



# A Chosen Journey

RBC® Indigenous Partnership Report 2019



In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission published its final report along with 94 calls to action. Recommendation 92 asks the corporate sector to work with Indigenous peoples to create long-term, sustainable economic development, employment, social impact and procurement opportunities.

RBC is honouring Call to Action 92 in a number of important ways, taking steps to build partnerships based on mutual respect and shared values, as told in this year's edition of *A Chosen Journey*.

With this report, we once again affirm our commitment to the reconciliation journey through specific initiatives designed to generate genuine and meaningful change that benefits Indigenous people and communities, particularly Indigenous youth.

Indigenous youth are at the forefront of the reconciliation movement, pointing us to a new way forward and providing us with visions of hope at a time in our shared history when we need it most. After generations of silence, Indigenous youth are raising their voices, helping us connect the past to the realities of the present in order to build a better future together.

We are, therefore, unwavering in our determination to listen to Indigenous youth and be guided by their voices so we can continue to progress as a bank that stands for Indigenous inclusion and prosperity – now, and for generations to come.



**About the cover art and illustrations by Patrick Hunter**

*Patrick Hunter is a two-spirit, Ojibwe, Woodland artist from Red Lake, Ontario. He paints what he sees through a spiritual lens that is inspired by his homeland and painter Norval Morrisseau, one of the key influencers of the Woodland style of art.*

*Creating has been Hunter's passion and the focus of his life from an early age. In 2014, he launched Patrick Hunter Art & Design, where he creates and sells artwork that makes people feel good. Recently he expanded his business vision to include a small clothing and housewares line, which he sells to people across Canada and around the world.*

*Hunter resides in Toronto, but makes regular journeys home to stay inspired, be with family and teach art classes to the next generation of Woodland artists.*



## A Chosen Journey

### RBC Indigenous Partnership Report 2019

The map represents a small selection of the vast array of stories coming from all over Canada.

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**We'll continue to put action into reconciliation, removing systemic barriers and enabling success for Indigenous youth, entrepreneurs and communities.**

## A letter from Dave McKay, President and CEO

At RBC, we've committed to building a bank that supports the strength and prosperity of Indigenous peoples and communities – both today and into the future.

Our Indigenous inclusion journey began a decade ago when we pledged to put action into reconciliation, remove systemic barriers and enable success for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities across Canada.

With the release of this report, we continue to document and honour our long history of partnering with Indigenous communities in Canada and share success stories from our Indigenous clients.

This year's edition of A Chosen Journey will focus on initiatives led by inspirational Indigenous youth who are helping build sustainable communities, driving economic growth and leading powerful change in important areas like skills and career development.

At RBC, we believe engaging youth to help drive positive change for future generations is critically important. You'll see this commitment in action through our recent support of TakingITGlobal's Connected North program, which delivers live, interactive learning experiences to 32 remote northern Indigenous high schools and gives students the resources they need to be successful on their educational journey.

Alongside thousands of RBC colleagues, I am proud to stand behind Indigenous communities and will continue to build on our strong relationships with the First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities across Canada.

Please join this conversation and share the important stories in this report with your friends and colleagues.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave McKay". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dave McKay

President & Chief Executive Officer  
Royal Bank of Canada

## A letter from Phil Fontaine, Indigenous Special Advisor

Since September 2009, I've been a Special Advisor to RBC, advocating for positive change and progress, and collaborating with RBC on opportunities to deepen its relationships with Canada's Indigenous communities.

I am honoured to continue in this capacity, supporting RBC on their chosen journey for Indigenous inclusion, reaffirming the original commitment to removing barriers and improving access to banking and capital, contributing to community and social development, providing employment, training and education, and supporting procurement opportunities.

In this year's edition of A Chosen Journey, you will see the great impact Indigenous youth are making in the world around us. They are reclaiming a shadowed history, working together to reshape their communities, celebrate culture, reclaim language and chart a new way forward for generations to come.

The many achievements of Indigenous youth today reveal the limitless potential for the future of Canada, and how Indigenous identities, perspectives and values are intrinsically woven into the social fabric of this country.

I will continue to support RBC's efforts to listen to and work with Indigenous youth to ensure their work and their aspirations lead to the positive and impactful changes we all envision for First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities across this land.



Phil Fontaine

Special Advisor,  
RBC Indigenous Financial Services



**As a great statesman once said, we are all part of one “garment of destiny.” The differences between us are not blood or colour and “the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us.” The “common road of hope” will bring us to reconciliation more than any words, laws or legal claims ever could.**

# Métis Proud



## With the vision of Métis Crossing – a place to gather, educate and share – almost complete, the Métis Nation of Alberta now has somewhere to inspire youth to proudly tell their own story.

Hannah Nash was just four years old when she volunteered for the first time with her family on National Aboriginal Day at the Canada Place in Edmonton, Alberta. Now age 17, she considers giving back her hobby, and last year organized a walk for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Much of her community work is intertwined with her Métis culture, of which the grade 12 student and citizen of the Métis Nation of Alberta speaks proudly. “I’m Métis from both sides of my family,” she says.

So, when she took a course on Indigenous history in her community of St. Albert, she left feeling uneasy that the Métis were not a bigger focus, and chose to make a difference.

“I just thought that maybe we could improve the course, because I knew they may not be doing it on purpose,” she recalls. “It could just be a lack of education, or that they just didn’t realize they weren’t including Métis culture as much as the others. So, I figured we should just let them know and they could learn from their mistake.”

Such misunderstanding of Métis culture is hurtful to Métis youth, says Tania Kruk, Manager of Youth Programs & Services, Métis Nation of Alberta in Edmonton. Her own research echoes

Nash’s experience. In addition to saying they don’t see their Métis distinctiveness reflected or represented in so-called “Indigenous” programming, the Métis youth she spoke to indicated they wanted to know more about who they are and where they come from – in short, their history as one of Canada’s three distinct Indigenous peoples, with an estimated population of 600,000 in Canada.

“It’s just so hard for the youth because they keep having to explain who they are ... they’re defending their existence as a people,” Kruk explains. “So, what we try to do is educate the public as well as prepare the youth to communicate their heritage, so they can advocate for themselves.”

Besides better knowing their history, Kruk says Métis youth also long to more deeply belong to their community and connect with others, especially the Elders. Today, Kruk and her team develop programs to address these needs, many of which take place at Métis Crossing.

For years, a strong desire was voiced of the need to create a gathering space for the Métis people, a place where they could tell their own story rather than others doing it for them – and getting it wrong. So, when Audrey Poitras became President of the Métis Nation of Alberta in 1996, she made it her mission to realize this vision.

Located about an hour and a half north of Edmonton on more than 200 hectares of the Victoria District National Historic Site near Smoky Lake, Métis Crossing is that “Place of Pride.”

The area used to be a hub of river-lot settlements where Métis people had spent generations upon generations, but had since passed into non-Métis hands. So when it came up for sale,

Poitras and the Provincial Council sprung into action.

Afraid that the property would be purchased by someone else, but not quite ready and able to purchase it themselves, the Métis Nation approached RBC and asked if RBC could purchase the land for them and hold it until they could secure additional necessary funding.

Understanding how important this site was for the Métis Nation of Alberta and their vision of creating a place for education and celebration of Métis culture in Alberta, RBC did just that: they held the land for three months, and then another three, before finally selling it to the Métis Nation. Seeing the value of this place to Alberta's Métis people, three Métis entrepreneurs, Herb Belcourt, Orval Belcourt and George Brosseau, contributed the full purchase price of the land.

believed that we are a Nation, a proud Nation, who had a cultural piece that we needed to promote and develop ... and RBC has been a big part of that. And I always say, 'If we Métis succeed in this province, it's good for us, but it's also good for Alberta. It's good for Canadians.' And that's what it's all about."

With the addition of the new Cultural Gathering Centre, Métis Crossing will also become an anchor for Indigenous tourism in Alberta, sharing Métis culture with not only Albertans, but international visitors. To better understand the Métis is to better understand Canada.

Nash loves the idea of Métis Crossing, and enjoys spending time there, especially during last year's week-long Métis Youth Summer Camp. She and the other youth played the fiddle, hiked, learned about traditional medicines, worked with animal hides and slept in Métis trapper tents.

