

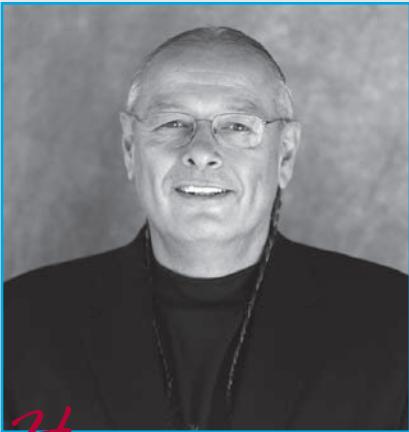


AMERICAN
INDIAN
COLLEGE
FUND

Circle OF HOPE

Educating the Mind and Spirit

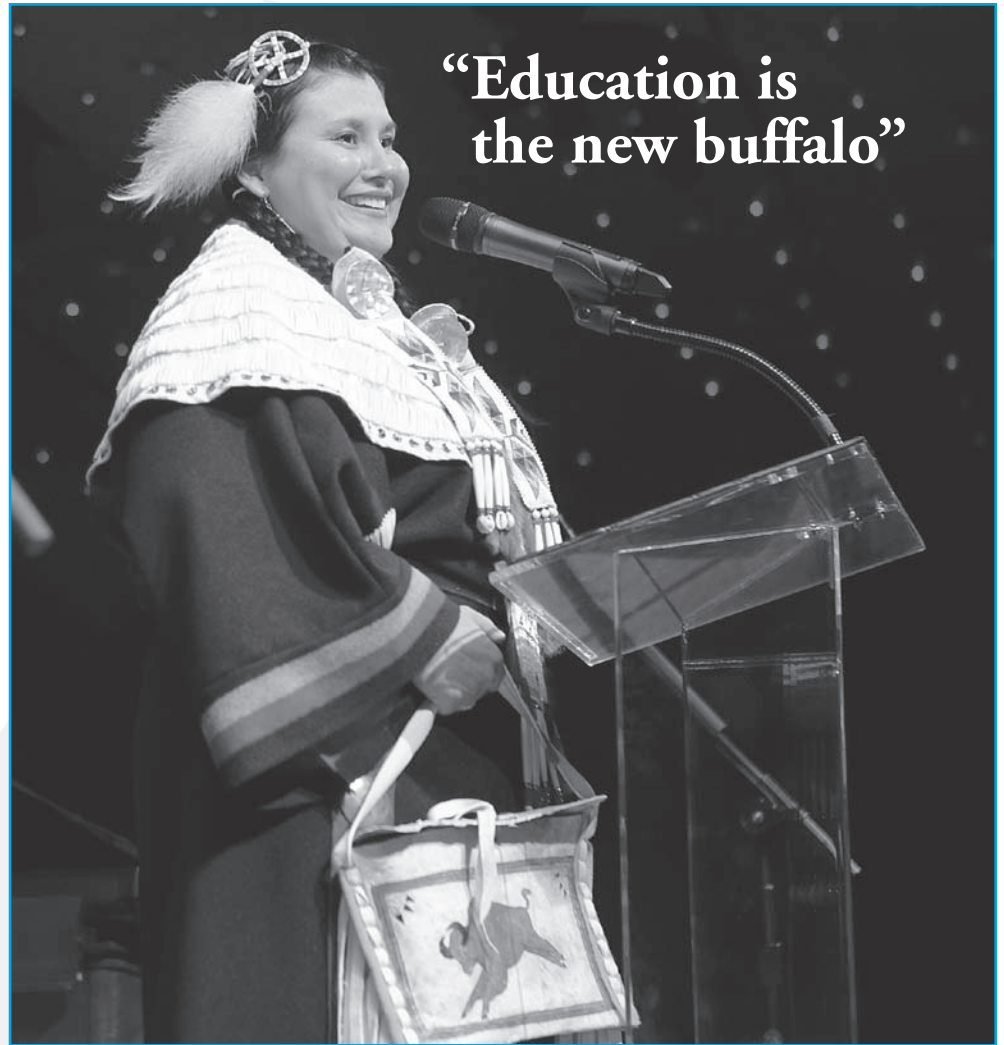
Letter from the President



Hau! Mitaku oyate!

The advent of the New Year is a time among all cultures for renewal. We make resolutions to do better at the start of a new year, with diets, exercise, and other self improvement projects. As we begin 2011, it is a perfect time for incorporating the American Indian value of reciprocity into our resolutions.

