



# The Indigenous Gender Equality Program: planting seeds and innovating our way home

Impact Story | June 2022

THE INDIGENOUS INNOVATION INITIATIVE





"After a long trek, we have landed here for the first time — together. My relatives come with many gifts, each of us rich with knowledge, strength, and eagerness in our pursuit of knowledge. Markers and traits of our foremothers can be found in our hair, proud cheeks, and in the words, we speak into circle. 'I'm so happy to see you, my relative!' says our aunties and matriarchs, 'we've been waiting a long time for this'."

- Sage Lacerte, Founder and CEO of  
the Sage Initiative





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# Introduction

**Indigenous Peoples have always been innovative.** In a Western context, the innovation process is often rooted in the creation of new ideas —usually technology-based— that will bring us closer to the future. In an Indigenous context, innovation is generally rooted in the continuum of all our relations: our ancestors and relatives gift us seeds of change and growth and teach us how to nurture them so that they grow into the relationships, infrastructure, economies, systems, and medicines that will sustain and care for all our relations —past, present, and future. We understand that innovation isn't always about creating new things, and we prioritize Indigenous innovation as being critical to creating shared futures where all Peoples, and the planet, can thrive. We use Indigenous innovation to reclaim, revitalize, and reapply ancestral ways of knowing and being to new contexts. By doing so, future generations can also feast from the harvest, and enable sustainable growth and wellbeing of their own communities, Lands, Waters, and Skies for generations to come.

Within the [Advancing Indigenous Gender Equality through Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Program](#) ("Indigenous Gender Equality Program"), we recognize and honour the sacred role of Indigenous women, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people in leading and stewarding these seeds of change, as they act as leaders and form the backbone of Indigenous communities and systems. We are walking alongside them as they nourish, heal, and care for their communities, Lands, Waters, and Skies through social innovation - through seeds of change. Rooted in ancestral ways of knowing and being, these innovative solutions are creating the conditions for future generations to thrive.

The following stories share how the first cohort of Indigenous innovators within this program are dismantling colonial and oppressive systems and rebuilding through love, respect, responsibility, and reciprocity to all our relations. To honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being, this story is told using the narrative of seed rematriation as a guide. Across Turtle Island, or what is commonly known as North America, Indigenous Peoples —in particular, women, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people—are rematriating stolen or missing seeds back into their communities and systems. Once these seeds are brought home, they can fulfill their original purpose of nourishing and feeding communities. Within the Indigenous Gender Equality Program, we are reconceptualizing innovation, growing medicine, feeding the community, and returning home.

**Thank you for joining us on this journey.**

# The Indigenous Innovation Initiative

Our vision is to improve all life through Indigenous innovation. We understand that creating the conditions for Indigenous innovation to thrive is about more than just increasing access to capital. Different harvests need different supports, environments, and types of care, which is why we provide tailored wrap-around supports for innovators to unlock their fullest potential. Through core values of inclusion, self-determination, sustainability and creativity, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative uses innovative approaches to support First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in developing, testing, iterating, and scaling innovative ideas that re-inspire healing, imagination, and opportunity for their communities, while benefitting all people, the Lands, Waters, and Skies. This includes:

## Access to capital

In partnership with donors, philanthropists and impact investors, we address the resource gaps and investment needs of innovators

## Building capacity

Together with a network of collaborative partners, we support innovators with the Knowledges, skills, and tools they need to succeed

## Cultivating networks

As they are ready, we connect innovators to a meaningful ecosystem of relationships and opportunities that increase their social capital

## Driving interest

Successes are celebrated as we share innovators' stories of hope, possibility, and impact, which model and inspire the next generation of Indigenous innovation

In May 2020, we launched round one of the inaugural [Advancing Indigenous Gender Equality through Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Program](#), funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada. Of 238 eligible applications, [10 projects](#) received a total of \$2.5-million in proof of concept (seed) grants to develop and test their innovative ideas. So far, Innovators have leveraged \$3,086,000 in direct investment or in-kind support, using grant money provided by the Indigenous Innovation Initiative. As some projects start to wrap up, we are exploring opportunities to transition them to scale so they can achieve more impact within the community.



## Our path to impact: every change begins as a seed

The ultimate impact goal of the Indigenous Gender Equality Program is to advance Indigenous gender equality across health, economic, and social dimensions through transformative innovation and large-scale systemic change that is by and for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis women, Two-Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Another key objective is to re-empower innovators to achieve their vision of self and community.

