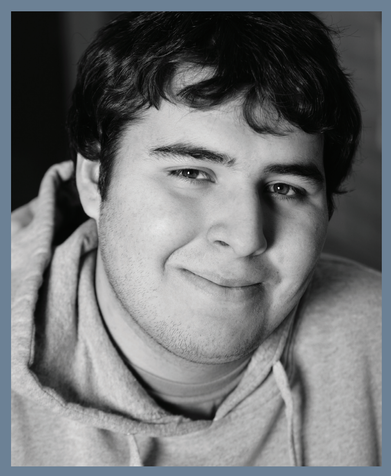
"I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE I'D BE WITHOUT THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB. IT KEPT ME OUT OF TROUBLE AND HELPED ME BE THE PERSON THAT I AM TODAY."



Lane Spotted Elk 19
Northern Cheyenne/Crow
St. Labre Indian School
Montana State University
Student/Boys and Girls Club of America
Montana Youth of the Year

In middle school, Lane Spotted Elk was struggling with his future. "I was hanging around high risk kids," he says. "I was at the point in my life where my parents saw that I needed something bigger than myself." So Lane turned to the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation in Lame Deer. The club, whose mission is to help young people reach their full potential as "productive, caring, responsible citizens," gave Lane the opportunity to work with kids from all over the reservation and surrounding communities. Lane, who worked at the club for four years, was nominated as a representative from Lame Deer/Northern Cheyenne for the Boys and Girls Club of America's biggest honor, Youth of the Year. Lane went all the way through the state competition and was named as the representative from Montana for 2008/2009.

Lane also attends Montana State University in Bozeman, where he is majoring in accounting. "I'm a first generation student," says Lane. "None of my brothers and sisters went to college and my parents never graduated from college either. It's a big responsibility." But Lane takes courage from one of his role models from the club, Emma Harris. "She was my boss ever since I started working for the club when I was a freshman in high school." says Lane. "If I needed someone to talk to or needed guidance or needed someone to hang out with, she was there. Plus she's a really strong woman. She's really a strong-willed person." Lane understands the importance of finding mentors. "As humans," he says, "we all struggle and have things that prevent us from being the person that we really want to be. Sometimes we need help to get through it."

Lane, who is the business manager for the student council at MSU, plans to become a Certified Public Accountant and work for a company before starting his own firm. Eventually, says Lane, he wants to come back to work for the tribe and come back to the club. "I will always be a strong supporter of the Boys and Girls Club back home," says Lane. "At the end of the day, you look back at what you did and you think, I really did change a kid's life."

"THERE IS SO MUCH PRESSURE ON KIDS TO GO ON AND DO STUFF WITH THEIR LIFE. THERE IS GOING TO BE A POINT WHERE IT SEEMS LIKE TOO MUCH TO HANDLE. BUT THAT IS THE POINT THAT DECIDES WHO YOU ARE AS A PERSON."

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