



BACKGROUNDER: ELEV PROGRAM

RECAP

- In 2017, the Mastercard Foundation co-created the EleV Program with Indigenous youth and communities across Canada. EleV aims to transform education and employment systems based on the visions, values, and priorities of Indigenous youth. The program will support 100,000 Indigenous young people on their journey through post-secondary education and onto meaningful livelihoods by 2030.
- The pathway to transformational change includes incubating, demonstrating, amplifying, and sharing innovations to influence and crowd in others. This includes working towards more equitable mainstream systems and stronger Indigenous education and employment systems.
- Our vision is for Indigenous young people to live Mino Bimaadiziwin (“a good life” in the Anishinaabe language). It is a holistic and Indigenous view of success — a fulfilling, meaningful life consistent with one’s traditions and worldviews. This includes not only access to education and meaningful work, but to language, culture, healing, wellness, connection, and contribution to community, economic revitalization, and more.

EleV Program Results as of June 2025

- Indigenous Youth Engaged*: 66,300
- Number of active partners: 64.
- Total commitment: CAD 500M

*Engaged in programs and supports that enable Indigenous youth to access work.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

- **Indigenous youth are the fastest-growing population** in Canada and are embracing their roles as powerful agents of change. The total Indigenous population is 1.8 million people (548,600 Indigenous youth) growing at five times the rate of the non-Indigenous population.
- **Seventy-five percent of future jobs require a post-secondary education**, yet the vast majority of Indigenous young people continue to face barriers. Only 11 percent of First Nations adults and six percent of Inuit have university degrees — well below half the Canadian average for university education.



- **Inequities in the K–12 school system** have resulted in 37 percent of Indigenous peoples having not completed secondary school. This goes up to 51 percent for on-reserve First Nations, and 63.2 percent for those in Nunavut, compared to only 17 percent for the non-Indigenous population.
- **The national Indigenous youth unemployment rate sits at 19.5 percent** compared to Canada's unemployment rate of 7 percent.
- **Equal access to education** and fully mobilizing the Indigenous labour force and economy would generate a direct \$27.7 billion annual contribution to Canada's GDP and lift 150,000 Indigenous people out of poverty.

PROGRAMMATIC PROGRESS & IMPACT

This summary highlights key themes and examples of how EleV partners are creating systems-level impact across post-secondary education, employment, and entrepreneurship pathways, as well as economic revitalization, in alignment with Indigenous priorities.

Expanding Culturally Grounded, Relevant Education

EleV partners are bringing education and training closer to home for Indigenous young people, embedding Indigenous languages, cultures, and priorities in programs that deepen holistic student learning and improve retention. New culturally aligned programming, such as storytelling, Indigenous languages, and hands-on learning, has strengthened the bond between education systems and Indigenous communities, empowering youth to succeed in ways that honour their heritage. New models of education delivery – that enable Indigenous youth to remain in their communities while pursuing post-secondary (e.g., virtual education and mobile learning hubs) – have proven to be highly effective and successful. For example:

- At the Université Laval, enrollment was expanded to over 500 Indigenous youth through new programs in land guardianship, archaeology, and entrepreneurship. Fifty-eight Indigenous Land Guardians from eight First Nations have graduated and are working for their Nations.
- Seven Generations Education Institute has established the new Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) virtual training platform, which has reached over 2,700 students and 120 teachers and is now being used by 16 school boards. By modelling best practices and advocating with the provincial government, they have shifted the teaching approach across the public school system. They have also attracted additional funding from the



provincial government to scale programming in areas of critical regional need, including health and construction.

- The McKenna Institute, at the University of New Brunswick, developed mobile training labs to deliver science and technology skills directly in community. More than 1,000 youth have participated in programs to build their digital skills, increase their confidence in science and technology, and access career pathways while embedding culturally grounded approaches.



Aligning Education to Meaningful Work

EleV partnerships are building accessible pathways from education to employment and entrepreneurship that are directly aligned with the priorities of Indigenous young people, their communities, and their pursuit of economic self-determination. Partnerships focus on relevant business models and access to finance and support entrepreneurs to not only create access to jobs, but to contribute to cultural revitalization and enhanced wellness in their communities. Others are increasing the opportunities for youth to access meaningful work through training and opportunities in key community-prioritized sectors, such as clean energy, health care, IT, and environmental stewardship. For example:

- Queen's University and Weeneebayko Area Health Authority have linked education directly to 600 jobs through the creation of a new health infrastructure serving remote Indigenous communities. Seventy-five Indigenous youth have already participated in training and education programs.
- Indigenous Clean Energy and the International Buffalo Relations Institute are linking clean energy and ecosystem management training to meaningful jobs that support community sustainability and cultural values. Over 200 Indigenous youth have participated in Indigenous Clean Energy workshops and training, and over 700 Indigenous youth have attended education events of the International Buffalo Relations Institute.
- First Nations Technology Council is working to scale digital skills to drive access to jobs in technology with 250 Indigenous youth completing the training and transitioning to the workforce.

