



In 2003, I worked as a summer student at Oneida EMS doing reception duties and public relations. In addition to my regular duties I had the opportunity to participate in training scenarios as a patient. I thought, "hmm, this is cool and I wonder if I could do this?" From there I checked out the program at Fanshawe and quickly found out that I did not have the qualifications they required. At the same time, within the community, there was "a buzz" that Oneida wanted community members working for their service. This led to further talks and getting the program at Anishnabek Educational Institute started. Within about a year these "talks" became reality and from the hard work and perseverance of community leaders AEI was to host the first Paramedic Program in 2006.

I kept up to date with the progress and attended the information night at AEI and submitted my transcripts. From the movement and voice of the community I became more driven to be a part of this. I had some experience in Emergency Services with Oneida Police as an Auxiliary Officer and thought it would be a good fit for me. On another note, I remember when my oldest son was two years old...this would of been 1998...we were outside playing of our apartment in London. I was in the Police Foundations Program in Westervelt at the time. We heard a helicopter flying...we looked up to see the ORNGE medical transportation chopper flying over us and I said to my son, "see that Ronnie, someday mommy's gonna be in there, that will be my job." I really had no thought of this at the time and I sometimes think back to that time and ask myself why I said that. Today, more than 10 years later, I am working in the field. (Editors Note: ORNGE is not an acronym. Instead the unique name was adopted to reflect the well recognized colour of ORNGE'S distinctive vehicles.)

The paramedic program was very demanding in all aspects: physically we had to be fit to carry equipment and patients; mentally we had to learn anatomy and physiology of the body and all its processes and most diseases, plus procedures of paramedic practices and the Standards that these procedures are governed by. Emotionally we had to learn to deal with the fact that we will be in emergency situations and some may include family members. Spiritually we had to prepare ourselves for when we witnessed a person die.

I remember the first two weeks of the program (in 2006) we were taught and tested on the Primary Survey of a patient. This included the introduction to the program and mainly obtaining information. Most of us were literally sweating! The process brought a few of us to tears; with one student didn't continue on after this. The program was very demanding and deadlines became a regular and expected practice for us. Before the program I usually had a bad habit of being late and procrastinating. In order to be successful in this program these bad habits had to be addressed by not only me but by all of us. From the first year of having a lot of unexplained absences and lateness I completed the second year with very little of either.

In the summer before the second (final) year, my father passed away. This was the hardest time in my life...it had fallen apart and I felt so alone. My father was so proud to see me and my sisters in the program. The day we got our uniforms, in the first year, he had us put them on and took a picture of us. He told all of his friends and would sit and listen to us vent after a day of learning. The pride he had in us helped us all continue.

There are number of things that motivated me to finish; from what I said to my son when he was two, being a role model and providing a much needed service to my community to having a career so I can sustain a comfortable living. Mostly, I've been so driven to do this because I want to make myself, my family and my community proud and amidst all the problems we have, I want to be part of the solution.

My success is absolutely the success of a community and family...the community I was raised in and the family that supported me. I didn't grow up knowing I would do this but I believe I chose my own path. Completing the Paramedic Program is something I am very proud of and it has given me motivation to keep going! I believe in myself - that I am capable of completing what I start. So I'm looking to the future and making other goals for my life. In five to ten years from now I would like to continue to be in the Emergency Services field...as well as an entrepreneur.

Julie Brown
PCP Oneida EMS



What made me decide to become a paramedic is more who than what. Oneida started gathering info on how an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) station would benefit our community back around 2001 and this is when my dad, Terry Elijah, was a councilor for Oneida. One night he came home from work and called me up about this workshop that was happening and explained Oneida was thinking of building an EMS station. My dad's health at this time was not getting better and as time went on we needed to call the ambulance for him more and more. So he told me he wouldn't mind so much if I picked him up and took care of him on the ride to the hospital and laughed. "Besides its good money" he said and "you can give your son a good life." That night I did think long and hard about going back to school for my dad because I know he waited until the last minute to call the ambulance when he really needed it and it was a good paying job to raise my family. It was a few years of planning before anything was started and meanwhile thoughts were going through my head over and over...three yrs of school... how old will I be when I'm done. Will I be the oldest in the class? Can I do it? Do I want to do it?