To achieve this, we are committed to providing innovators with the wrap-around relationships, supports, and resources they need to achieve their fullest potential so they can nourish and grow their own seeds of change. Here is what our path to impact is starting to look like, based on our learnings to date. Every time we release a new Indigenous Gender Equality Program Impact Story, we will update this based on new learnings.

80% of innovators are **employing people** through their projects

22 jobs have **been created** through these 10 projects

This employment is valued at **at least \$535,090**

## WHAT WE DO WITHIN THE INDIGENOUS GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAM:

**We start with spirit:** Using language, materials, and approaches that are resiliency-informed, strengths-based, gender-affirming, and culturally rooted, that honours culture, community, and ceremony.

**We create authentic spaces:** Intentionally creating spaces that are as safe and inclusive as possible for innovators to grow and connect across their cohort, within their communities, and across the innovation ecosystem more broadly.

**We remove systemic barriers:** Continuously identifying and addressing gendered, racialized, and oppressive barriers that First Nation, Inuit, and Métis women, Two-Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people face.

**We cultivate dream medicine:** Sharing time, resources, and space for innovators to dream, create, and succeed. This includes project timelines of up to two years, grants of up to \$250K, and connecting with mentors and advisors.

**We are rooted in impact:** Integrating learning, Knowledges creation, and impact storytelling into each step of this journey, and prioritize amplifying learnings, impact, and potential at an innovator, platform, and community level.

## WHAT INNOVATORS EXPERIENCE AS A RESULT:

**Rematriation:** Rowen White describes rematriation as going “[...] back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than patriarchal destruction and colonization, a reclamation of germination [...].” Innovators are actively reclaiming the spirit of matriarchal leadership within their communities by taking on positions as role models, mentors, and guides for current and future generations.

**Creating gender-affirming spaces:** Innovators recognize that building a gender-affirming innovation ecosystem starts with creating safer spaces at home. Innovators are co-creating spaces where people feel safe showing up as their authentic selves and where everyone is caring for each other in an intentional and affirming way. Innovators are also reaffirming the importance of empowering people with lived experience to guide the creation of these spaces. For example, through reciprocated leadership or consultancy.

**Honouring the wisdom of our ancestors:** At the core of the Indigenous innovation process is the wisdom of community, including Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who connect us to the ancestral teachings and practices we require to co-create the just and equitable futures we are building together. Innovators understand that healing and wellbeing are critical to community sustainability, which is why their innovations are continuously shaped by what their communities need to restore, reconnect, and relearn their cultures, identities, traditions, languages, and relationships.

**Restoring relationships with community, the Lands, Waters, and Skies:** For Indigenous Peoples, relationality is critical to the wellbeing of people and planet, and it is our relationships that help us understand where we belong, what our gifts are, and how we will use these gifts to co-create positive change for all our relations. Innovators are exploring these relationships with their communities on a deeper level, including how Indigenous innovation is vital to revitalizing ancestral practices and to strengthening our inherent relationship with Lands, Waters, and Skies.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE COMMUNITY AS A RESULT:

The seeds of Indigenous innovation are critical to the future wellbeing of all Peoples, the Lands, Waters, and Skies. Through the following stories, innovators share what relationships, infrastructure, economies, systems, or medicines they are growing for their communities and how they are guiding all their relations into a reimagined future. A future that includes the resurgence of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, with the wisdom of ancestors and the well-being of future generations acting as a guide.

