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Join AIGC for the 40th Anniversary at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (October 3-11)

The American Indian Graduate is now available online at www.aigcs.org

An easy way for federal employees to donate — 11514 American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC)
AIGC would like to thank the generous artists and donors who contributed to our silent auction at the Miss Indian World Pre-Reception event.

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President’s Message

Inviting Graduate Students

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AIGC’s applications for 2009-2010 fellowships and scholarships are up 20% from the 2008-2009 academic year. While this is very exciting news, AIGC awards all applicants who meet all of the eligibility requirements. This means each scholarship or fellowship recipient will receive less funding for the current academic year. Right now, the average loan for an AIGC fellow is $11,000 annually and the average AIGC award is a mere $3,300. The two primary reasons for this shortfall; the economy is still in recovery mode and the return on investment, from endowments, has taken a very large hit.

Giving Opportunities

There are many ways in which to give to AIGC and we encourage you to visit the website for detailed donor information:

www.aigcs.org

- Make an online donation or contact the office directly at (505) 881-4584. To mail your donation, please send to: AIGC, 4520 Montgomery Blvd. NE, Suite 1B, Albuquerque, NM 87109
- Corporate and event sponsorships, in-kind donations, etc., may be coordinated with the AIGC Development Office by calling (505) 881-4584.
- Specify AIGC in your CFC contribution in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #11514)
President’s Message

Dear Graduates and Friends:

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC). Our 40th Anniversary “Kick-off” celebration took place on February 7 and was sponsored by the Public Service Company of New Mexico and hosted by Albuquerque the Magazine. Several dignitaries, students, alumni, fellows and AIGC friends and supporters were in attendance. Joe Garcia (Ohkay Owingeh), President of the National Congress of American Indians, was a keynote speaker. AIGC recognized Dr. Joe Sando (Jemez Pueblo) for his work in higher education and as one of the founders of AIGC. Albuquerque’s Mayor, Martin Chavez, signed a proclamation recognizing this milestone anniversary and AIGC’s mission. In addition, Ben Lujan, Speaker of New Mexico’s House of Representatives, sponsored a certificate in New Mexico’s 49th Legislature, extending gratitude and appreciation to the AIGC for its profound contributions to New Mexico and the nation.

On April 23rd, in conjunction with the Gathering of Nations, AIGC hosted a Miss Indian World pre-reception, with entertainment and a wonderfully diverse silent auction, featuring generous contributions from numerous local merchants and many of New Mexico’s finest Native artists. AIGC’s ‘grand finale’ celebratory event for the year will be held for nine days, from Saturday, October 3 through Sunday, October 11, during the International Balloon Fiesta in Albuquerque. Many of the same artists who contributed to the silent auction at our April event have already volunteered to contribute in October. During this event, in addition to fundraising, we will focus on educating the public, both national and international attendees, on Native culture and traditions, as well as the role AIGC plays in helping provide higher education opportunities to present and future generations of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

With each of these 40th Anniversary events it is amazing to realize that to date AIGC has awarded over $44,000,000 dollars to over 15,000 students. As I write this, I am remembering how incredibly thankful and fortunate I felt when I learned I would be the recipient of a financial award from AIGC, while attending law school at the University of New Mexico.

As AIGC continues its outreach programs and the number of students applying to AIGC escalates, it is proving more and more difficult to make a significant contribution to students as college expenses continue to dramatically increase. With only .05 percent of mainstream philanthropic dollars going to American Indian issues and only a portion of that being designated specifically for education, the projected debt for Indian students, who complete a graduate or professional degree, is so staggering that we are losing incredibly bright, talented students with promising futures because the financial resources are simply not available. Of all the ethnicities, American Indian and Alaska Native students obtain the lowest number (less than one percent*) of higher education degrees in the nation, primarily due to lack of funding.

It is only with through the generous, continuing contributions from our friends and supporters that we are able to continue our mission: “to build, promote and honor self-sustaining American Indian and Alaska Native communities through education and leadership.”

Elizabeth Rodke Washburn (Chickasaw)
President, AIGC Board of Directors

* Source: U.S. Department of Education
Indian Lore and Indian Studies

by Sam Deloria

We used to be about the only people with lore. You never heard people saying, “I’m taking my fellowship in Italy and studying Italian Renaissance Lore.” Or “My major is English Lore.” So it is undoubtedly a major advance in our relentless march to civilization, acceptance and even prestige that we have moved from “lore” to “studies.” It’s like Fine Art, and Indian art, which presumably is Not So Fine Art.

But we’re not there yet. I think “studies” refers to something inter- or cross-disciplinary, the concept focusing perhaps too much on this cross-cutting characteristic, and overlooking that virtually any subject, properly examined, is cross-disciplinary. You don’t hear of majors in French Literature Studies or English History Studies (of course, these days you don’t hear much of those majors anyway). Wait, maybe while we Indians and our lore-studies are moving in the direction of the majors of my youth (or “Ute”, as they say in the movies), the things people major in are becoming more like Indian studies — communications, criminal justice: those are things that, in my day, people did after getting a degree but didn’t, couldn’t, major in.

Every society has ways of passing two kinds of things down from one generation to the next: how to make a living; and how to be a “Human Being”, in the words of Old Lodge Skins. In the larger category of how to be a human being, our kind of people, we include the origin and history of the people, spirituality (what used to be called “religion”, but for some reason isn’t any more), and things like that, and that inescapably includes a bit of bragging and a bit of favoring ourselves over the people who live over the mountain. All societies do that. It takes away from the purity of the study of history, perhaps, but historians by and large have learned to live with it.

Societies generally assign these intergenerational responsibilities in part to various family members and in part to specialized people, and in various ways the how-to-make-a-living may be combined with the who-we-are. Much of the quarrel we have had for the last hundred years or more with the educational system has to do with our contention that those who have historically offered us education have sold it on the basis that it would help us make a living, but instead have used it to indoctrinate us to accept THEIR who-we-are as our own, particularly when a good share of their positive who-we-are about themselves refers to us negatively.

How to make a living — that is pretty scientific, verifiable. You tell a kid that to hunt a buffalo you just walk up to him and whack him with a rock, if he lives through his first hunt he is going to lead seminars about your worth as a hunting instructor. You tell a kid he doesn’t need to be able to write clear English, sooner or later he or she is going to come back and correct you.

On the other hand, you can get away with just about anything at all plausible if you teach in the who-we-are department. That leads me again to Indian Studies and Indian-controlled institutions. I have been sending young Indian people to law school for nearly 40 years, and for two years here at AIGC I’ve been sending them to all kinds of grad schools. In that time, a time of great
progress in Indian and Native Self-Determination, our young people have become much more conscious and informed about who they are, but I don’t know that we are doing a much better job of getting them ready to make a living. We may have overcorrected; we have to do both; we need to talk about how we balance the two kinds of education, instead of assuming that our present approach to the who-we-are is enough.

Am I being too rough on Indian and Native-controlled institutions? Yes, and for the same reason it makes news when the preacher gets caught up in the raid on the bawdy house. We hold certain people and institutions to higher standards because they claim special privileges based on those standards. Of course, public and other non-community schools do a bad job, too, but they don’t claim the expertise that we do.

We claimed control over education based on our right to control our own schools just like our non-Indian neighbors, and also on the ground that as Indian and Native people we would have a better understanding of how to balance the practical and the inspirational aspects of education. But I don’t think we have been all that good at it and I think we have sold our own kids short in the process. Our young people are capable of performance at a very high level if we know how to get it out of them. We do it every summer at PLSI. But too many of our institutions take the easy way out and fail to challenge the students, instead filling them with excuses for failure.

I think the most important question in Indian education is how to balance the need to equip students with practical skills against the larger role of inspiring students to become good citizens of the various societies in which they belong. But try to get into a conversation about that with an Indian educator. It is either the minutia of Title This and Title That, or it is a mantra about the superiority of Indian cultures over all other cultures in the history of the human race. Maybe I’m talking to the wrong people and reading the wrong things. I hope so. But if that is the explanation and, if we are doing a great job of preparing our young people to make a living in this society and everyone knows it but me, then please someone clue me in so I can move on to misunderstanding something else. ♦

Four Directions Summer Research Program
Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Our vision is simple...
that a handful of talented Native American college students will leave with new skills, experiences, and knowledge that can be used to help themselves, their communities, and future generations of Native peoples from all of the Four Directions.

For program eligibility and application, visit us online at WWW.FDSRP.ORG.

APPLICATION AVAILABLE
November 2, 2009
DEADLINE
February 19, 2010

QUESTIONS
FourDirections@partners.org
Richard Meyers (Oglala Sioux), who received his doctorate in Cultural Anthropology from Arizona State University (ASU) this spring, is one of less than 100 enrolled American Indians ever to receive an anthropology Ph.D. “Without the support I received at ASU, I don’t know if I would have finished my degree,” he says. “The Native support groups, my chair, project director and the American Indian faculty and staff on campus were all fundamental to my success.”

Meyers is now the only enrolled American Indian with an anthropology doctorate working at the U.S. Department of the Interior for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Office of Public Affairs. He works as a writer/editor on matters relating to Indian Country and its intersections with American mainstream, as well as teaching adjunct at American University in Washington D.C.

With 1,400 American Indians registered at ASU, including over 250 master’s and doctoral students, the support that Meyers’ experienced is not unique. Thirty faculty members and over 150 professionals and staff at ASU are Native American. Student support groups, partnerships with some of the 22 federally-recognized tribes in Arizona and other university resources dedicated to student success have resulted in ASU being consistently ranked among top U.S. universities in the number of doctorates and master’s degrees awarded to American Indians.

Significant programs specifically tailored for American Indian students include law, education and nursing, as well as numerous academic and social groups.

