AIGC Celebrates 50 Years

Opportunities Abound: AIGC Scholars Set Sights on Leadership Goals

Teaching the ‘Soft-Skills’ for STEM Leadership in Indian Country

Manning Takes a (Shark) Bite Out of Life with Marine Studies

Native American Students Abroad in the World

AIGC Partners with Eighth Generation

The Inception, History and Legacy of American Indian Graduate Center
The Center for Native Scholarships is Turning 50 Years Old!

To commemorate this milestone, AIGC will be hosting a 50th Anniversary Gala March 25th, 2020 in San Diego, California!

For more information, visit: AIGCS.org/AIGC50
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Celebrating Our Legacy

You may have noticed an increasing level of excitement from us in recent years. As we approach our 50th anniversary, celebrating our history and championing our future has really inspired everything we do at AIGC lately.

One of the best ways to crown this years-long anticipation is with a huge celebration, and that’s just what we’re going to do. On March 25, 2020, we’re hosting the AIGC 50th Anniversary Gala in San Diego, California.

During our exciting Anniversary Gala, we will honor our founders and our alumni from the past half-century, plus we will be introducing the AIGC Hall Of Fame Inaugural Class. The celebration will include music, entertainment, a silent auction and the premiere of the documentary AIGC Founding, celebrating Robert Bennett and John Rainer, Sr.

There are several ways that you can celebrate with us. First, please join us at the Gala in San Diego. You can provide corporate or individual sponsorship of the event as well. Finally – and make sure you do this right now – you can make nominations for the AIGC Hall of Fame. All of these can be done right now at our 50th Anniversary hub, found at www.aigcs.org/aigc50.

It’s impossible to overstate the legacy of AIGC. Whether in tribes, universities, courtrooms or hospitals, AIGC scholars have had a massive impact on their communities. Join us as we take some time to celebrate all of the important people who have given to – and who received from – AIGC since 1970.

There’s a lot to celebrate. Miigwech (Thank you) for being a part of the AIGC.

Holly Cook Macarro
President, AIGC Board of Directors
Xest Sxlxalt (Good Day)! I am extremely grateful to be serving as AIGC’s Executive Director at the dawn of 2020, and we’re about to celebrate our significant milestone anniversary – 50 years since our first scholarship was given!

In this issue of American Indian Graduate Magazine, we highlight some of the amazing people who have given their time and talents to AIGC since the birth of the organization in 1970. Robert Bennett and John Rainer Sr. founded what became AIGC, and their impact of their legacy is immense.

Others who are featured in this issue are recipients of scholarships from AIGC who are doing exciting things in their professional careers. We are now averaging $15 million in scholarship awards to 1,500 students annually. I give thanks to all of the board members, executive directors, and staff members over the past 50 years who have been instrumental in bringing us to where we are today.

I’m grateful for the decades of data that we have at AIGC, because we are using that data to pave the way for the next 50 years of success. Since inception, AIGC has:

• Contributed to 1,300 law degrees, 1,700 PhDs and 450 medical degrees.
• Delivered over $210 million in scholarship funds.
• Helped members of over 500 Tribes with their college educations.
• Given scholarships and support to over 16,000 students.

We are one of the oldest scholarship organizations in the country who specifically serves Native students. We are so proud of the impact we’ve made and grateful for all who have helped make AIGC a half-century success. While the decades of success are impressive, 90% of our scholarship applicants still go unfunded and AIGC scholarships remain in high demand. Please stay keep an eye out to learn of the amazing new partnerships that we will be announcing over the next few months. We will also be unveiling our 50th Anniversary Blanket in partnership with 8th Generation. Through these expanded partnerships and with your help, we will ensure more Native students’ success in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the country.

With such a positive impact on Indian Country and the nation as a whole, I invite each and everyone of you to connect and celebrate with us. We are on a mission to transform lives through education for the next 50 years!

Angelique Albert
AIGC Executive Director
The American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) offers significant financial support to Native American students. Here are some key statistics:

- **Scholarship reach**: $15 million annually, $200 million+ since inception.
- **Student Scope**: 500 tribes in all 50 states, 16,000+ Native students since inception.
- **50 Year Funding Legacy**: 1,300 law degrees, 1,731 Ph.D. degrees, 450 medical degrees. Undergraduate, graduate & professional degrees.

AIGC/AIGCS are the largest scholarship providers to Native students in the U.S. They have supported over 16,000 Native students since inception, and their funding legacy includes over 4,500 degrees.

The Jack Montoya Memorial Scholarship Fund is one of their notable initiatives. This fund supports Native American students across California who show a genuine interest in promoting cultural revitalization. The fund is open to both federally and non-federally recognized tribal people. For more information, visit their website at hafoundation.org/Montoya.

Morek Annie O'Rourke, Jack Montoya Memorial Scholarship recipient and 2016 graduate of Humboldt State University, shares her story. Her photo is included as an image to inspire and encourage Native American students to pursue their educational goals.

