

SPECIAL SHOUTOUT TO OUR 2024 STUDENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

By Apryl Little



Teidyn Gage

is a Hillman scholar and a senior graduating with a degree in Sociology and a minor in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Teidyn volunteers with the VOICE Center and serves on the ASMSU VOICE Center Committee. Their research in the Sociology of Trauma has informed their future life path as they pursue a master's degree in mental health counseling. Teidyn is passionate about people and cultivating relationships and connection with others. They intend to become a relational therapist with more schooling and give people the space to feel safe and cared for while making change in their lives.



Maleeya Knows His Gun

is a proud member of the Crow and Northern Cheyenne tribes of Montana and will graduate in December with a degree in American Studies and minor in Native American Studies. Maleeya has served as the co-president of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Persons student organization and has coordinated No More Stolen Sisters Awareness basketball games through Bobcat Athletics. She has been instrumental in planning MMIP Awareness Day and uses her platform as Miss Indian MSU to highlight this issue. Maleeya's Awards include an NAS Voyich Community Involvement Award and a National Collegiate Marketing Administrators Unity Award. Maleeya is excited to continue to serve her community after graduation and to "make waves" around the world for future generations.



Anja Lincke

is from Alaska and will graduate in May with a degree in Sociology and a Leadership Fellows Certificate. Anja serves as a Student Diversity Advisor through ASMSU where they chaired a DEI committee tasked with collaborating DEI efforts across campus. They worked as a trip leader of multiple single and multi-day trips through MSU's Outdoor Recreation Program where they integrated leave no trace principles, storytelling and Indigenous history. Anja is currently investigating ways to improve a sense of belonging for women and non-binary students and faculty in STEM. Anja will be graduating with an incredibly impressive GPA and hopes to continue to make changes that affect the world of STEM.



Suzanne Loviska

is a senior in Psychology with a minor in International Business. She will graduate in May and appreciates her exposure to a diverse range of cultures, perspectives and backgrounds broadening her understanding of global issues and fueling her passion for social change. Her volunteer and student staff work at the VOICE Center and membership in Women in Business have combined to help her find effective ways to raise awareness and hopefully have an impact on social change. Dedicated to immersing herself in male-dominated spaces to break stereotypes, Suzanne hopes that she will have an influence on a growing appreciation of diverse perspectives. After graduation, Suzanne has decided to join the Peace Corps to assist in communities all over the world.

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Rhianna Merriman

is from Anchorage, Alaska and will graduate in May with a degree in Cell Biology and Neuroscience. Rio serves as an American Indian Hall Volunteer Tutor and a Pre-Health Advising Peer Tutor. Her work with the MSU VOICE Center and their Survivor Fund quickly helped her realize the importance and positive impact this assistance can have on those experiencing interpersonal violence and trauma. Rio will attend medical school and hopes to become the best physician possible to serve her community. Rhianna will be graduating with an excellent GPA and will return to Alaska to eventually practice as a physician and help her community.



Hope McWilliams

is studying Cell Biology and Neuroscience with a minor in Astrobiology and will graduate in May. She has been very active as an advocate with the VOICE Center and a Board member of the Survivor Fund. Her work as a Board Member for We Are HER and as a Students Against Sexual Assault member has fueled her passion for being both an advocate for survivors and a voice for change in systems that often overlook survivors of interpersonal violence. Hope has also volunteered in multiple departments at Bozeman Deaconess in preparation for attending medical school. Hope is passionate about the patient first medical model and hopes to practice with compassion as well as knowledge to help disprove some of the stereotypes attached to women's healthcare.



Carson Putnam

will graduate in May with a degree in Psychology. His tenure at the MSU VOICE Center as an advocate and peer mentor, his work with Hope House and Forward Montana and with the Human Resource Development Council cleaning the Warming Center have all helped Carson recognize his privilege. He hopes to leverage this privilege to raise awareness around disenfranchised people and have a positive impact on the Bozeman community. Carson also plays in local jazz and rock bands and hopes to create a safe and inclusive moshing environment for all. Carson hopes to continue fostering inclusion in the Bozeman area after graduating as well as making a positive impact wherever the future takes him.

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Miller Rijkogel

will graduate in May with a degree in Psychology and Criminology. Miller has been active working with the MSU VOICE Center and Students Against Sexual Assault as a volunteer advocate and student staff member. They co-founded the Disabled Students Association at MSU in 2023 and currently serve as President. Miller is an ASMSU At-large Senator and sits on the Diversity Council. They plan to continue at MSU (with June, of course!) to study forensics in hopes to bring more disability and queer representation into the field.



