



**INDIGENOUS  
INNOVATION  
INITIATIVE**

**2024-2025**  
**Annual Report**



## Artwork by Jackie Traverse (Winnipeg)

### **Cultural Background: Anishinabe, Lake St. Martin First Nation**

*Jackie Traverse is a multi-disciplinary First Nation female artist who calls the city of Winnipeg home. A large portion of her work contains a combination of popular and traditional cultural reflections, which she portrays through her knowledge of urban living, contemporary visual art, traditional craft, and her own cultural practices. She works in many mediums from painting in oils and acrylics to mixed media, sculpture and stop motion animation.*

*Traverse is widely known in art communities across Canada. Her paintings, drawings, documentaries, and sculptures speak to realities of being an Aboriginal woman. She has created stop-motion animation on missing and murdered women in Canada, another on the sixties scoop titled "Two Scoops" and "Empty" a tribute to her estranged mother. Jackie is deeply moved by the injustices faced by First Nations people. She is committed to her community and teaches art in public schools, which bring together the traditional teachings of the First Nations to various cultures.*

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# Introduction

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*Aaniin-Boozhoo, Waaciya, Tanshu, She:kon, Kwe', Atelihai, Edlanet'e, Negha, Hadih, Sán uu Dáng Giidang, Oki, Kuei, Bonjour, Hello!*

In a period of increasing global uncertainty, the lessons learned by Indigenous innovators continually demonstrate how honouring traditions, adaptability, and flexibility build resilience and community capacity for a hopeful future. Over the past year, we have continued to reflect on the need for a fully Indigenous-led investment approach and platform and have focused on stewarding a transition of the I3 platform out of its current host arrangement at Grand Challenges Canada.

Over the past year, we have celebrated many successful firsts for the program. We celebrate having distributed capital into the ecosystem to 13 seed innovations and three transition to scale (TTS) innovations. We celebrate a successful evaluation of I3's Gender Equality Program. This year we also wrap up our commitments to our previous funding supports, with deep gratitude for the partnerships we have formed and that are carrying us forward. For the first time, we had the opportunity to bring together many of our innovators and funding partners at an Innovator Gathering in September 2025.

With gratitude, we reflect on the opportunity to have worked with innovators to reach more than 7500 people from coast to coast to coast, in more than 70 communities – supporting innovators who are driving inclusive economic growth and fostering gender-inclusive skills development on their own terms. As the path forward for I3 takes shape, we look forward to carrying the lessons and strengths of I3 into the future, to continually grow the impacts of Indigenous innovation from coast to coast to coast.

Sincerely

**Board of Directors and I3 staff**



# Acronyms and Key Terms

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## 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

# Impact Updates



**\$4.7 million CAD**

disbursed to date across Round 1, Round 2 and TTS

With more than an additional **\$5.1 million CAD** leveraged by innovators, donors and communities.



**7500+ people**

directly reached by innovator programming from coast to coast to coast



**70+ communities reached**

across 7 provinces and territories



**100+ people**

employed across 25 projects in film and media, construction, cultural education and entrepreneurship



**100%**

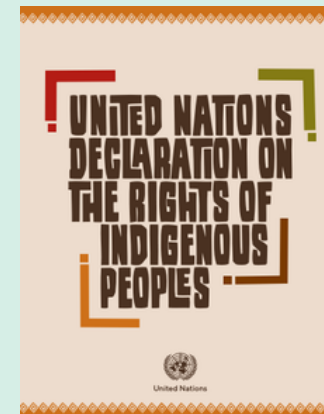
of round 2 and TTS innovators driving inclusive economic growth by building employment skills

## Systems Impact at a Glance

Collectively, 13 innovations are working to uphold the following articles of UNDRIP and to advance the following SDG's:

- Article 21: Right to improvement of economic and social conditions
- Article 23: Right to determine and develop economic and social programs
- Article 31: Right to maintain, control, and protect traditional knowledge

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# Communities at a Glance

23 Innovations in 70+ communities across Turtle Island, supported by 13



# Gender Equality Impact

**100% of I3 supported innovations are being led by Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ community leaders and entrepreneurs.**

- In 2017, StatsCan data indicated that 1.4% of all small and medium enterprises were Indigenous-led, despite Indigenous people representing at least 5% of Canada's population.
- Of that 1.4%, only 25% were women-led businesses.
- I3 has sought to enable Indigenous innovation through the values of inclusion, self-determination, sustainability, and creativity.



