

**l'Initiative  
d'innovation  
autochtone**



**Indigenous  
Innovation  
Initiative**

# **2023-24 Annual Report**

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***"Aaniin-Boozhoo, Waaciya, Tanshu, She:kon, Kwe', Atelihai, Edlanet'e, Negha, Hadih, sán uu dǎng giidang, Oki, Bonjour, Hello!"***

In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of investing in Indigenous approaches to innovation is greater than ever. As we continue to build a program that addresses the needs of Indigenous-driven innovation, collaborative leadership and intentional co-creation remain foundational pillars of our approach. We are grateful to walk this path with our partners and to celebrate the community stories and lessons learned from the past year.

As we reflect on another year, we look back on a period of growth and transformation for the [Indigenous Innovation Initiative](#) (I3). This past year saw the launch of our second round of seed funding, the start of our Transition-to-Scale program, additions to our team and leadership, and opportunities for us to be in and connect with the community. We celebrate receiving more than 100 applications from the northern half of Turtle Island from coast to coast to coast, fulfilling our vision of engagement from all provinces and northern territories.

Drawing inspiration from our community, partners, and advisors, the year has been an opportunity for us to re-imagine investment in Indigenous innovation and to create a more innovator-led process, grounded in community values and approaches. We continue to develop and refine our grant process and to deepen our understanding of data sovereignty and to integrate the OCAP principles into our work. Working with both Western and Indigenous partners alike, we reaffirm our commitment to centring Indigenous ways of knowing and being, in all their forms, as the foundation for innovation.

Sincerely,  
**The I3 team**

# Celebrating Indigenous Innovation

## Meet our Round 2 Innovators

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**Indigenous  
Innovation  
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## Acronyms and key terms

### Acronyms:

- **TTS** — Transition-to-Scale
- **IIC** — Indigenous Innovation Council
- **I3** — Indigenous Innovation Initiative
- **GCC** — Grand Challenges Canada
- **MaRS Discovery District** — MaRS (Medical and Related Sciences) Discovery District
- **OCAP** — Ownership, Control, Access and Possession
- **WEKH** — Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub
- **SRG** — Spirit Reclamation Gathering

### Key Terms:

- **Rolling Intake Model** — A flexible application approach that aligns with seasonal activities.
- **Impact Investing** — Investment strategy focused on generating social and environmental impacts alongside financial returns.
- **Food Sovereignty** — The right of people to obtain healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods.
- **Tech and Data Sovereignty** — Control over technology and data within Indigenous communities.
- **Land Story/Environmental** — Initiatives related to environmental sustainability and Indigenous land stewardship.
- **Knowledge and Data Sovereignty** — The right to control and manage knowledge and data specific to Indigenous communities.
- **Innovative-Driven Process Improvements** — Enhancements made to processes through innovative approaches.
- **Seed** — Proof of concept funding for "seed" projects to test and grow their innovation ideas

## Launch of Round 2 innovations

The Indigenous Innovation Initiative was founded with the mission to address pressing community, economic, social and health challenges through community-led Indigenous innovation. We closed the second round of applications in 2023 and received more than 100 applications from coast to coast to coast. From there, we selected a new group of innovators for investment. This milestone marks significant progress in our ongoing goal to promote impactful change led by Indigenous communities, for Indigenous communities, and beyond.

The four areas of investment prioritized in this round—**Food Sovereignty**, **Wellness** (including a focus on Cultural and Spiritual Wellness), **Tech and Data Sovereignty**, and **Land Story/Environmental**—were selected to support and empower Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse peoples. These focus areas underscore our commitment to fostering inclusive innovation that benefits a broad spectrum of Indigenous communities.



Food Sovereignty



Wellness



Tech and Data  
Sovereignty



Land Story and  
Environmental

# Innovators across Turtle Island, supported by I3



## Overview of Round 2

There were significant changes made between the round one and two funding cycles, many of these changes were spurred by community input directly from past applicants. These changes improved many areas in round two's application, selection, and peer review sections.

Round two was structured into a rolling intake model divided into two cycles; the first cycle closed in the spring and the second cycle in the late fall. These two application cycles resulted in 15 Indigenous innovators being recommended for funding by an external selection committee. This selection committee was composed of Indigenous leaders who are experts in their respective fields, including social innovation, investment, technology and health.

