

Untitled

by the UA Tohono O’odham Student Association (TOSA)



TOSA placed 1st in the College Division. This photo was submitted by TOSA club members Jacelle Ramon-Sauberan and Nyona Smith.

Members of TOSA stand by the ASARCO Mission Mine Complex. A portion of the Mission Complex is located on the edge of the San Xavier District on the Tohono O’odham Nation.

1st Annual Literature and Photo Contest Winners

In an effort to garner community involvement in the creation of *Indigenous Stewards*, UA SWEHSC hosted a contest open to high school and college students. Contestants were asked to document environmental issues facing Indigenous communities through writing and photography.

Entries were judged by a panel of SWEHSC-affiliated students and staff based on context and originality. In addition to being featured in this issue, contest winners were acknowledged at a magazine preview event in November at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, Arizona.

Traditional Housing

by Zachery Garcia, Tohono O’odham



Zachery placed 1st in the High School Division. He is a freshman at Tohono O’odham High School.

Buildings and structures are an important part of our landscape environment. Preserving the past is important for us to show our future generations of their rich history. // Location: Pisinemo District

Obituary 12/17

by Sheila A. Rocha, Pure'pecha Nation

My dear Tata~
 I'm writing you a picture of the world left behind
 from the side view mirror of a rusty double cab
 watching the rear, road winding away
 and the voice inside
 hollers my improper name
 I cannot recall the way you spoke it long ago...in
 Pure'pecha

Tatemala
 I'm singing you a lamentation from the sacred spring
 where the bero bero grew even in a winter squall
 we dipped our cups and drank the cool . . .
 japunda dilated now with frito bags
 half pints, desperation floating
 colt 45 against a rotting branch.
 This stream you spoke to as a child.

Itsi, water spirit
 Your muddy juice now ferments in the sun
 where bero bero once rested on pebbles
 filled our jars with medicine
 seven miles women carried nectar to our side of town
 beside the creek near the river—we drank
 cooked, prayed and left a bit for Itsi,
 beneath a cottonwood.

My Tata gone
 I'm singing you a picture from the side view mirror of your yellow Ford
 watching the past, bumping over deer and death as north winds
 blow sand against my face
 to make me strong
 so I might endure
 the voice that scolds
 my erroneous name.

Sheila placed 1st in the College Division. She is a PhD candidate in American Indian Studies at the UA.

Untitled

by Leo Bia



A picture of Bia's aquaponic system from his research poster titled, "How much food can an aquaponics system generate?"

*Leo placed 2nd in the College Division.
 He is a student at Coconino High School.
 Leo is a former NASEP participant. This
 photo was submitted on his behalf by
 the UA AISES club.*

Ants

by Nadira Mitchell, Diné



The importance of the smallest animals that help keep our community in balance.

Nadira placed 2nd in the High School Division. She is a student at Utterback Magnet School for the Arts.

Hozhonahasdlii: We will plant in Beauty again

by Samuel Slater, Diné

Alkidaa, a while ago, when I was driving with my masaniye', my late grandmother, she began sharing with me what everything used to look like around our home. My grandmothers have lived in this community for generations, and it's hard to go far without seeing a story. As we pulled out onto the highway, she identified the cottonwood grove where her father had kept a cabin, where the hogan that my mom had her kinaalda' in once stood, gave vague directions to where relatives had once lived, and eventually pointed with her lips to the expansive field that she used to plant as a girl.

Her father would wake her around midnight, after the heat of the evaporating summer sun had finally cooled, and she would attach the donkey to haul water to the field. She watered every corn stalk and squash and melon vine the way her father had taught her, replicating his every detail, following that strict intentionality particular to medicine men, whether in planting a seed or creating a sand painting.

As we drove through Many Farms, a Navajo chapter, she recounted what the Chinle Valley used to look like. About forty or so families once planted here, attracted by the water, which collects in the reservoir.

I could still see the plowed rows and the uncommonly fenced and cleared fields, now hauntingly barren.

