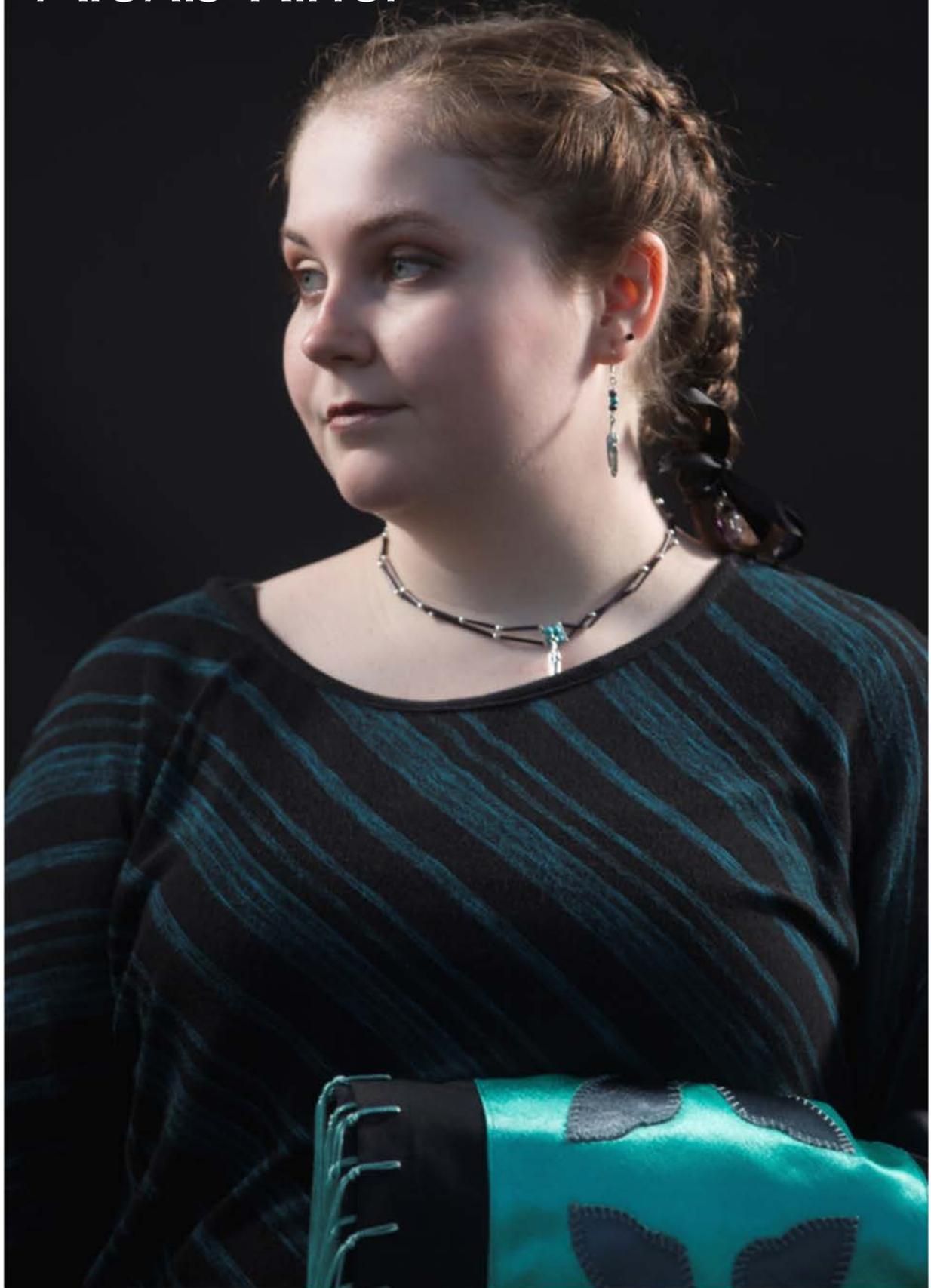


# POTAWATOMI LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



## 2015 FINAL PORTFOLIO

Alexis Riner



## ELDER INTERVIEW

In my short experience with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) during the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I've seen so many wonderful things and people. Meeting the Chairman and all of the other employees that work for the tribe has inspired questions that I would like to ask others. It is because of my mother that I know anything about the tribe. She introduced me to it, encouraged me to go to meetings, and even got me to get my name and tribal card! I've wondered how my mother viewed CPN, so I asked her a few of the questions I had been stewing in.

When I asked her about how she felt about being a member of the CPN, she responded positively. "I feel honored! I feel like I'm a part of American history, because we were the first ones here as far as we know". As much as I've learned in the weeks as I've been here, I wondered how much my mother actually knew about the tribe when she was my age. "No, [I didn't know anything about the tribe], only that my grandmother came from the Mayetta area." Since she didn't know much then and still doesn't know a lot, I asked her if she would like to learn more about the tribe. "Yes! I'd like to know more about the tribe before the Trail of Death and elaborate on stories John Boursaw has told." John tells the history well, and I remember loving to hear my mother's stories; it was like a small present when I got to hear one of them. I asked my mother for a story she remembers that related to being Native American. In response, she shared the stories and memories below.

*"All the cousins knew we had "Indian Blood". It was a source of pride for us. We actually felt special because of it. One cousin, Steve, as a little boy, had hurt himself. He was bleeding as a result. He freaked out because as he said, "I'm losing my Indian Blood". We knew we had a percentage but we didn't know what that meant. So Steve figured that if he was bleeding so much, he was losing what little he had!*

*Grandma (Clara Boursaw Ice) was very proud of her heritage. In those days though, being a Native American carried a certain stigma. Some of her relatives were not proud of the heritage. While she celebrated it, they tried to hide it.*

*This is a story she told me when I was little and this is how I remember it. She was a little girl, and their farm hand asked her "Jib, why is your skin so much darker than your brothers and sisters?" Her reply was "Because a crow sh\*t me out on a stump!" Grandma said her father heard her say that and she got a good spanking.*

*Sh\*t was her curse word as she grew older. It irritated her daughters especially. It became my favorite as you know. She would spell out h-e-l-l and d-a-m-n. To this day even some of her great grandchildren say that she is responsible for sh\*t being their go to curse word!*

*When Grandma was growing up, being Native was looked down on. She didn't make her children or grandchildren feel it was a bad thing. We thought it was awesome! I know she had some other family members who seemed ashamed. That really bothered her.*

*I've always been curious about my family history. What little I knew didn't fit the typical reservation ideas of the movies! I knew that Ogee and Beaubien were also family names but knew nothing of the people themselves. Hearing the story of the Trail of Death was an eye opener. That was only a few years ago. I didn't grow up knowing much of anything; where we came from, etc. Hearing how we got here, the way our ancestors were treated was heartbreaking. To see how the tribe has*

*succeeded in flourishing is inspiring. I take pride too in knowing that old ways are still able to be taught and learned."*

Some of my family didn't like that they were Native American and were ashamed, as stated in the second story. I wondered what it was like while she was a child. "I didn't know any of the traditions. I knew that I was a member, but I wasn't treated any differently, and I knew it was very important to my grandmother."

While I have been learning so much about the tribe, I wonder how many other elders don't know as much as I've been learning or if they even knew that their history was so strong. I plan on telling my mother all that I've learned when I get home, and plan on taking her to see and do more tribal related things. I know she would love the culture in the events and even find some of her heritage while she's doing it.

## GROUP PROJECT

The project I am working on with my partner, Heath Steward, is a water collection idea that may help us in the future. In the beginning, we came up with two ideas that could better prepare the tribe for self-preservation: an apiary for honey and to possibly help with allergies with the locality of the honey, and the Water Collection idea. We ended up choosing the water collection as it seemed to be the favorite from everyone we asked.

In the process of getting all of the facts needed for the project, we learned a large amount of things that would stand in our way or things that needed to be done in order to make the project even a possibility. The people we talked to for this project are Richard Kunze, who is the Director of Public Works, and Bill Smith, who is the Director of the Construction Department. Both were very helpful when we asked our questions and gave specific answers that helped greatly.

When we were in our meeting with Richard, we learned the tribe buys raw water from Arcadia lake, for \$1.15 dollars to 1,000 gallons. We have to run it through pipes that stretch far to reach our water tanks. We then have to filter it to make it the least bit usable for consumers. The water we have is distributed throughout the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) area limits. While we only pay the dollar amount for those thousand gallons, CPN sells it to the citizens for around \$3.20 for the monthly bills. We decided to use the Grand Casino Hotel and Resort as the area to use the collection system on first. It has the biggest roof space and has a water treatment plant right behind the building. Bill told us the approximate area of the Grand roof was 4,300 sq ft. With a low average rainfall of 31 inches a year, the rounded number of money we may save would be around 450K.

The main idea behind the project is to implement a gutter system that catches the rain water off of the Grand Casino Hotel and Resort's rooftops. The water will run through the gutters and into pipes that will be able to transfer a large amount of water, if need be, and send it to the water filtration plant that resides close to the building. The extra water will eventually lower the amount of money we use to buy the rest of the water we need by a small amount or a large amount depending on the rain average for the year.

While it doesn't seem like much now, we believe it can bring down the costs enough in later years to put the money we used to use into other areas that need it. Ultimately, we have developed a proposal to pitch to the board that may help with being able to provide more water service to the CPN citizens.

## FINAL REFLECTION

This summer has gone by so fast I can hardly believe it. Being in the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP) has made my life just a bit fuller. It seems like just yesterday that I was being told who my partner was for our project! I remember not being in the first selection of PLP as well. I had just gotten to the cabin my family was staying at for a few days when I took a nap and didn't notice I had missed a call. When I woke up, I saw that the call was from Shawnee OK, and called back nervously. When I called my mother to tell her that I had been accepted into the program, I was all but screaming into the phone. I think I actually cried. I'm not used to being accepted into much of anything, so this was a wonderful opportunity. Before the six-hour road trip it took to get here, I was so nervous I was wondering if I would be able to make myself actually get in the car. Besides sleeping most of the way, I got to see new things and spend time with my parents.

Ivory was the only PLP that was at the house when I arrived, and I was happy about that. I had met Ivory at a district meeting back in May before the PLPs were chosen, so we already had a bit of a connection. When everyone else arrived, it felt like we all immediately connected with each other. I think it was actually a better time for us since the basement got flooded, which forced the boys to sleep upstairs. I felt like everyone bonded on a higher level because of that. We also may not have interacted as much as we do now. Watching movies with everyone made me feel like we were having a giant slumber party that went on for weeks.

Cooking together was another way that our group bonded. I couldn't really cook as well as I bake, which meant I ended up washing the dishes most nights. I didn't mind being on clean-up duty, but I felt a bit stupid when I realized that there was a dishwasher right next to me after I had been washing the dishes by hand for a week. I loved that we all ate together and had a hand in cooking the meals. I especially love when the boys cook. I think their cooking skills are just under my mom's level sometimes, but we all know nothing can beat your mother's cooking.

I was introduced to ceremonies rather quickly once the program started. I learned about the prayer circle and what I needed to do when I entered and exited. I had already been introduced to the naming ceremony. I was also shocked to find out that I was the only PLP with a Potawatomi name, but I can't wait to see what the four people will get named on Wednesday (July, 29th). I loved helping to build the sweat lodge, but I didn't feel like I would be able to participate since I don't usually take heat as well as I take the cold. I do believe that my favorite ceremony is the Full Moon Ceremony. It's full of passion, and we can open up as much as we want with the other women. I felt so at ease even when everyone started crying. The connection with the moon is a very powerful thing.

Visiting the different departments was informative and fun at the same time. While I may not remember what every one of the department heads have told me, I can remember loving going to the Police Department and the Child Development Center (CDC). Those two places are where I ended up shadowing, and it turned out to be a wonderful day. Being able to do a ride-along with an officer is a thrilling experience. Even if we only stopped a speeder, I got to see what patrol is like and what an officer may do when pulling someone over. At the CDC, they were short staffed when I arrived, so instead of shadowing the Director's assistant, I asked if they needed any help, and I got to be hands on with the after school program. I've had some experience with children in large groups many times before; coming from a big family and being a helper at camps helped a lot. I loved

watching and interacting with the children there. Of course, some may find a favorite person in the group, but my favorite wasn't a child. It happened to be the teachers were my favorites!

While I could touch on so much more with my stories, I tend to keep things short so I don't ramble. Overall, I've loved my stay and have only cried twice, mostly because I was having an annual breakdown, which I need to work on fixing. I'll miss being in the Sharp house and spending every waking moment near the other PLP, but I also miss being at home with my family. I'll be able to take my knowledge of the traditions home and share it with my cousins and maybe convince a few of them to consider joining PLP when they're eligible!



