

# Youth Leaders Built a Foundation for Change



Pictured is the newly seated 2017 NYFSA Board of Directors (left to right): Mariah Gladstone, Megan Forcia, Karli Moore, Zachary Ilbery, Cindy Farlee, Masewa Mody, Sha'Teal Pearman, Brennen Jones, Shelbi Fitzpatrick, Azelya Yazzie; Not Pictured: Angela Heay, Chance Crutcher

## Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance

**History.** Like their adult counterpart, American Indian Youth have limited access to information, resources, and venues to learn about opportunities in Indian Agriculture. Since 1987, the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) has become recognized as the most respected voice within the Indian community and government circles on agricultural policies and programs in Indian Country. Native youth are coming to the table more informed, more passionate and more prepared to bridge the age gap that exists in Indian Agriculture.

Two young leaders from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Sha'Teal Pearman and Rya LeBeau attended IAC's 2013 Membership Meeting and experienced a major shift in consciousness around Indian Agriculture which in turn had them rethinking their career paths and sparked a Youth in Ag movement. After attending the inaugural Youth Ag Summit in Fayetteville, Arkansas their resolve to create a forum for a Youth voice in Indian Agriculture was solidified. By the conclusion of the 2014 IAC Membership Meeting, the two had presented their idea to leadership, from which they received unanimous support in pursuing this new facet of Indian Agriculture.

Fast forward to the 2017 IAC Membership Meeting held at the Hard Rock Hotel & Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada; where the establishment of the Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance (NYFSA) was formalized with the seating of their first national Board of Directors. These 12 passionate, motivated leaders guided policy discussion to support the goals of the 80 youth in attendance, representing more than 35 tribes. The IAC has established a platform for the voice of Indian Agriculture's youth to forever be heard, after seating a voting representative upon their national Executive Board of Directors. You'll be able to follow the future of this organization at [www.indianaglink.com/youth](http://www.indianaglink.com/youth), and learn more about the organization's leadership below:

## **KARLI MOORE, LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

*Chairwoman, Eastern Region*

### **What do you advocate for in your community?**

In my tribal community, I advocate for increased educational opportunities by mentoring local students and practice civic engagement by managing a county-wide campaign. In my residential community (Fayetteville, AR), I work with various student organizations on campus to elevate the perspectives of marginalized communities.

### **How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I want to help craft a vision of economic, environmental and cultural renewal for my tribe and Indian Country. I'm a global thinker, and enjoy working with others on big-picture ideas. I see my role as building capacity and consensus as my expert colleagues see plans through completion.

### **In your free time, what do you like to do?**

I like to visit new places, far away and close to home. I like to learn more about God, my culture and other people. I enjoy walking outside (in warmer weather), talking to my family and watching documentaries.

### **Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

Thank you for giving this board your blessing. It is my desire to make you proud and contribute greatly to IAC as a whole.

## **AZELYA YAZZIE, BLACKFEET & NAVAJO**

*Vice Chairwoman, Pacific Region*

### **What do you advocate for in your community?**

In the community, I strongly advocate for more Native youth involvement in agriculture and community events. We should strive for all of our Native communities to be strong and healthy. I also advocate for sustainability and food sovereignty, I truly believe we are able to feed ourselves and improve our health. Lastly, I advocate for traditional foods because they are sacred and provide more nutrition than the foods we eat today.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I identified my role within supporting tribal food sovereignty by growing traditional corn, beans, and squash. Also, by starting my own Native youth outreach project that educates them about food sovereignty and the opportunities within agriculture. This also allows me to reach out to different Native American centers and reservations to help with their agriculture projects. I hope to foresee this role changing for the better in the upcoming years, such as getting more youth involved in tribal food sovereignty. I want to be involved more with tribes and help them achieve food sovereignty. I would like to gain as much exposure as I can and make myself useful to Native youth and tribes.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

During my free time I like to spend time with my family and enjoy the outdoors. I also love to garden and learn about new plants. Another hobby of mine is running and being physically active.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I am so grateful for this opportunity and excited to see what the NYFSA Board of Directors will accomplish!

