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Saskatchewan Post-secondary Institutions Partner with the Mastercard Foundation to Support Indigenous Students Impacted by COVID-19

Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the University of Saskatchewan receive \$840,000 for Indigenous student supports

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – June 4, 2020 – The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI), the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), and the University of Saskatchewan (USask) have partnered with the Mastercard Foundation to support Indigenous students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The partnerships, between the Mastercard Foundation and each of the post-secondary institutions, present a shared commitment to provide immediate support for Indigenous students dealing with the impacts of the pandemic on their lives and their education.

GDI, SIIT, and USask will deliver support programs by drawing on their existing networks and capabilities to provide student supports that will include:

- Immediate access to technological solutions such as Internet connectivity, laptops, and remote IT support to enhance access to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Access to mental health and wellness supports to help Indigenous students deal with the challenges resulting from isolation, social distancing, and other barriers.
- Direct support to Indigenous students through emergency funds to help meet basic needs like rent, childcare, and medications.
- Enhancement and modification of existing wraparound supports so they can be delivered virtually to students, and the creation and delivery of new virtual content on mental health, recruitment and advising, counselling, Elders and culture, and other key topics.

"There is no blueprint for navigating this crisis. However, the actions we take now will shape the post-COVID-19 world. This crisis is teaching us how interdependent we are as well as how powerful collective action can be," said Reeta Roy, President and CEO of the Mastercard Foundation.

"Supporting our students through this unprecedented and stressful time is our top priority right now. We are deeply appreciative of the Mastercard Foundation's generous commitment. It will help enhance the 'wholistic' well-being of our Indigenous students

during this time. This contribution will allow Indigenous students to have the access and support to stay connected and engaged in their studies while in their communities; it will help to ensure that they have the technological, online learning guidance, and mental support that they need to fulfill their educational goals,” said Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement at the University of Saskatchewan.

Riel Bellegarde, President and CEO of SIIT stated, "On behalf of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and our Board of Governors, I would like to acknowledge the leadership of the Mastercard Foundation in supporting our Institution and Indigenous learners through the COVID-19 pandemic. These generous contributions directly respond to the needs of our students with relief and supports – and lay a foundation for our institutions to transition to new, virtual academic delivery platforms. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation and our colleagues at GDI and USask – as we pivot into this new environment – ensuring a bright future for Indigenous education in Canada."

“We are grateful to the Mastercard Foundation for their willingness to invest in the education and mental health and well-being of Métis students. Through collaboration with communities, service providers, and other post-secondary institutions across Saskatchewan, we will be able to deliver the much-needed support to Métis students,” said Geordy McCaffrey, GDI Executive Director.

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation seeks a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn and prosper. Through its Young Africa Works strategy, Canadian EleV program, and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, the Foundation works with partners to ensure that millions of young people, especially young women, access quality education, financial services, and dignified work. The Mastercard Foundation was established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company. The Foundation is independent with its own Board of Directors and CEO. For more information and to sign up for the Foundation’s newsletter, please visit <http://www.mastercardfdn.org/>. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at @MastercardFdn.

About Gabriel Dumont Institute

GDI is a Métis-owned post-secondary and cultural institution in Saskatchewan. It is the parent company to a number of subsidiaries, including the Dumont Technical Institute, Gabriel Dumont College, GDI Training and Employment, the Métis Culture and Heritage Department, Gabriel Dumont Institute Press, and the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). For more information, please visit www.gdins.org.

About the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

SIIT is Saskatchewan’s only First Nation governed, credit granting Indigenous institution. SIIT seeks to advance post-secondary education, adult education and skill development for all Indigenous peoples through multiple pathways that support student success. SIIT programming is delivered through three principal campuses in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert, nine Career Centres, and more than 35 community sites per year. The SIIT

network includes people from more than 74 First Nation, Metis, Inuit, and Non-Indigenous communities. Approximately 95% of SIIT's student and client base are Indigenous. More information is available at www.siiit.ca.

About the University of Saskatchewan

USask is a U15 research-intensive university leading the way in addressing relevant, global issues such as water and food security. Research in these and other key areas, such as synchrotron sciences, human-animal-environment health and Indigenous Peoples, is enhanced by our world-class facilities, including the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, VIDO-InterVac, the Global Institutes for Food and Water Security. Our community includes more than 25,700 students, with about 3,300 self-declared Indigenous students and more than 3,400 international students, creating a welcoming environment with a culture of growth and deeper understanding that extends beyond the classroom. By working together across traditional disciplinary boundaries, and recognizing different ways of knowing and understanding, we bring a unique perspective to crucial global challenges as the university the world needs.

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