For those interested in graduate programs, the University of Missouri offers over 150 degree programs. They have awarded $1 million+ in diversity fellowships and host 5 campus cultural & resource centers. They have over 60+ graduate student organizations and 68 online degree programs & certificates.

Visit gradschool.missouri.edu/degree-programs for more information.
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Many Strong Hands Have Built AIGC’s 50-year Legacy

by Alastair Lee Bitsóí & Greg Mays

“If you look at all the people who are part of the legacy of AIGC, there are many strong leaders who have contributed since the inception.”

- Angelique Albert

On the 50th anniversary of the founding of the American Indian Graduate Center, Executive Director Angelique Albert has been thinking a lot about the legacy of the organization. “In 1969, as the organization was conceptualized, there were so many influential leaders involved. Bob Bennett, John Rainer Sr., Ada Deer, and Lucille Echohawk, all people who have done great things in this country, were involved in making AIGC happen. They understood the value of education and how transformative it can be.”

As the organization was founded in 1970, Albert says, “we were at the end of the termination era and the effects of boarding schools were still prominently felt across Indian Country. As the self-determination era ushered in, there was a need for Natives to be educating Natives. There was a demand for Native educators in the field, and AIGC addressed that need. In fact, we have contributed to over 1,700 PhDs since our founding.”

“There was also a need for Tribal lawyers to fight for our treaty and sovereignty rights at that time, education was the answer in that situation, too,” says Albert, “and that need has resulted in 1,300 law degrees funded by AIGC. Historically, AIGC has heard the needs of our Tribal Nations and responded to those needs.”

The needs of Indian Country have shaped the guiding principles, educational services and education support of AIGC since its inception. Albert says, “my predecessors and those who established this organization have done such a great job of creating strong programs to address the individual needs of the students, while also addressing the collective needs of Native people nationwide. That’s work we can be proud of no matter what tribe you’re from.”

Lucille Echohawk was asked to join the team at American Indian Scholarships in 1975 by John Rainer, Sr. As the organization’s administrative assistant, Mr. Rainier needed her to help him manage...
seed money from the William H. Donner Foundation, the first organization ever to provide financial funds for aspiring Native American college students at what would become AIGC.

Echohawk says that she had no idea that her office role would eventually lead to the establishment of a well-funded scholarship organization for Native American students, now known as AIGC. Since that first seed money 50 years ago, AIGC has provided over $210 million in direct scholarship funds to undergraduate, graduate and professional students from over 500 tribes across the U.S.

Echohawk remembers working with many of Indian Country’s brightest educators and activists, including David Warren (San Clara Pueblo), Charles “Chuck” Trimble (Oglala Sioux Tribe), Joe Sando (Jemez Pueblo), and Lucy Covington (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation) – all of whom later served as board members at AIGC. “They were all connected to the National Congress of American Indians and knew each other very well,” Echohawk added, “and John Rainer, Sr. was a national figure.”

Echohawk said that in the 1970s, the goal then was to get Native Americans college-educated. Inspired by President Lyndon Johnson, who launched the War on Poverty a decade earlier, a pilot program was created to pave the way for Native students interested in law. Advanced degrees such as a Masters’ or doctoral degrees were sometimes desired by Native peoples, but Echohawk says they were really made possible by AIGC.

Echohawk graduated with a Master’s degree, which empowered her to establish nonprofit organizations like the Denver Indian Center for Urban Natives. Her brothers, Larry and John Echohawk, both lawyers, continue to serve Indian Country providing legal expertise on behalf of tribes and their sovereignty.

“It was the genesis of the era of Indian Country realizing the importance of education, and, in this case, not just a college education, but graduate-level,” Echohawk added. “I’m just happy to play a small role, and some members of my family have received assistance from AIGC. It has been put to good use.”

One of AIGC’s founders, John Rainer Sr., is remembered fondly by Governor Gilbert Suazo (Taos Pueblo. Suazo remembers Rainier being his principal at the day school in Taos Pueblo, where Rainer and his wife encouraged Pueblo students to pursue more education. Later, Rainer and Suazo worked together when Taos Pueblo acted to protect the Taos Blue Lake, one of many religious freedom cases of the 1970s. Although this was one of Rainer’s most notable accomplishments, he also served Indian Country in many leadership roles over the years. He was elected as the director of the National Congress of American Indians in 1950, served as the Chair of the All-Indian Pueblo Council in 1956, and was named to direct the New Mexico Commission of Indian Affairs in 1969. When he started the organization that would become AIGC, they held
their first meeting in October of 1970 and distributed their first funds that year as well.

"John promoted education amongst our people," Gov. Suazo said, saying he is sure Mr. Rainer had influenced many others in Indian country. "After all, Rainer was one of the first citizens of Taos Pueblo to go to college," he said.

Norbert Hill (Oneida Nation), AIGC’s executive director from 2001-2006, said efforts during his tenure focused on stopping what he calls the “brain-drain” of Native American communities, particularly in reservation territories. While their goal of AIGC in the 1970s was to encourage Native people to get a college education, the goal in recent decades has been to encourage scholars to stay in their communities once educated.

