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NAVAJO GAMING PREPARES TO LAUNCH NAVAJO BLUE TRAVEL PLAZA LATE FALL

BY [NATIVE NEWS ONLINE STAFF](#) / [CURRENTS](#), [EDUCATION](#) / 20 OCT 2019

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First row L to R: Jennifer Jones, Taylor Miller, Raeanna Bahe, Teneah Davis, Quindrea Yazzie

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We are pleased to announce that the University of Nebraska Lincoln is accepting applications for our New Storytellers: Summer Institute for Digital Ethnic Studies. This innovative, interdisciplinary, and collaborative two-week program will bring together scholars from Minority Serving Institutions who seek to advance their research and teaching using digital humanities approaches. We envision these two weeks being a transformative experience for all participants, as we build a vibrant intellectual community during the institute and beyond. For eligibility criteria and the complete call for applications, please refer to our website: <https://digitalethnicstudies.unl.edu/call-applicants>.

Second row L to R: Camen Tracy, Special Projects Manager NNGE, Tasha Preston, Mary West, Executive Director Development NNGE, Dalphianna Prettysongs, Samantha Zah, Janice Cummings, Third row L to R: Mike Apachee, Kaitlin Edwards, Chad Murphy, Manuel Lopez, Tristan Swatts
 Interns not in photo: Freeland Livingston, Kyle Horce, and Kyler Begay

Published October 20, 2019

9500-Square Foot Travel Plaza Trains Future Navajo Leaders through Hands-On Mentorship Program While Celebrating Navajo Culture, Cuisine and Architecture

TWIN ARROW, Ariz. —The Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise’s (Navajo Gaming) college interns, members of the Navajo Nation, are busy preparing for the launch of Navajo Blue this fall, a world-class travel plaza adjacent to Twin Arrows Casino Resort located off Interstate 40 east of Flagstaff. Navajo Gaming’s innovative “Let’s Build a Business” internship program was created in 2017 to team up Navajo college graduates and students with senior-level mentors in their field of study to provide opportunities to gain real-world experience, facilitate preparation for jobs after graduation and strengthen Navajo Gaming. A group of 17 college graduates and students contributed to the project, – the Navajo Blue Travel Plaza..

“Navajo Gaming is positively impacting future leaders of the Nation through this hands-on opportunity that brings Navajo students back to the Navajo Nation and creates a working environment alongside knowledgeable and experienced mentors that include owners of Navajo businesses such as Rock Gap Engineering and Hozho Engineering and key leaders of the projects within Navajo Gaming. These energetic interns have strengthened Navajo Gaming with their talent, perspective and youth,” said Brian Parrish, Navajo Gaming Interim CEO. “We’re grateful for their commitment. Many carry challenging class loads as both graduate and undergraduate students. It has

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been a tremendous learning experience for both our team and the interns, as we work together to build a successful Navajo business.”

The 23rd Navajo Nation Council approved Síhasin Funds for this project. Working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Gaming enhanced its existing internship program, and developed the “Let’s Build a Business” project. It provides Navajo college students from Diné College, the University of New Mexico (UNM), University of Arizona (UA), Arizona State University (ASU), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Duke University, Mesa Community College and other nearby colleges an unparalleled opportunity.

The Navajo college graduates/student interns include:

- Chad Murphy, from Los Lunas, NM, is a NAU student working on a bachelor’s in Civil Engineering. Murphy focused on grading, the drainage plan and construction of Navajo Blue.

Which One Will You Be?

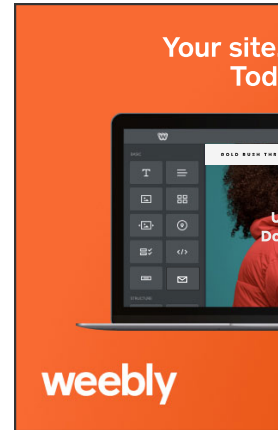
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- Dalphianna Prettysongs, from Jeddito, AZ, is an ASU graduate in Business Management. She focused on legal contracting and accounting administration for Navajo Blue.

- Freeland Livingston, from Church Rock, NM, is a student at UNM working on his bachelor’s in Architecture. He focused on the floor plans at Navajo Blue.



