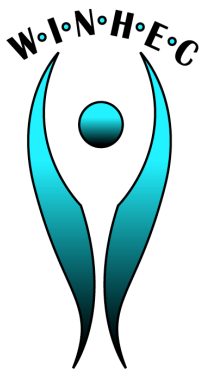




**Year 1 Accreditation Report of the
Department of Native American Studies at
Montana State University**

to the

**World Indigenous Nations Higher Education
Consortium**



World • Indigenous • Nations • Higher • Education • Consortium

Submitted: 30 September 2023

Department of Native American Studies Team

Academics

- Walter Fleming (Kickapoo),
Department Head
- Lisa Stevenson, Business Operations
Manager
- Erika Ross, Academic Services
Coordinator
- Anita Moore-Nall (Apsáalooke),
Assistant Professor
- Matthew Herman, Professor
- Kristin Ruppel, Associate Professor,
Online Program Coordinator, Faculty
Graduate Coordinator

AI/AN Student Success

- Lisa Perry (Eastern Shoshone and
Arapaho), Director
- Nicholas Ross-Dick (Yakama), Assistant
Director, Instructor
- La'Trell Hendrickson
(Tsétsêhéstâhese), Outreach
Coordinator & Recruitment Specialist
- Chance Cummings, Program
Coordinator

Hau, Okii, Pevashev, Boozhoo, Tansi, Shoda, Wahey, Kisuk Kiyukyit, A!
(Greetings in Nakoda/Nakona/Dakota/Lakota, Niitsitapi (Piikani), Tsétséhéstâhese/So'taa'e,
Anishinaabe, Ne-i-yah-wahk, Apsáalooke, A'aninin, Ksanka, Sélish... Indigenous Nations of this
place)

In accordance with the requirements set by the WINHEC Board of Accreditation/Affirmation
“Accreditation Motion” dated 13 August 2022, the Department of Native American Studies at
Montana State University respectfully and humbly submits this report to share our overall
accomplishments during Year 1 of WINHEC Accreditation, as well as our specific efforts in
keeping with this year’s annual accreditation benchmarks, which are:

- 1) To develop a plan to integrate our Cultural Standards, and
- 2) To situate an Oversight Board.

Overall Accomplishments

In our first year as part of the WINHEC family, we’re excited to share a number of areas in
which we have made progress.

New Programming

Elder-in-Residence

In January-February 2023 we were blessed by having Dr. Laura Horton, (Anishinaabe) in
residence for a 6-week period. In our invitation to Dr. Horton, we had given her a “wishlist” of
things she might attend to during her residency. The list included:

- cultural programming through AI/ANSSS (for example, quilting classes with students?)
- guidance/critique in meeting WINHEC benchmarks, for example
 - oversight committee development
 - integrating departmental values throughout (syllabi, position descriptions, etc.)
- departmental strategic planning, evaluation & assessment
- guest appearances in classes
- other duties mutually agreed upon.

We expected that Dr. Horton would pick and choose from among these. Instead, she
accomplished all of them! We are indebted to her, particularly because of the financial burden
she suffered because of MSU’s inordinately time-consuming (and sometimes seemingly
deliberately obtuse) payroll process. One of the many things we learned from Dr. Horton’s visit
is that we must give ample lead time to make sure that all the necessary paperwork has been
submitted ahead of the EIR’s arrival. We deeply appreciate Dr. Horton’s patience and
graciousness during her period of service as the Department’s first Elder-in-Residence. We are
still learning from her time with us. [Her report can be found here.](#)

Internal Oversight Committee

In keeping with one of Dr. Horton's recommendations about the development of a cultural oversight board, soon after her departure we formed an Internal Oversight Committee (IOC). We invited key Indigenous staff and faculty from across MSU to join us for a series of informal discussions aimed at helping the Department meet WINHEC accreditation benchmarks and more generally look for ways to Indigenize the NAS Department, particularly in its academic and administrative spheres. This stellar group of 7 Indigenous scholars met with members of the Department (both staff and faculty) during biweekly meetings between March 20 and May 3, 2023. Together we explored ideas for collecting stories, integrating our cultural values and standards into everything from syllabi to hiring practices to assessment and evaluation, and many other topics as they arose (notes from these meetings are housed [here](#) in Google Drive). We continue to nurture these relationships and invite IOC members to Departmental gatherings and events whenever possible. IOC members will also be invited to share in our upcoming meetings with our Cultural Oversight Board (see below, p.8).

