Certificate in Journalism in Indigenous Communities

Impact Report

2025 - 2026





Delivered in **Partnership**

Led by **Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication**, in partnership with **Kenjgewin Teg** and **First Nations Technical Institute**—made possible through a partnership with the **Mastercard Foundation's EleV program**.

Carleton University

KENJGEWIN TEG

In partnership with

mastercard foundation

eleV

FNTI Sharing and Learning

CJIIC Year 1

Message from the Director



Storytelling is at the heart of our cultures, a sacred practice passed down through generations. At the Certificate in Journalism in Indigenous Communities (CJIIC), we honour that legacy while equipping learners with the skills to navigate today's media landscape.

Through a braided learning model that combines skill-building with wholistic support, learners gain hands-on experience in reporting, writing, audio storytelling, and visual journalism. Our all-Indigenous faculty, along with support staff from our partners, Kenjgewin Teg and First Nations Technical Institute, guide learners through mentorship and cultural care to help them thrive.

As an Anishinaabe journalist, I know the power of stories to heal, inform, and unite. This certificate is more than a credential, it's a pathway to change.

On behalf of the entire CJIIC team, I am pleased to present the first annual CJIIC Impact Report, highlighting the inspiring achievements of the 17 graduates of our inaugural cohort, the next generation of Indigenous journalists and storytellers.

Miigwech,

Duncan McCue
CJIIC Director

The Certificate

Indigenous Peoples are **underrepresented in Canada's journalism and media landscape**. Systemic barriers to accessing journalism education, including geographic and financial constraints and a lack of culturally relevant learning environments, can make traditional post-secondary pathways inaccessible or alienating for Indigenous learners. The Certificate in Journalism in Indigenous Communities (CJIIC) was created to address these barriers.

CJIIC is a **9-month**, **4.5 credit** program, led by Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication, **designed specifically for Indigenous learners**. It combines **live online classes** with three **in-person intensives** and a two-week **internship**. Taught by experienced Indigenous journalists, the CJIIC program allows learners to **build foundational journalism and media skills** while studying from their **home community.**

Rooted in Indigenous pedagogies and developed in partnership with Indigenous Institutes Kenjgewin Teg and FNTI, CJIIC's **braided learning approach** integrates cultural values alongside practical training to provide meaningful support for students that values their **wholistic well-being**.

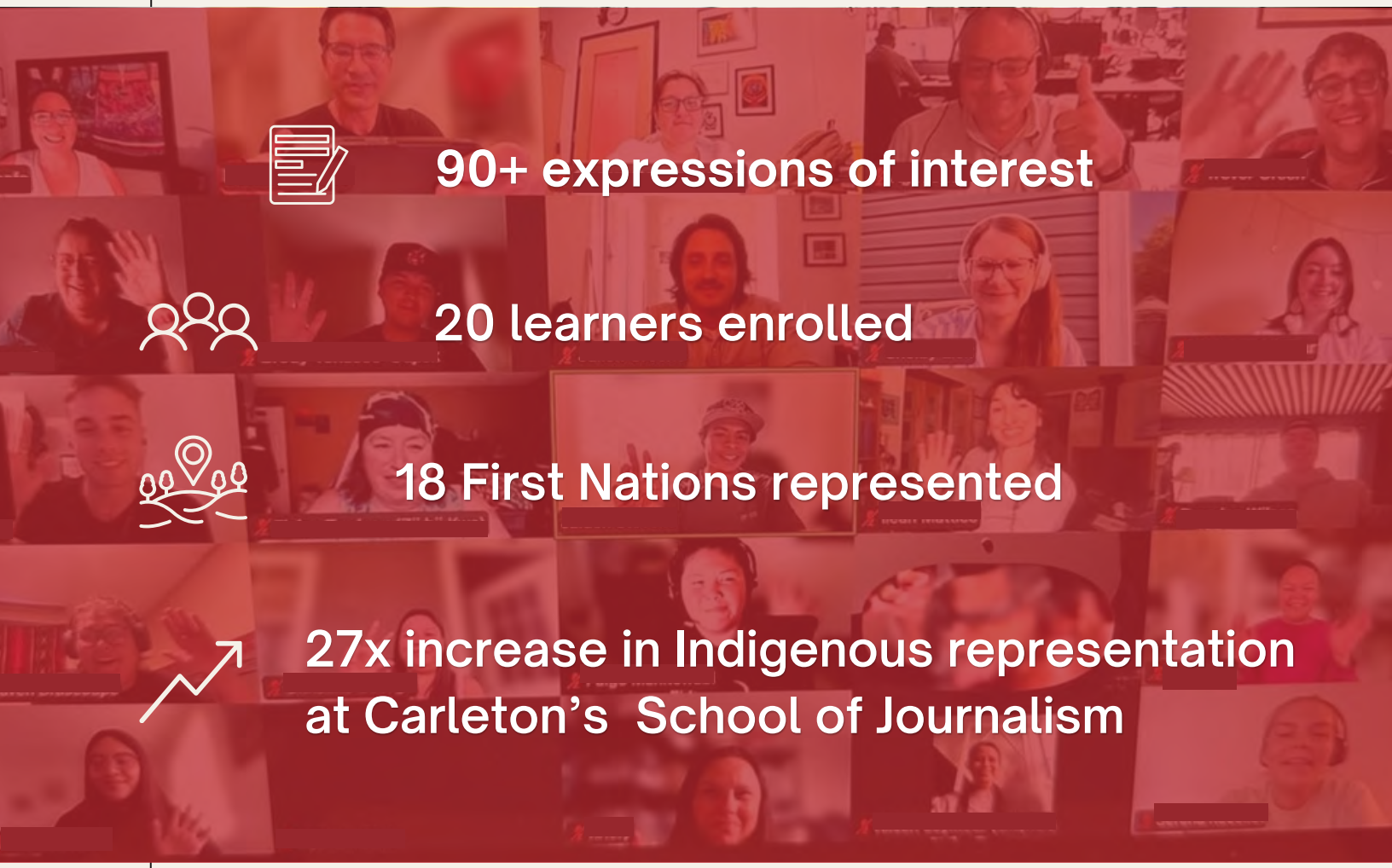


Mission

To **equip** Indigenous learners with the **skills**, **knowledge**, and **confidence** to **respectfully** and **accurately amplify** Indigenous **voices** and perspectives in **media**.

