

OUR PLACE IN A CHANGING WORLD

For over 60 years, UVic has proven its unwavering commitment to providing an excellent student experience in a supportive teaching and learning environment, to partnering with communities, and to pursuing research and creative activities that make an impact, both locally and globally. We are prepared to face a changing world with renewed commitment, enthusiasm, compassion and humility.

This moment will define our future. It will need us to try new ways of teaching, and new methods of tackling the world's most complex problems through creativity, innovative research and partnerships—building community inside and outside the classroom. Now is the time to re-imagine the lab and studio, libraries and offices, campus and community to create interconnected and interdisciplinary opportunities.

Now is the start of our next 60 years. This is the moment to be Distinctly UVic.

Now is the time

Our times are marked by immediate challenges: from health crises and climate change to geopolitical instability and the hard but necessary work of confronting difficult truths about our history.

How we respond is up to us, but we need to do it now. This is an exhilarating time of innovation, collaboration and possibility. It is time to lead with our values and live up to our commitments to:

- Redressing historical barriers to higher education for Indigenous Peoples
- Upholding equity and creating a culture of belonging
- Addressing the climate crisis to ensure a more sustainable and fair future
- Embracing innovation and community partnerships

The world and the communities connected to UVic need us to work together to find new ways of learning, thinking and working. The world needs critical thinkers and interdisciplinary solutions; it needs perseverance and openness to the challenges ahead. It doesn't need us to be a wildly different UVic—it needs us to be bolder, more confident and more curious, but still distinctly who we are.

We must continue to amplify how our research, creativity and teaching responds to global opportunities. We must drive innovation, create partnerships and nurture the next generation of leaders, thinkers and citizens. We must strive to be relevant to local communities while also making a global impact. We must think critically about who we are and how we move in the world, embracing values of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Now is the time to be Distinctly UVic.

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

HONOURING THIS PLACE

We are grateful for and deeply honour our place on Coast Salish territory along with the responsibilities that come with living and working here. Foundational to this plan is our commitment to the ləkʷəŋən peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ Nations, who have continuing relationships with and inherent rights to the land on which the university stands and to its neighbouring territories.

As part of UVic's commitment to upholding the rights and sovereignties of Indigenous Peoples, we recognize and acknowledge the damaging and colonial history of education in this country. We are committed to living up to and beyond the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and [BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#).

A commitment to Indigenous rights and to honouring the First Peoples of this territory is an essential step in creating the conditions in which everyone feels a sense of belonging within a respectful, welcoming community.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE AND TEACHINGS

Language is the foundation of Indigenous laws, worldviews and ways of knowing and being. The protection and revitalization of Indigenous languages is a priority for local Indigenous communities and for UVic.

Throughout this plan, we have used ləkʷəŋən and SENĆOŦEN language and teachings. These words and teachings have been shared with the university community by Elders, Language and Knowledge Keepers from the local Nations, and we are charged with upholding them through the Coast Salish teaching of nəwəŋes šxʷ cən ʔayšqʷeləqʷəŋ | ÁMEKT TŦEN ÍY, ŚKÁLEŦEN | bring in a good heart and a good mind.

Elders Seniemten, Dr. Elmer George (Songhees Nation, ləkʷəŋən) and J, SINTEN, Dr. John Elliott (WJOLELP First Nation, SENĆOŦEN) have provided permission and guidance on the use of ləkʷəŋən and SENĆOŦEN throughout this document.

To hear these teachings spoken in ləkʷəŋən and SENĆOŦEN, visit: [\[LINK\]](#)

A NEW KIND OF PLAN

A distinct approach, building on a strong foundation

To develop this strategic plan, we stepped back to get a broad view of our journey over the past 60 years. Our new plan is built on a strong foundation of excellence in teaching, research and creative works, and our commitment to an outstanding student experience.

