

Native American Heritage Month

Did You Know?

Nicole “Duke” Victoria Aunapu Mann (1977-)

Nicole “Duke” Victoria Aunapu Mann, a renowned astronaut, achieved remarkable milestones in her career, earning her a notable place in space exploration and serving as an inspiration to aspiring astronauts and scientists worldwide. Mann made history with her first spaceflight in October 2022, becoming the first Native American woman in space. Furthermore, on January 20, 2023, she became the first Native American woman to participate in a spacewalk.

Mann was born on June 27, 1977, in Penngrove, California. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from the United States Naval Academy in 1999 and a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University in 2001. While her educational background provided a solid foundation for her future endeavors, it was her unwavering determination that set her apart.

In 2013, NASA selected Mann as one of the eight members of its 21st astronaut class, marking a transformative phase in her life. Her training encompassed a wide range of skills, from spacewalking to spacecraft piloting. She excelled as an engineer, leader, problem-solver. Mann’s journey to space materialized when she became a member of the Artemis Team in 2020. The Artemis program aims to return humans to the Moon, with the objective of establishing a sustainable presence there and preparing for future missions to Mars. Her inclusion in this team underscores her exceptional skills and her pivotal role in shaping the future of space exploration.

A defining characteristic of Mann’s career is her dedication to the pursuit of knowledge. Mann’s commitment to scientific discovery is evident through her involvement in various research projects during her time as an astronaut, contributing significantly to our understanding of how extended space missions affect the human body and mind, which is important for planning future deep-space missions.

Nicole “Duke” Victoria Aunapu Mann stands as a trailblazing astronaut, exemplifying determination and resilience throughout her career. From her early days as an engineering student to her selection as a member of the Artemis Team, she has consistently demonstrated her commitment to space exploration and scientific discovery. Her role in space exploration stands as a symbol of the diversity and inclusivity that NASA and the space industry as a whole are striving to attain.

Sources

Encyclopedia Britannica. 2023. *Nicole Aunapu Mann*. Retrieved October 10, 2024 (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicole-Aunapu-Mann>).

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). 2023. *Nicole A. Mann (Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps) NASA Astronaut*. Retrieved October 10, 2024 (<https://www.nasa.gov/astronauts/biographies/nicole-a-mann/biography>).

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Spotlights will be published twice a month. Dr. Julian Culver (julian_culver@brown.edu) wrote the above spotlight. Have a spotlight to share? Newsletter submissions are due to Casey Wahl (casey_wahl@brown.edu) Wednesdays by 11:00 am.