

Meet Miss Indian Nations

Contributed by Ponka-We Victors/Cher Thomas
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Greetings! My Name is Ponka-We Victors and I'm a proud member of the Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona and the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma. Currently, I am attending Wichita State University in Wichita, KS completing my Masters degree in Public Administration with an emphasis in Policy. In addition, I have received a Bachelors Degree in Biology from Newman University.

Throughout my educational career, I have taken full advantage of all the learning I possibly can which has lead me to be involved with many programs that aid my career plans and goals.

During the summer of 2004, I was selected to attend the University of Kansas Medical School: Health Care and Pathways program. This was an opportunity to shadow doctors on their daily routines and to prepare students with the fast paced world of medicine for minority areas. I have applied this program to my own perceptions in regards to the Indian Health Services.

Throughout my life I have observed the obvious need of improving Indian Health Care Service's policies and procedures for our native people. As opposed to complaining about the system, I want to become involved and help find solutions to the problems. I feel responsible in being apart of developing and implementing new policies that would begin to restructure a new and improved Indian Health Service program. In taking my aspirations to develop a better Indian Health Service a step further, I would love to have the opportunity to lobby in Congress for significant changes related to our Indian health care policies as well as other concerns facing Native people. Growing up in a traditional family has allowed me several opportunities to serve as ambassador for numerous tribal nations, organizations, celebrations, and families. Now as a young woman, my responsibilities are to stand as living proof that today's Native American woman can pursue the achievement of any goal.

There are many things that I hold close to my heart such as religion, family, traditions, education, and dreams. It is these virtues that give me the faith and encouragement that I need to strive for success in all that I accomplish.

Interview conducted by Cher Thomas.

What inspired you to run for this title?

The first time I attended the United Tribes Celebration in Bismarck, ND and witnessed the crowning of Miss Indian Nations I A.J. Gillete. Since then I've aspired to achieve that dream. Also, because it's one of the only National Scholarship Titles in Indian Country.

What did you do to prepare for the pageant?

First I turned toward my spirituality and then I concentrated on my traditional values and prepared myself by reading up on all of our Native/non Native issues. Also, I talked alot with our Native youth and elders for guidance.

What is your favorite memory from the pageant/preliminaries?

The girls were all great and down to earth. There was no tension between us which made the pageant fun.

What was your talent for the pageant?

Traditional Song and Stories

What trick do you have for getting over nervousness or stage fright?

Being on stage has always been easy for me. It has always come natural for me to just go for it lol. It's your time to shine!

Who did you thank in your acceptance speech?

Our Creator, The Miss Indian Nations Committee, family, friends, and the people who never thought I would make it this far. They are the ones that challenge me the most.

What is your platform/goal this year?

To convince one youth to stay in school and dare to dream. Also, to be a role model to somebody, we need strong Native women to be mentors.

What events are you going to be attending throughout your reign?

It's whatever my committee selects for me which includes powwows, schools, and conferences. For example, next week I will be in Alaska for the National Indian Education Association conference.

Why do you think pageants are important to Native Americans?

Our young Native women need to see role models. It helps to build our self esteem and confidence about who we are, where we have been, and where we are going in the future.

Which former titleholder inspires you the most?

My Godmother Nellie Lopez Miguel. She is a former Miss Papago and Miss NCAI. The same two titles that I had an opportunity to hold. She inspired me to learn about my traditional ways while getting my education. And she still is deeply involved within the tribal community.

What are your long term goals?

U.S. Senator/Medical Doctor. Im trying to do it all!

What would you like to tell prospective contestants about your experience running?

Its draining and challenging but well worth it in the end. Also, it's a one time chance in life for everyone to find out who you really are, including yourself. One of the perks of it, is you get to ride around in a limo and have police escorts :) The pageant is usually held during the United Tribes Celebration the second weekend in Sept. It's one of the best pageants I ever ran in to be honest. You get an opportunity to represent the U.S. and Canada. The hospitality is awesome! I encourage everyone to run!

Anyone interested in running for the National Miss Indian Nations title can

visit our website:

<http://min.unitedtribespowwow.com/>