**"Métis Crossing is our Place of Pride. For decades leadership has wanted a place to showcase our culture; the new Cultural Gathering Centre at Métis Crossing provides us that place to share our Métis stories with the world."**

— Audrey Poitras, President,  
Métis Nation of Alberta, Edmonton

Today, Métis Crossing invites everyone to gather, celebrate and learn about Métis people and their unique journey. Phase I of Métis Crossing opened in 2005 with restored Métis homesteads, a barn, a music stage for outdoor events, a children's playground and an RV park.

Now in Phase II, RBC is helping again to finance the building of their 11,000-square-foot Cultural Gathering Centre and more, enabling the Métis Nation to open the Centre to the public year-round.

"RBC's funding and support of Métis Crossing means that they believe in the Métis Nation," says Poitras. "They

"Just watching all the kids make friends and learn about their history and be so engaged was definitely my favourite part," says Nash, who is laser-focused on being elected as Prime Minister of Canada in 2046.

"I just like the idea that so many years ago, our ancestors walked and lived on that land," she says. "There, you feel super-connected to the land ... knowing that the people who were standing before you felt the same about the Earth and wanted to care for it, as you do."

1910



Royal Bank's merger partner, the Union Bank of Canada, opens a branch in the Hudson's Bay trading post village of Hazelton, BC. The branch is eventually relocated to Hagwilget First Nation in 1997.

1947

Royal Bank issues a dedicated national Royal Bank letter focused on Indigenous peoples.

1954



Investiture of Royal Bank CEO James Muir as Honorary Chief of the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy is a tribute to his leadership and humanitarianism.

1957

Royal Bank opens the first bank branch in Canada's Arctic Islands in Frobisher Bay, Northwest Territories (now Iqaluit, Nunavut).

1961



New clients open bank accounts with Royal Bank in Terrace, BC.

# Stewards of the future

Saulteau First Nations (BC Treaty 8) leaders are preserving and investing their community's capital while utilizing the flexibility of the new RBC First Nations Capital Line to build critical infrastructure that drives economic development, enabling future generations to live and work in the community.

About 400 Saulteau First Nations (BC Treaty 8) members currently reside on the reserve located at the east end of Moberly Lake in BC, 100 kilometers southwest of Fort St. John – and their ideas and opinions are tremendously valued and respected by the community's leaders.

“The leadership takes an all-inclusive holistic approach to their projects and economic development initiatives – only proceeding when projects fall within community ratified plans and by-laws,” says Tracy Antoine, Saulteau's long-time RBC Commercial Account Manager.

For example, when it came time to create Saulteau's five-year Community Comprehensive Plan (CCP), the leaders consulted with their members, who provided clear direction that they wanted Saulteau to be the “best governed Nation, and one that is culturally strong and self-sufficient.” Members also stressed the importance of continuing to be “stewards of the land” through sustainable practices for “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and rivers run.”

Already, there is much economic development work being done by Saulteau through their own construction company and other joint ventures.



“We're very progressive in promoting our membership in industry and opportunities in the area,” says Estelle Lavis, Director of Operations, adding that they have installed fibre optic internet, a new community water system and a biomass energy heating system for the community's core buildings.

However, growing Saulteau's economy and increasing their self-sufficiency requires additional investment in actions that solve two of their biggest challenges:

a shortage in housing and a lack of infrastructure. They need to enable more of the 1,100-total membership to live in, work in and build up the community, and they need to be able to support long-term community growth plans during a limited construction season each year.

With healthy levels of own-sourced revenue available to invest in building community assets, including much-needed housing and a forward-thinking Industrial Park, the question became:

*Do we use up our liquid assets to build infrastructure in the community, or do we find another way to preserve our capital for the benefit of future generations?*

RBC designed the First Nations Capital Line for capital investment plans that improve Indigenous communities such as new industrial subdivisions, community water services, administration/health and community buildings, schools and housing. Recognizing this line of credit fit with the five-year CCP membership had ratified, Antoine worked closely with the community to review the investment policy and financial by-laws to prepare them for approval of the \$10 million RBC First Nations Capital Line.

For Sauleau, the biggest benefit of the Capital Line is that it enables them to begin investing in their community today without waiting for federal government funding, grant approvals or partnership agreements, which along with short construction seasons can delay projects. Meanwhile, the community's wealth is being preserved and growing for future generations through an investment managed portfolio with RBC Phillips, Hager & North (PH&N).

Lavis also appreciates how the credit line enables the community to move forward on projects without tapping into operational dollars. "It's not fixed term, like a mortgage where you're in for 25 years," she says. "With the RBC First Nations Capital Line, if for whatever reason we want to pay it off in full, we can do that without penalty, so it provides cash management flexibility."

The Capital Line is currently being used to build 10 energy-efficient homes for the Elders and disabled members, making it more affordable and easier for them to maintain their independence. They are also in the final planning stages of the construction of an administration

building and new cultural recreational centre, to have a place where youth can gather, learn and connect with each other, learn culture and language and get advice from the Elders.

"Had we not had the RBC First Nations Capital Line, we potentially wouldn't have had the cash flow to be able to do some of the other programming things that we've done for our youth today," says Lavis.



**“Had we not had the RBC First Nations Capital Line, we potentially wouldn't have had the cash flow to be able to do some of the other programming things that we've done for our youth today.”**

— Estelle Lavis, Director of Operations, Sauleau First Nations (BC Treaty 8)

1969

Royal Bank launches An Introduction to Banking, an educational booklet for Inuit communities in what is now Nunavut.

1973

A First Nations mural, the largest piece of Indigenous art in Canada, is unveiled at Vancouver's main branch.

1977



Royal Bank supports the 1978 Arctic Winter Games held in Hay River, Northwest Territories. RBC would become the first financial institution to officially sponsor the Arctic Winter Games in 1992.

1990

Royal Eagles, an employee resource group, is established at Royal Bank to support networking, mentoring, recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees and to enhance cultural awareness of Indigenous communities.

1991

With the opening of its branch on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Royal Bank becomes the first major financial institution to have a full-service branch in a First Nation community in Canada.

1992

Royal Bank launches an annual educational awards program for First Nations students attending university or college in Canada – now called the RBC Indigenous Student Awards.



“The Freedom Road is just the way it sounds – freedom. It’s freedom of movement to get in and out of our community safely, accessing development opportunities ... which we’ve been denied for the past 100 years ...”

— Chief Erwin Redsky, Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, Manitoba

The dream of Freedom Road has been made into a reality by the whole community.

# The Freedom Road

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation may be small, but the community’s dogged determination for a basic human right – access to clean water – has paved the way for a new 24 km road to connect the community and its youth to education, jobs and more.

Construction of the Freedom Road is almost complete. The 24-kilometre all-weather access road spans from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation on the Ontario side to the Trans-Canada Highway just west of Falcon Lake on the Manitoba side.

For Shoal Lake 40’s leader, Chief Erwin Redsky, there is no other way forward; future generations of his community are depending on the Freedom Road, a true symbol of a brighter tomorrow.

Chief Redsky recalls a recent visit from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. “He was here about a year and a half ago to see and feel for himself the reality of what a lot of First Nations face today. No clean drinking water, no right to economic development,” he explains. “He looked into the eyes of our youth and saw their dreams and aspirations to be participants in Canada. That’s what the Freedom Road project is about – a new beginning, a new future and a new relationship with Canada.”

The \$30 million Freedom Road was made possible through funding from the City of Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba and

federal government – a deal the First Nation worked hard to obtain. Funding for a new water treatment facility is also in the works.

There are already plans for Shoal Lake 40 to develop the intersection of the Trans-Canada Highway and the Freedom Road – a place they are calling the “Crossroads of Reconciliation.” To do so, they hope to leverage funds from their trust, which is managed by their long-time financial partner, RBC Wealth Management, Royal Trust, Indigenous Wealth.

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When the fast-growing City of Winnipeg needed a reliable water source a century ago, the logical solution was to tap into the nearby Shoal Lake. As it was 350 feet higher than the city, gravity would power the flow of lake water through a new aqueduct down to the urban centre. However, the aqueduct – hailed as an “engineering marvel” – did not benefit everyone.

In order to divert the lake water to Winnipeg, the City expropriated over 1,200 hectares (about 3,000 acres) of reserve

land from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, a small Ojibwe First Nation straddling the Ontario-Manitoba border. During this diversion, a channel was dug across a peninsula, cutting the First Nation community off from the mainland for almost a century.