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American Indian College Fund
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Lynette Chandler is a role model. She won a fellowship from The American Indian College Fund's Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Faculty Career Enhancement Program, and she used it to provide the time and space needed for the research and learning needed to earn a Ph.D.

But before she was a role model, Lynette was a hero. You won't hear her use that word. She simply considers herself a scholar and a teacher, but the job which she needed to leave in order to work on her doctorate was a

heroic one. Lynette was the founder of the White Clay Language Immersion School at Fort Belknap College.

Before Lynette founded the White Clay Immersion School, there were only eight people who spoke the White Clay language. There are now hundreds, and White Clay appears to have been rescued from extinction.

Lynette Chandler is an enrolled member of the A'aninin Tribe of Fort Belknap, Montana. "White Clay" is a translation of A'aninin, which is

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“Education is the new buffalo” continued from page 1



what her people call themselves. They have also been known by the French name Gros Ventre.

The White Clay people number in the thousands, but

comparatively few of them know their language. Nearly a century ago it was suppressed in missionary-run schools, and ultimately the language was banned by the authorities, and it started to die out.

Lynette Chandler was an adult when she learned to speak White Clay. She learned it by meeting with fluent tribal elders. She and her husband, Sean, recorded those conversations, built a White Clay dictionary and developed interactive CDs to teach the language. They also learned to use keyboards with the White Clay alphabet.

The importance of her culture and language became increasingly evident after Lynette and her husband had children. Students who study the White Clay language not only learn an important part of their heritage, but they rank high in test scores because of the discipline it takes to learn such an advanced language.

Lynette has a fond remembrance of her grandfather, who encouraged her to get an education.

“Education is the new buffalo,” he said.

The White Clay people relied on the buffalo for food, clothing, fuel, tools, housing... virtually everything they needed to survive.

The great buffalo herds are now gone, but Lynette Chandler believes education can supply the White Clay people with what they need to survive: learning, wisdom, employment and survival skills in today’s world.

The White Clay Immersion School – located in the Fort Belknap College cultural center – currently has 13 students who range from ages 8 to 11 and grades 4 through 6. They will transfer to other schools after eighth grade. At the school, they study the standard elementary school curriculum, but they study it in their own language.

Lynette’s doctoral dissertation is titled, “A Qualitative Study of Tribal Colleges that Transitioned from Two-Year Associate Degree Granting Institutions to Four-Year Bachelor Degree Granting Institutions.” When asked, she says, “The topic was chosen because it will directly benefit tribal colleges that would like to grow and expand their services to their communities. I believe this is the next important step for the tribal college movement.”

The Value of a Second Language in Academic Achievement

Bilingual education is typically an effort to reduce some of the disadvantages faced by students who speak a minority language when they come to school. The results have been mixed.

But the White Clay Immersion School is a completely different kind of bilingual education. The students arrive speaking English, but they are taught in the White Clay language. They must master the state standard elementary curriculum while at the same time acquiring fluency in the Native language.

The White Clay Immersion School routinely tests student proficiency both informally and formally with a standardized test called Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The immersion students place at or above grade level in these tests as well as being fluent in the White Clay language.

In a recent issue of *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, authors wrote up the latest research on bilingualism, which shows that knowing two languages can change brain function.

Children who learn two languages from an early age achieve the same basic milestones (such as their first word) achieved by those who speak only one, but they develop more effective language acquisition skills.

Bilingual children are better at focusing and screening out distractions than single-language children. The concentration required to suppress one of the languages when communicating in the other gives bilingual children advantages in attention and cognitive control.

Fun for all ages.

Did You Know?

We speak Indian languages everyday and may not know it.

Many of our states’ names even come from Indian languages...

<http://community.collegefund.org/states>

Student Success Story



“Because of you...”

Iva is a Blackfeet language major at Blackfeet Community College, an honors student, a mother of three children, and a wife, married to her high school sweetheart for 27 years. Iva decided to realize her dream and complete a college education.

Iva first became interested in learning her language as a child when she listened to her grandparents. Then, traveling to Canada, she met young children her age who only spoke Blackfeet.

Iva says hearing her Native language spoken filled her with wonder. But the demands of raising a family came first, and it wasn’t until she was an adult that she decided to go back to school after working for two decades for her tribe.

