

Stewart Koyiyumptewa: Author, Cultural Keeper, Advocate for Education

“College is one of the greatest life experiences”, says Hopi graduate student, Author and Hopi Tribal Archivist, Stewart B. Koyiyumptewa.

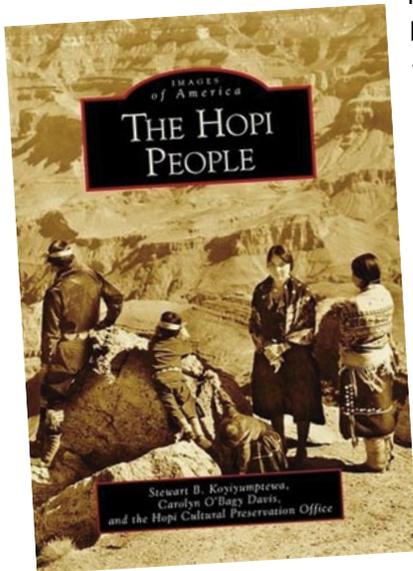
A graduate of the University of Arizona in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, he did not always believe that a college education was in his future, stating, “When I was a young boy, I used to be the type of person who went through the motions when it came to school. My way of thinking changed while working labor jobs right out of high school.” It was during this time period when he asked himself, “Is this the type of work I will be doing for the rest of my life?” This was the turning point when he began his college career.

Although encouraged to pursue a graduate degree by his family and numerous colleagues over the years, the late Ferrell Secakuku who completed his studies in the same graduate program, was the inspiration and catalyst for him to take the next step and take advantage of the opportunity. Koyiyumptewa adds, “There are many missed opportunities to learn

from our own family, our own people, about our history and about life as it once was, compared to today.” Now working toward a Masters of Arts in Cultural Anthropology at Northern Arizona University, the emphasis of his study is looking at changes in cultural traditions over time and how these changes are incorporated and become acceptable within communities. Stewart said, “The Hopi people are a unique group of people and have involuntarily become idealized as keeping its traditions intact, especially by other native groups. The Hopi people are not immune to change and have undergone its share of changes in its cultural traditions, but the core of (its) cultural philosophy is intact and living today.” Also, while pursuing his graduate degree, Stewart is also employed full-time for the Hopi Tribe’s Cultural Preservation Office as the Tribal Archivist, which afforded him the opportunity to work with a collection of 900+ pristine black and white photographs which were donated to the Hopi Tribe, leading to his co-authoring *The Hopi People* (Images of America)



Photo Courtesy of Stewart Koyiyumptewa



Education is held as a high priority in his families’ life, saying, “We value education as a critical component in paving the way for the future. Education and college are a part of our everyday vocabulary at home.” There is an expectation that his children complete their college education, saying, “College is one of the greatest life experiences and I would be cheating them of that milestone by not expecting such. By setting the example, I believe my children are inspired to pursue their career goals, they see that not everything comes easy, but through perseverance and family support, anything is possible.” His wife, Blythe is also University of Arizona alum who completed her undergraduate degree in Engineering.

Stewart says that the support from his and Blythe’s family has been the crucial to their academic endeavors. He also added that the support from the HEEF donors is also important and is thankful for their support. He says, “If it wasn’t for the program, I would not have considered applying for graduate school and would not be as close to graduation as I am now.” He added, “I encourage anyone of any age to think about college and then put that thought into action. Education is an amazing option in life, set your mind on a goal and work toward it.”

Stewart Koyiyumptewa is Honanwungwa/Poovolwungwa (Badger/Butterfly Clan) from the Village of Hotevilla. He is the son of Patricia Selestewa.



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