

## **Buffalo Hide Academy:**

### **January 2018**

#### **Maria Grant: 1999-2017**

The Buffalo Hide family lost Maria Grant, 18, on Dec. 23. Maria was a senior and was in the alternative program for three years, having attended Project Choices back in the day. We are devastated to report that she died from completing suicide. Words cannot express how this loss affects our whole school, but suffice to say we are all feeling it on many levels. Maria was a great kid, and she will remain a part of our family for all time.

Maria's younger sister is a sophomore with Buffalo Hide Academy and she will obviously need additional love and support as she returns to school

When we lose young people, it brings up many painful thoughts and emotions whether we realize it or not. As a staff, our priority at this point is to be there for our students and for Maria's family and to take care of ourselves the best we can.

Truth be told, it is easy to slip into a negative headspace when something like this happens. Our staff members are authentically grieving for Maria and feeling this loss, as they should. It is critical now so more than ever that we honor Maria and our attachment break with her, and that we continue to keep her spirit with us in our work of supporting our student population.

Maria's suicide is also a poignant reminder of how badly supportive and nonjudgmental role models are needed here. We are all unique, as is our grieving process. There is no road map for overcoming grief, and contemporary grief and loss research has departed from the archaic "stages" to arrive at the notion of "cycles of grief." The grieving process, full of ups and downs, unfolds on a continuum rather than a bullet point checklist.

We will publicly honor Maria, because if we tried to stay hush hush about her death to proceed with business as usual, we would be stifling our students and preventing them from exploring



the very natural thoughts and feelings that come up when we lose people we love. We'd also be inadvertently telling them that having feelings about Maria's death is simply wrong by not providing the forum to work through this difficult time.....

We will be debriefing with all staff and students today, and we'll also be offering counseling both on an individual level and the group level. Our Honor Group is specifically designed to meet the needs of students experiencing grief and loss issues, which we will be offering beginning this week. And as always, we will continue to love our students unconditionally, and cherish this opportunity to be in their lives. Our main goal, as always, is to provide a nourishing environment that meets the diverse needs of our student population.

We will be here for them, we will grieve with them, and that will never change.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Maria and her family.

**Buffalo Hide's Focus on Writing:**

The Buffalo Hide Academy will be rolling out a school-wide intervention in which we focus on writing. Staff will create weekly prompts that cover a wide-range of themes from world events to issues that affect the Reservation to controversial sports topics. This intervention will be a standards-based approach with a different area of focus each day (free-write, peer-editing, final draft, etc.). All students will participate, with our Tier 3 students receiving additional support when needed. As this is a work in progress, we hope to roll this out early this month and make adjustments/changes as issues arise.