This approach was specifically designed to alleviate the stress associated with rigid deadlines while maintaining clear distinctions between application cycles. By being more responsive to seasonal activities, such as land-based work, we were able to align more closely with the rhythms of the seasons.

We have also enhanced the application process by introducing interviews and increasing transparency by publishing the scoring matrix on our website. These changes were implemented to make the process more open, fair, and build trust within the community. Our proactive outreach efforts included direct engagement with tribal councils and community hubs.





## Overview of Round 2 (cont'd)

Applicants were offered the opportunity to meet with the Indigenous leaders who reviewed their initial applications. This provided a chance for reviewers to ask questions directly and for project leads to clarify and offer more insight.

This step was highly recommended, as community recommendations highlighted the need for accessible processes that allow project leads to showcase their passion in a setting acknowledging the limitations and barriers of complex written applications. While our existing process is improving, we recognize that privileging a written application system creates barriers, as oral storytelling is a foundational component of Indigenous ways of being.

To increase accessibility to the I3 team, phone calls, webinars, and live streaming via social media platforms were available to address any questions or concerns. This comprehensive approach has helped us build stronger relationships and extend support to a wider range of innovative projects from coast to coast to coast.

As a result, 15 new innovations were approved for funding at the proof-of-concept phase. Three of these innovators withdrew due to concerns surrounding data sovereignty and their capacities to engage with our granting process at this time. We have now successfully launched 12 new innovations into the proof-of-concept phase, each poised to create significant impacts within and beyond their communities.



## Innovator Paced Due Diligence

This year was the first time we tested an innovator-centered approach to completing due diligence. In round one, we received candid feedback that rigid deadlines created a high-stress environment for innovators and organizations. Some innovators told us that were hesitant to proceed with an application given the competing demands faced by small organizations and businesses. Within our current structure at Grand Challenges Canada (GCC), we are mutually committed to taking meaningful steps to simplify the process and make it accessible.

Innovators told us that they appreciated this adjusted pace, which allowed them to align the application process with their shifting organizational needs and capacity. This helped prevent burnout and nurture better relationships with the Indigenous Innovation Initiative.

Through these touchpoints and a trust-based process, we are creating strong connections between I3 and the round two innovators.



## [Click here to learn more about the seed innovators!](#)



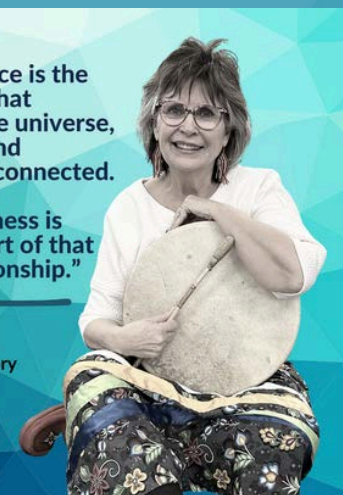
Recognition and acknowledgement of First Nation Territories is sacred to the Ancestors and youth today."

Elder Xwasteniya  
(Ruth Mary Adams)  
Tsawwassen First Nation

smāq'a? xet  
The Great Blue Heron Way

I3 Seed Innovator


**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



Relational Science is the understanding that everything in the universe, cosmos, earth and community are connected.

Relational Wellness is when we are part of that symbiotic relationship."

Elder Kerrie Moore  
Relational Science Story

  
I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



Together, we are Changing the Story."

Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS)

Changing the Story Mapping MMIWGS2+ in the Yukon

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



Strengthening the web of kin and communities around Indigenous children, youth, and emerging leaders."

Kelly Terbasket  
IndigenEYEZ

**IndigenEYEZ**

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



I'm grateful for I3's support to help us create our innovation lab NSAIL, an environment to help Indigenous women scale their businesses."

 Patrice Mousseau  
Satya Organics Inc.

Na'aabi Scale And Innovation Lab (NSAIL)

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



Leading with Love, Following Natural Laws."