**CINDY FARLEE, CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX**

*Vice Chairwoman, Southern Plains Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

Currently being away at school it is hard to be overly involved in much going on at home, but when I am back on break or even when I get the chance to on social media I am a huge advocate of higher education relative to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). I am a senior at Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) in Lawrence, Kansas and choosing to transfer there was the greatest “adult” decision I have made so far in my life. Our unique perspective and understanding as Indigenous peoples is the main focus that is taught there, regardless of degree specialty, and is taught mainly by other Indigenous scholars. The connection and support from the faculty, as well as the environment, made the biggest difference to me in my academic journey so I always steer prospective students towards HINU or other TCUs.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

Right now, as a student, I believe my role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty is being educated on it as much as I can so I can advocate for and educate others on the topic. As I continue my academic career and pursue my degrees further I plan on using my education as a tool to change law and policy so that it is more reflective of tribal needs.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

Family is extremely important to me and since I am in school right now and living states away from them, any time I can get with my family and friends at home is great. I also love to read, anything from court cases and

federal indian law reviews to magazines and fiction. Going to movies, singing, playing guitar, being outside and going to museums are additional favorite pastimes of mine. Right now though, one of my favorite things to do is research different Indian tribes in the United States and learn about their culture and history.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I am extremely grateful to have your support of the Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance Board and for the opportunity to be a representative. I look forward to the coming year and positive changes I am certain we will make!

**ZACHARY ILBERY, CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA**

*Voting Representative, Eastern Oklahoma Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

In my community I advocate about the Importance of youth in agriculture. Youth are a vital part of the future of the Agricultural Industry and I believe that if we can get them involved at a young age and grow their interest they will stay involved in the ag industry. While advocating for them I believe that the Agricultural Industry is more than just sows, plows, and cows, and I believe that we need to educate them on all of the sectors in the industry.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I have identified my role supporting tribal food sovereignty by advocating about what tribal food sovereignty is and how if we as a tribe can feed ourselves, and trade with other tribes, that all tribes in the nation could feed themselves and become food sovereign. In the future I can see my role being the same because we should all advocate for this effort, but also changing to take a more affirmative action.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

In my free time I enjoy surrounding myself by friends and family, being outdoors with cattle, during the summer spend time on the lake, and I always enjoy eating!

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

Thank you so much for your support in the Youth Board of Directors and allowing me to sit on your Executive Board. I am looking forward to a great year to come!

**CHANCE CRUTCHER, PAIUTE**

*Western Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

I advocate for the promotion of agriculture in my community by volunteering many hours to the farming industry in my area. I believe that introducing children to the importance of agriculture in everyday life can teach them to preserve and improve agriculture in the future. Through FFA and involvement with the IAC, I have been able to meet many successful tribal leaders from across the nation and I would like other Native American youth to have the same experiences and opportunities I have had.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I have identified my role in supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty by using my artistic abilities and agricultural background into integrating new concepts of advertisement and art techniques in to the overall promotion and sales of agricultural products, exclusively focusing on promoting Native American produced products. Our uniqueness as the Nation's first agriculturalist is too valuable to lose. I foresee this role changing in the coming year by becoming more involved with tribal leaders, introducing the new ideas and creative methods I have learned in my studies and try to improve my skills in ag-business.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

I like to spend my free time doing arts and crafts such as drawing, painting, and sculpting with clay. I also enjoy spending time with my animals especially my dogs and most of all my family. Recently, I've come to the realization that the time spent with loved ones is the most meaningful and special way to spend the limited time we have left in this world, due to the sudden loss of a very close relative and friend.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I would like to thank the IAC Executive Board for their time and dedication to this wonderful organization. There aren't many organizations that solely dedicate themselves to bettering the futures of Native people and I greatly appreciate the opportunity that the IAC has given me. I strongly believe the path they have put before us as Native youth in agriculture, will be followed by youth of all tribal nations for generations to come and it is our responsibility as youth board members to lead other Native youth on that same path provided to us by the IAC and all of the involved tribal leaders.