CJIIC Fall 2025
Inaugural Cohort

On September 2nd, 2025, twenty Indigenous learners across Turtle Island, from Norman Wells to Haida Gwaii, **gathered for their first day of classes** as CJIIC's **inaugural cohort.** They shared laughs, introduced their Nations, and spoke about why telling their communities' stories matters. **Not one had to leave home to do so**. Thanks to broadband internet, learners saw each other's faces in the small squares on their screens, met their instructor as he guided them through the syllabus, then logged off to walk a dog, tuck a child into bed, or get some rest before work the next day.



90+ expressions of interest

20 learners enrolled

18 First Nations represented

27x increase in Indigenous representation at Carleton's School of Journalism

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27x increase in Indigenous representation at Carleton's School of Journalism

Algonquins of Barriere Lake
Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation
Cowessess First Nation
Curve Lake First Nation
Haida Nation
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation
M'Chigeeng First Nation
Michel First Nation
Mississisaugas of the Credit First Nation
Mohawks of Akwesasne
Oneida Nation of the Thames
Opaskwayak Cree Nation
Sapotaweyak Cree Nation
Thunderchild First Nation
Wahnapitae First Nation
Wasauksing First Nation
Whitefish River First Nation
Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

Learner Insights: **Demographics**

Based on anonymous, voluntary self-identification survey completed by 82% of learners








Majority
Women

with Two-Spirit, non-binary and men also represented.

All
First Nations learners

representing diverse identities and languages, including Xaad Kil, Algonquin, Oneida and Anishinaabemowin.

Mostly
Rural-based learners

with some from urban areas.

Largest age group
Ages 26–35

with a range of ages represented across the cohort.

Half
Caregivers

balancing studies with responsibilities to children, Elders, and others.

More than Half
First-generation learners

the first in their families to attend post-secondary education.

Prior Experience & **Aspirations**

Based on anonymous, voluntary self-identification survey completed by 82% of learners

Most
Previously enrolled in post-secondary
with only half completing their studies.

Positive prior post-secondary experiences
associated with strong support, practical job preparation, & feeling valued as an Indigenous learner.

Majority
valued that CJIIC
is offered by a University.

Most
hoped to become
a journalist or work in media.

Most New to journalism
entered CJIIC without prior journalism or media experience.

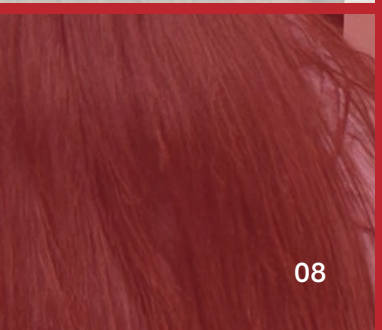
Negative prior post-secondary experiences
associated with limited support, racism, and lack of cultural relevance.

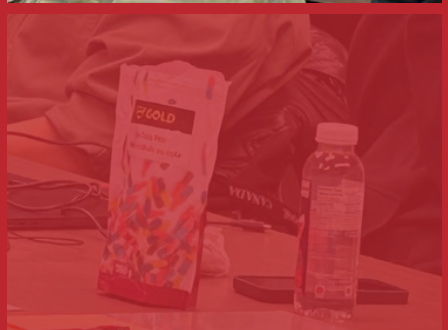
Most
chose CJIIC
because of its **Indigenous-approach** and **online format**.

Many
hoped to continue studies
after CJIIC.










The Intensives

CJIIC includes three in-person intensives that foster peer **connection**, **hands-on experience,** and **land-based learning**, with travel and accommodation costs covered by the program.

Indigenous Storytelling

Led by Associate Professor, Duncan McCue



Learners gathered in September 2025 for their first intensive in M'Chigeeng First Nation to explore how Indigenous storytelling traditions intersect with and differ from Western journalism practices. The group participated in ceremonies, land-based learning activities, and engaged in storytelling circles that built confidence and strengthened connections among peers.

Intro to Audio Journalism

Led by Instructor, Rhiannon Johnson



In this intensive workshop at Carleton University in February 2026, learners developed skills in pitching stories, reporting from Urban Indigenous settings, conversational writing, and recording voice and natural sound. They practised editing audio and producing audio reports, radio newscasts, and podcasts.

Intro to Video Journalism

Led by Instructor, Brett Forester



Learners developed their visual literacy skills at Carleton University in May 2026 while reporting, shooting, and editing video stories. They gained practical experience working live in the studio and in the field in urban Indigenous settings, producing a range of video material using smartphones.

"As someone who grew up with Christian values and very little exposure to Indigenous culture (besides what was taught at my reserve-based elementary school), it felt **amazing** and incredibly **affirming** to **explore that aspect of my identity**.

One moment that stands out the most was experiencing a **Sweat Lodge Ceremony** for the first time. I didn't grow up in a culturally rich household, and therefore never had the opportunity to indulge in the ceremonial practices of my people, so **I'm very grateful that I got to experience that with such a strong and welcoming group of individuals**."

