



Impact Report

**TFC Prototype Showcase
& 35th Anniversary Celebration**

May 31, 2025 University of Calgary, MacEwan Ballroom

MindFuel at a Glance

The [MindFuel Foundation](#) (formerly Science Alberta Foundation) is a registered charitable organization committed to creating youth innovation talent. Since 1990, we have been developing and distributing captivating, high-quality, 21st century programs that ignite a passion for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) innovation in K-12 and collegiate aged students.

The programs are technology based, and technology infused, developed to serve both in-class and extracurricular learning. To date, MindFuel has invested over \$135M into Canada's innovation ecosystem in over 1,600 communities, serving youth populations, including Indigenous students, females in STEM, economically disadvantaged youth, remote/rural students, racialized youth, and newcomers to Canada.

MindFuel also delivers eLearning programming through its wholly owned subsidiary, Wonderville Enterprises Ltd., which reaches hundreds of thousands of teachers, students, and parents each year in every province and territory, supporting over 620,000 learning sessions annually in Canada, and over 6,000,000 globally. Since inception, MindFuel has delivered over 165,000,000 learning sessions in over 190 countries with its online STEM programs.

Our programs include:

Wonderville ([wonderville.org](#)) - Wonderville sparks curiosity and STEM engagement through interactive, game-based learning that builds foundational innovation skills in students.
[Grades 4-9]

Codingville ([codingville.ca](#)) - Codingville empowers students to become digital creators through hands-on coding challenges that develop problem-solving and computational thinking.
[Grades 1-9]

Design Challenges - Student-centered design challenges immerse learners in real-world design thinking and innovation, fostering creativity, teamwork, and local impact.
[Grades K-12]

Tech Futures Challenge (TFC) - Tech Futures Challenge enables youth to tackle real-world problems using emerging technologies, supported by mentorship, funding, and collaboration. [High School, Post-secondary]

Founders Fundamentals - Helps young entrepreneurs turn ideas into ventures by building entrepreneurial mindsets and innovation capacity.
[Post-secondary, young adults]


Professional Learning - Hands-on sessions equip educators with the tools and confidence to lead innovation-based learning in their classrooms.
[Adults, Professionals]

Connect2Innovate (C2I) ([connect2innovate.ca](#)) - Connect2Innovate is a national digital innovation platform that connects youth, educators, and partners with resources, mentorship, and collaboration tools to drive inclusive innovation.
[Aspiring Innovators - Age 15 to 29]

This Impact Report summarizes key accomplishments and outcomes of our 2025 Tech Futures Challenge, in it's 12th year, and also celebrates a very special milestone for MindFuel and our founder, James (Jim Gray), as we celebrate our 35th anniversary.

For more information, please visit [mindfuel.ca](#)

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Executive Summary

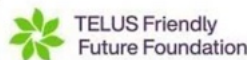
The 2025 Tech Futures Challenge – Pitch Event (March 2025) and Prototype Showcase (May 2025) brought together over 200 youth innovators, aged 15 to 25, from across Canada to present bold, STEM-powered solutions to real world problems. 16 teams participated in the Pitch event and of these, 15 teams of approximately 160 youth, registered for the Prototype Showcase event.

Hosted at the University of Calgary and marking 35 years of youth innovation leadership from MindFuel, this year's event also honoured its founder, James (Jim) Gray, with the introduction of the Jim Gray Transforming Futures Award for Best Prototype in each of the high school and collegiate streams.

The Prototype Showcase was the culmination of the immersive 19 week Tech Futures Challenge (TFC) program where youth teams presented their prototype solutions via live presentations and project displays before sets of panels of expert judges. The end of TFC 2025 does not mark the end of these projects since the innovation journey for many of these students is just beginning. Judges and mentors provided critical feedback to youth teams in terms of helping them to understand where to iterate and pivot in support of continuing their efforts.

