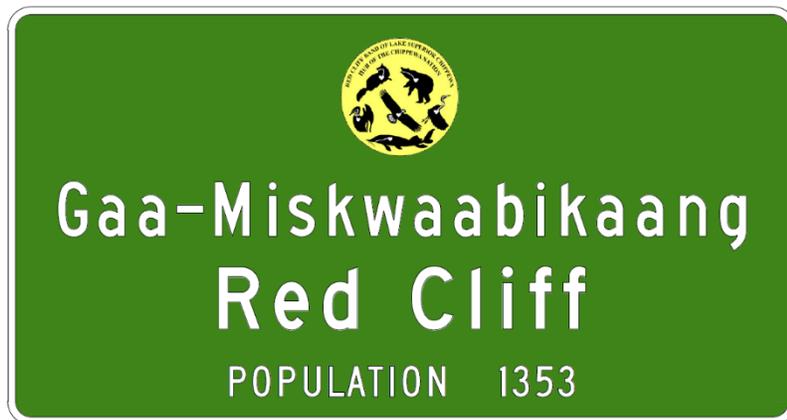


# WisDOT Dual Language Signing Program

## Background

In 2004 Governor Doyle signed Executive Order 39 which affirms the government-to-government relationship between the 11 Federally Recognized Tribes in Wisconsin and the State of Wisconsin. In 2019, Governor Evers re-affirmed the support of that relationship by issuing Executive Order 18. State cabinet agencies are directed to work cooperatively with tribes on any policies, programs or issues that have the potential to impact tribal communities.



By issuing these Executive Orders, Wisconsin is following the examples and actions of the federal Executive Orders and memorandums issued by Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama which supported the unique legal and political relationship with Tribal governments. Their Executive Orders and memorandums established that federal agency's working relationship with federally recognized Tribal governments fully respect the rights to self-governance and self-determination due to Tribal governments to the greatest extent permitted by United States law.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) maintains a Partnership Agreement with the 11 Federally Recognized Tribes as well as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). This agreement was originally created in 2007, revised in 2010 and most recently signed by all parties in 2019. The document formalizes a commitment by all parties for continuous improvement of communication and working dynamics. WisDOT respects Tribal sovereignty. Tribal languages, which add depth and history to our culture and landscapes, are inherently part of that respect. Many names of significant cities, lakes and other landmarks stem from Native culture and history. WisDOT and the Tribes, in partnership, want to take an action to honor and represent tribes in our state.

WisDOT worked with the WisDOT Inter-Tribal Task Force (ITTF) and the Wisconsin Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO) to develop this signing program. The purpose of the signs is to assist the Tribes with the revitalization of their languages and to inform all people of the historic pre-settlement names of geographic features and to welcome travelers to their communities in their Tribal language. The program structures a pathway for Tribal Governments in the State of Wisconsin to request that certain roadway signs throughout Tribal landscapes display both English and Tribal languages. WisDOT recognizes this unique opportunity to assist in preservation of key terms, while also providing an educational tool for the broader benefit of the traveling public. The development of a signage using both Native American language and English is an opportunity to connect the public to Native American history, culture and environment.

Preexisting Native language, which currently is used for several Wisconsin cities, landmarks and waterways, already reflects Indigenous language and culture. The dual language sign system is a tool for preserving tribal language. Also, creating a sense of place that reflects the unique tie each Wisconsin Tribe has to the land that embodies them as a people. WisDOT dual language sign standards support and

strengthen the sovereignty of each Wisconsin Tribe through the acknowledgment and identification of each tribal nation's language.

Information about the dual language sign program is available on the WisDOT Tribal Affairs webpage: [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Dual Language Signs \(wisconsindot.gov\)](https://wisconsindot.gov/Wisconsin-Department-of-Transportation-Dual-Language-Signs)

## General Requirements

The Wisconsin Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices ([WI MUTCD](#)) is the standard in Wisconsin for all traffic control devices on any roadway open to public travel. All signs are traffic control devices. Uniformity of traffic control devices simplifies the task of the driver because it meets the motorist expectation which aids in recognition and understanding. For example, signs are read from top to bottom, left to right and must utilize a text size that can be read and interpreted by motorists traveling at roadway speeds.

The WI MUTCD generally does not include discussion on the display of alternative or supplemental languages on traffic signs. The following is WisDOT's guidance on the display of both English and Native American languages on traffic signs. The guidance allows Tribal Governments to request dual language signing on jurisdictional boundary and geographic features signs on or within the boundary of tribal lands on roadways under WisDOT jurisdiction.

## Guidance

The display of both English and a Native American language on a single sign or sign assembly on the state highway system may be approved by WisDOT, based on the following guidelines:

1. Requests may include any jurisdictional boundary signs or geographic features signs including the following:
  - Reservation boundary signs.
  - City population signs.
  - County line boundary signs.
  - Bodies of water (lakes, rivers and streams) when that body of water is crossed by the state highway by the use of a bridge or the body of water is visible to the motorist. See [TEOpS 2-4-55](#) for additional guidance on allowable lake, river and stream signing.
2. A letter of concurrence from the City or County is required for city population signs or county boundary signs. The letter of concurrence needs to specify that they are in agreement that both languages be displayed.
3. Signs shall be limited to locations on or within the boundary of tribal lands (including all tribal lands held in trust). Dual language signs shall not be installed outside of the boundary of tribal lands such as, but not limited to, concentrated ethnic neighborhoods, population centers or traffic generators.
4. The Native American language legend shall be specified by the Tribal Government.