**100% revitalizing culture**



**more than 60% building knowledge and data sovereignty**



**more than one third leading in economic empowerment**



**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.

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 are happy to continue this conversation.





# NiGiNan Indigenous Center for Excellence (NICE)



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

NiGiNan Housing Ventures

### Scope of Impact:

Indigenous-serving Organizations and Frontline Staff in Northern Alberta and Manitoba

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing, Economic, Reconciliation

NiGiNan's Indigenous Centre for Excellence (NICE) is envisioned as a social enterprise aimed at providing training to Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups on adapting NiGiNan's successful housing model to address homelessness and substance use in their communities.

As a nationally accredited agency and well-known experts on Indigenous-led, high-intensity housing, NiGiNan integrates Indigenous cultural teachings, such as neyhiwak (Cree) natural law and land-based learnings, into its staff training and resident care practices. NICE will serve as a platform to safeguard ancestral knowledge while fostering collaborative partnerships with non-Indigenous organizations to decolonize approaches to working with Indigenous communities.

Through NICE, NiGiNan seeks to empower communities across Turtle Island to create culturally sensitive housing solutions and break the cycle of homelessness.

During the project, the NiGiNan NICE team delivered dozens of sessions and workshops, reaching hundreds of participants internally, including storytelling, diversity, and leadership programming. NICE has also partnered with organizations across Northern Alberta and Manitoba to deliver culturally-rooted workshops on health, harm reduction, overdose prevention and de-escalation to more than sixty participants collectively.

Trainings are led by staff with years of frontline experience and a strong relationship with tenants, who also provide support, mentorship, and training iterations for staff.

Looking forward, NiGiNan seeks to make these training offerings more available externally, both online and in person, to the public and other service organizations.

Check out [The Burning Sage podcast](#), animated by front-line workers and social work staff to share their stories, reflecting on the housing crisis in Canada.

*"I want to express my gratitude for the training you provided. Your stories helped shape our understanding and were very impactful." – External program participant and organizational leader, Edmonton*

# IndigenEYEZ

IndigenEYEZ aims to increase community cohesion, training, and land-based camps that support frontline workers, emerging leaders, and youth in developing skills to drive collective change.

Their facilitation method is community-driven and rooted in Indigenous principles and practices. IndigenEYEZ seeks to build its training into an ecosystem with micro-credentials and learning pathways in preparation for the launch of the IndigeRISE Institute.

*"I am worthy of all that I dream."*— Indigenous participant in the IndigeRISE project

*For IndigenEYEZ, the story of impact that matters most is always the growth of our participants. This Indigenous Gender Equality project was the culmination of a 10-year journey of community-engaged innovation, creating trainings designed to increase the collective power of Indigenous peoples to act together on today's challenges, from wellbeing to cultural rejuvenation to land stewardship.*

*Our work is grounded in the belief that Indigenous peoples hold the keys to finding our own solutions to the impacts of colonization and developing the skills and relationships to implement them effectively. We recognize that relationships of trust and respect have been the wealth of Indigenous peoples since time immemorial and that colonization fragmented these relationships—within ourselves, across our families, and with the land. We do not replace the many excellent programs already in our communities; rather, we work with them to increase their impact by building skills for engaging with the community, bringing diverse voices into the dialogue, and strengthening connections across the generations.*

*Over the life of the IndigeRISE project, we refined our training and positioned them within an Indigenous learning pathway with micro-credentials. We heard from frontline workers, emerging leaders, youth, and Aunties who reported gaining new confidence and space to recognize their own strengths and abilities. Through the IndigeRISE project, we were able to help participants build skills to engage, envision, and work together to make positive change so that our communities can again be thriving places to live and raise our families.*



Kelly Terbasket

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

IndigenEYEZ

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing,  
Cultural Reclamation





Elder Kerrie Moore

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Health Nexus Sante

### Scope of Impact:

Indigenous Communities  
and Social Workers in  
Alberta and Ontario

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing,  
Cultural Reclamation

# Relational Science Story

Elder Kerrie Moore is the creator of the Indigenous Relational Science framework. Elder Kerrie Moore is a psychotherapist, educator and a consultant for the Brain Story course.