Projects tackled include challenges related to renewable energy, energy innovation in clean technology, health technology, to assistive devices and AI applications, reflecting a meaningful commitment to solutioning real-world problems. In addition, the TFC Showcase energized the innovation community with opening remarks and presentations from Dr. Ed McCauley, president and vice-chancellor of the University of Calgary, Dr. Bob Schulz, multi-award winning professor at the Haskayne School of Management, Nabeel Ramji (CEO and co-founder of Pedesting), Steve Allan, community galvanizer and builder, youth panels that unpacked questions critical to helping youth navigate the complex innovation ecosystem, and concluded with powerful Words of Wisdom, from founder, Jim Gray.

From meaningful prototyping to high impact networking, the 2025 Prototype Showcase reaffirmed that Tech Futures Challenge, in its 12th year, is a critical launch point for Canada's next generation of innovators and economic drivers.



Tech Futures Challenge 2025

Empowering the Next Generation of Innovators

In January 2025, 201 aspiring innovators embarked on their journey through MindFuel's Tech Futures Challenge. Representing high schools and post-secondary institutions across **Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario**, these students brought forward 21 unique projects—8 from high school teams and 13 from collegiate teams—each addressing real-world challenges identified within their own communities.

By March, these ideas had evolved into compelling pitches. From those, 5 high school and 10 collegiate teams advanced to the next phase, where they refined and developed their concepts into working prototypes. These innovations were proudly showcased at the Tech Futures Challenge 2025 Prototype Showcase in May.

Each team selected a problem that mattered deeply to them—issues rooted in their lived experiences and local environments, yet with the potential for broader societal impact. The students behind these innovations speak with clarity, conviction, and a deep understanding of the technologies they wield. Their passion is infectious, their curiosity boundless. They are not just learning about innovation—they are living it. Through this challenge, they've become active contributors to a vibrant, collaborative innovation ecosystem, driven by a shared vision of a better future.

By the Numbers

Pitch Stage (Mar 2025)

High School	Collegiate
6 Teams	10 Teams
8 Projects	13 Projects

Prototype Stage (May 2025)

64 High School Students

137 Collegiate Students

60% Female

7.7% Rural

1% Metis

57% People of Colour

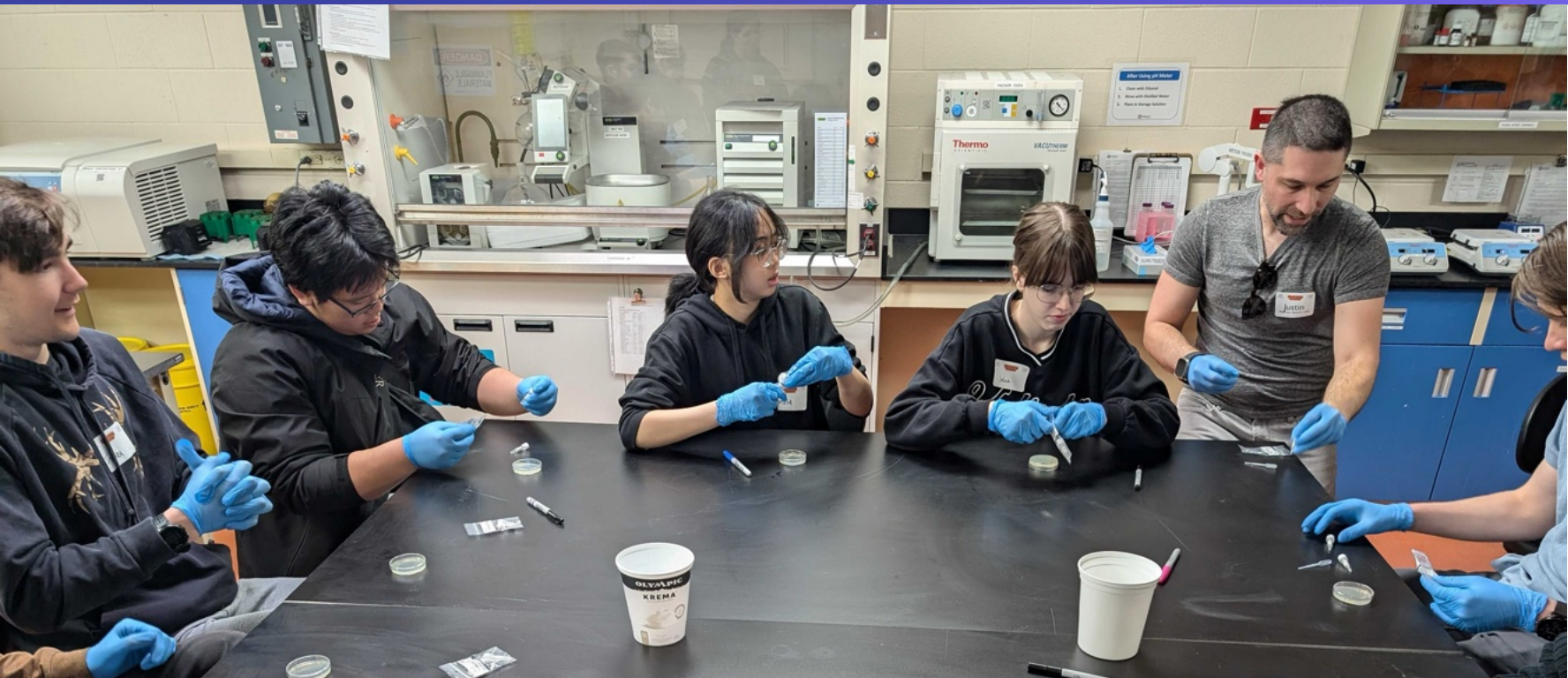
16% Newcomer to Canada (less than 5 years)



