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BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION'S MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

From Access to Belonging: Building Supports for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Dates:

May 5-6, 2026 | May 13-14, 2026

Time:

9:30 AM – 12:25 PM (MDT)

Click the links below to register, each date is a different link:

- May 5, 2026 → <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May5>
- May 6, 2026 → <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May6>
- May 13, 2026 → <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May13>
- May 14, 2026 → <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May14>

Did you know there are over 3,200 students experiencing homelessness enrolled in BIE schools?

And that's likely an undercount.

The Bureau of Indian Education, in collaboration with SchoolHouse Connection, is thrilled to present a four-day virtual conference aimed at sharing effective strategies to support children and youth experiencing homelessness. Sessions include:

- McKinney-Vento 101
- Building partnerships to support Native youth experiencing homelessness
- Supporting college transitions
- Identifying and supporting young children experiencing homelessness
- Bridging McKinney-Vento and special education
- Foster care education
- And More!





BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION'S MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day 1,
Tuesday,
May 5

Day 1: Tuesday, May 5, 2026

(Registration link: <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May5>)

Please note that all times are in Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

9:30AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome (Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director, Division of Performance and Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education) • Drum (Rock Point Community School)
9:40AM	Welcome (Tony L. Dearman, Director, Bureau of Indian Education)
9:50AM	2026 BIE EHCY Keynote Speaker: <i>This is the story of lives shifting direction.</i> (Jacob Lee, Teacher/Vice Principal, for Nizhoni Accelerated Academy, Alternative School, Tuba City, AZ: 2022-2025)
10:15AM	McKinney-Vento 101: Identifying Native American students experiencing homelessness (Nikki Hannon, Education Initiatives Specialist, SchoolHouse Connection)
11:20AM	Where are the Helpers: Building Partnerships Within Schools and Communities (Karen Rice, Senior Manager of Education Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection)
12:25PM	Close Day 1



BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION'S MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day 2,
Wednesday,
May 6

Day 2: Wednesday, May 6, 2026

(Registration link: <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May6>)

Please note that all times are in Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

9:30AM	Welcome Back (Marie Silverhatband, Education Program Specialist, Division of Performance and Accountability-Supplemental Education Programs and BIE McKinney-Vento State Coordinator)
9:35AM	“I’ll Figure it Out, I’m Good”~ Identifying Complex Scenarios and Supporting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nikki Hannon, Education Initiatives Specialist, SchoolHouse Connection • Karen Rice, Senior Manager of Education Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection • Spring Irving, Student Services Coordinator/McKinney-Vento Liaison, Hannahville Indian School
10:40AM	Supporting College Transitions for Students Experiencing Homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jillian Sitjar, Director of Higher Education, SchoolHouse Connection • Caleb McKay, Senior Manager, FAFSA Completion, SchoolHouse Connection
11:45AM	Navajo Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Their Strengths, Challenges and Needs (Dr. Delphina Joe-Dayish, Education Specialist, BIE/DPA/IDEA-Shiprock ERC)
12:25PM	Close Day 2



BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION'S MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day 3,
Wednesday,
May 13

Day 3: Wednesday, May 13, 2026

(Registration link: <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May13>)

Please note that all times are in Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

9:30AM	Welcome Back (Casey Sovo, Supervisory Education Program Specialist, Supplemental Education Programs Division of Performance & Accountability)
9:35AM	Identifying and Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Through Practical Strategies and Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Vrabic, Senior Manager, Early Childhood, SchoolHouse Connection • Nicole Hippeard, School Counselor/McKinney Vento Liaison, Salt River Elementary School, Arizona
10:40AM	Bridging McKinney-Vento and Special Education: Coordinated Services For Students Experiencing Homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Eleanor Francis-Jones, DPA-IDEA Education Program Specialist, BIE • Detroit James, Education Program Specialist, Special Education, Bureau of Indian Education - Division of Performance and Accountability
11:45AM	Foster Care Education: Requirements, Roles, and Best Practices (Dr. Loren Hudson, Ed.D., Education Program Specialist, BIE Division of Performance and Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education)
12:25PM	Close Day 3



BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION'S MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day 4,
Thursday,
May 14

Day 4: Thursday, May 14, 2026


(Registration link: <https://bit.ly/BIE-SHC-May14>)

Please note that all times are in Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

9:30AM	Welcome Back (Marie Silverhatband, Education Program Specialist, Division of Performance and Accountability-Supplemental Education Programs and BIE McKinney-Vento State Coordinator)
9:35AM	Resiliency 5 Skills (Louanna Benslow, Youth Wellness Specialist, Winslow Indian Health Care Center, Inc.)
10:40AM	<p>From Data to Dollars: Aligning MTSS and Funding for Student Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Silverhatband, Education Program Specialist, Division of Performance and Accountability-Supplemental Education Programs and BIE McKinney-Vento State Coordinator • Shilo Krolkowski, Education Program Specialist, Division of Performance and Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education
11:45AM	Closing Celebrations with Saint Francis Indian School
12:15PM	<i>Navajo Pow Wow Song</i> by Marlyssa Ann Jim, Leupp Schools, Inc.



TIPS TO ENHANCE YOUR VIRTUAL CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

- If possible, attend virtually in a physical location other than your normal workspace.
 - Remove one distraction from your immediate surroundings while logged on.
 - Join from a computer with full access to camera, speakers and microphone so that you are able to engage in shared learning opportunities.
 - Prioritize making a new connection with another conference attendee.
 - Keep a notebook nearby to jot down new ideas, questions still lingering, or your personal “to do” list~ capturing your thoughts as they come will help you stay in the moment!
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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Marie Silverhatband

(Diné), Education Program Specialist, Division of Performance and Accountability-Supplemental Education Programs

Marie Silverhatband is an Education Program Specialist for the Bureau of Indian Education, Division of Performance and Accountability, Supplemental Education Programs. Ms. Silverhatband is also the BIE McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program State Coordinator.

Prior to her current role within the Bureau of Indian Education, Ms. Silverhatband worked at a tribally controlled school as a Federal Programs Coordinator. She is also a certified school counselor and served as a school counselor and a school-based mental health case manager at a tribally controlled school and public school.

She received her Master of Education and Bachelor of Science degrees from Northern Arizona University.



Casey Sovo

(Comanche & St. Regis Mohawk), Supervisory Education Program Specialist, Supplemental Education Programs Division of Performance & Accountability

Mr. Casey L. Sovo, an enrolled member of the Comanche Nation, began working for the Bureau of Indian Education in 2001 as a high school English Language Arts teacher, later served as the Academic Department Head, moved to Albuquerque, NM in 2006 to be an Education Specialist supporting K-3 literacy instruction (Reading First/BIE Reads). In 2010, he became the Education Program Administrator (EPA) of the New Mexico South, New Mexico North, Billings, and Seattle Education Line Offices. In 2019, he was relocated to the Belcourt Education Resource Center to work with the Turtle Mountain schools. Mr. Sovo joined the Division of Performance and Accountability as the Supervisory Education Program Specialist for Supplemental Education Programs (ESEA/ESSA) in August of 2025.

Mr. Sovo specializes in differentiating K-12 instruction, using progress monitoring and short-cycle assessments to make data-based instructional decisions, supporting effective evidence-based teaching strategies, building professional learning communities, and supporting principals, instructional coaches and teachers with their implementation of Multi-tiered Systems of Support. He focuses on thriving rather than surviving and works diligently to help schools create data-driven learning environments focused on student and staff needs that close and eliminate the learning and achievement gaps. He spends his time improving the K-12 curriculum, increasing literacy across the content areas, and supporting effective, evidence-based teaching strategies for all students. Mr. Sovo deeply believes in the power of education to provide opportunities for changing the outcomes for future generations.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Margo DeLaune

(Kiowa/Citizen Band Pottawatomie), Associate Deputy Director, Division of Performance and Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education

Margo DeLaune is currently the Associate Deputy Director for the Division of Performance & Accountability for the Bureau of Indian Education. In this position, Ms. DeLaune supports the BIE and its schools by providing oversight of BIE funds from the U.S. Department of Education, as well as supporting fiscal management and the provision of special education services.

