

October 30th, 2020

Dear sponsor of the Allan & Gill Gray Foundation,

I am writing to express my gratitude for being a chosen recipient of the Allan & Gill Gray Foundation Awards for Indigenous Students. I am a Métis woman born in Treaty 6 Territory (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan). I currently reside on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples (Vancouver). I have just entered my second year of my Bachelor of Journalism degree at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, where I have achieved the Dean's Honour Roll, write for the student paper, and have just joined the Indigenous Student Council. I hope to go on to graduate school.

I couldn't imagine a better school to be a part of. The word "Kwantlen" means "tireless runner," which also relates to the University's motto: "through tireless effort, knowledge, and understanding." The wolf and salmon are represented in our Coat of Arms. The wolf represents teaching, learning, hunting, and community, and the salmon represents new beginnings. As a three-time University dropout who was allowed a chance to start again after struggling with ADHD, I genuinely believe in the power of community and new beginnings. It is never too late.

As the first in my family to graduate high school and go on to University, I hope to use my voice and life experience to make a difference and tell the stories of those who are less heard. My dream is to work in the publishing industry because books and magazines were places where I sought refuge in my youth. I have a long list of future aspirations, including writing for independent newspapers that practice public-interest journalism such as The Narwhal, IndgiNews, The Discourse, and Ricochet Media. I have recently accepted a managing editor position at a volunteer-ran local arts magazine that focuses on publishing emerging and underrepresented voices.

I am a part of a BIPOC photojournalism mentorship program, where we can be mentored by those already working in the field. And for the last six months have been a part of Métis Nation British Columbia's program My Eco Action where we have the opportunity to learn how to become supporters and advocates in Reconciliation through Métis cultural land-based perspectives. As a born storyteller, I believe that storytelling uses more than words and will continue developing skills across multiple mediums. This award means that I will spend more time focusing on my studies and giving back to my community. I truly honour the Indigenous philosophy of the 4 Rs: respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Thank you again for your generous support. It is truly an honour to be selected.

Kayla MacInnis