



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

# Mitákuyepi



Mitákuyepi is a publication for employees of St. Joseph's Indian School and its outreaches like Joint Cost Specialist and Cultural Liaison Heather Surat, recognized for

**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

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 Wakháŋ.



## SACRED SIGHTINGS

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

FALL 2023

# 4

## MESSAGE FROM MIKE

### Make Every Interaction Impactful and Profound

A former student emailed me asking about a football game he played in and I coached. It happened to be more than 30 years ago. Unfortunately, we lost. He said that he remembers the coaches yelling too much.

Relationships are important. They say that relationships are built on shared memories. These memories come to us here at St. Joseph's Indian School because of the many events that are part of our yearly calendar. Snow removal in Facilities, our fall campaigns in Development and Christmas in the homes give our yearly calendar a rhythm like

clockwork that we all get used to. Our recent opening of the Sacred Hoop Alumni Center took place as a means to support all our alumni. That space allows us to gather with our alumni, share memories and visit about what is going on in their lives. The Sacred Hoop Alumni Center helps provide support, such as food boxes, scholarships and other assistance. It has been nice to see former students come to campus and take the time to sit down and visit, particularly on Walk-In Wednesdays.

Developing relationships and engaging in hospitality are part of

what we do well here at St. Joseph's Indian School. How we interact and touch the lives of others affects all of us, having a profound effect on some. It is hard to know how our interfaces will influence someone, so it is best that we treat everyone as if the interaction will be impactful and profound.

Thanks to all our staff for being welcoming and hospitable as we work to make our mission a reality here at St. Joseph's Indian School.



Mike Tyrell  
President  
St. Joseph's Indian School



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

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.

### QUESTIONS?

EDITOR: CLARE WILLRODT  
Send comments and questions to:

St. Joseph's Indian School  
PO Box 89  
Chamberlain, SD 57325

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

www.sjskids.org or  
www.stjo.org



St. Joseph's Indian School  
We serve and teach, we receive and learn.  
Chamberlain, SD 57325-0899  
(605) 234-3000 • www.stjo.org



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

# Mitákuyepi

FALL 2023

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 4

## She Says, "Keep Going"

Kayla McCloskey will graduate in May of 2024 from Black Hills State University (BHSU) with a double major in American Indian Studies and Sociology. She is ready to take on the future. A 2018 graduate of St. Joseph's Indian School's High School Program, McCoskey is an eight-time recipient of the school's scholarship, which was started in 1985 to support Native Americans pursuing higher education.

McCloskey is one of 106 Native American scholars nationwide receiving a total of \$129,950 in fall-semester funding. The awards bring the total for the calendar year to a record \$224,950. This fall, the school granted awards to 22 St. Joseph's alums, 12 alum family members and 72 other scholars enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and pursuing higher education.

The path to a college degree was not always on McCoskey's road map. After high school, she joined the National Guard to support her education but was hurt in basic training. "The military's motto is to break you down to build you up stronger than before. It did break me," she laughs, "and I learned it wasn't a fit for me. But, it still made me stronger in a different sense," she said.

COVID-19 also interrupted her plans, explained St. Joseph's Indian School Alumni Liaison, Krista Lepkowski. The Lakota have a word, "kihelakayo" – keep going. 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."

When we caught up with, McCoskey, daughter of Christina Marshall and Willus McCoskey of St. Francis, S.D., she was studying for midterms. If the double major isn't enough to keep her busy,



(Standing, left to right): Coleman Caldwell, staff; Joaquin Black Lance, alum. (Seated, left to right): Casey Harrison, visitor; Scott Miller, alum; Andy Lepkowski; Joe Tyrell, staff; Theda Mesteth, alum.



she adds three part-time jobs: one in Sustainability, an environmentally focused program for which BHSU is widely recognized; one as a mentor; and a regular shift in the campus cafeteria. "Oh, and I am co-president of Lakota Omnicitye," she noted. The group seeks to bridge the cultural gaps between non-Native and Native students and raises funds for an annual powwow.

St. Joseph's Indian School created the scholarship program to benefit Native American students pursuing higher education. Through the generosity of donors, the school has awarded scholarship dollars to Native American students since 1985. Financial need and academic performance are the basis for determining the awards. Applications are due each fall and spring and are awarded based on proof of tribal enrollment, number of applicants and available funds. Also considered are returning scholars who are continuing their education journey.

## New Alumni Center Hosts Walk-Ins

A spread of homemade chili with all the trimmings, lasagna and garlic bread greeted alumni dropping by the new Sacred Hoop Alumni Center on St. Joseph's Indian School's campus for Walk-in Wednesday on October 4. It is a weekly event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the center. Some days it might be sandwiches and a game of cribbage that builds collegiality, but this day was extra-special. It was a celebration in honor of Alumni Liaison Andy Lepkowski's 68th birthday, and Butterfinger Cake was the centerpiece.

Long-time staff member Lepkowski reminisced about days as a houseparent in Perky and Speyer homes prepping 48 hamburgers for hungry mouths. In those days and on this one, nothing said "Andy" like the Butterfinger Cake. "Hey, I still make that at home," said Leland Honomichl of Wagner who attended the school from 1996 to 2002. He came to the event with his sister, Letha, also an alum.



