

Indigenous Insider

MCPS Native American Student Services Department Newsletter. September 2022

Department Changes

Cue David Bowie! The NASS Department is undergoing ch-ch-ch-changes! We have done some restructuring for the school year and have new school assignments for each of our Native American Specialists.

There are some schools without an assigned specialist at this time but rest assured that our entire department is available to provide support. Just reach out to one of us and let us know how we can help!

Here are our updated assignments:

Dacia Griego

- Paxson Elementary
- Rattlesnake Elementary
- Department Social Worker

Duran Caferro

- Big Sky High School
- Hawthorne Elementary
- Willard High School

Glenda Weasel

- Seeley-Swan High School
- Data Support Staff

Mary Fran Plumage

- Chief Charlo Elementary
- Russell Elementary
- Meadow Hill Middle School

Melissa Hammett

- Willard High School (Teacher)
- Sentinel High School

Ray Kingfisher

- C.S. Porter Middle School
- Hellgate High School
- Washington Middle School

Student Spotlight

Congratulations to SanTana Bearcub Goddard, Ethan Lamb, and the rest of their 7th grade champion football team! Their hard work and dedication led to an undefeated season! Way to go!! You make us all proud!

Parents, family members, teachers, and staff: We'd love your help in celebrating our Native students in our upcoming newsletters. Please let your Native American Specialist know if you have a student who deserves recognition!

2021-2022 Staff Contact Information and School Assignments

- Amy Shattuck, Federal Programs Director, 406-728-2400 ext. 1054, avshattuck@mcpsmt.org
- Matt Bell, Native American Studies Teacher at Big Sky HS and Willard, 406-728-2400 ext. 8634, mkbell@mcpsmt.org
- Duran Caferro, Native American Specialist at Big Sky HS, Hawthorne Elementary, and Jeanette Rankin Elementary; 406-728-2400 ext. 1064, dcaferro@mcpsmt.org
- Dacia Griego, Native American Specialist at Chief Charlo, Franklin, Rattlesnake, and Russell 406-728-2400 ext. 1068, dgriego@mcpsmt.org
- Melissa Hammett, Native American Specialist at Willard HS and Washington Middle School; 406-728-2400 ext. 1028, mshammett@mcpsmt.org
- Ray Kingfisher, Native American Specialist at CS Porter, Hellgate HS, Meadow Hill, and Sentinel HS; 406-728-2400 ext. 1047, rdkingfisher@mcpsmt.org
- Lewis YellowRobe, Native American Specialist at Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Lowell, and Paxson; 406-728-2400 ext. 1049, lyellowrobe@mcpsmt.org
- Glenda Weasel, Title VI Data Support, Native American Specialist at Seeley-Swan HS; 406-728-2400 ext. 1063, gfwesael@mcpsmt.org

2021-2022 Event Calendar

- Native American Heritage Day Celebration: Laughter is Good Medicine. Monday, September 20th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Ogren Park at Allegiance Field.
- Halloween Carnival. Friday, October 29th, 4pm at Washington Middle School.
- Winter Gathering. Thursday, December 9th from 6pm to 8pm at Meadow Hill Middle School.
- Family Fun Time. Thursdays from January 6, 2022, to February 10, 2022, 5:00pm to 7:00pm at Rattlesnake Elementary School. No family fun on February 4th.
- Sweetheart Round Dance. Friday, February 11th, 6pm at Franklin Elementary School.
- MCPS Native Youth Powwow. Saturday, April 2nd, 2022. Grand Entry at 12pm and 6pm at Sentinel High School.
- Title VI Public Hearing. Date and location to be announced.
- Graduating Senior Dinner. Thursday, May 12, 2022, from 6pm to 8pm at the DoubleTree By Hilton Hotel.
- End of Year Gathering. Thursday, June 8th. Location to be announced.

Halloween Fun

Thank you to everyone who participated in our costume contest! Here is the list of winners:

Elementary Students:

1st Place - Squid (Luke Barlow)

2nd Place - Witch (Maizie Upham)
3rd Place - Black Cat (Lilee McLean)

Middle School Students:

1st Place - Jason Voorhees (SanTana Bearcub Goddard)
2nd Place - Spooky, Scary, Skeleton (Ledson McLean)
3rd Place - Penguin (Caia Bird)

High School Students:

1st Place - Angus Young (Rickson Bull Calf)
2nd Place - Adam Sandler (Cecelia Coon)
3rd Place - Scary Clown (Peyton Racine)

The winners of our Halloween TikTok Challenge are Batman vs. the Clowns! Congratulations Logan Sinclair (Batman), Andrew Sinclair (Scary Clown) and Peyton Racine (Scary Clown)! Great job!

Native American Heritage Month

As we head into November many teachers look for ways to celebrate Native American Heritage Month in their classrooms. The [MCPS Native American Student Services Department](#) is happy to help! With a Native American Education Specialist assigned to each school our district has set the standard for implementing Indian Education For All (IEFA). Our department is passionate and eager to help teachers and staff. We can visit classrooms or help coordinate guest speakers, review classroom materials, and recommend resources and media. Please don't hesitate to contact the specialist assigned to your school.