201 Aspiring Innovators

TFC Innovation Journey

Pitch Stage & Skills Building (March 2025)



TFC High School Team Projects



AquaAlert Biobot

Calgary, AB - Biobot is a solar-powered floating device that detects heavy metals in water using genetically engineered bacteria, providing real-time contamination alerts to ensure safe drinking water & environment



Bee Wise - United Robotics of Lacombe #1

Lacombe, AB - We will improve our hive monitor system, tracking temperature, humidity, and CO2. Partnering with Gull Lake Honey, we'll refine the design, test in winter, and develop an app for real-time data.



Carbon Replay - Our Lady of the Snows

Canmore, AB - Carbon Replay is revolutionizing sustainable materials with its proposed network of small modular bioreactors (SMbRs,) which produce high-value, carbon-sequestering PLA bioplastic composites.



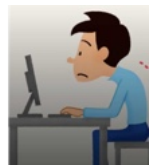
GreenEarth

Toronto, ON - Team GreenEarth's project is about solving the problem of water inaccessibility using a mobile app with features such as education and gamification.



Innoskate - Renert High School

Calgary, AB - Innoskate redefines ice rink maintenance by engineering E. coli to secrete ice-nucleating proteins, raising the freezing temperature of ice and decreasing the energy required for refrigeration.



Poistur-itive - United Robotics of Lacombe #2

Lacombe, AB - The Poiste-itive Prototype is a posture monitor by United Robotics of Lacombe, using sensors and an app to give reminders and feedback, helping users improve posture and reduce pain from poor habits.



RhizoRetention - Lethbridge HS iGEM

Lethbridge, AB - RhizoRetention focuses on plant-water retention using rhizoretenion bacteria to produce abscisic acid. This substance boosts water retention and drought tolerance in plants.

TFC Collegiate Team Projects



Hyaluronext – University of Lethbridge iGEM

Lethbridge, AB – From crosslinks to breakthroughs: revolutionizing hyaluronic acid and the enzymes that break it.



MicroRem – Green Vanguard

Calgary, AB – To decontaminate the toxic chemicals in soil and groundwater at the Hanford Nuclear Site we propose to use microorganism injection sites and a barrier for an economical alternative.



Chimera – Mycology

Calgary, AB – This team is investigating the potential and translatability of mushrooms and fungi as tools for bioremediation, construction materials, textiles, and more sustainable sources of agriculture!



NanoGuide – University of Calgary iGEM

Calgary, AB – By capping a porous nanoparticle with RNA, we can attach a protein in a way that when a target RNA is present, the protein will cut the cap and release a cargo. This serves as a Bird Flu RNA sensor.



ARBO – University of Ottawa iGEM

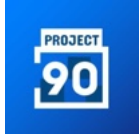
Ottawa, ON – A long-lasting topical solution that activates the skin's natural bacteria to repel mosquitoes for up to 12 days, offering safe, eco-friendly protection for outdoor enthusiasts and high-risk areas.