YOUR INFORMATION

# 1

### LEAD STORY

"Keep Going"  
New Alumni Center

# 2

### MISSION IN MOTION

Getting to Know Alumni Relations  
Mission Round Up

# 3

### PEOPLE NEWS

Selwyn  
CORE Winners  
Welcome Aboard

# 4

### MESSAGE FROM MIKE

Sacred Sightings  
Make Every Interaction Count

Scott Miller, Crow Creek, who attended in the 70s and 80s, dropped by with his niece, Casey, and a beautiful star quilt in shades of blue to honor Andy. Others came and went sharing news and well wishes with one another. Some 20 staff and alumni attended.

Remember: Students who attended St. Joseph's for any amount of time -- a day, a month, or 12 years -- are considered members of the alumni thiyóšpaye (extended family), and, as members of that thiyóšpaye, are always welcome to pay a visit to the Sacred Hoop Alumni Center.

In addition to Walk-in Wednesdays, the center offers job application assistance, resource guidance, college application assistance and more.

## Getting to Know the Alumni Liaisons

The sign on the door could read "Lepkowski & Lepkowski," but the daring duo who make up the Alumni Relations Team share more than a name. Related through marriage (Krista is the wife of Andy's nephew), the two share a commitment to improving the lives of St. Joseph's Indian Schools alumni. And, they are making it happen.

How? Relationship is the driver at all times, rolled out through five specific tracks:

- **Events and Outreach** – The team provides opportunities for alumni to gather including planning reunions, providing campus tours and inviting the alumni to the Sacred Hoop Alumni Center. They also attend graduations, weddings and funerals. More than 60 alumni came to a traveling reunion the two hosted in October in Lower Brule, and Walk-In-Wednesdays are a new popular event.
- **Alumni Communications** – The team communicates through social media, posted flyers and birthday cards.
- **Scholarships** – St. Joseph's Indian School awards more than \$220,000 annually in scholarships for higher education with applications open in the fall and spring of each year.
- **Assistance** – The team offers assistance in a variety of ways including guidance toward food and funding resources, job application assistance and more.
- **The Bookmobile** – The team travels more than 3,000 miles each summer to provide free reading material for all ages.

Always quick to explain that the school defines "alumni" as everyone who has attended St. Joe's – whether for a day or all twelve years – Andy enjoys the addition of Krista to the role he has held for around a decade. Krista spent several years as the school's Transition Specialist supporting graduates as they moved into life beyond high school. "She knows the newer ones, and I know the older alumni, so it has been great getting to know the larger group," he comments, and Krista agrees that in reverse, this is true for her, too.

Both say that they relish seeing former students graduate in fulfilling careers. Krista adds that there is great joy in watching every former student accomplish any type of milestone – big or small. Her greatest hope is to grow the role through listening, learning and adapting to the needs of all generations and the changing world of the current day.



IN MOTION

FALL 2023

2

MISSION



### Second Wichóni Waste Day Builds Connections for Freshmen and Sophomores

Sunday, October 15, provided the opportunity for nineteen freshman and sophomore students at St. Joseph's Indian School to explore life's peaks and valleys through critical reflection on their purpose in life on the undulating terrain of the Badlands. The goal of the Wichóni Waste (Good Life) Retreat, now in its second year, was a day of community, culture and relationship building.

On arrival, freshman Mario Bernie said, "This is such a beautiful view." Asked what he saw looking toward the Badlands, classmate Paul Luedke commented, "I see the history of my people."

Sophomore Earl DeNoyer noted, "I never got these opportunities at my old school. This is awesome that we can get this experience."



### Native American Week

While others celebrated Native American Day on October 9, staff and students at St. Joseph's Indian School extended the cultural celebration from Sunday to Sunday plumbing the richness and diverse dimensions of their heritage through prayer, dance, study plans, lessons from the bow and arrow, clothing and art.

Sunday, October 10, began the eight-day observance with a Lakota Mass incorporating prayer, dance, drumming and song from the Lakota tradition.

Monday morning began with the Four Directions Prayer Service. The afternoon brought a social dance on the lawn of the Wisdom Circle. High School students made a float and participated in the Sioux Falls Native American Day Parade.

Tuesday's lessons throughout the grade school came from the South Dakota Education Association's Oceti

Šakówin Essential Understandings designed to promote cultural understanding of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people.

On Wednesday, Lakota historian, writer, teacher, craftsman, administrator, actor and public speaker Joseph Marshall III taught traditional Lakota bow and arrow techniques and wisdom to students from grades seven through 12. Marshall is a frequent guest on the school's Hóchoka podcast and taped for the spring season on Friday. Other classes enjoyed traditional archery in physical education classes throughout the week.

Thursday was "Identity Day," when students dressed in ribbon skirts, ribbon shirts, moccasins and other cultural apparel.

Friday found students enjoying the Akta Lakota Museum's visiting exhibit, "Navigating Narratives: The Corps of Discovery in Titowan Territory."



