

# American Indian College Student Interpretive Ranger Program

## OUTREACH

### Program Overview:

The Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association (FPK/BTA), in partnership with the Bighorn National Forest and Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site, will sponsor an American Indian College Student Interpretive Ranger Program in 2023. Two students will be selected to participate in the program at the Fort Phil Kearny and Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmarks during a nine-week period between June 12<sup>th</sup> and August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Student benefits will include a weekly \$200 stipend, housing, travel support, an interpreter certification training course, and if they so choose tuition for a summer independent study course. Funding will also cover a stipend and travel support for a Tribal Mentor for each student.

Prior to beginning work students will complete a 32-hour course to become a Certified Interpretive Guide using the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) curriculum which is recognized throughout the world as the leading interpretive training program. The course will be taught by Linley Mayer from Fort Phil Kearny, and Kelsey Bean from the Bighorn National Forest, both of whom are certified NAI interpretive trainers.

Upon completion of the training one student will be paced at each site to work five days a week for a period of four weeks. On-site training and supervision will be provided by Forest Service and Wyoming State Parks personnel. At the end of the first four weeks the students will switch places to work at the alternate sites. One day of each week can be set aside for the students to work on and complete requirements for an independent study course for the college of their choice if they choose to enroll to obtain college credit(s). In addition, the students will have two consecutive days off each week, which will be determined based on-site staffing schedules.

At the end of their tenure at each site, the students will participate in an exit interview with the site supervisors and the FPK/BTA program leader to review their experience and provide recommendations for improving the Student Interpreter Program. They will also have an opportunity to provide suggestions for improving site interpretive materials and presentations for visitors, as well as on-site operations. Finally, each student will be interviewed about their experiences by the Wyoming Council for the Humanities which is providing funding for the project. The interviews will be videoed and placed on the WCH website.

### Program Partners:

**The Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association (FPK/BTA)**, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization founded in 1985 and dedicated to the preservation, development, education, and promotion of the Bozeman Trail and associated historic sites including Fort Phil Kearny, Fetterman Battlefield, and

Wagon Box Battlefield. The FPK/BTA will employ the students, pay program costs with grant funding, provide logistical support to the student as needed, and work closely with Wyoming State Parks and the Bighorn National Forest to monitor implantation of the program and ensure the students receive a rewarding and beneficial experience.

**The Bighorn National Forest:** Manages the Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark, which is recognized as a Traditional Cultural Place utilized by American Indians for ceremonial practices. The site is staffed between mid-June and Labor Day each summer, hosting American Indian ceremonies, and over 10,000 visitors annually from around the world. The Forest will provide housing, daily worksite transportation, on-site training, and supervision for the students.

**Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources:** Manages the Fort Phil Kearny, Fetterman Battlefield, and Wagon Box National Historic Landmarks. The site is staffed from May 1<sup>st</sup> through October 30 each year, and hosts over 5,000 visitors annually. The interpretive center contains interpretive displays and the FBK/BTA bookstore. On-site education events are presented regularly. Self-guided interpretive tours of the Fort grounds and the two battlefields feature walking paths and interpretive signage. Wyoming State Parks will provide housing, on-site training, and supervision for the students.

#### **Logistics and Financial Support:**

The students will be provided with a weekly \$200 stipend (paid every two weeks), to cover food, and other personal needs. They will be reimbursed mileage for the travel expenses to get from their homes to the program locations and then the return trip at the end of the summer. Transportation may be provided for the Interns by the partners if needed.

Students will be housed at the Forest Service Porcupine Work Center while working at the Medicine Wheel. While working at Fort Phil Kearny they will be housed in a camp trailer on-site. Grant funding administered by the FPK/BTA will be paid to the hosting Units to cover the cost of the housing at both sites.

The weekly and daily work schedules will be set by the hosting units. Any transportation needed to get from housing quarters to the work site and back each day will be provided by the hosting unit.

The FPK/BTA will provide transportation for the student as an in-kind match for the project if needed. This would include transportation for the initial trip to the program site and the final return trip home at the end of the season and providing one trip each week to get groceries or other personal supplies. If a student has a personal vehicle, grant funding would be used to reimburse the student for mileage at the current GSA rate of .55/mile for the trips described above.

