unity

Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

Red Earth Festival

'A Feast for All Seasons'

Top Native-owned businesses

Glass artist Marcus Amerman

Behind the lens with
Billy Luther

Kyle Von Bucholtz runs one of the top Native-American-owned companies in the country, according to Inc. magazine. His firm, Federated IT, specializes in information technology.

Entrepreneurship and community

What prompts someone to give back without wanting anything in return? If you ask Kyle Von Bucholtz, he will tell you about the lessons his father taught the family about pride. "He instilled in us a sense of ownership and pride in America," Von Bucholtz recalls. "We have a strong bond with our heritage."

Von Bucholtz's company, Federated IT, specializes in information assurance and analytic and operational support for government entities. Von Bucholtz and his brother and business partner, Matthew, go back to the Lower Sioux Reservation in Minnesota where his father was raised to hire members of the tribe to work for his company. "We offer them work as analysts and we provide them with computer-based training so they can enhance their job skills," says Von Bucholtz. "There are some really bright and capable people there and that resource has not been leveraged."

Along with giving back, Von Bucholtz observes his cultural traditions through being active with the Cub Scouts. "I regularly perform traditional native dance ceremonies with my father for local Cub Scout packs in the D.C. area. It's a lot of fun passing along those traditions and keeping them alive."

Federated IT was among Inc. Magazine's top 10 Native American Entrepreneurs in 2010. Editors of the widely respected magazine selected leaders from many different fields including government contracting, electronics and information technology.

"Educating and inspiring the youth of a culture is the best way to solidify it," says Stephen Mills, CEO and president of AQWIO (the Chumash Tribal word for "shooting star" or "light"). The firm offers internships to students from tribal colleges and universities and aspiring entrepreneurs who are interested in government contracting.

Mills is an avid supporter of these colleges and universities that don't receive much attention from the general public. "My message to (the students) is to remain optimistic and that your people are your greatest asset," says Mills. "To succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to be a sincere and caring leader."

Mills has learned that optimism and strong leadership have been paramount in overcoming challenges as a Native American entrepreneur. "In any minority business, there are preconceived notions from the customers, partners and even employees coming in," says Mills. "You have to build a reputation that lets them know you can get the job done."

These entrepreneurs' dedication to uplifting the community and honoring their heritage is a gift they would never take back.

The list of top 10 honorees are Ken Novotny, CEO of Consulting Services Inc. in Oklahoma City; Jim Williamson, CEO of New West Technologies in Greenwood Village, Colo.; Paul Lombardi, president and CEO of TeraThink Corp. in Reston, Va.; Louie Wise III, president and CEO of Climate Control Mechanical Services in Ocala, Fla.; Royce Cornelison, CEO and president of P&C Construction in Chattanooga, Tenn.; Jeff Styers, president of Arrow Strategies in Bingham Farms, Mich.; Kyle Von Bucholtz, CEO of Federated Information Technologies in Washington, D.C.; Vickie Wessel, CEO of Spirit Technologies in Phoenix, Ariz.; Brian Billingsley, CEO of HEBCO in Oklahoma City, Okla.; and Stephen Mills, CEO and president of AQWIO in Arlington, Va.

The Neal Hatathli Building on the campus of Diné College, which is part of the Navajo Nation. Diné College is the first tribally owned and operated college in the United States.

Private tradition, public debut

Life for the residents of the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in west-central New Mexico is usually quiet and uneventful. But every year on Aug. 10, "Grab Day," an infectious sense of excitement and electricity builds amongst its people. Young and old alike gather at the doorsteps of homes on the reservation with their arms reaching for the heavens and fingertips anxiously waiting to grab onto whatever gifts may fall their way. Director Billy Luther, of Laguna Pueblo, Hopi and Navajo tribal descent, set out to share this special event with the world in his documentary called "Grab."

Stills from the film "Grab," directed by Billy Luther. Photos by Cybelle Codish

Grab Day is an annual gathering celebrated in the villages of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. Families throw water, food, toys and handmade items from the rooftops of their homes for those gathered below to grab. A communitywide prayer of abundance, thanks and renewal is observed, adding a cultural significance to this event that has been in existence for more than 300 years.

