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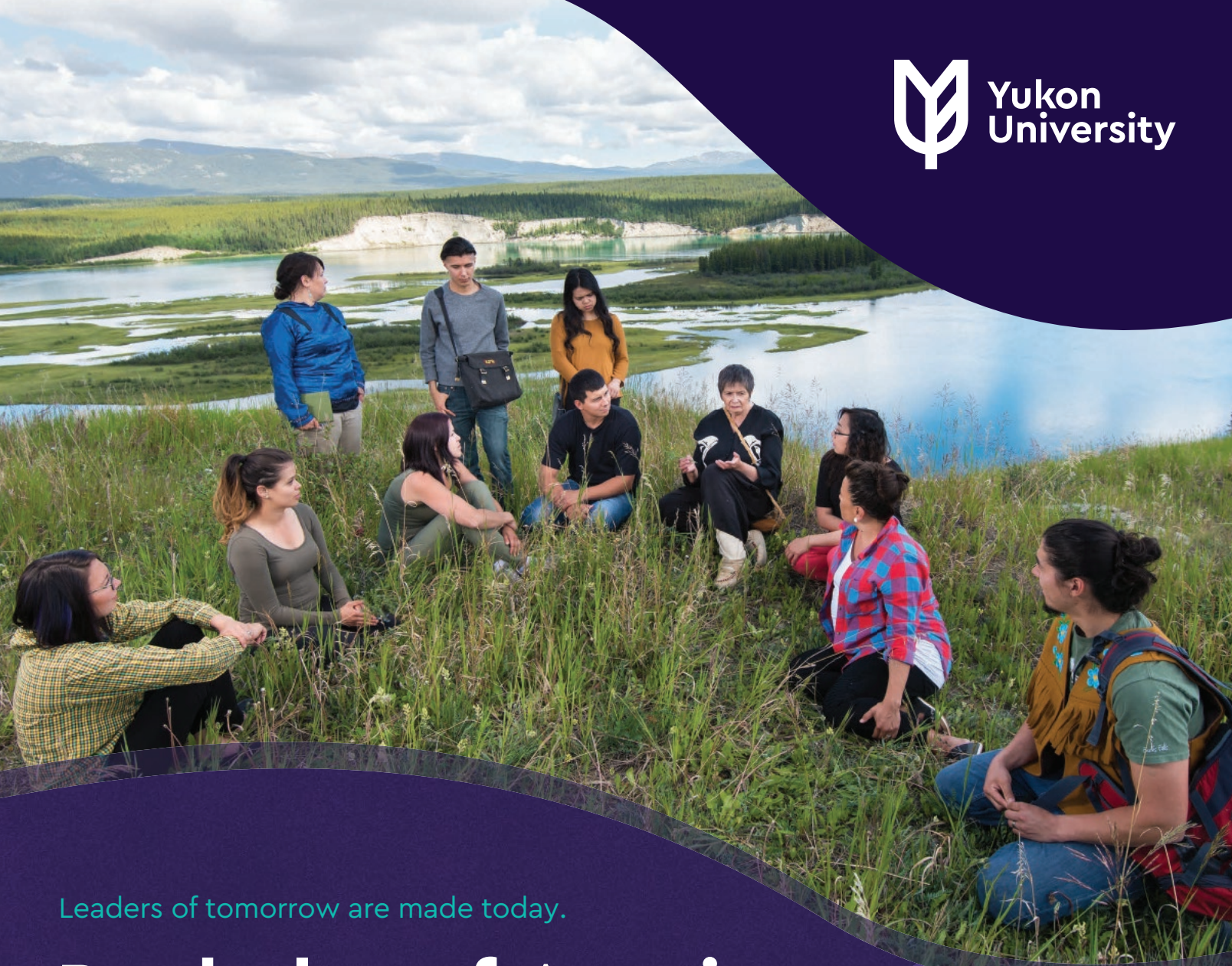
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CONTENTS 2020

8 MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Roberta Jamieson, Indspire President & CEO

- 12 EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID:** The pandemic created hurdles for Indigenous students, but it isn't holding them down
By Andrew Brooks

- 18 OUR GREATEST HOPE:** Indigenous enrolment is on the rise, and so is the involvement of Indigenous talent in the economy
By Niigaan Sinclair

- 22 BACKING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION:** When it comes to optimizing education outcomes of Indigenous youth, our work is far from over
By Matthew Bradford

- 30 A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE:** Three Indspire scholarship recipients make inroads in their chosen fields and pay it forward
By Sarah B. Hood



- 34 NEW SHOOTS FROM DEEP ROOTS:** Teach for Tomorrow – a program that brings Indigenous people into teaching
By Mike Hager, Indspire

- 38 PASSING THE BATON:** Indspire Laureate Tracie Léost runs to create opportunities for others – and build a future for herself
By Tracie Léost

- 42 STRAIGHT TALK:** Indigenous students share their views on higher education in an Indspire nationwide survey
By Helen Smith, Indspire

- 48 THE MAGIC OF MENTORING:** Indspire revamps its mentorship program to offer Indigenous students enhanced support
By Matthew Bradford

- 54 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORY**

A woman wearing an orange hard hat and a life vest is looking up at a large orange ship's hull. The ship has "WATER" and "FRONT" visible on its side. The background shows a city skyline across a body of water.

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Message from the President & CEO

Sge:noh, She:kon, Hello!

2020 has been a year of profound change: both on the global scale, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, and on a smaller scale here at Indspire. In that spirit, I'm excited to share the very first issue of *Indspiration* with you!

Our new magazine explores some of the changes we've seen here at Indspire and celebrates the hard work many people have been doing to keep Indigenous students supported on their journeys to success during a very unconventional time.

The first change – and the most personal one for me – was my recent announcement that I'll be stepping away from my role as President and CEO. I'm pleased to announce that Dr. Mike DeGagné has been appointed the new President and CEO of Indspire. Mike has long been a leader in Indigenous education, first as President and Vice-Chancellor of Nipissing University and subsequently filling the same roles at Yukon University. That's why Indspire honoured him with its Public Service Award in 2018. His determination to Indigenize education will help Indspire realize its goal of having every Indigenous youth graduate within a generation.

Learning begins with listening, and we did just that: reaching out to over 14,000 *Building Brighter Futures* recipients to find out how their educational journeys and post-education careers have progressed – with often surprising results – which you can read about in this inaugural issue. Educators and students have also shared the effects that COVID-19 is having on post-secondary education.

You'll learn about our *Rivers to Success* Indigenous mentorship program, which gives First Nations, Inuit and Métis students what they told us they need most to succeed on their educational journeys: good guidance from Indigenous mentors. Our *Teach for Tomorrow* program is also fulfilling a very valuable piece of the educational equation by helping young Indigenous students realize their dreams of becoming teachers – thereby ensuring that new generations of Indigenous students will see Indigenous teachers at the front of their classrooms.

And you'll hear from three of our wonderful *Building Brighter Futures* recipients as well as one of our Indspire Award Laureates, Tracie Léost, whose quest to bring attention to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is a very personal mission that is interwoven with her love of and gift for running.

Although all of these changes are happening in different areas, they're tightly bound together by the common thread of our North Star vision: within a generation, every Indigenous student will graduate.

Change is perennial, and sometimes uncomfortable...but change is always powerful. We're so excited to share these changes at Indspire with you.

Nia:wen!

Roberta Jamieson
President & CEO, Indspire



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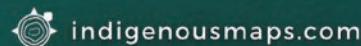


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Shell has been at the refinery site in Corunna (bordering on the Aamjiwnaang First Nation's community) since the early 1960s and has worked in partnership with the Aamjiwnaang First Nation for decades to build a meaningful relationship based on honesty, integrity and respect.





EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID

By Andrew Brooks

The pandemic
created a few
hurdles for
Indigenous
students, but
it isn't holding
them down

Canada's Indigenous students face many challenges when it comes to getting an education, especially at the post-secondary level. However, the public health measures taken across Canada to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic have presented students with new challenges. Social distancing requirements and online learning have created a paradigm shift for all students, but Indigenous students may be feeling the impact more than most.

"The move to online instruction in response to the pandemic has made even more clear and more urgent the inequities and disparities of education in Canada," says Paul Davidson, President and CEO of Universities Canada, which represents Canadian universities at home and abroad. "In particular, Indigenous students have had difficulty accessing broadband and WiFi, and experience problems with intermittent connections. Those are real issues we will continue to take up with the federal government."



