WSU Native American Programs: February 2019 Newsletter

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Letter from the Executive Director of Tribal Relations

February 28, 2019 faith.price

Dear friends,

January 9th marked a special time for the Tribal Relations Office and Native American Programs. First, we celebrated the retirement of our dear friend and long-time leader, Barbara Aston. After 31 years of dedication to Native American education, she is now enjoying extra time with her family and still remains passionate about service. I have now served as the Executive Director of Tribal Relations for almost two months and continue my work as Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology and the Director of the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration. These positions complement each other in many ways.

I am especially honored to work on the traditional lands of the Palus and ceded lands of the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce) tribe, of which I am a member. I grew up in the area and returned home four years ago. My Indian name is Hookoo, named after my great, great, great, great grandmother who was a prisoner of war in Oklahoma for not giving up her religion.
My father is Gordon Higheagle, and my grandparents are Daniel and Louise Higheagle who have passed. My mother is Kathryne Ankney, and my grandparents are Dale and Patricia Ankney who have also passed. I have been married for 21 years to Mack Strong, a former Seattle Seahawk for 14+ years. Go Seahawks! He has grown to love my home, which he now calls home himself. I have two amazing sons, Isaiah Strong and Evan Strong. Currently, they are playing varsity basketball together and getting ready to go to the State Championship tournament. Go Hounds! And, of course Go Cougs!

Speaking of Cougs, back to my new position. It has been rewarding to spend additional time building relationships with my Native American relatives through this work. From visits with tribal communities and time spent at gatherings (e.g., Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Conference), I have listened and heard numerous great ideas on how to better serve Native American students and improve research collaborations.

Native American Advisory Board group photo with Native American Programs staff and WSU students Friday, Nov. 9, 2018, at the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center in Pullman, Wash.

I am so grateful for the generosity of Native peoples and their tireless service at many levels – community, state, region and national. Their presence and engagement at WSU betters our entire university climate and work. For instance, we have delegates from 12 tribes that hold an MOU agreement with WSU. These delegates serve on an Advisory Board to the President. There are also Native American advisory boards that serve our Elson S. Floyd Medical School and Health
Sciences and our Vancouver Campus. Over the years, these meetings have sparked change and growth in our understandings of the environment, health, education, policies and how to better serve students.

Our programs continue to improve and expand our services to Native American students and communities because of our partnership with Native American people, allies and communities. We welcome you to come meet with us and find ways that we can partner! We are looking for members who would like to become Affiliates or Associates of the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration.

The Elson S. Floyd Medical School hired Naomi Bender in October 2018 as the Director of Native American Health Sciences. We are working together with WSU leadership and faculty to increase the number of Native American students entering into the health fields, and are looking to design a bridge program to prepare students for undergraduate pre-health degrees. There are numerous other programs and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to have a unique, fun learning experience!

We also have a new Ku-Ah-Mah Alumni Society President, Sharon Kanichy (Makah) and there will be some great upcoming alumni opportunities to get involved. Lastly, my priority is to expand our formal relationships and MOU agreements with Tribes to increase the tribal voice at WSU. If a tribal government is interested in this type of relationship, please contact me directly and I am happy to plan a visit.

Sincerely,

Zoe Highagle Strong (Nez Perce)
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WSU Alum Shawn Brigman Using Education to Recover Traditional Arts

February 28, 2019 faith.price

by Faith Price, Director, Native American Student Services

Dr. Shawn Brigman’s educational journey took him to multiple institutions all over the world. Along the way, he gathered knowledge and inspiration that ultimately led him to where he is today – digging deep into the knowledge of his ancestors.

Brigman is enrolled Spokane, but also has Arrow Lakes, San Poil, Shuswap and Colville heritage. He grew up in Spokane and attended East Valley High School.

