

Indian Support Staff: Turquoise Devereaux

Turquoise Devereaux is Salish and Blackfeet. She is currently employed at the University of Montana as the American Indian Student Services Program Coordinator.

In her professional role, Turquoise has always acted with dignity and respect even in stressful and demanding situations. She has been welcoming to all students who enter her office. She treats all students and colleagues with genuine respect and compassion.

One of the most notable projects Turquoise has undertaken is to better understand the experiences of the university's Native students. Upon completing her research, she developed presentations to disseminate her findings. She also developed professional development workshops for creating more inclusive classrooms. In addition to creating a more welcoming environment for the students she is in direct contact with, her workshops also function to create a more welcoming climate across the university campus for all Native students and people of color.

Turquoise is a great support to UM American Indian students and student clubs. She quickly learned how to advocate for students with common problems they face with financial aid issues such as maximum credits; managing grief, loss, and homesickness; managing experiences with tokenism and marginalization in the classroom; maintaining connections to culture (such as beading circles); activism (such as an educational event on the UM oval for students coping with their experiences when returning from Standing Rock water protector experiences); supporting the AISS mentors and mentees with the daily management of the office and weekly social events to build a sense of community; and has taken on advising student clubs (American Indian Business Leaders) and mentoring student club leaders (such as Kyiyo Pow Wow student leaders that needed extra support in managing Caucasian volunteers for the event). Regardless of what Turquoise is carrying personally she always greets students, staff, faculty, and administrators with a welcoming, warm, resilient, and joyful presence.

Turquoise has become just the leader that UM needed and has grown into someone that exemplifies the Indian Support Staff of the Year.