“The move to online instruction in response to the pandemic has made even more clear and more urgent the inequities and disparities of education in Canada. In particular, Indigenous students have had difficulty accessing broadband and WiFi”

Paul Davidson, President & CEO
Universities Canada

Events included a ‘Meet the Mentorship Officers’ online get-together and a paint night, where Cree visual artist KC Adams conducted an online walkthrough of a Norval Morrisseau painting. “We’re very good at rolling with the punches – we all want to support each other,” says Stoneman, noting that while there have been a few hurdles to cross, the overall vibe remains optimistic among Indigenous students. “I’d say the general outlook, even with the outbreak and all the confusion, is really positive.”

If anything, says Annette Trimbee, President and Vice Chancellor of MacEwan University in Edmonton, COVID has made it startlingly clear that programs to support Indigenous students are especially important. She has also noticed that “COVID has really got a lot of people – and not just young people – looking for ways to reinvent themselves, and universities are going to play a key role in upskilling and reskilling.”

Indspire’s own *Rivers to Success* program, which provides mentors for Indigenous students in high school, university and college, was challenged by COVID-19 in much the same way most educational initiatives were. “We lost the face-to-face piece of it when COVID happened,” says Julia Stoneman, an Indspire Mentorship Officer and member of the Misipawistik Cree Nation in Manitoba.

Indigenous students emphasized that they really needed that connection to culture, community, Elders and identity. Fortunately, says Stoneman, “we were able to refocus our energies into our online portal. We had already been putting a lot of resources there. We started doing online events, changing our ideas about how to bring people together.”



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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Certainly, the COVID pandemic has been a test for Canada's Indigenous students, bringing out their coping skills and resilience. Henry Brass, a member of the Peepeekisis Cree Nation of Treaty 4 in Saskatchewan, was hoping to resume his nursing studies at the University of Regina this January after taking a pause to deal with real-life issues that included a cancer diagnosis.

The pandemic has put those plans into question for Brass, a single parent, who has simultaneously battled a general sense of isolation. "The hardest part for me has definitely been the isolation," says Brass. "The resources I used to use to get help disappeared. The occasional email and the occasional call just aren't the same."

"COVID has really got a lot of people – and not just young people – looking for ways to reinvent themselves, and universities are going to play a key role in upskilling and reskilling"

Annette Trimbee

President & Vice Chancellor,
MacEwan University



While he waits for word on his January re-admission to nursing school ("It's looking good!"), Brass is studying Cree and linguistics remotely through First Nations University, part of the University of Regina. Having cancer meant he qualified as a full-time student despite taking only two courses,

which in turn meant he could receive the full Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB). Brass says this was a godsend, as he was facing "destitution" at the time.

Jazzmin Cameron is a master's student in public administration through a program jointly offered by the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba. With a degree in biological sciences already under her belt, the Manitoba Metis Federation member intends to put her education to work in Indigenous governance and public services in Indigenous communities.

Cameron's fall courses are online for the most part and this is already a familiar routine for Cameron as her studies moved online as soon as the pandemic hit last spring. But it can still be a hurdle, she

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“The hardest part for me has definitely been the isolation. The resources I used to use to get help disappeared. The occasional email and the occasional call just aren’t the same”

Henry Brass
Cree Student

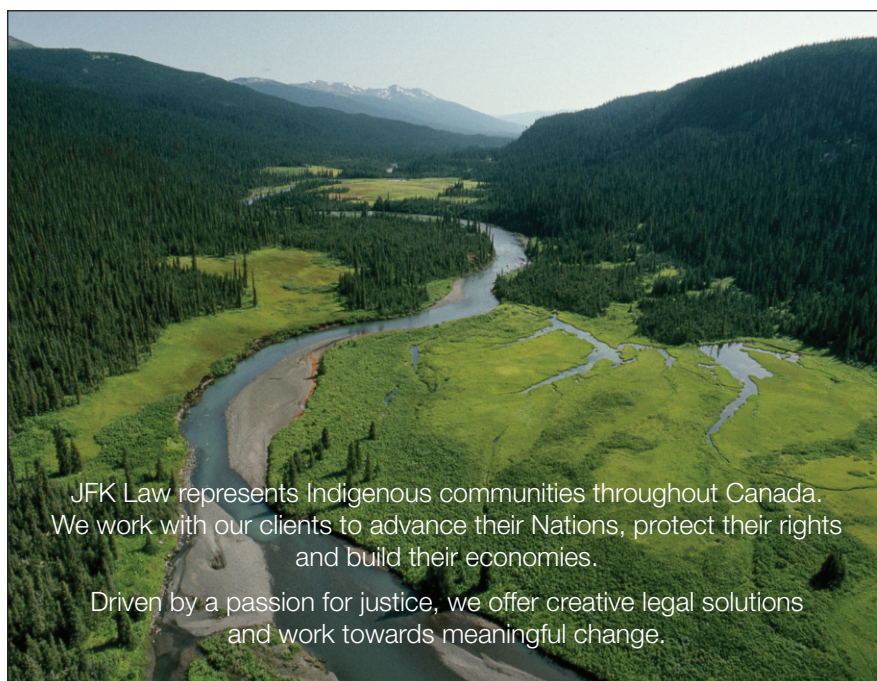


says. “My master’s program is based on a lot of collaboration and discussion, so being online will have an effect. The courses are mostly in a discussion format, where we discuss readings rather than attending a lecture. That kind of approach is a lot harder over Zoom or videoconferencing. Plus you can have connection problems and other technology issues,” she explains.

Cameron also notes that she, like other students, has made university friendships through after-class activities, whether going out as a group or just chatting between classes. That bonding is especially important for students who are just starting their studies, but with the emphasis on distancing and online learning, the batch of newcomers this fall will miss out.

Tamara Takpannie, a Nunavut native who studies in Ottawa, believes the coming semester will be tough in the COVID-19 climate. Takpannie is currently pursuing a BA in Canadian studies with a minor in psychology at Carleton University. Studying from home puts a lot of onus on the student, she says, and she has had to be careful to keep up with her online lectures.

Takpannie also misses the face-to-face contact with instructors and fellow students and is feeling the lack of access to campus resources. “I’m being super strict with myself and what I have to do,” she says. “I have to take control of my mental health, which is



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“I’m being super strict with myself and what I have to do. I have to take control of my mental health, which is something you need support for. On campus I would see an Indigenous counsellor. Now I don’t have that”

Tamara Takpannie

Inuk Student, Carleton University

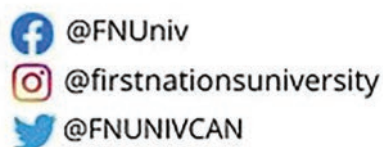


something you need support for. On campus I would see an Indigenous counsellor. Now I don’t have that.”

There are also practical considerations. Takpannie is the mother of an eight-year-old son, and she would return to Iqaluit if it weren’t for his schooling. But she knows she would face challenges with her own education if she did. “If I had an online exam, my Internet connectivity could go out at any time. I’d have to drop out of university just because we don’t have access to these things,” she says. “The challenge is just getting the Inuit onto the basis of having what everybody else has.”

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Despite the hurdles, the pandemic has fortunately not shown any sign of negatively impacting the numbers of Indigenous students pursuing a higher education. Today, they make up six per cent of Canadian university students – the highest proportion in a decade – and it’s going to take more than a pandemic to slow them down. After all, they’re used to tackling a challenge. “It’s been rough for us for a long time, but we’re still here,” says Brass. “We’re a resilient, strong people and we’re going to be fine. It’s just going to take some time.” ●

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION: OUR GREATEST HOPE

By Niigaan Sinclair

Indigenous
enrolment in post-
secondary education
is on the rise, and so
is the involvement
of Indigenous talent
in the Canadian
economy

In the early 1970s, there were about a dozen Indigenous students at the University of Manitoba. One of them, my father, told me he could go months without seeing another Indigenous person.

For the 2019-2020 school year, that same university reported “over 2,600” self-declared Indigenous enrollees, nearly 300 more than the previous school year. And this isn’t the largest Indigenous campus community – that title belongs to the University of Saskatchewan, which had over 2,800 Indigenous students registered that year.

The numbers continue throughout the Prairies. The University of Alberta and the University of Regina have almost 1,800 Indigenous students, Athabasca University has nearly 1,500, the University of Winnipeg comes in at around 1,200, the University of Calgary at over 1,000, and Lethbridge University and Brandon University have about 500 each.