Access, opportunity, retention, and graduation are the four tenets that Hill amplified during his time as AIGC Executive Director. In his leadership role, Hill told Native scholars to remember their humble beginnings: “you’re still Indian,” he says. AIGC implemented creative strategies and graduate admissions workshops.

AIGC Magazine, Hill says, emerges from how he saw many other marginalized communities featuring their scholars in a publication. Along with other AIGC leaders, Hill saw this as a method to stop “brain-drain” in communities when Natives receive advance degrees, but do not return to serve in their communities.

“We wanted to instill some pride. It was a way to share information and our calling card. The magazine became our marketing tool, but also an important piece for Indian Country. It was a beacon of hope. It was before the internet, when magazines were big!”

Since the launch of the magazine in the 2000s, Hill says the magazine helped AIGC become a force in higher education and continues in print and digital version today. When the organization came to administer the Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program, AIGC saw itself in a different orbit. Established in 1999, the GMS Program is a $1.6-billion-dollar initiative from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This initiative allowed AIGC to establish its associate firm American Indian Graduate Center Scholars, which has successfully funded 3,000 Native American Scholars and proudly boasts a 69.8% graduation rate.

“Education is the common denominator for survival for Indians,” Hill says, adding that the mission of AIGC is empowering the next leaders of Indian Country. “We want people to do the right thing and rebuild our communities, and that’s why I came home to help my Oneida people.”

Angelique Albert is doing her part in the service of Native peoples from her role as current Executive Director. I have four focus areas; data analysis, student support, organizational growth and transformation.

Norbert Hill (Oneida Nation) - The American Indian Graduate | Fall 2019 | www.aigcs.org

“Education is the common denominator for survival for Indians,” - Norbert Hill
Opportunities Abound: AIGC Scholars Set Sights on Leadership Goals

by Kim Baca
It was only four years ago while a graduate student at the University of New Mexico that he started the organization based on Indigenous principles of entrepreneurship through engagement, mentorship and cooperative economics.

“How do you benefit the people? How do you benefit the community? How do you make a profit? And how do you incorporate prayer and spirituality into all of that?” says Foreman, who is Absentee Shawnee, Filipino and Scott-Irish, sitting in front of his rented office space for Karuna Colectiva outside of Albuquerque, N.M.’s downtown.

“Social enterprise – what I like to call ‘Indigipreneurship’ … And we’re going to hire Native youth to do that,” he said.

Foreman, who received an AIGC scholarship to aid him in getting his Master’s in Community and Regional Planning, knows that his journey in building this nonprofit that recently received a total of $30,000 in grants from the Notah Begay III Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was unconventional after creating it with just a concept and $500 in winnings from an Indigenous youth business contest.

Being a nonprofit leader wasn’t exactly what he set out to be—he just knew that he had ideas for programs for at-risk and Indigenous youth that he wanted to help.

As one of the over 16,000 AIGCS scholarship recipients, Foreman is one alumus making a difference in their communities. From judges, to CEOs to nonprofit and finance directors, each has said the leap into leadership has been not only rewarding but in some cases unforeseen. Sitting on a park bench in front of his organizational storefront, Foreman

reflects on his educational and leadership journey. Foreman, who initially wanted to go into international business but was put off by the gluttony, instead received his undergraduate degree in civic engagement and nonprofit management.

But it was his travels to Mexico and South America where he saw Indigenous commerce and barter that sparked his interest in social enterprise and the concept of Karuna Colectiva (which translates from Spanish to Collective Compassion in English) came to light.

After winning a Native American youth business contest, Foreman used the $500 to get his teaching license. He didn’t have a job while nearing the end of his Master’s program so he took a teaching position at the Native American Community Academy (NACA), a charter school for Native Americans in Albuquerque. He then netted $15,000 from New Mexico Community Capital (NMCC), a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and Native American CDFI that provides capital in emerging or underserved markets, which helped him create a solid business plan. He then competed in a UNM business school contest and won $10,000, which he used to further refine the concept at NACA to help at-risk youth learn how to work, learn and earn through experiential education and collaborative projects through art or community service.

Foreman, 31, who was born with Cerebral palsy, is also now NMCC’s Financial and Business Basics Program Manager. With the additional recent grants, he’s able to rent the office space, buy equipment and art supplies, pay additional staff and pay youth a stipend for work. The youth, who will be paired with adult mentors to learn leadership and Indigenous knowledge, will help with various projects, including screen printing T-shirts or customizing bicycles supplies, as part of Karuna Colectiva.

“It if you asked me five years ago what I wanted to be doing, I would have said I wouldn’t want to do anything but teach,” Foreman said, proudly reflecting on his original path and looking back at his dream become reality.

“Be open to creating your own job. Be comfortable in creating your own position—chances are you’ll be creating something new and innovative.”

