



# Indspire

Indigenous education, | L'éducation des autochtones.  
Canada's future. | L'avenir du Canada.

## A message from Roberta Jamieson

She:kon (hello) and I hope that you're healthy and safe.

At this time of year, our hearts are full of gratitude – we are thankful for the promise of a new season—from the return of the robins to the new life that is emerging all around us from the earth.

At Indspire we are grateful for your ongoing support, for taking the time to share in some good news during this challenging period. The COVID-19 virus is impacting the world in ways we may have never imagined but we will get through this together, with a good mind and a caring heart.

This issue of 'Inspiring Change' features the stories of three young nursing students you've helped, and, as 2020 is 'The Year of Nurses and Midwives', there's no better time to share in the success you've helped create.

You play a vital role in helping our students overcome the many challenges you may be facing too – financial uncertainty and family health can be worrisome but we must continue the crucial work to distribute financial assistance to First Nations, Inuit and Métis post-secondary students in need.

As you might imagine, Indigenous communities that already struggle with food insecurity, poverty, lack of

# INSPIRING CHANGE

HELPING STUDENTS REALIZE THEIR DREAMS

Spring 2020

adequate housing or health resources and isolation are even more challenged right now.

Your encouragement and support for them is needed more than ever now. With many students adapting to new learning realities, dealing with the loss of part time jobs, struggling with the stresses of financial uncertainty, or living too far away from family and friends to lean on for help or access cultural ceremonies, you are an important source of hope.

Please keep us in your thoughts as you are in ours. And know that we are here working for students because we know that's important to you and why you donate to Indspire.

Niá:wen (thank you) and take care of yourself, your loved ones, and each other.

Roberta Jamieson  
President & CEO  
Indspire





## Nationally Celebrated Author Climbs Up From Rock Bottom to Take His Place in the Spotlight

**“Indspire gave me a second chance to become someone who can change not just my life, but many other people’s lives for the better.”**

**B**efore award-winning scholar Jesse Thistle became an Assistant Professor at York University – he lived on the streets, battled an addiction to crack cocaine, and supported himself through petty crime that landed him in and out of jail for years.

Jesse is a descendant of Mistawasis, chief of the Prairie Tribe and lead signatory of Treaty 6, the 1876 document that gave away most of what is today central Saskatchewan and Alberta to the British Crown. He is Métis and he has Cree Heritage.

Jesse says that within two generations of Treaty 6, his community was reduced to living as “forgotten people”. As a young man, “I felt resentful, almost hateful. I started to take crack cocaine to take the edge off. I do see a lot of connection between my story and those of others with my background.”

Today, this brilliant and ground-breaking scholar is completing his PhD and has also become a respected authority on intergenerational trauma and Indigenous homelessness.

Jesse Thistle was tapped by St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto to become Lead Investigator on “Pekiwewin (Coming Home): An Indigenous Guide for Health and

Social Service Providers Working with Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness.” His work will create fact-based policy and practice guidelines for medical doctors and social service providers across Canada who work with Indigenous homeless people.

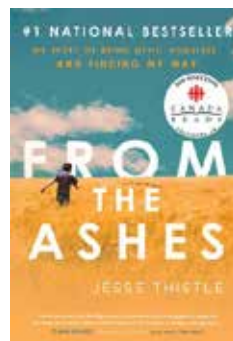
What is his connection to Indspire?

**“I received help from Indspire in my second year of undergrad through the office of Aboriginal Student Services at York University.” Jesse continues, “the grant meant that life was easier with less debt and more time to study. When you are in second year, you are just starting to transition into ‘student-hood’. The help from Indspire meant that the future really was attainable and the cash was a lifeline.”**

Jesse says to the donors of Indspire. “Thank you for giving me my eagle wings! Literally, when you support Indspire, your donation, no matter how much, is like feathers on an eagle wing. We need these wings to fly. Every gift, no matter how small will give someone wings. We really need donors to understand just how important they are – and to believe that they can make a huge difference in so many lives. I am proof.” •

### Jesse Thistle's memoir, *From the Ashes*, was selected for CBC's "Canada Reads"!

Canada Reads is an annual program hosted by CBC: "Five books, five champions, one winner: CBC's annual Battle of the Books has been getting people listening, watching and, of course, reading, for the past 18 years."



