

Statement of Purpose: My Journey to Evergreen

Everything in my life has led me to Evergreen. As a Puyallup Tribe of Indians Tribal Member and a descendant of Squaxin Island Tribe, it is time to support my people and my community. My grandfather's people, The Puyallup Tribe of Indians, has grown financially in the past decade. While my grandmother's people, Squaxin Island Tribe, has grown their natural resources. It is my desire to run for Tribal Council of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians in April of 2023.

There has been tragedy and trauma surrounding my life. But I have survived and learned from each experience. Our traumas change us, but they do not define who we are. I am breaking free of what I was taught to be and becoming who I am meant to be. As a woman and a minority, we were taught not to be seen. I have survived child molestation, my oldest child being taken, my husband going off to war, brain surgery, and years of domestic abuse. All these traumas and my education has brought me to the point where I want to give back to my communities and help those who need it the most.

I spent 21 years as an Army spouse. Then later, I had the pleasure of supporting the soldiers and youth of the Pennsylvania National Guard. This has given me the ability to work with different generations and a diverse population. We can learn so much from those around us if we just take the time to see and listen. During this time, I was able to grow and learn as a person. Every Soldier I spoke with had a different story to tell. Some of those stories I still carry today.

My father was born on Squaxin Island and did not speak English until he was five. But it was taboo for him to speak his native language. He taught us so much about the culture though

other ways; foraging, hunting, and fishing. Some of my fondest memories are of watching him string a fishing net, smoke fish, or weaving a clam sack. He died while executing his treaty rights, fishing the Puyallup River. I am doing this for him as much as I am doing it for myself. Getting this degree would not only make him proud, but it will also bring me much joy.

A Masters in Tribal Governance will allow me to have the education needed to support my people. It is my intention to run for Tribal Council. We must prepare our Tribe for the next seven generations. Through the education I receive at Evergreen, I will be able to use what I learn academically and through personal experience to ensure our future generations continue to thrive. We are no longer told to be silent, to not share our culture, and to hide who we are. It is time for us to be seen and to make a difference to our Tribal Members and those we work with.

Evergreen is the best fit for me. Not just the location and the price of my degree, but also by the curriculum and the grading system. Evergreen holds their students to the highest standard, but also gives them the flexibility to set their own academic journey. As someone of my age, this works out best for me. I will no longer be put into a tidy box, but I will spread my wings and share my knowledge. I know several Evergreen graduates and have had the pleasure to work with them. Their education has been exemplary. I have followed what Evergreen has done in partnership with the Tribal Communities since I worked at Squaxin Island Natural Resource Department in the early 2000s. It was a pleasuring working with Evergreen students each summer.

As a Puyallup Tribal Council Member, I will have the opportunity to lead my people and create policy that is beneficial to the Tribe as a whole and the next seven generations. Since Evergreen has connections within the Tribal Community, having my Masters in Public Administration will only strengthen my run for Tribal Council. I will not only be able to share

my knowledge I have gained from my life experiences, from my father, and eventually my degree from Evergreen. We no longer need to hid our culture. We no longer need to hide who we are as people. We can embrace our heritage and thrive as a people. I want the future generations to know they were loved by us, and we left the earth a better place for them.

It is up to us to reclaim our culture and help it flourish. I don't want a member to be treated different because of the color of their skin, or treated different because of their location. There is a divide in the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. I hope to breach that divide and bring us back together as one people. It is those who live within 50 miles (the outsiders) of the Tribe against those that don't. Some would like to see the rights of the outsiders be taken away. Some want those who are within the 50 miles to be the only ones who can vote. I am an outsider, or even worse, a blue envelope Puyallup. It is a fine line to walk between the Elders who are set in their ways, and the next generation. My education from Evergreen will give me the tools needed to heal this divide and bring our people back together.

Thank you for your consideration.