

**Danielle Keysaw**  
**Utah Valley University student**  
**68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Parallel event**  
***“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”***  
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Good morning! My name is Danielle Keysaw, and I am a biology student at Utah Valley University (UVU). I am fortunate to speak before you today thanks to the UVU class: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which is based on the inclusive student-engaged learning (SEL) model. This class has granted non-traditional students, like me, the opportunity to speak in support of Mountain Women and girls at the highest gender-focused forum on Earth. I am a mother, a wife, a student curator employed at the UVU Herbarium, and a full-time student working towards a new career in conservation ecology. Speaking from my personal experience as a woman, I have faced many challenges related to working in the field of biology such as intellectual disrespect and misunderstanding time restraints due to being a mother and student.

Within a group setting with the mentorship of faculty, SEL has aided me in honing my skills through practice. With help from my peers and mentors, I have developed the skills needed for my profession. During my college career, I have learned first-hand how to effectively communicate and work collaboratively within a team to accomplish a common goal and more. In the Herbarium, we use SEL via curation, and through this, I have been introduced to the philosophy of decolonial methods within ecology and botanical research. This means dispelling ignorance, removing bias, and creating space for alternative knowledge. This leads to a diverse and inclusive ideology in our lab, fieldwork, and personal lives, by taking into account the traditions, knowledge, and experiences of indigenous communities.

Indigenous women around the world are traditionally keepers of knowledge, holding the great responsibility of passing down their indigenous lifeways, ecological understanding, and environmental stewardship. Therefore, today I would like to invite you all to think about the indigenous women of mountainous regions, as well as all over the world. These women through their culture and living intimately in their environment have Indigenous scientific knowledge. From these women, I have been inspired to learn about and incorporate decolonizing methodologies within my research. I plan to continue making changes in the canon of Western scientific research to start encompassing decolonizing methodologies. I give thanks to the many Indigenous researchers who have put their knowledge into well-written books and papers and shared them with the world (Tuhivai Smith; Lee et al.; Hernandez, PhD).

The SEL model has given me multiple opportunities to test my knowledge, strengthen it, and correct misinformation before I enter my profession. With the skills I’ve learned, I will enter the

workforce with confidence as a woman in science while setting an example for my son, working towards sustainability. Someday, I aspire to be an inspiration for other women and girls to pursue their dreams and to never give up, as numerous women have been for me.

Thank you.