no longer have to go through the competitive grant process to fund their language programs. This new funding represents sustainability for language and immersion programs, and highlights a successful working relationship among MIAC, tribal nations, urban American Indian communities, and the state of Minnesota.

Not only are immersion schools and language programs revitalizing language, they are also revitalizing the culture connected to that language. For instance Ojibwemotaadidaa, an Ojibwe Immersion Academy at Fond du Lac Community College for adult language speakers, developed a program for expecting parents and parents with their infants that incorporated traditional parenting values and practices. The school has built curriculum around common phrases regarding infants, such as feeding babies, changing diapers, and asking how old a baby is. They have also taught skills on how to wrap babies and make traditional baby swings. This demonstrates how immersion programs are holistically revitalizing the languages in tandem with the culture that is embedded in the language.

In the past 10 years in Minnesota, there has been an increase from two immersion schools to seven. This is particularly important, as immersion programs are one of the best ways to learn a language and the associated cultural values.¹² As the number of immersion schools increases, it is important to increase funding. These schools function not only to teach language, but also as community centers, resource libraries, and sites of innovative curriculum development. MIAC facilitated and organized meetings with many communities to discuss language programs, allowing for leaders in this area to learn from each other and brainstorm new ideas.

We're seeing how it reaches out not only just with language but also with curriculum, culture, story, and how it's changing the whole philosophy of life, and returning back to a better comprehension and understanding of all facets of education from natural resources to child rearing. We're becoming more knowledgeable and aware of the gifts that are just out there for us.

– Staff member of
collaborating organization

These types of funds give us the opportunity to start meeting ourselves, and that's a huge piece to this puzzle. Constantly as Indigenous peoples we are not being seen, and not being heard. We are being ignored and are invisible. These types of funds help us create places where we can start being our own leaders and start picking ourselves up, start having ourselves be visible, having ourselves be heard.

– Staff member of
collaborating organization

2018-19 Language Grants and Appropriations

- Niiganne Ojibwemowin Immersion School
- Wicoi Nandagikendan Early Childhood Urban Immersion Program
- Lower Sioux Indian Community Immersion
- Red Lake Immersion
- Bdote Early Learning
- Fond du Lac Tribal College
- Dakhóta lápi Okhódakičhiye
- Minneapolis American Indian Center
- Nay Ah Shing/Pine Grove Schools
- St. Paul Public Schools
- American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center
- Dakota Wicohan
- White Earth Tribal College and Community College

¹Reyhner, J., & Carjuzaa, J. (Eds.). (2017). Affirming identity: The role of language and culture in American Indian education. *Cogent Education*, 4:1. DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2017.1340081

²Volunteer Working Group on Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization and Preservation. (2011). Legislative report of the volunteer working group on Dakota and Ojibwe language revitalization and preservation. <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2011/mandated/110620.pdf>



LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

One of MIAC's 2019 legislative accomplishments was coordinating Sovereignty Day in the House of Representatives. Pictured is the flag procession into the House Chambers. Photo credit: Paul Battaglia, House Photography

Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers

In collaboration with the state's ethnic councils, MIAC staff helped draft and advocate for the Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers Act of 2019. The bill included provisions for a variety of initiatives with the goal of increasing the number of Indigenous teachers and teachers of color in areas facing teacher shortages, with a focus on expanding pathways to teaching, strengthening teacher retention efforts, and providing incentives to attract more students into the teaching profession through scholarships and grants. While the House passed all parts of the bill as part of the omnibus policy, the Senate did not hear the bill. However, some small aspects of the bill were signed into law. These were: increasing investments for Student Teacher Candidate Grants in Shortage Areas (Statute 136A.1275), increasing investment and policy amendments for the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Program (Statute 122A.635), and increasing investments for the Teacher Mentorship and Retention of Effective Teachers (Statute 122A.70).

They [MIAC] provide a valuable service to Native people, and to the state of Minnesota particularly the Legislature. They are the force behind ongoing and future changes regarding the state's relationship with Native people.

– Minnesota State representative

In 2018-19, MIAC staff worked in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education and the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in the following areas:

- Added cultural responsiveness requirements to teacher development and evaluation
- Removed basic skills test requirements for Tier 4 license. Created an option for employing districts to verify satisfactory job performance of Tier 3 skills, so a teacher may be able to obtain a Tier 4 license by passing a standardized test.

MIAC and the ethnic councils will continue to advocate for the bill in the 2020 legislative session.