Iva says as her tribal elders started to pass on from this life, she decided she wanted a career teaching the Blackfeet language and to help preserve her culture. She plans to

earn her associate’s degrees in both Blackfeet Language and Blackfeet Studies, transfer to the University of Montana to further her education in Native studies, and then return to her reservation to teach. “I will have a career doing something I love – teaching the language, sharing what I have learned, and fostering a growth in the preservation of the Blackfeet language, traditions, and healthy lifestyle.”

Iva says her American Indian College Fund scholarship is a blessing to her, as it allows her to use her college work-study wages to buy groceries while her tuition, books, and transportation are paid for by her scholarship.

She says, “American Indian College Fund donors are angels on earth, giving struggling people the opportunity to rise up out of poverty, hold their heads high on graduation day, and demonstrate to others that the success rate for American Indian college graduates can and will increase. You have no idea what it feels like to have someone I don’t even know contribute to the realization of my dream. It makes me feel very important. Your investment in people like me has a ripple effect on the Blackfeet people, because those are the people who will benefit from my education. Again, thank you, and may the Creator bless you and your loved ones.”

American Indian College Fund Staff Film Picks

There was a time that the Native experience, as it was depicted in commercial films, was inaccurate, stereotyped, and demeaning. But the past decade or so has seen a flowering of sensitive and intelligent filmmaking about Natives. Here are the favorite films of some of the American Indian College Fund staff. For more film recommendations, visit <http://community.collegefund.org/films>.

Mahalia Newmark, *Development Officer*

Smoke Signals;
Flags of Our Fathers

Deborah Hunt, *Project Officer*

PBS American Experience series – We Shall Remain

Carrie Basgall, *Executive Assistant*

Dead Man; Naturally Native;
Christmas in the Clouds

Suzanne Lockhart, *Office and Human Resources Manager*

Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron

Tori Wunsch, *Foundations Associate Development Officer*

True Whispers: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers;
The Business of Fancydancing

IRA Rules Change

Tax benefits for helping American Indian students

The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 reinstates the IRA rollover and other charitable giving incentives through the end of 2011. If you are an individual age 70 1/2 years old or older, you can enjoy tax savings for the years 2010 and 2011 by making a gift to the American Indian College Fund. If you are at least 70 1/2 years old, you may transfer up to \$100,000 per year to the American Indian College Fund directly from your IRA to give Native students a chance to go to college.

The combined value of all transfers made (whether to one or more charities) cannot exceed \$100,000 per taxpayer per taxable year; transfers may be made for the years 2010 and 2011 with 2010 gifts accepted through the end of January 2011; transfers are not included in your adjusted gross income for federal income tax purposes; transfers to

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Reciprocity means paying it forward. In the words of Dr. David Yarlott, tribal college president at Little Big Horn College on the Crow Reservation in Montana, "My father taught me that the knowledge and skills that I have were taught to me and given to me by someone else, so they are not mine to keep. I pass them on to someone else."

Whether we pass knowledge and skills on personally, through mentoring a child, grandchild, or community member, or share the wealth that resulted from our personal knowledge by donating to the American Indian College Fund to help a Native student achieve a college education, we are paying it forward.

I can't think of a better or more urgent time to pay it forward than today. Donations for the nation's top 400 nonprofits have dropped 11% over the past year due to the economy, according to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* in its ranking reports released this past fall. This decrease in giving is the worst in 20 years since the publication started ranking organizations that raise funds from private sources. The decrease in giving is four times greater than the crippling nationwide decrease we saw after the events of September 11, 2001.

At the American Indian College Fund, we have been blessed with your dedication to the importance of education. I want to thank you for your unwavering support for our students—even in hard times.



Have you seen

our new website?



Our website at www.collegefund.org has been redesigned to make it more attractive and easier to use. You can find success stories, information about tribal colleges and the tribal college movement, videos, information about events, news, and much more. You can also make a donation online. It's fast, easy, and secure!

a charity may count as part of your annual mandatory IRA withdrawal amount; and IRA transfers to charity are not taken into account in determining the deduction eligibility of other charitable contributions. Please see your accountant or attorney for more details to take advantage of this opportunity to save you money and make the difference in an American Indian student's life. To make a gift, contact Eileen Egan at 303-426-8900.

I believe that you are all leaders through your role as an American Indian College Fund supporter. It is because of you that our students can succeed and meet their true potential. You are all leaders by demonstrating the American Indian value of reciprocity.

I am both humbled and energized by all that you do to further the cause of American Indian education, and I am honored to call you friends.

Pilamiya (*Thank you*)

Ocankuye wasté yelo (*In a good way*)

Richard B. Williams

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Blog: www.collegefund.org/blog/

