



The Asniya Bulletin

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Inspiring Tomorrow's American Indian Health Providers

Asniya Launches Doctor for a Day Program

On October 25th, five Native American students from Porcupine Day School and Red Cloud Indian School located on the Pine Ridge reservation walked the halls of Rapid City Regional Hospital alongside doctors from the hospitalist department. They took in the sights and sounds of the hospital while shadowing Drs. Nwafo, Pathak, Hasvold, Ghimire, and Dhungana as they tended to their patients.



L to R: Dr. Dhungana, Natalia Mesteth, Kamilla Sioux Calf, Dr. Ghimire.

Inspired by recent Asniya intern Jessica St. Laurent, Asniya's **Doctor for a Day** is an extension of the *Health Through Knowledge* program mission to introduce young students from local Native American reservations to the healthcare field as a viable career option. Organized by board members Dr. Jennifer Hasvold and Tracy Zacher, **Doctor for a Day** is in its first year and funding was made possible in part through Board member, Tracy Zacher's successful GoFundMe campaign (see Triathlon article on p. 2).

Asniya asked local teachers to nominate students who excelled in the sciences and have an interest in health care. Five 7th-9th grade students from the Pine Ridge reservation participated in the **Doctor for a Day** program. This year's participating students included Tristine Cross Dog, Richard Weston, Natalia Mesteth, Wacey Cottier, and Kamilla Sioux Calf (see Student Bios article on p. 4).

In addition to shadowing a doctor, students received orientation and HIPAA training prior to the event and got a

behind-the-scenes tour of the hospital. They learned about the lab and blood bank, echo and cardiac services, the ambulance service, and received inspiring talks from the family medicine residency program and Dennis Millirons, Interim President of Rapid City Regional Hospital and Market.



L to R: Dr. Hasvold, Richard Weston, Natalia Mesteth, Tristine Cross Dog, Kamilla Sioux Calf, Wacey Cottier, Tracy Zacher

Our **Doctor for a Day** program was a huge success, planting a seed in these young minds. They all said their favorite part was shadowing a doctor and seeing patients. They also said they would like more opportunities like Doctor for a Day, which Asniya will continue to organize and provide for these young students who are on their way to becoming our future leaders.



Students receive ambulance tour. Left to right: Richard Weston, Kamilla Sioux Calf, Tristine Cross Dog, Natalia Mesteth, Wacey Cottier

Health through Knowledge

2016 Internship Update

Asniya's internship program was lucky to have Jean Junior, a 4th year medical student from Harvard Medical School and



Jessica St. Laurent, a 4th year medical student from Tufts University School of Medicine participate as Asniya interns in March and April, 2016, respectively. Both young women are already very accomplished at the very start of their career in medicine and both brought unique perspectives to their rotation. Jessica was already familiar with the

Pine Ridge reservation, having visited in 2009 through another program. Jean was brand new to Pine Ridge and Native American culture. Yet both had the same goals in mind while here, to create awareness amongst the children they taught about health science, careers in the healthcare field and to start a dialog about healthcare needs.

After Jean's rotation at Porcupine School and Jessica's rotations at Red Cloud Indian School and Our Lady of Lourdes, they found that 35% of their students were considering a career in healthcare and more than 50% of students were interested in having a mentor in healthcare and learning more about the topic. These are encouraging outcomes in consideration of the recent 2013 article in the University of Arizona's UA News titled "Increasing Numbers of American Indian Physicians is Top Priority for UA Grad," where it stated the number of Native Americans entering medical school has been dropping in recent years,



"The Association of American Medical Colleges reports that in 2008, 58 American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in medical school – a number that dropped to 41 three years later." ¹

Moreover, did you know that there are only 24 American Indian physicians in South Dakota? That means that 1.4% of South Dakota's physicians are American Indian, but the total

American Indian population in South Dakota is 8.4%. ² Experts agree that a racially and ethnically diverse and proportionate physician workforce will increase access to healthcare in underserved areas such as the Pine Ridge reservation and will improve health disparities in those populations. ³⁻⁵

Asniya believes the most effective way to combat this decline in American Indians seeking medical degrees, an increase in disease and health disparities, and poor access to health care is to create mentoring opportunities such as the ones Asniya is creating. When young students learn about healthcare at a young age it creates a pipeline of skilled young students interested in and ready to enter the healthcare workforce. Asniya is looking forward to giving more bright young students opportunities like these.

