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Special to ONG

Sophie Wilson, an Okanagan College student and member of the Penticton Indian Band, poses with her daughter in this handout photo.

EDUCATION

TV's Harris establishes awards for students

A much-coveted subscription box from Kelowna celebrity Jillian Harris will open up more than just surprises for recipients, but opportunities to support a generation of historically excluded students at Okanagan College with every subscription sold, the institution says.

Jillian Harris, through her fall Jilly Box, is raising \$50,000 to create awards for Indigenous, Black and students of colour at Okanagan College.

The Jilly Box is seeding the fund with \$15,000 and, subsequently, is to match donations up to \$10,000. When the goal of \$50,000 is reached, the fund will offer two annual awards of \$2,500 as well as opportunities for mentorship, to OC students for the next 10 years.

"We donate a portion of our proceeds from The Jilly Box sales each quarter and this year we wanted to support the social issue of racial equity," Cynthia Pottinger, Harris's community coordinator, said in a press release. "We believe that access to post-secondary education plays a major role in creating a more equitable and fair society, so we are thrilled to work with the College to support students and relieve some of their financial burdens as they pursue their educational endeavours."

So far, more than \$19,000 has been raised, including the seed funding, with fundraising continuing into the fall. More than 525 customers of The Jilly Box have donated as part of their purchase and the expectation is to grow this number significantly by the end of the campaign.

The Jilly Box is running a contest this weekend to give away one box.

Each \$5 donation through The Jilly Box website will gain one chance to win. Learn more at jillybox.com.

"We will keep fundraising for this award fund in hopes that it will grow to become a self-sustaining fund that can grant additional and larger awards for years to come," says Harris.

"It is my hope that many individuals and companies will be inspired to donate. Thank you for supporting The Jilly Box Award and I look forward to making a difference with you."

Sophie Wilson, a Sylix Okanagan College business student and a member of the Penticton Indian Band, said student awards have been an incredible support in her journey as a student.

"Caring for my daughter as a single parent, bursaries and awards really help us on a day-to-day basis," says Wilson. "For me to be able to provide for her, pay bills and rent. I am really thankful for the support."

Helen Jackman, Okanagan College Foundation Executive Director, says the new award fund is an important part of the college's ongoing commitment to enhancing justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

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