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Doctors of BC 2026 scholarship winners

Doctors of BC has awarded its annual \$1000 scholarships for 2026 to Ms Kate Myllyniemi and Ms Claire Padvaiskas. The recipients were chosen from a pool of inspiring applicants.



Ms Kate Myllyniemi

Ms Myllyniemi graduated from Mount Douglas Secondary School's Challenge Program and is attending the University of British Columbia in the Faculty of Science this fall. In high school, Ms Myllyniemi participated in numerous sports, including captaining her varsity basketball team and playing on the ultimate Frisbee team, which won bronze at the provincial championships. She enjoys working with younger students and athletes, whether she is mentoring other students in her school's gifted program, coaching basketball, or volunteering as a junior leader with Girl Guides of Canada. Ms Myllyniemi is grateful to have been recognized with several awards during her graduating year, including receiving the Grade 12 Service Cup and being named the senior girls' basketball most valuable player. At UBC, she hopes to explore her interest in science while working toward a career in health care. In the future, she would love the opportunity to care for children at BC Children's Hospital and volunteer internationally with Love Without Boundaries. Ms Myllyniemi looks forward to continuing to learn, meet new people, and find ways to make a difference in her community.

Ms Padvaiskas is entering her 4th year at the University of British Columbia, where she is completing her bachelor of science in neuroscience. Ms Padvaiskas is particularly interested in improving follow-up care after critical illness. Through her work in the pediatric intensive care unit at BC Children's Hospital, she has seen how recovery continues long after a child leaves the hospital. This insight led her to become interested in how health care teams can better support children and families through the transition from acute care to the community.

Ms Padvaiskas has a background in competitive dance and enjoys staying active through hiking and Pilates. She also loves learning new languages, reading, and creative writing in her spare time. Her interest in Spanish led her to volunteer with MOSAIC, where she facilitates English conversation groups for newcomers and assists with Spanish interpretation. She enjoys meeting people from different backgrounds and helping create a welcoming environment where students can gain confidence, improve their communication skills, and use language as a tool to connect with others.

Ms Padvaiskas hopes to attend medical school and eventually pursue a career in pediatric critical care, combining patient care and research to improve the transition from hospital to home for children and their families.



Ms Claire Padvaiskas

About the award

For more than 20 years, Doctors of BC has presented the scholarship award to children of members in good standing who are completing (or have completed) high school and will be (or are currently) attending a recognized postsecondary institution. For more information, visit www.doctorsofbc.ca/about-us/awards-scholarships/awards-residents-students-community.

Spotlight: Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada

Founded in 1991, the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC) is a member-based not-for-profit organization that aims to nurture healthy and vibrant Indigenous nations, communities, and individuals. It is supported by Indigenous physicians, Indigenous medical learners, and allies who share this goal. IPAC's priorities are interconnected and focus on advancing the health of Indigenous lands and communities and uplifting current and future Indigenous physicians. At its core, IPAC is also a national community where Indigenous physicians and learners can connect, support one another, and strengthen Indigenous leadership in medicine.

The work of IPAC is diverse and multifaceted, explains Melanie Osmack, IPAC's executive director. IPAC advocates for culturally safe health care; supports efforts to address Indigenous-specific racism in medicine; contributes to conversations on forced and coerced sterilization; and partners on initiatives that improve health across the lifespan, including men's and boys' health and menopausal care for Indigenous women.

Osmack says a key goal is to ensure that Indigenous physicians and learners help shape the future of health care in Canada. This work includes contributing to national conversations; working on national consultations; collaborating with governments,

medical schools, health organizations, and Indigenous partners; and advocating for policies that reflect Indigenous communities' priorities. As a member of the Canadian Medical Forum, IPAC connects with other national organizations, including the Canadian Medical Association, to discuss issues of priority for physicians and the Canadian health care system.

For IPAC, strengthening Indigenous representation in medicine is vital, as Indigenous physician leadership leads to stronger health care systems and better outcomes for Indigenous people. Ultimately, IPAC's goal is to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are part of shaping decisions from the beginning. This work is interconnected with IPAC's broader commitment to the health of Indigenous people, communities, and lands. Recognizing that human and environmental health are inseparable, IPAC also supports the work of partner organizations, including the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

Osmack notes IPAC's unique role in nurturing and mentoring Indigenous medical students and residents. Medicine can be isolating, particularly for Indigenous learners, who may be the only Indigenous person in their program, residency, or training environment. For many Indigenous students, residents, and physicians, IPAC is a place to connect with colleagues who can support one another, celebrate diverse cultural identities, and build a solid community. It provides mentorship-matching services for

all members, as well as Canadian Resident Matching Service information workshops and funding to attend conferences and events. It works with medical schools in Canada to ensure that Indigenous medical learners can attend its Annual Mentorship Gathering. Through its Mentorship Circle, these relationships often extend beyond career advice to become a source of shared understanding and belonging.

For physicians who want to learn more about Indigeneity in health care or become better allies, IPAC encourages curiosity, humility, and a willingness to listen. Through initiatives such as Strengthening Allyship in Action: Walking Alongside in Medicine, physicians are encouraged to move beyond good intentions by listening, reflecting, and taking meaningful action in their own practices and communities.

Through its work, IPAC is helping ensure Indigenous perspectives are included in the development of a culturally safe, respectful health care system that supports physicians, patients, and the lands on which they live. Recognizing that Indigenous people are the experts in their own lives, cultures, and communities makes better outcomes possible.

Visit the IPAC website to learn more about its work, available resources, and how to become a member (<https://ipacamic.ca>).

—Ellen Tannam
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