

# NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GRADUATION 2021 NEWSLETTER



(Top photo NICC's 2021 Graduates; Bottom left photo: Whitetail Singers; Bottom right photo: NICC staff)



# 2020 GRADUATION COMMENCEMENT

Saturday, August 22, 10:00 am - Umonhon Nation's Small Arena Powwow Ground Area



## **Board of Directors**

Diane LaPointe\* (Isanti), Chairperson; Wynema Morris (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), Vice Chairperson; Danielle LaPointe\* (Isanti), Member; Cheryl Kitto (Isanti), Member; Mary Lou Mitchell\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), Member; Linda Robinson (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), Member

## **Administration**

Shona Campbell\* (Isanti Dakota/Ho-Chunk/Sac & Fox), MBA, Business Office Director; Mike Channell (Oglala Lakota), Director of PTAC Program; Jim Hallum\* (Isanti), AS, AA, Extension Program Director; Paul Fowler, BSW, Workforce Development Director; Michael Oltrogge\*, PhD, NICC President; Kristine Sudbeck, PhD, Academic Dean; Dawne Price, BS, Dean of Student Services; Justin Kocian, AAS, Chief Information Officer; Anthony Warrior\* (Absentee Shawnee), BS, Human Resources Director

## **Faculty**

Zeke Brummels, MA, General Liberal Arts; Joe Harlan\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), BA, Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup> Language; Binah Gordon, PhD, Language Curriculum Specialist; Jackie Hahn\* (Isanti), MAT, Early Childhood Education; Leland Henke, MS, MSE, Business; Qudisia Hussaini, BS, BEd, Teaching Assistant; Shelley Kosola\*, AS, Teaching Assistant; Maunka Morgan (Hochunk Nisoc), MBA, Native American Studies and Business; Hank Miller, MS, Math and Science; Megan Miller, MA, Instructional Designer/Instructor; Pri Morris\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), AA, GED Instructor-Macy; Patti Page, MA, Grant Writer/Instructor; LaVonne Snake (Winnebago), AS, Teaching Assistant-Macy; Kodi Urquidi, AAS, Carpentry; Anitra Warrior (Ponca) PhD, Human Services Counseling; Dasha Weatherman, MS, Math and Science; Al Widrowicz, MAT, Institutional Researcher/Instructor

## **Adjuncts**

Kari Bappe, EdS; Luke Becker, MBA; Clarence Benes, EdD; Kari Brafford (Oglala Lakota), MBA; Stacy Brasch, EdS, MSE; Michael Burgess (Comanche) MPA; Staci Burns (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) MHR; Reanna Carlson, MSE; Graham Christensen; Pete Coser (Creek Nation), EdD; Beau Davis, BS; Kristine Flyinghawk, MS; Misty Frazier (Isanti) MA; Jamie Good Bird (Isanti/Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>); Dr. Irene Graves-Ihm; Angela Greenroy, MFA; Dawn Hair\*, BS; V.E. Hamman, EdD; Corey Hawes, MS; Devin Henry\*, AAS; Stephanie Henry, MAT; Belinda Hinojos, PhD; Stevie Holmes, MS; Jennifer Holtgrew, MA, MS; James Hulstein, MA; Teri Kramer, PhD; Devin Lingle, RN; Travis Mallory (Winnebago), BS; Justin McCauley (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MS; Barbara McKillip-Erixson (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MEd; Lauren Miller, MAE; Kathy Mohlfeld, EdD; Taylor Moore (Pawnee/Otoe-Missouria), MA; Wynema Morris (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MA; Kim Murie (Pawnee/loway), MJ; Susan Nash, PhD; Kim Nelson, MBA; Stephanie Norton-McDonald, MSE, ME; Jennifer Pritchett, MS, ME; Patty Provost\*, AA, Emily Romkema, MAT; Andre Saunsoci (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>); Clayton Small, PhD; Vida Stabler\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MEd; Dusti Storm, AAS; Redwing Thomas (Isanti), Rick Thomas (Isanti), Keli Warrior (Southern Ponca/Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), BA; Trisha Wegner, MSE; Doug Widow\* (Cheyenne River Lakota), AA

