

Dear Walmart Canada Indigenous Bursary,

Chimiigwech, thank you so very much for this award. I am so very grateful for this opportunity. I was very worried that I would not be able to pay my tuition this school year. I am currently completing a Post Baccalaureate Post Graduated Diploma in Education in Indigenous Knowledges. I am currently an teacher teaching at an Indigenous school in Winnipeg's north end community. Because of this award, I am able to continue my studies and be an inspiration for the Indigenous youth I currently teach.

Aniin Boozhoo Waabishkaanakwadikwe ndizhnikaaz. Waawaashkeshi ndodem. Saint Laurent, Manitoba nindojiibaa Turtle mountain Ojibwe reserve nindojiibaa . Winnipeg nindaa. My name is Marika Schalla. My Spirit Name is White Cloud Woman and I belong to the Deer Clan. I was born and raised in Winnipeg's North End community. I also spent most of my summers in my home community of Saint Laurent, Manitoba with my grandparents, aunts, uncles and my cousins. My entire family comes from and lives in St. Laurent. We are one of the original families from the 1800s who settled in the village. My roots also come from the Red River Settlement, and Turtle Mountain Reserve in North Dakota. I am a young Metis-Anishinabkwe, educator, curriculum-developer, student, and mother. I am a resilient youth making waves in our Winnipeg community, as well as provincially and nationally. I am a mom to two beautiful gwiiwizensag (boys), Declan and Dawson. I had Declan as a teenager but, never let that stop me. I had Declan a month before I started grade twelve. I started grade twelve four weeks postpartum after having an emergency caesarean section. I went on to graduate that year on-time with honours. That was the start of my incredible education journey to become a teacher and to be a strong positive role model forever for my children. My baby Dawson, he is a miracle after seven years of infertility and many pregnancy losses. I became pregnant with Dawson in December 2019, and he was born just as the pandemic was really taking off. Reflecting on this time, after trying for a baby for so many years and finally being blessed during a pandemic, was difficult to navigate. I am thankful for my husband, Shawn's, support throughout the years. Becoming a dad at the age of sixteen was not easy for him either but, he has always work incredibly hard for our family, and been the most supportive partner. I am quite blessed and along with my sons, my husband, and generations of my ancestors, I wouldn't be who I am today.

Thus far in my education journey, I have achieved a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Education. I am currently earning my Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education in the Indigenous Knowledges Stream. I am studying at the University of Winnipeg and I am in year 2 out of 3 of the program. Due to my academic rigor, I may graduate early from the program. One day I hope to start a Masters in Education in Indigenous Education. With either a focus in Truth and

Reconciliation (Education for Reconciliation) or in Land-Based Education. Both are topics that I have dedicated my learning to in my Post Bacc, and two topics that are very near and dear to my heart. After my Masters in Education, I do plan to hopefully one day complete a PhD in Education. I am so very committed to my studies. In the last three terms of my Post Bacc I have maintained a 4.5 GPA and I achieved the title student of highest distinction for the entirety of my Post Bacc and for the entirety of my Bachelor of Education. Aside from my formal schooling, I also am an Anishinaabemowin language learner. I have been learning on my own either reaching out to different independent language courses and different self-paced books. I am so very dedicated to my education and thank you for believing in me.

Currently, I am a teacher in the Winnipeg School Division (WSD). I teach a grade 1/2 split. I teach my students, throughout all subjects, in both English and Anishinaabemowin. Aside from my classroom, I also run my schools first Truth and Reconciliation Committee. I volunteer my own time for this committee so our school can commit to the TRC's Calls to Action in education. Similarly, I created the Truth and Reconciliation Planning Guides for both K-4 and 5-8 for the entire Winnipeg School Division. This was a true labour of love but, this is such important information that teachers need. Along with the planning guides, I facilitated three Lunch and Learns for teachers to learn even more about truth and reconciliation. This was all through volunteerism. I am also currently a mentor for WSD, as a volunteer. Since 2018, I have led almost 40 various workshops on various Indigenous education topics. Recently, I started my own business – Heartberry Education. My business helps individuals, schools, divisions, organizations, etc. across Canada with Indigenous (Anishinaabe and Red River Metis) education. I have developed curriculum for businesses such as Lets Talk Science, TakingitGlobal, Connected North and Your Voice is Power. Most notably, in early 2022, my first textbook was published – Fireside Chats Teachers Guide Volume 1. I have had a very busy few years (especially during the pandemic and having a baby) but, this is such important work that I do not want to stop.

My goal is to become an Administrator in my division. I hope one day to become the first Metis-Anishinaabe Chief Superintendent. I would also consider becoming a professor teaching about Indigenous education one day. I also strive for becoming a curriculum developer one day for the province of Manitoba. I have so many big dreams that denote serious change in our education systems.

Why I need this Award:

I am in need of this award because, life has been so difficult sometimes we are struggling to get to weeks end. Even though I work as a teacher and have my business, money is super tight. Daycare alone is \$1100 a month for both my children. I also have my mortgage, taxes, insurances, and utilities. Along with groceries and odds and ends that come along with having a family. My youngest has

a severe dairy allergy so, our groceries had to change and also skyrocket. With inflation, we are scraping our cupboards to eat. I need to award so, I can continue University. So, I can get my post graduate diploma and go on to more so, I can help enact the real change I want to see in our school systems and our community for truth, reconciliation and a better tomorrow for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Chimiigwech, Thank you so very much, Walmart Canada Indigenous Bursary, for the generous support and believing in Indigenous youth like myself. My children and I are so very grateful for your kindness.

Giga-waabamin minaawaa,

Marika Schalla, *Waabishkaanakwadiwe (White Cloud Woman)*