Andrew Banta

## ELDER INTERVIEW

I chose to do my tribal interview with my mother, Christina Banta. She has been an enrolled Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal member since her birth in 1971. She married my father in 1992, and they raised my family in Okemah, Oklahoma. She brought us to the Family Reunion Festival almost every year and introduced me to my culture as much as she could. When asked what her perspective is on the tribe, she responded, "The Citizen Potawatomi Nation is one of the most progressive tribes in the entire country. I am proud to call myself Potawatomi because we don't just take care of ourselves, but all Native Americans. I work for another Native American tribe, and they offer certain services to their tribe only. We offer health services, youth services, and other various programs to all Native people. The programs we offer are very beneficial and have helped many people."

She also expressed her deep admiration for the leadership of the tribe. "Chairman Barrett and Vice Chairman Capps have been an integral part of the success of this tribe. I do not believe we would be where we are as a nation if not for the leadership of them both. They have basically built this tribe from the ground up. They have had a vision from their first day in office and have gone above and beyond for this tribe. While many tribes go through leadership every few years and the vision of their tribe changes, it is unique that we have had such great leadership to guide our tribe. Without their vision to be unique, we would not be financially and culturally growing. We have been blessed as a nation to have such continuity of great leadership."

She knows that the future is important for the tribe and believes that we have a lot to look forward to. "The future of this tribe depends on the youth of the tribe. The current leaders have left great blueprints on how to be successful and run the tribe the right way. The enterprises of the tribe are flourishing, but it is important not to get complacent. The leadership of our tribe has also taught our people to work harder for a better life, not be dependent on the tribe to provide a better life. As a tribal nation, we must work together and grow in love, traditions and culture. We need to look ahead to the future and keep progressing forward. It is important to keep expanding to become more and more self-sufficient."

My mother has had a huge influence on my life, and interviewing her about the tribe was quite an experience. Though she was not raised by her Potawatomi mother and did not have the opportunity to learn the traditions and culture, she read and researched as much as she could find about the culture to share it with me. She always made it a priority to share Potawatomi heritage with my family. I'm proud that she raised me in Indian Country and exposed me to the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. I learned about being Potawatomi and how to respect Native American culture. She taught me to be proud that I am a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. I was blessed to be raised by such a strong Potawatomi woman.

## GROUP PROJECT

For my project I was partnered with Blake Collins of Boise, Idaho. We were matched based on common interests and comradery. We instantly decided we wanted to work on a project to help people, but was unsure of which direction to pursue. During our brainstorm session, the ideas of creating a rewards system for Firelake Discount Foods grocery store and expanding our health system to include a twenty-four hour emergency room with a birthing center were tossed around. We eventually narrowed our idea to creating a fuel rewards system. Based on the amount of money spent in the grocery store, the customer would receive discounted prices of fuel at the gas stations. We researched how other stores were running their fuel rewards program and met with Richard Driskell, the FireLake Discount Foods Director. Unfortunately, we were just months too late because the program was already in motion and is set to debut in about a month.

We then readjusted our project during the fourth week of the program to an idea that was suggested by Mr. Richard Driskell. Respecting and protecting the environment is important to the Potawatomi people. Efforts to begin a green movement have been set in motion by placing small recycling bins around tribal complexes and the tribe hosting "Cleanup Day" on Earth Day.

Our project is a proposal to expand the green movement and create large recycling drop sites for not just Citizen Potawatomi Nation, but all surrounding communities. The main site would be housed at the Department of Environmental Protection, who would manage the program. Two more large sites at Firelake Discount Foods and The Grand complex would be used to gather paper, cardboard, aluminum, plastic, and electronics from citizens of the surrounding communities. The cost of the program would include the recycling containers, fuel for the gathering of the materials from the disposal containers, and either a small increase in salary of one of the existing environmental employees or a new part time employee. The cost would be below ten thousand dollars. Advertising the program through the Public Information department would be ideal. Advertisement around our enterprises and a small outreach into the surrounding communities would be sufficient enough to start the improved program.

Recycling is not only morally satisfying, but also has an economic impact. Many different companies pay for recyclables. Electronics and cellular phones are a hot commodity in the recycling world paying as much as fifty dollars for select cell phones. Firelake Discount Foods also sells their cardboard to a company and makes a profit. While recycling will not create a new enterprise and is not expected to make tons of profit, it will create some revenue for the tribe. This program is not intended to make the tribe tremendous amounts of financial gain. It is more important to protect and preserve the environment, but making money doesn't hurt.

I come from a small, rural Oklahoma town where recycling is almost non-existent. When I arrived for my stay here with the tribe, I was not used to recycling, nor cared about it. While here I learned about how it is the duty and responsibility of the Potawatomi people to preserve and protect the environment for the future generations to come. By opening these recycling drop stations, it gives the communities the opportunity to understand the importance of recycling and participate without any expense to them. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation is a lighthouse for the surrounding communities and municipalities. We are the ones who blaze the path for others to follow and by creating this program we are setting the standard for others. Chairman Barrett says, "We all live in the county together and CPN has the ability to provide the service that our members and

neighbors will benefit from." I believe what Chairman Barrett believes; if we have the resources to benefit the people of this area, we need to do it.

The Potawatomi Recycling Program will create a safer and cleaner environment for not only right now, but also the future. "Recycling Today for a Better Tomorrow" is our slogan and represents what our program is about entirely. It is the responsibility of our generation, the Seventh Fire, to preserve and share our culture with others. Our program is helping keeping the idea of thinking seven generations ahead and preparing the world for them.

## FINAL REFLECTION

Coming into the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I was not sure what to expect. I was excited to participate in my very first internship and learn more about my culture, but I was also hesitant about the others that I would be living with and what we were going to be doing for six weeks. I had very mixed emotions leading up to the PLP. Once I entered the Sharp House and met the Housemother, Margaret Zientek, and the other students, I knew this is exactly what I was supposed to do with my summer.

The first weekend we were here, we spent it getting to know each other and instantly became family. We all learned the unique qualities and quirks of each other. I remember the first shopping trip we had as a group at Firelake Discount Foods grocery store. We literally had five carts full of food. We have made many memories with each other that will last a lifetime, and I can honestly call all my fellow PLPs family.

The annual Citizen Potawatomi Nation Family Reunion Festival was a big highlight of my summer. I have attended the Festival many times before with my family, but getting to experience it with other Potawatomi people my age was very fun. We participated in the Hand Games as a PLP group. We adopted the slogan "Going to Montana!" as our motto. The reasoning behind the slogan is because during our first day of the internship we participated in New Hire Orientation and watched a motivational video of a fish market that embraced having fun at work and received national recognition due to their up spirit service. They would throw fish through the air and yell the phrase, "Going to Montana!" We decided we wanted to emulate their spirit and hard work, so we adopted their phrase. Even though we did not do as well as we wanted to in the Hand Games competition, we enjoyed ourselves and had a great time. Grand Entry to the powwow was also a very wonderful experience. Being involved with the dancing was very fun, and I look forward to coming back to festival to dance in the powwow again.

One of my favorite departments to visit during my stay here was Engineering, Roads, and Bridges. I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Art Muller, the engineer of the department, the second week of the program. He gave us a brief synopsis of what his duties are and how his job impacts the tribe. I am currently studying civil engineering at The University of Oklahoma. Civil engineering designs and creates better, more efficient infrastructure, and I was ecstatic to learn that I could possibly come back to the tribe for my career. I was also fortunate enough to shadow Mr. Muller. I met with him in his office, and we talked about past projects that he had completed and upcoming projects for the future. We discussed how he had been involved with the design and construction of the new roads of Iron Horse Industrial Park; we also discussed the plans of the tribe to widen Hardesty Road to make it more accessible to large semi-trucks coming to and from Iron Horse. Mr. Muller is a very interesting man, and I appreciated all the time that I got to spend with him.

Another part of the program that I enjoyed was getting to play stickball. It is a very intense and enjoyable sport. I have played stickball before with my Muscogee (Creek) friends, but it was a very fun to play with other Potawatomi people. The most memorable part of the game is when I knocked out our counselor's, Isaac Morris, front tooth with my sticks. He had the ball, and I went to guard him. He spun, and I put up my sticks to keep him from shooting and hit him square in the mouth. He instantly spit out his tooth. I felt very bad that I caused physical harm to him in a friendly game of stickball. He understood the risks of the game, though, and kept playing. He is a very tough man, and I am proud to call him one of my Potawatomi brothers.

This program has been very influential to understanding what it means to be Potawatomi to me. We are leaders, visionaries, and stewards. We lead by example; not just for our own people, but for all people. We are not selfish. We take care of all people and the environment. Being able to visit all the departments of the tribe and learn how they all work together to make this nation great has been an amazing opportunity. I would recommend taking part in this program to all Citizen Potawatomi youth to learn about your tribe and culture. I am very thankful and blessed to have had the opportunity to participate in this program. I am proud to call myself a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.



Andrew Kietzman

## ELDER INTERVIEW

Prior to interviewing my father, I had not known much about his experiences with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. In fact, I learned that his experiences with the Nation are limited, but he did say how he has kept up with tribal politics and business, always reads his copy of the HowNikan, and has communicated with our district representative, Bob Whistler, through email. However, my father mentioned that he has never participated in any of the tribe's cultural activities, such as the Family Reunion Festival, until this summer.

When I spoke with my father, he talked about how he had not been taught much about the Potawatomi culture when he was younger. To explain this, he referenced his great-grandmother, Agnes Louraine. When she was younger, Agnes' Potawatomi heritage and culture was repressed by her teachers, and she was subject to racism and prejudice from others. Her experiences were passed down to the following generations, and they were discouraged from associating with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

Hearing about these experiences was eye-opening to me. I had not known about the prejudices that Agnes faced in her daily life, and did not think about how those experiences may affect the next generations. From what I have gathered, these experiences were common among Natives, and have had similar effects on countless others. Even as society becomes more progressive, there still exists prejudice and racism towards Native people. That being said, I feel that these past experiences should not discourage modern Natives from participating in their tribal cultures.

During the interview, my father also shared a belief that people should participate in their Native culture and be proud of their heritage. He said that he is proud to say that he is Potawatomi, that he is proud of how far the tribe has come, and that he is proud of how the tribe is growing and acting to benefit its future. I personally find his pride in his heritage to be admirable, especially in the face of adversity and the historical experiences of Natives.

I feel that all of us must learn from the experiences of our ancestors, and rather than deny or ignore our heritage, we must seek it out and keep it alive. Even through admittance of our heritage, simply taking pride in who we are and where we have come from, empowers us; acknowledging our heritage is the first step in keeping it alive, and is something all tribal members must do.

## GROUP PROJECT

Our group's project revolves around controlling the local mosquito population through means that are more ecologically sound and less invasive than fogging. After arriving at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation headquarters, Tyler and I noticed that the local mosquito population is high, and that the Tribe's current approach to the problem is the use of fogging. My partner for this project, Tyler Kline, and I thought it would be beneficial to the health of the environment and to the health of those who work and live near tribal headquarters if there was a less harmful way to deal with the mosquitoes.

After deciding that we want to find a better solution to controlling the mosquito population, we noticed that the local ponds have a large amount of algae on the surface that reduces the amount of movement in the ponds, creating the ideal environment for mosquitoes to lay eggs in. We decided that instead of using pesticides to kill the mosquitoes, actions should be taken to reduce the amount of algae in the ponds. Not only would this act as a more ecologically friendly and healthier approach, but it would address the problem at its source and help keep the ponds looking clean and pleasant as a result. After further discussion, we also recognized that keeping the mosquito population under control and making the lakes a more pleasant environment could be used to the Tribe's advantage in attracting tourism, especially if the Tribe is interested in a potential fishing enterprise.

Once we decided on our goal and considered the benefits of taking action, we decided to do research on the best eco-friendly ways to reduce the amount of algae in the ponds and control the mosquito population. In our research, the two best options that we came across were the use of plants for filtration and repelling mosquitoes, and the use of fish to eat algae. When considering the plants and fish that could be potentially integrated into the ponds, we took into account the size and conditions of the ponds as well as what is commonly found in other ponds and lakes in Oklahoma. For plants, we found that barley straw and sweet grass make excellent plants for filtering the algae from the pond water, and that the citronella plant functions as a natural mosquito repellent. For fish, we found that buffalo fish, flathead minnows, orange spotted sunfish, brook silversides, and mosquito fish are all viable kinds of fish for tribally owned ponds that would help to reduce the amount of algae and to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.

While we want the Tribe to consider using environmentally friendly methods to control the mosquito population, we also had to recognize the benefits and drawbacks to each method of mosquito control. For example, fogging is a relatively quick fix to the problem, but does not address the problem at its roots and is not environmentally friendly. Conversely, stocking the ponds with fish or plants to control the mosquito population is environmentally friendly, but takes a longer time to take effect and requires maintenance. Despite our desires to see the Tribe use fish and plants to keep the mosquito count in check, we cannot ignore that fogging is still a valid and effective option. Ultimately, we decided that the best approach is to use a combination of plants and fish in the ponds to keep the mosquito population under control.