Without direct access to the mainland, the community was forced to operate a ferry, a lifeline that costs them over \$150,000 a year to run. When the lake freezes over, ice crossing becomes more precarious – and dangerous. Overall, getting to and from the island is challenging, making it harder for Shoal Lake’s members to access health services, jobs, higher education, and community development and business opportunities.

To make matters worse, the community’s ability to access clean water was compromised. Shoal Lake 40 has been living under a boil-water advisory for the past 20 years, making it entirely reliant on bottled water, all while living on a lake that supplies fresh water to an entire city. A new onsite water treatment plant is a solution, yet building one is challenging due to the lack of a good road to transport the necessary materials.

A century after Shoal Lake was cut off from the mainland, the Nation’s leadership, along with community members and youth, friends and allies, decided enough was enough. They found unique ways to tell Shoal Lake 40’s story, such as creating its own “Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations” – a foil to Canada’s much-touted Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg.

The First Nation’s Museum has given hundreds of Winnipeg, international and celebrity visitors a first-hand education about real life in an Indigenous community and the sacrifice Shoal Lake 40 community members have made over the years. The community also conducted a four-day occupation of the land the National Human Rights Museum sits on, during which they lit and gathered around a sacred fire.



The days of risking your life to get groceries are over.

Chief Redsky is especially proud of Shoal Lake 40’s youth who played a key role in raising awareness of the campaign and participated in the road project itself; the young people even assisted in mapping out and constructing the road of greater opportunity.

“The Freedom Road is just the way it sounds – freedom,” says Chief Redsky. “It’s freedom of movement to get in and out of our community safely, accessing development opportunities ... which we’ve been denied for the past 100 years, and a pathway for a more prosperous future for young people and generations to come.”

Kathleen Mazur, Associate Trust Officer of RBC Indigenous Wealth, has worked with Shoal Lake 40 for several years and admires the Chief’s resilience and dedication to improving the lives of those in his community. She adds that “his ability to guide Shoal Lake 40 through the intricacies and challenges that accompany inter-governmental negotiations is especially impressive.”

As a result, Chief Redsky is being invited to share the success of Shoal Lake 40 with other Indigenous communities, always carrying forth a message of Indigenous rights and collaboration: no “matter the size of your community” he states, “make friends, and make things work.”

1993

Royal Bank launches the Aboriginal Stay in School Program, hiring grade 9-12 students to work in bank branches across Canada each summer.

1995

Royal Bank establishes a national Aboriginal Banking division.

1996

Royal Bank joins forces with the National Aboriginal Veterans Association to help raise funds to erect a monument in Ottawa commemorating war efforts of the Indigenous men and women of Canada.

1997

Royal Bank issues The Cost of Doing Nothing – A Call to Action and Aboriginal Economic Development report.

1999

Royal Bank launches a new on-reserve housing loan program to assist First Nations members in constructing, purchasing and renovating homes located in their communities.

2000

Royal Bank establishes a national agency banking program as an alternative delivery method of banking services for remote rural communities.

# Brush blazer

A creative collaboration between Patrick Hunter, an emerging Indigenous artist, and RBC and Staples is empowering the artistic business owner to paint a pathway for success for himself and artists to follow.

Photo by David J. Fulde

Madsen, Ontario, on the outskirts of Red Lake, is where Patrick Hunter's roots as a visual artist began to form.

"Madsen is just like a circle with houses around it, with forest and lakes everywhere," he says. "Growing up, I would just lose myself in the bush and imagine."

One thing Hunter never imagined, however, was where those trails would lead him. His journey took him to Sault Ste. Marie to study design before moving to Toronto, making ends meet in retail and restaurants and then taking a chance on himself with the launch of his own business, Patrick Hunter Art & Design.

Things were tight at first, but social media was the booster shot his fledgling business needed, as happy clients shared his work online. Five years later, he works with some of the biggest organizations in Canada while staying true to his artist within.

"It's always shocking to me, because I do come from such a small town, so in working with these gigantic companies, I'm like, 'What? How did this happen?'" says the 30-year-old. "I'm the only one here, but somehow the work gets out there to the right people."

One of those "right" people was Kiruba Sankar, Global Leader from RBC Procurement for Corporate Social Responsibilities. Over 15 years ago, RBC demonstrated its commitment to helping clients thrive and communities prosper by launching its Supplier Diversity Program.



The Program supports diverse suppliers, including Indigenous business owners, by providing training, mentorship and facilitating introductions. This enables large organizations like RBC to identify and support diversity in its supply chain. It's how RBC learned about Patrick and his art.

"As an artist with a small business, we must find ways to include Patrick as a supplier to RBC," says Sankar. "We are opening our mindset to ask, 'How could we create opportunities for him?'"

Sankar was approached by RBC's Jemison Jackson, the Director, Indigenous Wealth, RBC Wealth Management, Royal Trust, which is a six-time sponsor of the annual conference of the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association (NATOA). She believed conference attendees should receive a gift from RBC that was useful and memorable. "Simply sponsoring such an important event was just not enough," says Jackson. "We wanted to use this as an opportunity to find creative ways to further support Indigenous peoples and ventures."

With these goals in mind, Sankar remembered artist Hunter and his beautiful work, and connected with the company that looks after all of RBC's branded and promotional items.

**"It's always shocking to me, because I do come from such a small town, so in working with these gigantic companies, I'm like, 'What? How did this happen?'"**

**— Patrick Hunter, Artist and Founder of Patrick Hunter Art & Design, Toronto**

"They wanted to give a unique and meaningful gift – something that had a story behind it," says Andrai Desormeaux, Strategic Account Manager at Staples Promotional Products Canada. Before long, Staples was working closely with Hunter to develop the one-of-a-kind item.

The result was a campfire mug with RBC's brand on one side and Hunter's "Tree of Life" artwork on the other. Biography cards, also carefully crafted by the artist, were tucked inside the mug. For Jackson, Hunter's tree image represented the RBC Indigenous Wealth team's decades-long efforts to build a trusting relationship with Indigenous communities.

"The response we received from the attendees of the 2018 NATOA annual conference was overwhelming; people were blown away by the gift and Patrick's story," says Jemison. "It was so popular we've now had to reorder more mugs on two separate occasions because they're in such high demand."

Still, Sankar sensed they could support this Indigenous supplier even more, and challenged Staples to take the concept further. After much collaboration among the artist, RBC and Staples, the exclusive "Patrick Hunter Collection" was launched. More than 50,000 RBC employees can now view and order Patrick's promotional items.

"I am just so in awe that they would even ask me to do it," he says of the launch of his Patrick Hunter Collection. "Even that we're in conversations together!"

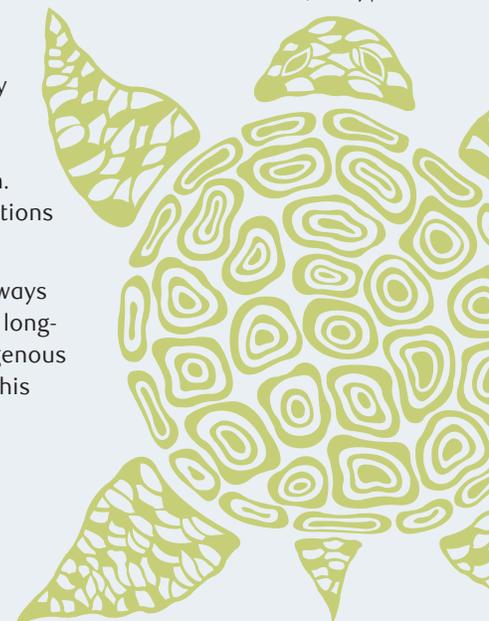
"RBC is proactively seeking ways to forge mutually beneficial, long-term partnerships with Indigenous business owners as we see this as part of our reconciliation commitment," says Sankar.

Sankar and others at RBC, and Staples, still mentor Hunter, empowering him to define his brand, grow his graphic design business and pursue his art – a key way he is reconnecting with his Ojibwe roots. His mother, an Ojibwe of the Turtle Clan from Manitoba, was impacted by the discriminatory practices of the Sixties Scoop. Because of this, Hunter grew up looking at his culture from the outside, but through his artwork he has begun forming a deeper connection to his language and Ojibwe heritage.

