



## SCA: Inspiring Youth



***H**ello! My name is Leiloni Begaye and I am from the Navajo Nation in Arizona. As a Dine' woman, I identify myself with four clans. They are: Má'déeshgiizhnií (Coyote Pass), To' aheadliíní (Water Flow Together), Táchii'ní (Red Running Into Water), and Tl'ááshchí'í (Red Bottom People).*

I am a National Park Service Academy Alumni with the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The NPS Academy was created to recruit and prepare students from underrepresented populations for a potential career in the National Park Service. The SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land.

During my time with the SCA, I attended a Spring Break Orientation at Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming. Next, I did a summer internship at White Sands National Monument with the Natural Resource Division. After that, I peer-mentored 19 Alaskan Native students at Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska. I was also a two-year Academy Ambassador at New Mexico State University. Currently, I'm back at White Sands National Monument as an interpretative ranger for the summer.

The SCA has given me awesome opportunities to expand my

knowledge and gain new skills within the NPS. This summer, I have developed and presented original interpretative programs, such as the Patio Talk, Skins & Skulls program, and nightly Sunset Stroll to the general public and special audiences. I've enjoyed working alongside the interpretive team and interacting with the public.

My appreciation of preservation grows because White Sands National Monument has a very dynamic ecosystem. It is very intriguing how everything from the largest mammals to the tiniest, microscopic organisms in the biological soil crust survive in this ever-changing environment.

During my times here I have explored all sorts of aspects of the monument. There are amazing scenes to see here and at other NPS sites. I can remember something spectacular and breathtaking from each of the parks and monuments that I have visited.

You too can become an NPS Academy student and experience a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity like this at

various National Parks across the United States! For more information, please visit [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org).

—Leiloni Begaye, SCA Intern



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