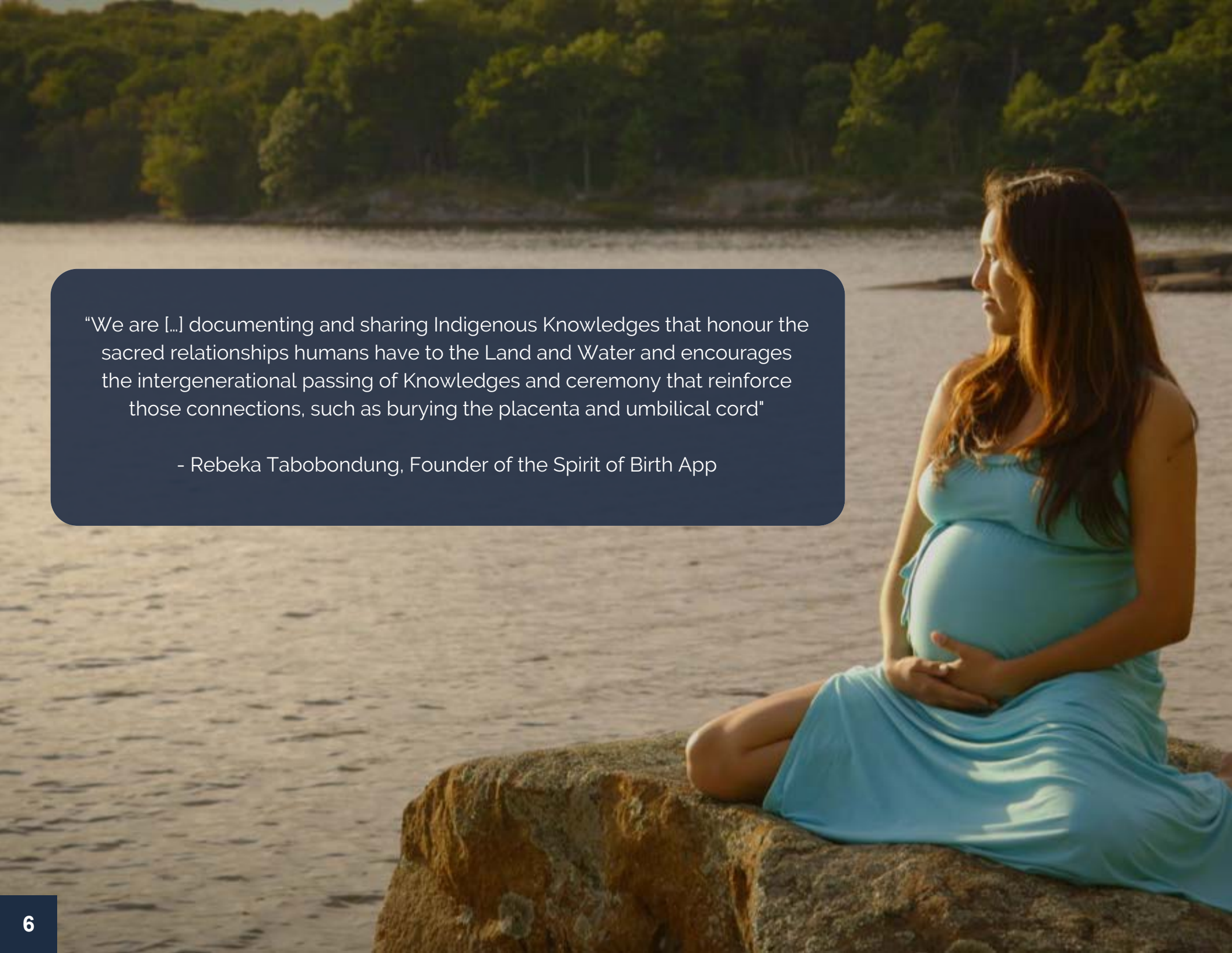
Seeds grow and change through the seasons and bring different gifts and opportunities across these cycles. To honour our important relationship with the Lands, Waters, and Skies and to honour how Indigenous ways of knowing and being are rooted in seasonal teachings, we are sharing these impact stories across seasons.

# Spring

We start with spring, which many Indigenous Peoples associate with the eastern direction or the eastern doorway. This often represents new beginnings, where the Land is waking up and preparing for new life. These stories are about innovators who are breathing new life into the world – one through the journey of pregnancy and another through the journey of birthing a new social impact investment model.







"We are [...] documenting and sharing Indigenous Knowledges that honour the sacred relationships humans have to the Land and Water and encourages the intergenerational passing of Knowledges and ceremony that reinforce those connections, such as burying the placenta and umbilical cord"

- Rebeka Tabobondung, Founder of the Spirit of Birth App



# Spirit of Birth App



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

MUSKRAT Magazine

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Across Turtle Island and what is known as Canada

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

24 months

### Investment timeline:



The Spirit of Birth App will provide 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. The app will include public health and traditional Knowledges, based on the voices, experiences, and direction of Knowledge Keepers, midwives, and community members – supporting the sharing of intergenerational Knowledges in a birthing context. In particular, the app will include teachings on the Lands and Waters and their relationship to life-givers. For example, a central teaching is that just as life-givers are responsible for caring for the lakes and bays, it is also their responsibility to care for the waters that sustain a baby.

The Spirit of Birth App will create impact by recovering, sharing, and revitalizing the sacred birthing and parenting Knowledges and practices that historical and ongoing colonization has misplaced. Unearthing and celebrating these birthing Knowledges and practices is critical to community health and wellbeing because they re-establish the sacred relationships of parent and child. The app will also include pre-colonial Indigenous perspectives that go beyond the narrow Western gender binary, to acknowledge, affirm, and create space for the complexities of gender and sexual identity.