Like the "power" lines of energy that he paints, illuminating the connections between humans, nature and creatures, it is now easier than ever for him to connect his Ojibwe ancestry to the artist he's now become. It is a platform he uses to serve others, especially other young Indigenous artists struggling to find their way.

Here, he refers to the famous Métis leader and founder of the province of Manitoba, executed for his role in the 1885 resistance to the Canadian government's intrusion on Métis lands. "There's a great quote by Louis Riel, just as they were about to hang him, and that was 'My people will sleep for 100 years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back,'" he says.

"And that's something that I always think of," he says, explaining that as an artist he never imagined that it would be possible for him to do what he is doing right now. "You just grew up thinking, it's going to be hard. You kind of get discouraged before you even start, but that's not the case for me at present, and I'm learning more and more every day, and think this is something that someone coming after me is going to need to know because there's no guidebook on how to do it. So, I sometimes think, 'Okay, whether you like it or not, you are trail-blazing in the business world as an Indigenous artist for other artists.'"





“Ikaarvik has been my  
stepping stone into my  
scientific career.”

— Mia Otokiak, age 22,  
Junior Technical Advisor,  
Nunavut Impact Review Board,  
Cambridge Bay

# Arctic youth stake out their future with SciQ

Mentored by Ocean Wise and Elders, young Inuit are building bridges between Traditional Knowledge and Arctic research for the betterment of their communities.

With the Arctic warming at twice the rate as down South, the Inuit in Nunavut have a front-row seat to a global problem.

“Climate change is having a crazy effect here,” says Mia Otokiak, Inuk and lifelong resident of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut.

Record summer highs, never felt or heard of. Warming waters melting their beloved Arctic ice earlier and then freezing it later, creating unpredictable – and dangerous – scenarios.

Alarmingly the permafrost – soil that remains frozen even in summer – is slipping away. In places, the newly softened earth gapes open, swallowing ATVs and their drivers whole. “People are riding along and don’t know the cracks are there, and then all of a sudden it’s too late,” adds the 22-year-old. “There’s all these accidents happening.”

These emerging facts – and her love of science – are among the reasons Otokiak leaped at the chance to join an Ocean Wise program called Ikaarvik: Barriers to Bridges after graduating from high school in 2014. Within a month of signing up, she was travelling to the South to inform the public on what it is like living in the Arctic in the face of global climate change.

As climate change advances, Arctic people are searching for relevant answers to questions on how to survive in this new warming world. Arctic science could help provide valuable insights to Inuit communities. But what gets studied, and for whose benefit, is not always clear.

Ikaarvik was designed to facilitate better access to Arctic science education and to

engage youth in careers in science and technology.

“Ikaarvik is really about empowering Indigenous youth of the North to be a bridge between Arctic science and their communities,” says Eric Solomon, Ocean Wise’s Director of Arctic Programs.

With 60% of Nunavut under age 30, Solomon explains how Ocean Wise recognized that working with youth was a critical path forward, and began facilitating workshops to explore the strengths of both Inuit knowledge – called “*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*” (or “IQ”) – and science.

Through this initiative, youth of the North created an entirely new concept that connects Traditional Knowledge with science, called “SciQ.”

With the help of a \$100,000 gift from the RBC Foundation, last year Ikaarvik gathered 15 youth, aged 16 to 29, and prominent Elder, Piita Irniq, for a six-day workshop to explore how SciQ can inform how researchers meaningfully engage northern Indigenous communities in research that addresses local concerns.

“This is youth driven,” says Solomon. “These are young people who are being asked by Elders and leaders in their community to step up and take leadership roles now. Our job is just to help them think about and articulate what they feel is important. It’s also about showing young people in these northern communities that they have a voice – something valuable to say and to contribute.”

At the SciQ workshop, the voices of the youth came through loud and clear, resulting in 38 recommendations for scientists to use in their research projects to meaningfully engage northern communities. So far, two scientific journals have already committed to publishing their recommendations, and Polar Knowledge Canada intends to make them a requirement of their funding objectives.

As part of the gift, RBC delivered a personal-brand workshop to the youth at SciQ. Jerilynn Daniels, Regional Director, Community Marketing and Citizenship, RBC Alberta and Territories, travelled from Calgary to Cambridge Bay to give the workshop. “Arctic youth are very passionate about the work they are doing and very committed to making their communities better – and that really shone through at SciQ.”

As for Otokiak, the opportunity to work with Ikaarvik after high school has been life-changing. She went on to become Ocean Network Canada’s first Youth Science Ambassador, giving presentations to high school and college students, before joining the Nunavut Impact Review Board in her current role as a Junior Technical Advisor. Now she helps protect and promote the well-being of the Nunavut environment and its people.

“Ikaarvik has been my stepping stone into my scientific career,” she says. “I really couldn’t thank them enough because I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that Ikaarvik was a big reason for me getting these amazing jobs.”

# Heeding the call

The New Pathways Foundation aims to inspire youth to serve their communities through their careers – not unlike the path chosen by its Innu leader, Marie-Claude Cleary.

Marie-Claude Cleary, an Innu from the Mashteuiatsh First Nation in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region, was working for CBC in Quebec when she chose to dedicate her life’s work to benefiting Indigenous communities. “I knew I just had to give back to my people,” she says.

Her quest to realize this calling began with jobs at Indigenous Friendship Centres before she successfully applied for the Executive Director role at the New Pathways Foundation in Wendake, Quebec.

New Pathways was created in 2010 by Aurélien Gill (Innu), John Martin (Mi’gmaq) and Andrew Delisle (Mohawk), who determined that First Nations youth should have a better future, empowered by their distinct cultures. The non-profit focuses on strengthening the futures

of 10 First Nations in Quebec and their communities by fundraising and funding community programming that benefits young people. A stellar board of directors, composed of active leaders who are themselves role models from respected First Nations organizations in Quebec, provides additional guidance for their work. “It’s not easy, but we try to help every youth from every First Nation community in Quebec,” Cleary says.

New Pathways offers several development experiences for youth. They sponsor First Nations Leadership Camps, aimed at vulnerable 10- to 14-year-olds, and Become, a program that provides high-school students with the opportunity to explore new careers through job shadowing opportunities in different trades, including those that are often gender-biased, or professions such as media and healthcare.

These experiences are designed to build confidence and self-esteem, fostering good health and mental well-being. “It’s important that our children understand our history,” Cleary explains. “As a result of that history, First Nation kids have big, big needs, and one of them is to have confidence in who they are. We have such great First Nations cultures. We want to help them understand why they should be proud, and to know that there are real possibilities for them, too.”

Ultimately, New Pathways hopes to inspire First Nation youth to stay in school and heed their own callings to give back to their communities through their careers and who they are. For young people living in remote First Nations, however, choosing to become a doctor or other type of professional often also means leaving home for training, education, accreditation and experience.





This is another challenge New Pathways hopes to help youth overcome.

“Just imagine if you have to leave your community and all the people you know, and come to a city where you are probably a little bit afraid,” says Cleary. “Through Become, we want to be there to make a link and say, ‘This is possible, you have resources. C’mon, let’s discover some work areas, but also come into the city and see how it is organized. And, we’re here to help you pursue the career you want.’ We want to give the youth tools to help them be strong.”

Recognizing the positive relationship between success in sports and the arts and other endeavours, like education, another program, Niska, builds strength in First Nations communities by inviting local organizations to apply for funding for youth-oriented physical and sports activities.

**“Historically, we don’t want to talk about what went wrong. We prefer to focus on the promise of the future, but as a result of that history, First Nation kids have needs. We want to help them understand why they should be proud, and to know that there are real possibilities for them too.”**

— Marie-Claude Cleary, Executive Director,  
New Pathways Foundation, Wendake, Quebec

RBC recently gifted \$1,000 to help New Pathways host a fun hockey event to raise even more funds to help children and youth. People and organizations sponsored individual players who became part of an all-First Nations team that played against Montreal Canadiens alumni in an exciting game held in Wendake. This is not the first time RBC has supported the non-profit, and Cleary says she values the long-term relationship with the bank.

As for Cleary, working to improve the future for First Nations youth is a dream come true. “I truly love what I’m doing now,” she says. “I know we can help the kids. We can offer them opportunities so they can build a better future for themselves and their communities.”

## 2007

RBC and the Assembly of First Nations sign a Memorandum of Understanding and commit to a two-year action plan addressing access to capital, community and social development, employment, and procurement for First Nations people.

