

I was born and raised in Great Falls Montana I went to CMR High School and was part of the Educational Talent Search during my time there. When I graduated, I went to Montana State and studied political science and then upon graduation, I decided to enter public service and so I knew that policy and finding solutions to the problems we face as people was kind of where my passion was in what I enjoy doing and so I ran for the state house representatives in Montana. Unfortunately, I lost but I ended up starting to work in policy after that primarily working on it LGBTQ policy as well as Tribal sovereignty in the Montana legislature and focusing on trying to solve the problems that Montanans face and seeing how we can respect people's identities as well as making sure that they feel included and welcomed in the state. I think part of what inspires me is my identities being a Native man as well as a gay man and seeing my peers, my friends and my family struggle a lot has really inspired me to become involved in politics and policy work. I think right now one of my big factors that influences why stay involved are that I have a niece and nephew that mean the world to me and making sure that Montana stays a place accepting of them as well as a place where they can stay and find jobs and find happiness and pleasure really inspires me. I think I chose policy because I'm a nerd. It is so not for everyone, but for me it just makes my little heart happy to sit and read and to study how we can solve problems from like not enough money for funding education, to like how are we going to get these roads built so people can drive. There's so many problems and they can all have a policy solution to them and I, like I said, I'm a nerd. I love to read; I love to sit and talk and discuss and policy lets me be that little nerd. I think the thing I want to pursue is just equality and continuing to make sure that no matter your ethnicity or race or sexual orientation or gender identity that Montana and the United States continues to welcome those people and to make them feel like they belong and that they can have a nice life. I think so many times growing up in Montana, when I would look around me, I wouldn't see people who either looked like me, talked like me, or acted like me in roles of leadership. And so I guess just participating, I want to show that to other people who grew up like I did. That they belong and that they are accepted and then I also want to show my peers that we have voices and that we get to really be the people who make change and who make sure that we're all included in that we get to have just as much of a flourishing life as anyone else. Some of the challenges that I've faced are acceptance. You know, there's a lot of people out there who don't agree with a lot of the things that I believe or on either my racial identity or my sexual identity and just kind of trying to stay true to myself when those people doubt or those people hate has been up a big lesson that I've had to learn kind of that skill I've had to build, I'm getting kind of a thick exterior. I think the most important thing is recognizing that as Native people and as young people, we have problems that we're going to face and that education will help us solve those problems. Whether you want to become a doctor or a teacher or get involved in public service, getting an education will help you learn how to start solving some of those problems in addressing the inequalities that we face and I think whether you go to vocational school, or to a 4 year university, or you go to a 2 year community college, or if you enter the work force, there's so many things that we can learn and all these different types of experiences that we have at our fingertips can help us solve those problems.