Rapid City Journal

Monday, November 16, 2026 • A Lee Enterprises, Incorporated Newspaper — Majority shareholder, David Hoffmann, Hoffmann Media Group • rapidcityjournal.com

## PHOTOS OF THE WEEK



**MADISON WILLIS**, JOURNAL STAFF

Meadowbrook Elementary School students wave at veterans during the school's drive-thru parade on Tuesday, Nov. 10.



**SHALOM BAER GEE**, JOURNAL STAFF

Last week, the South Dakota State Capitol underwent adornment for the Christmas holiday season. Trees lined the hallways as statues peaked through the greenery in the rotunda.



**MATTHEW NEUS**, JOURNAL STAFF

Wall quarterback Tanner Volmer drops back to pass at midfield in the Class 9B title game in Vermillion on Thursday, Nov. 12. Volmer helped lead No. 1 seed Wall past No. 2 seed St. Mary's 48-26 on Thursday, Nov. 12, at the DakotaDome to claim the Class 9B crown.

# Insufficient wellness funding a hurdle in supporting Native students

**MEGHAN O'BRIEN**
South Dakota Searchlight

The need for mental health and other wellness services among Native American students outpaces what's available with existing funding, according to data collected earlier this year and presented recently to South Dakota educators.

Dorothy Aguilera-Black Bear and Brooke Rumper, of the Central Comprehensive Center, asked South Dakota principals whose schools have at least one Native American student to identify the needs and available resources for those students. Of the 673 asked to participate in the survey, Aguilera-Black Bear and Rumper got responses from 157.

The pair shared their findings Thursday at the annual Indian Education Summit in Pierre. Federal grants helped fund the research, and the project is in partnership with the state Department of Tribal Relations and state Office of Indian Education.

"The capacity for schools to have those consistent needs be supported is really difficult," said Aguilera-Black Bear.

They're bringing their findings to tribal education directors to dig deeper into the data, "because they're very close to what's going on in the schools that serve their tribal citizens," said Aguilera-Black Bear. With the feedback from Thursday's presentation, her team is hoping to help educators create action plans to address their students' needs.

Nearly 60% of the survey respondents said their schools don't have enough funding to provide the mental health and reproductive health education and access that students need. Some respondents also mentioned a lack of student access to community elders and knowledge keepers, and a struggle to hire staff with culturally relevant or trauma-informed training.

The survey also showed that many Native students in South Dakota lack access to secure housing, reliable food

Please see **WELLNESS**, Page A3



**MEGHAN O'BRIEN**, SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Dorothy Aguilera-Black Bear speaks to attendees during a breakout session at the annual Indian Education Summit in Pierre, South Dakota, on Thursday.