



Dr. STANLEY HARPER, SUPERINTENDENT



DANIEL LJILJANICH, SUPERINTENDENT



JEREMY BELFIELD, SUPERINTENDENT

October 25, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

As Superintendents of Salmon River CSD, LaFayette CSD and Niagara Wheatfield CSD, we are writing to you again in hopes that you will include a funding increase in your Executive Budget for Native Schools on Native Lands. There are three School Districts in NYS herein that educate Native American Indian students that live on the reservations. These three districts contract with the NYSED to educate our Native students in buildings owned by NYS.

There are three pervasive issues that illuminate inequity for our Native American Indian students as compared to their Non-Native peers being educated in school buildings within any other school district in NYS:

1. NYS has an annual budget of about \$3 million for capital projects to maintain the working order of 14 buildings in NYS, including three Native school buildings within the school districts of Salmon River, LaFayette and Niagara Wheatfield.
2. The current funding is not enough to properly maintain these school buildings at the same level as all other Public Schools in NYS.
3. As Superintendents we continue to seek and request equitable improvements, modernization for education and to make these NYS owned school buildings safe and efficient at the level required, only to be denied our requests to correct some of the worst building conditions in NYS. Additionally, each time we ask for funding to make Capital Project improvements to maintain these dilapidated Native Schools, we are told there is not enough funds.

More specifically, we are asking that you budget \$20 million for each of our three districts (for a total of \$60 million). For perspective, over the past decade our Non-Native school buildings have benefitted from a combined \$187 million of Capital Project work, while at the same time our Native schools have been provided less than \$10 million.

- **In the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District approximately \$55 million has been spent on 5 buildings Non-Native buildings (\$11 million per building) in the past 6 years. During that same time period NYS has invested less than \$200 thousand in the Tuscarora Indian School.**
- **In the LaFayette Central School District approximately \$21 million has been spent on Non-Native buildings the past 10 years. During that same time period NYS has invested less than \$1 million in the Onondaga Nation School.**
- **In the Salmon River School District approximately \$112 million has been spent on Non-Native buildings in the past 10 years. During that same time period NYS has invested less than \$8 million in the St. Regis Mohawk School.**

Our advocacy is to seek equality for our Native American Indian students to learn and thrive in the same type of safe and updated school buildings as their Non-Native peers across NYS. Simply said, we request that equitable funding be provided that allows Superintendent to complete the Capital Project work necessary to modernize the educational facilities and make the buildings efficient and safe for the Native American Indian students who attend them.

In the Spirit of Education,

Daniel G. Ljiljanich

cc: Brian Benjamin, Lt. Governor of NYS
Betty Rosa, NYS Commissioner of Education - commissioner@nysed.gov
Dr. Lester W. Young, NYS Chancellor of Education
Christina Coughlin, Assistant Commissioner - ccoughlin@nysed.gov
Senator Charles Schumer - senator@schumer.senate.gov
Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins - scousins@nySenate.gov
Senator Robert Ort - ortt@nySenate.gov
Senator Dan Stec - stecD@assembly.state.ny.us
Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes - peoplesc@nyassembly.gov
Assemblyman Bill Jones - jonesb@nyassembly.gov
Assembly Angelo Morinello - morinelloa@nyassembly.gov
Charles Dedrick, Executive Director of NYSCOSS - Charles@nyscoss.org
Dale Breault, District Superintendent of FEH BOCES - dbreault@feh.org
Matthew Cook, District Superintendent of OCM BOCES - mcook@ocmboces.org
Lynn Fusco, District Superintendent of Erie 1 BOCES - lfusco@e1b.org