"Grab," narrated by actress Parker Posey, follows the lives of three families as they prepare for the Grab Day ceremony. Luther's crew followed each family as they purchased items for the ceremony and documented their connection to the reservation as well as their heritage. One of the central characters in the film is Josie Seymour, who has been a traditional potter sculptor for 10 years. The documentary shows her creative process of sculpting her beautiful pots. Treasures like these are among the water and food items thrown off the rooftops for the people below.

"Grab" was chosen as one of the 2011 Sundance Film Festival selections. This is Luther's second film to be selected by Sundance; he directed "Miss Navajo," which premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and aired on PBS' "Independent Lens." Luther's fascination with the world of film began with the musical "Annie."

"I remember leaving that theater on a high. For me, it was a life-changing experience," the veteran director recalls. "Later when I watched 'The Color Purple,' that's when I knew I wanted to be a director." Luther studied film at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. At Hampshire, documentaries were a popular course of study. Luther fell in love with the genre and realized he had an opportunity to share stories about his culture that hadn't been seen before. "I don't like to focus on the plight of Native Americans. I like to share uplifting stories that have been in existence for years in a contemporary light."

To shoot his documentary, Luther would have to seek permission from the Laguna Pueblo community to bring cameras to the reservation. Historically, video and photography have never been allowed as a way to protect the customs and rituals of the Laguna Pueblo people. Luther's Laguna roots played an integral part in gaining access. "The governor grew up with my father, so he knew my family. He also knew where to find me if there was an issue." Luther jokes. "I showed them what I wanted to do and assured them I wouldn't exploit the culture or reveal private ceremonies and traditions."

Luther is a recipient of a Roy W. Dean Los Angeles Video grant, and was selected for the Sundance Institute's Native Initiative/Ford Foundation Fellowship and the Tribeca Film Institute's All Access Connects program.

The exposure "Grab" received from its Sundance selection has created a global platform to display Native American culture. The film has since been screened at the Sydney Opera House and stills from the film will be displayed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. You can visit the film's website, www.grabthemovie.com, for more information.

Beauty (and tradition) to behold

When President George H.W. Bush approved a joint resolution in 1990 designating November as National American Indian Heritage Month, it was not the first effort to recognize Native Americans. At the turn of the 20th century, a quest for a proclamation to honor Indians for a day was sought by a Blackfoot Indian. In December 1915, he presented the endorsements of 24 state governments to the White House, but there is no record that a national day was ever proclaimed. The first American Indian Day was declared in 1916 by the governor of New York. In this issue, *Unity* recognizes and honors three artists who pay homage to Native American heritage (in 1974, the Native American Programs Act was amended to include native Hawaiians) through the intricate medium of colorful beadwork and images of Native traditional values.

"Ulalena" by Steve Sundram

"Island Dance" by Steve Sundram

Steve Sundram

On a monthlong vacation in 1990, Steve Sundram was captivated by the island's beauty and immediately fell in love with its panoramic paradise. He has lived in Hawaii for the last 21 years.

Sundram speaks fondly of his mother, "a naturally gifted artist," whom he credits for his inspiration to become an artist himself. He remembers sitting beside her as they both "scribbled on pads of paper for hours every day." By age 16, Sundram decided it was only natural to continue painting and drawing. When he moved to Hawaii, his quest was to capture the essence of the complexity and power of Hawaiian traditions.

Ulalena (pronounced Oo-La-Lena), is an acclaimed Cirque du Soleil-style theatrical production in Maui that explores Hawaiian mythology and history. Sundram was the featured artist for the 2006 Ulalena production. His oil painting by the same name reflects passion and mystery, and depicts awe and admiration of the culture. The various shades of reds, hints of yellow and wisps of white mirror Hawaiian relationships between people, nature and mythology into "one, swirling, epic painting."

"Island Dance," also oil on canvas, is of a Hawaiian hula dancer. Sundram was impressed by her intense focus as she danced. He states, "I wanted to capture the feeling of movement in this painting as well as her grace and beauty as she tells an ancient story through dance." The textured background of soft, burnt oranges and gold, and a smidgen of brown, allows the twirl in her skirt and the foliage around her head, neck and ankles to emerge.