## **Staff**

Michael Berger, BA, Grant Writer; David Clark (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>) Assistant to the Dean of Student Services-Macy; Debra Grant\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), AA, PTAC Macy Counselor; Nettie Grant-Sikyta (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MSOM, Procurement Specialist; Terri Grant-Wabasha\* (Isanti/Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), AA, Student Services Advisor; Vanessa Hamilton\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>/Yankton), BA, Student Billing/Accounts Receivable; Amanda Kanuho (Creek Nation), BA, PNC Director of Job Placement and Student Affairs; Charles Kreber, MA, Public Information Officer; Derek LaPointe (Isanti), PTAC Santee Counselor; Lani Moran-Samqua (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>/Rosebud Sioux), Extension Assistant-Macy; Troy Munhofen\* (Yankton Sioux), BS, Registrar; Alvin Parker\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), MLS, Student Services Advisor-SSC; Cheryl Phillips (Cherokee), BA, Librarian-Santee; Crystal Ross\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>/Rosebud Sioux/Otoe-Missouri), AA, Student Services Advisor-Macy; Keisha Siriboe, PhD, Assistant to the Academic Dean; James Schrock, BA, Payroll Clerk; Marcella Stephenson (Comanche), BA, PNC Student Services Advisor; Susan Tyndall\* (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), AA, Librarian-Macy; Chris Walker, Sr. (Umo<sup>o</sup>ho<sup>o</sup>), Maintenance Manager-Macy; Chastity Warrior, Extension Assistant-Santee; Tanesia Wolfe-Ricehill (Winnebago), BS, Accounts Payable

\*NICC Alumni



## Flags Entrance/Processional

*(Clockwise from top left) Dancers Dustin Lovejoy, Donnelle Lovejoy, and Eva Grant lead the graduates into the Graduation Commencement Ceremony; Kassie Phillips wears her graduation cap proudly.; Graduates getting lined up waiting for the event to begin including: Dustin Griffin, Christa Carrillo, Melva Beltran, David "Scotty" Clark.; Crystal Ross getting ready to walk the graduates in while holding the NICC flag.*








(Top left photo) Graduates lining up for the ceremony featuring: Christopher Turner, Danielle Webster, Lani Moran-Samqua, and Susan Morris. (Top Right photo) Graduates walking toward the graduation stage. (Center left photo) NICC President Michael Oltrogge, Santee Sioux Nation Tribal Chairman Rodger Trudell, and NICC's Board of Directors get ready to enter for the graduation. (Center right photo) David Clark and Melva Beltran wear masks, getting ready for the commencement. (Bottom left photo L-R) Kassie Phillips and Madison Ross walk into the graduation. (Bottom right) Community members look at the graduates. Umonhon White Tail observes.





Master of Ceremonies, Joe McCauley speaks to the graduates. Seated nearby are NICC's Board of Directors, Tribal Chairmen, and NICC's Administration.



Umonhon Tribal Chairman, Everett Baxter, Jr. giving a blessing before the meal following the graduation ceremony.

President Oltrogge pictured to right presented the Graduating Class of 2021. Pictured to left, Santee-Sioux Nation Tribal Chairman, Roger Trudell, gave a welcoming prayer to begin the ceremony.





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# SELENA PARKER

## 2021 Valedictorian



NICC's 2021 Valedictorian, Selena Parker spoke at NICC's 2021 Graduation. Parker began her journey at NICC as a dual credit high school student who enrolled at NICC upon graduating. She shares her experiences here.

"Hello, my name is Selena Parker and I am Nebraska Indian Community College's (NICC) 2021 Valedictorian. My Umo<sup>ho</sup> name is Mi'-mi-te, which means Standing New Moon given to me by my grandparents. I am from the Umo<sup>ho</sup> Tribe and of the Thatada Clan.

When I began my journey for higher education I was faced with many challenges; first, with selecting the right institution that met my personal needs. I committed to NICC because of the affordability, location, and mission. My educational journey at NICC was a learning experience. I have gained plenty of knowledge both academically and socially. This has guided and prepared me to pursue a four-year degree at Wayne State College.

I will be pursuing a degree in elementary education. I chose education, because it has always been a dream of mine to work with the younger generation. I know how much an educator can impact a student's life. My goal is to give back to my community, and I believe I can do so by educating.