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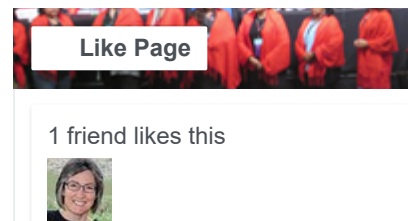


- Janice Cummings, from Whitecone, AZ, graduated from NAU with a bachelor's in Public Administration and is currently working on her masters at NAU in Leadership Development. Cummings focused on Navajo Blue's New Guest Services Module.
- Jennifer Jones, from Farmington, NM, is an ASU graduate with a bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering. She focused on Navajo Blue's energy management and commission plan.
- Kaitlin Edwards, from Tuba City, AZ, is pursuing a bachelor's in Business Management and Studio Arts at NAU. Edwards focused on Navajo Blue's marketing and intern budget labor tracking.
- Kyle Horace, from Tsaile, AZ, is a student at ASU's Biochemistry bachelor's program. He focused on accounting at Navajo Blue.
- Kyler Begay, from Window Rock, AZ, is a student at NAU's Computer Science program. He focused on IT and AV at Navajo Blue.
- Manuel Lopez, from Nazlini, AZ, is a student at ASU working on his bachelor's in Civil Engineering. He is also an Associate degree graduate from Mesa Community College. Lopez focused on Navajo Blue's road modifications.
- Mike Apachee, from Lupton, AZ, is currently a senior at NAU in Business Marketing and Merchandising. Apachee has taken on the final phases of coordinating the grand opening of Navajo Blue Travel Plaza. Mike is an intern who has been hired full time to serve on the management team for implementation of Navajo Blue's marketing plan that he helped develop. Apachee focuses on the Navajo Blue marketing plan, operations start-up, merchandising and business communications.
- Quindrea Yazzie, from Steamboat AZ, is a graduate from ASU with a bachelor's in Journalism. She

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focused on video and audio development management for Navajo Blue.

- Raeanna Bahe, from Whitecone, AZ, is a graduate from ASU with a bachelor's in Design Studies/Design Management. She focused on Walkway Design for Navajo Blue.

- Samantha Zah, the granddaughter of former President Peterson Zah, is a NAU and ASU graduate with a bachelor's in University Studies and a Masters in Sustainable Solutions. She focused on Navajo Blue's sustainability framework.

- Tasha Preston, from Tuba City, AZ, is a UNM graduate in Architecture who played a key role in engineering and architect honoring the Navajo culture for Navajo Blue.

- Taylor Miller, from Upper Fruitland, NM, is a Duke University graduate in Public and Environmental Policy. She focused on Navajo Blue's sustainability framework.

- Teneah Davis, from Sanders, AZ, is a Diné College student studying Nutrition. She focused on local food sourcing for Navajo Blue.

- Tristan Swatts, from Sanders, AZ, is a NAU graduate in biomedical sciences, psychological science and chemistry. He focused on Navajo Blue's health and safety, permitting, project management, infrastructure and served as intern coordinator.

Quincy Natay, Chairman of the Navajo Gaming Board of Directors, said, "We believe in supporting our Navajo youth through education and real-world experiences. For years our Navajo people have been researching paths and ways to bring our educated youth back to the Nation and I believed this is a positive step in the right direction."



“The ‘Let’s Build a Business’ project allows Navajo college students from educational institutions in the Four Corners region to learn business theory and entrepreneurialism, with practical application, while contributing to the design, construction and startup operations of the travel plaza – depending on their areas of study,” shared Parrish. “They gain invaluable hands-on experience through both individual and team assignments. This program challenges them beyond the classroom, augments their professional development and positions them for success early in their careers.”

Our hope is that many of the interns choose to return to Navajo land to put their educations and experiences to work at home,” added Parrish.

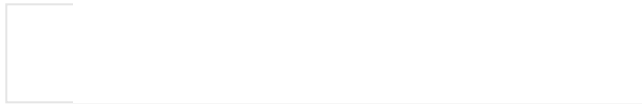
“We’re grateful to the Navajo Nation Council, the Office of the Navajo President and Vice President and to the Leupp Chapter for moving this economic development project forward as together we create more opportunities for Navajo people,” added Natay.

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