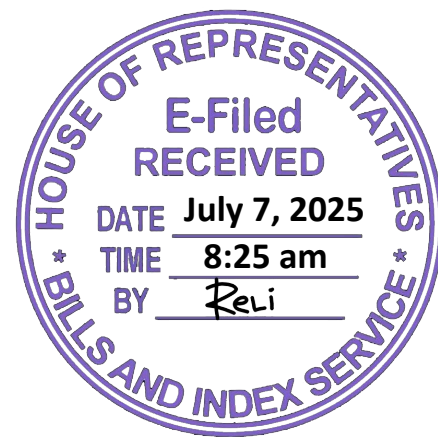




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **1349**



Introduced by Representative LORDAN G. SUAN

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOLS OF LIVING
TRADITIONS FOR INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMMUNITIES AS PART OF
THE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The School of Living Traditions (SLT) is a program of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) which started in 1995, to identify, preserve, promote, safeguard and transmit our country's intangible cultural heritage. This flagship program consists of initiating and funding the establishment of community-managed cultural learning centers where cultural masters or practitioners transmit the knowledge, skills and crafts of their communities to the young generation. The method of teaching in SLT is non-formal, oral and based mainly on practical demonstrations. From a short program of 3-6 months, it developed into a five-year community development program in some communities. NCCA was also able to establish Schools of Living Traditions in the formal school system through the Department of Education. It is so valuable that in 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 16th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, inscribed Philippine SLT in its Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

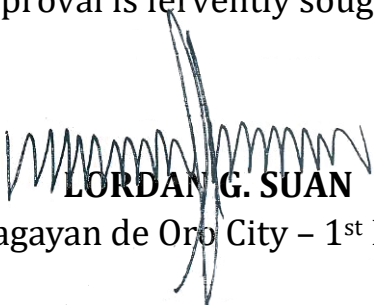
The purpose of this Bill is to take this valued program to a permanent and sustainable level by institutionalizing it as part of the basic education system. As it is today, SLTs are short-lived and greatly dependent on the

support of the local government, the communities themselves and the private sector. The budget of the NCCA for this program is also limited. Most SLTs lack the incentive for indigenous children to take part in the program. Even the SLTs in formal schools are limited in terms of student reach. However, when they become DEPED schools following the basic education structure as primary and secondary schools, indigenous children will not only have their own schools but will be DEPED-recognized graduates of such schools qualified to pursue higher levels of education. Naturally, if it is a public-run institution, it enjoys the same stability and sustainability as our existing regular primary and secondary schools.

In establishing an SLT in a cultural community, we are providing a safe and conducive space for learning, for indigenous children. We are fully aware that indigenous children suffer discrimination from children of the dominant culture. They are forced to accept cultural homogenization that not only eradicates their culture but also creates a negative connotation of their own, ascribing it to be backward and obsolete. The very first to suffer is their own language and the deep concepts and philosophies within that language. What we are trying to do is not to set them apart from others but to immerse them deeply in their own culture and develop a deep cultural root as they engage the dominant mainstream culture. This will strengthen their identity as a member of a cultural community and ensure the continuity of their culture.

UNESCO states that there are two approaches to preserving cultural heritage: one is by transmitting it to the next generation and two is by recording and archiving it. This Bill gives us the opportunity of both through SLT and as a necessary consequence, through research, documentation, publication and development of teaching guides on the culture of our cultural communities. Eventually, we will be able to mainstream indigenous knowledge, skills and practices beyond mere promotion in competitions and festivals.

In light of the preceding, this bill's approval is fervently sought.


LORDAN G. SUAN
Cagayan de Oro City – 1st District



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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as the “Schools of
2 Living Traditions Act of 2025.”

3 **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is hereby declared policies of the
4 state:

5 a.) To conserve, promote, and popularize the nation’s historic and cultural
6 heritage and resources;

7 b.) To recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural
8 communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and
9 institutions; and

10 c.) To ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the
11 educational system, public and private cultural entities, scholarships,
12 grants and other incentives.

13 In relation thereto, the state shall ensure that non-formal, informal, and
14 indigenous learning systems shall form parts of a complete, adequate, and
15 integrated system of education.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* For this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a.) School of Living Traditions (SLT) – refers to a public or private elementary or secondary school whose curriculum is an integration of the core subjects in basic education and indigenous knowledge, skills and practices. Its methods of teaching shall formal and non-formal.
- b.) Master of Living Traditions – refers to a recognized cultural bearer, expert or specialist of a particular Indigenous Cultural Community. He/She must possess knowledge, skills and techniques on customs, language, traditions, philosophies, spirituality, arts and crafts of the cultural community.
- c.) Indigenous Cultural Communities – refer to groups of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized communities on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos (Republic Act No. 8371).

