

ON THE RISE: NICOLE BOWMAN

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What she does: Nicole Bowman is the owner of the Shawano-based business Bowman Performance Consulting LLC, a certified national research, evaluation and technical assistance firm. This year marks the company's seventh anniversary.

Bowman said she collects and interprets data for grant programs, organizations and government systems so they can improve the delivery of specialized services to diverse American Indian populations nationwide.

What she says: Bowman, a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans, Turtle Clan, sees herself as an advocate for tribal communities.

Each native population has a unique background with markedly different needs, she said. American Indians live on reservations, in urban centers and in off-reservation rural areas.

It's part of her job, she said, to help educate those who create and support education, business and economic development initiatives in those communities.



Bowman

“It's almost like being a translator,” Bowman said.

“I want to make my data as useful as I can to as many audiences as I can. Sometimes when I write research or evaluation reports, I have six or seven different versions. Sometimes it's a Power Point presentation, sometimes it's a talking circle and sometimes it's a slideshow.”

What sets her apart: As she conducts her business, Bowman employs traditional American Indian values and the lessons she's learned from mentors in higher education.

“I was taught to ‘speak into their listening,’” Bowman said. “That basically means, know who your target audience is. It takes a multicultural, multiethnic, multigovernmental and multiorganizational approach to solve social issues.”

She seeks a sense of balance in her work, introducing social service agencies and policymakers to American Indian communities. At the same time, she must communicate to tribal elders and others why collecting population data is important.

One client, she said, intended to survey a community's residents by Internet or phone, before

Bowman redirected the efforts.

“I said, ‘You have to have some food and visit with people,’” Bowman said. “Informal structures are as important as formal structures in Indian country.”

Future plans: Bowman said she plans to start a nonprofit venture that would be a clearinghouse for information about American Indian communities.

“I think I'm a for-profit busi-

On the Web

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ness functioning with a nonprofit philosophy,” she said.

Bowman said she would like to leverage her status as an educated and experienced business owner to highlight the accomplishments of American Indian entrepreneurs who may not be as technologically

advanced or connected to non-native communities.

“It's almost like a mentor-protégé program,” she said. “It's helping Indian businesses get access to the mainstream business world. I'm trying to teach Indian communities how to continue to be sovereign and self-determined; to use their resources so they can make their communities better.”

By Kara Patterson