-Shantel Sault
(Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation)



Virtual Classes

CJIIC learners progress together through four **live online classes**, allowing them to maintain existing commitments and study from their **home communities**.

Foundations of Journalism

Led by Instructor, Trevor Green

Learners explored contemporary Canadian media, including the state of the media, advocacy, social media, and journalistic ethics. They also discussed Indigenous representation in mainstream media and the issues shaping the work of practicing journalists.

Fundamentals of Journalism

Led by Instructor, Julien Greene

Learners developed their interviewing, writing, storytelling, editing, and ethics skills while covering a wide range of topics in their Indigenous communities. Through hands-on learning, they gained experience thinking and working like journalists.

Digital and Photojournalism

Led by Instructor, Shelby Lisk

Learners further developed their digital journalism skills through online reporting and publishing. They also explored smartphone photography, identifying visually newsworthy stories, and the ethics of photojournalism in Indigenous settings.

Entrepreneurial Journalism

Led by Instructor, Karyn Pugliese

Learners explored the tools and strategies needed to pursue freelance journalism and navigate an evolving media workforce. They learned about finding and pitching stories, building a personal brand, reaching audiences in innovative ways, and funding their careers as media professionals, potentially from their home communities.

Putting Skills into Action
Internships

Led by Instructor, Francine Compton

Learners spent **two weeks** working with **professional news & media organizations** in April 2026.







17 internships completed

38 story-pitches accepted for publication





14 placement organizations





27 stories published

Placement Organizations

Anishinabek News
APTN Ottawa x 2
CBC Radio London
CBC Radio Ottawa
CBC Regina
CBC Sports
CBC Sudbury x 2
ACBC Unreserved
CBC Yellowknife
Investigative Journalism Bureau
IndigiNews x 2
The Manitoulin Expositor
Makwa Creative
Turtle Island News

Learner Spotlight



"Experiences like [this] are what built me up to calling myself a journalist."

Mackayla's Internship

Mackayla McGregor (Whitefish River First Nation) stepped into the role of active reporter during her internship at the *Manitoulin Expositor*, pitching stories, conducting interviews, and contributing to the editing process. In just two weeks, she put eight months of learning into action, publishing an impressive nine stories.

"I wouldn't have had the gumption to do so if it wasn't for our lessons."

She credits CJIIC's emphasis on Indigenous storytelling with preparing her to tell stories that respectfully amplify Indigenous voices and give back to her community.

"I was given the opportunity to amplify the Indigenous voices within Mnidoo Mnising and I will value this beginning for a really long time."

Reflecting on the potential impact of her work, Mackayla hopes to inspire others to continue sharing their stories:

"I made a small drop in the bucket and hopefully it creates a ripple for other islanders to continue trailblazing the storytelling path of our people in today's world."

Since completing CJIIC, Mackayla has continued freelancing for the *Manitoulin Expositor* and kickstarted her own professional photography business.

A Wholistic Approach to Learner Success

Practical and Emotional Support

The **Student Success Facilitator** helps learners navigate coursework, registration, personal challenges and support services.

Cultural Connection

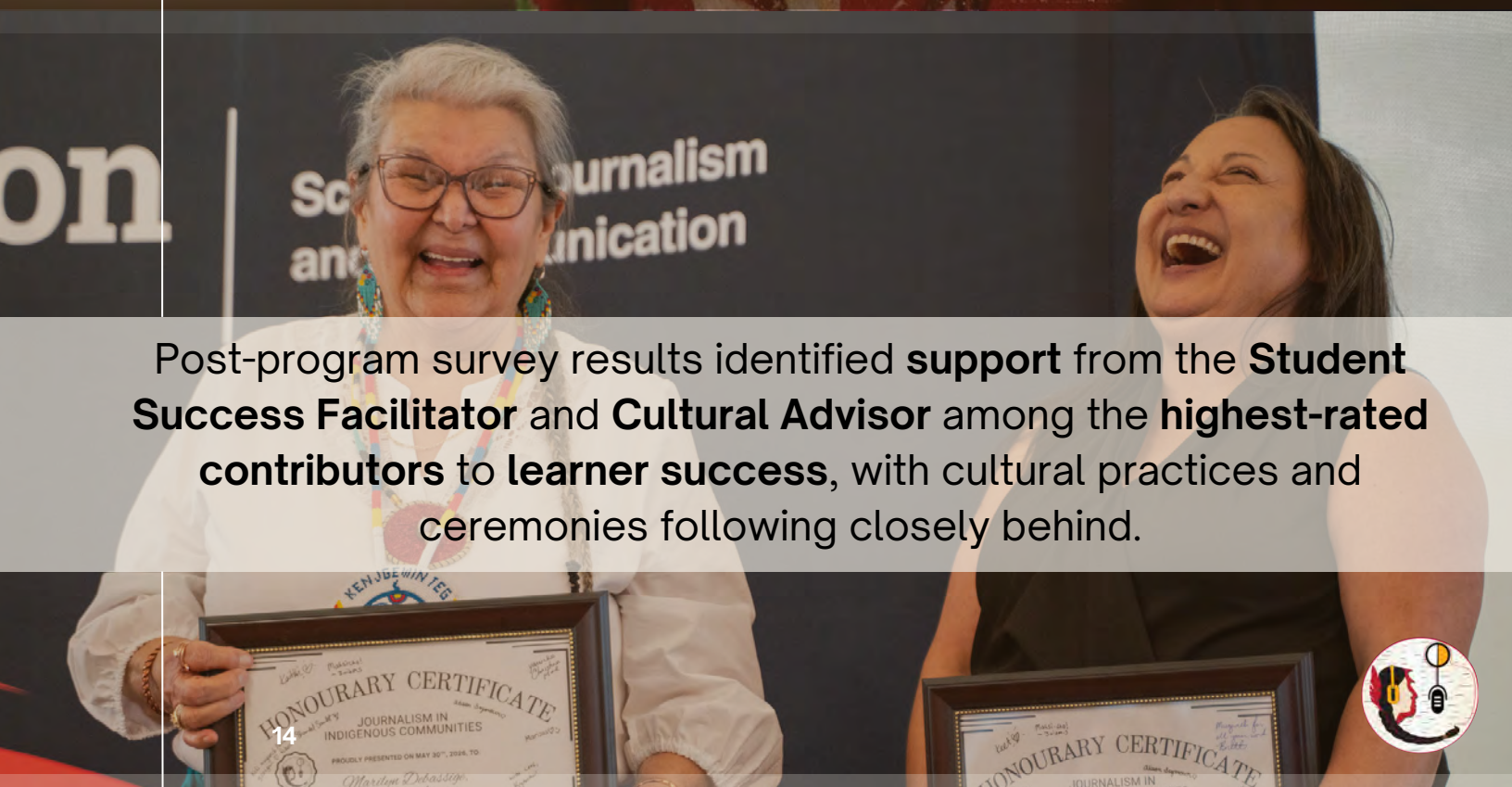
The **Cultural Advisor** brings cultural teachings, ceremonies and Indigenous perspectives into learning while supporting learners' personal growth.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