Originally, this project sought to adapt the Brain Story course for Indigenous communities.

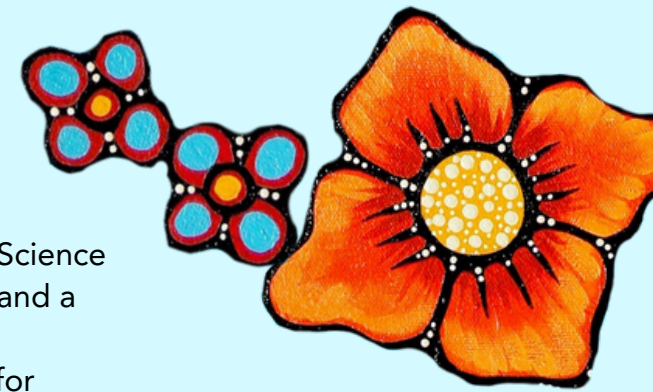
Through community consultation and drawing on her many years of experience and knowledge, Elder Kerrie has taken care to share an Indigenous model of wellness through storytelling. Carefully woven stories make up Kerrie's book on trauma.

Rather than trying to "teach" brain science, the stories are written for the reader or listener to resonate with how healing trauma feels and appears intuitively.

The stories in the book use simple and accessible language and invite participants to consider how people have agency and choice to be as they are – without explicitly using modern gender terminology, the stories reinforce the lesson of equality, inclusion and belonging as being central to an Indigenous way of being. People with diverse understandings of gender can engage with the stories and resonate with this message.

Elder Kerrie Moore has written her book on stories about trauma and has shared the book with two groups in Calgary for evaluation - a group of Elders and a group of social workers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) for feedback and validation. Both groups were highly supportive of the book of stories to open a healing space for trauma. Health Nexus has also validated and evaluated the book with a group based in Ontario.

The stories were shared as they would likely be shared in the future: read in circle, with time for those present to sit with the stories and with questions related to each story that the Indigenous facilitator can lead the circle through.





The Restoring Collective

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Restoring Circles Society

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia, Vancouver

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing,  
Cultural Reclamation, Gender  
Inclusion

# Ayataway

Building on five years of experience with collective healing circles, Ayataway aims to teach restorative relationship practices and culture.

Using a unique Train the Trainer Healing and Learning Circle model, Ayataway combines transformative healing Indigenous collective cultural practices with relationship support systems for ongoing deepening and widening of community engagement to disrupt cycles of violence.

Through Circles of Practice, relationship-building, and community collaboration, Ayataway aims to support and encourage the leadership of women, youth and gender-diverse Indigenous community members. The teaching method is intentionally scalable, locally adaptable, and entirely Indigenous-created and led.

*"On 'Ayataway': This Hulkamenem word, gifted to us by Squamish Matriarch and First Cohort participant Deliah Nahanney, means 'working together we lift everyone up, can deal with anything that comes up, and create joy'."*

Ayataway collaborates with local cultural projects, from community native species gardens to Elder's wisdom councils, to build relevancy and deeper impacts with existing networks.

Ayataway seeks to build coaching capacity for the existing network and grow the network, while continuing to offer trainings and workshops that combine cultural making to share teachings in non-violence, relational healing, care, and collective belonging.

Throughout the project and with a small core team, Ayataway worked to grow network relationships while simultaneously hosting a series of full-day workshops for frontline staff and participants at inner city Indigenous facing service organizations, reaching a range of participants with healing workshops grounded in cultural teachings, arts and lands education.





