



2020-2021

Annual Report

"We are family."

This past summer as the AICSN Holy Cross Fellows gathered together in-person for the first time in two years, it was hard not to feel a bit overwhelmed with emotion. Still processing all that had happened in the extended period away from each other, there was talk of challenges, stress, and exhaustion. More than anything, though, there was a strong sentiment of community – that the reason each person had persevered was due to the support from their fellow cohort members. One teacher summed it all up concisely: "We are family." This simple statement was packed with profound meaning. That a cohort of teachers from Native Catholic schools spread all across the country not only persisted through a pandemic, but actually grew vibrantly together in kinship, is such a beautiful reminder of the power of community.

Not only did teachers and staff exemplify this powerful mindset, but the students at AICSN schools similarly modeled inspiring solidarity and resilience. The obstacles were unprecedented, but these learners lived out commitment, flexibility, and compassion in heroic and humble ways – always focused on how to best support and encourage each other in their academic pursuits. This relentless, "whatever-it-takes" spirit truly is awe-inspiring. More than anything, it comes from deep bonds of love that convey far more than just a school – they remind us of family. What a blessing to witness, and what a sign of hope for the days ahead.

Will Newkirk

DIRECTOR, AMERICAN INDIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NETWORK



Highlights from the 2020-2021 Academic Year

1

SEPTEMBER 2020

New school added: St. Joseph's Indian School of Chamberlain, SD

On September 2, 2020, St. Joseph's Indian School accepted the invitation to become the seventh member school of the American Indian Catholic Schools Network.



2

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2020

AICSN Holy Cross Fellows Fall Semester

3

OCTOBER 2020

4th-6th Grade Book Club

218 AICSN students received a book of their choice through a partnership with Birchbark Books in Minneapolis, MN.



4

NOVEMBER 2020

Professional Learning Series Kick-Off

- **Technology and Distance Learning** presented by Meghan Crowley-Sullivan of Loyola Marymount University's Ideal Institute (November, 2020)
- **What's Working? A Conversation about Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic** presented by Meghan Fagan of the University of Michigan (December, 2020)
- **Bite-Sized Tools to Support Student Mental Health** presented by the ASSET Education team (February, 2021)
- **Academic Recovery in the COVID-19 Era** presented by the Diocese of Tucson Catholic School Leadership team (April, 2021)

5**NOVEMBER 2020****Virtual Fall Leadership Summit**

All seven AICSN schools brought their leaders together to discuss supporting teachers and students amidst distance learning challenges.

6**DECEMBER 2020****Advent Faith Sharing Group**

18 AICSN educators gathered virtually for reflection, community, and prayer.

7**JANUARY-MAY 2021****AICSN Holy Cross Fellows Spring Semester****8****FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021****Lenten and Easter Faith Sharing Group**

22 AICSN educators gathered virtually for reflection, community, and prayer.

9**MARCH 2021****AICSN School Spotlight on De La Salle Blackfeet School**

The DLSBS faculty presented their school's story to 43 AICSN educators.

**10****MAY 2021****Virtual 8th Grade Trip to Notre Dame**

Five classes from AICSN schools participated in a virtual visit to Notre Dame in celebration of their graduation from eighth grade.

11**JUNE 2021****AICSN Holy Cross Fellows In-Person Summer Term**

Seven teachers from our AICSN schools traveled to Holy Cross College in Notre Dame, IN for three weeks of coursework and fellowship.

**12****JUNE 2021****Virtual Summer Institute on Trauma-Informed Instruction**

48 AICSN educators attended virtual sessions facilitated by Bruce Perry and Tamera Miyasato.

13**JUNE 2021****ND STEM Center Camp at Saint Mary's Mission School**

AICSN partnered with Notre Dame's Center for STEM Education to hold a Summer STEM Camp at Saint Mary's Mission School in Red Lake, MN.

**14****JUNE-JULY 2021****Virtual Truth and Healing Series**

Maka Black Elk facilitated an introduction to Truth and Healing for 25 AICSN educators.

15

JUNE - JULY 2021

ND Arts and Letters Students Intern with Bookmobile at St. Joseph Indian School



16

JUNE - JULY 2021

ND SSLP Students Helping with Summer School at De La Salle Blackfeet School

Two Notre Dame undergraduates spent eight weeks in Browning, MT, to support the Summer School activities at De La Salle Blackfeet School.

17

JULY 2021

AICSN Teachers Participate in Remick Leadership Program

Katie Montez and Thetna Weston from Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, SD, are members of the 19th cohort of ACE's Mary Ann Remick Leadership Program.



18

JUNE - JULY 2021

Summer Book Club on Anti-Racism

35 AICSN educators read and discussed Ijeoma Oluo's "So You Want to Talk About Race."

Our Commitment to Truth and Healing

Over the past year, AICSN has committed more deeply toward the work of truth and healing in our Catholic Indian school community. It has been especially important to name that particular part of ourselves, both Catholic and Indigenous because at the core of truth and healing is the need to address the perceived enmity between those two identities. In the summer, AICSN held four virtual sessions for schools in the network to learn about the process of truth and healing to address boarding school history and racial, spiritual, and religious tensions in our communities. Not all of our AICSN schools were once boarding schools, but we all do share a fundamental need for our community to address the sometimes tragic and beautiful history of the Catholic Church and Indigenous peoples.

One of the other important aspects of this work appears in the make-up of our leadership framework. Aside from the core leadership team that meets monthly, each core area has a subcommittee—one of which is dedicated to truth, healing, and advocacy. This subcommittee meets monthly to talk about the challenges our schools face in addressing this area and how we can best support each other in that work. That work is culminating this year in a survey that can help map each school's cultural atmosphere when it comes to the work of truth and healing which can help customize future support for each and every member.

Maka Black Elk

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TRUTH AND HEALING,
RED CLOUD INDIAN SCHOOL
AICSN BOARD CHAIR**

