

EDUCATION

NEWSLETTER

Bug School Restructure

Discussions are ongoing about a possible new direction for the high school.

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Spotlight on Past Youth

Ingrid Mesarina and Kyle Fairbanks were two youth in the Youth Peer Mentor Program.

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Deer River STEP Coal.

Many great things are happening in the DR School system. STEP is one of them!

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Prison Outreach

There are 11 adult institutions and one juvenile facility that house inmates in Minnesota.

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LL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC) program held its quarterly Planning Team Meeting at Northern Lights Casino in Walker.

The MNTRECC membership consists of 10 of the 11 federally recognized Tribes of Minnesota. Each tribal agency has a primary member and an alternate that serves on the committee. Hosting rotates and Leech Lake was pleased to take a turn on January 21st and 22nd. The Planning Team was well-represented with members from Bois Forte, Mille Lacs, Fond du Lac, White Earth, Red Lake, Upper Sioux, Leech Lake, and a member from the office of Minnesota DHS. Our Grand Portage, Shakopee Mdewakanton, and Lower Sioux friends were unable to attend.

A topic of focus has been the 'Cultural Training Project.' We have been working at getting our 'Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers' to be recognized in the Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPPD) state registry for the trainings they provide. If successful the Child Care Providers throughout the state could count these training hours toward licensure. These trainings are important and should be recognized alongside the many other typical focus areas that fall under the umbrella of child development. We are currently in the Pilot Stage of this project with Leech Lake and Mille Lacs being selected as the pilot sites. Both reservations have created a Local Advisory Committee consisting of Elders with other community members involved as well. Next steps will be reported out as we undergo them.



Melvin Carter, Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet under Governor Dayton, was on hand.

Melvin shared that there is a \$1.8 billion dollar surplus and early childhood is slated to be a priority focus. MNTRECC members had several suggestions for Melvin to take back to the Governor as the work with young children is vital!

RETHINKING EDUCATION

New Direction for Bug School???

The Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School administration, staff, and parents are having conversations about alternative options for the school to take as they look ahead to the possibility of a new school restructure. While any school restructure piece is still off into the future, programmatic plans and options are being reviewed and discussed. An initial parent meeting was held on January 27 with only a handful of parents in attendance, but future opportunities will be made available to engage parental input into this very important topic.

Currently Three Choice Options (Initial Stage of Discussions Only)

The high school discussions for program design are centered around three options that students could consider:

- (1) Indigenous Pathways
- (2) Vocational/Career Pathways
- (3) College Preparation Pathways

While these are only INITIAL ideas and discussions taking place, it is important for the community to reflect on the possibilities that exist and to consider carefully what new direction might serve our Leech Lake students the best.

It is certainly known that the cultural components of the school will remain a focus area for all students. While the public schools are providing more meaningful and inclusive education services to our Native youth today, no one provides the culturally responsive environment that Bug School does!



Successful Alternatives to Agricultural Model

Schools across the country are seeking ways to better engage students in the educational process. Some schools are switching to year round school as the summer months away are viewed as too long of a break. In days past, children were required to work the farmland with their families so school was suspended in summer for this reason. Some schools deliver a 3 month on and 1 month off schedule year round. Others are looking only for program changes such as offering a project-based learning model. Tribally controlled education can look different!



Judge Paul Day and Judge Megan Treuer attended the meeting.

Focus on Truancy Issue

The Leech Lake Truancy Collaborative hosted a meeting on Thursday, January 28, with representatives from several entities in attendance. The issue of truancy was brought to the Education Division by two local public schools, Deer River and Cass Lake, while holding conversations about ways in which we can work together. Truancy is an issue that has a detrimental impact on our Native youth. Research has linked the issue of truancy to dropout rates, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, reduced likelihood of gainful employment, and increased rates of incarceration. The Learning Work Connection, at the Ohio State University, in its 2006 report titled Dropout Prevention, reported that ‘Every nine seconds in America a student becomes a dropout’ (Martin & Halperin, 2006).