Elder Xwasteniya  
(Ruth Mary Adams)

# sməq̓ wəʔ xeł - the Great Blue Heron Way

sməq̓ wəʔ xeł - the Great Blue Heron Way, is the vision of scəwəθən məsteyəxʷ Elder xwasteniya (Ruth Mary Adams) to reconnect First Nations Communities around the Salish Sea and along the Stó:lō on new and existing pathways.

This initiative brings together First Nations, organizations and governments to build greenways with good transit access for safe everyday walking, cycling and rolling needs, reducing GHG emissions; to facilitate meaningful reconciliation for First Nations and their neighbours along a healing pathway; and give the opportunity for Indigenous-led cultural awareness through BC and across Canada.



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Trails Society of BC

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Environment, Lands  
Stewardship

*"This is my gift to the Tsawwassen First Nation," said xwasteniya, Great Blue Heron Way Visionary. "The Great Blue Heron Way is Our Way of Life, and every Nation that we're going to go to, they will show us their Way of Life. I want you all to know all the friends that I've gathered into my hands who have done all this work."*

In collaboration with Tsawwassen First Nation, with staff from Trails BC, and youth community members, this innovation has brought Elder xwasteniya 's vision to life, nurturing a growing relationship grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, and community empowerment. With multiple outreach and collaboration efforts across transportation, environment, parks, and city departments across Vancouver, the project recently created and launched a short film sharing Elder xwasteniya's story and vision.

Learn more about the Great Blue Heron Way here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HMq0tb89SQ&t=2s>

<https://trailsbc.ca/the-great-blue-heron-way-vision-gbhwl/>

# Piihtikway/Come in: Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ Resurgence and Healing through Kinship and Culture



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Métis Nation of BC

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing,  
Cultural Reclamation,  
Gender Inclusion

This innovation supports resurgence and healing for Métis Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ community members. Using an intersectional approach to elevate Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members by creating resources, programming, and services built on the recommendations of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

Through culturally grounded arts workshops, speaker spaces, and the creation of a Resource Guide by and for the community, this project built a space for community to come together and find belonging and affirmation. This project also supported development of accessibility protocols (braille/audio for the Resource Guide) to support future inclusivity.

*"The existence of Two-Spirit Métis people is not new. Their resiliency, strength, and care are enduring, although the separation and burdens experienced by the community can also feel enduring. Through this project, traditional practices, roles, and stories were centred with intention, creating a space where teachings were shared genuinely and could continue to flow outward. Building community can be an intimidating process, yet it is within that journey that belonging is found, nourished, and carried.*

*Participants shared how important it was to feel connected regardless of physical distance, and how collective stories helped them feel seen, heard, and valued. This project affirmed that no one is alone in who they are, and that Métis 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities have always held a place within the Nation. By prioritizing connection, care, and hope, the project strengthened pathways for community endurance and healing. It emphasized that affirming and reconnecting Métis 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to culture is meaningful not only for individuals, but for the broader Nation."*

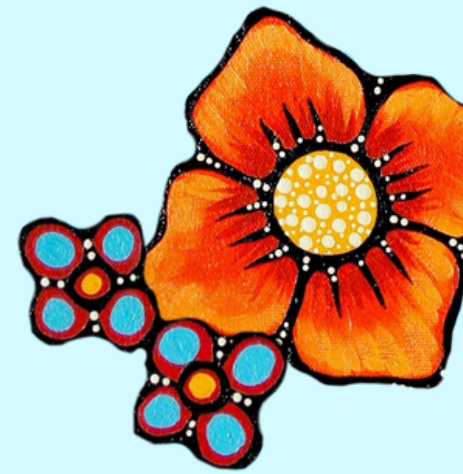




Michelle Sylliboy

# Kisitoqsipn Nepisuna'tasik - Creating Continuing Medicine

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Kisitoqsipn Nepisuna'tasik is a travelling indigenous initiative that delivers cultural healing in the form of land-based learning and artistic exploration.