We also asked tough questions about what is needed from and expected of us. We heard from thousands of people like you: students, staff, faculty, alumni, retirees, donors, community members, Elders, partners and so many more. Through more than 6,000 engagements, we heard what the world needs from UVic, what you need from UVic and the impact we should be striving for in this moment.

We heard that UVic must tackle the big issues we are all facing as a society and a world, and be transparent about the role that universities have played in upholding the dominant systems of power, including colonization, white supremacy, historical trauma and patriarchal norms. This plan challenges us—leadership, individuals and the entire community—to resist these systems and be accountable to our commitments.

The following pages don't capture every detail of what we do at UVic. This plan urges us to be creative, innovative, collaborative, compassionate and brilliant—not on our own, but together. Bringing together different perspectives and lived experiences is what allows us to build better solutions. We are ready to take action and lift up the expectations we have for each other and the role UVic has in the world and the communities we serve.

Interconnected plans

Look to the existing and emerging initiatives and goals that have been articulated in major institutional plans like *X^wk^wənən̓ istəl* | [WZENENISTEL](#) | *Helping to Move Each Other Forward: UVic's Indigenous Plan* [LINK], the [Equity Action Plan](#), [Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy](#), the [Climate and Sustainability Action Plan](#), and the forthcoming academic and global engagement plans.

These plans, along with the operational plans that direct our daily activities, have been created by the UVic community and guide us as a community and an institution toward fulfilling the shared purpose, pledge, principles and priorities articulated in the strategic plan.

OUR PURPOSE, PLEDGE & PRINCIPLES

Our purpose

Inspired by and honouring place, we are a community-minded, globally engaged university where we transform ideas into meaningful impact.

Our principles

- **Operating with excellence.** We will pursue excellence in the way we teach, research, engage with the community and operate.
- **Contributing to change.** We will make meaningful contributions to social, cultural, economic and environmental progress.
- **Upholding Indigenous ways of knowing.** We will embrace and continuously promote Indigenous ways of knowing and being, with good hearts and minds.
- **Create a welcoming space.** We will cultivate an environment that is inclusive, equitable and supportive. UVic will be a place where each person feels like they belong.
- **Making room for risk-taking.** We will nurture a culture that fosters trust, respect and accountability—where curiosity, courageous action and an openness to challenge are valued and encouraged.

Our pledge

We pledge to hold ourselves accountable to [?etal n w l](#) | [ TOL,NEUEL](#) by respecting the rights of one another, being in right relationship with all things, and by upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- **Honouring lifelong learning.** We will support learners through their lifelong educational journey, providing the skills and knowledge needed to reach their goals.
- **Lifting each other up.** We will commit to helping people succeed in their endeavours, because we know that purpose and fulfillment are foundational to the fullest expression of human well-being.
- **Adding value when we join others.** We will work to ensure our engagement with every partner is respectful, relevant and responsive through thoughtful dialogue and shared goals.

About the purpose, pledge and principles

Underpinning our approach and who we are as a community and a university, our purpose, pledge and principles will guide our decision-making in the coming decades.

- Our **purpose** gives us a sense of identity. It describes our direction, what we want to be known for and the impact we want to have.
- Our **pledge** is a non-negotiable commitment to supporting and honouring Indigenous rights. It is fundamental to what we stand for and a critical starting place for any work that upholds equity and justice.
- Our **principles** reflect our identity and character, guiding how we function as an organization.

PRIORITIES THAT DEFINE AND UNITE US

Students, teaching and research are our foundation. Like all universities, at our core we are an institution defined by our commitment to education, discovery and the development and mobilization of knowledge, and to providing a supportive working and learning environment for our students, staff and faculty. Our areas of study and our strengths in research in scholarly activity are vast and all contribute to a better world.

But what makes UVic different?

Our community told us about the strengths and priorities that make UVic distinct—and was clear about what should guide us toward building a better tomorrow.