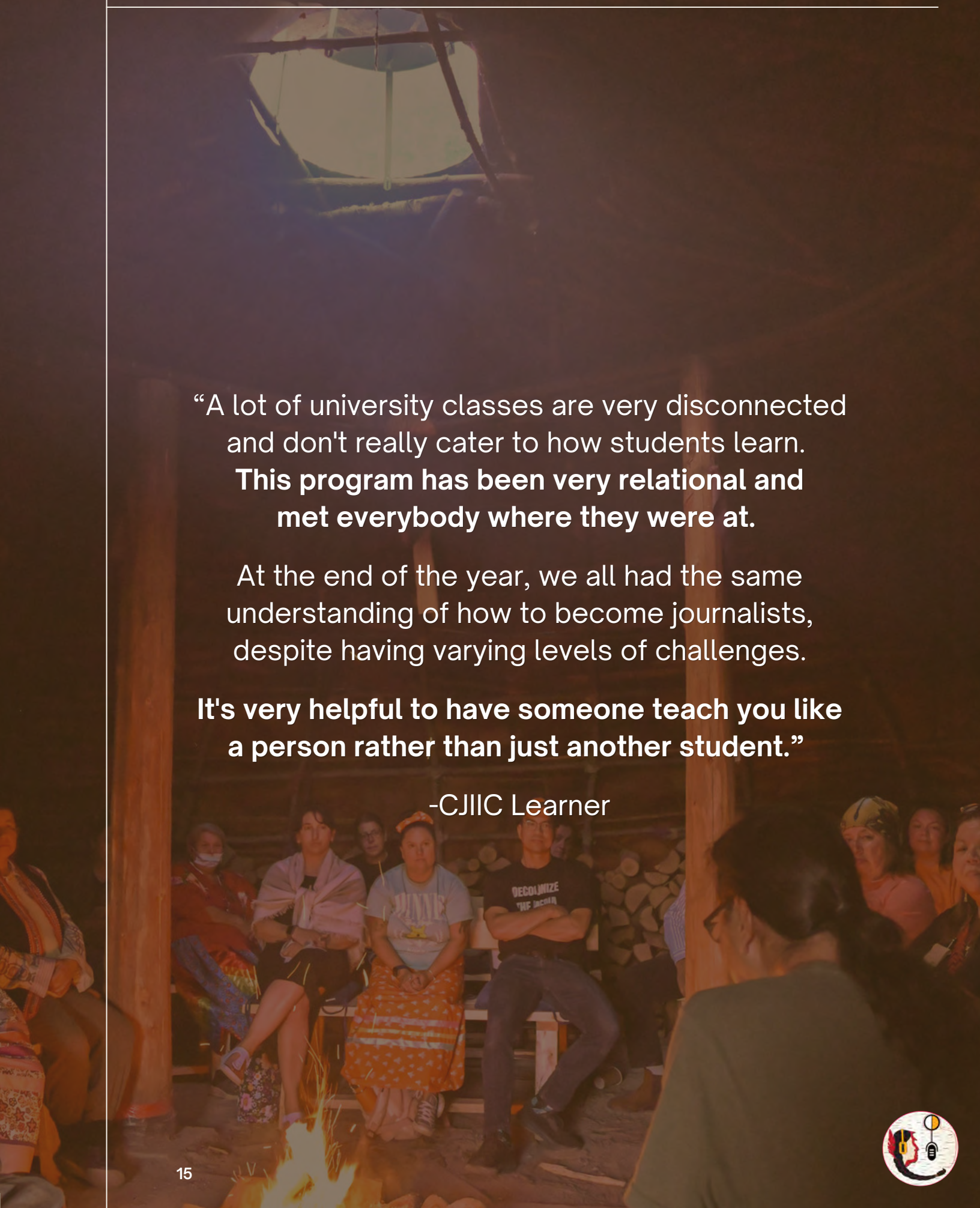
Ceremonies, land-based learning, Bundle-making, and storytelling circles deepen cultural learning and strengthen connections.

