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I am honored to serve as President of the AIGC Board. I have served on the board since 2012. My involvement on the board is based on the recognition of the importance of a solid educational foundation and the opportunities it provides both personally and professionally. An education also provides the opportunity and responsibility to pay it forward. I have had significant opportunities that would not have been open to me had I not benefited from a variety of scholarships, including one from AIGC.

As your new President, I would like to share a little about my background. I am an enrolled member of Kewa Pueblo in New Mexico. I earned an MSW from the University of Utah and an MPH from the University of Berkeley at California. I am blessed that professional opportunities have been numerous in my thirty year career. I am the first American Indian to serve as President of the American Public Health Association (2001) and the first American Indian to serve on AARP’s National Policy Council. I was, up until recently, the Chairman of the Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation, a tribal corporation established in 2012 to assume responsibility for the Santo Domingo Pueblo Health Center under P.L. 93-638.

I attribute all of my professional success to the direct result of a good education and the support of AIGC, my family, and supportive mentors throughout my life. My grandfather John Bird encouraged me to further my education and told me that, “an education is something that can never be taken away from you.” I would say that my education was a sound investment by any measure.

AIGC has much to celebrate in its 45 year history. Recent achievements of AIGC include the Wells Fargo Foundation three million dollar grant for a scholarship, outreach, and support program; and the REDW/AIGC Scholarship program in accounting.

As part of our 45 year celebration, we would like to acknowledge all former board members and those who have supported AIGC’s efforts. We also would like to welcome our newest talented additions to the board - Stacy Leeds, Steven Stallings, Dana Arviso and Holly Cook Macarro. I appreciate all who have contributed to AIGC’s success, both past and present, and those who will contribute in the future.

I look forward to working with you as we create a bright and secure future for AIGC and all who benefit from our efforts.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Bird, MSW, MPH
As a long time employee of AIGC, I frequently come across remarkable stories of student success. A woman becomes the first in her tribe to achieve a dental degree. A young man becomes the first in his family to attend college and graduate. The first Native Hawaiian earns a math PhD. A student becomes the first doctor in his or her tribe. The youngest of seven children earns an education degree. These achievements are profound, because they signal an individual’s strength to follow an educational pathway, regardless of the hills and valleys along its stretch, to graduation day. Turquoise nuggets of student success.

The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics’ reports, “Projections of Education Statistics to 2021” projects that total enrollment in post-secondary, degree-granting institutions is expected to increase 15 percent, to 24 million enrolled students, between fall 2010 and fall 2021. Enrollment of men in post-secondary, degree-granting institutions is projected to increase 10 percent during this time, as compared to an increase of 18 percent among women in the same decade.

Looking at the American Indian and Alaska Native student population, however, data trends tell a different story. According to a report by Gregory I. Redhouse, “Indigenous Men in Higher Education: How the 20th Century Can Inform the 21st Century,” Redhouse explains that the number of Native American male students in higher education has been decreasing since the early 1980’s, and the gap of female-to-male American Indian higher education enrollment is widening.

Here at AIGC, we celebrate the amazing accomplishments and growing numbers of Native women making strides in higher education. Here at AIGC, we celebrate the amazing accomplishments and growing numbers of Native women making strides in higher education.

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Here at AIGC, we celebrate the amazing accomplishments and growing numbers of Native women making strides in higher education. But we also have to question the male data: “Why is this happening, and what can we do about it?”

Redhouse writes, “If a suitable conceptual model can be applied that illustrates the causes for persistence rather than quitting, then perhaps colleges and universities can respond and develop new programs to successfully guide Native American men through the maze of higher education.”

Alan Dick, who wrote “The Root Issues Exposed: A Brief Exposition,” also explored the performance of Native American and Native Alaska males in post-secondary education. Mr. Dick explains, “The school system often challenges the autonomy of the individual, by insisting students do tasks that have no perceivable, demonstrable real-life application and gives zero choice in the process.”

The issue is undoubtedly complex. There are cultural triggers, irrelevant or inapplicable education lessons, socioeconomic pressures, internal conflicts, local mentorship availability and many other differences that likely play a role among the American Indian population’s interest in higher education, and the lagging numbers of males who pursue and persist in it.

Kamuela Yong, the first Native Hawaiian to earn a PhD in applied math, corroborates Redhouse and Dick’s assessments through the reflection of his own experience. Yong recalls, “If you find yourself way over your head, realize that you probably aren’t the only one… This revelation made me realize that my fears of not being prepared for this class and struggling were actually normal, but we were all too proud to admit it… It helped me immensely to talk to someone who had already been there.”

AIGC realizes the students behind the ‘turquoise nuggets’ of success were not free of the challenges that other American Indian and Alaska Native students have faced. In this issue of American Indian Graduate we are
AIGC enters the 2015/2016 academic year offering more undergraduate, graduate, professional and vocational scholarships, providing more opportunities to all Native students.

proud to feature stories written by and about just a few of our male scholars.

AIGC is seeking insight from these success stories, to better understand how the authors overcame the challenges and adversity. We will use this information to direct our work in a way that may contribute to a change in data trends and minimize the gap of American Indian female-to-male higher education enrollment.

AIGC enters the 2015/2016 academic year offering more undergraduate, graduate, professional and vocational scholarships, providing more opportunities to all Native students. Wells Fargo is currently providing funds to develop scholarships and programs that will help students get into college, succeed and earn a degree. For the first time, this year, we are awarding Cobell Scholarships, REDW Accounting Scholarship and Flintco Scholarship for Construction Management. We proudly celebrate our partnerships with these supporters of Native scholarships! In the future, we will continue to add more opportunities as we receive and forge new relationships.

We have also received resources from San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and AMERIND Risk Management, which help provide additional funds for our current scholarships. Individuals have stepped forward to start scholarships in their names or the names of their loved ones.

Keep an eye out for all the changes at AIGC that help make more “turquoise nuggets of student success”!

We Are Proud to Support the American Indian Graduate Center.

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The American Indian Graduate

Nát’oh Dine’e, while my paternal grandfather is of the Tódích’ii’nii.

The Gates Millennium Scholarship process was very nerve-racking for everyone, including me. As days shortened to hours, the deadline seemed to be creeping upon us, just as a lion stalks its prey. However, we, the applicants, all became each other’s ground of reassurance and encouragement, while we also received enlightening words from our teachers, recommenders and nominators. With the eight essays I wrote, Mrs. Becky Gilmore, Mr. Michael Ransom, Mr. Art Stendal and Ms. Diane Fuller were all a huge help, whether recommending me, nominating me, editing my essays or just being my foundation of encouragement.

During the time I was writing my essays, a teaching from my great-grandmother, Anna Etsitty, was constantly on my mind. When I was transitioning, from being a child to becoming a young woman during my Kinaaldá, she taught to me to be thankful and humble for everything.

Valentina Clitso

Ya’át’eeh, shi ei Valentina Clitso yinishe. Todích’ei’nii nishli, doo Bit’ahii bashishchiin. Tó’ahani dashichei doo ‘Ashiibi dashinali. Dzil azhiin dee’ nasha. My mom is Lucille Bentley and my grandparents are Mable Benally and Daniel Benally, Sr. Being thankful for the Gates Millennium Scholarship is an understatement; it is truly a blessing. For someone to achieve such an award is to remember you can do anything and accomplish anything you want. The thing that makes a difference is wanting it badly enough. Now, with the fiscal burden taken care of, I am pursuing a major of Aerospace Engineering at Arizona State University.

Thailer Etsitty

It is an honor to be selected as a Gates Millennium Scholar (GMS). As the eldest child of Ivan and Colynda Etsitty, I have set my expectations really high, so that I can be the role model for my siblings. I am Bit’ahnií, born for Tít’ízi’ ḿání. My maternal grandfather is of the Nátoh Dine’e, while my paternal grandfather is of the Tódích’ii’nii.

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2015 Gates Millennium Scholars, Monument Valley High School. From left to right, Ohiyah Shirley, DeeDee James, Valentina Clitso, Thailer Etsitty, Sherralyn Sneezier, Shandiin Herrera and Joshus Tenakhongva
Each ingredient I added to my Navajo cake was just as vital as breathing air, because she taught me to never let anything go to waste. “Everything has a purpose and must be used”, she would say to me. So, as I was writing these essays, I wrote about everything in my life. I wrote about my greatest triumphs, my hardships, my blessing, my teachings and my sorrows. My great-grandmother helped me realize that everything that has happened has all been a blessing, whether the experience was good or bad, because that is what made me who I am.

As a 2015 Gates Scholar, I encourage everyone to embrace everything about themselves, because one single good or bad memory can be your secret ingredient to a perfect cake. This is why I have been blessed and am fortunate to be attending Grand Canyon University (GCU), in Phoenix, Arizona, to work my way towards a pre-pharmacy degree. My goal is to, one day, become a pharmacist and return to my homeland to help my people. GO ANTELOPES (GCU’s mascot)!

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Shandiin Herrera
Ya'ah'teeh Shi ei Shandiin Herrera yinishye. Táchii'nii nishlí, Naakaiitbahi basishchíí, Bit'ah'íni dashichéíí, Naakaiitbahi dashinali. My parents are Jose and Jenae Herrera and we live in Monument Valley.

Throughout my childhood, my mother always stressed the importance of education and always demonstrated a relentless work ethic. After witnessing fiscal struggles as an adolescent, not only within my family but within my community, I was motivated to simply do better. I put my education on a pedestal and took steps every day to reach my potential.

I have had some amazing teachers, throughout my years in the Kayenta Unified School District, who have unknowingly inspired me to rise above expectation. Those who have been a genuine influence in my life include my second grade teacher, Mrs. Priscilla Black; my freshman honors teacher and Gates mentor, Ms. Diane Fuller; my economics teacher, Mr. Randell Ellis; my honors history teacher, Ms. Amanda Cicoria and my AP Literature and Composition teacher, Mr. Geron Coale.

I am so grateful and blessed to be a Gates Millennium Scholar. This scholarship will allow me to attend any institution in the country without burdening my parents. This is truly a dream come true. This fall, I will be pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology, at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. My ultimate goal is to become an attorney and return to the Navajo Nation and work for my people. It is surreal to see all of my dreams becoming reality, but the greatest part of my journey has not been that I have been able to catch my dreams, but the fact that I have been able to motivate and inspire other youth in my community.

DeeDee James

Receiving the Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS), I know, has already opened countless opportunities that will benefit my educational pathway. I am very grateful that my family and I no longer have to worry about the financial burden of higher education. I need only to focus on my academics and return home to Dinétah with the best knowledge.

The GMS application was a rigorous process, but all I have accomplished in high school and all the obstacles that tried to tie me down have helped me become a better and stronger person. To the future GMS applicants, be fearless; do not be afraid to let loose. Share your life experiences and your high school accomplishments. It is your uniqueness that counts the most. Our Navajo traditions are strong and unique, so include as much as you can within your writings. When failing, never be afraid to rise again and prove your doubters wrong.

Being the youngest in my family and knowing that my parents were not provided the opportunities of pursuing higher education has motivated me to aim high in my life and become a successful Diné woman. In the fall, I will be attending Utah State University; although my endeavors are not set in stone, I will be pursuing the study of medicine, to work in the healthcare field and aid my people. I want to take this opportunity to say how thankful I am to be a GMS scholar and send a thank-you to all the Monument Valley High School staff who helped me with the application process and, lastly, my mother and sisters, who encouraged me. Abéhee’.

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Monument Valley High School Students Receive GMS Scholarships

**Ohiyah Shirley**


Hello, my name is Ohiyah Shirley. I am of the Salt clan, born for Manygoats clan. My maternal grandfather is of Sicangu Lakota and my paternal grandfather is of the Edgewater clan. My mother is Nicole Shirley and my father is Peter Shirley.

I reside in Kayenta, Arizona, and am currently a senior at Monument Valley High School. I am grateful and thankful to have been selected as a 2015 Gates Millennium Scholar. It was not easy, nor was it impossible. To the future Gates Millennium Scholars: do not be afraid to tell your story. We all have something unique to tell about ourselves, our culture and our family. Have a purpose in what you do every day of your life.

Most importantly, do it for yourself. Do not forget about your family background, who you are and where you come from. These elements make you unique. It is truly an honor and blessing to be a Gates Millennium Scholar. There is no better feeling than being relieved and knowing that, financially, I do not have to worry about how to pay for my post-secondary education expenses and tuition. To the future generation, remember to take pride in yourself, culture and family and do not be afraid to share your journey to success.

**Joshua Tenakhongva**

Joshua Tenakhongva is the name I was given on my date of birth. I am of the Nát’oh Dine’é Táchii’nii, Naada a’i Dine’é, Bit’ahnii, and Gah Dine’é. My parents are Jennifer Gilmore and John Tenakhongva. Kayenta, Arizona, is my home community.

To those of you who have planned to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, and to those who have the credentials to apply for the scholarship, but do not plan on doing so, consider this a word of advice from a Gates recipient. The application process for this scholarship is grueling, both physically and mentally (mostly mentally) but, as long as you have strived to be the best student you can, it is not a herculean trial of your writing skills. Although it will require much planning and thought months in advance, the payoff is worth the time spent. You represent some of the best your school has to offer. You should not be intimidated by the process. Think of it as something that you want to conquer and show that you are ready for something bigger than high school. But, keep this in mind; there were 57,000 applicants for this scholarship and only 1,000 were selected as scholars. This may sound scary at first, but those 56,000 all had a chance to receive this. The only way they would have had no chance was for them to not apply. I was very close to not applying for the scholarship because the first essays I wrote, and my first plans for those essays, were not to my liking and I lost my confidence. If it were not for my family, friends and teachers, I would not have gone through with the application process. Although there are many ways to answer the questions to the Gates essays, giving up is not one of them.

In the fall of 2015, I will be attending Utah State University – Eastern: Blanding Campus and majoring in Computer Science.  

**Sherralyn Sneezer**

Ya’át’éeh, shi ei Sherralyn Sneezer yinishye Tábqghá niibii. Tódích’ií’ííi bashishchiin, dóó Tódích’ií’ííi dashíbe, dóó Apache dashínaáí.

