

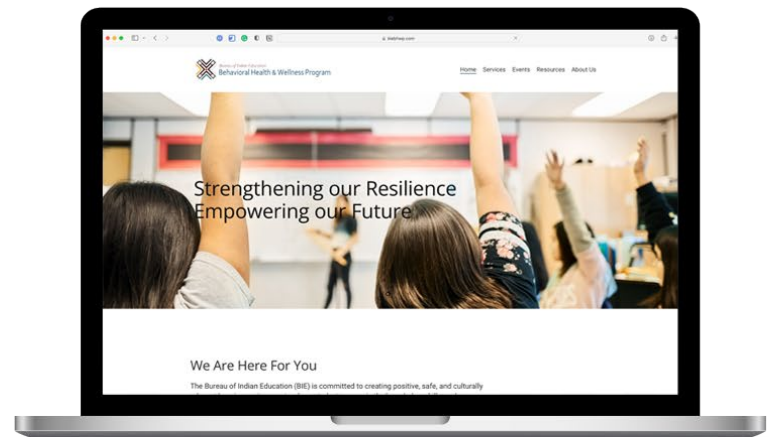
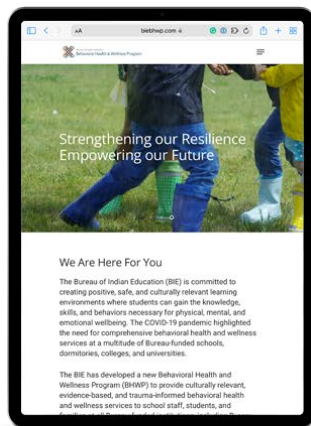
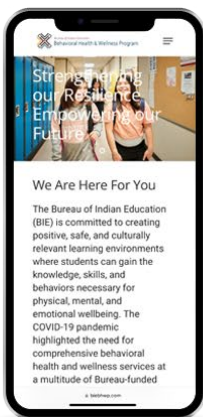


Bureau of Indian Education  
**Behavioral Health  
& Wellness Program**

August 01, 2022 | Issue 14

# The BHWP Messenger

*Culturally relevant, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness resources for schools, staff, students, and families.*



## BHWP's New Website is LIVE!

The Bureau of Indian Education Behavioral Health and Wellness Program (BIE BHWP) is thrilled to announce the launch of our new website! Please visit us at our new home: [www.biebhw.com](http://www.biebhw.com).

BHWP provides culturally relevant, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness services to school staff, students, and families at a multitude of Bureau-funded schools, dormitories, colleges, and universities.

Some of the great features of this site include information on our programs and services, as well as a library of resources for educators, parents, and students. News, announcements, digital stories, and articles about Indigenous health and wellness will be updated regularly. Our events page provides details and registration information for all upcoming program events including virtual Talking Circles, Mental Health First Aid training, and Continuing Education Unit (CEU) courses. The website also includes a Facilities Map, which shows the location of all Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Bureau-operated schools (BOS), Tribally-



controlled schools (TCS), Navajo District Schools, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities.

We invite you to explore the website and learn more about our program and how to access our services. The site is optimized for every device, making it simple and convenient to navigate. If you have any questions or suggestions, [please contact us](#).



## Virtual Talking Circles: August 2 and August 18, 2022

BHWP continues to offer two virtual Talking Circles each month. This month, Talking Circles will occur on Tuesday, August 2, and Thursday, August 18, 2022, beginning at 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

Our Talking Circles are available to all staff or employees from Bureau-operated schools (BOS), Tribally-controlled schools (TCS), Navajo District schools, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and employees within any BIE department. To get started, we recommend that you watch our Talking Circle public service announcement (PSA) video, which is available on the [BHWP YouTube channel](#). This will give an introduction to the basics of Talking Circles and encourage those who are interested to register! You can register by [clicking here](#) - make sure not to miss out because space is limited.

## Wellness Wednesday

The next Wellness Wednesday webinar will be held on August 10, 2022. The topic “Two Spirit and Native LGBTQ+ Resources and Support” will help participants identify available resources along with recognizing the progress and visibility of the Two Spirit community. Participants will also learn strategies to help LGBTQ+ students, helpful communication tips, terminology, and pronouns. The webinar will be led by BHWP Prevention Facilitator David Brave Heart and Digital Communications Specialist Blaine Leal.

Please [click here](#) for the event page to register. After registering for this event, an email confirmation will be sent with a meeting link to join via Zoom and a link to add the webinar to your calendar. *Note: If you did not receive a confirmation email, check your Spam or Junk email folders.* Webinar start times are 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

We look forward to seeing you there!