New Faculty Hires

The new faculty search that was being organized during Dr. Horton's residency was finally launched in mid-April with a revamped [position description](#) into which we integrated our departmental values and goals for the search. While the late launch delivered only a small pool of 9 candidates, the search committee found that two of these fit the position description. One of these withdrew from the hiring process after the first interview when she realized the position would be in-person (not online). She ([Dr. Jennifer Santry](#), Choctaw, Lakota/Dakota) now teaches an online course for us and we look forward to growing the relationship with her as time goes on. The other candidate, [Dr. Anita Moore-Nall](#) successfully completed the search process and was hired in August 2023.

New Staff Hires

Having lost two staff members over the course of the previous academic year (both to increasing family responsibilities), the AI/AN Student Success Services (AIANSSS) was able to hire two new staff members during winter 2023: La'Trell Hendrickson (Tsétsêhéstâhese) was hired as the new Outreach & Communications Coordinator in January; Chance Cummings was hired as a new Program Coordinator in February. Both of their bios can be found [here](#). The "boys" (as Uncle Walter calls them) immediately became integral members of the NAS family.

One of the staff members lost last year to increasing family responsibilities (she had a baby!) also moved away from Bozeman. However, we've been able to keep our former Outreach & Recruitment Specialist, Kristie Russette (Anishinaabe Ne-i-yah-wahk) connected to the Department in two ways. One, we've invited her to join our Cultural Oversight Board (see below, pp. 9-12). And two, we've hired her to revamp our online Federal Indian Law & Policy course (a required course either in person or online for all of our degree programs) this fall. She'll then take up the online teaching of that course in the spring. We're beyond excited to have Kristie and her growing family still connected to the NAS family.

AIANSSS Assistant Director, Nicholas Ross-Dick has also taken on teaching a course for the NAS Department, NASX 310 – Native Cultures of North America.

New Student Staff Hires

Starting fall 2023, the AIANSSS hired 6 new student staff members to work as Cultural Program Assistants - Riley Werk (A'aniih and Nakoda) and Watson Whitford (Dine and Anishinaabe Ne-i-yah-wahk); Good Relations Mentors - Damaris Addy (A'aniih and Nakoda) and Nevaeh Spotted Eagle (Amskapi Piikani and Nakoda), and Program Assistants - Daniel Carlson-Strom, Journey Erickson (Mandan) and Pacen Peppers (Tsétsêhéstâhese). Their bios can be found on the [AI/AN SSS Facebook page](#).

New Indigenous Language Programming

Fall 2023 saw the start of a revived [Indigenous Language Program](#) designed to teach basic conversational skills in 11 different tribal languages in the region from which most of our students come. This collaboration brings tribal knowledge holders and speakers to campus for accelerated one-week courses. These language courses are not for official MSU credit. Instead, they are part of the Department's cultural programming.

New Good Relations Learning Community Program

The Good Relations Learning Community is a new (started in Sept. 2023) initiative committed to creating community and helping new freshman thrive in the university setting. The program offers students the opportunity to build a strong support network from their first day at MSU, enroll in required courses along with fellow Native students, participate in cultural activities, and attend special meals and events as a group.

New Sewing Classes - Star Design Pillow Making and Ribbon Skirt/Shirt Making

Classes are free, but students must reserve a spot at one of the Department's 7 new sewing machines bought under Dr. Laura Horton's guidance during her residence with us. Dr. Horton also taught our first class in Ribbon Skirt/Shirt Making!

