

# TRIBAL AGRICULTURE FELLOWSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR



[TAFELLOWS.ORG](https://TAFELLOWS.ORG)

2023 TAFellow Matea Whittington (Choctaw-Apache) harvesting mustard greens for elders in her community.



# ABOUT TAF



2023 TAFellow Jonathan Romero tagging cattle.

## OUR VISION

**BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS IN NATIVE AGRICULTURE**

Our vision is to empower Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students pursuing technical, undergraduate, and graduate degrees in agriculture as next gen leaders.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the TAF is to create opportunities for students to advance their education with the purpose of preserving and promoting the legacy of agriculture in Tribal communities.

## WHO WE SERVE

We serve college students who are Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian pursuing degrees in agriculture. The students must be enrolled in graduate, undergraduate, or career and technical education (CTE) programs at accredited institutions.

Students must be a member or descendant of a Tribe or Indigenous community. Regardless of enrollment status, students must have strong cultural ties to a tribal community.

TAF has given me the opportunity to learn more about Indigenous agriculture, meet other young professionals across the United States, and continue my higher education. I'm so thankful to be a part of a group that helps me grow as a leader and share my Native identity.

**Tribal Agriculture Fellow**  
**Keona Mason**  
Oklahoma State University  
*Agriculture Communications*

# A BLURB FROM OUR TAF TEAM



At the Tribal Agriculture Fellowship (TAF), our mission is to create opportunities for students to advance their education, with the purpose of preserving and promoting the legacy of agriculture within Tribal Communities.

Across Indian Country, our stories speak of a deeply rooted connection to agriculture. Our students embody their ancestral lineages as they strive to serve their communities as Indigenous Agriculturists.

Over the past three years, TAF has proudly supported a diverse array of students pursuing careers in fields ranging from diesel mechanics to veterinary medicine. Each of these students addresses specific, distinct needs within Indian Country. The Tribal Agriculture Fellowship bridges the gap by recognizing and responding to the unique agricultural needs of our tribal communities, and our students are a testament to this commitment. The perspectives through which our students view the world are enriched by their unique experiences and insights. These individual viewpoints are shaped by personal histories, cultural backgrounds, and a deep commitment to their educational and professional journeys.

Following a successful application cycle for 2024, we are privileged to welcome eight new students and one returning graduate student from six different communities. We look forward to continuing to develop leaders and cultivate their passions as they dedicate their time, energy, and efforts to the advancement of Native Agriculture. The future of Native Agriculture is bright, and we are excited to see what it holds as we continue on our journey to promote the legacy of agriculture in Tribal Communities.



# MEET OUR TEAM



**NICOLE DEVON**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Nicole was born and raised in Washington State and brings over two decades of experience in Native education, spanning from early childhood to university levels. She notably served as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager for the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. At Eastern Washington University, she held leadership roles in Native American student programs and spearheaded the Lucy Covington Initiative, aimed at preserving tribal sovereignty and nurturing future Native leaders. With dual Master's degrees in Education and Intercultural Communications, Nicole focused her research on enhancing equity, access, and retention for Native American students. Additionally, she's a seasoned DEI consultant and has contributed to various advisory boards and task forces, including those addressing human rights and educational disparities.



**APRIL PARROTT**  
**PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

April Parrott, originally from Eastern Tennessee and now residing in Western North Carolina, holds degrees in Food and Agriculture Business and Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Extension. With a decade of experience in youth development, she has worked extensively with the 4-H and National FFA Organization, serving as a 4-H Youth Development Agent and Agriculture Educator. Notably, she spent three years at Cherokee Central Schools on the Qualla Boundary. Passionate about connecting youth to agricultural careers, April has served on various boards and was recognized as a 2022-2023 Kenan Fellow for teachers in leadership. Outside her advocacy work, she enjoys traveling and exploring diverse cuisines.