WHAT LEARNERS TOLD US:

Support & cultural connection matter.



Post-program survey results identified **support** from the **Student Success Facilitator** and **Cultural Advisor** among the **highest-rated contributors** to **learner success**, with cultural practices and ceremonies following closely behind.



“A lot of university classes are very disconnected and don't really cater to how students learn. **This program has been very relational and met everybody where they were at.**

At the end of the year, we all had the same understanding of how to become journalists, despite having varying levels of challenges.

It's very helpful to have someone teach you like a person rather than just another student.”

-CJIIC Learner

Stronger Support.
Greater Belonging.

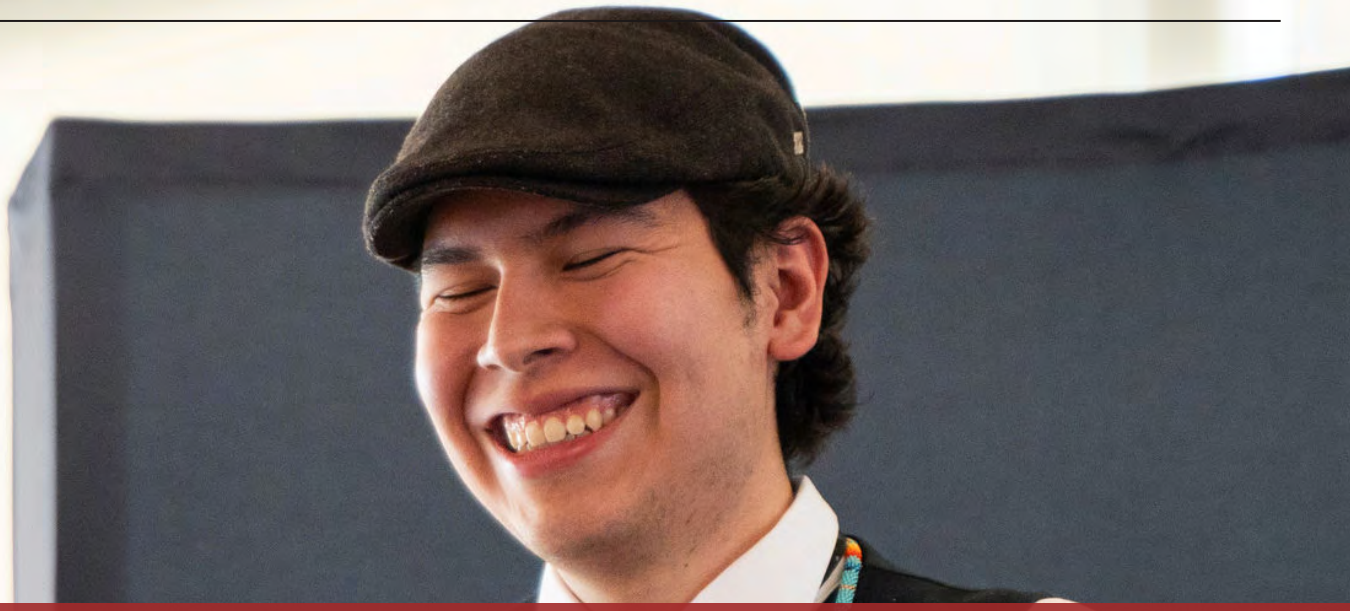
Based on anonymous, voluntary self-identification surveys completed by 82% of learners

Compared with prior post-secondary experiences, learners reported **greater support**, **belonging**, and **cultural responsiveness** through CJIIC.

POST-SECONDARY EXPERIENCE

	Before CJIIC	With CJIIC	Increase
Felt supported as an Indigenous learner	73%	**93%**	**+20**
Felt a sense of belonging and community	46%	**86%**	**+40**
Felt instructors understood Indigenous perspectives	64%	**93%**	**+29**
Felt they received wholistic supports	27%	**79%**	**+51**





"Being in school for a while, there's a lot that you learn when on your own. However, the lesson that we're all learning life together was one imparted by both families of mine: the one I was born into, and the one from this program.

Having the right people there to support you in your academic journey helps a lot!"

-Kiyanaw Bird
(Treaty 6 Cree from Thunderchild, SK)

Kiyanaw continues his studies through Carleton's Master of Journalism program and works as CJIIC's new Digital Content Creator

Learners Identified **Positive Growth** Across All Outcome Areas

Through voluntary sharing circles and early-/post- program surveys, **learners identified** five key **outcome areas** that reflect what **success looks like to them:**

Academic Success

Early Self-Assessment: **(N/A)**



Reciprocal Connections

Average self-assessment scores: 3.29 → 4.61 **(+1.32)**

Practical Journalism Skills

Average self-assessment scores: 3.33 → 4.36 **(+1.03)**

Wholistic Growth and Well-Being

Average self-assessment scores: 3.36 → 4.22 **(+0.86)**

Professional Readiness

Average self-assessment scores: 2.90 → 4.22 **(+1.32)**

*** Legend:**

Average self-assessment scores: Before CJIIC → After CJIIC **(+/- Change)**

*Where **1** = not at all, and **5** = very much so;*
***Change** reflect learners' perceived progress*



of survey participants indicated that they experienced **overall success** through CJIIC based on their own objectives.

