STORYTELLER

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Indian Education Newsletter Nov / Dec 2023

Rock Your Mocs! Celebration Collaboration

Jessica Atsye, from Laguna Pueblo founded Rock Your Mocs as a social media event for her family and friends. It is now celebrated world wide as a day or week in November, which is also Native American Heritage Month. Indian Education teachers at Governor Bent Elementary, Cari Kerkhoff; Mission Avenue Elementary, Jana Antonio Cheung and Shante Toledo; and Del Norte and Sandia High School Diné language teacher, Jerry Gee collaboratively celebrated Rock Your Mocs the week of November 13-17, 2023.

Christina Ramirez (Dine', Keetoowah Band Cherokee) performing Jingle Dress

Children's author Laurel Goodluck (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Tsimshian member) presented a book talk and reading of her award-winning "Forever Cousins" at Governor Bent Elementary School on November 13, 2023. Then Mrs. Goodluck read her newly published book, "Rock Your Mocs," at Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School on November 15, 2023. According to the book, "Moccasin comes from the Algonquian word from the Powhatan language, makasin, which means 'shoe.'" The publishing company, author and illustrator are a part of, We Need Diverse Books programs, which promote and encourage creating a world where every child can see themselves in the pages of a book. The book Rock Your Mocs is inclusive of all Indigenous children that are multicultural, from various backgrounds, and children with special exceptionalities. Mrs. Goodluck returned to Governor Bent in December to sign books and talk with students in their classrooms. She also signed books that were purchased from Mission Avenue Elementary.

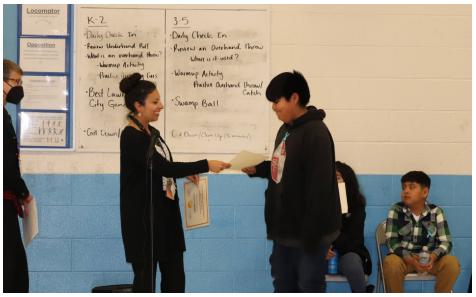
Indian Education

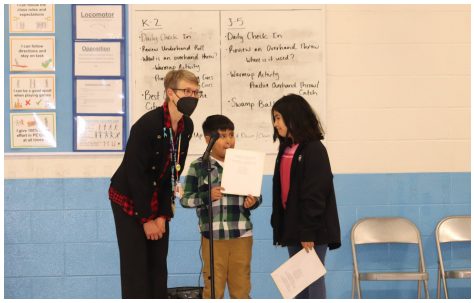
Mission

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.

Governor Bent

Students, families, and staff at Governor Bent celebrated their seventh annual Rock Your Mocs Celebration on November 15th. High School students from Mr. Gee's Navajo Language classes at Del Norte and Sandia High Schools performed Diné song and dances. Faith Begay and Shayna Jake (both DNHS Seniors) served as announcers for the assemblies, which also featured presentations by Governor Bent students. Third grader Christina Ramirez (Diné and Cherokee) performed Jingle Dress Dance. She was introduced by her father, Freddy Ramirez (Cherokee). Fourth grader Lyla Pacheco and second grader David Dominguez (both A:Shiwi) sang The Dragonfly Song in Zuni, which they learned from their Zuni Language Teacher, Mila Padilla, last school year. Fifth graders Lavaunt Morris (Tamaya, Haaku, Cherokee, and Blackfeet) and Marcus Notah (Diné) were recognized for their entries in the Governor Bent RYM poster art contest. Lavaunt's artwork, entitled Tamaya Pueblo, was featured on the school's 2023 Rock Your Mocs poster. Governor Bent Fine Arts Teacher, Mary Howe, led a school-wide art exhibit of Landscape Watercolor Paintings, which was displayed in the cafeteria. All Kindergarten through fifth-grade classes participated and displayed their paintings.

