

My name is Sunshine Thomas-Bear and I am a Bear Clan member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. I am the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, NAGPRA Representative, Angel De Cora Museum Director and Cultural Preservation Director for the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. I am also the proud mother to nine children and have one grandson and one granddaughter who motivate me to not only try my best for them but to reconnect to my culture and language. Knowing the importance of language and culture to not only my children, but my tribe and our future generations. I am interested in a variety of things; reading, sports, outdoors activities, gardening, canning but my most important hobby to me and my family is the reconnection to our cultural ways by means of beading, sewing, planting, learning and sharing my knowledge of cultural activities and breaking the various cycles that harm our people and communities.

I received my first Associate's Degree from Little Priest Tribal College in Winnebago, Nebraska and went on to receive a Bachelor's of Science in Education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, took some Special Education courses there and then I went back to Little Priest Tribal College where I graduated in May 2021 with my Associate's in Native American Studies. My path has lead me from teaching in schools to teaching the language and culture to now protecting our lands, water and resources within the reservation but also ancestral lands and fighting for the return our ancestors and our cultural objects that have been taken from our people. Which then lead me into seeking a degree at Oklahoma University studying Indigenous People's Law. Due to loss of several family members in a short period of time, I had to leave the program but I hope to reapply and finish in the upcoming year.

I not only have an interest in helping my community and people, I feel that at this point in time, there are so many other issues that face our country as whole. My grandchildren and future generations will be affected by what will happen in this country and state, it is my duty to them to help in the best way possible to make it a better place for them overall. Being in the position I am in, I feel allows me to help make their future a better place. By being on boards and committees gives my people a voice in what happens at these various tables I sit at like the NATHPO Board of Directors. It is an honor to have been selected and I hope that I can contribute in the best way possible for all tribes. Pinagigi and I look forward to serving.