

# SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL GRADUATE ENHANCEMENT AWARD

**Impact Report | For Toronto Eglinton Rotary Club**

**Prepared January 2026**



## **Impact Through Cultural Integration**

The generosity of your members has fueled another year of progress for Indigenous graduate students at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU).

We are profoundly grateful that the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) Award has another five years. This fund enables students to advance careers in social work, education, STEM leadership, and advocacy.

This impact is embodied by 2025 recipients Karina Brant, a professional social worker and Caleb Wesley, a youth science teacher. Their success demonstrates your gift in action. Thank you.



## Your Award

The Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) Award encourages Indigenous students to pursue graduate studies. The award aims to increase the number of Indigenous peoples entering careers in academia.

Your generosity at the Toronto Eglinton Rotary Club is creating the next generation of Canadian leaders.



## Caleb Wesley

Environmental Applied Science  
and Management, MA, '25

### About

Caleb Wesley is a dynamic Indigenous science educator and advocate whose journey is rooted in his cultural identity and mission to bridge knowledge systems. He is also a proud member of the Moose Cree First Nation. Motivated by overcoming early educational barriers, he focuses his career on equity and accessibility for students. This drive powered his previous role as Coordinator of Indigenous Knowledge and Science Outreach (2022-2024) at TMU. In addition to serving as a teacher's assistant for undergraduate Biology, he created the Stoodis Science program and tools such as the Cree Hide Tanning exhibit, actively uniting science literacy and Indigenous education by integrating Indigenous stories and arts into the K-12 curriculum. He also holds a BSc in Biology and a BEd in Intermediate Science from York University.

### Goals

Caleb's goal is to return to his home territory in Wemindji, northern Quebec, after graduation. He plans to teach science to Indigenous youth in this community of approximately 1,500 people. He will teach while continuing to learn traditional crafts like hide tanning and snowshoe making. He has already earned dozens of additional certificates, ranging from mental health crisis intervention to advanced wilderness first aid, demonstrating his commitment to applied learning, which is part of TMU's mission to provide experiential learning.

Academically, Caleb would like to earn a Master of Arts or Master of Education and, eventually, a PhD. Long-term, he envisions a leadership role in Indigenous education, with a school board or a post-secondary institution, so he can support up-and-coming Indigenous folks, just as so many have supported his own journey.

### Purpose of Funding

This award ensures that living expenses such as housing, food, transportation, and other necessities of life are covered while he works towards completing his MA.



**“My heart lies in education, and I believe that education is a tool that we as Indigenous peoples can use to help propel our communities forward.”**

**-Caleb Wesley**

## Karina Brant

Social Work, MA, '25

### About

Karina began her Bachelor of Social Work at TMU in 2021, where she excelled, even earning Dean's List recognition for outstanding academic achievement. This program was her first experience with Indigenous representation at an educational institution, allowing her to learn from Indigenous scholars, knowledge keepers, elders, and the community.

She joined the Indigenous Education Council (IEC) in her first year, and later represented the council in the Senate and its Learning and Teaching Committee. She also found a supportive community at Gdoo-maawnjidimi Mompíi Indigenous Student Services (GMISS). Her undergraduate social work practicum with GMISS and the IEC allowed her to contribute to advancing education on Land Acknowledgments. This includes authoring the "[Acknowledging the Land](#)" webpage on the Indigenous TMU website, which includes a guide for crafting personalized Land Acknowledgments.

### Goals

After graduation, Karina's goal is to advance the incorporation of Indigenous content in education. She will seek out roles as an Indigenous Curriculum Specialist or Indigenous education developer. She aims to support the Indigenization of academia by restoring and promoting Indigenous histories, knowledge systems, lands, teachings, and languages and to advocate for Indigenous knowledges to be valued based on their intrinsic value. Another option she is considering is to pursue her PhD in Social Work or Education, a career encouraged by her TMU professors and supporters. This constant validation has done wonders for her confidence and is one reason she would look to TMU employment roles after graduation.

In her Major Research Paper, titled "Ka'nikonhriíóhtshera," (teachings of a good mind), she explores how colonial institutions are Indigenizing and identifies key practices for incorporating Indigenous history and knowledge into post-secondary curricula. She is developing a sweetgrass methodology; to symbolize each piece of knowledge referenced in the paper, she will add a blade of sweetgrass to her bundle, and the act of braiding the sweetgrass will represent her data analysis and the knowledge gathered.

**"It is an honour to be selected.**

**Wa'tkwanonwerá:ton (my respect to you).**

**Niá:wen (thank you)."**

**-Karina Brant**

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### Purpose of Funding

This award ensures that Karina has a reliable vehicle and living expenses, alleviating some financial strain. Karina's commute is three hours total. Combined with the cost of childcare for her daughter, the rising cost of living has made it difficult to maintain her vehicle, which has required extensive repairs.

Most recently, Karina worked for TMU as a Research Assistant until December 2024. She concentrated on her studies in 2025, balancing her major research paper and coursework. If she pursues her PhD, she acknowledges it will further delay her full-time employment.

## THANK YOU

Thank you, Rotary Club members. Your sustained partnership continues to create extraordinary Indigenous leaders across Canada.

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