



Anpetu Waste'....Boozhoo....Greetings from the

American Indian Education Department

Our Mission

To support and strengthen increased educational outcomes for American Indian students by promoting culturally responsive instruction, family and student engagement and partnerships with MPS departments, schools and the broader community.

Our Vision

American Indian students are empowered to reach their full potential through educational experiences that value their cultural identities.

Grades 1-12 First Day of School:

Tuesday, September 8th

PreK and Kindergarten First Day of School:

Thursday, September 10th

Meet Our Staff

You will see some new faces, we look forward to meeting all of you!!



Jennifer Simon, Director of Indian Education **Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Mnicoujou Band**

Jennifer started this position with MPS last fall, 2019. She was previously the director of American Indian Student Services at Augsburg University. Jennifer is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and grew up there on the reservation. After graduating high school, she came to Mnisota to attend college at University of Minnesota Morris and Minnesota State Mankato. She has been working in higher education for the past 20 years and was excited to join PreK-adult education with MPS. She has two adult children, Isaiah and Mariah who both attend Augsburg University. They reside in Brooklyn Park.

Diana Leaskas, Account Specialist

Diana Leaskas is our Account Specialist and is the voice you will hear if you call our department, and the first face to greet you if you visit our offices at the Davis Center. She joined Indian Education in July 2019, but she started her MPS career in Educational & Cultural Services (Student Support Services) and was there for three years. Last year she was with Research, Accountability & Assessments working with Title Grants for 17 Non-Public Minneapolis Schools. She expressed that she is very happy to be working in the Indian Education Department this year. Diana loves music (she is a drummer), cooking, outdoors, and road trips. She has two adult children. Her favorite thing to do with friends and family is share quality time over a delicious meal. Her focus is to learn about all of the amazing things that this department does for students and to gain knowledge and an understanding of the culture and community.





**Christine Wilson, Family Engagement Specialist
White Earth Nation**

Christine Wilson is a member of the White Earth Nation, grew up in South Minneapolis, and currently resides in Richfield. She holds a Degree in Early Childhood Education and spent almost five years working directly with students in the Teen Parenting Service Program for MPS. In 2015 Christine left her position with the Parenting program to join the district's Indian Education team. She is currently the Family Engagement Coordinator working to build positive relationships between families and the schools that serve them. Christine serves on various committees and provides key support for several district wide initiatives including the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) and the Attendance work group which is a subcommittee of MUID/PIE.

**Jennifer Weber, District Program Facilitator
Oklahoma Choctaw**

Jennifer Weber is the Indian Education Special Education District Program Facilitator. This is a new position within Indian Education and the district because of the voice of our American Indian Parent Committee and our partnerships within the community. Jennifer started in her new role in October of 2019. Her tribal affiliation is Oklahoma Choctaw. During her nearly 25 years as an educator she has always had a focus on serving students, families and educators as she assists with

understanding the special education system and processes. She was an Indian Education Advisor at Anoka-Hennepin School District, a Behavior Specialist at Cedar Riverside and the Special Education Lead at Evergreen Park Elementary in Brooklyn Center. Jennifer completed her Bachelor's degrees in Special Education Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD) & Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and American Indian Studies at Augsburg University. She is working towards her Master's degree in Educational Leadership with an emphasis on differentiation and inclusion. Jennifer and her husband Don are the proud parents of 3 adult children and 9 beautiful grandchildren.



**Anjanette Parisien, District Program Facilitator,
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa**

Anjanette Parisien joined Indian Education in March of 2019 and is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Belcourt, ND. She brings with her 5 years of experience in higher education and 18 years experience as a licensed teacher, curriculum specialist, state level content specialist, Ojibwe language, history and culture teacher, and a lifetime passion for