Kevin Fast Horse

Kevin Fast Horse was born and raised in Rapid City, S.D., where he still resides. His family was born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Fast Horse is a member of the Oglala Sioux tribe of the Lakota people. He recalls, as a young child, observing his grandmother beading moccasins. Fast Horse was intrigued with the colorful beads and designs she used. His uncles made dolls and war clubs also using beads for the dolls' belts and around the war club sticks. He has been beading for 40 years.

"Blue Cradle Bag" by Kevin Fast Horse

"Scout Jacket" by Kevin Fast Horse

Fast Horse believes it is important that Native American children identify with their culture and that his art connects with his native past. "Blue Toy Cradleboard" achieves just that. It is a toy version of a larger model of what is commonly known as a "papoose." A large cradleboard can be used as a highchair when stood up, bassinet when laid down and as a swing when its strong, leather strap hangs from a tree. The beadwork on this toy version consists of 18,000 to 20,000 beads.

"Scout Jacket" is made of deer leather and adorned with green and white beaded strips draped over the shoulders and on the sleeves. The buttons are made of Indian-head nickels. This type of jacket was worn by Native scout/warriors who worked for the United States government in the late 19th century. It is also a blend of two cultural clothing styles. The beads symbolize the cultural art of the Lakota people and the coat was fashioned after the 1800s design of coats with fringes worn by mountain men and buffalo hunters.

Fast Horse says his work gives back to the Native American community. "It keeps (our heritage) alive and shares its beauty and significance." Fast Horse believes his use of beads challenges his own artwork and continues the legacy and history of the Lakota people.

Marcus Amerman

Marcus Amerman was born in Phoenix and presently resides in Santa Fe. He received a bachelor's in fine art at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash., and took art courses at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. Amerman's wide-ranging influences and strong artistic traditions stem from time spent with the tribe of his Choctaw relatives as a young boy and a cousin who "essentially introduced him to the world of Indian art."

Although Amerman is best known for his beadwork, he is also a jewelry maker, multimedia and performance artist, and glass artist. His paintings also offer social commentary that reflects his heritage. His juxtaposed images in "Something Wicked" depict an old train pulling cargo and bearing pictures of Western icons such as Buffalo Bill, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, and the American flag. In the foreground are migrating bison herd in their natural state. "The train is American culture coming into this continent and all the things good, bad and strange it brings," explains the artist.

Amerman's glasswork can be viewed as a representation of the stylistic and technical traditions of Native American communities. He creates pieces inspired by mysterious artifacts left by the Mound Builders of the Midwest. He uses a popular mound builder motif of the human hands with bones for his blown-glass vessel, "Hands and Bones." This

"Hands and Bones" by Marcus Amerman

piece puts Amerman's creativity to work and provides his interpretation of early Native markings in a contemporary way. Pictured on *Unity's* cover, "Mound Builder," with black, carved markings, resembles "a ceramic artifact from A.D. 1,100 and translates into a sleek, sandblasted representational vessel."

Amerman has work in the permanent collections in the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the Portland Art Museum and the American Museum of Natural History. Amerman's concept of art is "something elusive," he maintains. "It is something that is constantly changing, evolving and growing. It is a great mystery."

"Something Wicked" by Marcus Amerman

Tweaking taste buds and traditions

Chef Lois Ellen Frank

Lois Ellen Frank is ahead of her time. She was pursuing her dream of becoming a chef when women mostly prepared pastries or worked for men. And long before farmers markets and organic produce were all the rage, Frank had a vision. In the early eighties, she and two colleagues developed a restaurant concept called The Good Earth, known for healthy foods, portion control and brown rice as a staple. They were hoping it would overtake the food-fast industry.

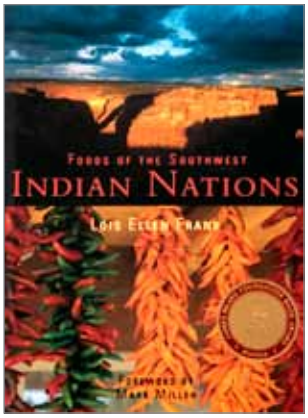
Consumers weren't ready and the concept didn't take off, but Frank was not deterred. Today she runs Red Mesa Cuisine, a Santa Fe catering company whose mission is to bring Native American fare into contemporary Southwestern kitchens — in a way that's ethical, humane and healthy. She is also an author ("Foods of the Southwest Indian Nation"), teacher, food historian, culinary anthropologist and photographer.