As he begins to describe his nonprofit, Henry Jake Foreman’s speech accelerates as he talks about future plans for Karuna Colectiva.
There will always be that connection either with the work itself evolves to a different thing or the people that you are with will take you into a different direction,” says Stacy L. Leeds, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development at the University of Arkansas. Leeds, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, is also a member of the AIGC Board of Directors.

Leeds has served in several significant leadership roles, including dean of the Arkansas law school, the first, full-time director of the University of North Dakota Northern Plains Indian Law Center, and first Native female of the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court.

Her career path into law came after hearing about issues with the Indian Child Welfare as an undergraduate but teaching law came at the suggestion from one of her professors while still law school. When graduating, she applied for a fellowship to help unconventional candidates become law professors at the University of Wisconsin. Once accepted, she decided to defer a few years to get some practical experience by working with Muscogee (Creek) Nation court system.

After several years teaching in North Dakota and at the University of Kansas, she applied for the dean of the University of Arkansas law school, a position she held for seven years until her appointment in 2018 as Arkansas’ vice chancellor. She now oversees 10 colleges, schools and divisions to amplify the university’s economic and social impact.

As the first Native American woman to ever be a dean of a law school and one of only three Natives to hold that position in the country, she talks about her roles with absolute humility. “I always approach it with this profound sense that I have an opportunity to get to do this, taking advantage of those opportunities when they come about, and how significant it is that your mere presence is to the people who will follow—it makes it pretty easy just being there,” Leeds said.

“A lot of the opportunities that I came upon I came upon them because someone said, ‘Hey, you should look into this.’ Having someone have confidence of you is a something that I continue to be mindful of because when I’m advising students and they’re looking for their first opportunity sometimes they’ll say, ‘Well, I don’t know if I can do that.’ I want to be the one there reminding them that they can absolutely can do that. Sometimes people have the inclination to do things and other times people in different points in their career they are probably nudged along.”

Richard Williams, former President and CEO American Indian College Fund (AICF) and current Indigenous Consultant to the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, said his path to leadership wasn’t always an easy one.

After flunking out of, then returning to the University of Nebraska to graduate, Williams, who is Northern Cheyenne, spent his last semester at the Native American Rights Fund as a paralegal. It was there he began advocating for the civil rights of Native prison inmates. At 25, though ready to go to law school, he instead was tapped to run the first medium-security prison facility solely for Native American convicts in the country. The prison was designed to help reintegrate Indigenous prisoners into their communities using traditional, vocational and
educational training. From there, he went to work at the University of Colorado as head of the American Indian Upward Bound pre-college program, later becoming director of Minority Student Affairs. In 1985, he decided to go back to school, commuting to the University of Wyoming from Boulder, which still working one day a week at UC Boulder, doing a graduate apprenticeship, and finding time to be with his wife and three kids.

After receiving an AIGC scholarship for his Master’s in Educational Administration and graduating summa cum laude in one year, he became director of the Student Academic Service Center at UC Boulder. After 12 years in academia, he then set his sights on the College Fund where he spent 17 years, raising millions of dollars, aiding in the education of tribal college students across the country.

“I know there are people along the way who helped me develop my leadership skills,” Williams said. “But there was a time at the AIFC I was a jerk. I was a terrible leader and I wouldn’t work for me. I let the power of the position I was in go to my head. I thought you could motivate people by yelling at them but that doesn’t work. You have to be willing to do whatever you have to do to have to gain their trust and maintain their trust but also get things done.”

Williams said later in his role as CEO he made it a point to take out the trash and shovel the sidewalks. “I started modeling leadership. I did it based on a couple of core values to really help me grow and gain that trust … I had to make a real contentious change in how I was and what I was doing, at the same time I remembered having grown up with good values and having grown up with that traditional understanding of respect, responsibility and relationship. I went back to those and it made me a stronger leader.”

Williams also attributes his growth to executive coaching, something that he said every leader should consider obtaining in addition to connections to people you work for -- and with. “Focus on your relationships with the people and never give up,” he said.
Teaching the ‘Soft-Skills’ for STEM Leadership in Indian Country

by Jacqueline Keeler

Laughing softly, Jade Herman recalls, “I think the very first high school visit that I did, the first question that I got from one of the kids was if I had any kids.”

No, Herman is not a mother, but she proudly tells the students they can be successful in school and in life “if you really want to put in the effort.”

As the tribal liaison to the South Dakota School of Mines president, Herman does a lot of outreach to tribal high schools mostly in the western and central part of South Dakota. She shares her experience growing up on the Rosebud Sioux reservation and how she got to where she’s at today, preparing for her doctoral dissertation.

Working with outreach to young Native students has led her to consider focusing that dissertation on leadership curriculum related to the School of Mines, where she currently works in Rapid City South Dakota.

“Because we are a STEM-focused university, part of our mission has always been to educate future leaders in science and engineering. But while the students get the technical aspect of that education here for sure, they don’t really get the so-called ‘soft skills.’ The leadership, the management.

Another focus area for Herman is increasing the School of Mines’ engagement with tribal schools in South Dakota. She originally got interested in attending the university when she participated in a regional science fair there in sixth grade, so she knows the impact it can have.

