

# Dakota and Ojibwe Language Signing Program

## Background

[Indian tribal governments](#) are federally recognized in Minnesota. Each tribe is a separate sovereign nation — unique unto itself and distinct from all other federally recognized tribes.

On August 8, 2013, Governor Dayton signed Executive Order 13-10 Affirming the Government – to – Government Relationship between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Tribal Nations: Providing for Consultation, Coordination, and Cooperation. In accordance with this Order the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) established [MnDOT Policy AD005](#) Minnesota Tribal Nations Government – to – Government relationship with MnDOT, Providing for Consultation, Coordination, and Cooperation.

MnDOT recognizes the unique sovereign status of federally recognized tribes and the cultural values of all American Indian tribes in Minnesota, and is committed to strengthening the government-to-government relationship with the tribes.

Tribal Governments have requested that certain traffic signs display both English and the Dakota or Ojibwe language on roads and highways that traverse tribal lands. MnDOT worked with the [Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation](#) (ACTT) and the FHWA Minnesota Division to develop this signing program. The purpose of the signs is to assist the Tribes with the revitalization of their language and to inform all people of the historic pre-settlement names of geographic features and the Dakota and Ojibwe words for other features on tribal lands that are included in this signing program.

Information about the meanings of the words on the signs will be publicly available on the MnDOT Tribes and Transportation webpage <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mntribes/> after the signs are installed.

## General Requirements

The [Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways](#) (MN MUTCD) is the standard 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 in a text size that can be read and interpreted by the motorist traveling at roadway speeds.

The MN MUTCD generally does not provide for the display of alternative or supplemental languages on traffic signs. Tribal Governments may request dual language signing on jurisdictional boundary and geographic features signs on or near tribal lands roadways under MnDOT jurisdiction. The

following is the MnDOT's guidance on the display of both the English and the Dakota or Ojibwe language on traffic signs.

The display of both the English and the Dakota or Ojibwe languages on a single sign or sign assembly may be approved by MnDOT, based on the following guidelines:

- Requests may include any jurisdictional boundary (MN MUTCD Section 2H.2.2 County/City Name Marker Signs) or geographic features (MN MUTCD Section 2H.2.3 Lake and Stream) signs include the following signs: Reservation Boundary signs, City population signs, County line boundaries and bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, streams, or creeks when that body of water is crossed by the trunk highway by the use of a bridge or the body of water is visible to the motorist.
- City population signs and County line boundary signs require a letter of concurrence from the City or County. The letter of concurrence needs to specify that the City or County is in agreement that both languages be displayed and identify the placement, above or below, of each language.
- Such signs shall be limited to locations on or near tribal lands. Signs shall not be installed outside of tribal lands such as, but not limited to, concentrated ethnic neighborhoods or population centers.
- The language legend shall be either Dakota or Ojibwe as specified by the Tribal Government.
- Dakota and Ojibwe languages shall not be displayed on any other sign including, but not limited to, Regulatory, Warning (including School Zone), and all other Guide (including Destination, Street Name, General or Specific Service (Logo Signs), Tourist-Oriented Directional (Specific Service Signs), Auto Tour Route, and Acknowledgment) signs.
- The use of such signs shall be limited to conventional roadways. Such signs shall not be installed on freeways and expressways.
- Such signs shall be post mounted on MnDOT approved crashworthy roadside sign structures and not be overhead installations.
- Installation of the signs shall not interfere with the placement of any other necessary signing and shall not compromise the safety or efficiency of traffic flow. The signing shall be limited to one sign at an appropriate location in each route direction.
- All letters and numerals displayed on the sign for the main characters of the Dakota and Ojibwe 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.

## Process Overview

- The ACTT representative as authorized by their Tribal Government will request signs through the [MnDOT District Traffic Office](#).

