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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Inaugural Cobell Awardees Announced

The new Cobell Awards and Celebrations Program unveiled.

Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 11, 2024 – Indigenous Education, Inc. (IEI) is thrilled to announce the inaugural recipients of the Cobell Awards and Celebrations Program. This new program highlights exemplary Undergraduate Scholars, Graduate Scholars, Alumni, and Leaders.

The awards are as follows:

The **Cobell Outstanding Undergraduate Award** is available to undergraduate students. This award celebrates an undergraduate who, in the review of the Cobell Awards Committee (CAC), has achieved remarkable outcomes in their pursuits and community.

The **Cobell Outstanding Graduate Scholar Award** is for a current recipient of a Cobell scholarship or fellowship pursuing a graduate degree. This award celebrates a graduate Scholar who, in the view of the Cobell Awards Committee, has achieved remarkable outcomes within their academic pursuits and community.

The **Cobell Outstanding Alumni Award** is for a prior recipient of a Cobell scholarship or fellowship who completed their academic degree for which they received funding. This award celebrates an alumni who, in the view of the Cobell Awards Committee (CAC), has achieved remarkable outcomes as a Cobell Alumni and exemplifies the resilient spirit of Elouise Cobell.

The **Cobell Leadership Award** is open to any member of the Cobell Community – Scholar, Alumni, or Friend of Cobell – who, in the view of the Cobell Awards Committee (CAC), exemplifies the resilience, fortitude, and commitment to reaching outcome(s) that positively affect the broader community.

Award nominations were collected during winter 2023 via the [Cobell Community](#). Continue reading to learn more about the 2024 Awardees.

Cobell Outstanding Undergraduate Scholar Award



The Cobell Scholarship Program is pleased to award the 2024 Cobell Outstanding Undergraduate Award to Cherish Grassrope. Cherish is a citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and is descendant of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. She is in the final year of her undergraduate degree in Business Administration and Management from Salish Kootenai College.

Cherish has won awards through the American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) in her efforts to give back to her community through Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Ms. Grassrope aims to serve her larger community(ies) through the increase of economic

knowledge and practice within and surrounding Indigenous communities. She also is an active volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club in her community helping advocate for nutrition, sustainable food systems, and healthy eating habits.

Cobell Outstanding Graduate Scholar Award



The Scholar Success team at the Cobell Scholarship Program is proud to announce that the inaugural Cobell Outstanding Graduate Scholar is Christina Thomas. Christina is an enrolled member of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony in Nevada and grew up on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation. A 2021 recipient of the Cobell Graduate Summer Research Fellowship and current PhD student, Thomas is attending the University of California – Davis, in Native American Studies. Christina’s practice is rooted in the Great Basin, more specifically Northern Nevada. Her primary fields of study are Indigenous sound studies, historical musicology, and language resurgence of Numu Yadooana [Northern Paiute language].

Christina spent the better part of 2023 in New Zealand as part of the New Zealand Fulbright Scholar Program. Christina was a Visiting Student Researcher at the University of Auckland, based in Māori Studies. She conducted research while working with iwi [tribes] across Aotearoa to conduct research on Te Reo Māori [Māori language], performance, and culture.

After many arduous years dedicated to her community and the Northern Paiute language, Christina says she feels “humbled that her research is being acknowledged and she feels her story has come full circle. She wants to share her story, the good, the bad, and all that in between, with others to help them on their journey, especially first-gen students, single parents, and Indigenous scholars trying to navigate the world of academia. Her journey was not easy, and she wants to help others on their paths.” Recently Christina was appointed as the only Native American representative on the Chancellor’s Graduate & Professional Student Advisory Board (CGPSA) and was also selected as a Graduate Scholar Ambassador at UCD. She also sits on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion boards for the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and CGPSA.

Christina expressed:

I would like others to know that if someone like me, who defied all the odds of growing up in poverty, surviving sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence, having drugs/alcohol in the home, being a single mom... you can survive and succeed too. I worked hard despite all those obstacles against me, we as Native scholars face many challenges we see in our homes and communities. I chose to use those experiences as my inspiration, as my why. By remembering who I am, and where I come

from, it uplifts me, and inspires me to make not only my family and community proud, but also my ancestors, and to pave the way for future generations. I want young people to see me and think, “If she can do it, so can I.”