If you're not familiar with it, here's how CBC describes it:

*Canada Reads is a "literary Survivor," with celebrities championing books. Each day, panellists vote to eliminate one book, until a single title is chosen as the title the whole country should read this year.*

Country singer George Canyon will defend Jesse Thistle's memoir *From the Ashes* on Canada Reads 2020.

## From Aamjiwnaang First Nation to Montreal, Boston and Beyond



“Our voices haven’t been heard in a long time. My work communicates a lot of experience; from the rez to the urban landscape.”

**N**ico Williams works with Japanese cut glass beads and creates experimental three-dimensional forms using geometric beadwork. His practice transforms traditional Indigenous beadwork into a totally fresh and exciting fusion of art, mathematics, and hyperbolic energy theory.

As part of a new generation of contemporary geometric beadwork artists, Nico’s ground-breaking work is based on the intention that, “from my standpoint as an Ojibwe artist, I create concept-based works that challenge colonial perceptions of Indigenous people and give voices back to our communities.”

And the world is demanding to see his work. Last year Nico was invited to participate in a creation session entitled “Art, Architecture, and Models of Hyperbolic Energy” at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston and recently won The Fluevog Artist Grant from internationally renowned shoe designer John Fluevog to help with art supplies and other resources.

“My art combines digital and crafting technologies like modeling software and casting pods. I use precision-cut Japanese glass Delicas to explore deconstructed and cloned structures, kinetic movement, and galactic

patterning to give shape to 3D forms, like the Hyperloop, that redefine art and craft.”

Nico first received funding help from Indspire during his undergraduate degree, “I had a very hard time trying to buy my art-making supplies and I also needed support with my living expenses.” As his international profile has grown, Indspire is there again as Nico completes his MA in art at Concordia University in Montreal.

Nico says that, “donors to Indspire open big opportunities for students like me. It’s always a struggle to develop your practice, but when you know that there is a chance to get help, it makes all the difference.”

“In the future we need even more support because there are so many talented people who can make extraordinary art. There are big things happening and donors can be a part of it when they support an Indigenous student.”

Nico Williams has a very busy schedule; making art, studying, and exhibiting around Canada and the world from Singapore to Europe to New York. He is also in demand as a speaker and exhibitor at People of Colour and Indigenous Art conferences, and most recently as a keynote speaker at a conference at the University of British Columbia on Indigenous art and math. •

*Hyperblanket*  
by Nico Williams,  
as featured in the  
Indspire 2020  
calendar







## Sharing Stories From Behind the Lens on the Road to Reconciliation

**“I just want to encourage communication and continue the process of reconciliation; encouraging Indigenization rather than decolonization.”**

**V**ictoria Anderson-Gardner, from Eagle Lake First Nation, Ontario, is using her considerable talent as a young filmmaker to make a positive impact and to help bridge generations – with a lifetime commitment to give back to her community. She is a role model, an advocate, and an award-winning filmmaker.

Her thesis film, “The Hurt that Binds Us” won Best Documentary and she won Best Woman in Film awards from Ryerson University. Her highly-regarded work is a strong new voice and bears witness to shared traumas.

**“Traumas seemed like such hushed topics that no one wanted to talk about. In this two-year process of making the film I wanted to talk about them with my family and my community to help better understand myself. It was a life changing experience for me.”**

Victoria created a documentary to educate Canadians to encourage a deeper possibility for communication by rediscovering stories, so we can, as she wisely puts it, “step out into the light.”

Her connection with Indspire started back in high school when she attended a *Soaring: Youth Empowerment Gathering* for students. Yet it was only recently that she reached out for help to complete her final year at

Ryerson. Victoria received an Indspire bursary and says, “you can see from my personal experience, donors can encourage and inspire so many Indigenous youth across Canada when they get involved.”

She wants to tell donors, “your support is like a push, or a nudge to young people. It shows that you see what they are doing – and that you are proud of them. When a student receives help from Indspire, it is a strong message that it is actually possible to do the work. Knowing that people believe in you is such a strong motivator.”

