



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOAR Indigenous Entrepreneurship Competition Expands Across Saskatchewan

SASKATOON, SK – July 14, 2026 – This year, SREDA's SOAR Indigenous Entrepreneurship Competition will be delivered through a new partnership between SREDA's entrepreneurship program, SK Startup Institute, and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), expanding the program's reach to Indigenous entrepreneurs across the province.

SOAR is an annual program that empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs through mentorship, business development workshops, and a pitch competition with cash prizes.

"We're incredibly proud of the impact SOAR has had in supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs, and we're excited to expand its impact to a provincial level through our entrepreneurship program, SK Startup Institute, and in partnership with SIIT," said Erin Lawson, CEO of SREDA. "This new partnership allows us to combine our strengths, expand our reach, and create more opportunities for Indigenous business owners to access the training, mentorship, connections, and visibility they need to succeed. Together, we're investing in entrepreneurs who are driving economic growth and creating positive change in communities across Saskatchewan."

In celebration of SIIT's 50th anniversary and with support from the Greg Yuel Fellowship, the total prize fund has increased to \$50,000, enabling greater investment in Indigenous entrepreneurship and creating more opportunities for participants to grow their businesses.

"At SIIT, we know that Indigenous entrepreneurs are creating innovative solutions, generating economic opportunities, and strengthening communities throughout Saskatchewan," said Riel Bellegarde, President and CEO of SIIT. "We're proud to partner with SREDA and SK Startup

Institute to expand the reach of SOAR and create greater access to mentorship, business development supports, and growth opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs across the province. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to supporting Indigenous business success and fostering innovation throughout Saskatchewan."

Since SOAR was established in 2022, SREDA has awarded over \$120,000 to Indigenous entrepreneurs. According to SOAR winner Christine Marie, Founder and CEO of [Awāsis Boutique](#), the program's impact extends far beyond business success.

"As an Indigenous entrepreneur, participating in SOAR was a pivotal moment in my business journey. While the funding helped me grow my business, the connections and community have been just as impactful. When Indigenous entrepreneurs are supported, the impact extends far beyond our businesses. It creates opportunities that ripple through our families, communities and future generations. I'm excited to see SOAR continue to grow and create even more opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs across Saskatchewan"

The SOAR visual identity has also evolved to incorporate meaningful elements that celebrate Indigenous values, perspectives, and connection to community. These brand elements were intentionally designed by Alexis Blackbird of Blackbird Beading, ensuring authenticity, respect, and alignment with the program's commitment to Indigenous entrepreneurship and economic reconciliation.

Applications for the 2026 SOAR Indigenous Entrepreneurship Competition will open on July 20th, with the Pitch Finale taking place on October 21st.

About SK Startup Institute

Delivered by the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority (SREDA), SK Startup Institute is dedicated to helping entrepreneurs start, manage, and grow businesses across Saskatchewan. For more information, visit <https://skstartup.ca/>.

About SIIT

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies was established in 1976 by Saskatchewan First Nations Chiefs representing all Treaty areas. Today, SIIT remains a First Nations-governed educational institution – and one of only four credit-granting post-secondary institutions in the province. SIIT provides adult learners with academic, vocational, and technical training, as well as services and supports for employment and career growth. For more information, visit <https://siit.ca/>.

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