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## Mastercard Foundation expands partnership with Yukon University to support Indigenous youth



Photo L to R: Fellow Jared Dulac (Kamāra), KFN; Fellow Jessi-John Whalen, KDFN; Regional Chief Kluane Ademek (Aagé), KFN; Steering Committee Member Emily McDougall, KDFN.

WHITEHORSE, YT— The [Mastercard Foundation](#) is expanding its partnership with Yukon University (YukonU) to continue to transform education and support Indigenous youth success in the Yukon through the [EleV](#) ("ell-uh-VEE") Program.

The Mastercard Foundation's Yukon EleV Program, coordinated by YukonU, will commit \$11.4 million toward several projects over the next five years that focus on systems change. In collaboration with Yukon First Nations (YFN) partners, EleV initiatives will foster the YFN education ecosystem and build capacity through the development of an education model for reconnection, a YFN training fund for individuals, a framework for micro-credentialling training, youth-led STEM community programming, and more. The Program will partner with the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region to pilot a YFN post-secondary graduation ceremony to recognize the achievements and celebrate the success of all Indigenous post-secondary students in the Yukon.

In the first five years of this partnership with YukonU, EleV directly connected Indigenous students with tech coaches, mentors, counsellors, and other wrap-around services; supported youth STEM programming; and also backed the [Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship](#). In an effort to increase access to education, the popular Office Administration certificate program was redesigned for online delivery. YukonU collaborated with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate to map the Yukon First Nations education ecosystem, which guided the partners' successful phase two project proposal to the Mastercard Foundation.

The EleV Program began in 2017 and now has partnerships in every region of the country. The Program partners with Indigenous-led organizations and institutions to support Indigenous young people on their journey through post-secondary education and on to meaningful livelihoods. By working in close partnership with Indigenous

youth and communities, the overarching aim is to fundamentally transform education and employment systems so they support success for Indigenous youth.

“We are proud and grateful that the Mastercard Foundation is investing a further \$11.4 million for YukonU to build upon what we’ve learned since 2017 through our work together and with our partners, the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate, the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region, and the Training Policy Committee, to significantly improve the post-secondary success of Yukon First Nations learners,” said Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor at Yukon University.

“For far too long, Indigenous youth have faced barriers when accessing post-secondary studies. We look forward to being part of the EleV Program as a way to increase access for Yukon First Nations youth and to bridge some of the educational gaps. With these supports, we look forward to seeing Indigenous students enroll in post-secondary/trades, complete their programs, and thrive in their lives,” said Melanie Bennett, Executive Director at Yukon First Nations Education Directorate.

“The Training Policy Committee has long championed the idea of a flexible development fund, informed by the needs of citizens and built on traditional values and wisdom. As a small organization, without this funding, we would not otherwise be able to scope and develop this project, nor realize the potential it has to further empower Yukon First Nation citizens and communities. We are immensely grateful,” said Emily Hoefs, Executive Director of the Training Policy Committee.

“Indigenous emerging leaders are the leaders today, and tomorrow. Their voices are vital to the future of First Nations, the Yukon, Canada, and beyond. It is our responsibility to lift them up, support their successes, and invest in their futures. The Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region is grateful for the work that the Mastercard Foundation has put into the EleV Program to do just that. This expanded partnership is a direct investment into Yukon First Nation communities and the next generation of leaders who will be required to take on some of the most pressing issues of our time. The AFN Yukon Regional Office is incredibly excited to continue supporting the work of the EleV Program and looks forward to the Yukon First Nation post-secondary graduation ceremony!” said Kluane Adamek, Aagé, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Yukon Regional Chief.

“We know we can support success for Indigenous youth by supporting Indigenous-led innovation. Yukon University is working closely with Indigenous organizations and Indigenous youth to transform education systems so they centre and value Indigenous knowledge, values and the aspirations and the leadership of young Indigenous people. Their work will demonstrate new approaches that others can learn from. We are very pleased to expand our partnership with Yukon University,” said Jennifer Brennan, Director of Canada Programs at Mastercard Foundation.

More information about the EleV Program in the Yukon University and the projects can be found at [YukonU.ca/EleV](https://YukonU.ca/EleV).

## **About YukonU**

[Yukon University](#) is a flexible post-secondary institution that includes a place and pathway for every learner. Our students are grounded in education and research relevant to the North. Our resourceful and creative graduates are building a resilient, versatile and ambitious future for all northerners.

With over 40 degree, diploma, certificate and trades programs, local learners can access opportunities without needing to leave home—those from across Canada and internationally are invited to deepen their understanding of our rapidly changing circumpolar world.

Our 13 campuses are located on the traditional territories of the 14 Yukon First Nations. We respect and honour Yukon First Nations knowledge, worldviews and educational priorities in every aspect of YukonU.

## **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 <http://mastercardfdn.org>

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