Keri Cardinal  
NiGiNan Housing Ventures

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



## [Click here to learn more about the seed innovators!](#)

**The collective's purpose is to advance Indigenous peoples' knowledge, values, and practices to protect and restore Lake Winnipeg for all future generations."**

**Kianna Durston**  
Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective

Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Environmental Monitoring Network

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

**We can stop the violence. The healing is collective. And it happens in our Ayataway Circles."**

**The Restoring Collective**  
Sandra Greene, Kung Jaadee, Christine Spinder Ayataway



I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

**Guided by the 13 moons cycle, a journey to the 7 districts of Mi'kma'ki, covering the Atlantic provinces, to share artistic culture through an Indigenous lens and facilitate intergenerational reconnection."**

**Michelle Sylliboy L'nu, Mawi Ta'mk Society and Jocelyn Li - Inspiring Communities**

Kisitoqsiqn Nepisuna'tasik - Creating Continuing Medicine



I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

**We are extremely excited to see the community participation across the Northeast network in getting the first textile recycling company in the North."**

**Doris Mitchell**  
Brunswick House First Nation

Sic Sox Circular Thrift

**Sic Sox Circular Ltd.**

I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

**Innovating Indigenous led solutions to address climate change."**

**Siksika Nation Youth Team Members:**  
Rozario McMaster, Jade Healy, Lewis Smith, Strawberry Many Heads

**I3 Seed Innovator**

**Project Lead: Izzy Ward (They/Them)**



**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

**Giving back spaces of belonging and wellbeing for Métis Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ community members in the heart of the Nation and within the historical and modern understanding of Métis identity."**

**Metis Nation of BC**

**Piihtikway/Come In: Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ Resurgence and Healing through Kinship and Culture**



I3 Seed Innovator

**l'Initiative d'innovation autochtone**  **Indigenous Innovation Initiative**



# *Transition to Scale*

## **Transition-to-Scale Launch:**

In early 2024, we introduced a new funding stream, Transition-to-Scale (TTS), designed to support innovators who have successfully tested their ideas and are now ready to scale. This new stream reflects our commitment to supporting innovators at every stage of their journey.

To support this initiative, we expanded our selection committee to include external peer reviewers with expertise in our key investment areas, direct field knowledge, and experience in scaling innovations. This addition has provided valuable perspectives and has been instrumental in refining our support strategies. Our team is grateful for the support from Grand Challenges Canada's Global Health Innovation TTS program in building this program and bringing the first applications to review and due diligence.

Several new applications went through the TTS peer review process in cycle one of round two, resulting in one successful TTS launch in June 2024. We are pleased to be partnering with ORIGIN to support the ImmersiveLink7 Platform at Transition-to-Scale.





The IL7 ethics series empowers communities by blending Indigenous cultural values with cutting-edge training, fostering both personal growth and professional success. With a focus on the 7 Sacred Teachings, the IL7 ethic series promotes inclusive learning and creates lasting impact.”  
— Melissa Hardy Giles

ImmersiveLink7



I3 Transition to Scale Innovator

## Partnerships and Relations

This past year, we have been grateful to continue to grow our relationships with partners who support the work of I3 and innovators:

- We cohosted the second **Spirit Reclamation Gathering** (SRG2) with the **National Indigenous Hub for Women Entrepreneurship and Knowledge** (WEKH) in summer 2023. The report summarizing the gathering is [available online](#).
- We were fortunate to gather with our 3 Sisters learning partners (the **Canadian Women's Foundation** and **Community Foundations of Canada**) in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, to exchange lessons learned, challenges, and future dreams as funders of innovation.
- **Impact United/SVX Partnership:** In March 2024, I3's Director facilitated a panel as part of Impact United's "Taking Steps in BC" Social Finance Event in Vancouver, BC, focused on Indigenous Impact Investing. Several members of the I3 community, including innovators Teara Fraser and Sage Lacerte, also participated. The event focused on building bridges between private investors and Indigenous-led enterprises to address a lack of access to private capital investments. The event was born out of a collaborative white paper, of which I3 was a contributor, entitled "Taking Steps: Addressing Capital Needs for Indigenous-led Enterprises."



