

THE AMERICAN INDIAN GRADUATE

NATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION: READING BETWEEN THE LINES

BEYOND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:
THE FUTURE OF INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION

REFLECTIONS: A NATIVE WOMAN'S
JOURNEY OF OPPORTUNITY, CHANCE
& COMMUNITY



NATIVE FORWARD

SCHOLARS FUND

Working together for generations

For over 65 years, we've been providing capital and financial services to Native communities and businesses and we'll continue to work together to make better tomorrows for generations to come.

Learn more about how we serve the Native communities at wellsfargo.com/nativecommunities



NATIVE FORWARD SCHOLARS FUND

The American Indian Graduate
Volume 23, Number 1
10010 Indian School Rd. NE,
Albuquerque, NM 87112
505.881.4584
www.nativeforward.org

BOARD MEMBERS

Chair
Holly Cook Macarro
Red Lake Band of Ojibwe

Vice Chair
Lillian Sparks Robinson
Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Treasurer
Cecilia Gutierrez

Secretary
Amber Garrison
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Member at Large
Kimberly Teehee
Cherokee Nation

Member at Large
Ernest Stevens, Jr.
Oneida Nation of Wisconsin

Member at Large
Franklin "Hud" Oberly Jr.
Comanche, Osage & Caddo

Member at Large
Linda Benally
Diné Nation

Member at Large
Victoria E. Adams
Oglala Lakota

EMERITUS BOARD

Steven Stallings
Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians

Walter Lamar
Blackfeet & Wichita

Stacy Leeds
Cherokee

COVER IMAGE

Rory Wheeler,
Native Forward Scholars Fund
Scholar
Seneca Nation

The American Indian Graduate

SPRING 2024 | VOLUME 23 | NUMBER 1

Publisher
Angelique Albert, CEO
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Editor-in-Chief
Sara LaBarge
Menominee Nation

Managing Editor
Alyssa Bitsie
Diné

Graphic Designer
Britney A. King
Diné & Chippewa-Cree

04

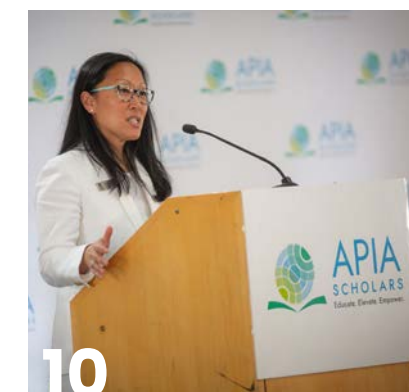
CEO Message

The continuing commitment of increasing Native visibility and representation in higher education

06

Chair Message

The evolution of Native higher education



10

**A Pathway Forward:
Navigating Access to Higher
Education without Affirmative
Action**

12



Cover Story

Indigenous Leaders on the Supreme Court's Ruling on Affirmative Action in College Admissions

14

**Beyond Affirmative Action:
The Future of Indigenous
Education**

18

**Rezfections: A Native
Woman's Journey of
Opportunity, Chance &
Community**



**A MESSAGE FROM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Angelique Albert

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Xest Sxlxalt (Good Day)!

Welcome to this spring edition of The American Indian Graduate Magazine.

In this issue, we discuss the impact of last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision to end Affirmative Action in higher education in this country. At Native Forward Scholars Fund, our students are always at the center of what drives us, and this decision will not lead us astray from our dedication in creating an impact in Native communities by providing access to quality education for all Native students.

Across the nation, there are college campuses that were built on land acquired from our Native ancestors in unethical ways. The conversation around land-grant institutions is often void of the fact that our people were expropriated from these ancestral homelands. Affirmative action is about race, we as Tribal people are governed by laws that uphold that we are a political classification and not a race. As we continue to see disparities and systematic barriers increase for our Native students, we reaffirm our commitment to answering the call to empower students

to pursue the educational dreams of their choice.

In March, Native Forward lead "How To Stand Up for Students Post-SCOTUS Affirmative Action" at SXSW EDU detailing Tribal education history, the impact of the SCOTUS decision reversing affirmative action, and strategies for allies to effectively support Native communities. Platforms and having conversations like this are essential in meeting the need to position Native people in powerful roles and to be in rooms that matter. Our work seeks to foster Native excellence while inspiring allies to amplify opportunities for Native communities.

In this issue, we feature stories from individuals in powerful roles, Native Forward scholars, alum, allies and more. Read insights on the implications of ending affirmative action, how students can navigate beyond the decision, what work can be done to mitigate what's happening in institutions nationwide, and the greater need to fund Native students. Also included in this issue are features on a Native Forward alumna's journey through higher education, Students of the Month, and Words of Wisdom.

A special thank you to all who

participated in helping us create this issue, for the time you spent on your written words and interviews, and for your dedication to using your voice for change and impact. You help guide and inspire others to make lasting impacts for and in our Tribal communities and beyond. I am honored and grateful to serve alongside those who passionately work for Native scholars in higher education.

The landscape has shifted and has become more challenging, but it's important that we lift and support each other to continue creating strong Tribal leaders and advocates. Join us for the next 50 years of serving Native students in higher education so that they may take what they have learned back to our Tribal communities to continue thriving for generations to come.

Lemlmtš (Thank You),

Angelique Albert
Chief Executive Officer

A MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

Holly Cook Macarro

Red Lake Band of Ojibwe

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for the spring issue of The American Indian Graduate. Over the last year, we have witnessed the end of affirmative action in college admissions, and we've had some time to process what this new landscape looks like and what it means for Indian Country and Native students.

The stories within this issue give insight and reflections into last year's U.S. Supreme Court's June ruling on affirmative action. The widespread trickle effect of this ruling can be seen throughout the educational landscape and within Indian Country – we hear from organizations dedicated to higher education, individuals in the field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Native Forward Scholars Fund scholars and alums, professors, and more.

Native Forward was built over 50 years ago to create opportunities for Native scholars to have equal access to higher education. Reflecting on the past year, the importance and need for student diversity in universities cannot be emphasized enough, and with this issue, we hope to encourage healthy discussions.

It is an honor to continue serving as the Board Chair and witness the stories and work of those committed to making higher education attainable for all, no matter who you are or where you come from. I want to say Chi-Miigwech, "big thank you"

in Ojibwemowin, to all who have contributed to this issue and taken the time to share their perspectives and forward-thinking thoughts of determination and perseverance.

Now more than ever is the time to give back, make your voice heard, and join us in continuing to meet the unmet needs of every Native student. Visit our website to learn more about ways you can support our work in meeting the unmet needs of Native students pursuing higher education.

Native Forward is not just a non profit, it's a beacon of hope for Native students across the U.S. It's a lifeline that empowers them as they pursue undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees of their choice. Please join us in impacting future generations.

Miigwech, for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Holly Cook Macarro
Board Chair



About the Writers



Niya DeGroat

Diné
Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumnus

Niya is a Two-Spirited fashion & culture journalist and multidisciplinary creative committed to elevating the discussion around the emerging field of Indigenous fashion and storytelling in the Americas and beyond. He obtained his master's degree in fashion journalism from the Academy of Art University in May 2020. Currently, he serves as Social Media Manager for Creatives Indigenous and Director of Branding and Media for Phoenix Fashion Week. He has years of fashion show production experience, including indigenizing the PHXFW runway by recruiting and showcasing Native designers. He is a citizen of the Diné Nation originally from Mariano Lake, New Mexico.