Hello, my name is Sherralyn Sneezer and I am from Shonto, AZ. Rose Marie and Jones Grass are my grandparents. Rosalie Grass and Donald Sneezer are my parents and Larry Gamble is my step-father.

I am a Gates Millennium Scholar. Undoubtedly, I am very fortunate to have been selected for this prestigious scholarship. Throughout my four years of high school, I have worked toward my goal of earning the Gates Millennium Scholarship. I believe my journey began when I was accepted into the (MS)² program, held at Andover, MA, for three years. This summer program helped me very much and I encourage all freshmen high school students to apply. College Horizons is another great summer program that is very helpful. I will be attending Dartmouth College in the fall and majoring in biology.

**Throughout my childhood, my mother always stressed the importance of education and always demonstrated a relentless work ethic. After witnessing fiscal struggles as an adolescent, not only within my family but within my community, I was motivated to simply do better. I put my education on a pedestal and took steps every day to reach my potential.**

In the fall of 2015, I will be attending Utah State University – Eastern: Blanding Campus and majoring in Computer Science.
“Indian Country needs our young people to pursue financial careers so that we can be self-sustaining. When we do it for ourselves, we accomplish so much.”

Locey Horn
Treasurer, Cherokee Nation

Building the next generation of Native American financial leaders.
American Indian Graduate Center Recognizes Higher Education Champions

by Linda Niezgodzki

AIGC recognized leaders in Native American education advancement during its annual reception, held at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, NM. Native American advocates, alumni of AIGC and supporters of the organization were honored at the annual event. There were approximately 120 persons in attendance.

“We honor the distinguished people and organizations responsible for the advancement of American Indian higher education,” said Sam Deloria, Director of AIGC. “We recognize and celebrate the contributions of those in our AIGC community and the collective impact the contributions make to American Indian and Alaska Native higher education.”

Those honored at the 2015 reception were:

AMERIND Risk: AMERIND Risk is the only 100% tribally-owned insurance carrier in Indian Country. Over 400 tribes united and pooled their resources to create AMERIND Risk and retain money within Indian Country. AMERIND Risk has been a regular sponsor for AIGC receptions and has included AIGC as one of the beneficiaries of its annual golf tournament, which raises thousands of dollars to support scholarships and other services for American Indians nationwide.

Prof. Robert J. Miller, AIGC Alumnus (Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma): Professor Miller is the Faculty Director, Rosette LLP, for the American Indian Economic Development Program at the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, Arizona State University. One of the nation’s leading scholars in Indian Law, Miller was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 2014. Professor Miller is the author and co-author of several books and is a generous donor to AIGC.

Ms. Alicia Ortega, AIGC Alumna (Santa Clara Pueblo): Alicia works for the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), an agency of the Department of Commerce that promotes the growth and global competitiveness of businesses owned and operated by minority entrepreneurs. Ms. Ortega is always eager to volunteer for AIGC events and has recently coordinated with AIGC and local businesses to host silent auctions, allowing AIGC to provide more scholarships.

Mr. Randall Willis, Oglala Lakota: Randall Willis is a consistent and long-standing supporter of AIGC and American Indian art. His continued financial contributions to AIGC and other American Indian works have made a tremendous impact on AIGC’s ability to reach and engage students seeking graduate degrees. Mr. Willis was instrumental in obtaining the Accenture Scholarship for AIGC, which just celebrated 10 years!
Thank you to all who made, and continue to make, the AIGC Reception so successful: AIGC staff, attendees, honorees, silent auction donors, sponsors and volunteers!

Please plan to join us next year, April 2016!

The AIGC Reception was made possible with the help of several generous sponsors. We would like to express our gratitude, for the generous donations and continued support, to:

- Amerind Risk
- Conoco Phillips
- Public Service Company of New Mexico
- Sacred Wind Communications

The evening included a successful silent auction, with a number of exclusive items donated by artists, collectors, jewelers and other craftsmen, listed below. AIGC is most appreciative of these donated items, as they help raise thousands of dollars toward scholarships for Alaska Native and American Indian students.

Fine art donated to AIGC is not sold during the silent auction, but remains available for purchase. These exquisite paintings, sculptures and baskets may be viewed on the aigcs.org website, at [http://www.aigcs.org/about-us/fine-art-for-sale/](http://www.aigcs.org/about-us/fine-art-for-sale/).

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ANAHSAT Selected for the Academic Year 2015-2016

by Marveline Vallo Gabbard

The American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) – All Native American High School Academic Team (ANAHSAT) is in its 10th year of honoring ten outstanding American Indian/Alaska Native high school seniors from across Indian Country. These high school seniors are selected based on academic achievement, honors and awards, leadership and community service. Each is given a monetary award, which may be spent at the student’s discretion.

The objectives of this program are: to increase awareness of academic achievement of Indian high school seniors among their peers, Indian Country and the public; to increase recognition of Indian student success and capabilities, as a positive motivation for pursuing academic excellence and higher education; to increase academic achievement and set examples of positive influences in Indian Country; to increase teacher, administrator, parent and community involvement by recommending, nominating and supporting student participation and to increase student participation in high school academic programs and pursuit of higher education.

Congratulations to the 2015-2016 AIGC All Native American High School Academic Team!

Makarios K. Begay (Navajo Nation)
High School: Washington High School, 3.62 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Arizona State University in Bioengineering.

Ashlynn S. Black (Navajo Nation)
High School: Monument Valley High School, 4.00 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Stanford University in PreMed.

DaLacy S. Dockrey (Cherokee Nation)
High School: Dale High School, 4.128 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Oklahoma State University in Criminal Justice.

Shandiiin H. Herrera (Navajo Nation)
High School: Monument Valley High School, 3.87 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at the University of Hawai’i Manoa in Sociology.

Adrianna L. Nicolay (Navajo Nation)
High School: Shiprock High School, 4.00 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Willamette University in Environmental Science.

Sequoyah J. Pollard (Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah))
High School: San Benito High School, 3.75 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Northern Arizona University in Biology.

Mason Willarma (Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes)
High School: South Kitsap High School, 4.00 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Gonzaga University in Business.

Jonathan A. Walck (Navajo Nation)
High School: Montezuma-Cortez High School, 4.00 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Stanford University in Mechanical Engineering.

Delvecchio K. Wilson (Navajo Nation)
High School: Navajo Preparator School, 4.20 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at Yale University in Biology.

Shanell N. Yenchik (Navajo Nation)
High School: Monument Valley High School, 3.85 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree at the University of Utah in Nursing.
The All Native American High School Academic Team program was created by AIGC, with a grant from the Tommy Hilfiger Corporate Foundation, and is currently maintained with private funds.
The Rainer Fellowship was established in memory of John Rainer (Taos Pueblo), co-founder and first director of the American Indian Graduate Center. When he was sent to boarding school at age thirteen, John spoke only his Native language. Yet, at a time when it was rare to find Indians with any degrees, he persevered, ultimately earning a master’s degree in education from USC in 1951. Holding positions such as Director of the National Congress of American Indians, Chairman of the All Indian Pueblo Council and Director of the New Mexico Commission of Indian Affairs demonstrates his dedication to improving quality of life and creating opportunities for Native Americans. His advocacy for education included participating in a Senate Budget Committee field hearing on science and math education and testifying before the Senate and House Appropriations Sub-Committees on Interior Affairs.

Recipients of the Rainer Fellowship are charged with following John Rainer’s path by using their education and career as tools for giving back to their communities—a logical assignment for this year’s recipients, given their history of volunteerism. They are already following John Rainer’s advice, “Get the best possible training you can.”

Since the Rainer Fellowship is designed to reward the qualities and commitment characteristic of a future Indian leader, a portion of the award is to support participation in a voluntary activity that afford an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Rainer Fellowship Recipients 2014-2015
Aaron B. Cate and Trina Hubbell

by Marveline Vallo Gabbard

One of my greatest life accomplishments was hiking up the Tianzi highlands, ten thousand stairs, among the silent temples, where cold clouds surround the sacred mountain summits and gazing in awe at China’s majestic sceneries. Having already acquired the preliminary Bachelor’s of Science degree in Civil Engineering, I have successfully completed my Industrial Engineering Master of Science program at New Mexico State University.

I am a tribal member of the Santo Domingo (Kewa) Pueblo tribe and the eldest child of a working class family. As a non-gaming tribe, reservation poverty, inadequate roadways and housing setbacks remain acute. Our indigenous community, however, remains very conservative in terms of ancient customs, tradition and culture. I remain grateful that my academic pursuits will yield a generation of improvements for my community.

Growing up without a father, I initially intended on getting a job after high school, because it was difficult seeing my mother go through financial hardships. I wanted to provide her with support, as a way of giving back for raising me. However, she insisted I go to college, while the opportunity was there. Looking back, I know what my mother meant when she forewarned me about the widespread underdeveloped state of education among young Native Americans. Many of them encounter various setbacks, such as unemployment, alcoholism and healthcare difficulties. I wanted to avoid these circumstances, which is why my mother encouraged me to believe in myself and to do my best, regardless of family income. Her resilience and support has helped me learn to persevere, even when confronted with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The reservation poverty setbacks also resonate with me deeply, which is why I decided to take the first steps in my scholastic journey, hoping to improve the community someday.

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Beyond the Reservation Boarders – Destiny

by Aaron Caté

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I majored in engineering in college because it involved solving problems and implementing ideas for community service and development, which was the
kind of academic program I was seeking. Math was never my strongest subject; nevertheless, with perseverance, I spurred on ahead from calculus to chemistry and, eventually, to my primary civil engineering courses, such as land development, structures, cost estimating, hydraulics and highways. All of these speak to resolving infrastructure problems, including urban planning and highway improvement, which is a common occurrence I witness on the reservation.

During my graduate school years, a different world opened up to me as I became dedicated in the technical innovations and experienced the work of engineering firsthand, through lab works, site observations and practical applications – the intricacies of engineering that cannot be learned from a textbook. I took graduate-level engineering courses at the Beijing University of Technology. I was also involved in an urban infrastructure development project for the city of Tianshui, in China’s Gansu Province. I conducted research and performed data analysis for reducing pollutant emissions, by replacing thousands of domestic coal-fired heating boilers with a new heating source plant. This project sparked my interest to get involved in sustainability and I feel that it serves as an excellent preparation for my future role as an engineer.

I also took the opportunity to provide a better quality of life, within the Indian community, in the same way that I helped communities when I went abroad. Three years ago, when I interned with PNM Resources, I prepared and assisted in the preliminary designs for building a new electrical substation that was built on our reservation. I also analyzed our transmission power line systems and designed new cross arms for the overhead power line structures. Furthermore, I feel very fortunate to have been involved in venturing to foreign countries with NMSU Engineers Without Borders (EWB), to build bridges and wastewater treatment systems for the developing communities in Honduras Azul, Nicaragua and Azerca Cancha, Bolivia. Ultimately, our school project became a successful community effort and my leadership in construction enhanced my insights of working with other people and understanding their cultures.

As far as my educational ambitions go, my heritage is central to my beliefs. Due to my tribal influences, I have a deep respect for Native heritage and other tribes in general. Nevertheless, with the lack of opportunity and unemployment, many of our tribal members, including the youth, remain depressed and faithless toward reservation life. Growing up on the reservation, I managed to come across various opportunities as I traveled to different countries. I tutored English to Japanese and Chinese students, during my study abroad terms, in Japan and China. I helped native Japanese and Chinese students with their English studies, including homework, and to better understand American culture.

It surprised to me that many people in Japan and China believe that Native Americans are extinct. Therefore, while I was studying abroad in Japan, I spoke and taught at Japanese high schools and middle schools about Native American history and culture. I also volunteered at community centers and orphanages across Nisshin, Japan, where I had intercultural exchanges with Japanese children and
Making a Difference

by Trina Hubbell

I am honored to be selected as a recipient of the American Indian Graduate Center Rainer Scholarship Fellow for the academic year 2014-2015.

My name is Trina Hubbell and I am a Dine from Flagstaff, Arizona. I grew up in Kayenta, a small Navajo community located on the Navajo reservation. Growing up on the Navajo reservation has allowed me to have a strong connection to the youth on the Navajo and Hopi reservations. Leaving the reservation in pursuit of higher education was what led my parents to Flagstaff. I graduated from Coconino High School in Flagstaff in 1990. I received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and History from the University of Arizona in 1994 and a post-baccalaureate degree in Secondary Education in 1995, a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership in 2002 from Northern Arizona University and, currently, I am working on a doctorate in Educational Leadership at NAU.

After graduating from the University of Arizona, I began my teaching career at Ganado High School in 1996. I taught American government and American history in Ganado for five years. In addition, working with Navajo students, in the area of leadership and student council, helped me realize the potential for developing young Native leaders. After meeting my husband and starting a family, in Ganado, we decided to move to Flagstaff however, my teaching career continued on the Navajo reservation, in the small community of Tuba City. I enjoyed teaching at Tuba City High School for twelve and a half years. This school district gave me an opportunity to develop a curriculum for a regular government, honors government, AP government and economics class. In addition, I was fortunate to continue developing student leaders as a sponsor for student council and numerous class sponsorships.

I chose to enter the field of education to make a difference in the lives of children. My parents are educators on the Navajo reservation and following in their footsteps makes my journey very rewarding. My parents are college graduates and have impacted my career choices. My father has a doctorate degree in educational leadership and is a superintendent for a reservation school. My mother has

electricity utility upgrades on tribal lands were my primary motivations. Furthermore, my experience in the engineering field has taught me the importance of leadership and community building – the insights of perceiving solutions to problems and propelling objectives.

Like a marathon, life is full of obstacles—it is not how fast you can go to the finish, but how much endurance you have to complete the journey. If I am able to ascend a towering flight of an academic journey, like climbing up China’s mountains, then I believe any other Native American student is capable of completing their academic journey. Climb your mountain and retrieve the degree that is waiting on top.

(Aaron B. Cate is an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Santo Domingo. He graduated this 2015 spring term, from New Mexico State University, with a Master of Science degree in Industrial Engineering.)
My parents are educators on the Navajo reservation and following in their footsteps makes my journey very rewarding.

a master’s degree in speech pathology and was a speech pathologist for a number of years. My parents were influential in my decision to enter the field of education and continue to support my educational endeavors.

