

Appendix B: Biographies



COMMISSION HONOREES

ALYCE SPOTTED BEAR

(December 17, 1945 – August 13, 2013)

Alyce Spotted Bear was an educator and politician. Born on the Fort Berthold Reservation of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Spotted Bear received her bachelor's degree in education from Dickinson State University in North Dakota in 1970 and served as chairwoman of her nation from 1982 to 1987. Spotted Bear then earned a master's degree in American Indian Leadership from Pennsylvania State University and completed coursework for a doctorate in education at Cornell University before returning home to work at Fort Berthold Community College (now Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College), where she was an instructor, vice president, and leader in the establishment of degree programs in Native Studies. In 2010, President Barack Obama appointed Spotted Bear to the National Advisory Committee on Indian Education. Upon her death in 2013, her family wrote in her obituary that she "was always good to people and loved the pursuit of learning. She was given the Nueta name of 'Lead Woman' – Numakshi Mihe. She lived up to that name as a beloved teacher, compassionate educator, vibrant mentor, humanitarian, cultural historian, gentle being, astute administrator, kind grandmother, humble woman, wise leader and so much more in all aspects of her life."²⁶

WALTER A. SOBOLEFF

(November 14, 1908 – May 22, 2011)

Walter A. Soboleff, whose Tlingit names included T'aaw Chán and Kaajaakwtí, belonged to the Raven moiety, L'eineidi clan (Dog Salmon), and Aanx'aakhittaán house (House in the Middle of Town) in Angoon. Soboleff attended Dubuque University in Dubuque, Iowa, where he earned a bachelor's degree in education and also attended seminary. When he returned to Alaska in 1940, he was offered the pulpit of a small church that grew under his nurturing leadership; later, he ministered to Alaska Native communities through bilingual radio broadcasts and circuit visits on mission boats. He raised money to build an Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) hall in Juneau, served the ANB as president for seven terms, and was the first Alaska Native Chairman of the Alaska State Board of Education. When he retired from full-time ministry, Dr. Soboleff created the first Alaska Native studies program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, in which his classes were often the most popular on campus. Young people, he said, "appreciate to learn who they are."²⁷ Dr. Soboleff was a spiritual leader who worked tirelessly to advance Native civil rights and helped Native and non-Native people alike at a time when segregation was the norm. Throughout his life, Dr. Soboleff practiced traditional Native values, especially the concept of haa shuká—"honoring our past while preparing a better future for our children's children."

26 | Staffwriter, (2013, August 17), "Alyce Spotted Bear," Bismarck Tribune, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bismarcktribune/name/alyce-bear-obituary?id=51885178>.

27 | R Alexander, (2011, May 23), "Remembering Walter Soboleff," KTOO News, <https://www.ktoo.org/2011/05/23/remembering-walter-soboleff/>.

COMMISSIONERS



GLORIA O'NEILL, CHAIR

President/CEO Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.

Originally from Soldotna, Alaska, Ms. O'Neill is of Yup'ik, Sámi, and Irish descent and a member of the Salamatof Tribe. She currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) and as CEO of CITC Enterprises, Inc. (CEI). Since 1998, she has led CITC in becoming one of the most effective social service providers in Alaska and the nation, and has led CEI as an innovative model in support of Self-Determination. CITC provides over 50 essential programs serving almost 20,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people each year. Through rigorous attention to community-based results, Ms. O'Neill has established CITC's national reputation as a leading innovator of replicable and effective service models for culturally informed education, workforce development, family preservation, substance dependency, victim services, re-entry services, and childcare/Early Head Start programs.

Ms. O'Neill additionally serves as CEO of the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC), which provides social justice, victim advocacy, and re-entry services; CEO of the Clare Swan Early Head Start Center, which provides year-round childcare and Early Head Start programming to working families; and CEO of Get Out The Native Vote, an entity dedicated to increasing Native voice in civic engagement, all of which are part of the CITC family of organizations. She is a director on the ANJC and Alaska Federation of Natives boards, served on the University of Alaska Board of Regents from 2012-2020, and was a 2010 Annie E. Casey Foundation Children and Family Fellow. Ms. O'Neill earned her Master's degree in Business Administration from Alaska Pacific University.



TAMI DECOTEAU, VICE CHAIR

Lead Psychologist and Owner, DeCoteau Trauma-Informed Care & Practice, PLLC

Dr. Tami DeCoteau is a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation and a descendant of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Dr. DeCoteau is a licensed clinical psychologist and a practitioner of Trust-Based Relational Intervention, a therapeutic model that trains caregivers to provide effective support for at-risk children. She also is trained in other trauma treatment modalities, including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, somatic processing, attachment intervention, neuro-sequential model of therapeutics, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. Dr. DeCoteau has extensive experience working with patients who suffer from complex trauma, neurodevelopmental disorders, grief, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thinking and has worked in a variety of outpatient settings and with a diverse patient population, including Veterans and Native Americans.