With a community-informed curriculum designed around the 13-moon cycle by artists, knowledge keepers, elders and cultural practitioners, the initiative is strongly rooted in language learning and preservation. It seeks to build a sustainable model for healing, training, mentorship and stewardship of artistic methods that are rooted in culture and support cultural preservation.

Led by artist and researcher Michelle Sylliboy, the initiative intends to reach Mi'kmaw residents in the 7 Districts of Mi'kma'ki – starting with 3 communities. Creating self-sufficiency and sustainability via accessible training, learning and healing, these workshops build space to nurture the next generation of Indigenous artists.

During the innovation project, three multi-day workshops were held in Mi'kmak'i communities across the Maritimes, partnering with local collaborators to bring people together to learn traditional arts from Elders who carry this knowledge. Spaces for language and cultural learning, these sessions also offered space to heal, grow skills, and build community for a range of ages and abilities.

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

7 Districts of Mi'kmak'i

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Wellbeing,  
Cultural Reclamation



Izzy Ward  
Project Co-Lead

# Project Phoenix- Algae Bioreactor

The Project Algae Bioreactor (PAB) is a solar-powered bioreactor that grows algae that can be used to sequester carbon, produce biofuel, and more. Led by a gender-diverse group of Indigenous high school and university students, this innovation seeks to create a commercially viable, Indigenous-designed algae bioreactor that can be implemented in schools across Canada.



The bioreactor creates the opportunity for youth to foster skills in leadership, entrepreneurship, and confidence-building opportunities that result in growth for the individual and community. The team also plans to engage with the communities, increasing visibility and leadership opportunities for gender-diverse Indigenous people, notably among high school youth.

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Treaty 7 Youth

### Scope of Impact:

Indigenous Communities  
Across what is known as  
Alberta

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Environment, Economic  
Reconciliation, Gender Inclusion

*"As Project Co-Lead, I am most proud of the growth of the team who have worked on this project over the last year. I have seen them take on leadership roles, develop skills, create exciting new technology that embraces their Indigenous identity, be inspired by their work and be inspired to pursue education, and be curious and proud of who they are as Indigenous women, Two Spirit, queer, and gender diverse people.*

*On a personal level, project team members' comments and curiosity about me as a Two Spirit person was particularly important for me. It was then that I really felt no matter what the technical outcome of this project is in terms of carbon sequestration prototyping, the social progress advancement regarding creating space for gender diversity and equality has been a success."*

*- Izzy Ward*

As this project moves forward and is distributed into classrooms, it will be an important part of storytelling to share the social progress, and success of Two-Spirit people and gender equality in addition to our traditional knowledge and responsibility to address the needs of climate change.



Patrice Mousseau

## The Na'abi Scale and Innovation Lab (NSAIL)

Satya Organic began when innovator Patrice Mousseau wanted to create something to soothe her daughter's eczema. The organic formula is sustainable, cruelty-free, and now widely available for use as a gentle moisturizer, salve, and balm.

Led by Patrice, the Na'abi Scale and Innovation Lab is a low-cost, industrial tech innovation that makes sustainable, cost-effective, compostable packaging for cosmetics accessible and affordable for small, local businesses, particularly those that are women-led and Indigenous-led, driving inclusive growth and sustainability in manufacturing.

The creation of the lab has set up "hot-pour" machinery that produces samples and full-sized products in compostable packaging for various cosmetics, including balms, foundations, and lipsticks. This allows small and medium-sized producers to be able to fill product in smaller batches, with the opportunity to eventually have the same small-scale packaging capacity within their own communities.

Through collaboration on a market research assessment and lifecycle assessment by Foresight, development of hot-pour machinery, and construction of the physical NSAIL lab, the innovation is now ready to scale. The lab, housing the hot-pour machinery, has been built, with demonstrated significant emissions reductions projected by Foresight analysis for the small-scale mobile manufacturing facility. Interest in collaboration and readiness is growing, as is the Satya team.