## Partnerships and Relations – Cont'd

- In May 2024, the I3 program team attended the **Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business 40th Anniversary Conference** in Toronto, alongside several past and current innovators.
- **MaRS Innovation**: We continued discussion with the MaRS team to leverage some of their existing accelerator programs for seed and TTS innovators with relevant projects
- Round one Innovator **Rebeka Tabobondung** participated in a Globe and Mail event, **“What accessing capital looks like for Indigenous entrepreneurs – and how we can do better.”**

There have been ongoing opportunities for I3 and GCC to strengthen the relationship over the past months and engage in co-learning through multiple touchpoint:

- I3 innovators **Sage Lacerte** and **Rebeka Tabobondung** shared their stories and experiences with the GCC team at an **International Women's Day event**.
- Sage Lacerte joined GCC's Innovator Council, a newly created advisory council to enhance GCC's work with innovators.
- On the Transition-to-Scale (TTS) program side, GCC staff are working more closely with I3 to support due diligence and approvals.
- On the seed program side, I3 staff are working closely with GCC staff to support the development of programmatic processes and the creation of tools.





## Round 1 by the numbers

Round 1 innovators have made significant progress in economic and gender-related impacts within their communities from coast to coast. Read more about round 1 projects in our previous [impact report](#).



**1,300+ people**

directly engaged as participants, knowledge keepers, and collaborators by the **ten round 1 projects** between 2021-2023.



**Thousands more**

were also engaged by **round 1** projects through storytelling and outreach across multiple communities in BC, Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, and virtually.



**100%**

of innovators are actively working to create gender-inclusive spaces in industry (construction, manufacturing, aerospace, cosmetics, film, and media) and communities across Turtle Island.

## Round 1 and Round 2 by the numbers



**36 people**

employed across ten **round 1** projects in film and media, construction and entrepreneurship.



**More than one-third**

of **round 1** innovators are creating employment skills and opportunities in film and media, construction and entrepreneurship.



**33%**

(one-third) of **round 1** innovators have created programs that will lead to future economic opportunities through skills building and creation of training programs.



**50%**

(6 of 12) of **round 2** innovators are working on skills-building and training programs.



**\$4.7 million CAD**

disbursed to date (across Round 1, Round 2 and TTS).

# Innovator Reach



**40+**  
**communities**  
**reached**

**Round 1 and Round 2**  
Innovators are reaching  
communities from coast  
to coast to coast.



**15 communities**

reached by **R1** across Canada,  
plus online workshops.