**ANGELA HEAY, CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF UMATILLA INDIAN RESERVATION**

*Northwest Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

I advocate for the health and well-being of my community. It is my number one priority to assist with helping my tribe journey toward self-sustainability and independence including: food sustainability, tribal housing, education, health, and businesses. I want to be part of changing my community for the better.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I grew up going to the mountains or valleys or canyons where my parents taught my siblings and I how to survive and the importance that the land brings to us native peoples. I hadn't decided what I really wanted to do until a few years ago, which is to create a more healthy and sustainable forest. It is important to keep our land healthy, our first foods healthy, our animals healthy because they'll give back in some way. In my area I feel that my tribe is losing sight of this and I want to help reawaken who we really are. Im beginning to start this task by continuing my education and working in interning/job opportunities that involve working with the forest or Native American First Foods.

In the upcoming years, I will have more experience and knowledge in the Agriculture and Forestry fields. It would be important to use that knowledge to teach the native youth of the future. I would like to see myself leading other youth in Agriculture and food sustainability practices by this time.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

Well, if it was gardening season I would be spending a lot of time in the garden. In the fall and winter months I am usually attending my siblings sports games. I like to go to the mountains for cruises or camping. I hike a lot in the warmer months. Go swimming or fishing on the Umatilla RIVER. I like to travel Oregon's scenic areas when I have the money. I go to pow wows and watch my siblings dance (I wish I knew how!). I love to have barbecues or get together with my friends. Right now I am taking a voluntary Master Gardeners training course so that I can be certified to teach others how to be Master Gardeners. Really excited about it!

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

Thank you for this opportunity! It means so very much to me. I was so surprised and excited when I was notified that I was on the board. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for the I.A.C. Youth Board and the future of farming in Indian Country.

**MEGAN FORCIA, BAD RIVER BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR OJIBWE**

*Midwest Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

In my community, I am an advocate for change through youth empowerment. All of our human infrastructures – from water, to energy, to food – will need to undergo a dramatic transformation in order to face the realities and uncertainties of climate change. It is my belief that the youth of today are responsible for the enormous task of understanding our current human infrastructures, recognizing their environmental and social impacts, and finding creative new ways of making our communities sustainable for the future of our species and the planet as we know it. In my conversations with young people in my community, I try to stress the fact that the situation we are in is not hopeless, and that they have the power to make change.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

When I first started college nearly four years ago, I often felt overwhelmed by the gravity of the problems faced by my community and around the world, and I struggled to understand my role. At that time, I couldn't have predicted that would end up in food sovereignty work, but looking back on my life the path that has led me here couldn't be clearer. Food sovereignty combines all of my passions – a healthy environment, a healthy community, and a healthy culture. My current role in food sovereignty is primarily as a student, taking every opportunity I can to learn more about agriculture, food, and tribal sovereignty. The IAC has played a tremendous role in helping me to pursue my passions and make a career in food sovereignty work. My experience volunteering at the regional youth summits and the national summit in Arkansas has opened many doors for me. I was offered a position working with the Healthy Foods Healthy Lives institute at the University of Minnesota helping to organize the 2018 Native American Nutrition Conference. So far it has been a great experience, and one that I plan to continue with after graduation this spring. I have realized how much work goes into gathering people together in order to have the important conversations we need in our communities, and I believe that more organizing work is in my future.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

As a full-time college student and a teacher's assistant, working two jobs and volunteering keeps me very busy and it is easy to get overwhelmed. It is important for me to spend my free time clearing my mind and focusing on my mental, emotional, and physical health. Meditation, exercise, and creating healthy meal plans is what I do to ensure that I have the necessary inner strength to accomplish my goals. I aspire to use more of my free time to study and practice Ojibwemowin (language).