As the project concludes its initial research and development phase, Rebeka is exploring core content and functionality, and which digital options will prioritize accessibility. The team is in continuous consultation with community partners and is proud to have formed partnerships with organizations like the Association of Ontario Midwives, Health Nexus, the Indigenous Screen Office, and Netflix. You can learn about these partnerships and more by visiting <http://muskratmagazine.com/mother-and-media-creator/>.





"When I founded Sage Initiative and reached out to Indigenous womxn across Canada asking for support to rematriate and strengthen Indigenous economies, the overwhelmingly positive response reminded me of the power and righteousness that our people carry when we move towards a mutual vision. We take care of each other as one might care for a relative. That's why we address our Matriarchs with respect and follow our cultural protocols. That's why our Circle of volunteer Mentors call the members of the cohort their nieces and relatives because they relate to and nourish us as they would their own nieces and relatives."

- Sage Lacerte, Founder and CEO of the Sage Initiative





# The Sage Initiative



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Sage Lacerte

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Across Turtle Island and what is known as Canada

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

24 months

### Investment timeline:



The Sage Initiative is the first and only Indigenous womxn's impact investing collective in Canada, founded by Indigenous youth Sage Lacerte. Over two years, the Sage Initiative seeks to create and support a national network of Indigenous womxn, enabling a select group to each invest between \$1,000-\$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 are on a journey to generate exponential wealth and prosperity and help to restore the economic balance that existed in our beautiful, traditional, pre-colonial Indigenous societies and economies.

The curriculum experience centres on healing and learning. By revisiting the past we can see the trauma that money has caused within Indigenous communities, and the Sage Initiative is beginning to unlearn and relearn how we might instead transform money into medicine. Sage is centring on how engaging in learnings about Indigenous commerce ultimately benefits everyone, and we will continue to learn about and share stories of how the collective is contributing to the restoration of pre-colonial Indigenous circular economies built on reciprocity and relationship.

The first cohort of ten Indigenous womxn received mentorship from a Circle of Matriarchs. Composed of just under twenty entrepreneurs and Knowledge Keepers, the Circle of Matriarchs carries decades of experience in Indigenous commerce spanning multiple sectors and industries. Cohort participants developed the technical skills needed to navigate a predominately white, male investment sector, while still honouring and employing Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

With countless press releases, community events, sponsorship events, and knowledge sharing, Sage is being celebrated and amplified in many ways since launching this project. In November 2021, Sage was named one of the [Top 30 Under 30 leaders in Canada](#) for her focus on sustainability. Sage was also named one of [21 New Founders to Watch by Future of Good](#), for pushing for a more socially conscious Canada. Sage is committed to birthing a new social impact investment model to better support Indigenous Peoples and the Land. As she continues to make a transformative impact in the broader impact investment landscape, she looks forward to welcoming the second cohort of learners, which will grow two-fold by next year.





# Summer

Many Indigenous Peoples associate summer with the southern direction or the southern doorway. This often represents youth and is a time of rapid growth and abundance, as we see the seeds of the earth flourishing and blossoming. This story is about an innovator who intentionally created career pathways for Indigenous women, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse young adults, in a white, male-dominated, trade space.





"This pilot is a weave of "Two-Eyed seeing," creating space for Western and Indigenous ways of knowing to come together using the best of both worldviews and understandings so we can leave the world a better place. We came together with open minds and hearts to highlight gender diversity and Inclusivity in the trades sector, prioritize Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ workshop speakers. We have designed the course to help equip students with the confidence and skills to work in a male dominated construction industry."

- Mae Flanders, Project Coordinator; Indigenous Energy Advisor (AHMA)







# Building a Greener Future Together



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Cheakamus Foundation for Environmental Learning

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Communities across Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Territory in British Columbia

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

12 months

### Investment timeline:



Building a Greener Future Together is a pilot education innovation built to address Indigenous gender inequalities in the sustainable construction industry. The 9-week high-performance buildings course just finished and attracted an enthusiastic cohort of eight Indigenous young adults from urban and rural communities across BC and Alberta. Learners came from diverse backgrounds and experiences with a common interest in building healthier communities. In addition to a virtual curriculum, Learners participated in a week-long immersion at the Cheakamus Centre. Facilitators included Indigenous, and non-Indigenous, gender diverse industry leaders from places like the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), as well as Elders and Knowledge Keepers, Aboriginal Housing Management Association, B Collective Homes, British Columbia Institute of Technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the North Vancouver School District.

