



CIRCLES
ALLIANCE

Newsletter

Fall 2023

CIRCLES Alliance Fall Gathering Held in South Dakota

The CIRCLES Alliance 2023 Fall Gathering took place at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota from October 12-14. The project team welcomed our Advisory Board and partners, shared updates and feedback on current and future project directions, learned about the Black Hills region from a Native American perspective, tried out culturally relevant hands-on STEM activities, and visited the Sanford Underground Research Facility. [Click here](#) to learn more on our website.



The CIRCLES Alliance Welcomes Jonnie Alisha Woody

Jonnie joins as New Mexico's CIRCLES coordinator and shared the following introduction:



Ya'at'eeh! My name is Jonnie Alisha Woody. I am from Shiprock, NM. I am of the Salt people, born for the Bitterwater people, my maternal grandfather is of the Leaf people, and my paternal grandfather is of the Red Running Into the Water clan. I graduated from New Mexico Tech in May 2023 with my Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science. I am working on applying to grad school to get my master's degree before I go to medical school. My goal is to become a pediatric oncologist. I have always worked to help my people and my community and am committed to being an advocate for Native American students in higher education. I am thrilled to be a new member of the New Mexico team as a project coordinator. I will be focused on reaching out to New Mexico Native American STEM students and trying to work with as many parents, teachers, and mentors as possible.

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State Spotlight: Idaho

by Crissy Phillips Oliver



With one year under the University of Idaho's belt, their most celebrated milestone is the addition of seven Indigenous graduate students to the team!

The launch of the first CIRCLES cohort shepherds the team towards cultivating conditions for Indigenous interdisciplinary STEM and Indigenous scholars to thrive within the University. With a focus towards activities in higher education, the team is creating the conditions in academic settings and community research partnerships where Indigenous research and Indigenous

scholarship can thrive in addressing multifaceted, interconnected, and pressing challenges of social and environmental wellbeing.

“At a lot of universities, there is a pre-supposed idea about what STEM learning is, including what the goals and outcomes are,” said Principal Investigator, Dr. Philip Stevens. “We need to call attention to cultural perspectives instead of starting off with a baseline of ‘all humans do X, therefore that’s a given.’ The evidence from our lived experiences and human records tell us that knowledge is much more diverse than presented in STEM classrooms.”

To begin building space in academic settings, a key initiative for the Idaho team is developing a Certificate in Indigenous Research and Education (CIRE). Contributing to this development of the certificate are Idaho's CIRCLES students. As research assistants participating in the pilot sequence of this 13-credit certificate, students are doing the important work of guiding and reviewing how the certificate prepares Tribal and non-Tribal graduate students.

The work has just begun, and the University of Idaho looks forward to future CIRCLES cohorts to guide the certificates growth and transform how space is built in institutions that better support Indigenous futures.

State Spotlight: North Dakota

by Daniel Conn

The CIRCLES Alliance's North Dakota team has been making significant strides in fostering connections and collaborations with educational leaders, community members, and students from the Turtle Mountain and Fort Berthold Reservations, as well as the City of Minot. Recent highlights include:

- Engaging over 50 students, teachers, and school administrators at AIRO STEM Day at Turtle Mountain Community College (October 27, 2023). The event connected students from Belcourt, Rolla, St. John's, and Turtle Mountain Community Middle Schools interested in STEM with college and industry partners.
- Meeting with K-12 teachers and college faculty from Turtle Mountain Community Middle School, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (Fort Berthold), and New Town Middle School (Fort Berthold) to learn about their interests and priorities. These meetings generated discussion about potential professional development offerings, potential teacher partners, the need for cybersecurity curriculum resources, and educators' overall curriculum development goals.
- Presenting on CIRCLES Alliance work at the North Dakota Indian Education Summit in Bismarck (July 2023) and the American Association of Teaching and Curriculum Conference in Louisville, KY (October 2023).



Dan Conn of Minot State University talking with high school students during AIRO STEM Day at Turtle Mountain Community College.

Learn more about the CIRCLES Alliance at:
circlesalliance.org

