



News Release

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Arctic Inspiration Prize receives unprecedented \$60 million gift and awards over \$2.4 million to eight teams across Canada's North

- Arctic Indigenous Wellness Project receives top prize of \$1 million
- \$60 Million Gift by Arctic Inspiration Prize Founders

Ottawa, January 31, 2018 – Eight teams from across Canada's North were awarded a share of over \$2.4 million for their innovative projects to improve the quality of life in their communities at the **Arctic Inspiration Prize** awards ceremony held tonight in conjunction with the [Northern Lights Business and Cultural Showcase](#) in Ottawa.

The **Arctic Indigenous Wellness Project (AIWP)**, an urban land-based healing program that aims to improve the health of at-risk Inuit, First Nation and Métis peoples in Yellowknife and surrounding communities in the **Northwest Territories** has received the top award of \$1 million by the Arctic Inspiration Prize.

“Over 90% of the homeless population in the Northwest Territories is Indigenous, and in particular, men in northern Canada have suicide rates from 3 to 11 times higher than their non-Indigenous peers,” said Dr. Nicole Redvers, team leader of the project. “This award will enable our team of Elders, traditional medicine experts, Indigenous mental health and support councillors to deliver collaborative culturally-specific community-supported programs to Indigenous men and women who are often left out of conventional support services.”

In addition to the \$1 million prize, three prizes were awarded in the Arctic Inspiration Prize category that awards up to \$500,000 each to up to four teams; and four teams received funds for their projects in the newly-created category for youth that awards up to \$100,000 each to up to seven teams.

The **Unaaq Men's Association of Inukjuak** was awarded \$500,000 for its **Intensive Traditional Program Development** project that will pair youth participants with Elders and experienced hunters to promote self-esteem, leadership, and pride while sharing traditional Inuit knowledge across the **Nunavik** region. Team Leader: **Tommy Palliser**, Nunavik Marine Regional Wildlife Board

A team from **Yukon** with a project to support families and children at risk received \$500,000 for its **Our Families, Our Way: The Peacemaking Circle** program that will train community members and professionals in the traditional practice of peacemaking circles to help deal with trauma and work through differences. Team Leader: **Lori Duncan**, Carcross/Tagish First Nation

The Qajaq Program, based in **Chesterfield Inlet**, was awarded \$140,000 for its plan to engage knowledge keepers and Elders to teach the youth of **Nunavut** how to build and paddle their own *qajaqs* based on the design and shape that was used in the area hundreds of years earlier. The team will also create a special *qajaq* that can be shipped to other communities as a teaching resource to show how *qajaq* making comes together. Team Leader: **Glen Brocklebank**

Youth Teams

A youth leadership team from **Colville Lake, Northwest Territories** was awarded \$100,000 for its **Dene Heroes Publication Project** that seeks to build literacy and leadership skills among Indigenous youth as they lead the annual development and publishing of a collaborative book about Dene heroes that will be distributed to all five communities in the Sahtu Region and beyond. Team Leader: **Dakota Orlias**

The **Rankin Rock Hockey Camp**, received \$80,000 for its project to develop youth leadership capacity and promote healthy active lifestyles in **Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake and Arviat, Nunavut** by providing youth with hands-on experiential learning opportunities as coaches and leaders of a hockey camp. Team Leader: **David Clark**, Recreation Director, Hamlet of Rankin Inlet

Rivers to Ridges was presented with a cheque for \$100,000 to open a forest school – a land-based education initiative – in **Whitehorse, Yukon** to meaningfully connect young people to the land and provide access to a natural space for child-directed, emergent and inquiry-based learning. The school also intends to integrate First Nations knowledge and teachings through Elder involvement, and to work to break down traditional barriers of accessibility for staff and participants. Team Leaders: **Erin Nicolardi & Emily Payne**

The **North in Focus: Nunavut, Our Land, Our People** team was awarded \$20,000 to build its capacity to prepare a larger nomination in 2018 to deliver mental health workshops and connect individuals with mental health resources to tackle stigma associated with mental illness and help youth 12 and older realize their strengths and build pride. Team Leader: **Ashley Cummings**

\$60 Million Gift to AIP Charitable Trust

The founders of the Arctic Inspiration Prize, Ms. Sima Sharifi and Mr. Arnold Witzig, immigrants with a deep love of the North and Northerners have given the AIP Charitable Trust a gift worth \$60 million.

The announcement was made during the awards ceremony by Natan Obed, National Inuit Leader and President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. “The act of giving and sharing is an integral part of our Inuit culture,” said Obed. “It has been essential to our very survival for millennia in the Arctic. We give and we share not only because we care about and love our families, friends and neighbours, but also because it helps to maintain life. In much the same way, I have witnessed the growth of the Arctic Inspiration Prize where people have given much, whether it’s their time, energy, talent, money. What is really special about the Arctic Inspiration Prize is that people have given to the prize because they believe Northerners are fully capable of finding their own solutions and creating new opportunities.”

“The Arctic Inspiration Prize model exemplifies how the North and South can work together to advance reconciliation and support Northerners,” added Obed. “We know Northerners have the solutions to improve the quality of life in the Canadian North. Sima and Arnold’s generosity and commitment to the North provides Northerners with financial support they need to implement their innovative projects that benefit northerners and their communities. This commitment also ensures the sustainability of the AIP Trust long into the future.”

Sharifi and Witzig acknowledged the support the AIP has received in the North and the South in explaining their decision to hand over their entire wealth to the Northern-led Arctic Inspiration Prize Charitable Trust.

“It is our dream and hope that the prize will create an ever-growing network of individuals and organizations from the North and the South with compassion for the North,” Sharifi recalled their quote when the prize was launched. “Comprised of Southerners and Northerners, Indigenous organizations and corporations, governments, businesses and industries, philanthropy, research and education, which together encourage, enable and celebrate the many achievements of the people of the North.”

“There is massive Southern support for the AIP and the North,” noted Sharifi. “The partnership agreement between the AIP Trust and the Rideau Hall Foundation secures management service and coverage of all the operational costs by the RHF for at least the next five years. The Southern commitment allows that 100% of funds from all the AIP prize partners go directly to the Northern laureates, and it provides crucial stability for the AIP.”

Witzig also credited the first of the Northern-based organizations to join as AIP prize partners for securing the continuity of the prize. “The Nunasi Corporation, owned by Inuit of Nunavut, became the first Northern partner of the Arctic Inspiration Prize. Without you joining the AIP at that critical moment, it is very likely that we would have terminated the project.” Witzig added that “with Nunavut on board, other Northern regions soon started to follow. All the Northern governments joined. Industry with stakes in the North, more Indigenous organizations, then airline partners, media partners, sustainability partners.

“We had a dream, and we hoped, and here we are. Thanks to all of you,” concluded Witzig.

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