UVic is distinct because we prioritize:

- **Indigenous perspectives.** We want to be a community that is open to learning, prioritizes being in right relationship with and respecting the rights of all people and things, and deconstructs systemic barriers to the full participation of First Peoples in the university's life and work.
- **People, places and the planet.** From the campus to the global community, we support people's wellness and ability to thrive, and are addressing sustainability, climate action and the systemic barriers affecting equity, diversity and inclusion in multiple ways.
- **Innovation and inquiry.** We want to continuously re-imagine what we do, how we do it and why.
- **Partnerships and collaboration.** We support collaboration among faculties, disciplines and divisions; between academic and administrative units; between the campus and our community; and between UVic and our international partners, alumni, research institutions, industry and governments.

These strategic priorities are what make us Distinctly UVic.

Sample initiatives

Alongside each of the priorities, we have included sample initiatives drawn from the major institutional plans. These examples demonstrate the connections between these plans and illustrate ways that these strategic priorities are already being taken up across the university. Further examples and guidance on setting your own priorities and initiatives are included in how-to guides that accompany this plan.

Committed actions connected to each priority will be shared in annual implementation plans.

Respecting the rights of one another and being in right relationship with all things

ʔetal nəwəl | ÁTOL,NEUEL (respecting the rights of one another and being in right relationship with all things) reinforces UVic’s commitment to implement core local, national and international responsibilities and calls to action that support the rights and sovereignties of Indigenous Peoples—for example, [UNDRIP](#), [DRIPA](#), the [MMIWG Report](#) and the [TRC Calls to Action](#)¹.

More importantly, ʔetal nəwəl | ÁTOL,NEUEL moves beyond individual and collective rights and focuses on our relationships with one another, with the land and waters, and with all living beings—working with respect for the rights of each other, showing respect for one another, and being in right relationship with all things.

We are centering the languages and teachings of the local Nations and calling on all members of the UVic community to learn about, understand and respect their relationship with the laws, protocols and peoples of these lands and waters. By respecting the local Nations and honouring the teachings we each carry with us, we will centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being in teaching, learning, researching, services and wellness.

Goals

- **Sharing** the work of creating an environment that supports Indigenous students, staff and faculty with the entire university community—supported by accountable practices and policies in all areas of our teaching, research and operations.
- **Ensuring** the sustainability of all new and existing Indigenous programs and services.
- **Honouring** the aspirations, laws, languages and sovereignties of local Nations through continued partnerships and relationship-building.
- **Taking responsibility** for ensuring institutional structures and systems are accountable to the spirit of ʔetal nəwəl | ÁTOL,NEUEL and informed by čələŋən | ČELĀNEN | our birthright and teachings.

Sample initiatives

- Establish an Indigenous Research Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of new supports for Indigenous scholars (*Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy*, Commitment to Indigenous scholarship)
- Increase Indigenous senior leadership in decision-making across the university including designated seats for Indigenous representatives on high-level governance bodies.² (*Indigenous Plan* [LINK], 4.4.2)
- Foster awareness of Indigenous languages and connections to campus lands and waters with new ləkʷəŋən place names and interpretive signage. (*Climate and Sustainability Action Plan*, Strategy 1.2)

1 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA); Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG Report); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (TRC).

2 Plan under development, exact wording to be confirmed.

PEOPLE, PLACE & THE PLANET

Sʔeəʔenxʷ | S,ÁEŁANW | When things are in harmony

Our current social and environmental context clearly demonstrates the urgent need to solve the issues threatening the well-being of Earth and all beings living here. The teaching of Sʔeəʔenxʷ | S,ÁEŁANW (when things are in harmony) reinforces what we know—that all life is interconnected, with individual and community choices having far-reaching impacts. Healthy communities depend on responsible stewardship.

UVic is a living lab, supporting and empowering people to exist more sustainably and improve the well-being of communities and our planet. By understanding the reciprocal and interdependent relationships in our world and the importance of diversity, community and genuine belonging, we discover how to live in transformative, respectful and thoughtful ways.

