

WSU's First Udall Scholar Receives Her Bachelor's Degree

by Edmund Frazier Myer

Rachel "Chedda" Ellenwood, Nez Perce tribal member, and two-time recipient of the prestigious Udall Scholarship, graduated this spring with her bachelor's in comparative ethnic studies (CES), and minors in American Indian studies and women's studies.

Ellenwood transferred to WSU in the fall of 2014 after she earned her associate's degree at Northwest Indian College in 2013.

Ellenwood was majoring in healthcare, but decided to pursue the CES route after learning that she was closer to finishing and graduating with a degree in that field.

She still plans on studying healthcare and working in that industry, and plans to apply for a master's program in maternal child health, but Ellenwood said she might hold off from school for a short term before finishing her required courses.

In her time at WSU, Ellenwood has been awarded the MOU Tribal Scholarship, the Plateau Native American Scholarship, and the Udall Scholarship two times.

Ellenwood received the Udall for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. The award is one of the top scholarships in the nation and only a select number of people are selected each year (about 60 a year). Ellenwood was the first WSU student to receive the award.

Ellenwood moved "straight off the rez" to Pullman with her son Terrell, who is now 11, and she said that it was hard not really knowing anybody in town.

The biggest adversity she faced was finding time to study. With no internet at her place during her first year at WSU, there were nights when Ellenwood brought Terrell with her to the library, and he would watch movies while she studied.

Managing a busy schedule was tough, but sometimes she would rely on fellow Nez Perce WSU student Shelby Leighton to help and watch Terrell. She said Shelby was always really good about it. She figures you can't be afraid to reach out, and she has learned "that it takes a community to raise a child."

Ellenwood said that an even bigger challenge was helping Terrell adapt to a new setting, and then adjusting herself to college. Coming from the reservation, she explained that her son was the only Native American in his class, and had a hard time getting comfortable at a new school and a new environment.

"He couldn't relate to anyone in his class," Ellenwood said. "But it was good because now he is really diverse."

Being around the various cultures has also affected Ellenwood in the same way. She said that the cultural exposure was more than she expected, even when it comes to Native people. When she first came to the Native Center, she thought everyone was going to look like her and the people she's familiar to seeing, but quickly realized that tribal people come from all different backgrounds.

Ellenwood said her time at the center has helped expand her knowledge beyond what she was used to with her family and her community.

"Getting to know them and their backgrounds, has helped open my eyes to what their culture is like," Ellenwood said.

Last year, in addition to keeping up with all of her son's events, she was president of the Native American Women's Association (NAWA), vice president of Ku-Ah-Mah and worked two jobs.

She also mentored for Native Programs, which she said she enjoyed because meeting others and welcoming them to the center made her feel like she was at home.

She felt being a part of the Native clubs was a chance to get out on campus, and be a voice for the Native community – a voice to create awareness and inform the people of the area that "we're not extinct," Ellenwood said.

Ellenwood said the Native Programs has helped her "grow as a person in general." She attributed a lot of her development at WSU to the people at the Native Center.

Ellenwood said that being a part of the program helped her "become a better person" and helped her bring out the best in other people.

She said her first year was the hardest and that Native Programs assistant director Faith Price would help talk her through tough times and assist with finding help.



Rachel "Chedda" Ellenwood, Nez Perce, received her bachelor's in comparative ethnic studies.

She hopes that future students can help spread the word about all of the resources available on campus and at the Native Center. And she wants everyone to know that they should feel comfortable asking for help in any fashion.

[Native American Programs](#), PO Box 641046, Washington State University, Pullman WA 99164-1046, 509-335-8618, [Contact Us](#)