

Indigenous Connectivity Institute & Mastercard Foundation Partner to Connect 10,000 Indigenous Young People to Broadband

The Mastercard Foundation supports new Indigenous-led organization to advance broadband connectivity in Indigenous communities.

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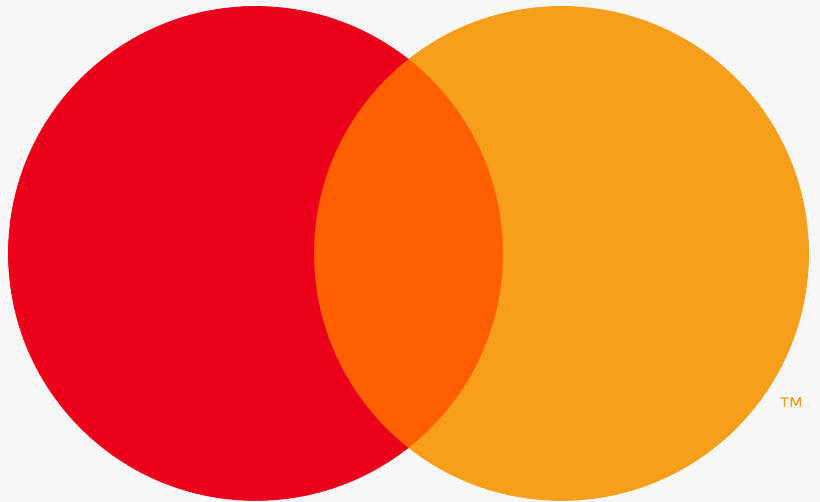
[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The Indigenous Connectivity Institute (ICI) and the Mastercard Foundation are partnering to support Indigenous communities to build fast, affordable, and sustainable broadband and to champion digital skills.

The partnership will help scale the ICI's work to support Indigenous communities with the capacity, skills, and access to the capital they need to deploy and maintain their own networks.

"To be without adequate broadband in today's world is to be shut out from opportunities to learn, earn, build businesses, and shape society. Yet, Indigenous communities across North America still live without the reliable, affordable internet they need. The Indigenous Connectivity Institute supports the growing movement of Indigenous broadband champions working to change that," said Darrah Blackwater, ICI Advisory Council member. "This support from the Mastercard Foundation has the potential to advance Indigenous digital equity beyond our



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imaginations and make real the projects and collaboration we've been dreaming up for years. I am so excited to see this new partnership in action.”

The ICI is the first Indigenous-led organization focusing exclusively on digital equity in Canada and the United States. It provides training programs to advance technical and advocacy skills, advocates for effective policies, and amplifies the digital priorities and aspirations of Indigenous people, in alignment with Indigenous self-determination. The Mastercard Foundation is providing CAD \$3.7 million to enable the ICI to expand current programs and develop new initiatives to reach 10,000 Indigenous young people over the next three years.



Broadband advocate Brittany Woods-Orrison at the 2022 Indigenous Connectivity Summit in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

With support from the ICI, Indigenous youth and communities will develop, deploy, and sustain their own networks. Establishing access to reliable, high-speed internet – while strengthening digital skills – will elevate Indigenous innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and employment opportunities.

This includes programs that bring Indigenous leaders together to connect and learn about building and maintaining wireless and fibre broadband networks.

“A fast, reliable internet connection is essential to ensuring that Indigenous young people can access high-quality education and meaningful employment opportunities,” says Jennifer Brennan, Director of Canada Programs at the Mastercard Foundation. “The shared vision for this partnership is a commitment to ensuring Indigenous young people and communities have the capacity, support, knowledge, and financial resources to lead digital equity to advance their aspirations and strengthen their communities.”

Indigenous communities across North America are among the least connected and most underserved on the continent. In Canada, only [31.3 percent of First Nations households on-reserves](#) have access to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission’s target broadband speed of 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload – a number that masks a near complete lack of connectivity in many remote areas.

Inadequate internet access creates barriers for many Indigenous young people, including in education, training, remote employment, and pursuing entrepreneurship opportunities. Through

this partnership, the ICI provides a new model for meeting the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of digital equity, working with Indigenous communities to build their own digital infrastructure and tools.

The ICI also brings together a movement of Indigenous broadband champions at the annual Indigenous Connectivity Summit, convening community members, network operators, policymakers, and researchers to advance Indigenous-led solutions to digital equity. This year's summit will take place from [May 22-24 in Anchorage, Alaska](#).

By maintaining ownership over their networks, Indigenous communities can shape their own digital futures and harvest the benefits of internet connectivity today and for generations to come.

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About the Indigenous Connectivity Institute

The Indigenous Connectivity Institute (ICI) works to advance internet connectivity in Indigenous communities in the United States and Canada. It does this through training and cultivating knowledge, providing grants to Indigenous broadband networks, and convening a movement of Indigenous broadband advocates at the annual Indigenous Connectivity Summit. Led by an advisory committee of Indigenous leaders, the ICI supports Indigenous communities to build a digital future on their terms. The initiative is incubated by Connect Humanity. For more information, visit: <https://connecthumanity.fund/indigenous-connectivity/>

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to enable young people in Africa and in Indigenous communities in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. It is one of the largest private foundations in the world with a mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. It was established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company. The Foundation is an independent organization, and its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by its own Board of Directors and senior leadership team. It is a registered Canadian charity with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa. For more information on the Foundation, please visit: mastercardfdn.org.

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