

What I'm missing

We've waited 12 years for these final moments. Now in this 13th year, the super unexpected hit us with great force and none of us know what to do or how to process the situation. Standing there, my little five year old self wearing my pink shirt and blue jeans, both from Osh Kosh as all my clothes were, and my beat up Nike shoes I was latching on to my mom's hand because I was petrified of letting go on that first day of Kindergarten. I had one best friend in my preschool class at Wapato Headstart and we ended up going to different school districts. I observed all the other kids laughing, babbling, and running around the classroom already in their friend groups and it terrified me even more. It was hard enough to be brave enough to make one friend now I had to start all over and I was scared I wasn't going to make any friends. Little did I know that I'd end up spending the next 12 years making the most fun, crazy, and wild memories with these kids that I knew nothing about, and little did we know that those memorable 12 years would get cut short right as we reach the home stretch. Now I'm petrified of letting go of my high school life and friends.

I went home on Thursday, March 12, 2020 feeling refreshed. We just ended our second trimester and we had a three day weekend and would return on Monday with a clean slate, all A grades, and no homework. Or so we thought. That weekend was chaotic, Tolo was canceled, schools shut down, and store shelves were cleared within a day or two. No chance to let the final days of high school sink in, no chance to make those final memories with our childhood friends, and no chance to say our "see ya later's" to our favorite teachers, staff, and rez dogs of course. For some people this isn't that bad, it's like an extra long vacation, but for other people like me it's a rude goodbye. I love school, I love going to school every day and saying "hi" to classmates

as I walk by them, I love seeing my four best friends in class and at lunch, I love seeing my teachers and I love learning. For me this was especially hard to process because I'm a memory hoarder and it's hard to stay happy and make jokes every five minutes when there's no one there to laugh with.

Ever since the notice that school will be out for the rest of the academic year I've seen multiple posts and memes using the class of 2020 as the subject, most being that people feel bad for us and some being funny relatable ones that bring a little light to the feelings we have and then there are the few negative ones. I myself felt selfish for feeling bad for myself. I thought 'it's just senior year' but now I think 'no, these were supposed to be the last best memories that I remember for a long time with my childhood friends' I shouldn't feel bad about feeling sad for myself. I saw a specific post replying to a 2020 seniors post regarding "losing time" that said "it's not that deep, get over it." I remember reading it as my eyes became just a little glossy and thinking how can someone be so ignorant. They were able to have their "lasts" and they had time to prepare for the new absence that is high school. This person got the full traditional high school experience that my class will never get to experience, ever and it's not fair. We've waited and did the same, or more work for 13 long years just like they did but they got rewarded for it while we got stripped from it.

We fundraised just as much if not more than the classes before us because we wanted to have the best senior trip together, relaxing and not stressing. We had Tolo dance dates ready to go out and eat at the restaurant we love most, and we were ready to waste all of our energy laughing and dancing ironically to "Time of our Lives." We had our senior skip day planned to meet up at a park and have breakfast or realistically probably lunch, I mean we are teens, then go

swimming in a lake while goofing around and listening to “Brooke and Jubal” on the 106.5 radio station. To end the day we’d kickback around a bonfire and reminisce on the fun and more importantly the embarrassing memories throughout all 13 years. We had reasonable and harmless senior prank ideas saved in our gallery from spending at least an hour searching Pinterest for the best ones. My personal favorite was to print out a screenshot of that time Mr. Espindola slipped on ice and plaster that picture all over the school. We had our never before seen outfits specifically for senior pictures paired with the best locations Yakima has to offer designed in our heads already. We had classes picked to end the year with. We had spring sports to attend. We eyed beautiful dresses and pictured ourselves taking the never broken traditional awkward prom pictures for the “last dance.” We marked the days passing by until graduation with June 4th just in sight. We daydreamt about graduation and how it felt with all eyes on us. And we sat with long faces as it slipped through our hands.

Sports or any physical activity for that matter is a huge part of who I am, and many of my friends too. I’m a three sport athlete all year round. This spring I was ready to work harder than I ever have before to get back to Eastern Washington University for the 2B state tournament in the 2 mile for my third year. I saved a spot on my letterman jacket for this specific 2020 state track and field patch that would be the very last addition before it was complete. On my left sleeve right below my 2017 and 2019 state patches, without the 2018 patch, due to my impulsive decision to try softball Sophomore year, it was a perfect location. I was ready to run and I was ready for the burn in my stomach from the Hot Cheetos and Redbull diet I’d acquired over the two week break from sports. I wanted to push myself all season and not sell myself short in practice. I wanted to go out with a bang knowing I did what I could to be the best runner I could

be. Track is usually my most memorable sports season and although I was determined to run my little heart out, most of all I just wanted to make more everlasting memories.

The most important thing I will miss out on, is high school graduation. I've attended a good amount of graduations here and last year I remember sitting with my friends on the old wood bleachers and saying "I can't believe that's going to be us a year from now." I remember watching each class pass out their roses to their closest friends and relatives as their baby pictures and elementary days are on display for all to see. It's like a flashback and a final goodbye to their high school life chapter. This is the biggest struggle for myself to deal with. I always admired watching grads hand out their roses every year. I was always thinking and planning on who I was going to give mine to because to me it means a lot to get a rose. I think it symbolizes appreciation in the best way possible. I just really wanted to have the opportunity to not only say it in words but to present it in this way. I wanted that. I hate hearing about alternative graduation plans because for once I wanted to be like everyone else. I wanted to have the traditional graduation ceremony with all of our families packed into that hot gym. I wanted the spotlight on us. I wanted all the families to see us and for us to celebrate one last time together. I wanted that.

Having to finish a full tri-mester online is a little frustrating. I would have preferred to learn in person but it's cool. I could say how I miss learning in class but honestly that just isn't it. What I miss, is the bond, the relationships built with teachers, and classmates. Finishing required classes online isn't the end of the world, but it is the end of something great. There's a lot that I miss. Starting with the teachers, I miss Mrs. Sanchez and the way she kept people on their toes, I miss Mr. Berry and his dry humor comebacks, I miss Ms. Owen and her respectable high

tolerance for our noisy class, and I miss Mr. Sheppard and his signature fists bumps and funny dances. For my classmates I miss the connection. I could be in any class sitting by anybody and we'd find something to talk about. I miss the bickering back and forth about something silly that has no correlation to what we're learning about in class. I miss the ongoing jokes that go on for what seems like an eternity because we just can't seem to let any joke die too soon, even when it's bad.

I've never felt so strongly about something. So many different emotions. Sad, mad, upset, relieved, stressed, and lonely at times. It really is a rollercoaster depending on the day. I'm holding on to the last bit of high school that I can by attending the Friday Night Lights at 8:20 pm, participating in Pep Club's virtual activities on instagram, and joining zoom calls when I can. This whole pandemic is scary but I'm holding on because I'm petrified of letting go but it's almost time for my new chapter. My final message to anyone in high school is to enjoy it while you can because you never know when it will end.