**“The recognition aspect of a donation to Indspire is so important. You help someone feel like an important person, someone who can be successful, someone with pride in what they are working toward. This gift changes your entire perspective on life and on what can be possible.”**

Victoria wants donors to know that, “even just one donation can push someone forward into a positive direction in life, and help them succeed. It is so true that everything starts with one person. Just one gift can touch the lives of so many others.” •

## A Student Who’s Encouraged in Education Gives Inspiration to Patients in Need

**“I would like to help in any way I can to ensure future students may benefit from Indspire as much as I have. I was drawn to nursing because of the opportunity I will have to give back and make a difference each and every day.”**

**T**aryn Lionel Phaneuf is a 24 year-old from from the Métis Nation Saskatchewan currently, attending University of Saskatchewan working towards his Bachelor of Science in Nursing, made possible through the help of Indspire funding. Taryn’s dad is a registered nurse and has always been a great role model. Choosing

to pursue a post-secondary education in nursing was a simple choice; the healthcare field has always been of interest to him:

**“I feel that my background and values will allow me to be an effective patient advocate and aid in increasing the quality of care for Indigenous people. Once I have completed my degree I plan on working as a Registered Nurse in an area of healthcare I am most passionate**



## Inuk Educator, Preserver of Language, Community Hero: Doris Boase Wears an Invisible CAPE – to Care, Advocate, Protect and Educate



“My hope for the future is that I make a positive impact on the children in our community. I want to be a role model for them.”

The new Inuit Bachelor of Education program in Labrador is a unique partnership between the Nunatsiavut Government and Memorial University of Newfoundland.

For strong and determined teachers like Doris Boase, this training prepares Inuit teachers to be vital participants in a curriculum that is founded on Inuit history, culture, and worldview. The program restores the central role of the Inuit language, and is community-based – all to support the next generation of Inuit identity.

Doris says, “when I received help from Indspire I thought, oh my gosh – it was such a huge relief. It was a Godsend to me. I simply could not have done this without Indspire. It was life-changing to have the burden lifted.”

Doris Boase, today a dedicated Inuit educator in Goose Bay, Newfoundland, says it was not easy to get to where she is now. “When I was 20, I tried to go to school and ended up quitting. I thought I’d never be able to go back. I didn’t have a support system whatsoever.” She continues, “education is so intimidating if you don’t have support. My struggle was real. I simply could not have done this without Indspire.”

Doris was steadfast in wanting to take the intensive training but had to relocate to Goose Bay to complete her degree.

“My children had to stay with their father, they couldn’t move to Goose Bay to be with me. The stress of being away from them for five years was hard, but I knew I had to complete this program and teach others.”

“It swells my heart with gratitude. Help was necessary – without funding from Indspire, I could have dropped out again. Would I even be teaching now?”

Doris continues, “any gift, even a small one, can contribute to changing someone’s life. We live in a world of so much difficulty. But when you have support from Indspire you have the chance to catapult forward in a positive way and relieve the stress of being a student.”

She never gave up her dream during all those years of sacrifice and strife. Now, she teaches children in grade three, and grades five through 12, delivering lessons in Inuktitut – teaching the language, the culture and the curriculum.

Doris is clear to remind us that, “when donors give to Indspire, they bring more hope to the world. They increase possibilities to be realized and they lessen the barriers that Indigenous people face.” Which sounds exactly like the gift that Doris Boase is giving back to her students, every day. •

about: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Health. After further developing my skillset for two years I plan on returning to school to pursue a Master's degree.”

His journey through the education system has had some peaks and valleys. One of the first obstacles he faced was returning to high school after graduation to upgrade his marks. After that, the second barrier was paying for school and living comfortably while doing so.

“In each challenge, a lesson is learned. I consider returning to high school and raising my grades enough to be accepted into university one of my greatest successes. A second success was being accepted into Nursing. I have proved to myself that I am able to set goals, accomplish them and succeed in life.”