ReneWool – University of Alberta iGEM

Edmonton, AB – ReneWool is a genetic engineering product which utilizes enzymatic degradation to upcycle mixed fabric waste into spider silk in *E. coli*.

TFC Collegiate Team Projects



Adaptive Kneeling Frame – Project 90

Calgary, AB – The Adaptive Kneeling Frame is a custom mobility aid for children with cerebral palsy and arthrogryposis. It enhances therapy by enabling weight-bearing on knees and arms, improving posture and strength



Chimera – Algae Tech

Calgary, AB – This team is examining fabrics, textiles, and paints made from or embedded with algae, photosynthetic microbes that convert carbon dioxide to oxygen and are easily grown.



AptaMod – University of Calgary BIOMOD

Calgary, AB – AptaMod is a nanoscale biosensor that can detect biomarkers for neurodegenerative disease such as Multiple Sclerosis and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis to reduce the diagnostic wait time.



Chimera – Biofuels

Calgary, AB – This team is investigating the use of naphthenic acid degrading algae to convert environmental toxins from the Alberta oil sands into a renewable biofuel source, cleaning our local waters!



Nutrix – Double Healix

Calgary, AB – This project is an AI-powered meal planning app designed to help users address nutrient deficiencies while maintaining their cultural food preferences.



Prairie iGEM – University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, MB – The idea behind our project is to use a probiotic bacteria to help maintain balance of healthy bacteria in vaginal area.

TFC Innovation Journey

Prototype Showcase Event (May 2025)

201

Aspiring Innovators
in TFC 2025

168 *Event Participants including:*

90 *Team Members*

10 *Judges*

6 *Mentors*

7 *Panelists*

32 *Special Guests*

14 *MindFuelers*

9 *Volunteers*

Inspirational Leaders



✦✦ Jim Gray



Dr. Ed McCauley



Dan Semmens



Steve Allan



Dr. Bob Schulz



Nabeel Ramij



Kate McKenzie

Prototype Showcases



Being a part of the Prototype Showcase has allowed my team to learn more about the process of innovating, connect with other teams, and keep iterating our prototype to become better and better. Hearing advice from the youth panel and other guest speakers is also inspiring to me, giving me a clearer vision for our next steps ahead.

~ TFC 2025 student

Prototype Showcases



An extremely fun and engaging experience. It was really awesome to make real world impacts through scientific research, ideation and innovation. Additionally, listening to the incredible panelists really inspired me to continue moving forward in my STEM journey!

~ TFC 2025 student

The Showcase has inspired me to pursue a career in STEM innovation and has given me the confidence that I am capable of thinking iteratively and scientifically.

~ TFC 2025 student

I had a good experience participating in the Prototype Showcase, as I enjoyed the opportunity to present our hard work and show our dedication to the project as a team. This showcase has benefitted my team through giving us the chance to be inspired by and learn from the projects of other groups, as well as hear valuable feedback from the judges.

~ TFC 2025 student

Prototype Awards

✦ Jim Gray Transforming Futures Awards Best Prototype ✦

Innoskate – Renert High School

NanoGuide – iGEM Calgary



MindFuel Awards

High School Runner-Up Prototype – United Robotics of Lacombe

High School Most Iterative – Our Lady of the Snows

High School Biggest Pivot – Lethbridge High School

Collegiate Runner-Up Prototype – Project 90 (University of Calgary)

Collegiate Most Iterative – Green Vanguard (University of Calgary)

Collegiate Biggest Pivot – BIOMOD (University of Calgary)

Youth Panels Highlights



The youth panelists of the 'What's Next' and 'Navigating the Innovation Ecosystem' panels explored how emerging innovators can build, collaborate, and scale their ideas within Canada's growing innovation landscape, and overcome obstacles to bring their innovations to life. They also shared programs and supports available in the ecosystem, and their own tips and recommendations on how to take manageable and tangible next steps in the innovation and entrepreneurial journey.

