

My name is my name is Amy Imamura I began my journey at Evergreen State College in 2019 when the coronavirus pandemic stuck. This experience was life changing for me. I was anticipating entering college as a new student with in-person classes but was quickly adjusted to virtual learning. I wanted to give up, thinking college was not for me and the pandemic was a sign. During this time, I have become hopeless, lonely, and depressed. My faculty encouraged me to stick with it and told me we are all in the same canoe. I quickly adapted to the community, and I pushed myself and made it through the storm. I then realized that Native Pathways community was now my supportive family. In that cycle that is ongoing, whether virtual or in-person, belonging and being a part of the family kept me going.

I have never had a pleasant experience in my life of education. I had poor confidence until I attended Evergreen State College's Native Pathways Program (NPP). I started to feel a powerful sense of belonging. In my undergraduate years in NPP I became fierce and found my voice and this is where I found out who I am and what I was made of. I would like to highlight my first quarter in upper division in NPP where my final was a paper called My Tribalography. This was a fifteen-page paper that held storytelling's of my grandmother and traditions that have been passed on in my family for generations and how we kept those traditions going. In my last year of my undergraduate degree, I was nominated to be president of the Native Pathways Program. I had to give a speech on how I can serve the program which I am not good at speaking in crowds. So, there I was and did not have time to write a speech so I spoke from the heart on how I felt about the program and what I can do to build bridges for success. I was voted president by my peers. This was huge for me. I started planning immediately for the 2023 graduation ceremony, I have put together fundraising events such as poetry readings with silent auctions. I was able to have a well-known Indigenous artist Steven Paul Judd come do a buffalo art project with our students and faculty. Also, I have provided an event where students and faculty were able to hand make traditional plant medicines to keep. 2023 graduation ceremony was a success for the Native Pathways Program.

Deeper into my academic experiences throughout my whole life, I never thought I would be going to college, drafting papers, and becoming a leader of the NPP community. I have overcome many obstacles in the four years here at Evergreen State College and my biggest accomplishments are that I never gave up once that- I am not a quitter, I realize who I am and what I am made of and what I am capable. I have strength and fight within my spirit, I overcame my dislikes of writing, overcame public speaking, speech. I became a leader in student governance and did meetings and presentations. Being present makes all the difference. My attendance and input mattered as I was a leader to my fellow students and community. Belonging and having an active and involved role my confidence shifted into a positive manner.

At an early age, fresh out of high school, I worked as a corrections officer at the Nisqually jail. I was one of the first female office to work the very first jail facility in the Nisqually Tribe we had a modular with only four cells and we fed inmates tv dinners, we

were brand new and was just learning how to run a jail. I have attended The Basic police training academy in Artesia New Mexico and have been trained there in tactical, transporting inmates, law and ethics, codes of conducts. From there I was a part of opening the second jail facility which has five single cells and three pods. Then in 2014 we opened the third jail which is triple the size. I resigned from law enforcement to pursue an education. I wanted to work on the other side of the fence and that means you can receive an inmate and build them up as they are getting clean and sober inside the jail listening to their stories and their plans of how they're going to do good when they get released but, then you see them weeks later back in jail. I did this work on and off for 17 years. Currently I work for a non-profit organization called Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative. My title is the Tribal Resource Navigator and Indigenous wraparound services. I work with Indigenous human trafficked victims and survivors and support them on their journey of healing by providing services and meeting all their needs until they are ready to stand on their own two feet.

My short-term goal is to continue my education so I can get prepared for my long-term goal. My belief is that I will receive everything I need through the MPA program. I feel as if there is more to learn and that we never stop learning even if we have a lot of experiences. So, I would like to add I come from a family that no one has ever made it past the ninth grade, and I also never thought I would make it myself, so I am the first to go to college. I would like to be the first to get my master's as a part of my short- and long-term goal, that way I started a cycle for my family's generations to come. My long-term goal is to have my own organization to provide individuals that are in need such as homelessness, incarcerated, drug/alcohol abuse, sex trafficked, domestic violence and to help people be able to stand on their own two feet and give them support and guidance when needed.

The reason for choosing the MPA program is because I have a five-year goal set and I believe this program is the key to success in reaching that goal. In that five-year goal is to complete the MPA program and then to have my own non-profit organization. There is so much more I need to learn and prepare for, and this is why have chosen this MPA program. I can imagine the possibilities that the MPA program will align with my career goals and the possibilities in holding diversity, justice and advocating fiercely on behalf of the people. I highly believe that the program will provide support, more knowledge, so I can impact and better serve my community. I am looking forward to becoming a part of the MPA family.

Thank you.