In her words, Frank grew up "multiethnic and multicultural." She's Sephardic Jew on her father's side, and Native American on her mother's. It's the latter that drives the mission of Red Mesa.

"The new Native American cuisine embraces this idea of tradition as innovative and evolving," she says.

Frank believes there is a connection between the food and its sources: the soil, the land, the water. And she believes there is no reason one can't bring that connection into a commercial kitchen.

"We are moving away from mass production and the foods that are getting people sick," she adds. "We make statements as chefs. That is a big part of what I do."



"Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations" by Lois Ellen Frank

At Red Mesa, Frank hosts the Culture and Cuisine Series in which customers enjoy local Native American cuisine in conjunction with, say, a visit to Frank's garden or an educational event in which the chefs talk about how they source the foods.

"We're not a normal, for lack of a better term, catering company," she says. "Even though we're doing a high-end dinner, the education is still very much a part of it."

A high-end dinner for Frank most always includes corn, one of her favorite foods. She also loves organic bison with potatoes and fresh green chilies.

"It's about looking at food each day with a fresh palate and fresh eyes," she says. "And then the food tastes better.

"When we handle the food, we want to feed you the essence of the ancestors — and that's filled with love and compassion," she concludes.

Blue Corncob Bread

Yield: 1 pan of cornbread or 14 corn sticks

1 cup blue cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1 3/4 cups buttermilk
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Grease (2) 7-stick corn bread pans, (1) 9-inch cast iron skillet or (1) cake pan.

In a large bowl, mix together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

In a separate bowl, mix together the eggs and buttermilk. Gradually stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Mix well. Add the melted butter and gently stir again. Do not overstir the mixture; the breadsticks taste better if you just gently stir in the melted butter at this point.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pan(s) and bake until firm, 25 to 30 minutes if using a cake pan or skillet and 10 to 15 minutes if using corn stick pans. The bread should be golden brown and spring back when touched.

Reverence for food and the environment

Andrew George Jr., a renowned aboriginal chef, knows about the spiritual power of food. From the time he walked the trails of his grandfather's place as a child until he left to pursue a career in the modern world, he was taught that everything in life is intertwined. Therefore, he says, "We should have respect for all living things, whether it is from the earth, sky, the waters or the land."

Growing up in British Columbia, George was also taught to make an offering before harvesting anything. "If we took something we had to replace it with something else," he recalls.

Those concepts are eloquently conveyed in "A Feast for All Seasons," a cookbook of traditional North American Native people's cuisines. Originally published in 1997, the new edition, which George co-authored with Robert Gairns, presents aboriginal recipes that feature ingredients from the earth, sky, water and land — and that focus on a respect for the environment. Recipes include such dishes as barbecued oysters, pan-friend rabbit and stuffed wild duck, and the more exotic moose chili, boiled porcupine and smoked beaver meat.

After 25 years promoting the traditions of aboriginal fare, George remains steadfast in his desire to honor his roots. "Early in life I was inspired by my paternal grandfather, Thomas George 'Gisdaywa,' Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief of the Bear Clan," he says, "who lived off the land prior to European contact."

George's grandfather nicknamed him "Junior the Cook," as George learned to cook at a young age from his mother, Rita George "Galukhan." George spent time with his parents in the traditional territories of the Wet'suwet'en people, or people of the lower river valley, in North Central British Columbia in the Morice/Bulkey river tributaries. George and his siblings learned to live off the land, as well as the importance of a Western education. "We were all taught to go out into the big world but never ever to forget where we came from," he says.

After completing his education, George became a chef, most recently at the Four Host First Nations pavilion at the 2010 Winter Olympics, the first games in which indigenous peoples were recognized as official host partners by the International Olympic Committee. His plans include a follow-up to "A Feast for All Seasons," which will include more modern recipes and fusion recipes containing aboriginal products — but which will retain the focus on the spiritual effect of food in our lives.

