



BIOLab Receives Boost

[RBC Youth BIOLab](#) has awarded its fourth, 3-year grant totalling \$198,000 from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) for science outreach and mentorship efforts to Indigenous students across Manitoba.

“We’re pleased this funding came through because it will help us continue to operate and pursue collaborative partnerships with remote communities here in Manitoba for mentored projects with Indigenous youth,” says Stephen Jones, RBC Youth BIOLab’s Director and a 2018 recipient of the Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence in Science, Engineering, Technology and Medicine (STEM).

“We’ve been working with Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake

First Nation) since last year, and we hosted their Gr. 8 students at the BIOlab recently with great success. This funding will help support our ongoing liaison efforts, travel and accommodation expenses, so that we can continue nurturing a long term partnership with the support of the Cross Lake Education Authority and other partners in the First Nations education community," he adds.

Jones and Greg Halcrow, Director of Education for Cross Lake Education Authority, both believe the RBC Youth BIOlab's Indigenous Outreach program can serve as an implementation model for science skills capacity-building in northern communities across Canada, so that future health centres can potentially recruit staff from the local populations.

"It's really about inspiring kids with the idea that they can pursue a career in science or a related field and not have to leave home. Lives and families would benefit and our communities would ultimately be strengthened," says Halcrow.

Inspiring youth towards a love for science and discovery since 2005, the RBC Youth BIOlab has hosted more than 60,000 students in grades 8-12 in Western Canada's #1 research intensive hospital. Youth BIOlab participants experience content well beyond the school curriculum, with access to research scientists studying real world health problems in a state-of-the-art biomedical facility.

"Many kids have experience with disease in their own families, and we want to help them develop meaningful connections to the science behind health. If students can have positive experiences with science and medical research at a young age, we can nurture some long-term interest not only in the field,

but also in personal health,” Jones adds.

“The RBC Youth BIOlab is a hub of activity year-round,” says [Dr. Grant Pierce](#), Executive Director of Research, St. Boniface Hospital. “From its small beginnings as a science literacy outreach program 14 years ago, interest and popularity has grown and the need for funding has only increased exponentially. We’re grateful for the support provided by organizations like NSERC – it makes a difference.”