INTRODUCTION

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators play a vital role in strengthening student success, advancing Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, and fostering meaningful connections between schools and communities. Across Canada, Indigenous Teacher Education Programs (ITEPs), communities, and education partners are helping prepare and support Indigenous educators. While the number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis teachers continues to grow, strengthening pathways into teaching, professional development, well-being, and retention remains essential to increasing Indigenous representation in elementary and secondary schools.

Through this funding call, the Rideau Hall Foundation (RHF) will continue to strengthen Canada's education landscape by supporting Indigenous-led, community-informed initiatives that advance pathways for systemic change and support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) pre-service and in-service teachers, school administrators, and educational assistants across diverse school environments. The RHF gratefully acknowledges the Mastercard Foundation for its foundational support of the Indigenous Teacher Education (ITE) initiative and its commitment to transforming education and employment systems based on the vision and values of Indigenous youth.

The 2026 Open Call invites applications to the Retain funding stream, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators and their long-term success in schools. Through this funding stream, the Rideau Hall Foundation will invest a total of up to **$1 million** in Indigenous-led initiatives across Canada. Funding is available for projects aligned with one or more of the following themes: Mentorship and coaching, wellness and wraparound supports, professional development, or language and culturally grounded teaching supports. Eligible organizations may request **up to $200,000** for projects with a duration of one to three years.

All applications will undergo a First Nations, Inuit, and Métis consensus-based peer review process. The guidelines outline the objectives, eligibility requirements, evaluation process, and timelines for the Retain grant.

THEMES

The 2026 Open Call invites applications to the Retain funding stream, which reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the retention and success of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators. Eligible organizations may apply for grants of **up to $200,000** toward projects that are **1 to 3 years** in duration.

This funding stream supports Indigenous-led, culturally responsive, and community informed initiatives that support Indigenous educators' well-being, professional growth, cultural connection, and belonging. Projects must align with one or more of the following themes:

- **Mentorship and coaching**
- **Wellness and wraparound supports**
- **Professional development**
- **Language and culturally grounded teaching supports**

Projects must demonstrate their measurable impact on the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators, including the reach and outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators and/or students.

Examples of projects under this stream include, but are not limited to:

- **Mentorship and coaching:** A community of practice initiative that pairs FNIM educators and teacher candidates with experienced indigenous educators to connect, collaborate, and share resources
- **Wellness and wraparound supports:** Culturally grounded programs that support well-being and career longevity or supports for teacher candidates transitioning into the profession.
- **Professional development:** Leadership and professional learning initiatives for educators, school administrators, and emerging leaders.
- **Language and culturally grounded teaching supports:** An initiative that creates and shares Indigenous language resources, culturally grounded curriculum and classroom materials, land-based learning tools, and technology-enabled platforms that support language revitalization, educator collaboration, and culturally responsive teaching practices.

APPLICATION TYPE AND LIMITS

Past Grant Recipients

- If an organization/institute has been awarded Reinforce Stream funding by the Rideau Hall Foundation from the 2023 or 2024 ITE Open Call, it is eligible to apply for the Retain Stream funding in 2026.
- If an organization/institute has been awarded Retain Stream funding by the Rideau Hall Foundation from the 2024 ITE Open Call, it is not eligible to apply for funding in 2026.

New Applicants

- New and returning ITE grant applicants may also apply for the grant with multiple applications, as long as the proposed projects are distinct.

Project Partners

- Applicants are able to submit a joint application in partnership with other entities.
- Project Partners are organizations, institutions, communities, or groups that are actively collaborating on the project and sharing responsibility for its planning, delivery, and outcomes.
- For applications that include one or more Project Partners, the application must identify the lead organization/institute as they will receive the funding and assume responsibility for any reporting and grant management with the Rideau Hall Foundation.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Type of Organization

Both qualified and non-qualified donees can apply, but to be deemed eligible for either stream, the applicant must be one of the following:

Qualified Donee

- ❑ A First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community registered as a qualified donee
- ❑ Canadian Post Secondary institution, including Indigenous College, University, or Institute
- ❑ Education-serving Organizations registered as qualified donees (e.g., school boards, school divisions, Indigenous schools and education authorities, and other organizations that support or represent educators and education systems)
- ❑ Other Registered Charitable Organization **must specify type of organization*

Non-Qualified Donee

- ❑ Education-serving Organizations (e.g., teacher associations and unions, and other organizations that support or represent educators and education systems)
- ❑ Other Registered Non-Profit Organization **must specify type of organization*

CRA Resources

→ CRA Qualified Donee Definition (link)
→ Qualified Donee List for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Communities (link)
→ CRA Registered Charity Lookup (link)

**Before beginning your application, please have your charitable registration number, or your non-profit/other legal registration number at hand.*

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: Supporting Documents

The following supporting documents must be uploaded for your application to be considered complete and successfully submitted.