“I thought this place was so cool,” Jade says. “And you know, we got to be on a campus tour, and I was like, I don’t have any interest in being an engineer, but I know I have to come to college some day. So every year we came back to the science fair. I was super excited to get new admissions materials and meet more people and see more things and try to figure out what exactly it was I wanted to do when I got here.”
She notes that younger kids, in particular, don't know what careers they can pursue with STEM degrees. They are not sure what the difference between a mechanical engineer, a mining engineer or a metallurgical engineer. Herman helps by explaining the diverse careers the students could potentially have, or how they can use an engineering degree in fields like law, biomedical engineering or health sciences.

“I think the common misconception, not just the tribal students but everyone in general, is that the School of Mines requires a very high ACT score and a high GPA for students to get in here and that’s not necessarily the case.” Although she admits that at a STEM-focus university, there are no “easy” classes. Herman said, “I totally bombed my first chemistry exam as a freshman, and I went home and cried afterwards.”

Still, the rewards are worth all the hard work. According to the School of Mines, 2017 - 2018 graduates with BS degrees earn an average starting salary of $63,354. When Jade relates this figure to reservation high school students, it gets their attention. “Growing up on the reservation, you hear numbers like that and it just kind of blows your mind.”

SD Mines offers the Tiospaye Scholar Program to help increase Native students graduating from the university with a BS degree. As of January 2019, they have graduated 40 scholars with 80 percent STEM-related job placement, and 15 percent working on the reservation. Herman is studying in the Interdisciplinary Sciences program with a background in environmental social and science policy. She took environmental law and atmospheric science classes, as well as geology, physics and chemistry. This provided her with a technical background and a grounding in the social sciences that she may use in the future at law school or business school.

In her doctoral research, Jade says she is drawn to a transformational-type leadership.

“When you need to make any sort of big changes or create an environment in order to seek a different direction, you need people, sometimes not even people that are in the formal leadership roles. You need people that are inspiring and energizing and motivating others to kind of work towards that common goal.”

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For additional information contact Kellie Thompson, Assistant Director of the Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies, at 314-935-4804 or kellie.thompson@wustl.edu.
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For More Info, Visit: AIGCS.org/AIGC50

AIGC Scholar Mary Kim Titla - San Carlos Apache
Manning Takes a (Shark) Bite Out of Life with Marine Studies

by Brittney Bennett

Cherokee Nation citizen Felicia Manning is a graduate student in the marine science studies program at Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida, and she is an AIGCS Scholar. Her studies will be completed in August 2019 when she defends her thesis research on thirteen great white sharks swimming along the Atlantic coast.

PHOTO/BRANDI RICKETT
Have you ever wondered what a great white shark would feel like on your fingertips? Would it feel rough or smooth? If given the chance to find out, would you take it?

Just in case you aren’t ready to stick your hand in the ocean to pet one for yourself, Cherokee Nation citizen Felicia Manning can summarize for you.

“A shark kind of feels like sandpaper,” she said. “I know they look smooth, but they have what’s called dermal denticles, which is kind of like modified teeth. When you go from the front to the back to the tail, it’s somewhat smooth. If you were to go the opposite way, it would be more rough because the denticles are pointing back. These denticles help them to move faster and quieter when they’re swimming.”

So how does a Cherokee girl, who calls the landlocked state of Oklahoma her home, know so much about sharks?

It’s safe to say that Manning, a 2010 American Indian Graduate Center Scholar through the Gates Millennium Scholarship Program, has been away from home more than once while pursuing her education.

After graduating from Westville High School in Oklahoma and spending two years at Northeastern State University, Manning transferred to the University of Oklahoma and got her first brush with marine life in 2014.

“I did a study abroad trip to Australia. That’s really when I got to take marine classes,” she said. “Obviously in Oklahoma we can’t do that, so all of my classes that I took when at The University of Queensland were marine-oriented.”

Manning went on to complete her general wildlife science degree in 2015 at OU, but it wasn’t until after she took a year off from school that she decided to further pursue marine life studies.

In July 2016 she spent a month in Mossel Bay, South Africa, as an intern with Oceans Research, an organization dedicated to South African wildlife management and conservation through marine research.

It was during that experience when Manning saw and felt a shark for the first time.

“I always knew great whites were big, but when you see it and it’s the length of your boat, you think, ‘he could swallow me in one gulp!’ When I saw my first great white I was freaking out. I was a total nerd. I remember thinking, ‘it’s so different seeing them in person and he’s swimming by the side of the boat and he’s huge!’ I’m a girl from Oklahoma, but I definitely want to work with sharks,” she said.

While interning, Manning helped Oceans Research staff with population estimates for the sharks in Mossel Bay.

“We would have bait in the water and you would try and get the sharks to come and get their dorsal fins out of the water. That’s what we were taking pictures of and we were doing videos when they swam by to try and get a population analysis of how many great whites were in that area.”
Photograph 2: Manning completed an internship with the marine research organization OCEARCH in July 2016 while in Mossel Bay, South Africa. She worked with the organization on their boat to help tag and study the great white sharks living in the area. COURTESY
When Manning wasn’t helping with research, she even took the opportunity to do some cage diving.