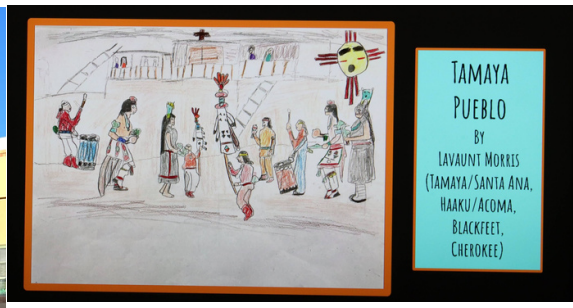




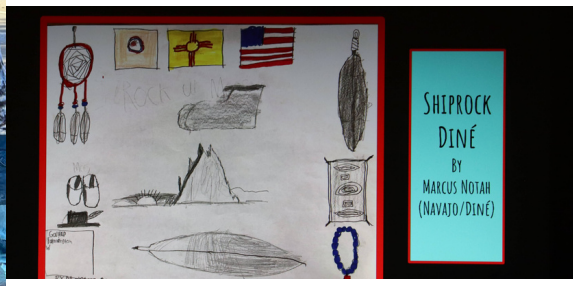
Mission Avenue

The Rock Your Mocs week at Mission Avenue was held for the first time on November 13-17, 2023. It started with a school-wide spirit week, each day had a theme where students were encouraged to wear their Native jewelry, Native belt, Native shirt, Rock Your Mocs, and Native attire. It was wonderful to see many students participating in this celebration by proudly showcasing their Native heritage. We held assemblies for the entire school to learn about the 23 Native American communities in New Mexico. Second grader, Rylan Nez (Diné) presented an environmental science presentation on The Three Sisters Garden: Corn, Beans, and Squash. During the assemblies, students asked many questions about the jewelry, Native attire, and moccasins that the students and teachers were wearing. Mission Avenue Art Teacher, Cheryl Padilla-Maldonado led a school-wide art exhibit of Norval Morriseau inspired art work. All Kindergarten through fifth-grade classes were encouraged to participate. Fifth grader, Payton Kane (Hopi, White Mountain Apache, and Yankton Sioux), won the Mission Avenue RYM art contest. Santiago Pino (Acoma and Kewa Pueblos) and Misha Thompson (Diné) were recognized as honorable mentions for their entries. On November 16, High School students from Del Norte and Sandia High Schools performed Diné dances at Mission Avenue Elementary School. The students performed the Diné round dance, two-step, skip dance, and ribbon dances. A few High School students also spoke about their high school experiences and encouraged elementary students to do their best.

Jana Antonio Cheung and Shante Toledo with Mission Avenue ES Students



Lavaunt Morris (Tamaya/ Santa Ana, Haaku /Acoma, Blackfeet, Cherokee)



Marcus Notah (Navajo / Dine')

Indigenous Author Laurel Goodluck talking with students at Mission Avenue ES

Identity, Pride, Style, Art, Community represented by students at Mission Avenue ES with acclaimed author Laurel Goodluck

DNHS Navajo Language Students with Mr. Jerry Gee at Governor Bent Elementary

Welcome: Shante Toledo Educational Assistant, Mission Avenue ES

Shante Toledo

Yá'át'ééh my name is Shante Toledo. I am Diné, from the Red House People clan, born for the Tangle Clan. I graduated from Dickinson College in 2021 with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Italian Studies. I started as an Educational Assistant in October 2023 with the Indian Education Department's Indigenous Initiative at Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School. In my role, I support our Indigenous students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

In my spare time I enjoy walking my two dogs, listening to music, learning new languages, and playing basketball and volleyball. I also spend time with my mother and younger brother. We like to watch shows and movies, go to live band concerts, and to go on road trips together. It has been rewarding to work with our Indigenous children and I look forward to a new semester full of academic and personal growth for everyone.

Shante Toledo & Jana Antonio Cheung helping students at Rock Your Mocs

Del Norte High School

On December 4, 2023, Del Norte High School Navajo Language students hosted an assembly for Native American Heritage Month for the whole school. Shante Toledo was the Mistress of Ceremony. Jana Antonio Cheung was the sound engineer. The assembly started with the presentation of the colors by Del Norte HS ROTC. All the ROTC flag bearers were Navajo students and one of them brought in the Navajo Nation flag. Maya Gishie (Diné) sang the National Anthem in the Diné language. A few Native students and staff introduced themselves in their Native languages. Ten girls performed the Diné ribbon dance. Maya Gishie sang "Go My Son" while students did sign language to go along with the song. Fourteen students performed the Diné round dance, the two-step dance, and the skip dance. Finally, Maya Werito performed the Jingle Dress dance to end the program.

DNHS Dine' Students performing

On December 8, 2023, Del Norte High School had their Winter Exemption Day. This was an all-school fundraising event for clubs, organizations, sports teams, and elective classes. Mr. Jerry Gee's Navajo classes and Diné Student Club did a Navajo Taco sale. The event was very popular and Diné students successfully raised much needed funds for future use.

Special appreciation to the school administration and support staff, and the Indian Education staff for assisting with 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.

