



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION
Washington, D.C. 20240

March 14, 2020

Dear Tribal Leaders, School Leaders, Staff and Parents,

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is actively involved in supporting the Federal response to COVID-19, including collaboration with Federal agencies including the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Education (ED) and Agriculture (USDA), as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Medical and public health experts across the Federal government are working to understand the virus, identify routes of exposure, and limit its spread in coordination with local, state, and Federal partners. Based on the recommendation of Public Health Officials and/or school administrators, and in coordination with state and local officials, to ensure the safety of students within our Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded facilities, I have made the decision to temporarily close Circle of Nations for TBD, based on 25 U.S.C. § 2001(d)(2)(B). These dates are subject to change based on conditions on the ground, so BIE will continue to communicate with our stakeholders to provide the most up-to-date information as soon as it becomes available.

Enclosed with this letter is guidance and the communications protocol regarding the closure of a BIE funded school location due to risks posed by COVID-19 that create facility conditions that may constitute an immediate hazard to health and safety. This guidance is specific to BIE and does not apply to existing DOI or Indian Affairs (IA) policies and guidance. Established closure procedures allow for timely response, efficient and accurate communication, organized operations, and the proper allocation of time and resources.

There is no higher priority than protecting the safety of our students, employees and communities. For the most current information concerning effective hygiene practices for limiting the spread of COVID-19, please refer to the CDC website for general information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>.

For school specific information from the CDC, please use the following webpages:

- Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

- K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools-faq.html>
- Checklist for Teachers and Parents: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/checklist.html>
- Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

Once again, we are monitoring this situation closely and will continue to provide updates to our community should further steps become necessary. For inquiries or concerns, please utilize your chain of command for field support and contact the BIE at crisisalert@bie.edu if you need direct support from BIE Central Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony L. Dearman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tony L. Dearman
Director