Universities aren't the only places of higher learning registering more Indigenous students. Red River College in Winnipeg, for example, has around 1,500 self-declared Indigenous students.

Conservatively, that's 15,000 self-declared Indigenous post-secondary students – just in the Prairies. In other words, we are surrounded by 15,000 soon-to-be lawyers, nurses, teachers, artists, doctors, plumbers and business owners.

This doesn't include Ontario, where 17,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students attend the province's colleges and universities, or B.C., which has over 14,000. Quebec and the Maritimes report lower numbers, but many schools there don't keep track of this data. Still, I'm almost at 50,000 now.

GATEWAY TO SUCCESS

This is incredible. It's a sign that Indigenous students – historically the most marginalized and oppressed group in Canada's education system – are overcoming obstacles and succeeding in education.

It's also a sign that teachers, schools and support services for Indigenous students are helping them enter the system and eventually achieve their degrees. Universities and colleges are not places for everyone, but for Indigenous peoples, they represent a gateway out of poverty and into opportunity.

Now, imagine for a moment that there weren't any obstacles. Indigenous peoples would fill the schools. Got that vision in your head? That's what today was supposed to look like, according to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers who negotiated treaties. And that just scratches the surface of Indigenous potential.

“Every single Canadian will eventually be living beside, working with, and perhaps even becoming family with an Indigenous person. Working effectively and meaningfully with Indigenous peoples and communities is the only positive and sustainable route Canada can take to live up to its potential”

Niigaan Sinclair

Professor in Native Studies, University of Manitoba

Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing and youngest community in Canada. According to the 2016 census, the Indigenous population grew 42.5 per cent in 10 years – four times faster than the rest of Canada's population. A third of this group is under the age of 14, bringing the current average age of an Indigenous person to 32.1 years – nearly a decade younger than the average Canadian age of 40.9 years. One doesn't have to look far to see the baby boomer generation – long the dominant group in Canada's population and economy – retiring and leaving behind a gap in the workforce.

Addressing the needs of Indigenous learners is arguably Canada's most pressing need and the most important investment everyone can make in the future of this country. In an ironic return to the 18th and 19th centuries – when Indigenous communities fed, clothed and cared for virtually everyone – who do you think is going to run the businesses, work in the long-term care homes and pay the taxes?

At the same time, due to a myriad of historical and political factors, many Indigenous youth never finish high school (never mind attend university) and this results in high unemployment rates in Indigenous communities. For instance, the unemployment rate



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among Indigenous peoples who can work is twice that of the non-Indigenous workforce (15 per cent vs. 7.5 per cent).

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Indigenous young people don't often have access to a well-funded education, decent paying jobs and opportunities for work experience and training, especially on-reserve, but also in urban areas. Then there are the challenges that Indigenous young people face when entering a workplace often unequipped with culturally-centred policies to support a changing workforce and lacking the necessary resources.

NEW REALITY

Regardless of whether Canada is ready or not, more Indigenous young people are entering the workplace. According to a recent TD Bank study, Indigenous women are "leading the way in labour markets," with an upswing in employment across all Indigenous demographics. Growth in employment has been particularly high in knowledge-based sectors such as finance, education and professional services, with around 40 per cent of off-reserve Indigenous workers employed in education, law, business and finance, management and health sectors.

So what has long been predicted is now a stark reality: Indigenous young people are Canada's greatest hope for the future. They are also the hope for Indigenous communities long shut out of the country's social, political and financial economy.

The growth of Indigenous students striving for success reminds us of the reality that every single Canadian will eventually be living beside, working with, and perhaps even becoming family with an Indigenous person. Working effectively and meaningfully with Indigenous peoples and communities is the only positive and sustainable route Canada can take to live up to its potential.

Educating Indigenous students and Canadians in an atmosphere of dialogue and relationship building is what sharing, trade and treaties – models for reconciliation – are supposed to be about. In this vein, Indspire and I have developed curricula and delivery models for workplaces and schools to inspire education for reconciliation based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action called *Climbing the Mountain*. You can learn more about this program at indspire.ca.

This work demonstrates the critical importance of fostering Indigenous professionals and building Indigenous economies that can invest in everyone's future. ●



Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing and youngest community in Canada - and a third of this group is under the age of 14



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BACKING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

When it comes to optimizing education outcomes for Indigenous youth, our work is far from over

By Matthew Bradford

From tomorrow's leaders to future innovators, Canada's Indigenous youth hold untold potential. Unlocking that potential, however, relies on meaningful and sustainable support for Indigenous education. Fortunately, that support is steadily climbing, especially with the recognition that Indigenous youth represent the fastest-growing demographic in the country – they are on track to eclipse 2.5 million in number over the next two decades.

Still, research indicates there is a widening gap between outcomes for Indigenous youth and their non-Indigenous counterparts when it comes to education, income and employment rates. Narrowing that gap would prove beneficial not only to Indigenous students, but to their communities as well. "Fully closing these gaps can lead to direct economic benefits in the form of higher incomes and help uplift



“We recognize the importance of investing for the future and believe that education is the most effective way of preparing and empowering Indigenous youth to be today’s and tomorrow’s leaders...[Education represents] the best way to prepare and empower Indigenous peoples to steward their own land and resources”

Barry Green

Barry and Laurie Green Family Charitable Trust

the social and cultural goals of Indigenous communities,” explains Tabatha Bull, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

This requires action on several fronts. First and foremost, it means supporting paths to education and strengthening connections between Indigenous students and Canadian employers. Done right, says Arlene Strom, Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel with Suncor Energy, the benefits can be far-reaching. “Supporting education initiatives can help close the gap and uplift communities,” explains Strom. “An educated, prepared workforce supports the talent needs of not only our company and industry, but communities across Canada.”

Promisingly, many businesses and community leaders are stepping up to help turn the tide, Suncor among them. The Alberta-based energy firm offers student mentorship and employment as well as Indigenous training and awareness programs. Its Suncor Energy Foundation gives generously to numerous Indigenous causes, including Indigenous education. Since 1999, the company has donated nearly \$10 million toward Indspire initiatives alone, including the organization’s *Research Knowledge Nest*. It has also funded travel for Indigenous youth in its operating communities to attend the annual Indspire Awards ceremony, and

partners with programs like Right to Play, Canada Bridges (aka Bridges Social Development), and the Actua InSTEM program. InSTEM conducts school workshops on science, technology, engineering and math for 35,000 First Nations youth in over 200 communities.

Last year the company entered a partnership with an Indigenous Youth Advisory Council, which works with young leaders from across Canada to gain perspective on what is important to their communities and how the company can improve its relations with them. “We are committed to supporting Indigenous youth to speak up and be heard,” says Strom, who chairs the Suncor Energy Foundation as well as Suncor’s Inclusion & Diversity Council. “Working with Indigenous communities supports us to better mitigate potential social and environmental impacts related to our work and helps ensure that local communities share in the benefits of energy development.”

FUTURE INVESTMENT

Suncor is not alone in its mission to promote and enhance Indigenous education. The Barry and Laurie Green Family Charitable Trust is another organization recognizing the importance of giving generously to Indigenous awareness and educational programs. In addition to supporting Indspire’s *Rivers to*

Success mentorship program, the Trust channeled \$2 million towards the creation of TVO’s Ontario Hubs, a media initiative that brings local news analysis back to the province’s regions. This includes a strong focus on issues impacting Indigenous communities.

“We recognize the importance of investing for the future and believe that education is the most effective way of preparing and empowering Indigenous youth to be today’s and tomorrow’s leaders,” says Barry Green, adding that education is the common denominator and represents “the best way to prepare and empower Indigenous peoples to steward their own land and resources.”

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business is also doing all it can to help Indigenous youth – in this case by connecting up-and-coming Indigenous talent to Canadian employers and simultaneously encouraging employers to add more Indigenous talent to their workforce. The organization oversees the only Indigenous-focused corporate social responsibility program in Canada – the Progressive Aboriginal Relations program, or PAR – which aims to help organizations build meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities in business development, leadership actions, community relationships and employment.

“The PAR program provides the framework for organizations to set and track their own Indigenous employment and professional development programs, according to community needs,” explains Bull. “If done successfully, this helps create more welcoming and inclusive work environments for Indigenous candidates and incoming employees.”

