

Statement of Purpose

Growing up on the Nisqually Reservation, I spent my childhood with my mother and grandmothers rather than kids my own age. The seed was planted from the experiences with them. Who knew this upbringing would leave me with long lasting memories and be the inspiration I needed in my life. Listening to the never-ending stories about, nailing boards to a tree to make seats for meetings, conducting meetings in a station wagon, fundraising to travel to Washington DC to lobby for their nation, and how they did their best to make decisions that would meet the needs of their people. I always knew that working for my people is what my lifelong goal would be. One component missing as I've grown up is being taught my language. Opportunities as an adult to learn my language has given me a passion to maintain and learn more.

In my youth, I sat in tribal council meetings and tribal committee meetings listening to my elders discuss tribal issues and ways to better serve the community. Looking back, the past twenty-five years my work experience has been in tribal settings along with my volunteer work. In my teen years, my first job was with summer youth. I worked part-time in customer service throughout my high school career. As my experience grew, I worked in various tribal departments doing clerical work and I am currently in tribal financial services. I have gained office skills, learned different procedures of how programs function, and I am still continuously learning. Recently, I've been able to participate in volunteer work with the Nisqually Tribe. I helped with children from North Thurston Public Schools who visited the tribe on their field trip days. They came to learn more about our people. I was able to assist the Nisqually Language Resource Center for Language Kids Day with the Bethal School District. Currently, I participate in Nisqually's Language Digital Illustration work group.

Obtaining my master's in public administration is vital in continuing to learn and gain skills that will accelerate my career growth towards leadership and management roles. Growing my skills in these areas, will help me make an impact in the tribal work environment and community. To protect tribal sovereignty, language and culture are key in maintaining a strong and healthy community. The work we do for tribes is for its people. When we understand that tribal jobs mean more than simply earning a paycheck, we can truly be difference makers in our communities. We must take our roles seriously to provide the best service possible for all. A key takeaway from being around my mother and grandmothers is that this work is a way of life. We give back to our tribe because our ancestors sacrificed so much for us to be here.

What drew me to the Evergreen MPA program is the Native Pathways opportunity. I've witnessed family and colleagues find success in their educational journey with the program. The admissions process alone gives a very supportive feeling. It reminds me of how I grew up, having constant support and teachers around. The sense of community is huge for me and my academic growth. I feel that the Evergreen State College will continue to provide that.

Conclusion

The little girl who was raised on the reservation amongst her family and community has grown up. I now see that growing up surrounded by elders versus kids my age is a blessing. What our ancestors went through and the foundation they've laid for us is important work to continue honoring and protecting. Moving forward, it's crucial to maintain our tribal sovereignty, language and culture. To successfully be of service to my tribal community, furthering my education is the effective way to achieve that.