The next step in my educational career is obtaining a doctoral degree, because this is an opportunity to become a leader in my community. It is my intention to seek an administrative position on the Navajo reservation. Another goal is to obtain the principal’s and superintendent’s certificate, while completing the doctoral program. Ultimately, I would like to have the opportunity to become a visionary and instructional leader for a school district. It is valuable to have female leaders embedded in primary leadership positions on the Navajo reservation to serve as role models for the younger generation. There is a lack of qualified and experienced female educational leaders, especially at the high school level on the Navajo reservation. It is important that students have a role model in every step of their lives, so they understand these roles are attainable and desirable. I plan to use a portion of the funds from the Rainer Fellowship to provide awareness to high school students about the importance of continuing their education. I am grateful for the opportunities that AIGC has given me.

(Trina Hubbell is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. She is attending Northern Arizona University pursuing a doctorate of education degree in educational leadership and administration.)

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I No Longer Wait

by Darla Clement

One of the girls
I watch movies
Like the Steele Magnolias movie
People part of a family
A part of a community
Strengthening each other
Understanding
And love
But, I was doomed for minimum wage.
Education changed that.

I have been waiting
…To find direction
…To meet my brother, Stephen
…To meet my step-sister, Ramona
…For a letter from my mother
…To be close to my mother
…For a relationship with my sister
To belong
To know
To understand
To be part of a group

Why didn’t you attend college after high school?
Because, quite frankly, no one told me that I could. Not one person in my family had finished college and it was never mentioned or considered. The high school counselor called all the students to her office to discuss college, but she did not contact me. My boyfriend, who had been attending college for two years, was against it.

I did not have the finances and was unaware about financial aid. Students from our small town worked at the paper mill for higher wages in the summer to pay for expenses. It was the town’s scholarship. I was too young to work at the mill when I graduated and my job as a short order cook was below minimum wage. As my dad says, “That’s the way the cookie crumbles.”

What were the challenges?
One of my biggest challenges was lack of basic skills, such as math and English. But, fortunately, schools offer fundamental courses. I took math classes for two years before I had the skillset to continue with college level courses.

What were the challenges?
I did not have direction, so I just took classes and eventually the degree plan revealed itself, with help from the professors.

I lacked social skills. I was afraid of not fitting in and not belonging. I felt like I was on the outside looking in. It seemed that people knew more than I did, had more wisdom than I did, or had life figured out better. I didn’t realize that I was playing into the sense of guilt and shame that plagues my family.

What were the challenges?
It’s a lonely road separating oneself through education. Passive aggressive words are tossed around me, “She thinks she is so smart because she has a college degree.” But I no longer feel shamed. Truthfully, they are the people who think they are smarter than the rest of the world. It is uncomfortable to broaden and stretch the mind. I had to be humble enough to be open to another’s opinion to grow as a person. I do not have to participate in the shaming from someone addicted to drama.

Some family members don’t understand finishing high school and college, and they make no secret about their contempt for it. But, I now know they will have their noses up in the air anyway. It’s their way of trying to be superior. I don’t have to play into it.

Why was it a lonely road?
I was the first in my family to finish high school. I
How did it change you?
All my life I’ve been waiting. I waited for someone to tell me that college was okay. I waited for better financial days and for a better home. I waited to not live paycheck to paycheck.

I no longer wait. I don’t need someone to tell me that my goals are acceptable. No one has to understand. I learned to save and manage money. I no longer live from check to check, because I always have money tucked away. If I make $50, then $20 will go into savings. Life happens and that $20 is the difference between a new tire and having to sell the car because I don’t have money to replace a blown tire.

I had to learn a new way to think and to recognize that sad thoughts keep me from success. I don’t have to bind myself to them. If I think of myself as poor, I’ll remain poor. It’s about what’s going on in my thoughts. Subconscious thoughts become reality.

I no longer hear the discouragement of the masses because I’m more focused on the next project ahead. I don’t need their approval, as I did before. It’s just noise.

Knowledge gave me power over my circumstances. I don’t feel like the outsider anymore, and I’m the driver in my own story.

Any advice?
Never stop seeking.
Never quit searching.
Ask for help.
Always try.
Don’t be afraid to get it wrong.
Just try again.

Anything you’d like to say?
So, I ask you, the reader. What do you want out of life? What are you waiting for? Do you want to wait for someone to tell you it’s okay? Do you want to wait for your ship to come in? Do you want to wait for better days, more finances?

What you are doing today, you’ll be doing tomorrow. Do you like this day? Are you waiting for something to rescue tomorrow? Your life is so much more than yesterday’s that are the same as todays and tomorrows. ✶
Opening My Worldview and Sharing My Heritage in China

by Emily Ellison

In July 2009, I flew out of San Francisco, California to China, with the group that became known as ‘China 15s,’ – the 15th group of Peace Corps volunteers to head to China. I knew it would be a life-changing experience, but the change that took place was even beyond my expectations.

It wasn’t an easy change. There were vicissitudes as I transitioned from my Navajo community to the international world. As an American Indian woman, communicating with individuals from completely different backgrounds and views was a challenge. But, within ‘China 15’ there was mutual respect and appreciation for each individual volunteer’s way of life. Many Peace Corps volunteers were comfortable with people from different cultural, nationality, ethnic, religious, language and political backgrounds. They were problem-solvers, who were self-reliant and had a deep appreciation for the ideals for which America stands.

Being in China, a country whose social roles are, in many aspects, the complete opposite of traditional Navajo ways, there were many difficult days. Traditional Navajo society is matriarchal. Traditional Chinese society is Patriarchal. I considered returning home but, with the support of a group of Peace Corps friends and Chinese nationals, to whom I affectionately referred as 成都人 (Chengdu people), I was able to persevere. During my time as a volunteer, I become an avid reader, traveled as often as possible, become more physically active and, at one point, biked 800 km through West Sichuan and Yunnan provinces for a month. I also learned that the Navajo love for basketball was matched by the Chinese.

As I become more integrated in my community, I was approached by community members, as if I was ethnically Chinese or ABC (American Born Chinese). Others could tell I was not of Chinese descent but not quite ‘Hollywood American.’ As soon as I explained that I was American Indian, Native to lands of the country now called the United States of America, they expressed their deep admiration for my heritage and their disbelief of the history and treatment of the indigenous people. They would correlate their history and ours, which they cited as China’s Century of Humiliation. We discussed social issues and public policy – highlighting topics such as economic success and perseverance of our historical and ethnic identities (knowing the traditional ways were surviving this new economic hierarchy). We always ended our conversations with hope and optimism.

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SHARE YOUR HERITAGE WITH A COMMUNITY OVERSEAS

peacecorps.gov
My Peace Corps service opened my worldview, shattered my intolerant views and expanded my conceptual knowledge to a realm on a different plane.

I was offered co-ownership in a flight attendant training school and several other business ventures. The economic opportunities seemed endless. However, I could not envision my future there. I missed home. I missed my family and wanted to use my skills for the benefit of my home, community and people. So, back to the Four Sacred Mountains I returned.

My Peace Corps service opened my worldview, shattered my intolerant views and expanded my conceptual knowledge to a realm on a different plane. Creation became endless, the entrepreneurial spirit emerged. I witnessed first-hand the effects of economic progress and planning, along with the roles governments and media play in development. My perspective on human decisions and social transactions grew, as I observed individuals making choices, after calculating the expected benefits and costs to themselves, based upon their interactions with others and their understanding of those needs. I now understood the importance of knowing one’s own identity, history and working together in a cohesive group toward common community goals. As I returned on my final flight from China, the image of young healthy Navajos, speaking flawless Mandarin, partaking in this economic explosion circulated in my mind and brought a smile. I thought, I have to help provide the opportunity for them to find “the toughest job [they’]ll ever love”, beyond the reservation and U.S. borders.

Emily Ellison is a member of the Navajo Tribe from New Mexico, within the Navajo Nation’s communities of Manuelito and Chichiltah. She served in Peace Corps/China, from 2009–12, as an Education Volunteer and continued to work in Chengdu as an English instructor at Sichuan University, for two years after her service. Ellison now is in management training at Enterprise Rent-A-Car and a board member of the Uplift Community School, a K-8 charter school. She was recently a runner-up in the Navajo Nation tribal delegate election and plans to run again in 2018.

The death of Ellison’s sister, in 2008, inspired her to apply to the Peace Corps to pursue her dream of international travel and service. When she faced challenges in her service, the words of her family kept her going: “Go out there and see the world. Be our eyes.” Ellison graduated from New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, with a B.B.A. in finance, where she was also crowned Miss Native America 2004–05.
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Developing a STEM Program at the Elementary School Level

by Lynette Charlie

Every child deserves a high quality education and opportunities to learn. For the past 10 years, my passion and goal, for students who have walked through my life and classroom, has been to foster a love for learning. I have been blessed with some amazing educators throughout my educational journey. Mr. Mabrito, at Crownpoint Elementary school; Mr. Nesbit, at Tuba City High School and Dr. Byler, at the collegiate level, are among the educators who clearly had a positive impact on me. The commonality among these educators is their passion for teaching, a quality I most definitely want to exude. Finding a bridge between theory and practice is a delicate endeavor and, for American Indian education, data often paints a dreary portrait of the educational challenges faced by Native students.

My name is Lynette Charlie, Navajo/Dine’ Nation, originally from Tuba City, Arizona. I am an educator and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) coordinator for Salt River Elementary School, on the Salt River Pima-Marcopoa Indian Community in Scottsdale, Arizona. Fueled by my own educational experiences and opportunities, I take education seriously. My parents set high standards and expectations for me when I was an elementary school student and I, in turn, have set high standards and expectations for students in my classroom. As a Native teacher, my role in helping transform lives is critical. Time often stands still in Native communities, but the global needs of the future continue to move forward rather quickly. Careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are rapidly increasing and communities all across Native Nations must ask, “How are we preparing our young tribal members to take the helm in these STEM fields?”

The school where I teach has been selected to be one of seven pilot schools, through a grant from Helios and Science Foundation Arizona, that focuses on integrating science, technology, engineering and math into the school curriculum. Being a pilot school has allowed the selected schools to develop effective STEM education systems by providing them ongoing support that directly impacts educational outcomes for Arizona students.

With no experience in grant writing, I didn’t let my fear of tackling this project deter me from attempting to secure this STEM grant. The process to acquire this generous award was a significant learning experience for me. From writing a successful grant proposal, to putting together and making a successful presentation to the Helios Foundation and Science Foundation members was, at times, overwhelming. This leap of faith, so to speak, has paid off and benefited our school community.

Native students continue to be under-represented in the STEM fields. Although efforts to support students in these fields exist, most often, at the high school and post-secondary level, it is uncommon to find support at the elementary school level. Planting the STEM identity seed can be a crucial factor in helping students plan for their future at the collegiate level and, eventually, their careers. Exposing them to hands-on experiences and opportunities in STEM fields, at a time when they are developing an understanding of their place in a global society, is necessary if the inequalities of STEM representation are to change among Native people.

For the past 2 years, I have worked hard to develop the STEM program and make it available, not only for the students in the Salt River Indian Community, but also for colleagues. Moving forward with a STEM focus has been an exciting and rewarding journey for me. With humble beginnings, STEM began as a teacher led initiative, but it has developed into a much greater endeavor. It is deeply rooted in preparing the young O’Odhham and Pipaash students to be part of a competitive global society and is preparing them to be ready to engage in being tomorrow’s problem solvers.
Creating a STEM identity has benefited the school community and is instrumental to the success of this project. To integrate STEM concepts across all academic areas has been an advantage to students, as they are seeing the connections throughout their academic day. Science materials were examined with a STEM lens and then connected and integrated into all academic areas. The teachers were guided and coached in a manner that allowed them to enhance their science units with STEM extensions that reached into reading, math and social studies. In addition, teachers rewrote curriculum maps to document their STEM initiatives, thus creating unified curricular units. They participated in many hours of professional development that focused on the grounding principles of STEM; critical thinking, observation, exploration and questioning. No longer was science taught in isolation. As a result, our school went from low attendance rates at our science events, to over 300 parents and children at our first STEM night, and the numbers keep increasing at each of the events.

An additional benefit has been that students now have a tablet lab at their disposal. This has enhanced the research and exploration activities in the classrooms. The grant has also provided opportunities for students to attend science and engineering camps at Arizona State University and the Arizona Science Center and, in spring 2015, a Young Women in Engineering Initiative was started.

The STEM initiative has also provided opportunities to create community partnerships. For example, our teachers worked with the Salt River Tribal Environmental Department to learn how they can connect outdoor learning experiences that are relevant to tribal issues in the classroom. This spring, the Young Women in Engineering Initiative, in collaboration with the Quarter Project, allowed us to award three, all-expense paid scholarships for girls to attend an engineering camp. Most notable, has been the collaboration with the 21st Century program, in which students continue to have the opportunity to attend after-school programs with a STEM focus. This summer, the first STEM summer day-camp opened at Salt River Elementary. The camp has been a wonderful addition to the STEM project. For 16 days, students are engulfed in STEM projects with presentations about STEM careers from local tribal departments, scientists, engineers and health programs.

By focusing on strategic integration, shifting current beliefs about science education to a more student-centered STEM approach, I continue to work on providing a quality STEM education program and opportunities to students. It is imperative that Native communities establish a consistent STEM framework where students can engage in authentic, hands-on, inquiry-based, scientific learning opportunities so that they can build stronger societies. Leveling the playing field for Native American students, by focusing on the inequalities in opportunities, resources and support they receive, can have positive long-term effects.

Planting the STEM identity seed can be a crucial factor in helping students plan for their future at the collegiate level and, eventually, their careers.