Continuing Programming

The Buffalo Nations Food Systems Initiative (BNFSI) – a collaborative effort between the NAS Department, the College of Health & Human Services at MSU and the non-profit Montana Indigenous Food System Initiative (MIFSI) – the BNFSI is in its third year, providing academic and cultural opportunities through paid fellowships, student employment, and scholarships. May-October, student fellows and their coordinators (some of them former BNFSI fellows) learn and share knowledge of gardening, harvesting, cooking and preserving native foods, saving seeds for sharing out to Native communities of the region, and communicating the Buffalo Nations vision and mission to the public through guided tours, feeds, demonstrations, and presentations. They also have paid time off to participate in ceremony and other cultural events in their home

communities. Year-round, Buffalo Nations scholars (some of whom are also BN fellows) work to ground their academic aspirations in the priorities of Indigenous communities. Check out some of their projects on our current [MA Program Students page](#), and see the [MIFSI Facebook page](#) for some of this year's planting, cooking, and harvesting activities! Some of Buffalo Nations other [accomplishments are also summarized in this two-pager](#).

The NAS Department AI/AN Student Success Services also continues to offer a wide range of cultural and social programs and events to encourage year-round involvement and community support for Native students from all across campus. Examples include:

- **Building MSU Families: Supporting Indigenous Students' Wellbeing:** Building MSU Families is a mentoring program that is geared towards Indigenous students attending MSU. Building MSU Families is a program that matches Indigenous students with a trained faculty/staff member to provide a connection, boost and support, such as what a family member provides. They are the students' local auntie/uncle/relative that is either in the student's college or works on campus, to help students navigate through their college career and beyond.
- **Indigenous Peoples' Day Round Dance** and community feed: All are welcome to this annual public event.
- **Ledger Art Sessions:** Students are invited to come relax and grab a snack while they design some ledger art. Multiple sessions are offered, RSVP is optional, and materials are provided.
- **Talking Circle – A Space for Healing: Mental Wellness is Sacred!** Offered every Monday from 12pm -1pm in American Indian Hall 159 - the Elders' Collaboration Room. Lunch is provided. This partnership with Counseling and Psychological Services provides a space in which students can check in, support their peers, and be supported by staff. The Talking Circle space is confidential, and attendees are not required to share. Taking advantage of this resource demonstrates advocacy and courage for students' own well-being and is meant to honor students as they work through the semester. In addition, the Counseling and Psychological Services provides a Let's Talk hour immediately following Talking Circle. Let's Talk is a program that provides easy access to informal, confidential one-on-one conversation with a clinician from CPS. The Let's Talk hour is available in room 135G in the Voyich Student Commons (in AIH) from 1pm-2pm and is on a walk-in basis.
- **Sweetgrass Braiding Sessions:** Students are invited to swing by the picnic tables at the North side of the AIH (where Sweetgrass grows in abundance). MSU/NAS alum Jade Yazzie shares her knowledge.
- **Missing and Murdered Indigenous People events:** These take place on and around May 5, the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples and are organized in collaboration with MSU's MMIP Student Association.
- **Graduation celebrations:** These take place at the end of each semester in honor of our graduating students.

- **Native Student Pathways to Success Student Orientation:** This is an annual event for new freshmen and transfer students. This orientation is hosted by the Department of Native American Studies AI/AN SSS and partners from across MSU who work with indigenous identifying students. Native Pathways is an opportunity for new students to get acquainted with many of the resources offered to them and the wonderful staff committed to their success as they adjust to campus life. This is a supplemental orientation. All students who choose to participate in Native Pathways to Success must register in one of the MSU summer orientations in addition. Native Pathways to Success is open to students who identify as tribally enrolled or descendant. Benefits include: priority for early arrival housing move in, custom swag, community and cultural connections.
- **Native Student Preview Day:** These semi-annual events offer Native students a culturally relevant campus visit experience and provide in-depth information about what it's like to attend MSU. Native Student Preview Day gives prospective first-time and transfer students the opportunity to meet MSU faculty and staff, engage with current students, tour campus, connect with academic departments, and learn more about other campus resources, such as financial aid, Native student support services, and housing.
- **And more!**

Please check out the [AI/AN SSS Facebook page](#) for a virtual 'tour' of our ongoing efforts!