It had always baffled me why the neighboring community to the southwest is called Many Farms—a chapter today only known for its feral horse problem or Bureau of Indian Affairs school, but certainly not any sort of farming. I come from Round Rock, and the story behind that name is confusing enough. In our small chapter we have Big Round Rock, a dominating mesa rounded off with a window and two spires, Little Round Rock, which plays a supporting role, in addition to our own two mitten rocks, which lack the thumbs of the far more famous Monument Valley versions. Even the Navajo name, Tse Nikáni, adds to the perplexity, simply meaning “flat topped rock.” Despite reigning over the Chinle Valley, there is nothing round about any of these striking formations. So I always thought of “Many Farms” as a similar conundrum—perhaps the mistranslation of a bilagáana trader or an old Navajo joke I'd never understand.

But what happened to these once rich farmlands? The families still live there. People still need food, especially fresh vegetables. We should still be farming then, right?

This way of life began falling apart when people thought of growing corn and farming as only necessary to feeding our physical being. We forgot the spirituality involved in toiling the earth and we forgot whence we came.

Alkidaa jinii, a long time ago, they say, we came to this earth from worlds before this one. We grew through three worlds and sprouted into this one, the White World, the Glittering World. The Diyin Dine'e built for us a hogan with mountains made of earth carried from each of the previous worlds. Within this homeland they taught us how to live in hozho, in balance and beauty. Their songs, prayers, and ceremonies guided us throughout this land and all through our lives.

The Holy People gave us additional gifts to help us remember how to remain in hozho, how to be whole. One of these was nadaa, corn. We identified the nadaa as our chei na'atnise, because this plant, like nihichei, our own grandfathers, gave us a spiritual library. These familial ties became so firmly established among the People that our roots were interwoven and our futures joined.

Every part of the plant was a

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different lesson: each leaf a different ceremony, each segment a different song, and each tassel a different prayer. The Holy People even placed lessons in the labor of caring for nihichei. In this way our field provided both our physical and spiritual sustenance, and we recognized its dirt as especially holy.

All they taught us was beautiful.

But when I asked my masaniye why nobody plants anymore, she gave me an answer I had often heard before: there is no more water. My masaniye told me, “Oh how I’d love to see this field full of corn just one more time, but it will be difficult.” When pressed on this challenge, she said we’d need a new fence to keep the horses and cattle out, and more importantly, she said, it doesn’t rain anymore like it used to.

The rain used to fall gently every evening, like a woman untying her tsiyeel before bed, letting her hair flow softly down her back in the nurturing way of a mother. I asked my masaniye again what has changed this. “We’ve forgotten about the Holy People,” she bluntly responded. If we don’t even remember them, how can we expect them to still take care of us?

This is what she taught me. That we’ve grown away from our

roots, and that we’ve almost severed our relationship to the main stalk. But if the rain stopped coming because we forgot about the Holy People, what caused that initial split? When we concern ourselves with this question it almost inevitably turns into an unsatisfying cycle of blaming.

Does distance really make the heart grow fonder? Today we find ourselves in a contradicting downward spiral. Because we turned away from our traditional ways, the rain stopped coming. Now that it has all but stopped raining, it is increasingly difficult to plant corn and a field, which pulls us farther and farther away from our traditional values and practices.

I do not believe that if every Navajo were to start growing corn today, the rain would immediately return to its seasonal balance. However, I do believe that hidden in the act of growing a field and immersed in the nurturing of other beings are the lessons that have made us resilient and flexible to life’s challenges, and are just as applicable today as they were to our cheis and masanis and naliis hundreds of years ago.

When we plant a field, pray to the Holy People, and tell the stories of creation, we are recognizing our place in the universe. We are planting ourselves firmly

into the web of continual creation. We learn about processes of action and reflection, of going through the steps of Nitsahakees, Nahata, Iina, and Siihasin—thinking, planning, living, and reflecting. We realize that everything we do should be in the mindset of Sa’ah Naghai Bik’eh Hozhon, the eternal lifelong struggle to follow the Corn Pollen Path, striving for hozho in all aspects of our lives.

These lessons were meant to be taken out from the cornfield and hoghan in order to be applied in our daily lives.

I remember on a different visit home I was the patient for hozhonji, the Blessingway ceremony designed to bring everything back to hozho. As part of the ritual bath, we needed the earth from a cornfield to bless me from my feet up. I went with my masaniye to the old cornfield to gather the dirt. Even though no plough or hoe or hand had touched the soil in over half a century, the earth remembered. The earth remembered how it had sustained us, her children, for generations. Nahasdzaan Shima remembered that it would always welcome us home.

Nahasdzaan Shima was equally as holy and purifying as it has been for time immemorial. Hozhonahasdlii, there will be beauty again, but only with our careful nurturing.

