



# 2026 Community Guidelines: Indigenous Business Pitch Competition

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# Welcome

At Pow Wow Pitch, we celebrate Indigenous entrepreneurship and the journeys of Indigenous entrepreneurs at every stage, from ideas to established businesses.

These guidelines are designed to create a space that is safe, respectful, supportive, and encouraging for everyone involved. Pow Wow Pitch is about learning, growth, and sharing your vision in a good way.

By submitting your application and pitch video, you acknowledge that you have read and understand these Pow Wow Pitch Indigenous Business Pitch Competition Community Guidelines.

We're honoured you're here.

## What is Pow Wow Pitch?

Pow Wow Pitch is an Indigenous-led, not-for-profit organization that supports Indigenous entrepreneurs through pitching, mentorship, skills development, and community connection.

Participating in Pow Wow Pitch gives you the opportunity to:

- Share your business idea in a supportive environment
- Build confidence and pitch skills
- Access mentors, experts, bootcamps, and free learning resources
- Win cash prizes and gain visibility for your business
- Receive additional supports, including tools, resources, and partner-provided connections
- Join a lifelong Alumni Network that continues to uplift and support Indigenous entrepreneurs
- Be eligible to participate in additional Pow Wow Pitch programs, including the Podcast and Box Program.
- Be featured through community spotlights and other communications.

## Who Can Apply (Eligibility)

You are eligible to apply if you meet the following criteria:

- Identify as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian.
- Physically reside on Turtle Island (Canada or the United States).
- Must be at least 10 years old, and any participant under the age of 18 must have parental/guardian consent.
- The business must be at least 51% Indigenous-owned.

- Business owners at all stages, whether you have a business idea, are an emerging entrepreneur, or own an established business are eligible to apply.
- Previous 1st Place Grand Prize Winners are ineligible to compete again.

### **Community Connection & Self-Identification**

As part of the application, we ask applicants to share information about their Indigenous relations, such as the Nation, Community, or Chartered Community they are connected to. We recognize that colonial systems, such as Residential Schools, Day Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and intergenerational trauma have impacted community connections. If this applies to you, you are still encouraged to apply. You have space in your application to share your origin story, and it will be reviewed with care, sensitivity, and respect.

All participants are subject to verification at any time and for any reason. Pow Wow Pitch reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to require proof of identity and/or eligibility in a form acceptable to Pow Wow Pitch. Failure to provide such proof to the complete satisfaction of Pow Wow Pitch within the timeline specified by Pow Wow Pitch may result in the disqualification in the sole discretion of Pow Wow Pitch.

## **How to Participate**

You can choose to participate **in person** at a community event or **virtually** through our online program.

### **In-Person Participation**

Pow Wow Pitch events take place at community gatherings or powwows.

In-person participation allows you to:

- Pitch directly to judges
- Connect with fellow entrepreneurs in a community-centered environment.
- Take part in mentorship opportunities
- Win a Golden Ticket to the Grand Finale for placing 1st (exclusions may apply depending on timing of event)

In-person registration:

- Pre-registration opens at least one (1) month before each event
- On-site registration is required on event day
- Spots are limited

### **Virtual Participation**

Virtual participation allows you to pitch remotely through our online program.

- Applications open each April
- To apply, submit your 1-minute pitch video and application at [powwowpitch.org/pitch](https://powwowpitch.org/pitch)
- Semi-Finalists and Finalists must have a stable internet connection, webcam, and microphone

- Tech checks are available upon request
- Semi-Finalists and Finalists participate in virtual mentorship sessions

## Pitch Structure

The Pitch structure outlines how you will share your business idea with judges and the community, whether in-person or online, and how each stage of the competition works.

### In-Person Pitch Structure

- First Round: 1-minute verbal pitch (notes allowed; small, table-top products and business cards are allowed; setup time is limited)
- Judges evaluate Round 1 Pitches and select the Top 10 finalists
- Top 10 finalists advance to the final round and receive mentorship
- Final Round: 1-minute pitch + 2-minute Q&A.
- Judges evaluate the Top 10 finalists and select winners.
- Winners are announced on site, followed by photos, interviews, and videos.

