

NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

2012/2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE

Colin Ben | Bio

I am a citizen of the Navajo Nation, originally from Shiprock, New Mexico. My mother taught me the value of learning, the belief that pursuing post-secondary education will increase my quality of life, and help others in need. As a first-generation student, I earned my bachelor's degree in Southwest Studies (with a concentration in American Indian Studies) from Fort Lewis College, and a master's degree in American Indian Studies (with a concentration in American Indian higher education) from University of Arizona. Currently, I am pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Utah. At every level of my educational career, I have benefited from advice from mentors, advisors, professors, and family members. As I received support, I realized I have a responsibility of sharing my new insights of successfully navigating higher education. My doctoral research interest focuses on increasing access for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) college students into graduate and professional programs.

My academic journey has allowed me to also build my professional experience in the area of student support services in higher education working with underrepresented students for the past eight years. Currently, I am the program coordinator of the McNair Scholars Program at Westminster College. The McNair Scholars program is a graduate school preparation program for first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students (which includes AIAN students). Prior to McNair, I was the Program Manager for the Morris K. Udall Foundation's Native American Congressional Internship Program. I recruited and placed AIAN undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in a ten-week summer internship in the U.S. Senate, House of Representatives, and in Federal Agencies. Previously, I was the Coordinator of Retention Programs and Services with the Native American Student Affairs at the University of Arizona. I am very fortunate to have worked in positions that have allowed me to support and work with AIAN students, and I enjoy helping students reach their academic and professional goals.

I volunteer my time to be the advisor to the NuChe (Native American) club at Westminster College. As the advisor, I support the club officers and members in reaching their club goals of raising awareness, promoting research, and conducting public service within our campus community and the urban American Indian community in Salt Lake City, UT. I also assist the club members on their public service projects that support the Indian Walk-In Center with food-drives and holiday social events.

In addition to activities listed above, I have volunteered with the Supporting Young Native Americans Pursuing Science Education (SYNAPSE) planning group, which recruits approximately 30 STEM students from the University of Utah, Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. As a member of the planning committee, we coordinate a one-day preconference retreat designed to prepare the students for the Society of the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) national conference, and follow up with a post-conference retreat. I have participated in three preconference meetings, three post-conference events, and served as a chaperone for the SACNAS National Conference.