



Photo by Hannah O'Leary

Ecampus just part of her OSU journey

By Tyler Hansen

Luhui Whitebear-Cupp is entering the third part of her trilogy as an Oregon State University student. First, in 2003, she earned a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies on campus in Corvallis, then a second bachelor's in anthropology online with Oregon State Ecampus in 2013.

Her third act involves a trio of OSU graduate programs: She earned a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies on campus this spring, is working toward a graduate certificate in public health with Ecampus and will start an on-campus Ph.D. program in women, gender and sexuality studies this fall.

Every step of the way, Whitebear-Cupp has immersed herself in the extensive support system for Native American students at Oregon State. It helped guide her to success as an undergraduate, and now she provides guidance to a new generation of students as assistant director of OSU's Native American Longhouse (NAL) Eena Haws.

Whitebear-Cupp says such support is vital for students who are conditioned to aim low.

"Many of the students I work with have been told they aren't college material over and over again," said Whitebear-Cupp, who was the first person in her family to graduate from high school. "It's no secret that Native Americans do not have a high rate of college degree obtainment, and this is part of the issue."

Having witnessed firsthand the low expectations for students like her, Whitebear-Cupp became determined to chart a different course for herself. She got a taste of academic success at Oregon State and, a dozen years after earning her first degree, hasn't slowed down for anything. (She was pregnant with her third

child and working full time in 2012 when she enrolled online with OSU Ecampus to finish her anthropology degree.)

Whitebear-Cupp has spent her entire professional career helping Native American students navigate their way to a college degree. For 10 years she was a college advisor for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in Oregon, and in 2013 she joined OSU's Longhouse.

"The NAL served as a primary support for me that ensured my academic success at OSU," she said. "This is pretty much my dream job, helping Native students get through the college experience."

Meanwhile, Whitebear-Cupp's own college experience continues at Oregon State. She has one foot in each world — enrolled simultaneously in graduate programs on campus and online. She's enjoying the unique qualities of and similarities between each learning environment.

And considering that she's on her second go-round as an Ecampus student, her opinion on the quality of the online learning experience at OSU carries weight.

"The academic component of the courses is very comparable to the on-campus experience," she said. "The instructors put a lot of time and energy in developing their classes so their students are able to gain a great deal of knowledge."

True to her mission, she will pass on that knowledge to every student she meets. 🍓

Tyler Hansen is a marketing communications manager for OSU Ecampus.