



# SIX DIRECTIONS INDIGENOUS SCHOOL

2055 NM-602

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## Securing a Facility for Six Directions Indigenous School

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### I. Overview: A Sovereign Model of Education

Six Directions Indigenous School is a state-chartered public secondary school in Gallup, New Mexico serving primarily Navajo and Pueblo students in grades 6–12. We are a school grounded in cultural identity, academic rigor, decolonial pedagogy, and community responsibility.

### II. Unprecedented Transformation & Success

In just two years, Six Directions Indigenous School has accomplished what most would call impossible:

- ELA Proficiency increased from 6% to 56.6%, the most dramatic improvement of any charter school in New Mexico.
- 100% of our seniors graduated and applied to post-secondary programs in 2025.
- Our school moved from a Comprehensive or More Rigorous Support (CSI/MSI) designation to a Traditional designation in just one year.
- Vistas school quality scores surged, contributing directly to this shift.
- We were the only charter school in New Mexico to receive the PEC Turnaround Recognition Award for Excellence (June 2025).
- During the 2025 site visit from the PED Charter Schools Division, staff stated:

“This is the first time we have conducted a school site visit where there is absolutely nothing we would ask the school to change.”

- We combine academic success with a deeply decolonial, Indigenous-centered model—centering ancestral knowledge, critical consciousness, and multiple epistemologies alongside high performance.

- We teach both Zuni and Navajo languages daily, with land-based learning, restorative justice, and project-based instruction fully embedded in the curriculum.
- Students are the driving force of our school's transformation. They have:
  - Led public governance reform of our Board
  - Participated in local and state advocacy
  - Organized community events, forums, and public campaigns rooted in Indigenous identity, healing, and justice
  - Co-designed curriculum and restorative practices through youth council and advisory circles

This is not just a turnaround school. It is a liberation-centered educational model that works.

### **III. The Facility Crisis**

Despite all of this, we are housed in a privately-owned rental building. The space is insufficient, not culturally aligned, and vulnerable to landlord instability. We do not have long-term access, and our sovereignty in education remains physically unrooted.

### **IV. Structural Barriers to Facility Access**

1. **Not part of a district:** We have no access to bond funding, district-owned buildings, or local infrastructure investments.
2. **Not prioritized by PSCOC:** The Public School Capital Outlay Council deprioritizes charters without facility ownership, educational specifications, or matching fund capabilities.
3. **No inclusion in GOB:** General Obligation Bonds require legislative sponsorship and often favor large districts or politically connected projects.
4. **Restricted from owning:** As a state-chartered school, we cannot take out mortgages or lease-purchase agreements under state procurement law.
5. **No MOU process with tribes:** We serve Zuni and Navajo youth, but no legal framework exists for us to use tribal land or facilities through co-governance or compacting.

## **V. Why This Matters**

Our students are succeeding not despite their identity, but because of it. Six Directions proves that Indigenous education rooted in culture, language, and decolonial pedagogy does more than heal—it excels.

But we are still structurally denied access to permanent space. That contradiction undermines everything we've built and everything our youth deserve.

## **VI. Comparative Context: Unequal Access Among Local Charters**

While Six Directions Indigenous School has achieved historic success in both academic and cultural outcomes, we remain structurally excluded from infrastructure access that other charter schools in McKinley County benefit from.

- We do not own or lease-purchase our building, making us ineligible for transportation funding through the Public Education Department. This forces 100% of our enrolled tribal students—many commuting from Zuni, Coyote Canyon, Vanderwagen, Jones Ranch, and Gallup—to rely on inconsistent or family-provided transportation.
- Other charters in the region have access to long-term, publicly supported facilities:
  - Hózhó Academy secured its building through affiliations with Hillsdale College's national charter network.
  - Middle College High School is housed on the University of New Mexico–Gallup campus, where they lease instructional and administrative space, including school-owned portable buildings on university-leased land. Their access to UNM classrooms and shared infrastructure expands their instructional capacity and stability in ways unavailable to most charters—particularly Indigenous-run ones.
- Six Directions is the only public charter school in the region with entirely Indigenous leadership and a 100% Native student body. Yet we face the greatest restrictions in securing facilities, transportation, and long-term sustainability.

These disparities are not a result of poor planning or low performance—they are the outcome of a system that offers no pathway for Indigenous charter schools to access public infrastructure.

We are not asking to be an exception—we are asking to be included. Indigenous students deserve the same public investment in infrastructure as every other child. Our students have earned what the system has long withheld: a place to thrive, not just survive.

## VII. How the Indian Affairs Committee Can Help

While the committee cannot allocate capital directly, you hold **jurisdictional authority** and **legislative influence** over tribal-state education relationships. You can:

Strategy	Action You Can Take
<b>Capital Outlay Advocacy</b>	Individually sponsor or champion our inclusion in FY26 capital outlay or GOB proposals
<b>Public Recognition</b>	Issue a committee letter or resolution naming SDIS as a statewide Indigenous model
<b>Interagency Convening</b>	Call PED, PSCOC, IAD, and tribal representatives to develop a framework for facility access
<b>Tribal–Charter MOUs</b>	Support the creation of formal pathways for tribal facility use by state-chartered schools
<b>IEA &amp; Statutory Reform</b>	Recommend amendments to the Indian Education Act or charter law to allow facility partnerships

## VIII. Our Request

We ask that you stand with us and take the following actions:

- **Acknowledge Six Directions Indigenous School** as a national model for Indigenous education and academic excellence
- **Advocate for our inclusion in capital funding cycles** and elevate our facility needs in conversations with LFC, PED, and the Governor’s Office
- **Convene the appropriate agencies and tribal governments** to pilot a tribal–charter facility use framework
- **Advance policy recommendations** that ensure Native-led charters are not locked out of state infrastructure systems

Together, we’ve witnessed what is possible when Indigenous students lead, learn, and thrive. Our youth have risen. We ask the State not just to watch—but to rise with them, and to help root this success in a permanent home.