I have enjoyed my time at NICC and the experiences."



# WYNEMA MORRIS & JOE HARLAN

NICC'S 2021 Faculty of the Year



NICC was proud to honor 2021's Faculty of the Year at the 2021 Commencement Ceremony: The award, based on student vote, resulted in a tie this year, and both Wynema Morris (pictured far left) and the late, Joseph (Joe) Harlan (pictured middle) were honored at 2021's Graduation Commencement.

Wynema, adjunct faculty in the Native American Studies Department, who also serves on NICC's BOD, was the first to speak. In her speech, she expressed gratitude and thanks to share this award with her friend and colleague, Joe, who passed away in January of 2021. Wynema shared her congratulations to the students and the importance of their achievement. Wynema also spoke of Joe and their experiences teaching together and learning from one another, sharing the Umonhon language and history. Wynema concluded her speech with the words, "We are still here" as well as her thanks for sharing this honor with her relative Joe.

Faculty of the Year, Joe Harlan taught Umonhon Language, as well as served as NICC's Umonhon Cultural Advisor. Dr. Kristine Sudbeck shared about his encouragement as an instructor and his kindness before inviting Joe's daughter, Sariah (pictured far right), to speak and accept the award on his behalf. She shared teachings from her father including his words, "Education is how you are going to help your people." Sariah shared about his love of learning, desire to always do his best, and also the importance for all to not take our blessings for granted. Sariah concluded speaking by sharing a prayer that her father spoke often in Umonhon. Sariah and her family accepted an NICC star quilt on Joe's behalf, and hugs were shared for her good words.



# GWEN VARGAS PORTER

NICC's 2021 Graduation  
Keynote Speaker



Gwen Vargas-Porter (Umonhon), NICC's 2021 Graduation Keynote Speaker, is a person known by many titles- Umonhon Tribal Council Secretary, Social Worker, Mental Health Practitioner, Drug and Alcohol Counselor, Foster Parent, Mother, Nana, Umonhon Woman- just to name a few. Along with wearing many hats, Gwen also holds a handful of degrees including: Associates in Integrated Office Technologies from NICC (2003), Bachelors in Human and Social Services Administrative from Bellevue University (2005), Bachelors of Social Work, with an emphasis in Child Welfare from Briar Cliff University (2011), and Masters of Social Work from University of Iowa (2017). However, her path had not always been laid out so clearly.

Gwen started at NICC in 1999 as a non-traditional student who had worked hard to earn her GED. "It was empowering and inspiring that I was in school. I was capable of learning. I was capable of doing something. After dropping out of high school, that's the worst feeling ever- to fail. When you accomplish it, that's the biggest thing," she says. With encouragement from several mentors (including former NICC Instructor, Margaret Maas), Gwen turned her interest to Human Services/Counseling.

Hands-on foster care experience, research, and community observations were factors for this direction. "At one point, there was only one Native foster home in Woodbury county," she says. Recognizing this inequity, Gwen was able to collaborate with universities, tribes, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), Morningstar Counseling, as well as many others to focus on foster parent training, providing an emphasis on trauma, history, culture, Native-American perspective, and addressing distrust of the system itself. Native American Foster Homes for Native Children (NF4NC) has been a big focus of her work. While there are a lot of strides being made to provide foster families with new knowledge, increased interest, and other resources, Gwen isn't ready to let up and has her eyes set on the bigger picture.

She currently serves on The Umonhon Tribal Council as the Secretary (also from 2012-2015), as well as a Clinical Social Worker at Carl T. Curtis focusing on connecting dialysis patients and their families with resources and navigating the healthcare system. Gwen also has a variety of experiences ranging from Board Member at NICC to Social Worker for the Omaha Tribe to ICWA Specialist and Winnebago Tribe CFS Program Manager. These varying experiences have brought a larger perspective and connection among these areas and in extension human services/counseling. Gwen says, "Part of my goal is to recruit, train, teach and supervise future social workers. We have at least 90% of our jobs are human services and providing services to people." She discusses the importance of sustainable organization and leadership, increase in indigenous professionals, safe, healthy, and happy families, as well as the importance of coordinating within the community, highlighting collaborations with NICC, local providers, and larger networks to reach a common goal.

