

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Alberta Blue Cross® supports Ever Active Schools in securing \$100,000 for Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program

Alberta Blue Cross is proud to announce that its community partner Ever Active Schools has received funding of \$100,000 through the [Healthy Futures program](#), offered by the Toronto-based organization LEAP | Peacut Centre for Social Impact. This funding will be put towards the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP), which Alberta Blue Cross currently supports through funding from its community foundation.

“IYMP is an Indigenous youth-led program where older students mentor younger students in order to build resiliency within Indigenous communities,” says Brian Torrance, Executive Director of Ever Active Schools. “This funding will help Indigenous communities continue to channel the strength of their youth in order to overcome challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and further improve the communities’ overall health.”

The IYMP was one of just 11 winners selected from more than 150 applications submitted across Canada. With funding from LEAP now secure, Ever Active Schools can enhance the breadth of its programming and expand the IYMP from the 50 communities it currently serves to more than 100 communities over the next five years.

“IYMP is founded from the voice of youth,” says Rebecca Smillie, Manager, Community Impact. “This opportunity will equip any community across Canada to lead an IYMP program in their community. The result? Equitable community wellness. We’re just thankful to be supporting this work.”

In 2020, a total of 265 high school leaders were trained as youth mentors for the IYMP. Data collected by Ever Active Schools and the University of Alberta shows that Indigenous youth who participated in the program saw a reduced risk of chronic disease, improved school attendance, an increased sense of belonging at school, increased connections among host Indigenous schools and improved access to health-promoting partnerships.

The IYMP program has also been researched by Dr. Kate Storey through the University of Alberta’s School of Public Health, which found a significant increase in the health outcomes of the communities where the program operates. With this extra \$100,000 funding from LEAP, IYMP can continue to build on the strengths, talents and natural leadership of the people in their communities.

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