~ Sabina Bauer Lewis

Lasting Impressions



Lasting Impressions



Words of Wisdom



Celebrating Jim



So do more. In your family. In business. In your community, your city, your province. Be generous with your time, commitment, and resources. Do more for your own quality of life, and for others.



Jim Gray – Words of Wisdom



Jim loves ideas – and he loves people. When ideas and people come together in response to his question, "What are YOU going to do about it?" look out, because things are going to happen– good things. What an incredible inspiration he is! And what an impact he has had – and the good news is, he's not done yet!



Steve Allan – Recognizing Jim



Jim is a big thinker. A visionary. He builds bridges and connects the right people at the right time to turn vision into reality. He's generous with his wisdom and always the first one to roll up his sleeves. His impacts are lasting and have benefited generations of people in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Jim – you are truly a transformer – and we at MindFuel, and the much larger community around us, celebrate you today and always. With all our thanks and appreciation.




Cassy Weber – Giving Thanks

From our Aspiring Innovators

Legacy & Listening

Credit: Aarushi Bhargava via LinkedIn

On Saturday I had the beautiful opportunity to speak on the "Navigating the Innovation Ecosystem" panel, moderated by David Lloyd alongside Gurmol Sohi , Aaron Quan, and Micah Louison.

While the panel itself was an honour, the true lesson of the day went far beyond the stage: I was reminded of what a privilege it is to have a voice and to be heard.

Earlier that afternoon, we heard from Nabeel Ramji, who has persevered through re-learning how to walk several times, and who spent a large portion of his life learning how to speak. I had the chance to personally interview him, and his story left me in awe. His resilience, outlook on life, and deep awareness of the power of words gave me a new lens through which to view my own voice.

Later in the evening we heard from Jim Gray, a true visionary who has left a lasting legacy in Calgary, from founding the Science Alberta Foundation to countless other accomplishments.. One of his reflections deeply resonated with me: "When you face a situation, always ask yourself - what are you going to do about it?" He emphasized that true learning begins with listening.



*Copyright, Aarushi Bhavgara
May 31st, 2025. Published with permission.*

But the most meaningful moment of all came when I had the chance to speak with Jim one-on-one. In that brief exchange, I truly felt the weight of his legacy, as well as the humility that he carries with it. When he told me he found my insights on the panel inspiring, it was a moment I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

This weekend left me with a powerful realization...
We all have voices. But the real question is - what will we choose to say?

From our Supportive Judges

The question – What emotion is scientifically proven to make you healthier?

Credit: Nannette Ho-Covernton via LinkedIn



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The answer is gratitude—gratitude for the opportunity to give back, support young innovators, and be a part of something truly impactful. Being able to ‘DO MORE’ for the community and champion the next generation of thought leaders is a privilege.

Today was a reminder that fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in youth isn’t just about shaping their futures—it’s about shaping a brighter future for all of us. I’m grateful to witness the passion and ingenuity of these young minds, and even more grateful to play a small role in helping them shine.

Thank you [MindFuel.ca](#), [Cassy Weber](#), and [Shahauna Siddiqui](#) for thinking of me.

Thank you Jim Gray for creating this organization 35 years ago and sharing your insights and inspiration for ‘DO MORE’ today.

[hashtag#Gratitude](#) [hashtag#GivingBack](#)
[hashtag#TechFuturesChallenge](#)
[hashtag#MindFuel](#) [hashtag#STEM](#)
[hashtag#Innovation](#)
[hashtag#FutureLeaders](#)

From our Community Champions

What an incredible day at the MindFuel 2025 Tech Futures event!

Credit: Mohamed Elhabiby via LinkedIn

This weekend's event was nothing short of iconic. Held on Saturday, it brought together brilliant minds and bold ideas in a truly mind-blowing experience. From inspiring keynotes to future-forward panels, it was a celebration of innovation, critical thinking, and the next generation of STEM leaders. The energy in the room was electric – and the ideas shared will no doubt help shape the future of tech in Canada and beyond.

I have deep gratitude for Cassy Weber's outstanding leadership and vision. Under her guidance, [MindFuel.ca](https://mindfuel.ca) continues to bridge the gap between education, innovation, and opportunity in remarkable ways.

