

Justin “JC” Secakuku - Carrying the Torch

JC is a 2011 graduate of Hopi High School where he was a member of three Bruins cross country state championship teams as well as an individual state champion. He received a BS in Secondary Physical Education from Southern Utah University in December of 2016 and began working with the HEEF as our nonprofit assistant in March of this year. In August, he will begin working as a P.E. teacher at Second Mesa Day School. JC is Piqöswungwa (bearstrap clan) from Songoopavi Village.

What pushed you to go to college?

I think the influence of my mother, my grandfather, and coach Rick Baker was the inspiration behind why I decided to pursue higher education. I knew it was important but it was really through the guidance of my mentor, Rick Baker. I spent a lot of time talking with him about running in college and his experiences. And I think that, by him talking about it and his successes, it was a pathway I wanted to follow and one I thought I could be successful at. I had a lot of friends in high school but I was so serious about my running. I would eat lunch and I would go straight to my coach's office and the whole lunch hour he would talk to me about college, races, his friends, and the memories that he made. That was the real tipping point for me because I thought, “I want that. That sounds fun.” Hopi running was always real special to me.

What is ‘Hopi’ running?

Running is something that Hopi does for the people. My grandpa and his friend, Richard Nuvayaktewa, would always tell me, “You get up early - *eets talahoy'e kuyvawisni, navahomlawni, warikni* - you get up, you pray, you bathe, and you run.” It's the way that you emotionally and you physically take care of yourself, as a Hopi. Those are things that we know that we should do but we don't do it. Getting up early shows that you're not a lazy man. Praying to the sun shows that you have faith in something that's gonna guide you – that you believe in those things that you pray to. Then third, you run because you have discipline. Being a member of the Antelope society and seeing really deep spiritual connections to the running, I felt like the gift that I had - it was minimal- but I felt like whatever gave me that gift wanted me to earn whatever success I had with that running. So I worked really hard to get where I was with my running. I ran every single day. It's because of what you're putting yourself through physically. I

don't know what it is. When I stopped running, it was tough for me because I felt like I let a lot of people down. But my mom talked to me and said the people, eventually, are going to look to runners to carry messages - like what happened during the Pueblo Revolt. Those messages didn't get sent without the strength of those runners.



Why did you stop running?

I decided to come home and that's when I got hooked on the other part of my life. That's when I started to plant more, I started to take care of my Hopi stuff more, I started trying to speak my language more. I was 20 years old, just turning into a young man, talking to my *taham* (uncles), talking to my grandfather and learning the responsibilities of a young Hopi man. I guess that just fueled me more than what I was doing out in Utah, so I just stopped running. It was hard coming back and forth and that's something I chose to do. Nobody made me do it. I had the money to stay and hang out with some of my friends or whatever but I chose to come back because at the time, I was really picking up fluency of our language, I was really starting to learn a lot of things and my uncles – because I'm a young man – they were starting to open up to me and so I had to take advantage of it.

How did you decide to major in Physical Education?

Naturally, because I hung out with Coach Baker so much, I wanted to follow my mentor in what he does because he's had such a profound effect on me. I would just like to be the same influence on some other Hopi kid. I think these kids need a strong male role model. I think I can have that effect on them to say, “Hey, chin up and this can make you a man that has a great foundation to be a good father, to be a good person.” If we can get our kids to harness what we already know as Hopi people, what we feel and what we embody from our clans and from our responsibilities that we all have within our villages and use it to help us and guide us when we're out doing our school thing; then we come back and we're more informed, we're a little more found, and we're more apt to cooperation with everything that's going on around us. I guess that's the ultimate goal: to make sure that we can make ethical decisions, that we're not compromised.

What's one thing you would like to teach everyone?

To have a positive open-mindedness about issues to have the capacities to do what's needed to be done to move forward. Like when they say *Itam suuf yani'* - meaning being together, being of one mind, being of one heart. *Suuf 'yan'kya 'kyang lolmat hohokiwmami* - let's be together, let's be of one mind so we can move forward in a good way. That's how Hopis believe that we pool blessings together and that's the only way that the spirit beings are going to hear our sincere prayers, if we're really true and faithful to it and if we're together. We all need to be prayerful of the same things. We all need to have the want to have the good things for our children and for our people and for those across the world. Here I am graduated and now I can provide for my family and that's something that I'll always be thankful for through this whole ‘beginning’ journey because I know there's more.



JC (center) with his family at graduation



Message from HEEF Board President, Romalita Laban

Greetings!

It is a good time for the HEEF newsletter to go out with much gratitude. To our friends – donors, members and new friends, we extend our sincerest Kwa'kwa/Askwali (Thank You). Without you and your valuable support, many of our college graduates, their families and/or supporters might not have been able to see the educational dreams for themselves or those so important to them come to fruition. Your support has truly made a lasting and positive impact and it is so appreciated.