CJIIC Year 1 Impact
By the Numbers

17 learners graduated
from the program

4 learners accepted into further studies
at Carleton University

Learners who gained employment or professional opportunities:

10
8

while enrolled
within three months of graduating

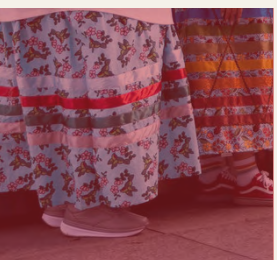
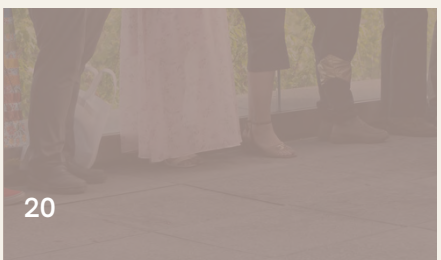
85%
retention rate

5 academic achievement awards
received by learners

27 stories published
by learners, while enrolled



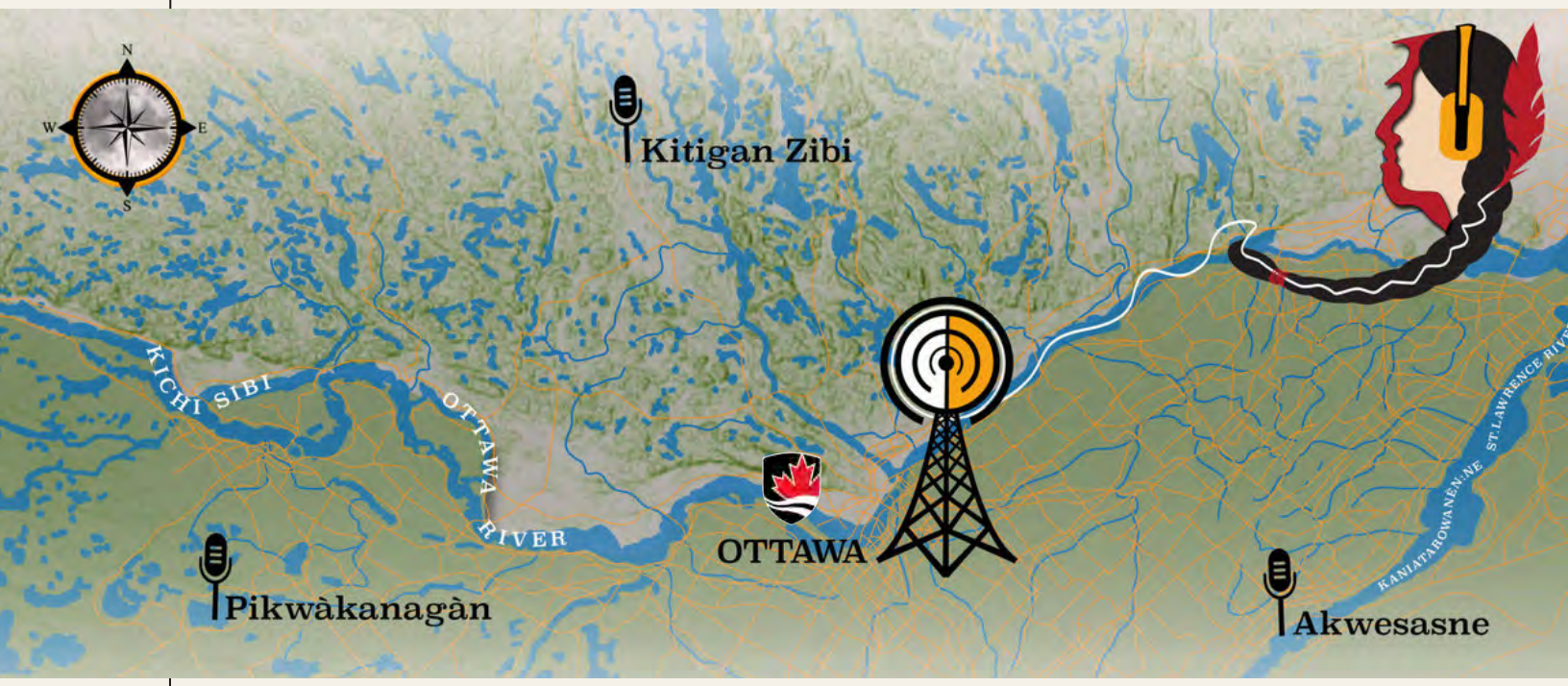




Because a **Land Acknowledgement** should be more than words,

each year, CJIIC awards **free tuition** to successful applicants from the Algonquins of **Pikwàkanagàn** First Nation, **Kitigan Zibi** Anishinabeg First Nation, and the Mohawk Nation of **Akwesasne**.





4 Land Acknowledgement Scholarships issued in 2025-26

Pictured from left to right: Raven Brascoupe from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Kristy Ferrill from Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, Brody Tenasco-Odjick from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, and Alison Seymour from the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne.

