



The Wildlife Society  
Native Peoples Wildlife Management  
Working Group



**Native Student Professional Development Program  
Reno, Nevada  
Sept. 29 – Oct. 3, 2019  
Final Report**

**Summary of Objectives and Accomplishments:**

As a scientific organization for professionals who manage and conserve wildlife and habitats, The Wildlife Society (TWS) is increasingly concerned about the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity within the profession. Diversity is essential if the profession is to grow and meet the nation's conservation challenges. To help address this concern, TWS established a professional-development program for Native students studying various aspects of natural resource management.

The indigenous community has enormous potential to enrich diversity within the wildlife profession. Native lands often consist of important wildlife habitat, and indigenous students are showing a growing interest in pursuing careers in wildlife management and conservation. Furthermore, Native American and other indigenous cultures rely heavily on wildlife resources as a source of income, basis for their culture, and subsistence living. TWS has an active Native Peoples' Wildlife Management Working Group (hereafter, Working Group or NPWMWG) composed of wildlife professionals and students, tribal and non-tribal, who recognize native people's cultural, spiritual, and ecological connections to the land. TWS and the Working Group have been exploring ways to promote the early development of indigenous wildlife professionals.

TWS believes one of the most-effective ways to support indigenous wildlife students is to give them an opportunity to attend and participate in TWS's Annual Conference – the largest gathering of wildlife professionals in North America. In 2006, TWS, with support from multiple federal agencies, implemented a competitive Native Student Professional Development (NSPD) Program. Individuals selected for this program receive grants of \$1,000-\$2,500 each (depending on student location, conference location and total amount of funding available) to help cover registration fees, lodging, meals and transportation to attend and participate in the annual conference. They also receive a one-year membership in TWS and become members of the Native Peoples' Wildlife Management Working Group. As TWS members they receive all the associated benefits, including *The Wildlife Professional*, the weekly *eWildlifer*, access to the TWS Network Online Directory (launching in December), and free online access to all TWS

journals (effective Jan. 1). Since its inception in 2006, the program has provided 123 indigenous students with professional development opportunities plus another 10 students in 2019.

The purpose of this APHIS grant was to provide Federal financial assistance to fund a symposium or provide funds for competitive students to participate in The Wildlife Society's 26th Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada.

**Eligibility:**

Candidates must be self-identified members of a Native American, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, or indigenous tribe, and a recent grad (within 6 month) or currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program in a relevant academic discipline such as wildlife biology or ecology. Applicants must display a record of academic excellence and a strong interest in pursuing a career in wildlife management or conservation.

**Application:**

Flyers for the Professional Development Program (attached PDF) were sent out May 2019 with a due date in August 2019.

**Selection:**

Qualified applicants are evaluated by a panel consisting of the Chair of the Native Peoples' Wildlife Management Working Group, two other working-group members, a TWS staff member, the Professional Development Program Coordinator, and at least one representative from other program partners, including the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society.

With an increase in funding from sponsors this year, the Native People's Wildlife Management Working Group had funding for 10 students to attend this year's conference.

**2019 Native Student Professional Development Program participants**



Front (left to right): Ameer Baier, Alana Wilcox, Ashley Archer (NPWMWG Chair), Sattie Whitefoot, Jeromalyn Santos, Deandra Jones, Serra Hoagland (NPWMWG past chair and NSPD past coordinator), Darrel Miller (TWS President 2019). Back row (left to right): Ty Werdel (NSPD coordinator), Kyle Dahlin, Jared Gregorini, Brandon Kittson, Mateen Hessami, and Alex Duncan.

Deandra Jones  
Navajo  
University of Arizona

Brandon Kittson  
Blackfeet  
University of Montana

Mateen Hessami  
Wyandotte Nation  
UBC - Okanagan

Alex Duncan  
Chippewas of Nawash  
Lakehead University

Jared Gregorini  
Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa  
Michigan State University

Aimee Baier  
Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa  
Michigan State University

Alana Wilcox  
Manitoba Metis  
University of Guelph

Jeromalyn Santos  
Saipan - Pacific Islander  
University of Guam

Sattie Whitefoot  
Yakama  
Salish Kootenai College

Kyle Dahlin  
Native Hawaiian  
Purdue University

Ten aspiring wildlifers representing tribes and indigenous communities from across the continent traveled to the 2019 Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada, through the TWS sponsored program: Native Student Professional Development Program.

**List of partners:**

This year, the program was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, USDA-APHIS National Wildlife Research Center and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

**Acknowledgements:**

The NPWMWG previously expressed to The Wildlife Society Council in a letter that while this is a great program, it is difficult to fund without assistance. NSPD coordinators acknowledge that they've had much more success the past few years with Chuck Shively helping to fundraise. Next year, they plan to look for funding from corporations in addition to tribes and government agencies. We would also like to extend a special thank you to Chuck Shively for this much needed assistance.

We would like to thank Dr. Larry Clark, Director of the National Wildlife Research Center, for his continued support for grant funding, his interest in this student program, and for attending the Working Group meeting this year.

We would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to The Wildlife Society.

**Final Report Prepared By:**

Ty Werdel, NPWMWG NSPD program coordinator

Israel Leinbach, NWRC APHIS Native American Working Group Rep.

Dan Gossett, NWRC APHIS former Native American Working Group Rep.

Serra Hoagland – NPWMWG, past chair and previous coordinator for NSPD

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