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UNIVERSITY WELCOMES A NEW MR. AND MISS INDIAN ASU

38th annual Mr. and Miss Indian ASU pageant brings new reign to the Native community, crowning Matthew Yatsayte and Gypsy Pete the winners



The 2017 Mr. and Miss Indian ASU contestants (from left) Klain Benally, Matthew Yatsayte, Daniell Albert, Desiree Yazzie, Gypsy Pete, Autumn Begay and Diamond Rivera. [Quindrea Yazzie](#)

By [Quindrea Yazzie](#) | April 23, 2017 | 3:13pm MST



After an eventful year of traveling to 11 out of 22 native communities, former Miss Indian ASU Jennifer Jones passed her title to a new reign.

Seven contestants, representing five different tribes, **competed on April 15**, but the Mr. and Miss Indian ASU title went to sociology sophomore Matthew Yatsayte and American Indian Studies junior Gypsy Pete.

Yatsayte has been a part of the Native community since he attended [Student Preparedness Initiative: Readiness Inspired by Tradition](#), or SPIRIT, a two-week program that helps native freshman adjust to campus life.

Being a part of SPIRIT introduced him to various clubs on campus including [Native Americans Taking Initiatives on Student Success](#), [Barrett Indigenous Culture Association](#) and [American Indian Council](#). Through these clubs he learned that working with indigenous people was something he liked to do.

Yatsayte described his platform as “Looking back at our cultural roots and our cultural values and living by those, but also keeping in mind that we need to be able to be open to new things to further our people as well as further ourselves.”

He said his inspiration for his platform came from a quote by Terry Pratchett: “If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going.”

He believes that learning more about his culture will show him where he stands in society and prevent him from being swayed away from his culture and tradition.

Gypsy Pete has served the Native American community at ASU through student-led involvement and working as Jennifer Jones’ second attendant from 2016–2017.

As Miss Indian ASU, her goal is to serve Native communities to enable “the empowerment of young girls (to) become independent successful native women, while balancing their native culture, from the western society.”

“(Many) indigenous boys and girls do not have the capability and opportunity to attend school. I just (want) to be a role model and ambassador for those who can’t,” she said.

Attending college sets an example for young people to realize that they can be away from home, but still can retain their traditional ways, Pete said.

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Graduate law student Brian Garcia said he is interested in running for Mr. Indian ASU next year with a platform in engaging Native Americans in the civic process.

He wants to work in Indian country to create a civically engaged environment through tribal sovereignty, self-determination and self-sufficiency.

“Among other things, I am a first-generation college student and my parents are both immigrants. My mom is from El Salvador and my dad is from Mexico. I am a member of the Pascua Yaqui tribe,” said Garcia. “From that I realized how important it is to be civically engaged.”

Garcia said he is amazed by the way the pageant brings many tribes together and focuses on a platform regarding issues that impact Native Americans.

“I would focus on having more Native individuals (participate) in the civic process,” he said. “There’s a disparity in terms of the amount of policy that goes into a municipal, state and federal government and we see that lack translate into those policies that have essentially hurt Indian country.”

Garcia found inspiration from Kathlene Rosier, the executive director of the Indian Legal Program at ASU and Laura Gonzales-Macias, the associate director of American Indian Student Support Services at ASU.

Gonzalez-Macias, advisor for the royalty committee, said for the past seven years she has seen the pageant and the contestants flourish with the number of tribes participating and the platforms they share.

“I have seen awareness and I see students take pride in who they are by sharing their stories,” Gonzales said.

“That is one of the reasons why I like the theme of the pageant this year, ‘The Power in Your Story,’ because it empowers the students and others as witnesses to — indigenous people are proud, educated, resourceful, individuals who have a lot to offer,” she said.

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