5. Native American languages shall not be displayed on any other sign on roads under WisDOT jurisdiction including, but not limited to:
  - Regulatory signs.
  - Warning signs (including School Zone signs).
  - All other Guide signs including:
    - Destination signs.
    - Street Name signs.
    - General or Specific Service (Logo Signs).
    - Tourist-Oriented Directional (Specific Service Signs).
    - Auto Tour Route signs.
    - Acknowledgment signs.
6. Dual language signs shall not be installed on [freeways and expressways](#) (major highways that are either fully controlled by interchanges or partially controlled by interchanges).
7. Installation of the signs shall not interfere with the placement of any other necessary signing, and signing shall be limited to one sign at an appropriate location in each route direction.
8. All letters and numerals displayed on the sign for the main characters of the Native American language shall be as provided in the [Standard Highway Signs and Markings](#) reference publication. Unique characters that are necessary for the proper translation, but not provided in the FHWA Standard Alphabets, may be used. These unique characters are to be kept to a minimum and shall be based on the characteristics of the letter forms of the Standard Alphabets, such as stroke width and arc, to the extent practicable.

Note - The locals (Counties/Cities/Villages/Towns) may choose to adopt this policy or a similar one for their roadways, but they are under no obligation to do so. Any requests for dual language signs on the county highway or local road system shall be coordinated directly between the tribe and the county or municipality. A written agreement should be used to document maintenance responsibilities. WisDOT shall provide sign details for the signs on the local system to ensure the dual language signs are consistently designed throughout the state.

## Process Overview

1. The Inter-Tribal Task Force (ITTF) representative, who is elected by their Tribal Government, shall submit a request for signs to their regional tribal liaison.
2. The tribal representative shall include the following items with the request:
  - Documentation signed by the tribal leader that illustrates action of approval by the Tribal Government to request signs. For example: A letter from Tribal Government, or a resolution.
  - Letter of concurrence from the City or County which is required for any requested city

population signs or county boundary signs. The letter of concurrence needs to specify that they are in agreement that both languages be displayed.

- List of requested signs as entered into the WisDOT Dual Language Sign Request spreadsheet, found on the [website](#).
  - Note – In an effort to reduce sign size and potential cost, wherever possible, recommend where the word or phrase can be separated onto multiple lines without changing the meaning. Submitting a working copy of the spreadsheet electronically will help ensure there are no mistakes in the sign design process.
- 3. WisDOT Bureau of Traffic Operations (BTO) will provide the following information back to the Tribal representative:
  - Completed spreadsheet (specified above).
  - Sign panel designs (PDF).
- 4. The Tribal representative shall review the sign panel designs for accuracy and if approved, shall send WisDOT a copy of the spreadsheet signed by tribal leadership. If there are errors, the Tribal representative should contact WisDOT BTO with revisions prior to tribal leadership signing off on the spreadsheet.
- 5. When the completed spreadsheet is received and approved by WisDOT BTO, the signs shall be ordered for fabrication and installation. Installation shall be coordinated by WisDOT.
  - A wait of approximately 45 to 60 calendar days can be expected from the order of the signs to their installation.
  - If changes to the signs are requested after the signs have been ordered, additional costs are possible.
- 6. WisDOT shall make the Native language words, English words, the English translation of the Native language words, and a phonetic representation of the words available on the WisDOT Tribal Affairs webpage.

## Sign Panel Design

1. The Native American legend shall be placed above the English legend. Both legends are upper and lower case lettering.
2. WisDOT shall use font Series D or C instead of E for the Native American legend. Series D and C are similar to E but have slightly less width. WisDOT shall also use a font size for the Native American legend that is one inch less than the English legend font height. This is done to both reduce the overall size (and therefore cost) of the sign as well as to ensure that drivers can quickly and easily decipher the meaning of the sign with the slightly larger English legend. The overall height and width of the signs should, in most cases, fit on a standard type II sign supported by wooden posts.
3. The I3-1 (Body of Water) and I2-2 (County Boundary) sign shall include the Native American language in Series D or C, and the font shall be 1 inch smaller than the English legend in Series E font.

4. The I2-3 (City Population) sign shall include the Native language in Series D or C, 7-inch font and the City Name with the English legend in Series D, 8-inch font. Below the city name is the word "Population" and population number per the standard sign drawings for I2-3.

## **Payment for the Signs**

1. WisDOT replaces Type II signs on a 12-year cycle based on corridor (Highway Number).
  - If the dual language sign requested is to be changed out as a part of the regularly scheduled WisDOT corridor replacement process, or if the sign needs to be replaced due to an improvement project, no cost shall be charged to the Tribe.
  - If the Tribe would like the sign changed outside of the regularly scheduled corridor process or improvement projects, the tribe shall be responsible for the cost of the manufacturing and installation of the sign.
  - After installation in both cases described above, WisDOT shall assume maintenance responsibility for the sign and from that point on, shall replace the sign with the regularly scheduled corridor process at no cost to the Tribe.