

## AIEF Grad Works on the Rez



**AIEF Scholarship Graduate**

NRC is a catalyst that supports positive change for Americans living on economically-depressed Indian reservations. One of the ways that NRC supports change is by supporting education. In the remote communities where NRC works, access to stores and even schools is limited. Our AIEF Scholarships increase access to college education for Native Americans living in these remote communities. One of our AIEF graduates echoes this strongly.

It was late July and Kelly was still interviewing for a teaching position. At the last minute, she was given an opportunity to go home and teach at a learning center on the Navajo Reservation. Many Native Americans leave their reservations, with the intention of going home to work after college. But with reservation jobs limited, some wait years before they get to return to their families. Kelly was one of the lucky ones.

We asked Kelly about her years in college and what helped her get through. She said there was never a time she felt that she would not make it because “quitting was never an option.” She also said that AIEF played a big part in her college success.

### **Nice to Be Remembered**

While in school, Kelly received three scholarships each year, and all three were needed. But Kelly shared that AIEF was different. Unlike other scholarships, AIEF did not just give her a check and then go away. They sent her care packages in the mail, called her regularly, and sent her gifts for Christmas. They also assigned another AIEF senior to be her mentor on campus. This support really made a difference to Kelly – especially during her freshman year. Kelly told us, “My freshman year was my worst year in college. I was lonely, had no one to talk to, was in the dorm alone, and it was nice to be remembered” by AIEF.

In her senior year, Kelly interned in Costa Rica. That experience of navigating the cultural differences and yet still being effective with the kids now serves her well in her full-time job on the reservation. Although she is working on familiar ground, Kelly was

away at school for 5 years and coming home was in fact a culture shock. She is grateful for having the Costa Rica experience to pass along to the kids on the rez, so they can learn to walk in both worlds.

### **Tell the Donors**

Kelly is on the road to self-sufficiency. She says she will tell other Native American students AIEF is a gift that helped change her life. When we asked what she would like to say to the scholarship donors, Kelly replied:

*“Tell the donors your support makes a difference, and we do not take it lightly. Without the AIEF scholarship, I probably would not have made it through.*

*Now I am teaching on my reservation and I have my own apartment. I was surprised I could afford to do this.”*



**Glad Grad at Work**