

**Emmit E. Taylor Jr.**  
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## **EPA Tribal Lands Environmental Science Scholarship PERSONAL ESSAY**

I am a Nez Perce Tribal member and currently reside in Lapwai, Idaho on the Nez Perce Reservation. I am 30 years old and have been living with my fiancé for 2 years. We are to be married August 4, 2001. I have a stepson who is 6 years old, and another son who is 1 ½ years old. I grew up in Lapwai, Idaho and graduated from Lapwai High School in 1988. Upon graduating from high school I left the reservation and attended college at the University of Idaho, then transferred to Colorado State University where I graduated with a BS in Civil Engineering in 1995. After graduation I worked for a tribally owned Engineering and Architecture firm in Spokane, Washington for one year. I then received my current job working for my tribe in the Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries/Watershed Program for about the last 3 ½ years. My work is focused on protecting, restoring, and enhancing watersheds and treaty resources within the ceded territory of the Nez Perce Tribe. I have been active in the restoration of salmon and steelhead fisheries habitat at a project level, national level, and a political level.

My upbringing consisted of learning about the culture and heritage of my tribe. I learned about hunting and fishing, gathering of traditional foods and medicines, and the sweathouse. I have been involved in the Nez Perce language program for the past 3 years. My son is a grass dancer and I help an up and coming drum group, the *Eagle Speaking Singers*, that consists of my son and my 4 nephews. I am very dedicated to learning all that I can about my culture so I may be able to pass it down to the next generation. I also want to use my traditional knowledge in my work today, integrating the education of the Indian and the non-Indian.

Through my upbringing and the teaching of the elders, I have been shown to respect the land and all those that live within it. The natural resources are extremely important to the heritage and culture of the Nez Perce Tribe and all Indian people. I have always wanted to work for my tribe and strive to protect and restore all natural resources. This passion has led me to the job I have today. I have used this passion to learn all that I can about the restoration of watershed and streams, although my college education was geared towards a field not related to the work I am performing today, transportation. It is for this reason, I want to pursue my education at a graduate level. I want to focus my graduate degree in Ecohydraulics Engineering, which will give me the tools I need at a technical level to participate at a project specific level to a national political level for the benefit of all Indian communities. This degree would allow me to take degraded watersheds, rivers and streams and restore them to naturally functioning systems for the benefit of all people, animals, fish, and birds.

Many program managers and professional staff within the Nez Perce and other Tribes are held by non-Indians and I want to use my education to work my way towards leading the restoration and protection of our natural resources for all Indian and non-Indian people.

My graduate degree would benefit the Indian Community in allowing me to integrate the education of the non-Indian with the education of the Indian. I want to use a holistic approach to my work combining the education I grew up with and the lessons I continue to strive in learning from my elders with the technical education from college. This will benefit the Indian Community by allowing me to voice the concerns of my tribe and the importance of protecting the land and water from a tribal view when dealing with agencies such as the National Marine Fisheries Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service.

Receiving my graduate degree would benefit the Indian Community by allowing me to inform my tribe and other tribes of the affects of land use activities (logging, roading, grazing, agriculture) on our natural resources and help in making best management decisions.

I believe my education at a graduate level would benefit the Indian Community by being a role model for other native people. I can show that with a little hard work, dreams and goals in life can be achieved. I can show others that a person can go to college and retain and expand on their cultural heritage. I have talked with several classes in high school and will continue to do so.

I have taken three classes on my own towards my graduate degree and received an "A" in each class. I believe I can do very well at the graduate level. I very much want to return to school full time and be able to take the knowledge that I obtain from college back to benefit my tribe and all native communities for generations to come. I want to become a leader in the environmental field to voice the concerns of all tribes. Thank you for your consideration in applying for this scholarship.

