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

First Lady Michelle Obama Attends SFIS Graduation Honoring Tradition & Belief

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A Historic Year for American Indian Graduates

by Rose Graham
President, AIGC Board of Directors

As the newly elected President of the American Indian Graduate Center Board of Directors, I’m excited to introduce the fall 2016 American Indian Graduate Magazine. The graduation season of 2016 had all the hallmarks of a successful academic milestone – caps and gowns, brimming smiles of young graduates, eyes shining with anticipation, proud parents and tribal leaders and – of course – a new class of AIGC scholars and scholarship recipients.

The graduation season of 2016 also had some events of historic value. The Santa Fe Indian School, a tribally-owned school established to educate Native American children from the tribes throughout the southwest, made history with the recent release of Gates Millennium Scholars from the 2016 graduating class. The cover of this magazine highlights some of those moments.

The Santa Fe Indian School 2016 graduating class ranks as the highest producer of Gates Millennium Scholars in the State of New Mexico, and among the top five schools in the nation with this distinction. Eight Santa Fe Indian School 2016 graduates were awarded this prestigious scholarship.

The Santa Fe Indian School 2016 graduating class ranks as the highest producer of Gates Millennium Scholars in the State of New Mexico.

It seems fitting, then, that the First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Michelle Obama, would also be present at the commencement ceremonies of the Santa Fe Indian School 2016 graduating class. Her attendance and thoughtful commencement speech words gave credence to the efforts of all the students at Santa Fe Indian School.

Santa Fe Indian School teacher, Christie Abeyta, summed up the experience with her ever-encouraging reflection. “There are no words to express how special this is for our communities, for the Pueblo people of New Mexico, for all of Native America.”

The historic events of the 2016 graduation season brought new light and energy to a class of high school graduates and all those who have supported them along the way.

In the decades since it was founded, AIGC has grown in both its capacity to serve graduate students and its reach to support all levels of post-secondary education, which include technical schools, undergraduate programs, as well as graduate professional degrees.

As we conclude the 2016 graduation season and welcome our newest class of AIGC scholarship recipients, I’m reminded of the ever-growing responsibility the AIGC network has, to sustain the services available to the American Indian and Alaska Native population of students.

Sincerely,

Rose Graham
President of the American Indian Graduate Center
The graduation season is always an exciting time for AIGC. From our perspective, graduations fall along a continuum of many years.

At the beginning the continuum, we welcome new AIGC scholars and fellowship recipients to our community of American Indians and Alaska Natives in higher education. At the other end of the AIGC continuum, we celebrate the individual and collective achievements of students in Indian Country obtaining their post-secondary and advanced degrees. Indeed, graduation season is a time for joyful celebration.

The 2016 graduation season was topped with an event of historic proportion — centered on Santa Fe Indian School’s (SFIS) 2016 Commencement Ceremonies. SFIS was successful in securing a member of the White House to deliver its commencement speech: Mrs. Michelle Obama, the First Lady of the United States of America.

“I wanted to be here with you at your commencement because your values are my values,” First Lady Obama shared in her speech. “Your big, impossible dreams are actually the right size.”

According to the White House, 67% of Native Americans graduate from high school. AIGC, a national scholarship provider responsible for the overall oversight of higher education attainment and success for Native people, recognizes this number as a call-to-action. While our focus since 1969 has been higher education, we know high school graduation is immediately connected to our mission to build, promote and honor self-sustaining American Indian and Alaska Native communities through education and leadership.

“We are graduating Native Americans. We are successful Native Americans. We are Native Americans with hopes, dreams and ambitions,” said 2016 SFIS Salutatorian, Chyanne Quintana (Ohkay Owingeh/Santa Clara).

We at AIGC agree with Mrs. Obama and Chyanne Quintana. Those hopes and dreams — regardless of their impossible sizes — are not just designated for graduation season. They are long-haul conditioned, resistant to the weathering of challenges and barriers and fueled by a bottomless tank of “I cans” and “I wills.”

On behalf of the entire network of AIGC students, staff, friends, graduates and alumni, I extend congratulations to the 2016 graduating class and offer our assistance, support and encouragement in the years ahead. May we collectively work to reduce the diploma-obtaining disparity among American Indian students and strengthen our communities through education, culture and leadership.

Sincerely,

Joan V. Currier
AIGC Interim Executive Director
Since 2009, PNM has provided 26 paid internships at PNM power plants and operations centers. We are proud to have provided key support, valuable experience and careers.

Celebrating Seven Years of Supporting Native American Graduates

Congratulations to the 2016 PNM American Indian Internship participants.

Kachina Ganz, Chemical Engineering Major
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
Navajo

Brennan Charley, Civil Engineering Major
University of New Mexico
Navajo
Fracturing Families

The Detrimental Effects of Courts Defining American Indian Families

by Airianne Posey

American society places a high value on the family unit. Social welfare policy aims to keep the family unit together, with the belief that this benefits families and the larger U.S. society. Families that remain together are socially and economically stronger, which places less stress on the U.S. social welfare system. With the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, the United States government recognized that American Indian and Alaska Native families needed to be protected. The passing of (the) ICWA was an important step in protecting the American Indian and Alaska Native family, but there is still work to be done.

The Indian Child Welfare Act has set a definition as to who is covered under the law, which is clearly written within the law. A problem is that courts have created a judicial exception by defining what constitutes an “existing Indian family” to decide if ICWA applies to a child who is covered under the law. Judges decide if parents and children are “Indian” enough, based on various factors such as, location of residence (reservation or not) or how connected the judge thinks they are to their American Indian or Alaska Native culture. This, the “existing Indian family,” exception has led to the destruction of many American Indian and Alaska Native families. Since the additional qualification of an “existing Indian family” is being used to determine if ICWA applies, it is of utmost importance for lawmakers to take action to no longer allow this judicial exception to be applied. An amendment to ICWA is needed now. Too many children have been taken away from loving parents because courts have decided that American Indian and Alaska Native families do not fit into the judges’ definition of an American Indian or Alaska Native family.

Contextualizing the Problem

Since the passing of this act in 1978, the number of American Indian and Alaska Native children being taken from their homes unlawfully has decreased, but a problem still exists. In 1982, the Kansas Supreme Court created the “existing Indian family” exception to ICWA, which places an additional criterion that is not in the law, to determine to whom ICWA applies.

Since the creation of the “existing Indian family”, courts in other states (Nevada, California, Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, etc.) have ruled against American Indian and Alaska Native families based on this criterion. This blatant disregard for not following the Indian Child Welfare Act has detrimental effects of American Indian and Alaska Native families and communities.

The United States government recognized, in the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, that American Indian children are the greatest resource to tribes. By disregarding who is covered by the policy, tribes and families are experiencing another loss of a generation of children whom ICWA was meant to protect. Tribes maintain their culture by passing it down through their children. When children are adopted out of their tribe, they lose their cultural connections and identity. Studies have shown that there are many detrimental effects of being adopted outside their culture. It is in the best interest of American Indian and Alaska Native...
children, their families and their tribes to keep them together. Families are being fractured, with children being taken away and placed in out-of-family, community and tribal adoptive homes. It is important that the government take all necessary steps to prevent children being taken away from their loving families.

Critique of Policy Option

American Indian and Alaska Native children, who meet the definition of “Indian Child” in the Indian Child Welfare Act, are supposed to be covered under this law. Despite this clear definition of who is covered under the act, courts have applied the “existing Indian family” exception in many cases. As a result, the Indian Child Welfare Act is failing to protect the interests of American Indian children, families and tribes. This appears to be about allocations and attributed need. It is imperative that congress amend who is covered under this law, so that the “existing Indian family” doctrine may no longer be applied to destroy American Indian and Alaska Native families.

If we look at recent court cases, where the Indian Child Welfare Act is being applied to children who are being adopted by non-Indian families, we can see that the failure to follow ICWA is based on the courts decision of the “Indianness” of the child and the biological parents. For no other race, does a judge base his or her decision on whether a child stays with their loving biological parents, on how culturally involved they are or their blood quantum.

In 2013, the heartbreaking case of Adoptive Couple v Baby Girl demonstrated that the courts decision to determine what is considered an Indian family is detrimental to American Indian and Alaska Native children and families. Dusten Brown, father of Baby Veronica, a military man who served this country to protect the rights of all Americans, experienced one of the greatest injustices and violations of rights toward him and his daughter. His family became one of the many American Indian families destroyed because of a violation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. The United States Supreme Court ruled against Dusten Brown, the biological father, in his attempt to maintain custody of his daughter. The Supreme Court questioned the “Indianness” of Dusten Brown and his daughter, citing her “low” blood quantum and questioning Dusten’s title as father. It is time to take action and amend the act to strengthen the protection the United States has enacted toward American Indian and Alaska Native children and families.

Policy Recommendation

It is recommended that the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 be amended in Section 1903,(a)(b), to add (c), which would read as follows: “an “Indian Child” who meets the definitions determined under (a) and (b) is an Indian Child for purposes of the Indian Child Welfare Act, regardless of the existence of an Indian family.” This would no longer allow courts to use the “existing Indian family” doctrine as a way to continue to violate the law. This policy recommendation is needed, but there may be opposition. Opponents of the Indian Child Welfare Act believe that the law is unconstitutional because they believe it is a “race-based law.” However, opponents must understand that being American Indian or Alaska Native is not only a racial identity, but a political status as well. The United States government has entered into a nation-to-nation relationship with tribes and, by extension, their tribal members, to protect and preserve tribes and resources. The devastating history of American Indian and Alaska Native adoption, from 1959 to 1967, removed 35% of American Indian and Alaska Natives most valuable resource, children, from their families. The destruction of the lives of many family members and tribal communities was so great that this protection was deemed necessary by the United States government. Therefore, federally-recognized tribes have the right to protect their tribal citizens and prevent the devastating

Continued on page 13
In the fall of 2014, I packed up my trusty red truck, some of my belongings, along with my two adventurous cats, and returned to the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO. CU Boulder is a great place to fuel one's creativity and has always been a place which has pushed me to challenge my academic boundaries.

I decided to return to CU, for a second Masters, as I felt I needed to take my experience in the areas of media, communication and Native American Studies, in a new direction. I applied and was accepted to the Master of Science in Information and Communication Technology for Development at the ATLAS Institute, in the CU College of Engineering.

I found the program very exciting and rigorous. I began to think about how online and mobile technologies can be used to support Indigenous communities, in their self-determination efforts and as an act of sovereignty. Over the first year and a half in the ICTD program, I became more and more interested in how mobile technology is used globally, for everything from banking, to determining crop prices, to paying for a bus ride.

In my final semester, I built a database in Drupal, on Indigenous Mobile Technology, for my practicum project. I focused the database on mobile language apps currently being created and used by Indigenous peoples, within the developed countries of the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. I wanted to focus on Indigenous communities within those countries as, often, their technological needs go underserved since they reside within a developed country.

The Indigenous Mobile Technology database I built in Drupal can be found by clicking on the Language Apps, tab within the Indigenous Language Apps Research Guide. The guide not only links to the Indigenous Mobile Technology database, but also links to other related information.

While most of the apps in the database are available publically on the Internet, I wanted to provide a resource for communities considering a mobile app project, but need some guidance on how or where to get started.

The Tribal Resource Guide tab within the Indigenous Language Apps Research Guide provides tribes guidance, when considering a mobile app project. The Indigenous mobile language apps, featured in the Drupal database, are available publically via the various apps stores. However, I wanted to provide a resource guide for tribes who want to consider a mobile app project, but might not want to have their language app available publically on the Internet. I took a step back and thought about what tribes need to consider, prior to implementing such a project.
The Indigenous Mobile Technology or Drupal site address is temporary, as the University of New Mexico University Libraries has acquired the site and the site migration is taking place over the summer of 2016. The data information is being transferred to the UNM Digital Repository and will be accessed via the Language Apps research guidelink when the transfer is complete.

The Indigenous Mobile Technology will be housed in the UNM Digital Repository and will be available for the public to access and utilize the information, for academic and tribal community research.

It is my hope the Indigenous Mobile Technology database inspires other tribes to consider using mobile technology in their language revitalization efforts and shows how they are bridging their traditional cultures and languages with technology, for years to come.

The Buder Center for American Indian Studies is a premier graduate program in Social Work. We are committed to preparing and supporting future American Indian leaders to practice in tribal and urban settings, making significant contributions to health, wellness, and the sustained future of Indian Country.

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- Provides assistance in career and professional development
- Offers dual degree programs with architecture, business, law, divinity, and public health
Every day that I catch the J-Z train to and from New York University in Manhattan, I never forget to remember where I come from.

While it is easier to be hypnotized by the New York City skyline, which features thousands of high-rises, including the One World Trade Center, the Empire State Building and the Rockefeller Center, I make sure to remember my story.

