INDIGENOUS

20th VIBE Awards honour Indigenous business leaders

Kendra Inglis, Darrell Brown, and Okimaw Community & HR Solutions demonstrate Indigenous business excellence.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2026 ESTIMATED READ TIME: 4 MINUTES RILEY PROULX, DIRECTOR OF IBEP

On November 5th, 2026, the Visionary Indigenous Business Excellence (VIBE) Awards will honour Indigenous businesses and business leaders that inspire the next generation of students.

Celebrating its 20th year of cataloguing Indigenous business successes within Manitoba, the prestigious awards gala brings together Asper School of Business students, faculty, and alumni, as well as community members and entrepreneurs, to honour the recipients while raising funds to support Indigenous business students.

The VIBE Awards is hosted by Indigenous Business Education Partners (IBEP). Located within the Drake Centre, this unit of Asper School of Business supports Indigenous business students with holistic academic supports, financial aid, and a place for community to thrive.

This year's VIBE Awards honour three recipients across categories of leadership, organizational impact, and entrepreneurship.

- **The 2026 VIBE Award in Leadership:** Kendra Inglis
- **The 2026 VIBE Award in Entrepreneurship:** Darrell Brown
- **The 2026 VIBE Award in Organizational Impact:** Okimaw Community & HR Solutions

> **Each recipient is selected for their achievements, but equally so for what they've done for the communities they serve.**
>
> *— Riley Proulx, Director of IBEP*

VIBE Award in Leadership

Kendra Inglis, Executive Director, Makoon Transition Inc.

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Kendra Inglis is a Métis entrepreneur, advocate, and the Founder & Executive Director of Makoon Transition Inc.

Makoon, as an organization, walks alongside families as they navigate the challenges of the child welfare system, supporting them with transitional housing, life skills training, parenting support, and addiction services.

Kendra became a mother at a young age and experienced many challenges that shaped her understanding of the barriers families can face. She later spent years working within Child and Family services.

After Kendra received a settlement from her Indian Day School claim, she made the deeply personal decision to use it to start Makoon Transition Inc.

Her vision was to provide the kind of support she believed families desperately needed—a place where parents could heal and work toward reunification while remaining connected to their children.

Makoon opened its doors in 2020 with a mission of keeping children with their families and out of care. Today, Makoon provides culturally grounded, 24-hour supported living and programming for families.

They've now helped reunite over 400 children with their families.

Kendra's leadership challenges traditional approaches to child welfare and demonstrates what can happen when families are given support, accountability, culture, compassion, and an opportunity to succeed.

VIBE Award in Entrepreneurship

Darrell Brown, President, Kisik Clean Energy and Kisik Commercial Furniture

In 2003, Darrell Brown founded Kisik Commercial Furniture with a simple objective in mind: to fill a gap in the prairie market for an Indigenous-owned commercial furniture supplier.

From the beginning, Kisik has worked primarily with Indigenous organizations and Federal Government clients, offering cost-effective solutions for health care, education, and office environments.

Darrell's advice to fellow Indigenous entrepreneurs and community leaders is simple: "give back."

Darrell does just that. He continues to actively recruit Indigenous full-time sales representatives to join the Kisik team. He is President of Kisik Clean Energy, an organization working with industry leaders and Indigenous communities to create new sources of renewable energy.

He is also a founding member and past chair of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and has served on many other boards and economic advisory committees.

Through the collective work of his career, his goal has been to build strong partnerships, create meaningful opportunities, and continue advancing Indigenous economic success across the prairies.

The VIBE Award in Organizational Impact

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Okimaw Community & HR Solutions is a proudly Indigenous-owned firm created to strengthen First Nations and Indigenous organizations through practical, culturally-grounded support.

Through human resources, organizational development, governance, training, policy, and Nation-building, Okimaw works alongside communities and nations to strengthen their people and systems, empowering them for sovereignty and success.

When Okimaw was founded in 2019 by Terry Brown (an Asper and IBEP alumni) and Miranda Bear, they started with the idea that any small contribution can matter.

Today, Okimaw continues to grow its HR Training Institute, community-based workshops, advisory services, planning work, and partnerships across Canada. Their national team has worked with staff and leadership from more than 200 First Nations across Turtle Island.

It's clear that their contributions, which have made wide impacts on communities and organizations, go far beyond the word "small."

TERRY BROWN, CO-FOUNDER OF OKIMAW COMMUNITY & HR SOLUTIONS, IS AN ALUMNI OF IBEP.

A night to celebrate

Each year, 100% of the proceeds from the VIBE Awards are given back to IBEP students through scholarships, bursaries, academic supports, and more.

"The VIBE Awards provide us the opportunity to celebrate these remarkable leaders and organizations for what they've accomplished. Each recipient is selected for their achievements, but equally so for what they've done for the communities they serve," said IBEP Director, Riley Proulx.

"Our guests are always thrilled to attend and learn about our recipients because they have stories that come from the heart. And for the students, our recipients are reminders that they too can achieve success in business while staying grounded to their communities."

Asper's Indigenous Business Education Partners (IBEP) program offers tutoring, mentoring, financial aid, and more to Indigenous students pursuing a business degree at the Asper School of Business.

The annual VIBE Awards Gala is IBEP's largest annual fundraising event. Tickets and sponsorship for the 20th annual VIBE Awards will remain open until October 22, 2026. Inquiries after the closing date will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

At UM, we are working together to advance reconciliation for transformative change, which is among the commitments you'll find in MomentUM: Leading change together, the University of Manitoba's 2024–2029 strategic plan.

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Since 2016, Qualico has helped Indigenous students start university confidently through the Qualico Bridge to Success Program

Award-winning student advisor Bailey Pigeau is passing on the care she once found at Migizii Agamik

Kookum Karen Courchene reflects on resilience, story and survival.

How Niigaan Sinclair is helping shape the future of Indigenous education.

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