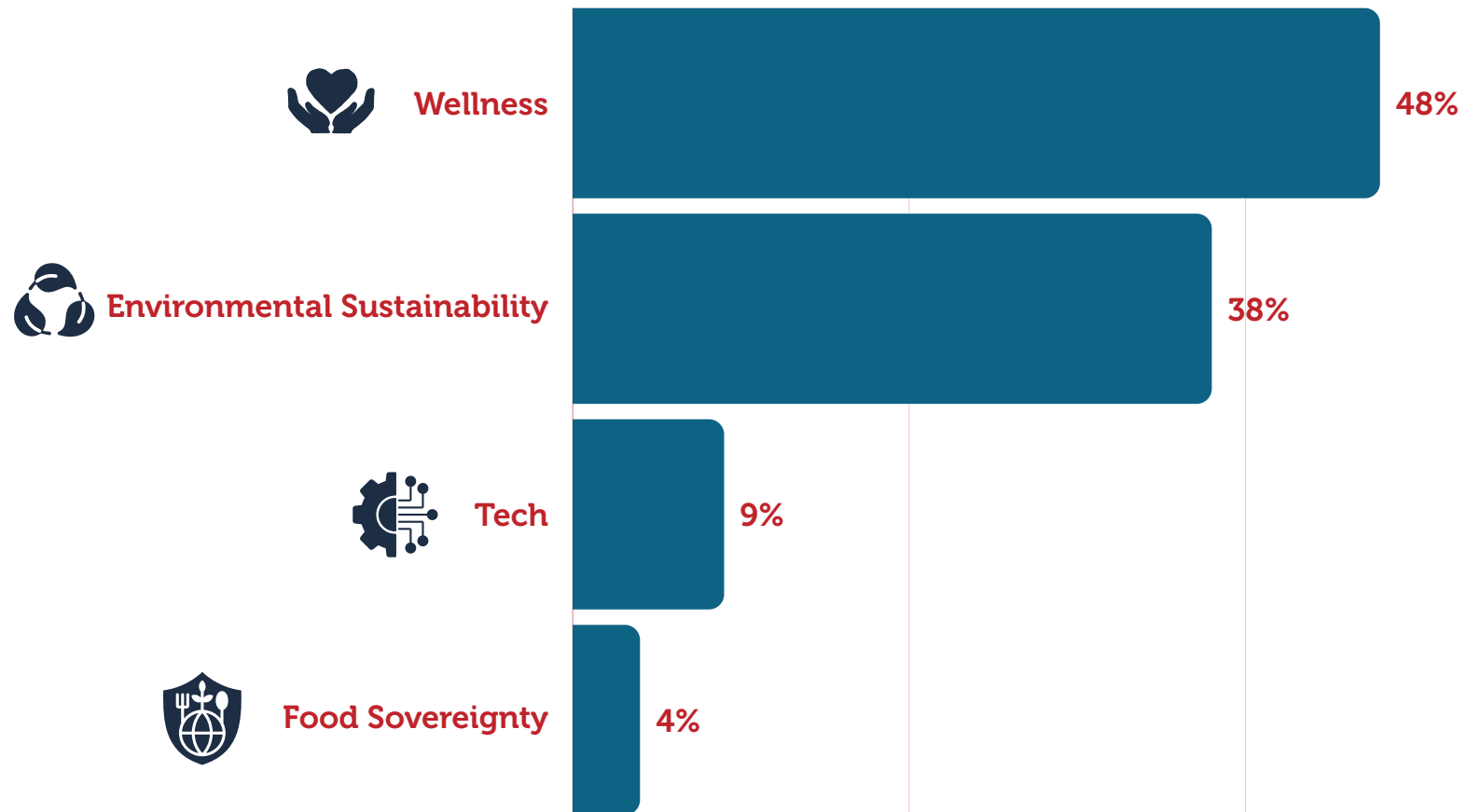
**22 communities**

reached by **R2 in cycle 1** with  
**7 communities** directly  
involved.

**23 communities**

directly involved in **R2**  
in cycle 2.

## Thematic areas of impact across R1 and R2





## Round 1 and Round 2 by the numbers — Cont'd

### Emergent Themes:



**100% revitalizing culture**

**50%**

(5 of 10) **R1** innovators are working on rematriation.

**8 out of 12**

of **R2** innovators are working on rematriation.

**REMATRIATION and RESTORING SACRED LAND-BASED RELATIONSHIPS —**  
refers to the important work of weaving cultural knowledge and the relationship back to the land that is led by and for women, Two-Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people. We understand there are different definitions of rematriation and we are happy to continue this conversation.

## Round 1 and Round 2 by the numbers – Cont'd

### Emergent Themes:



**64% knowledge and  
data sovereignty**



**36% economic  
empowerment**

With more than **\$1.6 million CAD leveraged** within the ecosystem by **R1** innovators, innovators are demonstrating strong support and additional investment from other donors and partners across seven provinces and territories.

## Impact Stories: The Sage Initiative

Innovator : Sage Lacerte

Scope of Impact: Across Turtle Island  
and what is known as Canada

Committed Funding: \$250,000

Investment Years: 2021- 2023



The **Sage Initiative** is the first and only Indigenous womxn's impact investing collective in Canada, founded by Indigenous youth leader Sage Lacerte. The Sage Initiative seeks to create and support a national network of Indigenous womxn, enabling a select group to each invest between \$1,000 and \$50,000 in Indigenous social purpose businesses, entrepreneurs, and trusts across Canada. The Initiative also seeks to strengthen participants' investment-related skills through a curriculum that employs a trauma-informed and bicultural lens. Participants were on a journey to generate exponential wealth and prosperity and help restore the economic balance that existed in our beautiful, traditional, pre-colonial Indigenous societies and economies.

Sage Lacerte  
Founder of The Sage Initiative

With a curriculum centred on healing and learning, the Sage Initiative has focused on unlearning and relearning to transform money into medicine. Each cohort made real investments to support Indigenous social purpose businesses and entrepreneurs in Canada. The Initiative has fostered mentorship for each cohort from a Circle of Matriarchs, composed of entrepreneurs and Knowledge Keepers, and has supported mentorship between cohorts. With feedback from the first two cohorts, mentors, and advisors, the Sage Initiative can continue to revise the curriculum for future cohorts.

