

Morongo Awards \$40,000 in College Scholarships to Native American Students

Four Native American students from across California have each received a \$10,000 scholarship from the Morongo Band of Mission Indians near Palm Springs as part of the 14th Annual Rodney T. Mathews Jr. Scholarship program.

“The Rodney T. Mathews Jr. Scholarship at Morongo was created to reverse the trends that have left Native Americans as the most underrepresented group in colleges and universities,” Morongo Tribal Chairman Robert Martin said. “We are happy to be supporting each of this year’s deserving recipients in attaining the education and skills they need to pursue their goals and improve their tribal communities.”

Since launching the program, Morongo has provided \$470,000 in scholarships to 49 Native American students seeking to secure a college or post-graduate degree. The scholarship program is unique in that it is open to enrolled members of any of the more than 100 federally recognized tribes in California. The 2018 recipients are:



Deserea Langley of Susanville Indian Rancheria attends UC Davis where she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Native American Studies. Her doctoral research will be the first comprehensive history of the Susanville Indian Rancheria and the implementation of the Dawes Act in Northern California. She plans to be an Education Counselor at a tribal college or state university to help

educate future leaders.

“I’m so thankful for tribal communities like Morongo supporting student success,” Langley said. “It is important to have educated Native Americans for the future of our culture, communities and tribal governments.”



Donald Salcedo of the Quechan Indian Tribe attends UCLA and is working on a Bachelor of Arts in American Indian Studies. He plans to continue his education with an advanced degree in Social Work to assist in tribal communities. Salcedo worked in tribal social services and mental health for eight years. He is the American Indian Student Association President

at UCLA and a board member of the California Indian Basketweavers Association.

“I felt so lucky and blessed to have received this scholarship from Morongo, especially since I was having a hard time financially,” Salcedo said. “As a non-traditional and first-generation student, I didn’t know I had so much support to go to school. It felt like someone believed in me.”



Andres Ramos of the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians is pursuing a B.S. in Biochemistry at Northern Arizona University. Following graduation, he plans to attend pharmacy school to obtain a Doctor of Pharmacy. His goal is to be a pharmacist on his reservation to help his community where he noticed a shortage of medical personnel while growing up.

“Thanks to the scholarship from Morongo, I’ll now be able to volunteer more of my time to Indian health clinics since I won’t have to spend as much time working to pay for school,” Andres said.



Shayleena Britton of the Round Valley Indian Tribe is working towards her B.A. in 3D Animation at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. Britton wants to use her animation and media skills to make films that preserve Native languages and bring tribal culture to others, while also inspiring native youth to go to college.

She received a grant through Running Strong for Native American Youth Dreamstarter to be an Ambassador for the Wailaki language. She manages a Facebook page titled “Wailaki Kunnes Bakang Ishjii Naagai” and is creating a website with an accessible Wailaki dictionary.

“I am very thankful and so happy to have received this scholarship from Morongo,” Britton said. “San Francisco is such a different place from the small town I grew up in, but I love the city, my friends, and my classes.”

American Indians and Alaskan Natives comprise less than 1% of the nation’s college students, the lowest college enrollment rate of any ethnic group, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Similarly, only 15% of American Indians hold bachelor’s degrees, fewer than any ethnic group in the U.S., according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The scholarship program honors the late Rodney T. Mathews Jr., a Morongo tribal member and Hastings Law School graduate who passed away in 2004 after serving as a judge pro tem for more than a decade.

Scholarship applicants are considered based on their academic success and community service. Candidates must be full-time students at an accredited college or university; complete 60 hours with a designated California Indian agency; and be actively involved in the Native American community. ♣

For more information about the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, visit www.morongonation.org.