science. As a product of American Indian education and a lifetime of working within and for American Indian communities, Anjanette brings a vast and deep understanding of the ways American Indian students learn, how they relate to one another and others outside of their cultural group, and how blending traditional knowledge and teachings with contemporary content. Her teaching experience began 5 years prior to licensure while still in undergraduate school where she worked in various JOM, UpWard Bound, Indians Into Medicine, National Science Foundation Science in the Circle of Life summer opportunities and a peer tutor for science, mathematics, and engineering courses through the American Indian Student Services Center of UND (Grand Forks, ND). Her experience as a teacher includes teaching positions at her home reservation schools as well as urban districts in Kentucky and Tennessee. Additional experience in education includes faculty and instructor positions at Brown Mackie College (Hopkinsville, KY), Sitting Bull College (Fort Yates, ND), Turtle Mountain Community College (Belcourt, ND) and United Tribes Technical College (Bismarck, ND). Non-teaching/faculty positions held in education include serving as a Coordinator for Multicultural Student Services for Bismarck State College (Bismarck, ND) and also as the State Science Content Supervisor for the State of North Dakota (Bismarck, ND). While Anjanette only recently joined the department in March of 2019, she has built an understanding of the unique relationship between the Indian Education department, the MPS district, and the community partnerships held with the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors, and most specifically the Philips Indian Educators of that organization. Anjanette holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology/Chemistry; a Bachelor of Arts degree in Indian Studies/Psychology, and a Master of Science degree in Educational Leadership all from the University of North Dakota. Her teacher licensing coursework was completed through Minot State University. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies at St. Cloud State University in Educational Administration. She is the proud mother of a beautifully intelligent daughter and hopes to become a really strong and grounded grandmother one day.

**Tasheena LaChapelle, District Program Facilitator
White Earth Nation**

Tasheena is a member of the White Earth Nation and grew up in south Minneapolis. Upon graduating from Minneapolis Public Schools in 2003, she went on to study generals at Minneapolis Community College and later Elementary Education at Augsburg University. After spending some time teaching in the classroom, Tasheena later went on to complete her Masters in Leadership. Prior to coming to MPS, Tasheena taught in Robbinsdale Area Schools and went on to coordinate the Indian Education program for several years there. She is happy to be a part of the Minneapolis Indian Education team and to be able to serve as a District Program Facilitator. Tasheena's passion is to focus the work that needs to be done to provide the equitable education that our children deserve to be successful life-long learners.

Within her role of supporting elementary & middle schools, and professional development and coaching within the district, Tasheena also leads the coordination of the Ogichida Oyate American Indian Youth Council within the district that is supported in partnership through a grant with Migizi.





Jodi Burke, Counselor

Jodi Burke joined the MPS Indian Education team in August, 2014. Jodi works as a school counselor at the high school level and has served students in most of our MPS high schools. As a counselor, Jodi focuses on academics, social emotional well-being and college and career planning. Jodi works to bring in culturally relevant materials and to create supportive, comfortable spaces for our students to learn and receive support. Additionally, Jodi provides direct support to our seniors by helping with college applications, financial aid, tribal enrollment and scholarships.

Tracy Burke, Counselor

Tracy Burke has been a counselor with the MPS Indian Education Department since 2016. Previously, Tracy was a counselor with Osseo Area Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools. As a counselor, Tracy works in the areas of social emotional, academic and career and college. One of her main areas of focus is helping and supporting students in the development of the skills and confidence necessary to make a successful transition to high school. Tracy provides support to middle school and 9th grade students district wide. Her favorite thing about being a counselor is working with students and she believes that education is the path to empowerment. She is passionate about helping all students navigate that path and achieve their wildest dreams!



**Shane Thompson, School Success Program Assistant,
Seneca & Odawa**

Shane Thompson comes from the Odawa and Seneca Nations. He joined Indian Education in the fall of 2018 as a Special Education Assistant working primarily within high schools. Shane took on his current position as a School Success Program Assistant in the fall of 2019 working primarily within middle schools. He has a M.Ed in Youth Development Leadership from the University of Minnesota. Shane's previous work experiences with Twin Cities youth and education span the last ten years ranging from cultural after-school programming to outdoor education and coaching lacrosse.

Braden Canfield, Social Worker



Braden Canfield has been with the Indian Ed Department since 2016, making this his 4th year. Previously, his focus had been primarily on increasing attendance. In that role, he has worked closely with the Attendance Workgroup, a subgroup of PIE (Phillips Indian Educators). Starting this year Braden will be sharing the attendance focus with his colleagues while serving as a resource to all schools in zone 2 of the district (South and Southeast areas of MPS). The focus will be student and family advocacy as well as follow-up on any individual cases and mental health concerns. Braden has worked within MPS for 30 years. For the first 12 years he was a building SSW serving all age groups from Early Childhood through High School as well as Federal Setting 3 programs (Life Skills and SPEN/SPAN). For the next 15 years, he held various district wide positions: "Mental Health Liaison", "Community and Residential Program Specialist" and "Special Education Placement DPF". Currently he remains a social worker on special assignment with our department.



