

INDIGENOUS STEWARDS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Summer 2021



INDIGENOUS STEWARDS

This magazine is dedicated to all generations past, present, and future. To past generations for holding onto this knowledge and passing it down; to current generations for continuing this knowledge; and to future generations who will carry this knowledge.

Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center (SWEHSC)

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Land Acknowledgment

The University of Arizona occupies the original homelands of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui Nations. Indigenous people who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. Aligning with the university's core value of a diverse and inclusive community, it is an institutional responsibility to recognize and acknowledge the people, culture, history that make up the Wildcat community. At the institutional level, it is important to be proactive and broadening awareness throughout campus to ensure our students feel represented and valued.

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Letter From the Editor

Yá'át'ééh (Hello),

Welcome to the fifth volume of the *Indigenous Stewards Magazine*!

This year's edition subjected our Advisory Board with unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Advisory Board remained diligent and committed to producing this year's edition because we believe that this magazine is important to not only the University of Arizona community but all of Indian Country.

Past editions have focused on highlighting the work of Indigenous students, faculty, and programs. While this year's edition followed in that goal, it was more than that. This year's edition serves as a beacon of hope and as a testament to our resiliency as Indigenous Peoples. Everyone that contributed to this magazine has had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in their own way. Despite these struggles, they all felt compelled to share their stories to inspire us all to continue to be resilient in these uncertain times.

As you take the time to read through this year's edition please offer prayers and well wishes for all of those in essential positions that continue to work tirelessly to keep us safe from COVID-19.

We are strong. We are resilient. We are all one people. We can and will overcome COVID-19.

On behalf of the entire SWEHSC team and *Indigenous Stewards* Advisory Board,
Ahéhee! (Thank you!)

Cheyenne Grabiec (Diné)
Bilagáana - Dzilt'ahnii - Bilagáana - Tsi'naajinii





Lexana Echegary

Lexana Echegary (Pascua Yaqui), a sophomore from Desert View High School, is the winner of the 2020 Indigenous Stewards Cover Art Contest! Her artwork is a reflection of the current global pandemic and our connection to Mother Earth.

“My art piece represents how Mother Earth is weak and needs our help and she puts her trust in the hands of the youth. It’s up to us to make a difference.”

The inspiration behind Ms. Echegary’s art submission is the current global pandemic and the way in which the world is suffering. She has realized that during our quarantine when we had to take time away from jobs, schools, and many other things, that people were able to put their lives on pause and see things about our planet they would have otherwise ignored.

Ms. Echegary mentions how her generation, Gen Z, has been especially active on social media throughout the pandemic calling attention to a multitude of issues, including climate change.

Besides being an artist, Ms. Echegary is also a partner in a local small business called PopColorDesign. The business upcycles items, which range from cans to couches, that would have been trash, and turns them into art. A portion of all their sales are donated to a new charity each month.

“I am so grateful that my art can make a difference.”

Ms. Echegary aspires to pursue a career related to sustainability and business. Her dream job would be sustainability consulting because it is a combination of both fields.

On behalf of the Indigenous Stewards Advisory Board and community, we would like to thank Ms. Echegary for creating this beautiful piece of artwork. We wish her the best on her future endeavors and look forward to seeing more of her art.



Full size image of Lexana’s art that is featured on the cover of the magazine

To find out more about PopColorDesign and see their work visit their social media:



pop_color_design_



pop_color_design_

Recently, the University of Arizona appointed two key administrators in the Executive Office of the President and the Office of the Provost. These two positions will lead UArizona in its efforts to enhance programs and services for the different Native American communities, both internally and externally. This is the first time in the history of UArizona that there have been two Native American senior leaders.

The Honorable N. Levi Esquerra (Chemehuevi) is UArizona's first Senior Vice President for Native American Advancement and tribal Engagement. In this position, he coordinates University-wide efforts to advance Native American programs and tribal engagement in consonance with the strategic plan. He serves as a point of contact for Native issues and as a liaison between the University and tribal governments and regional and national tribal organizations.



N. Levi Esquerra

Mr. Esquerra has nearly three decades of experience facilitating and promoting Native American advancement and economic development for Native Nations, including two years as Chairman of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe and three terms on the Tribal Council. Most recently, he served as Director of the Center for American Indian Economic Development and the Rural Policy Institute, both in the Alliance Bank Economic Policy Institute, which is part of Northern Arizona University's W.A. Franke College of Business Administration. His experience also includes several other community and economic development roles with the state of Arizona, the St. Louis Community Development Agency and the American Indian Center of Mid-America. While representing the U.S. Department of State he worked to address the needs of Indigenous Tribes in Argentina. His expertise also led to the Canadian Consulate inviting him to participate in the annual Canadian Indigenous Conference

where he shared best practices with First Nations communities. As an elected leader, Mr. Esquerra helped shape the Nuwuvi Economic Development Corporation, which creates, manages, and develops tribal enterprises to promote economic self-sufficiency through business development, job creation, and revenue production.

Karen Francis-Begay is a citizen of the Navajo Nation and is the Assistant Vice Provost for Native American Initiatives at UArizona. She leads and coordinates programming in collaboration with academic units and colleges to support Native American students and faculty. Prior to this new appointment, Ms. Francis-Begay served as the Assistant Vice President for Tribal Relations for seven years and prior to that, she was the Special Advisor to the President on Native American Affairs for four years. She has served the UArizona community in other professional capacities for a total of 28 years of service. Ms. Francis-Begay has served on many national and regional boards such as the College Board, College Horizons, Community Foundation of Southern Arizona, and the YWCA Tucson, to name a few. Her life's passion is to advocate for Native American students and for women of color who seek to further their education and career endeavors. Ms. Francis-Begay has a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration and a Master of Arts degree in American Indian Studies, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education at UArizona. Her dissertation research is understanding the lived experiences of tribal liaisons at public universities and how they can be better supported in their work. Born and raised on the Navajo Nation, she is of the Tábaqhá clan (Edge of Water) born for the Kiyaa'áanii clan (Towering House).



Karen Francis-Begay

Neuroscience and the Navajo Nation

By: Cheyenne Grabiec



URBRAIN TEAM

Left to Right: Kathleen Rodgers, Ph.D., PI, Frederick Boyd, Ph.D., Co-PI, and Kaitlyn Haskie, MS, Project Manager

Located in the center of the Navajo Nation, Diné College is a tribal college with curriculum rooted in the Diné language and culture. Their mission is to advance quality post-secondary learning and development to ensure the well-being of the Diné people.

Recently, Diné College and the University of Arizona have collaborated to create the URBRAIN (Undergraduate Readying for Burgeoning Research for American Indian Neuroscientists) program. The URBRAIN program was created to give Navajo students the opportunity to advance their education

from Diné College to graduate programs in neuroscience at top-tier research universities. Through the program students will develop neuroscience literacy, be provided with professional development opportunities, and gain a sense of belonging within the academic community.

While some may ask, “What does neuroscience have to do with the Navajo Nation?”, the URBRAIN program understands the importance of neuroscience to the Navajo people. More than one third of the most prevalent diseases in Native American communities are neurological. However, the diagnoses, treatments, and study of neurological diseases are complicated. Many communities, including the Navajo Nation, lack adequate access to care and understanding of cultural norms.