That story centers around this path of healing, or achieving Hozho in the Navajo culture. Crucial to this healing is home, the small community of Naschitti, Navajo Nation, New Mexico, where most of my To’ahani and Kinyaa’aanii relatives live.

If not Naschitti, then I reflect on the thousands of interviews and eyewitness accounts that Navajo society exposed me to, as a reporter for the Navajo Times, when I wrote news and features, from 2011 to 2015.

These reflections could be the time I profiled how two Navajo sisters shear sheep for a living and tour around the vast Navajo Nation to assist the elderly with this seasonal chore. Or, I’ll remember the thousands of miles I logged in my 2009 Pontiac Vibe, driving through desolate lands, canyons and mountains, to report on health outcomes of people living near abandoned uranium mines or some protest by Navajo grassroots organizations against their government, for entertaining any plans for further natural resource exploitation.

Depending on which news story resurfaces in my mind, I interpret it as a reminder of home, even among the chaos of the concrete jungle that is New York City.

Home, also known as Dine Bikeyah (Navajo land), and the principle of Hozho, are the reasons for my recent success of pursuing a Master of Public Health in Health Management and Policy, at NYU’s College of Global Public Health.

Pronounced in Navajo culture and ceremony, Hozho is achieved when a person’s being and vibrations are in balance with divine nature. Commonly cited in the Navajo foundational ceremony – The Blessing Way – it has been the main driving force in my life.

It sounds easy to achieve, but it’s actually hard to maintain. In fact, Hozho is a principle that I only recently started to recognize and understand. Acknowledging it as a truth and witnessing the effectiveness of it in Navajo ceremonies that address specific health issues, for example, has in part inspired me to pursue a career in the health field.

When it comes to many indigenous youth across Indian Country, I do not think they fully grasp how critical it is to love themselves, particularly their culture and language. Self-love is part of healing and is a necessary step to be successful in life. I make this claim from personal testimony.

For most of my early 20s, I lived in a dark state, often resorting to binge drinking, as an outlet to deal with past demons like sexual assault and ill feelings of self-hate. As a result, I was pretty high-risk and found love in the wrong places. This vicious life cycle happened between 2007 and 2013, when I preferred mainstream society over my culture and my own skin.

Essentially, I betrayed who I was. Ashamed I grew up in poverty. Ashamed that I looked like my mom, dad and siblings. Discrediting the rich, genetic make-up with
Up to this point, my life is better and I credit my Navajo identity for providing this opportunity to study at NYU and live in “New York, the concrete jungle where dreams are made.”

which the Creator brought me in this world. Ashamed of my ‘Navajo-ness’.

This sadistic mindset changed, when I became aware that I was barely holding on to life by a thread. I realized that my life would not improve and that I would continue this downward path of instability until I took charge and initiative. In Navajo culture, this teaching is called “Táá hwo aji t’éego,” a phrase meaning, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”

Fast forward to my late 20s. I deployed this principle and began healing from the childhood traumas of bullying and domestic violence. After all, the healing of Navajo ceremonies and my renewed interest in Native American Church were, and are, strengths that helped me secure the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which allowed me to attend Gonzaga University as an undergraduate.

Both avenues of worship, allowing me to become more in balance with divine nature, after confession and forgiveness, is why I am now comfortable competing with the international student body of NYU. For me to achieve in higher education and lead a healthy life, I know that I must love who I am — physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally — and love where I come from.

Up to this point, my life is better and I credit my Navajo identity for providing this opportunity to study at NYU and live in “New York, the concrete jungle where dreams are made.”

(Bitsoi, 30, will graduate, with his Master of Public Health in Health Management and Policy, from NYU in May 2017. In addition to being an award-winning newspaper reporter for the Navajo Times and freelance writer, he is an alumnus of the Gates Millennium Scholarship and current recipient of the American Indian Graduate Center’s BIE Loan For Service.)

Fracturing Families

Continued from page 9

loss of another generation of children, by way of unlawful removal of children from loving families.

Concluding Remarks

ICWA states, “There is no resource more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children.” The family unit is one of the most important foundations on which American society is built. The continuing fracturing of American Indian and Alaska Native families is detrimental to children, families, tribes and society. It is important that the United States government continue to take action to protect the most precious resource of tribes, their children. Amending the Indian Child Welfare Act will strengthen the efforts the government has already made to protect American Indian and Alaska Native Children. Tribal nations most precious resource is their children. They are the future carriers of tradition but, more importantly, they maintain the tradition of family.

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www.nationalacademies.org/ford
ANAHSAT

All Native American High School Academic Team Selected for Academic Year 2016-2017

by Joshua Lucio

The All Native American High School Academic Team (ANAHSAT) is in its 11th 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 role models as 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 2016-2017 AIGC All Native American High School Academic Team!

Clifford Courvoisier (Navajo Nation)
High School: Cloudcroft High School, 4.47 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Neuroscience, at Harvard University

Grayson Henley (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma)
High School: Ashley Ridge High School, 3.40 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Business, at the University of South Carolina

Dalton North (Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation)
High School: Beaumont High School, 4.0 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Computer Science/Information Systems, at Pomona College

Teata Oatman (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation)
High School: Nixyaawii Community School, 3.79 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Early Childhood Education, at the University of Idaho

Sha’Teal Pearman (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation)
High School: Cheyenne Eagle Butte High School, 3.88 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Agriculture, at South Dakota State University

Samaya Small (Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation)
High School: Rio Rancho High School, 3.2 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Business/Government, at the University of New Mexico

Megan Thomas (Penobscot Tribe of Maine)
High School: Classical Academy High School, 3.79 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Biology, at Azusa Pacific University

Grant Tiger (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe)
High School: Riverside High School, 3.66 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Biomedical Engineering, at North Carolina State University

Chase Warren (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe)
High School: Standing Rock High School, 4.00 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, at Yale University

Kiana Wood (Chinik Eskimo Community (Golovin))
High School: Hutchison High School, 3.97 GPA
Pursuing a bachelor's degree, in Nursing, at George Fox University
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.

Grayson Henley

Grant Tiger

Sha’Teal Pearman

Dalton North

Teata Oatman

Megan Thomas

Chase Warren

Samaya Small

Clifford Courvoisier

Kiana Wood
For the Love of Music

Classical Pianist, Chemistry Major and Former Miss Indian, New Mexico

by Renata Yazzie


Greetings, my name is Renata Yazzie and I am a Diné woman, attending the University of New Mexico, majoring in chemistry and minoring in music and health, medicine and human values. In addition, I am a classical pianist.

As soon as I could walk, I would toddle over to the piano bench, climb up and serenade my parents, as they got ready for the day. I adored music and my mother played piano. She taught me until I was 4 years old. While most children my age were learning to read English, I was also learning to read musical notation.

I began taking formal lessons at age 4, studying in the Suzuki Piano Program, until I was 10, with Mrs. Louise Hill of Flagstaff, Arizona. I played my first piano competition, held at Northern Arizona University, when I was 8 years old, placing first in both the elementary solo and concerto divisions.

Even as a young child, I loved music, I loved to play and, although I disliked performing in public, piano and music served as a creative outlet for me to express myself where words failed. I immensely enjoyed playing and I faithfully practiced every day. I also grew up listening to...
I grew up not really knowing anyone that had my dark skin and hair, my high cheekbones, my understanding of the world, of family and kinship, who could also play the music I loved. My mother played classical piano and remains my main inspiration, the person I look to, the best pianist in the world but, outside of her, I knew no one. This is changing slowly, as there are now resources for Native classical musicians to share their work, but it has been an arduous search.

Therefore, I find myself as an ambassador between many worlds. On one hand, I strive to iterate that STEM fields and music may seem like polar opposites, but they are more alike than it appears upon first impression. To connect with one’s own creativity and artistry is not harmful and most certainly not to be looked down on but, rather, keeps us human and is often necessary to uphold a good quality of life.

In addition, I find myself connecting my culture with classical music; in the way I interpret pieces. As a child, whenever I had a hard time understanding the feel of a song, my mother would tell stories to go with the music. Stories of goats jumping in the pasture, of the drive to Masani’s house, of animals and the environment around me, to help me relate to the music. Things I knew, things of my world, so in this way, I could play Mozart and apply meaning to it, to create something beautiful.

I hope to enter graduate school to pursue a degree in ethnomusicology next fall 2017, followed by medical school. I wish to study piano for as long as I live and I encourage all young people to not only follow their passions, but to live as well-rounded individuals and incorporate their Indigenous roots, keeping their identities alive, in whatever field they choose to pursue. Finally, I believe I have been blessed with a gift from God and I plan to use it to bring glory and honor to Him, in addition to blessing other people and spreading a positive message through my music.

It has been a very humbling experience and an honor and blessing to bring an Indigenous perspective to a traditionally Western art.

I’ve spent nearly 2 years with Dr. Steinbach as my teacher and my technical capabilities, as well as my repertoire, have greatly increased. Dr. Steinbach’s methods have continued to unlock my musicality and led me to explore other composers and music that I enjoy. It is under his guidance that I’ve been able to give my first solo recital, been a featured lecturer at the John Donald Robb Composers’ Symposium, performed in Germany at Klavierfestival Lindlar and been invited to work with several other Indigenous musicians in varied genres. I will actually be returning to Germany this summer as well. I also seek to mentor and help promote the next generation of American Indian classical musicians.

As the first American Indian student he’s ever had, I have done my fair share of educating Dr. Steinbach. It has been a very humbling experience and an honor and blessing to bring an Indigenous perspective to a traditionally Western art. To bring my own Indigenous perspective to Chopin, to Bach, to Beethoven and bring a twist, an interpretation that differs than anything anyone’s ever heard, inspired by my roots as a Native person – that is what I aspire to do. In short, I aspire to Indigenize classical music.
Stop the Cycle: 
Set Goals, Self-Reflect and Have Patience

by Ashley Nixon

There are the three things I would advise anyone to remember on any journey in their life, especially when it comes to education—they need to set goals, self-reflect and have patience.

Education isn't just a four-year thing, or a two-year thing or even a ten-year thing—it's a lifelong thing. I don't remember at what point education became important to me—I think my love for knowledge evolved over time. It began with a love for reading and books and then became something more when I realized it couldn't be taken away. If you've known struggle, you probably seek things in life that cannot be taken away as I do—that means working hard to pay off loans, saving money to prevent further hardship and being possessive of your time.

These were all things I practiced even before I became a Gates Millennium Scholar. These were things I did for survival, while I prayed for things to get just a little easier.

On April 21, 2008, my world changed. I became a Gates Millennium Scholar. Finally, I thought, I would not know struggle. In truth, becoming a Scholar would definitely make things easier, but eliminate struggle, it would not. Upon graduation, I was entering a world I knew nothing about, without direction. I was a first-generation college student, on my own. I moved to college with the help of my best friend's family. My own parents, while proud, did not make the transition with me from Eufaula to Norman, Oklahoma, where I would attend school at the University of Oklahoma for the next six years.

Initially, I did not intend to work while I was in college. I had hoped my scholarship would be enough to keep me afloat, so I could focus on my studies; however, even before classes began, I realized this would not be the case. While my scholarship covered my bursar, I had other bills: phone, a car payment, insurance, and I couldn't rely on my family for financial support. On top of that, I wasn't used to being without my family and there was something about home, a comfort, I wasn't getting in the dorms at college. This made me afraid to search for work in Norman—I didn't know anyone and it would take away from the time I could spend with my family. So, during my first year at school, I came home every weekend to resume the job I'd left when I went off to college. On Friday, after class ended at 1:20, I would walk straight to my car, drive two hours report to work and get off at 9:00 or 11:00 p.m. Then, I'd spend Saturday and Sunday working an 8-hour shift and drive back to Norman Monday morning, to attend class at 8:00 a.m., after waking up at 4:00 a.m. I do not suggest this.

Everything I did my first year of college was out of fear: fear I would not have enough money, fear that I...
would not see my family, fear of change. This arrangement kept me from sleeping, kept me from staying healthy, kept me from making friends and joining organizations and, in the end, kept me from moving forward. I was stagnant and by the end of summer, as I prepared to go into my sophomore year of college, I knew something had to change. I made a goal: stop being afraid. I did just that.

Sophomore year was different: I made friends, I went home less and got a job at a local grocery store to pay my bills. Still, there were struggles. I was a full-time student, working 32 hours a week at the grocery store. Initially, I didn’t think this would be a problem: I’d worked the same amount of hours in high school and maintained a great GPA. But, college was different. Harder. I was taking two particularly difficult courses—Italian and Critical Reading and Writing—when I realized something; I didn’t know how to study. Because I’d never struggled in class, I’d never had to think about this. I couldn’t learn a new language through osmosis and I couldn’t succeed in Critical Reading and Writing, if I didn’t have time to comprehend what I was reading. Finally, I asked for fewer hours at work; I decided 25 would afford me the pay I needed to cover my bills and leave enough time to study. By the end of the year, I’d learned an important lesson: always reevaluate your needs. I was so used to working, almost full-time hours, to survive that I never considered other options, which, once again, kept me from moving forward.

