

**Dakota Indian Foundation**  
**2026 Spring New Scholarship Recipients**



**Yolanda**

I am currently pursuing a degree in Human Services and am on track to graduate in August 2026. This course of study is very important to me, as it will equip me with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a positive impact in the community. While I am eager to complete my education, I am facing some financial challenges. Nevertheless, I am determined to achieve my goals and am actively seeking alternative sources of financial support. These past 2 semesters I've been trying my best and got all A's to try and get back on track but hard to do with a full time job for the Chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. I am a mother of 5 whom I'm trying to be a good role model for. I'm also on the Suicide Task Force which is volunteering so I'm trying to use my education well, helping others.



**Brenda**

I am a dedicated Dakota Sioux Woman pursuing my degree to better serve and help my people. This scholarship will help me with my tuition and support my daily needs. I raise my son and support my daughter who is attending United Tribes Technical College also. My traditional values will help me return home with the skills and knowledge to strengthen my tribe and ways to create a positive change and to promote education. Financial assistance will help with constant expense like, gas, housing, food, and other basic living cost.



**Jesse**



**Ronessa**

I am a dedicated student-athlete majoring in elementary education with plans to transfer to HASKELL Indian Nations University to continue my studies and basketball career. I love working with children and hope to become a teacher and principal. Financial assistance will support education, training and daily needs as I pursue my goals

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#### **Adele**

I am a hardworking student, who achieved being on the vice presidents honor roll list for two semesters and the previous semester I made it on the presidents honor roll list for having a 4.0 GPA for the 2025 fall semester. My goal is find a job that I will love, so I choose general studies, to get a wide variety of different options. I plan to continue my education after I achieve my associate degree. I am a full time mother, so most of my time for extracurricular activities isn't an option. I am in need of financial assistance to achieve my last semester for my associate degree.



#### **Spencer**

As a 22-year-old college student living on my own, there are many finances that I have to account for. I have my own apartment, vehicle, wi-fi, insurance, and many other unforeseen bills come up. This can add a great deal of additional stress to someone in a demanding degree program, paying for college. I have always had a passion for helping people and worked for five years as a CNA before college. I've never felt more motivated and in the right place in my life. My plans after obtaining my degree are to work with a travel agency and go around the country doing what I love. This scholarship would help tremendously in relieving some of my financial burden. I want to be able to focus more on my schoolwork and not have to work as much due to my demanding workload this upcoming semester.



#### **Naomi**

I am a student and historian apprentice at NHSC. I am also a member of the NAS honors cohort and made it onto the presidents list last semester. I plan to pursue a career in culture and language and plan to teach in the future. I enjoy attended other cultural community events such as buffalo butcherings, story tellings, language work shops and traditional food and medicine classes.



#### **Phoebe**

For this scholarship, I feel as though I am most qualified due to my intense dedication to my career and academic choice of interest, and my extreme work ethic. My educational interest is in environmental science, where I would like to pursue a career working toward more sustainable ways for creating and conserving energy. I would also like to use this degree to go back on Native American Reservations, and help in the best way that I can to make our sacred lands thrive again. With this scholarship, I would be able to focus more on school and let go of one of these jobs. I work over 30 hours a week on top of being enrolled in 17 credit hours at the University of Oklahoma. This scholarship would help me tremendously to have more time for school, and less stress about financial burdens.



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### Winter

Growing up on the Crow Creek Reservation, I experienced firsthand the challenges of accessing proper dental care. When I was around ten years old, I had an accident that severely damaged my front adult tooth, and it couldn't be saved. Because our local dental clinic lacked the resources to treat it, I had to travel over 150 miles just to receive care. The emotional toll of dealing with dental pain and the bullying I faced for not having a front tooth at such a young age was very difficult. However, the kindness and encouragement I received from those who helped me through this experience left a lasting impression. It was during this time that I first felt inspired to pursue a career in dentistry, not only because of the care I received but also because I wanted to one day be that source of support and healing for others. Beyond my education, I also see this journey as a way to be a role model for Native youth. By sharing my story and experiences, I hope to inspire them to pursue their own goals.



### Laci

My ultimate career goal is to earn a degree in Exercise Science and become a certified athletic trainer so I can return home and serve my community college. I want to work closely with student athletes to help prevent injuries, guide safe recovery, and encourage lifelong physical and mental wellness. This goal is personal because it allows me to give back to my community and represent Indigenous people in health and athletic professions. Being awarded this scholarship would greatly have a hand in getting me closer to my end goal in which I'm grateful to have the opportunity to apply, your generosity is not overlooked.



### Sophia

Anpetu waste/ Good day, My name is Sophia (Phia) Strongheart-Lopez. I am from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and have the pleasure of attending South Dakota State University. I am currently studying in the College of Communication and Journalism and minoring in American Indian and Indigenous Studies. I am also working towards receiving my Oceti Sakowin Language Certificate and have been studying both Lakota and Dakota for two years now. I have immersed myself in the wonderful community at SDSU. I take part in the American Indian Student Association (AISA) and AISES Advancing Indigenous People in STEM Club. I am a committee member for the annual SDSU Wacipi/ Powwow as well. Once I finish my degree I want to work towards a job that will let me empower Native voices.



