

# NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GRADUATION 2020 NEWSLETTER





# 2020 GRADUATION COMMENCEMENT

*Saturday, August 15, 2020 at 10:00 am - Santee Sioux Nation's Powwow Grounds*



Beadwork by NICC Valedictorian, Estelle Farley

*Thank you to all for following social distancing, wearing masks, and providing your guest list to the Santee-Sioux Nation. We are so glad that the graduates were able to be honored in a safe, personal, and meaningful way. Pidamayaye/Wibthahon!*

## *Board of Directors*

*Diane LaPointe, Chairperson, Santee Sioux Nation; Wynema Morris, Vice Chairperson, Omaha Nation; Danielle LaPointe, Member, Santee Sioux Nation; Cheryl Kitto, Member, Santee Sioux Nation; Mary Lou Mitchell, Member, Omaha Nation; Linda Robinson, Member, Omaha Nation; Danielle LaPointe, Member, Santee Sioux Nation*

## *Administration*

*Michael Oltrogge, PhD, President; Kristine Sudbeck, PhD, Academic Dean; Dawne Price, BS, Dean of Student Services; Justin Kocian, AAS, Information Technology Director (South Sioux City); Marcia Robertson, AA, Human Resources Director (Macy); Paul Fowler, BSW, Workforce Development Director (South Sioux City); Shona Campbell, MBA, Interim Business Office Director (South Sioux City); Jim Hallum, AS, AA, Extension Program Director (Santee)*

## *Faculty*

*Zeke Brummels, MA, General Liberal Arts (Macy); Joe Harlan, BA, Umonhon Language (Macy); Binah Gordon, PhD, Language Curriculum Specialist (Macy); Jackie Hahn, MAT, Early Childhood Education (South Sioux City); Leland Henke, MS, MSE, Business (Santee); Maunka Morgan, MBA, Native American Studies (Macy); Hank Miller, MS, Math and Science (Santee); Kodi Urquidi, AAS, Carpentry (Macy); Dasha Weatherman, MS, Math and Science (South Sioux City); Al Widrowicz, MAT, Instructor and Institutional Researcher (South Sioux City)*

## *Adjuncts*

*Kari Bappe, Luke Becker, Stacy Brasch, Dr. Jenna Christensen, Beau Davis, Kristine Earth, Kristine Flyinghawk, Misty Frazier, Jamie Good Bird, Dr. Irene Graves, Dawn Hair, Dr. V.E. Hamman, Devin Henry, Jennifer Holtgrew, James Hulstein, Dr. Teri Kramer, Devin Lingle, Justin McCauley, Barbara McKillip-Erixson, Lauren Miller, Dr. Kathy Mohlfeld, Wynema Morris, Kim Nelson, Stephanie Norton-McDonald, Patti Page, Jennifer Pritchett, Andre Saunsoci, Vida Stabler, Dusti Storm, Redwing Thomas, Lacey Vanis, Dr. Anitra Warrior,*

*Trisha Wegner, Doug Widow*

## *Staff*

*Michael Berger, BA, Grant Writer (Macy); Rick Thomas, Dakota Culture Advisor (Santee); Estelle Farley, AA, Maintenance Manager (Santee); Terri Grant-Wabasha, AA, Student Services Advisor (Santee); Vanessa Hamilton, BA, Accounts Receivable/Student Billing (Macy); Qudsia Hussaini, BS, BEd, Teaching Assistant (South Sioux City)*  
*Shelley Kosola, AS, Teaching Assistant (Santee); Megan Miller, MA, Resource Specialist/Community Educator (Santee), Lani Moran-Samqua, Extension Assistant (Macy); Pri Morris, AA, GED Instructor (Macy)*  
*Troy Munhofen, BS, Registrar (Macy); Alvin Parker, MLS, Student Services Advisor (South Sioux City)*  
*Crystal Ross, AA, Student Services Advisor (Macy); James Schrock, BA, Accounts Contractor (Macy)*  
*LaVonne Snake, AS, Teaching Assistant (Macy); Susan Tyndall, AA, Librarian (Macy); Chris Walker, Sr., Maintenance Manager (Macy); Anthony Warrior, AA, Extension Assistant (Santee); Rex Webster, Technology Specialist (Macy)*



