

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

## Helping American Indian/Alaskan Native Students



By Chuck Masoka,  
Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation, & Research,  
and University Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid

I'm Chuck and I am an American Indian Student Affairs Practitioner. I'm an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota, also known as Sioux. I attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence Kansas (the only federally funded intertribal university in the United States), and got my start working in Student Affairs as a student at Haskell.

My first job was working for a Title III, strengthening institutions grant, as a part of the Student Academic Development Center at Haskell. At the time, the program was structured to help all first year and

transfer students with central advising and mandatory meetings during the first year. It was designed to be intrusive and to keep the students plugged into advising and mentoring. It was a great experience for me. We were a young team and were able to accomplish quite a bit, mainly because there was no one to tell us "no" to any initiatives that we wanted to do. We had an early version of an "E-Alert" system where faculty could refer students that were having problems to our office and we'd intervene and try to divert the student to appropriate resources.

What I didn't know at the time (2002) was that we were implementing what was to be a best practice of Student Affairs, early intervention for student success. We tried everything in those days. We'd email, we'd phone, we'd go to the dorms. We would go to the class of the referred student and wait for them to exit. We tried it all because every student is different. Our efforts didn't go unnoticed. Soon faculty were noticing the change occurring in referred students and what an impact our office was having across campus. This impact, this difference, is what made me want to pursue a career in Student Affairs.

I graduated Haskell in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts in American Indian studies. I focused my studies on the retention of American Indians in post-secondary education. I learned a lot and there's been a couple of really great books and studies that have contributed to the field since then. Most notable is probably *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education* (Shotton, Lowe, Waterman, 2013). It's an anthology that does a pretty good job at encapsulating the experience of helping American Indian students in post-secondary settings.

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The academic literature is now catching up to what practitioners have known for a long time: American Indian students are different. We have different challenges. We are more likely to stop-out (versus drop out) and will take longer to attain a college degree than other ethnicities. We're more likely to have dependents than the other student populations. We're more likely to be working through college. We have cultural and family obligations that are not optional. We often have additional challenges in regards to finances and basic needs. Many of us are first generation college students. American Indian students are looking for that indigenous connection among their peers on campus. American Indian students greatly benefit from intrusive advising and mentoring. I was all of these things while attending college and I'm so thankful that it was mandatory for me to connect with resources.

My first professional job after graduation was at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) in Las Vegas as a Recruitment/Retention Specialist. I was specifically hired to recruit and retain American Indian students at CSN. This is where my experiences working to spread awareness of resources really became useful. My American Indian students that came to see me came from a wide variety of backgrounds, from working, single moms to the high school senior about to graduate. While it wasn't in my title, or in my job description, it was a personal quest to serve as a resource to the American Indian community of Las Vegas.

A tricky part of working with American Indian students is the wide variety of issues that can come up. Navigating financial aid, guiding a student to their tribal resources and community resources gets more complicated when you factor in the 500+ federally recognized tribes and what each one offers to their enrolled members. Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution states that "Congress shall have the power to regulate Commerce with foreign nations and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes." This means that tribes are sovereign nations themselves and the laws that govern them are not always readily known to non-members. I've worked with students that got everything paid for by their tribes, while I've worked with plenty that received no tribal support at all.

For the better part of ten years, I worked to assist our American Indian students at CSN. Slowly, the institution made some changes that helped our American Indian/Alaska Native students. The college opened up an office for Diversity & Cultural Affairs, which began efforts to engage the American Indian community in Las Vegas. The college also began initiatives to improve retention, which included mandatory orientation and mandatory math and English placement tests. These steps, while small factors compared to other institutions, were huge for American Indian students that had no idea what the first steps were to attending college.

So, for my colleagues that are in the trenches, trying to make a difference while working with all kinds of different populations, remember that you can make a difference. You have the ability to affect the course of our students' lives. I come to work each day with the idea that I can make a difference in people's lives, but I head home every night knowing that people made a difference in mine.