By giving Navajo students the opportunity to further their education in the field of neuroscience in a culturally appropriate manner, the program is giving students the ability to serve their communities and answer community questions about neurological diseases that exist on the Navajo Nation. It is important that the research students engage in is important and relevant to themselves and their community.

The URBRAIN program is also working with Diné College faculty to improve student instruction, enhance career progression, and increase research output. The program is also working to help expand Dine College’s research infrastructure and develop fundamental laboratory research skills.



Corn Stock Statue at Diné College



For more information visit:
<https://www.dinecollege.edu/academics/ur-brain/>

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Native Students LEAD the Way in Addressing Health Equity

By: Agnes Attakai

The Leadership in Health Equity for American Indian Researcher Development Program (LEAD) is a one-year structured program designed to help first year American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students address the challenges they face while pursuing a degree in Health Science and STEM (HSTEM) disciplines. Many AI/AN students drop out their first year at the University. Our goal is to provide AI/AN first year and junior college transfers the best foundation for matriculation to their second competitive year with their peers and ultimately, a successful academic career in HSTEM.



LEAD students who participated in the program

LEAD provides educational development activities for individual students but also addresses systemic barriers.

LEAD offers:

1. Equal platform to perform academically with information, skills, training and education.
2. Environment that honors AI/AN faculty as role models.
3. Experience that examines the consequences of health inequity.
4. Education and experiences that build confidence to become researchers and scientists.

The program addressed barriers to academic success by providing support of the whole being including cultural, emotional, and academic support. Students participate in college life management, individual development plans, knowledge assessments, a one semester success course and a leadership/internship course. In addition, they participate in academic and near-peer mentoring while applying critical thinking skills. Cultural events have included viewing Indigenous films, blanket ceremonies, and talking circles. They also participate in leadership, community service and financial assistance activities. At the end of the Spring semester, faculty and staff support student engagement in a capstone project and applying to summer research programs.

Seventeen students have participated in the program since inaugural year in 2019. Due to COVID-19, the program is offered in a virtual format.



For more information visit:

<https://nartc.fcm.arizona.edu/lead>

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Indigenous Steward Highlight: *Dr. Felina Cordova-Marks*

By: Micaryn Begay



Felina Cordova-Marks is a member of the Hopi Tribe. She grew up in Flagstaff and Tucson, Arizona. Outside of her busy days at the University of Arizona, she spends most of her time volunteering to give back to the community. Despite her busy schedule, she still has time for her favorite hobbies, which include knitting, reading, hiking and attending movie theaters (pre-pandemic). Dr. Cordova-Marks graduated from the University of Arizona and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology. After she finished her undergraduate degree, she pursued a masters degree at University of Arizona in Public Health, and a doctorate in Public Health. When asked what she hopes to do with her degrees and educational experience, Dr. Cordova-Marks responded “I hope to create translational research that can improve the health of American Indian communities”.



Dr. Cordova-Marks picking up garbage for a Trash Tag event for her volunteer group

Felina Cordova-Marks, DrPH, MPH

these communities continue to face. Dr. Cordova-Marks aspires to eventually pursue a career at the National Institute of Health (NIH) or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Her decision to pursue a career at the national level is an interest of hers because she hopes that she can incite change for her community and other tribal communities at the national level.

Currently, Dr. Cordova-Marks is a newly appointed Assistant Professor at UArizona College of Public Health. Prior, she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Arizona Cancer Center. She is a mixed-methods researcher that has also spent equal amounts of training in both biological and social sciences. In addition to being faculty, she is also the founder of the Indigenous Volunteers and Tucson Volunteers. She founded these organizations “to increase volunteerism and show on social media all the great ways that American Indians/Indigenous People give back to their communities.”

Dr. Cordova-Marks is a well-known member of the Tucson community where she has been recognized for her contributions and hard work. She was recently named Tucson’s Woman of the Year-40 Under 40 from the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; National Native American 40 Under 40 from the National Center for American Indian Economic Development, and the University of Arizona Centennial Award. Her most cherished accomplishments outside of her community work are her first publications, which were primarily biology focused. Her first peer-reviewed journal publication was titled “Leptin’s Regulation of Obesity-Induced Cardiac Extracellular Matrix Remodeling” and was published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Toxicology.



Dr. Cordova-Marks helping a Native family in need for the Annual Present Drive

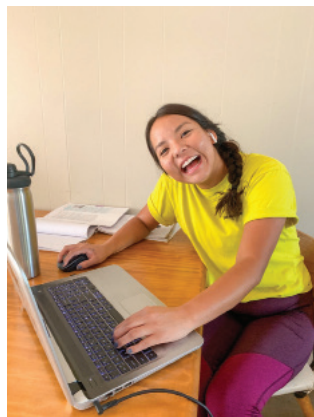
Op-Ed: Indigenous Volunteers

By: Dr. Felina Cordova-Marks

As much as the COVID-19 pandemic will be associated with the year 2020, so will volunteerism and the big hearts that have led many to help others locally and on their homelands. This year we have seen the rise of numerous COVID-19 relief efforts, providing food, water, cleaning supplies, and assistance to family, friends and tribal members. The majority of relief efforts for Native and Indigenous communities have been targeted towards helping reservation communities. Indigenous Volunteers' efforts to help those living on reservations included organizing ongoing mask drives for the Hopi reservation and for Gallup Indian Medical Center, located on the Navajo reservation.



Gallup Indian Medical Center healthcare staff handing out the donated masks to patients and those being tested for COVID-19



Indigenous Volunteer Kelsey Yonnie (Diné) hard at work

Our organization also saw the gap that Native and Indigenous peoples living in urban areas may be experiencing in receiving aid and created the "Southern AZ Urban Native Indigenous COVID-19 Relief" fundraiser and outreach effort. As there is strength in numbers, we decided to collaborate on this with the University of Arizona Native Student Action Advisory Board (SAAB), and local non-profits including Indigenous Alliance Without Borders, Chukson/Tucson Water Protectors and the HONOR Collective. To date we have raised over \$27,000 via a GoFundMe and direct private donations. All funds raised have been for urban Native and Indigenous communities in Tucson. Priority for our outreach is given to elders, those with limited mobility, and the medically vulnerable in order to keep those at high risk safe at home. To mitigate potential risks to volunteers and recipients, all efforts have been via a virtual format. Volunteers receive a wish list (google form we created) from those in need and place orders online through Safeway for groceries (we add fruits and veggies to orders if not originally included on their wish list) and supplies (adult diapers, formula, etc.).

Safeway then delivers the groceries to recipients on our behalf. One of our volunteers and UArizona College of Public Health alumni, Kelsey Yonnie (Diné) describes what volunteering on our COVID-19 relief efforts means to her as, "Opportunities to help others come up every day and I wanted to take advantage of that by serving and loving my Indigenous brothers and sisters here in Tucson. Especially during this time where most people are thinking, 'survival of the fittest,' I want to pick others up and say you're seen and we will help even if that is as simple as ordering and delivering groceries for your family." Currently, we have helped over 130 families (over 550 total people) with our fundraising and outreach.