Before this project I had not thought about eco-friendly ways to control the mosquito population. However, I am glad that I was able to research and propose new solutions. I have never been one to do much environmental research or to study the effects of plants and animals in an ecosystem, but this project has both provided a way for me to become involved in my tribe and to troubleshoot a problem I had never considered previously.

## FINAL REFLECTION

When I first arrived at the Sharp House to begin the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I was nervous and unsure of what to expect. I only had a vague idea of what the program might consist of: learning about the tribe and its entities, and how they operate. I was unfamiliar with the various businesses and branches of the tribe. Having gone through the PLP, however, I can say that my knowledge of the tribe has changed drastically. I have been learning pieces of the Potawatomi language and culture, which is something that I had never had much knowledge of or the opportunity to learn about before the program. I have gotten to see many of the tribe's entities first-hand and see all that the tribe is doing as a business, as a government, and as a family.

One of the highlights of my time at the Citizen Potawatomi headquarters is learning the Potawatomi language and culture. Over these six weeks, I have had the opportunity to study the language, learn the history and ways of the tribe through cultural teachings, and participate in cultural events. Of all of the culture-oriented experiences during my time at tribal lands, the Family Reunion Festival has been my favorite. Before I came to Oklahoma this summer, I had never been to the Festival, or even a powwow of any kind. Seeing many people gathering together to celebrate and socialize was a moving experience, and was a major event in shaping how I feel a connection to the tribe. During the Festival, I also met with my parent and my brothers. I was glad that we were all able to experience our first Family Reunion Festival together, and that I was able to help introduce them to some of the Potawatomi culture. During the Festival, I also assisted with a class teaching people how to make moccasins. I had only learned how to make moccasins a few days earlier, but being able to work with others and teach a very tangible part of the Potawatomi culture and history helped me to understand the duty and necessity to carry and share the culture with others. The entire Family Reunion Festival experience was a major component in helping me to understand the importance of keeping the Potawatomi culture alive, allowing me to experience teaching as well as being taught. I feel very blessed to be able to experience both teaching the culture and being taught the culture at the same time.

When I came to the Citizen Potawatomi Nation headquarters, I had doubts that any of the tribe's business enterprises would be relevant to my interests. I remember feeling a bit out of place in the beginning as an audio engineering major, feeling like none of the tribe's entities would be relatable to my area of focus. When I was visiting the different departments owned by the tribe, however, those doubts and concerns gave way to different thoughts and feelings. I saw that the tribe has departments where my interests in technology and art are relevant, such as the IT department and the department of Public Information. I also took into account that what I am currently studying does not have to reflect the different enterprises and branches of the tribe, and that I can still become involved. Once I had stopped concerning myself with whether or not tribal departments fit my major, I found myself getting more out of visiting the different departments, and I found myself interested in potentially becoming involved in departments outside of my area of study. I feel that this outlook was crucial to my enjoyment of the PLP and allowed me to approach different departments with an open mind and genuine interest.

I am especially grateful for this program because without it I may have never gotten an opportunity to learn about the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's business and culture in a personal way. I was not taught much about the tribe or its culture growing up because my family has not known much about the tribe themselves. As a result, I was both eager and uneasy to learn about the tribe. On one hand, I was excited to learn about a part

of my ancestors' culture and to be able to share in those traditions; on the other hand, the culture and its teachings felt very foreign, and I had a difficult time identifying with the culture and accepting it as a history that I am connected to. During my time here, however, I have begun to change how I view the Potawatomi culture and how I relate to it. I have come to see that, even though I have not been raised with the Potawatomi culture, I can still identify to it through my ancestry. While it is not the same kind of connection as someone who has been taught since childhood, my connection to the Potawatomi culture is still genuine through my desire to learn and participate in it.

Overall, I am both extremely glad and grateful that I was able to be a part of the Potawatomi Leadership Program. I feel that the connections I have made, both with other PLP participants and with other members of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, will prove to be lasting and valuable. While I was nervous and unsure of what to expect from the program in the beginning, I can genuinely say that my initial doubts and fears were put at ease as the program continued. Now that I have gone through the program, I will return home with new knowledge and a new perspective that I can share with my family and others. Hopefully, in the near future, my younger brothers will be participating in the Potawatomi Leadership Program and learning about their tribe.

Blake Collins



## ELDER INTERVIEW

I interviewed my grandmother, Shirley Bonde, for my elder interview. My mother has taught me about the benefits I receive from the tribe. One benefit I have been blessed to receive is a scholarship for school that I receive from the tribe each semester. However, since I am a Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal member in Boise, Idaho, it is difficult for me to learn much else about my tribe. My grandmother doesn't know much about the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, but she is the only one in my life that has taught me about the tribe other than the benefits I can receive, and I am very thankful for her.

The tribe is more to my grandma than benefits. When I asked her what it means to her to be a part of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she said, "Proud." She then went on to say the tribe overcame many hardships, like the Trail of Death and America breaking its treaties with them. She also mentioned that the tribe isn't a big fan of war and conflict. Using what I have learned in the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I was able to share more information with her, which is amazing. I told her that we were the first tribe to become American citizens, and I also explained how the tribe is making so much money from its grocery store that the City of Shawnee wants to be able to collect taxes from it. Many tribal members believe that this conflict is coming from racism. It excited my grandma and me that I was able to enlighten her on the tribe that she has been a proud member of her entire life.

My interview with my grandma was short, but I feel like I gained a lot from it. I realized there is so much I can take from this amazing opportunity. My grandma always talked to me about how great our tribe is for the city of Shawnee, Oklahoma, but other than the big casino that my grandma always talked about, I never understood what made this tribe so great for the surrounding community. Since being in the PLP, I've begun to understand her claim better. The fact that this tribe is creating 7 out of 10 available jobs for the city of Shawnee is incredible. They also provide policemen for the city of Tecumseh without charging the city. I realize that part of my purpose of being here is to be able to take this kind of information home to my family.

The last thing my grandmother said was that the tribe really cares about its members, and I believe that is true. Many tribes require you to prove blood quantum so that they can determine how much benefits they give you. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation does not do that, and they provide more benefits than many tribes. My grandmother loves this tribe that she is a part of, and so do I.

## GROUP PROJECT

For the Potawatomi Leadership Program this year, we split up into groups of two in order to do our projects. My partner is Andrew Banta. He lives in Okemah, Oklahoma, and he is attending the University of Oklahoma. I am attending Boise State University. Andrew and I both share a passion for sports. We instantly became friends when I brought up the 2007 Fiesta Bowl when Boise State's football team upset the powerhouse of the University of Oklahoma. Adrian Peterson, professional football player and Oklahoma running back, only rushed for 77 yards that game.

My partner and I initially decided that we wanted to create a rewards program at the FireLake Discount Foods grocery store in order to ultimately increase profit. We also hoped that this would decrease the number of customers going to Wal-Mart and using their price matches instead of shopping at FireLake. There is also a lot of conflict because the city wants to collect taxes from the grocery store, and if we can make the people happier about shopping here, then maybe we can decrease some of that hostility. We decided to design a gas rewards program very similar to the one that Reasor's, a local grocery store, offers. When a customer spends 50 dollars at the grocery store, they would be able to use their receipt at the gas station and get five cents off of each gallon. Gas is a huge expense, so people will take the extra effort to save money on it. We also had an idea to sell reusable bags and give the customer a discount each time they use their bag. This would also make customers happy and hopefully increase profit.

When we met with the director of the store, Richard Driskell, we found out that they were already getting started with implementing the exact same rewards program that we wanted to pitch! We decided that the reusable bags idea wasn't enough to pitch alone. Mr. Driskell helped us by giving us a new idea that would make people think better of the tribe that was similar to the reusable bags idea. We already have recycle bins inside the departments, but we want more. Many times people won't go out of their way in order to recycle, but the more recycle bins that are available, the more likely they will be to make the effort. We also propose placing big recycle bins outside of big businesses like the grocery store and the casinos. In addition, we also want even bigger bins at the Department of Environmental Protection for people to drop off more items. People would be able to drop off electronics such as phones and phone accessories, computers and computer accessories, batteries and other electronics that are better off recycled. These things do horrible things for the environment when they aren't disposed of properly. We want them to have separate bins because they can be sold for a profit. We also want to have a bin for tires and Styrofoam.

We are not expecting to make huge financial gains off of this endeavor. However, if the tribe promotes going green enough, we could get a lot of recycled phones and computers and make a small profit off of it. Our tribe is already doing so much to help the environment of the world we live in, but we can always do more. We need to market going green to our people and inspire everyone to do their part. The easier the tribe makes it for its employees, customers and tribal members to recycle, the more people will.

## FINAL REFLECTION

I was blessed to be chosen as one of this year's PLP's, which stands for Potawatomi Leadership Program. I was chosen partially because of my grades; I received all A's and one B in my first semester of college, and I'm not used to getting good grades because in high school all I cared about was wrestling. I wrestled last year in college, but God changed my heart real quick, and my focus on wrestling shifted to focus on my schooling. The fact that wrestling is a lot of work might have had something to do with it as well. I love to push myself, and now I want to push myself in school. Every summer since freshman year, I have spent at wrestling camps and tournaments, and school has always been the last thing on my mind. Last summer was my first summer outside of high school and I didn't plan on going to college. I worked in Fairbanks, Alaska for a contracting company at a gold mine called, Fort Knox. I loved standing out as one of the hardest workers, but I didn't like the grunt work that I was doing. I saw a future there, but I wasn't interested in it. I didn't feel like I had a purpose there other than making money. That's when I decided to go to college, and I'm glad I did! That decision led to my experience this summer as a PLP, where I continued to push myself and learn about who I am and what I want to do with my life.

This program has pushed me to constantly be busy, and I'm so thankful for it. We visited with just about every department of the tribe during the days and had talking circles, cultural teachings, and pow-wows in the evenings. I would have never gotten to experience any of these things at home working all summer. I may not have made as much money either because I didn't have to spend any money while being here. The tribe took care of all of my needs. I even got glasses during my stay here!

I was able to hear from people with just about every career: bankers, police officers, teachers, legislators, lawyers, store directors, social workers and much more. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation does so much for its tribal members and even other tribal members. They offer daycare for all ages, they offer school supplies and even clothes, means of transportation to work, housing, medical care and much more. My mom and grandmother have always talked to me about what great things our tribe is doing for its members and the city of Shawnee, but I never really understood the extent of it until now. This tribe is so much more than a big casino and grocery store.

I was particularly amazed by the Environmental Department. The tribe promotes recycling, which seems like it can be difficult here in rural Oklahoma. They also want to be treated as their own state when it comes to dealing with river water and other environmental responsibilities. I was surprised because normally when there is a problem the tribe calls the state and they take care of it, but this would give the tribe more responsibilities. They think they can do a better job than the state can, and I wouldn't doubt it. I also loved the Employment and Training Department. They help people get jobs and so much more than that. They provide access to transportation, air conditioners, school supplies, and children's clothes. They help provide people with the means to achieve their dreams, whatever that may be. I am able to receive money for school from this department along with the scholarship I receive from Tribal Rolls. I loved the P.L.A.C.E, which stands for Potawatomi Learning and Cultural Exchange. They, along with the Child Development Center, provide education on top of these kids' schooling. They also provide services during the summer, so parents that work during the day can take their children to these places for cheap, and depending on their salary, it can even be free for Native children. They

also provide transportation after school. Every child can benefit from this. They can make friends with kids that go to different schools, understand Potawatomi culture and language, and learn more on top of their education.

I helped coach a middle school wrestling team last year, and I absolutely loved it. I plan on helping coach every year that I can. This program has helped me make the decision to further my education and teach middle school rather than elementary students. I previously wanted to teach elementary because it is less schooling, but now I know that I want to get my Master's degree and teach middle school. I will then be able to coach wrestling, which will be a blast and allow me to run the practice the way I want. This summer, I have realized that I shouldn't sell myself short and teach elementary just because I know it will be easier.

I will never forget the experiences I had this summer. I can't wait to teach my family as much of the language as I can and make an effort to use those words with them as much as possible, like saying migwetch rather than thank you. I look forward to bringing everything that I have learned home with me and letting my mom and grandma know what great things this tribe is doing more specifically than just having a big casino.



Heath Steward

## ELDER INTERVIEW

For my elder interview I decided to interview Mrs. Capps, the Vice-Chairman of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. From this interview, I gained a glimpse of the challenges that the tribe has faced as a whole and as individuals over the past few decades.