### INNOVATION SUMMARY

#### Innovator:

Satya Organics

#### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia, Across Canada

#### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

#### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

#### Impact Areas:

Environment, Economic Reconciliation, Gender Inclusion



*"Initially, I dreamed of breaking down the barriers so many female, Indigenous owned businesses face - such as access to capital to produce enough product for a co-packer to take interest. As the idea came to life, it became clear that this could bridge the gap to provide a way to fill product on a smaller scale, without the massive capital expense required. This allows a smaller producer to scale with less risk and capital outlay, and 'grow into' their success until they can work with a co-packer"*

*- Patrice Mousseau.*



Kianna Durston

# Lake Winnipeg Environmental Monitoring Network

The Lake Winnipeg Environmental Monitoring Network aims to strengthen relationships among various Indigenous monitoring programs that work to build Indigenous-led environmental action movements and community resilience.

As part of the Lake Winnipeg Environmental Monitoring Network, organizations will collaborate on lake-wide monitoring and share resources, information, and climate adaptation strategies.

Their community-centred approach aims to build and maintain open communication and relationships to ensure the network's success in promoting Indigenous Knowledge and sovereignty.

To learn more, visit their website at [www.lwic.org](http://www.lwic.org).



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Lake Winnipeg  
Indigenous Collective

### Scope of Impact:

Manitoba

### Committed Funding:

\$125,000

### Investment Years:

2024 - 2025

### Impact Areas:

Environment, Lands  
Stewardship

*"One of the most powerful moments of this project was during the naming ceremony in the fall, when the network was given the name Pinesiw Maskihkiy Totem (Thunderbird Medicine Clan).*

*This name was given in ceremony by Knowledge Holders and affirmed by the community. It shifted the way members saw their role — from project participants to protectors preparing the way for healing. It brought deep purpose and clarity.*

*We are most proud of how ceremony, Indigenous Knowledge, and environmental data now live side by side, in the work of protecting Lake Winnipeg."*



# The Kilila Project

Kilila is the Siw̱wúmesh (Squamish) word for "butterfly" symbolizing transformation.

The Kílila Project empowers Indigenous youth (ages 18-30) with skills in sustainable construction and high-performance building, fostering economic opportunity and self-sufficiency, and ultimately aiming to improve Indigenous housing.

This land-based skilled trades training program removes barriers and creates meaningful pathways for Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ youth to create careers within a currently male-dominated field, while transforming the building sector through the uptake of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being.



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Cheakamus Centre

### Scope of Impact:

British Columbia

### Investment Years:

2021 - 2022 (Seed)

2025 - 2026 (TTS)

### Impact Areas:

Environment Reconciliation,  
Wellbeing, Gender Inclusion

- At seed, the pilot program (I3 PoC funding from 2021-22) successfully facilitated programming in partnership with AHMA, including a first of its kind program in building greener futures, led entirely by Indigenous faculty.
- The pilot course provided foundational and transferable skills training and wrap-around supports, and tested new ways to help the high-performance construction industry increase inclusivity in the workplace and job site, thereby empowering Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ people to gain access to green career opportunities. In addition to skills building and career development, the cultural and community connections built within a small cohort have been named by participants and facilitators as transformational.
- Through outreach efforts and storytelling, Cheakamus was able to reach several thousands of community members – particularly through NVSD, BCIT, and AHMA. More than 40 collaborators including students, Indigenous instructors, facilitators, Knowledge Keepers, industry, and community leaders were involved in bringing the project to life.

I3 is excited to be supporting the Kilila Project to scale through TTS, enabling the program to grow through key hires, an additional cohort for the program, and the development of an M+E framework.



# Strengthening Haida Arts & Culture Through Community-Led Programming



The Precious Culture Society (PCS) is a Haida-led initiative that addresses the lack of dedicated infrastructure and access to cultural programming on Haida Gwaii by providing training, mentorship, and resources for Haida artists and community members.

Through media, arts, and cultural programs, PCS equips Haida youth, Indigenous women, and LGBTQ2S+ artists with the skills to build careers in both traditional and contemporary creative industries.

By fostering cultural revitalization and creative economies, PCS ensures that Haida artistic practices—such as weaving, carving, performance, and language preservation—continue to thrive while creating sustainable opportunities for future generations. Because Haida art is deeply tied to identity and well-being, these programs also strengthen community connections, healing, and holistic wellness.