Funding will also cover tuition costs for the students to enroll in a summer independent study course at the college of their choice with the support of their professor. If they choose to enroll, one workday each week would be set aside for the students to work on and complete independent study course requirements.

**American Indian Student Mentor:**

A special component of the program will be the inclusion of a cultural mentor to support and council each student. American Indian culture and history are fundamental elements of the spiritual, historical, and physical landscape at both sites. Mentors will provide support and council to the students in both on and off-site settings. The mentor can also enhance interpretive efforts of the hosting agencies as well. Mentors may be the instructors overseeing the independent study course, and/or tribal elders with cultural knowledge who can council and guide students through the training and work experience. Grant funding would be used to reimburse travel and lodging expenses, as well as a daily stipend for each mentor.

**Selection of Student Participants:**

**Interested currently enrolled American Indian college students can apply by submitting a letter of Interest and resume with references March 1, 2023. The application will be submitted to the FPK/BTA, who will then convene a panel representing the three program partners to make the selection of two participants. The selection of Interns to participate in the program will be made by April 3, 2023**

**Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark Overview:**

The 4080-acre Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark is an American Indian Traditional Cultural Place located in the Bighorn Mountains of north-central Wyoming at an elevation of 10,000 feet in the Bighorn Mountains. Indigenous peoples have occupied this landscape for over 7,000 years. The 82-foot diameter stone feature known as the Medicine Wheel serves as focal point for over 50 traditional ceremonies each summer and is the focus of interpretive efforts at the site. The site can be closed to offer American Indians the ability to have a private and intimate ceremony. In addition to greeting visitors, and hosting ceremonies, interpreters provide a very general overview of the cultural significance of the site. Working at the site also includes daily maintenance of the site's facilities.

Students will experience working with a diverse group of coworkers. The Bighorn National Forest employs interns from Student Conservation Association and seasonal Forest Service interpreters. Typically, interpreters at the site come from all over the U.S. and have different backgrounds.

They will have opportunities to work with different disciplines/departments within the USDA Forest Service including but not limited to archaeology, range land management, wildlife biology, botany, and recreation. In the past students helped check snares and bear traps with the wildlife biologist. One student last year had the ability to see and touch a bear up close as it was trapped to be relocated. One joined in on a ride-a-long with our Law Enforcement Officer.

As part of the Interpreter training course, the Interns will develop a formal interpretive program. Bighorn National Forest has a Campground Talk Program where interpreters give talks on a subject that they're interested in and passionate about but can relate to the Forest Service's mission. Training for developing a program will be provided. In addition to the history and cultural significance of the Medicine Wheel NHL interpreters also provide information on local flora and fauna of the area. They learn about Forest Service rules and regulations and how FS managed land is multi-use.

**Fort Phil Kearny National Historic Landmark Overview:**

The Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site (FPKSHS) served as center stage during the 1860's for conflict between Plains Indians Tribes, and the United States Army sent to protect travelers trespassing through Indian treaty lands along the Bozeman Trail to reach the gold fields of Montana. Conflicts included two major engagements near the Fort including the Fetterman and Wagon Box battles. Ancestors of the Crow, Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Northern Arapaho were central figures in historical events at these sites.

The site includes an interpretive center and bookstore, a partially reconstructed Fort stockade, and the Fetterman and Wagon Box Battlefields. The State recently received a large grant to expand and improve interpretive exhibits and the bookstore.

Students will give tours of the site, provide 15-minute interpretive programs/ranger talks, provide informal activities that promote a connection between the visitors and events of the past, work in the bookstore, participate in all aspects of site maintenance and cleaning, and engage in developing and editing new exhibits in the expanded interpretive center.

**HOW TO APPLY**

**Send a letter of interest with your contact information and a resume with three references**

**By**

**March 1, 2023**

**To**

**Dave McKee, President, FPK/BTA at: [daveabtmckee@gmail.com](mailto:daveabtmckee@gmail.com)**