**100%**

of participants in the Sage Initiative felt a sense of belonging in the program and valued their learning experience, and participants from each cohort noted developing a healthier relationship with money and stronger investment literacy after completing the curriculum

*“The learning increased my confidence; it let me start conversations with my colleagues about money, and therefore I learned more from them.” — Year one participant*

*“My views have been completely altered since I, myself, have become an investor after being a part of the Sage Initiative. I now see potential in everyone to be an investor, especially the people and Indigenous people that will do good and be inclusive with their investments.”  
— Year two participant*

*“I have given myself the ability to spend without feeling guilt or anxiety.” — Year one participant*

*“The Sage Initiative has allowed me to think much further into my future with more intention and critical thinking. I’ve adopted an intergenerational mindset when it comes to money, whether that ends up being my own children and grandchildren, or simply youth as a whole that deserve this knowledge and to be continuously uplifted.” — Year two participant*





Rebeka Tabobondung  
Editor-in-Chief of MUSKRAT  
Magazine

## Impact Stories: Spirit of Birth App

Innovator: MUSKRAT Magazine

Scope of Impact: Across Turtle Island  
and what is known as Canada

Committed Funding: \$250,000

Investment Years: 2021- 2023



**Spirit of Birth, an Indigenous Pregnancy and Parenting App**, provides vital pre- and post-natal health, birth, and parenting knowledge that coincides with the progression of the pregnancy journey. Through the app, parents can document and share their pregnancy journey and/or related health information with healthcare providers, family, and community to support more coordinated care and communication. To rebuild and strengthen community knowledge, healing, familial relationships, and positive cultural identity, all of which are important to the health and well-being of parents, their children, and their communities.

Spirit of Birth required a large research and development phase in which relationship building with partners and participants was key. Five diverse Indigenous communities were visited in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta. Interviewed approximately 10 people from each community totalling 50 + in person interviews and an additional 20+ Zoom interviews.

*“Through our engagement with the Indigenous maternal health community, we expanded our reach and were invited to travel to Cree territory in Kehewin, Alberta, to participate in and document their first Indigenous land-based birth camp.” — Rebeka Tabobondung*

Spirit of Birth sourced and incorporated more than 500 unique entries of Indigenous birth knowledge, an additional 287 entries of public health information on pregnancy, over 50 pregnancy resources included across all the Provinces and Territories. 13 Knowledge Keeper profiles, and much more unique information from the interviews are included in the App.

*“We observe that documenting and sharing of positive birth experiences has an immense ripple effect whereby individuals, families and communities inspire one another to pursue Indigenous-grounded birthing and midwifery-informed care, which leads to healing from negative impacts of residential school and colonial child welfare practices which separate children and families.”*

**— Rebeka Tabobondung**

As they continue to grow, Spirit of Birth would like to expand the sharing and marketing of the App toward a public, community, national, and global audience. It includes sharing culturally grounded content within a diversity of platforms.

*“I am proud of the richness and power of Indigenous worldviews, value systems, and approaches to maternal health in healing and re-constructing Indigenous identity from the destructive impacts of colonization. Knowing and learning about these systems can improve health systems which benefits everyone because they embrace inclusive, safe, and respectful care for all.” — Rebeka Tabobondung*

# *Listening, Learning , Adapting, Growing*

## **Lessons Learned**

### **Called in by community**

**Knowledge and Data Sovereignty** — Throughout the round one projects and round two process, we were called in by community to meet a higher standard of rigor and care in our Data Sovereignty approach. We received extensive and concrete feedback on how our due diligence process and grant agreement could be amended to better serve community-specific data sovereignty needs. Specifically, it was necessary to amend the standard “open access” and propriety language, which implies “open” access of knowledge and patents in grant structures, to instead acknowledge that knowledge is held by communities, Elders and knowledge keepers, respectively and is not always meant to be held or claimed by others.

To better meet this need, we have undertaken **OCAP** training for the entire team.

**Northern Innovation** — Innovators and applicants in the North have unique needs and challenges and they highlighted the need for Southern innovation partners to recognize privileged biases. For example, expectations for access and communication can look very different in the North than in the South, which can have impacts on program timelines and administrative deadlines. We are committed to learning more about how to support innovation in the North, and to creating a purposeful focus on Northern innovation to increase inclusion and accessibility of I3 funding.