*"Haida Art is the visual companion to Haida language. Historically there was no alphabet and Haida kept oral histories. To help document histories, ancestors chose visual language today called Haida Art. Haida Art reaffirm not only events of the past but also communicate a person's place within society. Together our language and art represent who we are."  
- Haida Heritage Centre*

At TTS, Precious Culture Society is building on the success of Haida Gwaii Media Collective (HGMC)'s programming from its seed grant with I3, and exploring the feasibility of creating a dedicated cultural space for this cultural education and knowledge sharing to continue sustainably for future generations.

## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

Precious Culture Society

### Scope of Impact:

Haida Gwaii

### Investment Years:

2025 - 2026

### Impact Areas:

Cultural Reclamation, Economic Reconciliation



# ImmersiveLink7

Using VR to integrate and share the Seven Sacred Teachings from the Ojibwe nation, this tech innovation guides users through land-based environments to sensitize them to Indigenous values and their connections to the land.

With hundreds of Indigenous youth and job seekers already using IL7 to connect with cultural knowledge, this innovation was supported by I3 to scale, rapidly growing to also share this offering with corporate clients and within the justice and education systems.

Learn more here: <https://immersivelink.ca/>



## INNOVATION SUMMARY

### Innovator:

ORIGIN (Hardy Giles Consulting)

### Scope of Impact:

Ontario, across Canada

### Investment Years:

2025 - 2026

### Impact Areas:

Tech, Economic Reconciliation, Cultural Reclamation

*“When this project began, our goal was to explore whether Indigenous teachings could be translated into a modern learning experience that would resonate in workplaces and classrooms. We knew there was a need, but we did not yet know how organizations would respond, how the program would be used, or what form it ultimately needed to take to succeed.*”

*One of the most meaningful moments in the journey came from the conversations that happened after people experienced the IL7 course. The trial process was intentionally designed as a starting point for dialogue, and those follow-up discussions became the most powerful learning tool we had. Leaders shared how the teachings sparked conversations about respect, inclusion, and workplace culture in ways they had not experienced before.*

*What we are most proud of is how the project has laid the foundation for long-term economic and partnership opportunities. The program is now positioned to expand through organizational partnerships and broader implementation, creating pathways for future growth and impact.*

*This past year has been a true development and learning phase. The grant created space to experiment, listen, adapt, and grow. It allowed us to transform an idea into a validated program with a clear path forward.*

*As we move into the next phase, we are excited to build on this foundation, expand partnerships, and continue working toward our vision of bringing Indigenous teachings into workplaces, classrooms, and communities across Canada.”*

# Program Updates

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The past year was a period of growth and transition for I3, with many major milestones for the platform as we prepare to operate as an independent organization. This included the conclusion of all seed projects, our first innovator-wide gathering in British Columbia, and the successful completion of our first Program Evaluation of the Indigenous Gender Equality Program by COYA Productions Inc.

We are grateful for the lessons of this year, and to share some of the highlights of this year with you.

## SEED PROGRAM

Over the past year, all Round 2 seed innovations completed their projects. We are grateful for the opportunity to have come together with innovators from seed and TTS in the Fall of 2025, which complemented the wrapping up of seed projects and facilitated opportunities for discussion for all innovators present.

We are excited to share stories of impact from the Round 2 seed innovators in this report.

## TRANSITION TO SCALE PROGRAM

In early 2024, we introduced the Transition-to-Scale (TTS) funding stream, 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. All projects will be wrapping up in early 2026.

Three innovators are currently being supported at TTS, two of which were previously Round 1 Seed innovators.



# Innovator Gathering

In September 2025, I3 had the opportunity to bring together innovators, board members, partners and staff in Whistler, British Columbia, for several days of gathering. The core goal was creating a culturally grounded and collaborative space for innovators to connect, share, and envision the future together. Through a combination of ceremony, peer exchange, and thoughtful facilitation, I3 hoped to foster a sense of belonging for innovators working across different spheres.

