Children of the Prairie

Your seasonal newsletter from St. Joseph's Indian School

Summer 2024



"I'm thankful for friends like you!" St. Joseph's student

From the Desk of Fr. Greg



Fr. Greg, Chaplain

This coming school year will mark St. Joseph's Indian School's 98th year of caring for Lakota (Sioux) children — mind, body, heart and spirit.

After all these years, we have learned a thing or two about what it takes to provide a memorable and

quality childhood for Native American children. We've had times of victory and success. We've also had times of stumbling that allowed us to take a step back and start again. Our school is not stagnant, but is ever changing.

Each year, new children arrive on campus for the first time. We're also greeted by familiar faces from families we have been fortunate to work with for years. In this newsletter, you'll read about what that first day and week look like for students ... because

of generous and kind people like you who make it possible!

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." — Isaiah 43:19

God makes a way for our Lakota students through the kindness of others who are His hands and feet on Earth. We're so appreciative to know the Lakota children are in your thoughts, prayers and actions.

Philámayaye — *thank you* — for opening your hearts to the children in our care as we embark on a new school year in August!

Peace and Blessings,

fr. Gres

Fr. Greg Schill, SCJ Chaplain

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Kayla

Kayla, an alumni of St. Joseph's Indian School, recently graduated college in May of 2024 with a double major in American Indian Studies and Sociology. She is ready to take on the future.

Kayla is an eight-time recipient of St. Joseph's college scholarship, which started in 1985 to support Native Americans pursuing higher education.

The path to a college degree was not always on Kayla's road map. After high school, she joined the National Guard to support her education, but was hurt in basic training. Then, COVID-19 interrupted

her plans.

However, the Lakota have a word called **kihélaka yo** — *keep going*. Kayla faced challenges a lesser person may have given up because of, but she didn't. Now,

Kayla's advice to other young students echoes this expression.

"You have to keep going," she said. "When you aren't sure what you want to do, take a year; work a job; and decide what you want to do."

Programs You Make Possible

St. Joseph's 98th School Year **Begins in August**

We're preparing for another school year at St. Joseph's Indian School — our 98th year! This may have you wondering ... What does the first day at school look like for a Lakota (Sioux) child at St. Joseph's?

The first day of school at St. Joseph's Indian School can be described by many words, but the best one might be: whirlwind.

Move-in day checklists are in place for each student to ensure every detail is covered throughout the day when students step foot on campus. These checklists guide the students from the health center at check-in, all the way to their campus homes at the end of the day. The staff at St. Joseph's, including Family Service Counselors (FSCs), health professionals, administrators and teaching staff are all involved in making the first day a success.

FSCs are often the first people the students see, as they greet families and provide directions when families arrive to campus. Some teachers may also be present at the school, offering tours or meeting kids in their homes to help them settle in.

The next day is the first official day of classes. One highlight of this day is the Welcome Back Parade. The parade showcases the excitement and enthusiasm of the entire St. Joseph's staff as they welcome students, making them feel at

(over, please)



home and supported.

What are students learning in the classroom? **So much!**

St. Joseph's follows a unique schedule, with a 10-period day and study hall time. Apart from core classes of Reading, Math and Science, students also have the opportunity to engage in Personal Living Skills, Art, Religion, Computers, Lakota Language, Physical Education, Music and Library. It may sound like a lot, and it is, but St. Joseph's strives to maintain academic integrity while providing a well-rounded education. We're known for having a low student to staff ratio, wrap-around services, recreational activities and other opportunities — all rooted in the foundations of Catholicism and Lakota culture.

"Here at St. Joseph's, we truly believe in the mission directive to educate the *mind*, *body*, *heart* and spirit. There is not one of those concepts that rises above the other in importance," said Jessica, assistant principal at St. Joseph's. "In order for learners to learn, they need to feel supported,

connected and safe."

The FSCs play a vital role in providing such support, as they offer therapy to students through traditional talk therapy, and also art, play and equine therapies. Working through struggles translates to students being ready to learn in the classroom. Teachers and FSCs work closely together to ensure students and their families receive all the necessary support for a positive academic, emotional and social experience.

Our staff are truly special people. Staff members undergo extensive training, including Crisis Prevention Intervention and Life Space Crisis Intervention. They also regularly participate in professional development opportunities, focusing on trauma-informed education.

"I do believe St. Joseph's is in a class by itself in many aspects," said Jessica.

Wóphila thánka — many thanks — for providing Lakota children great first days, weeks and months at St. Joseph's Indian School.



What do you love about St. Joseph's?



"I love St. Joseph's because they have powwow, food and friends."

— Jaylena



"I like my houseparents and teachers. They are very nice."

Lamya



"I like that we get to swim and go to the gym."

Misunkala

Do you have a question to ask the Lakota children? Email it to saintjosephs@stjo.org.

BLESS OUR LAKOTA CHILDREN



A Will is the last statement of your ideals and values here on Earth. You want to be sure it reflects the love and concern you hold in your heart for family, friends and special charities. By naming St. Joseph's in your Will, you are directing a gift to support our work to help the Lakota children even after you are gone.

Would you consider the needs of the Lakota boys and girls at St. Joseph's Indian School when you plan your estate?

Start planning today by requesting our FREE Estate Planning Course booklets.

Contact our Major Gifts Department at 1-800-584-9200 or visit us online at stjo.org/will to request information.

You are under no obligation. We offer this information only as a service to help you.

PHILÁMAYAYE - THANK YOU - 🗱 🔅







FOR MAKING THESE MEMORIES HAPPEN!

