



**Native Women's
Association of Canada**

*Look to a career in
health for inspiration
and success!*

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women within First Nation, Métis and Canadian societies.

Much like a "Grandmother's Lodge", we as aunties, mothers, sisters, brothers and relatives collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Native ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to us by the Creator.

The Native Women's Association of Canada

www.nwac-hq.org

Our health care workforce is facing a shortage and our health care system needs to change to improve the way care is given to First Nation, Métis and Inuit people. In response, the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative (AHHRI) was developed. NWAC is the only National Aboriginal Organization solely responsible for representing Aboriginal women and is providing this booklet with stories and strategies from women just like you. We all need inspiration sometimes.



“Health is an ongoing way of living that includes and involves Spirit, emotion, mental, physical, and intellectual”

Anonymous



Focusing on your successes will encourage greater achievements in the future.

Many women have children and the thought of going to

school has to include housing and childcare.

Family responsibilities top the reasons Aboriginal people don't complete post secondary studies.

2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS)

Whether you are upgrading your high school, taking one course or attending full-time, most schools have services for housing and daycare. Long-distance learning is another option.

Some schools have a meeting area or centre just for Aboriginal students. For example, Indigenous Studies at Trent University is located in the First People's House of Learning Enweying Building. As a student of Trent University, you can access the many offered services, such as counselling and mentoring, even if you are not in the Indigenous Studies program.

www.trentu.ca/academic/nativestudies

When asked to identify a health care profession, people often say doctor or nurse.

What about other jobs in health care?
Have you thought about these other jobs?

Acupuncturist, Addiction Counsellor, Audiologist, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Chiropractor, Clerk, Clinical Manager, Community Health Representative, Dentist, Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist, Dietician, Instrument Technician, Lactation Consultant, Laboratory Technologist, Medical Physicist, Medical Researcher, Midwife, MRI Technologist, Occupational Therapist, Optician, Paramedic, Pharmacist, Phlebotomist, Physiotherapist, Psychologist, Radiation Technologist, Receptionist, Respiratory Therapist, Scientific Researcher, Speech Language, Social Work, Pathologist, Ultrasonographer.



“As a First Nations person of Canada I feel I have a responsibility to contribute to the wellness of our people and to help build a brighter future for those who will follow me”

Jarita



By successfully attending a post secondary institution, you are giving hope to those who may think it is impossible to achieve a degree. It is important to remember that your actions can inspire and shape the lives of those around you. If you are seen, you are a role model.

School can be an intimidating & scary thought. If you are a youth, you probably have many pressures coming at you from all directions in your life: family, friends & co-workers. These people have influence in your life and impact the decisions you make. While it may seem like everyone has a different opinion of what you could do with your life, the most important thing to remember is that you should be making choices that are positive for yourself.



“Be healthy for yourself.”

Farren



*“Your health is your most
precious gift.”*

Jane



As First Nations, Inuit & Métis people, it is important to recognize that our cultures are quickly diminishing and the need for cultural sustainability is important now and for the future. There are ways we can combine traditional teachings with modern medicine and you have the ability to be involved in that process!



“The health care profession is severely short of First Nations. There are abundant career choices once you have a health degree. First Nations need to take leadership roles in the health field.”

Donna



What is success? Is it going to work every day and getting paid? Is it finding personal satisfaction in your work and loving what you do? Is it making a lot of money? Is it helping your community? Is it going to school and becoming a teacher or a professor? Each person thinks about success differently.

How do you define success? Is it:

-having a goal?

-finishing what you start?



-being a good person?

“Success is you!!”

-making contributions to your family and community?

Sherri

-living a healthy life?



-doing the right things for the right reason?

-getting up one more time than you fall down?

-being honest and dependable?

*The only person who can define
your success is you!*

What makes you successful?

Vanessa, student

Being passionate about wanting to learn about the history of my community and traditions. Now, I am learning how to speak my own language, learning to speak Carrier language. I spoke my language when I was younger but I took it for granted. Now I take my passion for language with me. Other Aboriginal women inspire me, so amazing women are.

Linda, student

Meeting powerful women helps me feel successful. I am learning about my culture and I am proud of where I am. We are trying to make a difference. I am proud of being Aboriginal.

Karen, student

My biggest success would be to have the opportunity to pursue my dream to be a Registered Nurse. My greatest success would be to raise my son with traditional Native values and raising him in a home filled with love and respect.



“I am successful as my mother’s daughter”

Lindsey



Monica, student

Monica has been doing a lot! She got her driver’s licence at age 31, graduated from grade 12 at 32 and is now in her second year as a nursing student at 34. She is a single mom and is a good mom to her 12 year old. As a mentor, she frequently speaks to Basic Education students at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology. What an amazing role model!

