



MINNESOTA

INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

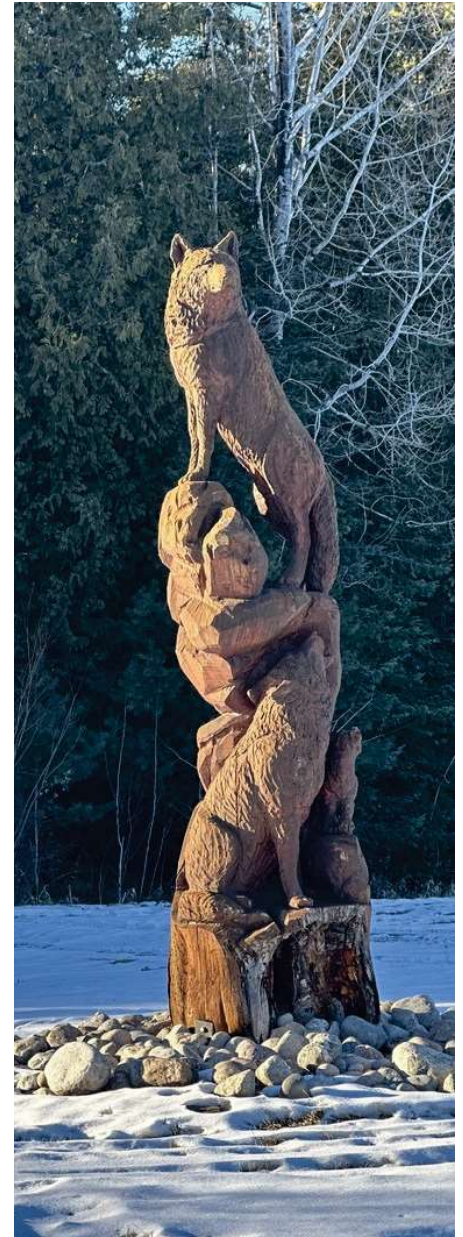
Legislative Report

*“Sixty-one years of building relationships
and providing service”*

Table of Contents ↘

Annual Report
2024

Letter from the Executive Director	03
Introduction	04
Executive Board	05
Non-Voting Board	07
Urban Indian Advisory Board	08
MN Indian Affairs Council Staff	09
Cultural Resources Department	10
Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grant Program	11
Dakota and Ojibwe Language Symposium	12
Community Engagement	13
Legislative	15
Expenditures	16
Acknowledgment	17



Letter from the Executive Director



Aaniin, Han, Greetings Relatives,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write about the exciting progress the MN Indian Affairs Council has experienced over the past year. In reflection, the word flourish comes to mind, not only with an increase in staffing, but also in our ability to fulfill our legislative mandates and board directives.

Most notably, we have grown our Cultural Resource team to 4 FTE - right on time to address the sharp uptick in requests for Reviews for construction and other statewide projects. The team successfully reviewed well over 600 projects during the 2024 fiscal year. MIAC Cultural Resource staff worked in close collaboration with MNDOT and Tribal partners on a variety of projects including the Twin Ports Interchange Duluth project. We are better positioned to safeguard American Indian cemeteries and burial sites on public and private land than ever. Chi miigwech, wopida tanka, a huge thanks to the MN State Legislature. With your support we can ensure that "all human burials, human remains, and human burial grounds (shall) be accorded equal treatment and respect for human dignity" [1] becomes the norm.

Our grants department has fully cemented itself as a trusted partner in Dakota and Ojibwe language revitalization funds. In addition, our language grants program staff have coordinated, for the third consecutive year, an annual symposium that brings together dedicated language warriors immersed in preservation and revitalization work. Further, the hire of a full time Legislative Director, a longtime dream of mine, came to fruition. We anticipate building stronger, more solid partnerships with legislators, the governor's office, and with Tribal governments.

A rare opportunity came in the form of the Hay Review evaluation process. The Hay Review revealed the need to elevate the executive director position by two points on the classification scale. Further, equity in position descriptions and salary offers was center in the hiring process of five new MN Indian Affairs Council team members over the past year. I am exceptionally optimistic that through partnership and together, we can realize not only our mission of protecting Tribal sovereignty and ensuring the well-being of American Indian citizens but also the spirit of One Minnesota.

