



National Congress of American Indians **Miss NCAI**



Brooke Grant
Miss National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) 2005-2006
Hoop Valley Tribe
University of California, Davis

I am honored that I have been chosen as Miss NCAI 2006 and look forward to the year ahead when I can use my platform, Native American education, to ensure a better future for Indian Country.

The Native American community is often forgotten and seemingly always stereotyped. On top of this, there is a lack of direction for much of the Native American youth. For these reasons, I find that it is my responsibility to step up to the plate and give a voice to encourage others in the Native American community to familiarize themselves with these issues as well as others affecting the greater community and become active politically to assist in making a change.

There are several aspects regarding Native American education that I believe can be improved. Perhaps the greatest area to be improved is the turn around rate of graduating high school seniors seeking postgraduate schooling; whether the schooling is at a college, junior college, university or vocational college. At a time when unemployment is so common, it is necessary to pursue a post-graduate education in order to be a qualified applicant within a competitive job market.

There is great demand for employment across the board in Indian Country and a rise in employment will translate into higher morale, integrity and personal accomplishments of Native students and community members.

Before turn around rates can increase, there must be an improvement in the self-confidence levels of elementary and high school students. More often than not, students lack the confidence in themselves to be bold enough to pursue a post-high school education.

Kids often feel most comfortable being on the reservation and seem to never really attain enough confidence to be able to leave and pursue and education elsewhere.

Most recently this has become a more pressing issue as the job market has become very tight for those without some sort of postsecondary education. I will advocate for the development of classes on reservations and in tribal communities that will help prepare students for post-secondary programs and assist the students in building qualities of independence and confidence.

At home in California, I have watched brilliant and active kids waste a dream because of a lack of direction, confidence and resources. Those are the kids I want to help and give a voice to. I have taken the leap into higher education and as Miss NCAI, I wish to motivate others to do the same.