Year 1 Benchmarks

Plan to Integrate Cultural Standards

Our cultural standards—*Knowledge, Relationship, Land and Sovereignty*—are expressed in our model of student wellbeing (Fig. 1). However, how these standards play out in the everyday life of the Department is influenced by the structures we inherit from Montana State University, the Department, and our own institutional and personal traditions and habits. Some of these are at odds with the cultural standards that we seek to uphold. For example, the University puts high value on the achievements of the individual. Meanwhile, we adhere to a core value of *Humility*, which operates on the assumption that what we accomplish, we accomplish together and through *Relationship*.

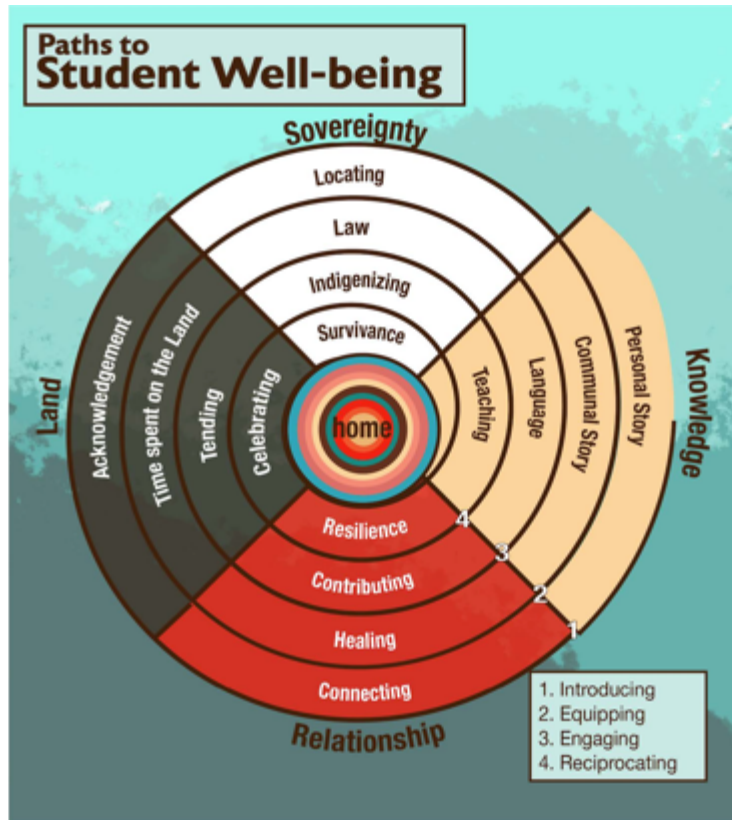


Fig. 1 – NAS Model of Student Wellbeing

Given that our Department operates within the mainstream environment of a predominantly white university system, we feel that integrating the cultural standards of *Knowledge*, *Relationship*, *Land*, and *Sovereignty* in NAS more fully than they already are—especially in the Department’s academic arena—must begin with the structures that we have inherited: our syllabi, hiring practices, position descriptions, website, graduate handbook and other guiding documents (such as our Role & Scope document which lays out the processes by which faculty members are evaluated and promoted). We have begun this process by integrating the Student Wellbeing Model itself into particular classes ([such as NASX 524](#)) and other areas. For example, we are:

- revamping some of the boilerplate language in our job announcements, such as in our most recent [position description](#), to emphasize not only our relationship with WINHEC, but our departmental values and priorities;
- reconstructing our [Graduate Student Handbook](#) to better reflect who we are not just as a department, but as an Indigenous community; and,
- revising our departmental [Role and Scope document](#) by integrating performance requirements specific to our Student Wellbeing Model and our Cultural Standards into the faculty annual review and retention, tenure, and promotion review processes with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service activities.

