

Freedom Scholarship Supports Student's Journey to Teaching and Preserving Native Language

A dedicated student at Northern State University is shaping his future, thanks to the financial support provided by the South Dakota Freedom Scholarship.

Jaeden Shaving, who graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in History in 2024, has set his sights on a future of teaching, specifically sharing the rich history and language of the Lakota people as well as the importance of knowing one's own history.

"You should know where you or your people or your society or whatever came from, and what laid the roots for the world we live in today," he said. "I just feel like it's good to be aware of the world around us and what's shaped it."

Shaving has always had an interest in history, but a passion sparked by influential professors has shifted his perspective. His future goals now are centered on empowering high school students to learn from the past and build a better future.

Shaving has already made an impact as a mentor for middle school and high school camps, as a student representative for the Admissions Office, and as a member of several campus organizations.

"One of my main concerns when I began attending college was how I would afford it," he said. "I was lucky enough to receive several scholarships, including the South Dakota Freedom Scholarship. Having this source of financial aid meant that I didn't spend all of my time working and stressing about affording the bill - I could focus on my studies, maintain good grades, and participate in campus activities and organizations."

The Freedom Scholarship, a need-based award made possible by public and private entities, is the largest of its kind in South Dakota. Its purpose is clear: help students finish their degrees and keep talented workers in the state.

Shaving is one of those students benefiting from this transformative scholarship, and he's hoping to help guide others on their own paths to success. In addition to his academic achievements, Jaeden has been an Admissions Office student representative, giving campus tours and sharing his experiences with prospective students. He has also mentored at the Northern Tech and Innovation Camps and the Dakota Dreams camps, helping students navigate new environments and prepare for their futures.

He is active with Native American Student Association, American Indian Circle Program and Honors Program, including placing first at the National Collegiate Honors Council

annual conference in November 2023 in the diversity poster category for his research titled: "Lakota Sacred Rites: Current Expressions of Traditional Lakota Spirituality."

"Having the support from the Freedom Scholarship helped me finish my bachelor's degree in 2024 and allowed me to feel like I could afford more schooling after graduation," he said. "I am now halfway through my master's degree (Educational Studies).

"I am very thankful for the scholarship and feel that it has allowed me to get to where I am today."

Shaving's story is further defined by personal milestones.

"I was also able to set aside time to spend with my family - in the fall of my sophomore year, I became a father," he said.

Shaving's story is one of growth, dedication, and a focus to shape a brighter future. Thanks to the Freedom Scholarship, he has the support he needs to become a skilled educator, ready to shape South Dakota's future. His success is proof that when South Dakota invests in students, those students invest in the state, creating a thriving, skilled workforce and a brighter future for everyone.