

Suggestion to rename Kit Carson Elementary School

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 07 August 2020 04:01



Request highlights Carson's campaign against Navajo people

SANTA FE — Senator Linda M. Lopez, D-Albuquerque, has requested that the name of Kit Carson Elementary School be changed.

“Changing the name of Kit Carson and renaming the school to honor a local teacher or community leader is an important part of understanding history in a fuller context and empowering a community to take ownership and recognize one of our own,” Lopez said.

In 1863, Carson, on behalf of the federal government, led a scorched-earth campaign against the Navajo people, burning homes, killing livestock and destroying food supplies. The following year, troops under the command of Carson rounded up thousands of Navajo men, women and children and forced them to march several hundred miles from their homes in Arizona and New Mexico to a reservation at Bosque Redondo in the southeastern part of the state. Thousands of Navajos died along the way and nearly a third of those living there died of disease, exposure and hunger over the course of the following years.

While he is remembered as a frontiersman in some versions of history, he is also noted for leading forces to suppress the Navajo, Mescalero Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche tribes by destroying their food sources.

Suggestion to rename Kit Carson Elementary School

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 07 August 2020 04:01

“This is not about erasing the past, but we should acknowledge the hurt and damage that can be caused by putting historical figures in positions of reverence without regard to the complete story,” Lopez said. “Elementary school-aged students in particular should feel proud to walk the halls of their schools. Imagine what it might feel like for our Native American children to enter the doors of an institution named after the man responsible for the killing of their ancestors.”

As the renaming of a school is a community process and conversation, Albuquerque Public Schools will be taking steps to educate the community about this request, the historical figure of Kit Carson, the role of historical memory in our modern lives, and the role of school names in the modern context of anti-racist education. A panel for conversation on the topic is in the process of being set up to present to the Kit Carson ES Instructional Council/PTA who can approve or not approve the request.

If approved, a petition will be circulated to student families and staff.

If the petition receives enough qualified signatures (60 percent of student families and staff), it will go before the school board for final approval.