For Qualified Donees

Applicants with a charitable registration number will need to submit all of the following:

- ❑ A budget using the provided template. Please download the budget template in .xlsx format.
- ❑ T3010 Form *must include financial statement component and board of trustees.
- ❑ A letter of support, which should be from a manager, director, or leader either from a First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community or an Indigenous-led organization.
  The purpose of this letter of reference is to establish that the applicant has maintained good relations with Indigenous communities and organizations.

**Your organization's T3010 return can be found through the CRA Charity Listings. Search for your organization and open its profile. On the Quick View page, scroll to the Additional Information section and select "View the complete T3010 return for the period being displayed." Please include Section B (Directors/Trustees and Like Officials) and Schedule 6 (Detailed Financial Information). Access the CRA Charity Listings here.*

For Non-Qualified Donees

Applicants who are registered non-profits (not charities) will need to submit all of the following:

- ❑ A budget using the provided template. Please download the budget template in .xlsx format.
- ❑ Most Recent Audited or Externally Prepared Financial Statement
- ❑ List of Board of Directors
- ❑ A letter of support, which should be from a manager, director, or leader either from a First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community or an Indigenous-led organization.
  The purpose of this letter of reference is to establish that the Applicant has maintained good relations with Indigenous communities and organizations.

SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

The RHF seeks to support a diverse range of Indigenous-led projects from coast to coast to coast, including rural, urban and remote First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. Funding decisions will consider geographic representation, community diversity, and regions experiences significant Indigenous educator retention.

Eligible applications will be reviewed through a consensus-based peer review process involving a nationally representative panel of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis education experts. Using an Indigenous developed evaluation framework the panel will assess applications against the published scoring matrix, found on the RHF website, to ensure cultural responsiveness, relevance, and inclusivity.

The scoring matrix, including the specific criteria, is available on the RHF website to ensure clarity and transparency in the evaluation process.

Applications will be assessed by the following seven indicators that are found in the scoring matrix. The information below provides a detailed overview of the highest scoring criteria and guidance on how to strengthen your application.

1. Indigenous Representation

Scoring criteria: Senior leadership is Indigenous, and Indigenous people **are represented in at least 75%** of the initiative and a commitment to FNIM workforce representation is **clearly articulated and evidenced.**

What is Indigenous-led?

RHF is committed to supporting Indigenous-led projects. The indicator for the highest score in this criteria states that the senior leadership of the project is First Nations, Inuit, or Métis. This means that First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis individuals play meaningful leadership roles in shaping the project's design, decision-making, implementation, and oversight.

Applications that can demonstrate that 75% of the initiative's staff and implementing partners are Indigenous will score higher due to their commitment to ensuring that the project is guided by Indigenous knowledge, community priorities and culturally grounded educational approaches. Strong applications will clearly demonstrate Indigenous leadership throughout the project and provide evidence of FNIM representation across the initiative.

What is meant by senior leadership?

Senior leadership refers to individuals who provide overall direction, authority and accountability for the project. Examples may include an Executive Director, CEO, President, Dean, Director, or other senior leaders with decision-making authority. To be eligible, the project's senior leadership must be Indigenous.

What is meant by project implementation staff?

Project implementation staff are individuals directly involved in designing, managing, delivering, and evaluating the project. Examples may include project leads, project managers,instructors, facilitators, coordinators, and other staff responsible for project delivery.

How can I demonstrate Indigenous leadership and representation in my application?

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide evidence of Indigenous leadership and FNIM representation within the project team. Your response should:

- Identify the names, titles, and roles of the senior leaders and project implementation staff responsible for project design, implementation, and decision-making.
- Describe how Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and worldviews guide the project and are representative of the First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit communities being served.
- Provide evidence of FNIM representation within the project team, including senior leadership and project implementation staff.

2. Relationships

Scoring criteria: Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and/or Cultural Advisors are **central to the project** and relationships in place with FNIM communities are **well established and demonstrable (5+ years).**

What are relationships?

Relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities should be well established and demonstrate meaningful collaboration. Community priorities and participation should be central to the project. Strong applications will demonstrate authentic, reciprocal relationships and show how community input has meaningfully informed the project's design and implementation. Letters of support can help validate partnerships and demonstrate community support.

How can I demonstrate relationships in my application?

- Describe the FNIM communities, organizations, and/or knowledge holders involved in the project and the nature of those relationships.
- Provide examples of how communities, partners, or knowledge holders have been engaged and contributed to the project.
- Explain how community input, feedback, or guidance has informed the project's design, activities, and implementation.
- Provide one or more letters of support from FNIM communities, organizations, and/or knowledge holders involved in the project, where applicable.

3. Relevance

Scoring criteria: Demonstrates an **exceptional understanding** of the systemic barriers, challenges and gaps affecting the retention of FNIM educators, and **clearly articulates** how the proposed project will address identified needs.