## Flags Entrance/Processional

(Top left photo L-R) Ron Thomas carried the eagle feather staff and Santee-Sioux Nation Treasurer, Derek LaPointe carried the Santee-Sioux Nation Tribal Flag. Talia Saunsoci followed as the powwow princess. (Top right photo L-R) Following the flags, the Board of Directors followed in including: Danielle LaPointe, Linda Robinson, and Vice Chairperson Wynema Morris. Graduate speakers and administration then followed. (Bottom right photo L-R) Graduates then followed including Valedictorian, Estelle Farley, and Casey Saul. Following graduates, faculty and staff proceeded. (Bottom left photo, clockwise L-R) Maza Kute: Bradley Strickland, Chance Strickland, Waylon LaPlante, Jake LaPlante, Kalon Strickland Jr., Troy Saunsoci, Joe Moose, and BL White, led the processional and flag entrance, as well as sang an honor song after the acceptance of NICC's 2020 Graduating Class as the ceremony concluded.







(Top left photo L-R) Graduates socially distanced, masks ready, lined up, ready to enter the ceremony: Alexander White, Lakeya Williams, Brianna Bickerstaff, Jennifer Ross, and Kenna Robinson. (Top right photo) NICC's Terri Grant, Santee Campus Student Services, repping the NICC flag. (Middle right photo) Chris Walker, Sr., Macy Campus Maintenance Manager, and Susan Tyndall, Macy Campus Librarian, walking into graduation with the rest of the NICC staff. (Bottom photo) Math and Science Faculty, Dasha Weatherman, with graduates, Leah John, Kenna Robinson, Jennifer Ross, and Breanna Bickerstaff. (Middle left photo L-R) Santee-Sioux Nation Chairman Roger Trudell, Danielle LaPointe, Diane LaPointe, and NICC President Dr. Michael Oltrogge.



Santee-Sioux Nation Tribal Chairman Roger Trudell gave a welcoming prayer to begin the 2020 Graduation Ceremony. Chairman Trudell also honored the graduates through prayer before the meal at the conclusion of the ceremony.



Santee-Sioux Nation Tribal Vice-Chairman Sid Tuttle along with Ron Thomas honored the graduates through the honoring ceremony after degree conferrals. Tuttle also MC'd the Graduation Ceremony.

NICC President Dr. Michael Oltrogge shared kind words about the strength and adaptability of NICC's students for the unprecedented Spring and Summer 2020 Semesters through the President's Acclamation. President Oltrogge also accepted the class of 2020.



# ESTELLE FARLEY

## 2020 Valedictorian



Estelle Farley (Navajo/Dine) was NICC's 2020 Valedictorian and the first speaker of the 2020 Graduation Commencement Ceremony. Farley earned her Associates of Arts in General Liberal Arts and graduated magna cum laude, along with several internship experiences with the Department of Defense, as well as involvement with the NASA Fellows Program.

Farley spoke not just of her experience as a student but her story as a daughter, sister, community member, and more. With these experiences Farley highlighted loss and grief, as well as the dedication, resiliency, and strength that so many NICC students

embody. Farley also talked about each person's journey and how that path isn't always linear but rather part of a growth process. Farley talked about the importance of having support and supporting others. "Be a good listener. Stand up for each other. Offer prayers. Help one another to reach their goals. Give kindness and compassion to others. It will be given back in great return and respect." Farley also gave a special shout out to her family and culture, NICC support, and also her work and employment opportunities with the Santee-Sioux Nation as the Office of Environmental Protection's Air Technologist. To the graduates, Farley shared, "Remember that education does not stop. Just because you have your degree doesn't mean for you to stop learning. There's always something new for you to learn. Never forget that no one can take this education and accomplishment away from you. The spirits stand with us today, and give us honor."



