

# Chad Ward - Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe



My name is Chad Ward, I am proud enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe. I grew up on the reservation on the shores of the beautiful Lake Traverse near Browns Valley, Minnesota. I attended school in Browns Valley and then high school in Sisseton, South Dakota. Upon graduating high school, I attended the University of North Dakota and received a Bachelors degree in Criminal Justice.

I had the privilege of working for Roberts County Sheriffs Department as the Jail Administrator, until I accepted a position with the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe and worked my way through various roles until Chairman Robert Shepherd hired me as Realty and Buffalo Farm Manager. I had the privilege and honor in serving the Lake Traverse District as their Treasurer on several occasions.

sions.

Through my years of growing up and working on the reservation area, I witnessed how successful our tribe was economically in contrast to other areas. However, there were two things that always stuck with me: language and misconceptions. I witnessed language throughout the years first hand during the Cobell Buy Back Program in talking with our Elders. Language is so valuable to our culture as Dakota people, but there was a lack of it. Over the years I would hear people talk Dakota but as the years went by and elders passed, language was less frequent. Sisseton-Wahpeton has an enrollment of nearly 14,000 members, but less than 70 fluent speakers. The second item I witnessed over the years was the misconception of American Indians. The Non-Native and mainstream misguided information of the American Indian on items such as assuming we are all the same, speak the same language, receive a check in the mail every month, or that we do not pay taxes. All these factors made me want to not only educate people, but also continue my education as well.

In 2017 I was hired as the Grand Forks Public Schools Native American Liaison, here I am able to educate students, faculty and staff on the American Indian culture and answer truths about the reality of the American Indian. Being able to serve the families and students in the school system is a great honor and experience. Having over thirty different tribes represented in a school district provides some great insight into the rest of Indian Country, but only a small fraction of what is out there.

In the Summer of 2019, I was accepted into the University of North Dakota's Lakota Language Program. The program has undertaken change and reform from their 2018 *UND Today* article and had a lot of bumps, but it opened the door to Lakota Language. It is a different dialect from my Native Dakota language but gave me a foundation of learning the language. With the tremendous support of the Grand Forks Public Schools Administration, I was able to achieve a degree into Teaching and American Indian studies. It is my goal and the school district's goal to not only offer Lakota Language to students, but also American Indian courses as well. By being able to teach students today, those students will be able to teach to children of tomorrow about not only language but the journey the American Indian has had to overcome to survive to stay in existence. Today there is a call for social justice and reform from varies minorities and ethnic groups, since 1492 the American Indian has endured and been asking for change. It is my dream that the ancestors we lost will get that change and acknowledgement of wrong they suffered be learned from and not hidden as a secret anymore.