



# Indspire

Indigenous education,  
Canada's future.

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

## INSPIRING CHANGE

HELPING STUDENTS REALIZE THEIR DREAMS

Fall 2019

### A message from Roberta Jamieson

Greetings!

Welcome to the first edition of Inspiring Change -- our newly-named donor newsletter!

You are inspiring change for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students with your donations. This in turn, inspires change in their families and communities. Together, we are all inspiring change, across Canada and actually, throughout the world.

This issue shares the stories of Indigenous students you've helped succeed – and you can see the ripple effect of your generosity as it is changing the lives of their families as well –grandmothers, mothers, daughters and sons, brothers and sisters.

As you look through these pages, you'll notice how much each student has to offer – from sharing traditional healing, protecting the land and ecosystems, to instituting Indigenous ways of resolving conflict. These students are all role models and the stories you'll read here highlight how each of them have encouraged

and inspired their parents, grandparents, siblings and their communities.

Celebrating our students' potential and their achievements helps us in moving forward on the path to reconciliation. These stories we are sharing recognize the ties that bind people together and that bind us all together as part of the Indspire family.

We have a long way to go on this journey, but our strides are brisk and our focus is sharp – we'll get there, together.

Thank you, Merci  
Nia: wen, Miigwetch

Roberta Jamieson  
President & CEO  
Indspire





## An Indspire Award-winning mother and an Indspire-funded son feel the ripple effect of generosity

**“You can’t imagine how much talent we have with Indigenous young people! There is so much ability and achievement in our community. Yet it is a struggle for kids to find funding.” – Barbara Hager**

**M**ultiple award winning Canadian writer, producer and director Barbara Hager has a unique vantage point on Indspire. “For 26 years, I’ve seen the amazing things that Indspire can do and it all started when I first had the chance to work on the production of the Awards event.”

Today, Barbara’s son Ben Mulchinock is able to receive help from Indspire to achieve his goal of working in the environmental conservation movement. Ben is Métis and has family roots in St. Paul de Métis and Red River Settlement.

“It made such a big difference for him to get this help. The application process alone taught Ben about the confidence that comes from expressing your goals. You start to feel proud of the things you’ve done, your grades, volunteering for the community, and any awards you may have won. I think that so many young people just don’t realize the gifts they have until they put the application to Indspire together.”

Barbara Hager thinks an Indspire-awarded bursary is also about much more than the funds a student might receive. “This is such a special award – I’ve seen how it encourages people and makes them feel worthwhile. I’ve seen the big increase Indspire makes in student motivation.”

She points out that, “I have first-hand knowledge about what this means. Sometimes for Indigenous students it’s hard to get the feeling that education is worthwhile and that you have a future. That again is why receiving help from Indspire is so special.”

“I want to say thank you to donors. I want to tell them that we are so close to catching up and we will change the world when we have thousands of educated young Indigenous kids working in Canada. When you give to Indspire, you help all of us reach our goals. It has a huge ripple effect!” •

## An accomplished grandmother inspires a young teacher and future generations for many years to come

**“The Indigenous population is small within Canada, and so many of us are the very first students to go to university in our generation. I want to let everyone know that Indspire is the best place to make your investment in Indigenous education. Thank you for your generous support!” -- Rachel Watt**

**O**riginally from North West River, a small town outside the Nunatsiavut Land Claims area, Rachel Watts is an alumna of Acadia University – graduating from the Bachelor of Kinesiology program and having just completed a Bachelor of Education.

“Indspire helped me to complete my honours degree in education and now I’ve just been certified as a teacher in Nova Scotia. I’m so excited and proud that I am now licensed to teach in all grades, from primary school through to grade 12!”

Rachel has a long and distinguished family connection to higher education. Her grandmother,

Dr. Beatrice Watts was the first Inuk in Eastern Canada to become a school teacher, a principal, and the first woman in Newfoundland and Labrador to become a town mayor. This means that Rachel knows well the importance of having a strong role model for the next generation of young people.