The Indian Legal Program (ILP) (www.law.asu.edu/ilp) is one of the largest groups of Indian law students in the nation. Part of the ASU Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, ILP provides legal education, scholarship and public service to tribal governments, helps train Indian lawyers and promotes an understanding of the differences between the legal systems of Indian nations and the United States. ILP professors serve tribes as Appellate Judges for several reservations in the U.S. and some alumni currently serve in tribal government and tribal courts.

“The ILP has worked hard to create a supportive community within the law school,” says Kathlene Rosier, Director of the program and a member of the Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma.

“The reason I came to ASU’s law school was their Indian Legal Program (ILP),” says Raymond Campbell of the Gila River Indian Community (Pima). He graduated with his Juris Doctorate (JD) this spring. “There is a real sense of community among the ILP, from the professors down to the students.”

The Indian Legal Clinic, guided by Director, Patty Ferguson-Bohnee (Pointe-au-Chien), provides law students with the opportunity to participate in real cases dealing with Native people and Indian issues. One of their recent successes was enabling an elderly Navajo grandmother in northern Arizona to re-establish the right to cast her ballot after new voter identification laws went into effect.
For teachers in Indian country, ASU has several practical options for obtaining a master’s or doctorate, without leaving their home or job.

The Native American Educational Leadership (NAEL) program (education.asu.edu/nael) offers an accelerated doctoral (Ed.D.) degree exclusively for practicing administrators and teacher leaders. The rigorous, sixty-six (66) semester hours, accelerated program is geared to the needs of working administrators and teacher leaders. ASU faculty travel on a twice-weekly basis to Window Rock, Arizona to teach 23 courses, to students who are living and working on or near the Navajo Nation.

Regina Bitsoi (Navajo/Diné) graduated this spring with a doctorate in Educational Administration and Supervision through the NAEL program. She plans to become an administrator when the opportunity is available. “I would like to make a difference for my Navajo children, as well as all children, so they can be successful in their lives.”

Navajo teachers can also get a master’s degree in Education Administration through the Navajo School Administrators Preparation Program (NASPP), funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. The program prepares administrators for Navajo schools through a collaboration between ASU and Diné College (cdte.dinecollege.edu) and courses are taught on or near the Diné College campus in Tsaile, Arizona.

Jo Ann McClanahan (Navajo) earned her degree entirely online through a long distance learning program (asuonline.asu.edu). Her tuition was provided by the Tsaile, Arizona school, at which she teaches, and she was able to continue teaching as she earned her degree. Her first trip to the ASU campus was for commencement, when she received a Master’s degree in Elementary Education from the ASU College of Teacher Education and Leadership “This provides a nice service for Indian students who can’t come to ASU,” she says.

The American Indian Students United for Nursing (ASUN) program (nursing.asu.edu/asun) has, as its goal, to increase the number of Native American nurses providing care in Indian communities. The program was established by a grant from the IHS and provides scholarships...
to undergraduate nursing students who will work in IHS upon graduation. The local chapter of the Native American Nurses Association has partnered with ASUN to provide mentors to students and many ASUN graduates have become nurse leaders.

Social and cultural nurturing are also included in the program’s goals, as well as academic support for both undergraduate and graduate nursing students. “Students can get lost in an educational system of over 60,000,” states Jewel Bishop (Gila River Indian Community), who just completed her first year of Ph.D. studies in Nursing and Health Innovation. “ASUN sponsors events such as talking circles, holiday dinners and a reading day blessing, as cultural support to students in a rigorous academic program. Another component of the program is the nurse elder, who is available to meet with students for encouragement and inspiration.”

At the center of support for Native American students at ASU is the office of Peterson Zah (Diné), Special Advisor on American Indian Affairs to ASU President Michael Crow. Dr. Zah, (www.asu.edu/president/zah) who was elected the first President of the Navajo Nation, works to recruit, retain and increase the graduation rates of Native American students, as well as increasing the communication between ASU and American Indian tribes. “Our close connection with the ASU President and our commitment to the tribal communities gives us high visibility and integrity among Indian people,” says Dr. Zah. “Education can’t solve everything, but it will help us find solutions to many challenging issues that face us.”

As Coordinator of Projects and Operations, Jaynie Parrish (Diné) assists Dr. Zah. “In most cases, we are the first stop that many students and their families make when they want to connect with ASU,” she says. “Dr. Zah is a grandfather, he’s traditional, a Tribal community leader, a mentor and he truly cares about the well being of students.”

The office has awarded a total of 196 scholarships to Native American students since 2004. Dr. Zah has helped countless students attain employment, as well as academic and financial aid opportunities, says Parrish. “He’s just a great resource with a lot of good networks. He wants the students to be real contributors and informed leaders who can work to improve tribal communities.”

Left: Elfreda Marie Benally (no caption provided). Center: Regina Bitsi (Navajo), Ph.D. Educational Administration & Supervision, at spring Commencement. Right: Rachel Carroll, a Northern Cheyenne Traditional Healer, gives the Reading Day Blessing for American Indian Students United for Nursing (ASUN). Carroll has a master’s degree in education and worked for many years in ASU Student Services.
A broad range of social and academic support and resources are available through the American Indian Student Support Services (AIISSS) (aisss.asu.edu). Academic support includes tutorials, writing assistance, computer access, printing/copying services, skills workshops, study areas, meeting space, connection with faculty, academic performance tracking and a graduate support office.

Personal support includes individualized advising and counseling, referrals for services, cultural presentations and social events. “This all culminates in the recognition of student achievement through the Student Recognition Banquet, a display of student art/projects and the American Indian Convocation,” says Director, Michael Begaye (Diné). “In the past two years, the number of students with low academic performance has decreased and the number of students graduating has increased.”

Just a few of the other resources for American Indian students at ASU include:

- **American Indian Studies Program (AIS)** broadens the knowledge of students interested in the histories, languages, cultures, arts and contemporary situations of American Indian nations/people. (americanindian.clas.asu.edu)
- **The Center for Indian Education (CIE)** is an interdisciplinary research and service organization. (coe.asu.edu/cie)
- **American Indian Programs** at ASU Polytechnic campus collaborates with tribal communities and other partners to improve educational opportunities, emphasizing science, mathematics and technology. The One Nation Club at Polytechnic offers a social component with cultural activities, guest speakers, workshops, community service projects and fundraising events. (www.poly.asu.edu/aip)
- **The Labriola National American Indian Data Center**, part of the ASU Libraries, is a research collection of historic information on government, culture, religion, social life and tribal history. (lib.asu.edu/labriola)
- **Native American Achievement Program (NAAP)**, within the Multicultural Student Center, is a specialized program primarily designed to increase the persistence and graduation rates of Native American students from three Arizona tribes. (www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/mmss/msc/naap.htm) 

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**Graduation 2009**

Fifty-six American Indian graduate students received their degrees from ASU in spring 2009, including seven (7) Ph.D.s, nine (9) juris doctorates and forty (40) master’s degrees. Over 120 American Indians received their bachelor’s degrees. President Obama was the featured speaker at commencement and students found echoes of their Native philosophies in his speech:

“I want to thank the parents, the uncles, the grandpas, the grandmas, cousins—Calabash cousins—everybody who was involved in helping these extraordinary young people arrive at this moment.”

- President Obama

“President Obama included thanking your cousins,” says Gerald Vandever (Diné), Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction. “That’s the first time I’ve heard that from a president—he knows that extended family is very important.”

“So, Class of 2009, that’s what building a body of work is all about—it’s about the daily labor, the many individual acts, the choices large and small that add up over time, over a lifetime, to a lasting legacy.... it’s cumulative; it deepens and expands with each day that you give your best, each day that you give back and contribute to the life of your community and your nation.”

- President Obama

“He touched upon how you can’t really be successful without getting help and giving back,” said Charlton Long (Diné), Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction. “Somebody has to sacrifice something for the future. Obama just hit it—trying to be there for someone else, not always just looking out for yourself.”

“His message was inspirational,” said Kishan Lara (Hupa/Yurok), Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction. “He talked about how our body of work is not completed and we still have a long journey ahead of us. That’s a real Native philosophy, because we are here because of our ancestors, because of our history, because of our parents, our grandparents and all our support. The majority of us have come here because we want to be instruments of positive change in Indian country and we want to make that contribution.”
The first evening consisted of introducing ourselves to other participants in the program and listening to the schedule faculty speakers. One of the speakers, Sweeney Windchief, who spoke that evening said, “You all think graduate school is difficult, but when you look around this room and see all the Natives, you think to yourself, this doesn’t seem so bad.” It was empowering to be surrounded by a large number of Native students and faculty who have also struggled to reach this level of success in academia.

The thought of going to graduate school was intimidating for me. I was uncertain as to where to begin and which school requirements deserved additional attention. I was beginning to think that maybe I did not even need to go, that maybe attaining my undergraduate degree would be satisfactory. Attending the GH program and seminars clarified a lot of the confusion. There was a GRE workshop with Jay Rosner, from the Princeton Review. His workshop provided useful study questions.

I questioned whether I should go to graduate school. My answers verged from not sure to maybe; there was no certainty on my part. I wondered how or why I should enter graduate school, when I did not feel confident or certain about what field of study to go into and other considerations such as, which school is right for me? I had many questions and finally began to find some of the answers at the Graduate Horizons (GH) program. I was unaware of the GH program until my mentor, Gretchen Fletcher, advised me to participate in the program. Prior to attending the GH program, there were four tasks I had to accomplish: first, write a personal statement; second, submit a resume; third, complete a sample graduate school application and, finally, to finish a practice GRE test. By accomplishing these four tasks I embarked on my first step in preparation for the GH program as well as graduate school.