### Nikiah

My educational journey reflects resilience, commitment, and a deep desire to build a meaningful future for myself, my daughter, and my community. As a first generation college student who earned a high school equivalency diploma, I have had to navigate higher education without a roadmap. Every step I've taken has required determination, discipline, and a willingness to overcome obstacles. These experiences have shaped my academic interests and strengthened my commitment to completing my degree in General Studies and continuing on to nursing school. My career goal is to become a registered nurse and eventually work in a healthcare setting that serves Native communities. My long-term vision includes working in Tribal health programs or Native-serving organizations where I can contribute to improving health outcomes and supporting the well being of Indigenous people.

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**RaeAunna**

Hello! My name is RaeAunna. I am hoping to receive this scholarship to help me out financially. Art is expensive, sadly and it really helps to get the money needed for these supplies and programs for my degree. It also helps me out for essential needs during the school year as well. I really have a passion in wanting to become a graphic designer as art has always been my outlet in life. With the financial help you can really help me make a career out of this outlet.



**Michael**

My finances are currently spread thin. As a single parent, I'm putting myself and my 18-year-old son through college. We're both full-time. My 17-year-old son will also be in college full-time in the fall of 2026. I'm trying to juggle living expenses and set them up for adulthood with vehicles so that they can get to work. It's a lot all at once. Even though all three of us work, it feels like we're just treading water financially. I'm nearing completion of my B.A. in Lakota Studies and hope to graduate by next summer so I can begin reinvesting my education in my community. I'll seek employment in a community development or instructional position on the Rosebud Reservation, where many family members live. Any assistance that you might provide would be received with the utmost gratitude, and with a sense of obligation on my part to "pay it forward."



**Alyssa**

I am pursuing an associate degree in the Administrative Office Specialist Program at Mitchell Technical College, with an anticipated graduation date of Spring 2027. My current role as Office Manager for the Chamberlain Oacoma Chamber of Commerce has shown me how much I enjoy administrative work and motivated me to formalize my skills through higher education. After earning my degree, I plan to continue in the administrative field, advancing in my career and applying the skills I have developed to improve workplace efficiency and support my community. Returning to college after dropping out has been a humbling and motivating experience, and I want to set an example for my daughter and younger relatives that it is never too late to start over and follow your passion. Thank you for your consideration and for supporting students like me who are working hard to create a better future.



**Victoria**

I am applying for this scholarship to support my continued education. I am a motivated and hardworking student who values education as a pathway to personal growth, stability, and the ability to give back to my community. I am focused on developing the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in my chosen field and build a meaningful career. My academic experiences have strengthened my time-management, communication, and problem-solving skills, and I am committed to staying engaged and putting forth my best effort in my coursework. Financial assistance is important to me, as balancing school, work, and personal responsibilities can be challenging. This scholarship would allow me to focus more fully on my education while working toward my long-term goals. I am grateful for the opportunity to apply and appreciate your consideration.



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#### **Mahpiya Win**

I am a senior pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (K-8th), currently enrolled in my courses, including Methods of Teaching. I hold two associate degrees, one in Lakota History and Culture and another in Arts and Science, and I aspire to pursue a Master's in Law in August 2026. I am a single parent diligently managing student loan repayments and saving for my Master's program. I am confident that furthering my education will significantly improve our lives, and I am deeply grateful for any financial help that can support a college student like myself. I aspire to contribute to similar initiatives in the future, giving back to the community that has supported my journey as a single mother, student, and employee.



#### **Betheny**

My name is Bethany Yankton, and I am enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe in North Dakota. My education is very important to me, and I hope to graduate sooner than I expect to then apply for grad school. I hope I stay committed to this field and strengthen my skills. I plan to continue working for my Bachelor of Business Administration. This scholarship will allow me to focus on achieving my academic and professional work. This will help give the foundation to help achieve my goals in life. Receiving this scholarship would benefit many ways such as my responsibilities, reduce the financial burden, give me hope, and allow me to give me more motivation and dedication to my study time. I have always been a go getter in life because growing up, I didn't have much. I didn't have parents to depend on, so I believe in breaking generational cycles. I've been committed to continuing my education and helping myself work towards becoming a impactful in my field and community. This scholarship would support me in every aspect of in achieving education.



#### **Sissy**

Mitakuyapi! Let me introduce myself; My name is Sissy Ray, and I am currently enrolled at Sinte Gleska University and Ihanktonwan Community College. I am an honor student in the Human Services program working towards creating healing spaces that are culturally grounded and trauma-informed, especially for Native youth and families. Along with school, I have the pleasure of working full-time as a Certified Food Protection Manager and leading the dietary department at a nursing home. This role has taught me a lot about leadership and caring for people with compassion and dignity. My long-term goal is to build a nonprofit farm that offers Equine Therapy, Art Therapy, and agricultural learning for adolescents recovering from generational trauma. This vision comes from the creator, and I believe that healing grows when culture, land, and compassion can come together.