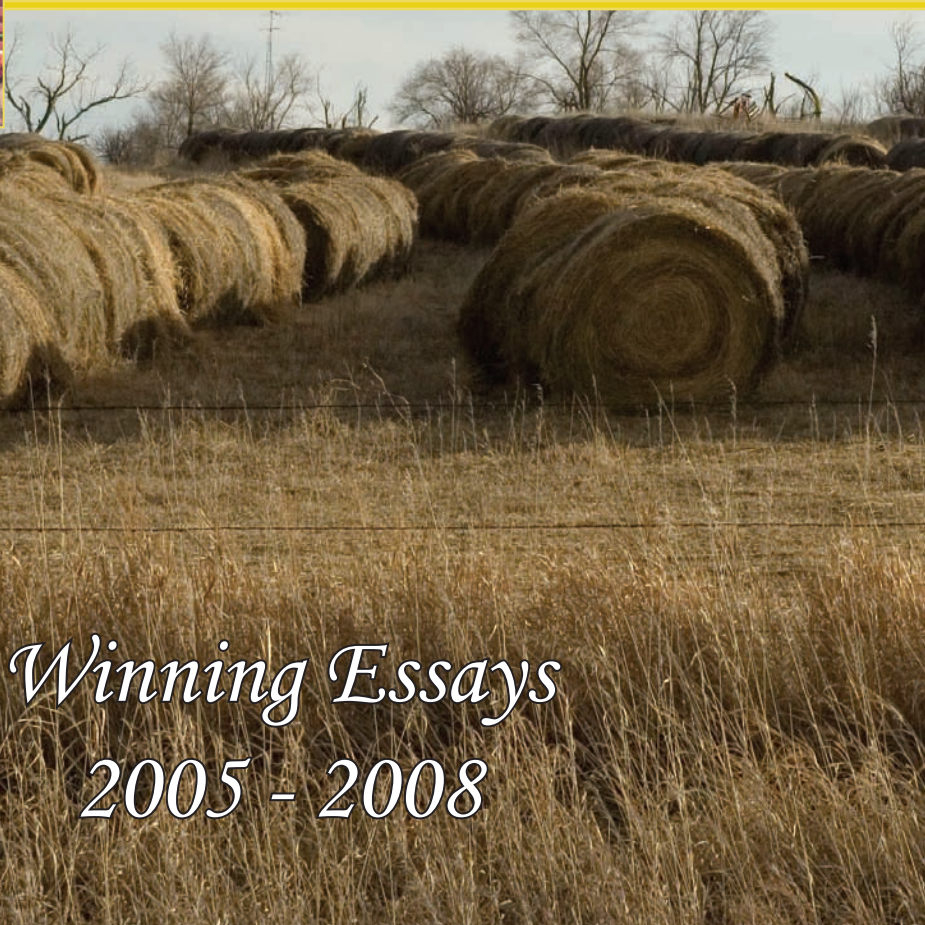
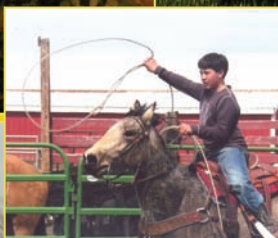


Native Women and Youth in Agriculture Essay Contest



*Winning Essays
2005 - 2008*



Native Women and Youth in Agriculture (NWYIA) was founded in 2004 to provide a network and forum for Native women involved in agriculture, recognizing the critical role that Native women have traditionally, historically and culturally played within their families and tribes in agriculture and food systems.

NWYIA also works to encourage and promote agricultural and natural resource related pursuits among Native youth. As part of its youth-oriented activities, NWYIA holds an annual essay contest for Native youth on a specific topic related to Indian agriculture and land management. In addition to a monetary award, contest finalists receive free airfare and lodging to attend a banquet in their honor, held during Intertribal Agriculture Council's annual conference.

The following organizations have also provided support for the youth essay contest:



Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) was founded in 1987 to pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of agricultural resources for the betterment of Indian people. Over the past two decades, IAC has become recognized as the most respected voice in the Indian community and government circles on agricultural policies and programs in Indian Country.



Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF), created in 2001, is a national community-based organization focused on Indian land recovery and management. ILTF works to promote education, increase cultural awareness, create economic opportunity for Indian people and Indian nations, and reform the legal and administrative systems that prevent Indian people from owning and controlling reservation lands.

Preface

We are pleased to present you with this collection of essays from our talented Native youth. These young people have demonstrated their strong commitment to agriculture in Indian Country and have shown their leadership skills to their peers, families and communities. We are proud of these young leaders, who will be charged with ensuring that agriculture in Indian Country continues to grow and stays strong for future generations.

And we know they will face challenges. A recent report on agriculture in Indian Country states that non-Native agricultural producers continue to dominate on most Indian reservations in the United States. Despite the fact that 46 of the 56 million acres of land held in trust for Indian people is in agricultural production, Native Americans represent only 1.6 percent of the farmers and ranchers operating on reservation lands. Income statistics reveal that while the total value of agricultural commodities produced on Indian reservations in 2007 totaled over \$2.1 billion dollars, only 16 percent of that income went to Native American farmers and ranchers.

The essays we have compiled here suggest that many of our Native youth recognize and are ready to meet the challenges they have before them. They are educating themselves about their own land histories and in the laws, policies and regulations that impact Indian land ownership. But they also understand the profound opportunity and honor they have in the stewardship of our Indian lands. Many of the essays speak to a strong cultural connection to the land. Others to the importance of helping to provide food for their families and communities. Still others emphasize using sustainable agricultural practices that are in harmony with Mother Earth. Each of these perspectives reminds us of who we are as Native people and of the duty we have to preserve and protect our Native lands.



Vicki Le Beaux
President
NWYIA



Ross Racine
Executive Director
IAC



Cris Stainbrook
President
ILTF



Healthy Land for Healthy People: How Are They Connected?

Callie Menie

Melissa Ann Badonie

“Without a healthy land, people cannot survive.”

I have fond memories of the first time I helped to raise a garden, and my first homegrown tomatoes, cucumbers, squash and sweet corn produced from it. I spent a lot of time tending it with my mother. I strongly believe that the time I labored that summer and summers since has shaped my appreciation of home grown food and fresh produce.

Gardening seems to be a natural progression in any child’s life. I have been read and told stories about gardens since birth. From Mother Goose I learned that Jack couldn’t have saved the farm without the beanstalk, that Contrary Mary had silver bells in her garden, and that Cinderella could not have gone to the ball without a pumpkin! As Kerr Center Community Foods Coordinator, Doug Walton stated:

There is a growing body of evidence from children’s and youth’s gardening and cooking projects that shows an increased interest in and consumption of fruits and vegetables when the kids are involved in growing, harvesting or preparation of the foods. Experiences working with food lays a foundation for an increased desire to eat fresh food, not just from the garden, but even when purchased from the store or the farmers’ market or sometimes when eating out. You know, maybe it’s something we’ve only grown once in the past, or perhaps we’ve never grown it, but just being able to imagine how it might grow somehow seems to make a difference.