The GH program that I attended was held in Tucson, AZ at the University of Arizona campus. The program was designed so that there was balanced mixture of faculty and students so that we, the students, could have all our questions answered and be able to build a relationship with our mentor. We were divided up into different fields of study; I was part of the social sciences group. The entire GH program consisted of students representing 40 different tribes from across the United States. One thing that motivated and impressed me was that every one of these individuals wanted to use their education to better the Native communities.

The Graduate Horizons program was very beneficial and the knowledge that I gained is invaluable. GH has helped me prepare for graduate school and inspired me to be more optimistic and progressive in my steps towards that goal.
tips and a discussion of what to expect as we began our graduate education. During the personal statement discussion group, I discovered that a strong personal statement was extremely important. I hadn’t realized that so much emphasis is placed on writing well. My mentor was very helpful in improving my personal statement and advised me regarding what I should, and what I should not, include. Another seminar outlined the difference between Ph.D. and Master’s degrees, and provided helpful information in deciding which to pursue. I learned that a Ph.D. leads to research and teaching and, since I would like to apply my knowledge and studies directly to the Navajo community, I found myself deciding that a Masters program would be the best thing for me. At the end of the program, there were college presentations that allowed me the opportunity to talk with representatives and ask questions. There were many group seminars, one which provided personal feedback from my fellow group members and my mentor.

Overall, the Graduate Horizons program was very beneficial and the knowledge that I gained is invaluable. GH has helped me prepare for graduate school and inspired me to be more optimistic and progressive in my steps towards that goal. I learned that, as long as you prepare the right way, the GRE and other graduate school requirements are not so scary. The importance of a strong personal statement that demonstrates, to a graduate school committee, who I am and illustrates that I am a person that would be an invaluable asset to their school and program cannot be overemphasized. I am so blessed to have had the opportunity to participate in such a wonderful program. Being in the atmosphere of Native students and faculty, from 40 different tribes all over the nation, has left me wanting, as everyone else was, to make a difference. I feel that I am now ready for graduate school and that I am going to make a profound difference in my community. To end this article, I would like to give a huge ‘thank you’ to the American Indian Graduate Center, not only for helping fund the Graduate Horizons program, but as an outstanding organization that funds so many Native students, who dream of higher education, throughout the country. Ahehee Nitsa’go’ (Thank you very much!) ✦
Until 2001, there was no national organization representing American Indians and Alaska Natives employed by the federal government, and only a few scattered local groups existing within federal agencies. National and local organizations for African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Pacific Americans, women and other groups had existed for many years. The idea for a national Native-oriented organization predated the original effort, which began in 2000, with a listserv in which roughly 60 Native federal employees discussed, via email, the formation of this organization and what it should be. In 2002, the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) was officially incorporated as a national, non-profit, 501(c)3 charitable organization.

The SAIGE mission is to promote the recruitment, retention, development and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native government employees and work to ensure their equal treatment under the law; to educate federal agencies in the history and obligations of the Federal Indian Trust Responsibility and to assist them in its implementation; to assist government agencies in the development and delivery of initiatives and programs that honor the unique Federal-Tribal relationship and to provide a national forum for issues and topics affecting American Indian and Alaska Native government employees.

SAIGE has grown quickly in its few short years of existence and, today, consists of over 500 members. It is run by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, with four officers and ten directors at large, geographically dispersed, who serve staggered terms of office. In 2005, SAIGE joined an umbrella group, the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS) and in so doing, became a partner with Blacks in Government, Federally Employed Women, National Image and the Federal Asian Pacific American Council. NCEPS uses collective membership numbers to ensure their voices are heard in civil rights issues in the federal sector, as well as policy making in Washington, DC. In 2007, SAIGE opened its membership to state, tribal and local government employees. Associate memberships are also available for those who support SAIGE’s mission but are not government employees.

Since SAIGE considers education to be a major focus, it has held six annual, national training conferences for government employees to date. SAIGE conferences have been held in Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Washington, DC; Anchorage, AK; Tucson, AZ; Grand Traverse, MI and San Diego, CA. Indian Country is everywhere in America and SAIGE incorporates cultural elements of the local Native communities into its training conferences. In addition to providing outstanding speakers and workshops to increase participants’ professional development and the understanding of the Federal Indian Trust Responsibility this expands the conference participants’ general understanding of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Prompted by an idea from a board member’s daughter, in 2005, SAIGE began its first ‘Youth Track’ as a component of its training conferences. Funded by federal agencies, the Youth Track brings in Native college students, aged 18 – 25, to the conference for a unique experience. There they are exposed to the many varieties of career options within the government and they form bonds and networks that can stay with them throughout their lives. They might find an older SAIGE mentor, who can counsel them about what to expect in their
field of interest. This program serves to broaden the horizons of these young people, some of whom have never traveled outside their own communities, to expand their interests, their self-awareness and confidence. It is an investment in Native communities that SAIGE finds very worthwhile and rewarding. SAIGE maintains contact with the students after the conference, keeping them informed of internships and other opportunities. SAIGE also offers academic scholarships to college students who are SAIGE members.

In 2003, SAIGE was approached by Native employees in the headquarters office of the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC, for assistance with a hostile workplace issue. The Ariel Rios Building, which initially had been a postal administration building, was being used for EPA offices and contained historic murals from the 1930’s Work Progress Administration arts program that displayed offensive images of American Indians. The lurid and violent images were most disturbing, not only to employees who worked in the building, but also were insulting to tribal leaders who were visiting the building on business. SAIGE became a consulting party to the 106 process of the Historic Preservation Act which ensued, and for years strongly encouraged removal of these murals to a more appropriate location, such as a museum. After many years of letters and testimony, as well as support from the NCEPS partners, the General Services Administration (that owns the building) made the decision, in 2007, that the murals would remain in place due to historic considerations. Interpretive panels for the murals are under discussion today. SAIGE remains a consulting party to ensure proper interpretation, but remains adamantly opposed to the display of these murals in the federal work environment and will continue to press for their removal.

Recently SAIGE partnered with NativeEnergy to encourage people to purchase carbon offsets through the SAIGE website. A portion goes to renewable energy projects, such as tribal wind turbines, and a small percentage comes back to SAIGE for training and other programs. As SAIGE looks toward the future, it will work to increase the number of American Indians and Alaska Natives within its membership. Although there has already been dynamic growth, SAIGE hopes the organization will continue to grow steadily with a stable base and reasonable and achievable goals. SAIGE is working to get a national American Indian and Alaska Native employment program in place within the Federal personnel system and looks forward to working with its NCEPS partners on employment and civil rights issues that are of concern to all. SAIGE hopes to positively influence Native youth to consider careers in public service, as a way to make a difference in their communities and the country, as well as government itself.

For more information about the Society of American Indian Government Employees visit the website at www.saige.org.

(Lori Windle is the current Vice-Chair of SAIGE. She was a founder and the first Chair of the organization, and recently finished two terms as Secretary. She is a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and earned her Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Colorado at Boulder.)
AIGC Alumnus a Catalyst in Renewable Energy

by Stephine Poston

AIGC alumnus, David Melton (Laguna Pueblo), is the co-owner of Sacred Power Corporation (SPC), the largest Native American owned and operated company in the U.S., dedicated to the promotion and use of renewable energy technologies. Sacred Power’s specialty is the design, manufacture and distribution of proprietary products, including: photovoltaic (PV)/hybrid remote power systems; passively heated and cooled communication shelters; PV-powered, stock-tank ice-breakers and utility grid-tied PV powered carports. The organization also does some government contracting. To learn more about Sacred Power visit www.sacredpowercorp.com.

Melton is an AIGC alumnus, who received his degree in Economics from the University of New Mexico in 1986. His wife, Ada Pecos-Melton, is a former President of the AIGC Board of Directors and currently owns and operates her own business. David and Ada have three daughters, Dana, Rita and Kristin, and one son, David J.

An interview with an AIGC alumnus and successful Native entrepreneur, David Melton (DM):

AIGC: What year did you start Sacred Power?
DM: 2001

AIGC: While in college did you already know you would someday own your own business?
DM: Yes, that’s why I studied business.

AIGC: What reaction did you get from family, colleagues and peers when you said you wanted to start a solar manufacturing company?
DM: It was a shock. It happened so fast. Nobody saw it coming. But the opportunity occurred within a five second window.

AIGC: What is their reaction now?
DM: They say they assumed it would always occur.

AIGC: What did tribal leaders, planners and economic development people tell you when you approached them about solar 10 years ago?
DM: There wasn’t much excitement about the renewable energy industry, basically due to the cost of the product.

AIGC: How do they react now?
DM: Now; with the strong political agenda and the recession-caused drop in price, they are calling us.

AIGC: Renewable energy, solar energy is quite a “hot topic”; did you know solar was heading in this direction when you started?
DM: When I started my first company, in 1997, there already had been a coming and fading of the industry during the Carter Administration, but it had always simmered; so it was still there. Looking at it from a global perspective at the time, the first Iraq War was about oil. I definitely recognized the energy crisis that we were facing then, and continue to face, would require us to make tremendous changes about how the world viewed and used energy.

AIGC: What business tools from college did you implement to understand global trends and business indicators?
DM: The business plan I did in 1997 clearly shed light on trends on indicators that said, yes, this is the direction to go. I still look at that business plan and say “heck, yeah.”

