

Navajo woman headed to Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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Elisha Sneddy is a member of the Navajo Nation who will soon be studying social and behavioral sciences at what she describes as her dream school: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

She introduces herself this way: Shí éí Elisha Sneddy yinishyé. Kinyaa'aanii nishłi, Tó'aheedliinii báshishchíín, Bít'ahnii daschicheii dóó, Deeshchii'ni dashinalí. Hello, my name is Elisha Sneddy and I am a proud member of the Navajo Nation. I am Towering House clan, born for Water Flows Together clan. My maternal grandfather is Folded Arms clan and my paternal grandfather is Start of the Red Streak People clan. I am the daughter of Lisa Tolth and Cameron Sneddy. I am the granddaughter of Theresa and Amos Tolth.

Sneddy is 24, originally from Nahodishgish, N.M., a small community on the Navajo Nation reservation. She is the oldest of six.

She graduated in May 2019 with a B.A in Native American studies and psychology, with a concentration in leadership and building Native Nations.

Sneddy told the *Gallup Sun* that while she now lives in Albuquerque, in her early years on the Navajo reservation she witnessed and experienced the harsh realities of disparities that exist

among many communities.

“Personal experiences with these challenges have encouraged me to become a public health leader for my community so my siblings, grandparents, relatives, and all Native people can heal and achieve long-term wellness,” she explained in an autobiographical email.

“At an early age, my family instilled in me the knowledge, importance, and beauty of my Navajo culture and traditional values. Our traditional and cultural ways continue to guide us, as they have for many generations and have helped many continue to live in peace and harmony. Therefore, I plan to develop community-driven and culturally informed programs and services. My dream is to return to my home community and honor the past, current, and future generations by dedicating my life to giving back to this that made me who I am today.”

Sneddy, who grew up in a single-parent household, thanks her mother for paving the way for her and her siblings.

“I believe in the words of Chief Manuelito, “use education like a ladder”. It is a privilege to achieve higher education and I made it this far from all the sacrifices and prayers from my ancestors and those who believe in me. My passion for Native health stems from the love I have for my family, the land, and my cultural teachings. I strive to give back to Native communities because I believe we should be receiving help and care from our own people.”