“I knew when I went that it was on my bucket list to cage dive with great whites,” said Manning. “The adrenaline was pumping and I was so excited. Of course, my whole family was like, ‘why would you want to do that?’ But it was awesome! It didn’t faze me at all. It was just a surreal moment.”

A month after her trip to South Africa, Manning found herself beginning a Master of Arts in Marine Science at Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida.

“I wasn’t sure if anyone would even accept me because I’m from Oklahoma and people would think, ‘oh, she doesn’t know anything about the ocean,’ but I was super excited when JU accepted me,” she said.

When JU created a partnership in 2017 with OCEARCH, a non-profit organization dedicated to researching great whites and other large apex predators, Manning knew without a doubt that she had made the right choice.

“I’m a religious person and I feel like God has really put me where I need to be,” she said. “When I got to JU, Dr. White, he’s the head of the Marine Science Research Institute where I go to classes, informed me they were working on a partnership with OCEARCH and I was super excited about that because I didn’t think anyone even knew who they were besides me.”

Manning walked with her classmates during the JU spring convocation ceremony this past April, but she has one more project left in August before her studies are complete – her thesis defense.

For her project, Manning was given spot tag data collected by OCEARCH from 2014 to 2017 and asked to analyze the movement pattern and other migration factors of 13 great white sharks along the Atlantic coast. Manning explained that spot tags are attached to the dorsal fins of the shark on top of its body, and when the shark’s dorsal fin emerges from the water for at least 90 seconds, a transmission with the GPS location of the shark is sent to a satellite that stores the data.

“The overall goal is to use that spot tag data to see where the sharks are migrating to and where their seasonal movements are,” she said. “If I find anything significant, I’ll share that with OCEARCH and hopefully they can use that for future expeditions and different conservation management ideas.”

“No one has used this data before, so when they sent it to me in September 2017 it was in a file type that I couldn’t just click buttons to make all the data go where I need it to in Excel. I had to manually go in and put the pings for locations in,” she said.

Manning’s thesis will focus on specific factors as possible indicators for migratory patterns.
"I’m looking at sea surface temperature and measure of depth and distance to shore with each of those locations and seeing if there’s any significance or if they might have a preference for particular spots,” she said. “If you can get an idea of what kind of environmental factors these sharks like, then you can better predict where they’re going to be. That leads to the overall goal of what waters need protected in order to protect the species. Sharks are important apex predators in the ocean ecosystem.”

Manning’s work could also influence other students that come after her.

“I’m excited that since we did partner with OCEARCH, that other master’s students and even undergraduates that come along, they can use this data too and add on and keep building our knowledge to further improve different conservation strategies,” she said.

While she continues work on her thesis and manages her job as a conservation intern at the Jacksonville Zoo, Manning continues to look towards the future.

“I’d like to stay in Florida and do the marine round if I can, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be that either,” she said. “I’m basically looking at jobs in the field of wildlife conservation. I leaned more towards conservation while in school because I really like educating the public. I like informing them what’s going on and what you can do to help.”

As her educational journey comes to a close, Manning paused to convey her gratitude to AIGC and GMSP.

“I’m so glad and thankful for AIGC and Gates. I definitely wouldn’t have been able to go to all these places without financial help, especially JU because is a private school. It’s been nice knowing I have that financial support, that way I can move to Florida and go study sharks. It has been awesome!”

For other Native students aspiring to careers in marine biology or anything a little more out of the norm, Manning’s advice is: adapt.

“You have to be willing to adapt and to move to somewhere completely new,” she said. “I’m glad I can be an inspiration for other young Natives. I think it’s a great thing for all these Native kids to see, the ones who think, ‘oh, I’m landlocked. I can’t go be a marine biologist.’ No, you absolutely can! You just have to be willing to do it. You can always go back home, but you’ll regret it if you don’t at least try.”
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Native American Students Abroad in the World

by Jacqueline Keeler
We often don’t think of travel abroad when we think of Native America.

Other than the high-profile activism of Native people in Paris attending the Climate Change Agreement or our tribal leaders attending United Nations meetings to push recognition of sovereignty in international forums, travel abroad -- particularly to Europe -- is rarely seen.

And yet, AIGCS Scholar and Cherokee citizen Dakota Miller Thompson is passionate about sharing the gift of travel with more folks from her home community of Stilwell, Oklahoma. Every other year she takes students, teachers and some of their family members on trips abroad. Thompson says “I live in Stilwell, Oklahoma, and for the past six years, I’ve worked in Stilwell. I grew up here, and we are number one in the child poverty rate, and we’re very rural.” It takes her two years to plan and fundraise each trip. “So when we are over there, we really know just how powerful (working or our tails off for two years) to make it to these places.”

Dakota believes the greater appreciation increases the “mindfulness transformation” after students return and may be the focus for her dissertation, as she is presently working on her doctorate in Educational Administration, Curriculum, & Supervision at The University of Oklahoma.