AIGC: What are some of the challenges of starting and owning your own business?
DM: Starting; is having “Work to do that pays.” You need a customer that will pay your for your efforts. Then, you have to do it for less than you are receiving. Sounds easy, but the expenses add up fast. Then there’s the regular stuff like taxes, regulations, etc. Payroll is a big issue. It must be met week in, week out, without fail.
AIGC: What is the most rewarding project you have worked on since starting your own business?
DM: Our U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utility Service funded project that provides off-grid renewable energy electrical service to remote Native American homes is most gratifying. Bringing energy to homes in Indian country that have never had any source of power to do things that we take for granted, like getting cold milk from the fridge and lighting for kids to study. It was truly an absolute pleasure and privilege to have the opportunity to work on this project. Native American people throughout this country deserve the basic services that everyone else has.

Sacred Power is in the high tech business, which keeps us on our toes and engaged in cutting edge technology, so it is hard to pick just one rewarding project. I’d have to say, Sacred Power’s photovoltaic/hybrid with a hydrogen electrolyzer that takes hydrogen atoms out of water to burn in a fuel-cell, used in a Department of Defense project for West Point cadets, was just very cool. We provided them with a learning tool that prepares the cadets to utilize renewable energy systems on the battle field

AIGC: What advice do you have for college students thinking about owning their own business?
DM: Take your accounting classes, financial classes and economics classes; it all comes down to how you manage money. Pay close attention to personnel and material costs and costs of goods sold.

AIGC: What are personal traits one should have to own a successful business?
DM: In my business, it comes down to relationships and the trust people have in you, to buy from you or invest in you. Honesty, integrity, leadership and a willingness to take some risks are all important traits as well.

AIGC: What are significant benefits of solar energy?
DM: Once the initial capital investment is made, it provides energy from the natural world (sun, wind) at no cost. It’s always there day in, day out and year in, year out. Almost all of Sacred Power’s installed systems are maintenance free. We call it “fire and forget”. The most significant benefit is that solar is environmentally friendly and pollution free. The bottom line is that renewable energy consumers have a smaller imprint on Mother Earth, protecting her for generations to come.

AIGC: Who was your role model while attending college and why?
DM: My role models were the fighter pilots in the NM Air National Guard flying the A-7 Corsair II. While I was in college, I was active in the NM Air National Guard to assist with school expenses. I was wowed by the pilots because I recognized what incredible preparatory work and discipline it took for them to fulfill their dream of becoming a pilot. In order to be a pilot, most had to be strategically thinking since high school and not many people have the discipline at that age to rigorously stay the course.

AIGC: Where do you see yourself in five years?
DM: Operating a large photovoltaic manufacturing facility, providing megawatt-size solar fields to industry and advertising with NASCAR, the NFL and other mainstream mediums to promote renewable energy to the masses.

AIGC: Where do you see renewable energy in five years?
DM: It continues to grow at double digit rates so, as it becomes more affordable, acceptable and less political, it will become much more main stream.

Sacred Powers recently received the MBDA Regional Directors Award and was listed as one of the nations 100 fastest growing businesses by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In 2009, for the third year in a row, Sacred Power won the Flying 40 in Albuquerque, an award recognizing the top 40 fastest growing high-tech firms.

Dave Melton was solar when solar was not cool. It takes courage and persistence to stay the course in business when the public at large does not see the value of a service or product. I admire the courage and persistence David demonstrated that led him to become a successful entrepreneur.

Rita Melton (Married name), remembers, “My dad would bring home gadgets and be excited about the potential of the gadget. I’m not surprised he picked a business that others were not quite ready for at the time.”

(If you know an AIGC alum who should be featured please contact Stephine Poston stephposton@msn.com)
As we move into the second half of this remarkable year, we continue to celebrate our anniversary. The AIGC Kick-off event, on February 7th, and the Miss Indian World Pre-reception on April 23rd were well attended, by many friends, both old and new. AIGC received praise from both the City of Albuquerque and the State of New Mexico, recognizing our 40 years of continuous educational contributions to Native American and Alaskan Native youth.

Our final event will be held in conjunction with the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, October 3-11, 2009. The October event will give AIGC the opportunity, for the first time, to introduce Native culture, tradition and education to an internationally diverse group.

Elizabeth Washburn, President of AIGC Board of Directors and Director Sam Deloria help kick off AIGC’s 40th Anniversary through local media.

Ada Melton-Pecos, former AIGC Board President and her husband Dave Melton (also an AIGC fellow) enjoy the 40th Anniversary Kick Off at Albuquerque the Magazine.

Bunky Echo-Hawk proACTIVE ARTist

Brian Lee, Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez, David Melton (AIGC alumus)

AIGC team busy with auction at the Miss Indian World Pre Reception in April.
Top: Kevin Gover, Director of the National Museum of the American Indian and Lynn Trujillo of Sandia Pueblo enjoy the Pre Reception to the Miss Indian World Pageant and Auction in April.

Center: Nicole Alek’aq Colbert, 2008 Miss Indian World performs at the AIGC Miss Indian World Pre Reception & Auction.

Bottom: One of the Founders of AIGC, Joe Sando was honored at the Kick Off. In the picture: Joe Sando, NCAI President Joe Garcia and AIGC Board Secretary Joann Sebastian Morris.
The University of New Mexico-Los Alamos is proud to announce its partnership with Junior Achievement and Zia Pueblo. Through a collaborative effort, high school students are taking ARSC198 (Introduction to Undergraduate Studies) at Zia Pueblo for college and high school credit. UNM-Los Alamos is a two-year branch campus of UNM-Albuquerque, located in northern New Mexico. In addition, UNM-Los Alamos operates a site campus in Bernalillo, New Mexico, that serves the populations in and around Sandoval County.

During the summer of 2008, Benita BigFoot, Director of the Native American Initiative, Junior Achievement of New Mexico, Inc., and M. Sarah Pino, Zia Pueblo Education Director approached UNM-LA/Bernalillo staff with the idea of creating a course that was aimed at offering high school students the opportunity to take a college course while in high school. The course, entitled “Introduction to Undergraduate Studies” (ARSC198) would provide general learning outcomes including college success strategies, study/life skills, information literacy, and career planning. Further, the course would include vernacular cultural curriculum that was unique to Zia that would further enhance the educational experience of Zia students.

We are pleased to announce that 10 Zia Pueblo students took ARSC198 during the Spring 2009 semester for high school/college credit. The students attend Bernalillo High School, Jemez Valley High School and Walatowa High Charter School. UNM-LA is pleased to have partnered with Junior Achievement and Zia Pueblo in providing an innovative College Dual Credit course servicing American Indian youth at Zia Pueblo.

The students enrolled in the course have had the advantage of learning from Anthony Delgarito, a UNM-Los Alamos Adjunct Professor hired from the Zia Pueblo community to provide valuable expertise embedded within the dual credit course. The Zia Education Director, M. Sarah Pino served as the onsite coordinator at Zia. Junior Achievement Native American Initiative Director, Benita BigFoot provided valuable expertise in servicing the mentor/role-model driven curriculum. An extensive course syllabus was created between entities and individuals involved, with Benita BigFoot taking the lead role in the development and implementation of that curriculum.
The Junior Achievement Native American Initiative (JA NAI) core and supplemental curriculum model recommends the programs are delivered by an Indigenous role-model/mentor from the community. The opportunity to provide this program to Zia youth was created by understanding the Pueblo of Zia’s current educational and long-term goals for their community. The JA NAI model created the opportunity for Zia tribal members to initiate and implement the program. The partnership in creating the curriculum allowed the Zia Tribal leaders to participate in creating curriculum to benefit their youth in specific areas reinforcing Zia language acquisition, cultural and tribal identity. Thus, the curriculum provides a bridge to empowering and promoting the valuable life skills and abilities for long-term life goals embracing their tribal identity, culture and language while promoting higher educational pursuits and long-term career goals. The Zia students’ foundation for long-term success has been open with a clear understanding of the resources they will need with thoughtful tools to help them succeed. The students will gain a valuable life portfolio reinforcing their roles in Zia society. The Zia tribal leaders allowed an avenue for the Zia youth to be empowered to come back to support their community once they have completed their career, vocational or academic pursuits.

BigFoot states “the partnerships will continue to be a model for other Indigenous communities to provide our high school students with valuable life skill sets and prepare them for their future academic and career success by providing them valuable Indigenous expertise role-models/mentors. UNM-Los Alamos, Junior Achievement Native American Initiative and our Indigenous communities will continue to partner to provide valuable outreach programs for our Indigenous youth in an effort to close the achievement gap and empowering our youth through innovative higher education community driven programs.”

The collaboration between entities speaks to an emerging ideology that community colleges/branch campuses, such as UNM-Los Alamos/Bernalillo, have adopted in that institutions of higher education can work with communities/tribes in identifying specific goals and initiatives of those communities. Further, they can work to offer educational programming that is unique to those goals and initiatives. UNM-Los Alamos hopes that the students of Zia Pueblo will benefit from ARSC198 not only while they are in high school and college, but throughout their lives. Joseph Moreno, Senior Student Program Advisor for UNM-Los Alamos states “during my tenure of working with American Indian tribes, I have learned that there are two types of knowledge; Western and traditional knowledge. In some cases these two types of knowledge and learning present different worldviews, which can become difficult for young adults trying to navigate the traditional and Western worlds they may live in. It is through a collaborative effort, such as what resulted in ARSC198, that UNM-Los Alamos can work to bridge the gap between western and traditional knowledge. We are hoping to create students that are well versed in both ways in an effort to create confident and proud students for semesters and years to come.”

Due to UNM-LA/Bernalillo’s proximity to several Pueblos, Kate Massengale, UNM-Los Alamos Dean of Instruction states “I think that the collaboration of Junior Achievement, Zia Pueblo, and UNM-LA in taking the academic and life skills class we offer and building it to include cultural components specific to Zia Pueblo students is inspiring. We are finally, in the 21st century, working to bring our differing points of view to focus on helping our New Mexico students be successful. UNM-LA’s Bernalillo campus is crucial to this new collaboration.”