We joined the project team at the Cheakamus Centre for a project closing celebration in May 2022 and immersed ourselves in the impact of this innovation. The path to impact starts with dismantling barriers to the high-performance building sector by creating space for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse young adults. One facilitator reflected on how all it took was creating the space for diverse and historically under-supported youth, and they showed up ready to learn.

Learners are grateful for the safe, caring, and respectful learning space and the deep impact it had on them to be able to spend a week together. This week was more than just the retrofit – the impact came from taking time to build a relationship with the Land, make friends, and build skills. Learners reinforced the need for building these skills, so they can apply them within their communities to improve the quality and integrity of housing and other buildings that are critical determinants of health and wellbeing. These skills are also critical for creating career pathways in a trade space that is historically white, and male-dominated. Multiple Indigenous facilitators shared their own stories of impact, with the project creating space for them to dive deeper into their own identities and cultures as part of their reclamation journey.

We are exploring opportunities to transition this innovation to scale. We will continue to work with this project to gather and share stories of the learners as they journey forward and create further impact.



# Fall

Many Indigenous Peoples associate fall with the western direction or the western doorway. This season often represents adulthood. It is also a time when we harvest the gifts of the Lands and Waters and share them so that all our relations can thrive. The following stories are about innovators who are reclaiming critical relationships with the Lands, Waters, and Skies and are reinforcing pathways to stewardship, sustainability, and sovereignty.





DYNAMIC

PEOPLEHOOD

INDIVIDUALISM

RECIPROCITY

OWNERSHIP





## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Cheekbone Beauty  
Cosmetics Inc.

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Global

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

12 months

### Investment timeline:



## Cheekbone Beauty



Cheekbone Beauty is reimagining our relationship with the community and the Land by creating a more sustainable and inclusive line of cosmetics. Founder Jenn Harper's goal was to develop sustainable and refillable containers for an existing foundation product, to reduce the number of cosmetic products that will enter landfills while removing and reducing the harm and barriers that men, Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people can feel when using makeup. Guided by the principles and values of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Jenn is prioritizing how Cheekbone Beauty can benefit the Land and Peoples of Turtle Island seven generations in the future, while also honouring our ancestors.

Using support from the Indigenous Innovation Initiative, Jenn and her team built an in-house testing lab, including a stability oven, lab freezer, mould, and other equipment, so they could move quickly on product research and development. After hiring a full-time chemist, they developed a 3D printed prototype of a container made from material that is recyclable in most municipal systems and has a general sense of what materials are required to support the integrity and function of the container at different levels of post-consumer recycled content. As they transition toward scale with this new packaging, the next step is to use a production mould to experiment with different compositions of these materials at 10%, 30%, and 50% and eventually 100% post-consumer recycled content or even compostable materials.

In February 2022, Jenn was named number four on the [Canadian Business and Brookfield Institute's New Innovators List](#), a new annual ranking of Canadian companies forging a more progressive path forward. This project closed in January 2022, and we are exploring opportunities to take this concept to scale. Jenn will continue to transform the beauty industry for people and the planet, propelled by the recent [Right the Story campaign](#) which demonstrates this transformation and the critical need for innovation, equity, and sustainability within the beauty industry.







## Iskwew Air



### INNOVATION SUMMARY

#### Innovator:

Iskwew Air Inc.

#### Scope of Intended Impact:

Across Turtle Island  
and what is known  
as Canada

#### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

#### Year of Investment:

2021

#### Term:

15 months

#### Investment timeline:



Teara Fraser is the founder and CEO of Iskwew Air (“iss-kway-yo”). Iskwew is a Cree word for woman and celebrates the first Indigenous woman-owned airline in Canada. Teara is bridging the gap between traditional air service and sustainable technology of the future by rematriating, reimagining, and rebuilding our air transportation system – while centring on equity, resilience, and sustainability. In a decolonized, co-created, reflective learning process, Teara’s innovation project seeks to bring Indigenous Knowledges together with modern Remote Piloted Aircraft Systems and Advanced Air Mobility technologies to uplift Indigenous land story, sovereignty, and stewardship. This includes strengthening knowledge and building relationships with collaborators, including the Canadian Advanced Mobility Consortium, Unmanned Systems Canada, InDro Robotics, and the British Columbia Technology Institute to name a few. Teara is breaking down gendered, systemic, and racialized barriers to create equitable spaces that are fueled by love and compassion. Spaces where Indigenous women and gender diverse people not only see themselves represented within the aviation space but feel like it is a space where they can thrive. Teara is being recognized across the world for this ground-breaking work. For example:

- She received the [2022 BC Tourism and Hospitality Businesswoman of the Year Award and the 2021 Canadian Innovation](#) and [Entrepreneurship Awards Scotiabank Entrepreneur of the Year award](#)
- She was highlighted in the [eVTOL Power Book 2022](#), the definitive list of the influencers, leaders, and innovators who shaped the global aviation industry this year
- She is one of 19 people featured in the [DC Graphic Novel Wonderful Women of the World](#), which is about women who are making the world a better place through strength, compassion, and commitment to truth, equality, and justice

After diverse engagement with the community and within the aviation space through her project, Teara identified numerous ways that remote piloted aircraft systems and advanced air mobility technologies can support social, ecological, and economic justice for Indigenous communities. As Teara transitions toward scale with this innovation, she is growing partnerships and investments to take aspects of this work to the next level. We will share more on this through follow-on stories. As the wisdom harvested from this innovation is shared, there is potential to serve tens of thousands of Indigenous community members as this innovation evolves and transitions to scale.





"I am so proud to say that this innovation is a long-overdue opportunity that contributes to the healing of womxn and the resurrection practice of ancestral harvesting practices!"

- Kim Wheatley and Amber Sandy, Co-founders of the Reclaiming Ancestral Harvesting Practices Project





# Reclaiming Ancestral Harvesting Practices



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Kim Wheatley and  
Amber Sandy

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Communities  
around Shawanaga  
First Nation and  
Dokis  
First Nation, Ontario

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

17 months

### Investment timeline:




Innovators Kim Wheatley and Amber Sandy are co-creating a year-long on-the-land pilot program that focuses on reclaiming ancestral harvesting Knowledges through immersion in traditional practices. Guided by First Nations' Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the project integrates Indigenous ways of knowing and being with social innovation by grounding it in ancestral wisdom and western science modalities. The project addresses the colonially diminished roles of Indigenous women, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people by empowering them to reclaim a traditionally grounded role within and beyond their community circles.

The project's first in-person gathering included sweats, a ceremonial honouring feast, sacred site visits, and traditional teachings delivered through shared stories and hands-on experience. Using two pontoons, participants and Elders set sail for a two-day overnight immersion that would acquaint them with the Lands and Waters of the Anishinaabe Peoples of the Georgian Bay area. Reflecting on the experience, many participants referenced a feeling of connection that was both empowering and holistic. Kim and Amber got to witness the personal growth of participants: from screaming *yucks* when putting a worm on a hook to watching them help each other set up their fishing rods. The Elders expressed deep gratitude for having the opportunity to share their wisdom and experiential Knowledges in a culturally safe way with diverse participants and reinforced that this type of activity was long overdue and a rare opportunity to share what they have spent a lifetime learning.

Kim and Amber are nurturing a reawakening of the importance of ancestral Knowledges and are contributing to a learning journey of how they might be applied in an empowering and accessible way in contemporary practice. Many participants reinforced the rarity of a cultural immersion that is made by and for Indigenous womxn and LGBTQ2S+ people, and they're eager to share this experience with people who are not a part of this project. Participants also reinforced how they think this learning approach can easily be replicated or scaled, and that they feel prepared to take what they learned and apply it within their personal contexts. This affirms the ultimate impact goal of this project, which is to support participants in reclaiming their ancestral harvesting Knowledges and practices so they can apply these learnings within their community networks as it relates to supporting food sustainability. We will continue to work with this project to gather and share stories of the participants as they journey forward and learn more about how they are applying these skills in different contexts.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt and traditional jewelry including a beaded necklace and a bracelet, stands in a field of white flowers. She is holding a drum with a caribou design on it. The background is a dense forest of evergreen trees.

"I think that what I am most proud about is being able to show people that you can find work and employment in safe places and culturally grounded spaces. For some people, I think it's just a job, but others are happy to be a part of some kind of movement. It was recently shared with me that 'Yukon Soaps Company is THE place to work' in Mayo. That really made me laugh but it also made my heart happy to know that people see it as a workplace option and that they see it as something that they want to be a part of."