Second Annual Triathlon Fundraiser

The early morning of September 10th, 2016 was a chilly 43 degrees with frost on the ground as Asniya Board President, Tracy Zacher contemplated jumping into the water of Stockade Lake, 5,177



feet above sea level. The lake was covered with fog, but just minutes before the race was to begin a brisk wind came through and blew the fog away just in time for the race's start time. Once Tracy finished her 1.2 mile swim, her friend Kasey then sped away to begin his 56 mile bike ride. As Kasey rode through the windy wilderness of South Dakota's Custer State



Park, highlights included buffalo, deer, and wild turkey obstacles. Then Tracy's brother Alex rounded out the day with a hot and sunny 13.1 mile run. In addition to a second place finish, Team Asniya had

another successful year raising money and awareness to help support Asniya's programs. This is the second successful year Tracy, Alex and Kasey have taken part in a fundraising triathlon for Asniya. This year Team Asniya raised \$600 to help support Asniya's newest program, **Doctor for a Day**.

1. Erikson, J. Increasing Numbers of American Indian Physicians is Top Priority for UA Grad. UA News. July 2013 <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/increasing-numbers-of-american-indian-physicians-is-top-priority-for-ua-grad>. Accessed October 7th, 2016
2. <http://aamcdiversityfactsandfigures.org/section-iii-geographic-distribution-of-physician-workforce/> Diversity in the Physician Workforce: Facts & Figures 2014. Accessed October 7th, 2016
3. Walker KO, Moreno G, Grumbach K. The association among specialty, race, ethnicity, and practice location among California physicians in diverse specialties. J Natl Med Assoc. 2012; 104 (1-2): 46–52.
4. Grumbach K, Mendosa R. Disparity in human resources: Addressing the lack of diversity in the health professions. Health Aff. 2008; 27(2):413–422.
5. Council On Graduate Medical Education (COGME) Twelfth Report. Minorities in Medicine. May 1998. Available at <http://www.hrsa.gov/advisorycommittees/bhpradvisory/cogme/Reports/twelfthreport.pdf> Accessed Oct 7th, 2016.

Intern Rotation Reports

Jean Junior

My name is Jean Junior. I graduated from Harvard Medical School in May of 2016. In March of 2016, I spent several incredible weeks teaching 6th-8th grade students at the Porcupine Day School on the Pine Ridge Native American reservation in South Dakota



My time in South Dakota flew by. When I started teaching at Porcupine School, I began with a focus on cardiovascular health, with activities and discussion about diseases such as diabetes, heart attacks, and how to prevent these through methods such as good nutrition and exercise. I also taught a unit on reproductive health education, which covered

the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system, characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships, birth control, and sexually transmitted infections. Towards the end of my time in the classroom, I got to review previously covered topics and do some teaching on substance abuse and the brain.

During my time in South Dakota, I learned a great deal and learned as much as I taught. I had the opportunity to strengthen my skills as a teacher and future physician. I really focused on how to make lessons engaging for my diverse audience of students. With this perspective, I learned how to make almost any lesson interactive and hands-on – from bringing in healthy snacks to teach about nutrition, to having students practice seizure first aid through a staged convulsion I had one day in class. In addition to what I learned in the classroom, I also learned more than I had ever known before about life on a Native American reservation from the people I interacted with each day.

It was a privilege to deliver education about life-saving health topics that would not have otherwise been covered in grade school science classes. I loved working with the students at Porcupine School, learning about their hot Cheetos- and basketball-loving ways, and having a ton of fun with them in the process.

Jessica St. Laurent

I had never seen such excitement in the expressions of children until the day we reviewed cardiac anatomy on real buffalo hearts. My excitement throughout the Asniya course was derived from the insightful questions and curiosity of these middle school students; it was beyond my expectations. Throughout our month together, middle school students at

Red Cloud Indian School and Our Lady of Lourdes 5th – 8th grade classes were motivated and inquisitive.

During our first class sessions, I asked the students what they were interested in learning. I received a variety of requests ranging from how pimples form to the heritability of schizophrenia. I had two goals for our time together: the first was for students to understand how healthcare professionals think and learn. The second was to familiarize students with a variety of careers in healthcare.

The vast majority of the students voiced that they enjoyed the material, hands on laboratories, and even...the homework. Research has shown that introducing children early to healthcare careers is an important factor in the decision to enter a health profession. Many students may decide later on to pursue these professions, but most importantly, I hope all students retain their passion and excitement for learning.



This bright young student, Allison Richards, learns how lungs work.