## 2008

RBC Blue Water Project Leadership Grants, totalling more than \$1 million, are awarded for use in Indigenous communities.

## 2009

RBC names Phil Fontaine, former three-time National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, as Special Advisor to RBC.

## 2010

RBC is the first Canadian financial institution to offer telephone customer service in Ojibwe, Cree and Inuktitut.

## 2011

RBC Foundation contributes \$300,000 to Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, a program aimed at helping Indigenous youth stay in school.

## 2012

RBC receives the Canadian Aboriginal & Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC) Corporation of the Year Award, which recognizes leaders who exemplify the very best in corporate practice regarding the promotion of supplier diversity.

# Olympics of the North

For athletes like Richard Lewis, competing in the Labrador Winter Games is more than sport – it’s also about fostering the next generation of “northern pride.”



“Feeling that from the age of 15, and even before, that you’re a part of something that’s so important to your community, putting all the time into training, and then feeling how it feels to be successful ... that set the stage for what I do now in my career.”

— Richard Lewis, Labrador Winter Games Athlete + Operations Manager, Nunacor Development Corporation, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador

## Community – Social Impact

It is four weeks out to the start of the 2019 Labrador Winter Games in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Richard Lewis is training hard to proudly represent the Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut and his hometown of Cartwright, Labrador.

There, he will take part in one of the Games' most physically demanding events: the Northern Duathlon. It involves cross-country skiing for five and a half kilometres before jumping into snowshoes to stomp another three to the finish line.

Should be easy for this 34-year-old seasoned athlete who runs marathons for fun and fitness, but first he needed to get a hang of those darn skis. "Before this year, I really never cross-country skied before," he says.

Fortunately, Lewis is always up for a challenge, especially when it involves competing in the "Olympics of the North" – a spirited event held every three years that RBC has sponsored since 2002.

"I've participated in a lot of sporting events, but the Labrador Games is my favourite of all," he says, "and I can't see another event replacing that just because it's so unique and it means so much to us from a young age."

"Even before I participated, I was part of the group of kids who travelled to the Labrador Winter Games because these were the star athletes that we idolized while growing up," he says. "Yes, we watched Wayne Gretzky on TV, but really what I wanted to do was to win the gold medal in the Northern Games." And he did, twice – for Cartwright.

He first competed in the Games at age 15 as a member of the community's ball hockey team, and has competed in four Games since, winning a total of six medals – three golds, three silvers – in various events for Cartwright's "Team Orange."

Thousands of fans can't wait to cheer on the more than 500 athletes, especially those participating in the Northern Games: the crown jewel of the entire event. For two days,

it is standing room only as the Northern Games athletes test their athletic abilities in a grueling series of traditional events such as the Seal Crawl, Seal Kick, Hurdles and Over the Rope – games Inuit of Labrador have played for centuries.

Joe Goudie, who has Inuit and Innu roots, is one of the 600-plus volunteers who are critical to the Games' success. The 79-year-old is also the founding funder of the event in his former role as Provincial Cabinet Minister back in 1983.

He loves seeing the pride on the faces of the young athletes, dressed in their traditional clothing during the opening, closing and medal ceremonies. "That one week can be the highlight of a young person's life," he says. "It's like the Stanley Cup or Super Bowl of the North, there's always respect behind the competition, and the friendships made may last for the rest of their lives."

No wonder the unofficial name of the event is "The Friendship Games" – the very thing that keeps athletes like Lewis returning again and again. "We love coming together for this one week every three years," he says. "And yes, competition is the backdrop, but it's really about friendship, community and the celebration of our culture."

This deep sense of community spirit has even influenced the athlete's career. Today, Lewis enjoys serving his community through his work at Nunacor, a business development organization whose primary purpose is to develop business opportunities for reinvestment in NunatuKavut communities.

"Feeling from the age of 15, and even before, that you're a part of something so important to your community, putting all the time into training and then achieving success. That set the stage for what I do now in my career in that it's my job to develop business opportunities that ultimately contribute back to the well-being of NunatuKavut Peoples and communities. It's an alignment of my values," says Lewis.

### 2013

RBC announces the creation of the new role of National Manager, Indigenous Wealth.

### 2014



RBC proudly sponsors the 2014 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in Regina, Saskatchewan, where more than 4,000 athletes compete with the support of 2,000+ volunteers.

### 2015

RBC Foundation becomes a signatory to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Declaration of Action, the only financial institution to do so.

### 2016

For the first time, all five living former National Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) are brought together at the AFOA (formerly Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada) National Conference, sponsored by RBC and moderated by a former Prime Minister of Canada.

### 2017

RBC launches three Indigenous talent programs internally to support Indigenous employee development.

### 2018

RBC Foundation commits \$800,000 to TakingITGlobal's Connected North program, delivering live, interactive learning experiences to 32 remote northern Indigenous high schools. The program equips Indigenous students with the tools and resources to be successful on their educational journey.

# ReconciliACTION in the classroom

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund’s Legacy Schools – High School Artist Ambassador Program brings students and artists together to learn about Chanie Wenjack’s story and continue the reconciliation conversation started by his family and Tragically Hip frontman Gord Downie.

Gord Downie, beloved frontman of the popular band The Tragically Hip, was deeply touched by the story of Chanie Wenjack, a 12-year-old boy who died on the railway tracks in 1966 after trying to escape from Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School.

“Chanie haunts me,” Downie wrote in a 2016 statement. “His story is Canada’s story ... We weren’t taught it; it was hardly ever mentioned.”

The artist chose to do something to ensure that all Canadians would know Wenjack’s story – and perhaps even more

importantly, never let such a tragedy happen again.

Downie’s Secret Path project began as 10 poems, and eventually turned into an album and graphic novel, with the hope of starting Canada on a road to reconciliation.

“The Tragically Hip are part of the DNA of this country and telling the story of Canada, and I think the residential school piece – such an important and devastating part of the history of Indigenous people in Canada – was a big missing piece for Gord,” says Sarah

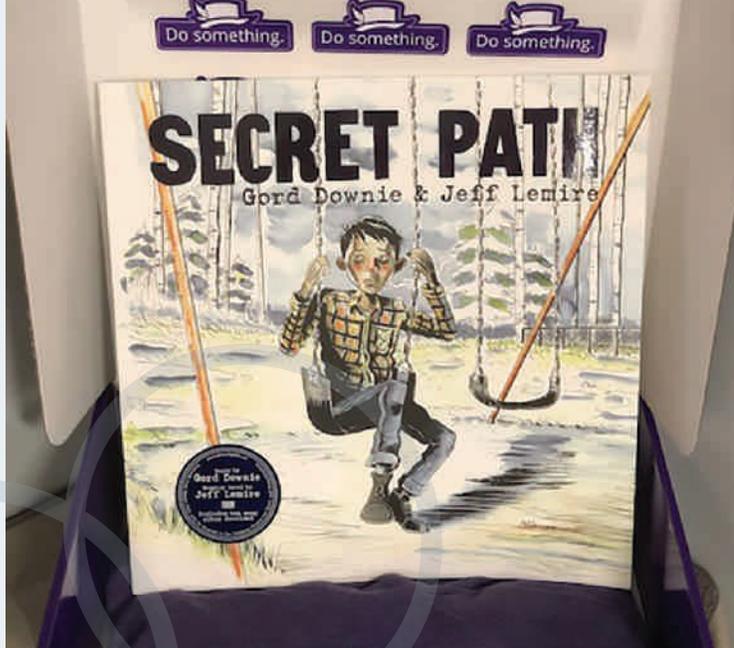
Midanik, President and CEO of The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund. “Gord understood that once you understand this part of Canada’s history, you can’t unknow, so what are you going to do about it?”

As part of Downie’s legacy, The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) is focused on building cultural understanding and creating a path toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through awareness, education and action.

A cornerstone of its work is the DWF Legacy Schools program, which inspires educators/schools to join a national movement committed to teaching about the true history of Indigenous people in Canada. From here, the educators/students are asked to take the next step towards reconciliation through reconciliACTION – meaningful actions towards reconciliation unique to their communities and schools. This annual movement of awareness and understanding culminates in Secret Path Week, which occurs each year from October 17-22 and also commemorates the dates when Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack passed away respectively.



Adrian Sutherland of Midnight Shine and students of Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning sing songs together at the piano during the DWF High School Artist Ambassador visit on February 28, 2019.