Ms. DeLaune has been with the Bureau of Indian Education since 2016 and has worked extensively in education, primarily with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) programs, since 1974. Ms. DeLaune's previous work experience has been concentrated on helping at-risk, disadvantaged students improve their academic potential to better improve their lives and the communities in which those students live.

She has received her Ed.M. from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education in Higher Education Planning, Administration and Social Policy. She received her A.B. from Franklin & Marshall College located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



Tony L. Dearman

(Cherokee Nation), Director, Bureau of Indian Education

Tony Dearman, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, has served as the Director for the Bureau of Indian Education since November 2016. Dearman brings more than two decades of experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator in BIE operated and tribally controlled schools.

He began his career in education in 1993 at Sequoyah High School as a science teacher and coach. He served as the principal at Sequoyah High School from 2004-2005. In January of 2006, Dearman accepted the leadership role of Superintendent at Riverside Indian School. From 2008-2009 he was the acting Education Line Officer for the Seattle, Washington office. From 2009-2010 he served as the Education Line Officer for the BIE New Mexico South office. In 2010, Dearman returned to Riverside Indian School as the Superintendent. He remained in this position until November of 2015 when he was selected as the Associate Deputy Director of BIE Operated Schools.

Dearman earned an Associate of Arts degree from Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and a Master's degree in School Administration from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. His duty location and office are located in Washington, DC.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Jacob Lee

(Navajo Nation), Teacher/Vice Principal, for Nizhoni Accelerated Academy, Alternative School, Tuba City, AZ (2022-2025)

Mr. Lee's keynote shares the story of Nizhoni Alternative School, where, with limited staff and growing numbers of students facing homelessness, they built something stronger than circumstance: a place of safety, belonging, and quiet transformation.

Students arrived carrying chaos, heavy hearts, displacement, conflict, uncertainty. Staff met them with consistency, care, and a single driving question: how do we make every student feel seen, protected, and worth figuring out the inside story to acknowledge and heal?

This is the story of lives shifting direction. Of a student who walked in with almost no credits and walked out a graduate, now working, independent, and on a path toward healing.

It's not just about strategies. It's about what happens when a school refuses to fail.



Nikki Hannon

(Blackfeet/Little Shell), Education Initiatives Specialist, SchoolHouse Connection

Nikki was born, raised, and educated on the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, Montana. Prior to joining SchoolHouse Connection, she worked in her hometown district for nearly two decades as an Administrator for Alternative Education, Childcare, Hi-SET Education, and the *āisspōōmmoōtsiiyō•p* (We Help Each Other) McKinney-Vento program, and as a certified school counselor. Nikki currently serves as an Education Initiatives Specialist for SchoolHouse Connection, which allows her to continue to support Native students experiencing homelessness across Indian Country. Nikki is passionate about supporting the educational success of Native American students through advocacy, building relationships, and creating communities of support.

Nikki received her Master's in Education in Risk and Prevention from Harvard University, her Master's in Education in Counselor Education from Montana State University-Northern, as well as Bachelor degrees in Psychology and Liberal Studies from the University of Montana.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Jillian Sitjar

Director of Higher Education, SchoolHouse Connection

Jillian Sitjar is the Director of Higher Education at SchoolHouse Connection and has been with SHC for 8 years. She works to help students transition to and through higher education by elevating best practices and removing barriers. Her background is in Higher Education and Student Affairs, specifically within housing and multiculturalism. Jillian received her bachelor's degree from Butler University and master's degree from the University of South Carolina. She has worked in higher education for over a decade and believes in the power and importance of education.



