



St. Joseph's Indian School  
We serve and teach, we receive and learn.



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family relationships and for the big-picture vision they bring to their participation in our mission. And Rich, thanks for all the bike repairs.

This employee newsletter is named Mitákuyepi because it speaks the mission of St. Joseph's Indian School. Mitákuyepi is a Lakota word used to say, "my relatives." Also, it is the address to an audience that means, "I have something to say." This is the voice of our thiyóšpaye.

Its masthead has a backdrop of sacred sage to remind us that our work is Wak'hán.

## PROBLEMS? PLEASE LET US KNOW!

CHANGE LABEL AND MAIL BACK TO US.

\_\_\_ Misspelled name

\_\_\_ Wrong address

\_\_\_ Received more than one

\_\_\_ Remove my name from the mailing list



Sacred Sightings is a pictorial celebration of God's presence and signs of hope at St. Joseph's Indian School.

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## MESSAGE FROM MIKE

### A Look Back

Management's work involves looking and thinking forward to plan for the future. Strategic planning, endowment planning and employee engagement are just some of what looking ahead involves.

Today, though, I want to take a moment to look back. In preparation for this edition of Mitákuyepi, I am reminded that my 35th employment anniversary is among the service awards we celebrate. I don't mention this to grandstand, but to ask, "Where did the time go?" I recall fondly the years when Kim and I were houseparents. We were young

and naïve, but the students were great, and the experience was truly wonderful.

As President, I can attest to the idea that I have been blessed by St. Joseph's Indian School's mission. That blessing comes in many forms. It is as great as seeing the first child in a family graduate high school and go on to college. It is as simple as the smiles on our youngest students' faces as they ride bicycles around the Wisdom Circle without a care in the world.

In all of these years, I believe the one constant has been the power of our mission. Interacting

with students, families, alumni and supporters always stood out for me. It perpetuated my sense of hope. Also our hardworking, dedicated staff continue to be relentless stewards of the mission.

Thirty-five years ago, a young, naïve couple came to St. Joseph's Indian School. Today, as I look back, we are better for it.

Thanks to one and all.



Mike Tyrell  
President  
St. Joseph's Indian School



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Mitákuyepi is PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL. ITS PURPOSE IS TO COMMUNICATE

ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE SCHOOL, TO SHARE IDEAS AND INFORMATION USEFUL IN PERFORMING THE MISSION, TO ASSIST IN

FOSTERING A COMMON CULTURE AND TO REINFORCE THE MISSION AND CORE VALUES OF ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL.

comments,  
QUESTIONS?

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For additional information about St. Joseph's Indian School, its outreaches and the Priests of the Sacred Heart visit:  
www.sjiskids.org or  
www.stjo.org



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WINTER 2021

VOLUME 3

NUMBER 1



## Employee Engagement Shines in Uncertain Times

The results are in, and the organization is listening to what 274 employees had to say. The number of staff taking the survey was sizeable, equal to the October 2019 survey. "When so many employees

participate, we receive excellent feedback for planning and managing St. Joseph's Indian School," said President Mike Tyrell.

The survey asked how you feel about recognition, performance, attitude, teamwork, work/life balance, friends, fun, faith and mission. Questions were at individual, team and leadership levels. Compared to the survey taken 15 months earlier, there was an uptick in nearly every area, evidence of how well employees have responded during these difficult pandemic days. Employees responded to four open-ended questions targeted at how you want to be recognized, how you want to learn about other areas of the organization, how you explain St. Joseph's Indian School to those unfamiliar with us and how faith plays a role in your work. These insights will be incorporated in Communications and Human Resources planning and utilized by department-level leaders.

The Communications Department will share results with leaders in March, and each leader will receive a PowerPoint to explain the results to their Departments.

### COVID-19 AND ENGAGEMENT

Thank you to all staff for your response to these challenging times. Because you went the extra mile ...

- Masking and goggling
- Cleaning and distancing
- Flexing and subbing
- Thinking creatively and optimistically

... our staff tell us ...