“High school wasn’t always a good experience for me,” said Brigman, explaining, “I was raised by my aunt and uncle. We were a low income family. We couldn’t afford for me to join sports or anything.”
One day he was called to the office. He thought he was in trouble, but instead that day ended up positively impacting his life trajectory. In the office waiting for him was Dan Iyall and Terri Parr from the Indian Education program. They asked him if he wanted to go to college, something he hadn’t considered before, and invited him to a workshop about financial aid. He remembers that Parr gave him a ride home afterward, saving his family a few dollars in gas, which meant a lot at the time.

The workshop explained that a college degree wasn’t necessarily out of his financial reach. Subsequently, Brigman applied and was accepted to Gonzaga University. He stayed there for about two years, but ended up leaving the institution. He got a job doing manual labor, “lifting 50 pound produce boxes every minute of the day. It taught me to be very industrious.”

When he was in his twenties, he went back to Spokane Community College to pursue a certificate in computer-aided drafting. He applied for a Gates Scholarship the first year they became available in 2000. At that time, everyone could apply no matter their age or year in school. He was selected for the Gates, something that also had a huge impact on his life as the scholarship offered to fully-fund his education all the way through his PhD if he decided to go that route. He knew that it was a huge opportunity and a privilege not afforded to many.

“Everyone should have the right to go to college and have that education,” said Brigman, reflecting back. “Everyone should have the right to go to college without the financial burden.”

As he pursued his education, he would learn new concepts that would send him in new directions. At Gonzaga, he took an intriguing class in Greek art and architecture. Next, at SCC, he started to get interested in the field of architecture. Prior to that he hadn’t heard of the concept of a “built environment.”

Receiving the Gates Scholarship allowed him to continue his education at a four-year school. He chose to study architecture at Washington State University. At WSU he had the opportunity to take American Indian Studies courses.

“That’s really where the awakening started to happen,” said Brigman. Between his major and his AIS courses, he began contemplating that as tribal people we have our own knowledge of architecture and other fields.
Native Programs staff and students paddle in Salishan Sturgeon Nose canoes on Lake Coeur d’Alene in summer 2017 as part of the Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program orientation.

While at WSU, Brigman had the opportunity to study abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark for one semester. He observed while there that they celebrated the connections between their contemporary city and the ancestral village it resides upon, something he connected with his homelands.

“We have our own ancestral villages with contemporary cities built right on top of it,” said Brigman.

As part of a class assignment, Brigman visited the Viking Ship Museum a thirty-minute train ride away. The Danish people had discovered ancestral ships in the mud and designed a museum to house them. Again, this made Brigman reflect on his homelands and begin understanding the concept of cultural tourism as well as culturally relevant recreation.

“I knew that’s what we had at home. We had our own boat heritage.”

Brigman received his bachelor’s degree in architecture from WSU in 2005. A few years later he returned to school to pursue a master’s degree in recreation at the University of Idaho. At U of I, a professor gave him the book “Decolonizing Methodologies” by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Maori professor in New Zealand. Brigman found the book and the concept of decolonization inspiring and decided to study abroad again, this time in Christchurch, New Zealand.
During his semester in New Zealand, Brigman studied Maori tourism and outdoor recreation. The Vice President of the University was a Maori/Tongan man with a background in architecture. He took Brigman on a field trip to visit contemporary maraes. The time in New Zealand impressed Brigman with the success the Maori have had in developing things like their own TV station and urban planning agenda.

After completing his master’s degree, Brigman returned to Gonzaga where he began his higher education journey, this time in pursuit of a PhD. While a doctoral student at Gonzaga University, Brigman was invited to Canada in June of 2012 for a sturgeon-nose canoe material identification workshop with the Lower Kootenai Band in Creston, BC. In addition, a week later he attended a western white pine bark harvest workshop sponsored by the Kalispel Tribe near Priest River, Idaho.

During the rest of summer of 2012, he built his first “Western White Pine Bark Sturgeon Nose Canoe” frame. A year later in 2013 he then developed a “Salishan Sturgeon Nose Canoe” design inspired by historical canoes but based upon his own unique frame assemblage and fabric skin attachment method. To date, he has built 30 of his contemporary “Salishan Sturgeon Nose Canoes,” and 3 of the ancestral “White Pine Bark Sturgeon Nose Canoes.”