Priorities for what to tackle next are set by our Cultural Oversight Board, the majority of whom kindly responded to the following request for their “specific areas of interest in seeing NAS grow and mature as an Indigenous, Indigenizing, and Indigenous-serving organization” (Fig. 2). COB Members were asked to help us prioritize in that, eventually, we will be seeking their guidance on a range of things, including: specific coursework and syllabus language, degree programs (existing and planned), research areas, research ethics, hiring practices (faculty and staff), assessment and evaluation (of the department), student services, outreach, recruitment, retention, graduation, and anything else they want us consider, such as Tribal Languages Revitalization and funding needed for growth and sustainability. Their priorities give us a clear path for what to tackle first, next, and later.

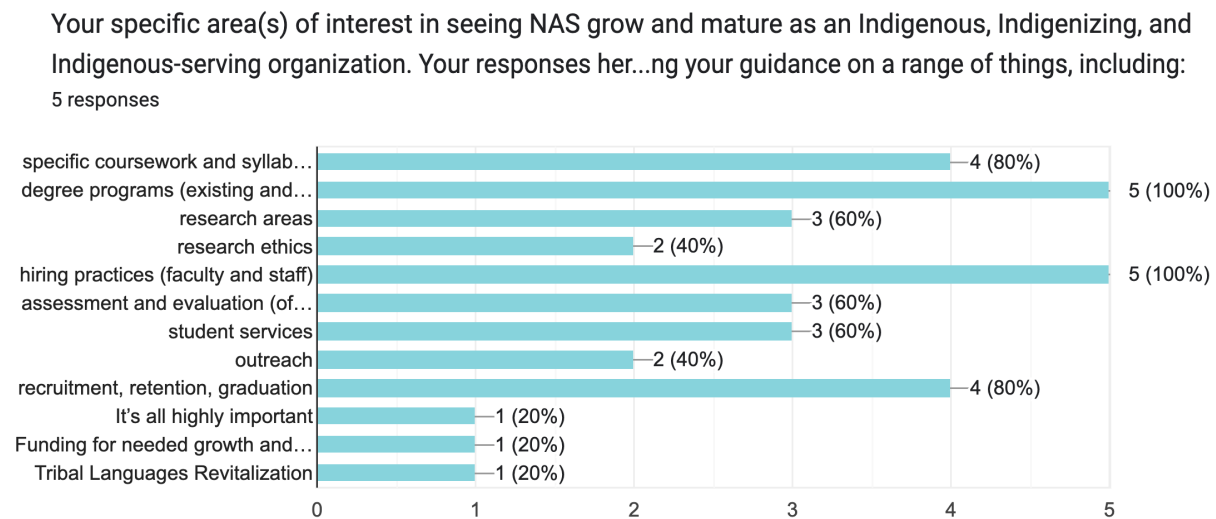


Fig. 2 – COB Member priorities survey, September 2023

At our inaugural Cultural Oversight Board Meeting (see below), COB Members will be asked to help us think through and elaborate upon next steps in integrating our cultural standards into all areas. We’ll ask them to confirm or revise where they think we should start (degree programs and hiring practices, according to our survey in Fig. 2). And we’ll share with them the areas in which we’ve already been actively working to Indigenize the Department’s structural underpinnings and daily practices.

Cultural Oversight Board

The NAS Department’s Cultural Oversight Board (COB) was assembled over spring/summer 2023 and will be gathering for its inaugural meeting on 2 November 2023. Seats on the Board are intended informally to represent each of the eight Tribal and Confederated Nations in the state of Montana. All of these seats except that belonging to the Northern Cheyenne Nation have been filled. A Northern Cheyenne Elder who is fluent in the language and who currently teaches at Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer has been invited to fill the eighth seat. He is interested

and we hope to have him on board well before the COB's first meeting. In the future, we also hope to grow this board to include seats for representatives from other Nations in the region, since our students don't just come from Nations within Montana.