A special highlight was hearing from Dr. [Bob Schulz](#) of the [University of Calgary, Haskayne School of Business](#) – a lifelong champion of youth entrepreneurship and innovation – who continues to inspire through his wisdom and mentorship. Panels on AI, clean energy, and the entrepreneurial mindset gave students and educators alike the tools and inspiration to lead in tomorrow's world.

It was also an honour to meet MindFuel founder James K. (Jim) Gray, the legendary philanthropist and passionate advocate for Alberta's future. His unwavering support for youth and education reminds us of the impact strong leadership can have on future generations.

As usual, I was inspired by [Nabeel Ramji](#). His advocacy for accessibility and inclusive innovation is paving the way for a more equitable and thoughtful future. His voice at the table is both powerful and essential.

Huge kudos to the entire MindFuel team, management and board of directors for curating such a dynamic, engaging, and meaningful experience. Events like this are essential to building a truly inclusive and forward-thinking innovation ecosystem.

[Peter Kinash CPA \(CA\) ICD.D](#) [Shahauna Siddiqui](#) [Dan Semmens](#)
[Wafa Kadri](#) [Raja Panwar](#) [Steve Allan, AOE, FCPA, FCA, ICD.D](#)

Let's keep fueling minds and powering futures.

[hashtag#TechFutures2025](#) [hash](#)
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[hashtag#Innovation](#) [hashtag#YouthInTech](#)
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[hashtag#Leadership](#) [hashtag#MindFuel](#) [hashtag#Inspiration](#)
[hashtag#Inclusion](#)



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From our Industry Partners

Building a Brighter Futures

Credit: Clean Resource Innovation Network via LinkedIn



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CRIN was fortunate to attend [MindFuel.ca](https://mindfuel.ca)'s inspiring prototype showcase and 35th anniversary celebration on Saturday, May 31. Kudos to all the young innovators on their excellent presentations!

MindFuel, a key partner in CRIN's Talent Builders sector, empowers youth to embrace an innovation mindset by infusing them with a passion to identify real-world problems and a drive to find solutions.

Highlights of Saturday's event included high school and collegiate project presentations, insights from [Nabeel Ramji](#), co-founder of [Pedesting](#), wisdom from innovation ecosystem panelists, and remarks from Jim Gray, founding chair of the Science Alberta Foundation, now MindFuel.

Gray shared the words that have guided him in his innovation and community-building journey: "What are you going to do about it?" His advice for young innovators includes being an effective listener, being curious, and building trust.

"You have enormous capacity to achieve your vision," Gray told the students in attendance. "You have to develop the skill and the ability to carry that vision to other people."

CRIN is excited to partner with MindFuel to showcase some of these young innovators at the Global Energy Show next week. Catch the Youth Fueling Innovation panel discussion on Tuesday, June 10, from 3 pm to 3:45 pm at the Emissions Reduction Theatre: <https://lnkd.in/gwmWQAmD>

[hashtag#Innovation](#) [hashtag#MindFuel](#)
[hashtag#GlobalEnergyShow](#) [hashtag#CRIN](#)

In the Media

Philanthropist honoured for role in mentoring youth science and tech excellence

In the 1980s, Gray founded the Alberta Science Foundation, which would eventually become MindFuel, that's developed youth interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

By: Bill Kaufmann

Published May 31, 2025

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/philanthropist-honoured-for-mentoring-youth-science-excellence>

In the 1980s, Gray founded the Alberta Science Foundation, which would eventually become MindFuel, that's developed youth interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Helping mentor thousands of Canadian students in pursuing their passions in science and technology has garnered a prominent city philanthropist their thanks.

On Saturday, former Calgary oilman Jim Gray was presented an award for continually inspiring the organization he founded 35 years ago that would become today's MindFuel Foundation.

The Calgary-based program encourages high school and post-secondary students to develop their technology and science ideas, many of which have led to scholarships and even valuable commercialized products.

'Gets things done'

"Jim is a builder — he sees a problem and gets things done," said Cassy Weber, who's been the CEO of MindFuel for the past 13 years.

"He's so amazing and today is an opportunity just to share Jim's wisdom."