Cari Kerkhoff, Resource Teacher, Governor Bent Elementary School
Jana Antonio Cheung, Indigenous Initiative: Resource Teacher, Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School
Shante Toledo, Indigenous Initiative: Educational Assistant, Mission Avenue STEM Magnet Elementary School
Jerry Gee, Diné Language Teacher, Del Norte High School and Sandia High School

Volcano Vista's Native American Student Union Explores Rich Heritage at Indian Pueblo Cultural Center

In a celebration of cultural heritage and a quest for deeper understanding, the Native American Student Union (NASU) from Volcano Vista High School embarked on an enriching field trip to The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque on November 30, 2023. This educational excursion marked a significant effort by the students to connect with their roots and foster appreciation for Native American traditions. Accompanied by their dedicated APS club sponsors and an APS district representative from Indian Education, ten members of the Native American Student Union embraced the opportunity to explore the diverse and vibrant history of the indigenous peoples of the Southwest. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, nestled in the heart of Albuquerque, provided an immersive experience that showcased the rich tapestry of Pueblo culture. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center served as an invaluable resource, offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by Native communities over generations.

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Co-Sponsor Ms. Elizabeth Summers: "It was wonderful to see our students actively appreciating Native American heritage and taking pride in their identity. Seeing these students bond with each other while learning more about Pueblo culture was a peak experience I wish more people could share."

Co-Sponsor Mr. Michael Torres, emphasized the significance of such educational experiences, stating, "These field trips are instrumental in fostering cultural pride and promoting cross-cultural understanding."

APS Indian Education Representative Sara Money called to attention the significant number of Native American students APS services, approximately 5,650 currently enrolled in APS.

As the Native American Student Union from Volcano Vista High School returns from this cultural odyssey, they bring with them not only cherished memories but also a renewed sense of pride in their heritage. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center has once again served as a bridge connecting the past and the present, empowering the next generation to carry forward the legacy of Native American traditions.

NAVAJO NATION VICE - PRESIDENT VISITS APS MIDDLE SCHOOL ALBUQUERQUE, NM

The administrators and students at McKinley Middle School were graced with the pleasure of hosting the Navajo Nation Vice-President, Richelle Montoya. Vice-President Montoya is the very first female to serve in this high-ranking leadership role and marked history when current President Buu Nygren selected her as his running mate in the 2022 Navajo Nation election.

Montoya is originally from the Torreon/Star Lake Chapter in the Eastern Agency of the Navajo Nation and in northern New Mexico.

On November 28, 2023 the Vice-President visited McKinley Middle School after accepting an invitation from the Navajo Language class in early October. As part of the Navajo Nation Content Standards, there is a section that highlights the teaching of Navajo Government along with Culture, Character, and Oral Language. Mr. Alvino Sandoval, Navajo Language Teacher had been facilitating learning discussions with the students on the topic of tribal sovereignty and what it means as it relates to tribal law and government. The students then took an interest at “Educational Sovereignty” and what role we as Diné have that right. The students studied significant and prominent Navajo leaders who have and are currently paving the way to mark history and lead our nation. We studied, Dr. Lori Arviso-Alvord, the first Navajo woman to be board certified to become a surgeon, Luci Tapahonso, Professor Emeritus and first Navajo Poet to earn the distinguish Navajo Poet Laureate medallion, and Dr. Jennifer Denetdale, Professor of American Studies at UNM who is the first Navajo female to earn a doctoral degree in History.

Finally, how the recent election marked history of the first Navajo female vice-president. “Navajo society historically is a matrilineal society and we have finally acknowledged that role in the western adopted government structure of our Nation” shares Mr. Alvino Sandoval who was very proud of how hard his students worked to plan for the event and asked meaningful questions of the vice-president during her visit. In addition to her visit, we also had U.S. Army veteran and retired police officer, Maryann Bullhead who shared her journey as a Diné woman in serving several tours of duty and becoming a police officer. Her inspirational message to the students was powerful and intriguing. The students have lined up other monthly guest speakers for the remaining of the school year and will share as we approach the coming months.

Frybread Making by Dine’ Students

Annual Winter Stories

Every year, students come together to share winter stories, sing songs, and play games.

This year's Winter Celebration was held at Albuquerque High School on November 30, 2023. Students from elementary school to high school came together for this unique event.

