



**CONTACT:** Carol Ortiz [cortiz@phxindcenter.org](mailto:cortiz@phxindcenter.org)  
Phone (602) 264-6768

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **2013 ARIZONA AMERICAN INDIAN EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARDEES ANNOUNCED**

*Lifetime Achievement, Man & Woman of the Year, Business of the Year,  
Friend of the Community and Outstanding Students at Annual Event*

**PHOENIX, Ariz. (September 30, 2013)** - The Phoenix Indian Center announces the 2013 American Indian Excellence in Leadership Awardees. In its 31st year, the annual dinner celebration boasts an impressive list of leaders. This year's awardees John Lewis, LuAnn Leonard, Mary Kim Titla, Randy Kemp, Arizona Indian Gaming Association, the Arizona Science Center and youth awardees will be honored at a dinner planned for Tuesday, November 19, 2012, at 6:00 PM at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Tempe, Arizona.

"It is important we take time to thank our community leaders for their dedication as stewards and advocates for our American Indian people." says Robert Roessel, President of the Phoenix Indian Center's Board of Directors. Phoenix Indian Center Chief Executive Officer Patricia Hibbeler said "Not only are we honoring today's leaders, we have created the opportunity for businesses in the community to partner with us in honoring their American Indian employees."

The Phoenix Indian Center's American Indian Excellence in Leadership Awards began in 1982 as a one-day celebration consisting of a community dinner, which celebrated community leaders. The event initiated what is now known as the Native American Recognition Days that takes place annually in October and November with more than 15 Native American events that include the awards dinner, a parade, pageants, art markets and more. Today the banquet hosts an attendance of nearly 400 people, coming together to recognize these distinguished community leaders. The awardees are chosen through an open and competitive nomination process each year which is administered by the Phoenix Indian Center, who is proud to announce the following awardees.

**Kent C. Ware Lifetime Achievement Award – John Lewis (Mohave/Pima/Tohono O'odham)**  
Lewis has dedicated more than 35 years as the Executive Director of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA), working directly with tribal leadership on a local, State and National level to address issues facing Arizona's Tribal communities through collective tribal sovereignty. He is instrumental in analyzing and disseminating information vital to Indian community self-development and facilitating participation of tribal leaders in the formulation of public policy.

**Phyllis J. Bigpond Lifetime Achievement Award – LuAnn Leonard (Hopi)**

Leonard is the first American Indian to serve on the Arizona Board of Regents. She was appointed by former Governor Janet Napolitano to an eight-year term in January 2008. She is also the Executive Director of the Hopi Education Endowment Fund (HEEF), providing educational opportunities for the Hopi people.

**Man of the Year Award – Randy Kemp (Euchee, Muscogee and Choctaw)**

Kemp is a renowned print-maker, painter, flutist and mixed media artist. Invested in his community, he is the organizer of an annual holiday concert-toy drive benefitting American Indian children, donates time and art work to various organizations such as Mayo Clinic Hospital, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Make a Wish Foundation, Mayo clinic, Phoenix Indian Center and more.

**Woman of the Year Award – Mary Kim Titla (San Carlos Apache)**

Titla is best known as a former 12 News (Phoenix NBC affiliate) on-air journalist and reporter. She was the first and only American Indian in TV news for nearly 20 years. Titla is the Executive Director of the United National Indian Tribal Youth organization, dedicating her time as a mentor to young American Indians and those aspiring to have careers in media.

**Business of the Year Award – Arizona Indian Gaming Association (AIGA)**

Established in 1994, AIGA is committed to advancing the lives of Indian peoples – economically, socially and politically – helping Tribes achieve their goal of self-reliance. The organization, headed up by Valerie Spicer, and AIGA Chairman Terry Rambler (San Carlos Apache), serves as a unified voice for its members providing as an educational, legislative and public policy resource for Tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development.

**Friend of the Community Award – Arizona Science Center (ASC)**

With history of exploration, innovation and collaboration, the Arizona Science Center has established itself as an institution of learning for all. Under the direction of Chevy Humphrey, CEO, the Center partners with tribes, American Indian organizations and individuals collaborating to provide culturally respectful dialogue on exhibits, events and activities and serves as host to the annual holiday concert-toy drive benefitting American Indian children.

**College Students of the Year: Quentin Begay (Navajo) and Ruby Steele (Hualapai)**

Begay, Arizona State University with a BA in Social Work, created the Care Assessment during an internship which increased patients utilizing services and began a softball team to promote exercise and teamwork.

Steele attends Grand Canyon University, majoring in Business Administration and was elected to the Arizona American Indian Tourism Board and coordinates the Summer Youth Training and Employment Program for Grand Canyon West.

**High School Students of the Year: Nicole Lucero (Navajo) and Kailey LaRue Toney (Salt River Pima – Maricopa Indian Community)**

Lucero, Westwood High School, is an avid volunteer, parade coordinator for the Martin Luther King Jr parade, and advises Freshman on how to balance activities and academics.

Toney, Westwood High School and East Valley Institute of Technology, works for the SRPMIC Community Relations Department and is published in the Au-Authum Newspaper.

**Junior High School Students of the Year: Nadira Mitchell (Navajo) and Taishiana Tsosie (Navajo)**

Mitchell , Utterback Middle Magnet in Tucson, is active in Girl Scouts, and received a service award from Congressman Ron Barber and Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild.

Taishiana Tsosie, St. Michael Indian School, vice president for the National Junior Honor Society, interns with the Navajo Times and mentors in basic math and Navajo ceremonies.

Businesses can learn about how to honor their American Indian employees by visiting the website or calling the numbers below. Everyone is invited to join us at the dinner to celebrate the awardees where awards will be presented on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 at 6:00 pm at the Double Tree by Hilton located at 2100 S Priest Drive in Tempe, Arizona. Tickets are \$40 and can be purchased online at [www.phxindcenter.org](http://www.phxindcenter.org), by calling (602) 264-6768 ext. 2009 or email [leadershipawards@phxindcenter.org](mailto:leadershipawards@phxindcenter.org)

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**ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN RECOGNITION DAYS**

[www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

The Annual Native American Recognition Days is held each year during the months of October and November in the greater Phoenix area and is coordinated by community volunteers from different nonprofit organizations and community groups who host events as a way to share and celebrate Native American heritage and culture with the community.

**ABOUT PHOENIX INDIAN CENTER**

[www.phxindcenter.com](http://www.phxindcenter.com)

The Phoenix Indian Center is the first urban Indian Center in the Nation of its kind, created in 1947, providing effective employment, youth leadership, education, cultural revitalization programs and community engagement. The Center provides services in greater Phoenix and Prescott.