



honor your Self

POETRY

“KEEP WRITING. AND WRITE FOR YOURSELF. DON’T LET OTHER PEOPLE’S OPINIONS DETER YOU.”



Heather Cahoon, PhD 32
Pend d’Oreille
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Poet

Heather Cahoon has always written poems. She says she loves language—the way words sound and how we can use not only the meanings of words but also the sound of those words to convey images and emotion.

Although she went on to college, school wasn’t always easy for Heather. She admits that she struggled through high school and decided to go on to college only because her boyfriend was going. At the university, however, she found encouragement from a tribal education specialist and eventually found her passion in poetry and Native American

“IF YOU PERSEVERE, THEN IN COLLEGE
YOU GET TO CHOOSE WHAT YOU STUDY.
THEN THE POSSIBILITIES ARE WIDE OPEN.”

Studies courses. Heather was so inspired that she went on to get her MFA in Poetry and an Interdisciplinary PhD with an emphasis in Tribal Sovereignty. “I never imagined that I would have a doctorate degree,” she says. “And I didn’t imagine I would come to enjoy college as much as I did. After getting over the initial culture shock, I found that I really liked learning and interacting with different people I met there—my professors and mentors, my fellow students, and eventually my own students. College has enriched my life in ways I couldn’t have imagined.”

Today Heather continues to write poetry. She takes great inspiration from the world around her—the physical landscape on her reservation, especially the places she grew up going to with her father and siblings, and from her tribal culture. She also runs her own event planning and consulting business and is in the process of writing a children’s book about a young Pend d’Oreille girl named “Useli.”

“Find something that interests and inspires you,” she advises young people. “and do it no matter what other people think. I never really cared what people thought about my writing. I wrote because I loved doing it.”