Fiddleheads Wabanaki

Yield: 2 servings

½ pound fresh or frozen fiddleheads
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 slice bacon cut into ½-inch pieces
1 large shallot, sliced
Pinch each of sea salt and pepper

Wash fresh fiddleheads thoroughly to remove dirt. In a large pot of boiling salted water, blanch fiddleheads 3 minutes. Drain in a colander, refresh under cold water, and drain well again. Set aside.

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook bacon, stirring occasionally, until crisp; remove bacon with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Chop.

Pour off all but 2 teaspoons of fat. Increase heat to medium-high and melt the butter in the fat. Sauté shallot and garlic until shallot slices are transparent and soft.

Add fiddleheads and sauté 5 minutes. Remove from heat and season with salt and pepper. Serve topped with bacon bits.

The Festival Color Guard, composed of American military veterans, upholds the Native American tradition of honoring warriors. Photos courtesy of Red Earth

Native festival honors its German 'mother'

In June 2011, Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Yvonne Kauger waved to the onlookers at Oklahoma City's Silver Anniversary of the Red Earth Festival and parade. She was the festival's Ambassador of the Year, 25 years after helping found one of the nation's most significant Native American cultural events. It was a tribute to a woman of German heritage who had always said she "wanted to be an Indian," and who grew up knowing her father had been raised by Cheyenne and Arapaho women after his mother died.

During Kauger's childhood in Colony, Okla., her mother always knew where to find her during the annual Cheyenne and Arapaho ceremonial gatherings. She was "next door," dancing with her Native American friends on their traditional gathering grounds. Her girlhood experiences began a lifetime of devotion to preserving Native American art and culture.

Because of Kauger, since 1987 the Red Earth Festival has provided insight into the wide, diverse Native American cultures; it is the only truly national Native American dance competition and juried art exhibit. It teaches participants and onlookers about Native culture while drawing up to 30,000 people to Oklahoma City from across North America.

On the first full weekend in June, the event begins with a Festival Gala and a downtown parade of tribal people dressed in traditional regalia. Opening ceremonies in the Grand Ballroom at Cox Convention Center kick off the now-renowned Red Earth dance competitions that attract dance teams from Canada to Florida. The dancers' colorful outfits and original choreography, based on the traditions of their native tribes, produce a spectacle unlike any other in the country.

In the convention center's exhibition hall, major Native American artists compete in a juried art competition.

Yvonne Kauger became Oklahoma's first female Supreme Court justice in 1984, and the only woman to serve a term as the court's chief justice. Still, Kauger says, one of her proudest moments was the day the Cheyenne and Arapaho adopted her into their tribes. It was a rare honor, given to very few Caucasians.

Soon after, Kauger began talking to other people about how to make the annual tribal powwows of Oklahoma's native people into a showcase for Native American dance, arts and culture. She wanted Oklahoma to take pride in its 39 different federally recognized tribes who spoke 39 distinct languages.

Over the years, Yvonne Kauger has become widely known as the "mother of the Red Earth Festival." As the 25th anniversary celebration's Ambassador of the Year, her name was added to the list of former honorees, who include actor-director-producer Kevin Costner (1991); CNN founder Ted Turner, (1996); and the first Native American in space, John Herrington (2003).

As a jurist, Kauger has also contributed to advances in tribal law. She holds a key role in an annual Sovereignty Symposium, which provides continuing education on tribal law and offers a non-adversarial environment where tribes and estates can discuss legal issues.

Kauger's additional role in founding the Gallery of the Plains Indian in Colony, Okla., her personal collection of art, and her support of the artistic community have helped put Oklahoma City on a par with Santa Fe as one of the top places to find the best Native American art and crafts in the country. She cites the work of her daughter, Jonna Kauger Kirschner, while president of the nonprofit Red Earth Inc., in creating Oklahoma City's first sales outlet for the best Native American artists, at Red Earth's downtown gallery. For Kauger, that legacy is all she could hope to leave behind.

Cover photos: Top, Fiddleheads Wabanaki; film director Billy Luther; bottom right, "Mound Builder" by Marcus Amerman; bottom left, Red Earth Festival participant. *Unity* is a celebration of food, art and culture. Published six times per year, *Unity* is exclusively distributed to clients of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group, both world leaders in foodservice. To contact us, send an e-mail to unity@thompsonhospitalityjv.com.

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