## A Family That Studies Together, Stays Together: an ambitious mom + an over-achieving teen = an ideal family dynamic

“My mother was a residential school survivor. I felt the inter-generational legacy of residential school growing up. I worked in child protection and witnessed children cycle through the system. I refuse to let inter-generational trauma dictate my life. I have broken the cycle”. – Samantha



Samantha and Kariya are not your typical mother-daughter duo. They are First Nation, from the Blood Tribe in Southern Alberta, both recipients of the BBF scholarship, and they are both attending university at the same time! Mom Samantha is in the midst of a Master’s degree in Social Work while daughter Kariya is fast-tracking to her final year of a Business degree (at only 20 years old)! They coordinate their class, study and work schedules to accommodate each other in all their extra-curricular



Rachel shares: “Indspire came into my life about four years ago – I heard about the *Building Brighter Futures* opportunity from my sister. When I realized that there was potential Indigenous funding available through a scholarship, I applied. It was a huge help with everything. From basic living expenses to helping me to go to a conference where I could increase my knowledge in kinesiology.”

“I’d like to say to a potential investor in Indspire that your donation is going directly to a population that is often overlooked. You can be sure that Indspire is the best organization out there for Indigenous students, and it is an absolutely phenomenal resource in many ways. Indspire goes a long way to ensure students are successful.” •

activities too -- Kariya’s a superstar basketball player and was chosen to coach a teen team in the 2020 North American Indigenous Games!

“It is an exciting and humbling experience to be taking this educational journey with my daughter. Thank you for establishing this scholarship. I hope that one day we can have a chance to help others, as you have helped our family.” -- Samantha

Samantha has three other children and strives to find a balance between work, school and parenting; encouraging her study-buddy daughter Kariya to also lead by example: “The scholarship has motivated her to commit to her studies and assisted with additional school and extra- curricular basketball expenses.”

They spend Friday nights together, often on campus, working on assignments or studying for exams. Samantha recognizes how unique her situation is and appreciates the time she spends with Kariya as they both work towards achieving their goals at school. “My parents always taught me that my education was very important.” says Kariya.

“We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the tremendous support that Indspire donors have provided us with through the BBF scholarship. We are both appreciative and grateful for the support provided by Indspire.” -- Samantha •





Curtis

## Twin brothers graduate medical school and law school together, learning the importance of confidence, dedication and motivation.

**“Indspire is the pillar of community support for Indigenous students. This organization has been there for me, and I hope they can be there for more students, too.” – Dr. Curtis Sobchak**

Everyone’s family is unique but the Sobchak brothers have a special understanding of what ‘unique’ can really mean. As identical twin brothers, both have received funding from Indspire, both went to the University of Toronto, and both graduated together this past June.

Recent medical school graduate, Curtis Sobchak, shares the story of his extraordinary family connection to Indspire. “My identical twin brother Patrick and I were in Grand River, searching for general funding to help us both get to school and we heard about Indspire. It was an amazing thing to receive, especially for Indigenous undergrads. Help from *Building Brighter Futures* meant we could focus on keeping our grades up.”

Patrick says it all started with a visit to the Band Education Office on the Grand River, “they had information on Indspire, and encouraged me to apply. Growing up as a twin means you are always naturally competitive. So of course, my brother applied as well!”

Having just graduated from law school at the University of Toronto, Patrick is ideally placed to know that, “confidence is so important, it pushes you into doing things you might not feel comfortable doing but can yield big rewards. I tell Indigenous students to always try new things – don’t be afraid.”

Curtis, now known as Dr. Sobchak, has similar advice for Indigenous youth:

**“I always had a strong desire to help others and I also knew I wanted to work helping the Indigenous community on a larger scale. Today, when I talk to high school students I tell them to be proud of their identity. Learn about your heritage. Speak to family members. Learn about who you are, and the change you can make. Be involved in your community.”**

Patrick, like Curtis, has advice for young scholars: “I’d like to tell students who are thinking of applying to always go for it. Why not try? You have nothing to lose and you’ll always have the knowledge that you tried. Why is trying so important? Because it means you will increase your confidence.”

