

NEWS RELEASE

First Nations University of Canada to lead long-term transformation of post-secondary education

Partnership with the Mastercard Foundation enables the school's full autonomy, catalyzing a new stage of leadership in Indigenous education

June 14, 2024, Regina, Saskatchewan – First Nations University of Canada, the only nationally-mandated Indigenous post-secondary institution in Canada, is proud to announce a transformative partnership with the Mastercard Foundation that will enable leadership and advancement in Indigenous education for generations to come.

Indigenous post-secondary institutions like First Nations University of Canada play a crucial role in delivering better learning outcomes for Indigenous students. By incorporating Indigenous languages, cultures, values and approaches into the education system, Indigenous post-secondaries support higher levels of academic achievement. This increases Indigenous innovation and strengthens communities and cultures.

Through the partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, First Nations University of Canada will become fully autonomous – academically, legally, and financially. This will position the university to expand delivery of community-led programming across Saskatchewan and Canada. With full Indigenous control and independence at the university, it is demonstrating a new approach to post-secondary education, grounded in Indigenous knowledges and accountable to First Nations communities.

“This historic agreement is an example of educational and economic reconciliation and responsibility in action,” says First Nations University of Canada President, Mizowaykomiguk paypomwayotung, Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann. “It is reflective of the strong and respectful relationship that First Nations University of Canada and the Mastercard Foundation have developed while building this partnership, which is focused on systemic, deep-seated change that supports Indigenous students and communities.”

The partnership will focus on four key areas: transforming post-secondary education across Canada, achieving full autonomy for the university, leading economic reconciliation efforts, and developing new Indigenous programs in priority fields like

Indigenous journalism and communication arts, mental health and wellness, paralegal studies, and Indigenous languages revitalization.

“First Nations University of Canada is deeply committed to the transformative and healing impact of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, accomplished through post-secondary education,” says Dr. Ottmann. “I truly appreciate and value the relationship with the Mastercard Foundation and look forward to the contributions we will make together.”

Over the next five years, more than 1000 students will complete new programs and another 6000 will benefit from increased enrollment and enhanced access to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities.

“The Mastercard Foundation is very proud to partner with First Nations University of Canada as they work to transform post-secondary education in Canada to honour, centre, and serve Indigenous young people and communities,” says Jennifer Brennan, Director of Canada Programs at the Mastercard Foundation. “While the university will touch thousands of individual learners through innovative and community-led programming, its role as a leader, as a convener, and as a catalyst for systems change will advance education in Canada today and for generations to come.”

The First Nations University of Canada is driven by the principle of collective action to enact systemic change, aiming to broaden Indigenous education and fortify Indigenous socio-economic prosperity through self-determination.

“We are committed to creating a strong educational foundation for the generations not yet born – seven generations into the future,” says Dr. Ottmann.



In partnership with



About First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv)

First Nations University of Canada is a unique Canadian institution that specializes in Indigenous knowledges, providing post-secondary education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike within a culturally supportive environment. FNUniv's Regina campus is situated on the atim kâ-mihkosit (Red Dog) Urban Reserve, Star Blanket Cree Nation and Treaty 4 Territory. Star Blanket is the first First Nation in Canada to create an urban reserve specifically dedicated to the advancement of education. The Saskatoon, Prince Albert and our Traditional Campus are situated in Treaty 6 territory. For more information on First Nations University of Canada, please visit fnuniv.ca.

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organizations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. Established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company, the Foundation is an independent organization separate from the company, with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa. Its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by the Foundation's Board of Directors and leadership. For more information on the Foundation, please visit mastercardfdn.org.

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