M. Sarah Pino stresses the importance of the collaboration stating “it was great because it opened the students’ eyes to opportunities in higher education. The cultural portion of the program helped them to realize that there are correlations and contrasts to achieving what they need in life through education. Actually the students were afraid at the beginning of the course that they would lose what they knew [cultural knowledge] when they went off to college. This course has helped them to realize that this is not the case.”
Attaining a doctorate degree in education has always been an important goal in my life, as I continue my dream of helping all students with their educational endeavors. I developed a sense of purpose in my life aimed at helping others and giving back to American Indian people. As a graduate from a BIE school on the reservation, I was not at all prepared to meet the rigors and challenges of higher education. However, I always envisioned myself as a positive change agent.

My advice to any American Indian or Alaskan Native student who would like to pursue a Ph.D. would encompass the following:

1) Believe in yourself and what you want to accomplish, and pray on a daily basis that everything will work out as planned. This is deemed spiritual well-being.

2) Always value yourself, be proud of your cultural identity and plan ahead (cultural well-being).

3) Mental well-being is learning as much as you can about the world and being open to a multitude of learning opportunities. In doctorate programs, you must learn advanced concepts and thinking skills.

4) Emotional well-being: Learn resilience, particularly when you feel overwhelmed with challenges in your graduate career. Learn how to cope and learn from mistakes.

5) Social well-being: Develop a network of positive individuals who can help you achieve your goals and aspirations. Join organizations that can guide and navigate your research.

6) Financial well-being: Learn money management skills and apply early for scholarships, fellowship and other financial assistance programs.

7) Physical well-being: Take care of yourself by getting plenty of rest and eating a proper diet. Avoid alcohol and other substances that can affect your mind and body.

8) Environmental well-being: Find a place where you can work productively on your studies, dissertation and other assignments and participate in graduate workshops on campus that can help your academic career.

Enrolling in a doctorate program is a long but rewarding process. Since there are early deadlines, plan at least one year in advance to apply for your graduate programs. You need to research and select a good program that will be significant to your research needs and your education. GradSchools.com and the National Center for Educational Statistics website are both good resources and a good start to your graduate school search. Contact your graduate program early to investigate the specific information about admissions, financial aid, student services, graduation rates and concentrations.

Pick at least 5 doctorate programs that will be a “good fit” for your education and look for fellowships and departmental scholarships. In addition, you may also need to further investigate any campus-based programs that are specifically designed for American Indian student services. Being an American Indian in a doctorate program can also be a very isolating experience, since there are very few Natives in doctorate programs. You may need to reach out and seek a mentor that can also help guide you through this process. Begin the application process early and be sure that your statement of purpose is an ideal match for your respective graduate programs. Meet all application deadlines early and save up for application fees. In some instances, you may gain acceptance to the university as a graduate student, but you may not gain acceptance to the graduate program. Don’t get discouraged and always have an alternate program.

With regard to financial assistance, start early and complete your FAFSA by March 1st of every year. Check into your department for scholarships, as well as the AIGC website, for further links to scholarships, grants and fellowships. I was able to obtain departmental scholarships and tribal assistance to help with my research. I learned that, when applying for grants, scholarships and
fellowships, late applicants are usually relegated to a very few remaining dollars, or just obtaining student loans that must be repaid. Don’t be afraid to ask for help and keep in contact with the financial aid office to make sure all of your documents are processed as early as possible.

There are many role models that I have looked up to in my life. I especially admire many of my elders, who have persevered through hardships and even those who are in the spirit world. I often credit my accomplishments to my parents even though I lost both of them during my graduate career. I lost my mother during the final year of earning my masters degree and my father during my final year of earning my doctorate degree. Although many students may find the loss of a loved one as a barrier in life, I often utilized the teachings of those in the spirit world as a sense of empowerment. My role models are also prominent educators such as Dr. Anne Calhoon, who was my chairperson and never gave up on me or my educational path. She was often there to guide me, like a godmother who took the place of my grandmother and mother. Dr. Cornell Pewewardy was also a mentor and offered sound advice like my father and grandfather.

In terms of advice for colleges and universities that would like to recruit American Indians for graduate programs, I strongly encourage them to go the extra mile in recruiting prospective graduate students. There are many outstanding American Indian college students who need that extra pull and support that entails the graduate application process, financial aid and succeeding at the graduate level. Personal success stories of Native alumni can often serve as great examples to inspire perspective students to apply.

As the most pressing issue for Indian education, we need to rethink our retention efforts for American Indian college students. In many universities, only 15 percent of all American Indian college students will obtain a bachelor’s degree in five years. More follow-up studies or interviews must be conducted with students who leave the university. Native students need strong mentors to serve as support personnel, as well as effective student services centers that can offer a home away from home environment.

In addition, we need college preparatory programs in all American Indian schools that will work with not only high school students, but begin as early as the upper elementary level. Students begin to formulate their academic identity as early as fourth grade and constant positive interaction is necessary to steer our students toward college.

As a college student, my lifelong goal is to establish a ‘University of the American Indian’. This institution would embrace Native ways of knowledge through language, cultural ways and heritage. It would be a place where our indigenous knowledge will be centralized and preserved for future generations. We could offer unique graduate programs of study (indigenous medicine, restoration of endangered languages), concentrations (Indian socio-economic development, indigenous film-making, etc.) and unique courses (indigenous healing plants, American Indian epistemology, etc.) that can ensure our well-being in the future. I hope that one day, we can offer degrees that range from certificate programs to doctorate degrees in all fields of indigenous studies and prominent elders can teach these courses to the younger generations.

In five years, I hope to be working on a post-doctorate degree in an American Indian well-being model that I can share with the world. The well-being model was inspired by elders and Native knowledge keepers, who shared with me the important aspects of attaining an advanced degree through pillars of spiritual, cultural, mental, emotional, social, financial, physical and environmental well-being. These concepts are deemed necessary to American Indian and Alaska Native students as a means of academic survival in higher education.

Shawn Secatero, Tohajiilee Navajo American Indian Graduate Center Gates Millennium Scholarship Program Coordinator of Student Services 4520 Montgomery Blvd. NE Suite 1B Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109 1-866-884-7007 or 1-800-628-1920 fax: 1-505-884-8683 or 1 505 881-4584 email: shawn@aigcs.org

Enrolling in a doctorate program is a long but rewarding process. Since there are early deadlines, plan at least one year in advance to apply for your graduate programs. You need to research and select a good program that will be significant to your research needs and your education.
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In the Spotlight: Michael E. Bird

Former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director, Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, was the keynote speaker at the University of California (UC), Berkeley School of Public Health’s commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 16, 2009. At the same ceremony, Mr. Michael E. Bird, a champion for Native American health, and Dr. Carol Onofrio, a community health educator and professor emerita, were honored as Alumni of the Year.

Mr. Michael E. Bird is past president of the American Public Health Association (2000-2001) and was the first Native American and first social worker to hold that office. A public health consultant, he has more than 25 years of public health experience in the areas of medical social work, substance abuse prevention, health promotion and disease prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention, behavioral health and health care administration. Most recently, he served as regional director for the implementation of a statewide behavioral health program, for Native Americans in New Mexico, with Value Options New Mexico, a national behavioral health company. Prior to that, he served as executive director of the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center. He worked with the United States Public Health Service for more than 20 years, from 1977 to 2000. In 2003 he received the Minority Congressional Caucuses Healthcare Hero Award. He received his MPH from UC Berkeley in 1983.

Michael has actively served on the American Indian Graduate Center Board of Directors since 2008.

“If you want to learn cutting-edge approaches to pedagogy and apply these techniques in your own classroom, you will succeed at WSU.”
Jeanette Weaskus Nez Perce American Indian PhD student English
The Alumni Connection

by Susan Duran

Class of 1990

Peggy L. Bird (Santo Domingo Pueblo) J.D, University of New Mexico School of Law

“I am the Legal Director with Clan Star, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance and training to recipients of U.S. DOJ grants, under the Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Program. The AIGC fellowship helped me to get through law school and to take the New Mexico bar exam. Completing law school and becoming a licensed attorney has opened many doors and created opportunities for me to work directly with Native women. I enjoy the work that I do now, working on a consultant basis to further the work of Native women advocates who are attempting to end violence against Native women.”

Class of 1991

Tracey LeBeau (Cheyenne River Sioux) A.B. Law, Stanford University

“I come from a tribe that does not have gaming but is rich in tradition. That being the case, I was not able to receive any tribal support while attending undergraduate or law school, but AIGC was there for me on many occasions as last resort funding that made it possible for me to focus on finishing out more than a few quarters when things became very financially challenging. This funding was not huge, but a real Godsend! I recommend this program to other students and am thankful that this program is still going strong. Congratulations on the 40th anniversary!”

Class of 1995

Connie M. Mesteth (Oglala Lakota) MS Nursing, University of Wyoming

“AIGC helped fund my education, which enabled me to obtain a Master of Science in Nursing degree, specializing in maternal child health. Now, I want to continue my education. I was accepted at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. I plan to study women’s health and hope to obtain a post-master’s certificate as a woman’s health nurse practitioner.

I have a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing since 1987.”

Class of 1998

Kimberly F. Irwin (Yellowrobe) (Sincangu Lakota) MBA Business, University of Phoenix

“Being the fortunate recipient of the AIGC Fellowship and my completion of the MBA program, led to an excellent career opportunity within the federal government.”

