

Ya'at'eeh, my name is _____, my first clan is Tse deeshgiizhnii (Gap in the Rock Clan), I am born for my father's clan, bilagaana (European-descended), my third clan is Kinyaa'aanii (The Towering House Clan), and my fourth is from my father's father, Jewish. My heritage is diverse and has taught me a great deal. In Dine, or Navajo, introduction is very important, it helps to establish a basis with your audience, a foundation for motivation and acceptable behavior.

I was raised by both my parents to know who I am and respect and appreciate my diverse heritage. My mother is Dine (Navajo) and my father is of Angle-Jewish background. Both have worked in lived extensively in Native American Communities. They have taught me that heritage and identity are important and I have been able to observe the examples of both, not to mention the examples of the rest of my family. I was taught to see my diverse heritage as a strength, for it allows me to see with many eyes and viewpoints and respect them all. I believe that my Western education off the reservation and my observance education on reservation complement each other and have helped teach me critical thinking skills. This summer, I have the opportunity of really combining these two types of education through my studies at Dina Community College in Tsaile, Arizona. There I have the ability to learn more about my culture and language and how they can be applied to living in today's world to help me be a successful person in all areas of my life.

Since high school I have been interested in environmental issues. I realized that if I really wanted to make a difference, I would need a higher education in a field like environmental science. With an education, one has the tools to succeed if one uses them. Education was

greatly emphasized by Chief Manuelito of my tribe in days long past. He realized the importance of an education, especially the role it plays in the strengthening and autonomization of the Navajo people, individually and collectively. One fundamental aspect of environmental issues affecting Native American societies in the U.S. is the issue of natural resources and their uses, especially water resources. Natural resources on the reservation are to a great degree managed by the federal government. Due to lack of Native people qualified, in terms of a western education in natural resources, many of these tribal resources are managed by non-Indians, worse yet, the difficulty of recruiting and retaining educated Navajo employees on the reservation is a statistically evident obstacle. In the summer of 2000, I had the opportunity to work as an intern for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Branch of Environmental Services in Gallup, NM for the Navajo Region, where I directly observed this obstacle. I feel that through my background, undergraduate studies, work experience and continuance of my education at higher levels, I will be more prepared to fulfill this need.

Water resource issues are of great importance to all indigenous peoples. Water resources are not simply physical resources independent of their surroundings, they have a strong influence in all communities, and many indigenous communities see water as the life-blood of the earth which supplies life to all. The significance of water resources is so great that it can have the potential to nourish or destroy communities. Disputes over water rights were the reason for the recent murder of a Klamath Indian man in southern Oregon, this horrendous act was committed in response to growing tension in a community divided by tribal water rights and those of non-Indian agriculturalists. To work in the management of these resources implies a need to understand these communities, laws and the rights and needs of all. They are far from

homogenized and one must see the individuality of each party involved. The communities of the southwest differ much in terms of ecosystems, but the need to understand the uniqueness of each community is nonetheless necessary. From my experience working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Branch of Environmental Services, I became very aware of the complexity of water resource issues. One must understand and be willing to work with a diversity of communities. Every community is different and has water issues unique to its area. The Navajo reservation is a good example of this aspect of complexity. Within a small area, the landscape may not appear to change greatly, however the issues and needs of the differing communities may differ greatly, and it is vital that this be addressed and understood when working with water issues in these communities.

My education at Oregon State University in environmental science has helped me to develop into a critically-thinking individual which will help me in dealing with diverse communities and their needs and issues in my future. My education also requires that I specialize in a specific area of environmental science. I plan on this specialization being either Water Sciences and Resources or Geosciences (emphasis on surface processes), both of which are crucial scientific components of water issues. These two areas; the social aspect of community needs, values and issues; and the scientific aspect of understanding the physical water and land systems will complement each other and provide me with the tools I will need in the future to work to understand these complex issues, and understanding is the first step towards resolution.