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AIR News

focus

“OUR MISSION IS THE PROMOTION AND SUCCESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS WITHIN EDUCATION.”

Created in 1993 the AIR Program has set out to create a greater future for our American Indian Community through education.

Midway Point

(SAN DIEGO) We are a little beyond the midway point for our AIR Sr. program and have gained a lot of great ideas on health, fitness, culture and education. To recap, we started our semester discussing health and our Native cultures. Many of our Tribes took great care in having a healthy lifestyle that promoted physical well being, as well as mental. Health started from their agricultural practices harvesting during specific times of the seasons. Further, it involved the combination of physical activity where it sometimes progressed into competition between neighboring tribes and villages. From this we planted our garden to give our students the ideal of where health starts. It starts with the choice of types of food and understanding of where it comes from. Many of our Tribal customs center around the planting seasons where much prayer and ceremony are given at this time. Next we were given the opportunity to experience



healthy activities that have gone on before within our Tribal communities. The SDSU Crew gave us a demonstration in rowing. This is similar to what many of our Native Tribes did to traverse the water ways in North America. Finally, we heard from a nutritionist who gave us the overall on nutrition. The comparison from our past Tribal practices and their diets are similar to healthy eating diets of today. Presently, our students are working to use all this information to create mini-presentations. We can never properly produce great research with our time allotment, but the exposure to

aspects of culture, research methodology, and mentoring is a valuable tool for the students. This approach also empowers them to understand ideas on culture and associate it with their own cultural identity. Overall, our program is on target and producing more students who are thinking about and who are going on to pursue college. We thank all those mentors who have volunteered their time this semester from San Diego State University, the University of San Diego, California State University San Marcos and the University of California, San Diego. Truly they have created a special program.



Congratulations to our Seniors!

We congratulate all our Seniors who are graduating this Spring. Altogether, each of our Seniors have been in our program for more than a year and we are honored that they have chosen our program to gain insight on higher education. Of our six senior participants all (100%) will pursue higher education through either 4 year institutions or through our local junior colleges. Parents, schools, and after-school educational programs working together are the strongest means to get our Native youth to pursue their dreams through education and we are proud to be part of these great efforts. We cannot say enough on these students and wish them the best as they will become our future Native Leaders guiding us all to a greater future.



Danielle's Corner

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Danielle Chung (USD Sophomore) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

“As part of USD’s ‘Race and Education’ class that pairs with AIR, we read about indigenous pedagogy (method of teaching). We were asked to think about how the reading relates to the pedagogy used in AIR. Indigenous teaching methods build on the responsibility and relationship between teachers and students. Indigenous learning spaces like AIR create dialogues, instead of the teacher-figure setting all the limitations on knowledge, history, and culture. Student empowerment is at the heart of AIR pedagogy. At the first AIR Senior meeting, students and mentors brainstormed the steps to the wide possibilities of high-school diplomas, college diplomas, and dream careers. We wanted to create a tangible “game plan” for each student to prepare for their post-high school endeavors. AIR

mentors are slightly older than the students ‘biologically,’ but it is the experience of ‘what it takes’ to get into and through college that makes mentors valuable. As racial/ethnic minorities in higher education, there are many invisible and unspoken forces working to keep (us) out. For many mentors, we personally hold indigenous and/or minority views, values, and struggles. I personally believe any mentorship is more successful when the student works with someone who understands them and can relate to them.”

Thoughts from Rose

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Rose Vasquez (Valley Center High School Senior and Santa Ysabel Tribal member) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

My senior year came quicker than I had expected. My senior year meant choosing a college, or colleges in which I would apply to. I cringed at the thought of all the essays I knew I would have to write and the lengthy applications I would have to fill out. Yet, I knew it had to be done.

The question of where I would apply still remained. I thought to myself, “big or small school?, private or public school?, rural or urban school?, religious or non-religious school?” I realized there were many factors to consider when applying to college, but what kind of college would best fit me?

I was not sure which type of college would fit me best, so I went for it all. I am applying to big, small, private, public, rural and urban schools in order to have a chance at it all.

In considering different colleges, you should keep in mind that each college has something different to offer. Each college is unique and has its own personality. Look into each one and see where you best fit. If you are not sure where you fit, just go for it all!



Special Note: Rose has decided to pursue her education at California State University of San Marcos. Congratulations Rose!!!