When I asked Mrs. Capps about the most important event in recent history for the tribe she responded, "The Self-Governance compact with the BIA." When tribal authorities elected to go to self-governance, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation gained control over its own decisions rather than leaving that power to the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Indian Health Service, which was a major turning point in establishing a precedent of economic and political growth. This transfer of power was essential because it seemed that the state and federal governments just didn't set the problems that Indian tribes were facing at a high level of priority, and furthermore it was difficult for these governmental bodies to see the unique conflicts and needs of each Native American nation.

Another thing that Mrs. Capps said was, "Culturally, unless a person was raised in a true Native American home, they did not learn much about their culture." When she was growing up, "tribal members did not openly speak about their heritage". The social atmosphere present was not one that embraced the cultural and social aspects of Native American life. Hearing about that sort of social attitude towards diversity is a difficult thing for me to really understand considering that the era that I was raised in seemed to focus on embracing and honoring the differences amongst the American people.

In retrospect, I am very appreciative of the changes that have emerged since Mrs. Capps was my age. It is difficult for me to imagine these issues because they are not really something that I have really faced throughout my lifetime. These concepts and stories seem to go against many pillars of the current American perspective. One would figure that Federalism and the appropriate delegation of jurisdiction was an important concept to the American people and yet there is this period of time where tribes were not able to effectively govern their territories and their people due to the power that the state and federal government had over these areas. Another idea that emerged as I read and thought about Mrs. Capps's responses was that an important aspect of American culture is the acknowledgement and the honoring of different cultural themes present throughout the nation, and yet you have this period of time where Native culture isn't necessarily acknowledged and definitely not honored.

I'm glad that I can look back at the history of the tribe and see this growth and this change. The world, or at least my world which I perceive, would be very different had these changes not been implemented. Had those individuals who established our new political practices and economic strategies not made those decisions I don't think I would be sitting here today, writing this Potawatomi Leadership Program essay. A lot of hard work has gone into getting the tribe to the position which it is in today. I can only be thankful for each individual who has had their hand in making this nation great- people like our current government officials and simply those tribal members who helped it all happen.

## GROUP PROJECT

For our project, my partner, Alexis Riner, and I developed a proposal for a water collection system that ensures that the rainwater that falls on the roof of the FireLake Grand Casino does not go to waste. This system consists of a common gutter with a metal mesh to prevent large contaminants. The gutter then runs to an intermediate storage vessel before going to the water treatment plant that is very close to the casino.

Water prices are continuously increasing, so finding a way to either cut costs or increase supply of potable water will soon become a challenge that civic planners face around the nation and the world. The implementation of this project will certainly not be a perfect solution to water problems. However, supplementing the water supply in any way possible is a good thing to consider at the least. While humans can survive without a lot of amenities that has become a part of our lives, water is one thing which we simply cannot do without.

The reason we selected this project is that it would increase the efficiency of the local water system. By preventing this water from running off into the ground, the precious resource is not wasted. The tribe has been focusing on efficiency and sustainability, but I have noticed that the main focus on these programs have been on electrical efficiency, such as the geothermal programs that the tribe has utilized in various areas. While it is good to increase the tribe's electrical efficiency, I noticed that there weren't any observable attempts to help with the local water supply. This project was chosen to help fill that gap and reduce the load that this particular structure had on the local water grid. The Grand Casino was the selected building for implementation due the large area of its roof, which allows for a large amount of water to be collected, and for its position near a water treatment plant. This plan would reduce the amount of water purchased by the tribe from other water systems and at the very least reduce the costs associated with running the water wells that supply this water treatment plant.

The execution of the idea is where we ran into a bit of difficulty. My partner and I realized very early on in the planning phase of our project that neither of us had a degree of engineering. Due to this simple lack of expertise we were very limited in how exactly we could anticipate the details and specifics of the plan. For this reason the next essential step in the implementation of the project is to consult with an engineer to assess the general viability of the project and from there, assuming that the project is considered an economically viable investment, to design a structural plan to implement the idea.

This plan, if implemented, would allow the tribe to better sustain itself. It would also reduce the cost associated with running the complicated infrastructure that is the Rural Water District 3. My partner and I found that the project would, according to the measurements provided by Bill Smith, the director of the tribe's construction department, return between 400 to 900 dollars each year in water. The amount of money saved by this system would vary depending on rainfall amounts, and the cost of treating the water has not been taken into account. If this system works well at the Grand Casino, then we may consider adding the system to other buildings around these water treatment centers to further conserve tribal funds. Running a complex water infrastructure is no cheap task, but hopefully, this project will help alleviate these costs to some degree.

## FINAL REFLECTION

When I first came to the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I had very little knowledge about the tribe. I didn't know that the tribe owned multiple business ventures. I didn't know that the tribe had a similar governmental structure as the federal government. I didn't know a single bit of the language or the culture. The PLP program has ended an 18-year-long period of ignorance and provided an effective means of establishing connections with the tribe, on both a professional and cultural level.

I am glad that I decided to spend my summer out here in Shawnee. After having spoken with all of the different directors and seeing all of the different enterprises, I certainly have a fuller understanding of how the tribe functions on a day-to-day level. It was very surprising to see that the tribe had some similarities to the federal government. The first time these similarities really set in was when the PLP met with the environmental and engineering departments. When I heard that it was their responsibility to issue permits and handle water pollution situations: I just sat back in my seat and thought, "This place is a whole lot more complex than I imagined."

That was certainly not the only time I had an epiphany about the tribe's complexity. As I shook hands with each new director, I was able to expand my understanding of the tribe's operations. I felt honored to have all of these busy people delegate their time to show us what their department was all about. And that was another thing that surprised me: how hard all of these people were working. Everyone seemed buzzing with all of their departmental duties, and yet they still had time to give to us. Their level of dedication was something that I admired.

The cultural aspects of the program have also been significantly impactful. I thoroughly enjoyed Justin Neely's stories. It made me smile when he would really get into it and mimic the blind man going out to the creek to fetch water for his blind wife. Hearing these stories was very important to me. When the Chairman was giving us his rendition of the short version of the creation story, I began to ponder about the importance of these tales to both the Potawatomi people of today and those who have walked on this Earth before me. Not only were these stories fun ways to pass the time, these tales were indicative of how they viewed the complex world. Hearing Justin talk about Animate and Inanimate things in our language session was a good way to start to put into perspective the methods of thought among our ancestors.

This experience has not only opened my eyes to the complexities of Potawatomi culture, but it has also sparked an interest in the customs of the other tribes as well. The PLP visited the Chickasaw Cultural Center and I was able to draw conclusions about the similarities and the differences between that tribe and ours. I saw the fishing baskets that our Housemother, Margaret Zientek, described. I was able to see the methods that were used when preparing a dugout canoe. These similarities made me think about how ideas spread throughout the different tribes long ago. That discussion is far from over, and I'm sure that as time progresses I will learn more about the mixing of customs and ideas that occurred before colonization.

It's easy in the fast-paced world of today to be distracted by work, school, or other obligations and miss out on these customs and ideas that I have learned about in this program. But from the time I have spent at the eagle aviary, in the sweat lodge, and with the elders who have imparted the traditional stories of the Potawatomi people, I know that slowing down and taking in these practices is well worth it. Hearing these stories and

learning about the cultural beliefs of the tribe is only the beginning. I know that my time here at this program was just the tip of the iceberg in relation to all of the stories and traditions which I have yet to experience.

As to the future, this program has made me reconsider my plans as I am setting off for college for my first year. I thought I had it all figured out--I was going to major in chemistry and go into research. But now I really don't know where I am going to end up. I guess you could say that the PLP has opened my eyes to all of the possibilities that there are after college. I'm sure that by the time I'm leaving the University of Oklahoma that the tribe will be even larger than it is now, and there will be even more departments and even more possibilities. Who knows what the tribe will need then, but now I know that there are so many ways that I can come back and help the nation in this process of growth. Maybe a few years down the road I will be meeting with a new group of PLP students as they begin to consider their mark on both the world and the tribe.

Being a PLP has opened a lot of doors. It is still strange to think that all of these things have been going on around me my entire life--the powwows, the naming ceremonies, the Festival--and yet I have never really known about it until this summer. I'm very appreciative of my time here. I have been given a unique opportunity to come and experience these things first hand. There is nothing quite like that, and for this I am thankful.

Ivory Hanson



## ELDER INTERVIEW

In our history, stories and traditions have always been passed down by elders. Elders are the ones who teach us our heritage and our culture. In the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and many other cultures, elders are highly respected and revered, so when we got the chance to interview an elder in the tribe, it was a good chance for all of us Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP) to learn from people who have been around the tribe a lot longer than we have. For my interview I chose to interview my grandmother, Christina Pauley, because she is an important person in my life and someone I look up to greatly.

The first question I asked her was one of the first questions I got asked when I started my journey as a PLP: *What does being part of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation mean to you?* My grandmother replied, "For me it is identifying with part of my heritage. I feel that Native American heritage in America has been basically ignored." I agree with her; Native American culture is often overlooked by many Americans or just not respected. I think that is why the PLP program is so important because it is teaching younger people the importance of being Native and not forgetting our traditions and culture.

Then, I asked my grandmother about her experiences being Native American. *Have you ever experienced discrimination because you are Native?* "Since I don't look Native, there has been no discrimination unless I tell others that I am Native. Most of the time the response has been positive, but at times there is silence." *When you were a child, were you taught Native traditions and culture?* "No, in fact I didn't realize I was Potawatomi until I was grown with children." *Has your Native identity grown or changed as your life has progressed?* "My Native identity has grown through the years. First, I researched and gained knowledge, then I began coming to the meeting/Pow Wows/Family Reunion Festivals and started identifying more. Since I don't know anyone outside my immediate family I haven't grown as much as I would like." *What are some important moments in your life that have defined and helped you learn about your Native identity?* "As I said earlier, the meeting/PowWows/Family Reunion Festivals have helped define my Native identity. I have researched and read a few books. I'm interested in learning what crafts/traditions are truly ours. I haven't found a good source. I've tried participating in language activities, but at 70 they are hard. I have been thrilled that my granddaughter, Ivory, has become an intern. I'm hoping that will help me learn more." In my opinion, this set of question and answers show how much of our culture as Native Americans we lost when there was so much discrimination and hatred toward Native Tribes. My grandmother did not directly face discrimination in her day to day life, but at the same time, she did because she was cut off from her culture to the point she didn't know anything about it until she was a full grown adult. I think this shows why the younger generations have such a hard time connecting with their culture because we have been so far removed from it for so long.

Being close to where the tribe is located makes it much easier to feel connected to the tribe. My grandmother lives in Newton, Iowa, so I asked her if she feels she can still make an impact in the tribe. "I vote in every election. I stay interested. I read the How Ni Kan. I attend the Family Reunion Festival when possible. I tell people in Iowa who will listen about our tribe. Do I make an impact? Probably in small ways. I would like to be involved more, but don't know how." Listening to my grandmother's answer to this question, it made me realize other tribal members who don't live in Oklahoma probably have feelings very similar to this; they want to be involved but don't know how. I don't have an answer to this problem right now, but I think this issue is a good one to keep working at. I think the more we are able to make our own tribal members feel like they are part of the tribe, the bigger impact we will have as a nation.

When I first received the assignment to interview an elder, I didn't really think I would get much from it. I thought I would just hear a couple stories and then write them down. After having this interview with my grandmother, I feel differently. It made me think deeper than I usually do about the difficulties we face as a tribe, whether it is our loss of culture or not feeling a part of the tribe. I think it is important to sit down and talk to our elders and learn from them; they are able to teach us a great deal.

## GROUP PROJECT

This summer I worked on the Potawatomi Leadership Program project with Natalia Anglin. Our final project ended up being a cultural workbook that we will be able to send out to tribal members all around the world.

Working with Natalia was a lot of fun. We have a lot of common interest and goals, and we wanted to go the same direction with our project. We started by brainstorming our strengths and our interests. We discovered quickly that both of us wanted to help people learn about our culture and relate more with the tribe. Our idea at first was to create a camp curriculum for youth here in Oklahoma that could also be sent to other districts to educate tribal members. We sent out a survey via Survey Monkey to all of the legislators to get their input on the camp idea. Using our survey results as a foundation, we decided that we wanted to include language, history, traditions, crafts, etc. However, we realized that it's not feasible to do a camp in the other districts because resources may be limited. In order to do a camp in all of the districts, we would have had to supply materials and teachers, which wasn't something that would be easy for us to do.

After deciding against the camp idea, we changed our project to a cultural workbook. We wanted to make a workbook that would still incorporate the different parts of the camp including: language, history, traditions, and how to relate it back to today. We thought a workbook would be an easy format for us to send to legislators, who would be able to send out to tribal members who wanted it in their districts.

