**The Dream Chaser**

Brenna Two Bears ’17 was awakened to her life plan around age 10.

“The women in my family worked towards their higher education while raising children and prioritized cultural revitalization along the way in order to help our communities,” Two Bears said, “I grew up with these role models and their influence led me to seek a career in museums, be it art or historical.”

The path that Two Bears has walked while in pursuit of her purpose may appear to be one filled with serendipitous occurrences, but serendipity is the term humans use to explain the life plan the universe has already outlined. Two Bears’ path has led from the west to the east coast and back again all in pursuit of her goal.

**Guideposts along the Path**

Two Bears earned a bachelor’s in art in 2017. Along with her education, Two Bears credits her time at Whitman for giving her a greater sense of empathy, while also stimulating her consciousness.

“I learned that in order to reach the audience I want to reach, I have to realize the hand that institutions and governments have in the erasure of my history and culture,” she said. “Though it was never easy going to college at Whitman, I know it wouldn’t have been different anywhere else. At least there I was able to come to my own conclusions about the world and its injustices in an environment going through its own process to be more inclusive.”

Two Bears also praised professors within the art department for assisting her to develop her viewpoint as she prepared to enter the world.

“Without Dennis Crockett’s Intro to Art History course, I would never have dreamed that my perspective could matter in the world of art history,” Two Bears said. “Krista Gulbransen taught her course on museums and the politics of display and focused heavily on the history of colonization in museums. After that course, Krista and I created Indigenous Representation in Museums, my independent study.”

After graduation, Two Bears received an internship at the School for Advanced Research located in New Mexico. Founded in 1907, SAR promotes Indigenous creativity through artist residencies, and stewards one of the world’s finest research collections of Southwest Native American art.

The small staff size of SAR enabled Two Bears to wear multiple hats working in various departments. The experience provided her the opportunity to work with their collection of Navajo rugs, teach kids at the Santa Fe Youth Detention Center and serve as a representative for SAR at Native art conferences. It also inspired her to apply for other internships, one of which was the Lifchez-Stronach Curatorial Internship at the Met, which she received.

**“**When I realized I got the position, I ran outside to feel the earth beneath my feet, and to see the sky. I took a moment to acknowledge the people who this land belonged to before colonization, to thank them for taking care of the land for as long as they did, so that I could be there centuries later,” Two Bears said.

**Reinterpreting History**

When Two Bears interviewed for the Met internship, she articulated her passion for Native collections. Her passion was realized as part of her tasks for the internship was to support the Native American Graves, Protection and Repatriation Act, which returns culturally sensitive and funerary objects back to their tribes.

“Places that originally exotified and othered my people and our art was now welcoming our input seriously, for the first time,” she said.

An additional task that enabled Two Bears to share her opinion was the specialized tours she conducted for the museum. As part of the tour, Two Bears was allotted four objects that best represented her chosen theme of environment.

“I chose pieces that would reflect the experience of a contemporary indigenous, art historian and queer brown woman,” Two Bears said. “I wanted to emphasize the different ways I connect to environment and get the visitors to consider how that is represented in art.”

**Following Your Heart**

Two Bears’ internship with the Met was scheduled to end in 2019, but Two Bears decided to make a bold move and end her Met internship to pursue opportunities that aligned with her ultimate goals.

“I am currently in the process of working with Deana Dartt and her business Live Oaks Museum Consulting,” Two Bears said, “I know that she is hoping to get consultants based in their hometown where the tribes are and help out museums in that region. So, since I’m in the southwest, I would be here working and consulting with museums in the southwest.”

In order to become a certified consultant, Two Bears will need to train with Dartt for one year. While she waits for her training to begin, Two Bears has returned to Arizona and is becoming certified to become a substitute teacher.

Although it may appear that since leaving the Met momentum on Two Bears’ path has slowed, but she is content in the way the events of her life have unfolded.

“I thought that I would have to kind of suffer through working a full-time job with a museum for a long time to build up my name so I could become a consultant,” she said. “You know the younger angrier part of me is really excited at the opportunity to go to a museum and say you’re doing this wrong and have them actually listen. Instead of having to work in a museum, I can be hired to help them change.”