Taryn has always enjoyed volunteering with local youth, especially in sports, as a coach and mentor. Having the opportunity to encourage youth to pursue their dreams and live a healthy lifestyle is something he’s always found great joy in; something his family constantly encouraged. “Giving back is something I always make time for. Having a positive interaction with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth is important in ensuring they believe in themselves and have a role model to look up to.” •



## Meghan is a Role Model as a Mentor, Nurse, Student, Daughter, Sister, Grand-daughter, and more

“As a nurse I have always been very compassionate and empathetic. Learning through my own challenges with mental health helps me to continue to develop skills to be able to build strong, trusting relationships with which I can help people.”

**M**eghan Eaker grew up in Edmonton and Sherwood Park and is a member of the Woodland Cree First Nation in Northern Alberta. She received funding from Indspire towards her tuition at McGill University and at just 26 years old, is already helping teach the next wave of future nurses.

Currently working on her Master’s degree in Nursing, Meghan is also an informal peer mentor, waiting to officially start a program at her university to help nursing students; she enjoys supporting Indigenous students in other health care disciplines too. She is often a guest speaker at various classrooms, conferences and events about anti-racism and cultural humility.

“I love the flexibility to do clinical work with Indigenous people and also educate other healthcare professionals on how to deliver culturally safe care.”

Meghan comes from a big blended family; she has 10 siblings! And her parents do too: “My kokum (grandmother) and mosum (grandfather) and all their siblings attended residential schools. I help in providing informal care to members of my family including my mosum, kokum and siblings.” And her innate ability to deliver empathetic and culturally specific health care is

evident in her involvement with her family’s health concerns, too.

“Last year I spent several months caring for my mosum while he was in palliative care. I also helped out with my step-kokum and little sister by taking them to medical appointments and acting as a health advocate for them.”

In the fall while at McGill, Meghan volunteered to teach a Cree language course “because it is very important to me to support our Indigenous languages. My aunt still speaks fluent Cree and is helping me learn.” She would like to be able to have more time to volunteer in the future and is particularly interested in street nursing, palliative care and pediatrics. Her long-term goal is to help Indigenous families have a positive experience if their children are ill, at either a specialized Indigenous clinic or as an Indigenous health services navigator.

“During my time working with Inuit and Cree children, I was exposed to the issues of institutional racism and saw how it negatively affected my patients, especially when reflecting on the number of young people who commit suicide. I decided to pursue a Master’s of Nursing to try to learn better how to address these issues as a Cree nurse.” •

## Resources to Round out your Cultural Competency

### In communities all across Canada, Indigenous Cultures are Flourishing!

Check our website (<https://indspire.ca/supporters/donor-resources>) under the ‘Supporters’ tab for an ever-evolving list of First Nations, Inuit and Métis artists, singers, authors and innovators: there are many ways you can learn about Indigenous cultures! There’s

plenty of great resources online – you can learn how to do beadwork or cook bannock, make plans to attend a PowWow or Strawberry festival, open your ears to music in a language you’ve never heard – this is the path to reconciliation.

## Arctic Nursing Needs New Scholars, Supporters and Sustainability

“Being a student can be very difficult in many ways and I cannot thank you enough for your support. I am sure this makes a huge difference for every student you support.”



**V**ayda Kaviok is a young Inuk from Arviat, Nunavut, where the majority of the 3000 people there are under the age of 25. She is a nursing student looking to specialize in psychiatry, and is one of many young Inuit scholars fluent in English and her traditional language of Inuktitut, an invaluable skill in the field of healthcare – especially when it comes to helping people with mental health issues.

She went to John Arnalukjuak High School before starting her nursing program at Nunavut Arctic College last year. Since her high school graduation it’s been difficult for Vayda to find employment – which was one of the reasons she knew she had to upgrade her education.

“I have finally decided to pursue my post-secondary education after 5 years because I know that jobs here at home are not always going to be available for me. It is difficult for us because there are not many jobs and many people are struggling. Jobs require more education, meaning bachelors, masters, PhD, or something simple like a certificate.”

Vayda wants to work as a community nurse for a few years after graduating from college and eventually go back to pursue graduate school. Her decisions will

have a ripple effect throughout her community; young students will be inspired by her, older patients will be comforted by her and her peers will learn from her.