SECTION 4. *Establishment of Schools of Living Traditions.* The School of Living Traditions (SLT) shall be established in identified and recognized homogenous indigenous cultural communities in the country. It shall be under the direct supervision of the Department of Education (DepEd).

SECTION 5. *Objectives of SLT.* The SLT shall be established to:

- a.) Safeguard and preserve traditional and cultural knowledge and practices;
- b.) Transmit cultural knowledge, traditions, and skills to succeeding generations;
- c.) Preserve cultural identity and integrity;
- d.) Identify, document, research and promote intangible cultural heritage through formal and non-formal methods of learning;
- e.) Integrate formal education curricula with indigenous knowledge systems and practices;
- f.) Teach indigenous knowledge systems, skills, practices, crafts, language, philosophies and spiritualities;

- g.) Provide safe and conducive spaces of learning for indigenous children;
- h.) Help indigenous children navigate mainstream culture while being deeply rooted in their own culture; and
- i.) Promote culture as an essential foundation for human development.

SECTION 6. *Structure and Characteristics.* The SLT shall be established as a primary education SLT or a secondary education SLT, consistent with the Philippine basic education structure. It shall be owned by the state or by a private entity. Provided that, private SLTs shall be duly recognized and accredited by the Department of Education.

An SLT shall be headed by a principal who has obtained a Graduate Diploma in Cultural Education (GDCE) or a Graduate Diploma in Teaching the Arts (GDTA) or its equivalent. The teaching personnel shall be composed of teachers who shall teach the regular subjects, and the Masters of Living Traditions who will teach the Indigenous Knowledge, Skills and Practices.

Qualified teaching and non-teaching personnel must come from the same Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC). If none is available, teaching and non-teaching personnel shall be employed provided that they shall undergo cultural sensitivity training which shall be conducted by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

SECTION 7. *Accreditation of Private SLT.* The DepEd, in coordination and consultation with the NCCA and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), shall formulate a system of accreditation for private SLTs.

SECTION 8. *Consent.* An SLT whether public or private can only be established through the written consent of the recognized leader or chieftain of the ICC concerned, and shall be duly endorsed by the NCCA, NCIP, and the Local Government Unit (LGU) which has jurisdiction over the area of operation.

SECTION 9. *Curriculum.* The DepEd, NCCA, NCIP and the Master/s of Living Traditions (MLT) of the ICC concerned shall formulate and develop a curriculum for an SLT established for such ICC. Each curriculum shall be different and distinct for every ICC. The curriculum shall be an integration of the core curriculum of basic education and the Indigenous Knowledge, Skills, and Practices through formal and non-formal methods of learning.

SECTION 10. *Identification and Accreditation of Masters of Living Traditions.* The NCCA in consultation with the NCIP and elders of an ICC concerned shall identify and accredit all Masters of Living Traditions who

1 can teach in the SLT. A qualified Master of Living Traditions identified and
2 accredited by the NCCA shall be duly endorsed to the DepEd.

3 **SECTION 11.** *Remuneration of State-owned Teaching and Non-Teaching*
4 *Personnel.* The Department of Budget and Management shall formulate a
5 system of remuneration for the Masters of Living Traditions. The rest of the
6 teaching and non-teaching personnel shall receive their remuneration based
7 on the existing Salary Standardization Law.

8 **SECTION 12.** *Office of Indigenous Peoples' Education.* The Schools of
9 Living Traditions shall be under the Office of Indigenous Peoples' Education
10 of the Department of Education.

11 **SECTION 13.** *Appropriations.* The amount necessary for the
12 implementation of this Act shall be taken from the current budget of the
13 Department of Education. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the
14 continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the Annual General
15 Appropriations Act.

16 **SECTION 14.** *Rules and Regulations.* Within sixty (60) days from the
17 effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education, National Commission on
18 Culture and the Arts, and National Commission of Indigenous Peoples in
19 coordination with the Department of Budget and Management and relevant
20 stakeholders shall formulate the necessary rules and regulations for its
21 effective implementation.

22 **Section 15.** *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared
23 invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not hereby affected shall remain
24 in full force and effect.

25 **Section 16.** *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules and
26 regulations or parts thereof, inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions
27 of this Act are repealed, amended or modified, accordingly.

28 **Section 17.** *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from
29 the date of its publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of
30 general circulation.

31
32 *Approved,*