Supporters of The Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers Act

Changes to the Private Cemeteries Act

In response to the cemetery disturbance at Shaver Mounds, MIAC collaborated with the Office of the State Archaeologist and the Department of Administration to update the Private Cemetery Act (M. S. 307.08). These changes would grant MIAC additional authority in determining whether a site constitutes an American Indian cemetery and in directing recovery processes, with the goal of improving site assessments, preventing further damage after a disturbance, and more effectively protecting sites from disturbances. The changes also aim to strengthen the relationship between MIAC and the Office of the State Archaeologist through the creation of a memorandum of understanding. While, MIAC received a slight increase in funding to address cemetery disturbances in the 2019 legislative session, new language for the Act was not successfully passed. MIAC will continue to advocate for policy changes in the 2020 legislative session.

Other legislative efforts

Beyond working as direct legislative advocates, MIAC staff also monitor many pieces of legislation that are pertinent to American Indians in Minnesota to effectively communicate to the MIAC board about relevant legislation and its status. This involves going to meetings for a wide range of legislation.

MIAC also supports legislation in a variety of ways, including: attending committee meetings, drafting language for legislation, writing letters of support, and testifying in front of the House and Senate. For example, the MIAC legislative director attended committee hearings and meetings for the People's Hearing on Minnesota Reparations Legislation, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, and Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development Grant program. Other activities in 2018-19 include:

- MIAC staff organized, attended, and facilitated the annual Tribal Leaders Summit with the Governor in September 2019.
- MIAC staff testified at the Senate Government Finance committee twice, and the State Government Finance Division in the House once, to give a high-level overview of MIAC's mandated roles and responsibilities.
- MIAC staff testified at the Legacy Finance Senate hearing and Legacy Finance in the House to advocate for language revitalization funding.
- MIAC staff had meetings with House and Senate members to speak about MIAC's mission and their need for resources.
- MIAC staff partnered with the Minnesota Department of Education and the Tribal Nations Education Committee to oppose an amendment for the Browns Valley school district to waive the consultation process with a tribal nation or TNEC.
 - MIAC staff provided a letter stating opposition to the amendment and attended several committee meetings regarding the E-12 Education bill and proposed amendment. The amendment was not included in the omnibus bill.
- Representative Aisha Gomez reached out to MIAC's legislative director concerning an amendment offered regarding Article 5 Section 4 Subd. 6 (c) of the Omnibus Tax Bill. MIAC opposed the amendment and advised that the state of Minnesota must comply with Indian Child Welfare Act and the State of Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act.
- MIAC's then interim director and legislative director consulted with Representative Olson regarding the number of tribal representatives that sit on the Opiate Epidemic Response Advisory Council, and facilitated creating an additional spot for a total of two American Indian representatives. The Opioid Omnibus bill calls for two members representing American Indian tribes (one representing Ojibwe tribes and one representing Dakota tribes) to sit on the Opiate Epidemic Response Advisory Council.

MIAC is currently working with the Minnesota Legislature to allow the MIAC executive director to testify in front of the Senate at the same level as a state agency commissioner. This will allow MIAC's executive director to advocate for funding that corresponds to MIAC's legislative mandates. (In the current legislative language, MIAC's executive director is unable to testify in front of the Senate in the final stages of advocating for MIAC's funding.) This change will allow MIAC to answer questions from senators, and better explain their scope of responsibilities and their need for the funding they request.

As a legislator, I'm really appreciative of the fact that there is a resources that we can go to to find out more of the impact of legislation and how [American Indian] communities feel about any action from the Legislature. [I have] stronger awareness of their willingness to collaborate.

– Minnesota State Representative

Tribal Nations Day in the House of Representatives: Sovereignty Day

Sovereignty Day in the House of Representatives was a historic event where elected tribal leaders from the 11 tribes in Minnesota came to the Minnesota House for learning and teaching.



Photo credit: Paul Battaglia, House Photography

MIAC staff were instrumental in organizing this event: they reached and coordinated the elected tribal leaders from all 11 tribes to attend. Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan gave a welcoming. Professor Tadd Johnson, Esq., Director of Graduate Studies American Indian Studies department at the University of Minnesota - Duluth, and Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, Secretary/Treasurer Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community presented on the history of the relationship between tribal nations and the state of Minnesota and state agencies. They described historical policies and their impacts, including the legal landscape set up by treaties and sovereign nation status, the creation of reservations, and the practice and ongoing impact of boarding schools. The leaders also explained the current tribal nation-state government relationship.