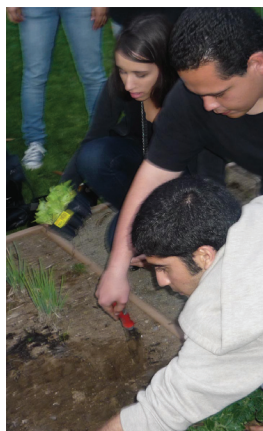
Stanford Bound!

We wanted to take this time to congratulate Chandler Hood for being accepted to Stanford University. Chandler is an exceptional student who has always been motivated and has set his goal on his pursuit towards higher education. From the beginning we often joked about how he should attend either USD/SDSU/CSUSM or UCSD but our motivation is for our students to attend anywhere that their heart desires and that will give them the best education possible. Perhaps Stanford may give him this but we definitely know that Stanford is getting a highly qualified student in Chandler.

Chandler’s success can only be attributed to the great support from his family (Suzanne and John), our native community which he is a part of and his own self empowerment, of his knowledge of his culture and who he is.

As with all our students we are proud of him. He is part of this year’s class of students that we feel will make a great difference for our Native Community and our country.

Congratulations and the next time we see him may be at the SDSU v Stanford game (in the NCAA Mens Basketball tournament) or at the very least at the Cal/Stanford game.





A Letter from Liz

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Liz Mejia (ATCS) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

Hello my name is Elizabeth Mejia. I am a senior at the All Tribes Charter School in Rincon. I am a Luiseno and Cahuilla Native. I am also Mexican American from my father. I have moved from all over Southern California, but all that moving has not changed my mind about higher education.

There are many people that inspire people to be the best that they can be. Well just like those many people, I was inspired to go on to higher education. The people that have inspired me were the many teachers that have been in and out of my life, my family and most importantly my parents. The reason why my parents play the most important part to my higher education is because I wish to be in every way better than them. I know that this may be very mean but is it not our parents that say that they want us to have a better life than them. I have seen the life that my parents have chosen, and I do not want that life. Neither of my parents have gone to college, or even finished high school. So I want to go to college and I have been introduced to two programs that will help me get ready for college.

The first program that has helped me is the American Indian Recruitment, but to some it is better known as AIR. AIR has many topics that it discusses with high school students, which change ever semester. For this past semester AIR's topic was health and exercise. I have learned the values of healthy eating and that exercise balances this as well. AIR has also helped me fill out the FASFA paper work for financial aid. Even though I filled it out at the last minute, I still finished it before the dead line. AIR has introduced me many local colleges in the San Diego area, and I was introduced to many students that attended these schools. AIR has made an impact in my life in many different ways. One way is that I now eat healthier and get my daily exercise. I also drink a lot more water instead of soda and surgery juices. I guess the thing that I will remember most about AIR is all the support that it gives me to go onto higher education.

There are not that many young Native American students that actually value the education that the government provides for them. Because of this many of them do not prosper in life and drop out of high school and rely mostly on the casinos that are on their reservation. My advice to these young students is to stay in school and soak in all the knowledge that the world offers to them. Who knows they can be the next great thing in the world or even find that cure for whatever disease is out there in the world. They might even be on the cover of a magazine instead of their favorite model. With an education young Native Americans can become anything that they desire in life, yes it might be hard at first but at the end it would be all worth it.

Special Note: Liz will enter a TAG program (via a Junior College) to the University of San Diego. Congratulations Liz!!!

Reflections from Wynona

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Wynona Peters (USD Student) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

Hello everyone! My name is Wynona Peters I'm from the San Xavier district on the Tohono O'odham Nation located just southwest of Tucson, Arizona. I'm half Tohono O'odham and half Pima and have lived in San Xavier my whole life until coming out to San Diego for college.

