

Montana Chamber Announces Winners of Indigenous and Rural Business Women's Scholarships

In recognition of Women's History Month, the Montana Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to recognize the winners of the 2024 Indigenous and Rural Business Women's Scholarships. Sponsored by Two Bear Capital, the scholarships will cover all expenses for four deserving women to attend the inaugural Women in Business Summit: Blazing Trails, to be held March 6-8 in Bozeman.

"Supporting women isn't just about leveling the playing field; it's about recognizing the immense talent, innovation, and leadership they bring to the table," said Liz Marchi, Head of Community Engagement at Two Bear Capital. "This summit provides a platform for empowering Montana women in the business world, and for us, it's a privilege to be a part of that journey."

The event aims to celebrate and empower women in business, fostering dialogue and inspiration while uniting remarkable women from across the Treasure State. During the two-and-a-half days of programming and networking, attendees will deep dive into leadership development, financial well-being, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, advocacy, philanthropy, and more.

The 2024 Indigenous and Rural Business Women's Scholarships have been awarded to:

- **Cora Chandler, Billings, MT**, Owner, Cora Kay Productions

"As a proud Indigenous woman and entrepreneur, I am deeply committed to economic empowerment for women, particularly within the Native American community. Attending the Blazing Trails Summit presents a valuable opportunity for me to connect with like-minded individuals, learn from inspiring women in business, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about advancing women's economic participation in Montana. By participating in this Summit, I can gain valuable insights, expand my network, and further empower myself and others to succeed in the business world."

- **Brittany Cooper, Luther, MT**, brittanycooper.com

“As a new small business owner who offers leadership development training for trades professionals, I am looking forward to learning and networking. Several panel discussions are exactly the conversations I relish. I'm truly impressed with the group of speakers they have gathered.”

- **Sarah Fischer, Peerless, MT, Owner, Moonlight Laserworks**

“The Women in Business Summit will serve as an opportunity to network and learn from other female business owners/executives of larger "small business" companies. I look forward to learning how other women built their businesses and to meet with forward-thinking business owners I can relate to and be inspired by.”

- **Yolanda OldDwarf, Billings, MT, CEO, Sweet Sage Woman**

“As the CEO of Sweet Sage Woman, an indigenous-owned business merging traditional Apsaalooke designs with contemporary fashion, I am deeply passionate about empowering women through my creations. Attending Blazing Trails presents a unique opportunity to connect with fellow female entrepreneurs, share my experiences as an indigenous artist, designer, actress, and model, and learn from the diverse perspectives of other women in business. Through the Summit, I can contribute to the ongoing dialogue about advancing women's economic participation, especially within the indigenous community. I am eager to exchange ideas, forge partnerships, and explore ways to further elevate indigenous voices and perspectives in the business world.”

- **Aleisha Shirley, Melrose, MT, Owner of Solid in the Saddle**

"In 2024 and beyond, my vision for Solid in the Saddle is to be able to make a greater impact on the horseback riding community across the globe. Building on the lessons learned from my expansion efforts in 2023 and the guidance of a business mentor, I recognize the importance of making new business connections within the small business owners of Montana. I am so excited to learn from other female powerhouses at the Summit and to gain insights on how to make a business successful.”

A panel discussion will be held during the inaugural event, *“Inclusive Horizons Elevating BIPOC Women in Business”* and include scholarship recipients and indigenous business owners, Yolanda OldDwarf and Cora Chandler, in conjunction with the discussion around the newly-launched Native Women Launch Program at Accelerate Montana.

“Rapid workforce development and training programs that are responsive to the needs in tribal communities are critical for promoting inclusive economic prosperity in the State of Montana, and ensuring that individuals within tribal communities have access to meaningful job opportunities,” said Karen Dove, Program Director, Native Women Launch Program. “Native Women Launch offers comprehensive and culturally inclusive courses in business, leadership, and finance specifically for female Indigenous entrepreneurs to support them in forging their paths, and shaping a future where their ventures flourish. Accelerate Montana is excited to support Indigenous Women leading the way in business and leadership in Montana as part of the Native Women Launch program.”

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About the Montana Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1931, the Montana Chamber of Commerce is the state’s largest business advocacy organization serving its 2,000 members, from sole proprietors to publicly traded companies, and all industry sectors located throughout the 56 counties of the Treasure State.

The Montana Chamber is guided by Envision 2026, a 10-year strategic plan which aims to grow Montana’s economy by improving the business climate, ensuring appropriate infrastructure investment, developing a skilled workforce, and promoting entrepreneurship in partnership with its philanthropic arm, the Montana Chamber Foundation.

For more information, visit: www.montanachamber.com.