STORYTELLER

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Indian Education Newsletter December/ January 2024-2025

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.

Cleveland Middle School visits the Navajo Nation's Capitol

WINDOW ROCK, AZ – On Monday, January 27, 2025, twenty-five students from Cleveland Middle School visited Window Rock, AZ, the capitol of the Navajo Nation. This was a response to an invitation that the school received from the Speaker of the Council's office, Chrystalyne Curley. The class was invited to sing the National Anthem in the Navajo language as part of the opening of the 25 th Navajo National Council winter session.

The students were joined by Miss Navajo Nation on the council floor as she offered the pledge of allegiance and immediately CMS students began singing the National Anthem as the Council chambers was filled with standing audience saluting the posted colors. After they were done, they witnessed 98-year-old Dr. Louva Dahozy who offered a prayer and played her rendition of "Amazing Grace" with her harmonica. Cleveland students were recognized as guests on the council floor by Delegate Dr. Andy Nez.

After being recognized, the students proceeded to the Office of the President and Vice-President where they received a tour by Deputy Chief of Staff, Alray Nelson. The students were joined by the Superintendent of the Department of Dine' Education, Roy Tracey and his staff. In addition, APS Deputy Superintendent Dr. Antonio Gonzales, Deputy Director of Equity, Mrs. Campos, administrators from Indian Education Department and legislative staff. After the tour of the office of the President and Vice-President, the students were invited to the President's state room where he came in a visited with the staff and students. President Nygren emphasized to always know that each student is capable to do more, in Navajo he shared "Biláágó Biniishghááh" This was a wonderful experience for the students from Cleveland Middle School.

More From Navajo Nation

Meet our New Coordinator: Nate Jopek

My name is Nate Jopek, I am from the Pueblo of Laguna and Polish. I went to the University of New Mexico and obtained my Bachelor and Master Degrees in Native American Studies, and I will be returning to UNM to be a part of the Native American Studies PhD Program. My goal is to continue bettering myself so I can provide meaningful and lasting change within the educational spaces here in Albuquerque, as well as across New Mexico.

Polk Middle School Hosts Community Engagement Event Celebrating Traditional Indigenous Cooking

Albuquerque Public Schools Indian Education Department along with Polk Middle School recently welcomed students, families and community members to a hands-on cultural engagement event celebrating Indigenous culinary traditions. This workshop, led by Shannon Romero and interns, Tylor Martine, Kaylee Bahee, and Kristalee Jaramillo from various high schools provided an opportunity to learn about time-honored cooking techniques, including nixtamalization, horno cooking, and the use of juniper ash. Mrs. Shannon Romero guided us in the preparation of traditional foods like corn, squash, and blue corn mama dolls.

The Role of Juniper Ash in Indigenous Cooking

In this workshop, we learned the process of nixtamalization and the use of juniper ash. Indigenous communities have long incorporated juniper ash into food as a natural source of essential minerals. We explored its use as an important dietary supplement in many Indigenous communities. Traditionally added to blue corn dishes like piki bread, blue corn mush, and mama dolls, juniper ash is rich in calcium and helps increase the bioavailability of nutrients in corn-based foods. Participants learned about the health benefits of incorporating juniper ash into their diet, including its role in strengthening bones, digestion, and overall well-being.

Cooking in an Horno

Hornos, traditional adobe ovens, have been used for centuries. The dome-shaped oven retains heat and allows food to bake slowly and evenly. We were guided in the process of heating the oven with wood, waiting for the walls to absorb the heat and then placing food inside after moving around the embers.

This event at Polk Middle School provided more than just a cooking lesson in Indigenous culinary techniques – it fostered a sense of connection between students, families, and cultural traditions. By engaging student and families in hands-on activities, it deepened an understanding and appreciation for Indigenous knowledge, sustainable cooking practices, and the power and importance of passing traditions from one generation to the next.

As the workshop came to a close, the aroma of freshly cooked squash and corn filled the air – a reminder that culture isn't just something to learn about; it's something to taste, to experience, to nourish the body and spirit, and to carry forward.