Motivated to make better grades, I decided my junior year of college would be the start of a better academic year for me. I was going to learn how I studied best—my next goal was set! Thankfully, my third year of college had a completely different feel: a comfort I hadn’t felt until then. Things seemed easier—perhaps because I’d taken the time to figure out how I studied best. I also decided to quit my job at the grocery store and focus on school. Since I’d moved out of the dorms, I had more money for my bills and could survive without a job. Did it ever make a difference! So much in fact, my goal for senior year became to make straight A’s. I did just that.

But my senior year of college brought its own struggles, mostly because of a new unknown: graduate school. I’d already decided to go into Library Science and Information Studies. Though I knew little about the degree, I felt it would provide a foundation for serving my community and, of course, I’d get to talk about books. Upon entering graduate school, my counselor didn’t want me to be full-time—she claimed my grades reflected that a lighter course load might be best, but I knew what I was capable of, so I told her, with full confidence, that I would make straight A’s in graduate school and that I was going to be full-time. I made a goal. And I did exactly that.

Graduate school didn’t come without its own hardships. For my first full year, I worked forty hours a week, falling back into my fear of not having enough money to sustain myself. Going into my second year of graduate school, I decided I could work part-time and found a wonderful job at an academic library on campus. Finally, in my final year of school, I’d found a balance between school, work, finances and…life.

I’m still not at the end of my educational journey. As I’ve said before, it is a lifelong commitment—and it is not only a commitment to academia, it’s a commitment to learn about yourself. To self-reflect. To make changes for a better you—for a better future, for a better world, so that those who come after you don’t face the same hardships.

It’s very easy to see the beginning of my life as setting the tone of struggle, but I see it differently—it was a lesson in setting goals and having patience. Perhaps, in the end, the goal is always to survive but, what is survival other than a series of goals? Oh, yeah, and patience. ✦

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Thank you for supporting Higher Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students!
It's about goals and it starts with me. I cannot ask students to have goals unless I, too, have goals. I cannot ask my students to work hard unless I, too, am willing to work hard. There was nothing I asked of my seniors at Sequoyah Schools that I was not willing to achieve along with them. When I was hired as the school's library media specialist, I was told that I would be teaching two college prep classes of high school seniors. College Prep? What's that? Isn't that something the high school counselor deals with? The school counselors are so bombarded with testing, class scheduling, etc., that college prep often lands at the bottom of the list. Sequoyah had the foresight to create a class that would ensure high school seniors that there would be someone to help them continue their education beyond high school. From the beginning, I heard over and over again, “You really have to be good at helping the seniors get scholarships, especially the Gates Scholarship. The last teacher was REALLY good!” Gates? I had never heard of the Gates Millennium Scholarship. I immediately immersed myself into finding out more about this scholarship. In my first year as college prep teacher, I was learning about the Gates Scholarship as I helped students apply. I literally was walking them through the application. I had fourteen seniors commit to completing the Gates Millennium Scholarship application. As they would complete each section, I would go through proofreading, editing and making suggestions. We would have after school sessions and even worked through winter break. The school counselor was on board, to assist with the process, as well. The final result, of my first year as college prep teacher, was the naming of four Gates Millennium Scholars!

After that first year, I had GMS fever! The school counselor and I set a goal of doubling the number of recipients. We achieved our goal.

application. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others. We worked hard at perfecting every section, making sure that nothing was left to question. We impressed upon them that it was very competitive, not easy, demanding of their time and that their application would need to be polished and stand out above all others.
had produced their very best work. After two years, I was named full-time college prep teacher and loved it.

I was honored to be able to work with Native American high school seniors for seven years, before my retirement. I have often said that those years were the icing on the cake. I truly loved every minute of it. It was challenging and so rewarding. In those seven years, 38 of my seniors were named Gates Millennium Scholars. We never had less than four Scholars, per year, and eight was our greatest number in one year. Many who applied, but were not named as Scholars, stated that they didn’t regret applying. They accepted it as a great lesson in knowing what would be required in writing a great scholarship application. They used much of their information for other scholarships and were able to receive those scholarships. One of the greatest honors I received as an educator was to be able to be a Gates Millennium Scholarship reader for three years. I enjoyed meeting colleagues from all over our great country who shared my passion in our desire to see our Native American youth succeed. I loved reading about our Native American students from throughout our country. Reading what other students had written made me realize that, no matter who was named as a Gates Millennium Scholar, our Native students would, undoubtedly, make a positive contribution and impact shaping our world. I was so humbled when other schools called upon me for assistance with the GMS process, after my retirement. I could not turn them down. I was often asked to critique essays for students who were applying for the scholarship. I enjoyed being able to assist in any way possible; hopefully, providing helpful suggestions on how to make their applications better. Now, I continue to feel confident as I communicate with Scholars who are using the scholarship to its fullest. I have such pride for those who go beyond a Bachelor’s degree and are pursuing Master’s and Doctorate degrees. The Gates Millennium Scholarship will always stand out as one of the greatest achievements for many of our Native American students, and for me, as their college prep teacher. Thank you, Gates Millennium Scholarship, for the accomplishments and successes of our Native American youth, which you helped them achieve.

(Augusta Smith is a retired college prep teacher, from Sequoyah Schools, in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.)
Siyo. My name is Corey Still and I am from Cookson, OK. I am the son of Stella Still-Campbell and Darrell Campbell, grandson of the late Betty and John Still and the great-grandson of the late Bessie Thompson. I am a first generation, twenty-five-year-old doctoral student, at the University of Oklahoma, studying adult and higher education. I have a Master’s Degree, in Higher Education Leadership, from Northeastern State University in Oklahoma and a Bachelor’s degree, in American Indian Studies, from Oklahoma University (OU). Finally, I am a Gates Millennium Scholar, representing the 2009 cohort.

Growing up in rural Northeast Oklahoma within the boundaries of my tribe, I experienced both advantages and disadvantages. As for the disadvantages, I did not grow up living a life of luxury or knowing what it meant to have privilege. However, I did grow up knowing what it meant to have a community, family and culture. These values are becoming excessively rare in today’s society. While I was raised in a life devoid of material luxury, I was raised in a life of affluent cultural luxury. These concepts of community, family and culture intersect with each other to provide balance in a person’s life. For Keetoowah (Cherokee) people, that is what we strive to achieve on a daily basis.

Now, growing up I never would have thought that a backwoods country Indian boy would ever obtain a college level education. However, this year marks the seventh year since my graduation from Sequoyah Indian High School. This past year, I was asked to speak at a Native student graduation event and, between that and going back to the 2016 Sequoyah graduation, I began to reflect about how quickly time passes and how much can happen in such a short time. If you had told me seven years ago that I would be where I am today. I wouldn’t believe you. In fact, I would have been more likely to laugh. I feel very few young people have a real grasp of the passage of time. In my own very limited experience, I have taken time for granted. Time is one of the few things that we can never recover and have to cherish, whether that is time we have with our families and community, or time that we dedicate to bettering ourselves and our communities.

Time is one of the few things that we can never recover and have to cherish, whether that is time we have with our families and community, or time that we dedicate to bettering ourselves and our communities.

In those seven years, I began to think back on my life as a young Native man and scholar. Going to a predominantly white institution (PWI), I went from being a member of the majority to being a member of a minute minority. I remember the day I was dropped off at college. There was a sadness and sickness that washed over me. I had heard, quite frequently, from non-Natives, that I would never accomplish anything with my life. The fear that they were right has never been so strong and deeply rooted within my very soul as it was that day. How dare a backwoods Indian dream to be a college graduate? How dare a backwoods Indian think that he can compete in...
Not long ago, I made a decision. That decision pushed me beyond what I thought I was capable of and guided me to a future I never imagined. Growing up in the small town of Gallup, NM, as a young Navajo girl, I knew, one day, I would return and give back to my community and my people. My grandfather was a quadriplegic and my grandmother was diagnosed with diabetes, colon cancer and ovarian cancer. In that respect, I developed nursing skills before most children my age. They taught me the stories, the traditional teachings of our Navajo culture and, most importantly, patient care. My family always encouraged education and I knew I wanted to pursue a career in the medical field, but was uncertain of which profession.

The majority of my childhood was spent traveling with my grandparents to their appointments at numerous hospitals, including an Indian Health Service facility. I remember listening to the counseling sessions, between the Commission Corps Pharmacists and my grandparents, and became familiar with their medications, since I would help my mother care for them at home. As years passed, I realized I developed an interest in understanding medications in general: their mechanism, dosing, side effects and indications. As I watched and learned, I began to admire the knowledge and confidence of each pharmacist. I remember the appreciation and respect my grandparents had for the pharmacists, because each counseling session was specific to them. When my grandparents passed away, it changed my life for numerous reasons but, most importantly, because that was the moment I made the decision to become a pharmacist. From that moment on, I pushed myself to, one day, be like the pharmacists I admired all those years ago.

Now, I am a proud Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), beginning another journey of PGY-1 pharmacy residency at Gallup Indian Medical Center (GIMC), as a Commissioned Corps officer. Education was the main focus of my family. My family sent me to educational conferences across the country, from New York City to Washington D.C., every summer throughout middle and high school because they wanted me to experience life outside the reservation and gain my independence. It was through these experiences I was able to secure the support of the Gates Millennium Scholarship Program, during my undergraduate years at the University of New Mexico and my first year at the UNM College of Pharmacy. Their encouragement helped me continue to strive academically. I was also very fortunate to be an Indian Health Service Scholar, for the remaining 3 years of pharmacy school, after funding with the Gates program has ended. I am still amazed at how much I have already accomplished, as I continue down my path of pharmacy, towards my Pharmacist Clinician licensure.

My family sent me to educational conferences across the country, from New York City to Washington D.C., every summer throughout middle and high school because they wanted me to experience life outside the reservation and gain my independence.
I remember, at college orientation, signing up for the classes that my friends signed up for, because I was lost when it came to college life. The Gates Millennium Scholarship provided me with the college experience and opportunity. I was a high school graduate who academically excelled, but endured the financial constraints that come from being raised in a single parent home. Through my first couple of college years, I developed a strong sense of perseverance. While in college, I experienced a positive change in my life; a change that would set my directional course in life. During my 3rd year of college, I took a class entitled, “American Indian Education” offered by Dr. Linda Oxendine. This is where I found myself. Dr. Oxendine chose the best textbooks for the class and I read both of them. The textbooks were *Widening the Circle: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for American Indian Children*, by B.J. Klug and P.T. Whirfield, and *Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education*, by Linda Cleary and Thomas Peacock. Through these textbooks, I found that some of my feelings and characteristics were based on my identity as an American Indian rather than my intelligence or difficult home life. Indian people are known to be closely connected to family and home and, to some extent, doubtful of the things they can achieve in life. I realized that almost every American Indian had those feelings. As an American Indian, I developed a greater confidence in myself. Dr. Oxendine taught me that just because I was Indian didn’t mean that I had to set limits for myself. This is the time that I declared my major in education. I had a desire to teach children. I immediately began the elementary education program in 2005 and, in December of 2007, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, with a concentration in American Indian Studies.

**Graduate School and Teaching Career**

As I began job seeking, I found an opening at a local Title I, 6-8 middle school. In January of 2008, I entered graduate school at UNCP and, the same month, obtained a position, at Pembroke Middle School, teaching sixth grade math. UNCP provisionally accepted me into the program, since I was a Gate’s Scholar. Needless to say, after the first semester, I was removed from the provisional list and fully accepted in the program. I attended the program full-time and taught full-time. In December of 2009, I graduated from UNCP, as an academically excelling graduate student.

Presently, I have been teaching sixth grade mathematics curriculum for eight years. I have also served as an afternoon mathematics tutor, working with students in small groups and one-on-one, to maximize student learning. In addition to being an elementary educator (middle school setting), I am also a former adjunct instructor for a local community college.

**Doctoral Studies**

During the couple of years I spent in the Elementary Education Graduate Program, I developed a greater passion for teaching. This passion led me to apply to a doctoral program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. I applied, interviewed and was accepted in the Educational Leadership Program, on the Curriculum and Instruction track. Through my first year of doctoral studies, I found another interest, which was leadership. For some weeks, I contemplated applying for the add-on administration licensure program. Finally, I decided to
apply. In the midst of all my ‘busyness’, I found a way to make my life even busier as, less than a month later, I received an acceptance letter. Recently, I successfully defended for the MSA add-on licensure at UNCW and am continuing to pursue doctoral studies. My projected graduation date is December 2017.

