

honor your Self

PROUD

“IF SOMETHING IS HARD, TAKE IT AS A CHALLENGE. DON'T GIVE UP. MAKE AN EFFORT TO BE INVOLVED IN WHERE YOU'RE GOING IN LIFE.”



April Youpee 22
Dakota Sioux
Poplar High School
Harvard University
Research Assistant for Indian Affairs,
U.S. Senator Tim Johnson

When April Youpee was ten years old she watched her uncle represent her grandfather's heirs in the United States Supreme Court. In *Babbitt v. Youpee*, her uncle argued that the Indian Land Consolidation Act violated the 5th Amendment, and he won. April has been hooked on Federal Indian Law ever since. A recent graduate of Harvard College, April was not only a good student, but also an active member of her community. She was President of the Native Americans at Harvard College, on the Harvard Pow Wow Committee and deeply involved with the Peabody Museum, which, she says, is second only to the Smithsonian as the largest collection of native ethnographic materials in the country. After spending the summer as a Udall Intern in Washington, DC for Senator Jon Tester, April is now honing her skills as a research assistant on Capitol Hill for South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson. "I get to walk through halls where laws are being made," she says of her current job in Washington. "It all happens here."

Washington, D.C. is far away from home, April admits, but it's an amazing opportunity for her to gain crucial knowledge that she hopes to one day use to benefit her community back in Montana. "Don't be afraid to leave home," she advises. "It doesn't mean you're a traitor if you leave. It just means that there are skills out there that you need to go and get." April's Grandpa Bill is her biggest and ultimate role model. "The things he did took him all over the country but he still managed to give back to his people and in a very effective way and not to lose that very specific connection to home."

With the support of her family, April has always challenged herself, not letting negative expectations or racism get in her way. "I have an ability to sit at the table with really intelligent people, with people from different parts of the country, with people who in other situations might for lack of knowledge look down on me because of where I come from and I can say I belong here. I can present my ideas confidently."

In fact, says April, she has a lot to offer the people she meets in Washington. "I come from a place that is increasingly unique in a global world," she says. "There is no richer or more unique culture. I don't buy into the stereotypes. I feel like I'm coming from a place of privilege."

“WE COME FROM SMART, STRONG PEOPLE. THAT'S NOT THE STORY NATIVE YOUTH ARE ALWAYS HEARING IN OUR SCHOOLS. NATIVE STUDENTS DON'T ALWAYS THINK IT'S THEIR PLACE TO DO WELL. BUT WE ARE PROUD AND WE ARE RESILIENT. THAT'S WHAT WE NEED TO REMEMBER.”