



# Indspire

Indigenous education,  
Canada's future.

L'éducation des autochtones.  
L'avenir du Canada.

## A message from Roberta Jamieson

Greetings!

In this edition of our newsletter, we profile four Indspire bursary recipients who embody a strong work ethic and a focus on creating positive change in the lives of everyone they touch. Each of them demonstrates that providing young First Nations, Inuit and Métis people with funding to access a post-secondary education is the key to their future success.

With their eyes fixed on a brighter future, each has also expressed deep appreciation for the opportunities and responsibilities brought about by donor support through Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards* program – and each is clear in their appreciation of you as a donor that has helped to level the playing field for them, ensuring that talent and hard work find opportunity.

"This year's *Soaring: Indigenous Youth Empowerment Gathering*, taking place this year in Calgary February 21-22, was attended by over 800 Indigenous students and their chaperones - and was another powerful reminder of the extraordinary potential of Indigenous youth! Here's some of the participants, and entertainers, along with me in the front row." - Roberta Jamieson

## DONOR UPDATE

Spring/Summer 2019

On behalf of these students, thank you for all you do to ensure that financial barriers do not hold back the Indigenous students you support.

Thank you, Merci  
Nia: wen, Miigwetch

**Roberta Jamieson**  
President & CEO  
Indspire





## Soaring High Above to Bring People Closer to their Roots

Iskwew Air flights began on *International Women's Day*

**"I chose the name Iskwew as a reclamation. Reclamation of women. Reclamation of culture. And as a way of connecting people."**

**T**eara Fraser is the first Indigenous woman in Canada to start a new airline on her own.

Teara knows first-hand what it's like to be isolated and separated by vast distances and time zones – she was born in Hay River, NWT and lived in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, a fly-in only community – she grew up on a remote reserve with emergency access to a winter road, with the main access only by boat or plane.

This is partly what motivated Teara to conceive of the idea of an airline that caters to remote Indigenous communities not on the usual flight plan for most large Canadian carriers. Iskwew Air kicked off charter services from Vancouver Airport on *International Women's Day*, March 8, 2019 – *Iskwew* is the Cree word for woman – and will fly chartered and scheduled flights to remote Indigenous communities.

Teara is not just a mother of two, pilot, entrepreneur, and CEO, but also an academic.

"I started with a pilot's license but no post-secondary school education. Indspire and the *Building Brighter Futures* program got me launched. I used this opportunity to get an M.A. in Leadership (a graduate program that combines government, public policy, leadership and management expertise), as well as complete the Certified Executive Coach program at Royal Roads University – and now I'm working on my Ph.D. in Human Development, at Fielding Graduate University."

As a demonstration of her commitment to giving back to her community, Teara found time to launch *Give Them Wings*, a project encouraging Indigenous youth to get involved in aviation, offering flight training and mentorship for aspiring pilots.

Teara adds, "To encourage Indigenous students to break down barriers and study in the areas that matter to them – this is real reconciliation in action. And it also means we are starting to see Indigenous wisdom and change-makers in workplaces. Wisdom makes all the difference in the world. Wisdom, remembering, and rethinking with an Indigenous world-view. With a focus on community and connection. This is what people are longing for."

"Investing in Indigenous education means that when you support an individual, you can help unite Canada. When donors support Indspire, they help us to connect and learn from each other. And this elevates and celebrates the success of Indigenous change-makers. It matters to the world when we can provide everyone with the opportunity to learn and grow. I want donors to know that their support will absolutely make a difference, and make education accessible for everyone."





## Postcards with Encouraging Words from Donors Has Propelled an Indspire Bursary Recipient to Continue to Help Her Community to Heal

### Language Dinner Nights Unite Three Generations of Sustudene Yinkadini'

"When I received the postcards in the mail, I was shocked to see the overwhelming support from so many people. All of the kind words of encouragement were exactly what I needed at this point in my academic journey."

**M**any donors had the opportunity to send words of encouragement to Indigenous students – right around the time students need that extra bit of motivation as they prepare to return to school. What an amazing response!

Alana Tevley was featured in a letter sent in the fall, and your words of encouragement to her, and other students, were incredibly moving and heartfelt. Alana is currently completing the last two courses for her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology at UNBC. She has a Minor in First Nations Studies and has taken up an Internship within the First Nations Studies department. This is where she spends a lot of time producing language learning material in her traditional Sustudene language. To do this work, she depends on her mother, who is a Hereditary Chief within her community, Takla Lake First Nation. Her goal is to develop material to help others in her community, including her children, learn their language.