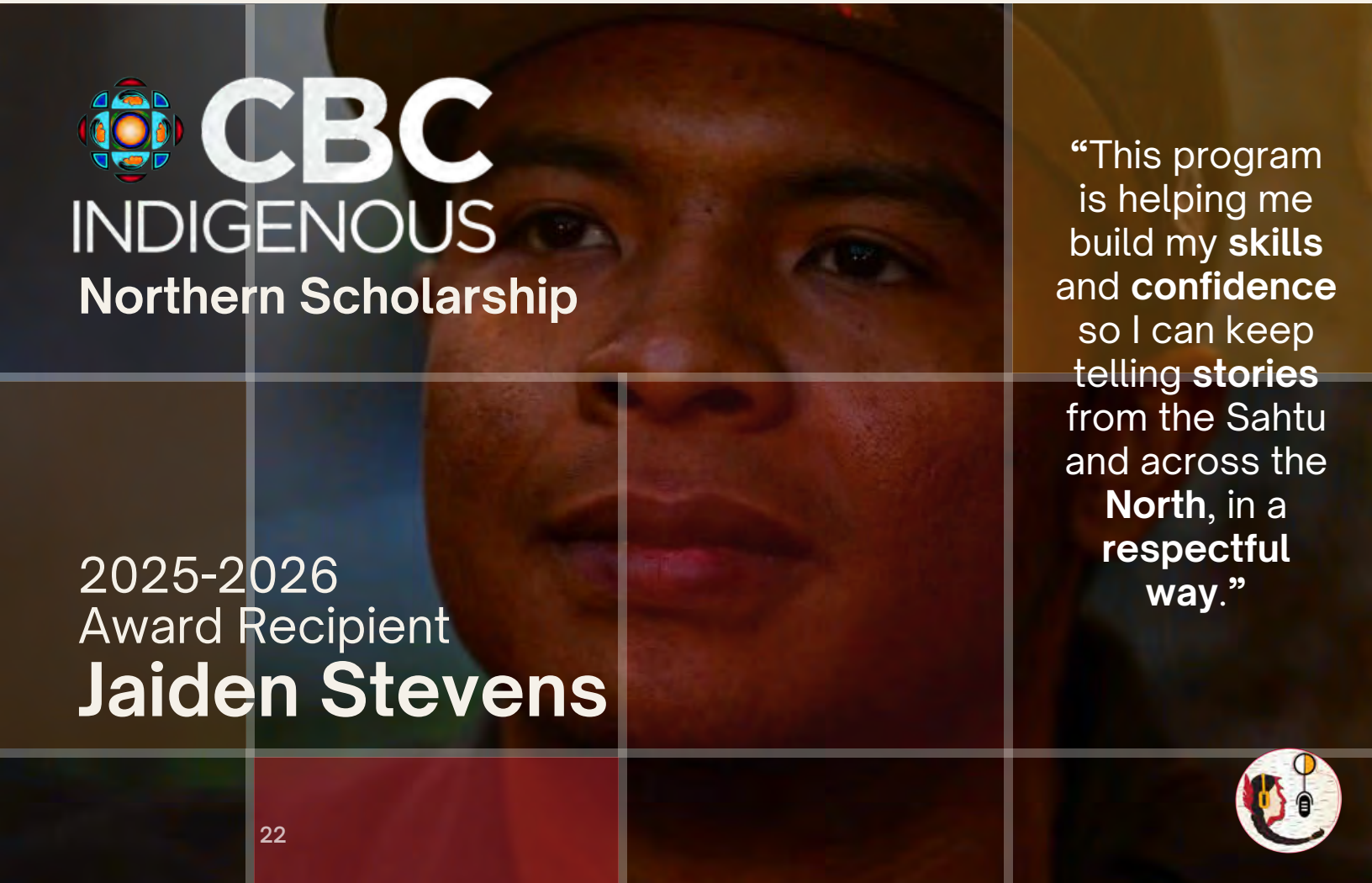
Jaiden Stevens (Sapotaweyak Cree Nation) was the inaugural recipient of the CBC Indigenous Northern Scholarship, newly established for CJIIC to support aspiring Indigenous journalists from or living in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, with the award covering his tuition.

Jaiden completed CJIIC remotely from his home community of Norman Wells, NWT, and undertook a two-week internship at CBC Yellowknife, where he shadowed different departments and learned how live television broadcasts are produced.

“I see how fun being in the newsroom can be, and I can see myself trying it out in the future.”

During CJIIC, Jaiden also completed the inaugural IndigiNews ReFocus Photojournalism Fellowship in Kjipuktuk (Halifax) and received Carleton University’s Cripps-Murphy Memorial Scholarship, awarded to outstanding full-time students continuing from one year to the next in the Bachelor of Journalism program.

Building on this foundation, Jaiden was accepted into Carleton’s Bachelor of Journalism program with advanced standing. He is now in his second year, continuing his path toward a career in journalism.





"CJIIC provided me with new **perspectives**, **insight**, new and enhanced **skills**, **knowledge**, and prepared me for **opportunities**. Not only in terms of **journalism**, but in a **cultural** sense, and on a **personal** level."

-CJIIC Learner

**Shared anonymously through learner survey.*



"I was trained on essential **skills** in **journalism**, found **community**, and discovered so many cool **pathways** in my career."

