Veteran Uses Graduate Studies to Assist Native Vets

by Edmund Frazer Myer & Faith Price

Army veteran Greg Urquhart, descendent of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, is using his education to help other Native vets. He received his master’s in Community Counseling in May and is continuing his WSU studies as a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology.

He has already left his mark on WSU in multiple ways and made an impact nationally on research around Native American veterans. The study he conducted with fellow graduate students Matthew Hale and Nasreen Shah on Native vets and PTSD, garnered attention from the media, Indian Health Services, and the Veterans Administration.

Urquhart’s future plans are to “continue to strive to complete my Ph.D. and then work for the Veterans Administration.” He would like to use his education to “provide relevant healing and treatment for Native Veterans with PTSD.”

Urquhart himself experienced mild symptoms of PTSD after a tour in Iraq. Urquhart grew up in Tacoma, Wash., and enlisted in the Army as a young man. He attributes his success with his busy school schedule to “discipline both mental and physical and a strong work ethic gained through six years of service in the army as a tanker and cavalry scout.”

So far during his first four years at WSU, Urquhart has been involved in numerous organizations. He helped start the WSU chapter of the Society of Indian Psychologists, where he served as president and student representative for the national organization. Under his direction, the WSU SIP Chapter began a WSU Indigenous Research Convention which just saw its 2nd annual event in April.

“It has been a challenge to create, organize and maintain a chapter of the Society of Indian Psychologists on campus but I would not have it any other way,” said Urquhart. “This organization is needed because it advocates for the unique needs of Native students and promotes social justice advocacy through outreach and research.”

Urquhart also served as Student Rep for Division 17 and 18 of the American Psychological Association, member of the WAZZU Singers, and was a career coach for student veterans.

He did all of this in addition to working this year as a graduate assistant in WSU’s Alcohol and Drug Counseling, Assessment, and Prevention Services (ADCAPS) and supporting a family. Urquhart and his wife Sarah have three children, daughters Gabby age 3, and Ally age 14, and son Kristofer age 15.

During the 2014–15 academic year, Urquhart advised students as the interim Native American Retention Specialist for Native American Programs.

He said he would like to thank Native Programs for “their support and friendship, which has provided me with a second family and a place where I feel that I belong and my cultural values are understood.”

Urquhart has certainly made the most of his years as a student at WSU and still has two more years to complete his doctorate.

“It has provided me with many amazing opportunities to travel and create valuable research to support Native Veterans,” he said.

Urquhart advises new students to “work hard but also allow time to have fun. Find balance in all things and remember that education is a blessing that also comes with an obligation to go forth and make your community a better place.”