Shannon Geshick



[1] MN Statute 307.08

Introduction

Mission

The mission of the MN Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) is to protect the sovereignty of the 11 Minnesota Tribal Nations and to ensure the well-being of American Indian citizens throughout the State of Minnesota.

Membership

The MIAC executive board is not appointed through the state's open appointments process. Rather, MIAC appointments are made directly by each elected Tribal president or chair. Although MN §3.922, where MIAC's authority is derived, permits the Tribal Chairperson/President/Chief to appoint a member to the Council, in practice, it is the Tribal Chairperson that most often serve rather than a designee.

Several revisions have been made to the Council since 1961, including membership, terms, and name changes.

Board Meetings

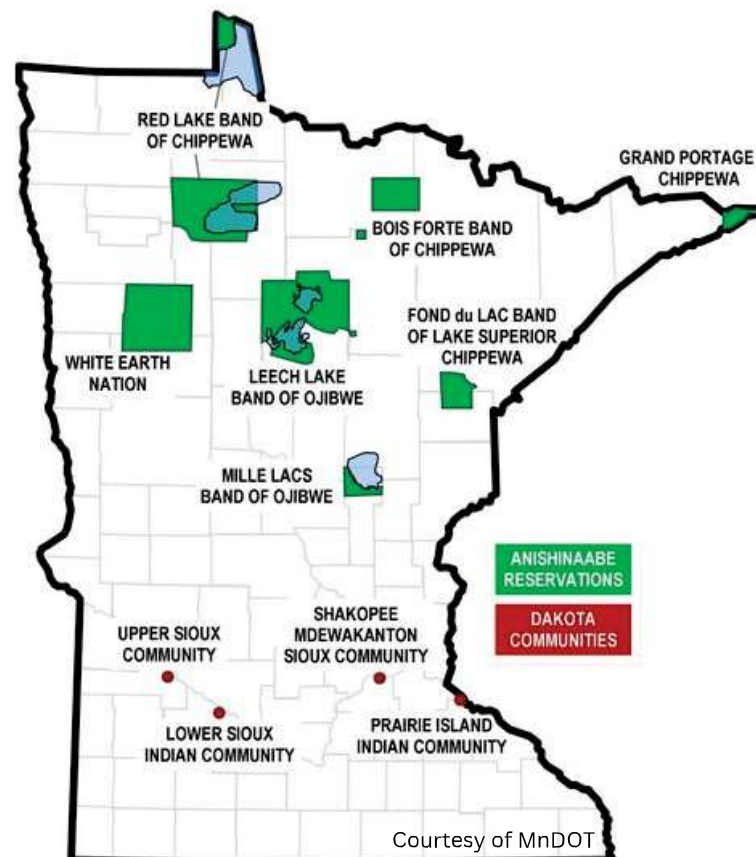
The three day long MIAC board meetings are held quarterly statewide and include government to government relationship building, sharing of current information and resources, education around priority issues that affect both urban and tribal populations and presents an opportunity to foster understanding and build connections throughout state and tribal government.



Function

Established in 1963, MIAC provides a liaison office between Tribal governments and the urban Indian community and state government. MIAC's Executive Director provides strategic direction for the Council, is a leader for MIAC staff, and advocates for policy changes through engagement with state legislators, the governor's office, and Tribal governments.

MIAC staff provide operational support for the agency and Council. Other duties include American Indian cemetery/burial protection, administering Dakota and Ojibwe Language grant funds, collaborating with state agency tribal liaisons, and making recommendations to Tribal nations, state legislators, and the governor's office on services affecting Native Americans, and engagement with Native communities statewide.



Executive Board



ROBERT "DEUCE" LARSON

BOARD CHAIR
PRESIDENT CANSA'YAPI/LOWER SIOUX INDIAN
COMMUNITY

ROBERT "BOBBY" DESCHAMPE

BOARD VICE-CHAIR
CHAIRMAN GICHI-ONIGAMING/
GRAND PORTAGE BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR
CHIPPEWA