When asked what her success is, Monica said: “Taking ownership of my life. Making my own happiness and fighting for what I believe in.”

Sherri

Sherri is a dental hygienist living in northern Saskatchewan. She defines her success as being comfortable in every area of her life: work, family, friends, finances, education, her personal pride and confidence, life in general.



“Stay in school and try your best.”

Cheryl



Anonymous

My success always used to be based on how many awards I received or how many compliments I got. But now I think that my success is how much I get done in my young years. I have done so much.

Jackie

Jackie is raising her two daughters and working on her Master's degree in Social Work. Her success is being on a healing journey from the ripple effects of Residential School Syndrome as both her parents went to residential school. Jackie links her successes with bringing traditional culture back into her family's life. Kyla, one of her daughters, is a proud daughter and says that her mom helps struggling people. What a positive role model for Kyla!

Anonymous

My successes are maintaining sobriety, continuing with education after quitting high school, completing my post-secondary education and encouraging others to continue with their educational pursuits. Maintaining my commitment not only to work and education but to family and community as well is also my success. But my biggest successes are my three boys as they keep me grounded and give me purpose.

I work in a job I love so it's not "work". I volunteer in my community to create a healthy community for my kids and I raise my boys to know the value of their family as they will always be there!

Robyn is a single mom with 3 daughters. She is in an ACCESS program at the First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan. After becoming a registered nurse, she is setting her career sights on becoming a nurse practitioner.

“Learn from your mistakes and your downfalls. Realize that in the end, everything usually turns out or works out.”

Sherri

Marney: Nurse supervisor for a home and community programme

When Marney was in grade 5, Diane, a family friend had a profound influence on her future. Marney wasn't doing well in school and almost failed. Diane sat down with her and her younger sister and made a plan to work hard in school. Diane also suggested that they become either a nurse or a teacher and talked about how this could be achieved.

After finishing high school, one of Marney's cousins came to live with her. This cousin was a nurse. Things clicked and Marney decided to go to college to become a Registered Practical Nurse. Later, she continued her education to become a Registered Nurse. Today, Registered Nurses need a university degree: Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN).

p.s. her younger sister became a teacher!

Sharon:

I always wanted to be a nurse, ever since I was a little girl. However, I dropped out of school at a young age to get married. I had 5 children. When I was in my 30s, I decided to go back to school. While I was on maternity leave from work, I took high school classes and received my grade 12. I then went on to university to receive my Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

However, my biggest success is that my two twin daughters (age 19) are now second year nursing students. I am confident that they will complete their studies and receive their degrees in nursing. They are respectful, motivated and intelligent young ladies.

Balance is the key to healthy living.

If you are interested in a job related to health care, there are many options. Not everyone wants to go to university for a four year degree. You don't have to become a neuroscientist to contribute to the health of Aboriginal people!

Kelly and *Phoebe* both feel as though the 4 years they would need to contribute to a BA programme is too much time to dedicate. They also both feel daunted by having the complete so many science courses but this doesn't mean they can't contribute to the health field.

Both of these women are able to become medical administrators, through this job they will be helping to ease the workload on many other health professionals, ensuring they can spend as much time as they need with you and your family, the clients!

Cheryl's dream job is to become a youth support worker. Currently, she is in a medical administrative program.

Connie: a paramedic's student.

She has three kids and is going to school for herself, her kids and her community.

Vicki is an Elder in Saskatchewan. She is proud that her daughters are university educated but "it was tough to get them going!"

"I think people get scared at the thought of applying for post-secondary education; it's scary to try something new."

Research all of your options.

Anonymous

Every chance I get, I share my experiences in education. My first educational experiences as a young person effected me in a negative way that turned me off from school growing up. I eventually dropped out in grade 9 and didn't return to school until I was 19 and pregnant with my first child. I know many people that can relate to this similar experience in their own lives. I knew I had to go to school because I didn't want to continue the cycle of welfare of my own family. I needed education. It was only when I went to university that I had a positive experience about my education because I got to choose what I want to learn about history and its effects on our people, social justice, religion and politics. I love school!

Marlene

Marlene is a member of the Flying Dust First Nation in Meadow Lake and a survivor of the residential school. She is a fluent Cree speaker and very proud of her heritage. Marlene received her grade 12 education from the College of New Caledonia and continued on to earn a bachelor of Social Work and Human Justice from the University of Regina, while raising her twin daughters as a single parent. She is an Aboriginal Liaison Officer at St. Mary High School in Prince Albert, dedicating her time and energy to ensure that Aboriginal students are not only academically successful but involved in cultural activities.

