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MISS NATIVE

Fort McDowell youth claims Miss Native crown

Mesa Community College crowns Kadence Sayles



(<https://gamma.creativecirclecdn.com/yourvalley/original/20240220-105349-022824%20sc%20Miss%20Native.jpg>)

Kaitlyn Yazzie, left, and Kadence Sayles, right, were selected as the Mesa Community College Miss Native Royalty this year. (Submitted photo)

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Kadence Sayles was crowned Mesa Community College's Miss Native MCC on Monday, Jan. 29.

Sayles descends from Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation and the Lakota Native Americans.

Contestants participated in qualifying sessions including interviews with judges, introducing themselves, answering impromptu questions, demonstrating traditional talent, giving oral presentations of their platform and presenting a modern talent.

Sayles is studying creative writing at MCC, and her platform is to uplift and support the voices of two-spirit and queer individuals at MCC and surrounding communities. According to the Indian Health Service (<https://www.ihs.gov/lgbt/health/twospirit/>), traditionally, Native American two-spirit people were male, female and sometimes intersexed individuals who combined activities of both men and women with traits unique to their status as two-spirit people.

In most tribes, two-spirit people are considered neither men nor women. Instead, they occupy a distinct, alternative gender status.

Sayles plans to transfer to Northern Arizona University after finishing at MCC to study screenwriting so she can produce original stories that truthfully reflect her Native cultures. First Attendant Kaitlyn Yazzie received a sash during the winter pageant and is an aspiring designer.

Yazzie draws inspiration from her mother, who is a designer of traditional Navajo clothing. Yazzie wants to enhance Indigenous representation in the fashion industry.

“The American Indian Institute at MCC has been hosting this event since 2014 but, due to the pandemic, we had to suspend the ceremony,” senior student services specialist Maragret Talia White said. “We are so pleased that we were able to re-establish this important celebration. Miss Native MCC and the First Attendant serve as Native American Student Ambassadors engaging with and representing their Indigenous communities and promoting the many opportunities at MCC.”

The royalty court is hosting and attending events throughout their reign to promote their platforms and raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples.

Sayles and Yazzie have begun attending campus, local and regional events, including the Skoden Winter Market, the S’eday Va’aki Museum and the Mesa Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade. They will be honored guests at the upcoming 2024 Thunderbird Pow Wow, on Saturday, March 9, at the MCC Southern and Dobson campus.

Groups wanting to schedule an appearance should contact the MCC American Indian Institute at aai@mesacc.edu or call 480-461-7931.

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