I once asked my grandmother what she thought being blessed was, and I will always remember her response, “Being healthy and well. You don’t have to be rich; if you’re well, you can work and survive. All the money in the world wouldn’t be worth anything without peoples’ health.” The truth in her response shocked me, and I became more sensitive to the idea of health and wellness. Throughout history, the productivity of mankind’s health has been

closely related to the very land upon which he lives.

In the 1930s, winds came sweeping across the very plains that we call Cherokee Nation. With no cover to hold the soil in place on many of our fields, the once grass-covered land was exposed to those winds, and great clouds of dust filled the air carrying away that life-giving topsoil. This situation more commonly known as the Oklahoma Dust Bowl, not only made life miserable, but also destroyed our capability to produce life-sustaining crops that are necessary for survival.

If only a few people of that time would have recognized the traditions of the Native American, much hardship would have been reduced. Referring back in history, we are shown a time when we, the stewards of the land, replaced all that was borrowed from it. Native Americans realized that every action had an equal and opposite reaction, and when we gain something from the land, it not only loses that crop, but a portion of its self-sufficiency and nutrients as well.

Knowing this, Native Americans developed systems to replenish and repay the land. When planting crops, fertilizers such as fish were added to the ground to compensate for the lost nutrients. Imagine if something as simple as giving back to pay for what has been borrowed from the earth had not been complicated and we, the caretakers, lived in a thriving, plentiful nation.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 ruled that the Cherokee Nation was to be set on the road to Oklahoma. The path to Oklahoma proved impossible for many, and over 4,000 men, women and children died. By removing this group of people from their healthy environment, and depriving them of healthy food and facilities, the Cherokees were devastated.

Without a healthy land, people cannot survive. This is why today's crops must be selected carefully with regard to such requirements as soil, climate, markets and integration with general farming. Disease outbreaks occur due to unhealthy PH balances in crops that have been planted repeatedly in the same location. Crop rotation helps to prevent against many diseases.

Another way to help maintain healthy PH balances in the soil is "conservation grazing." Many farmers are using this type of soil management that is specifi-

cally designed to restore grazing land to a more sustainable condition. Mark Parman, natural resource expert and local farmer explained:

In a conventional feedlot operation, large amounts of manure are deposited in a relatively small space that is devoid of living plants. In sharp contrast, when animals are finished on pasture, their manure is deposited naturally over a large area of grass-land, allowing the nutrients to be put to immediate use. In order to grow healthy crops, we need to have healthy soil.

Every spring flowers unfold from the soil, and nature's life cycle comes to a peak. Each delicate petal and precious offspring has been given to us as a gift to cherish and to help continue our evolution. My father once told a Cherokee legend to a young child upon his knee:

At the beginning of the time cycle, long ago, the Creator made the world and man. Creator wanted to show generosity and love to the people, but he knew they would have to have respect for life. He told man that he was to have a responsibility, called the guardianship. The man listened, and learned that the Creator had made a place for him to live. It had been created plentifully. He understood that he was to accept the blessings and gifts given from the land and always give thanks for them.

As the Native Americans worked together to care for this land, so must we work together to maintain it, and in doing so maintain the health of our nation's people. A wise woman once told me, "If people have a problem, they often find the best solution by working together." I call this wise woman, "Mother."

Callie Menie (2005 finalist) is a member of the Cherokee Nation and lives with her family on their land in Webbers Falls, Oklahoma. She attends Porum Public School.

“When the whole family takes part in any activity, a closer family bond is created.”

Mother Earth provides us with many different kinds of plants used for food and medicinal purposes. During the spring, we pick wild onions, carrots and herbs. During the summer many different plants are used for different ceremonies when these various plants are cultivated prayers are always offered before these plants are used. During the fall, pinions are picked for food, red berries (chilchiin) for mush, and chokecherry is gathered for jam. For my little sister's womanhood ceremony, different wild grasses will be gathered for various brushes and stir sticks will be made. Firewood will be gathered to heat our house and for traditional ceremonies. If we don't take care of Mother Earth, she won't provide us with the necessary plants for the Navajo culture to endure.

According to *Discovering Wildlife in New Mexico* (1997), wildlife is one of most valuable resources. “It is a renewable resource, which, if properly managed, can last forever.” The full value of wildlife cannot be measured. Being able to observe wild animals in their natural habitat, to photograph them or to hunt them means relaxation and improved physical and mental health. Such values cannot be easily measured. Different animals, especially birds, eat more than their own weight in insects and weed seeds. Animals that eat crops or livestock must be controlled to minimize the loss to farmers and ranchers.

My dad hunts for deer and turkey. The deer meat is used for food, the hide is tanned to make our moccasins, the hooves and antlers are used for ceremonial purposes. The excess is taken back to the forest for a traditional offering. The turkey meat is used for food and the feathers are used for ceremonial purposes. Careless hunters leave trash, and misuse ATVs or vehicles by crushing native plants and also causing erosion, destroying habitats for wildlife and damaging property. Fences are built to keep wildlife out, but humans are the ones invading their homeland and ranges. Good wildlife management requires cooperation and respect from all public land users.

Being a 4-H member for the past ten years has provided me with educational material to assist me with various projects. These projects give you a chance to learn how to accept responsibility, assume leadership, work with people, and to experience the rewards of competition. Enrolling in different projects has given me a greater understanding and knowledge of agriculture and livestock management. Having the determination and willingness to learn will help me to compete at all levels of 4-H and reach my goal of becoming a top quality producer of livestock and agriculture products. The Shiprock 4-H club teaches us to become responsible community members by giving back to the community. The New Mexico Highway Department Adopt-a-Road Program, assigned our 4-H club to clean two miles of highway each spring and fall. To improve the fair grounds at our recent tribal fair, different 4-H clubs made picnic tables and a portable arbor for the Senior Citizens to enjoy and watch the kids compete in various 4-H competitions.

The 4-H book *Market Lamb Project* (1998) provides the necessary skills to produce quality market lambs. When the whole family takes part in any activity a closer family bond is created. This is as important as all the other learning experiences gained from the project. We learn basic sheep husbandry practices.

As a 4-H teen leader, I have been helping senior citizens with vaccination, castration and docking talks for their lambs. My maternal grandfather has sheep and goats that have been in the family for many generations. Each year, Suffolk ewes that aren't sold are given to my grandfather to improve the quality of his herd. These Suffolk ewes are bigger than his white face ewes. The three lambs that we sold at the Shiprock Navajo Fair were from our herd. We were able to see our lambs being born and raising them as our market lamb project.

Navajo Livestock Reduction: A National Disgrace (1974) documents many horror stories from Navajos that lived through the Navajo stock reduction program. This program produced an economic and social revolution, for the Navajo at that time did not have the education or understanding to comprehend the necessity for a long-range plan. To a people who had been shepherds for more than two centuries, to be told that they must reduce their flocks

came as a shock.