## Keep Calm and Carry On: Keeping Your Head in High Stakes Situations

By Vonnie Vayder, BHWP Education Specialist



**MY NAME IS VONNIE VAYDER**, and I am an Education Specialist specializing in behavior strategies. Recently I was asked, "What do you do?" My response was easy. I teach academic staff how to stay out of power struggles and instruct students on strategies for healthy problem-solving.

There are so many stories I have from the past 40-plus years, but I will share one that exemplifies strategies that worked well for me over my entire career.

One winter day after school, I was working in my basement classroom preparing for the next day when I heard footsteps coming down the stairs. I looked up from my desk to the back of the classroom and I saw a young man ("Tom") walking quickly toward me. Tom was 19 years old, stood at 6'2", and was quite athletic. He was visibly upset as he walked quickly in my direction. So many thoughts were running through my head.

Tom approached yelling profanities and threats, and when he got within a few feet of me, flight was my first reaction; however, since the door was behind Tom, I chose to stay where I was. While Tom's threatening behavior continued, I immediately went to my "behavior" training and did the opposite of my first reaction. The expression on my face (after years of practice) went to that of "no matter what you do, I will care for you." A facial expression like the one you might have when looking at a newborn baby.



Tom raised his fist, yelling and stepping closer to me. I had said nothing to this point; I just stood there and looked at him with a caring expression. I didn't change my expression as Tom thrust his fist toward me. Suddenly, he stopped his fist in mid-air and started to sob. After quietly pausing for a short period, I got a chair and placed it near him. He sat down still crying for what seemed like hours, but it was actually a matter of minutes. When he regained some composure, with his head in his hands, I spoke for the first time saying, "Help me understand?"



For the next 90 minutes, he explained that his mom had left. He didn't know when or if she would be coming home. He was locked out of his house, had no money (unfortunately, drugs were a part of his lifestyle), and was hungry. I said, "Can you think of a couple of solutions?"

Together we figured out some short-term solutions, got some food, and found a place for him to stay that night with a friend. He asked if I would take him to his friend's and said, "I won't

ever hurt you, I promise." When I dropped him off at his friend's home, I said, "Tom, nice job of not only controlling your anger but coming up with workable solutions. Nice work."

The basic strategies that have been life-changing and life-saving have been what I have used for over four decades. I have worked with many ethnic populations and age groups, and these strategies have been successful throughout. If you find yourself in a similar situation, follow the strategies below:

**"Always remember that *what* and *how* we say something is vitally important. It determines how a young person responds."**

1. Do the opposite of your first reaction.
2. Listen more than talk.
3. Provide positive comments and affirmations. State 10 affirming statements to one correction.
4. Provide choices more than giving directives.
5. Teach how you want them to behave.
  - "We are heading for recess now. If we go single file, hands to ourselves, and quietly, who knows how long recess may be. Bonuses are possible today."

Why these strategies work:

1. Kids BELIEVE they can read our minds, so open-ended sentences are a successful strategy.
2. Many youths only know two emotions, sad and mad. Teaching and modeling the continuum of emotions is essential.
3. Adults EXPECT young people to DO the right thing. Seldom do youths hear adults say positive comments or affirmations when they do the right thing. (Ex: excellent choice of words or good choice to sit quietly)
4. Power is what young people strive for, provide choices, and let the student decide.



Always remember that *what* and *how* we say something is vitally important. It determines how a young person responds. These strategies will work, but only if the adults change from what they have been accustomed to.

To learn more about Vonnie's strategies, please visit the BIE BHWP YouTube channel and watch [Wellness Wednesday: Supporting Students in the Classroom](#) and [Wellness Wednesday: Supporting Students in the Classroom: Part 2](#).

## Meet a Member of Our BHWP Prevention Team

### BHWP Education Specialist Vonnie Vayder, MSW, LMSW

**MY NAME IS LAVONNE VAYDER**, better known as Vonnie. I am currently serving as an educational consultant for Tribal Tech, LLC, providing classroom strategies for managing behavior and developing problem-solving skills for students in a positive manner.

My story began in rural Wisconsin on a large dairy farm where life was a struggle. My growing-up years were filled with abuse of all descriptions. However, I discovered my life was somewhat unique when I went to college. From that point, my life took a more positive direction.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of Wisconsin - River Falls and a Master of Science in Special Education from St. Cloud State University in Minnesota and then began

my first years of teaching. I taught physical education, driver's education, health, and psychology in those early years as well as served on the Minnesota State High School League committee organizing girls' sports in Minnesota where I coached basketball, volleyball, softball, and track.