In addition to her clinical work, Dr. DeCoteau frequently lectures on the ways trauma impacts attachment and brain development, in-school strategies for working with traumatized children, and historical trauma. She was the 2009 recipient of the Indian Health Service's Health Professional of the Year Award and the 2010 recipient of the American Psychological Foundation's Early Career Award, which commended her efforts to provide culturally competent practice techniques for Native Americans and to develop training programs in rural, underserved areas.

Dr. DeCoteau obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of North Dakota and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a specialization in the cognitive-behavioral treatment of anxiety disorders for adults, adolescents, and children.



CARLYLE W. BEGAY

Former Arizona State Senator

(inactive as of March 2022)

Carlyle W. Begay, a lifelong resident of Arizona, was born on the Navajo Nation and is Tó tsohnii (Big Water), born for Kinyaa'aanii (Towering House) clans; his maternal grandparents are Tl'izi lani (Many Goats clan), and his paternal grandparents are also of the Tl'izi lani (Many Goats clan). Mr. Begay grew up on the Navajo Nation near Black Mesa and was raised under the teachings of his ancestry, instilling in him the importance of remembering the story of his people and carrying it on to his descendants.

As a State Senator from 2013-2017, he represented the seventh district in the Arizona State Senate, the largest legislative State District in the continental United States. Previously, he served for over eight years as Vice-President and Chief Development Officer for American Indian Health Management and Policy, an American Indian-owned and -operated company specializing in American Indian health care and policy. He also has served as chairman of the Community Advisory Board for the Center for American Indian Resiliency and on the board of directors for the Greater Arizona Development Authority and American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Arizona.

Mr. Begay graduated from the University of Arizona with an Associate of Science degree in Molecular and Cellular Biology and was a student in the Minority Medical Education Program at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. He also attended the Arizona International College's Natural Sciences and Mathematics program in Tucson, Arizona; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Winter Institute; and the Harvard School of Public Health's Public Health Studies program.



DELORES SUBIA BIGFOOT, PHD

Director, Indian Country Child Trauma Center

Dolores Subia BigFoot is an enrolled member of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma and is additionally affiliated with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, where her children are enrolled. Dr. BigFoot is a Presidential Professor at the University of Oklahoma and director of the Indian Country Child Trauma Center, which is housed in the university's Health Sciences Center within the Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. Since 1994, she has directed Project Making Medicine, a clinical training program for mental health providers in the treatment of child maltreatment using culturally based teachings. With the establishment of the Indian Country Child Trauma Center in 2004, she has been instrumental in the cultural adaptations of evidence-based child treatment protocols.

Dr. BigFoot has served as a principal investigator on 16 federally funded projects and has contributed to numerous journal articles and book chapters. She is a member of the national Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Trainer Network, served on the U.S. Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence, and has received numerous awards for her contributions to Native and Indigenous psychology, pediatric medicine, and American Indian and Alaska Native mental health.

Dr. BigFoot received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology/Sociology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and her doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Oklahoma. She also completed a pre-doctoral internship in psychology at the University of California, Irvine and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.



STEPHANIE A. BRYAN

Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Stephanie A. Bryan has served as the Tribal Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians since 2014, when she became the first woman elected to that role. In her dual capacity as Chair and CEO, she oversees all aspects of Tribal government as well as the Tribe's diversified business interests. These interests include Wind Creek Hospitality, Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority, and Poarch Creek Indians Federal Services.

A life-long member of the Poarch community, Ms. Bryan is committed to inspiring and equipping future generations to seize opportunities that will improve their chances for a successful future and increase their quality of life. As Chair, she championed formation of the Tribe's Boys and Girls Club, as well as afterschool and summer programs at the Poarch Creek Community Center. She also was an early and avid supporter of establishing Tribal Pre-K programs that include cultural education and Creek language instruction. During her tenure as Vice Chair, she served on the Tribe's Education, Labor, and Legislative Committee and worked with both the committee and the Tribe's education department to develop an on-going program to ensure that every Tribal member and first-generation descendant has access to education dollars through a noncompetitive process.

Ms. Bryan also has devoted her time to the wider community of Indian Country, where she has worked with the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC). She has been active in the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) and has long been involved with the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET).



JESSE DELMAR

Former Director, Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety

Delmar, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, is the former Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety. Prior to that role, Mr. Delmar served as Chief of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Police Department and in several positions with the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety. Based on his significant experience and expertise in public safety, he is also a past Vice-Chair for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Indian Country Law Enforcement Section and was recognized as 2017 Public Safety Director of the Year by the National Native American Law Enforcement Association, an award presented annually to a public safety director who has made positive strides in their community.

Mr. Delmar received his Bachelor of Science degree in Administration of Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology from Northern Arizona University. He is also a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy and of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Academy.