Truancy data is being collected at many of the public schools, but we need a centralized way to document the degree of impact within our Native community. Actual numbers with the multitude of reasons for students being truant from school will assist us as we work together to find solutions. (STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION)

RESERVATION YOUTH PROGRAMS

District I

Youth Programs would like to introduce Natasha Jenkins to the Youth Activity Program for the Winnie Dam Jacksonville area. Natasha is an enthusiastic young mother of a three year old daughter. She is also a recent graduate of Itasca Community College having received an AA degree in Native American Studies.

Natasha has family roots in District 1. She is the daughter of Betty (Inger) and Nathan Jenkins (Winnie Dam). She comes from a large and supportive family. She is ready to take on the role as Youth Activity Coordinator in District 1.

Some recent activities in the District 1 area include the Leech Lake Winter Carnival held in Ball Club. There was a tremendous turnout for this event. On February 6, there was the All District gathering at the Bug-O-Na-Ge-Shig School where a Moccasin Game & Story session was held. Also, on February 6 there was a Deer River Youth Basketball Tournament. The Leech Lake 6th grade boys were runners up. Congratulations to all who participated in this event.

Some things to look forward to include the Native American Night to be held at Bemidji State University when they host Alabama Huntsville or Michigan Tech in hockey. This will be held later in February.

District II

The Sugar Point Community sponsored its third annual New Year's Eve Mini-Pow Wow. What fun we all had. This event was sponsored in collaboration with the Northland Remer JOM Committee and Leech Lake Youth Programs.

Our host drum was the Northland Drum Group consisting of young men ages 5-14. We are very proud of our young Drum Group.

The night was spent drumming, dancing, and socializing with others including our Elders. As a community we are trying to encourage our youth to get into dancing and our culture. It is good to have these gatherings where the Elders and youth can spend time together.

We had a huge feast prepared by Janice Dahmon. We ate ham, potatoes, gravy, wild rice, macaroni salad, fruit salad, and fry bread.

Our Elder, John Atkinson, said a prayer for the food. After the feast, we continued with the dancing.

There were approximately 29 youth and 16 Elders and community members in attendance. The youth seemed to enjoy the time together. Many of them did not have regalia so that will be our next project. We must continue to help our youth in any way we can so they do not lose interest in our culture and our way of life.

We have more big events coming up in the 2016 year so with that we will say, "Gigawabamin" from the Sugar Point youth and our community!

District III

CPR and First Aid training were offered by the Leech Lake Ambulance Service with Sherry Garcia, Coordinator of Ambulance Service, and Amanda Downs, CPR instructor, in collaboration with the Leech Lake Youth Division. The training was held in Cass Lake on December 30 at the Leech Lake Veterans Memorial Building with 13 youth in attendance.

The Youth Programs provided a fry bread taco lunch with beverages and snacks. Yvonne Hardy, Cass Lake area youth coordinator, Theresa Jordan, Onigum area youth coordinator, and Candace Rogers, Round Lake area youth coordinator, all were instrumental in bringing their area youth to this event. Everyone felt that the 'youth only' participation made it easy for them to work and learn with their peers.

Please mark calendars for June. Plans are underway to bring forward another training opportunity for youth to participate. This will take place in the warmer weather at the end of the school year when the area youth will be able to participate more fully. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL - WE ARE VERY PROUD OF YOU!

EDUCATION COUNTS!



CPR & First Aid Class

Youth from District III can be seen learning the basics of CPR and First Aid while teaming up with their peers. Many thanks to the people who organized this event and the youth who are now ready to serve others in an emergency situation.

Spotlight on our Peer Mentors!

INGRID MESARINA, LEECH LAKE TRUANCY PROGRAM (Cass Lake Youth Peer Mentor)

Ingrid became a Youth Peer Mentor at the young age of 15 working with a Sr. Coordinator for two years.

When asked if being in the Youth Peer Mentorship Program was influential in her life, she reported, "Working in the Youth Peer Mentorship Program helped me gain some leadership skills and made me want to work with youth." She also said, "I really liked working with youth then and now."

