UVic's future will be shaped by Indigenous communities

Unlearning colonial ways is a journey with many steps. For the University of Victoria, those next steps are grounded in language and ancestral teachings—guided by Indigenous communities—to ensure the work is done in a good way.

This fall, UVic launched Xʷak'áz (aay̓ aatstsid) | x̱ wakas̓x̱iitstsid | (Helping to move each other forward) UVic’s Indigenous Plan. With local Indigenous teachings and Lək̓ʷəŋən and SENĆOŦEN language woven throughout, this new plan proposes a fundamental rethinking of the institution’s approach to learning and work.

Songhees Elder Dr. Skip Duck wrote in his words of welcome, “Changes are happening in our time. When a pebble is thrown into water, the ripples grow into waves. It used to be that kids were dragged to school—now they’re running ahead of their parents to get to school. Their teachers did something to excite them about knowledge, awakening a feeling of initiative and excitement to learn, and it’s spreading. Waves are coming down between students and administration here, where we are energized by belonging here.”

Working in consultation with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, staff, faculty and community members, Xʷak’ázid | x̱ wakas̓x̱iitstsid | (Helping to move each other forward) was shaped in tandem with Distinctly UVic, the institution’s new strategic plan (see page 3). Both envision a future where ways of knowing, being and learning are embedded into UVic’s programs, systems and organizational structure. Local Indigenous languages and teachings are used instead of settler terminology as the foundation of these plans.

“My family have always worked in this process, “UVic under-took to develop these plans, which weave local Indigenous teachings to guide the university’s future,” says Qwal’sih yah’mahl, Robin Thomas, UVic’s vice-president Indigenous. “I hold my hands up to all those who contributed to the development of Xʷak’ázid | x̱ wakas̓x̱iitstsid | (Helping to move each other forward).”

Central to the plan are Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Unilux | Sḵwx̱wissh Lúxmi | TŦE Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (the Laws and Philosophies):

- Héłəm’xw 7 kwač’elq’elq’el | Héłəm’xw 7 kwač’elq’elq’el | (Work together)
- Náq sə̓ləq’ələq’əl | Náq sə̓ləq’ələq’əl | (Work together)
- X̱ wáy’i X̱ wáy’i | X̱ wáy’i X̱ wáy’i | (Bring in your good heart and mind)
- Ləx̣w’xw X̣w’xw | Ləx̣w’xw X̣w’xw | (Be prepared for the work to come)

The SENĆOŦEN name of the Indigenous Plan was shared by Seniemten, Dr. Elmer George.

UVic has a responsibility to recognize and respond to the historical and present-day colonial realities that shape our relationships with the local Nations and their laws, lands and waters,” said Kevin Hall, president of the University of Victoria. “We have pledged to hold ourselves accountable to letal nál’iixʷ | Atol, meul | by respecting the rights of one another, being in right relationship with all things, and by upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

More at uvic.ca/weakabouts

MACLEAN’S RANKS UVIC #2 IN CANADA

This fall, Maclean’s magazine reaffirmed the University of Victoria’s standing as one of Canada’s top universities, ranking it second place among the nation’s 15 comprehensive universities. This is the sixth consecutive year that UVic has been ranked first or second.

The annual Maclean’s rankings are built on 12 categories which quantify student supports, faculty performance, student satisfaction, resources and reputation. This year UVic is ranked 9 for faculty awards and medical/sceience grants, 7 for research activity and student awards, and 5 for scholarships and bursaries, and library resources.

Faculty awards measure the proportion of a school’s professors who have won major national or international prizes for their work. This is the fifth year in a row that UVic has outperformed all other comprehensive schools in this category.

UVic Vice-President Academic and Provost Elizabeth Croft says, “I’m proud of our faculty and the national and international recognition that they receive, as shown by these rankings. Through research-inspired teaching and scholarship, our professors provide an exemplary, hands-on experience for students who’ve chosen to study at UVic.”

UVic is also consistently the top university in its category for the size and number of medical and science research grants awarded by the National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Maclean’s breaks Canada’s universities up into three broad groups. Comprehensive schools like UVic have a wide range of programs, both at the graduate and undergraduate level, along with substantial research activity. Large medical doctoral institutions and smaller, primarily undergraduate schools are ranked in their own categories.

