

Dawi Cofer Dakhóta Studies Teacher

Where did you grow up?

Chattanooga, Tennessee, southern end of the Appalachian Mountain chain.

What were your experiences in High School?

They weren't very positive, I was one of the only Native students in my school and the faculty didn't understand my specific needs for learning, so I left high school at 16 and got my GED 2 years later.



Where did you go to school?

Ooltewah and East Ridge, Tennessee (Suburbs of Chattanooga), as well as the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities.

Why did you become a teacher / para / other?

My personal dream has been to teach young people the things that were not available or taught to me growing up as a Native.

Where did you work before Augsburg Fairview Academy?

The Dakota lapi Okhodakichiye, a non-profit dedicated to creating Dakota language materials for the home and classroom, as well as providing learning camps for Dakota language.



Why did you choose to work at Augsburg Fairview Academy? Why a charter school and not a public school?

AFA seemed like a perfect fit for my personal philosophies regarding working with youth. Public schools are much more rigid and unforgiving, and I personally feel like I have Public School PTSD :)

What was your first impression of Augsburg Fairview Academy?

The staff of AFA has different relationships with the students than I've seen in my own educational career, and there is a brighter attitude for many who come here dedicated to getting their diploma.

What has surprised you most about working at Augsburg Fairview Academy?

How easy it has been for me to level with the students and get deep conversation where they feel equal and supported.

What do you like about Augsburg Fairview Academy?

The Staff is very focused on equity, and culture is held high.

What don't you like about Augsburg Fairview Academy?

We can't smudge inside.

What do you wish other people knew about Augsburg Fairview Academy?

That our youth have paid incentives to recruit their friends if their friends stay.

What would you say are some of your strongest beliefs about education?

That young people be treated like people who have problems just like the rest of us, and that those problems often come into the classroom where they should be acknowledged and even addressed at times.



What's your personal philosophy on what should be done about education?

Young people should have pretty much no testing until they become teens, and that they should have outdoor education as much as possible. I personally think that if Charles Eastman could grow up in the pre-colonized free country until he was a teenager, and then become a doctor after attending school, that any young person can do the same if they so please.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about enrolling at Augsburg Fairview Academy?

Take every Native Studies class! :)

What are your hobbies?

I study plants, Dakota language, I like to sing Dakota songs, I make bows and arrows, as well as craft many other useful things.



If you weren't working at Augsburg Fairview Academy, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

I would do my best to be busy creating Dakota language curriculum and traveling to visit with fluent native speakers and record them.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I can talk to dogs, but I can't tell you what they say. That's a secret between us.

How would your students describe you?

Dakhótaŋča