



Jim West, President & CEO

Futures for Children

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Jim West, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, is currently President of Futures for Children, a non-profit organization based in Albuquerque. Futures for Children has worked with American Indian children and communities since 1968, and strives to enhance the educational experience of American Indian students who live on reservations in the Southwest.

"Both my parents led lives of service to others," West says. "Theirs was an interracial marriage in Oklahoma during the 1940s through 1960s, so they also showed me the values of perseverance, tolerance and an openness to people of all races and cultures, even in the face of prejudice and intolerance. I knew I would love working with the wonderful people who are a part of Futures for Children — the young people we serve over a 25,000-square mile area, our donors and mentors throughout the US and the world, and the wonderful volunteers who work so hard to improve life in more than 42 communities."

The organization has 148 program sites in New Mexico and Arizona. Last year, 98 percent of the seniors in the Futures for Children mentorship program graduated from high school. Fundamental to the program's effectiveness is the understanding that sustainable improvement in the quality of native children's education is best initiated by them, their families and their communities.

"A key to being a successful American Indian business leader is working to bring the values of your tribal culture and spiritual way of life to the principles that guide your business career," West says. "Rather than choosing between one's culture and sound business principles, the greater challenge is to find how each informs the other. This is not easily done when one's culture exists within a very different economic, social and spiritual context, but I believe that modern American business has something to learn from American Indian cultures, and our cultures have something to learn from sound, morally guided business principles."

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