Caleb McKay

Senior Manager, FAFSA Completion, SchoolHouse Connection

Caleb is the FAFSA Completion Senior Manager at SchoolHouse Connection. He works to increase FAFSA completion and access to financial aid for youth experiencing homelessness. Caleb has a background in financial aid, working for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), serving low-income and first-generation students; and for Front Range Community College, the largest community college in Colorado as the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for unaccompanied homeless youth. He is passionate about educating others on financial aid policies, increasing access to higher education, and empowering people to succeed.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Karen Rice

Senior Program Manager of Education Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection

Karen Rice is the Senior Program Manager of Education Initiatives at SchoolHouse Connection. Prior to joining the SchoolHouse team, Karen spent five years as a State Coordinator for homeless education and migrant education, and ten years in a school district serving as a homeless liaison and supporting the Spanish-speaking community. Karen is passionate about connecting with and supporting those in the field who provide direct service to children, youth, and families. She joins today from Madison, Wisconsin.



Nicole Hippeard

School Counselor/McKinney Vento Liaison, Salt River Elementary School

Nicole Hippeard is a dedicated and compassionate School Counselor and McKinney Vento Liaison, serving the families and students of the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community for the last eight years. Nicole has a deep passion for supporting students' academic, social, and emotional growth. With years of experience in education and counseling, Nicole brings a thoughtful and trauma informed approach to helping students navigate challenges and achieve their full potential.

She is known for her ability to connect with students, families, and staff, creating a supportive and inclusive school environment. Nicole's work is driven by a belief in the power of early intervention, meaningful relationships, and empowering students with the tools they need to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Sarah Vrabic

Early Childhood Senior Program Manager, SchoolHouse Connection

Sarah Vrabic is the Early Childhood Senior Program Manager at SchoolHouse Connection. In her role, she partners with communities and states across the country, working to overcome homelessness through education by providing practical assistance to better identify and enroll infants, toddlers, and expectant parents experiencing homelessness into high-quality early childhood development programs. Prior to starting at SHC, Sarah worked within the Philadelphia family emergency shelter system for a decade, facilitating cross-systems collaboration between homeless housing programs and early childhood education programs.



Shilo Krolikowsk

(Oglala Sioux), Education Program Specialist for the Division of Performance and Accountability

Shilo Krolikowski has over 25 years of a wide variety of educational experience, from a classroom aide to a Tribal-Controlled School principal to her current position with the BIE Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA) as the Title II Coordinator. She spent 16 years interpreting data to drive continuous school improvement to help her students succeed in academics and to succeed in their future endeavors. She has strove to use data to paint the picture of the whole child to build relationships that create lasting effects on students' success. Her former school team received the AdvancED Midwest Region's "2018 Values Driven Award of Excellence " from Cognia for the team's data-driven school improvement process they implemented in their school to serve their students, school, and community.



Louanna Benslow

(Diné), Youth Wellness Specialist, Winslow Indian Health Care Center, Inc.

Louanna Benslow is the Youth Wellness Specialist for the Winslow Indian Healthcare Center and has worked with the organization for 10 years educating and advocating for youth and their families. Louanna is a frequent speaker on topics related to mental health at schools in the communities she serves. Louanna's experience emanates from: coaching sports; being a trainer in areas of suicide prevention, youth leadership, Navajo Wellness Model, ACEs, and Resiliency; and being a Grief Recovery Specialist. Louanna has made her initiative to find ways to help the communities she works for, learn and overcome childhood trauma. Louanna is Dine' of the Navajo Nation and a mother. She is Salt People Clan, born for the Bitter Water Clan, her Chei's are Red Running into the Water People Clan, and her Nali's are One Walks Around Clan.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Dr. Delphina Joe-Dayish

(Diné/Navajo), Education Specialist, BIE/DPA/IDEA-Shiprock ERC

Dr. Delphina Dayish, Ed.D., is a proud member of the Navajo (Diné) Nation. Her clans are Tl'aashchi'i (Red Cheek), born for Oozei Taschiini (Hopi People of Red Running into the Water). As the daughter of a coal miner, she holds deep pride in her Navajo heritage. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education with an emphasis in Bilingual Education, along with two master's degrees—one in Education and another in Educational Leadership. She later completed a Doctorate in Leadership for Change, with a concentration in Dual Language Education. Dr. Dayish also holds multiple licensures in education and leadership across New Mexico and Arizona.