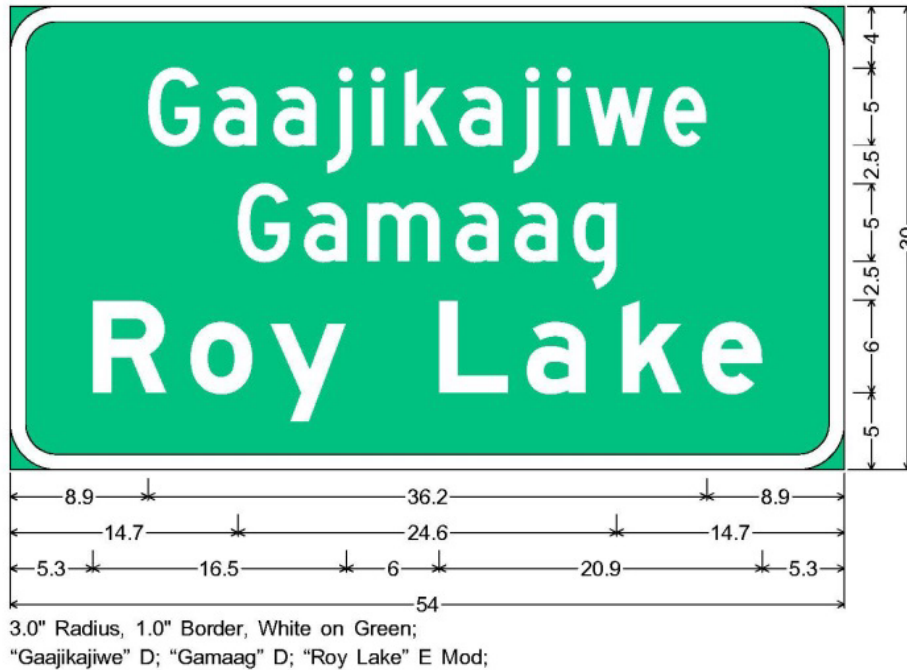
- The ACTT representative will include the following items with the request:
  - Submittal Letter
  - Documentation that illustrates action of approval by the Tribal Government to request signs. For example: minutes of a meeting or proceeding, letter from Tribal Government, resolution, etc.
  - Letter of concurrence from the City or County which is required for any requested city population signs or county boundary signs. The letter or concurrence needs to specify that they are in agreement that both languages be displayed and identify the placement, above or below, of each language.
  - List of requested signs as entered into the spreadsheet: Dakota or Ojibwe Language Signs.xlsx. Because of the length of some Dakota and Ojibwe words, some signs could be very large unless the word or phrase is separated onto two lines. Where possible, recommend where the word or phrase can be separated onto two lines without changing the meaning.
  - If possible, submit electronically the spreadsheet referenced above to the MnDOT District Traffic Office so information can be added to the spreadsheet as described below.
- The MnDOT District Traffic Office will provide the following information back to the ACTT representative:
  - Sign Panel designs (PDF)
  - Completed spreadsheet: Dakota or Ojibwe Language Signs.xlsx
  - Dakota or Ojibwe Language Signs Application
- The ACTT representative will review the sign panel designs for accuracy and if approved, will send the MnDOT District Traffic Office a completed application. If there are errors, the ACTT representative should contact the DTE with revisions prior to completing the application.
- When the completed application is received, signs will be ordered for fabrication and installation.
- The MnDOT District Traffic Office will send the completed spreadsheet to the MnDOT website coordinator who will make the English words, the Dakota or Ojibwe language words, and the English translation of the Dakota or Ojibwe words, and a phonetic representation of the words available on the MnDOT Tribes and Transportation website.

## Sign Panel Design

- The Dakota and Ojibwe legend may be placed above the English legend on a case by case basis. Both legends are upper lower case lettering.
- Due to the length of some Dakota and Ojibwe words and phrases it is recommended to use the highway font Series D instead of E Mod. Series D is a similar font to E Mod but has less breadth to the letters by approximately 35%. By using the Series D font and one inch less than the standard font height, the overall width of the signs when placing the Dakota or

Ojibwe language on two lines should in most cases fit on U channel post sign structures. If the word or phrase cannot be displayed on two lines the overall size of the sign may require a larger sign structure. This will increase the cost of the sign.

- The I3-1 (Body of water) and I2-5 (County boundary) sign will include the Dakota or Ojibwe language in Series D, 5-inch font and the English legend in E Mod, 6-inch font.
- The I2-3 (City Population Signs) will include the Dakota or Ojibwe language in Series D, 7-inch font and the City Name with the English legend in E Mod, 8-inch font. Below the city name, the word population is abbreviated as POP and number per the standard sign drawings for I2-3.



Sign Design Example

## For More Information

Visit: [mndot.gov](http://mndot.gov)

Or contact: Josie Tayse, MnDOT State Signing Engineer, 651-234-7371, [Josie.Tayse@state.mn.us](mailto:Josie.Tayse@state.mn.us)

For sign requests on the state highway system, contact the [MnDOT District Traffic Engineer](#) in the location of your request.