**Alicia Garcia, Social worker
Taos Pueblo**

Alicia Garcia (Taos Pueblo) joined the MPS Indian Education department as a school social worker in 2013. Previously, Alicia had been a school social worker for 13 years for the St. Paul Indian Education Department and at the American Indian Magnet School. For 7 years prior to those sites, Alicia worked with Ain Dah Yung Center as a youth and family advocate. Starting this year, Alicia is focusing her work on student/parent advocacy and support within Zones 1 and 3 (schools located in the North, Northeast, and Southwest areas of MPS). Alicia lives in St. Paul where she has raised two children, Rain and Sky. Four years ago, she was blessed with a grandson, Storm! She enjoys staying active by running, biking and swimming.

Alicia also supervises College Student Social Work Interns each year. This year's interns are:
Ellie Pulido-Hernandez (St. Catherine University)
David Stier (University of Minnesota)

Matthew LaFave, Ojibwe Language Teacher

Matthew teaches Ojibwe language daily at Edison High School and Northeast Middle School and joined our department this year to offer Ojibwe language district wide to all American Indian students and families. Matt joined MPS in 2016 as a Community Liaison to assist the Ojibwe language classes at Sanford and Northeast Middle schools. Matt is an enrolled member of the Fond Du Lac Lake Superior Band of Ojibwe. He was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota where he graduated from MPS's Roosevelt High School in 1990. In 2000, I graduated from Native American Educational Services (NAES) College with a B.A. in Community Studies with a focus on Public Policy. Matt has worked in the American Indian community for over 20 years in various youth and family focused positions. Matt enjoys camping,

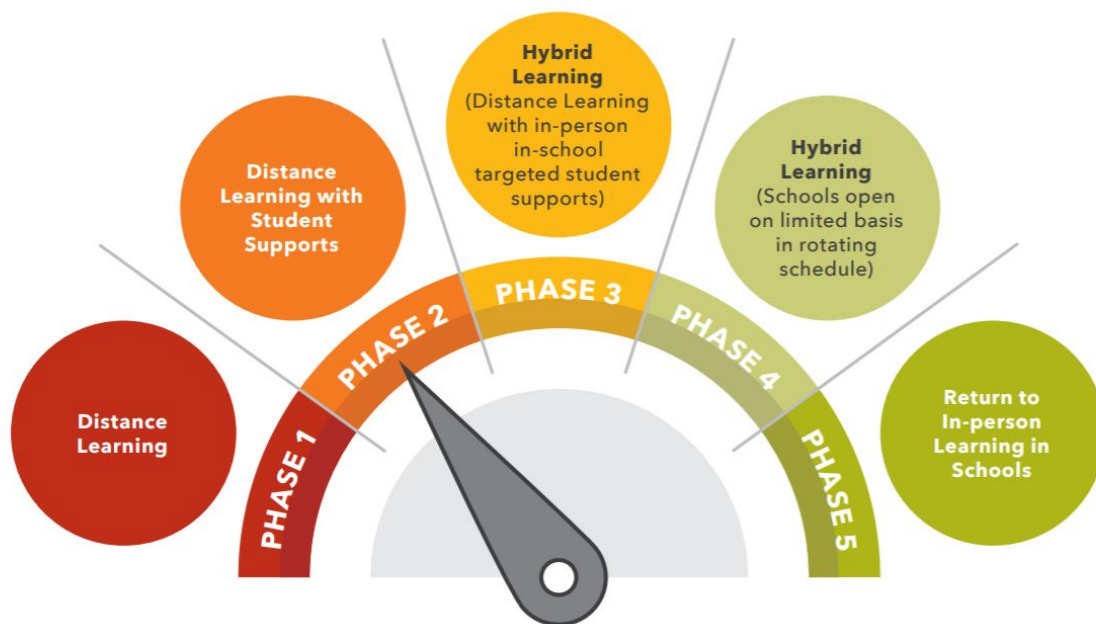


fishing, sports, and keeping up with his children. Matt loves to see young people learning Ojibwe language and culture.

Welcome Back to Minneapolis Public Schools!

Distance Learning + Supports

MPS will start the new school year through distance learning for PreKindergarten to 12 grade.