Legacy School educational tool kit. Each registered school receives the kit. To date, 434 schools are registered and 880 toolkits have been distributed.

“As Canadians we all have a responsibility to understand our true history. Gord Downie recognized this and took action in his final years to try and build a more complete Canada, one that is fair and equitable to all its citizens. By sharing Chanie’s story through events, Legacy Spaces and Legacy Schools, DWF is bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to raise awareness, to educate and to inspire action towards reconciliation.”

— Mike Downie, Co-Founder and Director,  
The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF)

The response to Legacy Schools is phenomenal with more than 1,200 participating classrooms reaching over 35,000 students – and growing. Building on this momentum, DWF recently launched the Legacy Schools – High School Artist Ambassador Pilot Program, supported by a \$25,000 gift from the RBC Foundation.

The RBC Foundation gift enables Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to visit high school Legacy School classrooms to share their art, music and stories with students, engaging the youth in learning and conversations about reconciliation. In turn, high schools encourage students to share their own stories, art and reconciliATIONS with their artist guests.

Midanik says she loves working with RBC because the partnership is meaningful. “I’ve worked with RBC through various roles for almost a decade now, and they’ve always been an innovator in terms of supporting Indigenous projects within the community, and their support goes right to the very top of the bank,” she says.

With its own emphasis on youth engagement, Midanik especially appreciates RBC’s focus on making social investments today through programs like RBC Future Launch: a 10-year, \$500-million commitment to invest in meaningful partnerships that will empower today’s young people for the jobs of tomorrow. “That’s something that RBC is great at – recognizing that potential, and asking, how can we support when communities know what they need?” she says.

True to Downie’s vision, such programming is a must to ensure the legacy of Canada’s residential schools is both learned – and learned from.



Angela Gladue performs a hoop dance during the DWF High School Artist Ambassador visit at the Peterborough Alternative and Continuing Education high school on February 20, 2019.

# Career movers

Ever wonder what it is like to work at RBC? Three Indigenous employees share their chosen journeys.

## Jadelyn Psutka

**RBC Indigenous Sourcing Specialist, Human Resources, Toronto**  
**Ancestry: Haudenosaunee – Turtle Clan, Oneida of the Thames First Nation, Ontario**



**“I love that I can work here and still be part of the Indigenous community.”**

— Jadelyn Psutka,  
RBC Indigenous  
Sourcing Specialist

Having grown up off-reserve in a German community just outside Kitchener-Waterloo, Jadelyn Psutka did not connect with her Haudenosaunee culture until studying criminology at Wilfrid Laurier University.

After post-secondary school, she started a career in corrections but quickly realized that was not her path and ended up managing a pub before moving to Toronto on a whim.

Finding a job was challenging, so she decided to volunteer at the Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training centre. Seeing her potential, they hired her part-time in the HR department with the promise of helping her obtain her HR certification. Before long, she was running the HR department full-time and attending Ryerson University in the evenings.

Just three courses away from completing her HR degree at Ryerson, Psutka joined RBC as an Executive Assistant – with the condition that once she earned her degree, she would pursue an HR role within the bank.

Today, as RBC’s Indigenous Sourcing Specialist, she is the first point of contact for Indigenous students at university and college campuses. Her role includes raising awareness about the bank’s broad array of positions along with Indigenous-focused programs such as the RBC Indigenous Peoples Development Program.

Being so close to the post-secondary world, she often hears stories from students who don’t feel connected to

their Indigenous cultures or don’t self-identify because they’ve grown up off reserve – a scenario Psutka knows all too well.

“They often say things like, ‘Yeah, but am I Indigenous enough to say that I’m Indigenous?’ Or, ‘I’m just trying to figure things out now,’” she explains. “Maybe their parents didn’t accept their status, or their parents and/or grandparents stepped away from the culture due to residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, etc.”

This uncertainty of status is something she is seeing more and more, especially as the number of Indigenous students in post-secondary programs continues to rise.

“It’s so hard to get somebody to self-identify if they’re unsure, but I think bringing that to light and mentioning not all of us grew up on reserve, and that there are options to explore your culture here at RBC helps,” she says. “There’s lots of opportunities to get involved with community through volunteering with the Royal Eagles, our employee resource group for Indigenous employees and their allies, so it’s up to your own comfortability as to how you want to explore your Indigeneity.”

As for her own role at RBC, she’s finally found her sweet spot, satisfying her craving to work in a job that also helps the Indigenous community. “I love that I can work here and still be part of the Indigenous community,” she says. “You don’t necessarily have to be working at an Indigenous organization to do that.”

**“I’m really thankful to RBC, and every day I count my blessings that I’m here because it really is a fantastic program. I want to say it’s changed my life.”**

— Jake Karasin, Participant,  
RBC Indigenous Peoples Development Program



## Jake Karasin

Participant, RBC Indigenous Peoples Development Program, Toronto  
Ancestry: Métis

The new Indigenous Peoples Development Program turned out to be a lucky break for Jake Karasin.

After extensive consultation with Indigenous employees and the community, in 2017 RBC launched the Indigenous program to develop talent for its Finance department. A key part of the design of the two-year program is a six-month rotation working with an Indigenous organization, recognition of the strong desire of many to better their communities.

Karasin was enrolled in the Bachelor of Commerce – Business Technology Management degree program at Ryerson University in Toronto in 2017 when he learned about the program and applied.

After the interview process, Karasin was not identified as a top candidate. However, interviewers felt strongly that he had potential to gain more skills and experience at RBC in technology. A few weeks later he was offered an internship in the Technology & Operations department.

Meanwhile, the Indigenous Peoples Development Program took off, and RBC expanded the program beyond Finance to include other departments such as Technology & Operations, Group Risk Management, Human Resources, Internal Audit and Marketing.

As a participant in the newly expanded program, Karasin is now nearing the end of his first rotation on the Middleware team. “It’s a lot of problem solving and investigation,” he says of his first rotation role.

At first, he wasn’t completely okay with the idea of doing different rotations, thinking he would learn more if he stayed in a single role for the whole two-year program. “But just the opposite has happened,” he says. “Every day I’m learning something new – and in a week, I’m moving to this new rotation in the community and I’m really looking forward to that too.”

The job has been a life saver. Prior to joining RBC, he was struggling financially, emotionally and physically – trapped in a vicious circle of trying to make ends meet while trying to find a decent paying job as a new grad with no experience.

Plus, at age 21, he donated part of his liver to his father, suffering from cancer. It’s been six years now, and Karasin still has trouble gaining weight. Proper nutrition is critical to his health and well-being. “For the longest time, the first thing when I woke up, I would always think, ‘How am I going to eat tonight?’” he recalls.

The RBC Indigenous Peoples Development Program has enabled him to get back on his feet with a salary that enables him to live comfortably. With it, he’s grown healthier and has begun to build a brighter future for himself, while paying off debts and saving a little. “I’m really thankful to RBC, and every day I count my blessings that I’m here because it really is a fantastic program,” he says. “I want to say it’s changed my life.”

But what he really wants other Indigenous youth and emerging professionals to know is that RBC offers many career opportunities. “When I was in university, I wasn’t even considering a bank,” he says. “When you think about it, at the core, RBC has so many employees that they almost have a position in every field.”

## Jessica Shute

RBC Mortgage Specialist, Personal & Commercial Banking, Toronto

National Co-Chair, RBC Royal Eagles

Ancestry: Ojibwe – Lynx Clan, Couchiching First Nation, Fort Frances, Ontario



**“I said it was going to be a year or two and then I would go back to school, but I’ve been loving the job so much, so I’ve stayed. It gives me all the flexibility in the world.”**

– Jessica Shute, RBC Mortgage Specialist

Jessica Shute began her chosen journey with RBC in the summer of her grade 10 year, working at the Fort Frances branch full-time in the RBC Indigenous Student Internship Program (ISIP).

Finishing high school, she went to Ryerson University in Toronto, earning a degree in Business Management and Finance before landing a full-time position as Personal Banker in RBC’s main branch in downtown Toronto.

It was there that she made a fortunate connection by meeting Curtis Hitsman, an RBC Regional Vice President, who introduced her to the RBC Royal Eagles, a national employee resource group for Indigenous employees and their allies.