CATHY CHAVERS

BOARD MEMBER
CHAIRWOMAN ZAGAAKWAANDAGOWININIWAG /
BOIS FORTE BAND OF CHIPPEWA

KEVIN DUPUIS

BOARD MEMBER
CHAIRMAN NAH-GAH-CHI-WA-NONG/
FOND DU LAC BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR
CHIPPEWA



GRANT JOHNSON

BOARD CHAIR /
PRESIDENT CANSA'YAPI / LOWER SIOUX INDIAN
COMMUNITY

FARON JACKSON

BOARD MEMBER/
CHAIRMAN GAA-ZAGASKWAABIGANIKAAG/
LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE



MELANIE BENJAMIN

BOARD MEMBER/
CHIEF EXECUTIVE MISI-ZAAGA'IGANIING/
MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE

SAMUEL R. STRONG

BOARD MEMBER/
SECRETARY MISKWAAGAMIIWI-
ZAAGAIGANING/ RED LAKE NATION



CYNDY MILDA

BOARD MEMBER / MDEWAKANTON /
SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY

MICHAEL FAIRBANKS

BOARD MEMBER / CHAIRMAN GAA-
WAABAABIGANIKAAG/
WHITE EARTH NATION



MN Indian Affairs Council NON-VOTING BOARD

Governor's Office

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

State Legislators

State Senate

Mary Kunesch

State Senate

Paul Utke

State House of Representative

Liish Kozlowski

State House of Representative

Bobbie Harder

Commissioners

Tammie Gronvall

Department of Administration

Paul Schnell

Department of Corrections

Willie Jett III

Department of Education

Matt Verilek

Department of Employment &
Economic Development

Jennifer Lemaile Ho

Department of Housing
Finance Agency

Brooke Cunningham

Department of Health

Rebecca Lucero

Department of Human Rights

Jodi Harpstead

Department of Human Services

Ida Rukavina

Department of Iron Range
Resources & Rehabilitation

Sarah Strommen

Department of Natural Resources

Larry Herke

Department of Veterans Affairs



MN Indian Affairs Council Staff



Shannon Geshick
Executive Director



Opalina Peralta
Executive Assistant



Keegan Flaherty
**Contracts & Grants
Manager**



Skyler Kuczaboski
**Grants
Administrative
Specialist**



Melissa Cerda
**Cultural Resource
Manager, Senior**



George Goggleye, Jr.
**Cultural Resource
Manager**



John Reynolds
**Cultural Resources
Manager**



Lilly Geraghty
**Cultural Resources
Manager**



Isaac Weston
**Cultural Resource
Manager**



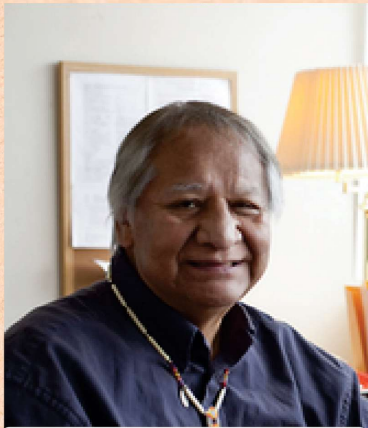
Brandon Alkire
Legislative Director



Michele L. Poitra
**Communications
Manager**

Urban Indian Advisory Board

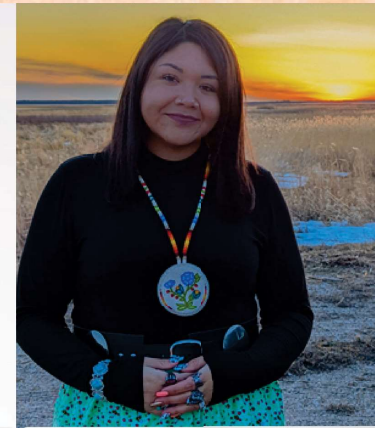
The Urban Indian Advisory Board (UIAB) represents the urban Indian populations in the State of Minnesota. Members include two representatives from St. Paul, two from Minneapolis, one from Duluth and one from Bemidji.



Richard Wright
Minneapolis Representative



Richard Latterner
St. Paul Representative



Tera Nelson
Bemidji Representative



Margarita Ortega
Minneapolis Representative



Dr. John J. Littlewolf
St. Paul Representative



Vacant
Duluth Representative

Statement of Commitment

We commit to be:

Present - visible, accessible and involved

Focused - we represent, organize and engage community

Optimistic - American Indian resilience can be counted on to solve community challenges

Strategic - share work with community and Tribal leadership

Honorable - build, respect, gain, and treasure community trust

Inclusive - attend gatherings, seek input, and listen to ideas for best solutions

Cultural Resources

Accomplishments

MN. Stat. §307.08 & §138.31-42

- MIAC Cultural Resources Department reviewed 650 project proposals, archaeology licenses, EAW's, statewide survey proposals, and information requests pursuant to MN Indian Affairs Council's responsibilities under both the Private Cemeteries and Field Archaeology Acts.