# ZEKE BRUMMELS

NICC'S 2020 Faculty of the Year



NICC's 2020 Faculty of the Year was Ezechiel 'Zeke' Brummels. Brummels has taught at NICC for the past three years, and is the Division Head of General Liberal Arts. Brummels teaches a variety of Education, History, and English courses and also has had experience in a multitude of projects from service learning to archives to assisting in institutional assessment and tools.

Brummels spoke on NICC's community of educators (both instructors and staff) who are constantly teaching others whether in the classroom and beyond. Brummels touched on the NICC Family, all people doing their part to work for the students and helping them succeed. Giving individual shout outs, Brummels also credits his success as an instructor to these people and his larger NICC family.

When addressing the graduates, Brummels shared how impactful their achievement is, "Academically, within the discipline of history, the first rule is that you can't tell how important something is in the moment.. yet I cannot help but feel.... that right now this is historic. These are historic times... Years from now... when people ask what you were doing in the pandemic and rest of 2020, you can say I graduated from Nebraska Indian Community College. You can say, 'I worked and took care of my kids and overcame all kinds of obstacles and barriers.. to graduate college.' As things start to get better... you should wear this degree like a badge of honor, because if you can complete a college degree in the time of a pandemic, you should remind yourself just what a big deal that really is... By standing on this stage today, you have already made history and all of us at NICC, we are eager to see what you do with it."

# JANELLE WHIPPLE

NICC's 2020 Graduation  
Keynote Speaker

Janelle Whipple (Santee-Sioux) gave the Keynote Address at NICC's 2020 Graduation Ceremony. After earning her AA in General Studies from NICC in 2011, Janelle graduated from University of Nebraska-Omaha in 2015 with a bachelors in General Studies with an emphasis in History, Native Studies and Sociology. Whipple recently finished her master's degree in Tribal Administration and Governance from the University of

Minnesota-Duluth. Whipple is also humbled to be a Bill Gates Millennium Scholar, Shakopee Mdewankanton Sioux Community Scholar, as well as maintain a 4.0 for her last year of graduate school. She has spent the past decade in both administration and Indian gaming, as well as the past five years in education. She currently works at Headstart as the Community and Family/Mental Health/ERSEA Manager.

Whipple's message to the graduates was a heartfelt reminder of the power of culture, identity, education, language, and community. Whipple shared her own experiences as an indigenous scholar, as well as detailed the various reasons for getting a degree. Whipple spoke about each person being on different journeys with unlimited possibilities. She said, "I believe in our people. I believe in the language. I believe in the culture. I believe in education. We're in the 21st Century now, you don't have to choose. You can be your tribal self- your authentic self, and you can have a PhD. You can be a lawyer. You can be a doctor. Nobody can take that away from you. Nobody can take that degree from you. Take it all the way if that's what you want." When it comes to life after graduation, Whipple says, "It's your responsibility to be advocates for those who may not have had the opportunity to go to school. It is your responsibility to bring awareness to your community.. It's your responsibility to advocate and speak for those who don't have a voice... I believe in you guys, and I believe in your future... I believe we can be unified, and we change Indian Country for the betterment."





# CONFERRAL OF DEGREES



Pictured top left, clockwise: Lakeya Williams with Troy Muhofen NICC Registrar, Alex White and Munhofen, Yasmeen Sandoval and Munhofen, Casey Saul waiting for his name to be called, Anthony Sharpfish receiving instruction from Munhofen after receiving diploma, Jennifer Ross and Munhofen, Kenna Robinson receiving her diploma, Leah John after walking offstage, Breanna Bickerstaff and Munhofen, and Estelle Farley diploma in hand.



# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## ANTHONY SHARPFISH

*Associates of Applied Science  
Carpentry*

South Sioux City Campus graduate Anthony Sharpfish (Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux) was also involved in AIHEC and various construction projects. Kodi Urquidi, Carpentry Division Head, says, "Anthony is a trustworthy and dependable student and man. His work always showed the care, quality, and time he took on each project,"

## LEAH JOHN

*Associates of Arts  
Business  
(Business Administration  
emphasis)*

Leah John (Santee-Sioux) graduates from South Sioux City Campus. Alvin Parker, South Sioux City Student Services Representative, says, "Leah is always up for the task presented to her. She would always say, 'I know what needs to be done. I can get that done'. She would always be up for it, and get it done."





# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## KENNA ROBINSON

*Associates of Arts  
Business (Business  
Administration Emphasis)*

Macy Campus Graduate Kenna Robinson (Umó'nhon) has been busy in the classroom and in her community. NICC Instructional Designer, Megan Miller says, "Kenna is always dedicated to helping others. Whether through work, school, or family, she works hard until she reaches her goals to help her community."

## JENNIFER L. ROSS

*Associates of Arts  
Business (Business  
Administration emphasis)*

Macy Campus Graduate, Jennifer Ross (Umó'nhon). Ross was also AIHEC's NICC Student of the Year, as well as has worked for NICC in the Business Office. Leland Henke, NICC's Business Division Head, says of Ross, "Jennifer was always a good student and would always go above and beyond for assignments and class participation."





# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## BREANNA BICKERSTAFF

*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

South Sioux City Campus Graduate, Breanna Bickerstaff (Santee-Sioux Tribe), is currently enrolled at USD this semester. "She's shooting for looking at her future. She's doing everything she can do get it. Setting a prime example," says Alvin Parker, South Sioux City Student Service Representative.

## ESTELLE FARLEY

*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

Santee Campus Graduate, Estelle Farley (Navajo/Diné), also completed NASA Research Fellowships along with internships from the Department of Defense.

"Estelle shows compassion and courage in everything that she does," says Santee Campus Student Services Representative, Terri Grant.





# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## CHRISTOPHER LEVI LASLEY

*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

Christopher Lasley (Ponca Tribe) graduates from the South Sioux City Campus. "Chris is such a laid back student... [with a quick wit and intelligence, which enabled him to interact with just about any subject matter in front of him... He will go far in whatever area he decides to apply his gifts," says Zeke Brummels, General Liberal Arts Division Head.

## CASEY SAUL

*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

Santee Campus Graduate, Casey Saul, (Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe) has been involved with the MATC program. Science and Math Teaching Assitant, Shelley Kosola, says, "Casey is dedicated to his education, as he sees the value of being able to help future generations and the quest to share indigenous knowledge





# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## LAKEYA RAIN WILLIAMS

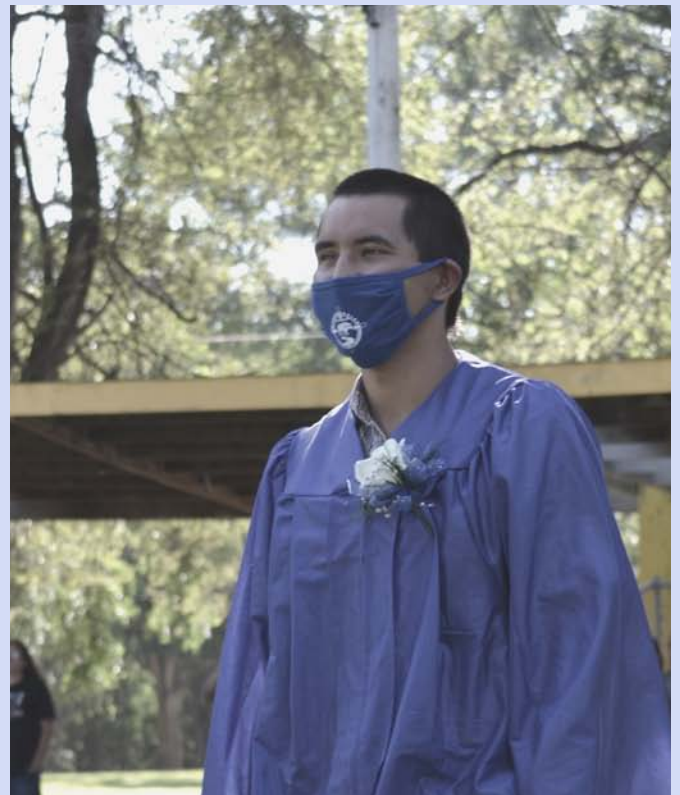
*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

Lakeya Williams, (Yankton Sioux) graduates from South Sioux City Campus. "She is very intelligent. She is one of those students- a real go-getter. She persevered," says Alvin Parker, Student Service Representative from South Sioux City Campus.

