STORYTELLER

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Indian Education Newsletter Aug / Sept 2025

Indian Education

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.

# A Rewarding Trip to Window Rock

On Sep 3, 2025, Tres Volcanes Community Collaboration MS and West Mesa High School took a trip to Window Rock, Az, to participate in the event for Navajo Nation Fair 'Kid's Day' and to tour the Nation Nation Tribal park and Veteran's Memorial Park. The students had a blast touring the exhibit at Gorman Hall. There we were greeted by many Navajo/Dine' people. After telling them of where we were from, they were amazed we came out to the Navajo Nation Fair. Most excitingly, we greeted the Navajo Nation President, Buu Nygren. APS students all greeted him in Navajo respectfully and he welcomed us as well. Our students received gifts from President Nygren. A pair of shoes and a skateboard. The class were so surprised to receive such a welcome. Due to the long lines, not all of our students were able to receive gifts.

# Candids from Window Rock:

# Brianna Secatero - Dressed to Impress.

*Brianna Secatero, 10th Grade, Manzano High School, Dine', visiting APS District Office to 'dress to impress,' Thursday, September 4, 2025*

# New Mexico Indigenous Youth Share A Vision for Youth Leadership at National Physicians Conference

Seattle, WA - At the annual meeting of the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) this past week, there were presentations on a variety of topics affecting Indigenous communities. A few of these sessions touched on youth issues. But one session was actually led by youth leaders, all of whom are in high school. “Youth Leading the Way to Healthier Indigenous Communities” was presented by Tiana Chino (San Felipe and Acoma Pueblos), Sunny Louis (Acoma Pueblo) and Nizhoni Fleg (Dine’).

The session opened with a game that allowed participants to become more familiar with one another, while having fun. “I thought this was an important way to bring us together, building trust amongst those in the room,” said Nizhoni, who led this part of the session.

The youth then shared about their experiences as leaders. Tiana Chino spear-headed a blood drive at Bernalillo High School, organizing the various elements and working with her school’s administration to make it all happen. Sunny Louis created the Auntie Moon project that promotes menstrual equity and educates on bleeding disorders. Nizhoni Fleg shared on her policy work that led to her and other Indigenous youth presenting their ideas to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deborah Haaland and U.S Congressmen Ben Ray Lujan and Martin Heinrich.

Sunny reflected on her experience: “Attending AAIP was a highly motivating experience for me. I had the opportunity to connect with others, learn new things, gain resources, and find inspiration. Being surrounded by Native physicians and witnessing the impactful work they do for and within Tribal communities filled me with joy and encouraged me to pursue a career in medicine. My most impactful experience was connecting with young Pueblo women aspiring to become medical doctors and conducting pioneering clinical research. It hits you different when you can connect with people from your own communities doing things you’ve always dreamed of doing.”

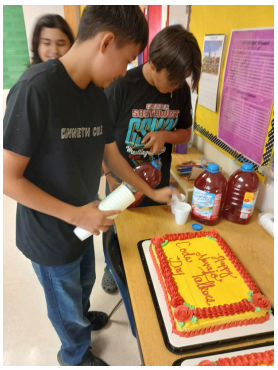
Multiple participants in the session commented that it was the best one in the entire conference. - Dr. Anthony Fleg, University of New Mexico

# College, Career & Tribal Resource Fair: A Huge Success!

Since 2011, the Albuquerque Public Schools Indian Education Department has hosted its annual College, Career & Tribal Resource Fair, and this year was a huge success! The event was on Saturday, September 20, 2025 at the Berna Facio Training Center. There were seventy organizations including in- and out-of-state colleges, apprenticeship and trade programs, branches of the military and Tribal resources. The fair offers something for everyone, whether you're exploring college options, learning about career pathways, or connecting with Tribal and community programs. The representatives from the organizations brought prizes for the students, which included tshirts, backpacks, and $50 Aveda gift certificates and special hair products! Students of all ages were encouraged to attend, along with parents, guardians and community members. Sara Money, the College Career Counselor and organizer for the event states, "I believe It's never too early to start planning for your future." This event was also a great opportunity for parents or other family members who may be looking for employment opportunities." We had 17 student volunteers come to set up tables, decorate, assist the representatives in finding their tables, and run the drawings for door prizes. Josestte Gonzales, from the Aveda Institute New Mexico said "Thank you for organizing such a thoughtful, well-run Career & Tribal Resource Fair. We felt genuinely welcomed—from the enthusiastic student volunteers to the smooth logistics—and appreciated how intentional the day was."