Raised on the Navajo Reservation, Dr. Dayish attended both public and boarding schools and maintained close relationships with her grandparents. Her childhood was rooted in traditional Navajo life—herding sheep in Red Valley/Cove, Arizona, and helping farm her grandmother's land in Nenahnezad, New Mexico. She recalls a simple life, sleeping on sheep pelts on the dirt floor of a hogan without electricity or running water. She observed her grandfather conducting ceremonies and joined him in singing ceremonial songs. She also watched her maternal grandmother weave intricate designs on a loom and enjoyed homemade tortillas cooked on a wood-burning stove. Music was a meaningful part of her upbringing, as she listened to both of her parents sing Navajo songs that brought her joy.

Professionally, Dr. Dayish began her career as a schoolteacher and advanced into leadership roles as a Department Head and Principal for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools on the Navajo Nation. Prior to her current position, she taught grades K–12 in public schools, including special and gifted education, and worked with college students in special education programs.

Dr. Dayish is a mother, grandmother, wife, and dedicated educator. She currently serves as an Education Specialist with the DPA-IDEA program and resides on the Navajo Reservation with her husband, Leo Dayish. Together, they have three sons—two of whom are U.S. veterans who served in the Air Force and Army—and five grandchildren. In her leisure time, she enjoys powwow music, Native American Church songs, and beadwork. Through her life experiences and professional journey, Dr. Dayish remains deeply committed to supporting and empowering BIE schools, particularly in the area of Special Education.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Spring Irving (she/her)

Coordinator/McKinney-Vento Liaison, Hannahville Indian School

Spring Irving serves as the Student Services Coordinator and McKinney-Vento Liaison at Hannahville Indian School, located on the Hannahville Indian Community reservation and has also been a member of the BIE McKinney-Vento Advisory Board for the past two years. She has 19 years experience in education working as an English teacher, administrator of an alternative school, and now in the school counselor role; Since rejoining the school in 2020, she has worked with students from grades RK-12, supporting both their academic success and overall well-being.

Quoting retired long-time superintendent Tom Miller, Spring is honored to work at “the only Potawatomi school in the universe.” She is deeply committed to honoring the unique identity and needs of her school community. In her role, Spring has led efforts to significantly increase the identification of McKinney-Vento eligible students (over 8x previously identified students), ensuring they and their families receive the resources, advocacy, and stability they need for students to thrive in school and beyond.

Spring believes that building strong relationships is the foundation of effective support. Through trust, consistent communication, and collaboration with families, she strives to create a safe and responsive environment for all students. Spring is passionate about equity in education and is dedicated to removing barriers so every student has the opportunity to succeed.



Dr. Loren Hudson, Ed.D.

(Navajo), Education Program Specialist, BIE Division of Performance and Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education

Dr. Loren Hudson draws on years of experience as a teacher and school leader to support BIE-funded schools with practical, educator-centered guidance. As an Education Program Specialist, Loren helps schools strengthen their BIE One Plans and serves as a BIE State Coordinator for Title IV, Part A; the Stronger Connections Grant; and the Foster Care Program. Loren is committed to empowering educators and creating safe, supportive learning environments across the BIE system. Contact Loren at Loren.Hudson@bie.edu.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Detroit James

(Navajo), Education Program Specialist, Special Education, Bureau of Indian Education - Division of Performance and Accountability

Detroit James is an Education Program Specialist in Special Education with the Bureau of Indian Education's Division of Performance and Accountability. In this role, he provides technical assistance and oversight across multiple Education Resource Centers, supporting schools in improving outcomes for students with disabilities through compliance monitoring, data-driven decision making, and systems-level program development.

Mr. James has extensive experience in special education, Indigenous education, and public health, with a focus on culturally responsive practices and holistic student support. Prior to his current role, he served as a Special Programs Coordinator, overseeing special education, literacy, and English language development programs, and leading initiatives in early intervention, Child Find, and schoolwide systems improvement.

He holds degrees from the University of Arizona in public health and assessment/diagnostics, along with additional training in developmental disabilities and Indigenous STEM education.