The first section we thought would be important to include is language. I feel like when people want to learn about Potawatomi culture, one of the first things they want to learn is the language. In the workbook, we made sure to include a lot of the basics of the language and little explanations of how the language works. We worked with the Language Director, Justin Neely, for input on this section. Some language things we included were: the explanation of animate and inanimate objects, common greetings, and getting to know someone, just to name a few. Language is often the foundation of a culture, which is why we thought it was important to include it.

The next section we included was history. In the history section, we focused mostly on a couple of different stories. The first story we included was the creation story because that is the story of how people came on this earth. The other stories we included were the seven fires prophecy and the seven grandfather story and teachings. We wanted to focus more on the stories because we feel like they are the basis of our culture and our beliefs. Then, we talked a little about our traditions. The four directions and the four sacred medicines are an important part of our culture, so we made sure to include it in the workbook.

The last section we included was how to relate everything back to today. We believe that a lot of people would like to learn about their culture but have no idea how to incorporate it into their everyday lives. We include discussion topics, mostly to start the conversation. We want our tribal members to start talking about the problems and issues we face today as Native people. We include ideas including the following: what defines being Native, how do you bring traditions into your life today, and Native appropriation.

In the end, we hope that our cultural workbook is a good introduction for people to start learning about the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's history and culture. Our workbook is supposed to be just a beginning introduction to CPN culture so they feel more comfortable going out and learning more on their own.

## FINAL REFLECTION

This summer with the Potawatomi Leadership Program, I have learned and grown a lot as a person. Coming into this summer, I was hoping to learn about my culture, but what I got was so much more. I was greeted with open arms when I first arrived and got to experience a work environment where the people were so much more than coworkers; they were family. I saw how passionate people were about the advancement of the tribe and keeping our culture and traditions alive. I was able to talk to directors from most if not all of the departments we have here at CPN. I got to see the future projects and the direction the tribe is heading. In addition to seeing where the tribe is heading, I got to experience the cultural and traditional history of our people by participating in various ceremonies and taking a language class. I hope to be able to take the things I have learned this summer back home with me to share with my family and to be able to teach other people around me about my culture and history.

The people I have met and interacted with in this program have made the program what it is. The people I have spent the most time with these past six weeks are the other PLP interns. We have had many ups and downs throughout our time here, but each time we seem to be able to settle issues easily and get along with each other really well. At the end of the six weeks, it will be hard to leave the people that I have gotten so close to, but it is comforting to know I have made lifelong friends in this program.

Like I stated earlier, we had the amazing opportunity to meet with directors of all the different departments in the tribe. We learned a lot from each and every one of them and were able to get a glimpse of all the different things the tribe is involved with. Some of the departments that stuck out to me were Indian Child Welfare (ICW), Public Information (PI), Language, Self-Governance, and the youth programs. I am very passionate about helping youth and making sure they have access to a safe environment and a good school. I think for those two reasons I was drawn to ICW and the youth programs because they focus on exactly those points. I like the the P.L.A.C.E. and the Cultural Mentorship Program because they put such an emphasis on education and learning.

As part of the program, we had to do an elder interview. For my elder interview, I chose to interview my grandmother. My grandmother is someone I look up to a lot. She has been a rock in my life that I have been able to rely on throughout everything. As I interviewed her, I learned things about her that I didn't know before. The questions I asked her not only helped me to understand her view on her own Native identity but to think deeper on issues I face in my life today and other people have faced in the past. As I interviewed her, we talked about what it meant to her to be Native, how she incorporates Native culture into her life, and if she has ever faced discrimination in her life. She replied that she has never faced discrimination because she looks Caucasian. Previously, she had stated that she didn't even know she was Native until she was grown with children. This made me think about the different types of discrimination in society. My grandmother didn't face outright discrimination to her face, but I believe she was a victim of discrimination. She was denied the opportunity to grow up in her Native culture, so I believe that is a type of discrimination. I feel that is a common struggle for the Native population because so many of our parents or grandparents grew up in an era where they got beaten for being Native, so they never passed it on to their kids. Since I have been here, I see Native tribes trying to keep an entire culture alive when there was a whole generation that was denied and unable to practice our traditions. One of the reasons I am so interested in learning the culture and language of the CPN is that I don't want it to be forgotten. I don't want to forget who I am, and I want to be able to pass it on to my children and grandchildren when that time comes.

Another one of my favorite parts of my experience came towards the very end in the sixth week when we got to shadow two different departments. I ended up shadowing the Language department and the Public Information department. I enjoyed spending time with both of these departments tremendously. In the Language department, I was able to talk to the people about what they do on a day-to-day basis and some major projects they were working on. One question I was able to ask them, which I thought was important, was why they wanted to work in the language department. I asked three people that question and got three very different answers. The Director, Justin Neely, said he started learning the language when he was eighteen years old. It became a passion of his, and he wanted to share with other people. Ivan Ozbolt, the Language Aid, said he was interested in the preservation of languages, and so he chose to work for a Native American tribe even though he himself is non- Native. Eenedina Banks, the other Language Aid, said she got involved because she wanted to learn the language so that she could pass it on to her kids and keep the culture alive because it is very important to her. I had a lot of fun spending the morning with the Language department and learning from them. In the afternoon, I got the opportunity to shadow the Public Information department. With the PI department, they had me and my partner, Natalia, do a little simulation using our PLP project to see how much work goes into creating the different things they do. We were able to work on different things to improve our PLP project including coming up with quotes we could use, designing a flyer to promote our workbook, and filming a video explaining our workbook a little bit to get people interested in it. Everyone I worked with was a lot of fun and I was able to learn a lot from them.

This PLP program has been an amazing experience, and I am glad I got to be a part of it. When I go home, I will take with me a better understanding of our culture and history, cultural lessons I have learned from different people in the tribe, an understanding of how accomplished CPN is as a nation with all of its different businesses and ventures, and how passionate people are about the tribe. I feel like I will be able to teach my family things they didn't know before to help them feel more connected with the tribe, and I have created a base for myself to be able to go out and learn more about my own history and culture and be able to practice it in my day to day life.

Natalia Anglin



## ELDER INTERVIEW

Marti Boling is an elder of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) tribe. She lives in Topeka, Kansas and has been surrounded by the Prairie Band Potawatomi tribe for most of her life. Marti has very little knowledge of what the CPN does. When asked her take on the two Potawatomi tribes, she answered, "It seems that Prairie Band has a lot more benefits, although maybe if I lived near CPN headquarters I would be receiving more benefits." This is when I revealed to her that many tribes have blood quantum, which means that many tribes are only giving their benefits to the individuals with ¼ blood degrees or more and sometimes have stopped enrolling new members altogether. This shocked her; she didn't understand how someone could be in a tribe but their child could not. Marti is grateful to CPN for getting rid of those barbaric rules.

"Being a part of a tribe is amazing." To Marti, being Native is an honor and a gift that should be cherished. She remembers when she was a young girl that the family would get together at the house of her grandmother, Elizabeth. Marti could always find her grandmother with her sisters in the kitchen speaking Potawatomi, swapping stories the children couldn't understand. All the kids picked up a few words, enough to understand the conversation topic, but they never fully learned the language as it was just not handed down. Marti's mother, Ruby, was sent to boarding school and was beaten for speaking Potawatomi, and it is because of this harsh treatment that no one was taught the language again. Marti does remember the hours her grandmother spent beading, and the times Elizabeth and Ruby would be in the kitchen making corn soup and frybread.

Marti Boling has many siblings, one of whom is Mary Anglin, my mother. Ruby Olson, their mother and my grandmother, was born a Mulanax in 1925. Elizabeth Mulanax was born in 1902 as Elizabeth Levier. Joseph Levier and Martha Battese are Elizabeth's parents, Marti's great grandparents, and my great-great grandparents. These people and traditions are why being CPN is so great. We have the right and the privilege of being a part of a tribe that has existed for thousands of years. Even without meeting most of these people, we can feel a connection over time with each one of them. Marti, who knows very little of the current government working within CPN, still feels the love of the tribe. "When I hear the drums, it stirs something deep inside." Through these long found traditions, Marti will never feel far from the tribe or her ancestors no matter the physical distance.

## GROUP PROJECT

The project that my partner, Ivory Hanson, and I came up with is a cultural workbook. Our project went through several incarnations throughout our time in the Potawatomi Leadership Program. In the beginning, we wanted to create a one-week camp that would include culture teachings, language classes, dance classes, and more, but we soon realized that the project was simply too big for us to take on with the time we had in Oklahoma. Many things had to be tackled and addressed that couldn't be accomplished in such a short period. From there, we tried to create a two-day culture curriculum camp that could be held in every district. I still believe that both of these ideas are great and hope that they can come to fruition in the future, but neither worked for us for one major reason: funding. We did not want to make Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) members pay big amounts of money, as we understood that not everyone can afford to be spending funds in this area. This is how we came to the idea of creating a cultural workbook.

Neither Ivory nor I live in or have ever lived in Oklahoma, so we both knew how little information about or tribe's culture really reaches the outer districts. For me personally, I never really felt connected to the tribe and was a bit intimidated by the website to try and find information, and I felt I didn't really have a place to vote on or contribute to the tribe since I had never been to Shawnee, Oklahoma. I did desire to know more about the tribe and about the language my great-great grandmother spoke. The cultural workbook offers all these things and more to CPN members not only in Oklahoma but all over the world! The only way to strengthen our tribe is by helping one another learn and feel connected to one another.

Once we finally had a project that was not only feasible but also met our desire of spreading the Potawatomi culture and CPN culture to fellow tribal members, everything fell into place. We knew what we wanted to include and who to talk to about getting the content. In the book, we will have four major sections: language, histories (or stories that have been passed down in our tribe for centuries), traditions, and a way for tribal members to incorporate these things in their everyday lives as well. Discussion questions will follow each section. The language department was more than willing to help as they want more tribal members to be able to speak the language; we simply had to pick which conversational Potawatomi phrases we wanted to incorporate. The tribe itself made many of the stories available online or through written text; it was just a matter of collecting them and putting them in one book.

Finally, having a workbook is amazing, but it can't distribute itself. Luckily, the tribe has an amazing Public Information department that was more than willing to meet with us to help come up with ideas of how to get the book out to our members. They suggested we make announcements on social media and in the tribal newspaper, *The Hownikan*, about the workbook saying it would be available for download on the [plp.potawatomi.org](http://plp.potawatomi.org) website and at [potawatomi.org](http://potawatomi.org). Public Information also helped us think of ways to bring tribal members together so that no matter where you are you can discuss the questions brought up with someone else doing the same thing. We hope to create a blog that all tribal members can access, which would be a safe place to open up and talk about the thoughts that were provoked through reading the workbook.

With how big this tribe is, I was honestly a bit shocked at how familial it felt in the workplace. No department was unwilling to work with us, and everyone was so excited to see how the book would turn out. That is the biggest thing I've taken away from this project. This is a big tribe with many employees, but we are all

working towards one goal: spreading the knowledge and traditions of our ancestors. This cultural workbook has the potential to connect one CPN member from Maine to a CPN member in Hawaii. Everyone now has the opportunity to learn more and feel a deeper connection, a stronger connection, to this tribe.

My goal with this project was to be able to help people in my tribe. This workbook does exactly that. By giving people some basic information about our tribe, it will encourage them to seek more information and become an active part in the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. By giving people the tools and ability to learn at their own pace and on their own time, they can hopefully feel empowered by their tribe. My takeaway from the workbook is the fact that we are helping any number of people learn and expand their knowledge.

## FINAL REFLECTION

For the first time in my life I have no idea what to say, which is huge because if you ask anyone who has ever met me, I never shut up. When I first applied to the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I really didn't know what I was signing up for. I knew that I'd finally be learning about the culture and traditions my grandmother was taught to let go and that I'd be giving up a summer in California for a summer in Oklahoma. Ending my time here now, I can say that a summer in Oklahoma was better than any summer I could have had at home in California. Connecting with and meeting fellow Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) members has made a huge impact on how I view the tribe. Before coming here, I knew next to nothing about the tribe I've been a part of my whole life. Leaving now, I am proud to know and say I am a part of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. CPN has shown me that no matter how much or little I know about the tribe, there will always be a place for me.

Six weeks ago, when my mother dropped me off at LAX and drove away, it hit me. I was actually leaving the comfort of my home with my family to go somewhere completely foreign. When I got off my flight in Oklahoma, I thought about hiding and buying a ticket to go straight home. Once I saw my leaders, I knew I couldn't run away; I was here and I was going to do it. To my surprise, Oklahoma wasn't the dry barren land I learned about in U.S. History. The dust bowl was long over, and there was more green grass and trees than I had seen in a long time. Oklahoma City was an actual city with busy streets and skyscrapers--the whole nine yards. CPN was bigger than I'd led myself to believe. I thought that we had maybe three buildings and a small corner store, but no. We own so many businesses and properties; the corner store is by no means small. One of the leaders told us that anything with big letters was ours, which was everything in sight for the most part.