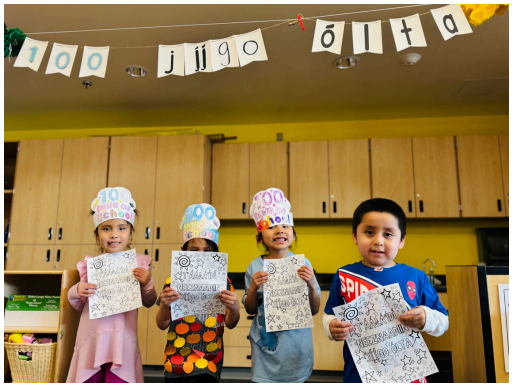
Cibola Jobs for America's Graduates Attends Legislative Day

Lia Garcia, Cibola JAG Public Relations Officer

On January 21, 2025, our own Cibola JAG took a field trip to the Roundhouse in Santa Fe, NM for Legislative Day. Going to Santa Fe, we took the New Mexico Rail Runner Express train, and it was a very nice experience. Once we arrived, thankfully we took a shuttle bus to the Roundhouse. It was only 8 degrees and breezy upon our arrival! Upon entering the Roundhouse, we began looking for the office of Senator Michael Padilla, who had agreed to meet with us. Before our trip, we learned about the committees he served on between sessions. We were given briefs about updates to the Yazzie-Martinez case, his work regarding school safety, and a committee addressing the needs of Indigenous communities facing food insecurity. Students who were unable to attend the field trip researched these issues as well. We did a few rounds around the Roundhouse, and ultimately, Senator Padilla brought us and our fellow JAG groups into the Senate Chamber. He shared much information about what he does and what he feels successful in doing for New Mexico. We were able to have a discussion with him and ask him questions about his field of work. We are so thankful to have had a great talk with Senator Michael Padilla. After meeting with Senator Michael Padilla, we were able to walk through the Roundhouse, which Senator Padilla told us belonged to as citizens of New Mexico. We appreciated the amazing artwork. We then wanted to go and speak about our JAG program to individuals in the Roundhouse offices. We were able to speak to many and give out fliers about our program. After our time at the Roundhouse, we enjoyed a meal at Tomasita's by the rain station. We are so grateful for this opportunity to visit the Roundhouse in Santa Fe. We enjoyed our trip.

Diné Kindergarten celebrated our 100th day of school.

On January 28th Diné Kindergarten celebrated our 100th day of school. Our four students have come far and continue to learn more each day, Nizhóní ałchini. Diné Kinder Immersion at Tres Volcanes is taught by myself, Rhonda Cordova and Ms. Bonnie Bedonie. Diné Kinder Immersion is taught 90% in the Diné Language throughout the school year. Our Diné students also participate in Specials classes like, P.E., Art, Music, and Library. The students are encouraged to speak Diné through educational instruction throughout the day and also taught about teaching of the Diné Culture



Tres Volcanes Diné Kindergarten class participated in singing Shí Naasha in Diné for December

1st Annual Lighting the Flame: Indigenous Healthcare Leaders of Tomorrow Expo

The Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in UNM's Healthcare, held its 1st Annual Lighting the Flame: Indigenous Healthcare Leaders of Tomorrow expo on January 31st, 2025. Students from West Mesa High School and various schools around APS attended this amazing event. Students were involved with tabling events, presentations, and activities that gave students insights on the healthcare industry and possible opportunities for school and careers in the future.

Learning to Lead in our Nation's Capital– Cibola JAG attends the National Student Leadership Association Conference

December 4, 2024 - December 8, 2024 found Wes Cozad, the president of Cibola High School Jobs for America's Graduates, in Washington, DC for the annual National Student Leadership Academy. Wes was accompanied by all JAG presidents from New Mexico. So, in addition to leadership development, he formed lasting bonds with his NM peers. NSLA also provides attendees multiple opportunities to engage with JAG presidents from across the country. They attend leadership development break-out sessions and social events together. This is another chance to practice networking and gather ideas to bring home to their own chapters.

During NSLA's Day on the Hill, students met with US Representative Gabe Vasquez, and they were given a Capital Tour. After the Day on the Hill, students attended a panel about engaging with their congressmen, but between this panel and the hands-on learning about political networking, Wes was able to develop important skills that he could employ and model for his peers during New Mexico Legislative Day in January.

It's not all "work" at NSLA. JAG Presidents also visited multiple historical sites, such as the Abraham Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr Memorial, the Vietnam Wall Memorial, and the Washington Monument, during an extraordinary Twilight Tour. Wes also visited museums and went ice skating.

On the last night of NSLA, there was a Battle of the Decades dance, but talk about leadership–Wes skipped the social activity to catch up on his academics! He knew we boarded a plane in the wee hours of Sunday morning and would make it back to Albuquerque in time to catch up with family and friends for just a few hours before getting back to school Monday morning!