- Work is fun.
- They feel supported by each other.
- Faith is strong.
- Families know they count.
- Mission matters.

You make St. Joseph's Indian School what it is – a great place to work!

## St. Joseph's Indian School Named Best Nonprofit

In 2020, St. Joseph's Indian School demonstrated what it means to be "St. Joe Strong" to its employees, our community and our state. When it would have been easy to take a "sit tight and see what happens" approach to the pandemic, the organization exercised foresight in every measure. For that, the school was recognized as Best Nonprofit by the Chamberlain-Oacoma Area Chamber of Commerce at a gala on Saturday, February 6, 2021.

The winning nomination cited these efforts:

- Employees remained on payroll, even though there were no students on campus from March 13 through the beginning of August. This measure supported employees and our community where they shop for goods and services. Child Services employees responded "St. Joe Strong" by finding innovative ways to

meet the needs of families. For example, they sent educational packets to students and delivered spirit gifts (hygiene articles, sage, prayers, etc.) to buoy the elderly and health care workers in our communities.

- No one knew how donors' generosity might fare during the pandemic, but Development forged ahead, reconfiguring work environments for safety and keeping the lines of donor communication open. Development employees went the extra distance to maintain the financial footings of the organization "St. Joe Strong."

- We held our families close through constant communication, moving forward with plans to build the new sjiskids.org website with resources to stay connected and reaching out through the Counseling Services team to provide emotional support and meet material needs.



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### LEAD STORY

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### MESSAGE FROM MIKE

A Look Back



Employees made food box deliveries to every family on five occasions.

- From March onward, with all of the uncertainty that came with the pandemic, planning continued to re-open school doors in August. Planners considered every aspect: health screenings, quarantines, isolation when needed, remote learning, social distancing with movement plans for the campus and more. When the day arrived, our families trusted their students' care to us, and the mission continued strong.

St. Joseph's Indian School is a powerful asset to the community and an organization that met uncertainty with certain vision that matches its mission and looks to the future with resiliency.

# Getting to Know Native Hope

Six team members fulfill Native Hope's mission to dismantle barriers through impactful programs and storytelling. Each has a unique skill set. **Madison Harden** communicates with donors and supporters via phone, letters and website. Through photography and video, **Ashley Korzan** creates visual stories and social media posts, while **Iris Huezio** shoots video and creates animations. Every office needs a **Kim Kontz** — she maintains operations and ensures things run smoothly. **Trisha Burke** develops tribal and partner relationships along with planning and writing content. Overseeing Native Hope, **Jen Long** specializes in website development, marketing and content. The team works with direction from **Clare Willrodt**, director of Communication and Outreach.

**Reach and Partner:** Native Hope exists to address the injustice done to Native Americans, which continues to generate trauma for many. Our vision is to promote sustainability; however, the reality is general aid is vital for many. So, we partner with tribal leaders and others to identify needs and decide the best approach to meet their requests. When COVID-19 hit, we worked with community partners in Lower Brule and Crow Creek to start weekly food runs. At the height of our runs, we delivered 120 meal kits per week, which tribal members distributed to those in need.

We connect with reservation leaders across the Oceti Šakowij to foster relationships. The Decade of Inclusion Strategic Plan for the organization seeks to reach and partner beyond our walls. Native Hope will work with tribes and tribal entities to create more targeted outreach in that spirit. We are now working with Home and Office to coordinate outreach (former mission runs) with items for which communities have identified a need. Watch our January Hope report to see us in action at <https://blog.nativehope.org/january-hope-report-2021>.

**Community Projects:** Native Hope has raised funds for numerous community projects. Among them, two vans, one for the Lower Brule Patient Transport and the other for the Lower Brule Boys and Girls Club; \$24,600 to assist with the remediation of six homes on the Crow Creek Reservation; and construction of a baseball field in the community of Crow Creek. Assistance with such community-identified needs advances Native lives on local reservations.

