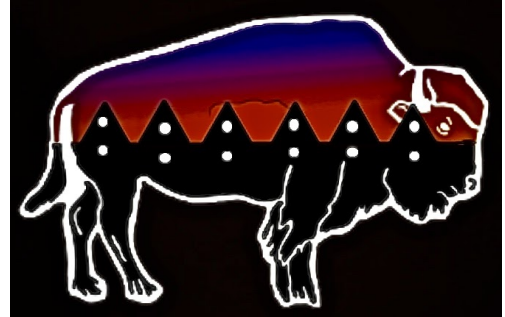


Buffalo Hide Academy

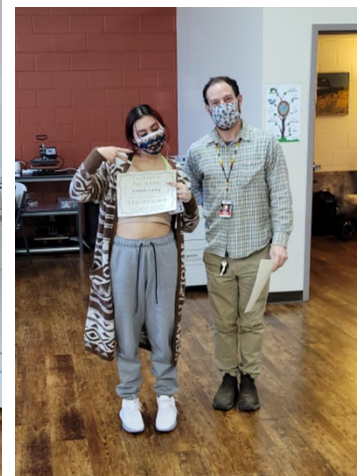
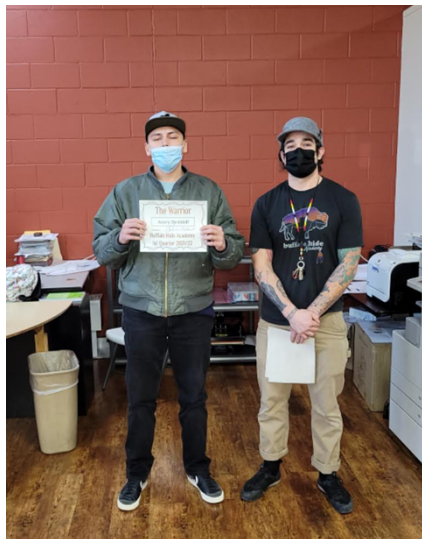
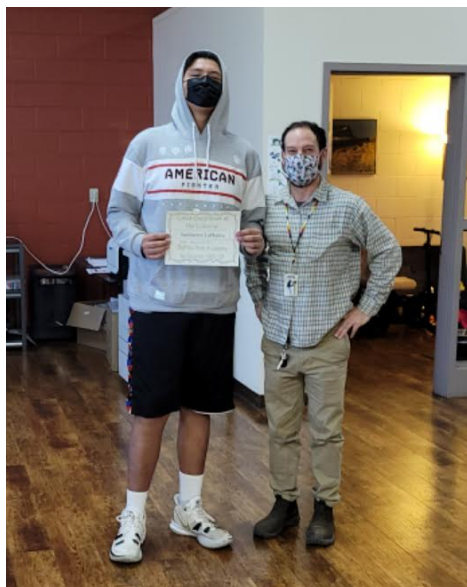
December 2021



Active Reflection and Reflective Action:

With 2021 in the rearview, we thought it would be a good time to reflect on the year that was, and to look forward to 2022. We are incredibly proud of each and every student who has walked through our doors since August. Coming back to in-person classes after 18 months of distance/hybrid learning is difficult enough, but when a student is having to overcome additional obstacles – i.e., anxiety, depression, childcare, work, credit deficiency – this can seem insurmountable. So, hats off to all BHA students that have made their education a priority and are working tirelessly to earn their diploma.

We want to use this report to highlight the four pillars of BHA and what our staff has been doing to assist student learning while also identifying the challenges faced AND how we will work tirelessly to provide a space for students to feel safe and supported.



Attendance/Engagement

One of our main goals for the second half of this school year is to increase student attendance. We assumed that coming out of last year this was going to be a major issue, but we we didn't realize how paralyzing it would be. By this, we mean that teachers are finding it incredibly difficult to pace lessons and units when so many students who were absent one day are present the next, and vice-versa. Counselors are having a challenging time maintaining consistency in their one-on-one sessions as well as their group classes. BHA staff are constantly telling students that there is a strong correlation between attendance and academic progress, so we are rededicating ourselves to getting more students in the building by any means necessary.

Chris Lewis and Lacey Salois will continue to monitor attendance on a weekly basis and check in with students that have missed 2+ days via phone, email, Facebook, etc on Monday mornings. Charlie Speicher and Jason Krane will keep working with students that are unable to make it in to the building by providing counseling and academic resources by meeting them where they are (at home, at work, in the community, etc). All teachers will continuously strive to create meaningful and engaging classes in order to hold students' attention and to motivate them to come back the next day.