Founding COB Members currently include:

Janine Pease –

Dr. Janine Pease, "Loves to Pray", an enrolled Apsáalooke tribal member, a child of the Newly Made Lodges Clan and a member of the Big Lodge Clan. She is an adjunct faculty member at Little Big Horn College in Crow Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences (2020 - present). She holds undergraduate degrees in sociology and anthropology (Central Washington University 1970) and advanced degrees in Higher Education (Montana State University - Bozeman 1989 & 1994). Dr. Pease was a full time LBHC Faculty member, the accreditation liaison officer and coordinator of Crow language revitalization programs (2013 - 2020). She was the Crow Nation Cabinet Head for Education (2010 - 2012). At Fort Peck Community College and Rocky Mountain College, she was vice-president of academics and Indian Affairs, respectively (2008 - 2010 and 2003 - 2008). She is the founding president of Little Big Horn College; during her tenure, the college achieved full accreditation and participated in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and world's Indigenous colleges meetings (1982 - 2001). Dr. Pease was lead plaintiff in *Windy Boy v. Big Horn County*, a precedent-setting American Indian Voting Rights case (1983 - 1986). In Montana, Montana Governors appointed her to the Human Rights Commission, the Districting and Apportionment Commission and the Montana Board of Regents. Currently, she chairs the board of the Crow Language Consortium (incorporated in 2014), a non-profit for Crow language materials development and language teaching/learning programs. She is a member of the Nighthawk Dance Society and the Valley of the Chiefs District. She resides in Billings; is mother of three, kaale of six and kaalexxaa'lia of two.

Julie Cajune –

Julie holds a master's degree in education from Montana State University–Billings. After years of classroom teaching on her home reservation, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Julie began developing tribal history materials and curriculum and served as her Tribe's Education Director. Julie has collaborated with Indigenous scholars, knowledge keepers, artists, and musicians, as well as elders and poets to produce materials in a variety of media including DVDs—*Stories from a Nation Within*, *Art and Identity*, *Remembering the Songs*, and *Inside Anna's Classroom*— and children's books—*Gift of the Bitterroot* and *Huckleberries, Buttercups and Celebrations*, and a variety of other publications Julie is a recipient of the national Milken Educator Award, the Montana Governor's Humanities Award, and two Lifetime Achievement Awards. She continues her work to add Native voices to the master narrative of American history with the recent publication of [*Our Way: -A Parallel History: An Anthology of Native History, Reflection, and Story.*](#)

Kristie Russette –

I am member of the Chippewa Cree tribe from Rocky Boy, Montana. I am a former staff member with American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success at MSU and recent graduate of the Native

American Studies MA Program. My graduate research focused on indigenizing university strategic planning to better serve and support Indigenous faculty and staff.

Sean Chandler –

Dr. Sean Chandler is an artist and enrolled member of the Aaniinen (Gros Ventre Nation). He is also the President of Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC) located on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana. In 2016, Dr. Chandler was appointed to the Montana Arts Council and in 2022, he was appointed to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Additionally, in April of 2018, Sean received the Montana Indian Education Association's Indian Educator of the Year Award. He acquired a Bachelor of Arts in Art in 1997, as well as a Master of Arts in Native American Studies in 2003 from Montana State University-Bozeman. He also attained a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from The University of Montana in 2014, with his dissertation entitled, "The Identity of Indigenous Lifeways." For the past 21 years Sean has been employed with ANC, serving mostly as an Instructor and Director of American Indian Studies, until 2017 when he began to fill the role of Academic Dean and later as President in 2020. In addition to his administration duties, he also instructed the Aaniiih (Gros Ventre) Language to grade school aged children within ANC's White Clay Immersion School. His artwork has been collected by the Minneapolis Institute of Art of Minneapolis, MN and the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, MT. Most recently, Sean was selected as one of five artists for the 2023 Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellowship of the Eiteljorg Museum of Indianapolis, IN.