Many Navajo livestock owners believe that quantity of livestock is better than quality of livestock. Navajos usually have a Summer Camp located in the mountains and a Winter Camp that is closer to jobs and schools. They move between the two camps, to help reduce overgrazing. The traditional sheep herds will start diminishing. Younger generations accustomed to modern day conveniences of running water and electricity do not want to herd sheep. All children are required by state law to attend school, making them unavailable to care for the sheep. Over the years, I have seen how overgrazing and erosion affects the land. Unfortunately, certain areas of land are still being eroded where sheep pull up the grass by the roots destroying the whole plant. Traditional sheepherders are trading in their horses and walking shoes for pick up trucks and ATVs. These vehicles are causing erosion and pollution. There is no enforcement of Navajo Nation laws to help preserve the Navajo rangelands for future generations.

As pet owners, we are also responsible for spaying, neutering and vaccinating our cats and dogs. Many free or low cost animal health clinics are held throughout the year. These clinics have a limit to treating the number of cats and dogs. This creates long lines that some pet owners aren't willing to endure. Many dogs run wild on our reservation making it unsafe for both animals and humans. Deon Ben, my older brother, lost his entire flock when some wild dogs attacked his herd in the corral. Deon reported the incident to the dog owner and the local grazing official. However, the law was never enforced. The dog owner was never held accountable for the slaughter of his herd. The dogs still roam free to kill more sheep.

The Enduring Navaho (1968) provided me with key information about Navajo farming. The Navajos have always been farmers. "Evidence of their produce was found in archeological excavations in old Navajo land where corn, squash, and beans were found—seeds more than four hundred years old were recovered."

The Navajo people consider corn a sacred plant. Corn pollen (Tadideen) is gently gathered in a bowl before the sunrise, which is used during a blessing ceremony. Cornhusk is used for corn cake or wrapped around tobacco for

the smoking ceremony. Even the corncob has a purpose; it is used to light up our pipes for our smoking ceremonies. Yellow corn represents a mother and daughter, or females. White corn represents a father and son, or males. My Chei, Allen C. Brady, Sr. (maternal grandfather) told me, the family farm provided enough produce to feed the family and military during World War I. Government officials came to the reservation to pick up the produce. My maternal great grandfather died at an early age, leaving his wife to raise ten small children. She was determined to raise her children by living off the land, planting crops and harvesting produce during the fall, for survival.

The 4-H publication *Home Vegetable Gardening in New Mexico* (1997) provides information on how to raise a vegetable garden that can provide nutritious, high quality, fresh vegetable for our families, "Though a well-maintained vegetable garden can be a lot of work, the outdoor exercise will mean better health for all involved."

Many young people think that farming is for the older people or ladies work. It takes a lot of hard work to raise a healthy crop. Navajo farmers should collaborate with the local Cooperative Extension Programs to learn new farming techniques to yield quality crop production.

As caretakers of the land, we plant to feed our families and livestock. As children of Mother Earth, we must protect her from contamination, pollution, erosion and over grazing by abiding by all tribal, state, and federal laws established to protect, develop and maintain all that Mother Earth has to offer her children.

Melissa Ann Badonie (2005 and 2006 finalist) is a member of the Navajo Nation and lives with her family on their land in Shiprock, New Mexico. She attends Kirtland Central High School where she is active in sports, Future Farmers of America and Rodeo Club.



My Family's Land in Agriculture

Richard Seth Whiteclay, Jr.

Amy Running Fisher

“If you are taught at a young age to protect and nurture lands and taught why, you’ll grow up understanding the importance.”

Respect is probably the proper word to use to describe how an individual maintains his lands. My grandpa Philip always taught us kids to respect the lands and it will take care of you, respect your animals and they will perform like champions. Respect your family and you will always find a safe haven. Respect your elders and listen to their wisdom for they have seen much and know the answers to many questions. Respect your God and learn his word for it gives you abundant life. This wisdom comes to life in the lands he owns and the dreams fulfilled in his life. Respect is the key to protecting Indian lands.

My uncle taught me that beavers on the Pryor Creek were helping Grandpa’s farming. He said “Beavers are nature’s engineers.” They retain waters for grandpa’s farmland. While people down the creek are chasing the critters off and fighting against them, grandpa allows them to build slowly and respects the homes they build on streams alongside his farmlands. The water table near these lands are high and produce lush grass and alfalfa. There are times when we have to slow them down because their dams damage roadways and farmland by causing floods or high waters. We go to pow-wow with the beavers.

Grandpa reserves some of his lands in their natural habitat. He told me that at one time, he planted different types of grains on the land, and with time, the land was losing nutrition, and started showing signs of wear and tear, like an overworked man. Rocks worked their way to the surface and strange weeds started popping up here and there. As a result, the lands required expensive chemicals to clean up the mess. The lands couldn’t keep up with the demands, so when he returned it to its natural setting, and kept animals and humans off the sites, the land stretched and yawned and enjoyed the break! Each year, I go to those lands and I see how the grass has thickened with less weeds.

I wondered why he kept animals off those lands he reserved, and he explained to me that an animal's waste carries whatever the animal ate, wherever it came from. If he ate cheap grass or obnoxious weeds, he will scatter the seeds, they will lay root into the ground where they fall, and POW, you have an outbreak of bad weeds on your lands. So, whenever we see animals on the reserved areas, we saddle up and chase them out immediately.

Grandpa had allotments located in various places on the Crow Reservation. He told me it took him nearly 50 years to consolidate 2,500 acres for his home base and he said it paid off. I admire his knowledge of real estate and his patience.

My paternal grandpa (Vernon Whiteclay, Jr.) in Crow Agency worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 30 years. He educates me all the time about the lands in the mountain areas. He showed me how trees are thinned out to allow trees to branch out and grow naturally and produce proper seedlings. He said allowing the trees to grow properly is like humans. Man shouldn't clutter his life or have extremes in his life, but he should have a good balance of all necessary needs, or else he won't grow straight and strong.

He taught me about man-made fires and nature's fires. The man-made fires happen because of ignorance or lack of respect for land. These fires can cause havoc and cost millions of dollars in hiring man power to put the fire out and many acres of vegetation destroyed. When trees in the forest are gone, up comes the weeds and sagebrush. This is like a man who cares little for the body God gave him and when a sudden onset of disease destroys the body, it takes lots of money to try to correct the problem. He probably sits and thinks, "If only I had it to do all over again."

Now, when nature starts fires (i.e. lightning storms), it has its own way of thinning out trees for conservation measures. Nature stops the bad things from continuing to grow in the forest dead in its tracks! U.S. Forest Service allows the fires to burn out on their own, and clean up the area nature's way. With time, new trees grow, and the grass grows thick and strong. The fire allows the trees to drop good seeds to the ground, soot from the fire covers and protects them, and with the rains and snows, the seeds receive good covering to grow strong roots into the ground first, before they show their heads to

the world. My mom told me that one needs a strong foundation in God if he wants to go out and challenge the world, because his foundation will keep him strong and help him to grow properly.