## ALEXANDER DOWAN WHITE

*Associates of Arts  
General Liberal Arts*

Santee Campus Graduate, Alexander White (Winnebago) continues to pursue his written, musical, and studio arts. General Liberal Arts Division Head, Zeke Brummels says, "... I have never run into a more versatile creative mind than that of Alex...Alex is constantly pushing the boundaries of his own imagination... It is my great hope that he keeps nurturing that artistic spirit."





# NICC'S 2020 GRADUATES



## BAYLIE REIL

*Associates of Arts  
Paraeducator Pre-Teacher Education*

Macy Campus Graduate, Baylie Reil, is pursuing her teaching degree. Dr. Kristine Sudbeck, Academic Dean and Paraeducator Pre-Teacher Department Head, says of Reil, "During her practicum and continued work experience with Umonhon Nation Public Schools, Baylie shared her growing interest in serving students with special needs... It is exciting to now see her pursue her Bachelor's degree at Wayne State College to become a teacher!"

## YASMEEN SANDOVAL

*Associates of Science  
General Science Studies*

South Sioux City Campus, Graduate, Yasmeen Sandoval (Santee-Sioux) graduates with internship experience in the environmental sciences, as well the NASA Research Fellowship program. Hank Miller, NICC's Science and Math Division Head adds, "Yasmeen is a hard-working student that through the course of her education has developed incredible knowledge and perspective about our natural environment."





# 2020 GED GRADUATE

## GED GRAD SASHA MILLER

### *General Education Degree*

Macy Campus GED Graduate, Sasha Miller (Umónhon) earned her General Education Degree while working with GED Instructor, Pri Morris. Morris says that Miller is, "A very self-aware and determined young Omaha woman."



Below L-R: Troy Munhofen with NICC's graduates, diplomas in hand: Yasmeeen Sandoval, Alexander White, Lakeya Williams, Casey Saul, Estelle Farley, Breanna Bickerstaff, Jennifer Ross, Kenna Robinson, Leah John, and Anthony Sharpfish





# Graduation Photos



Above L-R: Valedictorian Estelle Farley's sisters, McPhee Farley and Cornelia Farley-Widow, streaming the ceremony to their family on the Navajo Reservation. Below L-R: South Sioux City graduate Lakeya Williams's daughter Xyla held by her father Michael Williams getting a hug from their NICC Graduate, Lakeya Williams.



Above: Graduate Yasmeen Sandoval carrying her diploma. Below: Chef Anthony Warrior taking a break after the graduation meal rush.







## Graduation Photos ctd.

Above top left L-R: Graduate Jennifer Ross with family including: Angela Robinson, mother Marcia Robertson and NICC HR Director (recently retired), and father Joseph Ross, Sr. Top right: Dasha Weatherman, NICC Math and Science Faculty, proudly watching the graduates. Middle: Leah John watching the ceremony, socially distanced with other graduates: Anthony Sharpfish, Alex White, and Kenna Robinson. Bottom photo L-R: Keynote speaker Janelle Whipple's family, mother Linda Whipple and sister Bernadette Whipple watching Whipple share her keynote.



*Thank you to all of those who helped make this NICC 2020 Graduation Ceremony possible.*

*Thank you to the Santee-Sioux Nation for sharing your weekend of celebration with NICC's graduates. We thank you for honoring the graduates with great meaning and honor at the powwow grounds. This event will be remembered for many years to come.*

*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 is no small part of 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 2020!*

*-The NICC Family*