"I was successful in my efforts to bring the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) pilot project to my community as of September 2019. This project is called *Reclaiming our Language: The Silent Speakers Program*, and it allows those who know the language, but do not speak it, an opportunity to develop their language in a safe environment with a certified Cognitive Behavioural Therapist on site in case past traumas cause blockages. Such traumas as those experienced in Residential School. I will be the coordinator for this program, and the goal is to allow our language holders to feel more comfortable when speaking our language and for those who were traumatized, to allow them to heal. I am confident that this will bring about more fluent speakers that can assist in revitalizing our language."

Alana's Indspire bursary came just in time for the Spring/Summer semester of 2018, which allowed her to continue taking courses during these months. Assignments, midterms and final exams are quite overwhelming during condensed courses, and when Alana opened a package to find hundreds of postcards from Indspire donors, it was an unforgettable experience:

"To date, I have been completing courses for my degree for 29 months straight, and it has become mentally exhausting. All of the messages from the postcards from donors are truly inspiring, and it definitely gives me more drive to finish this last semester on a positive note."





## The Ripple Effect of Generosity

**Being a Principal with principles: This is what creates systemic change**

**“I want to give back to the system that has helped me. Donors need to know that education is fundamentally a ripple effect of generosity – one person is a catalyst for change in Canada.”**

**L**eona Prince has had a long-standing relationship with Indspire: she received bursary support in 2014, last year she was recognized as a recipient of a *Guiding the Journey – Indigenous Educator Award*, and this year she is part of the *Peer Support Educator Mentorship* program – and you have been there with her every step of the way.

**“From student to Principal, Indspire was there with support to help me with my B.Ed. at the University of Northern British Columbia and later when I completed my M.Ed. I am also a mother of three, so the support helped to soften some of the financial strain – even though I also worked full-time throughout my student days, as well. I’m also so proud to say that now I have a son in college, working towards his BFA.”**

Leona began her journey to “break the cycles of intergenerational trauma,” with the hope that “integrating teachings into the local curriculum can decrease the levels of discrimination that our people face and ensure that all people learn to appreciate and understand the different worldviews of different cultures.” Currently a District Principal of Aboriginal Education in British Columbia, Leona is carefully planning for the educational success of a new generation.

As a key leader in Indigenous education, Leona Prince takes care of young people spread over 70,000 square kilometers.

**“That’s over 1,300 students, and I am responsible for planning and programming for them. I try to cover this entire area every two months in-person to see how the students are doing.”**

Her goal is simple: to increase graduation rates.

“Research is also an interest of mine,” she adds. “I’m currently working on a Student Voice research project focused on students in grades 8 to 12. The goal here is to shift the narrative in Indigenous education. We need to think more about our student’s voices, and student-identified success and challenges.”

**“I’ve seen systems accountability shift. Now we don’t accept a lower rate of performance – we have high expectations; we expect students to graduate. We keep families informed and directly involved. When the family and the community work together, great things can happen. Best of all, I tell the kids that there are always people willing to help them if they work hard.”**

Leona Prince says for her, this work is not just a job, “It’s my passion. My vocation in life.”





## A Dynamic Role Model for a New Generation of Doctors, Volunteers and Parents

Soon-to-be physician influencing change as a volunteer, helping children and her community

Laura and her daughter were beyond thrilled to be featured on the inside cover of Indspire's first calendar.



"It also increased my accountability; it was humbling to ask for help and to receive it. It restored my faith in humanity. To know there were people out there who believe in the power of education and who want to see others succeed. I am so grateful to donors who are willing to show kindness."

Laura McNab-Coombs is an inspirational young Métis woman who works hard to be a caring and compassionate role model for both her daughter and other Indigenous youth – as a single mother, she went back to school to pursue an education in the field of healthcare science and hopes to become a physician.

Since beginning her academic career, she has won numerous awards in Biology, History and Anthropology at Selkirk College, and is currently a student in the University of Northern British Columbia's Bachelor of Health Sciences in Biomedical Studies. Next she'll write her medical school admissions exams and send off her first round of medical school applications.

"Indspire is amazing. People don't always understand just how stressful being a student can be. It's not easy to follow your dream, especially for single parents like me. The help from Indspire gave me a second chance to become someone who can change people's lives for the better."

Motivated to become a physician so that she can work actively within rural Indigenous communities to help combat the unique health concerns that they face, she is not waiting until medical school to try and influence change.

Outside of school, Laura is also a fitness instructor in her community, promoting health and wellness in all that she does. She is an active volunteer, always contributing to Indigenous events in or near her community. She is also a loyal volunteer for her local SPCA, where she brings her daughter along to help

socialize the puppies with special needs – most of which are blind or deaf. On top of all this, Laura finds time to volunteer for the Crisis Line, finding even more ways to give back to her community and beyond.

"I first found out about Indspire at the Aboriginal Services Centre at Selkirk College. The team there really wants us to succeed and they encouraged me to apply."