Over the years, Brigman has developed a body of work that is starting to earn a reputation and recognition. This spring he will be spending two weeks at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico as a visiting artist in residence. He will be attending art classes, and constructing a Salishan Sturgeon Nose Canoe in their woodshop.

“It’s great to go down there and get recognized as an artist,” said Brigman.

In June, he will be trying his hand at a new art form – glass blowing. He will be an artist in residence at the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA. In addition, he recently received a grant through the Evergreen State College Longhouse to expand his capacity as a canoe maker to extend to dugout-style canoe.

“It is my objective and goal to begin researching, designing and carving dugout canoes specific to the Interior Plateau Tribes,” said Brigman.

The Longhouse has given him the support to do that research, as well as buy tools and materials. He plans to make two canoes – a 1/3 scale model and a full-size dugout. He’s already got a white pine log for the smaller canoe.

“I’ve started whittling away at it,” said Brigman. “I’ve discovered it’s hard work.”

Which is something he has never shied away from, since his days moving produce boxes.

Brigman has played a large role in the recovery and revitalization of the Plateau region’s canoe culture. His canoes are in use and on display in tribal communities throughout Washington and Idaho, art galleries as far away as British Columbia. They have made the journey to Kettle Falls and delivered water protectors to Standing Rock.
“What you hope for is for the next generation of youth to get into it,” said Brigman. He hopes to someday hear, “I remember I made that dugout canoe with my uncle, now I want to make one.” In a way, he would be paying forward what was given to him once – an opportunity.

“Terri Parr-Wynecoop sees this poor little Indian kid at seventeen years old and gives him an opportunity and I ran with it,” said Brigman. “I absolutely come from nothing and I’m proud of it.”
Pah-Loots-Puu Powwow Coming to WSU March 22-23

February 28, 2019 faith.price

by Faith Price, Director, Native American Student Services

The 42nd annual Pah-Loots-Puu Powwow is scheduled for March 22 & 23rd at WSU’s Beasley Coliseum!

The ASWSU Ku-ah-mah Native student organization has been working hard for months to organize their largest event of the year, the Pah-Loots-Puu powwow. Dancers and singers from around the region will be in attendance. The powwow is free and open to the public.

Head staff include Emcee: Dave Madera, Arena Director: Dan Nanamkin, Head Man Dancer: Russell McCloud, and Head Woman Dancer: Thea McCloud. Host drum TBD.
Pah-Loots-Puu powwow begins Friday, March 22 with a grand entry scheduled for 7pm. On Saturday, the grand entries are at noon and 5pm. A stew dinner for powwow participants will be sponsored by the Native American Women’s Association during Saturday’s supper break.

Powwow Chair is Kyra Antone, a senior in Digital Technology and Culture from the Coeur d’Alene and Tohono O’odham Nations. Vendor Chair is Chantel Hill, a senior in Elementary Education from the Absaaleoke (Crow) Tribe. For questions about the powwow or vending, contact kuahmahaswsu@gmail.com.
In February, Native American Programs collaborated with Native American Health Sciences and the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine to bring physician and actor Evan Adams to the Spokane Health Sciences Campus.

Dr. Adams is a member of the Tla’amin First Nation in British Columbia. He first came to the public’s attention by playing Thomas Builds-The-Fire, in the 1998 film *Smoke Signals*. Adams went on to earn an MD, as well as a Master’s of Public Health. He is currently the Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority, in British Columbia.

The primary purpose of this visit was to have Dr. Adams meet with members of the Native American Pre-Health program, which is administered by Native American Programs. Dr. Adams
also met with the leadership of the College of Medicine and shared his advice about supporting Native American students pursuing health degrees and working with Native American communities.

After spending the afternoon of February 8 with students, administrators and faculty, Dr. Adams gave a public presentation at the Spokane Convention Center, entitled “Nothing About Us Without Us.” Dr. Daryll Dewald, Chancellor of WSU Spokane, welcomed Dr. Adams to the stage, and Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong (Nimiipuu), WSU Executive Director of Tribal Relations, introduced him to the public.