I wrote "Hey Mister" after sitting on a panel with other practitioners working at the other schools and finding that my experiences were quite similar to others in the field trying to help our American Indian/Alaska Native students navigate post-secondary education. It's a reflection of the work that I did, the impact that I did and didn't have and difficulty of having to assist students navigating some tough choices.

Hey Mister

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"Hey Mister, I hear you went to a tribal college. You know how to work with Indians and we have a job for you here."

"Hey Mister, I'm Indian too. My grandmother was Blackfeet. How can I get a grant?"

"Hey Mister, I couldn't find a sitter for my kids and now I'm failing. What should I do?"

"Hey Mister, I can't afford the books. Should I drop my classes?"

"Hey Mister, we need Native American Heritage Month here. Can you help?"

"Hey Mister, we need a Native student group here."

"Hey Mister, we need you to focus more on the other 99%."

"Hey Mister, what's a Tribal Needs Analysis?"

"Hey Mister, I got into UNLV! Thanks for your help!"

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*(Continued from page 2)*

“Hey Mister, I was murdered. I was found in the desert two weeks later because nobody was looking for me.”

“Hey Mister, I need you to report on the Recruitment & Retention efforts that the college is doing for Native Americans.”

“Hey Mister, I have a student that needs to find out how to get on tribal roll.”

“Hey Mister, what scholarships are available for Native Americans?”

“Hey Mister, you need to speak for Heritage Month about Natives in Higher Education.”

“Hey Mister, we need you to report to the Board of Regents what efforts we’re doing.”

“Hey Mister, you need to mention these two non-Native faculty members in your report. They’re mad because they teach American Indian History and weren’t mentioned in our report.”

“Hey Mister, what are you going to do for the graduation celebration? Who is on your committee? Who is coordinating this event?”

“Hey Mister, the school district needs your help coordinating a diversity day.”

“Hey Mister, why don’t you come to our events?”

“Hey Mister,

I went to your office in 2008 and asked you for advice and information because I am a Native American student. You told me to sign up for the federal grants and ask my tribe for grants. I have signed up with the All Nations at CSN a couple of years ago.

I am confident you met your job requirements with the information you gave me in 2008. This is the first email I have received from you since 2008. I accept I must be

proactive for myself and pursue events whether or not you contact me. My concern is some Native American students, especially those recently departed from the reservation may be passively give up pursuing services from your office. I hope that no one else receives the same cursory information which I received in 2008 and fails to receive announcements of Native American Student events from you or your office

I am not impressed with your office and I am disappointed with my interaction with you.

I am amazed to receive an email from you. It shows progress in contacting the student population I hope you serve. I have graduated from CSN. Your announcements would have been timely had I received them during my six years at CSN.

I am hoping my experience was unique.”

“Hey Mister, thanks for helping me with the ONNSFA application. They said I should be funded for next semester.”

“Hey Mister, I got my financial aid, but my mom took it. She said she needs to pay bills. I don’t have books. Can you help?”

“Hey Mister, I hear Cobell checks are coming. How do I get mine?”

“Hey Mister, we need you to be Indian again. Just one more time. For the school. But not for you.”

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edited by Shotton, H., Lowe, S., and Waterman, S., Garland, J. (2013). *Beyond the asterisk : understanding Native students in higher education*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

## Upcoming Sexual Assault Awareness Events

April 2018

SAAM: Sexual Assault Awareness Month

BeyondWords

[wellness.utah.edu/saam](http://wellness.utah.edu/saam)

#uofusaam

See the full list of events at: <https://wellness.utah.edu/involvement/saam.php>.

# Upcoming Training Modules

Are you interested in learning about issues around diversity? Attend our training modules to learn more about issues of diversity in a safe environment, which will be essential to better serve our ever changing student population. Please note, the modules must be taken sequentially.

Date	Module	Location	Time
Tue., May 1	Module 1 - Exploring Self & Others	Union Collegiate Room	2-4:30pm
Tue., May 15	Module 2 - Exploring Power, Bias, & Values	Union Parlor A	2-4:30pm
Tue., May 22	Module 3 - Putting it all Together: Dialoging About Social Justice	Union Parlor A	2-4:30pm

To register for these upcoming modules, please visit: <http://sadc.utah.edu/events/training.php>.

