

Generations of STEM:

Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte

First Native American Physician in the United States

Susan La Flesche was born on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska in 1865. As a child, she tragically witnessed a Native American woman die after being refused treatment from a white doctor. This inspired her to enter the field of medicine, becoming the first Native American to earn a medical degree.



Graduating at the top of her class, Susan returned home in Nebraska to practice medicine at the government boarding school. There she faced patients with Tuberculosis, cholera and alcoholism, often working 20-hour days. She actively worked to dissuade the community from drinking, and to educate the public about food sanitation, school hygiene, and preventing the spread of tuberculosis. Her desire to improve and educate in public health led to her ultimate dream: Susan constructed the first privately funded hospital on a reservation, which was named in her honor.

Outside of medicine, Dr. La Flesche helped other Omaha navigate bureaucracy to maintain legal ownership of their land and receive fair money for the sales of land.

Image Source: [Wikipedia](#), [The National Library of Medicine](#) Information Sources: [The National Library of Medicine](#), [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [NPS](#)