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AIR News

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"OUR MISSION IS THE PROMOTION AND SUCCESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS WITHIN EDUCATION."

Created in 1993 the AIR Program has set out to create a greater future for our American Indian Community through education.



Announcing our AIR Programs 2021 Leadership Awardees

We are proud to announce AIR Programs Awardees for 2021! These honors are to recognize the achievement of our Native Youth and Community members who have contributed to Indian Country through community service, academic achievement and leadership. Past Native Youth that we have had within our program and honored are now taking leadership positions within their Tribes, teaching future generations of students, and protecting Native Rights in our communities. This year our Students Leadership Awardees are:

Ms. Makayla G. Hernandez (Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians)

Ms. Jayden R. Chaloux (San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians)

Mr. Ihpaa S. Martinez (San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians)



Announcing our 2021 Leadership Awardees (cont.)

Our Mentor Leadership Awardee: Ms. Jennifer L. Rodriguez (Tule River Tribe)

Our Community Leadership Awardees: Mr. Kenny Meza (Jamul Indian Village)
Ms. Linda Ruis (Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel)

We are honored that we have been able to both work with these students, mentors and Community Leaders throughout these many years. We will honor our Awardees at our Annual Awards and Fundraising Banquet to be held at the Rincon Harrah's Resort and Casino on November 4th. Congrats to all our honorees.



28th Annual American Indian Recruitment Programs Awards & Fundraiser Banquet

Thursday, November 4, 2021, 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Rincon Harrah's Resort and Casino

AIR Programs announces the date for our Annual Awards and Fundraiser Banquet for 2021. This year our Annual Banquet will be held at the Harrah's Resort and Casino, where we will honor our students and mentors within our program. This year we will be limiting our attendance based on Covid safety protocols to Awardees and a limited number of guests. We will live stream our event for those who wishing to hear from our Awardees. Please celebrate and honor our students by supporting the 2021 AIR Annual Awards and Fundraiser Banquet.

For additional sponsorship information please visit our website at www.airprograms.org or email us at info@airprograms.org

Honoring our Native Youth for their Excellence in Academics and their pursuit towards Higher Education

AIR Programs will honor 3 Native Youth that have participated within our AIR Programs and have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement as they pursue higher education. We are honored that they have chosen to participate within our program as they look forward to college where they will gain the tools of success and become the next generation of leaders within our tribal communities.

The following are our students Awardees for 2021:

Ms. Makayla Grace Hernandez (Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians)

"Everyone is held innocent until proven guilty. I strive to become a Criminal Defense Lawyer where I can defend the wrongfully accused, offer my clients a speedy, fair and just trial, and lastly, be the person that fights for them when it seems like the rest of society has turned against them."

A quote from Makayla's personal statement as she intends to become a Criminal Defense Lawyer. This of course is one of the reasons she is one of our selected Student Leaders of 2021.

Active in playing varsity sports in basketball, Makayla has participated within our AIR Programs Honors Project taking courses at San Diego State University in American Indian Studies and currently taking coursework from the University of California, San Diego, in Tribal Law. She intends to further her academics, hopefully, at the University of San Diego (USD) with an eye on San Diego State University. Academically she is in the top tier in both our Honors Project and her High School. Congrats to Ms. Makayla G. Hernandez and thank you for participating in our programs this last year.





Mr. Ihpaa S. Martinez (San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians)

"I wish to better myself through higher education...to learn and assist with the juvenile offenders...help(ing) my peers in my community and spark the interest in other students"

Ihpaa has participated in our AIR Honors Project as a Sophomore in High School and has continued to take college level courses in Kumeyaay Language and History at Cuyamaca Community College. Prior to Covid-19 he attended the American Indian Chamber of Commerce Youth Expo 19 where he was able to pursue his economic interests with other Native students having the same goals and interests in business. There, working with others, he completed a mock-business plan in the hopes of starting a new business. We cannot say enough about Ihpaa, as he has gone beyond normal academics in high school and pursued his interest at colleges and universities when given the opportunity. His ideals, his pursuit of furthering his education and his willingness to help others when he achieves his degree are the reason why we have chosen Ihpaa as one of our 2021 Student Leadership Awardees. Congrats.

Ms. Jayden R. Chaloux (San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians)

"It is fascinating to know how a fingerprint, burn, or a small piece of fiber can speak volumes about a crime scene. It is even more fascinating that we can use criminal profiling to create a map that helps to unlock the secrets in each criminal's mind. My goal is to study Criminology and Forensics Science."

Jayden has participated in AIR for many years and it is truly an honor to have her within our program as she motivates her peers, is there to always help and is determined to further her academics after High School at a university in Southern California. She is an avid painter, as it helps her maintain a healthy mind by transfer my emotions onto a canvas. Within High School she is within the top tier of her class and this is evident as she has achieved our top grade within our San Diego State University Course, AMIND 120. This achievement proves that she can compete at the university level and be highly successful. In knowing her all these years we are proud of her and her success. Congrats!



