

LEONARD & SANDY SARGENT EVST GRADUATE FELLOW

2015-16

Tabitha Espinoza

Tabitha Espinoza entered the Environmental Studies (EVST) Master's Program at the University of Montana in Fall 2015. She was selected for the Sargent Fellowship on the basis of her "demonstrated commitment to the environment, commitment to healthy and equitable communities in Montana, and on the tremendous promise the faculty sees in her as an important future leader in both environmental and social arenas."



Born and raised in Arlee, Montana, Tabitha is a first descendent of the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Confederated Tribes, she earned a BA in Anthropology (2008) from the University of Montana, graduating summa cum laude. In the ensuing years, she worked as a Park ranger for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge in Hawaii and as a Visitor Services Technician for the U.S. Forest Service in the Beayerhead-Deerlodge National Forest, both of which expanded and deepened her commitment to the natural environment. Tabitha also worked as a Therapeutic Youth Care Provider at Missoula Youth Homes and as a Residential Program Advisor of the Missoula Urban Demonstration (MUD) Project, both of which strengthened her commitment to healthy and just Montana communities. With archaeological fieldwork experience in South America and volunteer experience on an organic farm in the Dominican Republic during her undergraduate years, Tabitha brings a valuable global perspective to her work and studies.

Tabitha has a strong commitment to her homelands and communities on the Flathead Reservation in Western Montana. To complement her Master's studies, Tabitha works part-time as a Program Coordinator of the Missoula Girl's Using Their Strengths (GUTS!) Program. Her goal in the EVST Masters Program involves multiple projects to bring her "skills and talents back home to benefit the land and people of the Flathead Reservation." The projects she has identified encompass examining existing

environmental education programs on Montana reservations and investigating how Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) can be applied in educational contexts to help native youth find meaning and forge better understanding of contemporary scientific methodologies.

Tabitha's long-range goal is to continue strengthening the Flathead Reservation tribes' historic stewardship of the natural environment while fostering the integrity and security of individual residents and reservation communities.

According to the UM EVST Program, Tabitha "would not likely have been able to attend the University of Montana without the fellowship support, professional encouragement, and honor that the Leonard and Sandy Sargent Environmental Studies Graduate Fellowship has provided."