STORYTELLER

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Indian Education Newsletter Aprill May 2025

Mission

By working together with schools, parents, and communities, APS Indian Education Department develops enhanced and supportive Indigenous educational opportunities for American Indian/ Alaska Native students by increasing knowledge of Native values through teaching language and cultural differences.

APS Indian Education Senior Banquet 2025

Seals and Stoles recipients - 2025

On May 5, 2025, the Indian Education Department hosted its annual senior banquet at Isleta Resort and Casino. Close to 600 people attended to celebrate the accomplishments of the Indigenous class of 2025. The students are encouraged to wear their regalia, and we start with a group photo! We had approximately 150 students attend this banquet with their families. The color guard from Del Norte presented the colors, and Maya Gishie, from Sandia High School, sang the National Anthem in Navajo. The keynote speaker was Leroy “Buster” Silva the Executive Director from the Laguna Community Foundation. The student speaker was Kaylee Bahe from Eldorado High School. Kaylee earned 4 seals from the “Stole and Seals” award: which included the APS Tribal Seal, Distinguished Learning Seal, APS Bilingual Seal and the NM Bilingualism/Bi literacy State Seal. There were 33 students that earned the stole this year.

Senior Banquet 2025: Candid Photos

APS

Indian Education JAG Students Shine at the 2025 Jobs for America's Graduates National Career Development Conference

April 24-26, Cibola JAG students Nevaeh Orr, Kaiden Martinez, and Deondre Simmons and Del Norte JAG student Chris Becenti were in Indianapolis to compete at the 2025 Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) National Career Development Conference (NCDC). With over 1,000 JAG students from across the country, the
conference gave our students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills!

Cibola JAG students competed with their L.O.V.E. (Lifting Our Voices for Equity) project, which raised awareness about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis. Their presentation not only earned them 5th place but also brought significant recognition before the awards ceremony. JAG National reached out the week before NCDC and invited the team to share the critical message about this crisis during the Grand Awards Ceremony. Our students were truly Lifting their Voices for Equity when they spoke in front of
this huge crowd!

The students' dedication to the cause of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, as well as their outstanding achievement at the NCDC, demonstrates the impact that young leaders can have. Their success highlights the importance of fostering civic engagement and advocacy in our students, which are components of the JAG model.

L.O.V.E. (Lifting Our Voices for Equity)

Del Norte's **Chris Becenti** competed in the prepared speaking event after winning first place at the state Career Development Conference (CDC). His speech, which focused on the positive impact JAG has had on his life, engaged the audience with personal anecdotes and humor. While Chris did not place at the national competition, his ability to connect with others and his talent for networking shone through. He is well known for being everyone's friend and making lasting connections with peers and adults alike. Chris is a true leader who naturally demonstrates the value of **Belonging**. In addition to benefiting from his experience at NCDC, the people he interacted with benefited from the example he set as a master relationship builder. Chris also shared that his experience at NCDC inspired him to pursue a degree in political science after graduation.
Beyond their competitive events, Chris, Nevaeh, Kaiden, and Deondre also participated in a range of activities designed to foster career readiness and leadership development. They attended a college and career expo, participated in educational and networking sessions, and engaged in social events with peers from across the nation. As part of the conference, they also explored Indianapolis, visiting the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, the Indianapolis Zoo, and the NCAA Hall of Champions.

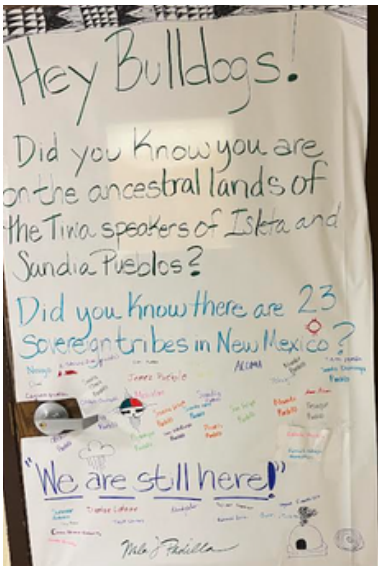
We are incredibly proud of our students for their hard work and dedication to making a difference in their community and beyond.