“I understand the difficulties Inuit patients have to go through when they visit the Arviat Health Centre. Inuktitut is the main language and most people struggle to communicate in English. Being bilingual in both English and Inuktitut makes me very confident that it will be very beneficial in my home community.”

Like many nursing students, Vayda started her journey with a pre-nursing certificate program at college as a ‘transition year’ that will lead to a Bachelors of Science in Arctic Nursing. She wants to pursue a post-graduate degree that will focus on mental health and eventually be employed as a community health nurse back in her home community of Arviat. She is compelled to reach her goals by the support and encouragement of Indspire donors:

“I want to thank you very much for your on-going support of Indspire. By receiving a scholarship, it motivates me to push harder and finish what I started.” •

## The 2020 Indspire Awards

This year we’re celebrating an incredible group of achievers who will be receiving Indspire Awards. Join us in recognizing the talent, innovation and resilience of all the Award recipients as we bestow the highest honour on First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who have made significant contributions to Indigenous education, art, culture, business, health, law and public service in Canada. Watch the broadcast on CBC and APTN on National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21st.





## An Inuk Throat Singer Infuses Culture in Community Counselling

**"I'm learning to channel my emotions as fuel to empower my decision to help change the Canadian perspective and treatment of Indigenous people."**

Malaya Bishop is an ambitious Inuk with something to prove. She started her career as a graphic designer and after a few years she began to feel as though there was something else out there calling her.....

**"I decided to pursue a post-secondary education because I want a career that is meaningful to me. Prior to attending the University of Alberta, I was a graphic designer, but I felt like it wasn't enough, I wanted to do something that will help Indigenous people in Canada. I enrolled in Psychology because I feel that I can make positive impacts in my community with mental health training."**

Malaya's mother is an Inuk from Nunavut and her father is non-Indigenous, hailing from Nova Scotia. She moved to Edmonton for school and recently graduated from University of Alberta with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. It was not always an easy journey, Malaya shares:

**"Working towards my bachelor's degree was very difficult -- one of the biggest challenges of my degree was continuing to absorb material that portrays Indigenous people in a bad way."**

She is overcoming this obstacle more and more as she continues on her journey to a post-graduate degree, thanks to the help of Indspire donors.

Currently living in Nunavut, Malaya was happy to move back home this year. She plans on taking a year or two off from school to work and gain experience, eventually more in the mental health field. Afterwards, she'll apply for graduate school in Community Psychology specific to an Inuit Studies graduate program.

While working on her undergraduate degree, she was the president of her university's local Inuit Society (called Inuit Edmontonmiut). She and her fellow students put in a lot of time and effort in working to strengthen and build relationships among Inuit living in the Edmonton area.

**"In this role I connect with Inuit in Edmonton to provide cultural activities and a space for Inuit to connect within our city. Community Psychology**

**analyzes, and applies intervention to the broader systems (social, political, etc.) that affect human behaviour. Learning Community Psychology will give me the basis I need to contribute to improving the well-being of our society as a whole."**



Malaya has always enjoyed lending a hand whenever possible, in any capacity. This ambitious student leader maintained excellent grades, excelled in university intramural programs, advanced her career as a performer and found time to volunteer every semester during her undergraduate degree. What an incredible role model.

**"I volunteer and participate in my community; I was enrolled in the Community Service-Learning certificate program at the University of Alberta. Through this program I volunteered at a local organization each semester."**

As if that wasn't enough to keep her busy, Malaya also has a booming career as an entertainer! She is one half a throat singing duo called the "Sila Singers", taking gigs at concert halls and conferences across Canada (and even in Europe – and beyond!) as often as her schedule permits. Malaya and her duet partner, Jenna Broomfield, sing traditional songs and newly composed ones that they create.

**"...as a throat singer, I share my culture to various groups of people ranging from elementary school children, corporate conferences, to Inuit who want to learn how to throat sing."**

When asked to reflect on her journey thus far, Malaya presents an extremely mature and exemplary perspective: "My past challenges have helped strengthen my successes. I have failed many times, but I haven't given up on myself." •