While growing up I always had goals and plans for my future but when it came to education, it was a different story. After graduating from San Xavier Mission School our community's local grade school, I entered a whole new world and school which was Salpointe Catholic High School located in Tucson. My years there was an experience for not only me but my family as well because my entire family all attended boarding schools making me the first to attend high school in Tucson. Salpointe really challenged me academically, mentally and socially due to the school being a college prep school and predominately "white" leaving me the only Native student there. It was hard to adapt and probably took me about two years to finally feel comfortable enough to seek support or even talk to people. As I planned my future of what I wanted to pursue after high school, my family, grade school counselor and sponsor really encouraged me to look into higher education because of what I wanted to do in life. I had always been interested in the health field and really wanted to do something involving health to help my community but was not quite sure. Those supporting me encouraged me to go to college because they said it would benefit me and also the health field would require higher education. When I finally made the decision to go ahead and pursue college, it was hard trying to find the support at Salpointe because I had no idea where to start. Since I was going to be the first to attend college, I was unclear to the whole college process. After asking around, I was led to the counselor's office where I met the college counselor who helped me out so much. Not only did she make my life and decisions much easier, she was very excited to see me pursue college because she wished more Natives would attend college. In the process of picking a school my main focus was on selecting a small college with a small student population because it would make me feel more comfortable and more likely to open up. Even though I did apply to state schools such as University of Arizona, Arizona State and Northern Arizona, I really wanted to go out of state because I figured it would open me up more and keep me from going home all the time. When going through the list of small colleges, I also looked into the location of the school making sure I would be able to adapt to the environment and find things to do. My counselor then brought up USD as a potential school so I applied and ended up getting in and since it was one of my top schools, I accepted. When first coming into USD, I was still unclear of what to major in but figured I should do pre-med since I was looking into the health field area but that changed. After taking a sociology class, I really enjoyed the material and found it interesting making me want to take more classes which led me to major in it.

(Continued on Page 4: Wynona Reflections)





AIR Programs and USD Tutorial Program



AIR tutorial program for greater academic success at USD, Spring 2010

(USD) AIR tutorial is on Spring Break but all indications point to greater academic performance with all our student participants. Our AIR Tutorial program has been ongoing for over a year and we are still continuing our program and our service to our community. Most of our services are based on our volunteer mentor/tutors from both our USD students and Alumni. We are also strongly supported by the USD Community Outreach

Program CASA and the Department of Ethnic Studies which helps in accommodations, our tutorial staff and monitoring. This is a true testament to the charisma and character of these students and Alumni who are vital to the success of our program and our community.

For any additional information on our tutorial program and services please contact:
Kate Gordon at kgordon-10@sandiego.edu

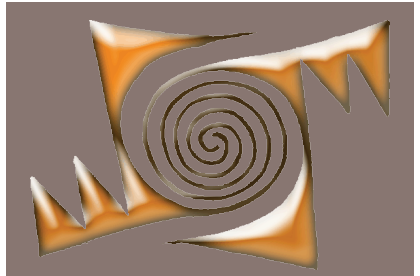


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When I knew sociology would be my new major, soon that changed because when I was introduced to Dr. Michelle Jacob, she introduced me into the Ethnic Studies department. Since she was the only Native professor on campus I really was interested in taking one of her classes and after taking her class I was hooked. Then with the help of her and some friends, I decided to become a Ethnic Studies major because the material is somewhat similar to sociology. Now I'm a junior majoring in Ethnic Studies and Sociology looking to graduate next year.

Since first deciding to join and participate in AIR as a mentor my second year, it has been an amazing experience. I have been involved with AIR for the past three semesters and continue to participate as a mentor. Every semester it is a new program I look forward to and always enjoy working with the students. AIR gives me the opportunity to encourage Native youth to pursue higher education and provides me with sense of home. Since USD does not have a big Native student population, it is hard to adapt to San Diego and find a place away from home but AIR provides that for me. I think AIR is such an incredible program for Native students to participate in because I wish there was an AIR for me to attend back home when I was in high school. Not only does the program encourage students to pursue higher education but AIR provides students with resources to help them succeed and get to the next level. It would have been great to have mentors, college workshops, research projects and other Native students around like AIR during my time in high school.

As I continue to work with AIR, I hope my involvement makes an impact on the students because I always gain something new from the students every time I attend AIR. I really want these students to succeed and think about college because we need more Natives in higher education. There is so much potential out there and everyone is capable of making a difference no matter who you are. I may not be the best student out there but I give it my best and have worked hard to get where I'm at, now a year away from finishing college. For those looking at attending college, I encourage you to apply because next thing you know, you could be a college student.



AIR PROGRAMS

PO Box 880471
San Diego CA 92168
info@airprograms.org



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Thanking all our Community Partners for their support of our program, Native Children and bringing hope and future for all our American Indian Community.



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