Miisami Sapai yi Aki/Kimberly L. Paul –

Miisami Sapai yi Aki (Kim Paul) is born from the Greenwood Burners clan of Two Medicine River, within the Amskapi Piikani Blackfeet Nation. For her people, she is the carrier of the last repatriated KsiskStahkii Mopistaan, the Holy Piikani Creation Beaver Bundle affirming a rich spiritual history within Piikani Homelands for the past 20,000 years (to include all the ways of protection and provision, stories and holy songs and ways of being). Additionally, she was transferred into the full rights of a woman who carries the traditional stand-up war bonnet of the Piikani, was captured into the Kanatsoomiitaiks Warrior Society (traditionally a men's honor) and although a mother of 4 and grandmother of 13, has earned a dual BS in premedicine and research psychology, an MS in environmental chemistry and biomedical science and has completed all coursework and dissertation towards her PhD in biochemistry, biomedicine, and community and public health (PhDc). She is the first Piikani to achieve this in the STEM fields, has over 20 STEM community-needs-based action research projects completed or completing, and is also the first Piikani to create a holistic, community-needs-based non-profit (501c3) whose mission is meaningful job creation, training, climate change adaptation, suicide and substance misuse reduction, cultural identity reclamation, Indigenous-focused curriculum, economic development within the 11 Piikani sub-communities, and on the land programming focusing on reconnection to Piikani Lifeways, physical activity, ceremony and strengthening local food systems via traditional foods intake, traditional foods production and education.

Florence Garcia –

Florence Garcia is a member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck reservation and is also Ojibwe. She holds a doctorate in Adult and Higher Education from MSU Bozeman. She served as the President of Fort Peck Community College and most recently as the Associate

Dean of City College at MSU Billings. She is retired but teaches as needed. Florence had a daughter Elisabeth and has three grandchildren.

[Jordann Lankford-Forster \(Bright Trail Woman\) –](#)

Jordann Lankford-Forster is from Great Falls, Montana and is A'aniiih and Anishinaabe. Her A'aniiih name is Bright Trail Woman. Jordann received a major in Native American Studies and teaching degree in Broad Field Social Studies from the University of Montana. Jordann has spent 10 years in education and currently serves as an educator and IEFA instructional coach for Great Falls Public Schools. She is also a co-facilitator for Bright Trail Education (an educational consulting company). Jordann has been recognized as a Montana Indian Teacher of the Year as well as the BSNF 2021 Teacher of the Year. She believes that public education is vital to the growth and development of society, and by providing students with a strong educational foundation using primary source documents from multiple sources, students will be able navigate their identities, world, and future.

[INVITED- Setovaatse \(Burt\) Medicine Bull –](#)

[Burt Medicine Bull](#), Setovaatse, is a member of the So'taa'e band of the Northern Cheyenne people (Tsétséhéstâhese). He is a professor of Cheyenne Language and Culture at Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer, MT. Setovaatse has held multiple significant teaching positions from 4th grade through college levels in Montana and South Dakota. His B.A. from Montana State University, Billings, is in elementary education with a Minor in Native American Studies. He received his M.A. in Leadership/Elementary Administration and graduated with honors, Magna Cum Laude from Oglala Lakota College. He is a practicing member of the Native American Church and participates in the sweat lodge. He is a fluent speaker of his native Cheyenne language and is passionate about teaching his language and sharing his culture.

Pilamaya, Tsiktsiksiimaatsipsii, Neaese, Miigwetch, Ekosani, Ahó, Giniheya', Hu sukiŋqukni, Lémlmtš!

(Thank you, gratefulness... in Nakoda/Nakona/Dakota/Lakota, Niitsitapi (Piikani), Tsétséhéstâhese/So'taa'e, Anishinabe, Ne-i-yah-wahk, Apsáalooke, A'aninin, Ksanka, Sélish... Indigenous Nations of this place)