



MEDIA RELEASE

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National Fellowship Invests in Young Indigenous Leaders to Shape Canada's Future

First Cohort of Mastercard Foundation Fellows Begin Leadership Journey in Saskatoon

SASKATOON, SK – A new national initiative will support and resource young First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders to strengthen well-being and foster prosperity for their Peoples, communities, and across sectors, for generations to come.

With a commitment of CAD \$130 million over the next decade, the first cohort of 25 Mastercard Foundation Fellows began their two-year leadership journey in Saskatoon with inaugural partners the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI).

"This program recognizes that Indigenous leadership takes many forms and that each Fellow has their own goals for the future," said CeCe Baptiste, Vice President of Finance at SIIT. "At SIIT, we're proud to support them in building on their experience, deepening their connections, and pursuing opportunities that matter to them and their communities."

The Mastercard Foundation Fellows Program supports First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth across Canada who are already demonstrating leadership in their communities and sectors. Fellows will shape their own leadership paths through mentorship, cultural learning, and training, with access to up to CAD \$50,000 each to support the goal they set.

Following an opening retreat hosted by GDI and SIIT in early October, Fellows will be connected to culturally grounded leadership development and mentorship.

"This inaugural group of Fellows represents the strength, vision, and potential of Indigenous youth from across Canada. We are honoured to walk alongside them on their leadership journeys and look forward to the impact they will make in their communities and beyond," said Brett Vandale, CEO of Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Over the next decade, the Mastercard Foundation Fellows Program will support more than 1,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth. This will create a growing network of leaders equipped to advance lasting social and economic change within their communities in Canada and internationally. Indigenous youth have been clear, a meaningful leadership journey – and a good life – includes contribution to community well-being, which will strengthen their Peoples and all of Canada.

“Each Fellow will identify the learning and the leadership development they need, and we will resource it with mentorship, coaching, and funding directed toward the goals they set with their host institution,” says Sewit Ahderom, President and CEO at the Mastercard Foundation.

“Indigenous youth are already leading in their communities, and they understand what their communities need. Our role is to make sure the education and support are there when they are ready to use them. Over the next decade we intend to do that alongside more than a thousand young people.”

The Mastercard Foundation Fellows Program builds on SIIT and GDI’s experience supporting Indigenous learners and leaders, including through the former oýateki Partnership. It extends that work beyond education and employment by investing in the continued growth and development of Indigenous leaders.

This first cohort marks the start of a long-term investment in Indigenous youth leadership across Canada.

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Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (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. Indigenous learners are at the core of SIIT, representing over 90 percent of the student body.

Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research

Founded in 1980, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) is Saskatchewan's Métis educational and cultural institution. GDI promotes the renewal and development of Métis culture through research, materials development, publishing, and the design and delivery of Métis-specific education, training, employment, and cultural programs and services.

Through a province-wide network of service delivery locations, GDI provides opportunities that support lifelong learning, skills development, employment readiness, and cultural preservation for Métis people. Working in partnership with communities, governments, educational institutions, and industry, GDI helps advance social, cultural, and economic well-being for Saskatchewan's Métis.

Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organizations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. Its Young Africa Works strategy aims to enable 30 million young people to access

dignified and fulfilling work by 2030, while its EleV Program will support 100,000 Indigenous youth in Canada to complete their education and transition to meaningful work aligned with their traditions, values, and aspirations.

Established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company, the Foundation is an independent organization. Its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by its Board of Directors and Leadership team.

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