NSLA is just one of the many experiences that has made JAG an important part of high school for Wes. He'd love to tell you! If you have a Cibola student going into their sophomore through senior year and want to learn more, reach out to amber.reno@aps.edu.

Mission Avenue
Rock Your Mocs: A Retrospective

Jessica Atsye, from Laguna Pueblo, founded Rock Your Mocs as a social media event for her family and friends. It is now celebrated worldwide as a day or week in November, also Native American Heritage Month. Indian Education teachers at Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School, Jana Antonio Cheung and Anthony Shemayme, celebrated the 2nd annual Rock Your Mocs on November 13, 2024. It was wonderful to see many students participating in this celebration, proudly showcasing their Native heritage.

Native American Heritage Presentation

The Native American Heritage Presentation was held on November 21, 2024. Shannon Romero shared stories from her Pueblo and Diné heritages, including the story of how the stars fell into the sky. Mr. Shemayme invited his friends Steven, Bryson, Chaske, and Lyle to sing round dance songs for the students at Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School. The drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth, and the drum circle represents the circle of life. The songs are prayers asking for blessings and protection from negativity.

Special appreciation to the school administration, support staff, teachers, and the Indian Education Department for their assistance in making these events run smoothly and accommodating these events to take place. The celebrations of our students' identities as resilient Native peoples were so beautiful and we hope to continue having these events.

Jana Antonio Cheung, Indigenous Initiative: Resource Teacher, Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School
Anthony Shemayme, Indigenous Initiative: Educational Assistant, Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School
Shannon Romero, Indigenous Education Coordinator, APS-Indian Education Department

Indigenous History from a Vantage Point: December

The Wounded Knee Massacre holds profound significance in Native American history as it marked as a symbol of the violence and injustice faced by Native peoples during the westward expansion of the United States.

Key aspects of its significance:

1. ***Native Resistance:*** The massacre took place on December 29, 1890, near Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. It was the culmination of years of violent conflict between Native American tribes and the U.S. government. The massacre resulted in the deaths of at least 150 Lakota Sioux, including men, women, and children, and is widely seen as the final chapter in the series of armed Native uprisings that began with the Indian Removal Act in the 1830s and continued through the Indian Wars. After Wounded Knee the U.S. government established even more restrictive policies toward Native peoples.
2. ***Symbol of U.S. Government's Brutality***: The massacre was carried out by the U.S. 7th Cavalry, which surrounded a band of Lakota Sioux under the leadership of Chief Big Foot. The immediate cause was the Sioux's participation in the Ghost Dance, a religious movement that predicted the return of Native lands and the removal of white settlers. The U.S. government viewed the movement with suspicion and feared it could lead to an uprising. The massacre was a clear display of the government's willingness to use military force to suppress Native beliefs and way of life, and it remains a symbol of the brutal treatment of Native Americans by the U.S. government.
3. ***The Role of the Ghost Dance:*** The Ghost Dance is a spiritual movement that promised to restore Native American land, culture, and sovereignty through the performance of specific rituals. The U.S. government saw it as a threat to its authority, and the massacre was partly a reaction to the widespread fear of a "revolt." The massacre is often framed as a consequence of the government's fear of Native American unity and resistance, particularly the belief that the Ghost Dance might lead to a large-scale rebellion.
4. ***Impact on Native American Identity and Struggle:*** For many Native Americans, Wounded Knee became a symbol of the destructive forces of colonization and the unrelenting efforts of the U.S. to suppress Indigenous identity. It illustrated the harsh realities of settler colonialism and laid the foundation for generations of Native Americans to continue fighting for their rights and sovereignty, albeit through nonviolent means after the collapse of armed resistance.
5. ***Legacy and Recognition:*** Wounded Knee remains a powerful symbol in Native American activism. The site of the massacre has been memorialized in various ways, including through protests and cultural remembrance. It continues to serve as a focal point for Native American rights movements, including the American Indian Movement (AIM), which in 1973 organized a protest at Wounded Knee that led to a standoff with federal authorities.
6. ***Historical Revision and Public Memory:*** In the years following the massacre, the event was often framed in mainstream U.S. history as a necessary action to quell an "Indian threat." Over time, however, Native American perspectives on the massacre have gained more prominence, and the event is now widely recognized as a tragedy and a crucial moment in the history of settler-colonial violence.

Conclusion:

The Wounded Knee Massacre represents a turning point in Native American history, encapsulating the destruction of a way of life, the intended erasure of Indigenous cultures, and the violent suppression of Indigenous resistance. Its enduring legacy is a reminder of the ongoing struggle for Native American sovereignty and justice.