“What I’ve learned from travel personally is that it helps with the development of life skills,” Thompson explains. “Especially if students aren’t very familiar with various cultures and different ways of doing things. It’s quite an eye-opener. It was for me the first time I traveled abroad because all I knew at that point in time was rural Oklahoma, and I still work in the same type of area that I grew up in.”

“We often don’t think of travel abroad when we think of Native America.” - Dakota Miller Thompson

She recently returned home after leading a group of 12 to Ireland and Scotland. Some tribal members have Irish and Scottish ancestral ties, and they took note of how Irish and Scottish medicines and old traditions seemed to share similarities to their own tribal culture. They also had the chance to inform people they met about what it means to be Native American today. “Some people think that there are no Native Americans left in America,” Dakota says. “They were surprised to know that we are thriving.”
An AIGCS alumna, Thompson got her first taste of overseas travel through the scholarship program in 2010, which cemented her desire to share the gift of travel with other Native students. Since then, she has organized three trips to Europe for students, teachers and a few parents, for groups of 10 to 20 people. The one thing Thompson learned traveling abroad that surprised her the most was how connected people really are. “Growing up, I assumed these boundary lines made us different, and they do in lots of ways. But if you spend time in any culture, I believe that you will find things that connect us more so than separate us and that’s something important that I believe everyone needs to take in in this day and age.” Her observations echo that of the late Wilma Mankiller, former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation in her 1993 speech titled “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation.” Mankiller said, “I’ve been very fortunate to be able to travel extensively in this country and abroad, and I can tell you that even though our people are very fragmented today, we still, in the more traditional communities, still have a sense of interdependence.” Mankiller notes how travel and cultural exchange can inspire a leadership perspective that benefits and is a natural fit with our tribal values; “I can still motivate people in communities to do something because it helps their neighbor, or helps the person down the road, or helps the community much more than I can motivate people to do something just because it helps themselves.”

The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) finds that while the number of students studying abroad has increased for Native American students, the numbers are still very low. According to their study, Native students account for 0.8 percent of all postsecondary students the U.S. but only 0.4 percent of students studying abroad. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Native Americans are 1.5 percent of the population. Dakota, however, believes that students of any background -- no matter where they are from or what socioeconomic status that might be -- should consider studying abroad. She says “it will open many doors and impact lives in such a great way that everyone should at least think seriously about doing it.”

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Javier I. Kinney, BA, MALD, JD, has always been prepared to step up to leadership roles since he could remember.

He credits his parents and global opportunities like the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC), the Woodrow Wilson Public Policy and International Affairs (PPIA) National Fellowship, and the Council Legal Education Opportunity program for his educational pathways. “My story has always started with my family, mentors, community and professionals that have encouraged my journey to where I am today.” Kinney, a 46-year-old Yurok Tribal citizen, explains.

To elevate into his career as an attorney and top executive for the Yurok Tribe, he first studied at the University of California, Davis, where he double majored in history and Native American studies. Thereafter, he achieved a Master of Arts degree in Law and Diplomacy, specializing in Development Economics and International Law, from Tufts University-Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In 2004, he was conferred a juris-doctorate from Suffolk University Law School in Boston, after being inspired from his fact-finding missions in the Imataca Forests, in the Amazon Forests of Venezuela.

“My mother and father were teachers, they were very instrumental to me, to believe in myself and pursue my dreams,” Kinney said, “they really valued education and prepared me for the leadership skillsets to not only better myself individually, but to go out and come home to apply knowledge in my educational process.”
Kinney added that his parents encouraged him to pursue a profession that allows him to align his thought leadership, and passion for analysis for systems change actions, while also learning skills to work anywhere in the world. He has traveled abroad with indigenous delegations and other missions to Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Jamaica, Hungary, Norway, Brazil, and Canada. Since 2018, Kinney has served as the Executive Director for the Yurok Tribe. In this role, he oversees and manages the operations of his tribal government. He specifically advises Yurok tribal leaders on business decisions, policy and legal, cultural and financial matters. He serves on the board of the Yurok Justice Advisory Board, and is an advisor to the Yurok-based Hoh-Kue-Moh Corporation, a tribal non-profit organization. Kinney says his diverse knowledge and educational experience are important for his Yurok people, which is the largest tribe in California.

Additionally, Kinney advises other tribal nations, and indigenous global leaders in technical areas with strategic action, natural resources management, direct action, mediation, negotiations, public policy, economic development, international diplomacy, youth empowerment, land acquisition, tribal governance, philanthropic partnerships, protection of tribal cultural resources, and water law and policy.

Kinney says his cultural experiences, educational career and skills he gained over the years would not have been possible if it were not for AIGC funding sources and support. His son Kokonow C. Kinney is a second generation AIGC fellow, who is a pre-medicine student majoring in Biology and American Indian Studies at University of California, Los Angeles. His daughter is a student athlete leader and a junior at Hoopa Valley High School, with a promising future and preparing for college.