- Distance learning will be stronger academically with students and staff alike benefiting from more structure, better planning, regular interactions and a greater sense of connection among students.
- Tutoring, technology and mental health supports will be provided at certain school buildings.
- Visit b2s.mpls.k12.mn.us to find up-to-date information on [distance learning](#), updates on [grading](#) and [attendance](#), and many other helpful resources.
- [Back-to-School Resource Guide](#)

Important Back-to-School Reminders:

- ✓ **Update your contact information!**

- Now more than ever, it's critical that families make sure your school and Indian Education has your most recent contact information. Before school starts, please make sure and call your school if there are any changes to your child's home address or your phone number or email.
- Update your information [here](#).

✓ **Ensure you have completed the 506 Form (for ALL your children/students) for eligibility to receive additional supports/programming offered by Indian Education**

- MPS American Indian students who are either enrolled as a citizen of a federally recognized tribe, OR have a parent OR grandparent qualify for additional supports from funding provided by the 1972 Indian Education Act. This act was the landmark legislation establishing a comprehensive approach to meeting the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. This program is designed to provide additional resources to address the unique cultural, language and educational related academic needs, including preschool age children.
- Please reach out to our department, to your school or to the Enrollment Office for a 506 form.
- Once the form is completed, you can give it to your school office and they will assure it gets to our department. If you have questions or want a form emailed to you, please reach out to: diana.leaskas@mpls.k12.mn.us or indianed@mpls.k12.mn.us

✓ **Johnson O'Malley Program (JOM)**

- Purpose: To provide supplementary financial assistance to meet the unique and specialized educational needs of American Indian children. Johnson-O'Malley funds are not to take the place of federal, state or local funds.
- Eligible students must be a member of an American Indian tribe or Alaska Native or be at least one-fourth (1/4) blood of a descendant of a member of an American Indian Tribe which is eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States.
- For the student eligibility/certification form, visit the website [here](#). This form can be returned to our office along with the 506 form.

✓ **Complete the Application for Educational Benefits**

- It's time to complete your [Application for Educational Benefits form](#), which used to be called the "Free and Reduced Lunch" form! In addition to no-cost

meals for students and other benefits for families, these applications generate almost \$100 million in critical funding for MPS and our schools.

- Forms can be filled out online by following the link above and following the instructions

MPS Honors Gary Lussier



Gary Lussier Sr., a current District Program Facilitator in the Minneapolis Public School's Indian Education Department, will be retiring after this contract year, June 2020. Gary was recognized this past fall by the Minnesota Indian Education Association, receiving a well-deserved Lifetime achievement award.

Gary is an enrolled member of the Red Lake Nation and grew-up in north Minneapolis. He graduated from North High School and began work at the new North High as a hall monitor and teacher's aide. He taught at Heart of the Earth Survival School and eventually worked as aide to the principal at Anderson Fundamentals. Gary went on to be American Indian Language and Culture Teacher and Elementary Classroom Teacher at Anderson and Four Winds American Indian Magnet. He went into administration and became the

Assistant Principal and then Principal at Four Winds American Indian Magnet. His administrative career continued with the Minneapolis Public Schools. He returned to the classroom and has been teaching traditional language and culture with American Indian middle school students.

For over 40 years Mr. Lussier has worked in the Minneapolis Public Schools. He married Carol Engstrom-Lussier, a music teacher for the Minneapolis Public Schools. Carol and Gary have raised three children. Leah, is an Indian law and finance attorney at Feagre, Baker, Daniels law firm. She and her husband, Jesse Six Killer, have three children. Hannah, is a mental health therapist at the Native American Community Clinic. Gary Jr., is a 4th grade teacher at Anishinabe Academy in Minneapolis Public Schools.

With his growing family and after many years of public service, he is transitioning into the role of grandfather and community elder, which will undoubtedly bring new journeys his way.

Because of the nation's pandemic, we will be planning an honoring for Gary at a later time. We wanted to get this announcement out and offer a way to contact Gary to thank him for his many years of dedicated service to our children and families and wish him well as he leaves Minneapolis Public Schools. Gary's phone number & email address are: 612-310-5485, glussier1@me.com.

Renewing the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Minneapolis American Indian Community

In 2006, the American Indian community entered into a historic [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) with Minneapolis Public Schools. The MOA document outlines our goal to dramatically improve academic achievement and graduation rates of American Indian students within MPS. The MOA established American Indian best practices sites characterized by the integration of cultural relevance with academic rigor. The MOA is renewed every five years.

