

JULY / AUGUST 2021

INDIGENOUS SOLUTIONS

GREEN FIRE TIMES

News & Views from the Sustainable Southwest



A NEW PATH FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 4

GREENFIRETIMES.COM

PUBLISHER GREEN EARTH PUBLISHING, LLC

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ADVERTISING SALES ADVERTISE@GREENFIRETIMES.COM

PRINTED LOCALLY WITH 100% SOY INK ON

100% RECYCLED, CHLORINE-FREE PAPER

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C/O SOUTHWEST LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

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505-989-8898, P.O. BOX 8627, SANTA FE, NM 87504-8627

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COVER

HOPI FAMILY SHARES THE EAGLE DANCE IN CRESTONE, COLORADO, MAY 2021

PHOTO © SETH ROFFMAN

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Green Fire Times provides a platform for regional, community-based voices—useful information for residents, businesspeople, students and visitors—anyone interested in the history and spirit of New Mexico and the Southwest. One of the unique aspects of *GFT* is that it offers multicultural perspectives and a link between the green movement and traditional cultures.

Storytelling is at the heart of community health. *GFT* shares stories of hope and is an archive for community action. In each issue, a small, dedicated staff and a multitude of contributors offer articles documenting projects supporting sustainability—community, culture, environment and regional economy.

Green Fire Times is now operated by an LLC owned by a nonprofit educational organization (Est. 1973, SWLEARNINGCENTERS.ORG). Obviously, it is very challenging to continue to produce a free, quality, independent publication. We are seeking financial support to help us institute a new business model and formalize a mentorship program for writers, aspiring journalists and documentarians. We also need funding to make our archive more accessible and to upgrade *GFT* online. Please consider a tax-deductible donation. Checks may be made out to Southwest Learning Centers, Inc. (with a notation 'for *GFT*') and sent to: P.O. Box 8627, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504-8627.

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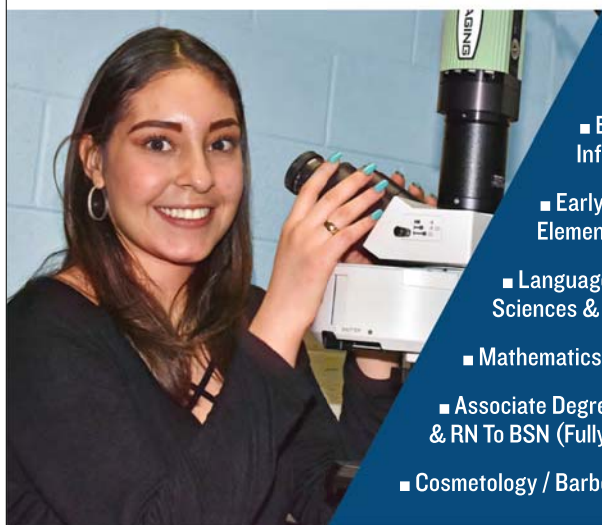
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*A:shiwí College & Career Readiness Center
logo (Zuni Pueblo)*

A:shiwi College & Career Readiness Center – Pueblo of Zuni

Indigenous Solutions for Educational and Community Empowerment

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY **HAYES A. LEWIS**

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share here some of what we are doing at Zuni Pueblo to continue developing Indigenous solutions to strengthen educational conditions for our community.

The A:shiwi College & Career Readiness Center (ACCRC) was created by the Zuni Tribal Council in 2016 after the council was informed that the University of New Mexico had decided to close the UNM instructional site at Zuni. The tribe's decision to take control and assume responsibility for students, program operations and facilities provided an opportunity to establish a safe, equitable, culturally responsive and community-focused higher-learning center. It has also allowed the tribe to bring academic, cultural and extended programming to the community and surrounding tribal lands.

Indigenous solutions that support tribal language, culture, environment, and provide contemporary skills

Our goal is to provide culturally supportive academic, vocational and technical programs that prepare students for leadership and



*Above: Front view of A:shiwi College and Career Readiness Center campus
Below: Students at ACCRC engaged in oven rehabilitation as part of service learning*

successful careers, inspire them to value Indigenous ancestral knowledge, and participate competently in a global society.

Our mission is to provide technical and academic programs and an accredited certificate, in partnership with Navajo Technical University (NTU) and other universities, to include Land Grant programs, cultural and Indigenous knowledge, dual credit, environmental sciences, global Indig-

Tribal practices and ancestral values serve to decolonize our thoughts and revitalize our relationships and services.

enous studies, entrepreneurship training, career and work-readiness opportunities, lifelong learning and continuing education. We are fortunate to have

one of the premiere tribal colleges in the nation, NTU, as our mentor institute. We proudly serve as an instructional site of NTU as we provide accredited educational services, develop our capacity and prepare for independent accreditation.

The Zuni Tribe continues to assert its sovereignty to work independently and collaboratively to find solutions to tribal needs and conditions. In 1980, Zuni was the first Indian tribe in the Southwest to establish its own K-12 public school district. Now, with the establishment of the A:shiwi



Center, the tribe is on a path to establish an accredited tribal college based on Indigenous world perspectives, ancestral knowledge, career readiness and academic excellence.

We are blessed to have a highly qualified staff of Zuni tribal professionals that work to engage our community on many levels. We have faced unique challenges, and there are those who doubt the tribe's ability to succeed. But with prayer and grounding in ancestral practices and values, we have persevered and overcome bumps on the path. We have learned a great deal from our many allies among tribal colleges and universities.