My start in the field of education has an interesting beginning. I was not expecting to become an educator, but stumbled into it because of family responsibilities. I credit motherhood for directing me into education and helping me find my passion. Nearly twenty years ago, when I was faced with raising a child on my own, I started looking for a new career. I thought education was a good choice because everyone knows teachers “get summers off.” With my little baby in tow, I changed my career and have never looked back. With the financial help of the Gates Millennium Scholarship (inaugural class, 2000), I was able to focus not only on being a mother, but my college studies as well. I graduated Summa Cum Laude, with a degree in Elementary Education from Arizona State University and a Master's degree in Education and Teaching from Grand Canyon University. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program in Organizational Management and anticipate completing the doctoral degree. I reside in Arizona, with my daughter, who will begin her college freshman journey this fall.

I've been blessed to work with some of the most amazing administrators, teachers, families and students. They have supported my effort and my vision, one in which students can continue to discover the simplicity and beauty of the science and engineering world and understand they have the ability to change that world, by deepening their understanding of the STEM content. The STEM project is a way to prepare students for college and future careers. This will be a way to meet the needs of their Native communities and for them to become the next generation of scientists, engineers, mathematicians and technology specialists. ✤
Native American and Native Alaskan males do not perform well in high school and seldom aspire towards post-secondary education for clear and simple reasons. While the following statements will perhaps offend, exposition of the roots of the issue is long overdue.

The contradiction.
• To ask an individual to participate in an experience that is perceived as useful is to work in a spirit of respectful cooperation.
• To tell an individual to do something that has no demonstrable value is to demand submissive compliance.

All education and life preparation should be a visible pathway between where a young person might be and any destination he may want to go. Yet, the current educational system is perceived, by students, to be an obstacle course littered with prime/nonprime and imaginary numbers, box/whisker plots and writing assignments that are merely proof that a student has read something in which he was utterly disinterested.

Values. A published list of Native Alaskan values, subdivided by culture group includes: hard work, respect, community commitment, honoring elders etc. Those values are quite valid, but are overshadowed by one pervasive value that has yet to be clearly identified: Honoring the sovereignty of the individual.

Culturally, each Native Alaskan person is free to make his own decisions, even if those decisions have less than positive outcomes. That process starts at a fairly young age and supersedes all other stated values.

The current educational system demands that students divide compound fractions, determine if pi is rational, prove the converse of the Pythagorean theorem and do recursive formulas exemplified by the Fibonacci sequence, while explaining gerunds and participles. New facts and skills are now being generated at a frighteningly exponential rate. Is there a shortage of useful knowledge such that curriculum must resort to that which will seldom, if ever, be used?

80-80. I have devoted the past thirty-six years to making education relevant for Native Alaskan students by linking academic concepts to village life, primarily science and math, although I have taught all subjects in all grades. I have authored several books and produced motivational videos to that end. On a major portion of the Common Core standards, after sixth grade, I am completely stumped in my efforts. If I, as a professional educator with numerous career experiences, including decades of subsistence living, carpenter/construction worker, bush pilot, fire-fighter and state legislator, struggle to make a real life connection to the standards, how can the majority of students possibly do so with no assistance?

The Common Core standards are provably 80% useless to 80% of high school students. Only one-third of Alaska's high school students will even attempt a two-year, four-year or certificate program, yet the CC standards appear to be designed for the upper third (for whom they are also questionably useful). Stated another way, one third
of the students are in the bus and two thirds are thrown under the bus, as they are driven through the fog of confusion between aspirational and essential standards.

Simultaneously, the myopic obsession with testing, coupled with teacher evaluations based on student test performance, compel educators to exclusively teach that which can be assessed by multiple choice. This narrow process disallows a multitude of essential life skills that students naturally crave.

Traditional Native American training included hunting, tracking, trapping, fishing, traveling, building, etc.; all concrete identifiable objectives on a visible pathway towards an established maturation process. Contemporary training is perceived as an obscure, cluttered pathway with questionable incentives at trail’s end. Suicide says, “My crisis appears to be permanent, as I can’t find a way out of this undesirable situation.” The healthy traditional pathway has been hijacked by those mandating the obscure journey with dubious outcomes. Endless meetings about suicide in Native American communities could end here.

The question always arises, when practical deviation from the current pathway is suggested, “What about the students who change their minds and decide to go to college?”

More realistic questions rebound using a different metaphor. “What about the far greater number who attempt college and drop out? Are the crumbs that fall from the table of the few college entrants and the far fewer graduates adequate nutrition for the far greater majority who are relegated to exist under the table?”

Two Part Solution. The solution, although incredibly simple, is challenged by a severe addiction to the broken paradigm.

1. The “What.” Mandate that all educational standards have a demonstrable, real-life application. Problem solved. Teachers become facilitators. Students prepare themselves for a future they have chosen by doing assignments that have obvious personal value. The “What” must be taught using a holistic theme-based format, never as fragments that

Continued on page 30
abruptly stop when a one bell rings and another follows. Pavlov does not work here.

2. The “Who.” Who would expect a UPS worker to develop or install the software he is delivering? No one. Why then are educators designing curriculum objectives? Educators know how to deliver knowledge. They have absolutely no idea what knowledge is necessary for life outside their narrow domain. Should a music major design the career path for an electrical engineer? No? Why then are those at the pinnacle of the educational system designing career paths upon which they have never walked?

Answer: Do not allow educators in the room when the “what” of education is being identified. The “what” must be exclusively designed and vetted by recognizably down-to-earth individuals living in the career and lifestyle destinations towards which Native American students aspire. Do not believe the common, yet provably empty, claim that educational leaders meaningfully involve industry during standards development.

Boots-on-the-ground folks must identify the “what” of education. Educators then deliver the skills and knowledge vetted by the practical end-users. Again, this should apply to both high school and post-secondary education. Educators should never be involved in determining the “what” of education, or the broken paradigm, like the Phoenix, will arise again.

The following excerpt is from my recent book, *Teaching in a Culturally Responsive and Responsible Manner*, and addresses classroom disrespect.

“The school system often challenges the autonomy of the individual by insisting students do tasks that have no perceivable, demonstrable real-life application and gives zero choice in the process.”

“The school system often challenges the autonomy of the individual by insisting students do tasks that have no perceivable, demonstrable real-life application and gives zero choice in the process. Intuitively, the student responds with secondary disrespect to the perceived initial disrespect of the school system. The student might eventually comply, but does so, in the presence of peers, at the very last moment with every allowable display that communicates, ‘I am unwillingly complying with this request under protest and want you, my peers, to know that I retain my independent sovereign human status in spite of my temporary cooperation with this foreign authority that none of us can seem to avoid.’”

This might seem harshly overstated, but is extremely accurate. Do students consciously think of those words when they resist the efforts of the school to teach them? Of course not. Is that dynamic churning intuitively within? Absolutely, yes.

The solution, in sum: Make it demonstrably relevant and they will come.

Alan Dick, champion of the outcast and downtrodden, is an Alaskan Bush educator since 1979, B.Ed.Cross Cultural Education UAF and an Alaskan Bush resident, since 1966.
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Delivering broadband to Tribal Lands
Greetings, my name is Kevin Neal Teehee. My mother named me after the first man on the moon, as she was apparently inspired in the hospital by the Apollo 11 landing just a couple days before I was born. She did not like the spelling (Neil), so she changed it a little bit. I like this story because it somewhat describes my trajectory and journey to being the first physician in my family.

I enjoy the stories of how AIGC has assisted many students in their journey to higher education over the years. I wish I could replicate some of the experiences and tell the story of how I was raised traditionally and grew up on our tribal homeland and returned to my community, but that is not really the case. Nonetheless, I hope a few students may find inspiration from my experience.

My mother and father are both Cherokee from Eastern Oklahoma, Tahlequah and Stillwell. They both attended boarding schools. My father, one of the youngest of twelve children, went initially to Seneca Indian School, at age eight, after his mother died. My mother didn't leave until age 15. They were from an era where traditional teaching and language were very much discouraged, as it might inhibit their chances at a future. My maternal grandmother and great-grandmother were the last to be fluent. They attended Haskell Indian School and the Cherokee Seminary, respectively, but neither finished.

My parents met at Chilocco Indian School and, eventually, were the first to go to college at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah. After college, they subsequently followed the jobs and ended up in rural Northern California, where I was born. My mother was a beloved elementary school teacher and my father, a draftsman, worked for various construction companies. I spent summers in Oklahoma growing up and one year in elementary school, but most of my life was spent growing up near a small railroad town in Colfax, California. My mother did help facilitate the state-run educational summer programs for the local Maidu and Miwok community for several years, so I did learn beading, sand painting and a few other skills in the role of the teacher's son.

It is a well-known phenomena that children who attended Indian boarding schools can struggle to fit in, in adult life. They never quite know where they belong, sometimes feeling “too Indian to fit in with the whites and too white to fit in with the Indians”. In retrospect, that can describe how I grew up and still how I feel today. I am almost a full-blood Cherokee and really don't have much connection to the culture. Yes, we have a close family, being a little different from everyone else in a mostly Anglo, rural place can do that. We spoke a handful of Cherokee words and phrases at home, but that was about it.

We could be a model assimilation story, I guess. My parents did well considering their origins. We didn’t have everything one could want, but we had everything we needed. Getting a good education, working hard, paying taxes and staying out of trouble was the goal. Yes, I do think the boarding schools instilled a subordinate mentality. I hope I don’t sound critical, as my parents did the best they knew how. In retrospect, I feel it was implied that we would always be inferior to the majority population. At our best, we would always be good employees, but never an employer, and being something like a doctor or lawyer was an option for others, but not for us.
I quietly got good grades in high school and was accepted to UC Berkeley. Yes, this was an era of affirmative action, so I doubt I would have been accepted if I was not Native.

Affirmative action is great in that it provides an underrepresented group the opportunity to participate at a higher level, but it can also fill you with self-doubt. It is easy to feel like you are not really deserving of your opportunities and, deep down, you are not good enough or smart enough. It doesn’t help that you are already out of place and not even sure if you are a real Indian or not.

Yes, I had a lot of fun in college, (a little too much fun), but that is another story. That can happen when you are trying to fit in, but I managed to survive. Regarding academics, I was a little confused on what I wanted to study. The first year, I sought refuge in the Native American studies department. I majored in that for a while, but the thing about Native American history is that there is usually not much of a happy ending. As a result, it can be easy to become filled with resentment. Some of us know, too well, what too much resentment can do to you, so I sought something else. I did make some good friends in the Native students group and am still in contact with them today.

After struggling to decide on a major, I decided I liked animals and the outdoors and would be a zoology major. I was fortunate to have good friends who loved math and science. I wouldn’t have originally been confident enough to compete at UC Berkeley, in math and science, but it occurred to me that if my friends were smart enough and we were on the same wavelength as friends, why couldn’t I? That was when I really decided to challenge myself and, you know what? I did it! Having the opportunity to go to college and compete at UC Berkeley, with arguably some of the brightest and eccentric people in world, was an experience I will always treasure.

It was then that I was exposed to human anatomy and physiology through the major and that was when I really fell in love with medicine. I discovered something so fascinating that I would never get tired of learning it. If you have never experienced that magic, then I encourage you to keep looking. I grew up tinkering in the garage and the human body to me is a living, breathing car. I was hooked and that was when decided I would change course and try to go to medical school.

I did well enough to get into a few medical schools. Again, I suspect I would not have been accepted if I were not Native. Even though I was accepted to schools with emphasis on recruiting and educating Native students, I still felt out of place. I chose an environment that also felt less patronizing to me as a minority student. I chose to attend an historically black college, the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine, partnered with U.C.L.A. in South Los Angeles. I enjoyed being in an environment with predominantly minority professors and doctors, teaching minority students, with a mission of serving minority patients, in an underserved community. Yes, I was the only Native American in the history of the young medical school, and probably still, but I was used to being the only one by now.

My medical education and training was spent going back and forth from Drew/U.C.L.A., to a general surgery internship in Oakland, then back to finish up in family medicine at U.S.C. in Los Angeles. They say, “Don’t get too attached to anybody before medical school, because medical school and medical training can cause you to disappear for about 7 or 8 years and reappear a as completely transformed person”. You are definitely different now. You have seen and done things that very few people will have the honor of doing and seeing, and you do it for hours and days on end, with no sleep. I was a physician now and I will always consider it an honor, a privilege and a huge responsibility. It was a tremendous challenge for one to complete, I will always have a bond with those who accompanied me through training. It was my trip to the moon.

My first several years of practice were with the Indian Health Service, as the first medical director of an urban Indian health center on the central coast of California. I managed to accomplish a lot. The program grew exponentially. I was awarded Model Program and Outstanding Member Affiliate by the Association of American Indian Physicians and sat as California representative on the executive council of the Indian Health Service. It was a great learning experience, but I eventually began to suffer from wanderlust, as sometimes politics and bureaucracy have a tendency to interfere with being a doctor and treating patients. Those of you who have worked for government agencies will understand. I am still active as a Board Member of American Indian Health & Services in Santa Barbara.

I am an active member of the Association of American Indian Physicians and look forward to the meetings every year. Do I feel out of place still? Yes. I don’t like to fake that I am more traditional than I really am. I still don’t really know the songs or dances. I have been known to walk the wrong way around the fire, but all I can do is give my best effort and try to take part.

Currently, I work in the emergency department of a community hospital in an underserved community in Los Angeles. I enjoy it as it is a very diverse population, primarily serving immigrants of different languages from.
AIGC Alumnus, A Doctor’s Story

Not all Indians may be meant to be tied to one community or reservation. Some of us are meant to be nomadic hunters and gatherers and may never return home. I am now at peace with that and have, at times, relieved myself of the need to look for a community in which I belong.

all over the world. I occasionally run into another Native, but I am, in essence, an ambassador as the only Native American my coworkers or patients may meet or work beside.

My favorite part of being a doctor is still the first few minutes of a new patient encounter. I enjoy the challenge of meeting an apprehensive stranger, who probably doesn’t trust doctors, establishing a rapport and getting a smile out of them. My strength is that I am just a normal guy, who happens to be a doctor. There are plenty of smarter physicians, but I like to think I make up for it by being a hard worker and treating my patients like an extended relative. For my efforts, I have recently been nominated for the “Pride in Profession” award, which is only given to few physicians per year at the hospital. I am frequently praised by staff and patients as their favorite of the best physician they know, yet I still sometimes wonder how this happened or think that I am not worthy. I have not counted exactly, but I am sure I have seen over 100,000 patients in my career. I still love the art and science of medicine and can honestly say I would never want to do anything else.