In her spare time, Marlene is active in the community promoting cultural opportunities for First Nations women and families. Marlene is a determined woman who is not afraid of hard work and that is evident in the volunteer activities she does in addition to her paid employment. Marlene has been the driving force behind many organizations including *PA Women of the Earth Inc* and *Youth of the Earth*.

Marlene believes her greatest accomplishment has been the birth of her twin daughters, Alana and Ali, who have just entered their first year of university.

In addition to successfully raising two young girls, Marlene has been the formal caregiver for her three year old nephew, Cashton, who is the man of the house and keeps everyone in line. Despite her hectic schedule, Marlene still finds time to take care of herself and is a regular at the bingo halls where she volunteers and spends her leisure time.

I am reminded every day to be grateful for my gifts and my job keeps me humble. I am inspired by the creator, my people, my role models and myself.



“As an Aboriginal woman, I feel it is my responsibility to work for my people and advocate for excellence in health care service.”

Donna



Zeynep

Becoming a dental hygienist was not Zeynep's first choice for a career in health. Her dad wanted her to become a geriatric nurse so she could look after him but she couldn't imagine working in that field. After talking with her mother-in-law, who is a dental assistant, she decided to do the research and looked into becoming a dental hygienist. She didn't have the science pre-requisites so took the courses. College was tough, she was busy and had long hours. Zeynep remembers the teacher who was aware of the Aboriginal students in her class and tried to incorporate the medicine wheel into general discussion.

Zeynep took her goals seriously and worked to complete her education. Through her coursework, she was able to see the link between oral health and overall health. She also learned the importance of good management and interpersonal skills.

There are some things that she wished she knew about:

- The time it takes to become registered with your professional organization once graduating from school
- The national exam and the cost of the exam
- The registration process for her profession
- The cost of liability insurance

How do you get inspired?

For inspiration, Marcia follows the Red Road and prays to the Creator.

Margaret looks to those ahead of her, the Elders and those behind her, the youth. The circle of life keeps Margaret inspired to continue working hard in her education.

Teaching her Maliseet language to children motivated Christine. Communicating in her first language strengthened community ties and continued the history of her people.

Many of the people I meet already have self-esteem issues and this is a barrier that affects their employment prospects. I provide encouragement by engaging clients to acknowledge their own skills and achievements to empower themselves to be positive and proud of their skills in gaining employment.

Roberta: a PhD student

Roberta didn't have the best marks when she graduated from high school and she was a single parent of one child. A few years later, Roberta took a course to become a clerk/typist. She loved the course, the learning atmosphere and finished as the top student!

After having 3 more children, a family friend "saw something in me" who went on to become her mentor. But Roberta thought: "I am too dumb" and that "university is beyond my reach intellectually". But her mentor continued to encourage her and suggested a specific university program. Roberta ended up completing that degree and a master's degree too!

Today, Roberta is completing her PhD. She studies violence and its relationship on the health of Aboriginal women.

*I have been inspired by my
mother and my grandmother.*

When asked, Aboriginal women identified four areas of support which would help them with school:

Academic support

- Tutoring
- Orientation
- Mentorship programs
- resources for classes like clinical equipment, laptop, etc.
- help in developing portfolios such as community employment
- awareness of Aboriginal seats in a programme
- support to do practicums within own province/territory
- designated seats for residency programs



The mothers and young children inspire me on a day to day basis. Just to witness their struggles, their will and eagerness to learn a better way of life, one that's filled with our Native culture and heritage.

Jarita



When I consider both the business and my work in counseling, I believe that I have simply been following my instinct to participate in the healing of others as well as Nature/environment and of course, my own health & healing.

Anonymous

I am studying as a full time master's student. Traditional health practices and their potential to be combined with modern methods of healing interests me. Before pursuing interdisciplinary academic studies, I considered a career in nursing and traditional midwifery. I think an amazing program would incorporate Indigenous knowledge with western knowledge and teach these ways to students.

It can be really hard to move to the city, to relocate. It can take time to fit in, to find your place.

Social Support

- networking with other students
- attending conferences
- affiliation with professional and Aboriginal associations
- community-based practicums
- support and assistance once in a job or on a practicum
- encourage life-long learning
- reunions
- Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, MSN
- sharing circle
- gatherings
- family and friends



Believe in yourself.

Honour yourself.



Lindey

Lindey didn't always think of her family as a support tool until she went to University. She was always grateful to learn from other Aboriginal women. She came to realize that she herself needed to learn to bring love and strength to her family in order to bring them together.

