



NEWS RELEASE

New \$16 Million Partnership Strengthens Indigenous-Led Entrepreneurship and Business Education Across Canada

Calgary, AB — October 27, 2025 — Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) and three Indigenous institutes — Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and Six Nations Polytechnic — have launched a historic partnership to strengthen Indigenous-led entrepreneurship and business education across Canada.

With a US \$12 million (approximately CA \$16 million) commitment from the BHP Foundation, the initiative known as Mamawi brings together CICan and the three Indigenous institutes in a partnership grounded in Indigenous leadership and ways of knowing and being. A Governing Circle representing these four partners will oversee its direction and impact.

The partners will work together to expand training, mentorship, and applied-research opportunities to improve economic and social outcomes to support Indigenous learners and communities. Together they will create tools to equip Indigenous learners and entrepreneurs to build and strengthen skills, start ventures, and generate meaningful employment while growing an innovative Indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports long-term, community-driven prosperity.

The partnership will also strengthen Indigenous institutes' capacity to design and deliver programming, broaden supports such as access to Elders, Knowledge Holders, and childcare, and promote innovative learning models—including land-based and flexible approaches that improve learner retention.

The first national Indigenous-led initiative delivered through CICan, Mamawi represents an important step toward advancing meaningful reconciliation through new approaches and partnership. Its impact will extend across Canada's network of public colleges, institutes, CEGEPs, and polytechnics. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous institutions alike will benefit from stronger community partnerships and enriched programming.

Canadian employers and the financial sector will gain access to a more diverse and skilled talent pool, making businesses more resilient, supporting economic growth, and contributing to tangible progress on economic reconciliation.

The partnership was officially celebrated on Sunday, October 26, during the 2025 National Indigenous Education Symposium in Calgary, grounded in traditional ceremony(s) and protocols.

Quotes

“I am deeply honoured for NVIT to be part of this historic partnership with CIGan, SIIT, and Six Nations Polytechnic as our *nkseytkn ~ nęqsílt ~ our family and community*. Together, with the generous support of the BHP Foundation, we will strengthen Indigenous-led education and entrepreneurship grounded in our cultures, values, and worldviews. NVIT recognizes and commends BHP Foundation’s commitment to Indigenous Peoples across Canada. This collaboration supports NVIT’s purpose of improving the quality of life for Indigenous Peoples by creating meaningful pathways for learners and communities to lead, innovate, and shape their own economic futures.” – **Dr. John Chenoweth, President and CEO, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology**

"Rooted in Indigenous leadership and knowledge, the Mamawi partnership will open new pathways for Indigenous entrepreneurs, researchers and business students to learn, grow, and give back to their communities. For SIIT, it builds on our long-standing commitment to advancing indigenous-led education and creating opportunities that reflect the priorities of our communities. We are proud to collaborate with our partner institutions, CIGan, and the BHP Foundation to make a meaningful and lasting impact." – **Riel Bellegarde, President and CEO, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology**

“On behalf of Six Nations Polytechnic, I extend gratitude to the BHP Foundation for supporting Mamawi and to CIGan for walking with us in this Indigenous-led and grounded initiative. It is an honour to come together with our colleagues at NVIT and SIIT for this important work. Mamawi brings us together in collective responsibility and with-it renewed hope for the future where the inclusion of Indigenous led strategies will build a stronger economy for the benefit of all who share this land.” – **Rebecca Jamieson, President and CEO, Six Nations Polytechnic**

“This partnership is a historic moment for CIGan — our first national program to be fully Indigenous-led. It reflects a deep commitment to reconciliation through action: strengthening Indigenous-led education, expanding opportunity, and learning from our Indigenous members to embed more inclusive, community-driven approaches across the college system. Together, we’re building capacity that will benefit learners, communities, institutions, and Canada.” – **Pari Johnston, President and CEO, CIGan**

“Mamawi’s ambition to transform support for Indigenous entrepreneurs and learners is closely aligned with the BHP Foundation’s commitment to advancing economic equity for Indigenous Peoples. We recognize that for Mamawi to truly resonate, it must be Indigenous-led and grounded in Indigenous worldviews. We are deeply grateful to the Indigenous Institutes for their leadership and cultural knowledge in guiding this journey. CIGan’s role as convenor—bringing together partners and fostering meaningful dialogue—makes it a vital collaborator in this work.” – **Kristen Ray, CEO, BHP Foundation**

About Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Visit <https://www.nvit.ca/>

About Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies was established in 1976 by Saskatchewan First Nations Chiefs. Today, SIIT remains a First Nations-governed educational institution – and one of only four credit-granting post-secondary institutions in the province. SIIT provides adult learners with academic, vocational, and technical training, as well as services and supports for employment and career growth. Indigenous learners are at the core of SIIT, representing over 90 percent of the student body.

About Six Nations Polytechnic

Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP) is a distinctive post-secondary institution recognized by communities, governments, and institutions of higher learning as a centre of excellence for Indigenous Knowledge. SNP has over 30 years of postsecondary success in partnership with twenty percent of Ontario’s publicly funded universities and colleges. SNP’s mandate of Indigenous Sustainability advocates for the enduring application of Indigenous Knowledge (understood and expressed through language, values and actions) that provides capacity to live in harmony with the natural world, while restoring and maintaining a healthy existence in a nation with diverse citizenship and needs.

About Colleges and Institutes Canada

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is the national voice of Canada’s dynamic network of public colleges, institutes, CEGEPs, and polytechnics. By convening, connecting and championing the sector, we amplify the value and impact of our members to advance priorities that matter most to Canadians. With more than 95% of Canadians living within 50 km of a member institution, and thanks to its extensive reach around the globe, CICan works to position colleges and institutes as key partners in meeting Canada’s – and the world’s – biggest challenges.

We respectfully acknowledge that CICan’s offices in Ottawa are located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation.

About BHP Foundation

BHP Foundation is a non-profit organization working with others to address the root causes of sustainability challenges relevant to the resources industry. Created and funded by BHP - a global resources company - the BHP Foundation's investments aim to impact the systems that prevent progress towards a more equitable and sustainable future for people and planet. Its partnerships in Canada, Australia and Chile are primarily focused on support for greater self-determination for Indigenous Peoples and preparing underrepresented young people for the future through education.

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