Both brothers recognize the role Indspire donors played in shaping their experiences in post-secondary education. For Curtis, it was about the opportunities he was able to access:

**“For me, I wanted to do research in hospitals one day – and this was made possible. I have also been able to deliver babies and assist with surgeries in Turkey, work in a rural hospital in Malawi, and work in Indigenous medicine in reserve clinics in Northern Ontario as well. *Indspire* helped me do all this and much more – and not have to get a part-time job to take away from my studies. Knowing that you have this kind of support means one less big thing to worry about.”**

And for Patrick, a BBF scholarship through Indspire funding made law school a lot easier:

**“When I found out I had received funding from the *Building Brighter Futures* program, it was a huge relief – and a feeling of gratitude.**

**Knowing that Indspire could help with a scholarship meant that the small things, like buying books and reducing my overall stress – were now possible. I could relax a bit and channel all my energy into schoolwork.”**



Patrick

Patrick Sobchak wants the supporters of Indspire to understand that, “there is so much untapped potential that even a little help can unlock so many doors for Indigenous youth. Please don't hesitate to get involved. The potential benefits can be huge and you can help make the biggest difference, forever. What you give will stretch far beyond today and into the future.”

As twin brothers, Patrick and Curtis share many of the same values and beliefs. Dr Curtis Sobchak echoes his brother's sentiments for Indspire supporters:

“I also want to say to donors – by supporting Indspire you are supporting the entire Indigenous community across Canada. And you are making change for many generations to come. When you give, you are helping to give a new voice to the Indigenous people of Canada. Your support means they can have a positive education and get the right ideas in mind.”

According to Curtis, Patrick always likes to have the last word – he concludes with a final call of action for all Canadians to support Indigenous education.

“Know that you are helping. Students can focus on their schoolwork when they get help. Even the smallest steps can benefit someone. Have faith that *Indspire* is doing great work. Get involved!” •

## The 2019 *Indspire Awards*: celebrate your commitment to advancing Indigenous education!

Watch the *Indspire Awards* if you haven't already – you'll enjoy amazing performances, hear inspiring stories and watch the grateful recipients on CBC Gem at [www.cbc.ca/indspire](http://www.cbc.ca/indspire)! It's a great way to connect with the Indspire family and see how much your support means to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Enjoy!



## Making Dreams Into Reality for a Métis Graduate Student Dedicated to Helping Youth in her Home Community

“I truly believe in the Indspire program especially for those of us who are ineligible for funding through our own nations.”

Darby Starratt is a Métis student from a small town in rural northern Ontario; she earned her Master's Degree through a distance education program that allowed her to continue working full time. “My post-grad program is amazing, especially for mature students and those of us living in rural or remote areas.”



“By the Moment Photography”

Now that she has a post-graduate degree, she is carving a career path towards giving back in her community. “I've completed my Masters of Public Administration and I'm currently back in my home town of about 5,000 people. I'm working in the guidance department of our local high school.”

“I never dreamed I would make it this far in my academic career. I was the first to graduate university in my immediate and extended family on both sides, and I am the first in my family to achieve a Masters Degree as well.”

To be able to achieve this goal meant a lot to her. Darby wrote an incredibly moving and heartfelt Thank-You letter when she was notified of Indspire funding:

“Without the support of donors like you, I would not have made it this far. I am a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario and there is almost no financial support for our community members who are attending schools outside the province and at the graduate level. Were it not for your donation I would not have had the financial support to even begin this program, let alone graduate.”