**Storytelling:** The core of our mission is storytelling. We look for stories of individuals or organizations doing positive things for their Native communities—artists, tribal leaders, elders and community members. The stories we tell are personal journeys and historical events and policies often left out of history books.

Native Hope builds awareness around current issues communities face: suicide, sex trafficking, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and more. We recently released the short film "Voices Unheard," an MMIW fictional drama about one women's loss of her mother and best friend. We collaborated with St. Joseph's Indian School counselors on three MMIW events for female students: a trafficking survivor presentation, the Red Sand event and the "Voices Unheard" premiere.

**Fellows:** Fellowships provide funding for much-needed action. Each year we choose a slate of Fellows whose proposals align with our mission and award them \$5,000 to assist in fulfilling their visions. Our longest-running fellow, Tiny DeCory, leads the Be Excited About Reading (BEAR) suicide prevention program on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Other fellows include Beverly Running Bear, Lakota Language Preservation; Elva Stricker, Coming of Age Ceremony; and Jason Goodface, Meth Awareness. We will soon announce a new slate of fellows.

**Mentorship:** This winter, we embark on a pilot program to sponsor General Education Degrees (GEDs) through Lower Brule Community College. Participants receive practice tests in four disciplines, the GED test and mileage.

Our programs are the ever-present ways we partner with those pursuing a stronger future for Indian Country. In each focus area, we work together with tribes to address root problems and seek long-term solutions.

# MISSION 2 NEWS

WINTER 2021

IN MOTION

PEOPLE



**Lawrence Diggs Returns by Zoom**  
From February 1 to 5, St. Joseph's Indian School welcomed poet Lawrence Diggs back to campus. He provided virtual instruction to 7th and 8th grade English classes to help students express themselves in poetry.

Diggs believes students learn through self-discovery, experience and personal struggle. He is a well-known writer, designer and editor from Roslyn, S.D. He has worked in radio, television and public performance for more than 40 years. The visit was made possible in part through the South Dakota Arts Council Artists in Schools & Communities (AISC). AISC is a residency program for K-12 schools and community organizations with matching funds from the South Dakota Arts Council.



**High School Putting on Thinking Caps**  
High School students tracked 276 hours in the Learning Center during the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Two hundred fifty-four of those hours were elective, and only 22 were required. The hours tracked are nearly three times greater than the first semester 2019-2020. Not surprisingly, the first semester overall GPA for this year is 2.79, up from 2.36 the prior year. But study time isn't nerdy time with Tutor Dan Stevens. Just look at the "thinking caps" he provides.

**Faith on Campus**  
Late winter didn't mean faith went into hibernation for staff and students at St. Joseph's Indian School.

From January 31 to February 6, St. Joseph's Indian School celebrated National Catholic Schools Week. Director of Mission Integration Joe Tyrell said, "This week reminds our

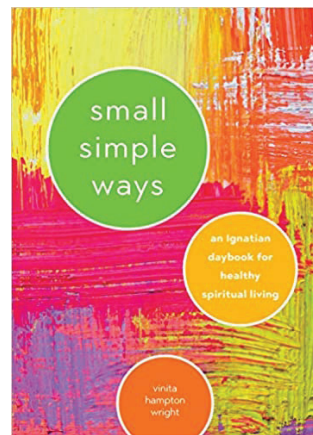


Left to right: Madison Harden, Kim Kontz, Trisha Burke, Iris Huezio, Jen Long, Ashley Korzan

students of our strong Catholic identity in a fun and interactive way.

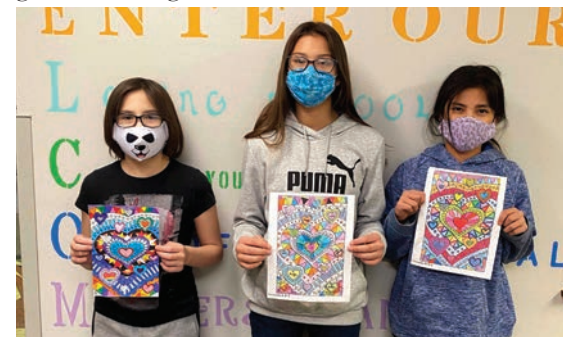
Three offerings provided opportunities for staff to exercise the faith muscle. The University of St. Thomas hosted two webinars led by speaker Damian Costello who visited campus in October 2019 for Mission Education days. The Black Elk expert discussed how Black Elk became a prominent Catholic leader with an unexpected and striking vision.

