

AISES Motivational Journey

Althea Walker, Nez Perce, Hopi & Gila River Indian

ASU Alum: B.S. Environmental Resource Management & M.S. Environmental Technology Management

Interview by Cheyenne Francisco-Grabiec

Althea Walker is the Environmental Education & Outreach Specialist for the Gila River Indian Community's Department of Environmental Quality. She graduated from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Resource Management and a Master's in Environmental Technology Management.

Ms. Walker's connection to AISES began with her grandparents as she was growing up. Her grandparents served on AISES Council of Elders. She attributes them with getting her involved where she eventually found her niche. When Ms. Walker was an undergraduate, she attended an AISES National Conference with her grandparents and had the honor of witnessing Dr. Karletta Chief accept the 2010 Most Promising Engineer/Scientist Award. Dr. Chief's acceptance speech inspired Ms. Walker to want to be like Dr. Chief and everyone else in the room.



"It's giving back to this community and that I'm able to learn about who I am as an Akimel O'odham and my family here and my ancestors here and what they've endured." -- Althea Walker

Photo by Reuben Ringlero



Althea's grandparents and two AISES family members who pledged as a Sequoyah Fellow (lifetime member). Left to right, Isaiah Sato, Pearl Walker, Andrea Axtell, Althea Walker, Horace Axtell
Photo by Tyler Parisien

How has AISES been able to assist you professionally?
A lot of things I'm able to do today is because I had that experience with AISES.

How important is it for students to return to their communities after they graduate?

Whether it's your own community, another Indigenous community, or you work at a higher place where you have influence over those communities it's important that wherever you go after graduating that you have a positive impact on the community you work for.

What advice do you have for Native students?

Know the opportunities are out there, and they're not impossible to reach. When an opportunity presents itself, just say yes and don't be afraid to say yes because you never know what it will lead to. And, find that organization or that place you feel you can belong, because some days are going to be hard, or you're going to need a study buddy, or you're going to need somebody to buy you lunch, or somebody's going to need that from you. Find that home away from home.

Ms. Walker not only credits AISES with inspiring her to pursue environmental sciences, but also for providing her with internship experiences that further exposed her to the field. She was given the opportunity through AISES to take an internship in Beaverton, Oregon, which then led to multiple internships, including one in Alaska. She says that when you are given an opportunity, as much as it might scare or intimidate you, or not know where it will lead, "those lead to friendships, to opportunities, to jobs."