WHEREAS, United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) federally recognized Tribes; and

WHEREAS, the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribes’ leadership; and

WHEREAS, Native languages are the repository of all the collective wisdom and culture of Tribal Nations, containing ceremony, indigenous knowledge and mechanisms for social governance that have been thousands of years in the making, and can lead to positive reinforcement of traditional values essential not just to Tribal nations but to the United States as a whole and beyond; and

WHEREAS, teaching students in their native language has proven in several studies to be an effective way of improving achievement of Native American children, even on standardized tests, in part because such a teaching mechanism raises self-esteem and places value on the culture and traditions of the Native nation whose language is being spoken and used in everyday life; and

WHEREAS, because of budget cuts and limitations, the use of language immersion programs, using funds under the Esther Martinez Act and other sources to preserve and promote Native languages, has been severely limited throughout Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, within the U.S. Department of Interior, discretion exists to use available funds to assist and enhance both existing language immersion programs and to fashion a pilot program in which additional language immersion programs could be created and developed to further demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs; and

WHEREAS, as speakers of many Native languages become older, it is increasingly critical to the preservation and promotion of Native languages to use these older speakers as teachers of the language to impart their knowledge to the next generations, and to continue the use of language immersion programs in educational settings for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) passed a similar resolution in October 2013, and the USET Education Committee supports this recommendation and wants to unite with NCAI on this issue; and

WHEREAS, in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it
RESOLVED the USET Board of Directors joins with the National Congress of American Indians in requesting that the U.S. Department of Interior identify funds from non-local sources that can be used to promote a pilot project for additional language immersion schools in Indian Country, with the understanding that existing immersion programs will be part of the pilot project using existing funds; and, be it further

RESOLVED the USET Board, along with the National Congress of American Indians, urges the President of the United States to take significant steps to work with Congress, including seeking additional funding, to enhance language immersion programs that can help improve achievement for all Native American children in elementary and secondary schools.

CERTIFICATION
This resolution was duly passed at the USET Annual Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Cherokee, NC, on Thursday, October 31, 2013.

Brian Patterson, President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Brenda Lintinger, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

“Because there is strength in Unity”