Rory Wheeler

Seneca Nation
Native Forward Scholars Fund Scholar

Rory is a citizen of Seneca Nation, Turtle Clan, and is pursuing his Juris Doctor and Indigenous Law Certificate at the Michigan State University College of Law. Previously, Rory worked in the Seneca Nation government, served as a law clerk to the Executive Office of the Governor of the State of Michigan, and participated in the Udall Foundation Internship as a legal fellow to United States Senator Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona. He serves on the Boards of the Association on American Indian Affairs, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center's Department of Indigenous Cancer Health, and the National Native American Law Students Association. Rory attended the Pre-Law Summer Institute at the University of New Mexico School of Law and received his B.A. from Niagara University.



Melanie Benjamin

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

Melanie Benjamin was first elected to the four-year term of Chief Executive/Chairwoman of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in 2000, and was re-elected in 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020. With her Master's degree in education and a B.S. in Business Administration, Benjamin previously served as the Band's Commissioner of Administration and Sr. Vice President of Administration and Finance at Grand Casino Hinckley. As Chief Executive, Benjamin leads the Executive Branch of Band government and is responsible for conducting external relations with other governments. Benjamin's service as a board member includes, but is not limited to: NAFOA, WEWIN, NIGA, MAST, the U.S. Attorney Generals' Tribal Nations Leadership Council, and the U.S. Department of Interior Self-Governance Negotiated Rulemaking Committee.



Saxon Metzger

Osage Nation
Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumnus

Saxon is a Commercial Solar Project Manager and Sustainability Consultant. His work on municipal Sustainability Planning was highlighted for its emphasis on cross-sector collaboration and environmental justice by the United Nations at COP15 Biodiversity. Utilizing his professional experience in conjunction with his role as a professor of graduate-level sustainable business courses, Saxon is pioneering the solar decommissioning and end-of-life space, being awarded an Under 30 in Energy Award in 2023 for these efforts to eliminate waste from renewable energy.



Toya Stewart Downey

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumna

Toya has been telling stories since third grade. She brought a blend of pragmatism, insight and cultural awareness to her work in print journalism and to her work as a communications leader for the past 15 years. She has worked for Robbinsdale Area Schools since 2020 and she serves as the Executive Director of Strategic Communications, Equity and Inclusion. She serves on the executive boards of the Minnesota School Public Relations Association (MinnSPRA), MinnPost and Theater Latte Da. She is also a member of the Hopkins School District American Indian Parent Advisory Committee and Twin Cities Black Journalists. Toya has served as writer and editor for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, of which she is an enrolled member and writes stories for other publications focusing on Indian Country.



Hilary Gourneau, M.S.

Wičahŋpi Winyaŋ-Star Woman
Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation
Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumna

Hilary is a dedicated advocate and passionate educator. As a daughter, sister, and aunt, she understands the importance of community and family bonds. Board of Trustees at Poplar Public Schools, Ex-Officio Member of the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education (MACIE) Representing Tribal Head Start programs, and serves on the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) board. Hilary's educational journey led her to Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, where she earned her Master's in Counselor Education with a specialization in School Counseling and Trauma-Informed Services. Her roots run deep in the Fort Peck Tribal community, where she actively contributes to its growth and well-being. Hilary's passion lies in uplifting Indigenous students, families, and Tribal communities. She firmly believes that education and mental health support are essential for their growth and success. Hilary's journey has come full circle, as she now serves as the Head Start Director for the Fort Peck Tribes, where her love for learning began as a Head Start student.



Nichole S. Prescott, Ph.D.

Miami Nation of Oklahoma (Myaamia)

Dr. Nichole S. Prescott is a proud citizen of the Miami Nation of Oklahoma (Myaamia) and actively participates in the culture and language revitalization efforts of her people. Born in an Indian Hospital in Oklahoma, Dr. Prescott was raised on the Texas/Mexico border before she moved to Austin to pursue a college degree at The University of Texas as a first-generation college student. Dr. Prescott is committed to creating stronger engagement between Indigenous communities and higher education through her writing and public speaking, her policy work, and through her service on boards such as the Governing Council of the National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education, the Executive Committee of the Miami University Foundation Board (a university situated on lands historically occupied by Myaamiaki), and, formerly, on the board of the American Indians of Texas. Dr. Prescott currently serves as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Texas System. She is responsible for leading and supporting student success initiatives system wide. Her work addresses the PK-20 student success continuum with special focus on strategy, policy, data, and partnerships. Dr. Prescott's words and thoughts are her own and do not represent an official position by her employer The University of Texas System.

A Pathway Forward: Navigating Access to Higher Education without Affirmative Action

By Niya DeGroat

In June of last year, the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative majority put an end to affirmative action after they determined that race can no longer be considered for college admission because it violated the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. As stated in the third sentence of the Equal Protection Clause, no state shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Ironically, affirmative action was born out of the Civil Rights movement to help diversify the workforce and academia.

Furthermore, some can argue that White students benefit the most from having a robust and diverse campus environment because they are being exposed to a myriad of forward-thinking ideas from various minority groups. In recent years, though, support for affirmative action has dwindled. According to a spring 2023 Pew Research survey, 50 percent of adult Americans disapproved of race-conscious college admissions with 33 percent approving and 16 percent being unsure.

Still, this landmark decision delivered yet another blow to an already fragile education system where equity and inclusion find themselves on the chopping block in this already divisive political climate. From book bans to a slew of anti-critical race theory and anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) legislation, access to higher education is becoming increasingly narrow where only a privileged few can earn a college degree in this country.

However, non-profit organizations like Native Forward Scholars Fund

remain steadfast in their mission to help underrepresented students gain access to higher education through scholarships, mentoring programs, and professional development. In interviews over Zoom, I spoke with Sarah EchoHawk (Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma), Native Forward alumna and president of American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), and Noel Harmon, president and executive director of Asian Pacific Islander American Scholars (APIA Scholars), to get their perspectives about the ruling and how their organizations are moving forward in a post-affirmative action educational landscape.

"I was really sad and disappointed," said EchoHawk, "I really thought that maybe the Supreme Court would view this fairly and understand that this is not about special privileges. Or this is not discriminatory in nature that, in fact, affirmative action is in place to level the playing field."

Founded in 1977, AISES is a national organization committed to "increasing the representation of Indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies and careers." Currently, the organization has a membership of 5,900 and supports 230 affiliated pre-college schools, 196 chartered college and university chapters, three Tribal chapters, and 18 professional chapters in the U.S. and Canada.

With the reversal of affirmative action, EchoHawk worries that membership for AISES will come to a halt due to low enrollment of incoming high school students, and

that with the onslaught of anti-DEI policies, the future for active chapters hangs in the balance. "We know that Indigenous students are still at the bottom of the bottom when it comes to most of these socio-economic indicators," she said. "Particularly as Indigenous people, we are already dealing with invisibility, so this ruling by the Supreme Court just confirmed what we already know: that this country still doesn't care about the First Americans."

Moving forward, EchoHawk believes fellowship and open dialogue between the National Native Scholarship Providers (which is made up of AISES, the American Indian College Fund, the Cobell Scholarship Program, and Native Forward) are ways to mitigate a future without the benefit of race-conscious admissions.

"Collectively, the National Native Scholarship Providers group needs to continue to collaborate and support one another's organization by sharing best practices, resources, and data," said EchoHawk. "We also need to have conversations with leadership at these colleges and universities; to reassure them that we are here to support them, too."

"Any opportunity to work together to collaborate, to be thought partners around some of these big issues that we're facing is really important," said Harmon. Since 2018, she has been at the helm of APIA Scholars which is the only national scholarship organization serving the Asian and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander community in the U.S. and its territories.



Noel Harmon, Ph.D. President and Executive Director of Asian Pacific Islander American Scholars (APIA Scholars). (Courtesy photo)

"At APIA Scholars, we believe that access to education should be equitable. In our case, we support underrepresented Asian communities that have not had equitable access to higher education and who have been underrepresented in education, K through 12 grade levels," said Harmon.