She is always quick to tie back to where her passion for education began- NICC. Grateful for her mentors, experiences, and the journey that resulted, she says, "Education- that's the key, that's the ticket to doing better, knowing better, wanting better, not just for ourselves but for others... Our tribal community colleges, [they're] here for us. There's no other place like this."



# CONFERRAL OF DEGREES



Pictured top left: Derek LaPointe, Vandy Merrick, David Clark  
2nd row Melva Beltran, Christa Carrillo, Gabriella Medina, Selena Parker  
3rd row Kassie Philips, Rex Webster and Danielle Webster,



# NICC'S 2021 CONFERRED GRADUATES

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## VICTOR HAHN

### *Carpentry Certificate*

South Sioux City Campus certificate graduate, Victor Hahn, is planning to continue at NICC in pursuit of his General Liberal Arts Degree. Victor also served as Sioux City Campus's Student Representative in Spring 2021.

## VANDY NICOLE MERRICK

### *Business (Business Administration emphasis)*

Vandy Merrick (Umo<sup>h</sup>o<sup>n</sup>) is a South Sioux City graduate. Merrick was a dedicated student raising her family while working and attending college all full time- directly from work, occasionally with her children, snacks, books and toys to keep them occupied while she could be in class. Her goal was to earn her degree which she earned along with much respect from fellow students and NICC for her hard work and dedication to her family and studies.



## DUSTIN C-RAY GRIFFIN

### *General Liberal Arts*

Dustin Griffin (Umo<sup>h</sup>o<sup>n</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Dustin came to NICC as a transfer student and earned his degree in just a few short semesters. Dustin currently works as an ambassador with HCI as well as housing security.





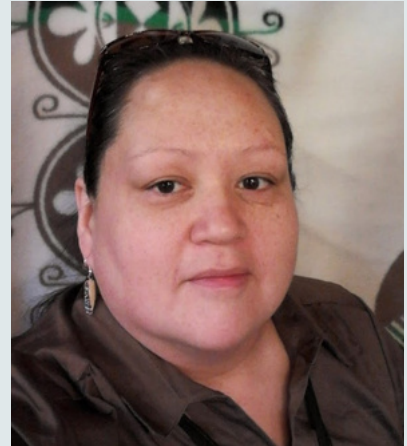
# NICC'S 2021 CONFERRED GRADUATES

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## LANI MORAN-SAMQUA

*Native American Studies (History & Tradition, Tribal Leadership); General Science Studies*

Lani Moran-Samqua/ Ma The' (Umo<sup>ho</sup>/Rosebud Sioux) plans to continue to her bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Native American Studies. Moran-Samqua recently presented her NASA Research project, focusing on soil health.



## GABRIELA MEDINA

*General Liberal Arts*

Gabriela Medina (Winnebago) is a South Sioux City Campus Graduate. Medina has consistently worked towards a rounded education within her degree. She has participated in the NASA Fellowship program, co-presenting at the Nebraska Academy of Science Conference in Lincoln, as well as various science workshops; all while achieving a General Liberal Arts degree. Medina loves to learn and plans to continue with that philosophy.

## NAKOMIS MERRICK

*General Liberal Arts*

Nakomis Merrick (Umo<sup>ho</sup>) is a South Sioux City Campus Graduate. Merrick has taken a special interest in Umo<sup>ho</sup> language and has plans to teach in the future. In addition, Merrick also is an Archives Intern, as well as integrated the Umo<sup>ho</sup> language into a service learning project.





# NICC'S 2021 CONFERRED GRADUATES

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## SELENA J. PARKER

### *General Liberal Arts*

Selena Parker (Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup>), Macy Campus Graduate, is 2021's Valedictorian. Parker began at NICC as a dual credit student. She will pursue Elementary Education at Wayne State College. Her goal is to teach at Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> Nation Public School. Parker graduates with magna cum laude honors.



## KASSIE SKYE PHILLIPS

### *General Liberal Arts*

Kassie Phillips (Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Phillips has had various internship experience with NICC as well as Ho-Chunk Ambassador Program and plans to attend Haskell in the Fall Semester.