- Joella Hogan, Owner and Operator of the Yukon Soaps Company





# D ank'ehtenatsedan

## (Learning Our People's Way)



### INNOVATION SUMMARY

**Innovator:**  
Yukon Soaps Company

**Scope of Intended Impact:**  
Community of Mayo, Yukon

**Committed Amount:**  
\$250,000

**Year of Investment:**  
2021

**Term:**  
21 months



Joella Hogan, Founder of the Yukon Soaps Company, is creating a space for people to develop skills, share in revenue generation, and rebuild their sacred connection to plants and relationships with one another through a regenerative economic development program. Joella’s innovation project supports the growth of local micro-businesses that are based on plant knowledge and cultural teachings, with an emphasis on launching small product batches and market testing of wellness products. The retail space of the Yukon Soaps Company will provide a venue for selling the products created in the shop. Yukon Soaps Company seeks to move the wellness sector toward a local regenerative economy, and away from extractive and environmentally harmful Western ways of knowing and being. While this includes a return to more sustainable materials and production processes, it also means deeply reflecting on how the integration of Indigenous values into business practices impacts the community that is being served.

After a difficult year, Joella and her team continue to develop an on-the-land, culturally relevant, business program. Through the development process, their educational materials and learning goals have shifted in content from bath bombs and lip balms to gaining a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. They are also exploring podcasts and videos as a way to include community members in the dispersion of business knowledge and Indigenous teachings. As the number of interested creators and entrepreneurs grows, Joella and her team look forward to opening a physical gathering space where they can pass on the knowledge and teachings that they have similarly been seeking out in their own lives. At the forefront of this knowledge is how Indigenous entrepreneurs can use medicines from the land to create wellness, wealth, and abundance, while also relearning, reclaiming, and restoring their connection to culture and language in the process.


In 2021, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative had the pleasure of nominating Joella for the [Canadian Innovation and Entrepreneurship Awards](#), where she won the [NACCA Indigenous Entrepreneur of the Year Award](#). Before this, Joella’s innovation project was acknowledged in the [Yukon Legislature](#) as an important community initiative, and [the Narwhal](#) acknowledged her tremendous community impact as it relates to creating space for regenerative economic growth that is not linked to the extractive industries that have driven the Mayo, Yukon economy for generations.



# Winter

Many Indigenous Peoples associate winter with the northern direction or the northern doorway. This often represents Elders and Knowledge Keepers and is where the Land is regenerating for the next season of abundance and where we thrive off the gifts of the fall harvest. This is a time of healing, repair, rest, and reflection as we plan and prepare for the season ahead, through ancestral wisdoms. This story is about an innovator who is using matrilineal-led solutions that heal the wounds of Indigenous human sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. And, an innovator that is encouraging reflection and healing through the power of digital storytelling.





"We know that we are responding to the needs of many wounded souls [...] The Moon Ceremony provided us all with the knowledge that our 'healing village' is already here. Although there are no buildings yet, the essence and impact of what a healing village is becoming a reality through Moon Dance and strawberry medicine!"

- Jamie Goulet and her mother, Elder Mae Louise Campbell, Co-founders of Clan Mothers Healing Village and Knowledge Centre



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Clan Mothers Turtle  
Lodge Inc.

### Scope of Intended Impact:

Across what is now  
known as Canada

### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

### Year of Investment:

2021

### Term:

24 months

### Investment timeline:



# Clan Mothers Healing Village and Knowledge Centre



The Clan Mother's Healing Village and Knowledge Centre is a matrilineal-led social enterprise that centres the Knowledges and lived experience of youth, women, Two Spirit, and trans people to create educational content on human sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in Indigenous communities. This social enterprise will enable broad access to meaningful solutions to human sex trafficking and sexual exploitation through a fee-for-service Digital Knowledge Centre that also supports the sustainability of the Healing Village. Clan Mothers upholds that people with lived experience are the most knowledgeable about the solutions needed to dismantle ongoing colonial sexual violence. To honour this, content for the Knowledge Centre is co-created in partnership with the Lived Experience Leadership Council and Elder Council and includes experiential webinars, conferences, workshops, sharing circles and ceremonies that are guided by Indigenous matriarchal knowledge, wisdom, and teachings.

In August 2021, Clan Mothers held their first annual Moon Dance Ceremony, in part to celebrate the start of the project. People came together in deep relationality, and participants shared that it allowed them to explore their spirituality in connection with all our relations. When participants returned to the land for another ceremony in October, the Creator provided a gift of assurance: under the arbour and around the ceremonial altar there were strawberry plants in bloom. Highly unusual for strawberries to be blooming in late October as opposed to June, the Elders considered this a miracle and message that Mother Earth, and the ancestral spirits, were responding to the participants. Several participants were reluctant to leave the land, claiming they had never felt so safe, secure, and accepted.