“Working within the Social Security Administration has allowed me to exercise my MBA studies as the American Indian public Affairs Specialist for the San Francisco region. I assist in the creation and distribution of Public Information Materials to benefit American Indian tribal communities. It is important that these communities understand accessible federal, state local and tribal benefits. I feel privileged to assist in the development of tribal outreach materials for the largest federal agency in America. I also conduct the outreach and serve as the liaison for the San Francisco region. I am a current board member and Co-founder of the American Indian MBA Society.”

“I am thankful, grateful and very humbled that I received the AIGC Fellowship so I could earn the degree necessary to compete and succeed in today’s job market.”

Class of 1999

Duane O. Matt (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) MS Geology, University of Montana – Montana Technical School of Mines

“Just THANK YOU for your support! I wouldn’t have been able to attend school without your help. I recently began working for the office of surface mining reclamation and enforcement (OSMRE) in Denver, CO as a technology coordinator. I had previously been employed by OSMRE as a reclamation specialist in Charleston, WV. The transfer to our Denver office resulted in a promotion. I have now been with OSMRE for nine years.

Receiving assistance from AIGC allowed me to obtain my Master’s degree in geology, allowing me to obtain my job with OSMRE.”

Class of 2003

 Eldena N. Bear Don’t Walk (Crow/Salish/Mitchif) JD and MPA, University of Montana

“I worked for two years as a public defender for the State
AIGC helped me complete my studies for a Masters Degree in Business Administration, with a specialty in Health Care Management. This new educational achievement in my life was one of the qualification requirements for the job that I have with the State of New Mexico, Department of Health, Office of Primary Care and Rural Health. I am so grateful for the support that AIGC has given me in the past and am even more grateful for having the opportunity to give back to our Indian people and the general public here in our state, by being a public servant, working with the Department of Health.

Despite my full-time work during the day, I look forward to completing my Ph.D. in Health Care Administration, by studying part-time during the day, full-time on nights and weekends.”

Class of 2007
Yolanda R. Alanis (Rosebud Sioux) MBA, University of Phoenix
“The AIGC Fellowship helped fund my MBA program from the University of Phoenix. I have been accepted into the doctoral program at the University of Phoenix for the Doctorate in Business Administration.”

Class of 2008
Richard T. Meyers (Oglala Sioux) PhD Cultural Anthropology, Arizona State University
“I completed a fellowship at Middlebury College, where I was teaching from 2005-2007. I received a Smithsonian Fellowship to complete my dissertation research at the National Museum of Natural History. Upon completion of my research at the Smithsonian, I headed to work here at the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Public Affairs Office. My dissertation explored the identity issues that confront American Indians pursuing PhDs in academe and the intersections with the discipline of anthropology.

Class of 2010
Randall J. Yates (Tlingit/Haida) J.D., University of California Berkeley
“The GMS program has been the greatest blessing in my educational career and has made an impact in my personal life as well. On August 1, 2009, Kim Pierce and I will be getting married. We met at the GMS conference in Los Angeles in 2001! Kim has been a teacher and has been working with non-profits and I will be graduating from Berkeley Law next year.”

Notes:
To insure that we have all your current information, please take a minute to visit our web site (aigcs.org) or send an email to Leander Bekaye (leander@aigcs.org) or Susan Duran (susan@aigcs.org) to update your information (be sure to include your previous address so we know we have the right individual).
Have you ever visited the website http://www.usajobs.opm.gov? This website provides a host of information regarding employment opportunities with federal agencies across the nation.

After earning an MBA and, just beginning my job search, I came across this website. Although all of my colleagues were working in the for-profit sector of corporate America, they had been very supportive as I voiced my interest in obtaining employment within the federal government.

Many of my colleagues had also introduced the idea of creating a society consisting of other American Indians with MBAs. At that time (the mid 1990’s), American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) shared statistics indicating there were only about 1,200 American Indians with MBAs and less than two hundred of those were American Indian women.

Hilton Queton (Kiowa) shares the vision behind the formation of the National Society of American Indian MBAs (NSAIMBA); “NSAIMBA was developed because of the need to inspire more American Indian to seek the training and education to become the best leaders in our Nations. Those of us who have succeeded have banded together to encourage more American Indians to achieve this level of commitment. We offer to them our support and offer to help them in job development, employment referrals, mentoring and other types of assistance,” shared Queton, also an AIGC supporter.

Students are encouraged and supported when considering employment in the federal sector. The Social Security Administration (SSA) offers college students summer internships, a graduate level program; Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) and the Hardy-Apfel I.T. Fellows Program. The I.T. Fellows Program is a special 2-year program designed for exceptionally talented people -- the I.T. leaders of the 21st century and beyond.

Named for two former Social Security Commissioners, Dorcas Hardy and Kenneth Apfel, the program normally selects 5 candidates with Master’s or Doctorate Degrees in Information Technology related disciplines. The selectees are assigned to the SSA Office of Systems to research and perform specially designed projects for Social Security future programs.

Latohya Hunt (Dine) began her career in the Student Career Excellence Program (SCEP), at the Tucson Social Security office, while attending the University of Arizona. The program is designed to recruit and train college-level, degree-seeking students for permanent placement in professional, administrative and technical positions throughout the SSA organization. Upon completion of her Bachelor’s degree, Hunt received a Title II Claims Representative position and, more importantly, a career with the SSA.

I was hired as a Regional American Indian Public Affairs Specialist for the San Francisco Region. It was truly a great opportunity to give back to Indian country and the communities, of which I am so proud to be a part.

Upon gaining employment and a career with the SSA, I sought organizations that would help with personal, professional and career development and was fortunate enough to meet a representative from the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE).

Today, this wonderful organization is led by Danny Garceau, Chairman of the SAIGE Board of Directors.
The SAIGE primary mission is promotion, recruitment, hiring, retention, development and advancement of American Indians and Alaskan Natives within the government workforce. SAIGE’s Annual Training Conference provides workshops promoting professional, personal and cultural development. Each year, the conference is held in a different part of the country, which allows for diversity of cultural influence and greater access to local tribes that may not have the means to travel great distances each year. In the recent past, the conference has been held in Florida, Washington D.C., Alaska, Arizona, Michigan. This year’s conference will be held in California and the 2010 conference is planned for the northeast — at the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut.

Lori Windle, from the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, is a founder and current Vice-Chair of SAIGE. “When SAIGE first began, it was difficult to reach the people we thought would be most interested in the organization, due to confidentiality policies,” she says. “We have tried to increase our visibility within the government as well as in Native communities nationwide. One of our best tools is the Youth Track that we host at every training conference, bringing in Native college students. This has the dual purpose of exposing young people to the broad range of careers in the Federal government, as well as providing agencies with an opportunity to meet talented and educated students they can recruit.”

It is also important to express support of and mention the American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Council. I have had the opportunity to participate in the American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Council as Region IX Chairperson. The American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Council National Chair is Henry Allsworth, Boston Region.

The American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Council was established in late 1999 and is one of the youngest advisory councils. Their purpose is clearly defined in the mission statement: “to advise the Commissioner, executives and managers of the Social Security Administration (SSA) on issues of service delivery to, and employability of, American Indians and Alaska Natives”. Further, the Council also serves as an information conduit between SSA, American Indian tribes and Alaska Native organizations and individuals. Another part of the Advisory Council mission is to implement and carry out the White House Tribal College and University Initiative. We are both proud and honored to serve such a vital and meaningful role.

Woody Bekis (Dine), Chairs the Aianac Recruitment Committee for the San Francisco Region. Committee goals are to promote the recruitment of American Indians and Alaska Natives through information distribution and other outreach activities to inform the American Indian and Alaska Native communities of SSA employment opportunities and assist SSA in identifying and staffing recruitment fairs targeted at American Indians and Alaska Natives, particularly those conducted at tribal colleges throughout the nation, focusing on the White House’s Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Just as all federal agencies are tasked with conducting outreach to tribal colleges and universities, we at the Social Security Administration emphasize American Indian youth and communities to explore career opportunities with the federal governments, in this case, the Social Security Administration.

We have over 1,000 field offices across the nation. Many of our tribal communities are parallel to these offices. What better way to give back to your people than by providing public service and benefits our people need? (Visit www.socialsecurity.gov)

Continue your academic pursuit and maintain your relationship with the American Indian Graduate Center. Wishing you well on your continuing journey of knowledge and wisdom. ♦

(Kimberly Yellow Robe, MBA, (Rosebud Sioux) is the American Indian Public Affairs Specialist in Region IX of the Social Security Administration, the Chair of Region IX American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Council and a former American Indian Graduate Center Fellow.)
Dedicated to improving the lives of American Indians, the Buder Center for American Indian Studies promotes the higher education of American Indians, preparing students to assume leadership positions in social service and governmental institutions.

Among the Buder Center’s special advantages are:

- Opportunities for full and partial scholarships to American Indians from the Kathryn M. Buder Charitable Foundation
- A variety of academic concentrations
- Course work focused on social work practice with American Indians
- Fieldwork with American Indian communities in your area of concentration
- Excellent assistance in job placement
- Dual degree-programs with law, business, architecture, and health/hospital administration

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As I continue to experience life, I have been fortunate to finally and fully realize the true value of education. With it, my hopes and opportunities have been better than if I had come to that realization. Without a doubt, the cliché that an education is something that “no one can take away from you” is an axiom for our times. While initiative and hard work have tremendous value, and combined with an energetic personality can be rewarding, if one is like me, growing older, providing for a family, or holding jobs with no opportunity for advancement, then education can give you a chance to develop your talents. Let me share with you that education can be the key to one’s excellence. You can gain a rewarding professionalism, soothe age anxiety, nourish a home and family, and develop personal independence. It may seem like a tedious effort, but an education holds great rewards.