Last summer, as part of my doctoral studies, I engaged in an international internship in Belize. I offered mathematics professional development to the teachers in Belize City and San Pedro. As an educator based in North Carolina, the Belize international field experience offered unique new insights that have impacted me culturally, educationally and personally.

While in Belize, my cycling skills were tested, as I biked across huge chunks of gravel, with a basket containing 34 ounces of water, a laptop and a satchel.

The Gates scholarship afforded me a grand opportunity, for which I will be forever grateful.

Reflection
I must say my rollercoaster ride has been nothing less than crazy, inspirational, scary, wobbly at times and defining. Many things have made me the educator that I am today, including my personal history and educational experiences; these two things define me as a teacher. With all that life presents, I remain optimistic and determined to accomplish many more goals. I have never liked to discuss and reminisce about my past, but would be glad to discuss future goals that I set for myself. The Gates scholarship afforded me a grand opportunity, for which I will be forever grateful. I am a woman of great determination. My personal life had a tremendous impact upon my educational experiences and continues to do so. My life and the lessons learned from it have molded and shaped me into the person I am today: a person with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in the area of elementary education, add-on licensure in administration, an aspiring principal and professor, and one who can make a difference in the lives of others. Remember; I am Indian, from a single parent home - with a low socioeconomic status, categorized as predestined and predetermined to fall in the traps of teenage pregnancy, underage drinking and end up a high school dropout. But, God and the the Gates Millennium Scholarship gave me opportunities of a lifetime! ♦

Gates Millennium Scholar/Corey Still

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America? These questions and others, similar to these, have to be asked by Native scholars across the country. We are told that, in order to complete and be successful in the non-Native world, we have to choose and walk in that world. I don’t believe that. It is paramount that, as Native scholars and especially as young Native scholars, we do not walk in the non-Native world, but rather incorporate our traditional mentalities and philosophies into our studies and into the non-Native environment. By doing this we can truly begin to create atmospheres of Indigenous learning and create spaces that are welcoming to Native students rather than deterring them.

Once you find or create your space on your campus you have to become involved, both within the Native community and the non-Native communities. In my own experience, I spent a number of hours working with Native student organizations on campus, I also learned the value of going outside my comfort zone and making connections with people outside the Native community. This can lead to lifelong connections and untold adventures. It has been my experience that, when we unite as people, as human beings, we can accomplish so many things. No matter what race, nationality or creed we come from, a united front on any issue is both strong and powerful. Don’t be scared or think that you are letting Native people down if you work with other organizations outside the Native community.

My last bit of advice for upcoming scholars is to remember what your reasons are for accomplishing whatever goal you set. In the past seven years, I have been fortunate to travel the world and this country and have been able to see and experience things I had only heard about. During my travels, I have seen wonderful and beautiful things; however, wherever I go, I still fight everyday so that my nieces, nephews and future children will have a better life than I did. Our elders fought this fight for us. Now it is our time to continue to fight for the next generation. I wish the best of luck to all educators, community members and our scholars, who might read this and I challenge you. I challenge you to strive to be the best person that you can be. No matter what tribe you come from, our ancestors have fought for us to be here today. Continue that fight. Our strongest weapon today is education. Whether that is an academic education, a vocational education or a cultural education, the future of our people is not in the hands of politicians in the capital, but in ours. ♦
American Indian Ancestral Cuisine
How student driven efforts have brought food sovereignty to Washington University in St. Louis

by Miquela Taffa

In 2013, a team of American Indian Masters of Social Work and Public Health (MSW/MPH) graduate students, at Washington University in St. Louis, recognized that although the university had a significant number of Native students, there was a distinct lack of accessibility to ancestral foods on campus. From this realization, the Hunt. Fish. Gather. project was conceived. Hunt. Fish. Gather. is a collaboration between the Buder Center for American Indian Studies – a graduate research center dedicated to the support of American Indian MSW students, Bon Appetit with Washington University Dining Services and Chef Nephi Craig – an Apache/Navajo chef. The vision of the project was simple: how do we bring ancestral cuisine to Washington University’s (WashU) campus?

I joined the WashU community in the fall of 2014. As an American Indian woman from the Southwest, who relocated to St. Louis, I was very aware of the lack of accessibility to American Indian food staples in Missouri, a state where no reservations exist. The concept of the project and its potential impact was inspirational to me. Food is a center point of culture, discussion and enjoyment. Bringing together people of different tribes, ethnicities and even nationalities, over a plate of Three Sisters Salad, was an opportunity: to connect, to discuss indigenous spaces within academia and to educate about Native concepts of health and wellbeing. But, most importantly, the project symbolized the empowerment and success of Native students at a predominantly white institution.

I was thrilled to receive an acceptance to WashU because of the educational and extracurricular resources the Brown School of Social Work has to offer. I knew that I wanted to make significant impacts on health disparities in Indian Country, through public policy and programming, and the Brown School is the top school of social work in the United States and listed a myriad of classes that would enhance my professional abilities. The true draw of the program, however, was the Buder Center for American Indian Studies. Having gone to other predominantly white institutions, I knew that I needed a center that would support me culturally, as well as educationally, as I confronted the difficult challenge of attaining my Masters.

The Buder Center has not only been a great support resource, but has given me the tools and encouragement necessary in order to create and develop programs within the University. When I joined the Hunt. Fish. Gather. Team, in the fall of 2014, the project had already had one successful year. The students who created the project had graduated with the knowledge that they had provided the Chefs of Washington University’s Dining Services ancestral recipes and raised awareness about what counts as truly traditional American Indian foods on campus. Through the continuation of the project into the second
and third year, I have been able to see the project flourish: academically, professionally and as an indoctrinated part of campus policy.

At the culmination of Hunt. Fish. Gather’s third year, the project has resulted in not only an increase in the accessibility of traditional American Indian foods across campus, but in increased awareness of what traditional American Indian foods are nationwide. Since its inauguration, Washington University has incorporated ancestral foods into their regular menus. American Indian dishes are available as cold packed salads at all dining and food pick-up services, at Ibby’s (the fine dining restaurant on campus), as a catering service option across campus and the Brown School’s cafeteria, “Grounds for Change,” features a weekly American Indian dish. Beyond the Washington University Campus, the project has been accepted at multiple conferences nationwide has been featured in such publications as the fall 2016 edition of Social Impact Magazine and was also published by the Center of Disease Control in their Food Sovereignty Compendium, Part IV.

As a student, seeing the exponential growth and success of the program has been exciting and rewarding. As a Native student at a predominantly white institution, experiencing the success and legitimacy of American Indian cuisine and concepts of health and wellbeing has been awe-inspiring. It can often be difficult to work with

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Social Workers Advancing through Grounded Education (SAGE): Building Capacity for Mental and Behavioral Health in Indian Country

The SAGE project will recruit, train, and financially support Native and non-Native students as they complete 360 hours of their concentration practica. SAGE students are awarded paid practicums and will complete their field education either in American Indian/Alaska Native Country or with American Indian populations, providing students with the necessary experience to transition into employment in Indian Country.

**PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS:**
- Practicum should focus on Mental/Behavioral Health;
- Practicum should focus on working with either at-risk children, at-risk adolescents or at-risk transitional age youth;
- Practicum must take place either in American Indian country or with American Indian/Alaska Native populations;
- Students must participate in Center for Violence & Injury Prevention events;
- Must be a student at Washington University’s Brown School & a US Citizen

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
- To be eligible for the SAGE grant, students must take two courses from the American Indian Track and two courses from Mental Health or Violence Prevention/ Intervention Track

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 314-935-7767 or mtovar@wustl.edu. Download an application at buder.wustl.edu/SAGEpject
All it takes is one look at the current Navajo Nation health indicators to understand that there is a dire need for me to be exactly where I am. I grew up on the Navajo Nation and now live and work at a healthcare facility where I received care as a child. I work as an epidemiologist, interim director of marketing and principal investigator of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant, at Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Board, Inc., in Fort Defiance, AZ. Many of the individuals who live on the Navajo reservation face circumstances shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources, otherwise known as the social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. At times, these circumstances can be overwhelming to change; however, that is why I chose to be a Master of Public Health. Working in Public Health, specifically as an epidemiologist, allows me to monitor, maintain surveillance and track chronic diseases in the 16 Navajo communities making up the Fort Defiance Service Unit. If any chronic disease rates increase dramatically or are above expectations, I work with our community health managers to develop interventions that reduce or stabilize the occurrence. I also evaluate the intervention to see what was effective. One of our more innovative and creative interventions is to reduce obesity and type II diabetes, by increasing access to healthy and traditional foods by establishing community gardens. These gardens are a place where the community can gather and grow produce. In the fall, the harvests from the gardens can be sold at a farmer’s market sponsored by our organization. It feels awesome to be a part of a project that promotes health in the communities and makes it easier for community members to access healthy foods. Through projects like this, I have the capability to affect socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions to improve health. I help to combat the food desert, provide health education, provide economic opportunities where none have existed before and empower people to be healthy.

Many of the individuals who live on the Navajo reservation face circumstances shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources, otherwise known as the social determinants of health.

I definitely know the barriers to health in the area, as I have been faced these first hand. Fortunately, it wasn’t always the situation. I grew up in Navajo, NM, a small town located 11 miles north of Fort Defiance, AZ. Navajo was the headquarters for the Navajo Forest Products Industry Company (NFPI). At its height, in the early 90s, NFPI had just over 800 employees and revenue streams of up to $6 million dollars per year. This created an environment where the social determinants of health were positive. Unemployment was low, there was a recreation center, swimming pool, hotel, several gas stations, shopping market, grocery store, amphitheater and health clinic, all within walking distance. NFPI sponsored...
Opportunity is defined as, “a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something”. I would say my opportunity began with obstacles: divorced parents; rural isolation; drug abuse and poverty. These are all very significant parts of my childhood. But, my childhood also included things like love, family, hope and education. As a child, I didn’t realize just how poor and isolated we were. We enjoyed simple things in life, like going for a hike in the woods or a bike ride down a country road and eating things like ketchup sandwiches and powdered eggs, when commodities ran low. This was all part of life. When drugs and domestic violence entered our sacred space, I began to realize life should be better. The hope of a better future kept me focused on my education and dreams for a better life.

I was born the third of four children, the only one with dark hair and tan skin. People used to question my mom – ask “what” I was, tease me about being the “milkman’s baby’. I knew I was Creek but, due to his boarding school experience, my grandfather did not pass down our traditions or language. My mother and father were quite opposite in nature. Dad worked to provide for his family, but was very reserved and didn’t show much affection; Mother was outgoing, fun, always gave us hugs and made us feel loved. I wouldn’t say one was better the other, just very different. Growing up, I always enjoyed school. I loved to read and become immersed in books that I checked out from the library or borrowed from a friend. It was nice to receive praise from my teachers in school, they would often say things like, “You’re smart, you should go to college.” I believed them, even though I knew very little about college. I had no idea how to apply, how much it cost or even where I could go. One teacher told me to keep my grades up and I could get a scholarship to help pay for college. So, I stayed focused on my academics and they became an escape from the negativity surrounding me at home. I learned very quickly to maintain a definite separation between home and school.

Eventually, I reached high school and moved out of my mom’s house to live with my boyfriend. While I wouldn’t define it as a healthy relationship, it was, in many ways, a more stable environment. I remained focused on my education. I was introduced to a program called Talent Search (a TRIO program), where I met this incredibly fun, energetic woman. She had activities for us to do, while we talked about college and our futures. With her assistance, I began exploring ways in which I could improve my chances of getting a scholarship. I applied for every scholarship I found. Being only the second year of the program, I had never heard of the Gates Millennium Scholarship. Our community librarian, Tina Kirk, received an application packet and encouraged me to apply. It was an application I worked through like all the others, piece by piece. It was, by far, the most challenging, but also very cathartic. I submitted my application and didn’t think anything more of it.

That year, I finally escaped the relationship with my long-term boyfriend and moved in with my older sister and her new family. We moved a couple of times, during my senior year, and about mid-way through the summer I was in the hospital. Due to these circumstances, I didn’t receive my GMS award letter until after the deadline to
submit my acceptance. I never asked for exceptions or special treatment and this situation was no different. I had been accepted to Northeastern State University for the fall and had a few small scholarships and grants. I didn’t know if it would be enough, but I knew I had to make it work.

That fall, I started college and was commuting 100 miles roundtrip to school. It was hard, but I knew I had to keep going; I couldn’t stop now. It was sometime in September when I received a call from Christa Moya. She said they had a scholarship check for me, they were just waiting on my acceptance letter. Quite surprised, I quickly submitted the document and continued with my studies. It wasn’t until I received that first check I realized the opportunity I was given. I literally fell to my knees in tears. I couldn’t believe someone believed in me so much that they would provide this much money to help with my education. Mind you, that was the first check, for only one semester. It was more money than I had ever seen in my life.