Having witnessed our very own HEEF Executive Director's work being honored by Northern Arizona University and listening to her speech as one of the 2017 Honorary Doctoral Degree recipients, I found myself reflecting on the past 17 years since I received a BSBA in Business Management (from NAU). I was reminded how determined I was to move back home to Hopi to use my degree to positively impact my people and most importantly, my own children. The thought of my youngest child (my son Jason, who was not quite a two-year-old then and who is now eighteen and graduating from Hopi High School) reminded me time flies and yet more work still needs to be done!



Roma and her son, Jason

Looking out toward the many NAU graduates, I felt such a sense of gratitude and hope for the endless possibilities for all our young Native people. I also thought about the many challenges our young Hopi children face on a day-to-day basis, just trying to get to school. Many of our children come from single-parent families or are being raised by their grandparents, family members, or others in the community. Many of our Hopi children face traumas, some of which is a result of a lack of resources (financial and infrastructure) and/or various types of abuse and yet still manage to survive and flourish. My thoughts continued and I remembered some of my own family's challenges over the past seventeen years and focused on saying prayers for all children right then and there. I was then happy to hear LuAnn's analogy about how Hopis cherish each and every ear of corn - no matter how small or strong. She continued by challenging the audience to think about the possibility of a world where we could cherish each other in the same manner.

Ms. LuAnn Leonard, in her humble way, would not want me to focus on her, however I feel compelled to acknowledge how she has lifted and inspired me. As the HEEF President, I must acknowledge LuAnn for being a true inspiration to other Hopi women. This inspiring experience reminded me how very important the work of the HEEF is and even more so as we face less and less resources with the looming closure of the Navajo Generating Station and more limited educational budgets. Sometimes the challenges we face can be overwhelming but when something good happens for one of us, it uplifts us all. Collectively, we help each other towards our goal of growing the fund and our very own – that is the essence of Hopi. With that, I share a sincere 'askwali' to LuAnn and encourage her to inspire us even more.

I pray for energy that will help me to do more work on behalf of the education of our Hopi people. I am so blessed and grateful to be linked, since 2003, to such a giving and hardworking group of people involved in the HEEF. The HEEF is a great organization with an honorable mission of nurturing our Hopi people. The connection truly reminds me of what it is to be Hopi – in giving, helping one another, praying for others and taking time to nurture one another towards a mutual goal.

In closing, I send 'Congratulations' to each and every graduate, from the youngest to the eldest – Enjoy your accomplishments and I pray we continue to support your educational dreams! Askwali!

Sincerely,
Romalita Laban, HEEF President



Announcements!

We've hired a new Resource Development Manager! Please join us in welcoming Justin Hongeva, (Moencopi, Pīkyas'wungwa [corn clan]) to our small staff to aid in the work of the HEEF. Justin received HEEF funding while earning bachelor's and master's degrees in *Native American Studies* from Arizona State University.

Our fourth annual student recognition event will be held on August 2nd in Moenkopi this year! We will be honoring scholarship recipients for the 2017-18 school year. Our theme "Returning Home... *Itaa sinmuy amungem Monvastoti*" speaks to our mission of helping students receive an education so they can come back to strengthen our people.

The HEEF 2017 Summer Raffle was a huge success! We had many participants and we gave out more than 25 prizes thanks to all the donations we received. Visit our website to see the list of prize winners.

It's back! The HEEF Silent Auction is making a return in 2018. Our popular fundraising event will be held at the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona building in Phoenix, AZ on Friday, March 2nd. This event allows many of our Hopi artists to contribute to our cause, while also giving them a chance to showcase their talents.



Recent U of A Graduate, LeRoy Shingoitewa

LeRoy J. Shingoitewa is Piikyaswungwa (young corn clan) from the village of Lower Munqapi. He graduated from Tuba City High School in 1996. In December of 2016, he received a BS in Biology with a Biomedical focus from the University of Arizona. LeRoy recently moved from Tucson back to Moenkopi.

What drew you into Biology?

I was a physiology major, actually. I've always liked medicine. Growing up, I liked medical shows. I liked rehabilitating people. I think

a pediatrician was the first thing I wanted to be. I wanted to go into medicine. I thought about medical school but I was going to look into physical therapy. I thought it was something I would like to do and it's a way we can help our own people. In order to be out home, there's only so many fields we have and that's one of them.

What do you plan to do next?

I'm looking at different things right now but I'm kind of gearing towards genetics, possibly. I'm looking, specifically, into genetic counseling. There's programs popping up right now and I know there's not going to be any Native Americans in that field. It's going to be something that we're going to need in the future because, as we progress, they're doing a lot of genetic testing. We've had so much issues with genetics – people using blood for different things – a lot of the tribes have had that. I think we need to be more proactive about things we know we're going to be asking in the future. It was told to us to get educated so that we can fight again so it makes sense to be able to understand the whole issue so that if we have that resource within our tribe already, we can handle any legal actions that do come about from it.

Who was your influence to go to school?

Who's encouraged me always has been my family – my mom, my dad, both sets of grandparents – none of them ever questioned me going to school. They always thought that was the best thing. That's who I appreciate the most is family. Both of my parents went to college. All my grandparents are gone now but I knew them all. I grew up with them in our village. I saw them every day, pretty much, when I was a kid. Both my *so'ohs* (grandmas) always told us to go to school. That was part of what we're supposed to do because they always said, "Go away. Go to school. Go live for a while. But then come home to help us. We fought long time ago and we're going to fight again but maybe this time it's gonna be in the courts, in...somewhere else. We need people who are educated that can help us fight." Education was always a thing. There was never a time when they didn't tell us to go to school.

How did you end up a non-traditional student?

I had originally gone to school back in '96 at U of A. I went to school, completed five years of college, and never finished my degree. In order for me to get into the physiology major, I had to pass organic chemistry. I had all these credits, I wasn't moving anywhere and I couldn't get into my major so I ended up working and just kind of eased out school. I went into casino gaming. I was in that field for almost 13 years and then went back home. One of my grandmother's was sick and my aunt was taking care of her. Then my mom started taking care of her and within two months, my mom hurt her back. So I said, "I'm tired of the business that I'm in. I can move home for a little bit." I moved home for two years, then once my grandmother passed, I thought, "You know what? It's time for me to go back to college and finish what I started."

Having worked in casinos, how do you feel about Hopi being a gaming tribe?

We've always had gambling. We have a word for it in Hopi, *nanavö'pi*. Because the kachinas used to come – I think in the winter – and they would gamble against you. It's always been a part of our culture. [Money] it's an evil necessity. We may dislike it but we do need it. Especially with our tribe, if they close certain things and we don't have coal or we don't have other things, we'll need another source of income. If Hopis ever decided to do gaming and they found an area where it's not going to impact our villages, then I agree with it but until then, I don't think so. Because I think what we have is pretty nice out home. We're lucky. I think we've just been isolated for so long that...you get people who leave the reservation and then they're like, "I don't want to go home 'cause there's nothing out there." Versus people like me, where I get home and I go, (sighs) "Do I have to go back to that other world?" It's hard to balance it because you know you need money so you have to work off the reservation a lot of the time.

Why is Hopi special to you?

I think it's special in the sense that I don't know any different. I think everybody believes in the same thing. It's just different versions of the same thing. I think as a collective, we're all right. Hopis will tell you that too - we're not 100% the only ones that everybody should follow. We just follow it. That's what we believe. And we're not going to tell anybody else, "You're wrong. You shouldn't believe in that," because that's not how we should believe either. It's always something you're learning. That's what I miss about having my *so'ohs* is you could always go to them and say, "Why do we do it this way," or "Why is this done," or "How come it's called this?" And they always had an answer. They knew things. We lose our resource in that sense and just go, "How come I didn't listen more when I was a kid?" As we're getting older, our elders are dying off and things die with them. So a lot of the time you just go, "I hope I remember it when it comes time. I hope I remember how to do this." I think that's always been everything. because nothing's ever been written down. Everything has been oral forever. So that's been a fear of everybody forever and it's an ongoing fight we have. But I think more education gives us better tools in how to keep that going too.



LeRoy with family at his graduation

Congratulations to all of our 2016-2017 Hopi Higher Education Graduates!

On behalf of the Hopi community, the Hopi Tribe Grants & Scholarships Program and the HEEF, we are proud to share our Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 list of college graduates. As with all things Hopi, one cannot do things alone. Each of these Hopi students and their families put in a tremendous amount of work and resources to support their student on their journey to obtain their respective degree.

Spring 2017 Hopi Graduates:

Amber Poleviyuma, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *Community Health* from Arizona State University

Arianna Moreno, Hotevilla - Bachelor's in *Biomedical Engineering* from Arizona State University

Cante Riggle, Moencopi - Associate's in *General Studies* from Utah State University

Charlene Steele, Hotevilla - Bachelor's in *Early Childhood in Special Education* from Arizona State University

Cheryl Lomakema, Sichomovi - Master's in *Policy, Administration, and Community* from Arizona State University

Crystal Kaye, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *Information Technology* from Arizona State University

Dennis Murphy, Sichomovi - Bachelor's in *Civil Engineering* from the University of New Mexico

Felina Cordova, Hotevilla - Doctorate's in *Public Health* from the University of Arizona

Jelani Huma, Sipaulovi - Associate's in *Physical Therapy* from Central Arizona College

Kara Lavendar, Tewa - Bachelor's in *Social Work* from Northern Arizona University

Keisha Kootswatewa, Tewa - Associate's in *Public Administration* from Navajo Technical University

Kerri John, Hotevilla - Associate's in *Medical Assisting* from Northland Pioneer College

Lucietta Wytewa, Bacavi - Bachelor's in *Early Childhood Education* from Phoenix College

Mariah Pahona-Charlie, Tewa - Associate's in *American Indian Studies* from Mesa Community College

Monique Martel, Hotevilla - Bachelor's in *Exercise Science* from Northern Arizona University

Patrice Shupla, Mishongnovi - Associate's in *General Studies* from Northland Pioneer College

Racheal Chappell, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *Respiratory Therapy* from Weber State University

Sella Pauling, Tewa - Bachelor's in *Criminal Justice* from Dixie State University

Tahuska Bowman, Sichomovi - Associate's in *General Education Curriculum* from Mesa Community College

Teresa Martza, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *Psychology* from Northern Arizona University

Weldon Grover, Hotevilla - Bachelor's in *Journalism* from Arizona State University

Wendal Navenma, Old Oraibi - Bachelor's in *Anthropology* from Northern Arizona University

Fall 2016 Hopi Graduates:

Beverly Stanley, Sipaulovi - Bachelor's in *Public Administration* from Northern Arizona University

Carissa Taube, Kykotsmovi - Bachelor's in *Nursing* from Grand Canyon University

Christopher Castro, Tewa - Bachelor's in *Business Administration* from Northern Arizona University

Ester Mendoza, Moencopi - Associate's in *Administration of Justice* from Phoenix College

Genell Pooyouma, Hotevilla - Bachelor's in *Early Childhood Education* from Northern Arizona University

Hootsiwma Honyumptewa, Sichomovi - Bachelor's in *Tourism Development and Management* from Arizona State University

Julee Silas, Hotevilla - Associate's in *Elementary Education* from Paradise Valley Community College

Justin Secakuku, Songoopavi - Bachelor's in *Secondary Physical Education with an emphasis in Coaching and Human Performance* from Southern Utah University

LeRoy Shingoitewa, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *Biology with Biomedical focus* from the University of Arizona

MaryGrace Lawrence-Pewewardy, Moencopi - Bachelor's in *English* from the University of Oklahoma

Sue Rogers, Kykotsmovi - Bachelor's in *Respiratory Care* from Boise State University

IMAGINE Grantees

Along, with the students we help fund, we are also very honored to be able to fund various educational projects through the HEEF IMAGINE Grants Program. IMAGINE grants are awarded annually to projects that instill Hopi culture/values, strengthen the community, and show promise for sustained effectiveness. This year, we had a number of excellent proposals from very worthy programs and we are pleased to announce that we were able to fund all qualifying proposals a total of \$30,000. The following details the grantees, their respective projects, and the amount awarded.

Hopitutuqaiki - *Hopi Crafts Preservation Project* - \$1,289. The “Hopi School” works to preserve Hopi craft skills using traditional teaching/learning techniques. Their award will be used to fund a mocassin-making class.

Sipaulovi Village - *Youth & Elder Language* - \$5,000. Sipaulovi Village hopes to increase fluency among its members by increasing speaking opportunities and building confidence for those starting to learn.

Hopi Alumni Association (HAA)- *Website Development & Meeting* - \$3,450. HAA looks to be a resource for all Hopi college/university graduates, as well as for future graduates. They plan to hold an initial membership meeting and also to develop a website where members can connect and find other resources.

Hopi Jr/Sr High School (HJSHS) - *2017 Youth Summit* - \$5,026. HJSHS held a summit earlier this year and plans to hold another one this fall which will offer a professional conference-type setting with presentations on various topics for students.

First Mesa Elementary School (FMES) - \$3,400. For its *Math, Reading, & Science Champions* program, FMES plans to increase overall math and reading as well as parent/guardian/community involvement by holding a series of events and activities.

Hopi Credit Association (HCA) - *2017 Youth Financial Literacy Camp* - \$1,698. HCA held a two-and-half-day camp from June 20-22. The camp was designed to give 14-18 year olds basic financial skills while also incorporating Hopi values of resource management.

Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture (HTP) - *Ancestral Lands Hopi* - \$10,137. Southwest Conservation Corps' Ancestral Lands program provides educational and employment opportunities for youth and young adults.

Visit our website for more information on IMAGINE Grants.



Student making a pair of mocassins



Ancestral Lands Hopi Crew