In addition to the wealth of resources available on the [Montana OPI website](#), they have also put together a [resource guide specifically for Native American Heritage Month](#).

While November is the official month on our calendars, keep in mind that every month is Native American Heritage Month for the Native American Student Services Department and for our Indigenous students across Missoula County Public Schools. Consider how you can continue to celebrate and acknowledge Native American heritage throughout the year. Some suggestions include sharing: Indigenous history, contemporary issues, tribal language and stories, and notable Indigenous people throughout the year.

The Truth About Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving has been celebrated as a holiday in the United States since George Washington was the nation's president. The holiday gained popularity over time as a time to give thanks, celebrate the fall harvest, and commemorate the supposed friendship established between the "Pilgrims and Indians" at Plymouth Plantation. The problem is that the story of the "first Thanksgiving" is a fabricated and romanticized version of history that ignores the truth about the genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people in the United States.

In classrooms across the country, and possibly within our own district children learn this false history and even re-enact the events with students dressing up and playing the parts of "pilgrims" and

"Indians." When this happens not only are students misinformed but they are playing out stereotypes of Native American people. We strongly discourage these types of lessons and activities in any classroom.

Instead, we would like to encourage teachers to learn about and teach the true history of Thanksgiving or refocus their November lesson plans to topics like gratitude, food sovereignty, and Native American history and culture. We have gathered the following resources and books that help correct the false narrative.

Resources:

- [Rethinking Thanksgiving Celebrations: Native Perspectives on Thanksgiving](#)
- [What Educators Need to Know About Teaching Thanksgiving](#)
- [Oyate's List of Thanksgiving Books to Avoid](#)
- [Allyship with our Native Community](#)
- [Everyday Native](#)

Books:

- [If You Lived During Plimoth Thanksgiving by Chris Newell \(Passamaquoddy\)](#)
- [We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorrell \(Cherokee\)](#)
- [Giving Thanks by Chief Jake Swamp \(Mohawk\)](#)
- [Thanks to the Animals by Allen Sockabasin \(Passamaquoddy\) \(Video reading by Allen Sockabasin in Passamaquoddy language\)](#)
- [The People Shall Continue by Simon J. Ortiz \(Acoma Pueblo\)](#)
- [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Debbie Reese \(Nambé Pueblo\), and Jean Mendoza](#)

New Addition to the NASS Team

My name is Mary Fran Plumage, the students call me Ms. Mary. I am an enrolled member of the Salish tribe. I was born and raised on the Ft. Belknap Reservation. I am new to the department but not new to MCPS, before I worked as a para at Russell Elementary. I am excited to join the Native Education Department. The schools that I have are Chief Charlo Elementary, Russell Elementary School, and Meadow Hill Middle School.

Currently I have 2 children in MCPS, one in middle school and a senior at Big Sky. My oldest is my daughter and she is working on her degree at the University of Montana. I moved to Missoula in June 2007 and love Griz football games, huckleberry picking, and home cooked meals.

I am excited to work with your students and offer support to our community.

Pinamiya!

Mary Fran Plumage
Native American Specialist
(406)728-2400 ext. 1049
mfplumage@mcpsmt.org

Oki Niksookowaasi Tsa Niitaapi? By Raymond D. Kingfisher

Oki Niksookoowaaksiiksi,

I am the NA Specialist for CS Porter, Washington Middle School and Hellgate High. I host an in-person lunch gathering at each school throughout the week. I have been monitoring grades and attendance of the students at these schools.

I have noticed that there are a number of our students that are "chronically absent," based on the Infinite Campus system. I know that the NA community has and is still being hit hard by the Coronavirus. The ones that have been absent I just check on them, email or visit, encouraging them to try and be there at the school. Absenteeism has a huge effect on the students' grades, so we are seeing that lead to other things such as mental/emotional problems, somethings that I as a NA Specialist is not equipped for. I am doing my best by trying to get them help, telling them about the services available, All Nations, School, and other places that can help them deal with what is going on in the world. We are still in the midst of a pandemic, and it is taking a toll on everyone.

This month, Native American Heritage, I have been telling oral stories and doing Blackfoot language lessons. I have shown a few videos as well as to what NAHM is today and ask, "How do you feel as a NA?" They do have some great/creative answers. In the evenings I have started a basketball open gym, with help from the Native Connections of All Nations. I am hoping to field a team of 6-8 girls' and boys' teams in the local youth tournaments. The High School students are present as well. They are using the Gym time as preparation to "try-outs" and the upcoming season.

I am the point person for the December event. Initially I wanted to have a mini-powwow but as I was back home last weekend I seen the death toll first hand that we are still experiencing. I think having an in-person event would not be wise during this time. I will try and come up with something soon. Other than that, we continue to move forward doing the best we can.

Thanks. Ray

Stoodis! By Duran Caferro

Good day everyone. Here is my mini-update:

At Hawthorne Elementary, we are getting used to a new read aloud routine called Rounds. Each time I meet with classes for read aloud, I get to hear from each student. This allows me to gauge information the students already know on a given topic, as well as what they are curious about. These little ones also get to practice introducing themselves, speaking clearly to a group, and listening respectfully.