Land has some characteristics of humans. Land takes good conservation to grow strong and flawlessly in proper environment. Humans need good environments to grow strong and flawlessly. Respecting land begins at the heart first. If you are taught at a young age to protect and nurture lands and taught why, you'll grow up understanding the importance. If I did something disrespectful to the lands I live on, like light a firecracker, I can start a man made fire, which can destroy my grandpa's livelihood and cause deep rooted damages mentally and financially. I can actually destroy the environment where I live by one disrespectful act!

My mom tells me and my brothers to protect our bodies and not to abuse them with drugs or alcohol, for it is the shell that protects the spirit within. She tells us kids to protect the lands like we protect our bodies because it too nurtures and nourishes those who live on them.

Personal Thoughts

First of all, I thought I would never have the opportunity to become an active land user on lands owned by my grandparents because it almost seemed too sacred and too risky for someone as young as I. But thanks to grandpa, he is giving me a try. I'm turning my knowledge into action.

I knew about Crow lands through my experience in the area of land boundaries. Like any other kid my age, I had a general idea of the Crow Indian Reservation boundary. I knew the boundary of my grandparents' land vs. lands owned by the white man. Believe me when I say through personal experience I know about land boundaries!

I knew the boundaries of the Crow Reservation from my rides into Billings, Montana. My parents would always remind me to buckle up my seat belts and to sit still or the cops will stop us and throw us in jail. My Mom would say things like: "Don't go fast. Watch your speedometer. We are past the reservation line now!" "You can tell we're on the reservation now, the roads are bad!" " Yikes! Watch out for those potholes, we can't afford to buy new tires!"

and “When will that darn BIA remove the snow off the roads. We’ll probably die first on these icy roads before they come by!” And, a famous line all Crow children probably hear, “There goes a cop. I hope he doesn’t stop us, since we have 22 Plates” (Big Horn County plates). “The land this ranch sits on once belonged to Crows, but now them big shots own it. Now the ranch is like a ghost town because they cheated our people to get it. If the white man just left the land alone, it would be thriving.” (re: Scott Feedlot located on Old Highway 87, north of the Crow Indian Reservation boundary)

I learned the boundary of my grandparents’ land through a bad experience I encountered as a youngster. One day, my brothers and I went sleighing on a nearby hillside. A white neighbor came bouncing down the road towards us, got off his truck, and cussed us out. He told us to get off his property because we scared his cows. After that embarrassing scene, I knew how angry people could get if you are on the wrong side of the fence. I knew the fence was the boundary line! My grandmother purchased that parcel of land to teach him a lesson for messing with her grandkids. (The land was in trust status and belonged to Crow Indians at the time the white rancher chased us off of it. It was later explained to me the difference between trust lands and deeded lands.)

This incident, taught me that the white man gets aggressive when protecting his farm or ranch operation whether he leases or owns land on the Crow Reservation. On the other side of the coin, as long as you were a Crow you grew up thinking you can fish or play anywhere because the land is open to every Crow Indian (not true anymore). When I go to my neighbor’s land, I do not abuse anything or do mischief, because I may return again. When I go to our mountains, I don’t trash up the place because I appreciate the beauty and landscape. When I see how hard my parents, uncles and grandpa work the land in all kinds of weather conditions, I know it must be important to follow their rules.

I’m fortunate to have some great teachers as it relates to farming and ranching Indian lands. But my thing is, I don’t want to be the only one to know all this. I try to draw in other youth to listen and learn too. I enjoy the involvement by others, and try to encourage them to find avenues to utilize their parents/grandparents land and livestock. It’s a start . . . right?

My Indian heritage is strong. We have survived amidst prejudice and poverty. God gave us land to live and nurture our people. We must somehow teach this to others if we want to control our Native soils. If we work together in numbers, we will make an impact in the halls of BIA and in financial institutions. We need to show our seriousness.

Richard Seth Whiteclay, Jr. (2006 finalist) is a member of the Crow Tribe. He farms and ranches with his family on 2,500 acres of land south of Pryor, Montana on the Crow Nation. He attends Plenty Coups High School in Pryor where he is active in the Rodeo Club and Future Farmers of America. Whiteclay also participates in traditional Crow war dances.

“My parents have taught us to take care of the land;
the land takes care of us.”

The Blackfeet People have undergone many changes throughout their lifetimes. They have many more changes to overcome in the future. Today, land to tribal members is becoming invaluable. Native American people have little understanding about the division of the land, and the importance of consolidating.

The most devastating aspect of not understanding the land regulations and ownership rights puts our people in the dark. What have we done as Indian people to educate ourselves about our rights as landowners? In our past history, ownership of land was not important to the people because it was no man's land. Today, it is the foundation for our future. If we don't secure our ownership, we may not have “reservations.”

I have grown up with discussions about land, and understand the importance of ownership. Although, I am unclear about what the future holds for the next generation and the generations to come. I know that my parents understand the importance of having a land base, buying shares, reserving for owner's use, grazing permits, fee and trust land, and are knowledgeable about land.

My parents have established a land base which will benefit my two brothers and me. They have made it a goal to purchase land at a 51 percent ownership or more. It is very important for a 51 percent ownership to reserve grazing exempt pasture, sublease, or to lease. Land has been a long term goal for my parents' operation.

The history of our family goes back to the time of the 1800s. My great, great grandfather's father understood land as to be no one's land. My great grandfather was an original allottee, John Running Fisher, Sr. At this time, he was given a share of allotted land on the Two Medicine River, 13 miles south of Browning. He operated one of the largest ranches on the Blackfeet Reserva-

tion on his 320 acres lease, 320 acres hay ground.

My parents were married in 1981, and my grandfather gift deeded a 10 acre home site to them. This was the beginning of my parents pursuing the land that bordered their 10 acres. My father discussed his business with my maternal grandfather, Ron Crossguns. Ron was very instrumental in helping my parents understand policies and regulations.

My parents worked together to get signatures and consents and personally paid for appraisals to purchase shares in the allotments surrounding my great grandfather's original allotment.

The lease remained in the hands of my grandfather, James Running Fisher, Sr. after my great grandfather's passing. My grandfather James, Sr. continued the ranch on leased land, and became the heir to my great grandfather.

Their ranching business thrived, although their land base did not increase. The value of land was not an important factor to my great grandfather and grandfather. They believed things would never change and they would lease the land forever. On the other hand, my father educated himself by reading the policies and regulations and learned all possible about land policies. He used this knowledge to build our own land base which will stay in the family ranching business.

Needless to say, after the death of my grandfather, his land fractionated into small shares among his five children and his wife, a non-member. My father had purchased land in twelve of the fourteen allotments that my great grandfather and grandfather leased. He manages his business well, and found other sources of financing to purchase land. The land is important to my parents. My father understands the need to increase and the financial need to keep on thriving.

My father's awareness of policies and regulations became the drive of his dream. Exercising his rights as a landowner, my father reserved the allotments at 51 percent consent in Grazing Exempt Permits (GEP) for his personal use. His understanding the majority ownership secured our family ranching business. My father continues to purchase land to increase his base for the future of his children. His knowledge and understanding will benefit

our family, and has greatly made us aware at our young age the importance of land.

