

Selected Indigenous youth across Canada to address water issues through social art

Winnipeg, Manitoba (Treaty One Territory) – October 17, 2023: The first phase of the Indigenous Water Allyship, the ‘Indigenous Youth, Art and Water Initiative’ (IYAWI) led by the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER), in collaboration with the One Drop Foundation has selected nine Young Indigenous Ambassadors from a total of 31 applicants. Supported by their Indigenous-led sponsor organizations, they will create community social art projects that promote the significance of water and challenge the current state of water issues affecting Indigenous communities in Canada.

The young ambassadors ages 18-35 are embarking on projects to express their voice and vision and to drive positive change around numerous water-related challenges through social art and community-based approaches. Their projects include either songs, murals, sculptures, carvings, photography, digital media, music or storytelling.

“I hope that our plan to have communities residing near the shore of Lake Erie gather together simultaneously to sing to the water will help to raise awareness about the importance of the health of Lake Erie,” says Anellah Orosz, Young Indigenous Ambassador from Caldwell First Nation. *“Also, I hope it will educate people that keeping water bodies clean is critical to saving the rest of the environment.”*

“Water is life. Our project aims to utilize art in bringing recognition to water’s cultural importance in Indigenous communities. We want to educate people on water inequities egregiously affecting these communities,” says Mia Cook, Métis Young Indigenous Ambassador. *“By honouring our water treatment operators, we hope to foster systemic changes in water management and access for all.”*

For information on all the Young Indigenous Ambassador finalists: <https://yourcier.org/indigenous-youth-water-art-initiative/>

CIER is organizing an initial gathering of the ambassadors and representatives from their sponsor organizations at the University of Calgary’s Biogeoscience Institute (BGI) from November 19-23, 2023. Together they will experience various methods of leadership capacity development, including workshops on social art, storytelling, hands-on experience with experts in videography, as well as discussions about one another’s projects and their impacts. Grantees will then have one year to develop their social art project, with monthly support by CIER and social art coaching from the One Drop Foundation.

The Indigenous Water Allyship is a partnership between the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER), the One Drop Foundation, and partners from the private sector. It is co-designed and implemented with, by, and for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth and their communities from 2023 to 2030. Its purpose is to support these communities in Canada by helping to improve living conditions and health through water and art.

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About the Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)

The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) is Canada's first Indigenous-directed environmental non-profit charitable organization, founded in 1995 by 10 First Nation Chiefs from across Canada. CIER works in partnership with Indigenous nations to support and build sustainable Indigenous communities and protect lands and waters to help create a world that is in balance and supports the well-being of all living things. To date, CIER has worked on 450 projects with over 300 Indigenous nations across Canada, supporting Indigenous people and communities to become leaders of positive environmental change by combining traditional, local, and Western scientific methods.

For more information about CIER: <http://www.yourcier.org>

About the One Drop Foundation

The One Drop™ Foundation is an international philanthropic organization created by Cirque du Soleil and Lune Rouge founder Guy Laliberté with the vision of a better world, where all have access to living conditions that allow empowerment and development. Its mission is to ensure sustainable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene for communities facing extreme barriers through innovative partnerships, creativity, and the power of art, while contributing to climate action. The One Drop Foundation is celebrating 15 years of turning water into action, with projects that will soon have improved the living conditions of more than 2.7 million people around the world.

For more information about OneDrop: www.onedrop.org