I am a Southern Arapaho-Cheyenne born in Elk City, Oklahoma. I am the child of a Native American educator and Indian artist, long-deceased and exceptionally creative. My parents, Alfred Whiteman Jr., and Dr. Henrietta Mann, reinforced the importance of education in our home. Yet, I rebelled, only later to acquiesce to their philosophy to “get an education.” It was only after many years of hard work, losing interviews to either younger or more educated people, that had their parental advice reverberating in my head…”get an education.” It was only after many years of hard work, losing interviews to either younger or more educated people, that had their parental advice reverberating in my head…“education is something that no one can take away from you.” As I approached my 31st birthday, I found myself digging a fire-line and had spent the previous summer packing a ship’s hold on the Bering Sea. Shortly after, I was to become a GS-3 Clerk in the Indian Health Service at Headquarters East (IHS-HQE), in Rockville Maryland. In my past, I had several jobs considerably less glamorous and adventurous than those I mentioned.

Actually, before moving to Washington D.C. in 1991, I was a Heli-tak crew member in Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park. I rode to wild fires in the Sierra Mountains at 8,000 feet and used chainsaws that required two people. It’s funny now, as I recall deployments that fall suppressing more RV fires on the road climbing up from Ash Mountain to the Sequoia Redwood groves. Another time, my crew was deployed to rebury Indian remains, repatriated from the Lowey Museum, at Hospital Rock. At that time, a young Tule woman, the tribe’s Cultural Resource Specialist, and the tribal cultural committee requested that we dig the grave. We were so honored, yet it was a bitter-sweet memory for two reasons; the sadness of the unknown person I helped place back in the earth and our common indigenous history.

As I have come to understand it, education is a great gift. During my younger days it seemed that a higher education was guaranteed to tribal members. For me, a kid of the 80s, it seemed that I had all the time in the world and my education could come later. I had education opportunity then but I squandered it. Had I been a little wiser, I could have been a professional person and used my talent a lot sooner than I did. I might have been able to teach the public about Native American priorities in my 20s instead of so much later. Back then I was a Cultural Resources Technician on the Kootenai National Forest (KNF) in Montana. I had a great chance to be a full-time archaeologist in the Forest Service. However, I made a serious error and lost my Cooperative Education status in 1989 and never recovered that status. So, my moral message now is that academic opportunity is a real gift. AIGC has not wasted their funds on me this
time. I was honored to receive their funding and recognition of my future plans.

The reason for sharing my story with you today is to celebrate education. Not to dwell on personal failure, for which I owe and make a personal and public apology to my former mentor at the Kootenai National Forest, it’s archeologist. On that day at Hospital Rock in the Sequoia National Park, she saw the possibility of a great future for me.

She offered me a fast track into a professional career at the KNF, one of the richest paleo-landscapes in the country. I am sorry for my inaction then and will always regret it.

After many hours marching to the drum of another person, as a laborer, I came to recognize the value of education. It took a long time for me to realize that I could not make something happen without a college degree. But, in 1992, everything changed when I got assigned to the Office of Communications for the Director of the IHS. Shortly afterwards, I married a wonderful woman and we started a family. We now have four children, my first son, Marc, was born in 1995 and my last girl, Paige, in 2001. Today, education is an important family value for us. It gives me skills and confidence in a job. More, it gives me latitude to support my children and nourish my marriage. It empowers my decision-making by opening up an employment horizon and it is making my dreams come true.

When I started my family, which is the most important thing to me, my unquenched thirst for knowledge manifested itself when I entered the continuing education program at the American University (AU) in Washington D.C. It took me six years to finish AU’s Community Scholars program and earn an economics minor. So, I started a new family, night-school was selected by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as a Native American Program Specialist Trainee all at the same time. This was the Administration for Native Americans under the first politically appointed commissioner. The commissioner gave me government professional status, which I greatly appreciate to this day. The DHHS trainee program equipped me for rising to the GS 5, 7, 9, and 11 levels in 4 consecutive years.

After completing the DHHS trainee program, attending AU evening courses and nurturing my wife through four pregnancies, I claimed my redemption for squandering that missed KNF opportunity. I believe AU continuing education enhanced my work as a trainee.

The average person might be satisfied with these accomplishments, and I am; however, the story goes further and has provided several more rewards. Following my employment with the Administration for Native Americans, I transferred to the Office of Minority Health (OMH) in the Office of the Secretary, Dr. Shalala. While serving there, I focused on two national consortia helping Native Americans, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the Association for American Indian Physicians. Working for OMH, I gained my last HHS training for becoming a Grants Management Officer. With this training and ANA experience, I returned to IHS-HQE to be the Grants Scholarship Coordinator, in 2000. It became my responsibility to pay the stipends and tuition for all medical students, nurses, dentist and allied health students supported by the IHS.

In January 2002, I became the Tribal Liaison and National Tribal Program Officer for the Corporation for National and Community Service. This is the umbrella organization for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, VISTA and Learn and Serve America community service and civic engagement programs. During this duty, I guided a demonstration project called the Tribal Civilian Community Corps (TCCC), including the Hoopa Tribe (CA), Navajo Tribe (Chinle, AZ), and Tanana Chiefs, (Nena, AK). In my final days as Tribal Liaison, I brokered a funding transfer agreement between two federal agencies. The critical funding kept the 3 TCCCs in business until recently.

I resigned from federal service in 2003 to pursue a Master of Science degree in Natural Resources Management at Central Washington University. While there, I also studied the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. In 2005, I researched compliance for my tribes and, in 2007, I was selected as the first Gaming Compliance Officer after our tribes terminated the gaming contract with the company managing our casinos and needed a tribal member for the job. During graduate school I had studied gaming compliance and regulation and previously served 14 months on our gaming commission.

Education has brought an ever-widening employment horizon to me. I have been able to find success helping my tribes through self-exploration of my own interests.
tribes through self-exploration of my own interests. Another interest brings me full circle, back home to my tribal roots and principles. That interest is education about leadership based in ethics. Consequently, in 2006, I earned a Masters of Arts in Ethical Leadership from Duquesne University’s (DU) School of Leadership and Professional Advancement. In a paradoxical way, since turning my attention to education, I have come to a new realization of self. This is the central theory of ethical leadership at DU. Education has done for me what DU leadership theory purports, ‘transforming’ self.

Presently, synergy is the best word to describe my existence. My federal program management, grants administration, economics studies, natural resources principles and leadership education are the foundation I rely upon now as the first Vice President of our tribal college. As the VP of Development and Planning, I am motivated to create a campus for the next generation of Arapaho-Cheyenne people. There will be a balanced curriculum that matches our tribal college students with tribal self-governance priorities. As I pursue the establishment of a tribal college campus, education is never far off. Education is part of our Native society even more so than before, so don’t delay your opportunities like I did. Make the extra effort to develop your talents and explore your interests. If you are young, believe me, take the high road and go on to higher education now. If you have an undergraduate degree, then go for your specialty degree. Let’s not squander any more talent – study and come back to your tribe to work.

As my final words, please allow me to say a special thank you to the American Indian Graduate Center and all those cherished family members and friends who helped and encouraged me - raising me up on their shoulders to chase a dream – my wife, Mother, sisters, children and tribal community members. ✦

AIGC Fellow in the Spotlight

June 15, 2009

President Obama Announces Kimberly Teehee as Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs

WASHINGTON – Today, in taped remarks to the 2009 National Congress of American Indians Mid-Year Conference, President Barack Obama announced the appointment of Kimberly Teehee as Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs. As a member of the Domestic Policy Council, Teehee will advise the President on issues impacting Indian Country. President Obama also announced that the White House will hold a Tribal Nations Conference later this fall.

“Kim Teehee will be a tremendous asset to our team as we work to strengthen and build on the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the United States and tribal nations,” said President Obama. “She is rightly recognized as an outstanding advocate for Indian Country, and she will provide a direct interface at the highest level of my Administration, assuring a voice for Native Americans during policy making decisions.”

Kimberly K. Teehee, Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs, White House Domestic Policy Council

Since January of 1998, Teehee has served as a Senior Advisor to the House of Representatives Native American Caucus Co-Chair, Congressman Dale Kildee (D-MI). A member of the Cherokee Nation, she has also served as the Director of Native American Outreach for the Presidential Inaugural Committee for President Clinton’s second Inauguration. Prior to that, Teehee was the Deputy Director of Native American Outreach at the Democratic National Committee. She has also held various positions with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, including serving as a Law Clerk in the Division of Law and Justice. Teehee received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Northeastern State University and her Juris Doctor from the University of Iowa, College of Law. While in law school, Teehee was honored with the Bureau of National Affairs Award and served in leadership positions in the National Native American Law Student Association and the Iowa Native American Law Student Association.

(If you know of an AIGC fellow who should be highlighted please email stephposton@msn.com)
Today, very few statistics and demographics are available on persistence and success rates for American Indian graduate and professional students. Only a few identifiable quantitative data studies exist. As for qualitative data, “No study, to date, has been published on the experiences of American Indian and Alaskan Native graduate and professional students (Buckley, 1997, pg.49). In the current study, an indigenous corn model, based on well-being factors and personal narratives, was employed to examine and identify graduate and professional school success and persistence factors.

This study’s methods involved an in-depth qualitative analysis of persistence and success factors with 23 American Indian graduate students who recently attained their respective degrees. An electronic survey and short questionnaire were completed by participants representing 18 different tribal groups and 19 institutions. Participants had varying levels of graduate degree completion and different majors. Electronic surveys were completed from March 2008 through October 2008 and were designed to obtain participant demographic information, graduate school preparation, financial aid, academics, tribal ways of knowledge and shared words of wisdom.