NAGPRA

- MIAC CR staff has worked with Tribal Nations to repatriate culturally unaffiliated individuals. MIAC CR staff provided support to several institutions and individuals looking for guidance with repatriation efforts.



Mimbres

- The Mimbres ancestors and funerary objects at the University of Minnesota, are currently under the care of MN Indian Affairs Council. MIAC has worked diligently on repatriation and it is anticipated to occur in the upcoming year.

Twin Port Interchange

- MIAC CR Staff continues to work with Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa on the mitigation of the discovery of American Indian human remains.



- MIAC CR and Office of the State Archeologist worked together on a upgraded Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the implementation of MS §307.08 - The Private Cemeteries Act.
- MIAC CR staff is working with Tribal Partners/County Agencies to assist in with local projects in Northern Minnesota.
- MIAC CR staff worked with the United States Forest Service and assisted with orientation of new employees with emphasis on Tribal Relations.
- MIAC CR staff participated in a Cultural Resources panel at the NEPA National Conference.
- MIAC CR staff and MnDOT Cultural Resource Unit held a "mixer" to help foster relationships, keep communication open, and educate on the Private Cemeteries Act.
- MIAC CR staff worked with the United States Forest Service (Chippewa National Forest) in a cultural resource initiative.
- Members of the MIAC CR conducted a burial disturbance mitigation, including burial recovery and reburial, on private property near Mankato. Work was done in conjunction with Lower Sioux Indian Community, with assistance from Hamline University, Minnesota State University - Mankato, and the Office of the State Archaeologist.

MN Indian Affairs Council fulfills duties found in MS §307.08, through its Cultural Resources program. The Cultural Resources program works to protect American Indian cemeteries and burial statewide.

Language Preservation & Revitalization Grants Program

Minnesota Session Laws, 92nd Legislature, Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 4, Sec. 2, Subdivision 9, funds were allocated for the Indian Affairs Council to provide grants to preserve Dakota and Ojibwe Indian language and to foster education programs and immersion programs in Dakota and Ojibwe language.

The Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grant program, which funds revitalization of Minnesota's first languages, is underwritten by an appropriation from the state's Legacy Fund Amendment. The MN Legacy Fund gave MN Indian Affairs Council just over \$ 2 million to fund 22 language projects. The eligible project areas are intentionally broad and somewhat flexible to allow creativity and innovation with intent that a diverse array of projects can be funded. Recognized educational institutions in Minnesota, like Canšayapi Wakanyeža Owayawa Oti, the Lower Sioux Early Head Start and Head Start Dakota language immersion program in Morton, Minn. This program is the first and only Dakota Head Start program in the nation.

You can visit the [MN Legacy Fund Amendment](#) webpage page to learn about all the good work this fund does

COMPETITIVE			TRIBAL		
FY 24	AMOUNT		FY 24	AMOUNT	
American Indian OIC	FY 24	\$ 75,000.00	Boise Forte Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
Dakota Iapi	FY 24	\$ 75,000.00	Fond du Lac Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
Dakota Wicohan	FY 24	\$ 75,000.00	Grand Portage Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
Mpls American Indian Center	FY 24	\$ 75,000.00	Leech Lake Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
University of Minnesota	FY 24	\$ 75,000.00	Lower Sioux Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
			Mille Lacs Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
			PIIC Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
			Red Lake Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
			Upper Sioux Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00
			White Earth Tribal	FY 24	\$ 66,500.00

IMMERSION		
FY 24	AMOUNT	
Fond du Lac Tribal College	FY 24	\$ 100,000.00
Lower Sioux Immersion	FY 24	\$ 95,105.15
Niiganne Immersion	FY 24	\$100,000.00



MIAC Language Grants service map
[MN Legacy Fund Amendment](#)

COMPETITIVE	FY 24	AMOUNT
American Indian Family Center	FY 24	\$ 99,267.30
Mpls American Indian Center	FY 24	\$ 8,345.76
Dakota Iapi	FY 24	\$100,000.00
Niibi Center	FY 24	\$ 54,800.00



