

## Miss NCAI 2002-2003

### **Karen-Irene Serna, Miss National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)**

She is a 20-year-old bi-racial student at South Mountain Community College, located in Phoenix, AZ where she is striving towards an AA in English. She is a Hispanic and Maricopa Indian member of the Gila River Indian Community. She is the youngest of six children to Aurelio and Karen Serna. She resides in the sixth district (Gila Crossing Village/Komatke) of the Gila River Indian Community.



She has an extended family in what is known as "Maricopa Colony, District Seven" in the Gila River Indian Community. Her maternal family names are Sundust, which is her mother's maiden name, Yarmata, Stevens, and Redbird. Her relatives are also renowned Maricopa Pottery makers, by the names of Phyllis Cerna, and Ida Redbird. Her paternal extended family resides in Chihuahua, Mexico from the Soto and Dorame family.

Karen holds the titles of: Miss National Congress of American Indians 2002-2003, Miss Gila River 2002-2003, Miss Indian Arizona First Attendant 2002-2003, Miss Gila River First Attendant 2001-2002. Karen is second women, and first Maricopa Indian from Gila River Indian Community to hold the title as Miss NCAI.

Karen also has an extensive academic background:

From 1990-1998, she was placed on the Laveen Elementary School Honor Roll and Principal's list. In 1998 she was awarded the United States Presidential Award for Academic Excellence from former United States President Bill Clinton. She was also awarded the Tele-Communications Outstanding Native American Student Award.

She is a graduate of Estrella Mountain High School where she received recognition as Senior Class President 2000-2001 and Estrella Mountain Outstanding Health, Science, Social Studies and English student.

She also worked and continues to volunteer time at the Gila River Boys and Girls Club of the East Valley, Komatke Branch as a "teen leader" where I she worked with children from age six through thirteen. She was also recognized for her efforts as a teen leader by receiving "teen all-star" award from the Boys and Girls Club, Komatke branch.

Karen also works diligently to promote cultural awareness and understanding within Indian country by performing and educating others about the rich culture of her ancestors. She enjoys performing bird dances, and storytelling.

Her platform for this year is: "Maintaining a Cultural Identity in Contemporary America"