

Indian College Student of the Year: Sharen Kicking Woman

Sharen Kicking Woman (Siks Awakasi Akaa, Black Tail Deer Woman & Sooksistsi Koo Akaa, Cloud Woman), is Blackfeet and Gros Ventre. Her parents are Kevin & Joni Kicking Woman. Sharen is from Missoula and currently resides in California and attends Stanford University. Sharen graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology in 2016 and is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies. She will graduate this June. Sharen manages to maintain a full course schedule, work and serves as a volunteer while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

As her nominator wrote, "Sharen is an example of what hard work, determination, and dedication can accomplish. She sets a standard of excellence we all can aspire to." Sharen is an outstanding young native leader. Her excellence in her academic and professional pursuits is evidenced by the many opportunities she has been afforded while attending Stanford University. Sharen is a leader for the Native community at Stanford and has held many leadership positions such as being the chair of the Stanford Pow wow, serving as a mentor and conducting community outreach for the Native American Cultural Center, and leading committees for current students and alumni of Stanford University. She also continues to tutor and mentor students in the Phoenix Scholars program where she assists low income, minority and disadvantaged students in their studies.

Recently, Sharen had the opportunity to lead a student group from Stanford to participate in the movement at Standing Rock to protect the water and rights. Her group raised approximately fifteen thousand dollars for the cause. Because of her efforts, Sharen was able to attend the Native Nations March in Washington, DC.

As her nominator wrote, "What is most impressive about Sharen is that she is such a strong cultural advocate for her community, and she never fails to remain the same, strong-minded, Native woman. No matter what context she inhabits or what course she is in, she always thinks critically and voices her opinion and she finds a way to balance her culture with the world of academia- which sometimes feels like walking in two separate worlds. She manages to create spaces for all Native students to feel safe, included and like they are making a difference in the world. Sharen deserves this recognition for so many reasons, but most importantly she deserves it not because of what she has done thus far in her life (no matter how remarkable) but because of who she is on a daily basis. She is humble. She lifts up her friends, her peers, her classmates and her colleagues. She finds the time to spotlight others and help them to achieve their goals. She brings attention to indigenous issues and she takes every opportunity to share what she knows, pursue her passions, and constantly grow her own skills through her love of people.

The Associate Dean of the Native American Cultural Center wrote, "Sharen is blessed with an endearing sense of humor, real humility, intellectual curiosity, cultural vitality, integrity, and the kind of grit and grace that will enrich all she engages for generations to come. Sharen is a true facilitator of change. I can't think of a better candidate to honor."