"The decision around affirmative action has not affected my role as president as I will continue to find ways to carry out our mission." Harmon said with determination. "I have to point to the state of California, which has been dealing with this issue since the state passed a law to not have race-based selections, and I think we look to them as leaders in terms of ways that they have worked around a decision that was obviously disappointing."

Indeed, in 1996, California voters passed ballot Proposition 209 which amended the state constitution to prohibit state governmental institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity, specifically in the areas of public employment, public contracting, and public education.

However, data has shown this decision hasn't worked out for California in the long-run in terms of equity and inclusion as well as the recruitment of underrepresented student populations.

In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR) last year, Zachary Bleemer, assistant professor of economics at Princeton University, revealed that Black, Hispanic, and Native American students suffered the most under California's affirmative action ban:

"They're less likely to earn graduate degrees. Among lower-testing students, they're less likely to ever earn an undergraduate degree at all. They're less likely to earn degrees in lucrative STEM fields. And if you follow them into the labor market, for the subsequent 15 or 20 years, they're earning about five percent lower wages than they would have earned if they'd had access to more selective universities under affirmative action."

The consensus for EchoHawk and Harmon is that even though affirmative action has been banned, they will continue to rely on each

other for support and growth. "I must say, our community, along with other communities of color, have been very resilient. They can change a policy like this but progress marches forward," said Harmon. "This ban won't stop the tremendous growth of communities of color in the United States. It doesn't stop the fact that these populations are the fastest growing populations who will be the majority in the next 20 years."

As our society grapples with a world without affirmative action, the future of educational equity and inclusion remains uncertain. This past February, Yale announced that it will once again require standardized test scores for its admissions - a policy they waived during the pandemic.

In an interview with The New York Times, Jeremiah Quinlan, the Dean of undergraduate admissions at Yale, summed up the re-instated policy as: "We don't want more applications. We want the right applications." This cryptic response begs the question: Exactly who do they want applying to their college; everyone or just a privileged few?

Indigenous Leaders on the Supreme Court's Ruling on Affirmative Action in College Admissions

By Rory Wheeler

In July, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark decision in the consolidated cases of *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023) and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*, which held that the admissions programs used by Harvard College and the University of North Carolina (UNC) violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which prohibits the denial of "any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The decision authored by Chief Justice John Roberts, joined by Justices Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett, held that the consideration of a college applicant's race as one factor in making an admissions decision to promote diversity is unconstitutional.

Writing for the Court, the Chief Justice stated, "Harvard and UNC admissions programs cannot be reconciled with the guarantees of the Equal Protection Clause. Both programs lack sufficiently focused and measurable objectives warranting the use of race, unavoidably employ race in a negative manner, involve racial stereotyping, and lack meaningful endpoints. We have never permitted admissions programs to work in that way, and we will not do so today."

In a dissenting opinion authored by Justice Sotomayor, joined by Justices Kagan, and Jackson, Sotomayor wrote, "True equality of educational

opportunity in racially diverse schools is an essential component of the fabric of our democratic society. It is an interest of the highest order and a foundational requirement for the promotion of equal protection under the law. *Brown v. Board of Education* recognized that passive race neutrality was inadequate to achieve the constitutional guarantee of racial equality in a Nation where the effects of segregation persist. In a society where race continues to matter, there is no constitutional requirement that institutions attempting to remedy their legacies of racial exclusion must operate with a blindfold." Sotomayor concluded in dissent, "Today, this Court overrules decades of precedent and imposes a superficial rule of race blindness on the Nation. The devastating impact of this decision cannot be overstated."

This decision sent shockwaves to colleges, universities, and students of color, who now wonder what it means and how it will affect them. The Cherokee Nation's Delegate to Congress, Senior Vice President of Government Relations for Cherokee Nation Businesses, Executive Director of Government Relations for the Cherokee Nation, and Native Forward Board Member at Large and Alumna, Kimberly Teehee (Cherokee Nation); and the Willard H. Pedrick Dean, Regents and Foundation Professor of Law at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, and Native Forward Emeritus Board Member and Alumna, Stacy Leeds (Cherokee); and

Rodina Cave Parnall (Quechua), the Executive Director of the American Indian Law Center, Inc. (AILC) share their insights on this decision and its impact.

Teehee reminded students during a recent law school lecture that since the Supreme Court's rulings in *Morton v. Mancari*, 417 U.S. 535 (1974) and later in *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49 (1978), wherein an opinion written by Justice Thurgood Marshall affirmed that "tribes are distinct, sovereign political communities existing within the United States, which retain powers of self-government." In those decisions, the Court has ruled that special preference laws that apply uniquely to Native Americans are not based on race but are based on a political classification because of the unique status of Indian Tribes and their constitutionally recognized government-to-government relationship with the U.S.

Leeds said it's essential to note that in the same term, the Supreme Court decided the college admissions case, the Court decided *Brackeen v. Haaland*, 599 U.S. 255 (2023), which upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and affirmed the political classification of Native Americans rather than race based.

In supporting students in college admissions, Leeds said the ruling was about the use of race as a factor in college admissions decisions but didn't prohibit a university from doing things that they always had, such as



ensuring the pool of applicants is diverse. Leeds said in the Court's opinion, admissions committees can still look at the "big picture" of an applicant's experiences, where they can describe their background, pathway, and why they want to be admitted.

"For many law schools, this decision didn't make a huge departure from what they were already doing from the recruitment of a diverse class, taking into consideration many things in the applicant process. It just says there can't be decisions based on race alone, that it can have impacts based on a candidate's experiences and lives," said Leeds.

From a pipeline standpoint in Indian Country, there have been many organizations for the past 50 years that better situate applicants seeking higher education. Leeds said that programs such as the Native American Pathway to Law Program, the Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI), Native Forward Scholars Fund programming, College/Graduate Horizons, Fly-In programs, and similar programs, are "full steam ahead" and will continue to get a pipeline of Native students to higher education and that this decision does not change that in any way.

Teehee said she participated in the PLSI and had support through law school and guidance along the way because of its extensive network of Native lawyers that span generations. She says it is vital for students to know and appreciate the unique standing of Indian Tribes in this country – that it's not based on race, that we are a part of sovereign nations, and that as federally recognized Tribes, we have a lot more protections that any kind of preferences, like what we see in the employment area and in hiring is permissible. Indian preference in admitting Native students to the college system would also be protected because of that relationship.

Above: Kimberly Teehee, Cherokee Nation, Board Member at Large, Native Forward Scholars Fund

Below: Stacy Leeds, Cherokee, Emeritus Board, Native Forward Scholars Fund



Rodina Cave Parnall, Quechua, Executive Director of the American Indian Law Center, Inc. (AILC). (Courtesy photo)

Leeds said students should remember that this decision is about admissions decisions based on race alone, not about recruitment, pipelines, or creating programs that will uniquely draw certain types of students to a school. Leeds said this decision has no impact on schools that offer Native American studies or Native American law programs in their ability to recruit students who would be strong candidates for those programs.

The decision prohibits schools from considering race as part of their admissions decisions, Parnall noted. Still, it left open the opportunity for students to inform the law schools about their "lived experiences." For example, many law schools now ask for a personal statement, a "statement of perspective," or a "lived experiences statement," where applicants can share experiences that shaped their character and any unique perspectives that will contribute to the law school

community. Many law schools recognize that the Court's ruling does not prohibit an applicant from telling their unique story, including how their racial, ethnic, or cultural identity shaped them as a person.