I was inspired, not too long ago, by Sherman Alexie’s “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian”. Not all Indians may be meant to be tied to one community or reservation. Some of us are meant to be nomadic hunters and gatherers and may never return home. I am now at peace with that and have, at times, relieved myself of the need to look for a community in which I belong. Also, when you lose a connection to one tribe, you always have the freedom to pick and choose to be a member of other tribes. Yes, I am a Cherokee, but I am also in the tribe of health care, tribe of outdoor enthusiasts, tribe of Sooner and Golden Bear fans and tribe of foodies, just to name a few.

My parents have retired and moved back home to the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah. I have enjoyed watching my mother, in particular, reconnect with a community she left long ago. She is very active in the Cherokee Auxiliary and volunteer organizations of the tribe and has reconnected with the culture and many of her childhood friends. Do I still feel out of place and wonder where I am supposed to be? Sure. Will I ever find or return to a home where I feel I belong? Maybe. First though, I still have some hunting and gathering to do and some game to follow.

I would like to thank AIGC for the opportunity to tell my story. I hope someone may find a little inspiration in that it’s ok to not belong and it’s ok to keep searching for your purpose. AIGC provided me with valuable funding during medical school. In return, for several years, I have drafted a monthly contribution from my bank account to AIGC to pay it forward to other upcoming students. I will continue to do so as long as I am able. Wado!*
Who’s Eligible?

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- Have demonstrated leadership abilities through participation in community service, extracurricular or other activities;
- Meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility criteria;
- Have completed and submitted all three required forms: the student’s application (Nominee Personal Information Form), an evaluation of the student’s academic record (Nominator Form) and an evaluation of the student’s community service and leadership activities (Recommender Form) by the deadline of January 13, 2016.
- Application may be found at gmsp.org.

The American Indian Graduate Center Scholars (AIGCS) is the American Indian/Alaska Native partner for the GMS scholarship.
In Over Your Head

by Kamuela Yong

In 2012, I became the first Native Hawaiian to earn a PhD in applied math; however, math was not my first choice of careers. As an undergraduate at Loyola Marymount University, my primary major was civil engineering. Mathematics was my secondary major. One of the math classes I took was a math modeling course in which I learned about scientific research. It was in this class that I met my mentor, Erika Camacho. Here I discovered I had a passion for mathematical modeling and decided I wanted to get a PhD in engineering and use mathematical models for engineering problems. Previously, I just wanted to go into the engineering industry. With encouragement from my mentor, I enrolled in grad school...in mathematics, not engineering...and in Iowa! I'm from Hawaii and went to undergrad in LA; Iowa is probably one of the most unlikely places I ever believed I would go.

So here I am, having emphasized engineering rather than math classes throughout undergrad and about to take graduate level math classes. During my first week of graduate classes, they covered an entire course I took in undergrad. As the class progressed, I felt overwhelmed and very lost. Students asked questions that made no sense. If I don't even know enough to understand what the question is, how am I supposed to understand the answer? Then, to top it off, there were a lot of things in class that I didn't understand. I didn't want to ask any questions because I didn't want to seem like the only fool who didn't understand some concept. If I could have asked some brilliant question, I would have but, as I mentioned, I didn't even understand what those brilliant questions were asking, so there was no way I could conceive such a question. So, I remained silent.

I began to question whether I chose the wrong career. I even began questioning if my admission into grad school was just so the department could brag that they landed a token minority. At the time, I seriously considered leaving math and returning to engineering.

One day, I confessed this to a friend who had already gone through the course that I was struggling in and was told that everyone feels like that. No one asked questions because, like me, they were afraid to be the only person who didn't understand. Nearly everyone in the class was lost and, since no one asked those basic questions, we all assumed the others understood it and kept silent.

This revelation made me realize that my fears, of not being prepared for this class and struggling, were actually normal and everyone was in the same boat, but were all too proud to admit we needed help. Once I understood this, I gained confidence. I soon found a friend to study with and it made classes much more enjoyable...well, at least endurable.

If you find yourself way over your head, realize that you probably aren't the only one. It helped me immensely to talk to someone who had already been there.

I still struggled through classes, but no longer doubted that I was cut out to be a mathematician. Although I may not have had good grades in some my classes and struggled in undergrad and grad school, that did not mean I'm not a good scientist. After I completed all of my courses and actually began doing research, I had my...
chance to shine. I finally found something I was good at, something that I wanted to spend my time doing. I would come in early in the morning and stay late, not because I had a deadline, but because I found what I was doing fascinating.

When I decided to get my PhD in applied math I had no idea that there were no other Native Hawaiians. It wasn’t a question that came to mind because I knew what I wanted to do. It wasn’t until after I began grad school and started attending conferences that I realized I didn’t see any Native Hawaiians. Even at places where there’s a high concentration of underrepresented minorities, I didn’t see Native Hawaiians. I found this to be troubling and I want to change it. At one conference, I did meet a woman from Guam who has a PhD in math. For many years, she’s been the only Pacific Islander that I know who had a PhD in math, pure or applied math, but the lack of people from my background doesn’t mean that I’m alone. I have a huge network of people to support me. Aside from the obvious support from my family and friends, I am strongly supported on the academic side. My mentors have encouraged me every step of the way. My classmates have helped me get through the hard times and are there to help me unwind when the stress builds. I also made many friends simply by traveling to conferences.

If you find yourself way over your head, realize that you probably aren’t the only one. It helped me immensely to talk to someone who had already been there. It also helped me to talk to my mentor. There is a large community of professionals willing to mentor you. These people have all been in your shoes and they’ll help talk you down when you need it.

I know it sometimes seems like it’s a lonely world. You might be the only person from your neighborhood or tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a tribe to go away to college. It might be your first time living out of your state and so far from family. There are a.

I have just completed 3 years as a postdoc at Arizona State University, under the mentorship of Carlos Castillo-Chavez, and in Fall 2015 I will begin the next stage of my career as an assistant professor of mathematics at the University of Hawai’i West ‘Oahu.

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To request an application or for additional information, contact Molly Tovar, Director of the Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies and Professor of Practice at 314-935-7787 or mtovar@wustl.edu.

Download an application at [buder.wustl.edu/SAGEproject](http://buder.wustl.edu/SAGEproject)
Finding Your Way

by Michael Negale

My name is Michael Negale. I am Navajo and graduated from Gallup High School in 2000. Soon after I graduated, I moved to Utah to continue my college education. Some of the scholarships I applied for required a major to be declared. I was not sure what I wanted to major in, so I chose computer science, because I had taken some computer classes in high school. Being in college was so different than being in high school. The classes were bigger and it felt like the professors would never get to know you. I lived in the dorms on campus and it felt like no one ever slept. These drastic changes, in addition to being away from my family, made it hard to adjust. I found myself struggling with the workload and began falling behind in my classes. My grades, after my first semester, were not what I was used to in high school. The following semester was just as bad as my first. During the middle of my second semester, I withdrew from my classes, moved out of the dorms and into an apartment.

When I left school, I stayed in Utah because I thought it would be easier to get a job in the city rather than in Gallup, where my family lived. I applied to several places and ended up getting a job in a kiosk at the local mall. The pay wasn’t enough to keep me going, but I received a lot of financial help from my parents. The owner of the kiosk at the mall left and the job ended. I was able to get a job at a local grocery store. I put a lot of time and effort into this job because the pay was good and I thought I would move up to become a manager one day.

I met some Native Americans attending Utah Valley University (UVU) and remembered what it was like to go to school. I was interested in enrolling at UVU because it was a smaller university and I knew people attending there. After my first attempt at college, I had very little confidence in myself. I declared a major in collision repair, because it had nothing to do with computer science. I started my first semester at UVU by taking a humanities course. I was proud of myself for completing the course and the next semester I decided to go back full-time.

To pay for school, I applied for multicultural scholarships, the Navajo Nation scholarship, American Indian Services scholarship and financial aid. I also continued to work full-time at the grocery store. Although I had declared a major, I decided to take courses outside the required courses. I took courses in astronomy, math and computer programming. I finished with very good grades and was able to catch the attention of the professors.

I graduated from UVU in 2011, with a bachelor’s degree (Magna Cum Laude) in physics, a bachelor’s degree (Magna Cum Laude) in mathematics and an associate’s degree (high honors) in computer science.

They told me about majors in physics, math and computer science. I decided to go back to my original plan and changed my major back to computer science. As I got further into computer science, I was required to take more challenging math and physics courses. After taking these courses, I decided to keep taking more math and physics courses, although they would not count towards my computer science degree. I became so fascinated with...
Michael Negale, PFR Alaska

The American Indian Graduate

The focus of my current research at USU is the dynamics of the upper atmosphere, in particular atmospheric gravity waves (AGW). AGW originate in the lower atmosphere. As they propagate upwards they grow in size and, at various altitudes, will break. The breaking of these waves has a strong impact on the dynamics of the atmosphere, such as wind circulation and temperature. How much they impact the atmosphere is important for models, from which we can forecast weather and climate. These waves can also propagate into the near space environment, which can have an impact on satellite communication.

There are various techniques used to observe AGWs, such as cameras, lasers, balloons and radars. In my studies, I have utilized a camera, termed imager, to observe AGWs over Alaska. The location of Alaska is of interest due to mountain ranges, which are one possible source of AGWs, as well as the location of the aurora, another possible source of AGWs. The imager is capable of observing AGW at ~87 km in altitude, during the long winter nights. We collected data from the imager
for three consecutive winter seasons. The results of this study will be used in my dissertation.

I am currently investigating waves in the near space environment, known as the thermosphere. In the thermospheric region (~100 – 500 km), the solar UV radiation provides enough energy to strip electrons from neutral air molecules, creating the ionosphere. As AGW move through the thermosphere, they push and pull the ions (air molecules with missing electrons) and the electrons, creating traveling ionospheric disturbances (TIDs). Therefore, by observing TIDs in the ionosphere, we can gain information about the AGWs in the thermosphere. Incoherent scatter radars (ISRs) are an excellent tool used to measure properties of the ionosphere. I am currently using data from an ISR, also located in Alaska, to observe AGWs in the thermosphere. The results of this study will provide information on how these waves affect the near space environment. This study, along with the imager, will provide evidence for coupling of the middle atmosphere to the upper atmosphere.

News of receiving the NSFGRP landed me on the cover of Winds of Change spring 2014 magazine. During my graduate studies, thus far, I have had opportunities to present my research at various conferences and workshops, such as the Coupling Energetics Dynamics of the Atmospheric Regions (CEDAR), the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and the American Physics Society (APS). I have also participated in the NSF SRI sponsored radar summer school, which was held near Boston, Massachusetts. I have had the opportunity to travel to Alaska to install the imager, as well as help SRI International with the deployment of a new instrument to study the aurora. This summer, I was accepted to attend a two-week summer school at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), in Boulder, Colorado, to study the climate of the middle and upper atmosphere.

During my undergraduate and graduate studies, I have had the opportunity to do volunteer work. While at UVU I helped tutor middle and high school students in the community. The volunteer project focused on helping the minorities in the community. Here at USU, I have volunteered to be a science fair judge for elementary and high school science fairs, as well as outreach to keep elementary students interested in science.
New Friends, New Concepts, New Look at Tribal Government

by Tadd M. Johnson

In May of 2015, the American Indian Studies department at University of Minnesota-Duluth graduated its third cohort from the Master of Tribal Administration and Governance (MTAG) program. Included in the class of 2015 was Bill Rudnicki, Tribal Administrator for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, who reflected on his MTAG experience: “New friends, new concepts, new look at tribal government. Those are three points that come to mind as a member of the MTAG program. I have been involved with tribal government for over 20 years; the course lessons, instruction and interactions with my cohort members have exceeded my expectations. I am extremely satisfied to be a part of the program.”

The MTAG program was developed through two years of tribal consultation, from 2009-11. From the consultation, several ideas and courses rose to the top: a year-long course on tribal sovereignty in which the entire history of federal, tribal and state relations is examined; a year-long course in tribal leadership and ethics and a series of courses in tribal management (strategic, operations, human resources and project management). All of these courses were geared for tribal governments.

The consultation also revealed that people wanted a better understanding of the complexities of tribal finance, accounting and budgets – and Federal Indian law – which were added. MTAG is a 2-year program that meets with 4 synchronous meetings each semester, which can be attended in person or by remote connection – the remainder of the program is online. The 35 tribes of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) endorsed the program with a resolution and MTAG was approved by the University of Minnesota Regents in February of 2011.

With scant time to advertise, we thought the initial cohort would be small; however, 25 students started in 2011 and 22 graduated in 2013. Among those 2013 graduates was Mille Lacs Band member, Joe S. Nayquonabe, Jr., who remarked: “The MTAG program has been the perfect vehicle for me to learn about tribal administration and governance, while still being able to commit the necessary time to stay active with my family life, my work and my community involvement. The program design has been successful in improving both my breadth and depth of knowledge in Indian law, sovereignty, tribal management and ethics.” Joe recently was signatory on the documents wherein the Mille Lacs Band purchased half of the hotel rooms in downtown St. Paul.

The first cohort included Cory Strong of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, and Tiger Brown Bull, of the Oglala Lakota Nation; both of whom were promoted to the position of tribal executive director after completing MTAG. Also, from the Class of 2013, was Carolyn Beaulieu, who had been a tribal administrator at the Mille Lacs Reservation and was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Band in 2014. Similarly, in 2014 Annette Johnson was elected as Treasurer of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, after graduating from MTAG in 2013. Recently elected to the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Chippewa Council were Jason Schlender (MTAG ‘13) and current MTAG student Jason Weaver (MTAG ‘16).