If you would like to donate to the Indigenous Volunteer efforts visit the gofundme:
www.gofundme.com/saz-urban-native-relief



For more information follow on Facebook:
Indigenous Volunteers

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Increasing Tohono O’odham Enrollment at UArizona

By: Alex Benavides and Daniel Sestiaga



Alex Benavides, UA Program Coordinator
Annamarie Stevens (Tohono O’odham), TOCC
Program Coordinator

What started as an idea in the middle of summer 2018, A Student’s Journey (ASJ), swiftly turned into a full comprehensive experience bridging two institutions together for the success of Native American students, specifically those from the Tohono O’odham Nation. At the time of its proposal, the University of Arizona had minimal student enrollment that represented the Tohono O’odham Nation. Tohono O’odham Community College (TOCC), at the same time, was seeking a stronger partnership from UArizona; one that was focused on transfer, student success, empowerment, and incorporation of career development. Naturally, a robust partnership formed between TOCC and the Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center (SWEHSC) within the College of Pharmacy at UArizona. Both partners supported the idea of fulfilling a gap of representation while pursuing a streamlined approach to institutionalizing its work.

ASJ has assembled a comprehensive team from TOCC and SWEHSC to embark on establishing a clear path from tribal college to university. Simultaneously, this project has students from TOCC fully engaged in addressing topics in environmental and social justice while preparing for future careers within the Tohono O’odham Nation. A

three-year project (\$600,000 award) funded by the Agnese Nelms Haury Program will support three cohorts of students (60 total) to help develop: knowledge about environmental and social justice, skills and confidence to pursue bachelor’s degrees that are related to environmental impact, and work experience in Tribal departments.

Prior to the Pandemic of 2020, it was intended for TOCC students to have a unique opportunity to live at UArizona campus for 5-weeks, earn 3 units of college credit, and have a part-time work experience with a UArizona faculty member in their area of interest. Initially, during the 5-week stay, students would also have access to all campus resources such as the recreation center, libraries, academic advising, financial and much more. However, in summer 2020, ASJ offered the summer portion of its program virtually and enrolled students in PCOL 205, a new course designed specifically for the program. The course covered critical environmental health and social justice topics while incorporating guest speakers, guest lectures, home-experiments from UArizona graduate students, and life-skills styled workshops.

As for the fall portion of the program, it was intended for TOCC students to receive an internship placement on the Tohono O’odham Nation and apply their knowledge and skills from the summer to their fall practicum. Due to the pandemic, tribal departments remained closed and the program pursued other potential partnerships to coordinate student internship opportunities. While this has been an ongoing challenge, the staff is optimistic about the opportunities that will become available in the Pima County community for our students to fulfill their internship.



Orientation for the inaugural cohort of ASJ

ASJ will continue to connect and coordinate with other efforts at UArizona to improve the University's work on Native American student recruitment and retention as prioritized in the University's new strategic plan. What has made this effort unique is the strong and respectable integration approach that is being formulated around Native experiences, specifically that of the O'odham.

"These workshops have helped me feel more comfortable in my own skin and better prepared on how to respond to other people's questions. I am looking forward to seeing what we all can learn as a group and what we can all contribute to and for each other on this journey."

-Jamie Siqueiros (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), First Year

"I feel more confident in myself when looking towards this new upcoming semester at a new college. The guests we've had in our Zoom meetings have all been very helpful and I am now having a better understanding of the transition to a university. Being from a native community where the native people get underestimated, I want to be that change and help others be that change."

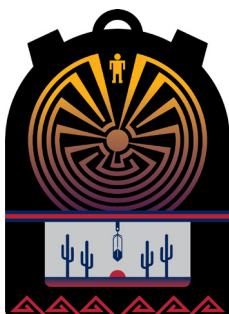
-Amanda Miguel (Tohono O'odham), Second Year

"Moving forward as an Indigenous, queer, woman it makes me want to be more vocal. To represent not only my tribe, but the other communities I fall under. And to uplift the voices of my fellow minority kin to keep fighting the good fight and to keep moving forward despite the systems of oppression we find ourselves surviving through."

-Pachynne Ignacio (Tohono O'odham), First Year

"It was a privilege to hear from one of our own people to bring awareness about our water and how global temperature is going to keep rising over the years. We, as the next generation, need to be aware of these current situations that are affecting all of us, especially in our communities."

- Ethan Antone (Tohono O'odham), First Year



For more information visit:
<https://tocc.edu/university-of-arizona/>

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American Indian Student Initiatives

By: Micaryn Begay



AISI installed solar panels throughout the Navajo Nation over the 2020 spring break

American Indian Student Initiatives (AISI) is a student run organization at the University of Arizona designed to help reduce environmental injustices in Native American communities. AISI focuses on building alliances with Indigenous communities, organizing direct actions, and raising public awareness. The organization initially started in 2019 during the Southwest Tribal Climate Change Summit in Idyllwild, California. During the summit, college students were asked to identify climate strategies and solutions in advancing tribal resilience in the Southwest with environmental researchers. Students from UArizona decided to form an organization to create initiatives and raise awareness amongst Native communities. They were inspired to build resilience within their own Native communities with the foundational support of Climate

Science Alliance and their advisor Dr. Len Necifer. The students of this program are affiliated with Native American tribes who seek to initiate effort to create future agents in addressing their tribes' environmental issues.

The first project of AISI was a solar grid electric installation on the Navajo Nation in partnership with the GRID Tribal Alternatives. Seven undergraduate students at UArizona involved with AISI volunteered during Spring Break 2020 to install a solar panel for a family located in Encino, New Mexico. The student volunteers gained knowledge and understanding of renewable energy efficiency and Navajo energy policies as they assisted with the project. AISI seeks to organize future projects working with Native communities in the surrounding Tucson area. Lastly, AISI offers their members the opportunity to improve their environmental based knowledge and networking skills through volunteer opportunities, workshops, and conference travel support. AISI hopes to continue the solar projects for upcoming Spring Break sessions to raise awareness about the environmental conditions and solar effects within the Navajo community.

Dynnika Tso (Diné) grew up in Cameron, Arizona on the Navajo Nation in a traditional hogan without access to electricity or running water. Ms. Tso is a first-generation college student entering her second-year at UArizona seeking to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Public Health with an emphasis on environmental health. She aspires to pursue a medical career within underserved Native American communities with a background in environmental health science research. Her decision to pursue this particular journey was influenced by her cultural upbringing and the health disparities within her community. Ms. Tso is the founder and president of the AISI organization. She believes that environmental health research is needed for Native communities due to the fact that many families do not have access to electricity or running water.



AISI President Dynnika Tso



For more information follow on Facebook:
American Indian Student Initiative

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College of Medicine COVID-19 Relief

By: Agnes Attakai



Aaron Bia (Diné), M.D. candidate class of 2021 and Thomasina Blackwater (Diné), MPH, M.D. candidate, class of 2021 from the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson (UACOM-T) along with fellow medical students in the Association of Native American Medical Students, Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) and the Commitment to Underserved People Program led volunteer efforts to fundraise and donate supplies to the Navajo and Tohono O’odham Nation, two tribal nations impacted by the coronavirus.

In April 2020, the group raised \$1,366 in monetary donations to purchase and deliver cleaning supplies and food to the Tohono O’odham Nation. In May, the students raised \$1,900 to purchase sewing supplies and personal protective equipment to aid fellow UACOM-T alumni that work in rural Navajo hospitals in Fort Defiance, AZ, Tuba City, AZ, and Gallup, NM. In collaboration with the Western Navajo Seamstress COVID-19 Dóóda, students received fabric donations to make reusable medical gowns, scrub caps, and face masks that will be distributed to healthcare workers on the Navajo Nation. Fourth year medical student Thomasina Blackwater states that, “Many of these impacted communities on the Navajo Nation are RHPP sites where we had the privilege of doing some of our clinical rotations and are also home to some of our fellow classmates including myself.”