How can I demonstrate relevance in my application?

Strong applications will clearly articulate the need for the project, demonstrate an understanding of the challenges, gaps, and systemic barriers affecting the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) educators, and describe how the proposed activities will address these needs and support educator success and retention. Your response should:

- Identify the specific barriers, challenges, or gaps affecting the retention of FNIM educators that your project seeks to address.
- Explain how these challenges impact FNIM educators, students, schools, and/or communities.
- Describe how the proposed project responds to the identified need and why the proposed approach is appropriate.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the local, regional, or community context informing the project.

4. Activities

Scoring criteria: The project's scope, objectives, timeline and milestones are **exceptionally articulated** and **align well** with the granting themes.

What makes a strong project plan (activities)?

A clear and realistic project plan that outlines how the identified needs or challenges will be addressed. Present a timeline with activities and milestones that are clearly connected to the intended outcomes and impacts. Project activities should be specific, achievable, and aligned with one or more of the following Retain grant themes:

- Mentorship and coaching
- Wellness and wraparound supports
- Professional development
- Language and culturally grounded teaching supports

Please organize your response by project year. For each year, identify the key activities and corresponding milestones. Activities should represent the tangible outputs or results that demonstrate progress, while milestones should describe the specific work that will be undertaken to achieve each activity. Refer to the example below for guidance on how to structure and format your response, as well as the level of detail expected.

Example of how to structure your response:

Objective: Strengthen the retention, professional growth, and cultural connectedness of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators through mentorship, professional development, and culturally grounded teaching supports.

Year 1: Program Planning and Development

- **Activity 1: Advisory committee established**
  1.1 Develop committee structure and terms of reference.
  1.2 Recruit FNIM educators, community representatives, and Knowledge Keepers.
  1.3 Onboard FNIM educators, community representatives, and Knowledge Keepers.
- **Activity 2: Needs assessment completed**
  2.1 Conduct engagement sessions to identify educator needs and retention challenges.
- **Activity 3: Mentorship model developed**
  3.1 Analyze findings and develop a mentorship and peer-support model.
- **Activity 4: Online platform launched**
  4.1 Develop the online community of practice.
  4.2 Create and upload initial resources and tools.

Year 2: Program Delivery

- **Activity 1: Mentorship program launched**
  1.1 Deliver mentorship and coaching activities.
  1.2 Facilitate networking and peer-learning opportunities.
- **Activity 2: Three professional development sessions delivered**
  2.1 Develop and deliver sessions based on participant needs.
- **Activity 3: Teaching toolkit completed**
  3.1 Develop culturally grounded resources and toolkit materials.
  3.2 Refine resources with participant feedback.

Year 3: Knowledge Sharing and Sustainability

- **Activity 1: Final resources disseminated**
  1.1 Finalize and share teaching resources and toolkits.
- **Activity 2: Project evaluation completed**
  2.1 Collect outcome data and assess project impact.
  2.2 Document lessons learned and wise practices.
- **Activity 3: Sustainability plan finalized**
  3.1 Engage partners on continuation opportunities.
  3.2 Develop and finalize a sustainability plan.

5. Expected Outcomes

Scoring criteria: The expected outcomes are **exceptionally clear and aligned** with project activities, demonstrating a **strong potential** to support FNIM educators' sustained retention and access to supports and resources.

Strong applications will present clear and measurable outcomes and impacts, realistic estimates of who will benefit from the project, and a clear connection between project activities and the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators.

What are project outcomes?

Project outcomes are the direct accomplishments or changes expected by the end of the project. An outcome may include changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, or emotions, such as increased confidence, a sense of belonging, or capacity to remain in the education field.

When writing your outcomes, consider both the development and use of the project, including how it will be created, shared, and applied. Think about how your project will have a direct and measurable impact on Indigenous educators and others who engage with it.

For each outcome:

- Clearly state the accomplishment or change that will be achieved by the end of the project in 1-2 sentences. Focus on the specific change, benefit, or result that will be achieved, rather than the activities undertaken to achieve it.
- Ensure the outcome aligns with the project's activities and the overall objective of the Retain grant.
- Ensure the outcome is realistic, measurable, and achievable within the project timeline.

Applicants may provide up to **five outcomes**.

What is project impact?

Project impact is the longer-term change expected to result from the project. Impact may include broader effects on the retention, well-being, and success of Indigenous educators as well as changes to organizational practices, policies, relationships or education systems.

When writing your impact statement, consider what will happen because of your project's outcomes. Think about how the project will contribute to the long-term retention and success of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators, and how it may help create lasting improvements in the systems, supports, and environments that enable Indigenous educators to remain and thrive in the profession.