ANITA FINEDAY

Children's Court Judge, White Earth Nation

Anita Fineday currently serves as the Children's Court Judge for the White Earth Nation. She is an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation and is eligible for membership with the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate. She previously served for 14 years as the Chief Judge for the White Earth Nation, as an associate judge for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa, as the Solicitor General for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and as Executive Director of the Indian Child Welfare Law Center.

Ms. Fineday was the first Native American woman to argue in the Minnesota Supreme Court. She has taught Federal Indian law and policy at the Tribal college, university, and law school levels and has served on a variety of boards, including service as the chair of the board of directors for the Regional Native Public Defense Corporation and as secretary for the board of Anishinabe Legal Services. Ms. Fineday received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Indiana University, a master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Colorado School of Law.



DON GRAY/ATQAQSAQ KIOUS

Director, Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation Oil & Gas, Alaska

Don Gray/Atqaqsaq Kious is director of Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation (UIC) Oil & Gas and a descendent shareholder for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, and Kuukpik Corporation. He previously served as a board member for UIC and as UIC's Senior Director of Quality, Health, Safety, Environmental and Training (QHSET), where he was responsible for the administration of all QHSET programs within the corporation. Prior to joining UIC, Mr. Gray served as Vice President of QHSET for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Energy Services and led operating units within the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Native Village of Barrow. Mr. Gray also has served as the chair of the Occupational Safety and Health Industry Advisory Board at the University of Alaska, as a management representative on the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board, and on the board of directors for Volunteers of America.

Mr. Gray received both an associate's degree in Applied Science Emergency Medical Services, through which he qualified as a paramedic, and a Bachelor's degree in Health Care Administration from Davenport College (now Davenport University) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He holds a master's degree in leadership from City University of Seattle. He also has completed the Harvard Business School Program for Leadership.



LEANDER R. MCDONALD, PHD
President, United Tribes Technical College

Leander R. McDonald, PhD, is an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation and a proud descendant of the Sahnish, Hidatsa, and Hunkpapa Nations. Dr. McDonald is President of United Tribes Technical College and concurrently serves as Chairman for the American Indian College Fund Board and Secretary for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Past positions include service as Chairman of the Spirit Lake Nation, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Cankdeska Cikana Community College, and Assistant Professor at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences Center for Rural Health.

Much of Dr. McDonald’s published research focuses on Native elders’ health risks and disparities, American Indian veterans’ access to health care, and American Indians’ behavioral risk factors. During his tenure as the Spirit Lake Chairman, he provided three national testimonies in support of child protection legislation, disparities, and the resources necessary to bring parity to Tribal systems.

Dr. McDonald earned an associate degree in liberal arts from Cankdeska Cikana Community College in 1993; an associate degree in business administration from the University of North Dakota-Lake Region in 1997; a bachelors and master’s in sociology from University of North Dakota in 1998 and 2000, respectively; and a PhD in educational foundations and research in 2003, also from the University of North Dakota.



ELIZABETH MORRIS
Administrator, Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare

Elizabeth Morris, a Registered Nurse, is the administrator of the Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare, a national nonprofit that she founded with her husband, a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, in 2004. Ms. Morris has been writing, lobbying, and advocating on issues related to Federal Indian policy since 1995 and is author of the book *Dying in Indian Country*.

Ms. Morris holds a Diploma of Bible & Missions, an Associate of Science degree in nursing, and a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministries. More recently, she earned a Bachelor of Science (magna cum laude) in Interdisciplinary Studies: Government and Policy, Communication, and Health Science (2016) and a Master of Arts (with distinction) in Public Policy (2019), both from Liberty University; the title of her Master’s thesis was “The Philosophical Underpinnings and Negative Consequences of the Indian Child Welfare Act.” Ms. Morris is a current PhD candidate in Public Policy and Social Policy at Liberty University.



MELODY STAEBNER

Indian Education Coordinator, Fargo and West Fargo Public Schools

Melody Staebner, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, has served as the Native American Education Coordinator of the Fargo and West Fargo Public Schools for the past 20 years. In this role, she has provided support to students to address school attendance and challenges to academic success, and has strengthened families through available resources. Ms. Staebner received the YWCA Woman of the Year Award in 2008 for “Advocating for Youth.” She received the Gladys Shingobe Ray Award in 2020 in recognition of her devotion and extraordinary service to the Native American community.

Ms. Staebner also serves on the North Dakota Indian Education Advisory Council, the North Dakota Every Student Succeeds Act Tribal Stakeholder Committee, the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings Committee, Youth Works Board, and Woodlands and High Plains Powwow Committee. She has extensive training in the areas of at-risk youth, homeless populations, dropout prevention, mental health, suicide prevention, Native leadership, trauma, and cultural competency. She is currently enrolled at the University of North Dakota, and will complete her bachelor of social work degree in May 2024.