Tribes could benefit from developing materials to share with local universities to urge these institutions to come to them if they have issues or need guidance, Teehee said. Further, Tribes can be proactive in equipping universities with the information that they need, so they don't feel that when institutions admit Native American students, they are somehow not fulfilling the spirit of the Supreme Court decision.

Leeds urged students that if they cannot find a preparatory program in their communities, they can find them nationally, such as summer pipeline programs. She said for those seeking to attend law schools, there is a large group of Native attorneys, such as the National

Native American Bar Association and local bar associations, in which those attorneys will be quite generous with their time, helping mentor students in what steps they need to take to move forward. "I know in Indian Country we are rich in mentors. They want to help the next generation find their path," said Leeds.

"You have great allies in the Tribal Nations you come from, as well as organizations like Native Forward Scholars Fund and such who can help along the way," said Teehee, "I have made it a mission of mine to mentor young students, particularly those in law school, and to work with top-tier schools in admitting Native students, not only because they add diversity to the campus, but because they are deserving of that opportunity."

"My biggest piece of advice is that there are so many people who are available to help in the path to success, whatever that looks like to the individual, and there is so much profound need throughout Indian Country for more lawyers and more educated people across all disciplines. It may seem like an uphill battle, but what comes, in the end, is much needed in our communities – and not just in our communities but in any pathway they choose. It's exciting that there are so many people passionate about helping," said Leeds.

"Native Americans still struggle to reach equitable access to higher education and law school. Natives still make up only a fraction of a percent of the total number of attorneys and judges in the United States. Our work continues," said Parnall.



NATIVE FORWARD
SCHOLARS FUND

Visit our Online Student Resource Center today!

Native Forward is dedicated to providing you with all the tools you need to fuel your ambitions and become a leader on campus!

Our Online Resource Guide will provide you with tools to help you find the right college, learn how to apply for scholarships, give you an insight to life on campus, and so much more!

Visit us today to learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit the link below!
www.nativeforward.org



Beyond Affirmative Action: The Future of Indigenous Education

By Saxon Metzger

In a 2023 decision felt across Indian Country, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against race-based admissions in education, commonly referred to as affirmative action. This decision marked a significant shift in the landscape of American higher education, with far-reaching implications for diversity and inclusion efforts across the nation. It ends the consideration of race in college admissions with few exceptions, which has caused concern for Native students, who have historically benefited from affirmative action policies to address systemic inequalities.

While this legal case will continue to evolve in its impact over time, this article will present a selection of responses and input from Native students and educators who are helping to clarify how impactful this will be for their lives, Tribes, and extended Native community, before clarifying how institutions like Native Forward Scholars Fund can fill this critical gap.

Affirmative action policies began to take shape at Harvard and Yale in conjunction with a ban on race-based discrimination established by the Kennedy administration in the 1960s. Conceived as a tool to combat racial discrimination and promote diversity within educational and employment settings, it has played a crucial role in opening doors for historically marginalized groups, including Native Americans.

By considering race as one of many factors in admissions decisions, colleges and universities have sought to create more inclusive and representative student bodies, acknowledging the diverse

perspectives and experiences that minority students bring to their campuses, while also acknowledging that high quality candidates from Native communities and other groups historically underperform on examinations and evaluations for college admission before overperforming when given the tools to succeed.

"It's difficult to succeed in education as a first-generation college student without a great deal of support from the university or faculty. Professors were at times products of affirmative action initiatives which gives them the chance to mentor incoming students from backgrounds that would be impacted by this decision, but there isn't going to be the same level of structural support to get these students here in the first place if we don't fill the gaps left by Affirmative Action's repeal," said Ayda Donne (Osage Nation), an instructor in the New York University (NYU) English Department.

"We're studying constitutional law now and we're certain to focus on this cutting-edge issue. My seminar project was completed on Louise Cobell and the Cobell vs. Salazar settlement," said Native Forward scholar and law student Austin Dodd (Choctaw Nation), echoing a similarly landmark decision that has created one of the largest sources of support for Indigenous education efforts.

Affirmative action policies have long been debated, but the evidence supporting their benefits, particularly for Indigenous students and other underrepresented minorities, is substantial. Research indicates that students of color, including

Indigenous students, benefit from the increased support and opportunities afforded by affirmative action, leading to higher graduation rates compared to their counterparts at institutions with less diversity. For example, a study by Bowen and Bok found that minority students admitted through affirmative action policies to selective colleges graduated at higher rates than they would have at less selective institutions. Affirmative action alumni, including Indigenous students, often achieve higher levels of professional and economic success.

A report from the College Board highlighted that students admitted through affirmative action policies are more likely to pursue careers that serve the public interest and report high levels of career satisfaction. "I always thought, whether you attend a higher education institution or not, you should always be trying to learn - higher education has helped me deepen my understanding of the world and provide for a better life for my family," said Dodd.

The presence of Indigenous and other minority students contributes to a richer, more diverse educational environment, benefiting all students. Diversity on college campuses has been documented as a key way to promote critical thinking, reduce racial bias, and prepare students for an increasingly global workforce, with a study published by the American Psychological Association emphasizing that campus diversity had a significant impact on students' cognitive skills and educational outcomes. Beyond this, affirmative action has been pivotal in providing pathways for socioeconomic mobility among underrepresented minorities.



Austin Dodd, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Native Forward Scholars Fund Scholar. (Courtesy photo)

A report by the Century Foundation found that students from minority backgrounds, including Indigenous students, who attended selective colleges and universities through affirmative action were more likely to move into higher income brackets as adults. Affirmative action contributes to increased representation of minorities in critical fields such as medicine, law, and public service.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, policies promoting diversity in medical schools are essential for addressing health disparities and ensuring that underserved communities, including Indigenous populations, have access to culturally competent healthcare. These findings highlight that affirmative action brought real benefit to both Indigenous students and others who benefited, but the entire campus, underscoring the importance of considering holistic measures and innovative policies to continue supporting diversity and inclusion in the wake of changes to affirmative action policies.

The Supreme Court's ruling necessitates a reevaluation of how colleges and universities can maintain and enhance diversity without the tool of race-conscious admissions policies. It challenges these institutions to develop innovative strategies that holistically assess the backgrounds and experiences of all students, while actively seeking ways to support underrepresented communities, including Indigenous students.

"Affirmative action provides access to education, and education creates power for individuals and their community. It's key for intergenerational wealth. Without the structural support of affirmative action, it's our responsibility as Indigenous people to organize and help this next generation of Native students," said Donne.

"Native Forward Scholars Fund has been instrumental in helping me achieve my educational and career goals. The scholarships offered, as well as the seminars and other activities, really provided an outlet for support that made it possible to focus on my studies. Native Forward Scholars Fund's role providing material support for Indigenous communities along with creating a sense of belonging is key," said Dodd, "I haven't had the experience of meeting as many other Indigenous folks in higher education, in part because of the demands of having a growing family with a newborn child. My father and grandmother, both Choctaw, are my heroes. As a first-generation college student, their belief in me, like Native Forward Scholars Fund, has been critical in helping me succeed."

I received support from Native Forward while I earned my undergraduate degree in Economics and my Master of Business Administration with an Emphasis in Sustainability, and now serve as a professor of sustainable business at Wilmington University. Having been both student and educator, it's undeniable to me the impact of organizations like Native Forward in helping students feel at home in higher education.

The conversation around affirmative action and its implications for Indian Country underscores a broader debate about how best to achieve equity in education. As colleges and universities adapt to this new legal landscape, the importance of creating inclusive educational environments that honor the voices of Native American students has never been more critical.