We have practiced our traditional ways by using the land wisely. My parents have taught us to take care of the land; the land takes care of us. We use it wisely, value it greatly, and will carry on the family tradition and the family ranching business. My brothers and I understand the importance of fractionated, undivided, divided, shares, interests, trust, fee land, leased and reserved allotments. We have learned the importance of ownership and the value of having 51 percent ownership. We have learned to rotate fields, utilize the grass to benefit the animals and use the water at the right time of the year. We have learned our rights as future landowners. We have learned to understand the value of land and the importance of understanding policies and regulations.

My parents, today, have continued buying land for their children. My father works on building our cattle count up to be in compliance with the CFR regulations. He has set goals and works hard for our family business which thrives on the beautiful Blackfeet Reservation.

In conclusion, I am proud to say a family who works together stays together. My parents have taught us to value land, family and hard work. We have learned in our young life to wrangle cattle, fence, brand, ride and rope. We have learned to live our life to the fullest, and will continue building on my parents' dream to be successful young agriculturalists of the Blackfeet Nation.

Amy Running Fisher (2006 finalist) is a member of the Blackfeet Nation and lives with her family on their ranch on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. She attends Browning High School, where she is active in 4-H, Rodeo Club and Future Farmers of America. She is also a Traditional Indian Dancer.



The Role of Native Women in Agriculture: Past, Present and Future

Melissa Ann Badonie

Melissa Ann Badonie

“From the time my grandmothers were small, they all had gardens to help feed their families.”

Hello, (Ya at eeh), my name is Melissa Ann Badonie. I'm a fifteen year old Navajo living on the Navajo Reservation. I was born into the Bitter Water Clan (Todick ii nil), for the Folded Arms Clan (Bitaanh), maternal grandfather's is Edge of the Water Clan (Tohaheelnii), and paternal grandfather (Nall) is Zia Clan (Kolgi).

I am an Indian; I walk in two different worlds. Atsa Biyaazh Community School provided my elementary education, where I participated in basketball, soccer and football. I'm now a sophomore at Kirtland Central High School, where I am currently active in the Future Farmers of America, Rodeo Club and play on the Girls Varsity Golf team. My favorite foods are pizza and Chinese food. I like wearing blue jeans, T-shirts and nice shoes.

As a young Navajo teenager I've been taught many lessons by my maternal grandmother (Shimasani), Fannie Brady, living in Shiprock, New Mexico, paternal grandmother (Shins Ii) Barbara Badonie, residing in Tohatchi, New Mexico and late grandmother Lillie Mae Hate from Lukachukai, Arizona. They have taught me how vital agriculture and livestock are part of my livelihood and culture. This is my story.

A mature corn (Naadaa) plant stalk represents me (Shi). I am the stalk. The right side of the corn plant represents my maternal family. The very bottom corn ear represent my two little sisters (Shi deeszhi), Michelle Rae Badonie and Megan Nicole Badonie. If I had an older sister the second corn ear would represent her. The third corn ear represents my mother (Shima), LouAnn Badonie. The fourth corn ear represents my maternal grandfather (Shicheii), Allen C. Brady, Sr. The fifth corn ear represents my maternal grandmother (Shimasam), Fannie Brady.

The left side of the corn plant represents my paternal family. If I had younger

brothers (Shitsili), the very bottom corn ear would represent them. The second corn ear would represent my older brother (Shinali), but I have no older brothers. The third corn ear represents my father (Shizhee), Melvin Badonie. The fourth corn ear represents my paternal grandfather (Shinali), Billy Badonie, Sr. The fifth corn ear represents my paternal grandmother (Shinah), Barbara Badonie. The tassel represents my people (Dine).

From the time my grandmothers were small, they all had gardens to help feed their families. Nowadays we have a tractor to help with the work, but the planting, weeding and watering of the garden are still done by hand. There were many different kinds of vegetable grown, but the main crops grown each year were corn, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes.

Corn (Nadii) is considered a sacred plant; we use all of the corn for different purposes. Corn pollen (Taydeeh) is gently gathered in bowls or baskets and dried. The dried yellow corn pollen is placed in a buckskin pouch to be used during blessings usually held before dawn. When the corn is ready to harvest, it's time for my favorite corn dish, which is Kneel Down Bread. Our outdoor oven is made from rocks and mud. A hot fire is made to heat the oven. The fire is removed. We are now ready to bake our wonderful corn products. Fresh picked corn is cut from the cob and ground coarsely. It is then wrapped in a cornhusk and is baked in the outdoor oven. It looks like tamale. Our outdoor oven has the shape of an Eskimo igloo, so when the Kneel Down Bread is placed in the oven you have to kneel down to place it into the oven. The left-over cornhusk is used for corn cake or wrapped around tobacco for the smoking ceremony. Even the corncob has a purpose; it is used to light up our pipes during our smoking ceremonies. More corn is picked and put in the outdoor oven without taking off the cornhusk, then water is added and the oven door sealed with mud. When the corn is taken out it is called Steam Corn. It can be eaten immediately or dried and be used later in Mutton Stew during the cold winter or for a special occasion.

During the fall, corn is harvested, frozen or dried. The cornhusk and corn silk are removed, and the corn is dried. It is then separated by color: white, yellow and blue. If a dried white or yellow corn is found without any blemish, it's put in the medicine bag to be ground on a grinding stone and used during a blessing or may be used for the Womanhood Ceremony for young Navajo

girls. The Womanhood Ceremony Cake is made from dried roasted corn that is ground, mixed with Navajo stir sticks and baked in an open pit. The open pit is lined with cornhusk and the corn cake mixture is poured into the pit and topped with more cornhusks. A fire is built to help bake the cake all night. It is removed early in the morning and given away to all her relatives, celebrating her Womanhood. Yellow corn represents a mother and daughter, or females. White corn represents a father and son, or males. Blue corn when dried is ground into flour. We use it to make blue corn mush, corn bread, paper bread and pancakes.

When I was younger, I wore my sandals when we helped my grandmother (Nali), Barbara Badonie, plant corn. She told me, "Wear regular shoes or boots; otherwise, your corn is going to look like your feet." To my surprise the corn I planted did look like feet, so I learned my lesson. My grandmother told me, "When a pregnant woman plants, there will be an abundant crop." My mom planted when she was pregnant with my little sister, Megan, and we had a huge crop. My grandmother (Nali) Barbara doesn't have irrigation, so she depends on Mother Nature to water her crops. The last few years we have been in a drought, so her corn crop has been very small.

My late grandmother Lillie Mae Haskie, was a community hero in Lukachukai, Arizona; she did anything to help her community. The one thing she supported the most was education. She told all her children and grandchildren that God gave them a good mind and they should not doubt themselves. She told every young person to continue on in his or her education; learning doesn't stop after high school, it continues on. In our family we have doctors, bankers, students and one lawyer. My grandmother was a registered nurse. She worked at Tsale clinic for many years. Over the years she became the head nurse and got the employee of the month award several times. To relieve her stress, she spent time in her garden. My grandmother must have had a stressful job, because she loved to work in her garden.