Native Roots Entertaining Hodgin Elementary Community

Good day relatives!

This past school year I was the Native Studies teacher at Albuquerque High School. I had a great group of freshmen, sophomores, and one senior. While most students were transitioning to high school and getting acquainted with what high school offers. I was shocked that some of my Native students did not know their own tribes much less the tribes of New Mexico.

Currently there are nineteen Pueblos, Navajo Nation, Jicarilla Apache Nation and Mescalero Apache Nation. The language groups which are in New Mexico represent eight languages. Why is this important for our young people to know and learn this? It is inherently a "right" for Native students to know this, because it is their unique history as Native students and urban Native youth should be comfortable with who they are and where their roots are planted.



This past school year, the students learned more about their distinct tribes and formed connections. That in itself was something the young people learned about. Students learned about "land acknowledgement," the Tribes in the state of New Mexico, and the roots of early colonial history which began in 1539 when the Spanish Conquistadors intruded on ceremonies at my village of Shiwina (Zuni Pueblo). That is insider history and speaking of Esteban the Moor who was killed by Zuni men.

Students also learned to advocate for themselves, their families and learned about notable New Mexicans such as Deb Haaland, La Donna Harris, and Pope'! Students also wrote letters to Leonard Peltier and La Donna Harris.

On the final I asked students "What they learned about being in Native Studies class this year, and if it's important" here are the answers:

"I thought that learning about Native activists really made me think how much we have to do to get us in the spotlight"- NP

"I learned about the history of Native America and ancestral lands. I do think it is important because it is good to know about the history of where you live and the people connected to you"-JB

" I learned about advocating and Native rights and relations. I think it is very important"-GD

" I learned that being in a Tribe is honorable and being proud of your tribe. This was an important class because it taught me about my Tribe and who the ancestors are"-TF

"I learned that being a Native is very important and understanding why being a Native is the key to your life" -ED

"I learned about the Tribes in New Mexico, the many languages, and how many Tribes are federally recognized. I do think it was very important,"- TS

All in all, this class was my favorite class to teach this year and I enjoyed teaching it. With Native Studies, we have a vast amount of knowledge, historical grounding in New Mexico and nationally. Every citizen in this state and country should know this knowledge!

Elahkwa- Mila Padilla (Ho' Shiwi)- I am Zuni.

Indigenous History from a Vantage Point: May

In May 1942, Navajo Code Talkers began their crucial role in World War II, transmitting vital military messages using the Navajo language, which was not written down and was difficult for the Japanese to decipher. This unique communication method proved to be highly effective, helping the United States win battles in the Pacific.

Key aspects of the Navajo Code Talkers' contributions in May 1942:

Development and Implementation:
The Navajo code was developed by a group of "First Twenty-Nine" Navajos, and its implementation began in the Pacific theater.

Communication Efficiency:
The Navajo code provided a secure and rapid means of communication, as it could not be intercepted or deciphered by the enemy.

Strategic Advantage:
The code was crucial for transmitting tactical and strategic information, impacting battles like Iwo Jima, where a Marine signal officer stated that the Marines would not have taken Iwo Jima without the Navajo Code Talkers.

Impact on the War:
The code played a significant role in the Allied war effort, helping to secure victory in the Pacific.

Secrecy and Limited Recognition:
Despite their vital contributions, Code Talkers were told to keep their work secret, and they did not receive widespread recognition until later.

Unit: 1st Marine Division; 3rd Marine Division
Dates of Service: May 1942 - January 1946
Battles / Campaigns: Guadalcanal; Bougainville; Guam; Peleliu

"People ask me, 'Why did you go? Look at all the mistreatment that has been done to your people.' Somebody's got to go, somebody's got to defend this country. Somebody's got to defend the freedom. This is the reason why I went."

Chester Nez was born in Chi Chil Tah, New Mexico on the Navajo reservation in 1921. He grew up in the surrounding "Checkerboard" region of northwest New Mexico, where his family frequently moved from one grazing area to another with their sheep herds.

As one of the "First Twenty-Nine" Code Talkers who devised the Navajo Code, Chester Nez was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2001.