



Department of Public Instruction
600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201, Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
(701) 328-2260 Fax - (701) 328-2461

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

Robert J. Christman
Deputy Superintendent

www.nd.gov/dpi

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Contact: Dale Wetzel, Public Information Specialist

Office 701-328-2247

Cell: 701-400-8557

Email: dewetzel@nd.gov

Baesler ‘Understandings’ Project To Be Highlighted At Indian Education Summit

BISMARCK, N.D. – Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction’s second annual Indian Education Summit will feature students from a Lakota language immersion class, a panel discussion that includes Indian high school and college students, and keynote speeches from two top federal Indian education officials.

The summit is being held Tuesday, July 7, and Wednesday, July 8, in the Brynhild Haugland Room of the North Dakota state Capitol.

Sessions on both days will begin at 8:30 a.m. with a traditional opening prayer, flag song and drum group. Bill Mendoza, executive director for the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, is giving the first keynote address at 9 a.m. Tuesday, July 7.

Charles “Monty” Roessel, director of the Bureau of Indian Education, is giving the second keynote address at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, July 8.

The BIE is a federal agency that supports education programs and residential facilities for American Indian students at more than 180 elementary and secondary schools. North Dakota has BIE-supported schools in a number of communities, including Belcourt, Bismarck, Dunseith, Fort Totten, Fort Yates, Halliday, Mandaree, Roseglen and Wahpeton.

A group of high school and college students from Bismarck, Selfridge and Fort Yates in North Dakota and McLaughlin and Little Eagle in South Dakota will hold a panel discussion at 10:15 a.m. Tuesday. The talk will be moderated by Sunshine Archambault Carlow, education manager for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Jenny Scala, a senior researcher at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C.

Students from the Lakota Language Immersion Nest, a program at Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates that teaches the Lakota language to preschoolers, will share their knowledge during a presentation at 11:15 a.m. Tuesday.

There are an assortment of breakout sessions on both afternoons, including presentations on the impact of career and technical education on Indian schools, strategies for discouraging school dropouts, and North Dakota’s Native American Essential Understandings program.

Essential Understandings is part of the “Indian Education for All” initiative begun by Superintendent Baesler to promote understanding of American Indian history and culture in all North Dakota schools. The scheduled presenters are Sharla Steever, a learning specialist at Technology and Innovation in Education, of Rapid City, S.D., and JT Shining Oneside, an instructor at Turtle Mountain Community College in Belcourt, N.D.

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