To see more photos visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/ISMedArticle>

Top Left: Thomasina Blackwater (far right) and peers with handsewn masks made from donated material

Top Right: Preparing to deliver donation to the Navajo Nation

Second from Top Right: Team of Volunteers

Second from Bottom Right: Aaron Bia with seamstress Theresa Hatathlie

Bottom Right: A sign on the Navajo Nation

This Is VOICE at UArizona

By: Jordania Livingston



Members of VOICE

Standing (left-right): Rani Yamutewa (Zuni), Felisia Tagaban (Diné), Tony Viola IV (Pascua Yaqui), Trinity Norris (Tohono O'odham), Amanda Cheromiah, Ph.D., (Laguna Pueblo), Mia Armstrong (Diné, White Mountain Apache, Yaqui, Hopi)

Kneeling (left-right): Joshua Billy (Diné), Joshua Sandoval (Diné)

Voices of Indigenous Concerns in Education (VOICE) is a student organization that was formed in November 2019, in response to a need for improving services and increasing support for Native Wildcats at the University of Arizona. Since then, VOICE has been sharing the narratives and experiences of Indigenous on campus to raise awareness and to create change through in-person and social media engagement."

Two graduate members of VOICE are Native SOAR Director, Dr. Amanda Cheromiah (Laguna Pueblo) Ph.D., Higher Education, and Graduate Assistant Felisia Tagaban (Diné/Filipino/Tlingit) M.A., Higher Education and doctoral student. Shortly after UArizona transitioned to online only in Spring 2020, Dr. Cheromiah and Ms. Tagaban shifted gears to focus on the educational needs of Indigenous educators, students and communities. They created an online community called Indigenous Educators

Unite (IEU). IEU's goal is to raise awareness of the need of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of VOICE's advocacy and the collective support of campus partners and allies, Dr. Cheromiah and Ms. Tagaban submitted a funding proposal to the Provost Office for a director, a program coordinator, and an operations budget for the Native SOAR program. The office approved the director position and the budget, citing austerity due to the pandemic as a reason for not approving the original proposal. Although Native SOAR received funding and is one of many Native-serving programs on the UArizona campus, VOICE continues to advocate for systemic change.

For environmental stewardship, both Dr. Cheromiah and Ms. Tagaban provide perspective through being current students and cultivating Native SOAR student's skills. For Dr. Cheromiah, VOICE, and Native SOAR, IEU are avenues to give back. The student led organizations, to Ms. Tagaban, are very personal. Throughout her undergraduate years, she didn't feel supported nor prepared for student life. With VOICE, Native SOAR and IEU, she's able to have a mentorship component that she didn't have in her time as an undergrad. As mentors and concurrent students, Dr. Cheromiah and Ms. Tagaban value the opportunity to uplift others.

Dr. Cheromiah adds, "It's important to recognize how [the work] morphs during the COVID-19 era. It's going to be interesting and fascinating to see how Indian Country will evolve with the pandemic occurring." Through sharing narratives and advocating for issues, Ms. Tagaban concludes: "it is the right thing to do when looking at disparities, a broken system, you can't ignore that".



Native SOAR students and instructors interacted with President Robbins during an in-class student outreach activity.

PREP@UAZ

By Tiffani Begay



Top: 2019-2020 cohort and staff at the 2019 SACNAS Conference in Honolulu, HI.

Middle: 2020-2021 cohort

Bottom: 2018-2019 cohort

The Postbaccalaureate Research Education Program at the University of Arizona (PREP@UAZ) is a year-long program funded through the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and is aimed towards strengthening participants' research skills and working towards being competitive applicants in their matriculation into a biomedical science graduate program. There are currently 36 PREP institutions in the US. Of those 36, PREP@UAZ is the only one primarily focused on American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students.

PREP@UAZ seeks to provide AI/AN and minority scholars with a rigorous research and educational program that honors Indigenous perspectives and nurtures a strong sense of well-being and belonging as well as increasing the diversity of PhD-level scientists. PREP@UAZ is in its third year and has been successful in having all previous participants accepted into graduate school.

This past June, PREP@UAZ accepted the 2020-2021 cohort. COVID-19 has been challenging for not only staff but students. Students faced challenges such as moving from a different state, finding apartments, and laboratory rotations. Despite these challenges, PREP@UAZ has persevered and is continuously adapting. This Spring, PREP@UAZ has accepted their 2021-2022 cohort and the new cohort will be starting their orientation and lab rotations this summer.

Tiffani Begay (Diné) from Dilkon, Arizona, was the Senior Program Coordinator for the PREP@UAZ for three years. Ms. Begay holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise and Wellness from Arizona State University and a Master of Public Health degree in Health Services Administration from the University of Arizona.

Ms. Begay started working with undergraduates when she was hired as the program coordinator for the Partnership for Native American Cancer Prevention (NACP) Research Education Core in 2013, of which, she coordinated along with PREP@UAZ. Ms. Begay's seven years of experience have given her the opportunity to succeed not only professionally but academically as well.

Dr. Margaret Briehl, PREP@UAZ Program Director and new Senior Program Coordinator Ms. Carolina Pineda are continuously working towards giving the scholars confidence to succeed in their academic and professional journeys.



For more information visit:

<https://pathology.arizona.edu/uaprep>

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Engaging in Student Research in a Time of COVID-19

By: Micaryn Begay



Dr. Carmella Kahn

Diné College's Summer Research Enhancement Program (SREP) is a 10-week program that provides research opportunities to American Indian college students who are interested in public health and health research. SREP students develop skills and interests in prevention research and participate in community-based research on the Diné College's campus and other campuses in the Navajo Nation. SREP was first created in 2000 as a student training component for national diabetes prevention. However, the program saw a need for public health research within the community, especially for public health workers in the Navajo Nation. Primarily, SREP functions as a training program to educate Native American students about public health research methods to raise awareness of public health issues, as well as to collect health data. Native American students of SREP are able to work with local organizations throughout the Navajo Nation and engage with research programs to address health concerns in the Navajo Nation.

Carmella Kahn (Diné) grew up in Mariano Lake, New Mexico and Pinesprings, Arizona, both located on the Navajo Nation. Dr. Kahn graduated from Gallup High School and continued her educational journey at the University of Arizona where she received her doctorate in Public Health. Dr. Kahn is currently a faculty member and an instructor at Diné College in the Public Health Department. She also is the co-director for SREP, which she believes is a stepping stone for her teaching career. Dr. Kahn was first introduced to SREP by her mentor Dr. Nicolette Teufel-Shone, where she began to guest lecture and co-instruct at the program. She started to engage herself more in the program and soon was asked to instruct for the entire summer. Using the skills and experiences she learned throughout her educational journey, she was able to apply her knowledge to help her own community. Dr. Kahn plans to give back to the Navajo community by teaching Native American students about public health, as well as increasing the numbers of Native American public health workers.

