

## Desire to inspire kept her going

Story by Rob Rombouts  
Photo by Blackbird Photography



Education was always an important part of **Sharmaine Gibson's** upbringing, and she wants to use her education to inspire other Aboriginal students.

Sharmaine, from Ohsweken, went to [Niagara College](#), graduating with a Correctional Worker diploma.

Going to college introduced her to new people and new experiences. "Growing up on the reserve, it's a different world," Sharmaine said. "Going to Niagara College was scary. It really opened my eyes to the world." It gave her an opportunity to challenge stereotypes people held about Aboriginals, and find out more about other people's cultures and experiences.

Upon finishing this diploma, Sharmaine wanted to follow up on criminology courses she took in college, and enrolled in the Contemporary Studies with Criminology program at [Wilfrid Laurier University](#).

In her last year of the program, Sharmaine gave birth to her daughter. While she sometimes felt she was neglecting her daughter to focus on her studies, as soon as she finished schoolwork, she would give her all the attention in the world. She knew she had to push on to make a better life for her daughter and herself.

Sharmaine wants to inspire others with her experiences. "I am proud to be Native and support my people as well as the rest of the world in Haudenosaunee knowledge," she said.

"I know the statistics about higher incarceration rates, higher suicides rates, higher rates of alcohol and drug use, and higher rates of children in care, and I want to help Native people to improve their lives," said Sharmaine. "I want to show that if I can do it, they can do it too."

Sharmaine is applying her education, working with [Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services](#). She plans to go back to school to complete her Masters in Social Work.

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*Education Works Alliance is a community group dedicated to building prosperity through training, education and lifelong learning. The group's mandate is to raise the education, literacy and skill levels of Grand Erie residents, in order to broaden opportunities for employments and economic development. For more information visit [www.educationworks.ca](http://www.educationworks.ca)*