Oz Smith

will graduate on May 10th with a degree in Sociology. Oz is from Bozeman and has been instrumental in planning and executing pop-up events for the Trans Closet project, a mutual aid organization that provides free gender-affirming clothing for trans folks. They have worked with Pride House to mentor LGBTQ+ youth and presented programs on queer and disabled sexual health with the Oh-Hi Collective. Oz is working to develop a comprehensive LGBTQ+ resource list for the Bozeman area in collaboration with Bridgercare and to help trans youth and their families connect with peers and gender affirming medical providers. Oz will be attending graduate school after graduating undergrad and hopes to continue to serve under-resourced communities in the future.



Kass Thompson

will graduate this month with a degree in Cell Biology and Neuroscience and a minor in Hispanic Studies and Global Health. She has been very active as a Senior Associate with MSU's Leadership Institute throughout her college career and has most recently co-founded and serves as the Executive Director of English Para Todos, teaching English as a Foreign Language to Spanish speaking immigrants new to the Gallatin Valley. Kass is also a volunteer with the VOICE center, and is a member of both Students Against Sexual Assault and the VOICE Center's Survivor Board. After graduation, Kass plans to continue working in the nonprofit sector and promoting change and support for her community.

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Maya Usher

is majoring in both Psychology and Sociology with a Criminology Emphasis and a minor in Human Development; she will graduate in May. Maya has been busy as a volunteer with several community organizations, including as a CAP mentor with Thrive and a Support Line volunteer with Haven. At MSU, Maya has worked with Project Connect as a Peer Facilitator, the Pre Law Club, the Asian Student Interracial Association, the Active Minds Club and the Disabled Student Association. Upon graduation, Maya will head to Denver to obtain her Master's Degree in Social Work. Maya will be graduating with an extraordinary GPA and will be attending graduate school at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work.



Emma Veldhuis

is from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, and is studying Computer Science. When she graduates in May, she will start a position with SPS Commerce in Minneapolis as an associate software engineer. She served as president of Chi Omega from Fall of 2021-Fall of 2022 where she was able to define the role of our chapter's Diversity Equity and inclusion chair. Emma has been a part of several Bozeman community service projects as well as fundraising for organizations like Make-A-Wish Montana. She is also active in MSU co-curriculars most notably Cats for Community and the Association for Women in Computing. Emma will be graduating Magna cum laude with a very impressive GPA.



Cheyenne Whiteman

is studying Nursing and will complete her undergraduate degree in May. Cheyenne has been extremely busy making a difference in her field by volunteering with the Caring for Our Own Program, the American Indian Council, the Mobile Health Training Program and Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health. As a member of the Crow Nation and Miss Indian MSU, Cheyenne values her work as a Native Pathways to Success Leader, a Tutor at the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Center and her work with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons. Eventually, Cheyenne will pursue a PhD in Rural Health. Upon graduation, Cheyenne plans to return to the Crow Reservation and work as a RN in her community before returning to MSU to become a Family Nurse Practitioner.

GOOD-BYE, SO LONG, FAREWELL! WOMEN'S CENTER STAFFER, MADELINE CONRAD



When I was asked to write a goodbye letter to MSU, I didn't even know where to start. I've had so many experiences, both good and bad. I experienced the first day of school nerves, getting to my classes forty minutes early, just in case I couldn't find them. I've experienced the uncertainty of making friends, unsure of how to act, and overwhelmed with "oh my god do they hate me now?" thoughts. There was the time I lived off ramen and cheap food, or the times I stayed up all night. Through my time at MSU, I've made many mistakes but also grew significantly because of them. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that everything does work out. As I battled rough classes, friendships, romantic relationships, and academia, I've faced many disappointments. I would think the world was going to end, and that I wouldn't be able to go on. But life did keep on going. I realized things that seem big in the moment aren't earth-shattering, and everything will turn out okay.

In those intense moments, I've realized the importance of the people around you. From the friends we cling to in freshman year to the meaningful relationships that develop over time, they've been my support through every challenge, making me laugh, smile, or even baking me brownies. The people you surround yourself with, the ones you can talk to about anything, are essential in getting through college and beyond. You need to learn how to accept those people and be there for them, a skill I'm still honing.

Throughout college, I've worn many hats: the diligent A+ student, the research scientist, a preschool teacher, non-profit worker, and staff member at the awesome Women's Center. Initially, I thought I wanted to be a professional research scientist, mostly because I once aspired to be a pediatrician until I realized I didn't like medicine or kids. But as I went through college and explored different roles, I slowly discovered my true calling. I've learned to take chances and explore new opportunities, which have shaped my career aspirations and personal growth.

As I finish up the semester, my plans are to work in a preschool and pursue graduate school in Elementary Education. While I'm uncertain where this path will ultimately lead, I'm open to where life may take me. What I am sure about is that I'm going to keep the lessons I've learned at MSU with me for the rest of my life.

DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

By Apryl Little

We would like to invite you to observe Missing and Murdered Indigenous People's Awareness Day (MMIP) and learn a little about the history and contributions of this impactful day. It is crucial that we continue to recognize the tragic history of violence against Indigenous people and use these stories to take action against the continued, targeted violence. I encourage readers to use May 5th as a time to learn about and remember the stories of women like Hanna Harris, Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, Ashley Loring HeavyRunner, and the estimated 5,712 Indigenous women missing in the United States.

The History of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Day:

May 5th was officially recognized by the White House in 2019 as a day of recognition for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This day holds a significant meaning as it is the birthday of Hanna Harris, a 21 year-old Indigenous woman who was raped and murdered on July 5th, 2013. When her family reported her missing, there was little help from law enforcement and no clear jurisdiction over the case with tribal and local police. Hanna Harris' is one of the countless stories surrounding the violence committed against Indigenous women, children and men as well as the cracks these cases seem to occupy jurisdiction wise.

The Devastating Reality of Violence Against Indigenous People:

Despite making up only about 2% of the population, Indigenous women and girls experience disproportionately high rates of violence, including homicide, domestic violence, and missing person cases. The horrific reality is that 4 out of 5 Indigenous women have experienced violence in their lifetime, this is over twice the national average. These statistics highlight the urgent need for action to address the factors contributing to the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women as well as Indigenous people as a whole. It is not by chance that Indigenous women are the target of so much violence; issues like historical trauma and prejudice, poverty, institutional racism, and a lack of comprehensive, effective resources put Indigenous women and girls at greater risk than most of the US population. Murder is the third leading cause of death for Indigenous women. This is a devastating number when considering that murder isn't even in the top ten leading causes of death for the rest of the population. The disparities in reporting and investigating the violence against and murder of Indigenous women and girls calls for an extensive reform of the criminal justice system as well as databases responsible for tracking missing people.

It's important to understand the history of violence against Indigenous people to better understand the reality of what's happening today. The enduring burden colonialism has left with Indigenous communities, including stereotyping of Indigenous people, poverty and lack of resources exacerbate the violence and creates a system that leaves Indigenous women and girls as targets. A fantastic resource on MMIWG is nativehope.org which explores the connection between historical trauma and the violence against Indigenous women today. "Pre-colonization, Native societies traditionally revered and honored the sacredness of women...European colonists with patriarchal views took the women as slaves to their men. Soon, Native women had been victims of rape, violence, and submission. This mistreatment can be traced throughout America's history...Now, when a Native woman is reported missing, these negative stereotypes hinder the search process. Law enforcement tends to turn a blind eye, fail to take reports seriously, and do little to assist. The media rarely picks up these stories and if they do, there is normally a negative spin on the story making the victim seem at fault." (NativeHope.org). Learning about and addressing these underlying factors is crucial to achieving justice and ensuring the safety of Indigenous women and girls.

To make an already challenging situation worse, the jurisdiction around crimes against Indigenous people is complex and archaic. Overlapping jurisdictions between tribal, federal, county and state law enforcement agencies often lead to confusion or the handing off of responsibility causing delays in responses to crimes. Tribal police often lack resources, funding, and authority to investigate crimes, while federal and state law enforcement have skewed laws about jurisdiction that essentially leave loopholes violent criminals can slip right through. This is made possible by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in 1978 with *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*; the court ruled tribal courts do not have jurisdiction over non-Indigenous people who commit crimes on tribal land. Because local and state law enforcement also face jurisdictional issues investigating crimes committed on tribal land, this leaves a huge blind spot for non-Indigenous people to commit crimes against Indigenous people and get away with it. The courts did attempt to fix this loophole by passing Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a law that allows tribal lands to prosecute crimes committed on tribal lands by non-Indigenous people in certain cases such as domestic violence or sexual assault. The concern is that VAWA did not provide tribal police with additional resources to be able to adjudicate cases of violence against women and girls.

The National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG or MMIP), is meant to serve as a day of reflection, a reminder of the lack of justice for Indigenous citizens, the epidemic of violence plaguing Indigenous communities, but it is also a chance to gather together to start the healing process. Reform is desperately and urgently needed. We must begin to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous people and recognize the roles that racism, colonialism and misogyny play in this violence.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Friday, May 3rd, 9 am -2 pm

MMIP Awareness Day Events at MSU

- There are several events throughout the day:
- **9am - Self Guided Exhibit “MMIP honors MMIW”**
 - Great Hall, American Indian Hall
- **11am - Voices of Humanity and Hope**
 - Great Hall, American Indian Hall
- **12pm - Prayer Walk**
 - Starts and end on Sunrise Plaza, American Indian Hall
- **12:20pm - Healing Dance**
 - Sunrise Plaza, American Indian Hall
- **1pm - Community Feed**
 - Great Hall, American Indian Hall

May 5th-

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Day (MMIWG)

- Learn More Here: [Native Hope](#)

May 8th- 4-6P.M. SUB Procrastinator/Leigh Lounge

DISC Multicultural Graduation Ceremony

- Hosted by the DISC, RSVP on Cats Connect

May 9th- 4-6P.M. SUB Procrastinator Theater

Lavender Graduation Celebration Ceremony

- Hosted by the Diversity and Inclusions Commons
- A celebration of LGBTQ+ and Ally Students Graduating

May 10th

MSU Graduation!!