Ingrid is currently working for the Leech Lake Truancy Program working to improve school attendance of our area youth. She would also like to help

teenagers get connected with services that will help them become successful.

KYLE FAIRBANKS, LEECH LAKE TRIBAL POLICE (Ball Club Youth Peer Mentor)



Kyle joined the program at age 15, also. He worked in the Ball Club and Deer River areas for three years. When asked if the Youth Peer Mentorship program helped influence his choices in life, Kyle said, "Yes, it kept me out of trouble." When asked if the Peer Mentorship program helped him make his career choices, he stated, "Not necessarily. I

already knew what I wanted to do, but it helped keep me in the right path to get into law enforcement."

Kyle has been working for Leech Lake as a Law Enforcement Officer and a Conservation Officer for nine years!

We are so proud of both of you!

MAJOR EVENTS - CONTACT YOUTH COORD.

Districts/Events Below	February	March	April	May
District I		Culture Camp		
District II			Culture Camp	
District III				Water Raft
Reservation Wide	Moccasin Games			
Date/Location of Events	6th (Bug School)	S Lake	Kego Lake	Cass Lake
Youth Conference (TBD)				

EDUCATION MATTERS!

Deer River STEP Coalition on the Move!



Standing Together Embracing Prevention! The STEP Coalition has a mission to foster a community, within District 317, that

supports youth by preventing underage alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. STEP has reported that 87% of DRHS students DON'T drink in a typical month.

Holding Conversations

Some of what they have learned is centered around individual factors that impact a student's choice to use alcohol or not. Those factors are: age of first drink, alcohol being perceived as less harmful than other drugs, youth perception of harm from binge drinking, and whether or not parents have discussed alcohol usage with their children.

STEP in Deer River is building a model that other schools may want to emulate.

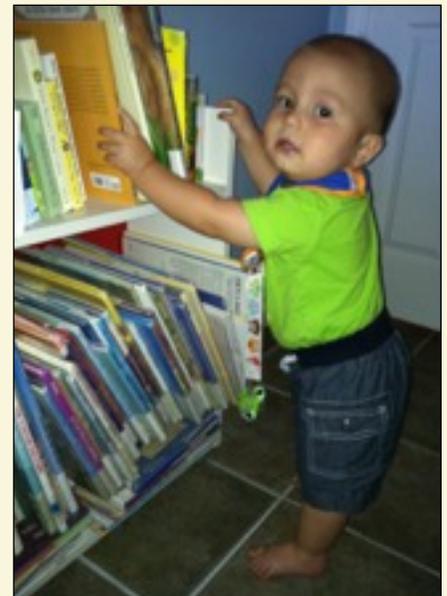


A youth project 'Go Pro - We would rather.....' is underway to help youth find healthy and positive alternatives to drinking.



TEACH THEM TO LOVE READING

One of the best things you can do to ensure a successful life for your child is to read to him or her starting in infancy. Some even advocate reading to your child in the womb! Why not? Re-reading their favorite books over and over helps them gain a sense of familiarity and control so eventually they feel like they can 'read' the book as they fill in the parts that are known. Of course, introducing them to new books develops their vocabulary and imagination. Board books are great for the very young.



EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Many Thanks to Education Employees!

Employees within the Education Division all donated food for the January 'neighborly luncheon feast' including wild rice, pasta, salads, fry bread, crab salad, fruit, cake, and ice cream. There was a clear consensus that we are a division of very good cooks without a doubt!

We want to thank the Early Childhood crew for donating the tender and delicious roast beef! There were lots of 'little piggies who ate roast beef' on this special day of sharing with our neighbors!



Education Sponsored Luncheon for Neighbors

On Friday, January 29, the Education Division sponsored a 'neighborly luncheon' for our many co-workers in the Facility Center. The idea for it came close to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season when smells were circulating throughout the building. We decided a post-holiday gathering of friends and co-workers during the long month of

January would serve to uplift everyone as we all took a pause to give thanks for life, work, and friendship. "It's simple," said Gary Charwood who offered a blessing

"It's Anishinaabe coming together out of kindness."