Strengthening Institutions and Collaboration

EleV is fostering collaboration across Institutions, communities, sectors, and governments to reshape education and employment systems and policies, so they reflect Indigenous priorities and advance long-term change. Partnerships have strengthened institutions by improving governance, policy, and administrative processes, as well as curricula and student supports, to be more inclusive of Indigenous perspectives. Support to Indigenous charities has enabled operational independence, sustainable development, and stability while furthering Indigenous solutions to community challenges. For example:

- The University of Manitoba is bringing together communities, institutions, and industry to create pathways for Indigenous students in their home communities with more than 4,000 Indigenous youth engaged in programs.



- At Yukon University, collaboration has strengthened the education ecosystem, enabling new programs in support of Yukon First Nation governments administration and capacity as well as initiatives in land guardianship and youth leadership in environmental stewardship. To date, 4,000 Indigenous youth have participated in these programs.
- New partnerships with the Annauma, Saskatchewan Indigenous, and Eenou-Eeyou Community Foundations are expanding youth programming, language revitalization, and community-led solutions while attracting new funding and building long-term sustainability.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. How we Work

- EleV seeks to foster genuine, trusting, and intentional relationships with partners, communities, and Indigenous youth. Systems change and transformation are processes which take time, patience, dedication, and courage.
- There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to working with Indigenous partners and communities; rather, different approaches, expectations, and processes are required for different partners and flexibility is key.
- EleV’s focus on continuous learning and adaptation is creating a culture of innovation and ambition amongst partners. They are striving for more and expanding programs beyond their original vision.

2. What We Support

- Investing in Indigenous-led organizations, charities, initiatives, and community-led change is critical, as these partners are in the best position to endorse meaningful systems change. Programs that reflect and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing are most effective in supporting Indigenous youth.
- Supporting **enhanced collaboration** across local networks, between organizations, and among partners can accelerate impacts and propel broader changes.

3. Ongoing Challenges

- Inadequate infrastructure is a significant barrier to EleV’s goals. For example, there are often affordable housing shortages near post-secondary institutions, making attendance untenable. Within communities, there is a lack of shared space and adequate facilities, creating a gap between the demand for programming and what is feasible to deliver.
- Rural and remote Indigenous communities continue to face a digital divide in terms of access to quality and affordable internet and digital skills, preventing access to economic opportunities.



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- The post-secondary education sector in Canada is operating under a constrained funding environment. It will be important for EleV to continue calling for educational institutes to invest in equity for Indigenous students, including deepening relationships with the Indigenous communities they serve. Indigenous education institutes are even further constrained, often lacking core funding and operating at about half the funding per student as mainstream institutes. EleV's support can help demonstrate to the government the deep impact Indigenous institutes can have when they are properly enabled.

4. Storytelling and Narrative Change

- Partners have communicated that storytelling is their most powerful tool, more effective than quantitative data in measuring and sharing impact and enacting change.
- At the strategic level, EleV is investing in the power of changing the narrative about Indigenous peoples and elevating stories of Indigenous youth who are succeeding, advancing solutions, and transforming systems.



APPENDIX : CANADA PROGRAMS PARTNERSHIP MAP

(PRIOR TO PARTNERSHIPS ANNOUNCED SEPTEMBER 2025)



Ontario	16
Carleton University	1
Dexterra Community Initiatives	1
Gaagige Zaagibigaa	1
Good Influence Films	1
Imagine Canada	1
Indigenous Advanced Education & Skills Council	1
Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE)	1
Indigenous Prosperity Foundation/NACCA	1
Indigenous Youth Roots (formerly Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE)	1
Matawa (Gathering Rivers for Community Care)	1
Queens/WAHA Health Partnership	1
Rideau Hall Foundation	1
Royal Society of Canada	1
Seven Generations Education Institute (SGEI)	1
The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada	1
Turtle Island Institute (Tides Canada Platform)	1
British Columbia	6
First Nations Technology Council	1
First Peoples Cultural Foundation	1
IISAAK OLAM Foundation	1
Nawalakw Healing Society	1
University of British Columbia	1
Vancouver Island University (VIU)	1
Quebec	5
Eenou-Eeyou Community Foundation	1
Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education	1
Fondation Nouveaux Sentiers	1
Indigenous Institutes Consortium	1
Laval University	1
Manitoba	4
Indigenous Connectivity Institute (Clear Sky Connections)	1
North End Connect (Internet Society Manitoba Chapter Inc.)	1
UNB/ JEDI/McKenna Institute	1
University of Manitoba	1
Yukon	3
BYTE - Empowering Youth Society & AFN Yukon	1
EntrepreNorth	1
Yukon University	1
Saskatchewan	3
First Nations University of Canada	1
Oyateki Partnership (SIIT, GDI, and USask)	1
Saskatchewan Indigenous Community Foundation	1
Alberta	3
International Buffalo Relations Institute	1
Mikai'sto Foundation	1
University of Lethbridge (ULeth)	1
Northwest Territories	2
Arctic Indigenous Fund (Arctic Funders Collaborative - Makeway)	1
EntrepreNorth	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1
Students on Ice Foundation & Innu Nation	1