Together, we are working to create a healthier and more resilient future that upholds the well-being of our region and of all life on our planet. We advance local and global issues like climate action and sustainability, social justice and equity, and health and wellness. We embrace and are guided by the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Goals

- **Inspiring and activating** people to thrive in a changing world by tackling local and global challenges through critical thought and perseverance.
- **Including and supporting** diverse and talented students, staff and faculty who want to make a difference in communities and have a positive impact on people, places and the planet.
- **Addressing** systemic barriers to equity and inclusion and progressively integrating our guiding principles throughout all decisions, processes and outcomes, to transform practices within UVic.
- **Developing and sharing** innovative strategies and solutions that support healthy, sustainable communities, and address global crises and our evolving world.

Sample initiatives

- Support research and scholarly activities that directly advance the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and systematically track our progress. (*Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy*, Societal impact)
- Build mentorship and sponsorship programs to support employees and students from systemically and historically marginalized communities to advance into positions of leadership. (*Equity Action Plan*, Recruitment & retention)
- Integrate Indigenous cultural competencies and anti-racist practice as key components for evaluating staff, administrator, and executive job performance and faculty service, research and teaching, expanding our ideas of excellence.³ (*Indigenous Plan* [LINK], 3.1.2)

³ Plan under development, exact wording to be confirmed.

CULTURE OF CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION

Xəçinjəŋ nəwəl | XEĆINEĽNEUEL | Actively planning and problem solving

We aspire to create a culture of courage, trust, curiosity and flexibility that will advance our quest to solve big problems and create powerful, positive change.

New ideas can change everything—and xəçinjəŋ nəwəl | XEĆINEĽNEUEL (actively planning and problem solving) teaches us to engage deeply with challenges and opportunities. Cultivating change means having the courage to take risks, embrace new ideas, and be open to learning and trying things in new ways.

A culture of innovation becomes possible with trust between people, and across disciplines and areas of expertise. People are the key. Only by actively supporting the people who make up our community—with attention to equity and belonging—can we reach our full potential. Honouring and welcoming diverse ways of knowing and being creates fertile ground for ideas that can, and will, transform our communities and the world.

Goals

- **Supporting** collaborative approaches to innovation in our research, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning programs and operations.
- **Fostering** adaptable, creative policies, governance and uses of space and resources to grow transformative ideas, partnerships, education and communities of practice.
- **Creating** a culture of trust, respect and collaboration that will attract and support curious, courageous people who are driven to engage, solve, teach and learn.
- **Embracing** risk-taking in the pursuit of knowledge, creativity and impact for all university activities.

Sample initiatives

- Expand the range of climate and sustainability initiatives and opportunities for greater student engagement outside the classroom on and off campus, while recognizing the needs of a diverse student population. (*Climate and Sustainability Action Plan*, Strategy 8.1)
- Establish a Thinkers-in-Residence program to bring international leaders to UVic to collaborate and lead open discourse on societal challenges (*Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy*, Global engagement)
- Develop tools and strategies to support the UVic community in addressing resistance to the change required to achieve the goals of the EAP. (*Equity Action Plan*, Institutional accountability)

PARTNERING FOR A SHARED FUTURE

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ᑭᓃᑦ ᓃᓂᓂᓂ ᑭᓂᓂ | ÍY,NEUELIST (moving forward together for the good of all) instructs us to come to the table as engaged and authentic partners. We actively co-create inclusive, values-based partnerships that are reciprocal, mutually beneficial and long-lasting. We acknowledge that lived experiences and diverse knowledge systems are essential in finding solutions to the challenges facing society and the planet.

We aspire to co-create inclusive, value-based partnerships that aren't bound by organizational, hierarchical or disciplinary structures. Our systems and processes will be nimble and proactive in addressing challenges, bridging academic excellence and applied research, and encouraging courageous action and inquiry. Working with internal and external partners from academic institutions, industry, community organizations and government, we will engage in collaborative partnerships that contribute to community, society and the planet.