“He’s been kind of my guiding light at the bank ... and got me quite involved with the overall Indigenous community in Toronto, which was very different for me because although I grew up on a reserve for 17 years, I was not culturally connected to my community whatsoever because my grandfather and my great grandmother had attended residential schools,” she explains. “I went to a Catholic school, so I wasn’t raised traditionally – and to be honest, I’ve taken on all of my cultural

learning since I started at RBC and through my involvement with the Royal Eagles.”

Last year, she was even one of the organizers of the Royal Eagles (Ontario chapter) Peace Conference. The ground-breaking retreat for Indigenous employees and their allies held in Kingston, Ontario includes healing and naming ceremonies led by Elders.

Today, she shares what she learns about her Ojibwe culture with her own family, and hopes others don’t ever have to feel shame, but rather pride, in who they are as Indigenous people.

Through the Royal Eagles, she has also had the opportunity to consult on Indigenous-focused programs like the RBC Indigenous Peoples Development Program – even participating in candidate interviews. “Honestly, HR was amazing in terms of having the Royal Eagles and other Indigenous employees involved with ensuring it wasn’t this overwhelming interview experience that you might typically have at a bank,” she says. “And if someone wasn’t a good fit for that program but was somebody we felt strongly about, they were very open to trying to find them something else within the bank.”

All in all, Shute is happy in her current role as a Mortgage Specialist. “I said it was going to be a year or two and then I would go back to school, but I’ve been loving the job so much, so I’ve stayed,” she says. “It gives me all the flexibility in the world, and the compensation is nothing to complain about.”

# Empowered to serve

Understanding the need for more support for Indigenous businesses in his province, Saskatoon RBC Commercial Account Manager Patrick Dinsdale joined forces with other community leaders to form the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce of Saskatchewan.

In his role as an RBC Commercial Account Manager in Saskatoon, Patrick Dinsdale recognized the need to create more supports to empower Indigenous owned and led businesses to thrive.

Working in his spare time, alongside other leaders in the community, Dinsdale helped form the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce of Saskatchewan with the support of RBC. “This is about saying, ‘Hey, we’ve got a seat at the table,’” he says. “Let’s use it.”

Indigenous-led and Indigenous-focused, the new province-wide Chamber was incorporated in May 2018 and is already accepting memberships. While still run entirely by volunteers like Dinsdale, the goal is to get enough members to begin to hire full-time staff soon and cultivate greater Indigenous market opportunities and commerce in Saskatchewan.

RBC actively works to deepen its understanding of the criticality of Indigenous employees being able to give back to community. Whether it’s a community rotation as part of the RBC Indigenous Peoples Talent Development program, mentoring other

Indigenous employees or volunteering in the community, the number of opportunities to give back to the Indigenous communities is extensive at RBC.

But giving back as an RBC staffer doesn’t always occur through an organized program, group or event, and the bank is proud to support all kinds of one-of-a-kind efforts, like the formation of the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce of Saskatchewan, by passionate staff – Indigenous and otherwise – across the country.

Dinsdale says it is amazing to work for an organization that supports his passion for helping Indigenous communities thrive through strong economies. “One of the great things when I started in this role was that RBC said, ‘Go out. Do things, and be a part of the community,’” says Dinsdale, a Mississauga-Ojibway from Curve Lake First Nation near Peterborough, Ontario. “I feel like I’m working on something that can make a very big difference for a lot of people, and that’s really exciting.”

**“One of the great things when I started in this role was that RBC said, ‘Go out. Do things, and be a part of the community.’ I feel like I’m working on something that can make a very big difference for a lot of people, and that’s really exciting.”**

— Patrick Dinsdale, RBC Commercial Account Manager in Saskatoon



# Setting the stage

The RBC Emerging Artist Showcase enables the Manitoba Arts Network to prepare young artists like Ila Barker for their next big break.

Ila Barker was at home on her family farm in rural Manitoba when a song on the radio gave her pause. It was “Bubbly” by Colbie Caillat, and it struck a chord deep within. “The music kind of pulled me into it,” she remembers. “I had this overwhelming sense of needing to play it.”

Problem was the home-schooled 14-year-old didn’t play any instrument. Undeterred, she picked up a guitar and plucked away, taking online lessons. She then taught herself vocals, music and songwriting – and before long Ila Barker, the musician, singer and songwriter, was born.

In 2017 Barker was selected by the Manitoba Arts Network (MAN) jury to get on stage for the RBC Emerging Artist Showcase. Each year, the non-profit hosts a conference that brings together provincial and national performers (music, theatre, dance and variety) to an audience of people in a position to book them for paid gigs.

For each of the last two years, RBC has gifted \$5,000 to MAN to support six emerging artists between the ages of 18 and 35. The support is reflective of RBC’s commitment to the development of Indigenous talent through continued investment in employment and education programs that support Indigenous youth.

“With RBC’s support, we were able to expand the RBC Emerging Artist Showcase program to include some mentorship components,” says Rose-Anne Harder, MAN’s Executive Director in Winnipeg. “So, it’s a better learning opportunity now.”

Barker says her own mentoring experience began before the big event with advice on bio writing, creating an elevator pitch and other best practices, and generally on how to prepare for her first showcase event. During the event, she got one-on-one performance coaching, with several check-ins throughout and lots of after-event contact too.

The additional mentoring set Barker up for success; she received two bookings – a rarity for such a young artist at her first showcase event. “I am very thankful for the mentoring that the

MAN provided throughout the experience,” she says. “I don’t think I could have done it without that support. I truly mean that.”

While music is her first love, the singer also has a passion for helping others through music, especially Indigenous youth. She is Anishinaabekwe; her maternal family hails from Berens River First Nation, but she only began discovering her Ojibwe ancestry at age 18. The story of how she became disconnected from her culture in the first place is knotted within the larger national tragedy of residential schools and years of systemic cultural genocide.

“I think it’s up to my Aunties and my generation to reconnect it all,” she says. “So now I feel like it’s my purpose to try to connect these different generations of people like me to our homes again, to the land and our culture, and music kind of interlaces it all together.”

Having been in the industry for eight years now, she’s ready to serve her community – and has already begun her first project called Artists in Residence Sessions (#AIRsessions) – an antidote to the one-off music development workshop.

After a successful pilot run in August, #AIRsessions garnered support from co-presenters at the National Art Centre and Manitoba Music along with other sponsors to present 10 sessions over five months. Youth interested in experimenting with music or perhaps developing their music careers are invited into a safe, consistent and comfortable place in inner city Winnipeg twice a month to have a meal and hang out.

“For me, it’s about giving back in a way that helps build the future,” she explains. “I think the youth, especially Indigenous youth, are going to be a massive force, and music just plays into that in so many ways because music is fun, and it connects and builds community. I think it can also positively affect the mental health of young people because I know that for me, music has always been a life-saving tool.”



“I think Indigenous youth are going to be a massive force, and music just plays into that in so many different ways.”

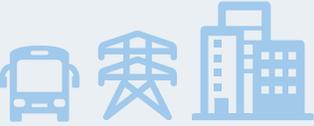
— Ila Barker, age 24, Artist, Entrepreneur, Founder of #AIRsessions

Listen at [www.IlaBarker.com](http://www.IlaBarker.com).

## Progress Report

## Economy: Access to Capital and Financial Services

RBC continued its longstanding commitment to financing economic development and community infrastructure projects throughout the 2018-2019 reporting period.