## TED Talks



### [Sally Kohn: What We Can Do About The Culture of Hate](#)

We're all against hate, right? We agree it's a problem - their problem, not our problem, that is. But as Sally Kohn discovered, we all hate -- some of us in subtle ways, others in obvious ones. As she confronts a hard story from her own life, she shares ideas on how we can recognize, challenge and heal from hatred in our institutions and in ourselves.



### [Howard C Stevenson: How to Resolve Racially Stressful Situations](#)

If we hope to heal the racial tensions that threaten to tear the fabric of society apart, we're going to need the skills to openly express ourselves in racially stressful situations. Through racial literacy -- the ability to read, recast and resolve these situations -- psychologist Howard C. Stevenson helps children and parents reduce and manage stress and trauma. In this inspiring, quietly awesome talk, learn more about how this approach to decoding racial threat can help youth build confidence and stand up for themselves in productive ways.



# Upcoming Seminar



## Talking About Diversity in Theatre, Film and Media

Kimberly Jew, Moderator

Panel Members

Date: Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 12-1:30pm

Location: Pano East, Union

[\[more information\]](#)

## Recently On NPR



### [Through the Lens: Dolores](#)

Dolores Huerta co-founded the first farmers workers union alongside Cesar Chavez. But she's not as well known as Chavez, and the director Peter Bratt believes she left out of the history because she was a strong defiant woman. Bratt set out to change that.

[Listen Online>>](#)

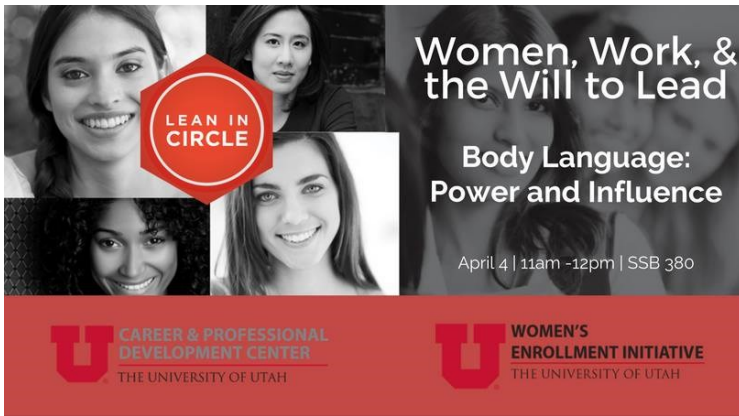


### [Who Is 'Us' Anyway?](#)

"Shouldn't you help out your own community first?" That's the question we're exploring this week via our play-cousins at Latino USA. A black celebrity is criticized for helping a Latino immigrant. On this episode, that celebrity makes his case.

[Listen Online>>](#)

# Upcoming Events



**Women, Work, & the Will to Lead**  
Body Language: Power and Influence  
April 4 | 11am -12pm | SSB 380

CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

WOMEN'S ENROLLMENT INITIATIVE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

## April 4 @ 11am-12pm

Lean In: Body Language: Power and Influence  
Women, Work, & the Will to Lead Series  
380 SSB [\[more info\]](#)

## April 5 @ 1:30-3pm

Campus Community Series: #MeToo: Now What?  
Hinckley Caucus Room 110 [\[more info\]](#)

## April 5 @ 5-6:30pm

Evening Ethics: Racism and Discrimination in  
Medicine—When the Physician is the “Victim”  
Eccles Health Sciences Library [\[more info\]](#)

## April 5 @ 6-8pm

The Land Between [Local Conversations: New  
Americans + U.S.]  
Marmalade Library [\[more info\]](#)

