

Immersion Programs Conference: Revitalizing Endangered Indigenous Languages Abstract -- 200 words

It is estimated that half of the world's 6000 languages are in danger of falling silent within a few generations, taking with them unique and valuable knowledge and wisdom (UNESCO, 2013). The history of colonialism and the current world of rapid globalization have put many languages in danger. The approximately 250 American Indian languages spoken across the U.S. are no exception to this trend. The near genocide of the 500+ distinct tribes almost wiped out native cultures and languages. Today, many American Indians are struggling to maintain their language and identity in an English dominated world (Moskowitz, 2012). Such is the case for tribal members in Montana who are committed to reinvigorating their respective languages. The Native Language Immersion Bill sponsored by Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) supports efforts to establish and/or expand Native language immersion schools and programs where Native American languages are the primary language of instruction. To revitalize and maintain Montana's 11 critically endangered Native languages, we will convene a "dream team" of national and state experts/scholars and policy-makers for a three-day conference to share models, pedagogical strategies and experiences with representatives of each language group aimed at supporting their effective immersion program development.