MOVING THE NEEDLE

While support for Indigenous education may be building, the work is far from over. Indigenous businesses still struggle to find qualified, educated talent. According to a 2016 Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business report, more than one in three Aboriginal businesses (36 per cent) create employment for others but find that “attracting qualified employees continues to be a challenge and an impediment to growth.” Two-thirds of employers – particularly larger firms – say it is difficult to find Aboriginal employees. The report, titled *Promise and Prosperity: The 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey*, was conducted in partnership with Environics Research Group and funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

As well, Indigenous businesses are underrepresented in key sectors

“If you’re asking what we need to do to support Indigenous students, the best answer is by asking them and then genuinely trying to take steps toward the kind of future they describe”

Arlene Strom

Chief Legal Officer, Suncor Energy



such as finance and insurance, administration, wholesale trade, health care and social assistance. Improving access to education among Indigenous youth is critical to levelling this imbalance. “Expanding access to relevant, high-skill education for Indigenous students could ultimately promote not only self-employment, but lead to more qualified Indigenous workers driving existing growth for Indigenous companies across regions and industry sectors,” says Bull.

Ultimately, supporting Indigenous education is a challenge that falls on the shoulders of many stakeholders, while corporate Canada

has an especially important role to play in improving labour market outcomes for Indigenous youth once they graduate. Businesses need to embrace meaningful outreach and embed Indigenous views and perspectives within their workplace, says Bull, while also proactively partnering with Indigenous leaders and groups to ensure they are on the right path. “Non-Indigenous employers should look to Indigenous-led businesses and organizations to share ideas and best practices,” she advises.

As for how the public sector can help, Barry Green hopes to see the public education system across all provinces and territories offer a full high-school credit devoted to Indigenous history and learning for all students. “Only by educating all our children and youth do I believe that true reconciliation can take place,” he says.

And then there is the all-important input from the Indigenous students themselves. We cannot forget their voices. Their insight, says Strom, is critical to improving education outcomes: “If you’re asking what we need to do to support Indigenous students, the best answer is by asking them and then genuinely trying to take steps toward the kind of future they describe.” ●



“Expanding access to relevant, high-skill education for Indigenous students could ultimately promote not only self-employment, but lead to more qualified Indigenous workers driving existing growth for Indigenous companies”

Tabatha Bull

President & CEO, CCAB



*We are so pleased to honour the achievements of Indspire and
to help celebrate this first edition of Indspiration.*

*Thank you to the entire Indspire team!
Welcome Mike DeGagné, and with much gratitude to
Roberta Jamieson for your incredible leadership. Miigwetch!*

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The Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) is celebrating their 20-year anniversary as a national, Indigenous-led, charitable organization working to promote healing and Reconciliation in Canada. The LHF's goal is to educate and raise awareness about the history and existing intergenerational impacts of the Residential and Day School Systems, Sixties Scoop and other colonial acts of oppression on Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis).

Part of the LHF's goals are to provide needed resources about Indigenous history. The history about residual trauma and the links to current social and economic issues are rarely taught in schools, which can lead to misinformation and foster racism, all of which underlines the need for more public education and resources on the topics of Residential and Day Schools, Sixties Scoop, and other colonial acts of oppression. There is little mentioned about the amazing contributions Indigenous Nations have made and continue to make to the fabric of our society within any of the educational resources. A comprehensive history highlighting the diversity of our Nations, languages, and traditions is lacking in the current curriculum. The LHF has created many resources to address this critical gap and to help inject more perspectives and knowledge on these issues to foster healthy and informed dialogue that will inspire positive action leading to equality.

The LHF honours Survivors and their families by taking direction from them to ensure that our initiatives consider their true and authentic voices, while providing Survivors with emotional support to ensure their work with us is an empowering and healing experience. We believe that by educating Canadians about both the rich histories of Indigenous Peoples, and the subsequent pain and injustices inflicted on generations after contact, we can highlight the strength and resilience of Survivors. With this approach, we can build respect, understanding, and empathy, so that meaningful connections can happen and we can inspire action that works toward justice, hope, and healing in Canada.

The LHF works to encourage people to address racism and discrimination in order to contribute to the equality, dignity, and just relationships among all. We will continue to work with teachers, school boards, universities, policing agencies, governments, officials, banks, unions, private businesses, and any willing partners to help meet these goals. The LHF offers a unique and comprehensive collection of resources, curricula, exhibitions, workshops, and research reports to anyone wanting to learn about Indigenous Peoples and willing to work toward Reconciliation. We believe true Reconciliation requires consistent, positive, and informed effort and action by everyone. Our teaching tools include the following:

1. Curriculum Resources that:

Emphasize Indigenous voices and explore First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences;
Provide comprehensive lesson plans, activity guides, and other resources; and feature two new curricula: one for K-6 and a new Sixties Scoop curriculum for 7-12.

2. Exhibitions that are:

Stand-alone, mobile exhibitions that provide a unique, museum-like experience and include first-hand, Indigenous Testimonies of the Residential and Day School System and Sixties Scoop. The exhibitions and associated activities promote healing and encourage acts of Reconciliation, and can be hosted in schools, offices, parliaments, galleries, or in any public space, available for loan for free and can be shipped across Canada.

3. Workshops and Training:

The LHF offers Workshops and training that fosters Reconciliation initiatives in your community, Federal, Provincial/Territorial or Municipal department, or organization by teaching about intergenerational impacts and Indigenous history. We teach people how to be an ally and the steps they can take to address racism and work toward improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples and the relationships among all in Canada.

4. Research Reports:

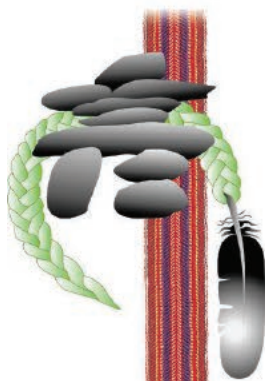
The LHF has research reports available on the impacts of Residential Schools in the areas of justice, domestic violence, suicide, inequality, health, and research reports on best practices for supporting Indigenous well-being, culture, and economic prosperity are also available from the LHF for free, and some at a minimal cost to support learning within your organization.

Our latest exhibition, *Escaping Residential Schools: Running for their Lives*, is now available through an animated virtual video, along with the Survivors' Oral Testimonies. The exhibition examines the experience of Survivors of the Residential School System and raises awareness on the impacts it has on our communities. For more information on the project, please visit: <http://legacyofhope.ca/project/escapingrs/>. The LHF is working on making its other exhibitions available online. LHF also has curriculum from K-12 and for adults, along with Activity Guides, aimed at educating Canadians about Indigenous history and the shared history of Residential and Day Schools, the Sixties Scoop, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

To view our catalogue: <http://bit.ly/exhibcatalogue2020>

Please check out our video at: www.vimeo.com/352694516

For training or to request exhibitions, please call the LHF at: 613-237-4806 Or email us at: info@legacyofhope.ca





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MNP aims to make Indigenous rights accessible for all Canadians

New book delivers thoroughly researched account of treaties, assimilation policies and attempts toward reconciliation

MNP is proud to announce a landmark book on Indigenous rights in Canada and their continued impacts on nations, governments and businesses across the country.

An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights investigates more than 300 years of treaties, conflicts and attempts to move forward — and the roles these have all played in shaping the country as we know it today. Through this unique and critical lens, the book helps to explain what Indigenous rights are, why they're important and how they continue to influence relations between Canada and Indigenous nations.

"We believe this book has the potential to effect a major turning point in how Canada interacts with Indigenous nations," says Clayton Norris, MNP's Vice-President of Indigenous Services.

"It covers a long timeline, but its findings remain relevant and highly consequential — underscoring the responsibility every Canadian has in honouring and upholding Indigenous and treaty rights as the fundamental part of constitution they are.

"Our goal is to get this book in the hands of not only every nation, business and government decision maker across the country, but every student as well."

Getting everyone on the same page

An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights has been both a personal and professional passion project for author, MNP Partner and leading Duty to Consult expert Tracy Campbell. Not only does she live and breathe Indigenous and treaty rights in her daily work with nations and industry, but as an Indigenous woman she's also experienced their impacts and consequences firsthand.

"The research and writing process was, in many ways, a process of trying to better understand my family and ancestors," says Tracy. "Especially the spoken and unspoken impacts marginalization and assimilationist policies had on my community — and communities I've worked with across the country over the past 25 years."

However, the book itself arose from a much more practical need. There is currently little non-academic literature available on Indigenous rights and history in Canada — and essentially none which covers the entire timeline from pre-confederation through the present. *An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights* was originally conceived as a companion resource for the firm's Indigenous rights training program; however, it turns out it may have far broader applications.