Bill Blackwell Jr., (MTAG ’14) a member of the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa, who was recently appointed the Director of the American Indian Learning Resource Center at Bemidji State University stated: “The structure of the MTAG program is the perfect blend for the person working with a family. The majority of the program was online, which allowed me to fulfill my responsibilities as a father of kids in sports, my job…, and still have time to spend with my significant other, all the while getting the full effects of a Master’s program. The part that was the most enriching though, was the relationships formed with my fellow cohort. While in class, I was able to hear stories about the way different tribes handle Economic Development, I listened to how tribes
in Wisconsin mobilized to show their sovereignty during the 1980’s, around spear fishing, and I got first-hand accounts of people testifying before Congress about Indian education. The collective talents and personal experiences of my classmates made each class come alive, as we talked about the important issues and events in Indian History. I highly recommend the program to anyone who wants to learn more, be pushed and make a difference in their community.”

The Class of 2014 included a sitting tribal councilman, who stated: “...The curriculum is relevant, the professors are knowledgeable and the staff is professional. The diverse experience and expertise of my classmates has made learning a pleasure; not a burden or challenge.”

MTAG now has more than 60 students or graduates in California, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Michigan, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Washington State and Minnesota.

Building upon the success of MTAG, UMD is adding a new, online Bachelor’s degree in Tribal Administration and Governance (TAG) Fall 2015. The new TAG program is designed for persons who have an Associate of Arts degree and want to complete their B.A. online.

However, the TAG major is flexible, to accommodate a variety of student needs. While consulting with Indian and non-Indian people on and off reservations, we discovered many potential non-traditional students who had earned an AA at their local tribal community college, or had gone to college for a year or two, then settled down, had children and were looking for ways to complete their Bachelor’s degree online and work for tribal governments. We believe the TAG program will fill this need.

✦

For more information on MTAG, please go to www.umdmtag.org and for the TAG program go to www.d.umn.edu/~umdais or call Tami Lawlor at 218-726-7332.

Tadd M Johnson Esq. is a professor of American Indian Studies and the Director of the MTAG program. Johnson is the former Staff Director and Counsel to the U.S. House Subcommittee on Native American Affairs and the former Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission. He is an enrolled member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa.

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The American Indian Graduate
Department of Counseling Psychology
University of Denver
The American Indian Graduate Psychology Program, will offer counseling services to Natives in the Denver urban area. The need for this program was very apparent. After working in collaboration with Native Americans for 40 years in boarding schools, on the reservations throughout the country and in metro Denver, I was concerned about the low number of Native Americans completing graduate level studies in our program. I knew, first-hand, the challenges faced by many Natives in the areas of historical trauma, family fragmentation, substance use problems, feelings of hopelessness and high suicide rates among Native youth, as well as the many strengths found among Natives, including sense of community, the value of family links, an appreciation of the natural order of things and a passionate commitment to gaining access to what is rightfully theirs. Who better to address these issues than Natives themselves, armed with credible graduate degrees, advanced training and education, and the inherent wisdom that can come only from growing up in the very communities that demand remedial and preventative services? At

The Counseling Psychology Department at the University of Denver (DU) received a grant from the Galena Foundation in December 2013. A significant portion of the grant is earmarked to improve and increase the availability of behavioral health services for Native Americans in the Rocky Mountain region, as well as recruit Native American students into the graduate programs.

At the master’s and doctoral level, Native Americans proportionally fall far behind other groups. We strongly believe that our program can help provide this change in a warm, supportive and inviting manner. Our primary goal is to recruit Native American students to our master’s and doctoral level counseling psychology programs, to minimize the gap and provide superior mental health treatment to underserved populations.

Presently, there are three major efforts underway:
1. Establishing collaborative relationships between the DU Counseling Psychology Department and Native American communities and agencies in Colorado.
2. Expanding existing coursework material, to include culturally-sensitive content into the seven courses that provide the requirements for Colorado Approved Certified Addiction Counselor (CAC).
3. Recruiting Native American students to our Masters and Doctoral programs in Counseling Psychology at the University of Denver.

Native Americans come from many different worlds including reservations, major urban areas and everywhere in between. The beauty of our program, in putting together masters and doctoral level training that includes specialization in addiction studies, is that the program is built on a foundation of valuing this diversity. We have formed relationships with Native American community partners, which will allow student counselors to obtain practicum placements at these sites. Further efforts are underway to establish more community-based supervision sites associated with serving Natives and the Counseling Clinic, based in the DU Counseling Psychology Program, will offer counseling services to Natives in the Denver urban area.

The need for this program was very apparent. After working in collaboration with Native Americans for 40 years in boarding schools, on the reservations throughout the country and in metro Denver, I was concerned about the low number of Native Americans completing graduate level studies in our program. I knew, first-hand, the challenges faced by many Natives in the areas of historical trauma, family fragmentation, substance use problems, feelings of hopelessness and high suicide rates among Native youth, as well as the many strengths found among Natives, including sense of community, the value of family links, an appreciation of the natural order of things and a passionate commitment to gaining access to what is rightfully theirs. Who better to address these issues than Natives themselves, armed with credible graduate degrees, advanced training and education, and the inherent wisdom that can come only from growing up in the very communities that demand remedial and preventative services? At

Promoting Advanced Training for Native Students

by Dr. Mike Faragher, Program Director

Marisa, Jessica, Chesleigh, Mike, and Dana, at DU 2015 Pow Wow
this point, I approached the Galena Foundation. I knew that this foundation has always considered the welfare of Native Americans to be of primary importance and would eagerly support the effort.

This effort has grown to include not only the director, but three doctoral level research assistants, two of whom are Native Americans. In addition, the project has evolved to include the contributions of a Native American consultant, who also serves as an adjunct professor in the department. The project has also made an impact within the department where this collaboration has proven to be most needed. According to one of the research assistants, Dana Santiago, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana: “I was quite surprised when I learned there was another Native student in my cohort. I finally had someone who could relate to feeling both a great sense of responsibility and opportunity for representing our tribes as doctoral students and psychologists-in-training. This ‘belonging’ was essential for me to persevere during the times I felt overwhelmed and underprepared. My firsthand experience, along with countless stories of ‘feeling like an outsider’ from other minority students, motivates my work to recruit more Native students into our programs. Through increased visibility, service, research and other action-oriented initiatives, I am hopeful that we will continue to promote inclusivity for all minority students.”

Similarly, Chesleigh Keene, Navajo Nation, speaks on the importance of this collaborative effort: “Over the years, I’ve found myself the only Native in school and work settings. I’ve always had an awareness of it and felt the increased visibility and burden of representing a whole group, rather than being recognized as an individual. Because of my experiences, I’ve wanted to offer something different for other Native students, something more supportive and inclusive. Having another Native in my doctoral program has been such a gift. It changes so much when you can share your experiences with someone and have them validate or reciprocate those experiences of being affected by self-doubt or worrying how one is representing their people. Beyond this, participating in this group, with the common goal of recruiting Natives into our counseling programs, has been an even greater gift. It’s so important to have layers of support as a Native student, particularly as you advance in your education. I’ve found that we have important dialogues on how to make our program more Native-friendly, which goes above and beyond Natives supporting each other. Our efforts to integrate core curricula with Native content help to attain this community cultural understanding. The DU Counseling program is an amazing training program for counselors and psychologists and we’re working to make it an amazing place for Native counselors and psychologists to train and have a positive higher education experience.”

It’s so important to have layers of support as a Native student, particularly as you advance in your education.

The interest of the grant has extended far beyond national boundaries. It has attracted the attention of Marisa Kostiuk, a master’s graduate and incoming doctoral student from Canada with previous experience working with First Nations communities. According to Marisa Kostiuk: “When I moved to the United States, to pursue a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology, I noticed the lack of conversation and knowledge surrounding Native American culture and topics. Formal training and information about other minority groups was common practice in the program. However, topics related to Native Americans were either minimal or completely absent from the curriculum. When I learned there were discussions of creating a group that brought Native American content into classroom lectures, which would promote advanced training for Native students and attempt to establish a more culturally inclusive environment, I immediately reached out. This was something in which I wanted to be a part.”

During the coming year it is the intent of the Counseling Psychology Department to continue expanding the wide range of support services, with Native urban groups as well as tribal programs, located at the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute reservations.

Current collaboration ranges from community-based programs to the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs. This increased collaboration and provision of services to the Native American community will be accomplished in two ways: 1) The Counseling Psychology Department will assist Native mental/behavioral service delivery systems in Denver and statewide. This assistance will include program development assistance on the reservations, continued contributions to the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs and community-based programs, and involvement in the City and County of Denver Reentry Project, to assist in the preparation of

Continued on page 58
Keep Moving Forward, Keep Trying

by Rebecca Berry

I was born and raised, for the most part, in Seattle. As a kid, each time we drove I-5 northbound over the ship canal bridge, I looked across at the sprawling University of Washington (UW) campus in awe. It looked so grand. No one I’d known had gone there, or to any college that I’d ever heard. I never dreamed that I would go either; I just remember glancing over at the prestigious campus, with great wonder.

I grew up in a single-parent home; me, my brother and my mom. We were poor but happy, for the most part. My mom was one of 9 children. We didn’t see much of her siblings and their families, as everyone stayed pretty much inside their own lives. My grandma died before I was born. She was full-blooded Tlingit and was born in Angoon, Alaska. When I was 13 years old, my mom died and I spent the next 5 years in and out of homes that didn’t seem to care too much about my present education, let alone my future.

I was sad, mad and felt lost after my mom died; I lost interest in school. I skipped over half of my classes during my freshman year of high school and officially failed 9th grade. This upset my family and I was sent to live with a foster family. They had three biological kids, close to my age, and I thought it’d be a good fit. They took me out of public school to home school me, which I didn’t like and, as it turned out, we never actually studied anything. Within a year, we moved from the suburbs of Seattle to the very rural, small town of Raymond, about two hours drive south of Seattle. At this time, they began treating me poorly; I was very unhappy and felt trapped.

They eventually enrolled me in an informal religious school. I was excited for the interaction and friendships. In less than a year, they pulled me out of school, due to a difference with the pastor. During my short time here, some classmates started at the community college.

I heard that I’d have the opportunity for scholarships since I am a quarter Native American, to help pay for school, so I took the entrance exam. It turned out I was only a bit behind in math and had to take two classes to catch up over the summer. I didn’t graduate high school and never got my GED; there must’ve been a loophole that worked in my favor, as I was admitted into the Grays Harbor Community College! I was over the moon with excitement and pride!

Classes were a challenge, at first, and I still skipped some classes. I was not used to being in school and I never really learned how to study. Shortly after starting college, I turned 18 and moved into the city, where I attended college. I felt so free, empowered and a bit scared. I was working, in school and on my own. My fate turned again when I had a car accident and had to drop out of school. I wasn’t doing that well in my classes and now I had to quit. After a few years of living on my own, I decided to move back to my hometown; back to Seattle.

Living with friends of the family, who treated me with kindness and respect, my spirit was renewed. I met good friends, who pointed me back toward college. I had a good job and felt I could attend evening classes. All together, it took nearly 5 years to get my 2-year Associates Degree. Someone once told me, “time passes anyway, you might as well take little steps forward, as one day, when you look back, you’re miles down the road”. One of my favorite nuggets of advice and I still find myself using this.

With this achievement under my belt, I thought I had a chance at that grand college I’d admired so many years before. At the time, I was actively volunteering, with a child advocacy nonprofit, helping kids in similar situations that I faced in adolescence. I’d volunteered for nearly 5 years total and, as a result, knew I wanted a career helping
people. I decided to apply to enter the undergraduate program at the School of Social Work on the UW campus.

I was rejected and so very discouraged. I thought maybe it was a fluke that I made it this far and wanted to give up. But, I regained my confidence and looked into appealing the rejection. I couldn’t get into the social work school, as they had limited spots that had already been filled for the year, but was admitted onto the UW campus to select another program.

I was elated, to say the least. I chose a comparative history major. I felt I was lacking in this area, since I never actually attended high school. This program encouraged study abroad and there were programs all over the world; so exciting! I chose to study in Europe, since there are so many countries to travel between that were really close together, and lived in the Czech Republic. The program selected 24 students from our school and we lived and studied abroad together for 3 months. We had classes 4 times a week, for 4 hours, and supplemented class time with many train and bus trips to several surrounding countries. We were encouraged and free to explore and travel on our down time. My time here proved to be one of the most all-encompassing learning points in my life!

In two years time, I graduated with my Bachelor’s Degree. The ceremony was surreal; I was so proud and remember thinking how far down the road I traveled, with a step here and a step there. No matter how many years it took, here I was in cap and gown, walking down the aisle in the big stadium to receive my degree!

At this point, I loved learning and was eager to keep moving ahead toward a Master’s degree. I enjoy helping people, so a career in social services would prove a good fit for me. I was rejected from my first program and was very disappointed. I took a year off to reassess my direction and resources. A year later, I found an amazing public administration program, for which I was a perfect fit, at Seattle University. It’s the business degree for social service; it’s for people who want to help people. It can qualify you to work in government or nonprofit leadership and management.

I applied and was accepted! Graduate classes tend to be smaller, 20 to 25 students, and the student base is much more focused on a specific branch of study. In this case, we all wanted to help people, so I felt like I just fit! After three more years working full-time days and attending school in the evening, I graduated with my master’s degree, with honors!

I met my husband, while I was at UW, just after returning from studying abroad. He has been irreplaceably supportive throughout my school work and in life. We got married, as I pursued my MPA. After graduating, I worked for a year before my husband and I started our family. I am thrilled my husband can support us, while I stay home with our children. Our daughters are 4 and almost 2. I would like to start my own nonprofit organization, once my girls both start school.

This brief snapshot of who I am personally and educationally, hopefully, shares a few things:

College is for everyone; there is no standard path. Having a nontraditional family structure, home life, educational experiences or lack thereof, does not subtract from an ability to succeed.

Keep moving forward, even if those steps are small. A huge incentive for me to keep moving forward with school was support from scholarships like those I received from AIGC. I was overwhelmed with their generosity and confidence in my ability to succeed.

Keep trying, even if you get rejected or fail; there is no one college or program. Opportunities abound. There is always a way.

Enjoy the process and it will, eventually, produce results. It’s not just A to B, there are many steps and decisions that build each achievement. Find jobs you like, leave jobs you don’t; volunteer with a cause that you’re passionate about and study abroad, if you can. All the things that happen along the way are valuable and can help you find your path or enhance your success in it.