Dr. Kahn believes that public health is essential within the Navajo Nation community to ensure safety and implement preventive measures – especially for elders and individuals with immunocompromised systems. More than ever, she believes that public health is highly needed and imperative with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation needs more public health workers that can combat this pandemic to ensure the safety and health of the people. The threat of COVID-19 affected SREP's ability to conduct their program in person. However, Dr. Kahn stated that the program went well despite SREP's modified curriculum so that students were able to conduct research projects online. During the program, students were trained to become contact tracers for COVID-19, which was a joint collaboration with the Community Outreach Patient and Empowerment (COPE).

“SREP is strength, kinship and culture preservation. Every day I learned a new way to incorporate my Diné culture and values into public health research methods. I will continue to utilize Diné Education Philosophy in my academic and professional career. I am truly grateful for my SREP family.”

-Shelby Kinlichee (Diné)



SREP Student Summer 2020-Shelby Kinlichee



SREP Student Summer 2020-Karianne Jones

“SREP gives you a chance to build your network and it inspires you to pursue greater and better things. At the end of the program, you’ll be impressed of what you were capable of.”

-Karianne Jones (Diné)

The students who attended summer 2019 said they joined SREP for many reasons, but the main reason was the opportunities provided for the students who completed the program. They heard numerous positive feedback about the program and how beneficial it may be for their future careers. The students also enjoyed the bonds that were created with their mentors and how each mentor prepared each of them to conduct primary data research. Their main research focus for the program during summer 2020 was COVID-19, which primarily focuses on recruiting participants, collecting data, analyzing data and presenting the findings. Karianne Jones (Diné), Krishayna Smith (Diné), and Shelby Kinlichee (Diné), had the amazing opportunity to present their research at the SACNAS 2020 conference in October.

Lastly, each student was trained to work as contact tracers for COVID-19 within the Navajo Nation. They made daily calls to people who were affected by the virus, whether they were a case themselves or someone who was in close contact with someone who was. Each student who joined SREP this summer played an essential role in following up on individuals and families by providing resources during the time of isolation.

SREP has opened so many doors of opportunities for each student such as continuing their educational journey in research and public health and work in organizations that focus primarily on COVID-19. Lastly, each student has gained the passion of giving back to their own community as public health research and focus are needed for the Navajo Nation.

“SREP challenged me in various ways that will help me climb my educational ladder. I learned more about my Diné culture and how it can be incorporated in public health. I gained lifelong friends and mentors. I am grateful for them”

-Krishanya Smith (Diné)



SREP Student Summer 2020-Krishanya Smith



For more information visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/ISSREPArticle>

Contact:
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Op-Ed: Tribal Spectrum Rights

By: Darrah Blackwater



Ms. Blackwater installing broadband internet at Diné College

What do sweatpants, divorce lawyers, and the internet have in common? They have all become increasingly important in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. This year the internet has become a lifeline, allowing students to continue their education online, coworkers to work from home, and healthcare workers to monitor data and deliver telehealth.

This past March I left campus for spring break in my third and final year of law school. Like all other students, I had no idea that I would be finishing my law degree online from that point forward. I had the luxury of an easy transition to online classes, as I own a laptop and had access to fast and reliable internet in my Tucson apartment. However, not all students experienced such an easy transition to online classes: many Native students went home to reservations that have no or little access to broadband internet. The American Library Association reports that seven in ten residents on rural tribal lands remain without access to fixed high-capacity broadband.

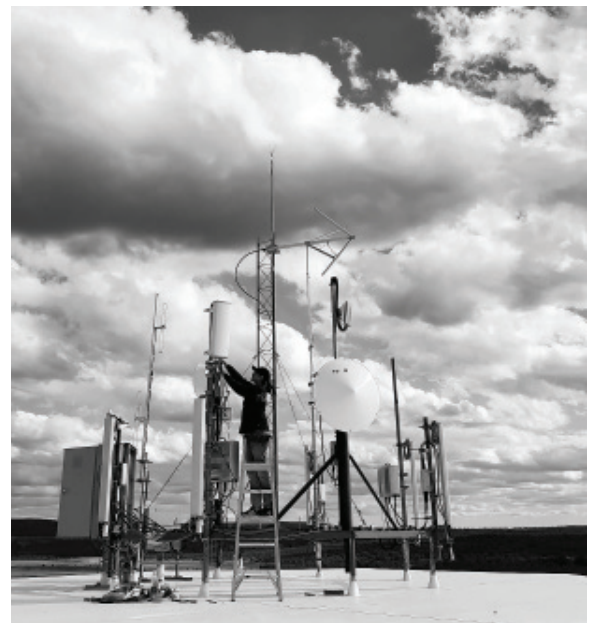
The University of Arizona searched for solutions on the fly. They set up parking lot WiFi at their agricultural sites in tribal areas, which were already connected for smart-ag purposes. It was the University's attempt to put a bandaid on the gunshot wound that is the digital divide in rural, tribal communities.

In order for Indigenous communities to reap economic, health, and educational opportunities, internet access is imperative. However, Indigenous communities remain among the least connected in North America.

When university campuses across the nation closed down, many Native students returned to homes without an internet connection capable of playing videos and uploading assignments.

While COVID-19 is illuminating the colossal crevasse between the connected and the unconnected, this is not a new problem. Tribal advocates have known for decades that the digital divide in Indian Country is creating inequity. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has repeatedly admonished the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for making radio waves called spectrum (a natural resource) and other telecommunications necessities almost completely inaccessible to Tribal Nations. In 2018, the GAO said the FCC "has done little to promote and support tribes' access to radio frequency spectrum that can be used for such wireless service."

A broadband internet connection in Indian Country can mean the difference between life and death, especially in COVID-19 hot spots, where telemedicine and online services would help keep infection rates lower by allowing more people to stay home more often.



Broadband internet system at Diné College

It is easy to talk about the problem, but it is more fun to talk about solutions. The State of Hawaii set out to solve their digital divide last year with the help of two non-profits called MuralNet and the Internet Society. The tribal government partnered with these organizations to create a sovereign community broadband network, with much higher speeds and lower rates than their former, big telecom service-provider.

In line with those recommendations, the FCC opened a tribal priority window from February to September of 2020, extending a novel opportunity for Native Nations in tribal areas to apply for a license to a small slice of spectrum over their lands. Holding spectrum licenses makes it possible for Native Nations to set up their own community broadband networks or make it easier to contract established service-providers.



Ms. Blackwater installing broadband internet in Hawai'i

The FCC's and many universities' 2020 responses to COVID-19 in Indian Country is positive and often welcome, but not timely.

Policy changes and support leading up to this point could have prevented the tech crisis that exploded inside of the pandemic. A bit of foresight would have made this time much safer and easier for thousands of tribal citizens. The FCC needs to act on tribal access every day, not just when the world is in a crisis. As a government agency, it is the FCC's duty to uphold the trust responsibility that the United States government owes to Native Nations by making sure tribes and tribal citizens have the tools to thrive. While many tribal citizens have found ways to thrive despite these broken promises, the duty remains, and the FCC must do more.

If there is one lesson that an Indigenous person has to learn early in life, it is not to cry over split milk. Through a positive lens we can see that the pandemic has shined light on the issue of the digital divide in Indigenous communities in a way that nothing else could. That is a win, as it has brought attention and funding to life-giving projects on tribal lands. It has inspired legislation affirming tech sovereignty and self determination among Native

Nations. It has given new meanings to policy recommendations given by organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians and the Internet Society: calls for a tribal broadband fund, meaningful consultation, and spectrum rights for Native Nations. Listening to experts and banding together as advocates will make our voices heard so that tribal citizens may be connected.