"I don't think it's possible to overstate its practical value in breaking down deep cultural barriers and repairing relationships between all peoples across Canada," Tracy says. "The deep lack of knowledge you see among all participants in this conversation is largely reflective of the lack of an accessible historical record.

"If we want to have informed and productive conversations, we first need to create a shared understanding to build from."

MNP's commitment to Indigenous nations and beyond

For MNP, the decision to support and take the unprecedented step of publishing the book was an easy one. The firm has been a national leader in providing accounting, consulting and tax services to Indigenous nations, businesses and individuals for more than 40 years, and, since merging with Tracy's firm in 2017, also one of the leading authorities on the Duty to Consult and Accommodate.

Having invested considerable time and resources into understanding Indigenous culture and history, MNP have come to appreciate the immense influence Indigenous and treaty rights have on decision making, goal setting and realizing beneficial outcomes.

Our history and relationship with Indigenous peoples is one of our firm's proudest accomplishments. *An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights* reflects our commitment to ensuring they receive the recognition and opportunities they deserve.

Working with many public sector organizations, resource developers and other business owners who either work with Indigenous nations, employ Indigenous peoples or have contracts with Indigenous-run businesses, we believe this book has the potential to benefit them and transform those relationships for the better, as well.

Keeping in line with the firm's mission to support continued learning and education, MNP plans to reinvest a portion of proceeds from *An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights* within the Indigenous community.

"We will be setting aside a portion of all book sales into our Communities Forward community investment fund," says Clayton. "We look forward to donating it to a recognized charity of choice for the benefit of community-led First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth initiatives."

Resources for more information

An Introductory Guide to Understanding Indigenous Rights is available for purchase through the MNP website at [MNP.ca/indigenousrights](https://mnp.ca/indigenousrights).

A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

By Sarah B. Hood

Three Indspire scholarship recipients make inroads in their chosen fields and pay it forward to the next generation

Victoria Anderson-Gardner
Filmmaker
and *Building Brighter Futures*
recipient



When Victoria Anderson-Gardner was about 15 years old – a difficult period in her life – she happened to watch a sci-fi film called *Another Earth*. “I went through a few hard years; honestly, I could have taken a bad path,” she says.

Instead, the movie sparked her interest in filmmaking. “The plotline plays with the concept of when you have two different paths set in front of you,” notes Anderson-Gardner. “It made me realize that I wanted to make films that could impact even one person, make them change their thinking in some way.”

As a result, Anderson-Gardner enrolled in film studies at Toronto’s Ryerson University and has already logged impressive credits in the film industry, including work as a production assistant on *Inconvenient Indian*, director Michelle Latimer’s adaptation of a book by Thomas King and one of the most talked about movies at 2020’s TIFF festival. Indspire is a screening sponsor for the film at the 2020 imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival.

Anderson-Gardner was raised in the Ojibway lands of Eagle Lake First Nation near Thunder Bay, Ontario, and moved to Toronto at the age of 17 with the assistance of Band

funding, a scholarship from Ryerson and funding from Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* program. Her thesis project *The Hurt that Binds Us*, an exploration of intergenerational trauma, premiered at the 2019 imagineNATIVE festival. "Part of my thesis was going up to the North to interview my grandparents, my parents, my siblings, bringing a film crew up with me. The *Building Brighter Futures* award helped me to achieve that," she says.

Among her other credits: direction of a segment of *In Search of a Perfect World*, a documentary about human rights hosted by Peter Mansbridge, and *Mni Wiconi: Mitakuyelo*, about five Indigenous Water Protectors, produced through her own Moontime Productions. She's currently working on a short film called *Nakuset's Bubbie*, about

a woman adopted in the "Sixties Scoop" who goes in search of her Indigenous family, as well as her first feature-length film, titled *Tenaya*.

As a queer Indigenous artist, Anderson-Gardner says she hopes to set an inspiring example to younger people. "I want to see my work at TIFF, at Sundance, on the big screens and on streaming services like Netflix, Crave and Prime, so it can be seen by as many people as possible," she says. "If more people see my work, I'm able to help more people."

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Anderson-Gardner is just one of the many remarkable recipients of financial support through Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* program. Another stellar example is Alana Robert, a 26-year-old Winnipeg-born citizen of the Manitoba Metis Federation and a 2020 Indspire Laureate (Métis Youth) who is currently practising law as an associate with McCarthy Tétrault LLP in Toronto.

In 2016, Robert graduated with Honours from the University of Manitoba with a BA in political science and economics. During her second year in the program, she spoke up against misogynist messages being spread by an elected student

representative but encountered "a lot of complacency in response," she says. This experience prompted her to create Justice for Women, which quickly grew into one of the largest student groups on campus.

The group organized awareness campaigns around current issues and raised more than \$20,000 in three years to support advocacy groups through events like a popular cupcake sale. "The third and probably the biggest legacy was creating programming and advancing consent culture on campus," says Robert. "The highlight was that we designed a policy mandating consent training for all student leaders across every faculty and got it approved by the student board."

In addition, Robert helped design Equal Voice, an electronic resource toolkit for advancing the representation of women in politics. Through this experience, she was selected to testify before the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where, she says, she "also talked about the services that exist and about violence to Indigenous women and girls." She also interned at The Hague in the Netherlands, working on victim and witness protection issues for the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Alana Robert

Indspire Laureate
and Associate
with McCarthy
Tétrault LLP



Métis Nation of Ontario

The Métis Nation of Ontario would like to congratulate Indspire on the launch of their new magazine and the publication of their first issue.

To learn more about the education, training, and employment programs and services we offer please visit our website at www.metisnation.org or call us toll free at 1-800-263-4889.

Robert's law education, and the impressive work that followed, was in large part possible thanks to an Indspire scholarship, which she calls transformative on many different levels. "To me it signified that I had a whole community behind me and it will help me to extend my hand to the next one in line and help them with their journey," she says.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

Tamara Takpannie, another Indspire scholarship recipient, is a Policy and Program Advisor at Indigenous Services Canada and also volunteers as President of Inuuqatigiit, Ottawa's Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, while raising her eight-year-old son. On top of these commitments, she is also about to graduate from Carleton University with a major in Canadian studies and a minor in psychology.

Describing herself as a proud urban Inuk, Takpannie was raised in Ottawa, but has spent time living with her mother in Iqaluit, Nunavut. "The reason I decided to pursue a post-secondary education is to support the Ottawa Inuit community in a way that



Tamara Takpannie

Policy and Program Advisor
at Indigenous Services Canada

An advertisement for the TYCOP (Technical Youth Career Outreach Project) featuring a young woman wearing a blue hard hat and holding a large blueprint. The background is a light blue wall with a vertical bar of colored squares on the left. The TYCOP logo is in the top left corner.

Check out our online Technical Career Guide for Indigenous Youth at www.firstnationscareers.com!

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supports children in care. What I want to do in the future is be an advocate for Inuit children," she says, adding that receiving *Building Brighter Futures* support allowed her to manage not only her studies but also her home life and the happiness of her own child.

Takpannie's career path was initially launched through Nunavut Sivuniksavut, a college program that led to summer placements in the federal Inuit Relationship Directorate. "My experience at Nunavut Sivuniksavut has really shaped my perceptions of how the world needs to see Inuit," says Takpannie, who has also worked for the national Inuit representative organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

"Colonialism hit Inuit last. They're facing everything from loss of language and culture to new substances that they are not properly taught how to use, like alcohol and drugs, and the lack of culturally appropriate education and health services," she says. Nonetheless, "Inuit are so adaptable, we have so much knowledge to bring, and with appropriate support, I think good things will come."

For now, says Takpannie, she's done with homework and happy to be drafting government policy. "I really enjoy that – being able to write policies for how education will be delivered across Inuit Nunangat." ●



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NEW SHOOTS FROM DEEP ROOTS

By Mike Hager

Creating the future with *Teach for Tomorrow*
– a program that brings more Indigenous people into teaching

Sometimes the path to your future begins on an unexpected road. It could start with a conversation, a cherished hobby, or a shared adventure. But sometimes the beginning is as simple – and as powerful – as the person who’s standing at the front of your classroom every day.

Nobody knows this better than Mike Hager, educator extraordinaire and Lead Information Manager for Indspire’s *Teach for Tomorrow* program. Here, he explains why the program is breaking new ground, and why it’s so important to the future of Indigenous students in Canada.

