



Native American Family Committee  
Meeting Minutes

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. March 10, 2026, District Office Room 102

**Voting Members in attendance:** Jana Finkbonner, Michaela Vendiola, Sharece Steinkamp

**Co-chairs:** Dr. Kristen French, Dr. Janis Valasquez-Farmer, Isabel Meaker

**Cultural Reflection:**

A cultural acknowledgement was shared by Dr. Will Makóyiisááminaa.

Attendees introduced themselves including special guest Will Makóyiisááminaa, Ed.D, former superintendent of La Conner School District.

**Agenda Review:** Janis reviewed the goals of the Title VI grant and reviewed the agenda.

**Committee and budget updates**

- Janis shared the current spending so far including specific expenses for the Pow Wow and family connections night.
  - Janis reported a 38% increase in 506 forms for the district from 71 to 98 forms, compared with one year ago.
    - A committee member asked about data accuracy and how that is monitored.
    - Dr. Makóyiisááminaa added that often it works best for parents to provide the enrollment number because children may not have ability to get tribal membership.
- Will Makóyiisááminaa, Ed.D, discussed his experience with Title VI in the La Conner School District, emphasizing the power of feedback from Native families. His advice included:
  - Importance of communications protocol and agenda planning
    1. Example: La Conner families speak first before district shares about budget or grant issues.
    2. Importance of everyone having a chance to talk. For example, when challenges arise a circle protocol can be useful where only the person with the object has the chance to talk.
  - Budget decision timing and how to prepare for next year
    1. It works well to determine the budget for the following year in March the year before. This aligns with district budget planning.

- Consult: A Committee member presented a draft letter to the principal at Squalicum regarding retaining a Native teacher for next school year. Discussion included suggestions:
  - Outreach to union representatives and understanding of collective bargaining agreements.
  - Outreach to state legislature due to state not fully funding education.
  - A committee member suggested including an ask at the end of the letter.
  - Seeking additional funding such as local Tribal Nations.
  - Ari shared about current district budget challenges including staffing cost increases,
  - Janis provided examples of teachers bargaining groups who have integrated language that demographic group who would be more impacted than another, such as Seattle Public Schools.
  - A committee member provided grammatical edits.
  - The group approved the letter for submission to Superintendent Greg Baker, Assistant Superintendent Ari Feeney, and Squalicum HS Principal Laurel Peak.
  
- Native student graduation: The group discussed how to plan an event or activities for native students who are graduating.
  - Graduation is June 4-6.
  - Janis requested the committee's assistance
  - Discussion topics included:
    - Caps and regalia, student input,
    - volunteers to work on this,
    - importance of celebration,
    - ideas for graduate recognition gifts,
    - opportunities for native families to speak, and
    - scholarships.
  - A committee member had ideas and volunteered to help, including asking about available cedar and measurements for caps.
  - A committee member suggested the whole group work on it.
  - Dr. Makóyiiisááminaa suggested a tribal liaison. This was paid through migrant funds in LaConner.
  - Other funding sources for native student supports and activities were mentioned: Johnson O'Malley funds, Impact AID, Direct support from Tribal Nations, Migrant funds, Bellingham Public Schools Foundation.
  - Several committee members volunteered to help plan graduation activities:
    - It was suggested that others not in attendance might also want to help plan.
    - The group decided to meet at 4pm on Tuesday, April 14 (immediately prior to next NAFC meeting)
  - The planning group would like to know the number of graduates and their tribal affiliations. District staff will consider how this information could be shared without violating FERPA. It was suggested something could be shared with families where they self-identify or share their info with the planning group rather than the district sharing their information.
  - Janis and others offered the District Office as a meeting place for any planning.

- Other resources and connections were discussed including Lummi cultural department and staff at the Swinomish Tribal Nation.
- Committee member recruitment and membership election processes:
  - Committee agreed to cover this topic at the next meeting.
  - Dr. Makóyiisááminaa suggested, when the committees processes aren't aligning with the bylaws to note the committee's decisions around this in the minutes.
  - The committee selected May 19 and June 9 for the next meeting dates
  - A committee member shared the importance of planning for next year and suggested selecting meeting dates for the next 12 months to assist folks in planning.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting is planned for Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.