May 27th- June 2nd

Bozeman Pride

- Learn more here: [Bozeman Pride Instagram](#)

July 28th- August 4th

Montana Pride

- Learn more here: [Montana Pride Facebook](#)

National Day of Awareness for
**MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

May 3, 2024

9:00am Self Guided Exhibit:

“MMIP honors MMIW”

Just Indigenous Corporate Services & families
Great Hall, American Indian Hall

11:00am Voices of Humanity & Hope:

Buffalo Women’s Society
Great Hall, American Indian Hall

12:00pm Prayer Walk

Start and end on Sunrise Plaza,
American Indian Hall

12:20pm Healing Dance

Sunrise Plaza, American Indian Hall

1:00pm Community Feed

Great Hall, American Indian Hall

‘Our Humanity & Our Hope’



PENNY RONNING'S HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRAINING

By Megan Matteoli

On Tuesday, April 2nd, The HEART Initiative, MSU Women's Center and Dean of Students hosted the co-founder of Yellowstone Human Trafficking Task Force, Penny Ronning. Penny spoke about her mother's experience being a survivor of human trafficking as a very young child and the lifetime consequences she faced because of this. Penny learned early in life the ways in which trauma impacts families and how victims of childhood abuse live with the painful ramifications throughout their lives. During her years as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for abused and neglected children (CASA), Penny again saw firsthand the impacts of sexual exploitation and violence on children.

During her training, Penny provided many disturbing statistics on human trafficking in Montana. One of these is the fact that a 14-year-old girl who is imprisoned and trafficked can sell for \$900 an hour in Billings. Penny explained that those who may be most vulnerable to becoming human trafficking victims are foster youth, LGBTQ+ identified youth, those involved with drugs, who are homeless, or have a history of trauma. Penny also discussed the advent of so called "massage parlors" in Montana-- especially in Billings where she noted the number of massage parlors in earlier decades was alarming. Most of them housed Asian women who were brought to the U.S. under false pretenses, spoke no English and had no way to escape or resources to turn to. She also noted that the state of Montana currently has two investigators who work on the hundreds of cases brought to their attention each year. These dedicated professionals are over-worked and need assistance in helping identify and stop cases of trafficking in our state.

An important component of human trafficking that Penny explained in her training was that children and teens are trafficked most frequently by family members, peers, and family acquaintances and later in life by romantic partners.

Some signs YOU can look out for to spot potential incidences of trafficking include:

- A person inappropriately dressed for stated work or weather
- A person with multiple cell phones
- Children/adolescents traveling with an older companion who does not seem to be a parent or guardian
- A child, teen or adult who doesn't speak for themselves/has a person answering for them in a controlling manner
- Someone with very few personal possessions (checking into a hotel/motel with no luggage, etc.)
- Someone who lacks their own form of ID (and companion is holding it for them)
- Someone who seems afraid

If you suspect you see a potential human trafficking situation, please report it to (833) 406-STOP or 406STOP.com.

You may also contact FBI Special Agent Brandon Walter at (406) 254-8117. Additional local resources for victims/survivors are **Haven at (406) 586-4111 and Bozeman Help Center at (406) 587-7511.** If you would like to become involved in The HEART Initiative, **email theheartinitiative406@gmail.com.**

Women's Center Library Book of the Month

By Apryl Little

Search for Savanna: The Murder of one Native American Woman and the Violence Against Many by Mona Gable is a compelling exploration of the tragic disappearance and murder of Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a young Indigenous woman whose case drew national attention. Through meticulous research and heartfelt storytelling, Gable examines the broader context of violence against Indigenous women and the systemic issues contributing to this crisis.

The book delves into the complexities of Savanna's case, revealing how it reflects a pattern of violence and neglect that has long plagued Native American communities. Gable gives voice to those who are often unheard, weaving personal stories with a broader discussion on justice, culture, and resilience. This book is an essential read for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Month, as it not only brings awareness to a single tragic event but also sheds light on the wider epidemic of violence that continues to impact Indigenous peoples. It serves as a call to action for justice and systemic change, making it a meaningful addition to any discussion on this critical issue. The Geraldine Fenn Memorial Library in the Women's Center has a copy of this fantastic book available for checkout as well as many other amazing books about MMIP as well as a variety of other topics.