The education process enriches more than your resume. Coordinating financial aid paperwork each quarter and year, college applications and requirements and all the background work necessary to be in school can be overwhelming and frustrating. The whole process is beneficial and strengthens your resolve.

Thank you for reading my story; I hope to read your stories, of following your dreams and passions educationally and in life, in the coming years! Time passes anyway; you might as well get a few feet down the road. ✦
To begin, I would like to express that graduating college did not come easy for me. It was challenging for a number of reasons, both personally and professionally. I am not just talking about completing my graduate degree, either. Completing my undergraduate degree proved even more difficult. In the paragraphs that follow, I will contextualize my experience. My hope is that my educational journey (and the lessons therein) will resonate with students, who have either stopped short of completing their undergraduate degree or who are considering whether or not they should take the next step and attend graduate school.

Outside the classroom, I had been dealing with a number of challenges. This is important to consider at any phase of education, whether at the first or secondary level – high school or college. Life happens. An ability to bounce back from challenge is critical. I later learned to call this ‘resilience’. You might say that a recurring theme in my journey is that I was academically uninspired, but resilient.

During junior high, my younger brother had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. It was an aggressive cancer that stole years from his childhood. It crippled our family emotionally and financially. While caring for my brother, my parents struggled to balance the obligations of work, marriage and the needs of their two other children. While it was brutal and unremitting, my brother survived his journey. My parents’ marriage did not.

As my brother arrived at the remission phase of cancer, I started high school. While it was not an uncommon practice for parents in our small town to divorce, additional challenges presented themselves. A very close friend of mine was murdered; another committed suicide. I was being raised by a single parent: first my mother and, later, my father. I had a lot of freedom to make my own choices and they were not necessarily healthy.

I was fully aware that I was not a star student. I spent a lot of time in detention. I occasionally skipped school and had disciplinary issues. I took risks and made poor decisions. During the course of an in-school suspension, our principal openly scoffed at the possibility that I would be admitted to college. In spite of my attitude and behavior, this offended me. I knew I was intelligent. I was simply uninspired. His doubt was motivating; I accepted his challenge.

Without motivation, encouragement and support from leaders in education, I would not have even considered college, much less graduated.

I was enthusiastic about playing football and running track, but that wasn’t all. When introduced to sports literature and multicultural issues, I became excited about education. An advantage of spending a lot of time in trouble is that you get to know your high school counselor. Mine was instrumental in helping me get into college. My English teachers were also challenging and encouraging. When motivated and supported, I did quality work. That is another theme. Without motivation, encouragement
and support from leaders in education, I would not have even considered college, much less graduated.

I chose to attend the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire (UWEC). The summer before my freshman year, I attended an orientation program for multicultural students. I immediately made friends with people of different backgrounds, cultures and identities. I was also introduced to staff and students who offered to serve as mentors for me going forward. This helped incredibly in the early stages.

By my sophomore year, I lost my way. I thought I wanted to be a high school teacher, but it was not the best fit for me in that moment. I changed majors a couple of times. I was undecided as to what I wanted to do. I was academically and socially distracted and filled with anxiety.

I was intimidated by peers from wealthy families who had things that I did not, such as money for elaborate spring break trips and experience traveling abroad. I spent weekends working at gas stations and restaurants. I spent summers working as a combine operator and a commercial fisherman. I always felt broke and threatened by what I lacked. Basically, I suffered anxiety typical for a first-generation college student from a low socioeconomic background. I lacked the cultural capital necessary to feel comfortable in a university setting. I devoted too much time to off-campus jobs. I gravitated toward peers who also took risks and had their heads and hearts in the wrong places.

It honestly took an intervention to help get me back on track. Seeing my parents sitting together, unannounced, for the first time in years was sobering and emotional. I also stopped out, which is to say that I took time off from school to work and live along the west coast. I briefly lived out of my car in Gasworks Park and threw fish at Pike Place Market in Seattle, WA. More than anything, I felt the need to remove myself from negative influences and seek adventure. I needed a second wind.

Having said that, there are a number of things that I did right. I wanted to interview bands and musicians who visited campus, so I began reporting for our campus newspaper. Unlike my coursework, I took my deadlines for the paper seriously. I began writing columns in which I openly expressed my disdain for those who thought I went to college for free because I was Native American. I helped revive a newsletter for our American Indian Studies department called Turtle Island Voices. I decided to step outside my comfort zone and do some acting. I volunteered at a local homeless shelter. I was active in our Native American Student Association, serving as a treasurer and recruiter. I tutored students in English. It was engagement outside the classroom that kept me engaged.

My most fulfilling job responsibility, upon returning from my journey west, occurred during the two summers that I served as a mentor and youth counselor for UWEC’s Project GEAR UP and Upward Bound pre-college camps. There were a number of programs at which we welcomed socio-economically disadvantaged and underrepresented students from urban and tribal communities (including the Menominee Indian School District and the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal School), to engage in learning, recreation and community building in a campus environment. Working in partnership with remarkable leaders and mentors to positively influence hopeful young students was an incredibly rewarding experience.

The most intelligent thing I did as an undergraduate was strengthen my career prospects through gaining leadership and work experience that would translate well into the workplace.

These are the experiences that not only got me jobs beyond graduation, but also helped me gain admission into graduate school, even with a subpar academic record. Believe me when I say that a Bachelor of Arts in English – Creative Writing and American Indian Studies does not guarantee job security. The most intelligent thing I did as an undergraduate was strengthen my career prospects through gaining leadership and work experience that would translate well into the workplace.

Serving on a planning committee and fundraising for a Powwow might not seem like a colossal endeavor, but it is both a valuable and enriching experience. Interviewing a retiring Dean, who continually advocated for Indian faculty, students and staff, was an honor and looked great in my portfolio. Studying the Ojibwe language for our foreign language requirement was not only enriching, but also helped set me apart from other job candidates. I am over a decade removed from these experiences and still reference them in interviews. To top it off, after graduating I completed a year of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA with the Institute for Social and Economic Development. This is the equivalent of a paid internship that results in an education award. I was thankful to apply my education award toward student loan payments.
I am unable to quantify the relationships I forged and nurtured while completing my undergraduate degree. Without the humor and example of elder students who helped coach me and the collective spirit of our Native community at UWEC, I might not have graduated. Without the guidance and support of our advisors, staff and faculty in the Office of Multicultural Affairs and American Indian Studies department, I absolutely would not have graduated. The power I gained from that community will never leave me. It is what finally inspired me to dedicate myself to graduate school.

In the fall of 2011, I began pursuing a Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University. Entering graduate school was a difficult decision, not only because I lost a full-time income, but because I was also returning to school as the father of three children. It was no longer simply an individual decision. I required the support of my family. I also required financial assistance.

I am eternally grateful to the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC), not only for helping make the graduate school experience more affordable, but also for helping me rationalize my decision to pursue a graduate degree. In submitting my request for AIGC funding, I spent a significant amount of time reflecting on my undergraduate experience, as well as what it would mean to be a member of the American Indian community who had completed an advanced degree in higher education. I would be in a unique position to pay it forward and give back to the community that gave so much to me, through serving as an academic advisor.

The perfect time and circumstance I was awaiting were never going to present themselves. When I learned that I had been accepted, I immediately wanted to learn the degree of financial support I would receive. As it turned out, my tuition was covered. Fifty-percent was covered through a half-time graduate assistantship: a 20-hour per week commitment. The other half of tuition and expenses were covered through Graduate Minority Assistantship Program (GMAP) funding at Iowa State University and AIGC funding. In other words, I only borrowed what was necessary in order to help my family afford the basics. Attending graduate school was not the financial hit I had always imagined it to be. While I lost the financial support of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and the grants that had helped fund my undergraduate education, I more than made up for it at the graduate level.

In closing, I would like to testify that higher education is what has ultimately inspired me to lead a richer and more fulfilling life. As an academic advisor, I am rewarded daily by what I do for a living. It feels so incredibly good to say that I love my job and mean it. I am proud to report that I have been selected to serve as a member of the 2014-16 Class of Emerging Leaders by NACADA (the Global Community for Academic Advising). I recently began serving as Chair of NACADA’s Native American and Tribal Colleges Interest Group.

I have, admittedly, taken a few detours and succumbed to a number of temptations and struggles along the way, but our most meaningful journeys in life are often painful, bewildering and inspiring. They involve conflict. The harder we struggle, the more triumphant we are in the end. This is not to say that completing a graduate degree is the equivalent of childbirth or surviving cancer. I am not that level of warrior. I will, instead, equate it to running a marathon, which is a journey I completed after graduating. Reaching the finish is not easy, but the people who love you most will be there to congratulate you at the end.

Jason C. Wiegand is an Academic Adviser at the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at Iowa State University.
Like most Native Americans, I had stories. Stories of where I came from, who my people were and where I wanted to go. There were also some stories I was afraid to tell. Stories of alcoholism, poverty and family drama. Like any good storyteller, my story kept evolving, changing and shifting, as I lived life. A broken arm on the playground became the story of how I outran a boy and he was so jealous he pushed me down. A scar on my cheek from birth became the story of how I was born with resilience and strength. A family fight became the story of my decision to marry a man who was patient, gentle and every bit my complement, rather than my match.

When I was twelve, I told my teachers that I wanted to go to Dartmouth because that’s where my favorite writer, Louise Erdrich, went. By thirteen, it was on to Harvard because I heard others talk about it with such reverence and awe. I constantly yearned for a story that would make people pause and take notice; to question if the success of my story was really mine. I knew the only way to do that was to make my story real: turning words into actions.

So, I applied to the Ivy League. I applied to respected state schools and a few private ones as well. I knew I had to hedge my bets if I had any chance of living up to the earlier tales I told. When I was accepted into all of them, I knew I was just beginning another chapter.

I chose to go to Yale University because, when I walked onto their campus, I felt at home. The people understood me. The campus architecturally inspired my thoughts and the energy made me more open to others. I joined what seemed to be just about every club and got involved in as much as I could: President of the College Council, President of the Anthropology Society, Manager of the dorm cafe, Historian of the Association of Native Americans, Club Soccer member and so on.

Because, as I applied to all those different universities, I knew what story I wanted to tell, but I didn’t know if greater powers would let it be told as I imagined. I had to be ready for surprise endings and cliffhangers. I had to let my adventure unfold, as a character rather than solely as the writer. But, whether or not I held the power of the pen, I was going to give my character all the options available to build a narrative of strength and success.

So, when I got a C- in Microeconomics, the major I had diligently applied to Yale under (believing it would help me become the first female President), I knew this was not my calling because, well, I found it boring. Fortunately, I had taken an anthropology class simply because the title intrigued me: “Gender and Sexuality in Africa.” I was hooked. I didn’t know what type of job it would lead me to or where an anthropology major would end up, in the scale of societal happiness, but I knew that, in that moment, it fulfilled me.

I think this is crucial to any person pursuing life with a story worth living. Let yourself feel fulfilled. It was due to this “offbeat” major that I was noticed by WPP, the world’s largest marketing conglomerate in the world, which decided that I should be given the chance to become a “Fellow.” A “Fellow” would be trained by the top advertising executives of the world and allowed to select what they did and where they worked, for three years. So, I was an Analyst in New York, a Channel Planner in Sydney, a Strategic Planner in Hong Kong and, finally, a Packaging Design Planner in London. When this chapter came to end, they let me choose where I wanted to settle; I went to Singapore.

It was in Singapore that I ended up leaving WPP to go to another agency. When times got tough, I was let go. My ego, my soul and my sense of self were hurt. I knew life could present hardships, which is why I always made sure I had multiple opportunities, but I lost sight of...
my ending, I fell into a depression. I didn’t want to bother seeing how the next chapter began or ended because I kept dwelling on the wrongness of it all.

Then something happened. I randomly met a man, Matsumura San, at a horse racing event, of all things. He worked in marketing for Toyota Asia-Pacific. He liked my story and thought I had potential. He suggested I undertake strategy for an upcoming project on a trial basis. Could I do that? Yes, I could and I knew it was time. I started my own business.

I like to say Bear Native was born from a desire to help businesses enter new markets, with a marketing strategy that reduces the likelihood of failure and optimizes investments for exponential return on investment. But that’s the sales pitch. In reality, it was born from all those chapters I had written before: to decide to go to Yale, to become an anthropology major, to register Bear Native as a business even when I had no clients, “just in case”, and to attend that social outing where I met Matsumura San.

I moved back to the States in 2014 to marry that patient, gentle man I met from Yale, who encouraged me to travel the world even when I pushed him away during these travels “to accomplish what I thought needed to be accomplished.” I didn’t know what this move would do for my career, but I knew that, if I was going to create another story of family and love, he would need to be by my side.

I know this tale has always unfolded as it should because I have always written what I could and trusted that, with a vision, I would fall into a happy ending.

I will admit it hasn’t been super easy. I haven’t talked about the divorce of my parents, who separated two times from one another. I haven’t talked about incredible sickness that hit my body in Hong Kong, when I developed food sensitivities. I haven’t talked about how, in securing clients like Toyota for Bear Native, I have cried many nights wondering when the next paycheck would come in.

I know this tale has always unfolded as it should because I have always written what I could and trusted that, with a vision, I would fall into a happy ending. I will continue to fight for success. I will continue to turn my words into actions: letting others hold me to what I say. I want to build Bear Native to a multi-million dollar agency, working with Fortune 500 companies and businesses that are ready to do something different. I am good at strategy and helping clients break into new markets all over the world, because I understand people and what makes them tick: uniting insight and advertising into brand-consumer bliss. When I can’t get that next project or others don’t allow me to speak my mind, I know that every story has a twist and this might just be mine.

So, for those reading this, let your stories be yours. Write what you can, but understand you don’t hold the only pen. We are a nation of verbal legacy. Let your accomplishments leave something definitive and unmistakable above and beyond your speech. I had a story, have a story and will have an ending to it all one day. While I don’t know how many subplots will be encountered, which characters will enter into the dialogue or how others will remember this tale, I know that no one will be able to deny what I did to make it the most magnificent story of going after one’s dreams. This is my story. My Native story. Now go write yours.