What is teaching? Thank you for raising your hand to ask this question! Teaching is a unique profession that combines the art of transferring skills and knowledge to someone in a way that builds on their natural sense of curiosity and increases their understanding of the world, while ensuring that they also grasp why something is worth understanding. Teachers want to help another person responsibly use what they know and what they’ve learned to cause change by cleverly connecting students and content in authentic contexts.

Since relationships with children and young people are the bedrock of everything that a teacher does, being able to see individual faces, needs and opportunities where others only see a room of children is vital. If students can see themselves in their teachers, their connection and engagement is increased. The same can be said if the teacher can see themselves in the faces of the children they’re leading, with empathy and compassion for the invisible backpack of stuff each student brings to school.

Unfortunately, the number of Indigenous people pursuing education degrees and graduating with teaching credentials is not nearly enough to meet today’s demand. Indspire’s research shows that the most common barriers to entry into the teaching profession are the requirement to complete two degrees, negative historical associations with the education system (in particular the effects of residential schools), and a lack of financial resources to pursue post-secondary education.

TARGETED PROGRAM

Teach for Tomorrow is one of the responses to suggestions made in Indspire’s 2018 *Truth and Reconciliation in Post-Secondary Settings: Student Experience* report, which identified that students need more resources to achieve academic success. This includes access to their culture, a variety of support systems, and examples of leadership and guidance from Indigenous role models.

Indspire’s *Teach for Tomorrow* program aims to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in Canada



Indigenous students need to see themselves as being a part of Canadian campuses at all levels of education and in positions of success. The lack of Indigenous instructional staff and limited resources tied to Indigenous student services has created a significant gap in on-campus mentors and in several First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities that struggle to recruit and retain school teachers from their area.

This program also represents Indspire's proactive response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action regarding several ongoing issues within the realm of Indigenous education. Many of the current education "systems" for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students on- and off-reserve are far from consistent with the legislative provisions and structures that support their respective provincial school systems, or the degree of input, accountability and democratic governance most Canadians take for granted.

The intent of *Teach for Tomorrow* is to provide a less obstructed path for Indigenous youth to join this remarkable occupation. Our goal is to help our partners with their holistic support in a variety of ways, from paid internships to extra academic assistance to covering the costs of public transit and textbooks.

For the initial *Teach for Tomorrow* pilot program, known locally in Winnipeg as *Ozhitoon Onji Peenjiiee* or *Build from Within*, Indspire partnered with the Winnipeg School Division and the University of Winnipeg. The program is supported by The Winnipeg Foundation, the Pathy Family Foundation and the Kenny Family Foundation. We have two cohorts, each with about 25 First Nations and Métis students, from six different high schools within the inner-city area of Winnipeg, starting the program in Grade 11. They were recruited, supported, trained and certified in the Educational Assistant Diploma program through the University of Winnipeg while also attending their last two years of high school.

INDIGENOUS VALUES

We want First Nations, Inuit and Métis students to be shaped by the values that are honoured in the various Indigenous cultures across Canada. School programs also need to be influenced by these values and include respect for culture as a priority; they should be regarded as a natural extension of the education system that all First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities want for their children. One of the best ways to facilitate this is to have more FNIM teachers, principals, education assistants and language speakers in schools as active, positive role models.

To help overcome this lack of influential Indigenous role models and leaders in so many of our schools, it is essential that First Nations, Inuit and Métis children of every Indigenous community have the opportunity during their



Studies show it is critical for Indigenous students to have Indigenous role models at their places of learning

school days to learn about their history, their customs, their language and their culture through the lens and experience of an Indigenous teacher.

Teach for Tomorrow has the potential to be a big piece of the puzzle to fill that gap. It truly can provide a clear and guided path for First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth to achieve a career in teaching. We are proud to note that our first cohort of students is about to start their first year of the concurrent BA and BEd program and that the second cohort will be entering their last year of high school while finishing their EADP certification courses.

In a time when different kinds of learning are increasingly being adopted – remote, synchronous or outdoors – *Teach for Tomorrow* becomes correspondingly more important for the future of both Indigenous educators and Indigenous students. The path to future Indigenous success lies in not only implementing an Indigenous-rich curriculum and using Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, but also in increasing Indigenous representation inside the classroom. ●

Indspire would like to thank its Teach for Tomorrow supporters, the Pathy Family Foundation and the Kenny Family Foundation.





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Through education and action, ETFO is committed to providing safe and inclusive learning, implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission actions and calls for equity in funding for all First Nations, Inuit and Métis students on reserve.

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Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

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PASSING THE BATON

By Tracie Léost

Indspire Award Laureate Tracie Léost runs to create opportunities for others, and build a future for herself

Raised within the traditional Métis community of St. Laurent, near Winnipeg, Tracie Léost already has an impressive track record – literally and figuratively. She drew national attention to the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) in 2015 by completing a four-day, 115-kilometre run that raised more than \$6,000 for the Families First Foundation. She is also an Indspire Laureate (Métis Youth, 2018) and scholarship recipient, currently enrolled in her fifth year of social work studies at the University of Regina. And she's only 22 years old.

Indspire asked Léost to share her story. Read on to learn about this inspiring young woman's passion for running and shining a spotlight on causes close to her heart.

My spirit name is Ogitchida Ikwe, and that means “warrior woman” in English. Ogitchida is a term I often use to describe our people: our people are warriors. Indigenous people have always been warriors, have always been resourceful and purposeful in our actions and very grounded in our ways.

The name means something for me and my identity, but it also connects me with my running. Running, for me, takes place outside and on the land, right with Mother Earth, and with every step you're connected to that.

It takes place on Indigenous land and on our treaty territories, and I think that's really important.

Recreation has been important to our community. When I ran from my community to the monument to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at The Forks, it was important that I was using my gift to create a platform and draw attention to an issue that I felt wasn't getting enough attention. Surviving colonization and genocide is a very *ogitchida* way. Our people were always very strong.

Every time I put my running shoes on, it's always bigger than just myself, and every step I take is on Indigenous land. I think that's a very powerful portrayal of Indigenous people. There are people who are still here, and every step that's taken is still on our land.

Running is a gift to me. It's very central to my wellness and connects me to my identity. Running is a very grounding practice. You can't rely on other people; it's about you and your capabilities and capacity and responsibility



and honesty. I think all of those things transfer to the rest of your life and build your character.

Running has always been a powerful force in my life. In 2014, I won three bronze medals at the North American Indigenous Games. In 2016, I completed the GMS Queen City Half Marathon in Regina. In 2017, I competed in the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto with top-10 results in all of my running categories and my relay team placed fourth in the nation. My New Year's resolution was to run the Manitoba Half Marathon, but COVID took that away.

FORMATIVE IMPACT

My first Indigenous studies class taught by an Indigenous person was probably the most formative class I took in my academic career. We learned about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and we were

“Becoming an Indspire Laureate has truly meant everything to me. I’ve had amazing things come to me because of the Indspire family: I’ve had a chance to sit alongside Knowledge Keepers and Elders; I’ve sat at the table with Ministers”

Tracie Léost
Indspire Laureate

given a project to research one woman. The point of the project was that these women, children and two-spirited people were more than a number. I randomly picked a woman whose name was Ramona Wilson who was murdered by Robert Pickton. That really opened my eyes.

I started doing research outside the classroom and I came across a video of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper saying the issue wasn't “really high on our radar.” Because of who I am and where I come from, it is justifiable in his eyes that I would disappear and very likely no justice would come to my family, myself and my community. My teacher said “Tracie, why don't you do something?” That summer my MMIW Journey of Hope took place and I remember saying it felt like using my running shoes to give silence a voice.



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“I was always aware of the importance that Indigenous people have always placed on land-based education, but experiencing it was something completely different. The youth in Actua's InSTEM program connected with what they were learning at a higher level because they were seeing themselves represented in the land and it was beautiful to be a part of.”

— Ethan Boyer, Métis Masters Student
at Trent University, and Actua Instructor.

INDSPIRE AWARD LAUREATE

I'm a first-generation university student; I didn't know that was a space Indigenous people were included in. I didn't even think of it until that Grade 11 class, when my teacher took us to a university fair. I didn't know it would be a welcoming space for us. Today, I say to my family: "I want to have a PhD." This is both scary and exciting because just a few years ago, I didn't know any of this was possible.

Becoming an Indspire Laureate has truly meant everything to me. I've had amazing things come to

me because of the Indspire family: I've had a chance to sit alongside Knowledge Keepers and Elders; I've sat at the table with Ministers in Ottawa and been able to hold them accountable. I cannot speak more greatly about what Indspire has been able to support me with – both financially and through the family that I speak of.