What impact can be made by having more teachers of color?

Increasing Teacher Diversity in Minnesota: An Ongoing Conversation and Call to Action!

The Minneapolis Community and Technical College sponsored a meeting on February 6, 2016, with a call to action to increase the number of minority teachers in the state. Over 200 people attended the gathering to share information and concerns around this issue. A panel of presenters including a student, parent, teacher, and administrator of color opened the session expressing, from their perspectives, why this is an important issue facing all of education in Minnesota.

Representatives from MnEEP, Educators 4 Excellence, Voices for Racial Justice, Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education were some of the groups on hand. University representatives shared about their current efforts to recruit minorities.

EDUCATION & SUPPORT NETWORKS

Prison Outreach: Is There a Need?

According to the Department of Corrections website, there are 955 Native American prison inmates making up 9.5% of the total inmate population.



Education Efforts to Date

The Education Division is attempting to make contact with Leech Lake members who are incarcerated in the state prison system to encourage them to consider study and work options available when they return home or even while on the inside. We are currently working with Ruth Stadheim, a careers project director at the state level, to provide information about our services to the inmates. The Education Division is seeking to be a part of a support network that would benefit the transition

from prison to home. The WOIA office and Post-secondary education division can assist.



Did You Know?

There are currently 95 known Leech Lake Band members who are serving time in prisons throughout the state of Minnesota (unofficial statistic).

Always remember that your present situation is not your final destination. The best is yet to come.



Do You Have a Family Member?

Families of incarcerated people can help to provide information of a more personal nature to their loved ones on 'the inside.' Some may not know that it is possible to work on continuing their education while they are serving their time. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe has a host of resources available to assist band members in any number of situations. The hope is that people will take steps to improve their lives by taking personal responsibility and reaching out to those who offer the support. The Education Division is one organization that can assist.



EDUCATION: UP-TO-DATE CHANGES

Passage of ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act allowing greater flexibility for states and school districts to design plans to better support struggling schools. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision within NCLB has been repealed and replaced by a statewide accountability system that allows flexibility in measuring school performance beyond test scores. States are allowed to use additional measures of school improvement leading to student success including student engagement, access to advanced coursework, school climate, and safety.

ESSA is intended to help states to improve low performing schools and targets funds to at-risk children. It intends to assist states to improve teacher quality and to promote high-quality choices for parents.

Preschool Education Wins

The Omnibus FY 2016

Appropriations Bill was passed by both the Senate and House of Representatives and signed by the President. It includes significant increases in funding for early education programs including:

- *\$326 million for the Child Care Development Block Grant maintaining a set aside of \$127 million for Infants & Toddlers;

- *Increase of \$570 million for Head Start including \$141 million for COLA

- *\$25 million for Designation and Renewal;

- \$294 million for supplemental funding to increase the hour of Head Start program operation;

- *\$135 million increase for Early Head Start, EHS Child Care partnerships, and conversions from Head Start to Early Head Start;

- *\$15 million increase in IDEA Part B;

\$20 million increase in IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families.

In addition, a major victory for key support for children and families is also included. The bill makes permanent substantial improvements in ARRA for both the refundable tax credits for low-income families through the Child Care Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit as well as making permanent a partially refundable tax credit for college tuition expenses. Without the changes in the Child Tax Credit, eight million children would have been pushed into poverty.

Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner of Education at the State Department of Education, plans to hold conversations throughout the state to bring awareness to the changes and possibilities that exist within the new ESSA law.

Tribally Controlled Education

What does it look like? How can we make it happen? What are other Nations doing in this area? DARE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY!

Indian Education Act of 1972

This was the landmark legislation establishing a comprehensive approach to meeting the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934

This was the first law to provide federal funds for public school education of American Indian children. Local schools use JOM funds for a variety of needs.