Adams spoke about the need for Native American health professionals to maintain their cultural identities as well the need for the health institutions to be more inclusive of those who do so. Following the keynote, Dr. Adams visited with members of the audience, during a public reception.

This day was just one example of the support being directed toward Native students pursuing degrees and, eventually, careers in the health professions and sciences. Native Programs looks forward to many future events.

We appreciate the hard work that Dr. Naomi Bender (Quechua), Director of Native Health Sciences, put into coordinating Dr. Adams’ visit. Additionally, we are grateful for the assistance of Vice Dean Dr. Ken Roberts, Assoc. Dean Dr. Leila Harrison, Asst. Dean David Garcia, and their staff members. Finally, we also thank Dr. Leslie Randall (Nimiipuu) and C.W. Hall, MD (Amskapipiikani) for visiting with students and faculty on the day of Dr. Adams’ visit.

If you have any questions about the Native American Pre-Health Program, contact Dr. Ken Lokensgard, Assistant Director, Center for Native American Research & Collaborations.
WSU Hosts Native Youth Exploring Higher Education Camp 2019

February 28, 2019 faith.price

by Tony Brave, Native American Outreach Coordinator

Native American Programs at WSU is proud to announce our annual Native Youth Exploring Higher Education (NY’EHE) summer camp, from July 15-19, 2019. NY’EHE is a summer camp for Native American high school students interested in exploring opportunities in higher education. Up to thirty Native American students entering ninth and tenth grade in the fall of 2019 will be selected to attend the five-day camp held on the WSU Pullman campus.

The camp is free for participants, and our goal is to get them excited about higher education early in their educational career, as well as to stimulate an interest in professions they can take back to
their communities. Throughout the five-day camp, we will be examining topics of interest to today’s Tribal nations such as health, cultural preservation, resource management, Tribal sovereignty and economic development. The students will form mock tribal councils, and through hands-on workshops will explore how higher education can serve their nations. Some workshops we are hoping to provide will focus on the topics of Food Sovereignty, Bow-Making, Sports Science, Podcast Making, Mural Painting, Videogame Making and other cultural activities.

Students also will gain the experience of living in a college environment, including staying in a residence hall with a roommate, eating at the dining facilities, utilizing the student recreation center, and engaging with current WSU students who serve as camp staff. This camp is made possible by support from the Bonneville Power Administration and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation.

The deadline to apply is June 15th, 2019!

Camp information is available at native.wsu.edu/nyehe.

Questions? Contact: 509-335-6718, or anthony.brave@wsu.edu.
Native Youth Visit WSU for Sports Summit

February 28, 2019 faith.price

by Faith Price, Director of Native American Student Services

One hundred Native middle and high school students traveled to WSU from as far away as Portland, Oregon and Nooksack, Washington to take part in the annual Native American Youth Sports Summit sponsored by WSU Native American Programs and WSU Athletics.

Participants heard from a panel of three WSU Native student athletes and two Native professionals with careers in sports media. Student panelists included Aaron Burns (Fort Mojave Indian Tribe), Club Volleyball; Valea Higheagle (Chehalis/Nez Perce), Twirling; and Austin Kicking Woman (Yakama), Intramural Basketball. WSU Football Video Coordinator Kevin Night Pipe (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) and keynote speaker Josh Echo-Hawk (Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma) shared insight into makings sports a career.
WSU senior Valea Higheagle gives a twirling exhibition during halftime of the WSU vs. OSU women’s basketball “Native American Appreciation Day” game.

Student panelists explained how to stay involved in sports at many different levels in college. Valea Higheagle is the university’s only twirler and performs at WSU football games. She receives a partial scholarship and a stipend to travel with the Cougar Marching Band to cheer on the football team wherever they might go, including their recent appearance in the Alamo Bowl.

