

Leslie "Les" Gibbs 2014 Community Diversity Award winner

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Multicultural Affairs and First Nations Center will honor Les Gibbs May 16 at 6pm graduation reception.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs, at the University of Wisconsin-Superior is proud to announce that Leslie "Les" Gibbs, a 2002 alumnus is this year's recipient of the "Community Diversity Award."

Les is a proud, enrolled tribal member of the Red Lake Ojibwe Nation. He was born and raised in Ponemah on the Red Lake Reservation located in northern Minnesota. He is a military veteran who served in the United States Army Reserves from 1984 to 1990. He received his Bachelors of Arts degree in 1997 at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and his Masters of Science and Education degree in 2002 from the University of Wisconsin-Superior.



Les Gibbs 2014 Community Diversity Award winner. Photo courtesy of Ivy Vainio.

He has worked as an adolescent, mental health, wellness counselor, and therapist, with the Red Lake and Fond du Lac Reservations. He was crucial in providing and directing crisis counseling support to the Red Lake Nation post the Red Lake School Shootings where three of the victims were his relatives. In his work after the shootings, he wanted to assist in destigmatizing the concept of mental health in Red Lake and Ponemah. He admits that this time was a very difficult and challenging time both professionally and personally. He currently works as a community support program case manager with the Human Development Center in Superior, Wisconsin as a Mental Health Therapist.

Gibbs connection to UW-Superior other than being an alumnus has been widespread on many levels. He was an ad hoc instructor within the First Nations Studies program, an emcee for the Circle of Native Nations Powwow for at least the past 10 consecutive years, and for the past two years served on a parent panel within the Office of Multicultural Affairs' Making College Accessible Program.

He is an executive board member of the American Indian Community Housing Organization in Duluth, MN and has previously served on the Minnesota American Indian Health Advocacy Council, the Duluth Human Rights

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Commission, and the Spotted Eagle School Board. He has mentored countless American Indian youth throughout his adult career with programs such as the National Indian Youth Leadership Project and the Red Lake Indian Youth Council.

He has presented on concepts and issues dealing with the American Indian family at many local and regional conferences such as the Minnesota Mental Health Association, Minnesota American Indian Mental Health Advisory Council, and the St. Louis County Mental Health Conference. He has been part of the Blandin Foundation Community Leadership Training Team.

Les is a strong advocate for higher education for everyone, but especially for diverse students of all ages and backgrounds. In his own words, "I believe in building relationships with all people and to maintain those relationships respectfully. As a Native American, I live each day with a value of treating everybody with respect and dignity."



Les gives a lot of credit and respect to his wife Renee and their daughter Ravyn for his community involvement and is grateful for their support. He spends his free time golfing, fishing, and emceeing powwows.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs recognizes individuals, alumni and others, who make important and ongoing contributions to their communities. The recipients of this award have all given back to their communities far more than they have ever received.

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