Samuel placed 1st in the High School Division. He is a junior at Georgetown Day School. Samuel lives in Washington, D.C. and his hometown is Round Rock, Arizona.

Untitled

by Dayanara Sixkiller



Dayanara placed 3rd in the College Division. She is a student at Baboquivari High School. Dayanara is a former NASEP participant. This photo was submitted on her behalf by the UA AISES club.

This photo is of NASEP students’ planted crops at the Native American Research and Training Center (NARTC). From their research poster titled “Opening to New Ideas on the Tohono O’odham Reservation.”

Land ain't broken, but we are

by Jacqui Lambert, Inupiaq Eskimo

Arctic Spring ice hopping turned into flood evacuations
Climate change is a game of finger pointing accusations

Political leaders speak about it
School children learn lessons about it

Urban tree huggers read 'n act on it
But how many of them grew amongst it?

My town is going under water
But we have developed sea walls
The summers are getting hotter
But there's less meat in the Fall

The water is shouting at us
The land, escaping from us

While we continue to pave our mother Earth
All we're causing her is to hurt

So, how can we understand
Not to fix what ain't broke
That is, the land

When I mention my Eskimo ethnicity
They ask if the winters are gritty

I speak about the melting ice
And our snow-less Novembers
They say "it must be so nice"
But there's a global warming, remember?

Jacqui placed 2nd in the College Division. She is from Kotzebue, Alaska.

City of Lights

by Darrien Nikkole Benally, Diné



Darrien placed 3rd in the High School Division. She chose to study the topic of light pollution and had the following to say, "Living in the world's first International Dark Sky City, the absences of light is important to the upkeep of this title; after all Pluto, (yes it is a planet), was discovered in Flagstaff, Ariz. The stale darkness of midnight is just as important to other creatures lurking in the forests, creatures such as deer or even squirrels. These delightful critters can become confused by so much light, they can wonder in to a gushing stream of cars and cause problems not only for themselves but humans alike. We see the ever so common 'road kill' every day and most of us never stop to think what may have caused it, but the fingers can simply be aimed at one culprit: light pollution. To solve this hideous crime, city streets are dim, and a city ordinance requires outdoor lighting to be facing down and have some sort of cover a top it."

Location: Mars Hill, Flagstaff, Arizona

The crisp air of the morning belong to us

by Shandiin Gorman, Diné

The rooster cocka doodle dood to wake the world, but the neighbors are too far. Separated from a land of dirt that gives life to snakes and weeds and nothing else

It seems that the sunlight is not coming today, the clouds are abundant and the greyness is almost too much to bear

A walk to the store was our adventure of the day. Grandmother won't see us until the lights by our shed turn on

The dirt greet mine and my aunt's shoes for a split second, than depart, leaving a trail for some other Indian kid to follow

The stories that are told about my grandmother and her grandmothers spending hours near the wash, abandoning all duties and just living for the moment, never get old

As I stare at it, the ubiquitous hills are masqueraded with faintly spray-painted symbols that dwindle away with the sand and breeze

Wondrously, small trees have sprouted on the edge of the walls that have become overcrowded with roots

Crunching booms in the miniature canyon, instead of splashing and roaring currents, as we crossed the naked land

A haven for our horses disappeared, leaving a couple carcasses in the tailgate

The tailgate that leads to the cornfield. Another setback in our community

Jugs of water carefully carried to each corn so as to not spill a single drop. The tank of water is sacred. When the task is done we pray God will be good, bless the field and the season. Keep it safe and oh yeah, watered

Wire gates surround the field and cannot cease animal access, leaving the crops vulnerable

Vulnerable like the grandmother that wakes extra early with the departure of the stars each morning, to work two times as much for our land that is not beyond help

The Indigenous community lacks the voice to emerge the hidden beauty of what we call home, our screams have not been heard. Maybe they got lost in our smoke signals.

So we stand silently and say our farewells to the horses, the crops and sadly welcome the desire for thirst and the diminishing of the winsome land

It is late. A day has passed and nothing has changed

The sunset of brilliant colors introducing the blanket of stars belong to us

Shandiin placed 2nd in the High School Division. She lives in Mesa, Arizona and her hometown is Hardrock, Arizona.

**For more information on future photography and literature contests,
email SWEHSC@email.arizona.edu.**