Aaron Burns plays on the WSU men’s club volleyball team. Club sports teams travel to compete against other colleges in the region. Athletes don’t get scholarships to be on club teams, and the teams fundraise to pay for their travel. However, it is fairly competitive and usually students have to tryout to get on a club team.
Austin Kicking Woman shared about his experiences playing intramural sports. Any WSU student can play intramurals, and it is a fun way to gather up a team of friends to play against other WSU students. Intramural sports are organized by the university recreation center and they have leagues for basketball, soccer, flag football, softball, dodgeball and more.

Keynote speaker Josh Echo-Hawk owns his own business as a media producer and creates videos and graphics for college and professional teams. On the day of the Native Youth Sports Summit, he was in town to do some work with the WSU women’s basketball team. He encouraged students to explore their talents and try on many possible careers. All of the panelists encouraged students to bring their whole selves into whatever career they choose, and to be proud of their Native heritage.

Following the Sports Summit, participants attended the Native American Appreciation Day game between WSU women’s basketball and Oregon State. The game featured a welcome from WSU Native student organization leaders, videos of WSU Native seniors, and a halftime twirling performance by Valea Higheagle.

While the basketball team fell short of beating OSU, they received appreciation from Native Youth Sports Summit participants at a special ice cream session after the game. The WSU women’s basketball team and their coaches shared ice cream with the group and thanked them for coming out to cheer them on. They also graciously signed autographs and posed for pictures.

The Native Youth Sports Summit coincides with the Native American Appreciation Day basketball game every year. It is open to 6th-12th graders and is free to students and their family members.
Sports Summit participants pose with the three Molina sisters from the WSU women’s basketball team after the game.
March Madness and Graduate Recognition Night Coming Up for Native Center

February 28, 2019 faith.price
by Joelle Edwards, Native American Retention Specialist

As the snow keeps coming down on the Palouse, we in the Native American Student Center are keeping warm and busy this semester with comfort foods, friendly competition, and looking ahead to summer opportunities.

(l-r): Jaissa Grunlose, Kaitlin Srader and Kyra Antone eat and chat at the Native American Student Center during a First Friday Feed.

Speaking of comfort foods, our students and staff enjoyed spaghetti and spent an evening playing board games together at the February Community Dinner. At our February First Friday Feed, we enjoyed warm broccoli cheddar soup and imagined opportunities we could have in the Peace Corps. As we ate our soup and bread, Brian Nyquist, WSU Peace Corps Recruiter, told us stories of warm weather and adventures to be had across the world.

To get us thinking about summer opportunities and life after WSU, we had a series of workshops around career preparation. The Native American Student Center brought in a presenter from the Academic Career and Success Center to assist students in finding potential jobs or internships and to give personalized feedback on resumes.

During the month of March, the Native American Student Center will be participating in March Madness by having students and staff fill out basketball brackets. Everyone will be encouraged
to return to the center for live-streamed games and to see whose bracket is busted! Winner gets bragging rights til next March!

We will wrap up the year with our Native American Student Recognition. This event recognizes our Native American students who are graduating. Community members, family, and friends are all invited to attend this celebration. This year the event is Tuesday, April 23rd from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center.

Our other upcoming events are the First Friday Feeds. They are March 1st and April 1st from 11:00 – 2:00 pm in the Native American Student Center. Our Mom’s Weekend Brunch is Saturday, April 13th from 10:00 – 12:00 pm at the Asian Pacific American Cultural House.

Please join us at any of our upcoming events!
Native Graduates Walk in the Fall 2018 Multicultural Graduation Celebration

February 26, 2019 faith.price

by Shana Lombard, Communications Assistant

The fall 2018 semester came to a close with the Multicultural Graduation Celebration in December 2018.

Students donned special graduation stoles made with fabric representative of the four culturally-based student centers on campus while giving a speech of their time at WSU and a toast to those who’ve helped them along the way. Faith Price, Director of Native American Student Services, also makes Native students Pendleton stoles to wear in addition.

December 2018 graduates Malik Johnson (Blackfeet) and Becka Oehler (Tlingit).

