

The Native Scholar

Scholarships and School Improvement

Fall 2008

JOE GLADSTONE: THE POWER OF BEING A BUSINESS PROFESSOR

For many years, it was possible to count the number of Native American college professors teaching business, and fully credentialed with Ph.D. degrees, literally on one's fingers. Today, after fourteen years of effort by The PhD Project, it's finally necessary to use a calculator.

One of the new Native American business professors resulting from this nationwide initiative is Joe Gladstone (Blackfeet/Nez Perce). Now a doctoral student nearly halfway through his Ph. D. study course to become Dr. Gladstone, he believes firmly that Native Americans have a natural, underdeveloped affinity for business—beyond gaming—and that the academically inclined among them can make an important contribution to their people by teaching tomorrow's business managers.

"Our people have always been in business, from the days of trading with settlers, but our entrepreneurial spirit was suppressed," says Gladstone, who is pursuing his doctorate at New Mexico State University after a first career as a tribal public health administrator and consultant.

"Tribal administrators need management education just as much as entrepreneurs," he explains. "Managers of Native American businesses and nonprofits are the troops on the ground in economic development, and I came to realize that I could help them by becoming a professor."

Married and the father of two young children, Gladstone appreciates that professors have huge flexibility in setting their own work hours and routines, and that the financial rewards for a business professor can be significant.

Equally important, he adds, is the sense of fulfillment and achievement he has observed in other Native American professors: "You are your own person. You are a mentor to others. You are respected. You are contributing to your community. And, you can go back to your home every summer."

"Joe Gladstone has realized what others have learned: being a business professor is not only rewarding in many respects; it is a meaningful chance to give back," says Bernie Milano, President of The PhD Project.

When The PhD Project started in 1994, there were literally a handful of Native American business professors in the entire United States. Today there are 28, with 16 more like Joe Gladstone in the pipeline now earning doctorates. To learn more, visit www.phdproject.org.