Nine staff members signed up for the American Indian Catholic Schools Network Lenten faith-sharing group. They are reading "Daily Reflections for Lent: Not by Bread Alone" and meeting by Zoom conference call to discuss the readings with staff from other American Indian Catholic Schools.



Beginning in March, some 20 staff are in faith-sharing groups. Participants receive a devotional prayer book titled "Small Simple Ways: An Ignatian Daybook for Healthy Spiritual Living." This book focuses on spiritual growth principles taught by St. Ignatius of Loyola, including God in All Things, Spiritual Freedom, Imagination and Reflection. Each day connects the general focus with a specific aspect or action of healthy spiritual life such as compassion, discernment, generosity, gratitude and integrity.

**Valentine's Sobriety Celebration**  
Like so many social events this year, the Valentine's Sobriety Celebration looked different. Instead of bouncing around on inflatables, students participated in wallet inflating contests, including a coloring contest for 2nd and 3rd grades and 4th through 6th grades, and trivia challenges for 7th and 8th grades and high school.



2nd and 3rd Grade Coloring Contest Winners:  
1st – Isabella Peneaux (\$50), 2nd – Gabby Sharpfish (\$30),  
3rd – Bradley Gillette (\$20)

## Horse Barn Preparation



More than one person wished they had a bag of marshmallows and a nice long stick in January when the Facilities team began to clear land north of the football field. Later this year, a horse barn will be constructed on the site for the šünkawakhán who reside at St. Joseph's Indian School.

## Welcome Aboard!



pizza and soda.

**Randall Graff** joined the staff at Tipi Press as a Bindery Assistant. On his time off, you might find him walking in the park with his metal detector or kicking back, watching Monty Python and the Holy Grail with



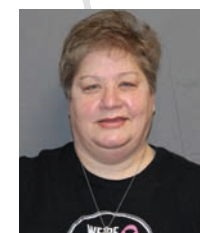
development that come with IT work.

**Joe Hetland**, Tech Support, describes his taste in food as "situational." He is planning to marry this summer and says most of his family enjoys hunting and fishing. Joe is drawn to the constant learning and



American culture and being a positive influence.

**Ben Macone**, new houseparent, says it's a tie between pizza and Asian food. His favorite family activity is the annual Christmas time Olympics with relatives. He looks forward to learning more about Native



challenges at the Health Center. Her life on a farm means free time in the garden or taking care of the animals.

**Lynn Toupal, LPN**, is the newest member of the Health Center team. She enjoys camping and spending time with her seven grandchildren. She looks forward to meeting new people and facing new

## Celebrating Milestones

Employees from across the organization are celebrating service awards. Thank them for their commitment to the mission.

**Five Years**  
Alyssia Weinzel, Mission Advocacy Center Project Specialist  
Megan McLaughlin, Mission Advocacy Center Supervisor  
Steve Knutson, Mission Advocacy Center Advocate  
Sharla Krogman, Administrative Assistant  
Tara Zelinski, Houseparent  
Rich Zelinski, Houseparent  
Trond Peterson, Health and Wellness Coach  
Stevie Gray, Mail Processing Manager  
Michelle Gilman, Production Support  
Evan Fleury, Rec Center Associate  
Sharon Lundberg, Thrift Store Associate  
Anastasiya Schmiadt, Integrated Marketing  
Bob Augspurger, IOS Product Support  
Justin Keatts, Press Operator  
Kristen Dailey, Communication Specialist  
Jim Daulton, Mission Advocacy Center Advocate  
Britini DeHaai, Facilities Associate  
Fr. Bernard Rosinski, S.C.J., Priest of the Sacred Heart  
Taylor Schmiadt, Mission Advocacy Center Advocate  
Daryl Bunker, Web Developer  
Cody Schumacher, PC Specialist/Help Desk