His work centers on strengthening educational systems to better serve Native students and communities through evidence-based practices, policy alignment, and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Dr. Eleanor Francis-Jones

(Diné), DPA-IDEA Education Program Specialist, Bureau of Indian Education

Dr. Eleanor Francis-Jones is a Diné and an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who works in special education program oversight supporting Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools in the implementation and monitoring of IDEA Part B requirements. She works closely with school leaders, administrators, and regional education staff to strengthen compliance systems, review Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and ensure that special education resources are aligned with documented student needs.

With many years of experience in education, curriculum development, and special education leadership, Dr. Francis-Jones is committed to helping schools build stronger systems that improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Her work focuses on supporting schools through technical assistance, data-informed planning, and continuous improvement efforts.

Dr. Francis-Jones earned her Ph.D. from New Mexico State University. As a Diné educator and advocate, she is dedicated to advancing equitable educational opportunities and strengthening services for students with disabilities, particularly within Indigenous and tribal school communities.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Marlyssa Ann Jim

(Navajo), Leupp Schools, Inc., Nurse Assistant

Marlyssa will honor attendees with a closing song, the Navajo Pow Wow Song, which is a song asking Creator to bring blessings to those that are to travel home or to bring blessings to the people that are and were in attendance of the event.

Marlyssa Ann Jim is from Cornersprings, AZ, which is located in the center of Whippoorwill Springs, Smoke Signals, and Low Mountain, AZ. Her clans are To'dikozhi, Kinyaa'aanii, Naaneesteezhii Taa'chii'nii, and Taaneeszaahnii. Her mother is Phyllis Begay of Cornersprings, AZ, and her father is Zearl Jim Begay of Blue Gap, AZ. Marlyssa's late maternal grandmother was Mary Mike, her late grandfather was Thomas Mike of Low Mountain, her paternal grandmother was Anna Jim Begay Blue Gap, AZ, and her later paternal grandfather was Isaac Begay of North Burnt Corn Valley.

Marlyssa is a School Nurse Assistant at Leupp Schools, Inc. She is also the school's Native American Culture Club and Dance Group Sponsor. Marlyssa grew up in the Pow Wow, dancing and singing, since she was a baby. Marlyssa has been singing since she was a child, learning from her father as he was her coach. Marlyssa's mother also enjoys singing with her, as she has sung with numerous champion drum groups from the United States and Canada. Marlyssa also solo sings as a hand drum singer, song and dance. Marlyssa is a former royalty title holder as Miss Western Navajo Pow Wow Princess 08-09, Miss Central Navajo 2010-2011, and Miss Navajo Nation Pow Wow Princess 2015-2016.

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT



ROCK POINT
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Tsé Nitsaa Deez'áhi Diné Bi'Olta', Rock Point Community School Song & Dance Group, Rock Point Community School, Rock Point, Arizona

Rock Point Community School will provide innovative and quality education to strengthen each student to succeed in a global society and maintain their Dine language and cultural uniqueness. We strive to provide balance in education while embracing cultural values. Our purpose is to build a strong indigenous identity. Our students help with this purpose by being actively involved in their cultural community. Singing and dancing are a major part in ceremonies that bring us healing. May you all be blessed with this healing as well.

Student members (grades 2nd to 10th) of the Song and Dance group will sing Nizhónígo Nihá Hwiitaaf, Nizhónígo Nááda'otzhish (I Will Sing for You so You can Dance in Beauty) and Shimásání Bóhólníih (Grandma's the Boss).



Sicangu Oyate Ho, Inc.

St. Francis Indian School

PO BOX 379 • 502 E. WARRIOR DRIVE • ST. FRANCIS, SOUTH DAKOTA 57572

The Summer Learning and Enrichment Program at Saint Francis Indian School provides a balanced, inclusive, and culturally responsive approach to summer education. By focusing on academic enrichment, creativity, culture, and student engagement, the program supports the success of all learners and aligns with the mission of the Bureau of Indian Education to educate the whole child.

