



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 22, 2015

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NAVAJO STUDENTS AMONG GRADUATES AT FORT LEWIS COLLEGE'S WINTER 2015 COMMENCEMENT

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE-Before the winter commencement ceremony began at Fort Lewis College (FLC), Wilhelmina Manheimer stood with her class in anticipation outside of the Whalen Gymnasium.

Manheimer was one of many Navajo students who would graduate on Saturday, Dec. 19 at FLC's Winter 2015 Commencement held in Durango, Colo. She received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

On behalf of the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the commencement ceremony and said he was proud to see so many Navajos among the graduating class.

In emphasizing the importance of higher education, Vice President Nez said a bachelor degree has become a standard requirement to gaining employment.

"Continuing your education provides you tools that reinforce your skill set while broadening the scope of your abilities," he said. "The Begaye-Nez administration supports continued education as a way to continually move the Navajo Nation forward."

The college was originally established in 1911 as an agricultural high school. Currently, it is a public liberal arts college that offers tuition-free education to Native Americans. FLC offers 32 baccalaureate programs and a masters of arts in education program.

Karen Wilde, Board of Trustees for FLC, noted that the college's alumni include Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz and Congressman Scott Tipton.

"Never give up," she said. "You had a vision that brought you to our school. Now follow it."

Dr. Lee Frazer, Assistant Professor of the Department of Adventure Education delivered graduation remarks. His advice for students was to think outside the box and "not be bound



Hundreds of students lined the sidewalks outside of the Whalen Gymnasium before Fort Lewis College's Winter 2015 Commencement was set to begin on Saturday, Dec. 19. Navajo student Wilhelmina Manheimer graduated and received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

by your studies".

"Let your life speak by recognizing and following your interest and passions. There is an importance in taking risks as life begins at the edge of comfort zones."

When FLC President Dr. Dene Kay presented the candidates for graduation, she asked the class to stand and cross their tassels from right to left signifying their recognition as the College's 2015 winter graduates.

This year's 53rd graduating class totaled 215 students.

Among the Navajo graduates was Amanda McNeil who received a bachelor of arts in psychology. McNeil thanked her parents for their

support.

"I'm so happy to be done," she said.

When the 2015 Winter Commencement was over, FLC's cannon fired a shot from the school's lawn to celebrate the graduating class.

While crowds of families gathered outside the Whalen Gymnasium for photos, Vice President Nez took the opportunity to congratulate many Navajo graduates.

Both President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez extend their congratulations to the 2015 winter graduating class of Fort Lewis College.

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