# Something for Everyone at the College, Career & Tribal Resource Fair

# Celebrations with Mr. Sandoval's Dine' Students



## Cleveland Middle School celebrate Navajo Code Talker's Day

On Thursday – August 14, 2025, the students in Mr. Sandoval's Navajo Class and first period, study skills class celebrated "Navajo Code Talker's Day". This day was proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1982 to recognize their vital role in creating an unbreakable code using the Navajo language. The week prior, the student's learned about WW II and the Navajo Code talker's program's establishment in the U.S. Marines. Students recalled and retold the events and identified the elements the Navajo Code Talker's veteran uniforms. In addition, the staff and rest of the Cleveland student body got to learn about the Code Talker's contributed. Mr. Sandoval's first period study skills class created a beautiful set up in the Teacher's lounge so staff could enjoy cake, juice, and honor our Navajo Code Talker's. Mr. Sandoval contributed cake for each of his class periods so they too could pause to honor and remember the heroic effort of the code talkers and the sacredness of our Dine' language.

# Dííhdíníilghaazh! Dííhdíníilghaazh! Dííhdíníilghaazh! (Fry Bread!)

A mouthwatering aroma filled the sixth-grade hallway — the unmistakable scent of fresh dííhdíníilghaazh (fry bread) being made by students in Mr. Sandoval's Navajo language classes.
As part of a hands-on cultural learning experience, students not only learned how to make fry bread but also practiced Navajo vocabulary related to ingredients, utensils, and cooking steps. Mr. Sandoval guided the students through the process, reinforcing key terminology throughout. Staff and administrators visited the classroom, observing the students in action and engaging them with questions. Students proudly responded in Navajo, demonstrating both knowledge and enthusiasm.
Each student made their own dough to take home as part of a family engagement assignment. At home, families were encouraged to cook the dough together, discuss what the student learned, and practice using Navajo terms. Families were also asked to document their experience with a photo or video and send it to Mr. Sandoval.
This project is ongoing — students will continue to practice making fry bread twice a month, with the goal of being able to explain the entire process in Navajo with minimal assistance. Their excitement is evident, and the project is already strengthening language use and cultural pride.

# Dr. Anthony Fleg Inspires at Cleveland Middle School

On September 25, 2025, Cleveland Middle School had the honor of welcoming Dr. Anthony Fleg, M.D., for a dynamic and inspiring presentation. Dr. Fleg captivated students with a blend of cultural wisdom, health education, and personal storytelling.

Students were fascinated to learn that Dr. Fleg speaks some Navajo and is married to a Navajo woman from Tuba City, Arizona. His presentation focused on the heart — referred to as ajíłʼí in Navajo — and its importance not only as a physical organ but also within the context of cultural balance and wellness. He introduced students to the Navajo concept of Hózhó — a state of balance, harmony, and holistic well-being.

During the session, students learned that the heart is approximately the size of their own fist — a fact that surprised and amazed many. Dr. Fleg taught them how to measure their pulse and heart rate and emphasized the importance of self-care. To make learning interactive, students ran in place to compare their resting and active heart rates, bringing science and health to life through movement.

# Farm Fridays at Polk Middle School

## By: Shannon Romero

Indigenous students in grades 6–8 at Polk Middle School have been engaging in Traditional Foods and Agriculture workshops throughout September. These hands-on learning experiences connect students to seasonal foods, cultural practices, and the wisdom of our ancestors.

On Friday, September 19, students explored the teachings of Blue Corn—learning how to shell, winnow, and grind it by hand. Together, they prepared blue corn mush and brewed Indian Tea, also known as Cota.

The following week, on September 26, students turned their attention to the harvest of green chile. They learned traditional preservation methods by making ristras and cooked Cochiti Pueblo–style green chile stew to share.

Farm Fridays continue to provide a meaningful space for students to learn through doing, while honoring Indigenous knowledge and foodways.

