

Native Student Professional Development Program

2025 Report



A COLLABORATION:



**THE
WILDLIFE
SOCIETY**





Thank you to our 2025 Program Coordinators!

Native Student Professional Development Program



20+

We received 21 applications in 2025



>48%

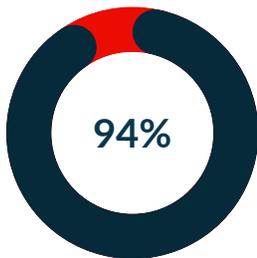
Nearly half of applicants are pursuing advanced degrees



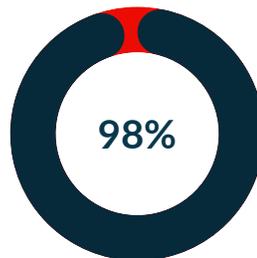
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Participants were from ten different Native American Tribes

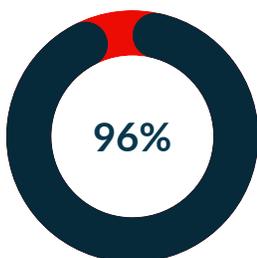
2025 Participant Results:



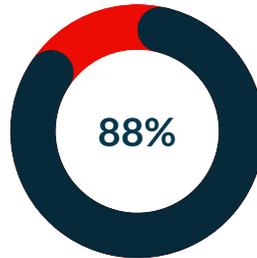
Overall Program Satisfaction



Satisfaction of Mentorship



Satisfaction of Application Process



Improvement of Professional Skills

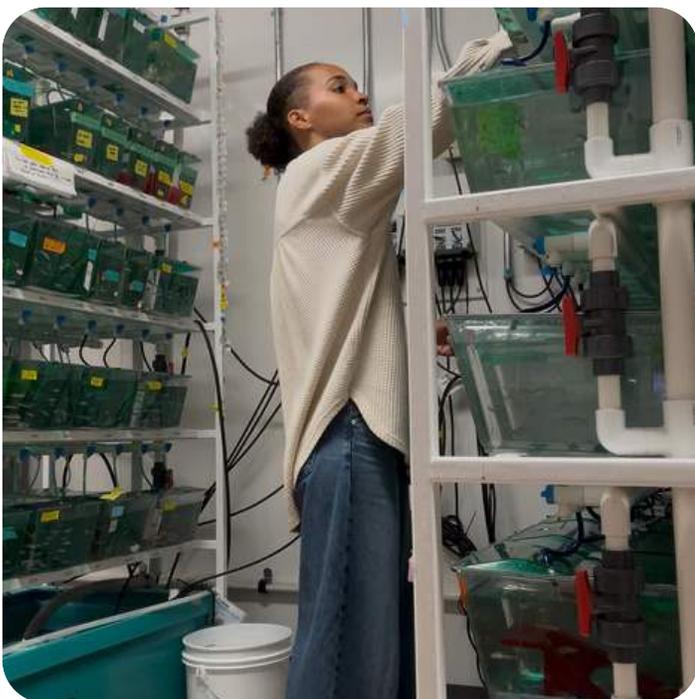
2025 Native Student Professional Development Program



Kahlan McDonald

Kahlan McDonald is an Undergraduate student at The King's University in Edmonton, studying Psychology and Biology. As a fourth-year Métis student pursuing a Bachelor of Science, she is a current intern at I-STEAM, an Indigenous-focused initiative that creates pathways for students to engage in scientific research. Through I-STEAM, she has been placed at the University of Alberta under the guidance of the Tierney Lab, where she is currently studying the effects of methane exposure on Zebrafish development and behaviour.

"I believe that this program was beneficial to me in understanding my pathways going into the professional field. I continue to have high aspirations, and I am more confident in my ability to succeed after talking with my peers and the support system present throughout the conference. Being given the opportunity to connect with native people from both my own country and the United States was very enlightening. Hearing different viewpoints and stories from a range of people made me feel more welcomed and appreciated within my culture."



Zoe Hutcherson

Zoe Hutcherson, Biology Graduate Student at Eastern New Mexico University, proud descendant of Apache, Cherokee, and Chickasaw ancestry.

“The Native Student Professional Development Program greatly strengthened my professional goals by providing the tools, guidance, and confidence I needed to take the next steps in my academic journey. Through its workshops, panels, and mentoring opportunities, I learned how to better navigate the process of applying to graduate school, seek out research opportunities, and develop professional relationships that align with my long-term career in science and education.”



The program was incredibly well-balanced and thoughtfully designed. There were numerous opportunities for networking, attending sessions that aligned with my specific interests and career goals, and engaging in events that fostered both professional and personal growth. The organization and care that went into ensuring each participant had meaningful experiences were truly impressive. Equally important, it strengthened my confidence in my own voice and experiences. Hearing from Native professionals who have succeeded in research, policy, and education reminded me that there is space for me in these fields - and that my cultural perspective is a strength, not a limitation. I left the program with a renewed sense of motivation and belonging.”

