

## **Indian Teacher of the Year (k-12): Jordann Lankford**

Jordann, who is Gros Ventre and Little Shell, is the Academic Achievement Coach for American Indian Students for Great Falls Public Schools. She earned her bachelor's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in Social Studies from the University of Montana and worked as the Indian Education for All Coordinator for Sunburst Schools for before returning to Great Falls.

Jordan's nominator wrote, "Jordann has created a learning environment that is positive and effective for a group of students who were not successful in a traditional high school. Jordann is the lead teacher for a pilot project within Great Falls Public Schools which was launched this year to help increase graduation rates for American Indian students. This new project, named interTribal Immersion School, has seen students return to school after having dropped out, increased their attendance from below 5% to 80%, and engage student learning in ways they have never done before. Jordann connects with administration, fellow teachers, and her students through her quick wit and intelligence. Her students truly love her because they know she loves them. Which is the key for her success in all that she does. She is a role model for our students in so many amazing ways and truly deserves this recognition."

In 2015, Jordann was recognized for her efforts as one of the "5 under 35" award recipients. This initiative was created to recognize young adults in the Great Falls community whose attitudes and actions are helping to change the perception of the community for the better. Jordann also caught the attention of the former Montana Superintendent of Schools, Denise Juneau, and was invited to join the Graduation Matters Montana team as a Project Coordinator for the 2015 - 2016 school year. In that capacity, she was able to reach a wider audience with her passionate work and was awarded the Governor's Award of Excellence with the rest of the team.

Jordann is described as "Kid Velcro," because the students love to be around her and her kindhearted, appealing ways. Her nominator writes, "Our schools need committed and skilled people, such as Jordann, to help lead efforts to provide American Indian students success in the classroom and help them achieve high school graduation. Jordann believes in the power of education and she is a great advocate for a quality public education for all students."

Jordann is creating change for American Indian students with passion and thoughtfulness and is a strong advocate for Indian Education.