It wasn't until after the EMS station was being built when notices went out looking for students to attend the paramedic program. At first I still wasn't sure if this is what I wanted to do because I was also on leave from the casino industry. That was until that one day when my dad needed the ambulance again and I could see in his face he didn't want to go with them. It took a lot of convincing but he did go. It was then and there I realized how many of our people feel this way and how much relief could I give people if they see a familiar face or even knowing it's a fellow community member there to assist in their time of a medical distress. The following day I went straight to the Anishinabek Educational Office (A.E.I.) in Muncey and started my journey to becoming an Oneida paramedic.

Our first year was pre-health...just like being back in high school but twice the age! There were times the work was hard with long hours of studying, essays, projects and reading. Out of 20 students 10 of us continued on to the paramedic course (2nd year) after pre-health. Some went to nursing and others in different fields but I was determined in becoming a paramedic in my own community. I hoped I might make a difference in the way some of our people are so hesitant in calling for help when they need it.

As I started my first year of paramedic school I quickly realized that there were so many procedures and information that needed to be ascertained in the first two minutes of the call. What happen...when, where, why and if possible what do to comfort the patient en-route to the hospital. There was so much to learn. This became a bit much for some students but I was still determined to become an Oneida paramedic. In our last year of school the majority of the time we were all at different stations getting work experience...400 hours are needed in order to graduate. Not many of my training hours were done in Oneida. However when I was here people asked what am I going to do when its someone close to me. I told them I've thought long and hard about that and explained to them there's only so much my protocols will let me do and I will always give the best care to my ability and I hope we make a difference being stationed right in Oneida.

Becoming an Oneida paramedic has changed my life and routine significantly due to the hours and shift work but I do love my job and there are always so many different situations out there...every call can be a new experience. I've already been told you never get used to the buzzer no matter how many years you have under your belt. Your hair stands up every time while we listen to the speaker for the little information we receive about the call. It can be stressful but also rewarding when we've helped someone in need of EMS.

Becoming an Oneida paramedic has changed my life and routine significantly due to the hours and shift work but I do love my job and there are always so many different situations out there...every call can be a new experience. I've already been told you never get used to the buzzer no matter how many years you have under your belt. Your hair stands up every time while we listen to the speaker for the little information we receive about the call. It can be stressful but also rewarding when we've helped someone in need of EMS.

We graduated in 2009 and was hired on part-time for Oneida. Although part-time is good I wanted more hours for more experience. Unfortunately there were no available positions at the time. It took two years but I am so happy to say I have been hired on as full time for Oneida as of January 30, 2011. It has been a long struggle and an awesome learning experience in furthering my career but well worth all the effort. I am very thankful for all of my family and friends support which helped me achieve my goal, especially my mom and dad and grandma Rose. Grandma Rose asked every week how I was doing and that I could do it! Unfortunately she passed away a year later as well. They have always been right there to tell me I can do anything when I put a 100% into it. There are so many people I owe and have said thanks to and I am grateful to have such wonderful people in my life. A big Yawoko^ to them all. Unfortunately I am sad because I did not get to give my dad the compassion and comfort he was looking for in his medical emergencies. My dad passed away three months before my graduation and I really wished he was there in body so I could have give him a huge hug and the chance to say thank you so much for leading me in the right direction for me and my family. I know his spirit is always with us...reminding us that and I am here because of his belief in me knowing...I would be a good paramedic. Love you Dad XOXO!

Its never too late to change life if you need to or want to. I had a goal and even though I was one of the oldest in the class it didn't matter to me because this is what I wanted and I was going to do it. It is so much easier with the support. More support means more shoulders you will have to lean on. We all need a little help now and then so if you have a goal go and get it and the support will come. I really wish I would have done this 20 years ago or even 10 but I am thankful where I am today. I've not only shown myself but also my children that it is never too late or out of reach to accomplish your goals!

Thank you to AEI for taking on the pilot project; we had an awesome staff and teachers that helped us every day we were there for three years. Especially Kendra, Sue, Mary and Frank that put up with us for three years. Uz are just awesome over there at AEI, we are students not just numbers! Thanks again!

Lorraine Elijah

PCP Oneida EMS