

PWNA LEADERSHIP

An experienced, dedicated Board of Directors with backgrounds that span a variety of industries, including business and financial management, strategic planning, law, education, health care, economic development, grants and programming, humanitarian services and multicultural diversity sets the stage for the strategic direction of PWNA and governs our administration and finances. PWNA's Board of Directors is passionate about improving quality of life for Native Americans, and the members volunteer their time and expertise to help PWNA achieve its mission and vision with efficiency and integrity.

2022 Board of Directors



Jackie Blackbird, Chairman

Jackie is an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre (Aaniiih) and Assiniboine (Nakoda) tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation of Montana. Her traditional Aaniiih name is 'Itha Gibi That' (which translated to English means 'Walking Woman'). Jackie graduated from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management with a Bachelor's in business. Currently, Jackie is the Talent Development Director for a tribally owned business on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, Island Mountain Development Group (IMDG). Prior to IMDG, she worked at Nike for eighteen years, spending the majority of her career managing Nike's N7 Fund, building capacity for sport and physical activity and providing grants to maintain or expand programming in tribal communities. When not at home with her family and community, Jackie is serving as a Board member for [Native Wellness Institute](#) and the [Pine Ridge Girls' School](#). Jackie brings to PWNA her knowledge of tribal communities and experience in partnership building, grants, program management and strategic planning.



Christina Kazhe, Vice Chairman

Nationally recognized and respected for her legal expertise in tribal sovereignty, land restorations and federal recognition, Christina is a member of the Navajo Nation and affiliate to the Mescalero Apache Tribe. An attorney, Christina specializes in protecting the interests of Native American communities. Her experience spans Indian Child Welfare advocacy, tribal self-determination, taxation, reservation economic development, gaming law, and environmental and cultural preservation. Before opening her own firm, she practiced federal Indian law with Monteau and Peebles LLP and commercial litigation with Morrison & Foerster LLP. Currently, Christina serves on the Board of Directors for [The California Endowment](#) and the Elk Grove Unified School District's [American Indian Education Program](#). She holds a Juris Doctor from Boalt School of Law at UC Berkeley and a Bachelor's in Human Development and Native American Studies from the University of California, Davis. Passionate about our mission, Christina brings multiple skills to PWNA, including legal and public policy expertise, strategic thinking and non-profit leadership.



Corey Mzhickteno, Treasurer

Corey is enrolled with the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. He has 14 years in tribal business operations, with experience from front-line employee to casino management, special projects and business expansions, to board member and public liaison. Previously, Corey served 12 years of Active Duty with the U.S. Air Force and is currently a Reservist flight instructor. Corey holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from the Washburn University School of Business and a Master's in Aeronautical Science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Corey also serves as a board member for the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation's businesses, which provide financial support and economic development to reservation programs and surrounding communities in Northeast Kansas. Passionate about making a meaningful impact across Indian Country, Corey brings to PWNA skills in tribal business operations, organizational behavior, public service and federal government.



Dr. Nicole Been, Secretary

Dr. Nicole Been (pron. Bean), a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and member of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town and the Deer clan, is recognized for her expertise in sports, education; socioeconomic development in Native communities; and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Recently named to the 'Native American 40 Under 40' class by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, she is a cofounder of the Been Foundation focused on youth with socioeconomic challenges. She also cofounded Duck Street Investments, LLC, holds Graduate Faculty status at Oklahoma State University (OSU) and recently became Associate Athletics Director of DEI at the University of Oklahoma. Previously, Dr. Been helped move Bacone to public tribal college status and implement distance learning, served as Dean of the Division of Indigenous Online Teaching and Learning and held several other roles at the college. An alumnus of OSU, Baylor University, and Bacone where she was on the women's basketball team, Been has deep experience in the world of sports and education, working with Orlando Magic of the NBA, the Baylor Lady Bears basketball program, OSU Athletics, Big 12 Conference women's basketball tournaments and Langston University Athletics. A three-time published author, she earned her Ph.D. in health, leisure, and human performance from OSU. Dr. Been brings to PWNA strategies to help close the gap in educational achievement, economic development and financial literacy in rural and tribal communities, and nonprofit leadership experience.