Like all other Gates Scholars, I faced many more obstacles in my pursuit of a college degree, but I was better equipped to meet those challenges. I had the comfort of knowing my education was paid. I began working on campus at the Center for Tribal Studies, where I met my mentor, Dr. Phyllis Fife. She was the first to emphasize the significance of the Gates Millennium Scholarship. She helped me feel comfortable with being proud of myself and pushed me to accomplish even more. She also helped me develop my identity as an educated, Creek woman. I became an Ambassador for the GMS program, hosting application workshops every year and talking to middle and high school students about how they, too, could go to college. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Master of Education in School Counseling from NSU. Within the next two years, I hope to begin a doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy.

My life has now come full circle. From 2012 to 2016, I was honored to serve as a reader for the GMS program. I started my professional career working in TRIO/Talent Search and remain active in our professional organizations. I returned to my alma mater and currently serve as the Director of the NSU Center for Tribal Studies. Through my involvement with the GMS Alumni Association, my goal is to ensure the legacy of the GMS program lives on, that we continue to find ways to help our brothers and sisters make their own dreams of a better life come true. Education empowers individuals to overcome life’s obstacles – this has become my own personal motto and passion in life.

Continued from page 27

institutional systems in order to incorporate new policies, especially indigenous ones. The amount of attention and interest the project has gained speaks to the potential Native students have for success, even when navigating within a dominant institution. The varied and interdisciplinary nature of the project has given me encouragement of the ability of Native programming efforts to succeed given the correct support systems. I have been thankful for the support not only of the Buder Center, without which the project would not have gained sustainability after the first year, but for the collaborators of the project, who have worked diligently to support and enable our programming efforts and for the advocates who have encouraged the growth and dissemination of the project.

Attention AIGC Alumni

Attention AIGC Alumni: To insure that we have all your current information, please take a minute to visit our web site (aigcs.org) or send an email to (news@aigcs.org) to update your information. Be sure to include your previous address so we know we have the right individual.

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Hello, my name is Sara LaBarge; my Menominee name is Southern Sky Woman. I am an enrolled Menominee member and a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a wife and a mother. The Menominee Reservation is a small, but beautiful, piece of land located in North Central Wisconsin, widely known for beautiful forests and sustained yield forest management. This is what I will always consider my home and it is where my story began.

My childhood is similar to that of many fellow Gates Scholars. My parents divorced when I was young and growing up we lived in poverty. But, it was because of these humble beginnings I was able to experience things such as community and a tight-knit family. As I child, I was not afforded the latest gaming system or toy; my friends and I played outside and we used our imaginations. One of the things my mother instilled in me was to always make the best of each situation and, let me tell you, this is one lesson I still carry with me today. Attitude changes everything.

In high school, I had a very close group of friends. We played sports together, sat together at lunch and spent many hours together away from school. One of my friends had signed up for the Upward Bound program and encouraged the rest of us to do the same. My dad would always tell me “education is the key to success,” even though he worked at our local lumber mill, he wanted better for his children. So I signed up, mostly to hang out with my friends. Little did I know this program would change my entire life.

Three key things happened at Upward Bound: 1.) I met my current mentor, Bridgit Martin, who encouraged me to pursue higher education, 2.) I became familiar with the college campus that I would eventually attend (Saint Norbert College, De Pere, WI.) and 3.) I was introduced to the Gates Millennium Scholarship Program, through a presentation during one of our financial aid sessions. In retrospect, this program drastically changed the trajectory of my life. I care not to ponder where I would be if I hadn’t attended Upward Bound, as life on the reservation had already consumed someone of my classmates (in an unfavorable manner).

My senior year, I decided I would give the GMS application a try. My English teacher edited my entire essay section and I sent it in the mail (at that time, there was no online application). I mailed the application, knowing how competitive the scholarship was and thinking to myself that I probably would not get it. Despite my negative thinking, I was selected as a finalist and, eventually, a scholar.

If I hadn’t received the scholarship, my plans were to join a branch of the military. When I found out I received the scholarship, everything suddenly became very real. I was told to apply to my dream schools. For me, those were Saint Norbert and Dartmouth. Saint
Norbert (SNC) won me over, because of my fond memories at Upward Bound. Despite my time at Upward Bound, attending Saint Norbert was very challenging for me. Upward Bound was mostly minority and low-income students. My experience with SNC was totally different, the majority of students were white and from well-off families. I was only one of two Native Americans on campus my freshman year, which was total culture shock for me. Because my home wasn’t too far from campus (one hour), I would always go home every weekend. Although I felt it was necessary for me at the time, I would not recommend this practice. My first few semesters were rough and, just when I thought about giving up, my mentor reached out to me. She had transitioned to her new role as the Director of Cultural Diversity, now called Multicultural Student Services, and had offered me a mentoring job, for other students of color, on campus. This was a pivotal time in my college career. Had she not reached out, I may not be where I am today. One of the biggest recommendations I have, for up and coming scholars, is to seek out your multicultural student services on campus, or Native American office if you are lucky enough to have one. This office on my campus was my safe space and I spent a great amount of time there.

After graduation, I took a year off and returned to UW – La Crosse, to complete my master’s degree in Higher Education Administration. At this time, Christa Moya, reached out and asked me if I wanted to help at the leadership conferences as an alumni participant. Part of my upbringing is to always remember where you came from and those who helped you succeed. Knowing I wanted to give back I happily agreed to help. Seeing GMS in a new light was fun and engaging and left me with the feeling that I wanted to stay connected to my GMS family. So, when Christa asked me to serve as a Gates Reader I was beyond thrilled. The experience was so emotional; reading what Native youth of our nation faced each day and the obstacles they overcame was so inspiring.

After helping with the Read and Leadership Conference for three or four years, I came across an opportunity on the AIGCS website (www.aigcs.org). Again, not thinking too much about getting a response, I threw my name in the hat. Christa called me almost immediately. I now have the privilege to work with the GMS scholars directly, as their Academic Advisor. This scholarship has been about so much more than the money I received to pay for college. This scholarship has been about family. Now, it is now my role to advocate for my GMS brothers and sisters, as they undertake their educational journeys. I’d like to thank Christa Moya for taking care of me during my educational journey and eventually letting me be a part of her staff. She has been so important to this program and the lives of many Native student recipients of the scholarship. Even though the majority of scholars have never met Bill or Melinda Gates (myself included), I still have to thank those kind and generous people. They have changed my life, my family’s life and the lives of so many others across Indian Country. Waewaenen (Thank You).

Gates Millennium Scholar/Dominic Clichee

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weekly community activities ranging from bicycle races, walk/runs, concerts and other physical activity opportunities. It was a great time to be a kid in Navajo. Today, NFPI no longer exists, including the buildings. The recreation center is filled with graffiti and boarded up. The swimming pool has debris inside the empty pool. The health clinic and library shut down a few years after NFPI went under. Today, Navajo is primarily made up of federally-subsidized housing units, in which families move in and out every few years. There is no longer an investment in the community. This type of negative environment leads to increases in chronic disease.

That’s why I am here. That’s why I have returned home, to assist in creating environments of positive opportunities, like those I had growing up. I understand that the major driver was economy, but that’s where public health can make an impact. That’s where the farmer’s markets help to create an economy where none exists. In addition to increasing access to healthy foods, I am adamant about increasing access to physical activity. I developed the business plan for the new Tsehootsooi Medical Center – Wellness Center, a $17 million dollar state-of-the-art wellness facility to decrease the incidence of diabetes and obesity.

Having the opportunity to return home and make a direct impact in the health of my community is a blessing made possible by the American Indian Graduate Center – Gates Millennium Scholarship Program. The investment from AIGCS empowered me to return home to make my community a healthier place, in which to be born, grow, live, work and age.
The Culture Shock Initially Experienced by American Indian Students at Public Universities is More Frightening and Powerful Than One Would Think!

by Tyson Jeannotte, Gates Millennium Scholar
University of North Dakota class of 2015

I am a proud member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, whose reservation is near the Canadian border in North-Central North Dakota. I grew up there and didn’t live elsewhere, until I came to the University of North Dakota (UND), 5 years ago. My higher education journey first began when I enrolled at Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC), located in my home community of Belcourt, ND, where my plan was to earn my Associate of Science (A.S.) degree, followed by a Bachelor’s of Science (B.S.). I knew a lot of people at TMCC and the one-on-one time with the instructors made it easy to excel in my studies. I experienced a lot of different opportunities, ranging from attending AIHEC and AISES National Conferences to participating in body transformation competitions.

Even so, after I received my A.S. Degree, I found myself wanting to experience a larger public university so, I applied for admission to UND for the 2011 fall semester and was accepted. I wanted to pursue a B.S. in Secondary Education.

Students who grow up on Indian reservations commonly encounter a lot of hardships when they leave home to attend a mainstream public university. Immediately upon arrival, I experienced severe culture shock and didn’t like it one bit. I felt like everyone stared at me as if I didn’t belong there. I didn’t like staying in the dorms, where I felt totally out of place. So, I spent my free time sitting in my car, because I didn’t know what to make of my situation and that was the only place I felt comfortable. At night, I slept a mere 3 hours and got up early, so I could take a shower first and get out of the dorm as soon as possible. This experience made me second guess my educational goals, did I really want to receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in secondary education from a big university? My time at UND was short lived; four days to be exact. I remember that last day like it was yesterday. I had a 9 a.m. class in Ecology and was so exhausted, overwhelmed and unhappy that, midway through the class, I broke down and cried. I left class and called my mom, which didn’t help any. She tried to convince me to give it time and things would get better, but that’s not what I wanted to hear. I called my dad and he said, “come home if you don’t like it there” and that’s what I did.

The next day I went back to TMCC and registered for classes. My class schedule covered a wide range of disciplines because I was no longer sure of what I wanted to pursue. That fall, I took an environmental science course which, surprisingly, changed my thinking process.

Continued on page 36
Building Relationships

by Debbie Golden Davis

When asked how I came to work with financial aid and scholarship programs, I tell the story of how administrators at Adelphi University came to my rescue as an unhappy, frustrated freshman. Like many students, my first choice of a major was wrong for me. I was having trouble changing to a new major, mid-year, and sought the assistance of a counselor I met during Orientation. He eventually introduced me to the Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He used some slightly unorthodox methods, but we accomplished my goal. I was a French major spring semester. Later, I added Communications and this man became my mentor in the new department and a trusted friend.

That experience, and my later participation in administrative committees, convinced me that I wanted to work in a college, in a capacity where I could help students. I had to get an M.Ed. in Counseling first but, finally, I landed my first job at Rockland Community College, in the Financial Aid Office. At the time, there was an influx of immigrants from Haiti, the Dominican Republic and SE Asia. The neediest students seemed to gravitate to me. After a failed attempt at self-employment, I moved to Atlanta, where I went back to the only field in which I had any background. This eventually led to my move to Tucson, where I brought my 12 years of experience to the University of Arizona’s Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid. I began working with the Native American community in early 1999, just as the Gates Millennium Scholarship Program was beginning.

My first years working with American Indian students, their families and my colleagues at the scholarship offices, were all about building relationships.

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Sometimes, someone in Admissions would connect me with a family even earlier in the process. If we did not bond, at least a little, that student may never come all the way to Tucson.

Once they did travel here, I would be sure they knew about the Native American Student Affairs office (NASA), academic advising, tutoring, Residence Life and how to interact with the Registrar and Bursar. Often, a mentor would be found in a faculty member, a grad student or an upperclassman. If they came back to me though, I didn’t mind at all. Don’t we all hope to find the cashier again who gave us extra coupons? The librarian who walked the stacks with us? The financial aid counselor who explained the incomprehensible form to your parents and who knew someone at ONNSFA who could
I discovered something in which I was really interested—Environmental Science/Geology. During my third year at TMCC, I began to grow as a person. I began to find myself. I also discovered my passion for weightlifting. Lifting weights taught me not to worry about what others were doing or thinking; rather, I needed to focus on myself and concentrate on my own goals. I knew then that I wanted to learn more about environmental issues. I also wanted to break out of the poverty that had held my family and so many other tribal community members back for as long as I could remember. It would take a four-year college degree to get the kind of job that would empower me to do that and I began to think about returning to UND, as a more confident, more mature and far more focused student. While my journey returning from UND initially felt like failure, I realize now that I needed that time to find myself and my direction.

