I sat there on the green prickly grass, while the sun hit my skin causing sweat to drip down all my body. It was a beautiful summer day in Bemidji on August 21, 2009. There were forty-five other girls sitting around me as our resident assistants and peer academic advisors spoke to us about guidelines and expectations for our floor and dorm hall. I saw a small black dot circling in the sky. After looking at the small black dot more closely, I realized it was a bald eagle. I could tell by the way it smoothly flew across the bright blue sky with its wings spread wide. I smiled because this was the moment I knew Bemidji State University was the beginning of a new journey and successful future.

Growing up as a young Native American girl, I have been taught by my family and culture to respect the eagle and its feathers. The eagle symbolizes truth, honor, and power in our culture. If one is given an eagle feather, it is considered the highest level of honor and respect. Eagle feathers are often given for the important moments in one’s life. When I saw that eagle on the first day at Bemidji State University orientation, I knew it was the way for my ancestors and medicine man to try to tell me that I was in the right place. They wanted me to know the eagle was there to help guide me, appearing for one of the many important moments in my life. As I came back to reality and listened to the last few rules and expectations for Oak Hall, I was excited to begin my first year experience at Bemidji State University.

After a little over a month passed by, I realized I had not missed the city of Minneapolis, my home, as much as I imagined I would. I could say it was because I was
so busy with schoolwork and adjusting that I did not have time to miss home, but that would all be an immense lie. The reason I did not miss home as much as expected was because I felt at home at Bemidji State University.

Winter break was when I had the time to see family and friends for the first time after being away from home. When I came back, my parents had a dinner, inviting friends and family over. Many of them said to me, “You look good. You look really happy,” and “You’re glowing, and you look so collegiate.” I was always able to mentally describe how happy I was in Bemidji, but for the first time I was able to physically show that I was more than happy being at Bemidji State University. As we all ate dinner, and conversed about different topics, someone turned to me and said, “You have a great outlook on things, and a very different perspective than most of us. I can see Bemidji is treatin ya well.” I replied, “More than you can imagine.” As I sat there eating the rest of my dinner, I thought I was living through déjà vu. This was because I had been reading and thinking about the “My BSU Moment” contest paper. My conversation with my family exemplified the Bemidji State University mission statement.

There were many dinners, parties, and social gatherings that demonstrated what the mission statement to Bemidji State University meant to me, but as winter break went on, I began to miss college. Although my home will always be located in the Twin Cities, my life is now in Bemidji. I loved being home, and am always happy being home, but I began to miss the happiness in Bemidji. It is a different kind of happiness I feel at Bemidji State University; it is freedom, independence, and excitement that run through my body when I am here. I started to miss the footprints I was leaving on my new path
of success. I wanted to be back where my future rested; I wanted to be back at Bemidji State University.

As winter break came to an end and I prepared to pack my things to go back to Bemidji, I was ecstatic. I was going back to where my life only goes forward.

After the four-hour-ride from Minneapolis to Bemidji, I stepped out of the car into the skin-prickling air, and stood in the exact spot where I felt a true connection between myself and Bemidji State University; the exact spot I saw that eagle circle in the sky. Only this time, there were no other students surrounding me, the sky was grey, but still bright from the luminous snow. There were no resident assistants or peer academic advisors speaking. I heard nothing but my breathing. I stood there thinking back to the moment on the grass, and the sight of that bald eagle. There has not been a moment at Bemidji State University where I have not been happy. I have a great roommate, who is one of my best friends, I have an unbreakable bond with my resident assistants and peer academic advisors, and I am making the best of friends with the girls living on my floor. Bemidji State University has given me nothing but good things and most importantly, a great start to my future.