

TRIBAL MEMBER NEWS

Tribal Member Accepted into Ph.D. Program at Portland State University Lisa Norton Will Pursue a Doctorate Degree in Social Services Work in Indian Country

By Brent Merrill

Tribal member Lisa Norton wants to change people's lives for the better. And after receiving her master's degree in social work from Portland State University in June, she's off to a good start.

Norton's first step was applying to and being accepted into PSU's Ph.D. Program in Social Work and Social Research. The Ph.D. Program is set up to prepare students to understand critical social welfare problems and to conduct research and policy analysis related to the solution of these problems.

The program also will prepare students to teach in accredited schools of social work and eventually to take responsibility for program development and administration in human services organizations. Students completing the program would then ideally be in a position to assume a leadership role in the social welfare community.

Despite the fact that the subject matter Norton will be dealing with in her profession (abuse of Native women) can be brutally uncomfortable for folks to discuss, she says it is extremely important to get it out in the open so healing can begin.

Norton, the daughter of Margo Hudson, said she sees herself in a unique position in Indian Country as a researcher and an advocate for victims. She wants to see the focus shifted to the perpetrator and off the victim.

"Conventional wisdom focuses on the victim and not the perpetrator," said Norton in a matter-of-fact, straight in your face style during an interview at a Starbucks in Dallas. "The system is not set up to support victims. Victims are the ones who are focused on. 'What did you do?' is usually the first question a victim is asked after an assault."

Norton says the process starts with defining sexual assault.

"Native women are raped at two and a half times the norm," she explained.

Norton said her professional desire to help Native women in abusive situations is



Courtesy photo by Tina Retasket

personal. In her Statement of Professional Interest and Goals, Norton explained her desire to help and where it comes from.

"My professional interests and goals have really developed out of my personal interests and goals," said Norton. "I am sure I am not unique. We all choose a particular path based on possibilities we are aware of. In my case, I knew early on that my passion was making the world a better place. I just wasn't sure exactly how. What I am sure of is what I know to be true personally based on my lived experience."

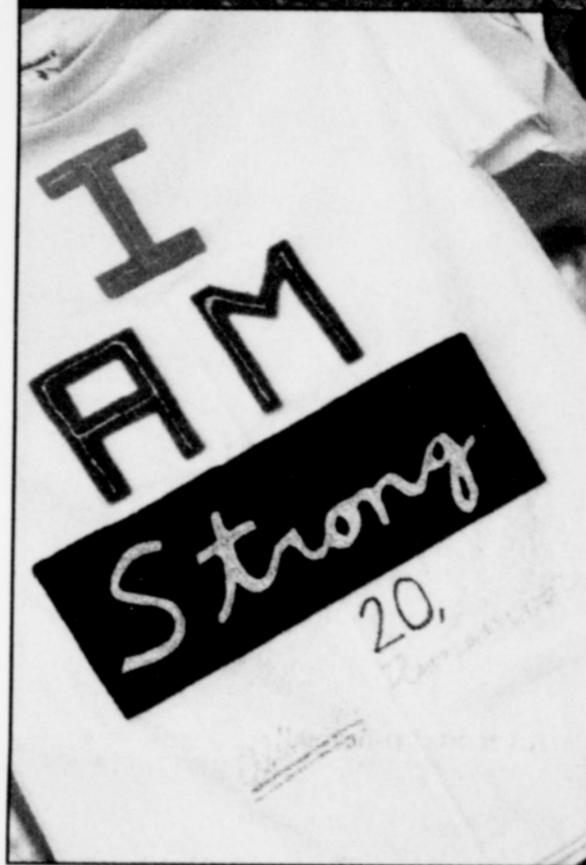
"I am a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. I have lived and worked on the reservation for 20 years," explained Norton in her statement. "I know that sexual assault has touched every member of the Tribe in some way, either by personal experience or that of a family member."

Norton proudly said she sees a responsibility to be a role model.

"I know that as someone who has successfully negotiated the higher education, I have a responsibility to those who follow to encourage and serve as a role model myself,"



Photos by Brent Merrill



said Norton in her statement. "I have chosen to make application to the Ph.D. Program in Social Work and Social Research in order to pursue my professional goal of reducing sexual assault and associated secondary trauma in Indian Country. Further, my work in the field of social work will serve to encourage and set an example for other Native American students who desire to pursue higher education in social work."

Norton sees her work as being more than just an example for her and her family, she sees it as benefiting all of Indian Country.

"My interest lies in helping the almost 600 Tribal Nations across the country in addressing the devastating effects of sexual assault through the use of community-based participatory research methods," said Norton. "Further, I have a responsibility to live my life as an example for Native students and researchers who are coming up to lay the foundation for their successful pursuits in higher education. It is not just for me, or for my family, it is all my relations that will benefit from the work I propose to do."

So as we watch and learn from Lisa Norton as she moves through the future helping her people, know that she is focused and driven to be a role model and her desire to succeed comes from you – her family, her friends, her community and her Tribe. And Lisa, despite what your mom says, get used to being called Dr. Norton! Aho Lisa!



Eagle Maintains Watch on Highway 229

An eagle has appeared several times atop the same tree in the last three months near milepost 10 on Highway 229. The tree affords an expansive view of hillsides, pastures, the Siletz River and people in their cars who often travel this road.



Photos by Diane Rodriguez