### Virtual Semi-Finals Pitch Structure

- Semi-Finalists will be notified by email with next steps. Missing deadlines or required steps may result in disqualification.
- Dates and timelines are posted at [powwowpitch.org/pitch](http://powwowpitch.org/pitch).
- Pitch date and time will be emailed, and are fixed. Time-change requests may be considered with advance notice, but are not guaranteed.
- Pitches are recorded live on Zoom: 1 minute pitch + 2 minute Q&A.
- Missing your scheduled pitch time results in disqualification.
- All times are in Eastern Time (ET); participants must convert to their local time.
- Participating in a mentorship session is strongly encouraged.

### Virtual Grand Finale Pitch Structure

- Finalists will be notified by email with next steps. Missing deadlines or required steps may result in disqualification.
- Pitch date and time will be emailed, and are fixed. Time-change requests may be considered with advance notice, but are not guaranteed.
- Pitches are recorded live on Zoom: 2 minute pitch + 2 minute Q&A
- Missing your scheduled pitch time results in disqualification.
- All times are in Eastern Time (ET); participants must convert to their local time.
- Participating in a mentorship session is strongly encouraged.
- Judges will deliberate immediately following the pitches. Finalists will be invited to continue the Pow Wow Pitch journey, with the full celebration and winner reveal taking place at the Grand Finale Watch Party. Remember, every finalist carries the spirit of a winner, whether or not you take home a prize, you're part of the Alumni network for life, opening doors to amazing opportunities along the way.

- A Grand Finale Watch Party is held virtually on the Pow Wow Pitch website in October, where we invite our partners, finalists, and community to join us as we celebrate Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Pow Wow Pitch event schedules, including live and virtual competitions, are subject to change as needed. By participating, participants acknowledge and agree that scheduling adjustments may occur.

## Mentorship

All Semi-Finalists, Finalists, and Top 10 in-person event participants are matched with a Mentor from our Partner organizations for up to one hour.

You are responsible for:

- Scheduling at least one session
- Arriving prepared
- Communicating if issues arise

Mentors are here to support you.

## Judge Criteria & Scoring

The Pow Wow Pitch team reviews all pitch submissions and selects Semi-Finalists. Semi-Finalist and Finalist are evaluated by a panel of judges using the criteria outlined below, with each category scored out of five (5) points.

### **Presentation (5 points)**

The clarity with which the participants communicate their product or service, value proposition, and intended pathway toward sustainability.

### **Execution (5 points)**

The participant's demonstrated readiness and ability to carry out their business goals.

### **Motivation (5 points)**

The clarity of how the participant intends to use the funding to support the next stage of their business or idea.

### **Community Uplift (5 points)**

The clarity with which the participant describes how their business creates, or intends to create, positive outcomes for their community.

## Awards & Prizes

Pow Wow Pitch offers a range of awards intended to support Indigenous entrepreneurs in advancing their business or business idea. Awards and prizes may include cash prizes, in-kind support, mentorship opportunities, and access to additional Pow Wow Pitch programs, depending on the stage of the Pitch program and available partner support.

Award types, amounts, and eligibility may vary by year and program stream and are subject to change.

### Live Events Awards

- Youth Prize \$500
- Fan Favourite Prize \$500
- Third Place Prize \$1,000
- Second Place Prize \$2,500
- First Place Award is \$5,000 and a Golden Ticket to pitch at the Grand Finale

### Virtual Semi-Final Awards

- People's Choice Semi-Final Prize \$1,000
- Alumni Choice Semi-Final Prize \$1,000
- Industry Semi-Final Prizes \$1,000 (up to 13 Industry categories)

### Grand Finale Awards

- Alumni Choice Prize \$5,000
- Third Place Prize \$5,000
- Second Place \$10,000
- Grand Finale Winner \$25,000

Additional partner-provided prizes may be available and are determined by Pow Wow Pitch Partners on an annual basis.

### Award Distribution

Cash awards are distributed following confirmation of eligibility and completion of required program steps. Additional details regarding award timelines and distribution will be shared directly with recipients.

