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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Morris Receives Language Revitalization Grant from Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Summary: Morris received an Ojibwe Language Revitalization grant from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, which will fund the Mino-Gikin'dasowin Project.

(February 8, 2013)-The University of Minnesota, Morris recently received an Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grant from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, which will fund the Mino-Gikin'dasowin (Good Knowledge) Project. This project will expand Morris's Ojibwe language offerings and build partnerships with tribal, immersion, and Ojibwe-teaching K-12 schools regarding field experiences for Morris education students.

The Mino-Gikin'dasowin Project will also enable the University to work with tribal and education communities to create pathways for more college graduates to teach Ojibwe language. It will support an upper-division Ojibwe Song and Dance course taught by Gabe Desrosiers, Anishinaabe language instructor and cultural programs and outreach coordinator, and an Ojibwe-language quiz bowl for middle and high school students as well.

"The Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grant from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council has indeed enhanced language learning opportunities on the Morris campus," says Desrosiers. "It has increased student numbers in the advanced courses and has been successful in many aspects of Anishinaabemowin."

Given the campus's history as an American Indian boarding school, Hilda Ladner, director of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Intercultural Programs, believes that this kind of work is particularly important for Morris, since boarding schools historically contributed to the loss of indigenous languages. She acknowledges, however, that the work will affect all students, as it will enable the University to better meet the needs of communities across the state.

"Minnesota's indigenous languages are dying," says Ladner. "Languages keep cultures alive, and when they aren't spoken, you lose part of your identity. While 80 percent of our American Indian students are from Minnesota tribes, there are other students, too, who would want to know more about Minnesota's indigenous cultures and languages."

The project team has already begun working with Niigaane Ojibwe Immersion School and will continue to do so throughout 2013. The language quiz bowl will take place this April, and it is hoped that Desrosier's new course will be offered in the fall of 2013.

Established in 1963, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council is the oldest council in the nation and serves as a liaison between the Indian tribes and the state of Minnesota. The Council's Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Grants program is underwritten by an appropriation from the state legislature from Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage fund.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.