

Angelique EagleWoman – distinguished in many ways

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By Jack McNeel, Today Correspondent



Angelique EagleWoman said it best: "It's just an amazing year!" The awards, honors and kudos she has received have been many and notable – and that's the way it should be for this remarkable young woman.

EagleWoman (Wambdi A. WasteWin) is a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota. She presently teaches Native American Law and Civil Procedure at the University of Idaho.

Don Burnett is dean of the University of Idaho College of Law and is EagleWoman's supervisor.

"She is a national treasure here at the [University of Idaho](#). She came to us two years ago as our expert in Native American law and policy, having received teaching awards at the [University of Kansas](#) Indigenous Peoples program and her own education at Stanford, at North Dakota and at Tulsa University. She has almost singlehandedly taken the next step toward establishing a true Native law program, including Native law emphasis and an invigorated Native American law student association."

Early this year, EagleWoman received the William F. and Joan L. Boyd Excellence in Teaching Award at the University of Idaho. This award recognizes outstanding performance in law teaching and innovation as determined by the dean. The evaluations by her students contain expressions of admiration for her "legal expertise, first-hand knowledge of law practice and personal devotion to teaching," Burnett said.

"She has earned a reputation as a 'no-nonsense' law teacher as one student observed. Professor EagleWoman is 'very prepared with the expectation of students being the same.' Students also have expressed appreciation for her uses of instructional technology, supplemental materials and guest speakers. On issues relating to Indian country, Professor EagleWoman's depth of knowledge has been described by students as 'thorough and amazing,' inducing 'admiration and awe.' Her Native American Natural Resources seminar has been described as 'fantastic.'"

The magazine [Diverse: Issues in Higher Education](#) recognized EagleWoman as one of the nation's 12 diverse "Emerging Scholars" for 2010 in American higher education.

"I can say it is abundantly justified by her scholarly work at the University of Idaho," Burnett said. "Just within the past 18 months Professor EagleWoman has written an article, 'Tribal National Economics: Rebuilding Commercial Prosperity in Spite of U.S. Trade Restraints – Recommendations for Economic Revitalization in Indian Country' that was published in the Tulsa Law Review and was distributed to the 2009 Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference. She also wrote 'The Eagle and the Condor of the Western Hemisphere: Application of Indigenous Principles to Halt the United States Border Wall,' published in the Idaho Law Review. She made a keynote presentation on the same subject to the Ninth Annual Distinguished American Indian Speakers Series sponsored by the University of Idaho American Indian Studies Program. She is a productive, excellent young scholar."

Still a third prestigious award came her way in the first half of the year. She received the 2010 Distinguished Alumni Scholar Award from Stanford University, one of just 19 awarded by the University.

She is a young woman, yet even before arriving at the University of Idaho in the fall of 2008 she had already acquired a wealth of expertise in Native American law. She served as general council on her own reservation in South Dakota,

was an associate with a law firm in Washington, D.C., involved with Native American law, and was a tribal public defender for both the Kaw Nation and Ponca Nation in Oklahoma. She had been on the law faculty at Hamline University School of Law and was a former visiting faculty member at the University of Kansas School of Law and Indigenous Nations Program. There she received the Crystal Eagle Award for leadership and dedication in helping community members and students in indigenous communities.

Much of her work at the University of Idaho is focused around the Native American law program, but even in that she branches out into other programs. "I process all my classes for American Indian studies so I can bring undergraduates and non-law graduates into my classes, hoping that is creating a pipeline for Native people to be able to take a law class, think about laws and careers or even just have that basic knowledge in any field they go into."

And what about other activities on campus? "I'm part of the president's Diversity Council and I co-chair the faculty recruitment and retention committee. We are educating the different units on campus about how to increase diversity in the applicant pool for faculty.

"I work closely with the Native American Student Center. I've been fortunate in bringing tribal judges over to the Native Student Center so they can visit with any Native students on campus.

"I'm on the advisory board for the I-STEM Project. It's a Ph.D. program and their first student is going to be John Harrington, the Chickasaw astronaut. It's building a Ph.D. program as an online component in the STEM fields. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math."

And what about off-campus activities? "I'm secretary of the board for the Northwest Indian Bar Association. I'm also secretary for the Association of American Law Schools, Indian Nations and Indigenous People section. I was the former chair and just stepped down to secretary."

Asked if she had any free time she laughed and said, "I go to micro-soccer for my kindergarten son. I also do some hiking at Kamiak Butte and go to powwows when time allows."

EagleWoman also occasionally serves as a tribal judge. "I nominated Angelique EagleWoman to be one of our judge pro-tems to be able to serve on an as-needed basis," said Bill Douglas, chief judge for the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Court. "It could be when one of the other judges has a conflict or when we need an appellate judge. We surely are very honored to have her sit as a pro-tem judge for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. She certainly brings a wealth of experience and knowledge and esteem to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe justice system."

She also continues to do research and produce papers. Earlier this year, she wrote an editorial for Indian Country Today about the Cobell settlement and the wrong to Indian people. Asked about current subjects she responded, "I'm looking at intergenerational poverty and how U.S. policies have contributed to creating a refugee status for Native people and keeping us in an impoverished status. And as lawyers, how can we impact federal public policy and help tribal governments strengthen their laws and their courts so we have a firm basis for economic development."

The research required for such papers comes through research she does for classes she teaches. "I'm hoping that in time tribal peoples will again have one of the best quality of life in the world because we did, prior to the European invasion. We own abundant resources. I believe we have the assets. We're beginning to have the human capital and creativity to make use of the inheritance we have from our ancestors and to reclaim our place amongst global nations. To do that we have to meet our survival needs, subsistence needs and be well educated. That's what I see as the future for our people, and I hope I'm contributing to bridge that gap from poverty to prosperity."