

From the desk of Pawnee Mayor Brad Sewell

The Pawnee Nation contributes to our area in ways that benefit the entire community. For example, the Pawnee Nation recently contributed \$900,000 to the City's wastewater plant project, and they have repurposed the old Armstrong Bank building as a community center. Pawnee Nation College represents one of the tribe's most ambitious and significant contributions to our area because it empowers people to benefit themselves.

The Pawnee Nation considered creating a college for years, and the idea came to fruition in 2004 when the school first opened its doors. A college takes a long time to build, and a new school typically partners with an existing school so that the new one can offer accredited classes and degrees as its program grows. PNC currently receives accreditation through Bacone College, but our school is methodically achieving the steps necessary for stand-alone accreditation. Meanwhile, a PNC student can take Gen-Ed or American Indian Studies classes here in town for a fraction of what it would cost elsewhere.

Students choose PNC for a variety of reasons. Some students thrive in a smaller setting. Some cannot travel the 60 miles round-trip several times per week required to take classes at a neighboring school. Some have discovered that PNC represents a bargain in higher education. Despite the nearby campuses of OSU and NOC, many PNC students could not attend college at all were it not for our local college.

Although Pawnee Nation College focuses especially on tribal members, the school serves students of all backgrounds. A typical PNC class contains a wide variety of demographics, and the interaction of people across social, generational, and cultural groups represents an important side effect of learning at PNC: Students learn to work together outside of their comfort zones.

A quick overview of a college's benefits to a town can help explain what makes support of Pawnee Nation College important for every local resident. Of course Pawnee Nation College does what every Pawnee attraction does, by bringing and retaining people in our town. Each new student represents an additional customer, and every local who stays in town represents a customer for businesses and a potential contributor to community projects and events. The more PNC grows, the more it will attract jobs. Not only does the school employ people, but a college helps ensure that Pawnee has an educated workforce so businesses can locate here without worry about extensive retraining or luring workers from other areas.

Pawnee Nation College will hold a community social at 6:00 PM on Thursday, February 23 at the PNC campus. Representatives from PNC and Bacone will be there, as well as folks from the City. The get-together will include a presentation and a Q & A session to discuss the college's plans for its students and for the community. If you've been thinking of going back to school, if you're graduating soon and thinking of your next step, or if you just want to know more, come out to hear what PNC has to offer.

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