After taking some time off to raise my children, I received an invitation to implement a creative program for a multicultural student population who struggled in the general education system. The model we developed went on to great success. So much so that I received requests from the Milacs Band of Ojibwa's Nay Ah Shing School and later the Sault Ste. Marie band of Chippewa Indian's Bahweting School to employ and then continue to develop our award-winning program.





In 2000, I helped develop a similar program for students with “at-risk” behaviors in Chisago County, Minnesota. As a result, all students participating in the Minnesota Basic Skills Test passed for two consecutive years, which was a challenge for students typically unsuccessful in their education.

My faith and spiritual life provide strength and peace daily. My family is my stress reliever and my first and lasting love. I have a son and daughter who are my life’s joy and I spend most of my free time with my five grandkids, ages 6-18. I also love sports, reading, playing guitar, and friends are also high on my self-care list, in addition to getting at least eight hours of sleep each night.

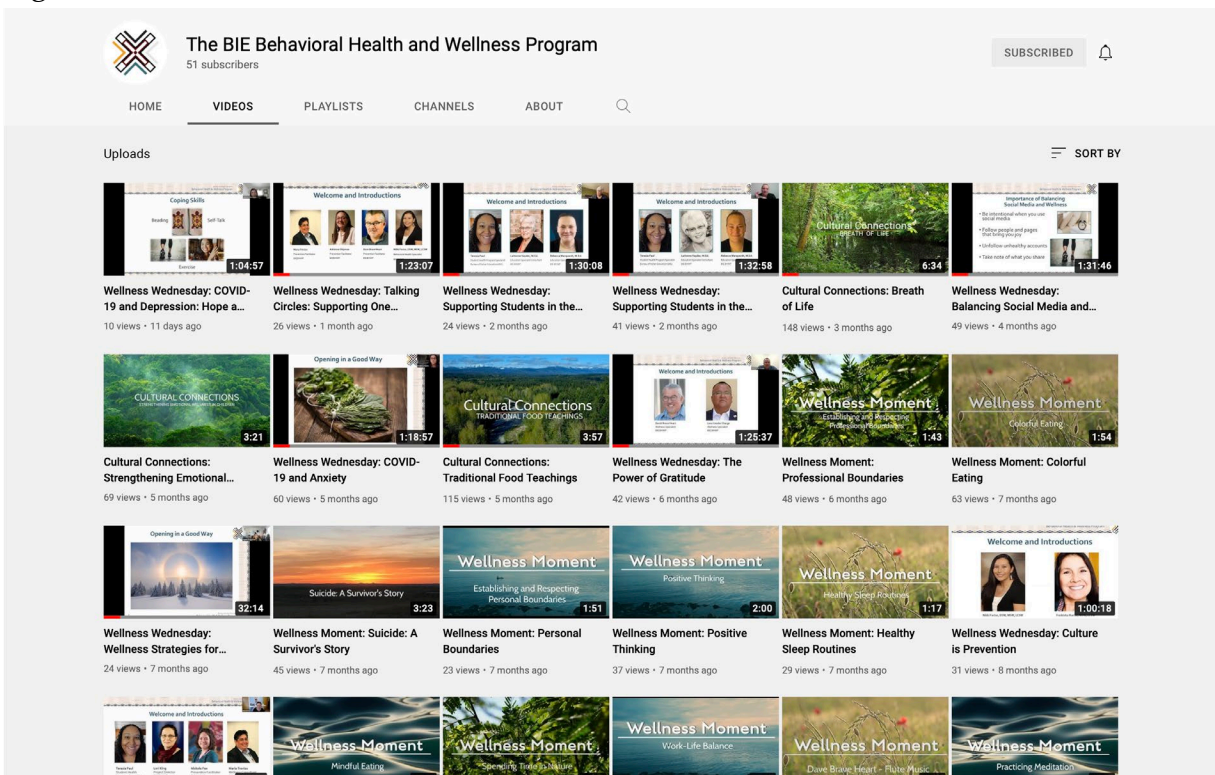
## Subscribe to the BHWP YouTube Channel



The BIE Behavioral Health and Wellness Program

SUBSCRIBE

Looking to improve your wellness? Subscribe to our YouTube channel and get access to the latest tips, tricks, advice, and support from experts in the field, like Vonnie Vayder! From Wellness Wednesday webinars to Cultural Connections, we've got you covered. What are you waiting for? [Click here to visit our channel!](#)



**We welcome any comments or suggestions for the BHWP Messenger.  
Contact us at [biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com](mailto:biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com)**