**JASMINE LOCKLEAR**  
**AGRICULTURE EDUCATION AND SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR**

Jasmine Locklear, a Lumbee Tribe member, holds a bachelor's degree in Horticulture - Production from BYU - Idaho. She previously interned at the USDA's Office of Tribal Relations and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. With a background in teaching agriculture education to youth in North Carolina, Jasmine is dedicated to providing Indigenous youth access to agricultural education, aiming to revive traditional practices. Previously with the Native American Agriculture Fund, she focused on outreach to Native American youth and teachers. In her current role, Jasmine collaborates with Native youth in agriculture education programs, manages fellowship operations, and builds partnerships to support agriculture education among Indigenous youth nationwide.



# MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## **KARLI MOORE (PRESIDENT)** **LUMBEE**



Karli boasts a varied academic background and is presently engaged in a PhD program at Stanford University. She plays an active role in promoting tribal sovereignty and economic development through sustainable agriculture, having helped secure investments surpassing \$40 million in Native food systems, all while garnering numerous prestigious scholarships.

## **DR. JIM HAFER (TREASURER)**

Jim chairs the Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences program at Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, where he teaches undergraduate classes and adult education courses in welding and metal fabrication, boasting extensive experience in teaching, research, and grant-based projects within Tribal Colleges and 1994 Land Grant Institutions.



## **MATT DENETCLAW (SECRETARY)** **NAVAJO**

Matthew has built a successful career in the beef industry, earning accolades such as collegiate livestock judging scholarships, founding a show cattle operation, and serving on the board of directors for the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, while now taking on a role at the Intertribal Agriculture Council to assist Navajo producers in utilizing USDA programs for agricultural improvements.



# MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## **DR. JOE GRAHAM** **PUEBLO OF LAGUNA**

Dr. Joe L. Graham, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, is the Senior Program Officer at the Native American Agriculture Fund, with a strong commitment to his tribal community and extensive experience in academia and program leadership, spanning multiple land grant university systems and diverse volunteer services focused on tribal economic development and community initiatives.



## **DR. LAKISHA ODOM**

Dr. LaKisha Odom, a Scientific Program Director at the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, leads initiatives to address challenges in food and agriculture through innovative science, collective impact, and public-private partnerships, while also prioritizing diversity in cultivating the next generation of scientists, managing projects in soil health, sustainable water management, plant efficiency, ecosystem services, and crop pest and disease detection.



*One of the most exciting aspects of the Tribal Agriculture Fellowship is seeing how fellows use the financial flexibility from our wrap-around support to step outside of their comfort zone, seek solutions to tough challenges, and generously give their time and talent to the communities that matter the most to them.*

*- Karli Moore*



# TAF BY THE NUMBERS

In addition to the 2021-2022 Cohort, eight students were awarded fellowships to advance their education and careers in agriculture-related fields for the 2023-2024 academic year. This cohort is comprised of future educators, ag economists, scientists, doctors, entrepreneurs, and cultural knowledge keepers, aiming to foster sustainability within Tribal and Indigenous communities.



## 18 FELLOWS

TAF currently supports eighteen fellows pursuing degrees in agriculture business, agriculture education, agriculture mechanics, animal science, forestry, geography, and veterinary medicine.



## AFFILIATIONS

Chickasaw, Lumbee, Navajo, Osage, 'Ōiwi [Native Hawaiian], Potawatomi Nation, Saint Regis Mohawk, Jemez Pueblo, Kickapoo, Choctaw-Apache, and the Three Affiliated Tribes: Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara



## EDUCATION

Collectively our cohorts have attended 15 different universities and education systems.