## MADISON ROSS

### *General Liberal Arts*

Madison Ross is a Macy Campus Graduate. Ross began NICC as a dual credit student and now graduates with both a high school diploma and associates degree. Ross plans to attend College of the Ozarks and pursue elementary education. Ross graduated with magna cum laude honors.



# NICC'S 2021 CONFERRED GRADUATES

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## CHRISTOPHER JOEL TURNER

*General Liberal Arts*

Christopher Turner (Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup>) Macy based Christopher Turner graduated in the spring of 2021 with an Associates in General Liberal Arts. Chris is an avid fan and scholar of the expanded Star Wars universe, a gifted artist, and is now back at NICC pursuing another degree in Native American Studies.

## DANIELLE JEAN WEBSTER

*General Liberal Arts*

Danielle Webster (Winnebago) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Danielle is a hard worker with a drive to succeed. During her time at NICC, she also worked as a paraprofessional at Umonhon Nation Public Schools. Danielle has plans to pursue her bachelor's degree and major in Business Administration.



## DONNA PIKE

*Human Services (Community Counseling)*

Donna Pike (Isanti) is a Santee Campus graduate. Donna plans to attend Wayne State in the fall and pursue Psychology. She currently works for the Santee-Sioux Nation in the Human Services field. Pike graduated with cum laude honors, as well as represented NICC at AIHEC's 2020 Conference in Washington D.C.



# NICC'S 2021 WALKING GRADUATES

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## TODD STABLER

*Native American Studies (History & Tradition)*

Todd Stabler (Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Stabler is interested in learning and says he took classes to learn more about his people's history. Stabler has also serviced in the U.S. military. An honor song was played at graduation for Stabler and other veterans.



## DEREK R. LAPOINTE

*Business (Business Administration emphasis)*

Derek LaPointe (Isanti) is a Santee Campus graduate who has had a variety of leadership experiences. LaPointe has served on Santee-Sioux Nation's Tribal Council, NICC's PTAC Counselor Team, and service to his country through the U.S. Army.

## REX WEBSTER

*Paraeducator Pre-Teacher Education*

Rex Webster (Winnebago) is a Macy Campus graduate. Webster maintains a busy schedule while being a student, father, and also working full-time with Umonhon Nation Public School in Tech Integration. Webster also has recently position with NICC in tech support and is always teaching others how to feel confident in technology.





# NICC'S 2021 WALKING GRADUATES



## FAITH GRANT

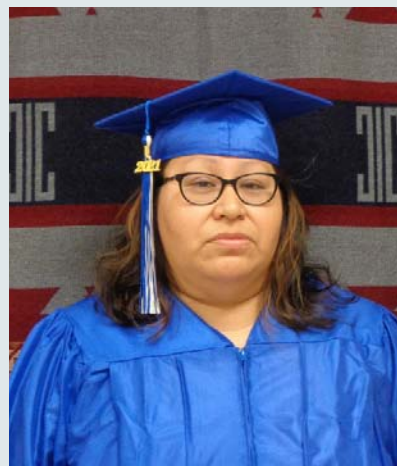
*General Science Studies*

Faith Grant-Lyons/ Monze Pewin (Umo<sup>h</sup>o<sup>n</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Grant plans to pursue her bachelors in environmental science, as well as a minor in Native American Studies. She presented her NASA Research project this spring semester.

## INESSA LYONS

*General Science Studies*

Inessa Lyons (Umo<sup>h</sup>o<sup>n</sup>) is Macy Campus Graduate. Lyons has directed much of her course work towards the environmental science emphasis. She has participated in the NASA environmental research classes for two years and co-presented her work at the Nebraska Academy of Science Conference in Lincoln Nebraska. She plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in environmental science.



## SUSAN F. MORRIS

*General Science Studies*

Susan Morris (Umo<sup>h</sup>o<sup>n</sup>) is Macy Campus Graduate. Morris has been a health care worker throughout the pandemic while still finishing her General Science Studies degree. Through her perseverance, she has not only been able to achieve her degree but also helped so many others. She plans to pursue a nursing degree and continue the great work she is presently doing. Susan has participated in the NASA Fellowship program for 2 years and has presented at the Nebraska Academy of Science Conference in Lincoln.



