

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Contact:** Nathalia Cordeau-Hilliard**Finning Canada STEM awards announced**

Fort McMurray (February 11, 2022) — Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta and Finning Canada are excited to announce the two recipients of the Finning Canada STEM Awards on this International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

The two scholarships, which increased from \$1000 to \$3500 in 2021, are awarded to two young women from the Wood Buffalo region who are in, or entering, a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related post-secondary program.

*“We are so proud to be able to provide these scholarships to help young women in the Wood Buffalo Region break gender stereotypes and pursue their dreams with careers in STEM,”* says Michelle Dupont, Vice President, HR for Finning Canada. *“Congratulations Manorama and Chantel on being this year’s recipients of the Finning Canada STEM awards. We wish you both success in your career journeys.”*

This year the recipients are: Manorama Joshi and Chantel Tait.

**Manorama** is heading into her first year as a computer or mechatronics engineering student. She has been a participant and volunteer in the Girls Inc. Operation SMART program since 2015. Manorama says she discovered her interest in robotics one day and immediately joined the Tech and Trade program, where she found herself being the only girl in the program. Soon after, she joined Girls Inc. Operation SMART program. She calls her time in the program a “groundbreaking experience” and says it opened her eyes to how amazing a world of STEM is. She also notes that these experiences have made her stronger by fueling her passion and helping her build confidence in herself. As her interest grew, Manorama says she wanted to create opportunities for others to explore their hobbies and passions in STEM, so she began mentoring and volunteering. As a student at Westwood Community High School, Manorama has been on the robotics team and was the team’s Lead Design Engineer. She is also involved in Queens in Code and founded the Westwood Women in Technology club. By pursuing computer or mechatronics engineering, she hopes to help build machines that will aid humanity sustainably.

*“I am incredibly honoured to be one of this year’s recipients of the Finning Canada STEM Award. I am immensely overjoyed to be recognized by the award in my hometown and it motivates me to continue my involvement. With my passion for pursuing a career in technology, I look to continue on my journey in STEM as a leader and bring more diversity to the fields. I am thankful for the incredible support and cannot wait to see what more is in store!,”* says Joshi.

**Chantel** is heading into her third year pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Keyano College, who aspires to be “a noble advocate for the Indigenous community and assist in the goal of reconciliation and empowerment of the Indigenous population”. She says she wants to be an inspiration to future Indigenous students and women to “pursue their dream career and not give up on what they want.” Chantel notes that the challenges and discrimination she has experienced as an Indigenous woman motivates her in proving to society that being Indigenous doesn’t restrict her ability to be successful.

*“While pursuing my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, this award will assist me in financial stability throughout my school year which allows me to focus on my studies. I believe this scholarship is powerful because it symbolizes the importance of empowerment of women in society,”* says Tait.

She has engaged in community development actively by volunteering with a variety of organizations, including Northern Lights Regional Foundation's fundraiser events and senior home visits and food basket creation with Athabasca Tribal Council. A long term goal of Chantel's is to continue to volunteer with organizations where the main purpose of their establishment is to improve the way of life of individuals. As a proud Cree woman from Fort Chipewyan, Chantel says she would like to be a registered nurse in her hometown and to provide healthcare to the Indigenous population.

*"Huge congratulations to Manorama and Chantel, who are actively working to break systemic barriers and contribute to creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive society from engineering to nursing. We would also like to express our gratitude for Finning Canada who was able to increase the awarding amount to \$3500 to tangibly tackle thicker and taller barriers that girls face within and beyond the world of STEM. Please join us in celebrating International Day of Women and Girls in Science today."* - Nanase Tonda, Executive Director, Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta.

Applications will open for the 2023 Finning Canada STEM Awards in September.

### **About Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta**

Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta (Girls Inc.) inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through direct service and advocacy. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. Girls Inc. has been serving the Wood Buffalo Region since 2004, growing our reach every year. In 2021, Girls Inc. was able to connect with 1,500 girls from Conklin to Fort Chipewyan. The girls-only, physically and emotionally safe environment is a sisterhood of support.