



Five exceptional young minds from the White Earth Science Fair were given a remarkable opportunity to broaden their horizons at the inaugural Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics, and Spirit (S.T.E.A.M.S.) Camp in the stunning locale of Colorado Springs. This transformative experience was made possible by the visionary sponsorship of Rita Peterson, who is a White Earth Descendant, a dedicated advocate, owner, and CEO of Caribou Thunder. Over the past decade, Rita has generously enabled over twenty promising youth from White Earth to participate in NASA's renowned Space Camp. However, recognizing the need for a more inclusive and culturally attuned learning environment, Caribou Thunder's team took the initiative to establish an enriching camp experience for the winners of the 2019 and 2023 White Earth Science Fairs, following the unfortunate cancellation of the 2020 event due to the global pandemic.

The 2019 Science Fair champions – Michael Brown, Alexie Keezer, and Niingosis Fanning, who have since evolved into accomplished students at Mahnomen High School – were joined by this year's outstanding victors, Anthony Clark, and Francisca Diaz from Pine Point School. This unique journey was organized by Caribou Thunder's Executive Assistant, Alexis Sanchez who made all the event arrangements including meetups with key local leaders, learning opportunities, and built lasting relationships with executives and more. The camp was guided by the steadfast companionship of Dr. Mark Bellcourt, a member of the White Earth Ojibwe community, and Amber Paulson from Caribou Thunder, who fulfilled the role of chaperones. The camp encompassed a dynamic blend of immersive experiences, including hands-on space technology simulations hosted by The Space Foundation, captivating insights at the U.S. Air Force Academy, and an enlightening encounter at Lockheed Martin Aerospace Center. Moreover, the students had the privilege of exploring captivating destinations such as the awe-inspiring Garden of the Gods, the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, and the serene Estes Park. The young learners even engaged with Colorado's Lieutenant Governor, Dianne Primavera, at the State Capital, gaining invaluable lessons from her personal journey to triumph.

Throughout the camp, these extraordinary young individuals displayed remarkable qualities. Michael Brown showcased a fervent interest in mapping out his academic and vocational pursuits, eloquently stating, "It's all on me – I gotta do the work! But I think I can do it." Alexie Keezer assumed a leadership role by orchestrating one of the evening's talking circles, emanating a serene and reassuring influence on her fellow peers. Conversely, Niingosis Fanning infused the camp with his infectious humor and boundless energy, keeping the atmosphere lively and engaging for all. Francisca Diaz exhibited remarkable courage, volunteering for challenging simulations and experiences without hesitation. As for Anthony Clark, initially reserved and pensive, he astounded everyone by gradually overcoming his inhibitions, participating in the dialogues, and captivating the staff with his mastery of origami artistry.



In a heartwarming gesture, Rita Peterson extended an invitation for the students to lodge in her new home nestled within the serene embrace of the Black Forest area, just on the outskirts of Colorado Springs. This gesture cultivated a nurturing "family" ambiance, fostering a sense of belonging and kinship among the young scholars. In addition to the meticulously planned agenda, students reveled in a plethora of recreational amenities, including shuffleboard, ping pong, air hockey, a massage chair, and leisurely soaks in the rejuvenating hot tub.

With an unwavering commitment to empowering the coming generation, Rita Peterson and Caribou Thunder embarked on a noble endeavor by launching the "Indigenous Minds" not-for-profit initiative. Beyond the realm of S.T.E.A.M.S. Camps, this initiative seeks to expand its footprint by providing programs and mentorship opportunities to Native American youth, thereby nurturing their latent potential, and ensuring a brighter future for all.



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*Our team and STEAMS recipients with Lieutenant Governor, Dianne Primavera, at the State Capital*

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*Our team and STEAMS recipients at Garden of the Gods*

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*Our team and STEAMS recipients at  
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo*

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*Our group at the Space Foundation learning  
to drive rovers on a Mars-like surface*

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*Our STEAMS recipients at the Space Foundation*



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*Our group at Lockheed Martin Space Center learning about Deep Space Exploration*

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*Our group at the Airforce Academy learning about Cyber Security and Virtual Reality*

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