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## **2023 Cobell Graduate Summer Research Fellowship Recipients Announced**

\$25,000 Total Awarded to Five Fellows

**Albuquerque, NM, May 1, 2023** - Indigenous Education, Inc.(IEI) announces the 2023 recipients of the distinguished Cobell Graduate Summer Research Fellowship administered on behalf of the Cobell Board of Trustees.

Five fellows from a highly competitive pool of over 100 graduate applicants were selected for the seventh Summer Research Fellowship cohort, each receiving \$5,000. “Every year, IEI looks forward to reviewing the applications. We recognize the students are in their final phases of their graduate programs and need support to cross the finish line. It’s such an honor and inspiration to witness their work and dedication,” said Melvin Monette-Barajas, CEO of IEI.

The fellowship supports high achieving student researchers who might not otherwise have access to funds for research and related activities during summer months. Research fellows receive a \$5,000 stipend to offset remaining costs associated with their final research projects. During the Fellowship period, scholars receive direct guidance from their faculty research advisor and support from the Director of Research and Student Success at Indigenous Education, Inc. Cobell Summer Research Fellows enjoy opportunities to network with other Fellows across the world and engage in future Fellowship activities as new cohorts are selected. “We are excited to continue supporting Native scholars representing a variety of tribes and working to indigenize higher education in their respective academic fields,” added Monette-Barajas.

Continue reading to learn more about the **2023 Cobell Graduate Summer Research Fellows**. Applications for our eighth cohort of 2024 Cobell Summer Graduate Research Fellows open on September 1, 2023.



**Cobell Fellow:** Stetson Kastengren

**Tribal Affiliation:** Crow Creek Sioux

**Institution:** University of Illinois

**Degree:** PhD – American History

**Research Project:** A historic analysis of the Spirit Lake Allotment and the Dawes Act

#### **Detailed Research Project Overview**

“When describing the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 scholars have often used words like “mystical” and “magical.” This is because had the act fulfilled its intended purpose, privatizing the Indigenous land base would have abolished nearly all tribal governing structures, granted citizenship, introduced each individual into the market economy, changed how tribal members dressed, spoke, chose their partners, raised their children, worshiped, governed, and how they thought about the past, present, and future. Indeed, scholars have

been justified in putting their finger on the otherworldly nature of adherent’s belief in the Dawes Act’s revolutionizing capability. What has not been addressed is precisely *how* these assumptions were adopted—i.e., how the act was a product of a longstanding imperial desire to transform Indigenous North Americans that a unique moment in United States history after the Civil War helped shape into the belief that the United States could effectively legislate into being a post-Indigenous American future. This belief, which this project defines as *imperial fantasy*, was a product of the expanded state following the war. Often overlooked in the broad historiography of both postbellum state expansion and American state development generally, the Dawes Act is central to conversations about the scope and reach of the American state. Revealing the act’s connection to longstanding imperial schemes that sought to deal on a continent-spanning scale with the “problem” of Indigenous people—a tradition which the United States inherited from Great Britain and added its own imperial vision to—will disrupt narratives of the United States supposed “statelessness” until the turn of the twentieth century. Additionally, highlighting the act’s centrality to postbellum state development will show it was part and parcel to state-driven efforts of “Greater Reconstruction” and also a harbinger for later late nineteenth century reform movements of the Progressive era. Indeed, the Dawes Act exists as a sort of culmination of imperial dreams exerted over North America during the long history of colonialism and sits at a critical juncture of American history between postwar state expansion and the Progressive era, and yet remains largely absent from these bodies of scholarship.

This project operates on two levels: the national and the local. The national intervention, outlined above, is incomplete without the latter. The imperial fantasy to alter and eliminate distant populations met a similar fate to numerous other imperial illusions: failure and, often, catastrophe. This failure was a product of both the delusions of empire and the refusal of local populations to acquiesce to these illusions. Mni Wakan Oyate, or the Spirit Lake reservation, home to the Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Inhanktowan nations, was targeted for allotment in 1889. When the federal agent arrived to begin the process, the people gathered to voice a series of grievances and demands that were, in many ways, the antidote to what the Dawes Act was seeking to accomplish. Instead of agreeing to disregard the past, the people recalled the treaties signed by their relatives in order to preserve their future. The people demanded that Congress address unfilled

annuity payments promised forty years ago during Millard Filmore’s administration and defective boundary lines demarcating their reservation from the tides of incoming settlers before they would consider allotment.

The documents that offer insight into this interaction are from the *Commissioner of Indian Affairs Report* from 1889. One scholar who has written about this interaction has also drawn from this source. What has not been explored is documents about the Spirit Lake allotment from the National Archives of the United States in Washington D.C., where the federal records of allotment are held in Record Groups 48, 75, and 95. This collection is vast, and will require an extended stay to explore sufficiently. Outside of the specific allotment process, my project seeks to foreground the history of the Spirit Lake reservation, and the people who called it home following the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862. In my visit to the Spirit Lake reservation and in conversations with the tribal historian, it has become clear that these National Archive records have not been explored for information about the Spirit Lake reservation that is valuable to the people. Specifically, the delegation that signed the 1867 treaty that created the reserve and conflict around singing and dancing during James McLaughlin’s tenure as the agent.”

**About Cobell Scholarship Program, Indigenous Education, Inc.**

Created in 2016 for the express purpose to administer the Cobell Scholarship Program, Indigenous Education, Inc. provides elevated opportunities for Native college students through empowering them with an impactful scholarship experience designed to support their success in higher education. The overarching mission and vision of Indigenous Education, Inc. is to support American Indian and Alaska Native student success. Since the program’s beginning, it has supported over 4,600 students with more than \$40,000,000 in scholarships. To learn more about IEI and the Cobell Scholarship, visit [cobellscholar.org](http://cobellscholar.org).

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