Emily McDonald

Currently a senior leader of Walmart's Culture, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) team, Emily focuses on enterprise strategy, brand identity, external relations, digital engagement and benchmarking related to CDEI. She led development of the first online tool that requires suppliers of Walmart and Sam's Club to report on their diversity, as well as digital and written communications and videos to share the organization's efforts to empower women. She also developed strategic plans for building corporate reputation and engaging the millennial market segment. Emily first joined Walmart in 2011 to focus on real estate and legal, then joined the Walmart Foundation and then the Public Affairs team to serve as liaison for Native Americans and people with disabilities. Prior to Walmart, Emily served as Member

Services Director and later Director of the Heritage Youth Development Center at the Joplin Family YMCA, working with youth organizations and engaging with community stakeholders, In support of Native youth, Emily serves as co-chair of the American Indian College Fund's (AICF) Next Generation Advisory Council to develop and implement strategies that increase the number of Native students who hold college degrees and provide insights on engagement with younger constituents and donors. She holds a Bachelor's from Missouri Southern State University. Emily brings to PWNA expertise in diversity, strategic planning, strategic communications, benchmarking of organizational effectiveness, and empowerment of women and youth.

MaKenley Barton



A former AIEF scholarship recipient, MaKenley is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation tribe. She earned her Bachelor's in Healthcare Administration from Northeastern State University and Master's in Healthcare administration from Oklahoma State University. MaKenley has been working in tribal health care since college, completing job shadows and internships at W.W. Hastings Hospital – the Cherokee-operated hospital. She started her career with Cherokee Nation Health Services as an Administrative Officer for a value-based care program the tribe participates in and then was promoted to Director of Patient Access Management to direct the scheduling and registration departments for the hospital and new outpatient health center. Since 2019, MaKenley has been serving as the Deputy Hospital Administrator for W.W. Hastings Hospital. She always wanted to work in healthcare but more specifically the health care system of her own tribe. MaKenley brings her knowledge of healthcare (rural and tribal), finance, operations and strategic planning to PWNA.

Nikki Pitre, Secretary



Nikki's Indian name is khwhele' (Meadow Lark). She is a member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and of the Red Bird Clan. She is also Kalispel, Yakama, Nisqually, Cowlitz and Squaxin Island. Currently, Nikki is Acting Executive Director of the Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute. She leads overall operations, grants, reporting and budgeting, conducts fundraising

and donor relations, and oversees all CNAY youth engagement initiatives and the Youth Advisory Board. Previously, Nikki served as Associate Director and Program Manager at CNAY, and in various capacities from Coordinator to Director at the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). Her entire life, Nikki has worked on behalf of her people. Her biggest inspiration comes from her daughter Aplnmarimn'tsu'tn (Carries the Medicine). Nikki maintains her culture through language, ceremony and honoring the teachings passed on to her. She also has the honor of serving on the [Miss Indian World Committee for the Gathering of Nations](#), the largest powwow in North America. Nikki brings to PWNA experience in grant management, youth and student services, advocacy and strong connections throughout Indian country.

Joshua Arce, PWNA President & CEO (Non-voting member)



Josh joined PWNA as President & CEO in January 2020 in our 30th year of serving Indian country. A citizen of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, he has more than 20 years' experience in education management, social work and business development. Most recently, he served as Chief Information Officer of Haskell Indian Nations University, advancing their IT infrastructure and services to better meet their mission. Other public sector experience includes tribal law and governance; after-school, youth, foster care and housing programs for low-income families; and diversity and inclusion. Josh has also volunteered for the Kansas court-based [Citizen Review Board](#) for child welfare and [Lawrence+Memorial Hospital](#) for health equity, diversity and inclusion. Arce earned his B.A. in social work from the University of Kansas and then a J.D., specializing in tribal law, applied indigenous leadership, federal Indian law and Indian gaming law. Sincere and forward looking, Josh actively supports the advancement of Native communities.