# NICC'S 2021 WALKING GRADUATES

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## DAVID SCOTT CLARK

*Business (Entrepreneurship emphasis)*

David 'Scotty' Clark (Umo<sup>no</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. In addition to being a recent graduate, Clark also serves as NICC's Assistant to the Academic Dean. David also has natural skill for technology and computer programs.



## MELVA LYONS BELTRAN

*General Liberal Arts*

Melva Beltran (Umo<sup>no</sup>) is a South Sioux City Campus Graduate. Like many non-traditional students, Beltran came back to school after a break. Seeing the world with a new perspective helped Beltran get on the fast-track to graduation and develop her career interest in fields related to social work and other human-centered fields.

## CHRISTA MAE CARRILLO

*General Liberal Arts*

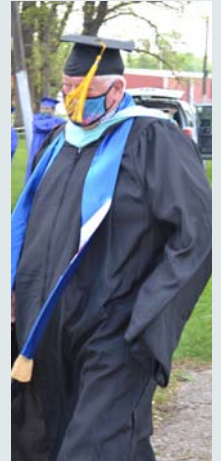
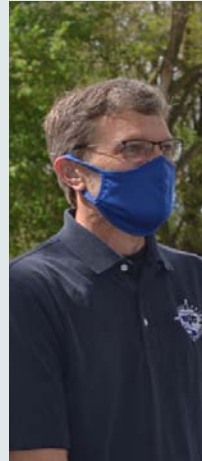
Christa Carrillo (Umo<sup>no</sup>) is a Macy Campus Graduate. Carrillo currently works for NICC in Student Services and has plans to continue her education. Carrillo also represented NICC in AIHEC's Student Testimonial videos to Nebraska's senators and representatives in Spring 2021.







# Graduation Photos



Above top right photo NICC staff enjoying the ceremony including: Vanessa Hamilton, Susan Tyndall, Qudsia Hussaini, Dawne Price, and Justin Kocian. (2nd row L-R) NICC graduates of 2021 clapping for a speaker. Mike Berger looking on at the graduates, White Tail honoring the graduates in song. Far right: NICC Math/Science Faculty, Hank Miller walking in with faculty and employees. 2nd to last row- A panoramic view of the graduation stage and attendees. Chris Walker watching the ceremony. Shona Campbell all smiles beneath her mask watching the graduates. Bottom row- L-R: NICC Graduates waiting to receive their degrees. NICC Faculty including: Kodi Urquidi, Patti Page, Zeke Brummels, Hank Miller, and Maunka Morgan. NICC Graduates listening to the keynote address including: Donna Pike, Lani Moran-Samqua, Rex Webster, and Susan Morris.







# Graduation Photos ctd.

Above top left: Crystal Ross leads 2021 graduates following the ceremony. Above top right: General Liberal Arts Faculty Zeke Brummels and future NICC student Wakonda pose for the camera. Middle left: 2021 graduates listen to the keynote speaker. Middle right: Dean of Academics Kristine Sudbeck addresses the audience and graduates. Bottom left : Audience members capturing the 2021 graduation ceremony on their cell phones.



*Thank you to all of those who helped make this NICC 2021 Graduation Ceremony possible.*

*Thank you to the Omaha Tribe for allowing us to honor the graduates at the powwow grounds, just outside the small arena area.*

*We thank the Omaha Nation, Santee-Sioux Nation, and NICC Communities for continued prayers and investment in the graduates. Your support through connection, culture, tradition, employment, and other resources plays no small part in their success.*

*To the families of the graduates, for not only attending and abiding by regulations, but also for supporting your students on their educational journeys. Thank you for ensuring their success by creating study spaces, encouraging persistence, and reminding them of their motivation, their strength, and their heritage.*

*Most of all, to the students- thank you for your dedication, devotion, and ability to adapt in uncertain times. Your resiliency is a reminder of your people and their belief in you. Have pride in your accomplishment, acknowledge your community and support, and remember that there is no bounds to what you are able to achieve.*

*Congratulations NICC Class of 2021!*

*-The NICC Family*

