



Nez Perce

TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

P.O. BOX 305 • LAPWAI, IDAHO 83540 • (208) 843-2253

February 26, 2025

Debbie Critchfield
Superintendent of Public Instruction
P. O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0037

Re: Director of Indian Education Position

Dear Superintendent Critchfield:

The Nez Perce Tribe appreciated the opportunity to meet with Department Liaison Crabtree earlier this month to discuss the status of the Director of Indian Education position, state curriculum, and the progress of tribal students in public schools. We were dismayed to learn that the new hire for the Director position was no longer with the Idaho Education Department and wanted to again express our strong support for the position and to have that position filled, by a person enrolled with a tribal nation.

We look forward to learning more about the ideas being discussed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Idaho's education efforts with tribal students. One idea we discussed is contracting with tribes to work with the Director of Indian Education on specific tasks and outcomes. This kind of collaborative effort would be welcomed. Please keep us informed when you begin filling the position and on any other developments that occur so that we can continue to work together as closely as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ryan Oatman
For Shannon F. Wheeler
Chairman

cc: Dr. Linda Clark, President, Idaho State Board of Education
Chief Allen, Chairman, Coeur d'Alene Tribe
Jennifer Porter, Chairwoman, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Lee Juan Tendoy, Chairman, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Brian Mason, Chairman, Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Business Council



LAPWAI SCHOOL DISTRICT #341

230 Main Street
Lapwai, Idaho 83540
(208) 843-2622

Thursday, February 20, 2024

Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns related to the Director of Indian Education role at the Idaho State Department of Education. Dissolving this critical representation for local alternatives would replicate efforts where we are already excelling. What our students truly need is an advocate at the state level. Our district joined the Nez Perce Tribe with letters of support to reestablish this role in Idaho. We were successful at securing a Coordinator role through the Idaho State Board of Education. This position was transferred to the Department of Education with a job description and title change without awareness or input.

This role is vital in ensuring state and local policies align with the educational needs of our Native students.

- Advocating for funding and equitable education for Native students
- Expanding Native American History and Tribal Sovereignty education in all schools
- Integrating Indigenous knowledge across all subject areas
- Supporting teachers with training and resources to achieve cultural competency
- Promoting language revitalization efforts
- Conducting meaningful Tribal consultation
- Recruitment of Native educators as representatives on state committees
- Uniting the five Tribes of Idaho for authentic collaboration and advocacy for Indigenous students

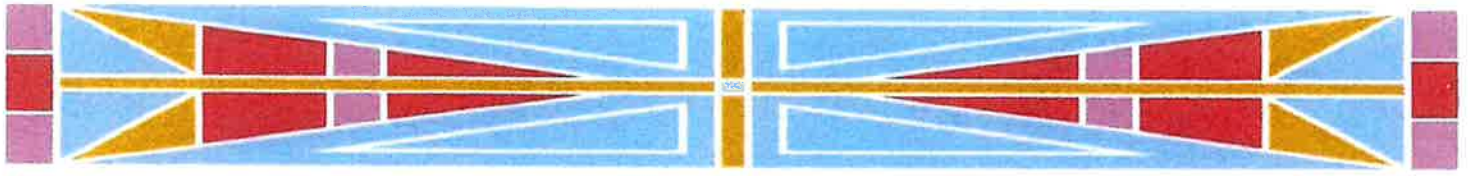
The need for a Director of Indian Education at the state level remains a top priority and must be addressed to ensure lasting impact and meaningful progress for Indian Education. Please advise how we can return the consistent support we receive from the Nez Perce Tribe during this concerning political climate. Your caring assistance is among our greatest resources and remains a source of pride for the Lapwai School District.

qe'ciyew'yew'

Dr. David M. Aiken
Lapwai School District Superintendent
daiken@lapwai.org
(208) 843-2622

Iris Chimburas
Lapwai School District Indian Education Director
ichimburas@lapwai.org
(208) 843-2241

*Together, we ensure all students will reach their full potential.
kiiye pecepelihniku' wapáyat'as mamáy'asna hipewc'éeyu' cúukwenin'.
We will all work to help the children become knowledgeable.*



February 21, 2025

Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC)

Nez Perce Tribe
P.O. Box 305
Lapwai, ID 83540

Subject: Urgent Need to Retain the Director of Indian Education Position

Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee:

We are writing to emphasize the critical importance of retaining the Director of Indian Education position at the Idaho State Department of Education. This role serves as a cornerstone for ensuring that Native American students across Idaho receive equitable access to culturally responsive and academically rigorous education.

The Director of Indian Education provides statewide leadership, ensuring consistent and effective advocacy for Native students' needs. This position is pivotal in developing and implementing policies that address the unique educational challenges faced by Native communities. Restructuring the Director's role into smaller, localized positions—such as district or school-level coordinators creates significant drawbacks:

1. Loss of Statewide Leadership and Coordination
2. Decreased Advocacy and Policy Influence
3. Inconsistent Implementation Across Districts
4. Limited Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty Representation
5. Reduced Funding and Program Sustainability
6. Risk of Overburdening Local Coordinators
7. Difficulty Addressing Systemic Issues

The retention of the Director of Indian Education position is essential for driving long-term, systemic change and ensuring that Native students receive the support they need to thrive academically and culturally. We urge the Idaho State Department of Education to preserve and strengthen this role, demonstrating a continued commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, and the success of Native students across our state.

Respectfully,

Robert Kipp, Chairperson
Lapwai School District #341 JOM Indian Parent Committee 2024-2025