

Together, Samantha Kigutaq–Metcalfe and Cailyn DeGrandpré are Tarniriik, meaning Two Souls. Tarniriik, are Inuit Throat Singers who performed at the 2020 *Soaring Indigenous Youth Empowerment Gathering*. Samantha’s family is from Nain, Nunatsiavut and Arctic Bay, Nunavut. Cailyn’s family is from Baker Lake, Nunavut.



photo credit: Liz Beedall



Indspire

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

INSPIRING CHANGE

HELPING STUDENTS REALIZE THEIR DREAMS

Fall 2020

A message from Roberta Jamieson

After more than 15 years as President and CEO of Indspire, I will be stepping aside at the end of the calendar year. I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors has appointed Dr. Mike DeGagné, as the new President and CEO. Mike is a celebrated national leader in Indigenous education, former university President and *Indspire Award* Laureate in the field of public service.

As I sit down to write what will be my last newsletter introduction, I am so proud for all the work that we have done together to support First Nation, Inuit and Métis students across Canada.

What tremendous growth and development we have jointly achieved at Indspire, with an eightfold increase in bursaries and scholarships – \$132 million to more than 42,500 First Nation, Inuit and Métis students. This has been possible through your generosity, along with other supporters who have believed in helping students reach their full potential.

You and I both know that the way forward is through education. As Senator Murray Sinclair said when he was Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Education is what got us into this mess, and it will be education that gets us out."

In Canada we are witnessing the most exciting and challenging years we have ever experienced, with more potential to make transformational and systemic change happen than we have ever seen before – we are in a time full of possibility for the future.

In this issue of *Inspiring Change*, we're sharing with you what reconciliation means through the words of students your donations helped support last year, along with other stories that demonstrate the impact of your support.

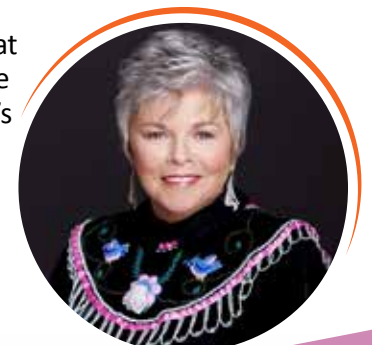
As is true of many Indigenous peoples, my own people, the Mohawks of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, are instructed that in living our lives and making our decisions for the future, we must focus our attention not on ourselves, not on our children, or even our grandchildren but rather on the Seventh Generation – those yet to be born, children whose faces are still coming towards us.

The Seventh Generation is not a figurative abstraction: it consists of real human beings not yet born – the people who will call us "their ancestors." They have every right to expect that we will realize the opportunity to put our minds together to improve life in the future.

Nia:wen - thank you – for all that you do to help make that future possible and to realize Indspire's North Star that *within a generation, every Indigenous student will graduate*.

Until our paths cross again,

Roberta Jamieson
President & CEO
Indspire





Pay it Forward

Don and Heather Perrier
London, Ontario

Long-time donors Don and Heather Perrier are deeply committed to their values of equity and access to education.

Dr. Perrier says, “We’ve always had a great concern for Indigenous people. When we started to make philanthropic gifts, we wanted to concentrate our support to one organization. I found the Indspire website and it met all our criteria. This was over ten years ago. We are not aware of anything else that makes a bigger impact on Indigenous people’s lives. Indspire is so tremendously helpful to young people, and is so well run and reliable. We knew right away that we’d found the best way to help.”

They both have a unique vantage on this issue. Don Perrier is a past Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto, and Heather retired after a long career in Student Affairs at the University of Toronto.

Where does this drive for social justice come from?

Heather says of her husband that, “Don is very modest about things but he’s one of the most principled people I’ve ever met in my life.” Don grew up in Saskatchewan and was heavily influenced by the spirit of Tommy Douglas. “I saw the level of poverty for Indigenous people,” Don says, “I guess as a young man I developed a social conscience. I knew I wanted to help people less privileged than I was. I wanted others to have the same chance that I had to move forward and find good jobs and gain benefits in their lives.”