"What leaves me optimistic for the future is how resilient my



Ayda Donne, Osage Nation. (Courtesy photo)

undergraduate students are. The ones here at NYU are claiming that space and really articulating that they belong despite what's going on. This repeal of affirmative action functions as a chilling effect, and it signals to Indigenous people that they don't belong in educational spaces like they might have thought," Donne said. "It was only through mentors that I felt that I belonged in academia, so seeing those relationships potentially be interrupted will be devastating for so many communities if we can't organize an alternative. The problem is that students of Indigenous backgrounds may have a hard time getting into the university due to societal or economic problems meaning groups like Native Forward Scholars Fund will be key to working with administrators and educators to create support networks outside of admissions to provide support before and after students are accepted into a higher education program."

The journey towards educational equity for Indigenous students is far from over, demanding continued advocacy, innovation, and commitment to diversity and inclusion from all stakeholders in the educational community.

With so much work to do, it will be important for Tribal organizations, Native people, and Indigenous allies to closely watch this issue as it develops to ensure that we're providing real support to the organizations helping improve Indigenous higher education outcomes.

Rezlections: A Native Woman's Journey of Opportunity, Chance & Community

By Hilary Gourneau

As the decision to uphold Affirmative Action was flat lined in June of 2023 by the U.S. Supreme Court with a 6-3 ruling, I knew my life's work would continue to be centered around equity and representation, specifically for Indigenous people. Raised on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Poplar, Montana, home of the Dakota and Nakoda people. Since August 2020, I have utilized my leadership training skills and knowledge acquired throughout my educational journey to serve as Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes' Head Start director, where I initially began my educational pursuit, as a Head Start student. I'm currently serving on the Board of Trustees at Poplar Public Schools; I hold a position as an Ex-Officio Member of the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education (MACIE) representing Tribal Head Starts and serve on the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) board as the Zone 8 Alternate.

According to treaty rights written by the U.S., education was promised to Tribes and Indigenous students and should be prioritized when seeking out educational opportunities. As the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) wrote in their 2023 resolution condemning the Supreme Court's decision on striking down Affirmative Action, "this decision fails to account for the centuries of destructive federal educational policies that oppressed Native cultures with future implications that may discourage Native learners from applying to universities." Native people were not seen as "U.S. Citizens" until 1924 and were then only eligible to vote in 1925. This year,

the U.S. will be turning 248 years old, and we've only been "citizens" for less than half of its existence but are the original stewards of the land.

As I revisit my educational journey, I'm reassured that many of my opportunities have been gifted to me through affirmative action. My college entrance scores did not reflect who I truly was nor what I was necessarily capable of. If you've watched the Hulu hit, "Reservation Dogs," when I say I lived a "rez-life" you'll know it's a mixture of humor and survival. Where my family vacations were spent at neighboring powwows, traveling for ceremonies, "root-digging" on the prairie for school clothes money, or attending a relative's funeral. As I entered high school, I had already experienced the death of classmates and friends due to tragic accidents involving substance use, violence, and suicide. I share these experiences because my life resume, by the time I was 18 years old, was far more interesting than my college entrance scores.

My post-secondary journey started in 2007 with an athletic scholarship to a junior college in North Dakota where the only people of color I saw were students on the athletic teams. I'd shortly find myself relocating back to my reservation and enrolling in college courses at my Tribal community college, Fort Peck Community College (FPCC). A place where I found understanding, representation, acceptance, and a sense of belonging as a Native student. As I finished my freshman year at FPCC, I decided to continue at Montana State University-Billings (MSU-B) on a track scholarship, while I pursued my Elementary

Education degree. The Indigenous representation was sparse in the teacher prep program and on campus, so I spent most of the time in my dorm room or in the Native American Student (NAS) lounge, where I could always find food and the comfort of Native laughter. The lounge was a sanctuary for me and other Native students, it was a place to find connection and support. We may have been from various Tribes throughout Montana but on that campus, we were of one Tribe, uplifting and celebrating each other. During my time at MSU-B, I was encouraged by the Native American student advisor to apply for internships and scholarships. I was hesitant but decided to take a chance.

My first internship took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Services (FSIS), working in the Office of Field Operations (OFO) in the Resource Management and Financial Planning Department. I learned valuable skills like time management, organization, scheduling, and creating filing systems that kept track of inspectors' certificates and vehicle usage. During this internship, I was able to accompany inspectors and veterinarians to the processing and slaughter facilities in Philadelphia to gain an understanding of the various jobs. My second internship, the Washington Internship for Native Students (WINS) program in Washington, D.C., on the campus of American University and in the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), is where I found my passion and purpose.

I worked with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) in the Office of Research, Policy, and Post-Secondary assisting my mentor with Michelle Obama's "Let's Move! In Indian Country" Initiative. I also experienced campus life at a prestigious college, toured the White House, and visited historical monuments and museums. I connected with Natives from all over the U.S., creating lifelong friends.

Those internships allowed me to experience many "firsts" as a Native college student; from navigating an airport, flying solo, living on my own in a major city, learning how to navigate the various transportation systems, to experiencing loneliness, homesickness, and at times being the only Native person occupying that space. As tough as it was to leave home during the summer months, these were unique opportunities for me and ones my family couldn't afford privately.

I graduated in 2012, with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in Native American Studies. I would carry out the traditional teaching I learned as a young child during my "root-digging" days, which is when you take from the land, you give need to back or what Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer refers to, in Braiding Sweetgrass, as "restorative reciprocity." I returned to my community, which gifted me unconditional support and encouragement through my years as a young person, and as a fifth-grade teacher. I would teach, coach, and continue to give selflessly to my school and community for five years.

In 2017, I was accepted into the Portland State University's (PSU) Counselor Education program. I knew funding was going to be a challenge, so I started my search and came across Native Forward Scholars Fund. I applied for financial support in the form of a Loan For Service through the Bureau of Indian Education, as well as assistance from the Cobell Scholarship and my Tribal Higher Education Department. I then moved to Portland, Oregon, and finally understood what a "predominantly White institute of higher education" was, even though I experienced this throughout the majority of my post-secondary



Hilary Gourneau, Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation, Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumna

journey. I found myself to be one of two (known) Native students out of the 50 selected to participate in the graduate program. During my time in Portland, I became involved with Portland's Native community by attending celebrations, volunteering at the Native American Youth and Family Center's (NAYA) annual gala fundraiser and helping mentor Native students in PSU's graduate program. In 2019, I applied to the Oregon Lead Program, housed by the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) Bridges Initiative in Portland. The seven-month, Native-geared, program consisted of interdisciplinary leadership, skill building, professional training, and networking opportunities which would allow me to build valuable skills. In June 2020, I graduated with my master's degree in Counselor Education with a focus on School Counseling and Trauma-Informed Services, and a certificate from the Oregon-Lead Program.

I share my experiences because without funding from selfless donors, non-profit organizations, businesses, and community groups, the resources to support Indigenous students seeking opportunities in higher education would be nonexistent. It would not have been possible to see myself reflected in spaces where Native people have been historically and purposely

kept from, or to discover where my passion and sense of purpose lies.

The fight for equity and inclusion just became more challenging, but it is a battle that Native people will continue to approach with a warrior mentality. NIEA called upon the "Department of Education and all institutions of higher education to acknowledge the unique political status of Native students, outside of their racial designation, and uphold the trust and treaty responsibilities by actively seeking to enroll Native students in higher education."

But as Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor wrote, "Society's progress toward equality cannot be permanently halted. The pursuit of racial diversity will go on."

Indian Country bands together when we need each other, I have witnessed this time and time again, from intimate moments like clinging to the only other Native in your graduate program because it felt like a piece of home. Watching Natives gather from every state to advocate in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (No-DAPL) because it threatened the livelihood of our relatives. We have always stepped up when called upon as Native people and I hope we continue to lay our blankets down and save seats at the table for our future relatives.