In these early stages of their project, the Clan Mothers group is working alongside Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Lived Experience Leaders to create the beginnings of the Knowledge Centre—exploring podcasts and recorded spoken word as a medium. A Lived Experience Leaders speaker series will eventually be a critical part of this Knowledge Centre, rooting the path forward in their experiences and creating intentional space for corporate and government partners to participate in these solutions.



"A central focus of our initiative is to allow Haida community members to tell their own stories in creative ways, that will allow a wider audience – and future generations – to hear their voices. Protecting the integrity of land, water, community, and culture are central to the Haida Gwaii spirit, and we expect that several creative projects assisted through this initiative will revolve around these themes."

- Julia Weder, Co-founder of the Haida Gwaii Media Collective







## Haida Gwaii Media Collective



Guided by Haida principles of reciprocity, respect, consent, and interconnectedness, the Haida Gwaii Media Collective is a media training and production initiative that gives the residents of Haida Gwaii access to equipment, resources, experiential skill-building opportunities, mentorship, and experience in digital storytelling. The collective seeks to combat access barriers and inequality for Indigenous women, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people in the media production sector, while also empowering them to take on leadership roles in the industry. This includes increasing access to equipment, mentorship and experiential skill-building opportunities that allow for self-determined and culturally rooted approaches that amplify the unique stories and experiences of Indigenous artists. Located in the small community of Skidegate and housed in the Haida Gwaii Museum, participants are given the tools they need to amplify their voices—and the voice of their community—through culturally rooted, unique, digital storytelling methods.

In September 2021, they hosted a visiting Indigenous artist, Lindsay Delaronde, to facilitate four days of land- and theatre-based workshops with a dedicated group of Haida Elders and community members of various ages. The goal was to create a space for dialogue and exploration of the body-land connection and choreograph, film, and share a land-based dance piece with the broader community. Through their participation in Dancing the Land, nine community members connected with the embodied teachings of the land and establish a deeper sense of place and belonging within their bodies and territories.

The project involved a series of activities including body maps on the beach, improvisation of sounds and movement, and sharing personal stories and learnings from participants' resilience journeys. The final choreographed piece included personalized movements from each participant stitched together into a powerful whole, and incorporated Haida songs and masks at the request of the participating Haida Elders and dancers. This allowed for a deep sense of cultural purpose and preservation to emerge. Cameron Watts, a young Indigenous videographer, helped capture the intimate process of reflection, creativity, and relationship building. The short film is currently being produced and edited, after which the community will be invited to attend a screening.

We recently nominated Julia, a project lead, for a youth leadership award through Future of Good.

### INNOVATION SUMMARY

#### Innovator:

Hiit'aGan.iina Kuuyas  
Naay and InnoNative

#### Scope of Intended Impact:

Communities across  
Haida Gwaii

#### Committed Amount:

\$250,000

#### Year of Investment:

2021

#### Term:

24 months

#### Investment timeline:





## Next steps: cultivating impact together

As we reflect on these innovation projects, the first bundle of impact stories affirms that we are advancing toward the shared vision of Indigenous Gender Equality that forms the backbone of this innovative program. This vision reminds us that, no matter the season, when our paddles are up, we are living our Values and Principles, are welcoming and respecting ourselves and others, and are inclusive of the gifts, roles, and experiences of women, men, Two Spirit, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Once our paddles are up, people can find their place – a place where they are cared for and uplifted as they move through their life journey. When we are lifting each other and paddling together, everyone has equal and equitable opportunities to achieve their fullest potential and to thrive and we are working toward shared community goals, using the gifts and roles of all our relations to achieve them. Before the program started, we co-created this shared vision with the community, and it plays a critical role in achieving the ultimate impact goal of the Indigenous Gender Equality Program.

The innovators are dedicating their life journey to planting seeds of medicine and opportunity that will sustain and care for all our relations, for generations to come. We are committed to creating a space where innovators have what they need to achieve their fullest potential. We can't do this work alone and invite you to invest in the Indigenous Innovation Initiative. Even though Indigenous Peoples make up 4.9% of the population in Canada, we receive just over 0.5% of grants –or, \$1 for every \$178 given to non-Indigenous groups. Your contribution allows Indigenous Peoples to be more meaningfully supported in this giving space and helps us support more innovators in developing, testing, and scaling their innovation towards impact.

**DONATE**





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



**June 2022**

**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 Annishinaawbe, the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee, and continues to be a gathering place for people from many nations.



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