My grandmother also liked planting flowers and taking care of her animals. She had thirty cows, seven horses and many sheep. She loved her garden and she spent most of her time off in her garden making sure her plants were healthy and strong. She got up before the sun every day to water her plants before she went to work and pull any weeds in it. She won many awards at the

Navajo Nation Fair including Best Display, Best in Show and Farmer of the Year. She loved to hike up the mountains near her home and her footsteps will always be there up our trail and in her garden. My grandmother Mae lived a happy life, and I will always miss her tender voice, her warm hug, and her love for me.

Our ceremonial hogan has a dirt floor where Navajo ceremonies are performed and culture is taught. In our hogan, a warm fire will be burning while winter stories are told by our elders, and shoe games and string games are played by all. In our culture we are taught not to waste anything. Animals and agriculture will always be a part of my life, so I will continue to carry on the traditions of my elders by raising my own livestock and growing my own crops. It's part of my past, I'm living it now, and it will be what I teach in the future. I am an Indian; I walk in two different worlds, but I have the best in both. Thank you (Ayeteeh).

Melissa Ann Badonie (2005 and 2006 finalist) is a member of the Navajo Nation and lives with her family on their land in Shiprock, New Mexico. She attends Kirtland Central High School where she is active in sports, Future Farmers of America and Rodeo Club.



What Is Your Plan?

How has your family passed its land from generation to generation, and how will you do it in the future?

Jay Running Fisher

Rayel Jai Brown

Joshua Dane Leivas Moore

“My goal is to continue increasing our cattle and making sure the land is in estate for the next generation.”

Planning for the future has been a long time life skill my parents have instilled in our family. We have been encouraged to work for what we have, and to always do our best. There have been times I have questioned myself about my plans, and if this is my dream or my father's dream. It has taken some time for me to understand that my father's dream is to carry on the “Running Fisher” ranch, as well as my dream.

Ranching has always been in the family back three generations. The inherited land was divided into small shares but not enough to continue the “family ranch.”

My father, Jimmy, realized waiting for inheritance, which was to be very little, was not worth waiting for. My father's dream was to build a land base for his children so they wouldn't have to worry about losing their land. His other concern was to obtain the largest percentage to allow ownership control.

My future ranching plan has been planned with our family. My parents have worked side by side to build the ranch we are presently living on. My father has taught us that we work together to accomplish our tasks. He has instilled in me many values that will enable me to be one of the most productive ranchers on the Blackfeet Reservation. Thanks to my dad, he has inspired me to continue the family ranch. I have learned many ways to utilize the land to benefit cattle, as well as myself. I have learned to rotate fields, build water pits, operate machinery, manage cattle and how to be productive.

The title of this writing entry was hard to follow. I couldn't think of a plan for myself. I grew up with the thought that the Running Fisher Ranch belonged to my sister, Amy, my youngest brother Ty, and me. I know that my dad would not be unfair, and he would make sure my two other siblings received equal shares. He has encouraged good feelings among the three of us, and to

work with each other.

I had always helped my dad with the manual labor. We are two of a kind and very head strong. Often we would have some pretty strong words but always worked things out. I can recall many times I thought my little brother should be along side of us working because one day he would own just as much as I.

I now realize we all have a part in our Running Fisher Ranch whether it is building fences, bailing hay, gathering cows, training horses, or cooking a meal. My parents, my sister and my brother have worked their butts off to make our ranch what it is today. The many valuable lessons my parents have taught me will enable me to be the best rancher on the Blackfeet Reservation. I have learned to have a good heart, a helping hand, make choices, decisions and will work to make my parents proud.

Now for my plan. I have learned many valuable lessons about land, leases, Grazing Exempt Pasture (GEP's), allocations, bids and the cattle operation. I plan to preserve the Running Fisher Ranch with dedication. I will rotate the fields, build water pits, and cross fences. I will care for the land without overstocking it, over grazing, and over use. I understand the value of utilizing the land wisely. Land has always been a family discussion. My siblings and I have bonded. We have grown together as a family and co-owners. We know that the Running Fisher Estate was established for our use. We will work together, and produce our hay and cattle and make our parents proud.

My plans are to continue increasing the land. I would like to work on buying more land near or around the land we already own. I will continue with my dad's dream of operating one of the largest ranches on the reservation. In the future, and it could be sooner than we know, we may not have a Blackfeet Reservation. The land my parents put together has increased from a small 10 acres to many acres. Acres that can be used through majority ownership had been a goal of my dad's and will be my goal as well. My goal is to continue increasing our cattle, and making sure the land is in estate for the next generation.

Estate planning is not easy to understand to people my age or older as a matter of fact. The estate will remain in the hands of the operator, and will be known as the "Running Fisher Livestock Ranch Company." I am hoping

to learn enough about the business to continue on planning for our future generation, my siblings' children and my own. I hope to instill the knowledge my parents have taught us, the values, the lessons, and the most of all the love that keeps the bond strong.

With this in mind, I would like to ensure my father and mother that I will work hard to continue with the Running Fisher Livestock Ranch Company with my older sister, Amy and little brother, Ty.

Jay Running Fisher (2008 finalist) is a member of the Blackfeet Nation and he lives with his family on their ranch on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. He attends Browning High School and is involved in 4-H, Rodeo Club and team roping.

“The bottom line is, since our land is our lifeline, we have to protect it.”

Being that I am an enrolled member of the Assiniboiné and Gros Ventre Tribe, which is a federally recognized tribe, I make it a point to find out about my culture and heritage. My parents, especially my dad, are very traditional and carry on their Indian culture. My Father is Clinton Brown and his heritage is from the Brown and Cole families on the Gros Ventre side. My dad is very active in the way of his traditions and plays a major role in the Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery II project. My Mother is Wandy Doney Brown and her heritage comes from the Craso and Doney families on the Assiniboiné side. We belong on each side of my family to several clans. All of my ancestors before this were of high stature in our community. My grandfathers and great grandfathers have served on the Tribal Council. My ancestral lineage of enrolled members of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation has all been firm believers that our reservation was formed for our exclusive benefit and use. We are a very poor tribe economically, because we have no business or economic ventures that provide employment. Some tribes are wealthy from their casinos but our reservation does not have that. We now have a small casino, which will probably never generate loads of money that can be paid out to the members of the community in the form of per capita payments. We have to rely on our land for our livelihood, which is why we have to plan for future generations.

When our reservation was established on May 1, 1888, it originally consisted of 708,602 acres. After the Allotment Act of 1921 where they gave small parcels of land to our ancestors once they proved they were enough Indian blood to be enrolled, the course of our lives started changing. This is when the federal government in their infinite wisdom decided to make Farmers of our people to assimilate them into mainstream America. The land was too dry and arid and there were not enough acres to make a living from it. This problem still exists today, but nevertheless, it is our land and most of our elders make a living from their land. Times have changed, and we now have new technology

and machinery to work our land. We have access to government loans that provide us with the ability to make a decent living. This is the only income that most of our old people have to rely on. If they have not currently passed their land on to their younger generation to operate, they lease out the land for a living. This is our way of life on the reservation. We just have to make this way better for the future generations.