Now, coaching youth is a big part of what I do. I've been involved in a program that reduces every barrier that exists in sport; it's about building community, having fun and

having the right to participate in recreation. I always say I've taken more away from what my kids bring than they will ever know. It fills your soul. And I've just founded a non-profit called Waanishka – in Michif it means "rise up" – to support the rise of Indigenous young ones.

One young girl told me: "I want to be just like you one day. Thank you for showing me that I am capable." It took me back to Grade 11 when I didn't even know I could go to university. That is a great reason for doing what I do. ●



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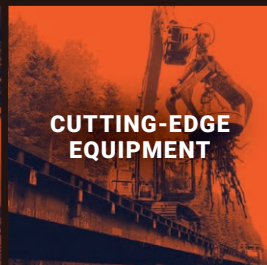
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Steve Williams, Chairperson



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STRAIGHT TALK

By Helen Smith, Indspire

Indigenous students across the country share their views on higher education in an unprecedented Indspire survey

When you ask the right questions and do some careful listening, you may get some surprising – and encouraging – answers. The Indspire team has always been vocal about the importance of listening to Indigenous students to support them, and our groundbreaking new research incubator, the *Research Knowledge Nest*, gave us a new way to do that this past spring.

Created with support from the Suncor Energy Foundation and the Government of Canada under the Skills and Partnership Fund, the RN is the first Indigenous research program of its kind in Canada. Its

work will provide decision makers with key insights into the educational attainment of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada, fostering a new understanding of how education supports the overall well-being of Indigenous peoples.

The *Research Knowledge Nest's* first product is a prime example of how it intends to fulfil its mandate. Expanding on the questions posed to Indigenous students in Indspire's 2018 *Truth and Reconciliation in Post-Secondary Settings: Student Experience* report, we wanted to get a more detailed look at the realities of contemporary Indigenous educational and employment outcomes.

So in early 2020, the *Research Knowledge Nest* deployed its very first national education survey to ask Indigenous students key questions about their educational journeys and post-graduation employment.

How do the students feel about the path of their studies? How many graduate, and when? What fields do they enter after graduation? Do they work for Indigenous or non-Indigenous employers, and how satisfied are they with their jobs? Where do they need additional support to succeed in their endeavours?

BROAD REACH

The *Research Knowledge Nest* used the existing wealth of data from the preceding six years of *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards* applications to reach out to over 14,000 *Building Brighter Futures* recipients and hear their answers to these questions.

And hear them we did. Over 6,500 students responded, representing an unprecedented response rate of 46 per cent. It was very encouraging to hear from so many who wanted to share their stories with us. Indspire's deep data pool, with its wide geographical spread, ensured that a diverse array of First Nations, Inuit and Métis responses were represented.

The *Research Knowledge Nest* collated and analyzed the data into its very first report, the *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards Program Recipients' Outcomes Report*. Not only did it reveal key insights about contemporary Indigenous educational outcomes that were simultaneously surprising and encouraging, it also showed us new areas where Indigenous students could use greater support.

Jamie Ricci, Manager of Indspire's Research & Impact Unit, considers the release of this report a crucial step toward understanding the state

of Indigenous educational and economic outcomes in Canada. "When our past *Building Brighter Futures* recipients gift us with their stories, it allows us to share a glimpse of what the educational journey looks like for many Indigenous learners. Their feedback allows us to understand what they really need and how we can work even more effectively to support their success."

Not only was this the *Research Knowledge Nest's* very first report, it also gave their first research assistant an opportunity to utilize his skills in an applied setting. Joshua Thomas, a member of Snuneymuxw First Nation who has an MA in economics, was excited to be a part of the survey and data analysis process. "After joining Indspire as a part of the *Research Knowledge Nest*, I had the opportunity to enhance my data analysis and programming abilities, and it

was great to see these skills translate to interesting and meaningful research," he says.

Launched on June 30, 2020, with a webinar featuring Roberta Jamieson, Indspire President and CEO, and Kristen Everett, former VP of Programs and Student Success, the report immediately got media attention for its insightful findings, prompting a *Globe and Mail* article about the existing funding gaps in Indigenous education, and featuring wise words from Jamieson on the subject.

KEY FINDINGS

Building Brighter Futures recipients continue to have impressive achievements. Nearly 85 per cent of all recipients graduate within two years of their expected graduation timeline. Of those who are no longer in school, nearly 60 per cent hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and almost 90 per cent are employed.



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Connection to community

For Colt Burrows, a Researcher with Indspire's Research & Impact Unit, research is about finding that connection to community. As someone who is Indigenous, queer and living with HIV, centering the experiences of his community within his research practice has always been at the forefront of the work Burrows is engaged with. This includes the work he carries out within Indspire's Research Knowledge Nest.

In Burrows' own words:

I have been a Researcher with Indspire and the Research Knowledge Nest for 10 months now and it has been an overwhelmingly positive experience. What we have created is a unique platform where budding new Indigenous researchers can develop and hone their skills in data analytics and research, enabling them to excel in graduate-level programs and their early careers. I support this cohort of researchers by leading them through developing innovative research proposals, analyzing Indspire's unique data holdings and drafting annual reports on program and organizational metrics. Building this capacity within a new wave of Indigenous researchers is truly remarkable!

When I am not supporting this new cohort of researchers, you can find me developing approaches for program evaluation and data privacy within the organization. My work with program evaluation focuses on creating frameworks to document, measure and evaluate the success of our three student programs – Building Brighter Futures, Rivers to Success, Indspire Research Knowledge Nest. This work is extremely rewarding; you get to see the impact of these programs firsthand and really understand the importance of investing in the education of our Indigenous peoples.

As I reflect on my experience as a researcher with Indspire, I feel very grateful. Grateful to have contributed to the success of a new wave of Indigenous researchers, and grateful to continue supporting the educational journeys of all Indigenous students in Canada. Our future as Indigenous peoples is looking brighter and brighter!

Another key finding was that *Building Brighter Futures* recipients are engaged in and often giving back to Indigenous communities, and they consider this engagement a priority. Nearly 50 per cent are working in Indigenous communities or for Indigenous governments, businesses and organizations, and they routinely rate their job satisfaction higher than those recipients not employed by Indigenous employers. Reciprocity is an essential factor for many of these students; giving back to their communities was noted as a key motivator.

The most common challenge to their education that *Building Brighter Futures* recipients identified was financial constraints. Since Indspire was able to alleviate some financial stress, the majority agreed that the *Building Brighter Futures* award allowed them to spend more time on their studies. It also allowed them to dedicate more time to many other beneficial activities: caring for family members, spending time in their communities, pursuing opportunities like unpaid internships, and volunteering.

However, the report also highlighted the fact that there's still much work to be done to ensure that all Indigenous students are able to graduate and pursue the careers of their dreams. Even with BBF funding, most students still have to work while they study to make ends meet. Over 60 per cent of respondents worked an average of 17 hours per week, making their graduation rates even more impressive.

And while much of the resulting income goes to expenses directly related to their studies (e.g., tuition), a large portion also goes to 'hidden' costs that are not often formally assessed. Childcare, transportation and living expenses are often essential expenditures for Indigenous students. Without financial support, these costs can quickly become

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significant barriers to their success. More than 80 per cent of those who worked during their post-secondary education reported that they did so in order to pay for necessary expenses during their studies.

The *Building Brighter Futures Recipients' Outcomes Report* shows that *Building Brighter Futures* recipients have a lot to celebrate, but even with Indspire's support, financial stress constitutes a significant barrier to Indigenous students enrolling in or attending post-secondary institutions.

Building Brighter Futures recipients frequently told us about the notable positive impact of Indspire's financial support on their studies.

Throughout this report, the analysis of the national education survey is substantiated by the recipients' own powerful words:

"When I received the award[s] I was able to stay close to the university and study and I became a role model for several of the younger students...I had at least three young people come up to me and tell me that seeing me every day at the

Aboriginal Student Lounge studying made them feel positive, and that if I could do it then they too could do it. That made me feel really good. You never know how deeply your mere presence can affect someone." ●

You can read the entire report on the Indspire website at <https://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Indspire-NES-Report-ONLINE.pdf> and find out more about the Research Knowledge Nest at <https://indspire.ca/programs/impact-research/research-knowledge-nest/>.