### Red Ribbon Week

During the week of October 23, students at St. Joseph's Indian School observed the importance of sobriety with five drug-awareness-themed dress-up days. Classrooms decorated their doors, vying for a coveted class pizza party. Fourth- through twelfth-grade homes also competed for a pizza party by assembling theme-based posters. First- through third-grade students participated in a coloring contest for cash prizes. A candy-counting contest sweetened the week's competition by guessing how many Red Hat Tamales were in the jar. "The winner takes the jar."



### Author, Artist Donald F. Montileaux Visits

On October 24, acclaimed Dglala Lakota ledger artist Donald F. Montileaux paid a visit to St. Joseph's Indian School where he sparked students' imaginations with his masterful storytelling and vivid artistic style. Montileaux, accompanied by wife, Paulette, spent the afternoon in Librarian Claire Nehring's room, recounting the story of "Tasunka, A Lakota Horse Legend" and mentoring students in illustration.

"My wife is going to punch your eyes out," he said to wide-eyed students. After a pause, the class heaved a collective sigh of relief when they realized he was referring to the hole punch Paulette used to create the effect of eyes on their horse illustrations.

Third-grader William Sazue, himself working on a book about the Titanic, was encouraged by Montileaux to keep at it.

PEOPLE

NEWS

### St. Joseph's Indian School Student Answers the Knock of Opportunity



with other high school students.

"I would rate my experience a 10,000 out of 10! I loved it! Although I was very, very nervous, I feel like this was a great learning experience in many different ways!" said Selwyn.

Mersayis Selwyn took a few deep breaths before boarding a plane headed to California. At 17 years old, the St. Joseph's Indian School student was taking her first flight. She was on her way to the University of California Berkeley for a week-long experience as a participant in the seven-day National Youth Leadership Forum Medicine & Health Care Program. Her experience capped months of fundraising to make the dream a reality.

Selwyn, who aspires to become a nurse, was the only student from South Dakota selected for the opportunity after her high school's Health Occupations Students of America Club Advisor nominated her, and Krista Lepkowski, St. Joseph's Alumni Relations Coordinator, helped with her application and travel plans. Native Hope, an outreach of St. Joseph's Indian School that inspires hope for Native people, assisted with travel expenses.

At Berkeley, she would see if her dream of being a nurse matched her expectations. She was there to experience the collegiate lifestyle firsthand, learn from doctors, participate in an interactive curriculum, visit an accredited medical school, test her medical knowledge during clinical skills rotations and explore professional opportunities

### FIVE FROM ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL RECEIVE NATIONAL HONORS

Five from St. Joseph's Indian School won Catherine Hershey National Awards at the Coalition on Residential Excellence (CORE) Luncheon at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center in Oacoma, S.D., on Tuesday, September 19. They were among thirteen honored with awards. St. Joseph's Indian School hosted the national conference this year.

The school's President Mike Tyrell received the "Lifetime Achievement Award." Robbie and Stephen Chatman were named "Houseparents of the Year." Librarian Claire Nehring was honored as "Educator of the Year," and recent graduate Mariah Quigley was awarded "Student of the Year."

St. Joseph's Indian School salutes these five remarkable people who build up the school community and community at large.



Shown left to right, top to bottom: Don Forrester, Executive Director of CORE, congratulates Mike Tyrell, Stephen and Robbie Chatman, Claire Nehring and Mariah Quigley with her mentor. Admissions Coordinator Julie Lepkowski.

FALL 2023

3



**Serena Black**, Houseparent, likes all music but says Old Country is best. She enjoys just about any food with the exception of oysters. She offers up this best advice she once received: "You can't eat an apple in one bite." Success to her is learning how to be content in any situation.



**Amia Byers**, Receiving Associate, says, "Try not to take everything too seriously." When she was younger, she wanted to be a cat. Her tastes are open with musical being "Anything you enjoy," and culinary being "Anything that tastes good."



**Nathan Dobbs**, Software Developer, prefers Country music and Indian food. He notes that success is paved on the road of failure. Best advice he ever received: "You can do anything you set your mind to." He feels working at

St. Joe's is an exciting opportunity to start his career in a place with excellent values and fulfilling work.



**Christina Erickson**, Mission Advocate, agrees with many that Country is the best. She enjoys homemade soups. When she was younger, she liked to rollerskate and play outside. The best advice she ever received was to live each day as

if it were your last. She feels working at St. Joe's is a rewarding opportunity and defines success as, "Being able to know that success is not given to you but achieved by you."



**Tracey Hayes**, Bindery Operator, says his taste in music is vast, but he tends to listen to a lot of Irish folk music as well as sea shanties. (Look that up. It's intriguing.) He loves all food and describes himself as a bottomless pit with a garbage

disposal for a stomach. One to watch, he says when he was younger he constantly caught snakes and reptiles to terrorize his mother.



**Malik Sanders**, Houseparent, likes positive/protest rap, orchestra/symphony, Gospel rap, Lo-fi and his own music. Food favorites include salmon, veggies and fruit. Growing up, he wanted to be a doctor, executive chef and in the NFL,

(which he qualifies with, "still possible.") He advises, "Stay a child as long as possible."

