

CCV Undergraduate Attends NIH Visit Week for Native American Students

This past July, the National Institutes of Health held its annual NIH Visit Week for Native American students. The week is a summer enrichment program designed to expose First Nation students to the NIH biomedical research, and healthcare careers. To attend, Native students throughout the country are nominated and apply for the program. Welcomed are rising high school seniors, students enrolled in Tribal colleges, and undergraduate college students at all levels. Nine students were chosen for this year.

I feel thankful to have been accepted and through the generous support of Vermont Genetics Network, I received the funding to go. It was a full, stimulating, educational, and rewarding week.

I am a registered member of the federally recognized tribe- Delaware Tribe of Indians. My Lenape (Delaware) father was a scientist for Johns Hopkins University. While completing my first degree at NYU in New York City, I lived within the American Indian Community House for 6 years. Elders there nudged me over time into what has become my current field. I am a complementary alternative medicine (CAM) practitioner. Working inside the field since 1998, I began working primarily on medical cases within a team approach starting in 2008. I am also a 2016 recipient of a VT-EPSCoR Native American Scholarship that was awarded in August 2016.

For me, the NIH, allopathic collaboration, and working with Native colleagues is a good match. All of the modalities I work in are based in the basic Native principle that a good medicine practitioner does not use intuition, but cultivates the ability to listen deeply, and focus on effective proven methodologies. I am uncomfortable with what I see happening in the current CAM community. I am more comfortable working inside of the allopathic and STEM community, as they closely resemble what I see in traditional teachings of Lenape, Lakota, and Mohawk tribes.

I am currently pursuing a second degree in STEM from CCV with hopes to get my PhD in the future. My career objective is to focus on research and bring new and sound approaches to research in CAM medicine.

In moving along this path, visiting the NIH this summer was a truly supportive and invigorating week. The curriculum included- NIH Clinical Center tour; extensive library tour and briefing on the NIH; meetings with many different program heads; science career workshops; interactions in selected NIH laboratories and clinical research settings; professional networking; briefing about NIH internship opportunities; attending the graduate school fair and meeting with other Natives in different positions at the NIH and in the government.

I have a lot of special highlights from the trip. I really enjoyed getting to know other fellow Native American science majors- coming from Hawaii, South Dakota, Arizona, Texas, and California. I was impressed by the NIH's firm commitment in developing the personal and professional life of those they mentor, educate, and employ. It was inspiring to hear how doctors often commented that they felt they had landed their dream job. It was great to meet the doctors behind research I had just read about and to hear interesting backstories. A theme I repeatedly heard was the twisting paths that individuals took to their current path and the importance of multiple mentors.

I did feel sad when the week was complete and with the realization that I am not at the point in my career to apply to work/study down at the NIH. I have since joined NRMN (a mentoring program to diversify the biomedical workforce) and AISES (Amercian Indian Science and

Engineering Society). As I am interested in getting my PhD, my NIH mentor has encouraged me to think about doing a pre doc- securing an extramural NIH diversity supplement grant, onto an existing research grant at a host University.

In conclusion, I would highly recommend visiting the NIH at NIH.gov. They have some great opportunities on campus and extramurally.

Bridget Kimsey E-RYT, LCMT, MMP, has been in the healing arts and sciences for about 20 years. She holds credentials in yoga, massage, medical massage, Reiki, and physics based energy medicine work. She currently has her private practice at Timberlane Medical Center and works with different organizations including UVM and the Vermont Dept. of Health. For more information or questions, please visit www.bridgetkimsey.vpweb.com



Photo - Bridget Kimsey CCV undergraduate - Recipient of a VT EPSCoR Native American Scholarship Award presented to her by former secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development Patricia Moulton. Bridget is 1 of 9 students nationally to attend the 2016 National Institutes of Health annual NIH Visit Week for Native American students.