



Nov. 12, 2021

## **Native American Heritage Month program at NCTA campus**

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

Kelley Meyer Sexson will present a history and cultural message at NCTA on Tuesday (Nov. 16) with a program in observance of Native American Heritage Month.

The public presentation begins at 7 p.m. in the Education Center auditorium of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

Sexson and her husband, Rick, are both graduates of the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture. They are cattle producers at the Sexson Ranch located between Wellfleet and Dickens, in Lincoln County.

As a newborn, Kelley was adopted by Kenneth and Virginia Meyer and raised at the family farm near Wellfleet. She recalls in high school a boy called her a derogatory term.

The title of her program, “Never a Half-Breed, but a Proud, Indigenous Warrior Woman” comes from the painful insult.

“My story is one of being adopted, with a white birth certificate for 14 years, then finding my new life as a native warrior woman. And how my two diverse lives connect,” she shares.

Education is helpful for everyone, no matter what race, culture, gender, education level, she says.

At the age of 57, when she finally met her mother and later, some siblings, Kelley gained insights to the family. Her mother lived out in a rural area, about 5 miles outside of a Marty, a small town in Charles Mix County of southeastern South Dakota.

Geographic regions across the state are home to Lakota, near Pine Ridge; Nakota in southeast and Dakota. Each has a separate dialect and traditions, although all translate to “friendly people.”

Since 2007, Kelley has learned much about her elders, Native culture, traditions, art, music and even takes online classes to learn the Nakota language.

Researching a story from her mother, historical films, books, and Ancestry.com, she has linked her heritage five generations back to Sitting Bull.

At UNSTA, Kelley majored in commercial horticulture, and Rick in production agriculture. She recalls writing a paper in Del VanDerWerff’s Human Relations class in which she broached her Native heritage.

“Later, when older and wiser, I was able to learn more,” she shares. “I knew Native people from around here so that I didn’t go in blindly.”

Although her mother died a year after they met, Kelley has continued correspondence and visits with a cousin in Sioux Falls, and knows more about aunts, uncles and some siblings.

She plans to bring some of the photographs, stories, Nakota hymnal and other items to display at her presentation.

Kelley says she was honored to be asked by a friend to share some of her story for Native American Heritage Month. The program is sponsored by the NCTA Diversity Committee, chaired by Erika Arambula.

*Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates, and for the success of student teams in competitive activities including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials, and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.*

Online article at: <https://go.unl.edu/6d3n>

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Kelley and Rick Sexson are surrounded by their two children and family. Clockwise are grandson Reid, Caleb and Jessica Nutt, and granddaughter Shaylyn, aboard Cisco, and son Justin Sexson. (Sexson photo)