The first week with CPN is a blur of new hire orientation, dentist appointments, and preparing for Festival. One memory that sticks with me is the lunch that the PLP got to share with Vice Chairman Capps. Most tribal members never have the opportunity to meet the Chairman and Vice Chairman, let alone have lunch with one of them. Originally, I thought we would have to act very proper and only speak when spoken to, but that was not the case at all. By the end of the lunch, we were all laughing and sharing little stories with one another. Getting this special time with Vice Chairman Capps showed me how hard she works for everyone in the tribe. She handpicked all of us to be a part of the PLP by reading all of our applications on her own time. This tribe is investing a lot in its youth, which includes those who live in Oklahoma and those who live in every corner of America, and even around the world.

When Festival rolled around, I was surprised to learn that my family, Levier, was one of the families being honored this year. My first Festival experience, and my family was being honored? Naturally, I thought this was one of the greatest things ever. It gave me the opportunity to learn about all the family trees that grew from my great-great-grandparents. I also learned about Francis Levier, who served as one of the legislators for a time. I knew none of this before I came here. I was also surprised to learn that some Leviers had come down to Oklahoma in the Sixties because I was under the impression that we'd all stayed in Kansas near the Reservation my great-grandma had lived on her whole life.

How can I describe Festival in a short section? It's exactly as it's named, a huge Family Reunion Festival. The first morning of Festival, I worked with Mrs. Brenda Tingler to help tribal members make quill earrings. Now, quill earrings are cool, but the thing that I enjoyed most from that morning was seeing the multi-generational

families. My grandma Ruby died before I was born, and my grandfather Ronald died soon after my birth, so I never really got to experience making things with my grandparents. I loved seeing this, how once a year the whole family gets together for a weekend to spend time with one another and experience the customs and traditions their families did years before them.

My favorite part of Festival was being a part of Grand Entry and dancing at the powwow. When I was little, my family would go to inter-tribal powwows in Topeka, Kansas, and my dad would always have to force me to dance around the drums as I was too shy to do it by myself. He would throw me on his shoulders as he bounced around, trying to copy the male dancers who actually knew what they were doing, but also just trying to make laugh. I remembered this as we, the PLP, made our way around the dance circle. My experience was completely different here than when I was a child. I was excited to do the dances we learned earlier in the week from Leslie Deer. It was amazing to go out and have a good time with friends doing dances that have been danced probably a thousand times before.

After many rounds and dances around the drums as the heartbeat of the night, my time fades into the next few weeks in Shawnee. We visited many departments, one of those being Realty. While at Realty, we visited a couple of allotments and learned about feral hogs that are a serious issue in Oklahoma. Feral hogs rub through trees by using them as post to scratch on. Pigs do not have sweat glands all over their body like humans do, and this is why pigs roll around in mud, which is another big issue. Hogs create huge mud holes by trying to cool down; they do this anywhere they can, often ruining crops. I found this interesting because I was unaware of the fact that feral hogs existed, let alone that there are hundreds of them.

One of the next big activities we prepared for, and then took part in, was the sweats. The process for preparing for the sweat required us cut down willow trees, remove the branches, soak them overnight, strip the bark off each tree, plant them in the ground, and finally, bend them into a hut. This process is a lot easier said than done. On the day we wanted to build the sweat, it was raining, which made the ground soft. Soft ground is nice when trying to dig a hole, but then trying to stick a tree in that hole and have it stay is not so nice. We only managed to plant 4 out of the 12 trees needed. Luckily, Burt, the man leading the sweat for us, is a no-nonsense kind of man and knocked out the other 8 trees by himself the day before the sweat. With all the main posts in the ground, we could get to work. As group, we were able to finish the sweat in no time. We worked like a well-oiled machine, each person falling into place as needed and helping one another with each task.

To prepare physically for the sweat, we drank water to an extreme the whole day before. I have never drank so much water in that amount of time in my life, I think I drank 10 bottles of water before our sunset sweat and then another 5 before our sunrise sweat. On a normal day it's amazing if I drink 3 bottles of water. The actual experience of sitting in a sweat is hard to describe to those who've never been in one for themselves. It was an experience that I wouldn't change for anything. The heat and the steam broke me down, in a good way. My mind was clear, and I felt I could connect with God on a level I never even thought possible. I saw the people I love and hold close and prayed harder than I have before for them and for those around me.

Having a sweat halfway through the program helped me to re-center myself at a critical point. I was missing my family and worried about the situations they were facing, but worrying about them wouldn't help in any way. My family is extremely supportive of my choice to come to Shawnee and learn about CPN; they text me constantly asking what I'm up to and what I've learned. I wanted to be able to take all the things I've learned back home and share with them because we are all members of CPN, but with my focus scattered I wasn't learning everything I could. Stressing out about difficulties that were happening thousands of miles away didn't

benefit anyone. Investing and giving everything I could to the program benefited not only me but will also benefit my family when I go home.

In the next couple of weeks, I focused on my project, the cultural workbook. The tribe was giving me so much, so the least I could do was give back in this small way. The workbook took a lot of time and effort, but it was worth it. By creating a basic book of information and discussion questions, I got to learn new things and think about what it all meant to me, which is exactly what my partner and I intended. Knowing this information, I feel closer to my great-grandmother and to the tribe. In the future, I'm excited to learn more and see what I can do to help the tribe.

There is honestly so much more I could say about my time with the Potawatomi Leadership Program, and if this paper could be a million pages long, and if people actual had the time to read it all, I would go on forever. Trying to capture six weeks of cultural information, tribal benefits, departments and enterprises, and all the amazing people we had the opportunity to meet is the hardest part of the whole experience. As cheesy as it is to say, I wouldn't, in all honesty, give up this experience for anything. If I didn't come to Shawnee, I would have wasted my summer sitting on my couch at home watching Netflix and avoiding the outside world. I can't even begin explaining how grateful I am for the tribe and everything they do for not only me or other tribal members but for all those in surrounding communities and other tribes. My summer with CPN was one of growth, understanding, and appreciation.

# Paulina Davison



## ELDER INTERVIEW

Martha Weld grew up in Nicaragua because her father owned a farm there. She knew she was Potawatomi, but she didn't have much interaction with the Nation until later in life. In Nicaragua, she went to school with the diplomat and government official's children. Their playground was across the railroad tracks and the station. She still recalls the distinct sound of the trains starting up, which she demonstrated to me during the interview. One of Martha's favorite dishes is banana pudding as her mother made it, with wafers coating the bottom of a boiler pot. She said it wouldn't last very long at all, only a couple of days, and her mother would ask them why they ate it so quickly. They would jokingly reply, "If it wasn't so good, we wouldn't eat so much of it!" Martha also loved the fresh mangos they would eat and rice and beans. Her mother would make American meals on Sundays, the servants' day off, and those were delicious as well. While explaining this period of her life, Martha educated me about Nicaragua's government and natural disasters. The government was a dictatorship, a father and later son ruler named Chico. The national palace overlooked a lake that had come from a large crater. A volcanic explosion caused the nation to require assistance from medical non-profit organizations, many of which were from the USA. She said that it took a long while for the population to recover, physically and economically.

Martha told me about her personal life, specifically a concussion from a car accident in Texas that affected her ability to communicate and continue working. She said right that after the accident, her aunts brought her to a hospital in Oklahoma City and cared for her throughout her treatment. For the last fourteen years, she hasn't been able to work, and she wishes she still could. We talked about several of her previous jobs. She started as a manager at a microfilm company in Texas. Microfilm was the technology for keeping records of documents at that time. Ink was adhered to a special paper, which made large rolls. When a hurricane came through and one of the military bases flooded, the classified documents were brought to the microfilm company so the rolls could be redone. Later she worked as a notary. Her last job involved checking paperwork to see if it satisfied a given checklist. That was after the car accident, but before she fully understood how it had impacted her. She said that both she and her manager knew that she was unable to satisfy the job requirements. When she received the analysis of her condition, she was happy to understand what had happened to her and be able to explain it to her manager as well.

From the interview and my interactions with Martha, I have observed many of the values of Potawatomi culture. I saw the generosity of one of the brothers in the origin story when she brought me her favorite taco seasoning and photocopies of family documents. She also embodies the curiosity and love of learning that is part of each generation's way of respecting their ancestors, especially when they tell stories. She told me that as a child she wanted to skate down the long, traffic-filled hill near her house on the way to the park, saying "What fun would that have been!" At one of the lunches we hypothesized what ingredients were used in a sweet salad dish that had been served. The perseverance of the Potawatomi people is also present in her life story. With the support of her aunts and family, she survived the concussion from her car accident. Though she wishes she could work, she is living well today and actively participates in Title VI and the community.

## GROUP PROJECT

Our project is to develop a flexible framework that will allow for more efficient processing of HEARTH Act businesses and account for situations that may occur in the future, such as businesses competing for the same lease. The HEARTH Act, which stands for Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership, allows the Citizen Potawatomi Nation to manage its land through leases without requiring approval from the Secretary of the Interior. The Act is relatively new. The Secretary of the Interior signed the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Business Regulations in November 2013, and since then one business, the BDC gunroom, has been leased to and constructed according to the Business Regulations.

We chose this project with guidance from Tesia Zientek. Based on my partner Ross Korzeniewski's interest in economics, she shared information about the HEARTH Act with us and encouraged us to consider the needs that may arise as the use of it increases. I was inspired by the deserved power it gives the Nation as well as the impact it will have for the Nation's economic development and financial prosperity. Tesia provided us with the official documents about the Act and also put us in contact with Charles Meloy at Real Estate, Dr. Jim Collard at Economic Development, and Cindy Logsdon and Bob Crothers at the Community Development Corporation.

After reading the CPN's Business Regulations, it was evident to Ross and I that it is a lengthy process to create and manage leases and that many departments and people are involved. We decided to focus on the part of the process up until the lease is signed because we thought that a lease with all the necessary input and precautions could make for easier management in the long run. We also realized that it would behoove us to read the documents created for the BDC gunroom and to ask the directors what they felt would help them.

When we met with Charles Meloy, we learned that he and the Finance department were the main collaborators for the lease with the BDC gunroom. He made a checklist of provisions and documents needed to create the business lease as well as an exemption checklist for the Environmental Review Process. In the meeting, he explained to us the different land descriptions and told us that his department is constantly trying to acquire land in the original trust land area and restore it to the legal status of being trust land. The required site descriptions described in the HEARTH act are performed for acquired lands in that process. In the case of Iron Horse Industrial Park, Real Estate has performed a site description as a whole that can apply to the individual plots that will be leased. When we discussed with him our desire to improve the process, he told us that it would be beneficial to have some way of making sure that all viewpoints are included and that any developments can be shared more easily between departments.

In our meeting with Dr. Jim Collard, we learned that in his work with Iron Horse he is currently communicating with international businesses in clean energy from Japan, France, and Israel. Once the railroad is finished, negotiations will increase and Real Estate and Finance will get involved. A data center is also planned. Dr. Collard also told us that there are weekly proposals to him and the executive branch from businesses and that he never hesitates to ask questions and request clarification because rock solid investments protect the assets of the nation. When asked what would help him in the HEARTH Act process, he noted that he may need another employee in the economic department if international interest in Iron Horse increases as is expected. We discussed the possibility that companies would compete for the same lease. In that situation, analysis based on the Best Interest of the Nation as defined in the Business Regulations would enable the Economic Department to create a score for each business in conjunction with a written explanation of its strengths, weaknesses, talents,

and threats. The resulting list of businesses would be presented for consideration and decision of the Executive Branch. Dr. Collard also recommended that the process be flexible so that it can adapt to the individual needs of the businesses and not be overbearing for the departments involved.

When we met with Cindy Logsdon and Bob Crothers, we learned that the Community Development Corporation (CDC) has applied for a \$16MM Bond Guarantee Program for enhancing their impact with loaning to Native American entrepreneurs. The HEARTH Act allows them to loan to businesses that are leasing from the Nation and use leasehold mortgages as collateral. We shared with them the checklists that Charles Meloy had made, and they told us that the same provisions and documents needed to create the business lease are needed to approve a loan. Charles Meloy's work demonstrates capacity for the bond application and makes it easier for businesses to be financially supported by the CDC. When asked about the process as a whole, Bob Crothers recommended that we think of it as a cycle and consider that there are multiple points of contact for any business to enter the cycle. On the subject of environmental reviews, they also informed us that a Phase I environmental review — a review of records, site survey, and interviews — can cost around \$3,000 dollars and a Phase II environmental review— sampling and laboratory analysis for contamination—can cost around \$25,000 dollars. While we know that the internal Environment and Engineering Department performs environmental reviews currently, if it ever were to become excessively expensive, the Nation should reserve the right to charge the lessee for the partial or complete cost of the environmental analysis.

