



## Official Press Release from Santa Fe Indian School

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**Date:** June 29, 2021

### **Santa Fe Indian School alumna selected as the 4<sup>th</sup> SFIS Superintendent in the school's 44 years as a Tribally-controlled Bureau of Indian Education School and national leader in Indian Education**

SANTA FE, N.M. – Today the Santa Fe Indian School Board of Trustees announced that Ms. Christie Abeyta of the Pueblos of Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Ohkay Owingeh, and Isleta, and SFIS alumna, class of 1992, has accepted the position of Superintendent beginning July 1, 2021.

Ms. Abeyta is the first woman to be selected and only the fourth Superintendent to lead SFIS since it became the first school to establish tribal control through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1976. Ms. Abeyta follows Superintendent Roy M. Herrera, of Pecos NM, who announced his retirement in January 2021 after eight years leading the school.

In 2016, Ms. Abeyta earned a master's degree in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies with a focus on Indian Education from the School of Education at the University of New Mexico, where she also earned administrative licensure in 2021. Over the course of twenty years' service at SFIS, she has held many roles, including Middle School Assistant Principal, teacher, Lady Braves varsity basketball coach, and residential advisor.

SFIS Board of Trustee President, Raymond Aguilar (Santo Domingo Pueblo), "We are proud that one of our own SFIS graduates has risen to be an accomplished educator, fresh in her professional training, and ready to give back in service to the community."

Outgoing Superintendent Herrera, "The pandemic shows us every day how education as we knew it has permanently changed. As part of the middle school team, Ms. Abeyta persevered through COVID-19 remote learning and emerged with lessons that will guide SFIS into an Internet-enabled educational paradigm and what that means for Indian Education."

SFIS Board of Trustee Vice-President Glenda Fred-Weahkee (Pueblo de San Ildefonso), "Today's announcement is an exciting day for a Pueblo sister, daughter, and aunt who is

uniquely able to bring the teachings of Indigenous education taught within community as the foundation to increase student attainment in mainstream education.”

Retired Superintendent Joseph Abeyta (Santa Clara Pueblo, Isleta), “Christie Abeyta is an incredibly bright person who not only is grounded in the education of young people but is a person who lives her culture and practices her traditions.”

### Family of Pueblo Educators

After the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC, an inter-Pueblo governance body that was first documented to convene as far back as 1598), contracted operations to assume tribal control of the Albuquerque Indian School (AIS) from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1976. In 1979, AIS merged with the Santa Fe Indian School and relocated to its historic campus in Santa Fe, NM, where SFIS continues to exercise its right to educational sovereignty and self-determination as a tribally-controlled school.

- The effort to reappropriate SFIS as a tribally-controlled school included members of Ms. Abeyta's family:
- Ms. Abeyta is the niece of Delfin Lovato (Ohkay Owingeh, Santo Domingo Pueblo), the Chairman of the AIPC that led the contracting effort.
- Ms. Abeyta is the niece of Joseph Abeyta (Santa Clara Pueblo, Isleta), who was a member of the contracting team and the first SFIS Superintendent; his tenure as Superintendent lasted over 30 years.
- Ms. Abeyta is the daughter of Francis L. Abeyta (Santa Clara Pueblo, Isleta), who was the esteemed SFIS Braves basketball coach from 1990-1996; Ms. Abeyta followed in his footsteps as the SFIS Lady Braves basketball coach from 2015-2017.

### About Santa Fe Indian School

The Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) is a tribally-controlled school that is owned and operated by the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico. SFIS provides academic and student living programs for grades 7 through 12 and serves a population of approximately 700 students from the 19 Pueblos, the Navajo and Apache nations, and other tribes throughout the Southwest. SFIS was established in 1890 as a federal, off-reservation boarding school that was operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) before becoming a tribally-controlled school in 1976, after the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975. SFIS is a sovereign educational community that has built upon its rich cultural legacy to become a national leader in Native American education.

## SFIS Ideal Graduate

Santa Fe Indian School graduates will understand the issues facing tribes in the Southwest and will be committed to maintaining Native American cultural values. They will participate in the culture of their communities and will have the skills to pursue the education and careers that will benefit them, their families, and their people. These skills include: creative problem solving, using the analysis of complex problems, the synthesis of collected data, and the communication of clear solutions; critical, confident, independent and interdependent, life-long learning; working productively with all types of people and making good choices.