MPS American Indian Best Practice Sites named in the MOA include:

[Anishinabe Academy](#)
[South High All Nations](#)
[Nawayee Center School](#)
[AIOIC Takota Prep](#)

The two named pathway middle schools in the MOA include:

[Sanford](#)
[Northeast](#)

Now is the time to renew the MOA! Over the next year we will be asking for your feedback and input as we make changes to the MOA. Stay tuned for communication, surveys, phone calls etc. as we reach out. If you are interested in serving on the renewal committee, please email Jennifer below. We hope that several of you are interested in participating in this critical process to help change the narrative of educational outcomes for our students at MPS!

For more information contact Jennifer Simon, Director of Indian Education at jennifer.simon@mpls.k12.mn.us

SAVE-THE-DATE

November 16-20, 2020

MPS District wide American Indian Awareness & Family Involvement Week!

American Indian Awareness & Family Involvement Week is a week-long initiative for Minneapolis Public Schools celebrating, recognizing and raising awareness of American Indian people & culture. Minneapolis has a vibrant American Indian community and we have much pride serving over 1500 American Indian students across the district in more than 100 schools.

All MPS schools are invited to join us in Indian Education to recognize our American Indian population by intentionally engaging our students, families and community during this week while also exploring activities that allow all students to learn about Indigenous populations.

Curious about what your school has planned? Or have a great idea for an activity or event. Contact your school Principal or Family Liaison and share your thoughts!
(Please note that all events this year will have to comply with COVID-19 restrictions)

For more information contact Christine Wilson at Christine.wilson@mpls.k12.mn.us

Need Support Navigating Minneapolis Public Schools? We're here to help!



**Amanda Dionne, Engagement, Education & Outreach Specialist
Northern Cheyenne Tribe/Turtle Mountain**
amanda.dionne@mpls.k12.mn.us
612-986-3937 (Cell)

Amanda Dionne is an enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. She has been at Minneapolis Public Schools since December 2018 in the Communications, Engagement and External Relations Division as an Engagement Education and Outreach Specialist providing additional support to American Indian Families across the district ranging from assisting families through the Student Placement process or raising awareness among District Leadership when concerns are unresolved at the school level. In her role Amanda works in partnership with the Indian

Education Department on a variety of projects, events and programming specifically for American Indian families. Amanda's position is a result of Minneapolis Public Schools American Indian Parent Advisory Committee's advocacy for more robust support for American Indian students and families outside of the Indian Education department. Amanda Dionne was born and raised in the Twin Cities Metro area and graduated from Augsburg University in 2011 with a Business Management, Business/Economics Bachelors of Arts Degree. She comes to Minneapolis Public Schools from the American Indian Cancer Foundation where she worked for five years building partnerships with Tribal Communities to work towards policy, system and environmental changes in effort to change the cancer narrative in Indian Country.

Questions, concerns, or looking to connect with District staff but unsure where to start?

Amanda Dionne is a resource within the District to provide navigation and engagement support for American Indian families!

Office of the Ombudsperson

An ombudsperson is someone who listens to and investigates complaints or concerns about an organization. The Office of the Ombudsperson can assist families who have questions, concerns or complaints against MPS schools, programs, offices, and staff. The Ombudsperson is a neutral party who does not take sides.



They work with families, community members, and MPS to investigate complaints, clarify and resolve questions, and address concerns in an impartial and timely manner. The services of the Ombudsperson are free. The Ombudsperson is an objective third-party whose goal is to work with people who have a problem with MPS to find a solution.

You can reach [Mitchell Roldán](#), Director, Office of the Ombudsperson at 612-668-0234.

Program Support, Updates & Events within our Community Partners

Please see their websites linked below for more information.

[Division of Indian Work](#)

[Migizi Communications](#)

[Minneapolis American Indian Center](#) (MAIC)

[Native American Community Clinic](#) (NACC)

[Indian Health Board](#) (IHB)

MPS News/Events

Free meal boxes beginning Tuesday, September 8th



Free meal boxes will be available for pick-up Mon-Fri at 29 school sites. Most sites will be open 11am-3pm, and a few sites will be open 11am-5pm. One meal box per child per week. Each box will contain 5 breakfasts and 5 lunches. For a full list of sites, visit the Culinary & Wellness Services Website [here](#).

Also, please visit the [City of Minneapolis Homegrown website](#) for an interactive map of food shelf locations.