Having visited the Pine Ridge reservation for the first time ten years ago, I was impressed by the changes on the reservation during my trip. I had the opportunity to work with the educators and community leaders who are dedicated to protecting Lakota culture and promoting Lakota health.

Alumni Perspective

Jacob Taylor

In the summer of 2011, although I was just beginning my medical training, I was fortunate to be included as an educator at Asniya's outdoor summer camp on the Sisseton Wahpeton reservation. Four medical interns, including myself, and a few practicing physicians held daily science classes for youth from the Sisseton Wahpeton tribe. The belief is that through science and health education, outdoor games that promote physical activity, and field trips to nearby colleges, these teenagers would be empowered to both improve their own health and help begin to change systemic health challenges in their own communities. At the same time, the medical interns would have the opportunity to learn directly from members of the tribal community about different aspects of their lives, worldviews, and contemporary and historical challenges.

Our week on the edge of Campbell's Slough saw significant obstacles that were well outside my comfort zone, but seemed to be taken in stride by the campers. A few days after setting up our outdoor classrooms, severe thunderstorms and tornado warnings swept through our area, damaging our materials and breaking down the camp completely. What I would soon learn is that storms like these were routine for area residents, and of relatively minor concern to the community when compared with wide spread health epidemics and a legacy of colonial traumas. The historical trauma that underlies current day Native American life is both tragic and challenging to grasp as a white male who was born with immediate advantage.

Ron Campbell, an Asniya co-founder and champion for Asniya, shared that many of the children in the community would get a chance in life if they simply survived. This concept of having an opportunity for a life just by making it to adulthood was



something I had never considered, and it stuck with me throughout camp, and in the years since. I remember during a field trip to a local medical school, as our campers

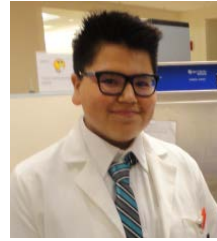
placed a stethoscope on a simulation mannequin, I hoped that they were not merely surviving, but thriving, learning, and discovering something of value to them.

Through dialogue with the campers and native leaders, I was reminded of the enormous limitations in perspective many of us who live away from reservation communities carry. During my time at the summer camp I was able to learn about the local tribes' sacred ceremonies. I learned that many of their ceremonies include prayer, fasting, singing, and dance. I also learned that their sacred ceremonies strengthened both the individual and the greater tribe through each participants' dedication and sacrifice.

To this day I feel the power and value of sacrifice, and how that can embolden my work to help others as I continue my medical training. My experience in South Dakota was one that I remember with great reverence, respect, and gratitude. I was able to see the strength and joy for life that our campers embodied, while better understanding the cultures and history and of this land.

Doctor for a Day Student Biosketches

Wacey Cottier is a 7th grader from Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge reservation. During the Asniya course in his middle school class with Jessica St. Laurent, he expressed an interest in learning about different types of doctors. He would like to be an anesthesiologist someday. He enjoyed learning about germ transmission. After shadowing Dr. Pathak he said he is looking forward to receiving more mentorship opportunities.



Tristine Cross Dog is a 9th grader from Red Cloud Indian School. She is motivated to become a medic or physician in the Army. By the end of the Asniya course with Jessica St. Laurent and after shadowing Dr. Hasvold, Tristine said she is excited about pursuing her goal and is looking forward to learning more from future Asniya mentors.



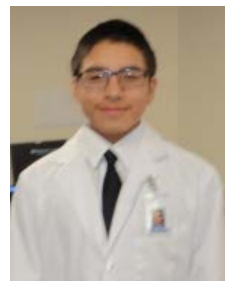
Natalia Mesteth is an 8th grader from Porcupine School located on the Pine Ridge reservation. She spent three weeks in the Asniya course taught by Jean Junior. She is interested in obstetrics and neonatology. She shadowed Dr. Dhungana and said she is looking forward to more opportunities with the Asniya program.



Kamilla Sioux Calf is a 7th grader new to Red Cloud Indian School. She did not receive an Asniya course, but was nominated by her teacher because of her interest in science. She loves animals and would like to be a veterinarian someday. After shadowing Dr. Ghimire she said she is excited about more shadowing opportunities through the Asniya program and learning more about health care.



Richard Weston is a 9th grader from Red Cloud Indian School. He spent three weeks in the Asniya course taught by Jean Junior at Porcupine School when he was an 8th grader. Richard would like to become a doctor in radiology or a nurse when he's older. He enjoyed the Asniya course, particularly learning about CPR. After shadowing Dr. Nwafo, he said he is looking forward to working with Asniya in his high school years.



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