Just as Indigenous students have so much to offer the UArizona, Indigenous peoples have so much to offer the world. The internet needs Indigenous voices: our teachings, our humor, our knowledge, our art, and whatever else we want to share. Throughout my career I look forward to advocating for our voices to be heard; the world needs to hear them.



Ms. Blackwater is a graduate of the James E. Rogers College of Law

To learn more about Ms. Blackwater's work and journey visit:
www.blackwatersoul.org

Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center Staff Working During COVID-19

By: Micaryn Begay



Marti Lindsey, PhD, Director SWEHSC CEC

“Working virtually has been a challenge because of the limitations of not seeing people in person, partners and students having less adequate technologies, and not being able to drop into the office to catch up. I have had to do more organized scheduling rather than spontaneous catch up sessions with the staff. It was awkward in the beginning but now it is more comfortable. I have had to be creative with getting students the technologies they need. I still mess up Zoom meeting links.”

Ben Richmond, Assistant Director SWEHSC CEC

“The COVID-19 Pandemic has created unique challenges in community engagement. One of the most difficult challenges has been providing summer programs for youth. We were able to transition all five of our summer programs, that are usually held on the University of Arizona campus, into a virtual format. We were able to accomplish this by rearranging the schedule of the programs to be more manageable in an online environment.”



Cheyenne Grabiec (Diné), Program Coordinator SWEHSC CEC

“Working virtually was definitely a challenge, because I really enjoyed being able to meet with partners face to face. I had to adapt to being able to have effective Zoom meetings so that our projects could continue to move forward.”

Alex Benavides, Program Coordinator SWEHSC CEC

“Working virtually has made my work experience more convenient but also more challenging at the same time. For “A Student’s Journey”, it was a challenge to adapt our original program model, goals, and activities to a virtual format, while also keeping our students engaged for every online meeting. I took this challenge as an opportunity to prepare the students for this new era of virtual learning, and to ensure they felt comfortable utilizing online systems.”



Micaryn Begay (Diné), Tribal Consultant SWEHSC CEC

“Working virtually was challenging but an adaptable experience. It was my first year at SWEHSC as an intern which was more difficult to complete my internship remotely. However, with the amazing team at SWEHSC, I learned a lot my first year as an intern and interacted with various tribal partners through zoom meeting. We were able to manage and continue our tribal projects despite the obstacles endured during COVID-19.”

Jordania Livingston (Diné), 2020 Intern SWEHSC CEC

“Working virtually was a learning experience and applying myself more into discussion during Zoom meetings while experiencing fatigue.”



Poetry Contest Winner



Where I Am From, a photo by Ms. Keovorabouth that accompanies his poem and captures his home of Chinle

“Yá’át’ééh, shí éí Souksavanh T. Keovorabouth yinishyé. Kinyaa’áanii nishli. Nááts’ózi Bashishchiin. ‘Áshjiji Dashicheii. Nááts’ózi dashinalí. My name is Souksavanh T. Keovorabouth, I’m an enrolled member of the Diné (Navajo) Nation, and a third-year Ph.D. Student in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Oregon State University. I am originally from Chinle, Arizona but grew up in Mesa (Phoenix), Arizona, with the pandemic still in effect, I had the privilege of moving back home from Oregon to be with family. I received a dual Bachelors at the University of Arizona in Sustainable Built Environments and American Indian Studies then a Masters in American Indian Studies and now I’m at Oregon State University. My research is in Two-Spirit identity, Native American urbanization/relocation, Native American urban experience, Indigenous Urban Planning practices, and Black and Indigenous Solidarities. My career goal is to either work as a professor in Native American Studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and/or Urban Studies or work in an urban planning firm to bridge Native American urban experience with Urban planning practices to build improved infrastructures for our urban communities.

“Displacement” is a piece that I wrote about my own Two-Spirit multi-racial urban identity and the complexities behind that within a settler-colonial society. What inspired me to write this piece is from my own experience but also to critique the ways we begin to understand Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in our society. We are often erased or

unheard and this was a way for me to bring voice to our peoples.

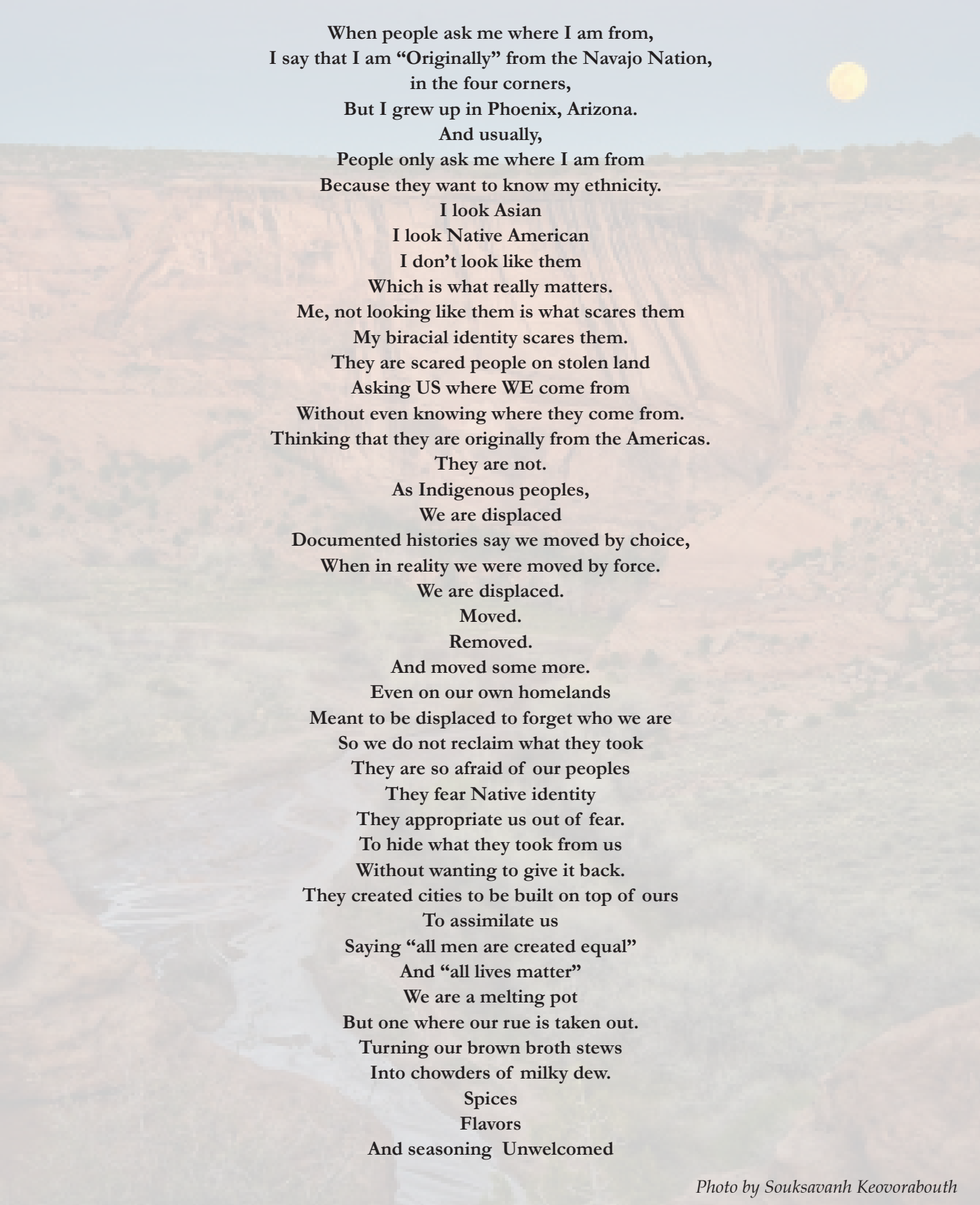
I enjoy poetry because it is a critical lens of understanding the world. It is a form of art and expression that tells truth, our truths, and I believe that poetry is a form of theory that should be heavily embraced, especially as a praxis, methodology, and epistemology for our communities to enjoy; it is that extension of storytelling and prayer.”