Wellness

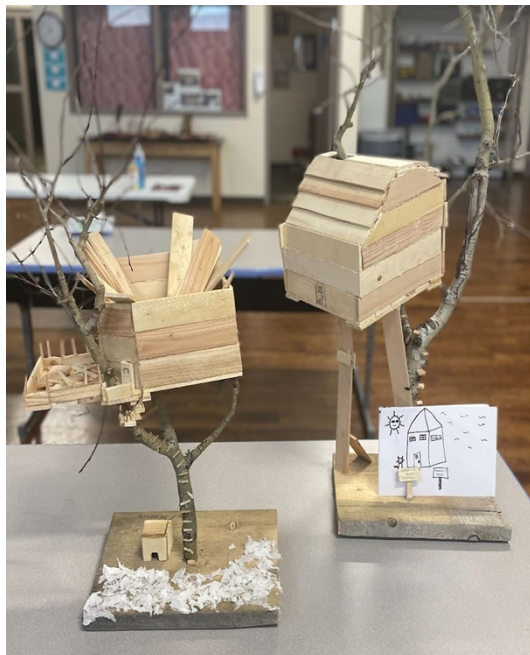
It is well documented that this pandemic has caused major disruption pretty much in every area of our lives, especially in terms of academic engagement and adolescent mental health. Our student population at Buffalo Hide has definitely experienced their share of pandemic related stress and hardship. In an effort to augment our counseling services and wellness interventions at BHA in response to these additional challenges, we as a staff have continuously realigned and modified our services in whatever ways the situation has called for. Our teachers tirelessly advocate for our students anyway, so it was an organic evolution to simply become more amenable and flexible as a school during the last 18 months. If we learned anything since Covid descended upon the world, it's that rigidity and inflexible school policy creates newer, bigger headaches for our students.

On the contrary, we've learned that our empathic connection and positive relationships with our students has served as the lifeline for many of them. We've adapted to gently assume that all of our students are in need of more compassion right now, not less, and that as a school we can set the tone for our community by being patient, supportive, and accommodating when challenges arise. These beliefs are supported by clinical science, as our counselors have continued to seek graduate coursework and extensive training in many of the issues that have been exacerbated by this pandemic. We are excited and proud to continue to develop our skills and abilities to respond to suicidal ideation, the continued exposure to potentially traumatic and overwhelming life events, as well as working to reconcile any academic deficit that's been created for any student in the last 18 months.

Academics/Learning

In an effort to continuously increase student engagement within classes, BHA teachers are constantly coming up with assignments and projects in which students are moving around and using their hands and bodies. One such example is in an Art class taught by Katie McDonald. In the week(s) leading up to winter break, she had students design and then create a tree house using locally harvested materials. Students took to this immediately and worked tirelessly in both phases of the project. And the results were stunning!

Due to the success of this and other projects done in all classes, teachers will continuously create hands-on assignments that are both meaningful and facilitate in the building of both academic and social skills.



Culture/Community

One benefit the pandemic had on strengthening our culture and community here at Buffalo Hide was the unexpected power of the regular home visits we practiced during remote learning last year. Bringing food, supplies, support, and homework to students' homes on a regular basis created unique opportunities to bond and create a sense of support in our community. We recognized this at the start of this year and designated two of our staff to continue the practice part of each day, but as a result of unexpected staff shortages this fall, we weren't able to continue showing up in person to our remote students' homes offering support. Our plan moving forward is to reintegrate home visits as soon as we have the staff and resources available to sustain the practice without feeling a shortage in school.

In addition to getting out into the community again, we have plans for having the community come into Buffalo Hide on a more regular basis in the form of guest speakers and collaborators. Jason Krane teaches a Healthy Minds class and has reached out to a couple local artists that are willing to come to his class and create projects that touch on some of the overarching themes of the class. We recognize that with the continuation of the pandemic these plans will need to be fluid, but we are excited to have more community members roaming the halls and working with students of the Academy.



BHA Student Spotlight

Name: Dusty Rose Larson

Grade: 12th

Years at BHA: 1

Fun Fact: She broke her first horse at age 12!

This is Dusty's first year at BHA and the only thing we wish is that we would've had more time with her. She is an incredibly hard worker, a descriptive writer, and is a joy to have in the building. Due to her strong work ethic, she is on pace to meet graduation requirements at the end of 2nd Quarter. Dusty isn't quite sure what she wants to do next, but she is incredibly interested in pursuing a career working with big machinery and possibly becoming a mechanic.

Dusty, we are so proud of all that you've overcome and the perseverance you've shown. We wish you nothing but the best and we're honored to have you as part of the Buffalo Hide family.