Gray's activism has also included lobbying on the development of Calgary's Green Line LRT and pushing for greater action on protecting Alberta's Bow Valley from wildfire. In the 1980s, he founded the Science Alberta Foundation, which would eventually become MindFuel, that's developed youth interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

At its core is a six-month immersive effort among students to develop prototype solutions to real-world problems, which were presented Saturday at the University of Calgary to a panel of 20 judges who'd pick winners among high school and post-secondary categories. It involved 220 students aged 15 to 25 from across the country.

"Thirteen per cent of those projects become commercialized within an average of 4.2 years and it's unintentional on our part," said Weber, who's been involved in several tech startups.

"We get these young people engaged and involved and help them navigate the tech system but these are their wins, their work."

In the Media

Over the years, those concepts have attracted \$32.5 million in venture capital, she said. Among those who participate, 45 per cent are able to garner major scholarships with 92 per cent of them being awarded more than one, she added.

One of them that went on the path to being commercialized is an algae bioreactor that sequesters CO₂, an entry from First Nations participants.

For Weber, it's been an endlessly inspiring journey. "There's such an exciting vibe to it, it still feels like fun — it's never work," she said.

Careers in innovation

A motivator for MindFuel, said Weber, is a statistic that shows 87 per cent of young people don't believe a career in innovation is possible. Once they've been involved in the program all of those minds are changed, she said.

One of those young people providing inspiration is Aarushi Bhargava who's competed in MindFuel events four times dating back to her early high school days.

Among her projects was a litter box process that identifies diabetes in cats from their urine, while another one sustainably breaks down polyester through a bacteriological process that's drawn the interest of Shell Canada.

"That's definitely one I can see myself coming back to," said Bhargava, 20, now a second-year chemical engineering student at the U of C.

"But it doesn't happen without these amazing mentors, it takes a lot of people." Her entry in this year's MindFuel Tech Futures Challenge is an aluminum frame designed to allow toddlers with cerebral palsy to stand upright, a project that's been developed alongside a four-year-old High River boy.



Calgary businessman and philanthropist Jim Gray gives a thumbs-up as he gets a standing ovation during the MindFuel Prototype Showcase at the University of Calgary on Saturday. Gray helped start the Science Alberta Foundation (since renamed MindFuel) 35 years ago to help foster STEM education for Canadian youth. For the 35th anniversary, the best high school prototype award was renamed the Jim Gray Transforming Futures award.

PHOTO BY GAVIN YOUNG /Postmedia Calgary

Post 10yr Longitudinal Study (2013–2022)

With over a decade of experience in youth innovation programming, MindFuel has established a repeatable model that consistently delivers high-impact results. Our programs have shown that youth participants not only develop critical innovation skills but also produce tangible outcomes—13% of projects reach commercialization within 4.5 years. In 2024, youth in our programs produced 21 innovations, and historical trends show a strong upward trajectory in both innovation output and geographic reach. These results underscore MindFuel's ability to scale youth innovation talent development across Canada with measurable, lasting impact.

13% of TFC supported projects
commercialized within 4.5 years

confirm an ongoing interest in
innovation and entrepreneurship

87%

1,720,000 hours of extracurricular learning

4,300 aspiring innovators (ages 15 – 25)

35% commercialized a technology after TFC

\$32.5M in venture capital (as of Dec 2024)

\$13.2M revenue and 138 high skilled jobs (as of Dec 2024)

91% talent retention in Canada

79% talent retention in Alberta

“*MindFuel is creating a pathway for young innovators to become the next generation of STEM leaders.*
Curtis Stange, President & CEO, ATB Financial”

“*This program is critical to Alberta's tech-futures – not only in talent development but also reducing brain-drain.*
Derrick Hunter, President & CEO Bluesky Equities Ltd.”

Continue The Innovation Story:



Connect2Innovate (C2I) is an innovative platform designed to enhance youth innovation across Canada by providing easily accessible resources, mentorship programs, and collaborative opportunities. C2I builds community between aspiring innovators, industry partners, educators, and alumni to **Connect. Ideate. Innovate. Create.**

C2I is the best next step in your innovation story, connecting you to your next big opportunity.



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