According to feedback from participants, House members believed that these presentations helped give lawmakers additional capacity to work with tribal nations and American Indian communities in Minnesota. They plan to use what they learned to inform future legislation. Hearing directly from tribal leaders allowed legislators to gain a greater understanding of the needs, concerns, strengths, and priorities of tribes and American Indian communities in Minnesota.

[MIAC's legislative director] was instrumental to helping organize the event and planning for how the day would go.

– Staff member for the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party

This was the first step in a long process of hearing from and having engagement with the 11 tribal nation in Minnesota. We wanted our House members to have an overview of tribal issues and importance and be able to put names and faces with the 11 tribal nations, as well as the tribal nations to be able to put names to faces of the House members.

– Staff member for the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party

MIAC and the work they do will build a stronger understanding of what sovereignty means, treaties and treaty rights, advocating in a positive way for Native American communities. That's going to result in positive change around the state. Stronger partnerships between legislators, in the House and the Senate, and that there will be the ability for them to advocate for our Native American tribes and communities because they are building a stronger awareness as well as building a stronger department.

– Minnesota State Representative



EDUCATION

Educational panels from the *Why Treaties Matter* exhibit displayed at White Earth Nation's Tribal Headquarters, photo courtesy of Casey DeMarais, MN Humanities Center.

Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations exhibit

The *Why Treaties Matter* exhibit details how the treaties tribes made with the federal government affirmed tribal government sovereignty -- tribal governments oversee their own land, resources, economies, and people. Communities throughout the state can now host the exhibit, and local community engagement events, such as speakers or tribal ceremonies, are often held in conjunction with the exhibit. A permanent version of the exhibit has also been installed at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Tribal-State Relations Training

Developed in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the University of Minnesota - Duluth, the Tribal-State Relations Training prepares state agency employees to work effectively with tribal governments. The training promotes respectful collaboration among tribes and state agencies and provides an overview of American Indian tribal governments, histories, cultures, and traditions. Over 2,000 state employees have attended the training to date. MIAC will continue to expand the number of trainings from five this year to 10 next year.

In 2019:

- 785 people were trained
- 27 state agencies were represented in the trainings
- 7 Tribal Nations hosted trainings
- 15 Tribal Leaders participated



The history really helped me put today's issues into context regarding everything from land to health disparities.

– Tribal-State Relations
Training participant

This is a rich learning environment; the sheer depth and breadth of information and resources packed into a two-day training was humbling and makes me want to keep learning.

– Tribal-State Relations
Training participant

This is the history we should have been taught and never were – it is critical to learn as a state employee to be effective collaborators and citizens of our shared land. THANK YOU!!

– Tribal-State Relations
Training participant

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Meetings and conferences attended

MIAC staff attended and participated in a wide range of public engagement activities to advance the mission and goals of MIAC.

- Office of Ombudsperson for Families Board Meetings – held quarterly
- Healthy Children Healthy Nations Conference:
 - A collaboration of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community’s Seeds of Native Health campaign, Better Way Foundation, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) to improve early childhood development and childhood nutrition in Minnesota’s Native American communities
- MN Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID)
 - A collaboration of leadership of Minneapolis Native American organizations and urban tribal offices and embassies
- Coordinated and attended tribal liaison meetings
- Minnesota Chippewa Tribe – quarterly meetings
- Governor’s Interstate Indian Council
- National Leadership Development Conference
- The Gretchen Carlson Leadership Initiative Regional Summit
- MN Tribal Youth Gathering
- Numerous state agency tribal liaison interview panels
- Office of Higher Learning grant reviews
- Interview with White Earth’s Niiiji radio
- MN American Indian Chamber Golf Tournament – MIAC staff annually volunteer at this event
- Minnesota Indian Education Association annual conference on the Dakota and Ojibwe bilingual language seals
 - Bilingual language seals is an initiative where high school students can receive free college semester credits at Minnesota State colleges for language proficiency in Dakota and Ojibwe.

Discussions MIAC staff helped facilitate

- MIAC’s executive director assisted the Governor’s office with outreach, planning, and dissemination of information related to the Wild Rice Task Force
- University of Minnesota Wiseman Collection discussion between the tribes and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan



INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Wilder Research®

Information. Insight. Impact.

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About this report

Wilder Research was contracted to complete this report on behalf of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. We conducted 15 interviews and reviewed a variety of documentation and notes from MIAC staff about their work over the past year, as well as consulted with MIAC staff about which work and priorities should be emphasized in this legislative cycle.

For more information about this report, contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research, 651-280-2682.

Author: Nicole MartinRogers and Alice Lubeck

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