To learn more about the amazing work that Christina is doing in her research, visit https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/497753/te-reo-maori-inspires-native-american-to-save-her-own-indigenous-language-from-extinction?fbclid=IwAR3qv0v4h5Z1bo_Fy0cb4J8baf9OJl2D-NWx-jqgSoXTJVv9diqltuUni4l or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZI07qMkvml>.

Cobell Outstanding Alumni Award



The Cobell Scholarship Program is pleased to announce the recipient of the 2024 Outstanding Alumni Award – Dr. Sandra Yellowhorse. Dr. Yellowhorse is Diné. She received her PhD in Education and Social Work from the University of Auckland in New Zealand. When she began her academic experience, Sandra was a solo parent of a beautiful Kinyaa'aannii child, who is also Autistic. Sandra attended school full-time and worked as a pizza delivery driver. She went on to develop the fields of Critical Indigenous Disability Studies and Indigenous Inclusive Education. In 2019, Sandra moved internationally to do her PhD in New Zealand. Her dissertation was the first to recover ancestral stories of disability from her Diné community. Sandra is an

example of what is possible. She established herself in a new country working alongside other Indigenous scholars combating long-histories of colonialism and building more sustainable futures. Sandra leverages her privilege to uplift Indigenous disabled voices. Sandra provides resource training for major medical and social services for tribal communities. She models Diné parenting and teaches the importance of learning from our children. She brings us back to our knowledge systems that prize care, unconditional love and belonging, so we can collectively thrive.

When asked about her ‘why’, Sandra said:

I wanted to rewrite the social narrative of disability for my child, born from our cultural wisdom as a gift and a promise, that our Diné ancestors loved her unconditionally. Our ancestors were

meticulous in their planning for all our children who come to us in their unique ways of being. Our ancestors placed the stories of those teachings all around us in the natural world to remind us how to live in relationship. Relational ways of knowing matters. It has always mattered.

To read more about Sandra's work, visit <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2023/06/18/indigeneity-and-disability-the-teachings-of-our-ancestors-and-being-in-relation-towards-harmonious-outcomes/>.

Cobell Leadership Award



The Cobell Scholarship Program is pleased to announce that the recipient for the 2024 Cobell Leadership Award is Molli Pauliot. Molli is a citizen of the Ho-Chunk Nation and is a current PhD candidate studying Cultural Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Molli Pauliot's PhD is performing community-focused collaborative research with tribal elders and employees on Ho-Chunk Black Ash Basket makers that are currently devastated by an invasive species the Emerald Ash Borer. Her research focuses on an ethnographic history, tribal political and

economic impact, material culture, and the Ho-Chunk basket makers communities' passion for sustaining their weaving craft through other natural fiber weaving.

Molli put together a panel of Ho-Chunk legal experts to discuss the treaties that dispossessed Ho-Chunk people of the land that is now occupied by the University. In the 2022-2023, she planned a Ho-Chunk Artist Series on campus to make traditional baskets and mittens and plant traditional crops. This series also brought Indigenous students on campus into the community with Indigenous elders from the area who attended the events.

Molli's nominators indicated:

Ms. Pauliot re-mobilized, post-pandemic, Our Shared Future, an educational framework at UW-Madison that was established in 2019 to foster a deeper understanding of Ho-Chunk culture and to invite the campus community to consider our shared past and present with Indigenous peoples and to forward institutional commitments to achieve a shared future with them.

During her two-year fellowship with Our Shared Future, Ms. Pauliot conceived and co-designed high-profile programs, like the university's inaugural Ho-Chunk flag-raising ceremony held on Bascom Hill, bringing together Ho-Chunk elders, dignitaries, and university leadership along with hundreds of students, staff, and community members in a public display of commitment to educate the campus community about Ho-Chunk history and to recognize the land as the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk people.

She volunteers her time to share her knowledge with undergraduate Ho-Chunk students who provide First Nations Cultural Landscape tours of our campus. Molli's colleague and fellow Ho-Chunk citizen, described Molli as "[going] above and beyond in serving Ho-Chunk interests by increasing tribal visibility and illustrating in tangible ways how Ho-Chunk never left Wisconsin, nor Teejop."

To learn more about Molli's work increasing Ho-Chunk representation on the UW campus, visit <https://news.wisc.edu/seed-by-seed/> and <https://oursharedfuture.wisc.edu/>.

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.

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