From these meetings, Ross and I came up with some techniques that might improve the communication between departments. To make sure each department has input before the lease is signed, there could be a checklist where each department initials that it has seen the documents and comments about them if need be. For a dynamic and quicker interplay between departments, there could be an online platform that allows all of the directors to see the same documents and edit or comment on them. To make sure that all developments are being shared as quickly as possible, there could be an employee that attends department meetings and consolidates the information into a newsletter to send via email to the other departments involved in the process. Such an employee could support not just those involved in the HEARTH Act leases, but other collaborations Nation-wide.

## FINAL REFLECTION

When I applied for the Potawatomi Leadership Program, I fully expected it to be a transformational experience that would reinforce my life-long commitment to honor my Native heritage and contribute to the prosperity of the Nation. It has been that and so much more.

It has added to my worldview and given me a cultural home. Our traditional teachings resonate with me and connect the parts of life in a balanced and purposeful way. I remember when Justin Neely explained to us that *nishnabe* means “why placed down,” and how peaceful it made me feel that in our culture it is expected that one can search for purpose for an entire lifetime and never completely find it. The word *nishnabe* emphasizes the importance of faith in the Creator, and our traditional ways encourage us to keep a close connection with God. The first time I entered the prayer circle I was overcome by how awesome it was to have an intimately holy space and the opportunity to freely praise and thank God as our ancestors did. That was a week into the program, and I was most thankful for the heartfelt preparation of our mentors and the vibrant personalities of my peers.

I learned later that the fire given to the original man represented not only the devotion shown by the shared ceremonial fire, but also the devotion of tending to one’s inner spark. In my opinion, to keep the inner spark requires knowledge of the other Potawatomi values— the sacrifice of the muskrat; the four brother’s recognitions of generosity, wisdom, compassion, and courage; and the respect for all our relations, *jagenagenan*. It made sense, then, that we got along so well and that each of us was passionate and well-rounded. I felt that the cultural values were passed to us in some form through our family and that they were amplified in the community of their origin. I felt welcomed by the women’s drum group, the elders, and all the employees we met. My main reaction from the many department meetings was that the Nation has attracted leaders that are of incredible character and expertise. They are forging the future, and the future looks bright.

Our first work day we attended the new-hire orientation hosted by Human Resources. From that day forth, I knew that the Nation takes care of its own and those who work for it. The meeting illustrated that the Nation is ahead of its time as far as avoiding conflict, advancing those from within, withholding information from future employers until consent of the employee is given, protecting employees against identity theft, and recommending legal benefits. Similar care for the community was illustrated at the Police Department by their recent agreement to dispatch for the entire county and purchase high caliber equipment to set the other stations up for success. I was impressed by the Police Department’s four core values, especially the commitment to be kind, and by the authority that cross-deputation and intense training gives them. It brings me joy that this and other departments maintain the best quality of service and refuse to be limited by outside entities. This attitude of excellence is also embodied by the Child Development Center. The atmosphere of creativity and abundant activities is perfect for stimulating children’s early years. It makes me happy that there is such a strong support system for Native children because a strong foundation leads to better lives and stronger communities.

This program has allowed me to identify where my talents and passions can benefit the Nation, and how I can continue to contribute when the program ends. I am extremely excited at the prospect of a data center at the Iron Horse industrial park, the creation of a television, radio, and phone internet platform, and the progress of a virtual tribe. My Bachelor’s in Computer Systems Engineering and planned Master’s in Computer Science and Economics sets me up to contribute to the growth of these projects later on, especially as I gain work

experience. As I continue through college, I plan to stay in contact with my new friends and continue to learn the language. I will offer my assistance to my legislators, Dave Carney for my home in Puyallup, Washington and Gene Lambert while at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. I am excited to continue learning with the Nation's undertakings in mind, and to adjust my habits to live in a way that honors my native heritage.



Ross Korzeniewski

## ELDER INTERVIEW

I had the opportunity to interview one of our tribal elders, Betty Simecka. I was able to gain insight and wisdom into her life, and the life of the tribe. Elder wisdom has long been revered in our culture; however, I believe now is an especially important time to lean on it. There are so many tribal members, including myself who have so much to learn, and these elders hold the key to understanding our culture.

Betty is one tribal member who has witnessed the growth and development of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Like me, she learned of her Potawatomi culture during her teenage years. This gave her a tremendous sense of pride, in both being Native and a citizen of the United States. There was something special for her, being able to trace ancestry to a proud people who had resided in the area that is now the United States long before the development of the United States. Betty also spoke highly of her Great Aunt, who was able to document much of her family history, and pass on her knowledge of the tribe. I was on the edge of my seat listening to the tantalizing stories of generations past. There is such a rich history and culture among our tribe, and I was so grateful to hear just a portion of these stories. Among her ancestors was Chief Tallbird, Betty's Great-Great-Great Grandfather. Many members of her family who have received their Potawatomi name have gotten derivations of this name. Betty's Potawatomi name for instance is Peneshi Kwe, which means Little Bird Woman. We got on the topic of differences between our tribe in comparison to others. Three major themes emerged: community, unity, and proper stewardship.

On the subject of community, Betty noted that the environment created among our tribe is one of close familial bond. The closeness of the tribe, and the way that people look after one another is one of our biggest strengths. I too have witnessed a strong bond between tribal members and the community at large. Betty said that one of the primary reasons for her move to Shawnee was the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. The work that they have done to build and create this community is one of their greatest accomplishments.

As an employee of the tribe, Betty also works in the gift shop of the Cultural Heritage Center. She noted that in every venture the tribe undertakes, both in business and in cultural preservation, there is a tremendous sense of unity. The vision of Chairman Barrett and Vice Chairman Capps has helped to steer the entire tribe in a common direction. This can only stand to benefit the tribe in the long run. I remember one line specifically; Betty said, "You can tell the tribe is growing". The intentionality and uniformity of the tribe has allowed for this growth. Another large contributor to this unity is a continuity of projects and constant development.

The issue of stewardship also came up as a strong strength of our tribe. Being wise stewards of our Tribal Rolls, by allowing members to enroll regardless of blood quantum under the condition one of their parents is enrolled has allowed for a growth in member base. Additionally, the focus on scholarship, health services, and community outreach serves a much better use of our funds than the per capita distribution favored by other tribes.

During her professional career, Betty worked in marketing. Using this mindset, she suggested that the tribe further promote their services, events, and opportunities. With all the tribe has to offer its members, Betty expressed a deep interest in communicating on a larger scale with tribal members. There is tremendous opportunity within our tribe, and a lot of it just needs to be recognized by tribal members nationwide.

One piece of advice Betty would give to younger tribal members is to get involved and take hold of these opportunities. This is our culture and our traditions. The upcoming youth are the future of our tribe. There

was one story Betty told me that I absolutely loved. For her birthday, a large portion of her family came to celebrate in Shawnee. There were cousins there who had never met, and people who knew very little of the tribe. Betty asked Chairman Barrett to speak about the history and culture of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. He was able to come and share, and he even performed several naming ceremonies. Betty told me that she knew it would have made her mother very happy to see the entire family learning this history and culture. At one point, it began to overshadow the birthday celebration, but Betty didn't mind because she was able to share and pass on the culture of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

It has been a tremendous blessing to learn about our culture this summer and explore all the intricacies of the tribe. At its core, though, our tribe comes down to people, and with the passion I have witnessed within Betty and so many other tribal members and employees, I am extremely hopeful for the future of our tribe.

## GROUP PROJECT

Paulina and I have worked this summer to create a solid, functional framework for the verification and vetting of businesses' wishing to lease tribal trust land. This framework is important because with the recently adopted HEARTH Act (Helping Expedite and Advance Tribal Homeownership), our tribe has the potential to generate its own leases to stimulate economic growth. This is an extremely exciting development in Indian Country. Previously, leases had to be approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now, tribes have the discretion to lease to businesses they see fit to bring economic growth into our land. Because this is such a new law, we believe it is of the utmost importance to plan how we handle potential lessees. This is a tremendous opportunity for growth, and we want to create a system that promotes this growth. Paulina and I have had the honor to work with numerous departmental leaders to find out what they would like to see in this process.

Among the department heads we worked alongside were: Jim Collard with Economic Development, Charles Meloy with Real Estate, and Cindy Lodgson and Bob Crothers with the Community Development Corporation. A lot of the paperwork came to us through Tesia Zientek with the Office of Self Governance. One of these papers was the signed CPN HEARTH Act, which outlined some of the environmental standards, as well as a portion of the process currently in place. Paulina and I used these specifications to generate both a framework for passing documents, as well as to generate suggestions for expanding the process as more businesses apply.

We are planning to present this with a PowerPoint presentation as well as a diagram of how the documents would flow. Initially, we wanted to create a circular flowchart, but upon consideration we decided against it. There are so many departments that need to work in close contact in order to ensure that our as a tribe standards are met. This led us to create a diamond-like flowchart that emphasizes interdepartmental communication through much of the process.

The process we created essentially starts with first contact, with any tribal affiliate. Then the affiliate would direct them to the Department of Economic Development, where businesses would be vetted for viability. If they are legitimate possibilities, they will then be passed to the Executive Branch for preliminary approval. Next, they will be passed onto the Real Estate Department, where the lease will can be created. Our Environmental branch will have already reviewed all potential lease land. At the same time, the potential lessee will be referred to either the Community Development Corporation or First National Bank (FNB), depending on whether or not the potential lessee is a tribal member or not. Not all loans will be made through FNB, but we should make it clear that this is an option for businesses. Additionally, we will require an environmental review of the lessee' business, to ensure that there are no adverse effects on our land investment. Tribal attorneys will also be present, working to create a solid lease that protects our interests.

After this process is completed, the final business proposal and lease will be passed to the executive branch to be approved and brought to the legislature. If they accept, then the lease will be created. It is important to remember that this is our land, and this is our potential for economic development. We want to ensure there is a structured framework, but also a bit of flexibility, as not to lose any potential investments. Paulina and I chose this project because we had an interest in Economic Development. After speaking with Tesia Zientek, we learned of the HEARTH Act and its potential for our tribe. This could be a wonderful opportunity; however, growth of the procedure needs to be handled with care.

We have several suggestions to resolve these issues. One is that as the process expands, we may need to take on a larger staff to deal with the applications. Additionally, there should be some sort of way for the departments to communicate, such as an online platform or monthly meetings. As I talked to Bob Crothers, he suggested bringing on a full time specialist for interdepartmental communication. This job would entail attending the numerous meetings, not just the proposed ones for the HEARTH Act, consolidating the most relevant information, and dispersing it to departments, perhaps through email.

Our project has come a long way this summer, and Paulina and I have a passion for seeing this tribe grow. I know there is a mutual feeling that the HEARTH Act is one major way we can contribute to this. There simply needs to be a solid framework for departments to follow, in order to ensure all relevant parties receive information in a timely manner.

## FINAL REFLECTION

I find it difficult to summarize all that this summer has been into a mere paper. This summer has been an extraordinary adventure that I have been blessed to be a part of. For so long, I did not know what it meant to be Citizen Potawatomi. I began my learning experience a little over two years ago. Last summer, my sister, my grandmother, and I were able to come to the summer Festival, where we gained what knowledge we could. But this summer has been a truly remarkable learning experience.

When I first arrived here, I was unsure of what to expect, but I knew there was much to be learned. I was eager to learn about the culture, and curious about the framework of the government and the tribal entities. I was excited to experience Festival yet again. However, this year was different than last summer; rather than being served, I was able to serve other tribal members, which in itself was an amazing experience. So many people all around Festival were so passionate about their jobs, and many of our tribal members were so passionate about our culture. During Festival weekend, a fire burns continuously, and I had the honor and the privilege to tend to it in the early morning hours. It was so peaceful to watch the sun come up and see daylight break. Each day, as the sun was coming up, people would begin to visit the prayer circle, where the fire was burning. I remember one tribal member, Elexa Dawson, genuinely thanking me for sitting with and taking care of the fire. I knew that this was something of great importance in our culture, but knowing there were people who appreciated it made it that much more rewarding. Elexa and some others who congregated at the circle early morning were able to pass on some cultural teachings to me. I felt encouraged to explore and embrace my culture even more than before.

This set the tone for the rest of summer, and I gained a fresh perspective as well as a deeper yearning to explore our culture. Throughout the summer, I was also fortunate enough to take Potawatomi language classes. This has been particularly fascinating because so much of the culture is embedded in the language. During our times in language class, we were able to identify important nuances in Potawatomi culture. As a group, we enjoyed throwing around conversational Potawatomi wherever we could. The language tells so much about the culture, and the revival of our language in the tribe, particularly through the online program, is a great tool to teach these ways. I thoroughly enjoyed going to language class first thing in the morning and going over our beautiful language. Justin Neely, the language director, has a lot of passion, which was a consistent theme I saw among many of our tribal members and employees.