Cultural support

- feasting, family encouragement, gatherings
- attend Elder talks, ceremonies, outings with other Aboriginal students
- smudging
- practising your culture
- culturally appropriate courses throughout academic years
- life experiences should be validated and recognized as another learning method and as part of the portfolio
- Aboriginal staff
- teach Aboriginal history
- Elder program
- advocate for a cultural component in the professional associations

Supporting access to culturally sensitive teachings and training is important.

Financial support

- student housing
- child care
- emergency funding
- awareness of financial incentives and awards
- advocacy for funding agencies
- assistance in filing income tax forms

Apply for every scholarship and grant and bursary you are qualified for. Someone has to win the money-why not you?!

Scholarships and bursaries are available for almost every area of study. You can search the internet or ask a counsellor at your school for help. Most applications ask you to tell them about yourself and your goals. Don't be afraid to share who you are and explain your situation. If you are an "A" student, don't be shy about it. If your marks could improve, but you're a hard worker and have responsibilities other than school, share that too.

Jot down a few numbers to get an idea of how much school costs. You might find out that you can afford school after all.

The Cost of School

School Fees

Program Requirements (eg books, stethoscope, lab jacket, safety glasses, instruments)

Rent/Mortgage

Food

Utilities

Phone/Cell phone

Entertainment (eg cable & internet)

Childcare costs

Vehicle expenses/transportation

Other

Total

Income

Personal contributions

Outside contributions

Total

Glossary

Academic adviser: A member of the school who helps and advises students on academic matters.

Add/Drop process: A process at the beginning of a term whereby students can delete and add classes with an instructor's permission without penalty.

Audit: To take a class without receiving credit toward a degree; requires permission.

Bachelor's Degree: an academic degree given by a university for those who complete the undergraduate coursework; also can be called an undergraduate degree or a baccalaureate. Usually takes 4 years full time.

Budget: a list of money spent and money earned; used to plan spending and income

Bursary: money awarded to a student, may or may not be awarded based on marks but demonstrated need; similar to a scholarship.

Campus: The physical location of a college or university; some colleges have a "virtual" campus, meaning that they offer online courses only.

College: a post-secondary school that grants diplomas and certificates, but not degrees.

Core requirements: A list of courses required for completion of the degree; this is different to elective courses.

Curriculum: all of the courses offered by a school/college/university.

Dissertation: Thesis written on an original topic of research, usually presented as one of the final requirements for the doctoral degree(PhD).

Distance Learning: education that takes place away from the campus of the school/college/university; also called distance education.

Dormitories: Housing on the campus of a college or university reserved for students. A typical dormitory would include bedrooms, bathrooms, common rooms, and possibly a cafeteria.

Electives: Courses that students may "elect," or choose, to take for credit toward their intended degree; this is different from core requirements.

Faculty: The members of the teaching staff, and occasionally the administrative staff, of a school. The faculty is responsible for designing and teaching the curriculum.

Fellowship: A study grant of financial assistance usually awarded to a graduate student.

Final exam: An exam taken at the end of a term, encompassing material throughout a course.

Financial aid: A general term that includes all types of money, loans, and work/study programs offered to a student to help pay tuition, fees, and living expenses; this money is paid back by the student.

Full-time student: A student who is enrolled in school with a full course load.

GMAT: Graduate Management Admission Test

Grant: an amount of money that is given to a person

LSAT: Law School Admission Test

Master's Degree: a post graduate degree that given once the master's coursework has been completed. Requires a bachelor's degree prior to beginning a master's program.

MCAT: Medical College Admissions Test

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy; an advanced academic degree; usually requires a master's degree; requires original academic research.

Prerequisite: Program or course that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a program or course.

Registration: a process where students select courses to be taken during their time at school.

Scholarship: money that is given to someone without having to pay it back.

Semester: one of the three time-periods of the school year: spring, summer and winter semesters.

Subject: Course in an academic discipline offered as part of a curriculum of an institution of higher learning.

Syllabus: an outline of the course.

Teaching assistant (TA): usually a student in graduate studies who helps the instructor as a job.

Thesis: A written work containing the results of research on a specific topic prepared by a candidate for a bachelor's or master's degree.

Transcripts: A certified copy given by the school listing the student's educational record.

Tuition: a fee the college or university charges to students to attend their school.

University: a post-secondary school that grants degrees.

Withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution.

So many questions.....

What do I want to do? Where can I find a tutor? Is there an orientation program? Can someone help me? Can I apply for funding? How do I apply? When do I apply? What if I didn't graduate from high school? Are there pre-requisites? Is there long-distance learning? How long is the program? What is a bursary? Is there a co-op program? What is a scholarship? Where do I go to school? How much does school cost? How do I get trained?

I'll never quit even if I fail»

Wanda