From Minneapolis Public Schools Homeless/Highly Mobile Student Services Manager

[COVID Shelter/Housing Resources](#) Guide

Three important things to highlight:

1. There is space in our family emergency shelter system. People Serving People and Mary's Place have rooms available.
 2. There are funds for anyone behind in rent/utilities/mortgage due to income loss related to COVID. People can apply multiple times. Link in the guide.
 3. Both a federal and a state eviction moratorium are in place. There are very few legal reasons for an eviction right now, we want to make sure families know their rights
-

American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC)

As a part of the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Title VI American Indian Parent Committee is a collective of elected members composed of parents, teachers and students who meet regularly throughout the school year. The Parent Committee serves the important role as a voice to represent American Indian parents, families and students within the Minneapolis school district. If you are interested in learning more about the committee, attending meetings or sharing information with them, please contact [Christine Wilson](#).

Parent Representatives include:

Lucie Skjefte, Committee Chairperson, Red Lake Anishinabe (Parent)
Wendy Locke, Committee Vice Chair, Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota (Grandparent)
Susan Bobolink, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (Parent)
Breanne Johnson-Bobolink, Red Lake Band of Ojibwe (Parent)
Angie Hirsch, Lake Manitoba First Nation (Parent)
Allicia Waukau-Butler, Menominee and Dine (Parent)
Yolanda Dorr-Slowey, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Staff representatives include:

Linda Azure, School Social Worker at Jefferson, Fort Peck Assiniboine/Sioux and Ojibwe
Cheryl Leavitt, School Social Worker at Folwell

Student representative is:

Alyssa (Blue) Stratig, Student at Edison, Lake Manitoba First Nation

MPS Indian Education American Indian Youth Council/Ogichida Oyate Application

The 2020-21 American Indian Youth Council application is NOW open and can be found [HERE!!!](#) Seeking American Indian students in any and all of the high schools within MPS.

Deadline: Friday, September 11, 2020.

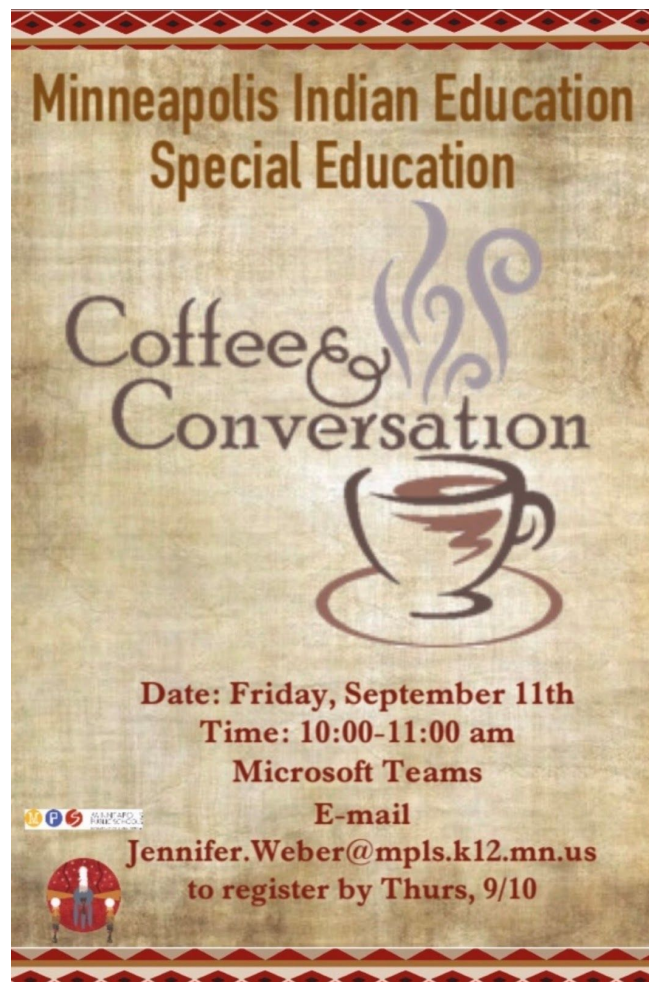
This is a one-year term position on a council of students in grades 9-12 that identify as American Indian within Minneapolis Public Schools. American Indian Youth Council members participate in leadership building opportunities within their own schools & community, cultural learning experiences, & possibly given opportunities to participate in local & national conferences. Members are required to make the one year commitment and to attend council meetings that will be held twice a month. The youth council opportunity is made possible by a grant partnership with our community organization, Migizi.