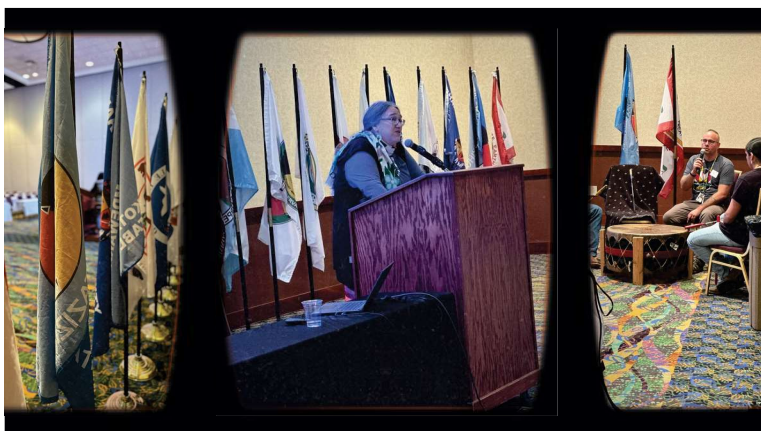
MINNESOTA'S
 LEGACY
 TRACK THE PROGRESS

Language Symposium

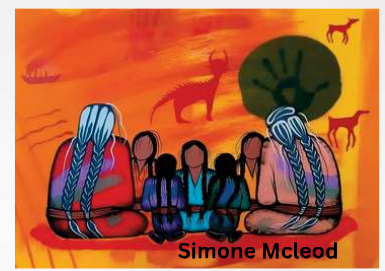


On February 29th and March 1st, the MN Indian Affairs Council Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Working Group, in collaboration with the Minnesota Humanities Center, convened the third annual Dakota and Ojibwe Language Symposium at Tinta Wita (PIIC) with virtual participation also available. The symposium drew an average of 91 in-person attendees each day, supplemented by 15 online participants. Among the distinguished keynote speakers was Vanessa Goodthunder, Lower Sioux Indian Community, who eloquently recounted her journey initiating Čaŋśayapi Wąŋąyeža Owayawa Oŋi, the first Dakota language immersion Early Head Start program in the nation. Additionally, keynote speaker Heid Erdrich, Minnesota Poet Laureate showcased her artistic and poetic endeavors crafted in Ojibwemowin, enriching her presentations with animated accompaniments and underscoring the unifying power of language.

Comprising eight sessions per day, with four concurrently running, the symposium featured a diverse array of topics. Highlights from the 16 sessions encompassed themes such as "Raising an Ojibwe Language Speaker: Successes and Challenges as a Parent," presented by Persia Erdrich, "Language and Cultural Revitalization in an Urban Setting," delivered by the Culture, Language, Arts Network team at the Minneapolis American Indian Center, and "Dakota Language at Harding High School," presented by Jordan Iwan and his students. As plans for the fourth annual symposium are yet to commence, the resounding success of this year's event underscores its significance in fostering dialogue and collaboration within the Dakota and Ojibwe language revitalization community.



Legislative Focus



The MN Indian Affairs Council (“MIAC”) is a uniquely positioned state agency guided under Minnesota Statute 3.922 and is overseen by a board consisting of elected Tribal Leaders. This highly complex structure means that traditional agency legislation building and prioritization pathways are different than within other agencies. The MIAC’s role of balancing the interests of Tribal Nations with the interests of the State means that our legislative priorities are all encompassing include all the state agencies.

The MN Indian Affairs Council’s complex process for developing legislative priorities is as follows –

- In accordance with Minn. Stat. §10.65, all matters that have Tribal Implications, including legislative proposals, must have been vetted through formal consultation by the above listed agencies.
- Once the formal consultation is complete and the Tribal Nations have agreed to the priorities proposed by the various agencies, then these are sent to the Governor to be considered for the Governors budget.
- In January, the Governor releases his legislative priorities with a budget. MIAC will adopt the legislative priorities that have been vetted through formal consultation between the Tribal Nations and the Office of the Governor.
- These priorities will be listed under the various departments that introduced the proposed legislation.