Nicky Nole is President of Bear Native, www.bearnative.com and a member of Bad River Tribe of Chippewa Indians.
The Calls That Change Your Life

by Mary J. Pavel

When I received AIGC’s email asking alumni to share their stories about their education and the programs that helped them succeed, thrive and graduate from college – I thought about the calls that changed my life and set me on an educational journey that took me from Washington State to Washington, D.C. What I have learned on this journey is to take the calls and chances given to you, be courageous and surround yourself with people who believe in you and give you courage.

I am the youngest of six children and was raised on the Skokomish Indian Reservation in Washington, State. My educational journey began when my oldest sister started her freshman year at the University of Washington and I started kindergarten. My parents placed a high priority on education and being active in life and our community. But, they always said school was our job and allowed no excuses for not succeeding. Thus, one by one, my brothers and sister left home to go to college: University of Washington; American Indian Art Institute; University of Puget Sound; Bellevue College. There was never a question that, when each of us finished high school, we were going to pursue higher education. My sister set the path and I can only imagine the courage that it took for her to be the first person in our large family to go to a major university.

Growing up, I had only one dream of what I wanted to be. That was a nurse, just like my mother. My high school was a vocational high school, which offered a certified nursing assistance vocational program. So I began junior year of high school not only carrying all of the rigorous math, history, English and science classes that my parents expected me to take, but including the vocational training classes to be a nurse’s assistance.

I did well in the nurse’s assistance class; I believed it was my calling. When I started my senior year, I was still completing the clinical aspect of the program and my instructor asked me where I was thinking of attending college. I said Seattle University because their nurses worked at Providence Hospital in Seattle. I wanted to work at Providence because those doctors and nurses saved my Uncle George’s life but, more importantly, my mother, who had very high standards, had high praise for the care they gave my uncle.

My instructor said that sounded good, but asked if I ever thought of going to Dartmouth College (her husband had gone to Dartmouth and a boy who had swum with my brother also went there); I said no. She said that Dartmouth was begun as a place to educate Indian people. She told me the college hadn’t done a very good job at it but, in the 1970’s, that changed with a serious commitment to recruit, admit and graduate Indian students. I said, “I don’t know, I want to be a nurse”. She asked “Why don’t I write and get an application packet for you?” I said okay; it was her time, not mine.

When the application packet came, she gave it to me. I immediately noticed that it cost $50.00 to apply. I did not want to waste money applying to a school I didn’t want to attend and was pretty sure I couldn’t get into, even if I did apply. Then I saw the essays that Dartmouth required. I told her I did not want to waste the money or the energy on the application, when I could easily apply to Seattle University. She said she understood, but she thought I should at least apply. She even offered to pay the application fee. “Take the chance,” she said. “You don’t have to go, but just apply and, if you don’t get in, Seattle University will always be there for you.”

So, then I had to share with my parents that I was considering applying to Dartmouth College. My father was quiet and encouraging, but my mom was sad. She was sad that I would consider walking away from my dream of being a nurse, but mostly because that I would consider going to a school so far from her. I was her baby, after all. But she did not dissuade me. She gave me the courage to apply.
So, I went about the process of answering the essays. I still remember one of the essays was, “How would you explain humanity to an alien from outer-space?” My answer centered on the people who jumped into the icy Potomac to save strangers’ lives when a plane crashed into the 14th Street Bridge in Washington, D.C. I sought out the required recommendations. My English teacher, whom I knew liked me very much, was worried that I would not get in and, if I did get in, would not be adequately prepared to succeed at Dartmouth. Not necessarily the vote of confidence you want from a mentor. Nevertheless, she wrote a recommendation for me. I had other teachers who told me that I was wasting my time applying to an Ivy League school. This actually fueled my determination to apply and prove them wrong, but I was still not certain I wanted to go to Dartmouth.

I sent my application packet off, virtually certain I would not get in. Then a call on a cold day in February, 1984 came. The Dartmouth Native American Program Director called me and said that the program wanted to fly me to Hanover, NH to visit Dartmouth College. Well, again, I had to ask my parents and gather my courage to do a cross-country trip by myself. But my parents said I could go and gave me the courage to make this trip.

I arrived at Dartmouth and met the staff at the Native American Program and the students, many of whom I still know today. From the moment I saw Baker Tower, I knew Dartmouth was my place.

I went home. At this point I was virtually certain I wanted to go to Dartmouth. But, more surprisingly, I was sure that Dartmouth wanted me. So, I waited for the big packet—I knew from my trip that if it was a simple envelop the news was not good. My parents were very worried that, if I got in, we would not have the money to pay the tuition. In April 1984, I received the letter from the Dean the financial aid package that alleviated some of my parents’ worry. The decision was made; I would go to Dartmouth.

Dartmouth is not the place for everyone, but it was the place for me. I had the Native American Program and the Native Americans at Dartmouth. If nothing else was going right for me, they were always there for a laugh and support. College was where I learned about other people; how not to judge a book by the cover and trust myself in making decisions about my future. But, more than anything, is not acceptable. They taught me that if you are going to work in the field of Indian law you must work at the highest level.

I finished PLSI and attended the University of Washington School of Law. I had the honor of being there with Ralph Johnson, one of the first scholars of Indian law. He frequently told the story of the Puyallup/Nisqually fishermen who demanded he take their case. He was a great teacher. I was surrounded by smart and kind peers, who all seemed to love the law as much as I did and, while we may have disagreed, we learned to do so with grace and respect.

Finishing the University of Washington, I did not know what I was going to do next. Then, in the fall, another call came. Douglas Endreson called and said the partners had met and made the decision to offer me an

My advice to people is: take the call; take the chance; be courageous and surround yourself by people who believe in you and give you courage on your journey.

Continued on page 58
Indigenous Men In Higher Education
How The 20th Century Can Inform The 21st Century

by Gregory I. Redhouse

During the last couple of decades, a number of scholars have attempted to point out the reason(s) for the recruitment, retention and graduation rates of Native Americans in higher education. While recent forms of literature shed light on the current trends of Native American students pursuing higher education in the early part of the 21st century, little is known about the decision-making processes and influences that aided older generations of Native American men to pursue educational programs during the 20th century. Stemming from my previous inquiries into the declining rates of Native American men in higher education, I decided to focus more upon the personal insights of indigenous male elders. After reading Joel Pfister’s book, The Yale Indian (2009), I was intrigued by the fact that a Native American man of the early 20th century, Henry Roe Cloud, was consistently networking to secure financial support for his collegiate career. One would think that, after a hundred years, Native Americans would have figured out a system to secure monetary support for members of their society in higher education, but this trend continues well into the early 21st century. I then reflected upon the narratives of my late father. Over the years, my father shared his stories and schooling experiences that occurred over the course of five decades: from the era of the Great Depression, through the Civil Rights period and into the Indian Self-determination era. Retelling his academic experiences helps to redraw the effects and influences of 20th century federal policies aimed at Indian Education. Examining a Navajo man, who lived during this period, traces the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ changing educational policies as a recurring concept linked to tribal members who benefited directly or indirectly from those academic programs.

During the course of federal attempts to assimilate Native Americans into the mainstream, the Bureau of Indian Affairs introduced new areas of conflict, in which indigenous groups were held captive under treaties and subordinate to non-Natives under educational policies, and were encouraged to enter a new world of ideas and opportunities that promised to enhance their political, social and economic standing in the United States. Tribal societies were viewed as poverty-stricken and targeted to participate in a series of socio-economic and educational programs during the 20th century. From one end of the continuum, students leaving colleges and universities have been a focus since the 1960s, but many of the studies that have been developed disregard the social movement of indigenous women, who began to outnumber indigenous men in higher education. Indeed, parity between indigenous male and female students was attained in higher education in the mid-seventies (American Indian College Fund 2006). By the early eighties, however, the number of Native American male students began to decrease. Today, the overall number of Native American students seeking higher education has flipped: today, Native American women disproportionately pursue higher education (American Indian College Fund 2006; Secatero 2009).

Higher Education literature suggests that students of low SES background tend not to enter college/universities and/or do not persist in post-secondary education for various reasons: 1) student’s parents did not attend college; 2) student’s siblings did not attend college; 3) parents’ low earnings; 4) vocational training instead of academic training and 5) Native Americans are less likely than Anglo-Americans to attend higher education (Tierney 1992). The data indicates that, not only are Native American men attending colleges and universities at rates lower than Native American women, Native
American men also attend at rates lower than men from all other minority groups (Minnesota Office of Higher Education 2008). Socioeconomic status (SES) affects college access and success by determining a student’s level of preparation for college and ability to persist in college. Often times, low SES students do not immediately enroll in a college or university after graduating from high school and, ultimately, will earn less income throughout their lifetime, compared to those SES students who immediately enroll after high school and graduate from college (Rowan-Keyon 2007). Low SES students are not as likely to pursue higher education (Hurtado, Kurotsuchi, Briggs, & Rhee 1997) and, if they do, they will attend less selective institutions, even if low SES student gain entry into the university, their experiences will be shaped by the cultural capital (specialized/insider knowledge) and social capital (networking) they have previously received and will receive.

For instance, as professors value cultural capital, they will reward students from higher SES backgrounds who already possess this cultural capital, thus leaving the lower SES students with lower opportunities for success. This scenario is referred to as habitus: an environment where people from the same social class share common attributes (Walpole 2003). This exclusion will decrease the likelihood of low SES interacting with peers and gaining positions of power after they graduate (Dowd 2008). Despite the social justice movements of diversity awareness, social inclusion and minority access, the majority of American colleges and universities have failed to explain the growing gender disparity between Native American men and women. Based upon recent literature on Native American college students and the rates of succession, there is no consensus for the basic question of why more Native American males are not actively pursuing a post-secondary education. Data drawn from scholarly articles, published literature, governmental agencies, tribal colleges and mainstream universities appear to suggest that, on average, Native American women outnumber Native American men, at a ratio nearly three-to-one, and this gap widens for graduate and professional students (American Indian College Fund 2006).

Higher educational structures are not always conducive to Native American male recruitment, retention and graduation; on the contrary, assumptions related to gender underlie Native American perceptions of mainstream institutions and curriculums used to construct a collegiate setting and provide the rational ground for theorizing about social inclusion. European colonization, Euro-American educational systems and current mainstream images of men and masculinity permeate the indigenous socio-cultural structures, thus marginalizing Native American men and contributing to the maintenance of gender segregation in higher education. Postulating the role of men in tribal societies is part of the larger strategy of wielding power and control over
indigenous populations by industrialized capitalist colonizers. But, the ability to adapt to changing situations allowed my father to alter his pattern of survival, from a traditional economic subsistence to a modernized economic lifestyle, transplanting his practices from farming and ranching to teaching and broadening his social network through education.

My father’s views and perceptions of mainstream education included positive and negative experiences and certain people who were instrumental in helping him pursue mainstream education at different phases of his life; this included family-members, government and school officials. My father’s initial schooling experience began with the urging of an older sister, who insisted he attend a federally-operated Indian boarding school, in the late-1930s. At that time, the Indian boarding school curriculum mirrored military and vocational training. By the early-1950s, my father participated in a federal relocation and vocational training program specifically designed to encourage Native Americans to leave tribal reservations and assimilate into an urban environment. In time, my father returned to the reservation and was influenced by my mother, who was attending a mainstream university. She encouraged him to attend the nation’s first tribally-controlled college, funded by federal monies appropriated by Congress. Last, but not least, with the advice of a non-Native professor, he transferred and attended a flagship university while being sponsored by a federally-funded Indian Teacher Education program.

Students from Native American backgrounds do not follow the same patterns of educational pathways into college as traditional, mainstream American students. Native American students have different experiences, from academic preparation to career aspirations. These differences expose the low social mobility of Native American students but, if the allocation of screening, advising and funding are at a time when political and economic dynamics are forcing the downsizing of educational programs aimed at minorities, the insights provided by my late father contribute to the discourse of affirmative action and the need for increased academic and financial aid programs to continue aiding Native Americans. I share these narratives to illustrate that federally-sponsored academic programs have an impact on the ability of Native Americans to attend post-secondary educational institutions.

At the center of this paper, my late father was a student who struggled, endured and, ultimately, benefitted from federal education programs to enhance his cause-effect relationship between intellectual strength and prosperity; he invested himself in mainstream education in order to increase his power and autonomy. Keep in mind that a number of explanations still exist that explain the source of why indigenous men may or may not consider higher education. My late father’s experience depicts a contrasting historical experience from the traditional mainstream college experience and may provide an underlying common theme that spans a century. Although expressed in a second-hand account, both the traditional and non-traditional college experiences could point to a social, political, cultural and economic process that scholars need to carefully re-examine—hegemony. Power relationships are all around us and are manifested in various systems and institutions that influence force or persuasion, knowingly and unknowingly.

References


associate position. I accepted immediately. The opportunity to work for the preeminent law firm in the field of Indian law was too much to pass up, even if it meant moving so far away from my family.

I took the chance and moved to Washington, D.C., in September of 1992, and began work at the firm. I became a partner in 1999. In January of 2005, my mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She passed away in April of 2005. There is no other call, before or after, that changed my life more than the one that told me I no longer had a mother. But, before she died, my mom made it clear to me that my time on this earth mattered and that I could not let my grief over losing her prevent me from doing my best work on behalf of Indian country. So, while losing my mom brought me to my knees, I stood up and continued to work on behalf of tribes, because she gave me courage to do what was expected of me.

In 2013, I got a call from Senator Maria Cantwell. She was going to be the Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and asked me to serve the Committee as Staff Director/Chief Counsel. I loved the firm and what I was doing, but this call offered me another chance to serve Indian country in a different way. I took the job and served the Committee for two years. What I witnessed in the Senate is that our elected leaders, whether tribal or federal, are dedicated public servants, who are doing the best job they can and that the myriad of problems they face every day would make the average person’s head spin. From my mentors in the Senate, I learned the art of the possible and that sometimes you can get someone from No to Yes, if you work hard enough.

My journey has brought me back to the firm, working with the people I admire and respect the most. Looking back, it is the calls (even sad ones) and the chances that I took that made my life what it is today. My advice to people is: take the call; take the chance; be courageous and surround yourself by people who believe in you and give you courage on your journey.

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