## Program Learnings

**Innovator-Led Approach to Impact and Learning** — Each innovator has different goals of what to learn and how to document impact in community. It has been important for I3 to not prescribe impact metrics, but rather to invite learning. Many innovators I3 works with are most focused on depth of impact, rather than breadth of impact, which takes time to learn and show – often more time than even the full cycle of the grant. To meet this need, we are continually aiming to build in time at all stages of the grant process for innovators to develop inquiry and learning plans and to modify them throughout the innovation process.

**Transition to Scale (TTS)** — Launching the TTS program was a significant step for I3, as it opens the ability to create impactful funding for innovations that are ready to scale across Canada. The TTS program is also a pathway for seed innovators to continue to flourish in partnership with I3, meaning we can continue this relationship and build out support for the next steps in an innovator's journey.

**Consistency** — The past has been a period of trial, error, and learning as we build both seed and TTS. We continue striving for consistency in funding and programming as I3 matures. The I3 team's vision and values remain focused on supporting innovators as they create impactful innovations that uplift community dreams and foster an abundance mindset.



## Team

While the I3 team grows and evolves, a consistent dedication to community persists. Each team member brings a rich connection to their home, their culture, and their desire to support Indigenous innovation in Canada.

The team centres their work around supporting innovators. By creating availability and improving accessibility to the team and support at all points of the innovation lifecycle with I3, such as navigation support in the application and negotiation process and touch points throughout the project active phase, we are continuously looking to improve the grant experience.

This year, we introduced a new structure to the team by recruiting a new Deputy Director and promoting members to program and community managers. We are looking forward to filling the new Senior Director position soon.





## I3 Staff



**Kathryn Manners**  
**Deputy Director**  
*A doer and a dreamer*

Kathy is a results-oriented, values-based community leader and entrepreneur with a passion for innovation. She has worked in both the private sector and public sector, along with contributing extensively in the non-profit environment. Kathy is one of a handful of Canadians who have completed graduate work in Social Innovation and is driven to change the way we change the world. In her spare time, Kathy loves spending time with her family and is an avid cyclist!

**Samantha Jourdain (she/her)**  
**Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director and Team Administrator**  
*Free-spirited and cheerful*

Samantha is Anishnaabe from Couchiching First Nations, living in Northern Ontario. Samantha brings her 10+ years of administrative experience to the team, as well as her passion for Indigenous community and drive for Indigenous peoples to be on the forefront of innovation and change.



## I3 Staff



**Nabeela Jivraj (she/her)**  
**Knowledges Mobilization Manager**  
*Calm optimist*

Nabeela grew up in Mohkinstsis (Calgary) and lives in Tiohtiá:ke / Mooniyang (Montreal). She has experience supporting impact measurement for global health innovations, stakeholder reporting, and organizational learning initiatives. She is passionate about supporting locally-led and strengths-based approaches to community development. In her spare time, Nabeela enjoys dancing, writing and curating meme collections for her friends.

**Jillian Sutherland (she/her)**  
**Manager, Program and Community (Acting)**  
*Creative catalyst*

Jillian is an Investment Associate for the Indigenous Innovation Initiative.

Jillian holds a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Industries from Toronto Metropolitan University. Before joining Grand Challenges Canada, Jillian spent three years supporting granting programs for Canada's largest public arts funder.



## I3 Staff



**Alexandra Langford-Pezzo (she/her)**  
**Manager, Program and Community (Acting)**  
*Creating abundance in community*

Alexandra (Felix) is Ililiwiskwew from Missanabie Cree First Nation, who currently resides in Tkarondo. An earth-worker by spirit, Felix has held space with the Indigenous Innovation Initiative team as one of the program associates since 2021.

Before joining the team, she ran an earth working business, bringing plant knowledge to her urban community. Her role within the team is centred around the Indigenous community; she works to continue to connect Indigenous Peoples with each other and opportunities through the Indigenous Innovation Initiative. Felix is passionate about creating abundance for Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island that is led by community, for community, and with community.

## Governance

**Community Leadership:** To ensure we can meet the needs of the innovators, entrepreneurs, and communities we aim to support, our initiative is deeply rooted in Indigenous values and wisdom and is built on a foundation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. To do this right, we draw on the guidance of our Indigenous Innovation Council, which is made up of remarkable First Nation, Inuit, and Métis leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. Their strong commitment to community engagement, co-creation, and expertise in innovation, impact investing, and entrepreneurship is integral to the success of our initiatives.