# September 27, 2025 Community Engagement Event at Los Padillas Elementary School

Our Indigenous Knowledge Keeper (IKK) Interns hosted their first event of the school year at Los Padillas Elementary, bringing together relatives, youth, and community to reconnect with ancestral ways of knowing and being.

We began with a walk through the Los Padillas Wildlife Sanctuary, where stories of place, plants, and seasonal cycles were shared. Following the walk, participants engaged in hands-on cultural practices, including making chile ristras and learning how to harvest and preserve Indian Tea — knowledge passed down through generations.

I'm deeply proud of the work our IKK Interns are doing to carry forward Indigenous teachings, engage community, and honor traditional lifeways through active learning and sharing.

# Indigenous Agricultural Traditions

## Los Padillas Elementary School – 2nd Grade

## By Mrs. Shannon Romero, Indian Education Department

## September 17, 2025

### Lesson Focus

- **Theme:** Indigenous Agriculture & Traditional Foods
- **Seasonal Focus:** Fall Harvest
- **Highlight Crop: Corn (Maize)**
- Students learned how Indigenous communities prepare, harvest, and preserve corn in the fall season

### Why is Corn Important?

- Sacred and central in many Indigenous cultures
- Symbol of life, growth, and community
- Provides food, materials, and cultural teachings
- Seasonal cycles connect people to the land

### Harvest Season in Indigenous Communities

- Gathering and preserving traditional foods
- Community celebrations and ceremonies
- Preparing food stores for winter
- Honoring the natural cycles of planting and harvesting

### Student Activities

**Corn Winnowing** – using Pueblo baskets and white corn

**Corn Braiding** – braiding husks to dry and preserve corn

**Pollinator Tic-Tac-Toe** – learning about the role of flowers and pollinators

**Corn Anatomy & Grinding** – identifying corn plant parts and grinding corn with stone tools

### Learning About Preservation

- **Winnowing:** separating kernels from husks
- **Braiding:** a traditional method to dry corn and protect kernels
- Skills passed down through generations

### Science Connections

- **Pollination:** importance of bees and flowers in growing corn
- **Corn Anatomy:** roots, prop roots, stalk, tassel, leaves, and cobs
- **Hands-on Grinding:** using a stone *metate* and brushes to understand food preparation

### Key Takeaways

- Corn is more than food—it is culture, science, and tradition
- Fall harvest connects people to the land and to community practices
- Students gained appreciation for Indigenous knowledge through **hands-on learning**

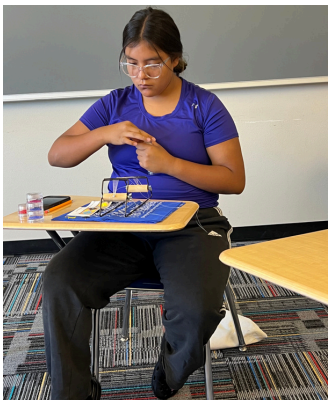
# Celebrating Creativity and Culture through Beading

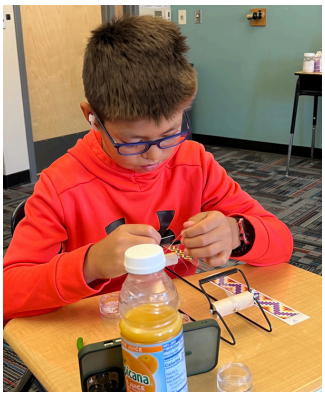
This summer, students had the wonderful opportunity to participate in a 3 week beading class held at Tony Hillerman Middle School as part of the Indian Education Department's summer program. Under the guidance of Roberta Armijo, Indian Education Resource Teacher, students learned a variety of beading techniques while exploring the cultural significance of beadwork within Native communities.

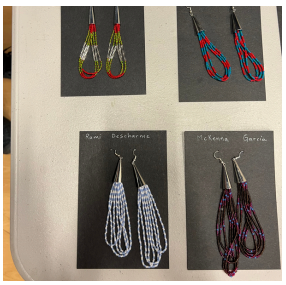
Throughout the program, students demonstrated patience, focus, and creativity. Each piece reflected personal style and cultural pride, resulting in a collection of beautiful beadwork that truly showcased their dedication and talent.