Darby is a shining example of how much education can transform a life, which in turn, can transform so many others. The students who come into her office for guidance – sometimes soft spoken, sometimes aggressive, sometimes uncertain – are given encouragement, direction and support. Seeing Darby as a role model, they're inspired to go just as far and have an impact just as great. Education is the first step on this journey. •



## Teaching runs in the family: donors Cheryl and Manuel Buchwald share how their family motivated them to fund education for Indigenous families

“Education can empower a student and help to make them fuller and more developed as a person. And give them the right tools to make the right kind of decisions.” – Manuel Buchwald

Long time Indspire donors Cheryl and Manuel Buchwald were pleased to be able to help their own nieces and nephews with their educations, “... and now, we have a chance to help the nieces and nephews that we don’t know” Cheryl laughs. In addition to their annual donations to Indspire, they also established a named bursary in honour of Cheryl’s great aunt, Anna Myles Bursary, who was trained as a teacher, like Cheryl.

These very kind and thoughtful people are clear about why they choose to support Indigenous students, Cheryl states that

“first of all, what motivates us is the awareness that in our own lives we’ve had opportunities to get an education. We want to help others in the same way.”

She continues, “with respect to why we chose Indigenous education, we believe that Canada needs full participation from its citizens of Indigenous

ancestry – and we recognize that opportunities for them have been restricted by governmental and societal prejudices. We both hope that our contribution to Indigenous education may help redress some of that.”

Cheryl also strongly believes that Indigenous students, “bring a different historical perspective, different traditions and a cultural world that has a great deal of positive impact on local communities and on the future of Canada.”

For the Buchwalds, education is always the best investment in the future that you can make. As Manuel says,

“when you help people to move others forward, to do things on their own, it starts a virtuous cycle of one good thing after another.”

And on top of that, “it’s just the right thing to do” says Cheryl. •

**Dr. James Makokis** (Nehiyô from Saddle Lake Cree Nation) has been part of the Indspire family for more than 20 years. He was awarded BBF funding several times, he received an *Indspire Award For Youth*, he became a donor and then eventually joined Indspire’s Board of Directors before moving on to our Jury Sessions in reviewing funding applications from health students. All of this happened while James was in medical school and carving out his career path. And to cap it all off, this summer he won first place on the popular series ‘The Amazing Race Canada’ with his spouse Anthony Johnson!



Left to right: Anthony and James



## Reviving Inuktitut Language for Children: A Young Inuk Teacher has High Hopes to Revitalize her Language



**“I’m very proud of my Inuit roots, my roots are a huge reason I decided to join the Inuit Bachelor of Education Program. This program granted me an opportunity to express my culture through a passion I’ve always had, teaching.”**

**F**elicia Edmunds is an Indspire-funded student who is well on her way to leaving an incredible impact on generations to come. Her dream is to teach elementary students in their core courses in the language of their ancestors, Inuktitut, on the north coast of Labrador, close to her home community.

**“Your scholarship has made this dream of mine seem much more possible.”**

She is honoured to share her story with donors and students alike. “I am a 4th year Inuit Bachelor of Education Student (Primary/Elementary) at Memorial University in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, NL.... this scholarship will allow me to receive the best education that I can.” Felicia received confirmation of her BBF scholarship and was relieved to know she could graduate without the extra stress of bills competing for her time and attention while she studies for final exams and writes essays.

**“When I received news that I would be receiving this funding, I was absolutely overwhelmed with excitement. Thank you so much for your kind and generous support. I am blessed and so grateful that I no longer need a part-time job and can focus the extra time on my studies.”**

James has gone above and beyond with all his incredible accomplishments and we couldn’t be more proud; he continues to give back to his community as a highly-sought after doctor with special interests in gender identity and Cree medicines, and has travelled to remote reserves for special clinics and sessions. He maintains a private practice in Kehewin Cree Nation in rural northeastern Alberta, and another transgender specialty clinic in Edmonton, where patients come from all over the world to see him.

Felicia was in the process of seeking part-time work to offset the costs of tuition and other expenses when she got the great news. She immediately resolved to get the most out of her final year and set about making plans for essays and study schedules.

As a student who comes from a culture experiencing a sharp decline in the number of youth who can speak, read and write in Inuktitut, Felicia realizes the importance of passing down the skill and knowledge required to ensure the language doesn’t die out.

