

• W O R T H Y •

2019 Worthy Women's Professional Studies Scholarship – Finalist Essay

-Adriana Sneezy

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."-Eleanor Roosevelt is one quote that I am definitely living by. As you can see my GPA had fluctuated from the time I started attending Arizona State University in 2015. I had endured a hardship of losing my baby by a miscarriage; this would've been my first child and my parent's first grandchild. I went through issues emotionally throughout this time, which I believe had taken an effect on my performance in school. I have overcome that trial in my life and since then I have become stronger and more motivated to accomplish my goals. Growing up on a Native American reservation, I grew up listening to my parents speak both English and the Apache language, I remember sitting at the dinner table after a day of school, or an afternoon of playing outside with my siblings, friends or cousins. As we sat there, I often looked at my mother and father and appreciated all the hard work they did for our family. On my reservation, we are blessed with 1.2 million acres of beautiful land, the culture within the community relies heavily on a strong bond between families, and most importantly, the language of our people. Additionally, most people grow up and want to move out of their childhood home, move to another city, and get out of what we call the "rez." However, throughout the reservation it is common to see several families living within one household, some may wonder why, and this brings me back to the bond between a native American family.

When I was five years old, I remember seeing my Dad come home from work, traveling and asking him questions about his job. He was a Tribal Attorney for our Tribe, and eventually, he became a Tribal leader for the community. I always admired his ability to fight for his people's rights, whether it was in the Courtroom or in the halls of Washington, D.C. In school, we would have an assignment which began with the question almost every child is asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I wanted to become successful like my Dad, I became interested in the criminal justice system, I wanted to learn to communicate well since I was a pretty shy child, I wanted to become a Lawyer. It seems to me that when you're asked this question when you're five years old, you don't put much thought into it. You blurt out something like a famous actress or a singer, don't get me wrong there is nothing terrible about having dreams like that.

Throughout the years, I did well in school, eventually made it out of high school and into college. I started in a community college for one full semester. Finally, I received a job offer to work in a law office, a Public Defender's office within my Tribe. Of course, I accepted the job; I was informed that I needed to obtain a tribal bar certification, I studied, took the test, and passed. I was excited because what that meant was that I would be in the Tribal Court advocating and defending indigent defendants. Within the six years I worked for my Tribe, I learned how to conduct my jury trial, attend pre-trial conferences, attend arraignment hearings, and draft motions and briefs. Although I loved practicing in Court, I wanted to step the bar up for myself and continue with my education. I thought, wow I am in my mid 20's, I should've already been finished with school. However, despite any doubts I had, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona, which was approximately 120 miles from my reservation. I moved to the city and attended Arizona State University; I missed my family, I missed our lakes, beautiful scenery, native food, seeing my people every single day, most of all I missed my reservation that everyone grows up wanting to leave. Now that I am older, I appreciate everything I was taught, yes it's a reservation that I grew up on, but that was home, and home is what I was missing. I graduated from Arizona State University in December 2018 with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Soon after I applied for graduate school and was accepted, this will be my first year as a Graduate school, so far I have done great and have received nothing but A's. My ultimate goal is to proceed to law school once I receive my master's and go back to my reservation as a Tribal Attorney, following in the footsteps of my father.

As an attorney, I can be that one person who is advocating for the rights of the disabled and indigent. I will ensure that disabled people are not left out due to any disability they are faced with. We should all be equal in whatever we choose to do, and accommodations will need to be made when necessary. What come to mind is the first woman who became an autistic lawyer, this makes me happy because she has not only set a path for autistic women or those who are disabled, but she has inspired women like myself to keep striving for what I believe in, and accomplish my goals no matter what struggles may come my way.