This special night takes place before the university commencement to give students a more intimate environment to express thank yous to the faculty, staff and professors who have guided them through a journey, many of whom’s families haven’t undergone at all.
Two students from the Native American Student Center participated in the special night, Malik Johnson (Blackfeet) and Becka Oehler (Tlingit). These two students attribute science class studies in their secondary education that sparked something in them to want to know more.

Becka Oehler came to Washington State University after a year spent at the University of Washington and some time spent in California preparing herself to reenter the university atmosphere. After taking general education classes at a local community college and feeling confident that she found a program that fit her better than her previous university, she left the Golden State and headed to the Palouse.

At Washington State, Oehler quickly felt she was in the right place.

“I originally went to UW and I hated it, my program specifically. It was not a good environment for me. Here in my degree field, we’re a really open environment because it’s more one on one and not 200 people to a teacher,” Oehler said later adding that she liked UW itself, just not her degree program.

Oehler got involved in research her junior year that paved the way for her to expand into her own research project. Her study is on how light affects fibers with different colors. Her research project was one of six physics research projects presented at the Emerging Researchers National Conference in February 2017.

As for what got her into the astrophysics realm, Oehler said a high school project about black holes gave way for her science teacher at the time to really push Oehler into wanting to know more about astronomy and physics.

With college research experience under her belt, Oehler has used her degree as a way to help put on physics demonstrations for camps that bring youth to the university, such as helping with the Na-ha-snhee Camp with WSU Native Programs in Spokane for the last two summers. Oehler loves doing physics demos because of how excited the youth get when seeing things get dropped or lit on fire.

“The demonstrations use basic principles but they’re really entertaining,” Oehler said.

Oehler hopes that her current research can be used in the medical and technology fields. She also wants to inspire more Native American youth to go into STEM-related fields because the field lacks people of color and even more so women.

“I just want to let younger kids know their teachers aren’t right 100% of the time that they can do this. You might not be the best at math right now but that may change,” Oehler said.

Something Malik Johnson learned in high school science class brought him to WSU as well.

In the fourth grade, Johnson learned about zoology and from then on was ready to devote his education towards it. Excited to see a sloth in real life, Johnson learned the Port Defiance Zoo
and Aquarium had a sloth that didn’t have its own exhibit. In order to see the sloth, Johnson signed up in the spring of 2012 to be a youth volunteer and has volunteered there ever since.

“I was looking online for sloths, just so I could see them because I love them not because they’re cute, but because they’re cool evolutionarily, biologically,” Johnson said.

When Johnson was a child, he grew up watching a popular children’s television show, *The Wild Thornberrys*, where the father of the Thornberrys, Nigel, travels the world making wildlife documentaries. Johnson feels his degree also stems from watching the TV series.

“This major is legitimizing what I’ve always inspired to do, to be like Nigel Thornberry,” said Johnson.

During his four years as a Coug, Johnson has been a part of clubs that have kept him busy: the raptor club, the wildlife society, and organizations such as the Grizzly Bear Research facility, the Palouse Conservation District, and the wild amulet facility. Johnson soaked up every opportunity these clubs provided him. In his time, Johnson has planted trees all across the Palouse, tracked wolves through their kill sites and is continuing what he did at Point Defiance, educating the public on wildlife, wildlife conservation and ecology.

Johnson has also been a part of some organizations who haven’t seen a whole lot of diversity as well. Johnson recalled back in 2015, when he was Vice-President of the raptor club, he and the club’s president were both African-American.

“It was pretty cool to have people of color represented in a student organization in a field that doesn’t have a lot of people of color in it so I’m pretty proud of that,” Johnson said.

As for what’s next for him, Johnson is currently in Tacoma, Washington working at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium working as an educational interpreter until September. After September, Malik will spend his next two years in Paraguay working for the U.S. Peace Corps before returning to school.

“As long as I get to be out in the woods and spend some time with animals doing science, have a field season, have an off season; I can do some form of conservation and education,” Malik said. “I’m contributing to a body of knowledge that’s going to progress our natural environment and natural resources. That’s what’s important to me.”