



Michelle VanEvery is a Walker Mohawk turtle clan.

Michelle started on her educational journey thinking “I don’t think I can do it”. Five years ago Michelle took advantage of a science education program sponsored by Imperial to help her gain employment at the nearby Nanticoke refinery.

She completed a pre-technology course offered at the Six Nations Polytechnic that was designed to allow students to upgrade in physics, chemistry and math. She continued her education in the three year Chemical Production and Power Engineering Technology

program in Sarnia at Lambton College. This course is geared for the petroleum industry, refineries. She spent her two eight-month co-op terms at the nearby Nanticoke refinery.

Michelle has reached her first goal, she is currently employed at Imperial Oil in Nanticoke as an operating engineer, where she provides utilities to the rest of the refinery.

Michelle considers going back to school at the age of 31 and completing a 3 year co-op program while raising a family to be her major accomplishments. She proved to herself and others that **anything is possible** if you try and that it is **never too late** to improve your education.

While Michelle was attending school the major challenges she faced were finding housing, finding schools for her children to attend, finding a daycare for her youngest and moving to a place where she didn’t know anybody. Fortunately for her, Lambton College had a native student center where she could go and chat with other natives. They made things easier being near or with other natives.

As an Onkwehon:we person it was her **determination** that helped her through the trying times of school and being away from my family. Being a single parent Michelle wanted more in life for her children which she knew an education would bring her. It was also the **encouragement** from family members and close friends that helped smooth the waves. The values Michelle has as an Onkwehon:we person is the mind set of “**finishing what you start**”.

As a result of her education and upbringing Michelle sees herself contributing to our community and society at large by encouraging people to **continue with their education beyond high school**. She feels “we **need** more of our people working in **various trades** to keep an eye on how industry is treating mother earth”.

Michelle feels that one key challenge that needs to be addressed by the Six Nations community in the next generation is to get more post secondary education and to do this there is a need for more funding to pursue whatever career you chose. She also suggests having mentors in

different careers to help inform the youth of their endless possibilities in life. This could resemble the information sessions the post secondary education office hosts but on a larger scale.

Words of encouragement she can give to young people as they make decisions for their futures is to “**not be afraid to leave the reserve**, there are natives everywhere you go. She advises not to settle for something, strive for the best you can be”. Your **education** will only improve your financial stability.

She also advises that “**nothing is free, don’t be afraid to work for it, it’ll be worth it in the end**”. Your **success** is what you are willing to **endure** to **achieve** it.