

Tribal Mentee Lands In Public Affairs

By Trinity Minahan

For Angela Sears, college was the last item on a long list of things to do after high school. After completing her high school diploma at an alternative school in Eugene, she wanted anything but more school and more classes. Instead, she went to work and did some traveling to places like Los Angeles, California and Lake Tahoe, Nevada. She did everything from delivering pizzas to dealing cards in various casinos. It took some growing up and some of life's experiences to realize it was time to make a change.

In 2001, after caring for her grandmother until she passed, Sears decided it was time to transform her life in a big way. Her grandmother had always asked her, "When are you going to do something?" Those words left her with a desire to seek out something more.

Sears credits April Campbell, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Member and Education Division Manager as another inspiration in her decision to attend college. As well as Campbell driving her to complete her degree, she gave her the words of encouragement that was needed to succeed on a path that Sears had not yet traveled. She was unsure and nervous about getting into college and Campbell eased the process.

Sears began her college path at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Oregon. At Chemeketa she worked toward an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree. She

was unsure of what she wanted to do in life, but she knew it was important to get a college degree. "Every other week there was something different I wanted to do," she explained. She used Chemeketa's Counseling and Career Center to assist her in researching many different careers that seemed intriguing. It was there that she developed and explored the idea of Journalism and Communications as a major. Upon further research she found that the University of Oregon had a baccalaureate program that would suit her interests perfectly.

Sears, like most non-traditional students starting college life long after high school, did not have just college, classes, and books on her mind. She had to continue working while going to school and sometimes that meant working 16 hour shifts. She maintained a job at Spirit Mountain Casino working as a table games dealer while she attended classes through the University of Oregon full time. "It was difficult. My life changed drastically," she said. There were many long days and long nights of working, attending classes, and studying.



Tribal Member Angela Sears

Photo by Toby McClary

After four and half years she made it through her program and is now a graduate of the University of Oregon with a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism and Communications, with a double emphasis in Advertising and Public Relations, and a minor in Communications. She is currently in the Tribe's Mentorship Program, working within the Public Affairs Department and has plans to enter into a Masters Program in Strategic Communications that the University of Oregon offers at their Portland campus this winter. "My successes in school had a lot to do

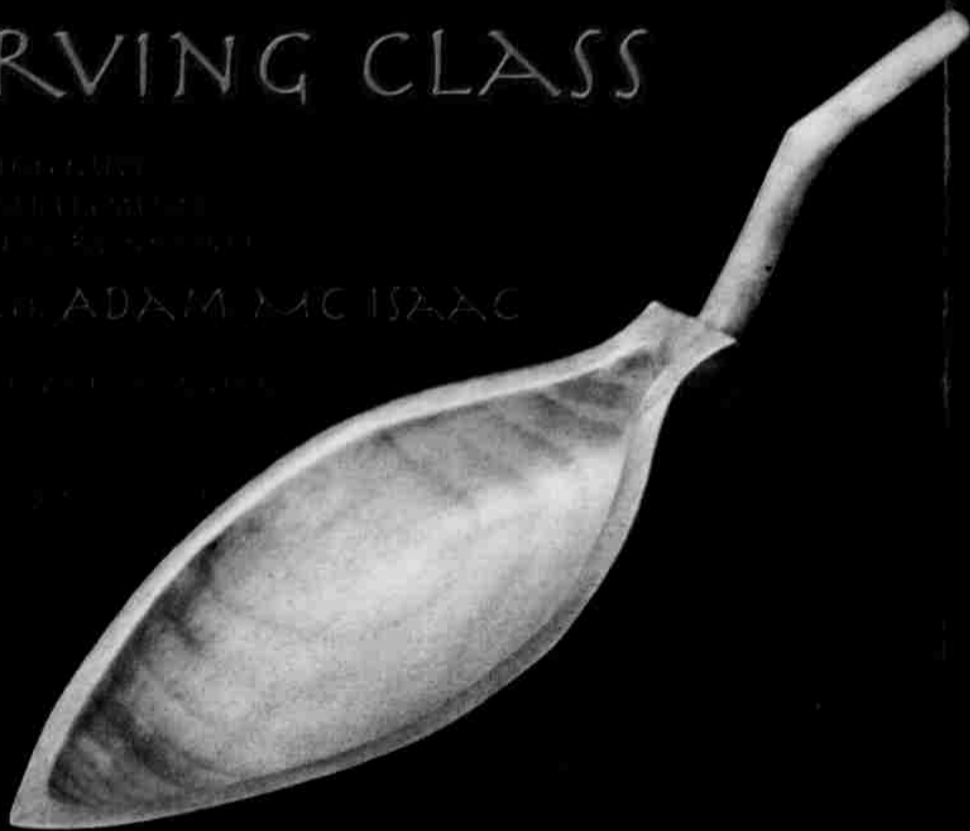
with age and experience. If I would have gone into college right after high school, I wouldn't have had the same level of commitment."

Sears also gives thanks to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde for the scholarship and grant funds that were made available for her to go to school. "Everyone should take advantage of the education funding that the Tribe offers," said Sears. "It is part of what our Tribe has worked so hard for — self sufficiency and making a better life for ourselves and our families." That, in itself, is exactly what she has done. ■

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