We will be leaders in bringing forward creative, informed, practical solutions for a sustainable and equitable future.

Goals

- **Cultivating** a culture of partnership so our university community and the communities we serve experience it as a defining cultural element at UVic—we are an open, responsive, supportive and preferred partner.
- **Transforming** systems, structures and processes to create the ideal ecosystem for partnerships to flourish.
- **Responding** to our partners' needs and opportunities using our insights and connections across communities.
- **Advancing** and strengthening interdisciplinary and interdepartmental opportunities to provide new teaching, learning, research, creative works and service solutions.

Sample initiatives

- Partner with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members to ensure that Indigenous ways of knowing and being are responsibly and respectfully integrated in academic programs across campus.⁴ (*Indigenous Plan* [LINK], 2.2.1)
- Create opportunities for UVic students, faculty and staff to work with solution seekers from communities, government, not-for-profits and business and industry for evidence-based decision making on equitable climate solutions, mitigation and adaptation. (*Climate and Sustainability Action Plan*, Strategy 5.2)
- Build robust community partnerships with organizations to increase relationships with systemically and historically marginalized communities. (*Equity Action Plan*, Relationality & belonging)

⁴ Plan under development, exact wording to be confirmed.

DISTINCTLY UVIC: IMPLEMENTING OUR PLAN

So how are we going to use this to do our work differently?

How will this help us prioritize our work?

We hope that this plan will help each of us focus on what makes UVic distinct. This is how we can articulate what is most important to the UVic community and how we can best contribute to our changing world with a new level of creativity, enthusiasm, compassion and humility.

As members of the UVic community, let's take an inclusive approach to implementing this plan. We are each responsible and accountable for living up to the purpose, pledge, principles and priorities we identified together.

We don't need to do more; we need to think differently.

Use this plan every day to help us focus as we strive to do meaningful, impactful work that builds on our strengths and leans into what makes UVic distinct. Let it inspire the work we do, especially when we must choose between this or that. When we choose between staying the same or charting a new course, use it to help prioritize what initiatives and activities we start, stop or continue.

Look to the existing and emerging initiatives and goals that have been articulated in major institutional plans:

- **Xʷkʷənəŋ istəl | W̱CENENISTEL | Helping to Move Each Other Forward: UVic's Indigenous Plan** [LINK] is grounded in Coast Salish *sq̓él iʔ snəpənəq* | TFE SKÁLS I, TFE ŚXENÁNS | laws, philosophies and teachings. It builds on UVic's commitment to redress barriers in higher education and honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and being in education, research and governance.
- The **Equity Action Plan** provides UVic with strategic direction to advance equity, diversity and inclusion, and to create the conditions in which everyone feels a sense of belonging: as connected and respected parts of the university community.
- **Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy** identifies UVic's research aspirations, actions, outcomes and the five overlapping impact areas where UVic's research and creative works are uniquely positioned to make a difference.
- The **Climate and Sustainability Action Plan** (CSAP) is a new and unique approach to sustainability and climate action at UVic—guiding us as we address and adapt to global challenges faced by all universities.
- Forthcoming academic and global engagement plans.

These plans, and the operational plans that direct our daily activities, are living documents that guide us as a community and as an institution toward fulfilling our shared purpose, pledge and principles. Learn more about all our [institutional plans](#).

It's up to each of us to decide what we can do individually—and as a team—to support progress in our priority areas. This is everyone's plan—yours, ours and the next generation's, too.

Here's to another 60 years. Here's to being Distinctly UVic. Let's get started.

Supporting our work

Annual implementation plans, accountability and activity reports, inspirational stories, how-to guides and calls to action will support the collective work of this plan.

Please check in at [LINK] to see how we are doing in moving this plan forward.