



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## New Partnership to Provide Opportunities for Indigenous Youth to Explore Innovation and STEM Learning Within a Traditional Cultural Context

*MindFuel and Future Skills Centre are reducing barriers to education for Indigenous youth in rural Alberta, B.C. and Yukon*

**Calgary, AB** – April 7, 2021 – Innovation, tradition and resiliency will be the key areas of focus of a new partnership between MindFuel and [Future Skills Centre](#), who are embarking on a two-year project to reduce barriers to education for Indigenous youth from rural British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon.

Indigenous youth, especially those in rural communities, face a number of barriers to accessing education. Said Isaac Ward, teacher at SikSika Nation High School, “As a rural school we see reduced access to STEM learning opportunities, and of those that currently exist, many do not reflect traditional and culture knowledge.”



*The SikSika Nation High School Team from MindFuel's 2019-20 geekStarter pilot program.*

He continues, “This lack of cultural connection creates a barrier for students to connect with learning material. An organization such as MindFuel coupled with the Future Skills Centre funding support would help bridge this gap between Western science and traditional knowledge allowing for greater synthesis of learning, which creates passion and interest in STEM fields.”

[MindFuel](#), a non-profit and pioneer in the online learning space and STEM (science, tech, engineering and math) innovation for youth programs, has developed the Canada Tech Futures Initiative (CTF) to help high school and post-secondary youth develop skills and innovation mindsets and prepare them for their future careers. Delivering these resources and programs to students traditionally underrepresented in STEM, such as Indigenous youth, girls, and newcomers, is critical to MindFuel’s mission help all youth reach their potential.

[Future Skills Centre](#), a pan-Canadian initiative focused on strengthening Canada's skills development ecosystem, is investing \$756,000 over 2 years in MindFuel's CTF initiative to identify ways to support Indigenous youth, while preserving their traditional ways of knowing, being and doing that are integral to their cultural identity.

Innovation is critical to the advancement of industries and the future of Canada's economic prosperity, but there is currently a large disparity of underrepresented demographics in the Canadian work force and particularly the STEM sector. By making educational resources and supports more accessible to these groups, which include girls, newcomer and significantly, Indigenous youth, MindFuel is ensuring diversification of our work force and increased competencies in our future workers and leaders.

"By addressing community needs and supporting the educational journeys of youth in a respectful and inclusive manner, we are investing in Canada's innovation future by helping youth to develop self-efficacy," says Cassy Weber, CEO of MindFuel. "85% of learning occurs outside of the classroom, and students who are supported with skills and knowledge development in STEM innovation are much more likely to succeed no matter the challenge."

Pedro Barata, Executive Director of the Future Skills Centre, says that bridging traditional Indigenous knowledge with skills development and an innovation mindset is a perfect example of the programs FSC is investing in to support holistic and innovative approaches to training and building capacity for an inclusive workforce of the future. "Reducing barriers to education in science, technology, engineering and math and enhancing resilience and adaptability for young people will build confidence and increase career success. This is just one of the exciting shock-proofing projects that FSC is investing in to build a future playbook for shared prosperity, and help Canadian workers and businesses seize opportunities in our future economy."

Organizers will work directly with Indigenous partners to learn and understand their communities' context and complexities, working to preserve and respect their culture and tradition while integrating STEM innovation. This project will see an empowered generation of Indigenous youth, equipped with the resilience and skills to lead successful lives and contribute to their community's prosperity.

Siksika Nation High School, Yukonstruct, and Alberta Native Friendship Centres Associations will work alongside MindFuel and Future Skills Centre to assist in the development of project-based learning and mentorship opportunities.

MindFuel is currently partway through its Tech Futures Challenge, part of [Canada Tech Futures program in Alberta](#), which offers teams of students the chance to solve a problem in their community through STEM innovation. Student teams presented their projects at a showcase on March 13, with MindFuel providing funding to see four teams continue their work and develop prototypes of their solutions, which will be presented at a final showcase in May 2021.

The Canada Tech Futures Initiative project is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.

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### **About MindFuel**

The MindFuel Foundation is a registered charity, established in 1990 as Science Alberta Foundation, focused on creating future generations of innovators and problem-solvers. As a digital literacy and online learning pioneer, MindFuel is helping Canada diversify its economy through a focus on online STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education programs and in-field learning. Recognized with many awards of excellence, MindFuel supports teachers with 21st century learning resources and helps immerse students in the fun world of STEM through blended learning, which includes both digital and hands-on activities, critical to advancing Canada's Innovation Agenda. MindFuel places a large emphasis on empowering girls, Indigenous youth and students in rural and remote regions to pursue studies and careers in STEM. In 2019-20, MindFuel programming reached hundreds of thousands of students across Canada in both French and English and is used in over 170 countries around the world.

For more information, please visit [mindfuel.ca](http://mindfuel.ca).

### **About FSC**

The [Future Skills Centre](#) (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

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