WORDS OF WISDOM

By Melanie Benjamin

When I was in college, an important leader in my community shared with me that education can be our greatest help when it comes to curing social and societal ills, especially in Indian Country. That became the new lens through which I understood the role of education. I began to see areas where I could contribute to my community through my studies, and places where I could fill a much-needed role. In this way, being a leader is much like being a student; good leaders are constantly learning about the wants and needs of their community, and working to fill gaps seamlessly for the betterment of all. When I stepped into leadership, I operated on the idea that leading, in any capacity, is less about what exactly you know, and more about the way that you are listening to and impacting other people.



(Courtesy photo)

If you are reading this, I am confident that you want to be the absolute best that you can be. Not only for yourself, but your community—your friends, family, neighborhood, Nation. This is called being a good relative. Good relatives know that the world does not revolve around themselves, and that we are all situated in a web of creation, where nobody or nothing is at the center, but where all feel the impact and tug of one another. In this web, there are opportunities for every single person to thrive, and find success. This is reflected in one of my favorite quotes: “When we all do better, we all do better.”

Success in academia, or in any endeavor, is extremely personal and meaningful. Your definition of success will not always match up with others. For me, success is any outcome that comes about when I am using my cultural teachings and value system. As an Anishinaabe woman, there are seven teachings that are at the forefront of all I do, as a leader and relative. These teachings are love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility, and wisdom. Whenever I am making an important decision, I make sure that the decision honors and reflects these

teachings. I encourage you to hold closely the teachings and values that come from your culture, and practice incorporating them into your daily life at every opportunity. Honoring your cultural teachings will not only keep you connected to important ancestral knowledge, which present answers for various modern-day problems, but it will also keep you connected to your “why.” Find your why and let it grow with you.

One of the best pieces of advice I can give to students is to get involved. Involve yourself in as many organizations and opportunities as your free time will allow—this will put you in contact with like-minded people, show others your dedication to being a part of the solution, and will demonstrate a commitment to being a good relative. The more you practice making the most of opportunities, the more will be afforded to you, and the more your personal work and network will be aligned with your vision. These are vital and worthwhile steps to increasing your luck radius, which can put you in the right place at the right time for job and partnership opportunities, and to realizing your unique strengths and medicines that only you can contribute.

As Chief Executive of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for over 20 years, I cannot understate the importance of developing your network. While it is important to commit yourself 100% to your studies, it is also about who you know. These two things can and should coexist as equally valuable for leaders. There have been many instances as Chief where I did not have the right answer or the specific skill set needed, but I knew somebody who did. Developing the practice of asking for help is often an indicator that you are the right person for the job, and you should develop your network with this in mind. There will always be somebody who wants to help you, and you are bound to return the favor. Take care of these relationships and this community, because nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something, and being successful is almost always a team effort.

My hope for the next generation of leaders is that they are able to be present in the now while remembering those that have walked before, and thinking fondly of those to come. As Anishinaabe people, we act with the next seven generations in mind, and the seven teachings guide us in creating a world for these coming generations to inhabit that is connected to the important things of our past, but is better in every way. This is why it is important to maintain a relationship with your cultural teachings. During my time as Chief, my most valuable advice and input came from my elders. They did not have much in terms of physical riches, but they held on to as much of our rich culture and language as they could. Now, we are in a season of abundant harvest, and are sowing the seeds of the hard work and advocacy of our elders, who always solved problems with the next seven generations in mind.

CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE YOU CAN BE A NURSE

Located in Grand Forks, ND, at the University of North Dakota, the RAIN Program provides academic support and assistance to American Indian students seeking degrees in nursing, nutrition & dietetics, and social work.

- Culturally relevant advisement, guidance, and personal and financial counseling
- Assistance in locating funding
- A “home away from home”

cnpd.UND.edu/RAIN

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
COLLEGE OF NURSING & PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

701-777-4519 | /UNDRAIN | rain@UND.edu | @undrainprogram

Watch Jezaarae's RAIN journey to Flight Nurse

Native

T Shirts Printing Company

**FREE SHIPPING
FAST DELIVERY**

Request a quote today

www.skyyscreenprinting.com

405-310-9003



THE MANY FACES OF SUCCESS

RECOGNIZING
ALUM & SCHOLARS
MAKING IMPACTS
IN INDIAN
COUNTRY &
BEYOND

Cultivating Allies, Fostering Success: National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education's Mission to Support Indigenous Students

By Nicole S. Prescott, Ph.D.

Transformational ideas are born when committed people rally around a mission. Success is achieved when those committed people act.

Every university is situated on territories that have historically belonged to, and in many cases continue to be connected to, Indigenous peoples.¹ These lands were frequently acquired from Indigenous peoples through methods that were unethical and, often, violent. As pillars of American culture and knowledge, universities have a paramount duty to acknowledge and confront these historical and ongoing truths.

A closely related issue is the pervasive gap in awareness about the past and present circumstances of Indigenous peoples among well-intentioned staff, faculty, and administrators in higher education. Universities can live up to their promise and responsibility by creating environments where Indigenous students can thrive while still embracing their cultural identities and worldviews.

I am a citizen of the Miami Nation of Oklahoma (Myaamia) and

an Indigenous higher education administrator, an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at one of the largest university systems in the country. These intersecting identities make me a rare breed. In 2021, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Native faculty at a degree seeking post-secondary institution was less than one half of one percent. The number of Indigenous higher education administrators are not even tracked to my knowledge. Based off the faculty numbers, I would venture to say that I am one of the very few in the country, particularly outside of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). I know I'm one of the very few in the academic side of the house.

For years I made a concerted effort to seek out other Indigenous administrators. Through these efforts, I found the National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education (NINLHE). I serve on its Governing Council, an honor I've had for the past four years. I sought out NINLHE for much the same reason it was conceived: to find a community of Indigenous and Indigenous-advocating, dedicated

higher education professionals. This is one of the greatest benefits of NINLHE, in addition to the high-quality professional development the group provides.

NINLHE produces a Summer Institute for Native and non-Native administrators, professional staff, and faculty committed to supporting and increasing recruitment, retention, and graduation of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Aboriginal students at public, private, and TCUs in the U.S. and Canada.

The number of Indigenous students in postsecondary institutions are better than faculty numbers, but still not where they need to be. According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute, only 24 percent of 18–24-year-old Native American students are enrolled in college, starkly contrasting with the 41 percent enrollment rate of the overall U.S. population. There are ongoing challenges facing Native students, challenges rooted in systemic issues of access, resources, and representation. Yet, there is hope in targeted support programs and institutional commitments to change.



Amy Locklear Hertel, Coharie & Lumbee, NINLHE 2022 Keynote Speaker. (Courtesy photo)

At the heart of efforts to address these challenges is NINLHE. Founded in the early 1990s by Colleen Larimore (Comanche) and her brother Jim (Comanche), alongside other visionary leaders, NINLHE emerged from a profound understanding of the barriers that Indigenous communities face in higher education. It was born out of a commitment to not only support Native American students, faculty, and staff, but to fundamentally transform higher education into a space where Indigenous students can thrive without compromising their cultural identities. The strategy was clear. We must build and educate allies through culturally relevant and evidenced-based professional development for Native and non-Native higher educational professionals to help improve Native student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.

The idea for NINLHE arose out of practical need and a deep desire to help Native communities by supporting and empowering Native students on college campuses.

But, first, there was a need to get more Native students onto college campuses. In the late 1980s, Colleen was working as an admissions officer at Dartmouth College. In addition to her task of traditional fall recruitment, she was traveling across the Western states (Montana, Colorado, Arizona, and Oklahoma) to university-based STEM summer academic programs geared toward Native high school students to recruit these students to Dartmouth College.