Receiving donor-supported funding for Laura meant:

"There was less time taken away from studying. Indspire increased my quality of life by reducing my stress level and lifting the psychological burden – it meant I could keep going. To think that someone believed in me – that's quite a gift."

## Charity Intelligence gave us an A!

Charity Intelligence Canada gave Indspire a four-star rating and named us a Top 10 Canadian Impact Charity again in 2018! We got our top score because of the work YOU help us do each day to advance Indigenous education! When it comes to the social impact Indspire's programs create for every dollar donated, our four-star rating from Charity Intelligence is based on high scores in Donor Accountability, Financial Transparency, Program Cost Coverage and Cost-Efficiency. As well, Indspire is among the top 100 charities rated as an impact charity.





## Politics, Healthcare and a Brighter Future Ahead

Sam Kloetstra, of the Mattagami First Nation, is looking at Indigenous governance in a whole new light

**“Indspire knows that so many more young people deserve the chance to have support. I give a huge thank you to donors!”**

**S**am Kloetstra first reached out to Indspire as a 19-year-old student who overcame big obstacles in making the transition from a remote reserve to life in the big city of Toronto.

Now 22 years old, this undergrad at Ryerson University has an interest in public administration and governance. Sam is very thoughtful and serious when he discusses his focus: “I’m interested in the historical context and the future of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada.”

*“Specifically, my interest is in policy and understanding how to go about making higher-level change in Canada. I’m also interested in bringing this knowledge home to my community, to help people look at the issues in a positive and constructive way.”*

In addition to his interest in examining what Indigenous government looks like, he is also passionately

committed to Indigenous health policy in Toronto, working with the Toronto Indigenous Health Advisory Council to assist First Nations youth and forming a Youth Council to increase access to services and programs for urban Indigenous peoples. “Why do I do this? It’s quite simple to me. It needs to be done. Now is the time to do it, and today there is so much awakening and a willingness to face the impact of colonialism.”

To Indspire donors, Sam says, “Thank you so much for the opportunity. Thank you for the care and the investment that you show. I work as well as being a full-time student, and the help from Indspire gave me a strong foundation. It meant I could eat healthy. I could take transportation.”

*“The extra support from Indspire is an investment in a better future, not just for me – but for everyone.”*

## Your generosity on Giving Tuesday was INSPIRING!

We received so many wonderful gifts when our network of supporters rallied around the biggest day of the year in philanthropy: **#GivingTuesday**. Your contributions were matched by Bill and Penny Eakin, and then matched again by the Government of Canada, quadrupling your impact! We raised \$158,816!

Your support helps students like **Tracie Léost**, who is in her third year in the Indigenous Social Work Program at the University of Regina. Students who receive

scholarships and bursaries from Indspire, like Tracie, often tell us how much your support means to them. Your donations show our students that you believe in them; removing a financial barrier allows them to focus on their studies and gives them more time to give back to their communities. And when students give back, it transforms individuals in these communities – AND the students themselves.

Thank you for helping us celebrate Giving Tuesday by supporting Indspire students.



# The United Nations has declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages

## You can help protect, promote and revive endangered dialects

During the same year that the UN has declared 2019 the *International Year of Indigenous Languages*, the Canadian government is currently drafting legislation to revitalize Indigenous languages – a project three years in the making. The goal is to help promote, support and protect Indigenous languages with increased access to the resources that make this possible. The best way to do this is through funding for education – schools and special immersion programs on- and off-reserve.

Recognizing IYIL means appreciating the vital contribution of Indigenous languages and peoples to our world

Now is the time to take action that will inspire Indigenous people of all ages to speak their own languages, which represent complex systems of

knowledge and communication; this serves as a valuable resource on the road to reconciliation. One Indspire-supported student, Layla Rorick, received funding last year thanks to the support of donors like you – she wanted to let you know how much this means to her, in Nuuchahnulth:

ʔiqhmuutʔiš qʷayaatukmitʔi yakʷiimitʔi nuučaanuʔath  
ʔuhʷitasmahsa suu ʔaahiqsak  
ciqciiqasamaḥsas qwaʔapiʔaʔ natnaniqsakqin ʔiqhmuut  
huuʔacayukmahsanis ciciqʔakqin  
ʔuyačiʔats iimaqsti ʔin huupii niihi  
haaʔakʷapis siihi

*to speak with ancient and continuing ancestral voices,  
to bring back our language.*

*Your support has uplifted my spirit  
and strengthened me for the work ahead.*

*“In my community, we are faced with learning a language that less than 1% of the people, many elderly, still remember. This situation is reflective of Indigenous experience across the country. Indigenous people have historically been subjected to policies that extinguished Indigenous languages and ways of life.” – Indspire-supported student, Layla Rorick*

The survival of Indigenous languages is key in sustainable development, peace building and reconciliation. Layla is taking action to revive her Indigenous language: “None of my generation grew up as speakers of our Nuuchahnulth (NCN) language.