## STATES

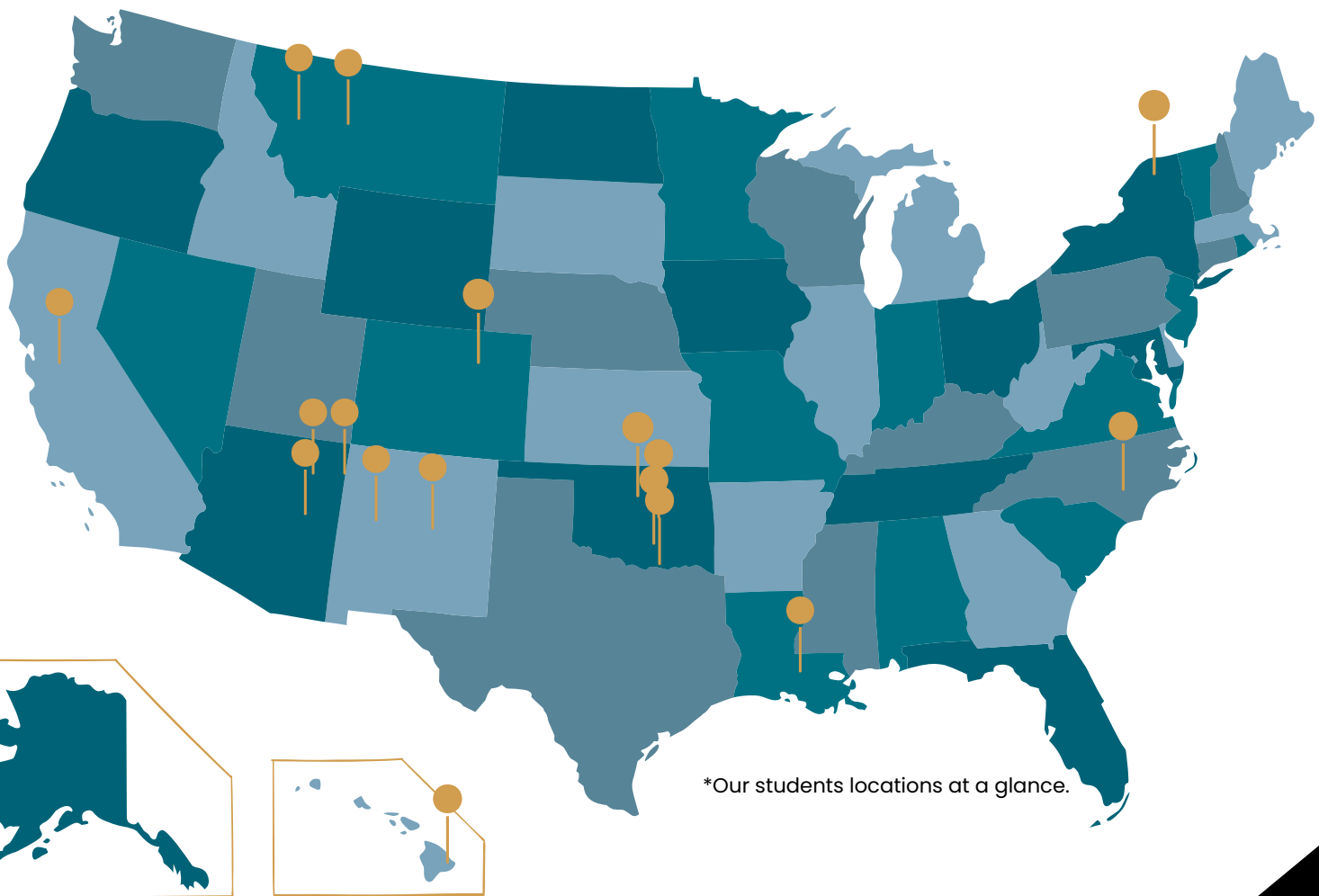
Our fellows represent 10 different states: Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, New Mexico, North Carolina, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, Louisiana and New York.



# OUR STUDENTS



The expansive and dynamic realm of Indian Country, particularly in agriculture, is constantly evolving. Tribal Agriculture Fellows are enrolled in various colleges and universities across Indian Country. As these students progress in their education, they will generate the necessary research and data essential for Indigenous Agriculture to continue.





# TAF IN YEAR TWO



The Tribal Agriculture Fellowship was officially established by its Board of Directors in of December 2021.

In 2022, Executive Director, Nicole Devon and Program Coordinator, April Parrott were brought on to the TAF team.