## ... Milestones (cont'd.)

**Ten Years**  
Frannie Thorman-Miller, Residential Administrative Assistant  
Odis Cosgrove, Houseparent  
Mary Ann Hickey, Production Support  
Jim Graves, Press Operator  
Terri Powell, Housekeeper/Cook  
Emily Swanson, Creative Technician/Photographer  
Jodee Lantz, Thrift Store Manager

**Fifteen Years**  
Quentin Myers, Plant Supervisor  
Joe Wall, Carpenter  
Vicki Hieb, Houseparent  
Chris Blasius, Prevention/Residential Support Associate  
Mark Saxton, Information Technology Specialist

## Twenty Years



who taught him the importance of keeping the laundry done and not leaving dirty rags unwashed. He expresses gratitude for the challenges, the freedom to get the job done, the resources to do it and the great staff he is surrounded by.

**Mike Dooley**, Operations Director, gets excited about the organization's success during the past 20 years, which has ensured long-term financial stability. He gives a shout out to Deacon Dave, which has ensured long-term financial stability. He gives a shout out to Deacon Dave, who taught him the importance of keeping the laundry done and not leaving dirty rags unwashed. He expresses gratitude for the challenges, the freedom to get the job done, the resources to do it and the great staff he is surrounded by.



belonging that feels "like one big family." She wishes she had written down all of the crazy fun things that have transpired in 20 years of donor luncheons and recalls how Fr. Steve used to track all of the ways they have had chicken – and it is a lot! She enjoys the opportunity to get to know others afforded by travel with staff and students.

**Laura Hutmacher**, Major Gifts Personal Care Manager, says she loves her job. The secret to her success is building relationships with donors and coworkers, creating a sense of

## Twenty-Five Years



says this place has her heart. She appreciates that we have much greater family connection than when she first started. Called "The Kid Whisperer" by some, Jennie considers it a privilege to work with students and help them walk through their emotions. "It is awesome to watch them grow and learn to make better choices as they get older."

**Jennie Schilling**, Student Coordinator, like so many others, says she only planned to stay a year or two, but working with the students as a houseparent "hooked" her, and now she

## Thirty Years



guy."

**Foster Iversen**, Grounds Supervisor, apologizes, "I don't have anything wise or insightful for you. I am a bit surprised that I have made it 30 years so far. Creeps up on a



continue to care for the next generation. Ronda saw the transformation of the Health Center from a two-person team to what it is today. Her advice for newbies, "Reach out to seasoned staff. We're all in this together." Calling herself "Nancy Nelson's Ed McMahon," she thanks her for saying to treat the children like you do your own when they are sick, scared, troubled, crying or naughty.



He feels the amount of growth in fundraising since 1991 is unbelievable. He thanks God and the Priests of the Sacred Heart for giving him a chance and coworkers for putting up with him. He advises, "Dream. Be generous, and don't be stingy. The best things in life are free." Asked what he might do differently, he responds, "Take up hunting and fishing."

## Thirty-Five Years



create and maintain professional standards for the organization, the growth and improvements of the Development Office and campus upgrades and appearance. Mike says sugar is the key ingredient in the secret sauce of his success and the best part of his job is representing the organization at ceremonies and events because it is a place that does so many great things to pursue its true mission.

## Forty Years



a lasting impression. Good relationships have been a priority, which means some of the most challenging students seek her out years later. She is grateful for her husband, Mike, with whom she was a houseparent for several years and many coworkers along the way.

**Jean Renbarger**, Program Evaluation Associate, didn't plan to be here for more than a year or so. But the good fit of working with service-minded people, the students and families made

**We are looking for ideas about how to celebrate service awards. Submit a suggestion for consideration to the Human Resources Department.**