To issue cash awards, Pow Wow Pitch is required to collect personal information for administrative and tax reporting purposes. This may include Social Insurance Number (SIN) for individuals or a corporation number, as applicable.

This information is collected through a required form, which all cash prize recipients must complete in order for prizes to be issued. This information is collected solely for the purpose of award distribution and required reporting and is handled in accordance with Pow Wow Pitch's privacy practices.

Pow Wow Pitch reserves the right to modify awards, amounts, or structures at its sole discretion, including in response to partner availability or program changes.

## Alumni Choice

The Alumni Choice prizes reflect the spirit of reciprocity, community support, and peer recognition within the Pow Wow Pitch community. Recipients are selected and presented by Pow Wow Pitch alumni, honouring entrepreneurs whose work and journeys resonate with those who have participated in the Pow Wow Pitch program.

### Semi-Finalist Alumni Choice

- The runner-ups from each semi-final industry category are reviewed and scored by the Alumni Choice judges panel, composed of past Pow Wow Pitch participants
- One Semi-Finalist Alumni Choice winner is selected to advance to the Grand Finale as a finalist

### Grand Finale Alumni Choice

- All Grand Finale finalists are evaluated by the Grand Finale judges panel
- The Alumni Choice winner is selected by the Pow Wow Pitch alumni who serve on the Grand Finale judges panel

## People's Choice

Semi-Finalists may rally their communities to vote for them.

- Voting runs July 13, 2026 to September 10, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
- One vote per person
- Paid and organic promotion is allowed
- Fraudulent or automated voting is not permitted
- Semi-Finalists advancing to the Grand Finale from their industry category are no longer eligible for People's Choice

If unsure about promotion methods, or you have any questions please contact [hello@powwowpitch.org](mailto:hello@powwowpitch.org).

## Media & Recording Permission

By participating in the Pow Wow Pitch Indigenous Business Pitch Competition, you grant Pow Wow Pitch, its partners, and media representatives permission to photograph, film, and record your pitch, as well as to use and share related content. This may include images, video, audio, your name, business name, and other information for promotional, educational, or marketing purposes across Pow Wow Pitch and partner channels, including websites, social media, newsletters, and other communications. All media are the sole property of Pow Wow Pitch and may be used in any medium.

Participation in Pow Wow Pitch indicates your consent to the use of this media, and no additional compensation will be provided. If you have concerns about media use, please contact the Pow Wow Pitch team in advance at [hello@powwowpitch.org](mailto:hello@powwowpitch.org).

## Behaviour and Conduct

Pow Wow Pitch is built on respect, integrity, and community care.

Participants must:

- Act professionally and respectfully
- Refrain from harassment, lateral violence, or abusive behaviour
- Honour others' stories and experiences

Pow Wow Pitch reserves the right to remove participants who do not uphold these values in order to maintain a safe, supportive, and respectful community for all.

We encourage participants to uplift one another and contribute to a space where everyone can thrive.

## Accessibility

Pow Wow Pitch is committed to accessibility and inclusion. We accommodate participants' accessibility needs and provide support to ensure everyone can fully engage in our programs. Participants are encouraged to share any accommodations they require. All accessibility requests will be handled confidentially, respectfully, and with care. If you require accommodations, please reach out to us at [hello@powwowpitch.org](mailto:hello@powwowpitch.org), so we can discuss how to best support you.

## Wellness Resources

We recognize that pitching can bring up stress and strong emotions. A list of wellness resources for Canada and the United States, including culturally grounded Indigenous supports, is available on this list of [wellness resources](#). These resources, created by various organizations, are shared by Pow Wow Pitch in the spirit of community care. They are here to offer support through difficult times, but they are not a replacement for personal or professional care. For additional help, we encourage you to connect directly with the original organizations or a trusted professional.

## Final Note

Pow Wow Pitch is a space where your ideas matter, your story is heard, and your business can grow. Every pitch is a chance to connect, learn, and take the next step in your entrepreneurial journey. We're excited to see what you'll share and support you on your entrepreneurial journey!