Now we have only 12 fluent speakers left. But I have become an advanced second language speaker and language immersion teacher.”

We can work together to support, promote and empower Indigenous communities by recognizing how vital communication is, especially as it relates to the protection of traditional ceremonies and cultural heritage.

Layla continues to raise awareness about the importance of Indigenous languages, like many Indspire-supported

students, in linguistics, education, psychology and many other fields.

*“Indigenous students are underrepresented in higher education and we must work together to close this gap. With a university degree, tremendous opportunities exist for Indigenous people and their communities, including the collective power of sharing knowledge and culture for future generations.”*

Supporting language revitalization goes a long way towards improving social, economic and political development, internationally and in small communities. With your help, students like Layla have the opportunity to make great strides with a ripple effect across the world: “It has been my privilege to focus efforts on answering the repeated calls from Indigenous peoples to work long and hard, to do whatever it takes to save our languages.”

Our goal is greater respect for linguistic diversity and Indigenous languages



This year we'll work towards improving the preservation of Indigenous cultures and traditions



## Teaching Indigenous Languages to Kindergarten Students Creates Role Models

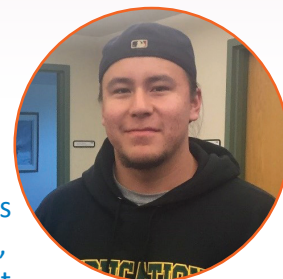
### Kids learning Cree are also learning about tolerance and discrimination

Jayden Kay, from Kawacatoose First Nation, is currently in his second year of studies through First Nations University of Canada in the Bachelor of Indigenous Education Elementary program. He's also working towards gaining a certificate in revitalizing Indigenous languages; he's fluent in Cree.

This Indspire-supported student is all too aware of the challenges often presented by being an Indigenous learner in a non-Indigenous school community. As a student teacher, he is beginning his placements in Kindergarten classrooms, and familiarizing himself with the education curriculum while incorporating his Indigenous knowledge into daily lesson plans.

The importance of promoting Indigenous culture and traditional knowledge in the classroom has become especially apparent to Jayden as he travels to many on-reserve placements:

"This motivates me to become an Elementary Cree Teacher now and an overall traditional-orientated teacher in the future. These placements give me the knowledge to help, because it is an issue today that youth must learn to not become prejudiced towards each other in the elementary system."



Jayden wants to make a difference in classrooms on- and off-reserve to help create a better environment for all youth who struggle "because I have been a victim of discrimination in the education system too." He wants to continue his studies in the future to earn a Masters degree in Indigenous Education. His message to you: "Thank you to the donors who have motivated me to complete my studies and make a change in the world."

### Personal acts of reconciliation: Small things create big changes

When we think about what reconciliation means, it's easy to feel a bit overwhelmed and unsure of where to begin. We hear from a lot of supporters who feel they wish they could do more; it helps to spread awareness about the myth of free post-secondary education. And it helps to get more people involved in supporting Indspire so we don't have to turn away any student in need. Here are a few other ways you can take reconciliACTION into your own hands – you're just one simple step away from forging a path to a stronger Canada.

- 1. Support emerging artists and musicians** – go to art exhibits, listen to Indigenous music, buy art from Indigenous artists, explore Indigenous craft markets, do online research to learn about events and exhibitions, concerts, new album releases, art installations in public spaces around your community, murals, and so much more!
- 2. Watch films and documentaries made by Indigenous people and/or about Indigenous people** – check out an Indigenous film festival!
- 3. Read books written by or about Indigenous people** – do something as simple as starting a book club where

you only read Indigenous authors! If you're already in a book club, choose an Indigenous author for your next read!

- 4. Learn the history of residential schools** – this is an important part of Canada's history that has been absent from curriculum for far too long.
- 5. Attend a cultural event** – check your community calendars for what's happening near you! There could be a PowWow or a Strawberry festival at your doorstep!
- 6. Explore authentic Indigenous experiences** – take a trip to a place you've never been, learn about the history of the land and the first people who were there. Find out if there's a reserve near you – and then find out if there are immersive Indigenous tourism experiences offered. Do something as simple as eating at an Indigenous restaurant!
- 7. Be an ally** – volunteer at an Indigenous non-profit organization! Do some research to see if you can join some kind of reconciliation committee or gathering in your community – there may be one open to everyone near you!

The **Indspire Awards** will be broadcast **June 23 on CBC and APTN** – check your local listing!