

**DIFFERENT
LIKE YOU**

Meet teens whose unique experiences might make them seem as if they're from another world—when in reality they're just like you.

Shanice is a Native American

Today, roughly **30 percent** of the **5.2 million Native Americans** in the U.S. live on reservations. What's it like to grow up on one? Shanice, 18, shares her story.

By SHANICE BRITTON, as told to JANE BIANCHI

The summer before my senior year of high school, during a four-week science program at the University of California, Davis, I was eating in a cafeteria with some other high school students, and this one girl asks me: "Do you live in a teepee?" It was such a silly question that, at first, I thought she was joking! I said, "Are you serious?" She said, "Oh, wait, I'm sorry. Is that something I shouldn't ask?" She wasn't trying to be rude, so it didn't bother me. I just said, "No, I have a house with electricity and running water. I'm not disconnected from the world!" But the truth is, I did grow up differently.

I'm a Native American, and I'm from a reservation in Covelo, California, where seven tribes live—including the two that I'm part of, Wailaki and Yuki. A reservation is a place that's reserved for Native American tribes by the federal government. About 56 million acres in the country are held for Native American tribes. Some reservations (like the 16 million-acre Navajo Nation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah) are huge, while others are just over one acre in size. Mine is on the smaller side.

People often have **misconceptions** about what living on a reservation means. Some think, for instance, that I wear a headdress and moccasins every day. In reality, though, my life probably looks a lot like yours. There are paved roads and restaurants. I watch *Finding Carter* and wear jeans. Oh, and I'm obsessed with basketball! I was named MVP of my league senior year, and now that I'm a freshman in college, I play **intramural** hoops.



"Believe in yourself. You can accomplish anything you want in life if you stay positive and work hard—no matter where you come from."

—Shanice Britton

When I go fishing, I use a traditional tool called a "gig" to spear salmon as they swim by.

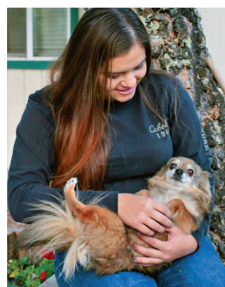


My younger sister Shayleena and I singing in church.

PAMINI RAHMAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR SCHOLASTIC INC. (ALL PHOTOS)



Hanging in my backyard with my dogs, Angel (the white one) and Kiara, and my horse, Scout



Keeping Tradition Alive

Even though I consider myself a typical teen, there are definitely ways that my life has been different. The reservation is an hour from town, so not only is there a strong community feel, but there's also a big connection to the land. Our house is surrounded by a mountain, a river, and a farm. We have 23 animals: 10 chickens, 4 goats, 4 dogs, 3 cats, a guinea pig, and a horse. It's not just for show! We collect eggs from the chickens, use manure from the animals to fertilize soil, and pick fruits and vegetables from our garden.

I've also learned how to hunt and fish. When hunting for deer, my tribe has two rules: 1) Never shoot a doe, because she might be pregnant, and 2) If you kill a deer, find a way to use all of it.

My tribe is also known for its weaving and beadwork. I love making all sorts of fun accessories, like earrings, barrettes, and necklaces—it's my way of relaxing at the end of a long day. When I'm

at school, I wear my beadwork around campus. A lot of kids will ask, "Where did you get those earrings?" When I say I made them, they can't believe it! It makes me feel special.

A Stronger Future

Going to college has been a big change for me. There were only 25 people in my graduating class, and now I go to school with thousands. On my reservation, I was surrounded mostly by Natives, and at college, the Native population is only 0.07%. It's intimidating but also exciting.

I'm studying to become a veterinarian—there aren't any on my reservation. If an animal gets sick, you have to drive an hour to get them help. My goal is to open a veterinary clinic that will help my reservation prosper.

It's actually pretty rare for teens from where I grew up to go to college. We've been plagued by poverty—and that's pushed many toward drug and alcohol abuse. But I'm determined to become a positive role model for my reservation. It's important to me to eventually return to the rez and invest in my tribe's future.

3 THINGS SHANICE WANTS YOU TO KNOW

1

Don't make assumptions.

It's not fair to generalize and put people in boxes. Get to know a person for who he or she actually is. Think about it: How would you feel if someone judged you before talking to you?

2

Listen to others.

Everyone comes from different backgrounds and has different stories—listen and learn! I like to live by the saying: "Step up, step down." In other words, if you're the one always talking, step down.

3

Be thankful.

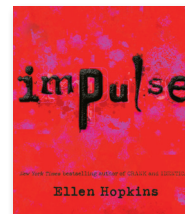
Even if you have hard times in life, there are always other people who are less fortunate. Every night, I make a mental list of things that I'm grateful for, like family, or even just making it home safe each day.

Shanice's Favorite Things



MUSIC

I really like country songs, because they tell stories. My favorite singers are **Luke Bryan** and **Carrie Underwood**.



BOOK

I love books by the author **Ellen Hopkins**, like *Burned* and *Impulse*, because they're about real-life problems that everyone goes through.

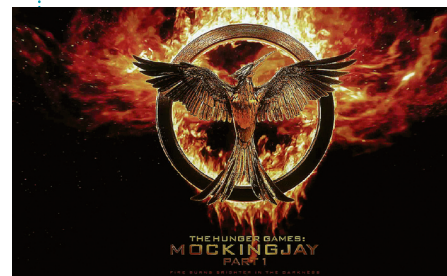
CELEB

I really like **Jennifer Lawrence** as an actress. When you see her in the media, she's always acting like herself and doing funny things. A lot of celebs talk about dieting, but she talks about how she eats as much as she wants and just makes sure that she's active.



MOVIE

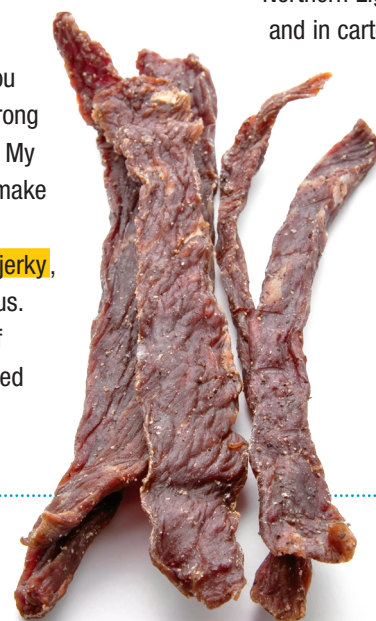
I liked *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay (Part 1)* a lot. There's so much action and suspense. I'm really looking forward to the next one, because I think it'll also be action-packed.



PLACE THAT SHE WANTS TO VISIT

I want to go to **Alaska** and see the Northern Lights. You see them in movies and in cartoons—they're just so pretty.

FOOD You can never go wrong with deer meat! My family loves to make deer-meat stew and **deer-meat jerky**, which is delicious. I'm also a fan of chocolate-covered almonds and cashews. Yum!



TV

I love *Friends*. The character Phoebe is the best, because she's so funny. Even if the episode is about something serious, she'll say something that makes no sense and crack me up.

