



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council Delegate Jesus celebrates St. Michaels Indian School Class of 2026 at graduation ceremony



On Saturday, May 23, the St. Michaels Indian School celebrated the Class of 2026 commencement ceremony.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Saturday, Council Delegate Brenda Jesus joined graduates, families, friends, educators, and school officials at St. Michaels Indian School to celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2026 during the school’s commencement ceremony.

Delegate Jesus congratulated the graduates on reaching this important milestone and recognized their hard work, perseverance, and commitment to education as they prepare for the next chapter of their lives.

“Your accomplishment today is something to be proud of, but it is also a beginning,” Delegate Jesus said. “As you move forward, carry with you the discipline, resilience, and support systems that helped you reach this moment. Those same values will continue to guide you as you face new opportunities and challenges ahead.”

Salutarian Aiden Dennison reflected on the Class of 2026’s journey from eighth grade to graduation, highlighting the challenges of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic during their transition into high school. He noted that the class never had the opportunity to celebrate their eighth-grade promotion and spent much of their early high school years learning remotely.

“One of the biggest changes we had to adapt to was the pandemic,” Dennison said. “Our class never got the chance to celebrate our eighth-grade promotion, and we missed many of the

experiences that come with starting high school together. But through those challenges, we learned resilience, adaptability, and how to keep moving forward.”

Valedictorian Kaiden Ahasteen reflected on the perseverance and determination that carried him through high school, crediting the support of his family, friends, classmates, and teachers. He shared a lesson from his experience as a cross-country runner, recalling a time when he considered quitting but was encouraged by his father to keep going.

“When I first started cross country, I wanted to quit, but my father reminded me that quitting is the easiest thing a person can do,” Ahasteen said. “By staying with it and finishing each race, I learned to keep pushing myself when things got difficult. That mindset stayed with me throughout high school, and now, in what feels like the blink of an eye, I’ve reached this moment.”

Keynote Speaker and SMIS alumnus Dylan Moriarty encouraged graduates to pursue their purpose with courage and intention, reminding them that success is not only about knowing what to do, but understanding why they do it.

“Here is the thing that nobody tells you when you graduate. The world is about to spend a lot of time teaching you what to do and how to do it. School and your job will teach what and how, but nobody teaches you why,” Moriarty said. “The why is your job. It’s the part of your life that no one else can do for you.”

During the ceremony, graduates presented flowers as gifts of appreciation to their parents and support systems.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council congratulates the St. Michaels Indian School Class of 2026 on their graduation and achievement. The Council also extends its appreciation to the graduates’ families, educators, and all those who provided guidance and support throughout their academic journey, helping them reach this significant milestone.

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