## April 6 @ 6-8:30pm

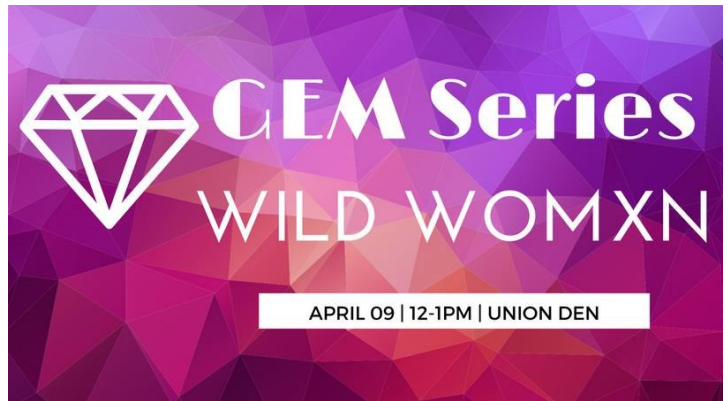
Island Soldier Film Screening  
CTIHB 109 [\[more info\]](#)

## April 7 @ 8:30am-4pm

2018 State of Utah Black Affairs Summit  
David Eccles School of Business [\[more info\]](#)

## April 9 @ 12-1pm

People of Color in Research: Panel Discussion  
Sill Center Large Conference Room 120 [\[more info\]](#)



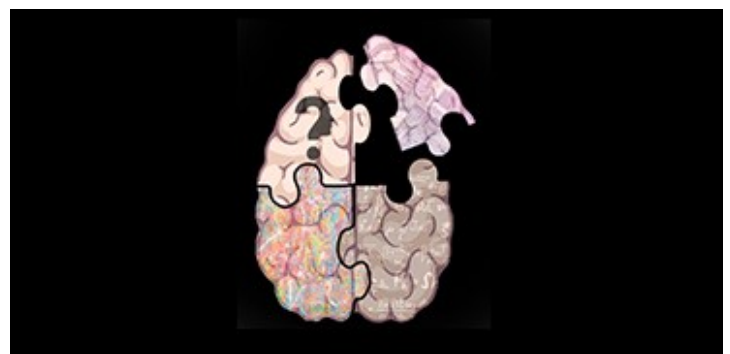
**GEM Series**  
**WILD WOMXN**  
APRIL 09 | 12-1PM | UNION DEN

## April 9 @ 12-1pm

GEM Series: Wild Womxn  
Union Den [\[more info\]](#)

## April 11 @ 12-1pm

Hinckley Pizza & Politics Forum - Sexual Assault  
Awareness Month: Beyond Words  
Building 72, Room 110 [\[more info\]](#)



## April 18-May 20

Piecing Together Mental Illness Exhibit  
Presentation on April 20, 7-8pm, Reception 8-9pm  
Salt Lake City Public Library [\[more info\]](#)

## April 25 @ 7-8pm

The Land Between [Local Conversations: New  
Americans + U.S.]  
Marmalade Library [\[more info\]](#)

## Every Friday @ 3-5pm

Fabulous Fridays, LGBT Resource Center Room 409



[sadc.utah.edu](http://sadc.utah.edu)

Debra Daniels (Co-chair), Women's Resource Center  
Kari Ellingson (Co-chair), Student Development  
Michael Bard, Registrar's Office  
Gabiella Blanchard, LGBT Resource Center  
Ella Butler, Career Services  
Branden Dalley, Union Administration  
Tim Davis, Housing & Residential Education  
Kyle Ethelbah, TRIO Programs  
Cairisti Flatley, Campus Recreation Services  
Morgan Gallegos, University Guest House & Conference Center  
Darrah Jones, Center for Student Wellness

Roberto Martinez, Counseling Center  
Chuck Masoka, Assessment, Evaluation, & Research  
Paul Morgan, Veteran Support Center  
Belinda Otukolo Saltiban, Office of Inclusion Excellence  
Natalie Pinkney, Office of Admissions  
Matthew Plooster, Scholarships & Financial Aid  
Nomani Satuala, Center for New Student & Family Programs  
Laura Schwartz, Bennion Community Service Center  
Ulysses Tongaonevai, Office of the Dean of Students  
Melissa (Lissa) Wanserski, Center for Student Health