

## Cherrise Reyes

### WSU Senior Cherrise Reyes: Born Cougar Returns to her Roots

by Edmund "Frazer" Myer

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Cherrise Reyes, 21, an enrolled member of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, meets the definition of a "Coug-baby." She was born in Pullman at what is now WSU's Health and Wellness Center, back when it was the town hospital.

Reyes grew up with her mom, Lana Reyes, who took what some may call the "untraditional route" in college, raising Cherrise in the midst of pursuing her degree. When Cherrise was four years old, her mother graduated from WSU, and they moved to the Seattle area, then Kansas for her mother to attend graduate school. Subsequently, her mother's career took them to Oregon and finally California.

Moving helped Reyes learn how to grow up fast. She said, "I had to learn how to deal with and adapt to new environments, and that taught me how to be flexible and deal with the diversity of different types of people from different regions of the country."

This ability to interact with different groups is something that Reyes recognizes as being one of her greatest attributes. She has plenty of opportunities to utilize this skill now that she's back in Pullman as a student who is very involved within the WSU community.

Reyes began her college career at California State University Sacramento, then transferred to WSU when she realized the school didn't feel like the right fit for her. She has always wanted to stand up for what she believes in, and protect those who can't protect themselves, which she said steered her toward a pre-law degree.

Standing up and defending herself is something that comes natural to Reyes, who participated in martial arts for eight years, working her way up to black belt. All of her trophies and awards are stowed away at her grandpa's house in the basement.

Her grandpa, Lawney Reyes, an artist and author, is someone whom she admires for how far he has made it in his life. She mentioned that he overcame a lot by taking matters into his own hands and making something out of himself. How he prevailed has taught Reyes to strive for her aspirations.

At first she wanted to major in pre-med, but her first semester at WSU, helped her realize what she wanted to study. Now she's in pursuit of political-science/pre-law major with a criminal justice minor. Her enthusiasm and drive to broaden her horizons led Reyes to get involved in multiple organizations. Last year she served on the WSU Student Conduct Board whose role is to make decisions regarding students facing disciplinary action. While on the Board she attended hearings, in which they discussed rules and regulations, and voted on sanctioning and punishments.

Currently, Reyes is Chair of the Coalition for Women Student (CWS), which consists of six different all-inclusive organizations, including the Native American Woman's Association (NAWA). CWS educates the campus about women's issues, and informs the community of rights and resources available to them.

Reyes has helped host numerous events as Chair of CWS, such as a multi-cultural talent show, and meals for both Mom's Weekend and Dad's Weekend. She was also able to go to Washington D.C. for a national conference for college women student leaders.

She is also an active member of the Native American Woman's Association (NAWA). Reyes said, "I view NAWA as my family, the NAWA ladies have become my sisters."

When she transferred to WSU, Reyes was selected to be part of the first cohort in WSU Native American Program's new Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program, and will be part of its first graduating class. When speaking about the Native Programs in general, Reyes said it has been very resourceful. It has helped her stay updated on available scholarships, internships and workshops.

Reyes plans to graduate next fall, and then she will pursue her goal of becoming a lawyer. She hasn't decided what law school she wants to go to yet. So far she's looked into schools in New Mexico and Arizona. She said it depends on where she can receive the most funds, since law school is expensive. For now though, she plans to continue to broaden her horizons while here at WSU. At present, that means taking a pink-glove boxing class at the Student Rec Center, in addition to her required courses.



*Cherrise Reyes, Upper Skagit/Colville, is a senior majoring in political science/pre-law.*