Since returning to Eastern New Mexico University, I have been sharing what I learned with my peers - encouraging them to pursue opportunities, guiding them on professional development, and advocating for greater representation in science. I have additionally brought this to my students, as I am currently a graduate instructor at the university. This program enhanced my path and empowered me to help others find theirs as well. It truly shaped how I see my future and how I hope to contribute to my community and the broader scientific world.”

Stelle Scarce

Stelle Scarce is studying for a Master's in Environment, Natural Resources and Society and is a Distinguished Graduate Scholar in their master's program at the University of Wyoming. Scarce is from the Cherokee Nation. This was her second year in the program, and she is interested in becoming a program coordinator in the future.

"The NSPD program is a unique space that supports both indigeneity and academic scholarship in ways that few programs do. The program bridges disciplines, geographies, and cultures to make lasting personal and professional connections for Native scientists.

I am grateful for the NSPD program and the people who make it possible. The coordinators and other participants are an inspiration for Native scientists everywhere. Through these mentors and peers, I have gained invaluable insight into navigating the field of wildlife science as a Native professional.

The NSPD program connected me to The Wildlife Society, The Native American Fish & Wildlife Society, and various individuals who have grown both my personal and professional network."



Wesley Sarmiento

Wesley Sarmiento is an Amskapi Pikuni (Blackfeet) descendant and PhD student in Wildlife Biology at The University of Montana. His current work focuses on how bison restoration on the Blackfeet Reservation will affect the land and on how external factors will influence bison reintroduction success. Previously, Wesley worked in grizzly bear management for Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Prior to that, he studied mountain goats, wild sheep, wolves, and traditional ecological knowledge.

“It was really nice being connected to the native community at a big conference. I really enjoyed the dinners and opportunities to interact with the NSDP participants. The program made me more committed to giving back to The Wildlife Society's native community. Reciprocity is important in our culture. The TWS native working group has helped me, and now I want to give back to the group and program.”





Jaimie Begay

Jaimie Begay is a former field technician for the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (NNDFW) and an alumna of Diné College, the first tribally controlled and accredited institution of higher education in the United States. Jaimie is currently pursuing graduate studies at Colorado State University, where she is researching disease transmission from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep.

"This program has connected me with a community of like-minded individuals. As an Indigenous person in wildlife, I have felt secluded in the past, searching for peers and role models. This opportunity allowed me to form those connections that I have been searching for. This allows me to open my mind beyond my own cultural background, to truly gain an understanding of others beliefs."



Taylor Galvin

Taylor Galvin is a Graduate Student pursuing a Master's of Environment at the University of Manitoba. She is from the Anishinaabe tribe.

"Because of the Native Student Professional Development program, I want to keep advocating for indigenous voices to be at the wildlife decision-making tables. My favorite aspect of the program was meeting other native students and hearing about their research."

Jaimie Vincent

Jaimie Vincent is a Graduate Student pursuing a Master's of Environment at the University of Manitoba. She is from the Anishinaabe tribe.

“Meeting other Indigenous students in wildlife research during the program was so important. I can't stress how unique an opportunity this was and how motivating and inspiring the discussions were, no matter what stage of studies we are in. Building professional networks is not easy, and this program enabled productive, effective networking among our peer group and the broader wildlife community at the TWS conference.”



Catrina Alberts

Catrina Alberts holds a Bachelor's in Natural Resources with an emphasis on Wildlife Conservation and Management from the University of Arizona. Currently, she is a researcher at Northern Arizona University; her work focuses on environmental DNA analysis to understand the current distribution of Northern leopard frogs.

“This program has connected me with a community of like-minded individuals. As an Indigenous person in wildlife, I have felt secluded in the past, searching for peers and role models. This opportunity allowed me to form those connections that I have been searching for. This allows me to open my mind beyond my own cultural background, to truly gain an understanding of others beliefs. ”





Isaiah Mercer

Isaiah Mercer is an Algonquin man and is currently in his fourth year of a combined Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies at the University of Alberta.

“The program has helped me to better define both a time line for my pursuit of a graduate program, as well as narrow down the sector of industry I would like to spend the next few years contributing to. Through the opportunity of attending several presentations which redefined my understanding of graduate work and the role it can play in connection with academia to indigenous communities and traditional stewardship.”



Julia Hebert

Julia Hebert recently graduated with a Bachelors degree in Biological Sciences - Ecology and Diversity Stream at MacEwan University. She is a descendant of the Métis Nation.

“It was nice to meet people at various stages in their professional development. It made me more confident that others are or have gone through the same challenges I am. Receiving advice about future career paths and graduate programs as a recent undergraduate was very valuable as I currently explore my options. Attending the program has provided me a strong starting point to enhance my professional development and to pursue my passion of a wildlife profession.”

Thank you to our 2025 supporters



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Become a Supporter of the Native Student Professional Development Program

The Wildlife Society and Native Peoples Wildlife Management Working Group need support through donations to help nurture the next generation of Native American wildlife leaders. Every contribution you make will create a significant impact.

Program support:

- Monetary Donations
- In-kind (wildlife gear)
- Conference Sponsorship
- Volunteer Support from Indigenous leaders

Contact Us

301-897-9770 x320 | www.wildlife.org | LRuotolo@wildlife.org