## Council Members



### Diane Roussin

Diane Roussin is an Anishinaabe leader from Skownan First Nation, serving as the Project Director of The Winnipeg Boldness Project. She is recognized for her contributions to social innovation and has been awarded for her outstanding Indigenous leadership.

### Elder Wendy Phillips

Elder Wendy Phillips, a member of the Bald Eagle Clan, is a respected Indigenous Wisdom Keeper and Ceremonial Leader. She is deeply involved in cultural revitalization, environmental stewardship, and helping others find their path through traditional and contemporary practices.



## Council Members



### Carol Ann Budd

Carol Ann is the owner and principal advisor at Woodland Wealth. Her firm provides clients with financial education, planning and investment advice. She believes it's a privilege and a responsibility to be trusted with individuals' and communities' financial and investment goals and visions. She is a Certified Financial Planner, Chartered Investment Manager, Fellow of the Canadian Securities Institute and has earned the Trauma of Money® professional certification. A proud Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation member, she finds fulfilment in being a Nokomis/Grandmother, an Anishinaabemowin language learner and spending time at her camp in Biscotasing, Ontario.

### Ashley Cummings

Ashley Cummings is an Inuk advocate from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, currently working as the Northern Program Community Specialist at MakeWay. She focuses on climate justice and mental well-being for Indigenous communities and chairs the Indigenous Advisory Council for Kids Help Phone.





## Council Members



### **Dr. Michael Doxtater**

Dr. Michael Doxtater is a senior communications specialist from Six Nations of the Grand River with a distinguished career in media and academia. He has contributed to award-winning films and research focused on organizational learning and mediation, particularly in Indigenous contexts.

### **Marie St-Gelais**

Marie St-Gelais is an Innu civil engineer and the founder of Ashini Consultants, a firm specializing in civil engineering and environmental aspects, with a mission to support First Nations communities. She is currently completing an Indigenous Leadership EMBA at Simon Fraser University.



## Council Members



### Nadine St-Louis

Nadine St-Louis is a social and cultural entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience in advancing Indigenous economies through arts and culture. She founded Sacred Fire Productions and Ashukan Cultural Space to promote Indigenous art and support cultural revitalization.

### Jordan Wapaas

Jordan Wapaas, Principal Consultant for Cree8ive Advisory, specializes in strategic planning and capacity building. With extensive experience in the non-profit sector, he has held senior leadership roles in various First Nations governments and holds a Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager designation.



## Looking Ahead

Looking to the year ahead, we are excited to move into a new chapter for I3. Having been incubated at Grand Challenges Canada since 2019, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative is moving forward with our plan for self-determination, with support from Grand Challenges Canada as a partner in this process. We are continually reminded how Indigenous knowledge systems can be the foundation of innovation in an ever changing world, and remain committed to facilitating community-led innovation in Indigenous economies from coast to coast to coast.

In the year ahead, we look forward to growing the Transition to Scale program and to continue supporting seed innovators to scale their innovations through the TTS stream. We are committed to supporting innovations that uplift communities and reaffirm the self-governance and self-determination of Indigenous economies. We look forward to sharing more stories of impact from our current innovators and continuing with our commitment to improving the grant-making process to one that is most accessible to those working in community.

We are deeply grateful to all the innovators in our community for their openness to continue the conversation and share feedback with us on this journey, and are thankful to our funders and partners for walking with us on this journey towards self-determination.



***" Miigwetch, mussi cho, mikwêc, marsee, nia:wen, wela'lioq, nakurmiik, mársi, haw'aa, nitsiniiyi'taki, merci, thank you! "***

**l'Initiative  
d'innovation  
autochtone**



**Indigenous  
Innovation  
Initiative**

Follow our journey online and email us at [info@indigenousinnovate.org](mailto:info@indigenousinnovate.org)  
for investment opportunities, partnerships, or more information.



**November 2024**

**Indigenous Innovation Initiative**

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We are grateful to live and work on Dish with One Spoon Treaty territory, the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaawbe, the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee, and continues to be a gathering place for people from many nations.



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