

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament & SMIS Board of Directors Seek New Sponsor for St. Michael Indian School (SMIS)

Sr. Stephanie Henry and Sr. Theresa Chato visited SMIS from 9/16-9/21 to encourage all groups: faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and students to view the search for a new governing sponsor for SMIS as a positive sign that the school's Board of Directors, administrators and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (SBS) believe that SMIS has a vibrant future. Currently, there are 53 SBS with a median age of 82 years and there are no sisters on site at SMIS. However, this information does not put the school at risk. For nearly ten years now, the school has operated through lay leadership and the guidance of the SMIS Board of Directors.

Among the signs that SMIS has strong future potential include:

- 1) **The financial support** from Arizona for tuition of their state residents.
- 2) **Faculty and staff stability through increasing Navajo and other Native hires**
- 3) SMIS offers a unique curriculum that fosters both student development in **learning the Navajo language and having cultural values of the Dine'** incorporated in students' spiritual formation on campus as they deepen their understanding and practice of the **Catholic faith traditions.**
- 4) SMIS administrators, have **strengthened partnerships** with some universities to provide enrichment and career learning opportunities for students.
- 5) **Long-standing tradition for multiple generations from local families choosing SMIS as their preferred educational option.** This fact, along with the presence of SMIS alumni (about 30%) on the school's faculty assures the continuance of SMIS mission and values.

The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are preparing to pass the torch of the educational mission started by St. Katharine Drexel at SMIS to more locally based guidance that will continue the Catholicity and the Navajo heritage traditions and curriculum at SMIS. **This transition time can become an opportunity for all segments of the SMIS family to work together for the school's future. Faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and students have a role in assuring SMIS future. The SMIS Board of Directors and administrators need your support, ideas and involvement.**

You are not alone, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament remain prayer companions and advocates for SMIS transition into its sustainable future.

Sr. Stephanie Henry, SBS President
Sr. Theresa Chato, SBS Vice President
September 16, 2024