I applied, was accepted and returned to UND in the fall of 2012, to pursue a B.S. in Environmental Geoscience. Based upon the advice of others and my own determination, this time I had a plan for persisting through the challenges and realizing success. I would utilize support services available to me, like American Indian Student Services, located in the Indian Center on UND’s campus. I would carry myself with confidence, because I belonged there just like every other student. I would never miss class and would focus on my academic responsibilities, and I would also explore getting involved in campus life and activities, to establish valuable peer support and gain leadership skills. I wanted to succeed; I wanted to earn my university degree; I wanted to realize my dreams and make my family proud. This time, I’m happy to report, I was ready to do just that! I found myself absorbing the material in my classes and feeling proud of who I am, where I was and where I was heading. It was like a 180 degree difference from my earlier attempt at UND. Perhaps because UND was a little bit familiar to me, I was more prepared for the culture shock and, most of all, I had the support and self-confidence I needed to persist through the hardships. A critical component of that support was the financial assistance I received as a Gates Millennium Scholar. I earned my B.S., in Environmental Geo Science, from UND, in 2015, and am enrolled in the Masters of Civil/Environmental Engineering program there. I also work part-time on campus for the EPSCoR/NATURE Program, which promotes and supports undergraduate research experiences in the sciences for underrepresented students.

get you back on track? I could not solve every problem, but perhaps I could lead them to people who could. Even if we all failed in that instance, that student knew there were people who cared, who would listen and who would try even harder the next time.

When I speak to prospective students and parents, I always tell them communication is a two-way street. If the school or organization asks you for something, provide it. If something has happened that you think we should know, tell someone. None of us are mind-readers. Dad lost his job? Mom had an accident and couldn’t work for months? Your Cost of Attendance estimates your room and board to be $9500, but you ended up in a more expensive dorm, and you can’t eat junk food, so you will spend closer to $11,000? Ask about it! Okay, first look online to see if there is a form to submit, but if you aren’t sure how to complete it properly, ask for help. Don’t wait until the last minute either. More mistakes are made when people rush, so allow you, your parents and your professional partners enough time to process everything. Everyone gets stressed out around deadlines, but that doesn’t mean they don’t care anymore.

I often noticed students coming to see me in pairs. A senior may bring a freshman to meet me. I helped someone in the past, so she brings her new boyfriend. Sometimes a couple of friends were in the neighborhood and stop by to tell me some good news. That’s the bright side to having an actual relationship. We who usually only hear from you when you have a problem or a deadline, love to hear about your successes! Connecting with another human being does take effort, but the rewards can be great. When you enter a new world, the best way to find friends, mentors or allies is to reach out to others. You won’t know in those first moments whether you just found a casual acquaintance, a life-long friend or someone who intervenes on your behalf and allows you to complete your degree. Perhaps that person inspires you to teach, or fix broken educational systems or pull your family back together. You never know who will introduce you to your first supporter or to your fiancé-to-be. Perhaps the other person will smile first or offer a chair. Why take chances? Make the first move, the first call, the initial email or message and start a relationship.

Gates Millenium Scholar/
Tyson Jeannotte

American Indian Scholarship
Counselor/Debbie Golden Davis

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The American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving cultural and economic wellbeing for individuals and tribes through graduate education, recently announced the installment of its newest board leadership – Rose Graham (Diné) as Board President, Joel Frank (Seminole Tribe of Florida) as Vice President and Steven Stallings (Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians) as Secretary-Treasurer.

“To support up-and-coming leaders in Indian Country, we must involve the nation’s current leaders in Indian Country,” said Interim Executive Director Joan Currier. “Our newly-appointed board leadership and incumbent board members bring diversity in industry, geography and expertise to AIGC to ensure we continue to serve our students in the best ways possible.”

Graham, who served as vice president of the board in the previous term, is the Director of the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance in Window Rock, AZ, which serves more than 10,000 Navajo students pursuing post-secondary education. Prior to this, Graham worked with the Navajo Nation Council for nine years as Legislative Services Director, Legislative Advisory and Interpreter. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities from Fort Lewis College.

Incoming Board Vice President Frank served as a board member in the previous term. Frank was one of the first American Indians to attend college at both Dade Community College and St. Thomas University. He is the Big Cypress Representative and serves on the Board of Directors for the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Incoming Secretary-Treasurer Stallings’ background is in American Indian economic development, including past positions as President of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, Senior Vice President at Wells Fargo, Secretary-Treasurer on the AIGC Board, chairman of the Los Angeles City and County Native American Commission, and Native American Community Development Officer at the First Interstate Bank of Arizona. He served as a board member during the previous term.

Continuing as Board Members at Large this year are Stacy Leeds (Cherokee), Danna Jackson (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes), Waltar Lamar (Blackfeet Nation of Montana), Dana Arviso (Diné) and Holly Cook Macarro (Red Lake Ojibwe).

“We extend a special recognition to outgoing Board President, Michael Bird,” said Interim Executive Director Joan Currier. “Mr. Bird served AIGC with outstanding leadership, thoughtful perspective and joyful camaraderie. He left his stamp on AIGC and we grateful for his commitment to our organization.”

The American Indian Graduate

AIGC New Board Leadership

Board of Directors at Native Scholarship Organization Represents a Breadth of Expertise

by Stephine Poston

Board of Directors Photo from left to right: Steven Stallings (Rincon Luiseno Band of Mission Indians)/Secretary Treasurer, Rose Graham (Navajo)/President, Joel M. Frank, Sr. (Seminole Tribe of Florida)/Vice President, Danna R. Jackson (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes)/Member at Large, Holly Cook Macarro (Red Lake Ojibwe)/Member at Large. Not pictured: Walter Lamar (Blackfeet, Wichita)/Member at Large, Stacy L. Leeds (Cherokee)/Member at Large and Dana Arviso (Navajo)/Member at Large.
The Gates Millennium Scholarship and AIGC Transformed My Life

by Tanya Powers

For much of my earlier life, I struggled and often felt alone. I did work that would bring in a paycheck, but did not have personal meaning. My educational experiences included dropping out of high school twice. I eventually earned my high school diploma through the Adult Learning Center in Anchorage. My father had always valued education and encouraged me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. He encouraged me to complete high school and consider college. My mother never completed her degree and my father had only a high school education. I think he wanted us to have access to opportunities he didn’t have, but he didn’t know how to advise us on the path. I had tried a semester of college, when I was 19, and dropped out halfway through. I didn’t know what I wanted to do and didn’t feel connected to my campus community. When I was 20, I moved from Anchorage to Seattle.

I struggled in those early years of moving away from home. I became homeless and felt incredibly isolated. Then, I became pregnant. Fortunately, our situation stabilized and my husband started working a minimum wage job and we were able to rent a small apartment. I did one quarter of college successfully and then had my oldest daughter a couple weeks later. I stayed home with her until she was 20 months old. I remember very clearly thinking that I wanted to be a role model for her. But, what could I do? My previous jobs had included selling women’s shoes, custodial work and packing fish eggs. None of those would cover the childcare expenses.

I re-engaged with community college and completed an Associate of Arts degree, participated in student leadership activities and had a high GPA. During my time as a student, one of the college staff encouraged me to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, in its inaugural year, in 2000. I had applied to two local universities. I was pregnant with my youngest daughter. Without scholarships, I wasn’t sure if I would be able to continue my education. I didn’t know if I could afford the actual cost of school or childcare expenses. I was saddened to think that I had worked so hard and a Bachelor’s degree might not be part of my reality nor finding work that could cover the childcare costs for two small children.

In the summer of 2000, on a hot day, I opened my mailbox and saw an envelope from Gates Millennium Scholars. I started to tremble, knowing that a thick envelope might mean something good. I ripped it open and danced with excitement around my home, knowing that I could make the memory of my father proud and my children proud. I took a quarter break, in autumn, to have my youngest daughter. During the winter quarter, I was enrolled at Seattle University with the ability to put both of my children in licensed daycare centers Later, I went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration. I also knew I wanted to give back what had been given to me. I started working part-time at the community college, from which I had graduated. My professional academic position was as an academic advisor. Later, I did a one-year internship in Multicultural Events and Activities.

I then moved on to a Master’s degree. I believe, if it wasn’t for the Gates Scholarship and the support of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC), I would have, most likely, thought the Bachelor’s degree would have been enough. I earned my degree in two years, because I could go to school full-time with support. I started work in Workforce Education, about which I still remain passionate. I have had the opportunity to work with students, who were in similar situations to mine, in poverty and struggling to find ways to enter or re-enter the workforce.

I also realized that my career needed to focus on supporting American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN)
students. We are still under-represented throughout the college system, in staff and faculty roles. I have often been either the only, or one of very few Native people on campus. I supported students with the creation of Indigenous clubs, where we could feel a sense of community on campus.

My master’s degree and doctoral coursework have allowed me to access management positions and I currently work at Highline College, as the Baccalaureate and Workforce Education Director. Highline has been incredibly supportive of my desire to support the AI/AN community. This past year, in partnerships with local school districts, including Highline, Federal Way, Auburn, Renton and Seattle Public Schools, along with community organizations, we hosted our first Native Student Success Summit, for high school and community college students, to explore identity and career and college options. It was a successful event and very inspiring to see youth engaged and feel as if they were a part of a community. My oldest daughter spoke on the panel about her experiences, from high school to college.

You see, it was important to me to be a role model for her, so she would realize her potential. She can now be a role model for others. She’s finished her first year of college at Georgetown University. She was accepted into 7 of the 8 universities to which she applied. She took part in College Horizons, which works with high school youth helping prepare them for college. Her counselor was a staff member from AIGC. While I encouraged her, she needed support from those who could advise on the college pathway from high school to university.

What I have learned is that we can’t do this work alone. It is important to support each other. It has been my personal mission to help give back the support that was given to me and give back to my community. I have been able to work on community building efforts with the South King County Native Coalition. Our AI/AN people are thirsty for urban community building in the area in which they call home. We just hosted our second community dinner on July 9th, with another dinner planned for August.

When I started this journey, I felt alone. But, along the journey, I have found people who believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself. The Gates Millennium Scholarship and AIGC have transformed my life. I have much gratitude. I have been able to go full circle, with the opportunity to give back what was given to me and give back to my children, my family and my community, in whatever role they need, as a community member, role model or leader. ✦

(Tanya Powers is mixed heritage St. Lawrence Island/Siberian Yupik and Irish. Her interests are access and retention for under-represented students in higher education. She works at Highline College and is the proud mother of two strong daughters.)

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AIGC Recognized by the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA)

On March 15, 2016 at NIGA’s 2016 Annual Indian Gaming Tradeshow and Convention, Chairman Ernie Stevens recognized AIGC for their work in higher education and scholarships for American Indian and Alaska Native students.

“Chairman Stevens has been one of the biggest champions of education for Indian students. It was an incredible honor for AIGC to be recognized on a national stage for our work, especially coming from Chairman Stevens and a respected organization like NIGA, whose advocacy is essential to promoting self-sustaining tribal communities,” said Joan Currier, Interim AIGC Executive Director.
From Matriculation to Graduation

Preparing Emerging Social Work Professionals for Competent Practice in American Indian Country

by Cynthia D Williams, MSW, LCSW, ACSW
Assistant Dean for Field Education & Community Partnerships

Rachel John, MSW, MPH
OFE&CP MPH Program Manager

From matriculation to graduation, Kathryn M. Buder Center scholars and SAGE (Social Workers Advancing through Grounded Education) graduate-level students are focused on developing transferable skills and knowledge that, when applied, will transform the quality of services for families and communities in American Indian country. The goal of SAGE is to train master-level social work students to become “culturally-competent mental and behavioral health providers in American Indian/Alaska Native communities in their work with at-risk children, adolescents and transitional-age youth.” Critical to ensuring the realization of those goals for our students is the collaboration between the Buder Center and the Office of Field Education & Community Partnerships (OFE&CP). This collaboration has resulted in the identification and commitment of social service organizations in 14 agencies. These organizations, with the support of their professional staff, work to advance social work practice and their mission, by allowing our students to learn under the supervision of seasoned professionals in mental/behavioral health.

Employing a student-centered approach, both departments within the Brown School are responsible for supporting student learning goals through field experiences. The OFE&CP coordinates the affiliation of practicum sites, provides assistance to students seeking to commit to a practicum experience through a guided selection process and monitors student progress once in practicum. The Buder Center is responsible for ensuring the practicum focus, location, population served, course preparation (including cultural competence) for practice and financial support of Native and non-Native students committed to working in Indian Country. Undergirding the field experience is the requirement that, prior to students entering the field, they must take courses from the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) concentration and Mental Health or the Violence Prevention/Intervention tracks.

Staff in both departments work in concert with students, to promote personal and professional growth and competency. This is accomplished through: 1) field advisement and 2) faculty support. The field advisement in OFE&CP supports the student and field instructor (supervisor) to ensure that the student meets or exceeds expectations of all required competencies. Faculty support is provided by the AI/AN concentration and includes, 1) provision of an inter-professional /interdisciplinary syllabi, 2) cultivated AI/AN professional alumni relationships as a resource for practicum sites and 3) faculty coaching and mentoring for the professional development of students. The effectiveness of the support and preparation students receive from these resources has been evident in the site visits that were completed for SAGE scholars in the summer of 2015.