Souksavanh T. Keovorabouth

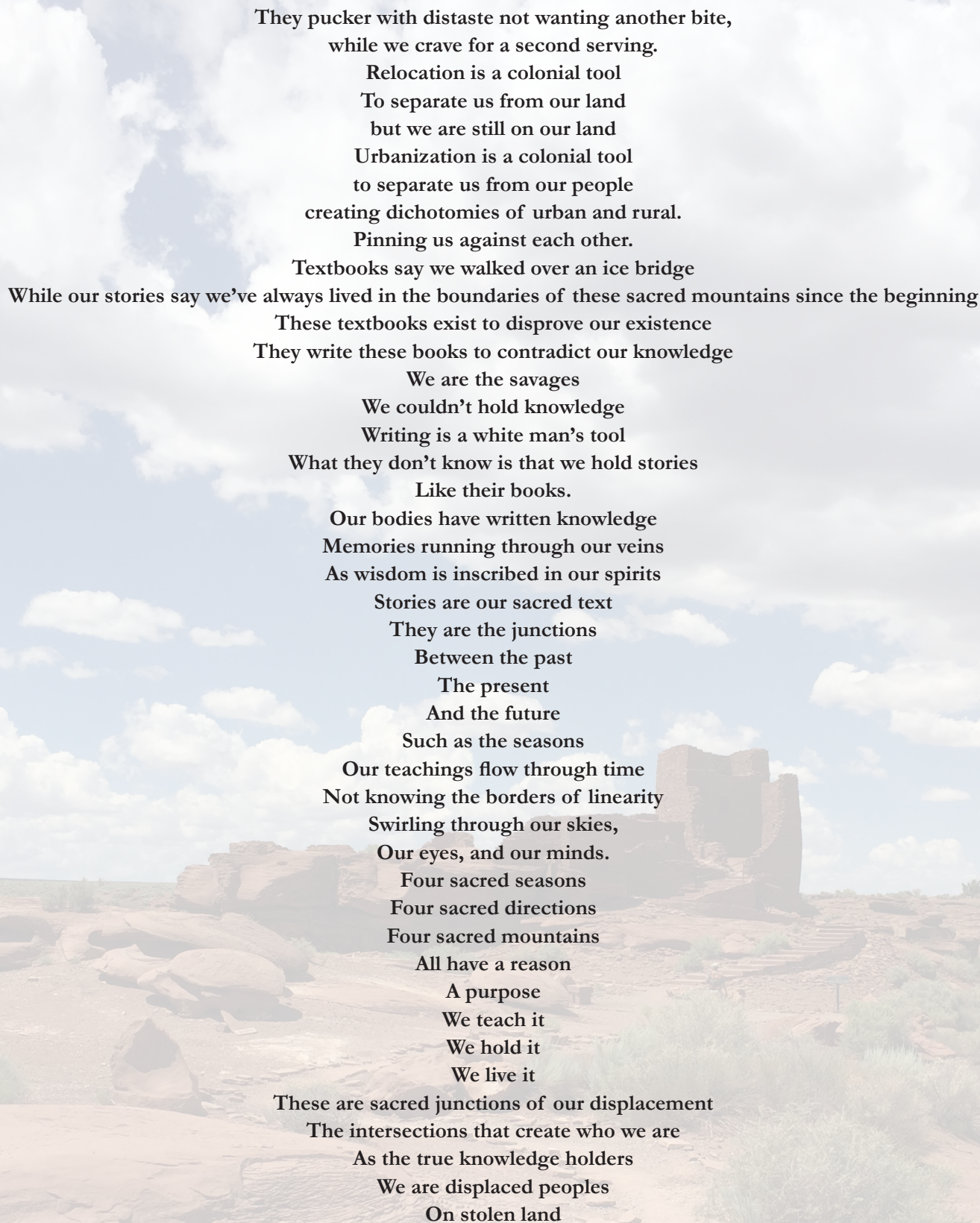
Where I Am From

By: Souksavanh T. Keovorabouth



When people ask me where I am from,
I say that I am “Originally” from the Navajo Nation,
in the four corners,
But I grew up in Phoenix, Arizona.
And usually,
People only ask me where I am from
Because they want to know my ethnicity.
I look Asian
I look Native American
I don’t look like them
Which is what really matters.
Me, not looking like them is what scares them
My biracial identity scares them.
They are scared people on stolen land
Asking US where WE come from
Without even knowing where they come from.
Thinking that they are originally from the Americas.
They are not.
As Indigenous peoples,
We are displaced
Documented histories say we moved by choice,
When in reality we were moved by force.
We are displaced.
Moved.
Removed.
And moved some more.
Even on our own homelands
Meant to be displaced to forget who we are
So we do not reclaim what they took
They are so afraid of our peoples
They fear Native identity
They appropriate us out of fear.
To hide what they took from us
Without wanting to give it back.
They created cities to be built on top of ours
To assimilate us
Saying “all men are created equal”
And “all lives matter”
We are a melting pot
But one where our rue is taken out.
Turning our brown broth stews
Into chowders of milky dew.
Spices
Flavors
And seasoning Unwelcomed

Photo by Souksavanh Keovorabouth

The background of the page is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are large, reddish-brown rock formations and a dirt path. In the middle ground, there are several ancient stone structures, possibly ruins of a civilization, with some having rectangular openings. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is arid and historical.

