



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

Washington, D.C. 20240

April 6, 2020

Dear President Nez,

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is actively involved in supporting the Federal response to COVID-19 and continues to collaborate with Federal agencies including the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Agriculture, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) wants to ensure your local needs are met as the COVID-19 situation continues. This is particularly true as states and Tribes make the local determinations to extend their school closure periods or even close their schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

As BIE continues to support decisions based on local conditions and in coordination with Tribal communities such as the Navajo Nation, BIE will continue to respect your local Tribal decisions in our Bureau Operated Schools and close our local school sites for the remainder of the school year. Extended learning opportunities will continue to be offered although the physical site will be closed. As you know, Bureau-funded Tribally Controlled Schools have the flexibility to close under their own auspices. BIE Operated and Tribally Controlled schools may continue to provide school lunches based on their local determination and the needs of the community. Bureau Operated School-level staff will continue to utilize the March 18 Employee Guidance Memorandum – COVID-19 Telework Status and the March 31 Guidance on the Use of Weather and Safety Leave, and Telework until subsequent guidance is provided from BIE Human Resources and/or DOI.

Please know there is no higher priority than protecting the safety of our students, employees and Tribal communities. For Indian Affairs COVID-19 information as well as access to BIE-specific information including BIE's academic waiver authority, please refer to:

<https://www.bia.gov/coronavirus>

Once again, we continue to monitor this situation closely in coordination with Tribal partners and national, regional, and local stakeholders. For inquiries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or utilize the BIE chain of command for field support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony L. Dearman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony L. Dearman  
Director