Most of these programs were staffed by Native Americans who shared many of the challenges Colleen was facing at Dartmouth. "It was revelatory, heartening, and disheartening to hear of their experiences in trying to improve things for their students and, by extension, their students' communities," said Colleen. "Their belief, and mine, was that we were all in this together and that empowering Native high school students to enter college on any campus was vastly better than them not going to college at all." It was many of these same program

staffers who formed the core group of NINLHE many years later. "As it was back in 1992, it continues to be the case that Native students are more likely to come from poorer communities, graduate from more under-resourced and underperforming high schools, and have greater financial need than students of other races. Long story short, we still have a long way to go," said Colleen. "The upside is that we know what to do."

Her brother Jim agrees. "While Native/Indigenous students are, in general, more visible than they were when NINLHE was created, I think that Colleen's description of [Native students] being both invisible and highly scrutinized continues to hold. And while progress is being made in terms of concepts like growth mindset and stereotype threat are now better understood, the deficit mindset still underpins much of K-12 and postsecondary education. So, while important progress has been made, and there are more people in more places working to make a difference, our journey is still often characterized by two steps forward and one step back," said Jim.

¹ A note on terminology: I use the terms "Indigenous," "Native American," and "Native" interchangeably, but do recognize that words and names matter and not all Natives identify with each of the terms I use in this article. I mean no disrespect.

Today, as we face the compounded challenges of declining college enrollment and graduation rates among Indigenous students, exacerbated by the pandemic, the work of NINLHE is more crucial than ever. NINLHE's efforts to foster Indigenous leadership, advocate for systemic change, and build supportive communities serve as a testament to the power of collective action and the enduring strength of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom.

The NINLHE Summer Institute offers a unique opportunity for Native and non-Native administrators, professional staff, and faculty committed to supporting the recruitment, retention, and graduation of Indigenous students. The Institute is designed to be an intensive experience, focusing on knowledge and skill-building, information sharing, and leveraging the wisdom and experiences of both presenters and colleagues. In an atmosphere of collaboration,

friendship, and fun, the Institute also provides opportunities for spiritual renewal and personal empowerment with an Elder-in-Residence guiding participants through prayer and reflection each day.

By attending the NINLHE Summer Institute, participants will be part of a transformative movement towards creating a more equitable and inclusive higher education system. It's not just about addressing the unique challenges Indigenous students face; it's about championing initiatives that ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed. The Institute's workshops, designed by experts in fields vital to Native student success, offer an intensive professional development experience that balances interactive skill-building with information gathering.

Hosted on the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW)

campus July 23-25, 2024, the institute promises to be a transformative experience, bringing together leaders, scholars, and advocates from across the nation to discuss and shape the future of Native leadership in higher education. The theme of this year's institute is "Navigating New Landscapes for Indigenous Professionals and Students in Higher Education," reflecting our commitment to providing culturally relevant and evidence based professional development in areas that enhance the knowledge of Native and non-Native administrators, faculty, and professional staff who work with Native students.

If you are committed to making a difference in the lives of Indigenous students and advancing Indigenous leadership in higher education, the NINLHE Summer Institute is an unparalleled opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to meaningful change.



Above: JoAnn Chavis Lowery, Lumbee, NINLHE 2022 Elder-in-Residence. (Courtesy photo)

Together, we can pave the way for future generations of Indigenous students to achieve their academic and personal aspirations, ensuring that higher education is a place where Native people can pursue their goals while maintaining their cultural identities. Join us in this vital

endeavor to support, empower, and celebrate Indigenous success in higher education.

For more information about the NINLHE Summer Institute, visit <https://myacpa.org/event/ninlhe2024/>.

Below: Karen Francis-Begay, Diné, NINLHE Governing Board member and Amy Locklear Hertel, Coharie & Lumbee, NINLHE 2022 Keynote Speaker. (Courtesy photo)

Felisia Tagaban Gaskin (forefront), Diné & Tlingit and Julian Juan (background), Tohono O'odham, two NINLHE 2022 participants representing the University of Arizona. (Courtesy photo)



2024 STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Every month, Native Forward Scholars Fund highlights one undergraduate and one graduate student for their academic excellence and community engagement.

Student of the Month Making the Grad campaign celebrates our scholars for their outstanding efforts that inspire positive change in all they do and their accomplishments in academics and beyond.

Congratulations to all our Students of the Month – you are Native Forward!

OCTOBER



UNDERGRADUATE

Lance Lowman
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Lance is pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan's College of Engineering. He hopes to leverage his creativity and join the SPARK Electric Racing Team at the University of Michigan, designing and building electric vehicular technology. He hopes to use his new skills to overcome educational disparities and cultivate engineering-related skills through volunteering with underprivileged youth.

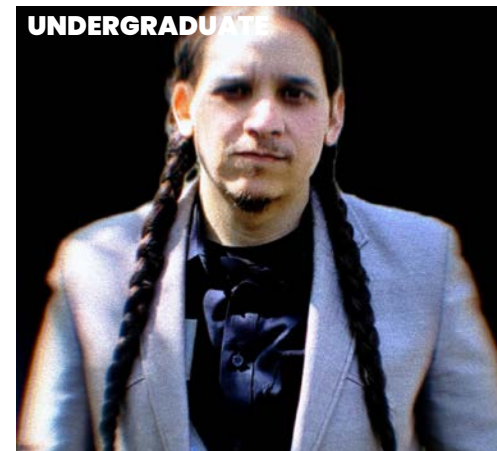


GRADUATE

Mikalen Belgarde
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota

Mikalen is a second-year Indigenous Health, Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Dakota. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a minor in Human Development and Family Sciences from North Dakota State University (NDSU). His passion for addressing community health disparities led him to pursue a Master of Public Health at NDSU.

NOVEMBER



UNDERGRADUATE

Stephen Silva-Brave
Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation

Stephen is in his final semester of the University of Texas at Arlington Bachelor of Social Work program. He is a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor-Intern and consultant for Texas' pioneering statewide Native American Studies course. His primary purpose is to uplift Indigenous communities and drive positive change for those struggling with substance use and health problems.



GRADUATE

Derrick Platero
Navajo Nation

Derrick is a first-year Ph.D. student at Iowa State University, specializing in soil science with a focus on soil erosion and watershed modeling through machine learning and AI. His current research aims to validate soil erosion models across Iowa. Derrick completed his master's in soil science at the University of Georgia, following an undergraduate degree in the same field, with a minor in geological sciences, from New Mexico State University.

DECEMBER



Winona Williams

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

Winona is a first-generation college student pursuing a bachelor's degree in Indigenous Studies. Winona has been taking Ojibwe language classes every semester to revitalize the language and one day become an Ojibwe language teacher and teach the language to future generations of Indigenous students.



Nerissa Dolney

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation

Nerissa is a third-year graduate student in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program at the University of North Dakota and a member of the Indians into Psychology Doctoral Education program. She plans on becoming a licensed psychologist to provide mental health services to Indigenous peoples on her reservation.

FEBRUARY



Jonathan Meadows

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

Jonathan is pursuing a degree in Native American Studies at Fort Lewis College. His lifelong goal is to revitalize his Cheyenne language. Jonathan has interned as a Language Apprentice, writing, and reading in Cheyenne, and as an Indigenous Food Systems Intern, learning and maintaining Indigenous-based farmland practices and using a traditional calendar to farm.



Emily Plumage

Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana

Emily is a third-year medical student at the Ohio State University (OSU) College of Medicine. In 2019, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training from the University of Utah. Throughout her time in higher education, Native American advocacy has been one of her greatest passions. She started the Association of Native American Medical Students (ANAMS) OSU Chapter and serves as the president.

