

For Immediate Release

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Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute Receives \$1.5 Million Gift from MacKenzie Scott for Language Revitalization

Lac Courte Oreilles, WI – December 16, 2024 – The Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute (WOLI) is thrilled to announce the receipt of a transformative \$1.5 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. This generous donation will contribute to the construction of a Community Language Revitalization Center, significantly advancing WOLI's mission to preserve and promote the Ojibwe language.

WOLI, established in 2000, has been at the forefront of Ojibwe language revitalization efforts. The institute operates an Ojibwe language immersion school in partnership with the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and provides community language programs, playing a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing the Ojibwe language within the Lac Courte Oreilles community and beyond.

Lisa LaRonge, Executive Director of WOLI, expressed her gratitude and excitement: "This generous gift from MacKenzie Scott comes at a pivotal moment in our journey. It aligns perfectly with our timeline for the community facilities project, allowing us to create a space dedicated to language learning and cultural preservation." The \$1.5 million gift will go towards the construction of the Community Language Revitalization Center. This state-of-the-art facility will serve as a hub for language learning, cultural events, and community gatherings, providing a dedicated space for intergenerational language transfer and cultural immersion.

Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Governing Board member David Scott Bisonnette, a long-time supporter of WOLI, emphasized the institute's impact: "WOLI's work has been instrumental in breathing new life into the Ojibwe language. This funding will amplify their efforts, ensuring that future generations can connect with their heritage through language. This gift is also the perfect example of how an individual can positively impact an entire community now and in the future. Miigwech for the generosity."

Dr. Anton Treuer, WOLI Vice President and Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University, highlighted the broader implications of this gift: "This funding is not just about preserving words; it's about revitalizing and renormalizing the Ojibwemowin language. It's about reconnecting our community with its cultural roots and strengthening our identity."

The impact of this donation extends far beyond the physical structure. It represents a significant step towards ensuring the long-term vitality of the Ojibwe language and culture. By creating a centralized space for language learning and cultural activities, WOLI aims to increase community engagement and accelerate language acquisition across all age groups.

As WOLI embarks on this exciting new chapter, the institute invites community members, language enthusiasts, and supporters of cultural preservation to join in this endeavor. Whether through volunteering, participating in language programs, or spreading awareness, every contribution helps in the crucial mission of revitalizing the Ojibwe language.

About Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute:

Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute was established in 2000 as an Ojibwe Language Immersion School with the primary goal of revitalizing the Ojibwe language. Located on the tribal homelands of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the institute has grown significantly since its inception. Today, it serves students from preschool through Grade 9, providing a comprehensive Ojibwe language immersion education.

The institute's mission extends beyond classroom education. WOLI is committed to supporting the development of Ojibwe medium teachers, creating culturally relevant curriculum, engaging in Indigenous community outreach, and conducting research in indigenous language revitalization. These initiatives are crucial in ensuring the long-term survival and growth of the Ojibwe language and culture.

Over its twenty-five years of operation, Waadookodaading has made significant strides in language revitalization. One of its most notable achievements is the development of over thirty Ojibwe medium teachers and scholars within the Great Lakes region. This accomplishment not only strengthens the institute's capacity but also contributes to the broader movement of Ojibwe language preservation across the region.