Select Examples	Project/Program	Amount
<b>Schools, community and cultural centres</b> 	School buses – AB	\$500,000
	Community centre – MB	\$11,000,000
	Community centre – ON	\$2,300,000
	Education facility – ON	\$3,500,000
	Baseball and deck hockey field – QC	\$500,000
	Pow wow and rodeo grounds – SK	\$1,900,000
<b>Roads, water and power generation</b> 	Road infrastructure – SK	\$2,300,000
	Lagoon – ON	\$200,000
<b>Housing and administrative buildings, other</b> 	New buildings (health, seniors and daycare) – BC	8,980,000
	Administrative buildings – QC	\$1,000,000
	Lodge refinancing – BC	\$750,000
	Housing – AB	\$16,500,000
	Housing – SK	\$1,200,000
	Housing – North of 60	\$1,100,000
	Housing – MB	\$2,900,000
Housing – ON	\$700,000	
<b>Business and refinancing, construction, infrastructure financing</b> 	Leasing trucks – BC	\$960,000
	Leasing equipment – BC	\$5,500,000
	Leasing equipment – QC	\$500,000
	Community infrastructure building – SK	\$617,000
	Tourism – BC	\$500,000
	Restructure loan – SK	\$3,200,000
	Restructure loan – ON	\$6,000,000
	Heavy equipment – SK	\$650,000
	Heavy equipment – ON	\$1,400,000
	Urban land purchase – SK	\$12,500,000
	Infrastructure – BC	\$10,000,000
	Infrastructure – MB	\$8,000,000
	Lease line – NS	\$6,800,000
	Farm land purchase – SK	\$11,571,000
Farm land purchase – NS	\$5,600,000	
Fish hatchery – NS	\$1,400,000	
<b>Economic development</b> 	Economic development – BC	\$7,800,000
	Economic development – NS	\$8,400,000
	Economic development – SK	\$5,000,000
	Gaming centre – MB	\$2,800,000
	Retail/community store – MB	\$2,000,000

Select Examples	Project/Program	Amount
<b>Sponsorships</b> 	Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business	\$30,000
	Aboriginal Financial Officers Association	\$40,000
	Council for Advancement of Native Development Officers	\$5,000
	Assembly of First Nations	\$20,000
	National Aboriginal Trust Officer's Associate annual conference	\$7,500

## Progress Report

## People: Employment and Education

RBC continued its efforts to attract and retain Indigenous employees through specific hiring initiatives, recruitment fairs and mentorship programs. Support for education and training was provided through donations and scholarships.

Select Examples	Program/Organization
<b>Hiring programs</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Indigenous Peoples Talent Development Program (IPTDP), a two-year rotational program for new undergraduates introduced in 2017, was expanded in 2018 to include six more business units – Finance, Technology and Operations, Global Risk Management, Human Resources, Internal Audit and Marketing. Thirteen Associates have been selected for the 2019 program.</li> <li>To ensure there's a robust and ready pipeline for the IPTDP in the above-mentioned business areas, 15 Indigenous summer interns will be hired for the summer of 2019.</li> </ul>
<b>Internships and scholarships</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2018, the Indigenous Student Internship Program (formerly called the Aboriginal Student Program) employed 20 student interns, of which four were offered permanent positions. Since the program's inception, RBC has hired 317 Indigenous interns, and more than 20 of these interns have acquired a permanent role at RBC. In 2018, to attract students to ISIP, we participated in various student recruitment fairs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University of Toronto Indigenous Career Fair</li> <li>Waterloo University Student Internship/Co-op Events</li> <li>Wilfrid Laurier University Student Employment Session</li> <li>George Brown Indigenous Student Session</li> </ul> </li> <li>As part of ISIP, RBC continues to offer a \$4,000 scholarship award to Indigenous post-secondary students to use toward tuition, supplies and living expenses. In 2018, RBC gave the award to 10 students.</li> <li>RBC continued to offer the RBC Indigenous Student Awards Program (ISAP), which provides Indigenous post-secondary students with scholarships to use toward tuition, supplies and living expenses. Since the program was launched in 1992, more than \$1.6 million dollars has been awarded to 158 First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth across Canada pursuing post-secondary education. The scholarship provides \$4,000 annually to each student for a maximum of four years.</li> </ul>
<b>Student (youth) engagement</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RBC Inclusive Recruitment partnered with Miziwe Biik to provide job seekers with a Dress for Success event in 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee engagement and retention</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RBC Global Diversity &amp; Inclusion hosted its first ever Diversathon (diversity hackathon), bringing together cross-platform teams of Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees and proactively engaging them in an interactive, inclusive design workshop to brainstorm ways to enhance the Indigenous employee experience.</li> <li>Engagement in #iCOMMIT, launched in 2017 to foster an environment of understanding and support for the Indigenous culture and community, has increased to over 1,000 participants.</li> <li>RBC continued to offer mentoring opportunities through the RBC Indigenous Mentoring Experience (RIME) support program. Now on its third cohort, the program has enabled 205 Indigenous employees to participate either as a mentee or mentor.</li> </ul>

Donations	Program/Organization	Amount
<b>Education</b> We understand the importance of education in helping to shape the future for today's Indigenous youth. 	RBC In.Business Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program – Cape Breton University	\$100,000
	First Peoples Enterprise Accelerator Program – Simon Fraser University	\$130,000
	North Campus Learning Centre Capital Campaign – Norquest College Foundation	\$50,000
	NCFC After School Program – North Central Family Centre Inc.	\$36,000
	BIWAASE'AA After-School Program – Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoon	\$23,000
	Youth Volunteer Program expansion – Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health co-op	\$15,000

## Progress Report

## Community: Social Impact

RBC companies made significant contributions to projects, initiatives and organizations that benefit various aspects of Indigenous communities and their social development.

Select Examples	Program/Organization	Amount
<b>Youth</b> 	Shad Valley International	\$500,000
	TakingITGlobal Youth Association	\$400,000
	Ontario Great Lakes	\$350,000
	Tides Canada Foundation	\$150,000
	Journalists for Human Rights	\$125,000
	Outside Looking In	\$100,000
	Ignite Adult Learning Corporation	\$50,000
	Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa	\$25,000
	Northern Policy Institute	\$25,000
	Reconciliation Canada – A New Way Forward Society	\$100,000
	Outward Bound Canada	\$95,000
	Katimavik Youth Services	\$80,000
	TREC Charitable Foundation/Relay Education	\$70,000
	TNC Canada	\$50,000
	Canadian Roots Exchange	\$30,000
	The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund	\$25,000
	The Canadian Journalism Foundation	\$20,000
	Water First Education and Training Inc.	\$100,000
	The Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology	\$87,500
	No. 9 Contemporary Art and the Environment	\$25,000
	Langara College Foundation	\$100,000
	Kitimat-Stikine/Heart of the Hazeltons	\$50,000
	North Island College Foundation Trust Fund/North Island College Foundation	\$50,000
Vancouver Island University Foundation	\$50,000	
Ocean Wise Conservation Association	\$100,000	
The Norquest College Foundation	\$50,000	
Bridges Social Development	\$50,000	
Lethbridge College	\$50,000	
Grande Prairie Regional College Foundation	\$45,000	
<b>Environmental</b> 	Conservation Corps Newfoundland and Labrador	\$20,000
	Fraser Basin Council Society	\$20,000
<b>Arts &amp; Culture</b> 	Canadian Museum of History	\$100,000
	National Screen Institute	\$25,000
	Northern Arts and Cultural Centre	\$20,000
	Canadian Museums Association	\$25,000
	Art Gallery of Nova Scotia	\$20,000
	Banff Centre	\$140,000
<b>Youth Mental Health</b> 	Dignitas International	\$100,000
	Resource Assistance for Youth, Inc.	\$50,000
	Siloam Mission	\$35,000
	Arctic Children and Youth Foundation	\$50,000
	CASA Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health	\$50,000



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*To obtain an electronic copy of this report, to contact an RBC representative, or to learn more about Indigenous Financial Services at RBC, visit [rbc.com/indigenous](http://rbc.com/indigenous).*

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## First Nations RBC Royal Bank Commercial Banking Centre Locations

Fort William First Nation – Thunder Bay, Ontario

Muskeg Lake First Nation – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Swan Lake First Nation – Winnipeg, Manitoba

## First Nations RBC Royal Bank Branch Locations

Hagwilget First Nation – New Hazelton, British Columbia

Westbank First Nation – Kelowna, British Columbia

Tzeachten First Nation – Chilliwack, British Columbia

Cross Lake First Nation – Cross Lake, Manitoba

Norway House Cree Nation – Norway House, Manitoba

Peguis First Nation – Peguis, Manitoba

Six Nations of the Grand River – Ohsweken, Ontario

Nation Huronne-Wendat – Wendake, Quebec

## North of 60° RBC Royal Bank Branch Locations

Whitehorse, Yukon  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Hay River, Northwest Territories  
Cambridge Bay, Nunavut  
Rankin Inlet, Nunavut  
Iqaluit, Nunavut

## RBC Royal Bank Agency Banking Outlets

Whitefish Lake First Nation 128 – Goodfish Lake, Alberta  
Wikwemikong First Nation – Wikwemikong, Ontario  
Webequie First Nation – Webequie, Ontario  
Arviat, Eskimo Point Lumber – Arviat, Nunavut