They pucker with distaste not wanting another bite,
while we crave for a second serving.
Relocation is a colonial tool
To separate us from our land
but we are still on our land
Urbanization is a colonial tool
to separate us from our people
creating dichotomies of urban and rural.
Pinning us against each other.
Textbooks say we walked over an ice bridge
While our stories say we've always lived in the boundaries of these sacred mountains since the beginning
These textbooks exist to disprove our existence
They write these books to contradict our knowledge
We are the savages
We couldn't hold knowledge
Writing is a white man's tool
What they don't know is that we hold stories
Like their books.
Our bodies have written knowledge
Memories running through our veins
As wisdom is inscribed in our spirits
Stories are our sacred text
They are the junctions
Between the past
The present
And the future
Such as the seasons
Our teachings flow through time
Not knowing the borders of linearity
Swirling through our skies,
Our eyes, and our minds.
Four sacred seasons
Four sacred directions
Four sacred mountains
All have a reason
A purpose
We teach it
We hold it
We live it
These are sacred junctions of our displacement
The intersections that create who we are
As the true knowledge holders
We are displaced peoples
On stolen land

Photo from Marti Lindsey

Adapting to Virtual Programming

By: Natalia Cachora and Carol Seanez

The Native American Science and Engineering Program (NASEP) is a year-long program that offers STEM engagement throughout the academic year. Each group is seen as a cohort and will receive support from NASEP staff as they prepare to apply to college. Additionally, there are other events offered throughout the year that consists of 4 phases: summer session, research project, enrichment, and closing. As COVID-19 put a hold on gatherings, academics, leisure, and other aspects of life, NASEP also had to adjust its normal programming to ensure the safety and wellbeing of



The 2020 NASEP cohort was held entirely through Zoom

our participants, staff, and community. This normally non-stop 1-week in-person program that takes place at the University of Arizona campus was switched to a two-week program offered on Zoom. We had twenty-six students login from across Arizona and New Mexico, who represented the Diné, Ho-Chunk, Hopi, Pascua Yaqui, Tohono O’odham and White Mountain Apache tribal nations. Each student was given an iPad to use to ensure that they could access the program virtually. At the end of the two-week program, students stated that they felt more comfortable in applying to college and felt that they learned of more STEM careers and opportunities. Ely Robbins (junior) stated, “I have learned a lot. I have learned more than I ever have about college and scholarships.” Although this was a new experience, we felt that it was successful and are thankful to our partners who provided support by making adjustments to their presentations to make it more interactive for an online platform.

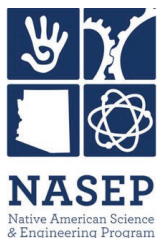
After completing our first online program, our advice for others planning to also change to a virtual format are:

- Interview people who have had experience with an online program: At the time that we were making this change, we reached out to individuals in the MEDSTART program, which had started 5-weeks before our program. We interviewed a participant and a staff person to get two different perspectives on what engaged students most effectively. Shout out to Maya McCormick and Dr. Tiffany Sorrell who shared their experience candidly with us! We learned about a free resource called Kahoot! that can be downloaded to a smart phone which allows participants to play an online quiz game from anywhere. We utilized this resource heavily in our program and our presenters often provide incentives participation with goodies we mailed to our students. In addition, we gained ideas on how to conduct virtual socials like movie nights.
- Watch the Indigenizing Zoom Presentation from the Indigenous Educators Unite series: In this recorded presentation, Dr. Amanda Cheromiah covers twenty different strategies that help educators engage all people in an online space. Our favorites included the ZoomName-Change ice breaker, the use of breakout rooms, and ways to combat Zoom fatigue. It is available to watch on YouTube.

- Utilizing small groups helped students engage with the program content more intimately: Our students were broken up into 3 groups which were led by a staff member. Whenever we had activities, we would break out into these groups which allowed them to discuss topics more intimately. It was also helpful for students who were shy and maybe have been more hesitant to speak to the whole group. We also broke students into “Exit Buddies” which was a socially distanced version of our in-person High-Five Buddies. The buddies, choreographed a dance that they would do every time we said “Find your Exit Buddy” which served the purpose of getting students moving to combat Zoom fatigue. Students were told to check in with their buddy daily which harnessed group accountability. If their buddy was running late to something, the participant knew to ask if they’re okay and to get them caught up.
- Integrating both virtual and off-Zoom spaces for learning can help avoid computer fatigue: Since our program only ran online for part of the day, we assigned off Zoom activities which included listening to podcasts or watching TedTalks and YouTube videos. Our Graduate Assistant, Natalia Cachora, had students create an air quality sensor using tools found in their home which was then used for her Air Quality presentation. The content was aimed at complementing our presentations for the following day and were discussed in our morning check-ins or during a lesson. This encourages learning beyond the screen, which can give students a break from constantly being on Zoom.
- There are a lot of free tools that can be used to create a fun environment for Native high school students to engage with the program: We mentioned Kahoot! above, but there are a lot more great tools that helped us engage with students. Slack is a channel based messaging platform that helps us communicate with families and participants. We use different channels that allow for program related things, but to also facilitate social interactions among the cohort. We found that many students missed participating in school sports. We used the Nike Run Club app to challenge one another to be physically active throughout the program. It was so successful that students asked to continue the challenge past the 2-week period.

As we enter our research project and enrichment phases of NASEP, we look forward to continuing to engage students in a virtual setting and have seen that online conference platforms are making updates to make this experience better for their users. We are thankful to all of our partners for their support in making NASEP a success. We are especially appreciative to the Southwest Environmental Health Science Center (SWESHC) and UArizona College of Pharmacy who continue to support NASEP by printing the research posters that our students use to compete and present in science fairs and conferences, and by presenting each year during our summer program.

To watch the Indigenizing Zoom Presentation go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q08LQ5NXbQ>



For more information visit:
<https://nasep.arizona.edu/>

Contact:
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To learn more about Indigenous Educators Unite visit:
<https://indigenouseducator.wixsite.com/unite>

Meet the Advisory Board



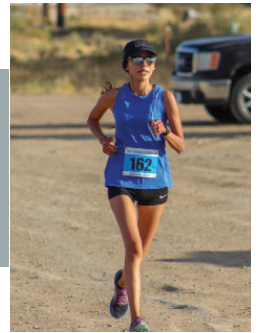
Agnes Attakai (Diné)

I am an Indigenous Steward

“Share the knowledge. Knowledge, no matter where it comes from or how it is derived, is useful.” As an Indigenous Steward I share my knowledge and support the next generation of knowledge keepers and protectors.

Tiffani Begay (Diné)

I am an Indigenous Steward by acknowledging and learning about the tribal lands that I am from or visit when I am giving a presentation or attending a race. It is also our responsibility as Indigenous people to protect our environment.



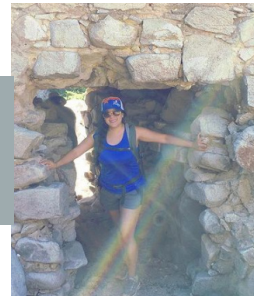
Alex Benavides



I'm an Indigenous Steward by collaborating with our community partners to provide opportunities and resources for students to become future leaders and advocates in environmental health and stewardship in Indian Country.

Felina Cordova-Marks (Hopi)

I'm an Indigenous Steward through my many many years of volunteering and service, striving to always help the various communities I am a part of.



Melodie Lopez (Hopi/Diné/Pueblo/Mexican)



I come from generations of Indigenous stewards and continue to pass along knowledge to the generations after me.

First Runner Up

Emery Jackson (Diné), Tucson Magnet High School

"The environmental issue that I was covering in this art piece was the issue that there are traces of uranium in the reservation water that is affecting Native American health and living style. I also wanted to show the beauty on the reservation through a Native American and the landscape."



Second Runner Up

Katrina Antone (Tohono O'odham), University of Arizona

"This piece shows a current situation and trying to protect the next generation from COVID-19 while also keeping him in a traditional environment."



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Indigenous Stewards magazine will continue to focus on young professionals and the vital work they do to protect the environment, improve human health, and empower Indigenous communities. Your support will allow the expansion to access resources, develop collaborations, and bridge networks for capacity building partnerships.

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