

Two Micronesian Women Awarded Bill Raynor Micronesia Challenge Scholarship Award

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Launched in 2017, the Bill Raynor Micronesia Challenge (BRMC) Scholarship was established to support young Micronesians in obtaining post-secondary degrees in environment, conservation, and related fields and to return home and support conservation efforts in the region, many of which, the late Bill Raynor started during his time. To date, over 15 students have received scholarships from this program with 100% of them returning to their home islands to work. This year, two more Micronesian women were awarded the BRMC Scholarship to complete their Masters degrees, Ms. Alicia Edwards of the Marshall Islands and Ms. Maybeleen Apwong of Pohnpei.



Ms. Alicia Edwards

Ms. Alicia Edwards was born and raised in Majuro, Marshall Islands. She graduated in 2013 from the University of the South Pacific (Laucala Campus) in Fiji with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science. After graduation she returned home and began at the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) as a Resource Management Facilitator where she travels to numerous atolls across the RMI and works directly with the local communities on resource management and conservation issues. She is also one of the Marshall Islands' core team members for the Micronesia Challenge Socioeconomic Measures Group. In 2020, Alicia enrolled at the University of Guam to pursue her Master of Science in Biology. She has chosen to further her education so she can continue contributing to the local communities that she has dedicated her time and passion to since she began her work at MIMRA. Her work and experience have also highlighted for her the critical need for expertise in data analysis in Micronesia, and she hopes to help address this gap by completing her degree. Aside from Alicia's day job, she is also a mother of two beautiful little girls, Silva Jade and Atelini Freda Ketedromo.



Ms. Maybeleen Apwong

Ms. Maybeleen Apwong was born and raised in Pohnpei, Micronesia. She is a first-generation high school and university graduate from her family. In 2014, she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Biology specifically focusing on Evolution, Ecology and Conservation at the University of Hawai'i-Hilo (UH-Hilo). In the fall of 2020, Ms. Apwong continued her education at UH-Hilo and began a Master's Program in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. While pursuing her undergraduate degree, Ms. Apwong realized just how much she had taken the natural resources of her beautiful island home for granted, and came to recognize the severity of the threats this bounty now faces from climate change, sea level rise and human activities. In addition to her studies, she is also currently at the



USDA Forest Service Institute of Pacific Island Forestry in Hilo, Hawaii, through the Research Corporation of University of Hawaii at Hilo. “Since I started working with these researchers and ecologists, I have come to appreciate my home island even more”, says Ms. Apwong. As part of her work with the Forest Service, she joined a research team that conducted studies on mangrove forests in Micronesia, reinforcing for her how valuable they are for her community and for so many other communities in the region. Her work on the project also took her to the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Annual Ministerial Meeting in Canberra, Australia in November 2019, and the virtual 2020 Hawaii Conservation Conference to present her work and experiences.

This year, the BRMC Scholarship Committee received several high-caliber applications, confirming once again the preponderance of emerging conservation Champions in Micronesia. Unfortunately, the committee could only award the opportunity to two such Champions and named Ms. Apwong and Ms. Edwards the 2021 BRMC Scholarship Awardees. The BRMC Scholarship is managed by the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) and more information can be found at:

<http://www.ourmicronesia.org/scholarships>. MCT and our partners wish to express our congratulations to these two inspiring young conservation leaders.