At the current time, there are 6,390 enrolled members of our reservation. There are 2,631 Assiniboines and 3,759 Gros Ventres who live on the reservation. The remaining choose to live off the reservation, because there are no jobs here and no housing. We have 8,265 acres of irrigated crop land and 481,495 acres of rangeland. This is the mainstay of our people. Agriculture is what it is all about. We have 9,255 acres of tribal land in farm pasture leases.

We also have 52 range units consisting of 265,108 acres, which hold 31,205 AUM'S. There are approximately 10,800 head of enrolled member livestock grazing in these pastures. We have approximately 150 to 160 enrolled member operators who utilize these lands. Currently there are 25 junior livestock loans, and young people are still investing in agriculture and seek land on the reservation they can utilize for their ranching and farming business.

Now, with all of this said and done, what else is there for the enrolled members of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation to do? There are no jobs, no housing, and not enough land to go around for everyone! My families have often discussed this predicament at length. We make our own decisions and that is to continue to live here on the reservation. The bottom line is, since our land is our lifeline, we have to protect it. We can do this through estate planning and land management. Our Tribal Council just enacted a probate code that could be an answer to our land issues. I also had an opportunity to look at an estate planning document that was written by Marsha Goeting from the University of Montana, which she wrote for the Fort Belknap Reservation. We had an extension agent who was very active in agriculture and was concerned about the future of our people. He worked his entire time he spent here on our reservation looking out for our best interest. His name was Don Addy. He just recently passed away. He, along with the director of the tribal land department, assisted Miss Goeting with statistical information in writing this plan.

With the changing of times, the federal government has made many changes that continue to affect the lives of our people. In talking about people, I speak about all Native Americans throughout Indian Country. They first came up with the Indian Land Consolidation Plan during the Ada Deere Administration. Ada Deere was the Secretary of Indian Affairs when the Indian Land Consolidation Act was passed by Public Law 97-479- of 1983. This Act was passed with the intention that they were going to solve all of the fractionation issues on reservations. Because of the land being passed down from generation to generation with no planning, splitting of the land occurs. When people die without leaving a will, their heirs inherit the land and everyone ends up owning fractionated interests. Over the years, the land has become so fractionated that the government cannot even manage it. This act has failed to correct this problem. They amended that plan a couple of times when the current regulations would not work. Now they enacted AIPRA, which is the American Indian Probate Reform Act of 2004. Again, this is supposed to make things better for "Indians?" I say that we don't need the federal government people to make our decisions for us. We have many informed people from our own tribes who can assist us in making decision. We should have the say of our own land and not have to listen to those people who sit in high places in Washington D.C., who probably have never even set foot on an Indian reservation.

What is My Plan? My Plan for the future is to continue to believe in my parents, my grandparents, great grandparents and great, great grandparents and even before them. I plan to do just what my ancestors have done and that is passing land on down through the younger generations. But, I hope to one day be in a position to have rules and regulations in place that allow us to make decisions concerning our own land. I have listened to my grandparents talk about the hardships that their parents and their parents before them have suffered through times. I don't want that kind of life for my offspring. I want everything to be in order when I leave this earth. My plan is to "write a will" before I die. This will is going to be iron clad and it will take care of my children, just as my parents have said they will handle their land by way of a will when they pass on.

But, just leaving a will is not the answer. We have to deal with the problem directly, so to speak, and change laws to our benefit. We have to improve and

protect our lands. We have to believe in and take control of our own destiny. I think that the federal government is slowly dwindling down the size of reservations throughout Indian Country. They are also “conniving” to “terminate reservations.” At least, this is what I think. If we as Indian people sit back and allow the federal government to determine our destiny, we are all doomed. Let us make our own laws and abide by our own form of government. The Fort Belknap Reservation has a Constitution that was enacted and approved on October 19, 1935, and a Corporate Charter, which was approved on August 15, 1937. These were adopted in accordance with Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934. The IRA allowed reservations and Indians to enact their own laws. Let us all believe in and live by our own laws.

My plan is to become educated in the areas of agriculture and Indian law so that I can make some changes for Indian Country and for our people. Just making a will is not enough. We have to protect our land and to make it better. We have to keep our land in trust status. We do not want any of our land going into fee status and non-Indians invading our land. I can boast that the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation has a very small percentage of fee land on our reservation. It is less than three percent, and I have been told that it is the only reservation in the United States that has such a small percent of fee land within their original reservation boundaries. This does indicate that some of our former tribal governments have had influence on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to prohibit the amount of land that goes out of trust status. I have made a point to visit with BIA realty staff about their functions and policies concerning land transactions. There is a good system in place and we have to ensure that the BIA keeps looking out for the best interests of our land and our people.

When I finish college and gain all of the knowledge that I need to make an informed decision about changes in our land and our economy, I will return to the reservation and put my knowledge to work for our people. Let us instill in our future generations the need to become educated and work to the benefit of our people and our reservations. Let us control our own destinies.

Rayel Jai Brown (2008 finalist) is a member of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Nations and lives with her family on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. She attends Harlem High School in Harlem, Montana.

“For too long we have let our grandmothers and grandfathers take care of us and our land.”

Have you ever seen those MasterCard commercials on T.V.? The ones that list expenses and then something cute and heartwarming pops up on screen and it's given the title of priceless? To me, the word priceless has both positive and negative connotations. Sometimes I see things which I believe need to change no matter what the price. When I drive around my reservation, a very sad version of a MasterCard commercial comes to mind. It goes a little something like this:

- A hit of Meth: \$20
- A 40 oz Mickey's Beverage: \$2.44
- Gas to cruise the Rez drinking with the boys: \$15
- Living a life of Poverty and Despair: PRICELESS

Some might say this is a harsh view of my home. To me, it's the everyday truth. The scenes of police officers throwing the winos out of the park, or seeing that your next door neighbor was a victim of domestic violence last night are stark reality. It seems to me that the only thing a Native child is destined to these days is a life filled with beer, living in the projects, living off of welfare, and eventually death at a premature age, usually having to do with alcohol. Why is this? Why is it that the oldest race on the North American Continent, has the lowest standards of life, is made fun of in our movies, and is avoided by the rest of our country? A wise man once told me that “The Devil dwells on idle hands.”

I am the grandson of a third generation farmer. My grandfather Tony Leivas, was born June 4, 1941 to Perfecto Leivas and Victoria Romo. At the age of 12, my grandfather was left to his grandparents to be raised and work on his grandfather's farm. Since his early days, the ideas of working from dawn till dusk and making something of the land with his bare hands were instilled in my grandfather. As the son of a teenage mother, I was raised by my grand-

parents until the age of 10 years old when my grandpa died. In those short 10 years, my grandfather and grandmother instilled in me a lifetime of heart, sweat, and love of the land. I was always out in the front yard playing in the dirt or sitting in the passenger seat of my grandpa's government truck helping maintain the canals for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As a young child, my grandpa taught me about my home. He taught me what the different crops are, different farming techniques, and the values of our family and friends in our small farming community. I was taught that it was a man's job to provide for his family at all costs. I was taught that there is the land that was given to my people and that I have the ability to work it with my own hands. I was taught that life is what you make it, and that the future was something to look forward to, not dread. Some would call this the American Dream. Then, why is it so much harder for my people to attain this dream?