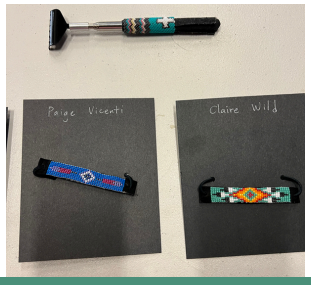
The program concluded with a special celebration, where families were invited to view the students' creations. The event featured student performances, a display of students work, and a delicious meal that brought everyone together in community and celebration.

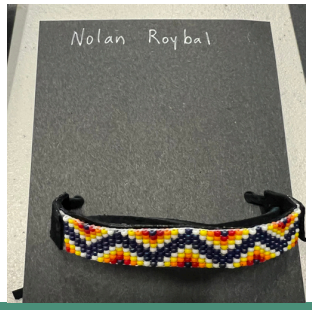
It was a joyful and memorable experience for all who participated. The beading class not only strengthened artistic skills but also deepened students' appreciation for their heritage and the value of working together in a supportive environment.











# Indigenous History from a Vantage Point: September

The Pueblo Lands Act of 1924 is a pivotal but complex piece of legislation in Native American legal history. It directly impacted the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico, whose land rights had been increasingly threatened by settler encroachment after the U.S. acquired the Southwest from Mexico.
Here's a deeper look at what it was, why it happened, and how it still affects Pueblo communities today:

**What Was the Pueblo Lands Act of 1924?**

**Historical Context**

The Pueblo peoples had lived in what is now New Mexico for centuries, in settled communities with deep agricultural and spiritual ties to the land.
After U.S. annexation of the Southwest following the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), many Pueblo lands were illegally occupied by Anglo settlers, ranchers, and developers.
Though Spain and Mexico had previously recognized Pueblo land rights, the U.S. government was inconsistent in doing so, and many courts did not consider Puebloans to be "Indians" under federal Indian law—meaning their land was vulnerable to seizure.

**Main Provisions of the Act**

Passed on June 7, 1924 (though often cited as being implemented in September 1924).

**Created a Pueblo Lands Board to:**

Investigate land disputes between Pueblos and non-Natives.
Confirm non-Native land titles if the occupants had been in "good faith" and for a certain period.
Offer some compensation or land in exchange for lost Pueblo territory (though often inadequate).
The U.S. government would defend confirmed Pueblo titles and attempt to quiet legal disputes.

**Key Impacts of the Pueblo Lands Act**

Formal Recognition of Pueblo Land Rights
For the first time, the U.S. acknowledged federal trust responsibility to Pueblo tribes.
Tribal lands were declared Indian country, meaning they were under federal jurisdiction (e.g., for law enforcement, not state/local).

**Loss of Land**

The Act often legitimized non-Native occupation of Pueblo lands, even if those lands had been taken illegally.
Thousands of acres of land were permanently lost to settlers and developers.
Compensation provided to Pueblos was minimal and often did not reflect the land's value or cultural significance.

**Legal Precedent for Future Cases**

Set a precedent for later land settlement acts involving other tribes (e.g., the Indian Claims Commission).
Created legal ambiguity around land status and jurisdiction, especially near cities like Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

**How It Affects Pueblos Today**

**Jurisdictional Confusion**

Some land still lies in checkerboard patterns—interspersed between tribal and non-tribal ownership.
Issues remain over zoning, taxation, and law enforcement, especially on lands near urban areas or roads.

**Land Reclamation Efforts**

Some Pueblos are still buying back land that was lost through the 1924 Act.
Others are working through federal legislation or land swaps to reclaim sacred or ancestral sites.

**Legal and Cultural Advocacy**

The Pueblo tribes have used the Act to assert their sovereignty and treaty rights in modern land disputes.
It serves as a reminder of both dispossession and resilience, and is often cited in legal cases involving land rights and jurisdiction.

**Why It Matters Today**

The Pueblo Lands Act underscores the unique legal status of Pueblos—distinct from many other tribes due to their Spanish/Mexican and U.S. legal history.
It also highlights the ongoing struggle for land justice, even for tribes with centuries of presence in a region.
Understanding this Act is key to understanding tribal sovereignty, broken promises, and modern land rights issues in the U.S.