Honoring our Mentor Leadership Awardee

AIR Programs is a volunteer program that utilizes cultural and historical knowledge while motivating our Native Youth to pursue higher education through various educational workshops and research guided curriculum. When our mentors engage and motivate our Native participants it not only strengthens our program but makes it greatly successful. We cannot say enough about our Awardee as she has worked with our Native Youth for the last year towards great success. Her patience, care and dedication to our students is one of the factors on why are students are successful. Our Awardee may never know how much she has helped those whom she has worked with but already we can see our students flourishing due to her abilities, this year's awardee is Ms. Jennifer L. Rodriguez.

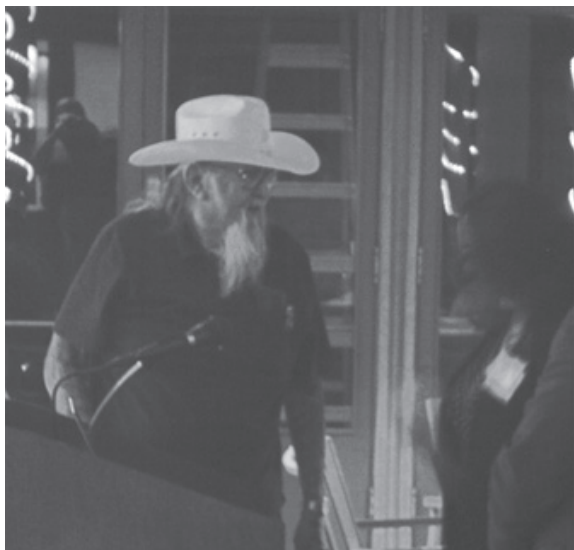


Ms. Jennifer L. Rodriguez (Tule River Tribe)

Jennifer started volunteering as a mentor in January 2021 during her last semester at SDSU, where she is a recent graduate. With Covid-19 in full capacity our mentors had to adjust as all our programs are virtual. Virtual mentoring and guiding our students, through the high level of academics within our coursework, is tough. You cannot truly gauge the reactions of your students, as when you are in person. Here, Jennifer has worked hard to gain her students trust, to engage her students and lead them through the university materials. For her efforts she has earned the praise from our community partnered programs and those parents of the students she has mentored. Jennifer's care, patience, and understanding of those she mentored makes her an asset to our Native communities. If a person is measured by the content of their character then she is of the greatest character. We thank her and are honored that she has chosen to work within AIR Programs and within our Native Community.

We thank Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP, for their sponsorship of our American Indian Recruitment Programs.





Community Leadership Awardees

Every year we recognize those in that have made great contributions to our American Indian community and have done so with great humility and care for others. Their contributions truly come from the heart and makes them deserved as our Community Leadership awardees.

Mr. Kenny Meza (Jamul Indian Village)

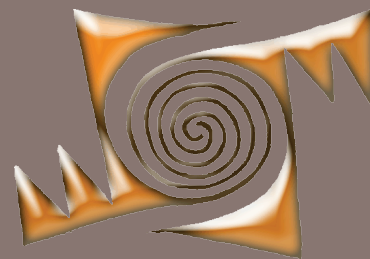
Mr. Kenny Meza is the former Chairman of the Jamul Indian Village. He is also a veteran of the Vietnam War where he served in the United States Marine Corp. Mr. Meza worked tirelessly for his community towards prosperity until retiring. As Tribal Chair he brought in programs to help his tribe succeed in a time when our Tribes did not have great economic gains. He is balanced in his cultural understanding while taking in the global world that his Tribe must navigate through. His past leadership has contributed in laying the groundwork for his Tribe's recent economic prosperity. At the same time, he never forgets his cultural ties as he is an avid proponent of preservation of the Kumeyaay language and you can see him at the many local traditional gatherings. He has honored our program many times as leading our opening prayer and saying a few words. We cannot say enough about former Chairman Kenny Meza, as we think of him not only as a honoree but as a friend to Indian Country. Thank you, Mr. Kenny Meza.

Ms. Linda Ruis (Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel)

Ms. Linda Ruis works as the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel Social Services Director and has been working over two decades to help preserve our Indian families that find themselves in or at risk of entering the child dependency system. Her social work career alone, is deserved of this honor. However, during her career Linda has accomplished so much more. We met with Linda in the 1990's where she drove students from Santa Ysabel to the AIR Program, this was after she got off work (from Santa Ysabel to SDSU and back). For over 20 years she has been on the Santa Ysabel Traditional Gathering Committee carrying on and promoting Iipay/Kumeyaay to keeps our traditions alive. She has been arguing for reunification of families in state and tribal courts as well as protecting our Native children that enter the system as an Indian expert witness. We acknowledge there is not enough words or articles that can capture her great contributions to our community. Indian Country is honored to celebrate Linda's many contributions to so many Tribal communities. Thank you Ms. Linda Ruis.



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We thank them for their belief in our
Native Youth and our Project.



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