-CJIIC Learner

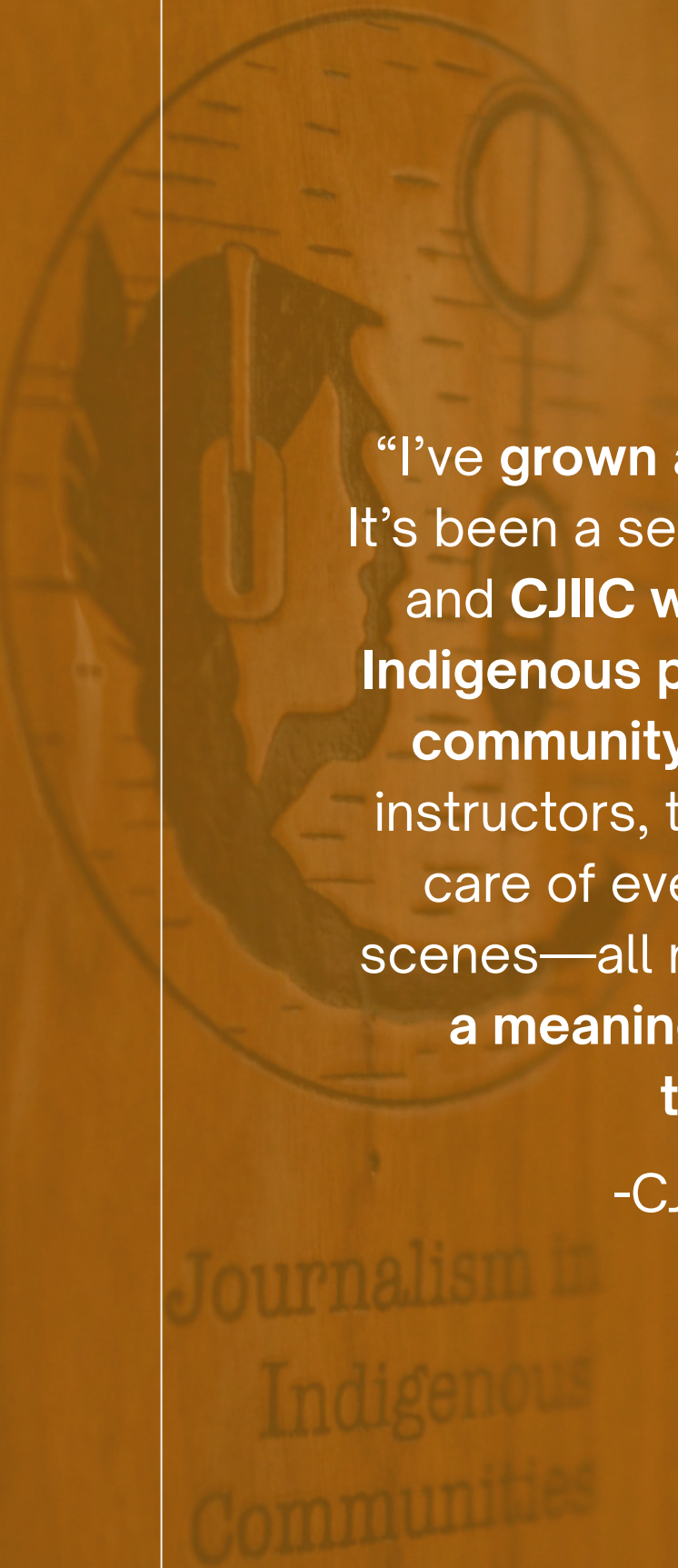
**Shared anonymously through learner survey.*



"The **skills** I learned from the CJIIC program will **stay with me** as I continue to **grow**."

-CJIIC Learner

**Shared anonymously through learner survey.*



"I've **grown** a lot in **every aspect**. It's been a season of growing pains and **CJIIC was the garden**. The **Indigenous perspective**, the CJIIC **community**—from learners, to instructors, to the team who took care of everything behind the scenes—all made the experience **a meaningful environment to learn**."

-CJIIC Learner

**Shared anonymously through learner survey.*

CJIIC Team

Staff

Duncan McCue, CJIIC Director
Emily Everett, CJIIC Program Manager
Denise Leafe, CJIIC Student Success Facilitator
Marilyn Debassige, CJIIC Cultural Advisor
Annalisse de Vroome, CJIIC Administrative Assistant

Institute Partners

FNTI -
Adam Hopkins
Shari Beaver
Kenjgewin Teg -
Roxxanne Mandamin
Ann Seymour
Carleton University -
Allan Thompson

Advisory Circle

Cheryl McKenzie
Doug George-Kanentiio
Ka'nahsohon Kevin Deer
Kerry Assiniwe
Lisa Abel
Robert Doane

Chi-Miigwech

to Debbie Debassige, a foundational contributor in the creation of CJIIC, now retired from Kenjgewin Teg.

Instructors

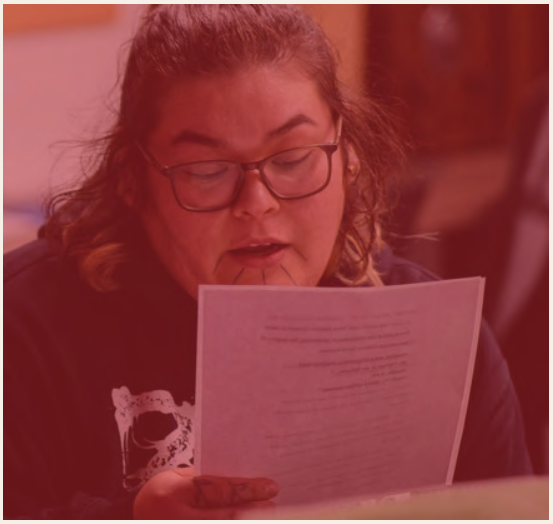
Trevor Green
Julien Greene
Rhiannon Johnson
Shelby Lisk
Karyn Pugliese
Francine Compton
Brett Forester

School of Journalism & Communication Staff

David Sarazin
Dave Elliott
Roger Martin
Randy Bowler

A Big Thank You to

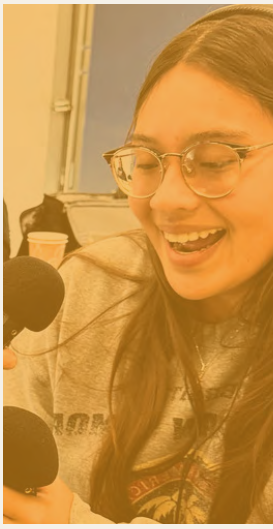
The Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous pedagogical advisors who shared their wisdom, and our partners at the Mastercard Foundation EleV Program.

































Miigwech · Nyá:wen · Thank You

Keep an eye out for these emerging journalists. They're just getting started, and we can’t wait to see where their stories take them!

https://carleton.ca/sjc/cjiic

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/company/certificate-in-journalism-in-indigenous-communities/