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GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK
STATE OF MONTANA

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Bullock Announces "Native Language Preservation Program"

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock announced today the creation of the "Native Language Preservation Program," a joint partnership between the State of Montana and tribal governments. The program is aimed at preserving the languages of Montana's Indian tribes.

The Native Language Preservation Program, which will benefit all eight tribal governments in Montana, is a measure that will enhance the educational opportunities students have on Montana's reservations, while protecting American Indians' cultural heritage.

"The First Montanans serve as our cultural compass. We must ensure that the languages that have been used for 400 generations do not disappear on our watch," Bullock said. "This program will serve as a valuable tool to preserve our cultural identity and ensure educational success for our students."

The announcement comes on the heels of a meeting Bullock had earlier in the week with tribal leaders from across the state and a bipartisan group of legislators. In that meeting, tribal leaders expressed concern that, without action, languages could soon disappear. For example, on the Rocky Boy's Reservation, home of the Chippewa Cree, there is only one remaining Chippewa speaker.

Bullock is asking legislators to appropriate $2 million to fund this educational and cultural program. The program is to be administered by Montana's State Tribal Economic Development Commission (STED) with input from the Montana Historical Society and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs.