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Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation News

Volume 1
Number 1
November 2012

Shaping Turtle Mountain's Future

**Improving one life,
improves all our lives.**

The earliest roots of Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) lie in the traditions of its people, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and in the Seven Teachings of the Anishinabe People. TMCC cherishes wisdom and believes that true wisdom reveals itself through a variety of forms and creative expressions; it is not merely an accumulation of knowledge. Wisdom flows from learning journeys that are illuminating and intense, connecting theories, ideas, and concepts with lived experiences to create new ways of knowing and being in the world.

TMCC has proven over the past 40 years that teaching the whole person – the mind, the body, and the spirit – leads to the development of students who are not only highly skilled and knowledgeable, but are well balanced and socially courageous, ready to step in to their future.

From its grassroots beginning as one of the original six tribal colleges established in the 1970's, TMCC now serves, on the average, 800 students annually, encouraging and creating learning environments that support the diverse and considerable needs of native and non-native residents seeking an affordable, accessible liberal education deeply grounded in cultural values.

TMCC, as a fully accredited college, is recognized as one of the nation's leading tribal colleges, preparing students for leadership through more than 50 degree and skilled occupational programs, including Bachelor's Degrees in Elementary Education,



Brandi Cree, TMCC Student

Secondary Science Education, and Early Childhood Education.

TMCC also strengthens the Turtle Mountain community through essential services that enrich the lives of all living in the region. TMCC's Anishinabe campus

provides community members with a walking path, biking trails, water sports, swimming area, canoeing, and bird watching.

Nestled among the indigenous trees and plants of the Turtle Mountains, Anishinabe's indoor and outdoor learning spaces house

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TMCC President's Message



On a macro scale, the issues we face as a nation are dire. News sources inundate us daily with the latest unemployment rates, the most pressing economic challenges and infrastructure crises, the massive changes needed in our nation's education and healthcare systems.

Locally, here on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, challenges are not new. In fact, they are deeply complex as many of the issues that confront us are long-standing and systemic in nature, requiring changes that must be scaled and yet still hold true to our traditional values and who we are as a people, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

As we celebrate TMCC's 40-years of educational service, we are taking charge as an organization and deepening our commitment to help all individuals attain the knowledge, skills, and understanding that will help them thrive personally, and are vital to the economic growth of our communities – local, state, and national.

To position TMCC to effectively reach this goal, we understand that diversifying TMCC's traditionally federally-funded revenue stream is critical to the growth and sustainability of the locally-accessible, higher educational opportunities TMCC provides. That's why we are creating the Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation - to ensure we'll have the resources we need to make postsecondary

degree attainment a reality for many more students.

We must be action-oriented because we know that creating our future is not "someone else's" job – but is our job here today. As we face choices as to how we'll determine our future, we will be asking for everyone's help in giving their time, talents, and – as they are

grandchildren tomorrow.

I urge you to join the Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation in seizing this opportunity to enrich and enhance the lives of every child, every woman, and every man living in our community and the members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

Together, let's forge the path that will lead us

Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation

Our vision is for a world where our children, our grandchildren, and their children will have access to the quality educational programs that support their life's passions and empower them to step forward and make concrete, lasting changes to create a brighter future for us all.

able - dollars, to support Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation's vision: to create a world where our children, our grandchildren, and their children will have access to the quality educational programs that support their life's passions and empower them to step forward and make concrete, lasting changes to create a brighter future for us all.

As you read through the stories in this issue of the TMCC Foundation newsletter, please think about Monique Vondall-Rieke and Harold Counts, and the more than 3,000 alumni who have passed through our doors at TMCC these past 40 years. The impact they make here in our local community and across the nation is creating the world today that we will leave to our children and our

to the future we desire – a brighter future for our families and neighbors, for our community and for ourselves. For more information about the work of the Turtle Mountain Community College Foundation, please call 701.477.7932.

Miigwech,
Jim Davis

President
Turtle Mountain Community College



JT Shining Oneside, TMCC's Native American Culture Coordinator braids sweetgrass and tells stories as she prepares the four sacred medicines for a student scavenger hunt.



More than 75 students, staff, and faculty participated in a Feasting of the Drum Ceremony, held at the TMCC medicine wheel on Oct 25, 2012.



TMCC's Drum Group: Dave Ripley, Brad Defender, Daniel Henry, Alex DeCoteau and Larry Henry perform the Flag Song on College Awareness Day, Oct, 2012.

The Spirit of Perseverance

TMCC Alumna works to give back to the local community.

On the Turtle Mountain Reservation, Lady Justice wears a buckskin dress. As a lawyer working to ensure that she balances truth and fairness, Monique Vondall-Rieke works to help her clients solve their legal needs.

From the beginning, this TMCC alumna, always knew she wanted to be a lawyer. "I remember watching Matlock on TV with my Grandma and I was just fascinated with the way lawyers talked. They seemed so knowledgeable to me. I knew right away that I wanted to be a court lawyer."

But even though she knew what she wanted early, Monique did not know the steps she needed to take to get there. After spending a part of her freshman year at the University of Dallas and later at the University of North Dakota, Monique ended up withdrawing from classes and eventually moving to California, Minneapolis, and a few other places before returning to her home, the Turtle Mountain Reservation.

While living in Minneapolis, Monique worked at a Native American law firm where she was finally able to put the pieces together to continue her journey toward a law degree. "One of the lawyers in the firm asked me why I didn't go back to school. I told him that I wouldn't even know what to major in because I had taken so many different classes. I have always had lots of interests and I've had trouble settling on one thing. He suggested that I major in English to prepare myself for a lot of writing and reading, which is needed in practicing law."

Monique decided to return to TMCC in order to work toward an Associate of Arts in English, and discovered she needed some help learning how to write in her own voice. After struggling in English class, Monique received some help from a TMCC instructor. "He just said, 'I think you can do better and I want you to try this weekend to work on your essay using the concepts we have talked about in class.'"

After she worked on her paper over the weekend with the help of a friend, Monique turned it in and made an A. "There was

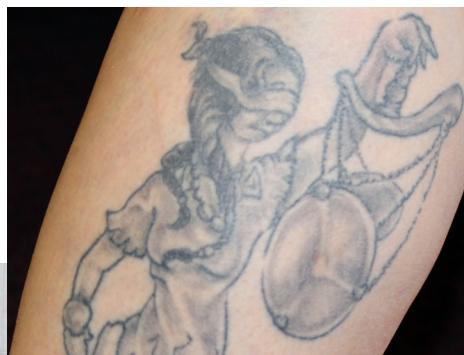
a note on my paper that said he [the instructor] was going to use my paper as a sample for other classes. I thought, Oh my God, I got it. After that, it seemed to spiral. I began to understand philosophy. I understood theology. It just kind of clicked for me."

Monique received her Associate of Arts in English from TMCC on the same day her brother graduated with an Associate of Arts in Wildlife Biology. She transferred to UND where she completed her Bachelor's in English and applied to law school, receiving her Juris Doctorate from the UND School of Law.

"I would have never made it through law school without the help of the Vocational Rehabilitation program at TMCC or the support of all of the elders. They were very

encouraging for me whenever I would come back from UND."

Monique attributes the support of the Turtle Mountain community and her family, especially her sister who is also her partner at Vondall-Rieke & Assoc. LLP, with helping her get to where she is today. "I am so glad to be back and a part of the Turtle Mountain Community. I just want to give back to the community that kept encouraging me to keep going toward my dream."



Monique shows off her Lady Justice tattoo.



Alumni Buzz

Meet Christina Hawk James,
TMCC Foundation's Alumni
Relations Coordinator

Christina works directly with TMCC Alumni to encourage and provide opportunities for alumni to interact, learn, give, and be recognized for their extraordinary achievements. Christina is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and a graduate of the Turtle Mountain Community High School. She is the proud mother of a 14 year old son and a nine year old daughter. Christina and her family enjoy trips out of town, watching movies, and golfing. Christina's professional experience began at Turtle Mountain Community College, where as a full-time TMCC employee, she also took classes that she transferred to her B.S. in Technical Management from DeVry University. Christina did it all to better support her family and to show her children no matter how difficult life gets, as long as you work hard, you can accomplish so much.

Christina's Story

In her own words

I graduated from Belcourt's Turtle Mountain Community High School in 1996, and envisioned life in a bigger town that offered more than a few gas stations and small grocery stores. I got my wish and moved to Valley City, ND. The town was a perfect size for me; not too big, but much bigger than my home town.

My future husband, Shannon, was with me as we adjusted to life away from home, but we soon realized the harsh reality of surviving on our own. My plan to attend Valley City State University turned into something that I had no choice but to put off.

Six months after moving to Valley City, I was ready to move home. I also realized I was expecting my



The Spirit of Conviction

TMCC Alumus and GED Instructor leads with heart and purpose.

Over the years, Harold Counts has developed a firm belief that education helps individuals develop the critical thinking skills that can help them become thoughtful, informed citizens. "Education helps people make better decisions," Harold says. "If you can get your education, it helps you to think more critically about the issues that we face as a community."

Although Harold dropped out of school at the end of 8th grade, he worked learning the trades of painting, building, and welding from his father, and later learning how to finish concrete while working for Job Corps, private contractors, and the

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. "I always loved to read and learn, but it wasn't until I scored well on my GED, I figured I could try college.

While attending classes at TMCC, Harold settled on obtaining a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Science Education and gave up his favorite hobbies, hunting and fishing, for two years while he focused his attention on completing his coursework, earning his degree in 2010. "Sometimes it's a little tough. The thing is, you've got to keep going. There is going to be stumbling. I am so grateful for all the support I received from my family and from the instructors



Harold working with a TMCC student.

and staff at TMCC. If I had any questions, they would answer them."

"I was the first person in my family to go to college. I didn't really have an academic foundation to build on since I dropped out of school so young. My background is a good way to let other people know that if I can do it, they can do it."

Harold also believes that attitude is everything when it comes to working through challenges. "A smile is a big thing. Even if you don't feel like it, if you just smile, it helps you, and it helps the person you are smiling at."

Harold works to ensure that the students

he works with have the encouragement and support they need, along with the instruction that will help them learn the skills they need to pass their GED exam.

"I am here for the students. I am here to help them get their GED no matter what circumstances they are coming from. I wanted to help out in our community and this job is a good way to do that. I think I understand what people's attitudes are and where they are coming from since I have come from there myself. I just want people to know that no matter what, if they want to get their GED, we are here to help them."

first child so the timing couldn't have been more perfect.

After settling into our new place, at home, I began taking classes at Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC). The relaxed atmosphere and family quality of TMCC allowed me to easily transition into motherhood, and still pursue my degree. I remember the warm, cozy feeling of the classroom when I walked into the building on bitter, cold days. Two years later, I graduated with an A.A.S. as an Administrative Assistant. Within a year, I began working full-time for TMCC. In 2003, we welcomed our second child.

The following year, Shannon was diagnosed with cancer and tragically passed away only five months later. It was then that I made the decision to resign from my job and further my education in order to support my children as a single parent.

My husband had always made sure our necessities as a family were taken care of, so I knew now that I could not provide for my children adequately without a higher degree. I returned to TMCC and completed my general requirements. With those out of the way, I returned to a full-time position with TMCC and transferred first to Minot State University, and then to DeVry University. In the spring of 2011, I graduated from DeVry with a B.S. in Technical Management.

Today, I am the Alumni Relations Coordinator for TMCC. Without a doubt, I feel TMCC provided me the stepping stone I needed to make it all happen.



Life after TMCC may take alumni far across the nation, but they are never far from TMCC or one another. The social web is abuzz with TMCC alumni. Stay connected by finding us on FaceBook at TMCCAlumni.

TMCC's Big 40

Turtle Mountain Community College Celebrates 40 Years of Improving Lives by providing Higher Education Opportunities and Community Service

November 2012 marks TMCC's 40th Anniversary of providing the Turtle Mountain Reservation and surrounding region with high quality academics, workshops, classes, technology resources and committed, caring faculty and staff - this has made a huge difference to individuals and families. By attaining high quality academic degrees and workforce credentials, individuals can seek employment in their field of choice, become leaders in their communities, and provide for themselves and their families, whether they choose to live and work on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, in North Dakota, or in states across the nation.

TMCC has graduated more than 3,000 students since they began providing classes in 1972.



An amazing number of TMCC graduates have gone on to receive Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral degrees.



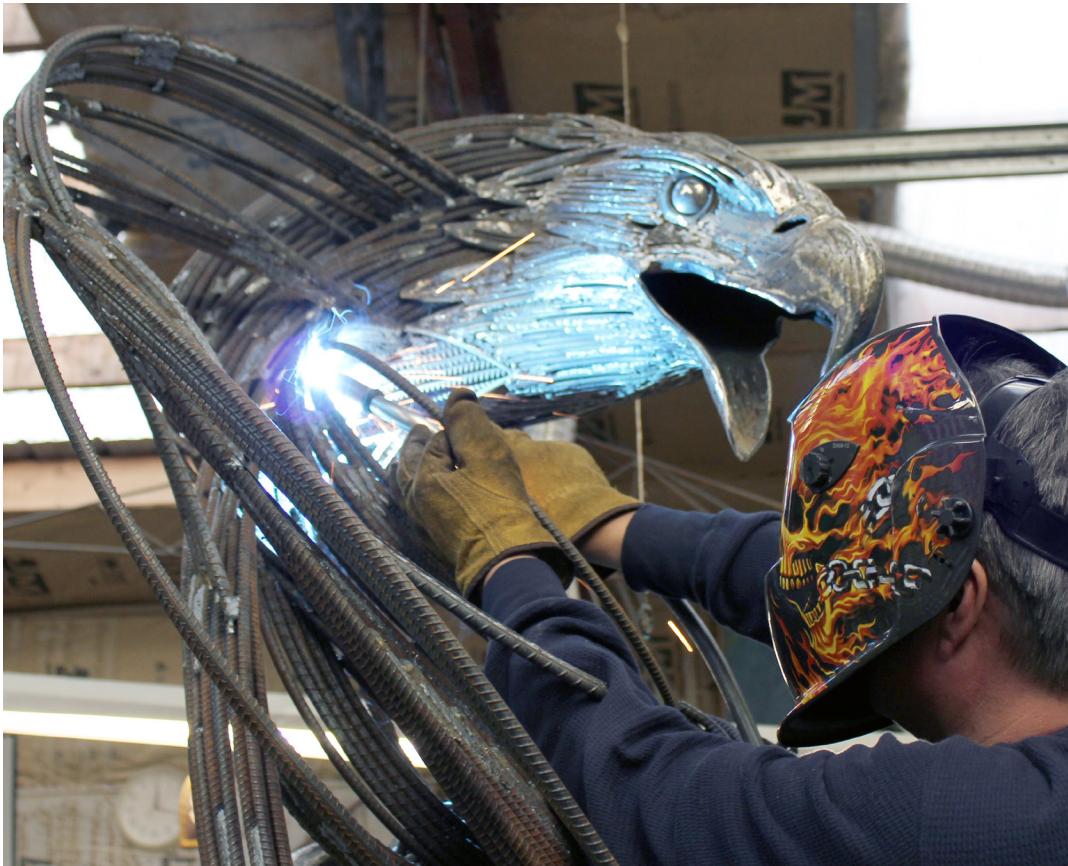
93% of graduates from TMCC's Bachelor's in Education programs are employed.



Featured Instructor

The Spirit of Humility

Renowned local artist, Bennett Brien, teaches students that creativity is a product of hard work.



Bennett putting the finishing touches on his Land, Sea, and Air sculpture at his shop in Belcourt, ND.



A working sketch of Bennett's most recent sculpture..

either gifted in art, like you were touched by the hand of God, or you are not. I will tell you that I started drawing when I was six years old, and man, I was pretty bad. Even when I was in college. I guess perseverance finally paid off."

A graduate of the University of North Dakota with a Bachelor's in Fine Arts in Drawing and Painting and a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture, Bennett's works are on display across the state of North Dakota, in collections housed at the North Dakota State Capitol Grounds, Federal Building, State Game and Fish Department, and the University of North Dakota.

But, Bennett is probably best known as the artist who created the controversial University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux Indian head logo, which UND transitioned into retirement thanks to the June 12, 2012 ND primary and the ND Board of Higher Education.

Bennett enjoys teaching part time at TMCC because it gives him a chance to help students in the same way he received help along the way. "I had this instructor, Stan Johnson, who was a pretty good guy. He taught me a lot. He was the guy who suggested I try welding."

Bennett teaches in the same way he was taught, not by telling, but by doing. He demonstrates techniques and then assists students as they start to practice them. He watches students and makes suggestions, encouraging them to go slowly and think deeply about what they are creating. He also encourages students to make as many mistakes as possible. "It's all about trying stuff. Sometimes it's just fun to throw something out there. You just keep working it and eventually you will get your drawing or sculpture to where you want it to be."

A highly-skilled artist, Bennett Brien approaches teaching at Turtle Mountain Community College with the same laid-back style he uses when creating commissioned works of art.

Bennett's easygoing approach, however, belies his intense work habits. "The discipline and work required to make art can be difficult," explains Bennett. "But, ultimately, if you like drawing or painting and want to get better, that is what it is all about - the practice."

Bennett's classes in drawing, painting, and sculpting offer students ample opportunity to develop their skills by focusing on mastering basic techniques as an integral part of art making. "A lot of people think that you are

Shaping Turtle Mountain's Future *continued*

TMCC's community extension courses in landscaping, tree and plant care, gardening, food production and preservation, nutrition education, cultural arts, uses of native grasses, and equine care and education.

Aninishinabe also provides the community with a year-round retreat center for families, organizations, and companies desiring a meeting space interconnected with nature's beauty.

While celebrating its past 40 years and many accomplishments as the singular institution for higher education in the region, TMCC recognizes the need to do even more, to enrich even more lives by ensuring that all individuals can attain the quality degrees and workforce credentials that will help them find success and fulfillment in their daily lives. In planning for the next 40 years

and beyond, TMCC has an unprecedented opportunity to bring an even greater vitality to the Turtle Mountains. As federal support declines for local programs and initiatives, private support must emerge to fill the gap and to move TMCC towards a vision not dictated by dwindling budgets.

In response to the uncertain economy and the complex social and economic challenges faced by those living and working on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, TMCC is working to formally establish the TMCC Foundation as a separate 501(c) 3 organization and support vehicle to drive private individual, business, and foundation donations to TMCC's indispensable programs, services and activities.

It is this combination of public and private support that will fuel TMCC's high quality

academic programs, cultural programs, support services, and training, ensuring that all individuals can prosper and thrive in learning environments that honor the traditional values imparted by the ancestors and elders from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

Ultimately, the TMCC Foundation aims to sustain and grow the vitality and prosperity of the Turtle Mountain Region by making higher education opportunities affordable, accessible, and attainable for all. This will improve the local, state, and national economies, strengthen community engagement, and reduce crime and poverty. In short, both Turtle Mountain Community College and the TMCC Foundation believe that improving one life, improves all of our lives.

Foundation Update

The desire to create the TMCC Foundation has been building over a number of years. Conversations over coffee and in the hallways had employees and students alike discussing the deep needs within TMCC's walls, and outside in the broader community, that TMCC's current budget just could not meet.

The response to this need is the development of the TMCC Foundation as a 501 (c) 3 organization, established as a separate nonprofit in support of Turtle Mountain Community College and the individuals TMCC serves.

The TMCC Foundation has one purpose: to ensure that every individual can attain the high quality degrees and workforce credentials that will empower them to live a full, successful life. The TMCC Foundation

believes that empowering each individual through higher education opportunities is the first step in creating vibrant, resilient communities. This will improve economies at all levels, strengthen community engagement, and reduce crime and poverty.

The TMCC Foundation's mission is to:

- Invite and contribute private funds to support TMCC's programs, services and activities, the majority of which are not adequately funded through traditional public resources.
- Mobilize a broad-base of volunteers to advance and support TMCC's mission throughout the Turtle Mountain region and beyond.
- Create relationships and communications that invite and open the space for

deeper conversation, collaboration, and community engagement for all ages.

- Catalyze change by engaging across sectors to strengthen the fragmented systems and services that support our population. By engaging and uniting our efforts, we will impact not only the prosperity of TMCC and those we serve directly, but the Turtle Mountain region in its entirety.

During the coming months, the TMCC Foundation will be out and about, connecting with individuals, organizations, and businesses in order to understand from the perspective "on the ground" how the TMCC Foundation can best support the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and the Turtle Mountain region in its entirety.

Let us know what you think!

Tell us

Talk to us about your TMCC experiences! We are compiling stories from former students, staff, faculty, and community members. Give us a glimpse into how your TMCC experiences may have helped shape who you are today.

Call the TMCC Foundation at 701.477.7846 to reserve 40 minutes of uninterrupted time where foundation staff will interview you, record your story, and preserve your memories. At the end of your interview, you'll receive a free CD to share with family and friends, and with your permission,

a second copy will be archived in the alumni section of the Turtle Mountain Community College library.

Connect with us

The TMCC Foundation and Alumni Association believe that meaningful connections spark the innovative solutions that can

transform the way we live and work. We invite you to connect with us!

- Call us at 701.477.7932.
- Visit us by coming to the second floor, room 206 of TMCC's Main Campus. Foundation offices are open from 8am until 4:30pm.