The Colorado River Indian Tribes rests on a reservation of 284,641 acres. The land consists of 84,000 acres of irrigable land; we have senior water rights that amount to 1/3 of Arizona's total water. If this is true, then why is it that we are one of the poorest communities in Arizona also? Why is it that our fertile lands are being farmed on and profited on by non-Tribal agriculturists? This essay I have written, is not to criticize or point fingers at other races for our dilemma, but to rather point out our own flaws as a Tribe, as a people, and most importantly, as a family.

As I enter manhood, and begin to stretch my legs, and begin thinking of what I will do as I walk the path of life, the idea of agriculture and education to those younger than me pops into mind. When I admit this idea to my peers, I am met with criticism and told that all I can look forward to is a headache and no money in my wallet. This often causes me anger and a sharp retort forms in my mind, but I always hold my tongue. For all these people who scorn me, criticize me, and downsize my dedication, I do not despise, but pity. For I know that the education I received was unique. No other child in my hometown received one even comparable to it. My family taught me that some things are worth risking and that our home and lands are reward enough. My grandfather worked every day of his life and could never be called a wealthy man, but he was rich. He was rich in responsibility, love, devotion, and the knowledge of how to work the land. With this in mind, I am willing to sacrifice my wallet size to help my people. In my community, I see that there

are many problems that lead to our dilemma. For example: our tribal government prioritizes casinos and greed rather than caring for the land and making something of our earth; my people stick to old prejudices rather than embrace the world around us; instead of helping each other, we put each other down; our men sit in the shadows drinking their lives away rather than use the hands the Creator gave to them to provide for their families. There is a lack of leadership and positive influences for my people. For too long, we have let our grandmothers and grandfathers take care of us and our land. It is time for our generation to step up to the plow and sow our lives. While some of my people and friends go on to be Burger King employees, tribal clerks, and welfare cases, I hope to become a teacher.

From my early school days to my senior year, I have always been amazed with my teachers. They have taught me not only how to use the books that they teach with, but also have endowed me with the love of learning and teaching. As a senior at Parker High School, I always try to be someone my people can be proud of. As president of Student Council and the Parker FFA Chapter, I am kept busy running the student affairs. At the end of last year, I was offered a chance to take a class that allowed me to help teach Freshmen Introduction to Agriculture. I relished the idea. The first step was to recruit students in the Ag Program. As an FFA Officer, I traveled to local junior high schools and presented in front of numerous students. Those days, I met many students. Some were incredibly smart, some very weird, others athletic, and many who seemed like they didn't care about anything. The last students in my list were mainly my fellow Native Americans. This saddened me greatly. I extended a hand and included them in my presentation. I talked to them. I befriended them. I related to them. This term, I proudly boast that there are 12 students from my tribe in my agricultural education class. In my experiences influencing these students, I have learned that we all have had similar childhoods. We all have seen things that no child should have to see. I now know that with motivation and revealing our similarities rather than pointing our differences, we can prosper as a people and that we do indeed have a bright future ahead of us.

The idea of Native students learning from a Native teacher excites me. I feel that it will create a comfort zone for all students that will allow them to shine. If we were to bring our culture into the Ag Class, our potential as tribal mem-

bers would have no limits. Throughout Arizona, there are 63 National FFA Chapters. About four percent of the chapters are located on a reservation. Unfortunately, there are vacancies in the teaching world. Every year, a new Ag Ed teacher is needed here and there, and usually the vacancies remain unfilled. I believe that if these teaching spots on reservations were filled with teachers who were culturally aware of the surrounding areas, the communities would definately prosper.

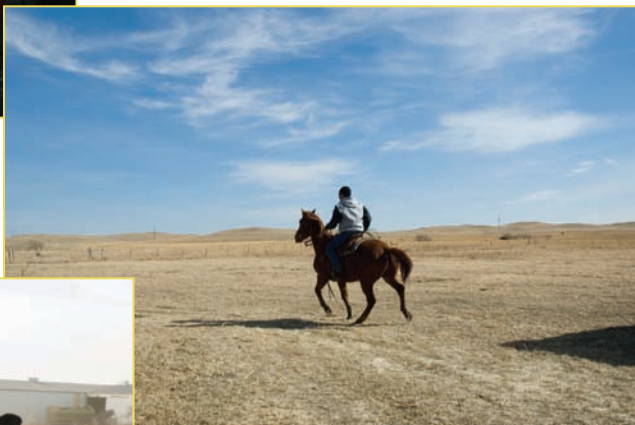
As a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, I feel that I know my people, I know family histories, and I know our culture. As a Hopi, I know the sanctity Corn. As a Mojave, I know the clan system. As a Chemehuevi, I know how my valley was flooded and my people were relocated here to Parker. As a Pima, I know the value of the Water. And as an American, I know life is valuable. I know that as a people, we have the potential to break the bonds that tie us to poverty and despair. I know that the only way for us to become a truly free and prosperous people, we must first help ourselves. Our fathers need to learn to work every day and use the hands that were given to them. Our mothers must learn to keep our families together. Our children must learn how life truly works and where our food comes from. We as a people must take back our lands. We must make something of what was given to us. We must create a healthy life for our families. As a Native American people, we must tend to our Mother Earth, and in return she will provide for us. We all have our part to play.

My part in this scheme of mine is to teach. It is my job to teach our youth how to work the land, how to sow our investments and reap the rewards, and how to fertilize the field of our lives with proper farm and ranch management, technology, leadership, and motivation so that someday our crops will bloom with success. My dream is to remind my people of our land, and that although all we may see now is darkness, a new day is rising. I am willing to risk all hopes of wealth, to teach our youth how to take what is truly ours, to take us back to the only things that matter in life: our families, our homes and our land. With this in mind, I can see this new, very detailed vision of my own future:

- Dinner for my FFA Chapter's officer team after an executive meeting: \$60
- Gas to drive home that student who didn't have a ride: \$10

- Working 40+ hours a week, 52 weeks a year: \$40,000
- Having the time of my life ensuring the future of my people: PRICELESS

Joshua Dane Leivas Moore (2008 finalist) is a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribes in Arizona where he grew up farming with his grandparents. He attends Parker High School in Parker, Arizona and is president of the Student Council and of the Parker Future Farmers of America chapter.



Native Women and Youth in Agriculture
P.O. Box 428
Eagle Butte, South Dakota 57625
(605) 964-4342



Intertribal Agriculture Council
100 North 27th Street, Suite 500
Billings, Montana 59101
(406) 259-3525
www.indianaglink.com



Indian Land Tenure Foundation
151 East County Road B2
Little Canada, Minnesota 55117
(651) 766-8999
www.indianlandtenure.org