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Penny Knight gifts an additional \$300,000 to the Architecture Foundation of Oregon to provide scholarships to Native students of art and architecture

PORTLAND, OR– The [Architecture Foundation of Oregon](#) (AFO) has more than doubled its scholarship awards to fund Native American, Alaskan Native, and Hawaiian Native art and architecture students at Portland State University. The Tsagaglalal (She Who Watches) Scholarship was established in 2022 with a generous initial gift of \$250,000 by Penny Knight. Knight made an additional surprise gift of \$300,000 in May of 2023 to increase the impact of the scholarship for award recipients as an illustration of her passion for access to education.

The Tsagaglalal Scholarship was initially announced as a \$5,000 multi-year scholarship for Native American, Alaskan Native, and Hawaiian Native students pursuing a degree in Art or Architecture at Portland State University. The scholarship was established in honor of Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs/Wasco/Yakama), who has helped shape Oregon through her work as an artist, mentor, and advocate. AFO recognized Lillian Pitt’s lifetime achievement at the 2022 Honored Citizen annual dinner.

While celebrating the year’s scholarship recipients at the AFO Scholars Reception on May 18, 2023, Lillian Pitt and long-time supporter of AFO Donald Stastny FAIA announced Penny Knight’s additional gift of \$300,000 to the Tsagaglalal Scholarship fund. The most recent gift doubled the scholarship awards for recipients that evening, resulting in \$10,000 unrestricted awards per year to assist in their academic pursuits.

“The Tsagaglalal Scholarship, made possible by multiple generous gifts by Penny Knight, is one of many initiatives that allow AFO to accomplish its work in providing access to and education in the design and building industry in Oregon. We are elated to watch these students thrive in their studies with multi-year support through this scholarship so that we can continue to cultivate diverse representation in the art and architecture fields in Oregon,” states Erica Rife, Executive Director of AFO.

The Legend of Tsagaglalal, for which the scholarship is named, tells of a female chief who was concerned over what would happen to her people when she became an ancestor. Coyote came to her and told her the world would change and that women would no longer be chiefs. Coyote then

tricked her and turned her into a rock, saying “...now you shall stay here forever to watch over your people and the river...”

Through the Tsagaglalal Scholarship Fund, Lillian assumes the personage of Tsagaglalal, watching over her people and providing opportunities for tribal youth to further their education.

“I have been honored and humbled with the encouraging and philanthropical support from the very generous friend and benefactor Penny Knight,” states Lillian Pitt. “She has been generous to my causes for over 30 years. I am so grateful for her support of the students of PSU in the AFO scholarships. This encourages and gives character to each one of the five students to do the works they can.”

The 2023 AFO Tsagaglalal recipients are Athena Rilatos (Master of Architecture candidate) and Nanette Beyale (Bachelor of Science in Architecture candidate) with the inaugural \$10,000 scholarship. A one-time \$1,000 Honorarium also went to Carter Silago (Art History & Business Major), Bryan Pontanilla (Architecture Major), and Ambarish Krsnadas (Architecture Major).

### **About Lillian Pitt**

Lillian Pitt is one of the most well-regarded Native American multimedia artists in the Pacific Northwest. She was born on the Warm Springs Reservation and is of Warm Springs, Wasco, and Yakima descent. Pitt works in many mediums including clay, bronze, glass, precious metals and wood. She produces sculptures, wearable art, prints, masks, jewelry, and more. Pitt’s work reflects the historical as well as contemporary presence and culture of Native peoples along the Columbia River. By supporting Native American artists, Lillian ensures that the Native American story of Oregon continues to be shared and evolve with each new generation.

### **About AFO**

The Architecture Foundation of Oregon is a nonprofit organization that supports Oregon’s quality of life and creates awareness of our designed environment through education, engagement and inspiration. Founded in 1981, AFO currently runs numerous programs across Oregon including Architects in Schools (AiS), the Van Evera Bailey Fellowship, and multiple scholarships. With only 4 registered Black architects in Oregon, the lack of diversity in AEC fields is one of the major barriers to inspire young BIPOC students to continue on in the industry. In 2023, AFO awarded \$28,000 in scholarships to Oregon students. Through strong community partnerships, AFO aims to ensure that traditionally underrepresented students and professionals are supported throughout the education continuum. For more information visit [af-oregon.org](https://af-oregon.org).

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If you would like more information about this topic or high-res images, please contact Erica Rife at [erica@af-oregon.org](mailto:erica@af-oregon.org).