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Yvonne Miller and Carly Conrad, Student Spotlight

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Carly Conrad and Yvonne Miller were the recipients of the 2015 Outstanding Student Service Learning Award. They raised awareness about Native Americans living in Whiteclay, NE through showing the documentary Sober Indian Dangerous Indian.

Carly explained that “Whiteclay is an unincorporated town in Nebraska with 14 residents and 4 liquor stores 100 feet from the Pine Ridge Reservation.” The documentary follows four men who are from the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, but live on the streets of Whiteclay, NE. In October 2015, the Sober Indian Dangerous Indian showing brought in about 250 attendees.

“The project really motivated us to continue beyond the assignment,” said Yavonne. After the showing, Carly and Yvonne's efforts to advocate for the Whiteclay community span from attending the Whiteclay Leadership Summit, at Lakota Hope Ministry to meeting with Nebraska’s First Lady, Suzanne Shore; hosting a CPACS lunch and learn presentation discussing their experiences while at Whiteclay Leadership Summit; participation in Pray to End Whiteclay Day; a second showing of Sober Indian Dangerous Indian at St. Francis Borgia Catholic Church; re-initiating monthly Whiteclay Action Coalition meetings; presented Whiteclay research at UNO’s research and creativity fair; and participated in the Public Comments to NE Liquor Control Commission.

Each year the UNO Service-Learning Academy (SLA) offers grant opportunities for UNO faculty. Faculty grants are awarded annually for up to $1,000 and are intended to assist faculty in implementing projects that allow students to explore and respond to important issues in the community. The projects may be part of a regular academic course or be a special project that involves students from multiple academic departments. In 2015, Patty Carlson, Instructor and BSSW Coordinator in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work, was awarded the UNO SLA Civic Participation Project grant. Without the grant, Carly and Yvonne wouldn't have had the opportunity to show the film.
Grants, like the Civic Partnership Project, play a major role in allowing students to become agents of change through their community engagement. Carly said, "It made my last year as a student very exciting for me because I was able to take this issue outside of the classroom. Everything outside of the classroom continued the momentum and it has allowed us to connect with people on campus and learn about working in different groups at different levels. We really had the support of UNO behind us." Yvonne and Carly are still deeply involved in creating awareness about Whiteclay, NE.

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