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I work as an Organizing Apprentice for a native non-profit organization, Hempstead Project Heart, advocating for industrial hemp in tribal communities. I strongly believe that industrial hemp brings so much potential for tribal economic development, and can form the foundation of a new "green" economy in Indian Country. I am grateful for the opportunity to sit on the youth board with so many incredible and hard-working youth from across the country. Chi-Miigwech for all of your support. The future of Indian agriculture is in good hands thanks to all of your hard work.

**SHELBI FITZPATRICK, BLACKFEET**

*Rocky Mountain/Alaska Regions*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

When I first entered high school, I saw a need for acceptance, tolerance, and support for those who were not receiving it from their families or my school system. These students came from many different backgrounds - low-income families, poorly represented heritages, and mental and physical disorders. As a freshman, I created a safe haven for these students called H.O.P.E. (Helping Others and Providing Encouragement). With the schools boards permission and supervision, the students and I met once a week for snacks, discussion, and academic tutoring. Of the accommodations provided, snacks were always the first to go, making me aware of the

food disparities that my school and community faced. H.O.P.E dwindled as students from the group made friends with one another and started to improve in their academic fields. Before I became aware of the terms, “food sovereignty, food scarcity, food deserts,” I was being exposed to people who struggled with hunger and food-related health disease and illnesses. I unknowingly advocated for a multitude of adversities affecting my community then, and have since started learning the names of those adversities and their effects on communities.

The first mention of “food sovereignty” was heard when I was a Senior in high school at an Intertribal Agriculture Conference in Las Vegas, NV. I got involved with the IAC through my short, but life-changing experience in 4H. After going to the conference, I was hooked. I wanted to learn more about food sovereignty and how I could help my community. After being a student leader at the youth summit in Arkansas and meeting Janie Hipp, I knew I wanted to make my future somehow involve food and bettering tribal nations the country (essentially, being Janie Hipp). Since then, I’ve declared my major in Environmental Studies and Native American Studies at Dartmouth College. I am going to take the LSAT this coming fall, graduate in 2019, then head to law school. Throughout the course of my high school and college education, I’ve advocated for Native Success, specifically through education. I’ve spoken at the Vegas summit on the importance of education and how Native youth *must* use this as a tool to shape the future of Indian country. In addition, I am often the only indigenous person in the classroom at my college. As an Indigenous women, I find it imperative to spread the significance of food sovereignty in tribal nations in my environmental studies classes, and advocate for the education of non-Native’s to do their research about federal Indian law and policy and food.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

The most important thing to me is my family. It doesn’t matter what I am doing; If I’m with my family, I’m happy. If there is coffee and a good book involved - even better.

I enjoy listening to people’s stories and learning what makes up a person’s identity.

I honestly and full heartedly LOVE to learn. I don’t mind professor’s pilling on reading, especially if it is about federal Indian law and policy related.

I love to try new things, go on adventures to places I’ve never been, dance, fish, and camp.

**Is there anything else you’d like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I am grateful for the chance to sit on the first Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance Board and I am very excited to keep in touch the next couple of years!

**MARIAH GLADSTONE, CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA & BLACKFEET**

*Rocky Mountain/Alaska Regions*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

My advocacy is focused primarily on encouraging Native people to learn how to harvest, hunt, and prepare their traditional foods.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

By starting Indigikitchen, I've been working to provide information about traditional ingredients and teach cooking classes about how to prepare them. Idealistically, I'd like to continue this work by expanding and teaching/traveling full time. Recognizing that we have the capacity to feed ourselves is central to our ability to regain it.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

In my free time, I spend a lot of time outside. I enjoy kayaking, hunting, skiing, and hiking. Not only does this allow me to connect with my environment, but it reminds me of the importance of taking care of my physical body.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve my community and assist Native youth with the quest to regain food sovereignty.