Within their respective agencies, students assumed leadership in various tasks and roles assigned to them. The experiences ranged from clinical work with individual caseloads to policy research, development, implementation and dissemination. Other tasks included researching, developing, writing grants, collaborating with other organizations, providing intensive case management, developing briefing papers on topics connected to the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid eligibility of Children and Youth in Tribal Foster Care. The field instructors have been impressed with the students’ analytical abilities, as well as their ability to build rapport with the clients and staff of the respective agencies.

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My name is Eashudee. In Tiwa, my Native tongue, Eashudee means bluecorn. This is the name I prefer, but most of the world knows me as Hanna-Marie Lucero. I am from the Pueblo of Isleta. When I learned I was accepted into the Santa Fe Indian School, I expected to get nothing more than my education but, what I walked away with, was far more than that. The people I had the honor of knowing at the Santa Fe Indian School are amazing souls. They are full of life, using their wisdom and experiences to help us in many ways. From my first few weeks at the school, I knew they genuinely cared about us, our education and our well-being. I walked away, not only with an excellent education and a family, but with great connections, self-confidence and leadership skills, for which I thank the Brave Girls.

When I joined Brave Girls, I was timid and thought of myself as only a team member. Throughout the school years being in the leadership program, I have grown to be outgoing and open to meeting and talking with new people. I have grown, from not only being a team member, but being able to step up as a leader, when needed. I met many other “Brave Girls”, from around the world, getting their voices heard and gaining success for their programs. Brave Girls has opened my mind to how there are many others just like us, determined to better ourselves and to use our determination, self-knowledge and educations to better the world for others and future generations.

Throughout my high school years, the core values that mean the most to me have changed ranks, but I can still say the most important is my humility. Although I do think highly of myself and my abilities, I am aware that I have limits and am not above anyone else. I feel being humble is a core value we should all strive to achieve; it does not represent weakness or timidity, but allows us to improve ourselves. Humility allows us to work well with others and shows us that we are never the “top dog” and can always improve.

Looking back, I have many regrets, but have realized that, if those events never happened, I would have never been given the key to the many doors that are open now. The advice I would give my younger self is not to be afraid to go against what others think is “right” for me, I know myself far better than anyone else. I know when to push my limits and when to ask for help. I doubted myself throughout my high school years and it showed in many of my choices. When I became strong enough to voice what I truly wanted, everything I could see laid out before me filled me with joy and happiness, making me more determined to strive to do my best. I would tell myself to be more confident in my abilities. To not be afraid to take hold of everything and make risky decisions. Another thing I would tell myself is to write down everything I have accomplished, because my future memory won’t be that great.

It is also at the Santa Fe Indian School that I was able to realize what I was most passionate about. Every year, all the different classes focused on various aspects of environmental issues. During my junior year, our class focused on water issues around the world. We did many projects related to this topic and our end of semester portfolios revolved around the issue. Each year, when we got a new topic, I realized how each one struck a chord within me; how a fire I never knew burned brighter and strengthened my determination to educate my classmates and myself on the

Continued on page 45
The Educational Lottery through the GMS Program

by Keandre Hairston

It is not every day that someone can say that they hit the lottery. For me, it was on April 20, 2016. I didn’t win the Powerball or even the Montana cash lottery but something bigger and much more meaningful. On that day, I found out I was a Gates Millennium Scholar. This was one of the biggest, if not the biggest, scholarship in the nation, for high school students coming from different ethnic backgrounds. Winning this scholarship is a blessing that you pray for every night before you go to bed. Receiving this prestigious scholarship deserved a reaction suited for such an amazing award and that is exactly what I did. I remember the day I received that scholarship like it was yesterday. It was a Wednesday and I was supposed to speak at the Montana Indian Education Association conference being held in Great Falls. I was the Chairman of InterTRIBAL Strong, so I had to give a big speech in front of American Indian students and administration from across Montana. The only problem was that I was running late because I was waiting for the mailman.

Earlier that week, I saw students posting on Facebook about receiving their scholarships and it was worrying me that perhaps I didn’t make the cut. Tuesday came along and still no mail from the Gates Foundation. Wednesday was the last day, in my mind, that I could receive any news from the scholarship foundation. I was pacing back and forth, on my porch, just waiting for the mailman to make his appearance. Time was slowly ticking by and I had to leave with or without the mail. Wearing dress clothes, with a sweater, on a seventy-degree day was not the best decision I ever made and the heat only added to my anxiety. Finally, the mailman, with his beautiful blue hat, stunning blue shorts and a satchel Indiana Jones wouldn’t mind wearing, came walking around the corner. I was running so fast you could have sworn I qualified for the Rio Olympics. Face-to-face with the mailman and breathing extremely heavily, I politely asked for my mail. With a confused look on his face, he handed me a big yellow package. I immediately tore open the package and starting flipping through the pamphlets until I found a single white sheet of paper. I only had to read the ‘congratulations’ part before I started screaming and shouting at the top of my lungs. I was doing a little happy dance in the middle of the street, while all of my neighbors looking out their windows to see what all the commotion was about. I thought one of my neighbors was calling the police, because I was being so loud. One of the first things that ran through my mind was, ‘I have to tell my mom’. She was at work across town, but I didn’t care how late I was going to be at that point. I started a full sprint toward my car and all I could think about is how Charlie was running home after he found the golden ticket in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Making it to my car. I zoomed off toward my mom’s work at the school district office. When I arrived, I ran through her workplace looking for her office and drawing a few curious eyes along the way. When I found her office, she looked scared, but all I had to do was hold the paper and say, “I got it”, for her to start screaming and jumping for joy. I gave her the biggest hug and started jumping with her. Pretty soon everyone was running in her office asking what was wrong. Even the superintendent came in with a confused look. My mom was crying and trying to catch her breath, so I shared the good news with everyone. Pretty soon, waves of congratulations started coming in. My teachers, friends and even people in the community, who saw my article in the paper, were congratulating me. All of my hard work was finally paying off and this scholarship is the first step to achieving my dreams. I would like to thank my friends, family and the Gates Foundation for helping me succeed in high school and making it possible for me to continue my education at the college level. ✦
Endrils of smoke, from smoldering sage and tobacco, rose from the abalone shell I held in the cold morning air. I fanned the burning materials with my eagle feather and breathed in the densely scented air, listening to the laps of the Pacific Ocean at the shore, where I knelt in the stillness before sunrise. It seemed that every part of my body ached. My joints had a dull soreness to them with every movement. My core felt as if it were seized up in a ball. It was my fourth day without food and water – my fourth day, out of eight, of fasting in seclusion for the Tlingit woman’s coming of age ceremony.

My ceremony was the first ceremony conducted, within the Alaskan Tlingit people, in a century. This ceremony, among others, was forbidden, under Russian and United States laws, for many years. These years left certain ceremonies in danger of being lost to my people. The Tlingit people looked at fasting as a way to weaken the body’s physical abilities to strengthen the spirit within. My body was weak. My spirit was strong.

Years later, I sat in a classroom at my university. I was four thousand miles from home, attending Northern Arizona University. Arizona does not have a Pacific Ocean or a rainforest. I was far from home; far from my ancestral prayer grounds, miles from any other Tlingit speaker, the salmon, the mountains and the rivers of my people. Throughout our lives, our bodies and/or spirits will be challenged time and time again, not unlike the ceremony I practiced years ago. The lessons learned, during my time of fasting in the women’s ceremony, and the distance and journey to attain my college degree taught me a few incredible lessons.

Our homes are always within us. Being far away from your village can be hard. Being far away from your family and people can be hard. During these times of difficulty, we must remind ourselves that our home is in the blood that runs through our veins. If faith ever falters, put your fingertips to your throat or wrist and you can feel it coursing through your veins. Your ancestor’s blood is within you.

Indigenous people have the incredible power of adaptation. Across the world, indigenous people have always adapted to their environment. In a world where we see Mother Earth being forced to adapt to the will of man, our power of adapting to our environment is written into our DNA and gives us a significant advantage. We may be adapting, from our lands to concrete structures and classrooms, but it is adapting, it is survival. If our ancestors could adapt in the world to survive, we certainly can. We walk for those that come after us. Let me repeat that. We walk for those that come after us. Never give up. Your ancestors will never forsake you, nor will your descendants. We breathe, fight and persevere for ourselves, our families, our clans, our communities and our Nations. We walk for the generations who will walk this earth long after we are ashes or reincarnated.

You are walking resilience. The United States entities sought to eradicate and assimilate indigenous people, yet indigenous people rose from this darkness to persevere. Your very existence is a protest to assimilation. Your very existence is resilience and triumph.
It was a rainy Friday in Durham. The bus reached West Campus and I hopped off, ready to run to class but, when I looked up, I saw the chapel. I noticed all the trees and how beautiful the sky looked, with the clouds hovering over our gothic buildings. I watched all the students rushing to and from class, ready to be free for the weekend. These students were amazing. This campus was breathtaking. I was always too afraid to look up and see where I was. My biggest fear was that this was a dream and, if I looked up, everything would vanish. Finally, I realized that I am one of those amazing students and this beautiful campus is my home. I am a real college student.

I grew up in Monument Valley, Utah, a very small community on the Navajo reservation. As a child, I always enjoyed school, especially reading because it was my way of entering a world away from the red rocks and endless skies that always surrounded me. Ever since elementary school, I felt that I and my fellow Navajo classmates were misunderstood. Sure, we received the much-needed free tribal clothing, and, every so often, we had white visitors stare at us as we read books and wrote sentences, but we were real students, too. We wanted to learn but, on a reservation, it is not that simple. Most of the time we received a minimum of resources, teachers and attention. So, at a very young age, I promised myself that, one day, I would be representative of my nation, community, school and family, to show people that Navajo kids are smart, too.

When I was in seventh grade, I asked my mom if I could go to summer school off the reservation, just to see what it felt like. I was curious and wanted to challenge myself, but I knew summers were the hardest for our family. Sometimes our electricity was turned off and we had no real food until the end of the month, when my parents received their paychecks. Still, my mother found a way to get me all the way to New Hampshire to attend Phillips Exeter Academy. The five weeks I spent at the Academy changed my life. I fell in love with the challenging coursework and the international friends. I wanted to continue sharing my Navajo culture with classmates and professors. Since then, every summer I went on a new adventure. Later, I wondered how I was able to go to anything when we still struggled to put food on the table. I always thought my mom was magic, because she could make all my dreams come true, but I found out she is the next best thing. She is courageous. This selfless woman took out loans, every summer, to send me to Phillips Exeter Academy, the National Teen Leadership Program in Sacramento, Northern Arizona University Summer Enrichment Program, Arizona State University Summer Health Institute, Duke IMAGINE summer program and College Horizons at Dartmouth. So, when people ask me how I did it all my answer is simple, “my mother.”
To be completely honest, I was afraid that I would apply to college and no one would want me. I knew I had good grades and I felt prepared, but what if I wasn’t? What if college was only a childish dream for Indian children? My biggest fear was disappointing my mother. She had sacrificed so much for me and I could not let her down. Senior year arrived and I began the college application process. I applied to fifteen schools because I figured my chances would be better. I saved Duke University for last, because I needed more time to flirt with my dream before submitting the official attempt to make it my reality. I applied for as many scholarships as I could, because I knew that getting into college was the easy part and, for me, the hard part was going to be funding my education. Finally, it was spring and letters started coming in. Every day after school, I would check the mail with my mom. I was accepted into fourteen schools and received eight scholarships. With all of my scholarships in place, I had the luxury of selecting any of the fourteen schools to attend because, for the first time in my life, money was not going to be the deciding factor. I am grateful to these organizations, for supporting me on my educational journey: Oljato Chapter Scholarship, Gates Millennium Scholarship, Chief Manuelito Scholarship, American Indian Services, American Indian Education Foundation, Suns Charities Scholarship, All Native American High School Academic Team and the Northern Arizona Native American Foundation.

In the fall, my mother flew with me to North Carolina for orientation week. It was my dream come true. I elected to attend Duke University and live my dream of being a Blue Devil. The best part of my introduction to Duke was having my mother there with me. I now had a key to a dorm at my dream school all because she could never tell her little girl no. Looking back now, after completing my freshmen year of college, I can’t convey how thankful I am for all the people who have given me chances and did not judge me by the color of my skin or from where I come. I admire the educators who continue to help the Navajo children learn to dream and provide the support needed to believe in themselves. Returning home, to the little house encompassed by monuments and red sand, always gives me a unique perspective. So, when I am at school stuck in the rain, I feel proud of the journey I have taken that led me from the dirt roads of Monument Valley to Duke’s chapel. I am proud to be joining some of the nation’s smartest students, while representing my Navajo people. Even on my challenging days, when I have two exams and a paper to write, I look back on my journey and pinch myself. I am living my dream.