One thing that really surprised me about the tribe was the magnitude of it. Before exploring all the departments, I did not realize the vast number of enterprises the Citizen Potawatomi Nation is working in. The extensive police department, the large grocery store, and the clinic were three that really surprised me. There was a very clear intentional level of professionalism among the members of the police department, as well as many other enterprises. There are so many tremendous resources that our tribe provides, and they are all in place to take care of people. The Nation looks out for the interests of tribal members, as well as tribal employees. I felt quite honored to experience their various entities.

As a student of Economics, I really enjoyed learning that we have an Economic Development department. This department, headed by Dr. Jim Collard, was one of the most intriguing business-related ventures here. For my summer project, I was excited to work alongside Dr. Collard and others to create a streamlined, reliable framework for using some of these economic resources. He was very open and gave us many good

leads toward achieving our project goal. But the part of my time that I valued most was speaking about current day economic policies and information as they related to Indian country. It was evident that Dr. Collard has a passion for watching this tribe grow, and his passion was contagious.

I remember during a talk I had with one tribal elder, Betty Simecka, we talked about the uniform shared vision at CPN. Everything here is done with purpose. People's entire lives are invested into our tribe, our culture, and our interest. It is amazing to see so many people with such a drive and a passion for what they do. When I first came here, I was worried about whether or not my limited knowledge of the tribe would hold me back. However, since getting here, I have felt nothing but embraced by the people and the culture. There is so much to learn particularly about the culture, and I have gotten the amazing opportunity to explore a portion of this. Now, towards the end of the summer, I feel I can proudly say that I am Citizen Potawatomi and stand firm on the knowledge and wisdom I have gained. I am still involved in a learning process, and I hope to always be. But with the knowledge that I have gained, I want to pass it on to others. There is a contagious passion within this tribe, and I am proud to say that after this summer, I am a part of it.

The Potawatomi Leadership Program is one of the most eye opening experiences I have ever had. Not only was I able to learn of the extensive services that our tribe has to offer, its growing business ventures, and the professional life surrounding the tribe; but I was able to experience our culture in this time of revival. This summer was informative, and the sampling of professional life will help steer my career decisions in the future. But the culture, our culture, is something I want to keep close to me. This summer sparked an even deeper interest in me. I want to learn about and incorporate more of the traditional ways into my life. Practicing some of the traditions and participating in our ceremonies has been one of the most enlightening experiences. I want to continue my journey as a lifelong learner. I want to explore more deeply the complexities of my tribe. This summer offered me a chance to begin experiencing the culture in a very real way. I can feel proud to say I am a part of this tribe. This is our culture, our people, and our community. Just being here, among these people, has truly opened my eyes to the countless wonders within our tribe.

Tyler Kline



## ELDER INTERVIEW

Reita is my aunt, as my family calls older cousins. Though I don't know her well, even enough to recall her last name, I have bonded with her. The rest of my family knows this woman. She is our gatekeeper for our family history. During our talks, she always brings back the importance of where and who we came from, and circles around to stories of our grandmothers and her children. When I ask her what it means to be Potawatomi, she will always say that she is proud, never ashamed, and that to her it's about the heritage.

She is most proud of our history. "Where we come from, where we started, where we are. I'm just sorry about the in between." I think this is important as well, especially when we have so little to gather for today's culture. History was big for our family because the present seemed so bleak at times. I think that's why we were so lucky to have some kind of hold on to what being Potawatomi meant. I won't lie; our family was white-washed--the language died on my branch with Grandma Minnie--but there seemed to be at least an understanding.

We talk about my grandma Charlotte. In reality, I claim all of my fortunate knowledge I owned about this tribe before this summer through her. "She was a good woman," Reita says, but not just in the way we talk about people who have walked on. In my family, she was the cultural leader. Really, that entire generation of Potawatomi must have shared this vision. I do not believe I would be typing this paper in the Sharp house without their hard work. As Reita puts it, "They were just sturdy hard people." We always have been this way, and we still are.

I ask her how she expresses being Potawatomi, wondering if she ever dances. Reita never was in competition but does participate in two step and such. She tells me the circle is sacred, because that is not only holy ground while it is being used, but where our culture was reborn. This cultural rebirth we are experiencing is an awesome phenomenon, and I can see how she expresses it because she keeps with the trends of the Potawatomi population. She has an Indian name, she knows the popular words of the language, and she is knowledgeable of the traditional practices. These things too, she says, are what it means to be Potawatomi.

A few days after our interview, Reita calls me. She worries she didn't make it clear how proud exactly she is to be Potawatomi. She clarifies what makes her proud of us, today. She says she is proud of the fact that we take care of our elders. Not just that we provide a house, but the medical services, and the odd jobs the Nation will do for the people under their care. Then she comments on the investment we make for the future. While we still maintain the past, we build for a better tomorrow by taking care of our students. She says again she will never be ashamed of that, only proud.

## GROUP PROJECT

### What Is the Situation?

#### *What Is the Problem?*

After humidity, the next thing most visitors of Oklahoma complain about is the mosquitoes. Most of Oklahoma's ponds and lakes are manmade, and this means standing water without an ecosystem to deal with it. The bloodsucking insects seem to rule the outside, only letting those with powerful chemicals to dare wander outside their homes. Aside from the multiple itchy bumps they leave behind, the mosquito can carry a multitude of diseases, some even fatal if not treated.

#### *What Are We Doing Now?*

Currently the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) and some private companies are fogging the areas around lakes and rivers. Fogging is a practice that uses insecticide that is similar to smoke or fog. The fog kills the mosquitoes in the air, and in some insecticides, absorbs into the water, to kill the larvae. Some homes also use chemicals in their ponds to reduce algae and mosquito larvae. Poisons are rarely discriminant. Fogging kills all of the insects in the air it touches, passes the insecticide to larger animals, and can make people sick if they are exposed. The same can be said about sterilization agents for water.

#### *Our Solution*

We want to use a variety of bioremediation. We propose that the Tribe invests in Aquaculture systems so we can stock tribal ponds with fish that are native to the area, and natural enemies to mosquitoes. Not only will they reduce the number of new mosquitoes, the fish will encourage biodiversity. Algae eaters will clean ponds, while limiting mosquito breeding grounds, and predatory fish will keep aquatic populations in check. On top of controlling mosquito population, we can use citronella plants around tribal buildings and communal outdoor areas that the tribe owns. Citronella wards off mosquitoes and is a natural renewable resource that could be very effective in areas with low mosquito populations.

### How We Got Here?

#### *Remember This Year's Mantra*

We started forming our plan when we noticed the fogging one day at the Sharp House. We were advised not to go outside for an hour and found out that the fog was pesticide. Later on we found out that the fogging had killed all the fireflies at the Eagle Aviary. This contradicted this year's mantra for the CPN. CPN is looking for sustainable and efficient ways to help their members and neighbors. We had to formulate a plan that relieved every one of the dangers of mosquitoes but went the extra mile to repair the damage done.

#### *Something Is Not Working*

With as much collateral damage fogging produces, there should be little to no mosquitoes in this area. Fogging helps, but it works like a band aid and only covers up the problem. We needed to strike the heart of why there

are too many mosquitoes. Mosquitoes hatch their larvae in algae. If the Sharp House pond is a well-rounded example, the surplus algae would explain the pest's persistence. Pesticides don't kill the plants that protect the larvae.

### **What Needs To Be Done?**

#### *What We Have Done So Far*

The tribe's environmental department already monitors surface waters and actively tries to improve them, while fogging to reduce immediate mosquito population. They also try to eliminate standing water that can encourage even more breeding.

#### *Our Plan*

We want to continue the improvement of our watershed by cleaning up organic matter/algae with fish as well as introducing desirable predatory fish for balance, and to attract tourists. We need to invest in aquaculture systems to cut down on costs for stocking said ponds. We can also use aquaculture systems to produce fish that can be sold at Firelake locations. Citronella plants will be planted at all tribal owned locations that people frequent, ensuring guests and members are comfortable. We will also pursue grants to help fund this project in the hopes to stretch our dollar. We project the cost to build a hatchery and fish farm would total at most \$84,000. This would be a small startup system that would include three raceway tanks, three cone bottomed tanks, the entire pumping system, and the built in filtration systems. On top of the cost of the building we would need one worker for the entire system, possibly two when we consider moving the fish to their sites. A positive when considering raceway tanks is that we can save some money because we can construct them ourselves, instead of purchasing prefabricated units. There are two major departments that can manage this enterprise, Firelake Discount Foods or the tribe's Environmental department. This program will most likely fall under Environmental due to grant reasons and to ensure quality due to employee proximity to policy.

### **The Takeaway**

Ultimately, the tribe needs to try and protect its members, while still managing to stay afloat. Many of the services are tied to some kind of profit or enterprise to ensure longevity or quality. This utilitarian approach is what makes the CPN a strong nation for its size. We are a leading tribal entity, which means we make progress and set the example.

## FINAL REFLECTION

Before even applying for the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP), I was not entirely sure what the summer would entail if I was accepted. I almost did not sign up because I thought it was going to be a boring shadowing experience strictly for future politicians. After much convincing from my step mom, however, I reluctantly applied thinking I had nothing else to do this summer. I don't think I have been more wrong. I learned so much more than I expected: much about my culture, more about connection, and a lot about myself.

Our traditional culture is elaborate, but our contemporary lifeways are complex. Cultural blending is an inevitable process for peoples in close quarters, and yet it can be empowering and breathtaking. The Potawatomi, like any other nation, is still unique, especially in how we apply our old teachings to modern day. I love how I can actively be Potawatomi without it impeding my everyday life. I don't mean this like it's some fashion statement, but instead that it feels right, completely natural, and alive. This is what I think plagues a lot of more traditional tribes, because they seem to not grow or change like real culture does. Culture is a choice and I have learned from this program that I can choose it and not be a recluse.

Two aspects of culture really jumped out at me during my time here. The first were the ceremonies. Processes like the sweat are private and personal while still being an open subject. I believe I have re-found God in some way with these connections. This can be a driving point or a drive away for some, but the prayer circle, the sweat, the naming, and so many more reminded me of the goodness individuals carry and the community they can build by simply being there. The next are responsibilities. These are the everyday things like putting tobacco down, listening to stories, and passing down skills. They are something tangible that make people feel like they belong, that they fulfill a duty not just in their network but inside themselves. I've learned that I need both, and I have a stronger hunger for the culture as a whole now that I have it all together.

Connection is an important part of being Potawatomi. Everything is connected, and the way CPN works as a tribe reflects that well. As an example, the Executive Branch has a vision of what to build and where to buy the land. Real estate buys that land and sorts it. Environmental and Engineering cares for and improves the land. Then, the Executive and Legislative Branches put the finishing touches and move to the next project. It is all a circle and is always adapting with each part and new cycle. Almost everything natural works like this, and it seems to work well.

A big part of connection is adaptability. Many of the department heads lead multiple departments. For example, Dr. Collard runs the Police Department as well as Economic Development, while Art works Roads /Engineering and Environmental. The Tribe as a whole displays its adaptability with its diversity of enterprises. Each company is disconnected enough to run as its own, but supports another in an even larger way. This ties in with a value we heard repeated several times this year: sustainability. Sustainability inevitably makes us more independent; however, we become more connected by supporting our community. As the Chairman likes to say, "A rising tide lifts all ships."

In all, I really learned a lot about myself. It's kind of cheesy, but I've done a lot growing up in this program. I was forced to interact with people I normally would not have, see their responses, and my own reactions to them. This is something that is invaluable yet lost to my specific generation. We get to pick and choose who we talk to nowadays a lot more than in the past. We lose track of how we work internally when we are not forced to reflect due to a lack of challenge. Nothing quite changes a negative attitude than when you are in a situation

where you are required to cooperate with your peers, superiors, and juniors all in the same day. I had to figure out what was going on in my head before I could piece together what they needed of me. I learned to let go of things and work together but not to blindly follow the crowd.

This humbling experience was not without a little reassurance. I now know I am part of the future. Vice Chairman Capps makes sure to kindle that flame in the PLP whenever we have had the joy to interact with her. You can see that she really does believe in us when she says that every year is her favorite group. It really helps a person to see that twinkle in another's eye. That true faith that their legacy will live on through you. It builds a strong push inside me that makes me feel like I'm part of something.

I am much more confident about my heritage as a result of the PLP. Over this summer, I have absorbed a lot of connectivity throughout the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. I have developed an adequate understanding of our tribe's culture and even the language. On top of the immensity of what it means to be Potawatomi, I have learned so much more about myself and built true character in my time here. Applying what I have learned, I now have the tools to be a Potawatomi leader in my area.