Like many events in American Indian culture there is a proper time and place for all activities. Traditional storytelling is reserved for the winter months for many tribes. This was a practical choice given the fact that during the other season's, people were busy growing, gathering, and hunting food. It was in the winter, with the long dark evenings, the snow and wind blowing outside, that telling stories was a way to entertain and teach the children. Another reason is that many traditional stories contain animal characters. To be respectful, people waited until the winter when animals hibernate or become less active so they cannot hear themselves being talked about. The Indian Education department coordinates a time for StoryTelling every year.

Native American Youth Empowerment Symposium (NYES)
Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico

Tiwa Lending Services, the Pueblo of Isleta, the Office of Special Trustee and the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of New Mexico (AICCNM) sponsored the *Native American Youth Empowerment Symposium,* an event combining career and scholarship information, as well as financial literacy.

Tiwa Lending Services (TLS), a community development financial institution that assists Isleta Pueblo members with low-interest credit builder or home loans, created the youth gathering in 2016 focusing on financial literacy after seeing tribal members applying for loans without full knowledge of monetary tools or the importance of good credit. The AICCNM joined as a partner in 2017, bringing business and educational representatives to promote, motivate and encourage networking, leadership and entrepreneurship.

Many students attended the event at the Isleta Resort and Casino to learn about budgeting, savings and investing. Students also heard about careers in tech, media, film and what it takes to be an entrepreneur, in addition to educational opportunities.

MCKINLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVE AWARD ISLETA PUBELO, NM

On Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 19 students from McKinley middle school attended the Native Youth Empowerment Symposium at the Isleta Casino & Resort. The students were also joined by other APS students within the district along with Los Lunas and Belen Schools. The symposium was sponsored by the Pueblo of Isleta and the Tiwa Lending Program. The intent of the convening was to offer Native American youth who are in middle & high school or attending post-secondary institutions learning opportunities about financial literacy, college and career preparedness, and other important financial obligations as they begin to think about life beyond high school.

The sessions were thoughtful, interactive, and inspiring. This was also the fifth year, that the committee has awarded the Native American Youth Empowerment Ambassador award who exuded the qualities of youth leadership in the areas of financial independence, academic excellence, community service, and leadership.

Sierra Yabeny and Chance Munoz both Dine‘ students from McKinley Middle School who were each recipients of the award. Mr. Alvino Sandoval, Navajo Language teacher at McKinley was very proud of the two selected.

Chance Munoz and Sierra Yabeny

Albuquerque Public Schools and the Indian Education Department begins to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into outdoor education

Los Padillas Wildlife Sanctuary

Third Graders in a 'grassland classroom' - photo credit: Steven Henley/ APS

Monie Corona works within the Indian Education Department in a newly created position, supporting Los Padillas and other outdoor programming. Her watchwords are "cultural humility, cultural relevance and the cultural landscape." She said this collaboration, bringing Indigenous learning to all students in an outdoor setting, "has been a long time coming, let's put it that way. As a [white] teacher coming in 30 years ago, I was not prepared for working with Native American students and their culture. There's a lot of things we have to understand and be able to respect as well."

All the way into October they can fish in the pond with a net," said Monie Corona, an environmental education resource teacher for the district. "There's cattails, dragonflies. For the kids to feel like they're playing, but they're actually learning — that to me is the key thing."

During Los Padillas field trips, the children spend time with Indigenous educators like Jered Lee, whose ancestral roots are in the Naschitti Region of the Navajo reservation in the northwest corner of the state.

Corona hopes that the Los Padillas program, as well as aligned efforts to bring Indigenous traditions into the school garden program and into outdoor learning opportunities at all grade levels, will enhance student engagement, particularly for those with Native heritage.

"Making sure the kids know their culture — it's not easy," she said. "We want to build up their self esteem, their motivation to be at school."

Pow-Wow Honoring Veterans at Albuquerque High School

In attendance, as well as honored was new Albuquerque Public School Board member and Vice President, Ronalda K. Tome-Warito. Ronalda K. Tome-Warito, is taking over for District 2 after defeating incumbent Peggy Muller-Aragón.

Tome-Warito, a parent, has been involved with Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) since 2006. Tome-Warito brings a unique perspective, running to be the first Native American to serve on the APS board, and saying in a questionnaire, “I feel I can bring the community together to focus on the concerns of our school district, but the district has to allow the community in.”

Tome-Warito says the plan is to have “regular meetings with Legislators, precincts, organizations, unions, tribes, community members and students,” and Tome-Warito intends to help the school board better understand the ongoing challenges in educating Native American and special education students.