

*Pierre Indian Learning Center*  
*3001 E. Sully Avenue*  
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March 12, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe  
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe  
Flandreau-Santee Sioux Tribe  
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe  
Oglala Lakota Nation  
Omaha Nation  
Rosebud Sioux Tribe  
Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska  
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate  
Spirit Lake Nation  
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe  
Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation  
Turtle Mountain Band  
of Chippewa Indians  
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska  
Yankton Sioux Tribe

As you know, media coverage of the coronavirus is widespread, and both the global and national situations are rapidly evolving. The intent of this letter is to provide parents with general information about the coronavirus, and with some specific details about the PILC's ongoing, longstanding efforts in addressing the spread of viruses. Two useful links are: CDC ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html)) and SD DOH ([COVID.SD.GOV](http://COVID.SD.GOV)).

**Brief summary**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals. The particular virus which is currently receiving media attention is a novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. This particular coronavirus can feature symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. While the outbreak is believed to have an animal source, most cases are now likely to be spread from person to person by droplets, when coughing or sneezing. As of the writing of this letter, it is our understanding that there are eight confirmed cases in South Dakota. Again, this is a new and evolving situation, and health authorities continue to carefully monitor how this virus spreads.

**Prevention**

As with other respiratory viruses, there are simple steps which can help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Frequent hand-washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then discard it in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects/surfaces

**Response**

Our school's custodians utilize strong practices for preventing the spread of viruses. Strategies which have proven useful during past virus outbreaks (SARS, H1N1) remain in-place, and include the frequent disinfection of surfaces such as desktops, tabletops, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, etc. These practices have been successful in minimizing the spread of influenza and other viruses, and an aggressive approach to surface disinfection will continue.

Further, beyond the quality academic instruction which they deliver, our faculty and staff also work with students on matters of personal and community hygiene. Students should expect frequent reminders about washing their hands, respectfully coughing/sneezing, etc.



Ultimately, nobody knows how extensive this outbreak will be, or how our region will be affected. In general, virus responses are directed by the SD Department of Health, but we may also receive direction from the State Education of Department, the CDC, the Governor, the Bureau of Indian Education or other levels of higher office. We will continue to monitor this matter closely, and will react as appropriate.

We are in a very unique situation, as there is no way to close our school and transport over 150 students home to 15 reservations in a three state area without completely exposing all of those communities to the virus should we have positive cases. We do not have any positive cases at our school right now, nor are there any diagnosed cases in Pierre.

We will not be sending students home unless we receive a directive from the BIE or the State Department of Health to do so.

In case of viral outbreak, we have a shelter-in-place plan. Students who test positive will be quarantined in the Health Office until they are symptom-free. Parents and guardians will be contacted should their child be diagnosed with the virus. If there are not enough beds to accommodate ill students, the old little girls wing will be turned into an infirmary. Additional staff will be assigned as needed to provide student care.

**In an effort to keep our students safe and to minimize potential exposure, students will not be attending outings or leaving the campus except in case of medical emergency. Student check-outs will not be permitted until further notice in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus.**

This situation was experienced several years ago, when we had an outbreak of students (and staff) with H1N1. For now, our best advice is to practice responsible prevention to the spread of this virus, to keep students who are ill separated from other students, and to consult medical caregivers if any of the symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus present. Together, we will successfully navigate this matter, as we have done with pandemics of years past. More information will be shared with parents as this situation evolves, and we look forward to your partnership as we all manage this fluid situation.

Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Veronica Morley  
Superintendent