Heather says, “We believe the history of the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada has been the greatest tragedy in our history. And that young Indigenous students have the greatest need in Canada. Education is progress.”

She continues, “the greatest investment you can make in life is helping someone get an education for a brighter future. That gift opens so many doors to move forward. And one day soon, the student becomes a role model to inspire others in their community. When you invest in a student’s education, they have it for life. It cannot be taken away.”

Heather grew up in southern Ontario near the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford. “It isn’t until you get older that you more fully understand what it is that people have to endure. So yes, Don and I are okay being called social justice advocates.”

Don and Heather Perrier agree that based on their experience, “donors should know that over the last decade we’ve seen that Indspire is a very high impact, positive force.”

Not everyone has to pursue a university, of course. Colleges, trades and technology programs are excellent choices as well. As Don points out, “just make sure it is something post-secondary. We know that education can be intimidating for students, especially from a rural area. That’s why Indspire is so important in its role as an advocate for Indigenous students - and they can help so much to guide young people through the system.” •

Building a Beautiful Life, Keeping Family Close and Staying Connected to Community

**Destyni Basil,
Ktunaxa Nation, British Columbia**



Destyni Basil is from a region in Southern British Columbia known as the Kootenays, specifically Ktunaxa Nation (pronounced 'k-too-nah-ha'), with the Lower Kootenay Band. She grew up on this First Nations reserve, not far from Creston, BC; her home community is small (52 houses) but the history of her people is larger than life.

According to the Ktunaxa creation story, before man was made, the land was inhabited by animals and animal spirits created by Nupika (the Creator), who told these animal spirits to move up above to be guardians and that only their forms in spirit, language, songs and dances could be left behind to help the Ktunaxa people in the territory.

Destyni has always felt a strong sense of responsibility for her people and this desire to contribute to her community brought her into a position as a council member with her Band's Social Investment sector, where she served for three years. Before that, Destyni had to overcome some pretty big obstacles to start making her dreams come true.

This Indspire-funded student has been through a lot of difficult times. She had her daughter when she was only 16 years old and life as a single mother was tougher than she imagined – her daughter was taken away and this led to some very dark days.

“Some past challenges in my life included struggling with addictions when I was younger, and dealing with depression and anxiety. I managed to get my life together and get my daughter back in my care... I managed to continue living when some days all I wanted to do was give up.”

Now with her daughter back at home and her career on the up-and-up, Destyni is finding no shortage of reasons to smile. She completed her diploma at College of the Rockies with the Mining Apprenticeship Program as a Heavy-Duty Mechanic and had the opportunity to travel internationally to talk to young women in developing countries about working in a predominantly male-oriented industry.

“Once I obtain my Red Seal and get enough experience, I can apprentice someone, and I can motivate someone to want better for themselves. To show someone that even though you may struggle, better things do come.”

When asked about featuring her in the newsletter, her reply was brave and humble: “That really means a lot to me. I would absolutely be honoured to have my story shared and I hope it does inspire other students and donors.”

“Without education I wouldn't be able to provide a better life for my daughter. Thank you for all your generous support in helping people achieve a brighter future.” •

71%

of funding recipients are female

Source: Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards (BBF) Program Recipients' Outcomes Report, 2020



A Celebration and the Joys of Giving

Julie MacFarlane, B'mose Aapto Nookmis Giizis Kwe
"Walking Half Moon Woman" in Anishinaabemowin
(Ojibwe language)

For Julie MacFarlane, celebrating her twins' birthday this past spring was an opportunity to support Indspire. Julie says, "it was important for us to support an Indigenous specific charity; so I was pleased to find Indspire on the ECHOage list!"

ECHOage is an online platform that invites guests to a party with the option of giving their gift online, which goes to both a charity the honoree has chosen and towards a gift. It provides convenience and a way to teach children the "joy of giving". ECHOage parties have grown from children's birthdays to celebrating any occasion such as anniversaries, showers and adult birthdays.

Creating a celebration for Eliza and Andrew's seventh birthday, which included social distancing, required some creative party planning. The big day included a drive-by parade complete with family, friends, local police sirens and a custom-made cake which appealed to both their interests. The cake had two themes featuring LOL Dolls for Eliza and Fortnite for Andrew.