At Big Sky, students have organized 2 groups. Each regular Thursday morning, students are welcome to join me in the Aux Gym, 9:00-10:25. Here I offer homework/missing work check, healthy snacks, a welcoming routine, and, of course, basketball. We also meet bi-weekly for a statewide Native Youth Leadership group called RISE. Students learn leadership skills like public speaking, planning, and running meetings, as well as self-advocacy and self-efficacy. I am available at BSHS, room 11, Wednesday and Thursday. We have our own space for students to utilize in any way they need to be successful at school.

At Willard Alternative High School, we have already had numerous awesome projects. We attended the Public Land Law Conference at UM Law School, online of course. We also attend RISE bi-weekly; we will begin to meet every Tuesday morning for a welcoming routine. I am new to Willard; I am looking forward to learning about the students and bringing them exciting programs to help with engagement.

At this time in history, given the flux event we are experiencing, my focus is on pro-social activities, self-esteem, and belonging. All programs are student driven and student led. Our youth are the experts of their own experience. I believe all students are capable of greatness; when they believe in themselves, anything is possible.

Duran Caferro (he, him, his)

MCPS Native American Community Specialist-Willard HS, BSHS, Hawthorne Elementary
MCPS Native American Student Services Dept.
(406)728-2400 ext. 1064
dcaferro@mcpsmt.org

Tansi Nitotemak! Hello Friends! by Dacia Griego

Tansi! Hello!

Things are moving right along with lots of changes so far this school year! We are so happy to have our newest specialist join the team. My role has changed a bit for the school year as well. I am now working as a part time Native American Specialist and part time Social Worker for the Native American Student Services Department. I'm feeling optimistic about this opportunity to be of support to our department, our students, and their families.

My background is in social work with degrees in both social work and psychology from the University of Montana. I have been an advocate for families in our community for the last decade. Prior to joining the MCPS crew I worked at the YWCA Missoula for several years as the Emergency Housing Program Coordinator where I worked with families experiencing homelessness and housing instability and survivors of domestic violence. I also worked for several years at Women's Opportunity & Resource Development (WORD) as a Family Advocate and briefly for the State of Montana in the Office of Public Assistance. My experience has given me a vast knowledge of community resources. I'm always happy to help families who need assistance in navigating these systems.

Because of this change in my role, I have had to reduce the number of schools I am assigned to as a Native American Education Specialist. I continue to be the specialist assigned to Rattlesnake Elementary School and have joined the team at Paxson Elementary School. I have started classroom read aloud visits with the Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade classrooms at both of these schools. So far this year I have read "Awasis and the World-Famous Bannock" and "We Are Grateful."

I am not hosting in person lunch gatherings at this time but will be visiting with students during lunch and lunch recess. I will be reaching out to parents and guardians over the next few weeks to check in and introduce myself to Paxson families. I look forward to getting to know you all!

Best wishes,

Miss Dacia

Champion Boxing

Cold Springs School Cafeteria

Boxers are expected to be in the gym at least 3 practices/week, on time, ready to work. This is a minimum. I suggest making it to more practices if being a champion is a goal. I have some funding sources in the works. We may see a ring and heavy bag structure in the gym within the next 2 months. Make sure your athlete is communicating with teachers about missing work, getting plenty of sleep, and drinking water throughout the day. I have seen tremendous growth in boxing skills, mental and physical strength, and positive social skills. Good work everyone, we are just getting started.

*These practices may change or be cancelled as competition opportunities arise.

Duran Caferro

406-465-6429 (text preferred)

championshipboxingmissoula@gmail.com

Title VI Parent Advisory Committee

The Title VI Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is made up of parents, students, and teachers within the MCPS Native community. The Title VI PAC provides support to the MCPS Indian Education Dept. throughout the year and hosts the Native Senior Dinner at the end of each school year to honor that year's graduating class of Native American seniors.

All parents/guardians and members of the Missoula Native American community are welcome to attend and participate in Title VI Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings and events. Our meetings are open to the public.

The PAC has one vacancy open for a Parent Representative for the 2021-2022 school year. Parent/Guardian spots are filled by those who have at least one child who is an MCPS student with a completed Title VI ED 506 Indian Student Eligibility Certification Form. The child can be an enrolled Tribal Member or a 1st or 2nd degree descendent of an enrolled tribal member.

Committee members attend monthly meetings, support the NASS Dept. and participate in fundraising and planning for the Native Senior Dinner.

Please send nominations to PAC Chairperson, Dacia Griego at dgriego@mcpsmt.org

PAC Fundraisers

PAC members are hard at work raising funds for the Class of 2022 Native American Graduation Dinner. There are several opportunities to show your support. The Turkey Dinner Raffle is a favorite with an opportunity to “Pay It Forward.” When you purchase a “Pay It Forward” ticket you give a local family a chance to win the basket.

We are also excited to host an online auction on Friday, December 10th. We have a variety of items available to bid on. This is a great way to find holiday gifts and support a great cause! We will share more information, including auction items and auction link, one the date approaches.

For more information contact Dacia Griego at dgriego@mcpsmt.org. Thank you for your support!

The Parent Advisory Committee