Office of Public Instruction – Indian Language Programs

Indian Language Programs				
	Actuals FY 2024	Appropriation FY 2025	Proposed FY 2026	Proposed FY 2027
State Level Activities Program				
Indian Language Preservation	$750,000	$750,000	$750,000	$750,000
Local Education Activities Program				
Indian Language Immersion	$96,970	$96,970	$264,970	$269,970

Montana Indian Language Preservation Program

The 2013 Legislature passed SB 342, which established a pilot Montana Indian Language Preservation Program to support efforts of Montana tribes to preserve native languages and to meet the state's educational goal of preserving the cultural integrity of American Indians under the Montana constitution.

The program was funded with several one-time-only appropriations to the Department of Commerce from FY 2016 to FY 2021, before it was moved to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) in FY 2022. The 2023 Legislature established an ongoing appropriation for the program in the OPI budget beginning in FY 2024. During the 2025 biennium, eight tribal nations received an award of $187,500 for language preservation activities, including the creation of digitized language products, recordings of stories and book publishing, online classes, development of interactive language dictionaries, and curriculum development for summer language immersion classes.

Montana Indian Language Immersion Program

The 2015 Legislature passed SB 272, the Cultural Integrity Commitment Act, which encourages school districts to create Indian language immersion programs in order to preserve and perpetuate Indian languages. Immersion program is defined in the bill as a program where all participating students receive content area instruction in an Indian language at least 50.0% of the day from teachers who are fully proficient in the languages and the goal of the program is perpetuating cultural integrity and promoting bilingualism and biliteracy. It provides a mechanism for financial support, if appropriated, for any programs at eligible school districts.