The Zuni Tribe has taken a holistic approach to higher learning, employing qualified community members as academic leaders, utilizing cultural resources in operations and program development. We are mindful of the negative impacts and marginalization that are systemic of the coloniality of American educational systems. We do not intend to perpetuate systems of learning that have failed our children and community for centuries. So, we actively seek to decolonize our programs, policies and operations, as well as the K-12 systems operating on our homelands. We strive to "dream the future" and design Indigenous solutions that support tribal language, culture and environment, and provide contemporary skills to empower our people and strengthen our community. In so doing, we will redefine accepted and self-imposed definitions of tribal sovereignty.

Guiding Organizational Principles

As we design culturally responsive teaching and training methodologies to strengthen tribal sovereignty, family economies and promote community recovery, our strategic plans, operational methodologies and implementation of organizational principles has aligned with those articulated in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999). These include:

- Indigenous (tribal community) determination of educational needs and priorities
- Community input of ways programming, research and evaluation are implemented
- Hiring and/or training of tribal members to teach and assist in providing services, as well as in the evaluation of programs and services
- Extending opportunities for participants to assess the impacts of services

- Culturally appropriate ethics and ongoing development of culturally supportive methods of instruction, training and evaluation must be included in programming and implementation
- Re-focusing and adjusting standardized higher learning practices and methodologies to become inclusive and less ethnocentric

Guiding Values

Our guiding principles are derived from A:shiwí ancestral values. All higher learning, career development, academic and cultural services, and relations with the public are grounded in values that promote cultural knowledge and socially responsive and inclusive practices. Adhering to tribal practices and ancestral values serve to decolonize our thoughts, organize strategies and revitalize our relationships and services. Ancestral knowledge and Indigenous methodologies expand the scope and reach of community involvement, solution development and potential benefits for all participants.

- **Hon ansammo le'na a:dek'yanna.**
We will all live accordingly.
- **Hon i:yayufashshik'yana:wa.**
We will respect and honor one another.
- **Hon ko'ho' lewuna:wedyahnan, wan hon i:tse'manna.**
We will think before we act and consider the consequences.
- **Hon i:yansatduna:wa**
We will help one another.
- **Hon i:yanbeye:na:wa.**
We will give advice and counsel one another.
- **Hon i:yayyumofa a:dek'yanna.**
We will be honest and trust one another.
- **Hon i:wichemana:wa.**
We will love one another
- **Hon dewufashshi' iwillaba' a:dek'yanna.**
We will be kind and generous to one another.
- **Hon i:yanhadiya:na:wa, hon i:yayyu'hadiyahk'yana:wa.**
We will listen and pay attention to one another.

Guiding our work is the Community Impact Strategy:

The following section highlights our activity and plans for developing higher learning opportunities and community support:

Zuni Language & Cultural Studies

Zuni language revitalization is prominent in our plans for higher learning opportunities.



Community art project near the entrance to the ACCRC, conceived by Edward Lewis (Zuni). Primarily designed by Warren Montoya (Santa Ana), assisted by Keith Edaakie (Zuni). Painted by 17 intergenerational community members. Funded by the Chamizá Foundation.

The Tribe will certify and offer professional development for 520 language instructors, and will guide all aspects of teaching the language in our public schools. We will also create an early-childhood language and cultural immersion center.

Cooperative Agricultural Education Initiative

This initiative provides activities and resources to encourage small-plot farming and gardening. Our community garden will utilize Zuni and other Indigenous meth-



Above: Middle and high school students learning 3-D printing and careers. Below: Community members learning the Johnson-Su method of thermal composting

ods. Local resource people will conduct presentations on topics such as organic, non-GMO crops, regenerative agriculture, waffle gardens, beekeeping, soil preparation, seed saving, fruit tree grafting, sacred water and environmental protection, climate change impacts, and associated cultural linkages. Free Zuni heirloom seeds and materials to build hoop houses and bioreactors for composting will be provided.

Creative Arts & Entrepreneurship Center

Grants from the Shakoepé Mde-wakanton Sioux Community, Pueblo of Zuni and the W. K. Kellogg Foun-

dation have been of great assistance in helping us strengthen family-based enterprises and entrepreneurship. Some of the areas we are continuing to develop with this support include: Starting a rez-based business; training in E-Commerce; digital technology training; website development and marketing; a Zuni women writing series; Zuni traditional techniques in pottery making, drawing and painting.

We do not intend to perpetuate systems of learning that have failed our children and community for centuries.

Community Support Initiatives

Grants from the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED), Pueblo of Zuni, the state Legislature, and partnerships with Muralnet, Santa Fe Indian School, National Science Foundation (NSF) Tribal Consortium and Navajo Technical University (NTU) have supported the following initiatives: implementation of a wireless tribal Wi-Fi network; Information Technology training for tribal staff; professional development for Zuni Public Schools instructional staff; coordinating a Yazzie/Martínez lawsuit remedy application framework; partnership with a tribal consortium on a NSF STEM grant, regenerative farming and gardening workshops; establishment of the ARTZ Artisan Cooperative, facilitation of suicide prevention resources. ■



Hayes A. Lewis is executive director of the Pueblo of Zuni's A:shiwí College & Career Readiness Center.
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