**SHA'TEAL PEARMAN, CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX**

*Great Plains Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

I advocate to choose life. I am the founder of a non-profit organization called "Just Breathe Suicide Awareness Campaign." I bring awareness to the epidemic of suicide in our young people and campaign and raise funds to help support awareness activities and assemblies and provide scholarships to local seniors. I began my mission in 2015 after being personally affected by suicide twice within a year. To date I have provide over \$3500.00 in scholarships and sponsorships. Along with myself I have reached out to high school students to help promote awareness. My team of ambassadors help in my endeavors while I attend college, to provide valuable resources to our adolescents, fundraising efforts, aid in youth awareness activities as well as participate in several volunteer community projects.

"Just Breathe" was derived from all the emotions and how helpless one must feel while contemplating suicide. My mission is to let those know that are struggling within that moment that "Life goes on, just breathe, take a moment to be brave and believe in yourself, your pain is only temporary." It's time to step up so no one else feels like they have to step out.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

My role in supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty is to continue my education in Agricultural Business as well as Banking and Financial Services. I aspire to cultivate financial stability and provide resources for food sovereignty and food sustainability. In the future I would like to play a key role in Native American agricultural lending to work for an institution that is Native owned and operated specifically to secure lending and financial

training to Indigenous people so that we can build a strong economic community and opportunity for our Tribes, our Native people, our future and our next generation to thrive on their traditional values and culture.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

Being a fulltime college student with a part time job and plenty of homework, I don't see a lot of free time. I was raised with strong family values, so when I do, I like to return to my hometown to visit my family and attend hometown sporting games. I also meet with my non-profit ambassadors to facilitate upcoming awareness activities and fundraisers.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I would like to say, "Thank You!" Thank you for the life changing opportunities IAC has provided me during the last 4 years. You have empowered me to further my education in agriculture by creating access to valuable resources and educational tools in food sustainability and food sovereignty. You have planted a seed that I want to continue to grow and cultivate into a viable and thriving economical asset to our Tribes and Indigenous people. By investing in me, IAC has invested in its next generation so together we can build a financially sustainable future for many generations to come.

**MASEWA MODY, COCHITI PUEBLO**

*Southwest Region*

**What do you advocate for in your community?**

In my community I advocate the importance of learning our culture. Our culture is the very essence of who we are and where we come from. Through my culture I can advocate agriculture. Agriculture plays a very important role in a variety of cultures. Making a greater connection between agriculture and our own culture will help lead us in the direction of food sovereignty.

**How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

I have identified my role within supporting Tribal Food sovereignty by advocating agriculture and the Farm Bill to tribal leaders in my community and the surrounding communities. Informing our tribal leaders about the importance of agriculture is a role I enjoy and hope to continue.

**In your free time, what do you like to do?**

In my free time I like to make traditional crafts, visit our local offices during the day to see what programs are currently doing, driving through the community, and surrounding land, and of course visiting with family and friends.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

In the hopes of moving forward as a community and I a nation I cannot wait to see what these next two years hold for each and everyone one of us.

## **BRENNEN JONES, NAVAJO**

*Navajo Region*

### **What do you advocate for in your community?**

I advocate for my community is how important agriculture reflects and defines our people. I want to emphasize the importance of agriculture by targeting the youth because they are our future. In ties with agriculture I also want to stress the importance of land management in taking care of livestock.

### **How have you identified your role within supporting Tribal Food Sovereignty? How do you foresee this role changing in the coming years?**

When I attended my first IAC conference in Las Vegas as a youth it made me feel like I had a role to fulfill in educating the youth back at home. Although I didn't know what the full definition of "food sovereignty" meant until my first semester in college. By attending various camps, it has helped equipped me with the knowledge I can apply back at home. In the future I see myself becoming ever more knowledgeable in Indian AG.

### **In your free time, what do you like to do?**

In my free time I am either examining the anatomy of a horse or watching surgery videos performed on dogs.

### **Is there anything else you'd like to share with the IAC Executive Board?**

I would like to say thank you for this amazing opportunity for letting me sit as a representative on the board. It is an honor to work with such an amazing organization that has not only brought together people, but give opportunities to such talented natives.