The family is from Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. Eliza and Andrew, have been Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) immersion students since pre-school, as part of an active language revitalization initiative in their First Nation community. Julie adds "I would love to give an additional nod to all of their teachers and

administrators from pre-school Enji Maahtaawaad Early Years and Antler River Elementary School for all of their hard work. Indspire directly supports Indigenous education programs such as these."

"Miigwech (thank you) for the opportunity to support Indspire through our children's birthday celebration. The Indigenous education sector is underfunded and as a cause, it is very near and dear to our hearts, culture and community."

Thank you Julie, Eliza and Andrew for choosing to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit students as part of your birthday celebration! •



Student Voices

What does reconciliation mean to me?

Wanda John-Kehewin
Cree from Kehewin, Alberta



At present, reconciliation is a term used to describe the need to make amends with Canada's Indigenous People: for the excessive adversities they have faced since contact. The knowledge and the accountability behind the intentions of 'reconciliation' are major breakthroughs in acknowledgement and validation of the injustices, both past and present.

True reconciliation would mean teaching an unbiased history to both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Peoples: through an Indigenous lens. True reconciliation would also mean dismantling stereotypes and stigmas attached to Indigenous People. The 'Native narrative' in Canada needs major restoration so future Indigenous children can feel like they are worth more than the white papers their ancestors signed. True reconciliation means Indigenous people can acknowledge their own pain and be given that chance and understanding. I think reconciliation means that we need to teach our children compassion and understanding in schools and not just tolerance.

Reconciliation means meeting people where they are at and asking them, as individuals, what do you need? In order to truly change the 'Native narrative': Indigenous people/communities should have the power and the support to create what true reconciliation should look like and be for their own

people—in order to do this, more research and services are needed with Indigenous focus and wo/manpower.

In June 2008, I sat on my bed watching the public apology and the tears, I never knew I needed to shed, flowed and didn't stop for two years. I wish both my parents could have been alive to hear the public apology and I think it would have released a lot of shame and guilt they both felt, carried, and hid. The apology was only words, but still a public acknowledgment and a public validation that was so hard for many Indigenous People because once the validation of the injustices was acknowledged, a lot of people finally could cry. The question was, could they stop?

The public apology was the start of 'reconciliation' in my heart and meant that one day, my children would be able to focus on a bright future and be able to live in each and every moment. Reconciliation, to me, means feeling supported and validated enough to feel safe to do the healing work that needs to be done without being judged and this does not look the same for everyone. (Not every Indigenous person has the same bannock recipe) The most important thing to me, about reconciliation, is the need for Indigenous voices and People to be involved in the process from beginning to end. We all need to help stop the pain all people face, who have been kicked so hard in the past, their future children fell. •

70%
of employed BBF recipients work in fields that support the Indigenous community

Source: Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards (BBF) Program Recipients' Outcomes Report, 2020

Student Voices

What does reconciliation mean to me?

Kayleigh Colford,
Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
Eel Ground First Nation, New Brunswick

As an Indigenous woman, I believe that reconciliation must be inclusive for all. Doing so, we as Canadians must strive to implement Indigenous teachings and history in school systems. Indigenous studies must also be taught by Indigenous peoples and through traditional means. Education and justice go hand in hand but cannot afford to be told through a colonialist perspective any longer.

Growing up, I only had one Indigenous school teacher, who taught a Maliseet history class. This class opened my eyes to the beauty of other Indigenous cultures and allowed me to learn more about cultures that were not my own. During my 13 years in public school I only ever had one Indigenous teacher. As a daycare teacher, I try to encourage the children to learn about new cultures and diversities. We celebrate Christmas, Hanukah and Chinese New Year. My co-workers and I teach the young students about the important role that Indigenous people play in Canada's history.