As a proud alumnus, Kinney supports AIGC’s mission. He said the benefit is huge: “It is having that support and network, and having economic assistance and support as we try carry out the course load, work experience, and being able to provide not only experiences, but institutional capacity.”

Over the years, he’s seen AIGC empower scholarship alumni to create solutions for Indian Country. Important to this, he says, is the acknowledgement of cultural values and teachings of his own Yurok people.

“At the end of the day, we need to exercise our self-determination and sovereignty by preparing our children, youth and elders to fulfill leadership roles,” Kinney says, before adding that Indigenous people have the innate ability to lead healthy lives by relying on their cultural worldviews. In other words. “We know that the future is our hands. We drive our own narrative by taking action consistent with our inherent cultural knowledge, as well as pursue formal educational processes to be successful.” And when it comes to writing your narrative, Kinney suggests three recommendations for a sound life and career:

1. **Keep an open mind**
2. **Seek out mentors or role models that can provide you with their experiences**
3. **Prepare for a career that is in areas that you are passionate about in order for you to wake and love your job, even it means creating a job that does not yet exist**

“Those three steps helped me pursue my dreams and educational success,” Kinney says. “I really appreciate the different perspectives of moving the needle when it comes to protecting and advocating for Indigenous rights for our peoples, both locally and globally.”
AIGC PARTNERS WITH EIGHTH GENERATION TO CELEBRATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In honor of AIGC’s 50th Anniversary, Eighth Generation and AIGC have partnered to develop a beautiful, commemorative blanket with the help of three talented AIGC/AIGCS Scholars and artists. Brittany Gene, Maka Monture, and Janelle Cronin are the winners of the AIGC and Eighth Generation blanket design contest.

The commemorative blanket will be unveiled very soon!
Brittany Gene is a Kiyaa’áanii from Indian Wells, AZ on the Dine Nation. She is currently in her first year of study in the Master of Industrial Design 3+ program at ASU’s Herberger Institute. She has recently been hired on ASU’s indigenous magazine team, Turning Points and works as a freelance pattern maker and branding stylist for indigenous brands. Brittany is an advocate for cultural preservation and progression and hopes to one day become a creative director in order bring acknowledgement to indigenous peoples in the realm of design. She wants to ensure that there is a living history for future generations. Her number one goal is to become a good ancestor.
Maka Monture is a Tlingit and Kanien’kehá:ka woman from Yakutat, Alaska in the Southeastern Coast of Alaska and Canadian Six Nations. Maka is finishing up her Masters of Public Health, with a focus on Indigenous youth suicide prevention. She is the program manager for the diplomacy-based youth program, the Arctic Youth Ambassadors Program, a program that brings together diverse youth from across Alaska to serve as ambassadors for their communities and country in building awareness at home and abroad about life in the Arctic. Maka is passionate about rights of indigenous peoples globally.
Janelle Cronin is Navajo from Gallup, New Mexico and she earned her baccalaureate of Natural Science degree from Haskell Indian Nations University in 2015. As a Sloan Indigenous Graduate Program Scholar, she earned her Master of Science degree in both Ecological Sciences & Engineering and Curriculum Studies & Instruction at Purdue University in May 2018. As a member of Indian Country and a student of science, the influences from nature such as the delicate floral patterns depict their existence and growth in the harshest of environments; very much the identity of Native women (people) across the nation. The inclusion of the geometric designs brings expression of identity and represents a contemporary presence within the modern world. I found the unity between the style of designs a reflection of my own complex identity; a Navajo woman, student of science, and Water Protector of Indian Country.
Jade Herman, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, holds a bachelor’s degree from the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology and a master’s degree in administrative studies from the University of South Dakota. She is pursuing a doctoral degree in interdisciplinary leadership from Creighton University. She is Special Projects’ Coordinator in the SD Mines Office of the President, where she manages the university’s tribal outreach plan, coordinates community outreach and large special events, and manages communications for capital projects. She serves on the University’s strategic plan steering committee and campus master plan architect selection committee. She is secretary for the Non-Faculty Exempt Employee Council, sits on the SD Mines Alumni Association Board of Directors, and represents SD Mines on the Ranch A Restoration Foundation Board.
Shandiin Herrera, a member of the Navajo Nation, is currently an undergraduate majoring in Public Policy at Duke University. She is an AIGCS Scholar, Udall Scholar, and a Chief Manuelito Scholar. Shandiin has played a transformative role as an executive member of the Native American Student Alliance and as the President of Alpha Pi Omega, the only two organizations dedicated to fostering the growth of Native students at Duke. She has been recognized by the Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute as a 2019 Champion for Change. Ultimately, Shandiin hopes to use her education and her leadership experiences to serve her people through enhancing policies for Navajo families living on the reservation.
AIGC introduced the #MakingTheGrad campaign to highlight the impressive achievements of our AIGC Scholars in academic excellence and community engagement.

Each month, the committee selects one graduate and one undergraduate student receiving AIGC/AIGCS funding.

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