Cowlitz Member One of First Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program Graduates

by Edmund Frazer Myer

Cowlitz tribal member Shay Workman, 23, from Longview, Wash., transferred to WSU in fall of 2013, and on May 7 she walked away with her bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science.

Workman wrestled in high school and won state in her weight class her senior year, and went on to wrestle on scholarship at South Western Oregon Community College. Initially, she transferred to WSU to do something with wildlife, but she changed her major to Environmental Science because it’s a broad field. She still wants to work with wildlife and her major allows that.

“I like the fact that it is broad,” Workman explained. “Right now I want to do restoration, but if I want to change my mind I could do consulting or have an environmental business. I’ve always been interested in the environment.”

Workman is a fifth-year student. “Taking one extra year really helped me. I learned a lot more in this last year,” she said.

She chose WSU, “because it’s an agriculture based school and they have a lot more natural resource based programs,” but when she came here she didn’t know anyone.

Being really shy, the hardest thing for her was transferring, she said. Getting a job at Sella’s and working customer service has helped her with that. She said that Sella’s is “a great place to work as a college student.”

Workman was in the first cohort of the Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program that began in Fall 2013. Workman and Sequoia Dance are the first two graduates from that program that aims to provide Native students with the skills they need as future tribal leaders. Workman was also involved with the Environment Sustainability Alliance while a student.

On her free-time, Workman enjoys outdoor activities. She said she loves going hiking, and now that she has graduated and will have more time to learn things outside of school, she plans on getting into fishing and photography.

She might not have much free time though, since she just got a job working with the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) in Spokane as a wildlife technician. She will be doing plenty of hiking though, since she will be “helping with collecting data on vegetation, and helping with catching amphibians and small mammals.”

She will still be commuting down to Pullman during the summer to work the occasional shift at Sella’s, which she said gets pretty busy during new student Alive orientations.

Workman is considering grad school, but she wants to take a year or two off to get a feel for the field.

Her ultimate goal, as of now, is to work with habitat restoration, or work with a developing country and help provide “efficient, clean water resources,” Workman said. She wants to promote “a healthy eco-system while providing clean water for the people.”

Her advice for freshmen is to know that “time management is important,” and don’t be afraid to talk to and meet people.