Saint Francis Indian School produced a video teaser that presents the Creative Minds After-School and Summer Enrichment and Intervention Program, a federally funded initiative supported through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant under the U.S. Department of Education. The program is designed to expand equitable access to high-quality after-school and summer learning opportunities for all students, including those protected under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. It highlights a comprehensive model that integrates academic intervention, STEM enrichment, CTE exposure, arts education, and social-emotional development within a structured, inclusive, and continuously improving learning system.

A central focus of the video is equity, access, and barrier removal, emphasizing that program design intentionally addresses transportation limitations, resource inequities, staffing constraints, and participation gaps. These concerns are directly reflected in the program's implementation framework, which emphasizes administrative responsibility, ethical decision-making, and continuous monitoring. The video reinforces that equitable access is not incidental but a core operational requirement, supported through coordinated school leadership, teacher engagement, and 21st CCLC funding structures.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

McKinney-Vento 101: Identifying Native American students experiencing homelessness

Although the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was first enacted in 1987, many schools remain unfamiliar with its requirements and the rights it guarantees for students. This session will introduce the Act and provide a brief overview of school responsibilities, with a focus on identifying eligible students and understanding their rights.

Where are the Helpers: Building Partnerships Within Schools and Communities

Where Are the Helpers: Building Partnerships Within Schools and Communities is provided specifically for homeless liaisons seeking to strengthen support systems for students experiencing homelessness. This session highlights practical strategies for identifying, engaging, and sustaining partnerships with school staff, community organizations, and local resources. Participants will explore real-world examples and collaborative approaches that improve coordination, reduce barriers, and ensure students and families receive the comprehensive support they need to succeed.

“I’ll Figure it Out, I’m Good”~ Identifying Complex Scenarios and Supporting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Youth who are both unaccompanied and experiencing homelessness face distinct challenges in accessing education. This session will provide an overview of the rights of unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY), with a focus on identifying Native students who are often “in plain sight, but hidden.” A Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) McKinney-Vento liaison will also share strategies she has used to navigate these complex situations and support UHY high school students in reaching graduation and beyond.

Supporting College Transitions for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Students experiencing homelessness face significant barriers transitioning from high school to higher education, which is exacerbated for native students. This session will explore key policy and practice strategies that support successful transition to reduce summer melt and increase postsecondary enrollment including FAFSA completion, homeless higher education liaisons, and summer bridge and transition programs. Participants will leave with insights, replicable best practices, and policy-informed approaches to strengthen postsecondary pathways to students experiencing homelessness.

Navajo Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Their Strengths, Challenges and Needs

Participants will be able to learn about a study conducted on the Northern Navajo sector of the Navajo Nation. Three research questions guided the study on strengths, challenges and needs. Furthermore, the study included recommendations as a result of the outcome of the study.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Identifying and Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Through Practical Strategies and Partnerships

During this session, participants will learn effective, practical strategies to increase the identification of young children experiencing homelessness and to increase their enrollment in supportive services and programs through building and strengthening partnerships.

Bridging McKinney-Vento and Special Education: Coordinated Services for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Students experiencing homelessness often face overlapping educational needs that require coordinated support. This session will discuss how McKinney-Vento and special education services can be aligned to strengthen support systems for these students. Participants will leave with practical ideas for improving collaboration and ensuring equitable access to services.

Foster Care Education: Requirements, Roles, and Best Practices

This presentation outlines the BIE Foster Care Program and its requirements for supporting educational stability for students in foster care. It highlights key responsibilities for BIE and school points of contact, including best interest determinations, transportation, and immediate enrollment. It also summarizes monitoring expectations and resources that guide collaboration between schools and child welfare agencies.

Resiliency 5 Skills

You will learn how the following 5 resiliency skills: Belief, Persistence, Strength, Trust, and Adaptability, will help manage stressors by working the skills.

From Data to Dollars: Aligning MTSS and Funding for Student Success

Participants will understand how to use data to identify student needs, apply MTSS to respond, and align funding, including allowable uses of Title I, Part A set-aside, to sustain support for students experiencing homelessness.