From thoughtful survey feedback, we learned that it would be beneficial to evolve this gathering into a three-day annual tradition, with a dedicated innovator-only day, ongoing cultural integration, and expanded time for networking and collaboration. Given this was I3's first gathering of this size and nature, we also found areas for iteration and improvement, particularly in the depth and range of sessions chosen for the agenda, and the format of closing reflections.

The gathering demonstrated the power of bringing innovators, board, staff, funders, and elders together in a community setting and laid a strong foundation for future events to build upon. We are honoured to have shared this space, and invite you to see more about the gathering [here](#).



# Partnerships and Relations: Honouring Place-Based Innovation



As the Indigenous innovation ecosystem continues to evolve, over the past year we have been focused on building intentional partnerships for the next phase of I3 that:

- Increase the visibility of Indigenous innovation and doesn't rely on western templates for innovation
- relate to the unique place experience for different regions.

Operating as an innovation platform from coast to coast to coast, I3 can reach many innovators while being unable to be as culturally specific and embedded in community. Many innovators in Round 2 were based in British Columbia and Ontario, indicating that the I3 funding structure and platform visibility might be strongest in these areas, closest to large city centers. Moving forward, we seek to expand our offering by being more regionally embedded and offering more opportunities for innovators to connect on regional cohort bases.

We were honored to partner with Entreprenorth in August 2025 and to participate in their Empowering Innovation Spirit Conference.

The Innovator Gathering in September, 2025, was held in British Columbia and was an opportunity for innovators to find alignment, meet, and build connections. This was the first time innovators from various cohorts gathered as a group – innovators expressed a clear desire to have more time to connect with each other 1:1, on the aspects of their work. These in person connection opportunities are a key space for learning and growth – while we learned much from the operational aspect of the 2025 Gathering and would hope to grow this offering moving forward.

## Lessons Learned

We have been proud to steward the Indigenous Gender Equality Program since 2019. At that time, 1.4% of SME's were indigenous led despite Indigenous people making up at least 5% of the total population, with only 25% of the 1.4% being women-led.

While this only offers a small part of the picture for capital access, we know that access to capital for women and gender diverse innovators continues to be limited and is the primary challenge facing innovators. Our core mandate continues to be centred on the following four pillars:

- **Access to Capital**
- **Building Capacity**
- **Cultivating Networks**
- **Driving Networks**

We were pleased to move the needle on these four areas this past year, with funding to 16 innovation projects in 2025, the successful completion of a collaborative evaluation process highlighting our programmatic strengths and opportunities for learning, and cultural support for the team.






## Looking Back, Looking Forward

The Indigenous Innovation Initiative (I3) was created by Indigenous leaders as a funding platform to spark community-led Indigenous innovation. The I3 journey started with the first Indigenous Innovation Summit in 2015, where we heard from innovators the need for capital and support. In Fall 2016, at the second Indigenous Innovation Summit, ten initial grants were launched as part of the Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund (IIDF) in partnership with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC). Created via community consultation, the goal was to provide support to develop Indigenous social innovation and social enterprise projects, and to unlock much-needed capital for these early-stage, high potential innovations.

In 2017, I3 was formed out of the IIDF and approached Grand Challenges Canada to support hosting and incubating the platform. Created and led by Indigenous leaders and in ongoing consultation with community members, I3 is built on a foundation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and is rooted in Indigenous values.

Since the conception of the Indigenous Innovation Initiative in 2015 – there has always been a vision for an Indigenous-led organization that distributes non-repayable grants, a much-needed form of capital in the Indigenous innovation space. With support from Grand Challenges Canada, I3 has built an initial platform base that has been able to meet many of its original goals, learning along the way how better to meet the needs of Indigenous innovators.

In July of 2025, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative was incorporated as a new not-for-profit – that will be operating independently from Grand Challenges Canada. This is an important next step in I3's journey as it flourishes into the Indigenous-led platform it was always envisioned to be.





Follow our journey online, or email us at  
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for opportunities, partnerships or more information.



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



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