It hurts me to know that I may very well be the only Indigenous teacher they will ever have. To me,

reconciliation is the connection between two nations. It's rooted in peace, solidarity and common ground. It is allowing Indigenous peoples to speak for themselves to educate young and old about Indigenous history, struggles and triumphs. Canada's history is rooted in struggle and sadness, which should not be overlooked. However, to me reconciliation is the act of working toward a positive, inclusive and resilient future between Indigenous and non- Indigenous peoples.

Teaching people about reconciliation must become like second nature so that we can have an inclusive Canada for all. Like traditions and creation stories, strength in reconciliation should be passed down through generations. Children taught about Indigenous history and strength will turn into adults who will pass on the same knowledge to their children. To me, reconciliation is the string that holds all of us together, but just needs help being tied. •

90%

of BBF recipients graduate

Source: Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards (BBF) Program Recipients' Outcomes Report, 2020

Student Voices

What does reconciliation mean to me?

Rawennontie Brant,
Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario



Shé:kon, wa'tkwanonhwerá:ton.
To me, reconciliation means acknowledging the past, making amends and supporting Indigenous peoples toward a brighter future. For example, residential schools are something of the past that still have an everyday effect on the average Indigenous person. Through making amends and helping Indigenous people with mental health, Canada will have taken large steps in the right direction towards reconciliation.

Although the last residential school was closed in 1996, the effects of language loss are still very real today, for all Indigenous peoples. In my community, there are no longer any first-language Mohawk speakers left, only second language speakers who have travelled to sister communities in order to learn. If residential schools didn't take such a toll on my community, my people would still be speaking and thriving in the language.

Canadians, however, are now doing a good job at reconciling by providing funding through programs such as Indspire, to students that are learning their

language. I personally am very thankful for such funding as I have received support from Indspire during times of need. I recognize the efforts being taken and am grateful. I am also happy to know that other communities receive similar support.

I believe that honesty and trust is the foundation to any healthy relationship. In the case of Canada and its Indigenous peoples, Canada has a long way to go in order to regain full trust from Indigenous peoples. But, if Canada remains honest about its intentions and is able to right their wrongs then our trust will be regained sooner than later.

At the end of the day, the true definition of reconciliation (according to the Oxford Dictionary) is, "the restoration of friendly relations.", and anything that Canada can do towards achieving that, is a step in the right direction. •

Indspire's new e-newsletter!

Launched in August and sent monthly, the new Indspire e-newsletter is packed with information about impact, programs, events and upcoming initiatives.

Sign up to receive it regularly so you'll have the first glimpse at the exciting things happening here at Indspire!

Visit our homepage at [indspire.ca](https://www.indspire.ca) and scroll down to enter your email and subscribe.

Indspire appoints Mike DeGagné as new CEO

Indspire is very excited to announce that Dr. Mike DeGagné will be joining us as President and CEO on November 9, 2020.

An Ojibway from the Animakee Wa Zhing 37 First Nation, Mike DeGagné comes to Indspire after a number of firsts in Indigenous education: as President and Vice-Chancellor of Nipissing University in North Bay, he was the first Indigenous leader of a Canadian university; he later served as the first President of Yukon University, a new hybrid post-secondary institution in Whitehorse, Yukon.

DeGagné holds a PhD from Michigan State University, focussing on Indigenous post-secondary success, and an MA on Public Ethics from St. Paul University in Ottawa. He lectures regionally, nationally and internationally on the topics of Indigenous governance and reconciliation. He was also a recipient of an

Indspire Award for public service in 2018, is a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, and recipient of an honorary degree from Dalhousie University.



In addition to his education accomplishments, Mike DeGagné has been heavily involved working for mental health. He was the founding director of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, a national organization dedicated to addressing the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and has spoken nationally on the issues of healing and reconciliation.

Please join us in welcoming Mike to the Indspire family!

Indspiring Change at Home: A Virtual Conversation with our Community

In June, Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of Indspire, had a virtual conversation with Jesse Thistle, assistant professor in the Department of Equity Studies at York University and author of the best-selling memoir, *From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way*. This chat explores Jesse's journey: discovering his Métis

heritage, looking at the role models who have influenced him, and talking about the transformative impact that education has had on his life.

If you missed this fascinating conversation, you can view at: <https://indspire.ca/events/virtual-events/>