Please Note: All applications will be reviewed by Minneapolis Public Schools Indian Education Staff & all applicants will be communicated to email by the end of September.

Special thanks/Wopida tanka to Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and United Way for the donation of 1000+ backpacks & school supplies for our MPS

American Indian students. Ask your school staff if you haven't already received one or reach out to us for assistance.

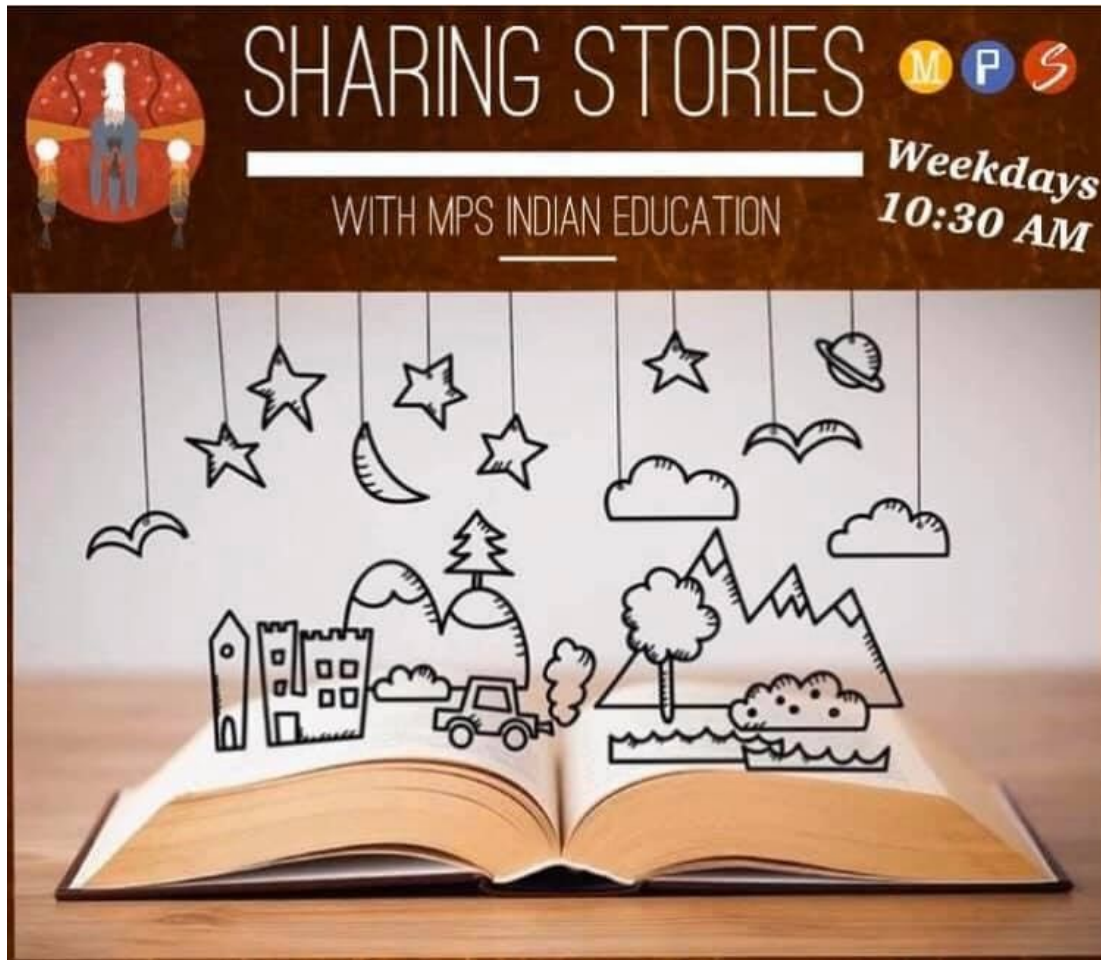
Coffee and Conversation with our NEW Special Education DPF within Indian Education



MPS's Yearly Fall Welcome Back Powwow is Postponed Due to COVID-19.

We hope that we will be able to host one in the spring but we will plan accordingly. Our priority is to keep everyone well & safe!!

**Sharing Stories with Indian Education ~
LIVE on our MPS Indian Education Facebook page every
school day starting Tuesday, September 8 @ 10:30 AM**



Lets Connect!

Facebook - [MPS Indian Education](#)
[Indian Education Website](#)
[Update Contact Information](#)

Wishing you and your family a great start to the school year!!