JANUARY



Katera Neil

Hopi Tribe of Arizona

Katera attends the Fashion Institute of Technology for packaging design. Always an artist, she combined her love for creating art with a passion for package design. Katera is inspired by relatives and ancestors who dedicate themselves to their craft and create intricately beautiful works of art such as pottery, baskets, belts, paintings, and Kachina dolls.



Miko Brandon

Choctaw Nation

Miko is a U.S. Navy veteran and graduate student in the Environmental Science Graduate Program at Oklahoma State University (OSU). He earned a bachelor's in forestry, Natural Resource Ecology, and Management with a minor in Soil Sciences. During his undergraduate studies, he was a student leader at OSU's Center for Sovereign Nations, teaching visitors about Tribal sovereignty and connecting Native students with resources.

MARCH



Ashley Hinkel

Morongo Band of Mission Indians

Ashley is pursuing a degree in business economics with a minor in accounting from the University of California, Los Angeles. After graduation, she intends to become a financial advisor and attain a Chartered Financial Advisor (CFA) certification. Ashley says her ambition is not merely a career choice; it's driven by a genuine interest in finance and accounting and a desire to assist families in effective retirement planning.



Joshua Severns

Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Joshua earned a master's in social work from Boise State University. He then enrolled to Montana State University's Indigenous and Rural Health Ph.D. program. He is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Advanced Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (ACADC), and clinical supervisor. Joshua's passion lies in serving Indian Country as a healer, leader, and health equity advocate by promoting and exercising the inherent rights and sovereignty of Native people.

APRIL



UNDERGRADUATE

Chenoa Turtle
Cherokee Nation

Chenoa is a sophomore at Oklahoma State University (OSU) pursuing a double degree in Biology and Physiology with a concentration in Pre-Medical Sciences. She is a three-year member of the Oklahoma Indian Student Honor Society and a two-year member of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Youth Council. After completing her undergraduate studies, she plans to attend medical school to become an orthopedist.



GRADUATE

Christopher Whirlwind Soldier
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of the Crow Creek Reservation

Christopher is a first-year graduate student at the University of Minnesota Duluth in the Master's in Tribal Resources and Environmental Stewardship Program. He received an associate's and a bachelor's in business management from Sinte Gleska University in South Dakota. Christopher's motivation is his daughter and helping Tribal Nations with the preservation and conservation of Turtle Island.



NATIVE FORWARD
SCHOLARS FUND



Make an Impact, Donate Today

Native Forward Scholars Fund's commitment to empower, amplify, and inspire generations is at the heart of what we do, and it is our mission to meet the financial need of every Native student attaining degrees and accessing careers of their choice to strengthen their communities.

Through scholarship funding and holistic support, Native Forward has increased the graduation rates of undergraduate students to 69%, compared to the national average of 41% for Native students, and has boosted the rate for graduate students to 95%.

However, financial, academic preparation, informational, and visibility barriers make success and access to higher education difficult for Native students.

SCAN TO DONATE



Join us on our journey to meet the unmet need today because our students' efforts depend on your continued support. For more information on making your donation, please visit www.nativeforward.org/donate-now

Our Partners

Special thanks to our strategic partners for their continued support

Allspring	Colorado University Upward Bound	NIKE N7
Amateur Radio Digital Communications (ARDC)	Cypress Creek	Northwestern University
American Indian Science and Engineering Society	Edelman	PNM
American Indigenous Business Leaders	FoodCorps	Poarch Band of Creek Indians
American Indian College Fund	Google	REDW LLC
AMERIND Risk	Hewlett-Packard	Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians
APIA Scholars	Hispanic Scholarship Fund	Salish Kootenai College
Bank of America	Indigenous Education Inc	Sandia National Laboratories
Big Fire Law	Johnson Scholarship Foundation	San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Key Bank	Salesforce
Blue Stone Strategy Group	Lincoln Institute of Land Policy	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
Bureau of Indian Education	MetLife	Sogorea Te' Land Trust
Catena Foundation	Murdock Charitable Trust	Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace
CBRE	Native American Agriculture Fund	UNCF
CLA Foundation	NDN Collective	Urban Native Era
CNIGA	NextEra Energy	Wells Fargo
	NIKE	

Contact Us

Mailing List | Sign up at www.nativeforward.org/our-magazine

Advertising | For advertisement inquiries, please send an email to: marketing@nativeforward.org.

Reprints and Permissions | Reprints of published articles and/or artwork are prohibited without permission of Native Forward Scholars Fund.

Native Forward Scholars Fund
10010 Indian School Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112
Phone: 800.628.1920 | Fax: 505.884.0427
NativeForward.org

© 2024 Native Forward Scholars Fund. All rights reserved.
Published submissions and advertisements do not necessarily reflect the views of Native Forward Scholars Fund.



NATIVE FORWARD SCHOLARS FUND

TARGETED READERSHIP

Over 33,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students, graduates, professionals, and organizations.

EXTENSIVE IMPACT

- Reach Native leaders
- Recruit Native students
- Hire Native employees
- Develop business in Indian Country
- Support our mission

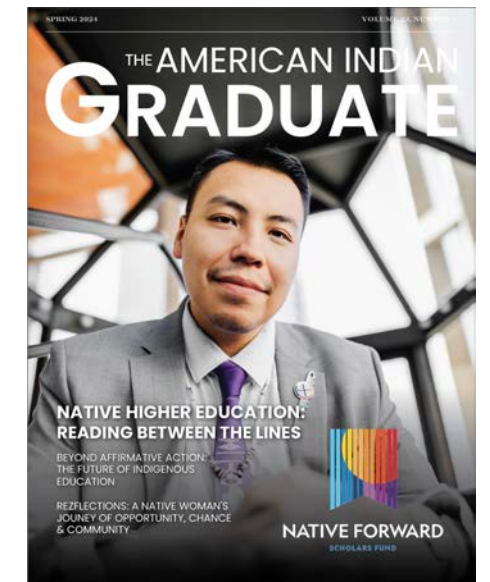
DEADLINE

FALL ISSUE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

ADVERTISING CONTACT

If you would like to place an ad in the American Indian Graduate, please email marketing@nativeforward.org

Advertisers and ad agencies assume full liability for all content of their ad including text, representations, and illustrations of ads printed. Advertisers also assume full responsibility for all claims made against Native Forward Scholars Fund that may arise for their ad(s). The publisher reserves the right to reject any advertisement not in keeping with Native Forward Scholars Fund standards. All copy is subject to Native Forward Scholars Fund approval.



ADVERTISE WITH US!

**SUBSCRIBE TO OUR
DIGITAL MAGAZINE**





NATIVE FORWARD
SCHOLARS FUND

Native Forward Scholars Fund
10010 Indian School Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S POSTAGE
PAID
ALBUQUERQUE, NM
PERMIT #1312

Native Forward Scholars Fund Alumni: What will your legacy be?

Our network of 22,000+ alumni is our most integral resource for deepening our transformative impact in every part of society.

Our unified hope for Native Forward alumni is to establish an identity rooted in our sense of belonging and cultivate long-lasting relationships for the next generation of Native Forward by activating a platform of ambassadors to lead professional and educational experiences that enhance Native Forward's visibility, collective impact of scholarship recipients, and increase funding for current students.

You can play a critical role in sharing our mission, vision, and core values through opportunities with us as alumni or ambassadors. We look forward to our alumni furthering our 50-year legacy of directly supporting and empowering Native scholars.

For more information on reconnecting with Native Forward, please contact antonia@nativeforward.org or scan the QR code.



SCAN TO
RECONNECT



Emerald Byakeddy, Navajo Nation, Native Forward Scholars Fund Scholar Alumna