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council has deemed the following legislation an ongoing priority -

- §260.751 - Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act
- §10.65 – Government to Government Relationships with Tribal Governments
- §3.922 – Indian Affairs Council
- §307.08 – Damages; Illegal Molestation of Human Remains; Burials; Cemeteries; Penalty; Assessment.
- §142G – Minnesota Family Assistance Program
- §241.80 – American Indian Cultural Program
- §144.0757 – Office of American Indian Health



Community Engagement Highlights



Day on the Hill 2024

American Indian Day on the Hill highlights contributions of Native people in tribal, state, and local government. It is a day where our community shows presence at our state capital. We were honored with remarks by President Larsen of Lower Sioux and MIAC board chair, Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, Senator Kunesh, and Secretary Simon. 2024 marks the 100 year anniversary of the American Indian Voting Rights Act. Each year our community honors elders. This year Gertrude Buckanaga and Maria McCoy were honored.



Ten Year Anniversary of Tribal State Relations Training

The mission of Tribal State Relations Training is to ensure a community that values and promotes knowledge, understanding and respect for American Indian governance and way of life. The goals of a Tribal Liaison is to educate state employees about Indian people and governments, create partnerships, build respectful relationships between the State and Tribal governments and create an enduring commitment by the state to learn about tribal nations.



Annual Governor's Tribal Summit

The annual Minnesota Governor/Tribal Leader Summit is a meeting between the Governor of Minnesota and the leaders of the eleven sovereign Tribal Nations who share geography. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council is to "prepare a proposed agenda for the annual summit of elected tribal leaders, legislative leaders, and the governor". This year's Summit was hosted by the MN Humanities Center on September 20, 2023.



Native American Community Development Open House

The MN Indian Affairs Council was honored to partner with the Secretary of State's Office to attend their Open House to discuss legislative changes to voting rights for Native Americans and to acknowledge the 100th Anniversary of the Indian Citizenship Act.



MN Chippewa Tribe Legislative Dinner

The dinner was held on March 12, 2024. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe President Cathy Chavers spearheaded the occasion with a heartfelt speech focusing on Tribal Sovereignty and government-to-government relationships. The event provided a platform to engage with State partners and deliberate on legislative priorities as well as network and show appreciation for the work that has been done.



Honoring John Boblink Pow Wow

M Health Fairview with American Indian community partners held the Honoring John Boblink Pow Wow. John Bobolink, St. Paul Indian Ed. Director who passed away in February was well-known for being a good relative and for his work with and support of youth and families. John Bobolink, along with other distinguished American Indian community members, including Chairman of Leech Lake Reservation Faron Jackson, Sr, Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, and MN Indian Affairs Council Executive Director Shannon Geshick were celebrated with honoring songs to pay tribute to their partnership and leadership.



Global MN / MN Indian Affairs Council Meeting

MN Indian Affairs Council had the honor of hosting world advocates, guided by Global MN, on topics related to Indigenous communities and the LGBTQIA+2S community.



Cultural Resources Department Tour with State Legislators

The MN Indian Affairs Council's Cultural Resources Department hosted Representative Klevorn at the MIAC office of a presentation of our work, a visit of a burial site in Minnetonka, and tour of the osteology lab at Hamline University where American Indian human remains are culturally and physically cared for.



HAMLIN
UNIVERSITY



Expenditures

Description	Amounts
Full-time Salary/Fringe	872,000
Part-time/Seasonal/Salary/Fringe	44,000
Overtime	5,000
Other Employee Cost	6,000
Space Rental	44,000
Printing & Advertising	3,000
Professional/Technical Services	70,000
Communications	6,000
In-State Travel	75,000
Out-of-State Travel	15,000
Employee Development	15,000
State Agency Provided P/T Services	10,000
Rate-Based MNIT Services	36,000
Agency-Specific MNIT Services	5,000
Supplies	20,000
Equipment Rental	10,000
Repairs, Alterations & Maintenance	1,000
Statewide Indirect Costs	N/A
Attorney General Costs	N/A
Other Operating Costs	10,000
Aid to Special Districts	N/A
Total FY24 Budget	1,337,000



We thank you for your ongoing support

MIIGWICH MIIGWICH MIIGWICH
PIDAMAYA PIDAMAYA PIDAMAYA
THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

This Annual Report to the Legislature was authored by Michele L. Poitra, Communications Manager along with assistance from MIAC staff.



MN Indian Affairs Council
161 Rondo Avenue
Ste. 919
St. Paul, MN 55103
651.539.2200 | 651.539.2202
Bemidji Office
1819 Bemidji Ave N
Ste 2
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-308-2750