For your impact statement:

- Clearly state the long-term or secondary change you expect to see because of your project in 1-2 sentences. Focus on the broader change, benefit, or result that will occur beyond the life of the project.
- Ensure the impact aligns with the project's activities and demonstrates how it contributes to the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators.
- Ensure the impact is realistic, meaningful, and demonstrates potential to contribute to broader systemic change within the Indigenous teacher education landscape

Applicants will provide **one impact statement**.

What is project reach?

Project reach refers to the estimated number of people who will benefit from the project. Reach should be presented as a measurable number and may be approximate. For example, applicants may estimate the number of educators, students, or school administrators affected by the project over its duration. Strong applications will provide realistic, well-supported estimates and clearly explain how the project's activities are expected to contribute to its anticipated reach and impact.

Your response should:

- Provide the estimated reach for each group expected to be impacted by the project (e.g., FNIM educators, school administrators, students, etc.).
- Briefly explain how the estimates were determined.

6. Project Evaluation

Scoring criteria: A **comprehensive** and **well-defined plan** with **clear measures** for project outcomes and impacts, data collection methods, and success indicators, including the number of FNIM educators impacted by the project.

How will you evaluate your project's outcomes and impacts?

Strong applications include a clear evaluation plan that demonstrates how project outcomes and impact will be measured and assessed.

Your response should:

- Identify what will be measured for each stated outcome, impact, and reach estimate.
- Describe how information will be collected (e.g., surveys, interviews, attendance records, feedback forms, or other methods).
- Explain how success will be assessed using clear indicators, measures, or targets.

Strong applications will present a well-defined evaluation plan with clear measures, data collection methods, and success indicators that demonstrate the project's contribution to the retention of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators.

7. Budget

Scoring criteria: An **exceptionally detailed**, **realistic, and accurate** budget, with **highly relevant justification** that **aligns well** with the project's scope, activities, timeline, and intended outcomes.

What is expected in the budget?

The budget should reflect the true cost of delivering the project and align closely with the project's scope, activities, timeline, and intended outcomes.

Your budget should:

- Include detailed, realistic, and accurate cost estimates.
- Ensure that all expenses clearly support the proposed project activities, timeline, and intended outcomes.
- Demonstrate that funding has been allocated appropriately and proportionately across the project.

What are the budget guidelines?

RHF budget guidelines for allowable and non-allowable expenses are as follows:

Non-Allowable Expenses | *Non-Allowable expenses include:*

- Capital campaigns or construction of capital assets
- Past debt or outstanding financial obligations
- Scholarships and bursaries awarded through a department or body that is **not** a First Nations, Inuit, and or Métis-led teacher education program or initiative
- Partisan and/or political activities

Allowable Expenses | *Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to:*

- Funds can be allocated for salaries and benefits of project staff or educators involved in the initiatives.
- **Student support** in the form of technology, books, tuition, living allowances, and other eligible supports. These supports may be provided to students or through scholarship or bursary programs administered through a First Nations, Inuit, and or Métis-led initiative.
- **Teaching, cultural supplies and technology funds** can be allocated for the purchase or creation of teaching materials, technology, curriculum resources, cultural items, medicines, and other supplies needed to support program delivery.

- **Elder, Knowledge Keeper, and cultural advisor honorariums** can be provided to those who contribute their wisdom, language, culture, traditional knowledge, and guidance within the project.
- **Travel expenses** related to travel, such as transportation and accommodation, necessary for project implementation or attending relevant conferences, meetings, or training.
- **Food costs** are covered as a component of delivering the initiative.
- **Operational or classroom expenses**, including costs associated with maintaining an office or classroom space, such as rent, utilities, and office supplies.
- **Training and professional development resources** that are required to provide dedicated learning opportunities for those involved in delivering or implementing the project.
- **Evaluation and data collection costs** associated with evaluating the project's progress toward stated outcomes and impacts. For example, contracting evaluation specialists, interviews with participants or beneficiaries of the project, and interpretation of results, etc.

*Please note that additional sources of funds are not required in your application. The significance of the requested grant funds in achieving the project's goals should be clearly outlined.

FUNDING TERMS AND LIMITS

- The full funding envelope for the 2026 Open Call is **$1 million**
- Applicants can request funding up to **$200,000** toward multi-year projects that are between **1 to 3 years** in duration

**These funding terms and limits are designed to provide flexibility and accommodate projects of different scales and durations. Funding amounts will be dependent on the project's scope, objectives, and budget, as well as the overall availability of grant funds.*

KEY DATES

- **Application Submission Deadline:** March 26, 2027, by 11:59 (ET)
- **Decisions Announced:** Funding decisions will be communicated in May 2027

Before beginning your application, please visit the application support section of the ITE grants webpage for additional resources. Thank you for your interest and commitment to supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis teachers in Canada.

If you have any questions, please contact us at indigenous.autochtone@rhf-frh.ca