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THE MAGIC OF MENTORING

By Matthew Bradford



Indspire revamps its mentorship program to offer Indigenous students enhanced support through key phases of their education experience

rivers
to success
Mentoring Indigenous Students

Indspire understands the value of mentoring. Not only does mentoring provide Indigenous students with help in completing their studies and choosing their path in life, it gives them emotional support at times when they need it most, as well as a vital connection to their heritage and culture.

To that end, Indspire recently overhauled its *Rivers to Success* mentoring program. The goal was to enhance the support it provides students during their high school and university or college studies, as well as their transition to a full-time career.

The revamped *Rivers to Success* program, launched in September, combines the fundamentals of the earlier mentoring program with Indspire's Peer Support program, to

deliver a more holistic mentoring initiative. Most importantly, the new program considers the three separate streams of an Indigenous student's education journey – High School, Post-Secondary, and Career Transition – as separate journeys.

The organization also listened to student feedback in fine-tuning the program, which validated the need for three distinct streams. “We listened to what students told us they needed through Indspire’s *Truth and Reconciliation in Post-Secondary Settings: Student Experience* report, and we recognized the importance of understanding each journey as its own,” explains Julia Stoneman, a *Rivers to Success* Mentorship Officer.

THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

Each stream in the enhanced program offers a wealth of in-person and online supports for participants. The High School stream, open to students in Grades 10 to 12, provides mentorship in a group setting through the *Rivers to Success* online portal, as well as custom online resources and skill development support (e.g., studying, school-life balance, choosing post-secondary education, etc.). It connects students with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, educators and other facilitators for the duration of their education and beyond.

“Within the High School stream, we find that students are learning how to transition into becoming an independent individual and student,” says Stoneman. “Learning to care for your own home, pay bills and manage a school schedule is a huge life change – on top of being a normal teenager.”

The program’s Post-Secondary and Career Transition streams concentrate on helping learners take their next step. The former is designed for Grade 12 students seeking skill development resources and one-on-one mentorships via the *Rivers to Success* portal. The latter offers advanced professional guidance

The revamped *Rivers to Success* program combines the fundamentals of the earlier mentoring program with Indspire’s Peer Support program, to deliver a more holistic mentoring initiative. Most importantly, the new program considers the three separate streams of an Indigenous student’s life – High School, Post-Secondary, and Career Transition – as separate journeys

to students undergoing the nerve-racking and often scary transition from post-secondary schooling to full-time employment.

“In the Career Transition stream, we hope to see students supported in the resume writing and interview process and into the transition phase of moving from being a student into a profession,” says Stoneman. “The final goal of the program would be to have the student come full circle and become a mentor [themselves] once they are comfortable in their career.”

Indspire has a network of respected Indigenous business professionals, community leaders and Knowledge Keepers eager to share their wisdom and experiences with program participants. “Each mentor has a unique story with their own background, successes, bumps and lessons along the way, and they understand how important it is to have someone who can understand and has walked a similar journey in your corner,” notes Stoneman.

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The *Rivers to Success* community also includes organizations, academic institutions, community stakeholders, youth groups and Elders, all of whom bring a wealth of resources, insights and even career opportunities to the program. “In our feedback from students, they told us that they need culture, community and opportunities to learn about their culture and identity,” says Stoneman. “We can do that through mentorship and connecting them to the right people and communities of support.”

CARRYING THE TRADITION

For Stoneman, the value of Indigenous mentorships cannot be overstated. A member of Misipawistik Cree Nation, she herself benefited greatly from working with like-minded mentors when attending Brandon University, 1,300 kilometres away from home. “For many of my beginning years, I struggled. Everything was completely foreign, I felt more alone than ever, and I wasn’t doing well in school,” recalls Stoneman.

Then she discovered the university’s Indigenous Peoples Centre and met Indigenous students who had already lived through her experience. It was eye-opening. “[I found] students who had been in the same place as I was and had found ways to thrive. Within this



Indspire’s mentoring program brings a sense of community to Indigenous students, and helps them learn about their culture and identity



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community of students, we found support and mentorship with one another. We learned and grew together,” says Stoneman.

Whitney Wolfe, an Indspire Research Assistant, is another example of someone who personally benefited – and continues to benefit – from mentoring, having completed Indspire’s original mentoring program. “Mentorship programs are extremely important for Indigenous students and provide a unique opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with [Indigenous] professionals who share similar interests and experiences,” she says. “The relationship I have with my mentor helps me stay focused on my goals, and the

“Mentorship programs are extremely important for Indigenous students and provide a unique opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with [Indigenous] professionals who share similar interests and experiences. The relationship I have with my mentor helps me stay focused on my goals, and the guidance I receive from [them] helps me achieve my highest potential”

Whitney Wolfe

Research Assistant, Indspire

guidance I receive from [them] helps me achieve my highest potential.”

Wolfe now hopes to leverage Indspire’s redesigned *Rivers to Success* program to strengthen her relations with her mentors as she pursues a master’s degree. “With their guidance and support, I’m hoping to achieve my next goal, which is to apply for a master’s [program],” she says. “Since my mentor has obtained a master’s degree in the same field of study I am interested in, I trust that they will help guide me in the right direction.”

It’s a new day for *Rivers to Success*. The relaunched mentoring program is already being delivered to hundreds of students in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario, and plans are in place to expand its reach across the country. It is helping First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth at a critical point in their lives and represents a first step towards what Indspire hopes will become an evolving resource for the future leaders of Canada’s Indigenous community. ●

Rivers to Success is generously supported by the Government of Canada, Ruth Butt, Giant Tiger, the Allan and Gill Gray Foundation, the Barry and Laurie Green Family Charitable Trust, the Slight Family Foundation and TD.

Learn more about Indspire’s *Rivers to Success* program at: www.indspire.ca/programs/students/rivers-to-success/



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Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle.....	41
www.alfdc.on.ca	
AWWAO	13
www.awwao.org	
Actua.....	39
www.actua.ca	
Alberta School Councils Association	14
www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca	
Athabasca University.....	4
www.athabascau.ca	
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.....	41
www.banffcentre.ca	
Barry and Laurie Green Family Charitable Foundation	25
BCIT – British Columbia Institute of Technology.....	6
www.bcit.ca	
Canadian Association for University Continuing Education – CAUCE.....	50
www.cauce-aepuc.ca	
Concordia University	33
www.concordia.ca	
Dilico Anishinabek Family Care.....	26
www.dilico.com	

Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiyag Child & Family Services	7, Digital
www.binnoojiyag.ca	
Edmonton Community Foundation	36
www.ecfoundation.org	
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.....	36
www.etfo.ca	
Enbridge, Inc.	Inside Front Cover
www.enbridge.com	
First Nations Financial Management Board.....	Digital
www.fnfmb.com/en	
The Firelight Group	9
www.thefirelightgroup.com	
First Nations University.....	16
www.firstnationsuniversity.ca	
FNTI – First Nations Technical Institute	10
www.fnti.net	
JFK Law Corporation.....	15
www.jfkclaw.ca	
Kenjegin Teg	26
www.kenjegin.org	
Laurentian University.....	19, 41
www.laurentian.ca	

Legacy of Hope Foundation.....	27, Digital
www.legacyofhope.ca	
LiUNA	Outside Back Cover
www.liunapd.org	
McMaster University	40
www.indigservices.mcmaster.ca	
Metis Nation of Ontario	31
www.metisnation.org	
MITT	54
www.mitt.ca	
MNP	28-29
www.mnp.ca	
Nelson	49
www.nelson.com	
New Gold Inc.	Inside Back Cover
www.newgold.com	
NewNation Developments Ltd.	44
www.new-nations.ca	
OFNTSC	32
ofntsc.org	
Ontario Teachers' Federation.....	37
www.otfco.on.ca	
Project Learning Tree Canada.....	37
www.pltcanada.org	
Remcan Projects LP.....	40
www.remcanprojects.com	
Saskatchewan Polytechnic Administration.....	51
www.saskpolytech.ca	
Sault College.....	43
www.saultcollege.ca/indigenous/index	
Shell Canada Limited	11
www.shell.ca	
Simon Fraser University.....	45
www.sfu.ca/education	
Swampy Cree Tribal Council/Circling Buffalo Inc.	17
www.circlingbuffalo.ca	
Teach for Canada.....	35, Digital
www.teachforcanada.ca	
University College of the North.....	47
www.ucn.ca	
Western University	47
www.uwo.ca	
Women Building Futures.....	21
www.womenbuildingfutures.com	
Yukon University.....	3
www.yukonu.ca	



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