In addition, four participants submitted stories to provide an analysis of success and persistence factors. Participants identified the following salient issues: (a) Spiritual well-being as the most important success factor that focused on family, belief system and giving back to the community; (b) Mental well-being that included critical thinking, personal and career development, academic rigor and leadership; (c) Social well-being, viewed as networking, mentorship, communication skills and advanced literacy; and (d) Physical well-being incorporating hard work, endurance and a healthy lifestyle.

Recommendations from this study included the development of a national American Indian mentorship program, institutional follow-up with graduate students, graduate school preparation institutes, the establishment of a graduate school guidebook for American Indian students and the dissemination of personal histories as models for life. This pioneering study serves as a foundation in the development of an indigenous perspective as more research is needed to address the persistence and success factors of American Indian graduate and professional students.

Dissertation Experience
As part of my Navajo identity, I was taught by my elders to wake up before the early morning sunrise. I would face east toward the majestic Sandia Mountains to pray with my precious corn pollen. I often performed this ritual every morning in hopes that the pieces of my dissertation study would eventually weave together like the beautiful rugs made by my grandmother. I often look backed at my college career as a way of remembering the importance of my Navajo way of life, as I was learning about success and persistence factors of American Indian graduate students. As part of this process, I would like to share my own experiences and words of wisdom, as I continue my vision of becoming a well respected indigenous researcher.

The setting of all my thinking comes from my home on the Tohajiilee Navajo Reservation. I live in a small modest house with no internet access, but the recently added luxury of cable television. I concentrate most of my work at the kitchen table with a slow burning wood stove beside me. During the cold early morning hours, I would motivate myself at three o’clock in the morning and begin making a fire. I would chop wood outside and

Beneath Our Sacred Minds, Hands and Hearts

By Shawn Secatero, Ph.D.

Shawn Secatero
While gathering wood outside in the brisk cold air, I would look up to the beautiful dark purplish sky that was sprinkled with stars and flanked by the upcoming light of the sun. I remember those I lost along my educational path such as my beloved mother, father, grandmother and so many others. In many respects, some people often refer to losing someone as a barrier. However, I remember those in the spirit world and use their teachings as a means of strength, perseverance and survival.

In 1995, I finished my master’s degree in education but I lost my mother to cancer. She was a shining example of a proud and strong Navajo woman, who supported me through many difficult times even without having a college education. On graduation day, I was unconsciously looking for my mother after commencement exercises outside Johnson Gym at the University of New Mexico. I found my family amid a sea of many proud parents, students and children. I asked my older sister, ‘So where’s mom?’ My sister replied, “She’s here, you just can’t see her, but I know she is proud of you.” Tears slowly rolled down my face as I walked sadly to my vehicle. My family members consoled me rather than being happy, I was very depressed.

Later that evening, my father was outside studying the night sky and I joined him. I expressed my sadness because my mother was not there. He began advising me about remembering people in the spirit world. My father said, “You always remember things they taught you – it’s a way of honoring them and it will make you strong.” He encouraged me to find the brightest star in the sky when I was not in good spirits. He pointed out, “That bright star is your mother, the star is twinkling; she is happy and dancing for you.” He began pointing out other stars and made reference to my great grandmother, Jessie Platero, my great grandfather, Desiderio Platero, and many others who have strongly influenced my life. My tears suddenly turned to short smiles. As we were walking back inside the house, we had the pleasure of witnessing a falling star. My father told me, “That is a gift to you from those in the spirit world, they are very proud of you. They are giving you a blessing to go on with your doctorate degree.”

He would tell me about the various stages in life and how our people view the sacred elements of corn through songs, prayers and ceremonies. I was strongly encouraged to keep the model as indigenous as possible and to develop a sense of purpose by helping all American Indian people achieve higher education. My father advised me, “When you are writing this dissertation, make sure that you include us and our way of thinking. Our elders want to read this as well, so combine both the modern and traditional ways of research.” As I continued to organize the research, I had my computer in the living room. I remember one time, my grandmother came to visit and she noticed that I was constantly on the internet and not paying attention to her. She strongly advised me, “Don’t spend too much time looking at those things (internet icons), those images are not good for your mind.” I listened to her and her underlying statement that the internet may indeed become an addictive behavior and how she considered the internet as a taboo among our people. I moved my computer into the back room and cancelled my internet service. I asked my father why grandmother said those things to me. He mapped out an explanation to me like a stern college professor, “You’re not working for the knowledge like you are supposed to. Long ago, we had no internet and you had to drive to the university, park your vehicle and walk to the library to conduct research. That is physical well-being; then you go into the library and ask for help to find your information; that is social well-being; after that, you find the knowledge that you are looking for and begin studying, that is mental well-being; and finally, you make meaning of what you just read so you don’t forget that information, that is spiritual well-being.” My father often remembered his college days; though he completed only one year of study, he demonstrated the keen knowledge of a professor. He implied that the younger generations have lost that way of working for knowledge and instant information, such as the internet, has created a lack of patience and deep understanding. I began listening to his advice and continued my research.
I instilled these cultural ways of knowledge in my mind, hands and heart. I would value and work for my knowledge and visit the library very often. I read, analyzed and made meaning of all the stories and online surveys. However, I knew that I would eventually need the internet and technology to help me organize and acquire research information. Therefore, I combined both the modern technology of the online survey method and the traditional American Indian based corn model to ultimately finish this study.

There were many frustrating times and many sleepless nights of developing the corn model and I often credit my study participants for keeping me on track. Every submitted online survey and success story instilled a belief in me that accomplishing this dissertation would be possible. Several participants telephoned and emailed me, which ignited every little spark to keep the fire going within me and the wood stove in my house. I was constantly reminded by my participants who emphasized, “We need studies like this so many more Indian people will continue to earn advanced degrees.” I could not give up.

In September of 2008, I lost my father due to a long battle with diabetes. I often felt the urge to discontinue this study because I lost focus in my life. However, on the clear night of his funeral, I was outside studying the stars once again as tears rolled down my face. I looked up at the brightest stars which continued to twinkle and dance. It was my father stating that he was very proud of me. I studied almost every bright star in the sky which resembled coding and analysis that I used in my research. I said to myself, “That star is my grandfather So’mamel, there’s my mom, and I even saw my great grandmother, Jessie, who scolded me for dropping out of graduate school.” To my amazement, I again witnessed a falling star which reignited my spark of attaining knowledge and motivated my research.

I also continued to pray in hopes that I would get through this difficult time and finish my study. Much to my surprise, it began to get cold and chilly as the morning stars began to disappear. Suddenly, several members of my family, relatives and friends appeared and stood beside me. My circle of support reconnected with me and I have been blessed. They opened their medicine pouches and offered their blessings to the rising sun. One elder spoke to me and said, “Are you going to finish your father’s work and your dissertation?” I replied with a smile, “Yes, our work is going to help American Indian people.” I reached into my medicine bag and gently touched the grains of corn pollen. I sprinkled it toward the east once again. Together, we all prayed for a new light, a new beginning, and a continuing beautiful vision. Si’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon. (May you continue on your beautiful pathway.)

We are American Indian Scholars
We wonder if we are strong as our elders and ancestors
We envision a time when more young people go on to college
We need a sense of belonging and trust
We think our people are the most resilient on earth

We are American Indian Scholars
We lead our people with pride, knowledge and wisdom
We feel we can make a positive difference
We worry that we will let our people down
We cry when we think of those we lost along our way

We are American Indian Scholars
We understand the importance of education
We dream of a better life for our children
We try to balance the traditional and modern worlds
We hope our people find the support and strength to succeed.

We are American Indian Scholars
We love our people, our mother earth and our father sky
We pray that all of our surroundings will be blessed
We will soar to new heights in our minds, hands and hearts
We plan to become prominent leaders

We are American Indian Scholars
We thank those who were part of our educational journey
We must remember who we are
We acknowledge where we are from
We know where we are going
We are American Indian Scholars

AIGC Scholarships and Fellowships

Special Higher Education Program (SHeP) Fellowships:
Administered by AGIC under an agreement with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), these awards are offered to American Indian and Alaska Natives who are enrolled full-time in nationally accredited graduate degree programs in all fields of study. Applications must be submitted to AIGC by June 1, each year.

BIE Loan for Service Awards:
A loan program for students meeting the eligibility requirements stated above, this program offers loans to graduate students, with an option to repay the loan through employment with a federal or tribal entity that provides products or services to American Indians and Native communities.

Accenture American Indian Scholarship Fund:
Created to help strengthen key relationships between Accenture and tribal businesses and communities, the scholarship is offered to Native American students pursuing both undergraduate and graduate degrees in high technology fields of business, math and science and demonstrate Accenture’s high standards of performance and achievement.

Wells Fargo Scholarship:
Funded by Well’s Fargo Foundation, scholarships are awarded to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing careers in financial industries. Internship opportunities are an integral part of the scholarship program.

Endowed Scholarships (Awarded subject to availability of funds)

**Gerald Peet Fellowship:** Priority to medical students – 2 year work/service pledge.

**Grace Wall Barreda Memorial Fellowship:** Graduate fellowship for students seeking advanced degrees in environmental studies or public health.

**Jeanette Elmer Scholarship:** Awarded to members of Wisconsin, New Mexico or Arizona tribes. Preferred field of study – library science.

**John Rainer Fellowship:** To honor AIGC founder, John Rainer, each year one male and one female receive a one-time $1000 award in recognition of outstanding leadership.

**Katrin Lamon Fund:** For Native American graduate students majoring in literature, journalism, communications or a related field.

**Ruth Muskrat Bronson Fellowship:** Priority to nursing or health-related fields.

**Dr. Beryl Blue Spruce Fellowship:** Fellowship for students pursuing medical fields.

**Dr. George Blue Spruce Fellowship:** Funding American Indian & Alaska Native dental students.
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