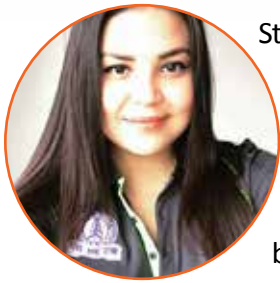
**“Upon graduation, I hope to work as a Primary teacher along the North Coast of Labrador, teaching young children with sharing the knowledge I have been learning within the Inuktitut language.”**

As International Year of Indigenous Languages draws to a close at the end of 2019, we go forward knowing there are a lot of Canadians who care deeply about the preservation of Indigenous languages, cultures and traditions – and a lot of students working hard to revitalize their languages from coast to coast. •

Life as a two-spirited youth on a reserve was challenging for James, but he never lost sight of his goals. James is a wonderful role model and proof-positive that investing in education, encouragement and empowerment pays off. Thank you for supporting James and other students like him – thank you for believing in the power of education. •

## A Daughter's Academic Dreams Inspire her Mother and Encourage her Brother

**"It's an exciting year for us because my brother is going away to college, my sister is going into high school, and my mother is going to pursue a college program as well so we will all be in school." – Stevie**



Stevie Jonathan is the oldest of four siblings; her mom Tania went back to school to complete her Ontario Secondary School Diploma shortly after she was born. Stevie and her younger brother Treyton is also pursuing post-secondary education. All three are recipients of Indspire funding; Tania's in her final year of a Social Service Worker Diploma at Fanshawe College.

**"My oldest daughter works in education in Six Nations and because of her experiences I was more inspired to pursue my dream of going to college. I feel my community could use more social service workers helping our youth, especially young parents." – Tania**

Tania's daughter Stevie got her BA from Western and then came home to work and continue her education. She is currently attaining a Master of Professional Education through Western University.

**"I am a Mohawk, Wolf clan woman from Six Nations of the Grand River. I decided to pursue post-secondary because I want to better myself so I can better my**

**community. My professional and academic work focus on Indigenous education; specifically cultural and language revitalization." – Stevie**

Education is also important to Stevie's younger brother, Treyton, who wants to give back to his community. He's following in his mother's footsteps; this is his second year of a three-year diploma in Child and Youth Care at Mohawk College.



**"I just wanted something more than just a high school diploma. My mom also strongly encouraged us to go into College or University because she wants us to have a higher education." – Treyton**

With family support so close at hand, some of the challenges of post-secondary education are a little easier to handle: Tania, who is now a grandmother, and her children, can lean on each other, encourage and help each other. And with donor support, the whole family is empowered and educated, making an impact for many more generations. Keep up the good work team! •

**Indspire is achieving more than ever before and your commitment to advancing Indigenous education is propelling positive changes all across Canada. For 2018-2019, your support helped 682 future STEM professionals, 140 soon-to-be doctors, 543 aspiring social workers and counsellors, 209 up-and-coming lawyers and 649 future educators.**

**In 2018-19 we awarded \$16.3 million through over 5,500 scholarships and bursaries to Indigenous students across Canada.**

However, we are only able to meet the needs of 22% of successful applicants. Let's keep working hard to ensure every Indigenous student has a chance to make their dreams come true!

- 4 of 10 First nations students on-reserve graduate Grade 12, compared to 9 of 10 for non-Indigenous youth.
- approx. 90% of BBF (*Building Brighter Futures*) recipients will graduate.

- 44% of Indigenous students attain a post-secondary credential compared with 63% of Non-Indigenous students.
- about 50% of employed BBF recipients work in fields that support Indigenous people.

Indspire was selected by the Financial Post as one of Canada's Top 25 Charities worthy of a donation in 2017 and 2018, and rated as a Four-Star Charity by Charity Intelligence Canada in 2017 and 2018. MacLeans Magazine has also given Indspire Top Rated Charity status several years in a row!