

NEWS RELEASE
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Over 600 Indigenous students share \$2.2M in Awards

VICTORIA – Even during a global pandemic, Alexyss Dieno is working hard to earn a Bachelor of Health Science Degree at Simon Fraser University. She is moving closer to achieving that goal courtesy of a \$3,500 *Indigenous Student Award* she recently received from the Irving K. Barber BC Scholarship Society.

“This award has given me the opportunity to spend less time worrying about how I’m going to pay for my career and to focus on actually studying for it.”

Dienno is one of over 600 BC Indigenous students who will share more than \$2.2 million in awards from the Society in support of their studies at public post-secondary institutions throughout the province. 383 of the recipients are receiving Indigenous Student Awards for the first time this year while 274 have renewed their Awards as they continue their studies.

The Society’s Indigenous Awards program is funded from the returns on an endowment fund established by the Province of British Columbia and ongoing supplementary funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. It was created to assist in removing barriers to higher education for Indigenous peoples. Renewable Awards of \$1,000 to \$5,000 each are issued every year through a competitive process to students studying at all post-secondary levels.

“We know this Awards program makes a real difference in shaping the futures of Indigenous students,” said Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training. *“Every year, these funds help break down barriers for Indigenous students enabling recipients to become active participants in classrooms, in communities and eventually in B.C.’s economy by putting their knowledge and skills to good use.”*

The Indigenous population in British Columbia is growing at more than triple the rate of the non-Indigenous population, with nearly 45% under the age of 25.

“The Society’s Indigenous Awards Program enables and encourages students to pursue their chosen fields of study with a sense of financial security. The fact that the Awards are renewable ensures that students are supported on an ongoing basis as they complete multi-year programs”, said Shirley Kamerling Roberts, the Society’s Board Chair.

The [Irving K Barber BC Scholarship Society](https://www.ikbbc.ca) provides scholarships and awards to students attending public post-secondary institutions throughout the province and internationally. Since its inception, nearly \$23 million has been distributed to B.C. students from its six scholarship and award programs. The Victoria Foundation provides administrative support to the Society.

Editors Please Note: A list of 2020 Indigenous Award recipients (new Awards) along with information about the 2021 Program can be found at: <https://www.ikbbc.ca/indigenous-awards/about-this-award/>

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