By August of 2023, TAF was able to hire Agriculture Education and Special Projects Coordinator Jasmine Locklear.

During the 2023–2024 academic year, TAF added 8 new fellows to the existing cohort for a total of 18 fellows spanning two years.

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## CONFERENCES ATTENDED IN 2023

- American Farm Bureau Convention
- AISES\*
- FALCON\*\*
- Intertribal Ag Council Conference
- National FFA
- National Western Livestock Show
- Native Women in Ag & Natural Resources

AWARDED TO  
TAFellows

\$604,895

2023–2024  
Academic  
Year

\*American Indian Science and Engineering Society

\*\* First Americans Land-Grant Consortium

# OUR 2022 FELLOWS



## **MARQUEL BEGAY (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | University of Arizona*

Major: Ecology, Management, and Restoration of Rangelands. Focus within major: Ecological restoration and community-based land management planning on the Navajo Nation.



## **NICOLE BENALLY (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | University of Montana*

Major: Forestry & Conservation Sciences. Focus within major: Indigenous Food Sovereignty



## **MADDYLON BURRIS (CHICKASAW)**

*CTE | Redlands Community College*

Major: Agriculture Education. Focus within major: Teaching Agriculture Education



## **CARSON CAPPS (CITIZEN POTAWATOMI NATION)**

*Undergrad | Oklahoma State University*

Major: Agribusiness. Focus within major: Pre-Law



## **BRENDAN WALKER (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine*

Major: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Focus within major: Large Animal Medicine



# OUR 2023 FELLOWS



**KIRSTEN BEGAY (NAVAJO)**

*undergraduate | University of Arizona*

Major: Veterinary Sciences



**JONATHAN ROMERO (PUEBLO OF JEMEZ)**

*Graduate | West Texas A&M University*

Major: Agriculture



**PETER THAIS (SAINT REGIST MOHAWK)**

*Undergraduate | Cornell University*

Major: Biological Engineering



**BAILEY TOM (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | Texas A&M University*

Major: Agriculture Business



**MATEA WHITTINGTON (CHOCTAW-APACHE)**

*Undergraduate | Southern Arkansas University*

Major: Agriculture Education



**CYNTHIA WILSON**

*Graduate | University of California at Berkeley*

Major: Environmental Science, Policy, and Management

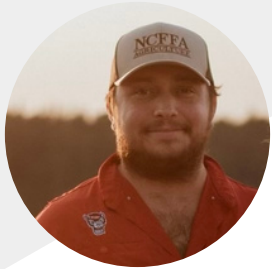
# OUR 2024 FELLOWS



## **TREY BLACKHAWK (WINNEBAGO TRIBE)**

*Undergraduate | University of Nebraska - Lincoln*

Major: Applied Sciences within the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources



## **KYLE CHAVIS (LUMBEE)**

*Graduate | North Carolina State University*

Major: Agriculture and Extension Education



## **SYDNEY IVEY (COHARIE)**

*Undergraduate | North Carolina State University*

Major: Agriculture Business Management. Minor: Agricultural Entrepreneurship



## **KRISTY KINLICHEENIE (NAVJO)**

*Graduate | Texas Tech University*

Major: Agriculture Education



## **BREE LAMEMAN (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | University of Arizona*

Major: Health Behavior Health Promotion. Focus within Indigenous food, water, and energy systems.



# OUR 2024 FELLOWS



## **KEONA MASON (KICKAPOO TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA)**

*Graduate | Oklahoma State University*

Major: Agriculture Communications



## **PEYTON MCMILLAN (LUMBEE)**

*Graduate | North Carolina State University*

Major: Crop and Soil Sciences



## **DAVIN MENDEZ (MESCALERO APACHE TRIBE)**

*Undergraduate | New Mexico State University*

Major: Rangeland Science



## **KIMBERLYNNIBAH YAZZIE (NAVAJO)**

*Undergrad | Oklahoma State University*

Major: Animal Science with a concentration in Pre-Vet.