From Matriculation to Graduation

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Continuous collaboration is essential for the sustained success of students in practice, especially in American Indian Country. It is imperative that emerging social worker professionals are equipped to be culturally competent and possess a strong grounding in professional social work skills.

GMS Essay/Hanna-Marie Lucero

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issues. It wasn’t until my senior year, when I took our community-based education environmental science course, that I was sure I was going down the right path. I have chosen to further my education in environmental science and get my bachelor’s degree in Pre-Environmental Science. I will continue my education after this and obtain more degrees in the environmental field, hopefully getting a degree as an environmental engineer. I want to help not only my fellow humans, but all the creatures of Earth and Earth itself.

When I first heard of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, during my sophomore year, I knew I would apply for it and knew I would receive it. I am saying this in the humblest way possible. It wasn’t because I was cocky or full of myself, but because I was confident in my abilities and knew all the hard work I was doing was worthy of a scholarship as honorable and exceptional as that one. I feel honored, but most of all I feel humbled. To know that others see something in me that has taken me years to recognize made my dedication and will stronger, to help make a difference in my community and around the globe.

Donate Now!

AIGC needs your help to provide scholarships to American Indian and Alaska Native Students

Please donate at aigcs.org
American Indian Graduate Center Recognizes Indian Country Leaders During 8th Annual Reception

Reception celebrates and honors American Indian higher education

The American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) recognized five distinguished supporters of American Indian and Alaska Native educational advancement at their annual reception.

Honorees included:

New Mexico American Indian Chamber of Commerce – The NMAICC continually promotes the development of a healthy, self-sufficient American Indian economy by helping Native people achieve successful economic development initiatives. This “Driving American Indian Business Success” program aligns with the efforts of AIGC and makes NMAICC a valued partner and resource for the student AIGC serves.

Lori Arviso Alvord, MD – AIGC alumna Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord, MD (Navajo Nation) was the first Diné woman to become board certified in surgery and was nominated in 2013 to serve as the U.S. Surgeon General. Dr. Alvord also authored *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear.*

R.J. Testerman – R.J. Testerman served as Associate Director of Financial Aid Services at the University of Oklahoma. He made connecting students with scholarships his career. Testerman was a passionate advocate of funding opportunities through AIGC and successfully connected many University of Oklahoma students with AIGC scholarships.

Debbi Golden-Davis – A retired American Indian Scholarship Counselor, Debbie Golden-Davis, worked for the University of Arizona Office of Student Financial Aid. Her work connected University of Arizona students to scholarships, including a range of AIGC scholarships.

Daryl Atchley – Daryl Atchley is a long-time donor to AIGC. He believes strongly in education as a means to achieve tribal sovereignty and makes annual donations to support the sustainability of American Indian and Alaska Native scholarships.

“Every year, we look forward to honoring the distinguished people and organizations responsible for the advancement of American Indian higher education,” said Michael Bird, Board President of AIGC. “We recognize and celebrate the contributions of those in our AIGC community and the collective impact those contributions make to American Indian and Alaska Native higher education.”
Eight High Achieving New Mexico Native Students Receive Financial Support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

by Stephine Poston

The Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS), a tribally-owned school established to educate Native American children, from the tribes throughout the southwest, made history with the recent release of Gates Millennium Scholars from the 2016 graduating class. The SFIS 2016 graduating class ranks as the highest producer of Gates Millennium Scholars, in the State of New Mexico, and among the top five schools in the nation with this distinction. Eight SFIS 2016 graduates were awarded with the prestigious scholarship.

“When we found out that I was a Scholar, we were in a state of pure euphoria. We were happy, we felt blessed and so honored,” said Michael Bancroft, Jr., a Gates Scholar and 2016 graduate of SFIS. “I plan on using this scholarship as an opportunity to get through my education and do the best that I can for my tribe.”

Gates Scholars, Emanuel Vigil, Jicarilla Apache Nation (Valedictorian) and Chyanne Quintana, Ohkay Owingeh and Santa Clara Pueblo (Salutatorian) shared the stage with Mrs. Michelle Obama, First Lady of the United States who gave the commencement address. This truly was a historic day for SFIS.

The SFIS 2016 graduating class Gates Millennium Scholars include:

- Charles Alonzo, Pueblo of Acoma
- Grace Aragon, Pueblo of Acoma
- Michael Bancroft, Ohkay Owingeh
- Kylea Garcia, Pueblo of Santo Domingo
- Hanna-Marie Lucero, Pueblo of Isleta
- Chyanne Quintana, Ohkay Owingeh and Santa Clara Pueblo (Salutatorian)
- Alyssa Ruben, Laguna Pueblo
- Emanuel Vigil, Jicarilla Apache Nation (Valedictorian)

The Gates Millennium Scholars is a scholarship program funded by a $1.6 billion grant by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Gates Millennium Scholars is a scholarship program funded by a $1.6 billion grant by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant is a twenty-year commitment designed to fund the college education of twenty thousand high achieving minority students. This program is also designed to help develop a group of leaders that represent the ethnic diversity of America in the 21st century. The American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) Scholars partners with the program to reach and engage the American Indian and Alaska Native student population nationwide.

“It is a sense of pride with these kids and their parents at a school that is so beautiful and producing such incredible students,” said Joseph Abeyta, the first SFIS superintendent, of the graduating ceremony.

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- Emanuel Vigil, Jicarilla Apache Nation (Valedictorian)

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A Guide to College Readiness

by Josh Lucio (Zuni Pueblo)
AIGC, Program Associate for Scholarships and Programs

The school year is officially underway and across the country, students are gearing up for their academic futures. Elementary students are filled with excitement and the contemplation of what they want to be when they grow up, looking at the adults around them for guidance. Junior high students are introduced to the rigors of high school academics and structure while managing the awkwardness of teen age life. High school students are pushing themselves to be involved with sports, clubs, and extracurricular activities while balancing the academic requirements to graduate and enter college. How a student prepares to enter college is one of the most important parts of the college navigation process. The second most important aspect of college readiness is to have a good understanding of how to pay for a college education and what resources are available.

Know Before U Go is a college preparation program designed by the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) nearly 50 years’ worth of knowledge and expertise relating to post-secondary education and the financial aid and scholarship process. Funded by a generous grant from Wells Fargo Bank, Know Before U Go is a holistic approach tailored for high school students, parents and educators on what to expect before embarking on the important journey of college.

Know Before U Go was launched in the Spring of 2016 at the University of New Mexico Striking Eagle Native American Invitational Education Fair in Albuquerque, NM. Subsequent programs were held at Phoenix College, AZ and UNC at Pembroke. The free, daylong event for participants included notable guest speakers, workshops, a student panel and group sessions for parents about financial aid.

Students, parents and educators are invited to attend Know Before U Go events. Tribes from Washington and South Dakota are encouraged to contact AIGC and partner to transport students. Each participant, including parents, must register online by visiting www.aigcs.org. For additional information or to host an event, please contact Josh Lucio at 1-800-628-1920.

Upcoming Fall 2016 Know Before U Go sessions and locations:

October 15, 2016
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington
Location: Intellectual House
Time: 9am – 3:30pm PST

December 13, 2016
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
Rapid City, South Dakota
Location: Surbeck Center
Time: 8am – 2:30pm CST
Santa Fe Indian School

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“Graduation season is the most wonderful time of year for AIGC. It marks an important milestone to many of our scholars preparing to enter college,” said Joan Currier, Acting Director of AIGC. “It is filled with hope, ambition, determination and resolve – all the qualities that shape AIGC and its network of incredible students.”

The goals of the Gates Millennium Scholars program are to:

• To reduce the financial barriers for African-American, Hispanic American, Native American/Alaskan Native and Asian & Pacific Islander American students with high academics and leadership promise who are at a significant economic disadvantage.
• To increase the representation of these target groups in the disciplines of mathematics, science, engineering, education, information technology, public health and library science, where these groups are severely underrepresented.

• To develop a diversified cadre of future leaders for America by facilitating successful completion of bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees.
• To provide seamless support from undergraduate through doctoral programs for students entering target disciplines.
American Indian and Alaska Native Scholarships

AIGC provides Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarships to American Indian and Alaska Natives

Undergraduate Scholarships
Includes bachelor's and associate degrees and some certificate and licensure programs. High school diploma or GED is generally required.
- Accenture American Indian Scholarship
- All Native American High School Academic Team (High School Seniors)
- Flintco Construction Scholarship
- REDW Native American Scholarship in Accounting
- Wells Fargo American Indian Scholarship
- Wilson-Hooper Veterinary Assistance Program

Graduate Scholarships
Includes masters, doctoral and professional degrees. A bachelor's degree generally is required.
- AIGC Fellowship
- BIE—Loan for Service
- Dr. Beryl Blue Spruce Memorial Scholarship
- Dr. George Blue Spruce Dental Fellowship
- Elizabeth Furber Fellowship
- Gerald Peet Fellowship
- Jeanette Elmer Graduate Scholarship
- John Rainer Fellowship
- Katrin Lamon Fund
- Lynne Ruth Labin Elmore Sucher Scholarship
- REDW Native American Scholarship in Accounting
- Ruth Muskrat Bronson Fellowship
- Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund (STEM Loan for Service)
- Wells Fargo American Indian Scholarship
- Wilson-Hooper Veterinary Assistance Program

Eligibility Requirements
- Pursue a vocational, associate, bachelor, master, doctoral or professional degree
- Attend as a full-time student at an accredited, U.S. school
- Demonstrate financial need
- Member or descendant of any U.S. federally recognized tribe

Go to aigcs.org for eligibility requirements, award amounts, opening and closing dates.

apply online at aigcs.org

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(505) 884-0427 (fax)
aigcs.org
Targeted Readership:
Over 16,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students, graduates, professionals & organizations

- NEW! Advertiser’s logo will be placed on the AIGC Electronic Newsletter
- Reach Native American Leaders
- Recruit & Enroll Native Students
- Connect with Graduates & Professionals
- Support AIGC
- Recruit Native Employees
- Develop New Business in Indian Country

Ad Deadline:
January/Spring Issue Dec. 1st
August/Fall Issue July 5th

Visit: aigcs.org
for further details and to view The American Indian Graduate Magazine online

Material Requirements
Ads are considered camera-ready if they meet all AIGC specifications. Advertisers who do not meet these specifications will be notified and will either resubmit a camera-ready ad or have AIGC produce the ad and charge accordingly. No agency commissions or camera-ready discounts will be applied to ads that do not meet AIGC specifications. Advertisers and ad agencies assume liability for all content of their ad; including text, representations and illustrations of ads printed and also assume responsibility for all claims made against AIGC, the publisher, that may arise from those ads. The publisher reserves the right to reject any advertisement not in keeping with AIGC standards. All copy is subject to AIGC approval.

Color ads (including photos) must be constructed and saved using the CMYK color format. Include all fonts on disk. Ads may be saved to a CD and mailed or submitted electronically.

The following file formats are acceptable: TIF (embedded fonts; no file compression); JPEG (no file compression); EPS (fonts saved as outlines; no file compression); PDF (as long as it is saved using the full Acrobat/Distiller program with output selected for "PRINT" or "PRESS". Save color as “composite CMYK” or black & white as “Grayscale”. Embed all fonts.

(7% gross receipts tax will be added to invoice.)

Advertising Contact
Mario Ortega | 3701 San Mateo Blvd. NE, #200 | Albuquerque, NM 87110
T: 866.881.4584 | F: 505.884.0427 | mario@aigcs.org | aigcs.org
American Indian Graduate Center Alumni:

What will your legacy be?

“As alumni, it is essential for us to support organizations like AIGC that provide funding to Native American students who will be our future tribal leaders, attorneys, doctors, engineers and other professionals. I call on my fellow AIGC alumni and others who are committed to Indian Country to join me in ensuring that these scholarship opportunities continue to be available to future generations.”

—Alvin Warren
(Santa Clara Pueblo)
Master in Public Administration,
Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

“I am so thankful that AIGC exists to advocate and provide much needed scholarships to Native American students. Now I can use my law degree in my staff attorney position at New Mexico Legal Aid for the betterment of tribal communities.”—Neomi M. Gilmore, JD (Navajo), University of Idaho College of Law (pictured left)

“Whereas I started in a position of needing money, now largely because of AIGC, I can give money; I am a donor. That truly brings things full circle.”—Shenan Atcitty, Esq. (Navajo), University of New Mexico School of Law, J.D.

DONATE TODAY! CALL (505) 881-4584

Or make a donation on our website at aigcs.org

Or mail your check to: American Indian Graduate Center
3701 San Mateo Blvd. NE, #200, Albuquerque, NM 87110

Other ways to give: In-kind donations • Corporate & event sponsorships • Advertise in the American Indian Graduate magazine • Planned giving

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