# OUR ALUMNI



## **JAELYN DOVE (LUMBEE)**

*Undergrad | North Carolina State University*

Major: Animal Science

Focus within major: Veterinary Bio-Sciences



## **JUSTINA SLIM (NAVAJO)**

*Undergrad | Colorado State University*

Major: Animal Science & Agriculture Business

Focus within major: Bovine Reproduction and Genetics



## **HENRY HAINZINGER (OSAGE)**

*CTE | Oklahoma State University-Institute of Technology*

Major: Truck Technician

Focus within major: Diesel Mechanic



## **SANTANA NEZ (NAVAJO)**

*Graduate | University of Arizona*

Major: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

Focus within major: Mixed Animal / Food; Animal Medicine



## **GINA MCGUIRE (‘ŌIWI [NATIVE HAWAIIAN])**

*Graduate | University of Hawai‘i*

Major: Geography & Environment

Focus within major: Indigenous Geographies of Wellness

# ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

TAF Scholars dedicate themselves to in-depth, meaningful research aimed at uncovering innovative solutions to some of the most urgent and complex agricultural challenges facing Indian Country. Their work not only addresses immediate agricultural concerns but also fosters a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between traditional knowledge and modern science, paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable future in Indian Country.

## GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE

- McGuire, Gina
  - McGuire, G., & Mawyer, A. (2023). Cultivating the Unseen: Pa'akai and the Role of Practice in Coastal Care. *Ethnobiology Letters*, 14(2), 22-36.  
<https://doi.org/10.14237/ebl.14.2.2023.1825>
  - McGuire, G. K. (2022). Nurturing Coasts: Hala and the Legacy of Mutual Care in Coastal Forests. *Parks Stewardship Forum*, 38(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/P538257519>
  - State of Hawaii. (2024). Hawai'i Climate Week 2024. Cultural Forests, Hawaiian Agroforestry and Climate. Presented by Gina McGuire.  
<https://climate.hawaii.gov/hawai%CA%BBi-climate-week-2024/>
  - Native Climate. (2023, December 1). Native Climate reporter represents U.S. at Indigenous Research Network Workshop. Keynote Speaker, Global Research Alliance Indigenous Research Network Keynote Speaker, Global Research Alliance Indigenous Research Network
- Wilson, Cynthia
  - Wilson, C., & Noyes, G. (2024, February 21). Grassroots Strategies at Bears Ears National Monument, Utah. Indigenous Co-Stewardship of Public Lands: Lessons for the Future. Rohnert Park, CA.
  - Wilson, C., Campbell, W., & Mach, S. (2023, November 16). *Caring for Navajo Culture: In Museums and Beyond*. Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology. Cambridge, MA.
  - Wilson, C. (2023, August 4). *Indigenous Leadership Summit*. Native Forward Scholars Fund. Albuquerque, NM.
- Greta Gustafson
  - Gustafson, G. (2024). *Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis: A Clinical Approach*. Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine.
- Peter Thais
  - Thais, P. (2023). The impacts of dispossession through the Morrill Act of 1862 on Indigenous food systems: Geographical mapping on ArcGIS Pro and data analysis on Julia and R.



# YOUR GIFT MATTERS.



Since time immemorial Indigenous peoples have been stewards of this land. By making a gift, you ensure that stewardship continues to be prevalent for future generations to come. Your generosity provides financial support and shows the next generation of Native agriculturists that their work is valued and can positively impact regionally, nationally, and globally.





# THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDING FUNDERS



**FFAR**



**JOHN DEERE**

**FARMER  AC**



**FARM CREDIT**

**A special thanks to our Founding Funders. They are truly committed to the mission of TAF. Without their partnership, none of this could be possible.**



Pictured 2022  
TAFellows (L to R):  
Greta Gustafson,  
Justina Slim,  
Maddylon Burris,  
and, Gina  
McGuire



TRIBAL AGRICULTURE FELLOWSHIP

# GROWING LEADERS. CULTIVATING MINDS.

2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

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