Find out more about how UVic excels at uvic.ca/rankings.
Distinctly UVic — our new strategic plan

UVic’s Strategic Plan

The world is changing, and it needs our critical thinking to address today’s complex challenges. And we’re ready. Together, we can work towards a brighter, shared future for ourselves, our communities and our world.

UVic’s Strategic Plan is a call to be in right relationship with one another, with the environment and with the world. It’s an invitation to uphold the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples.

60 years of passionate commitment

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

This moment will define our future.

It will well into the 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 imagine the life and studies, interactions and offices, campus and community to create interconnected and interdependent support.

This strategic plan doesn’t capture every detail of what we do at UVic. This plan urges us to be creative, innovative, transformative 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.

This is the start of our next journey. It’s our moment to be Distinctly UVic.

Our priorities

People, place & the planet

The 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 Indigenous perspectives.

This strategic plan doesn’t capture...
$2.5M grant integrates Indigenous knowledge into sustainability projects

The project includes 11 partners, including the Toquaht and T’sou-ke Nations in BC, the University of British Columbia Professor Peter A.Allison School of Law, as well as Wmns and Alert Indigenous organizations and universities researchers in Colombia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The research initiative reflects UVic’s commitment to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, or UN SDGs. Read more about the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.

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A UVic-based research team has received a $2.5-million grant to design and advance a sustainability framework for decisions-making in Indigenous communities that ensures their values, knowledge and cultures are at the forefront as they assume development priorities on their lands.

The project reflects a vision that critically specifies “that each nation or each Indigenous People has a right to determine for themselves their own form and path to development using their own governance structures and their own knowledge systems”.

The project utilizes four dimensions of well-being: economic, environmental, cultural and social. In addition to evaluating the potential of different approaches, the project will co-create customized sustainability assessment systems that integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, says Matthew Murphy, a UVic Gustavson School of Business professor of sustainability and strategy, and project director of the Balance Co-Lab.

“Self-determination is the foundation to everything, and our model on how to support that goes to other Indigenous communities around the world as a model of what can be contained in the models. Establishing their own indicators is a key part to this as well as building governance and decision making in the hands of the people,” Murphy says.

The project’s primary partners, however, were local Indigenous governments, organizations and community members. While they have “open and invitational” community approval of the work, Tsawout First Nation planned a lead partner role. Tsawout welcomed the field school to their new homeland in the first days of the project, where Elders from Tsawout, Xa angled and Tsartlip shared with students essentials teachings on how to carry themselves in ways like this, and align with each territories in ways that align with their own values and governance practices.

Murphy notes that Ktìpa Morgan, the curator of the SAS framework, founded with Mikea partners in Astoria New Zealand to determine the best approach to environmental re-

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I’m so impressed with their proactiveness, creativity, workshops,” says Bagelman.

The Ring

Hannah Gentes spends her days facilitating community-led initiatives in coastal restoration; she also exchanged knowledge of environmental stewardship in Indigenous coastal management. “I have no doubt their actions will help in articulating climate change and biodiversity. At the end of the summit, Inuit participants were presented with a United Nations certificate to acknowledge their contribution to the thematic work of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

“Seeing these amazing young Inuvialuit leaders become the change is the most incredible moment I’ve ever experienced,” says Bagelman. “It warms my heart,“ says Gauthier. “Their voices will be heard. They are bringing change and building relationships that have formed something meaningful. This workshop brought together leaders from Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Nunavik to learn about and contribute to coastal stewardship in the Arctic.”

“During the summer summit, Inuit leaders exchange knowledge through film, music and dance and can play a role in elevating climate change and supporting mental wellness. They also exchanged knowledge of environmental stewardship with Indigenous communities local to Coastal British Columbia.”

“With the aim of encouraging the leadership of Indigenous coastal peoples and to discuss the replication of objects from the Arctic. This research, and this program, is especially important initiative recognizing the leadership in coastal restoration projects in BC’s water systems through a lens of community engagement and Indigenous knowledge. From applying for grants to getting into the field and reporting on outreach activities, everything is a learning experience from managing shoreline change crews to liaise with communities and to be the change we want to see happen to create a sustainable future for our planet.”

“Scientists have long been aware of the importance of community engagement in coastal restoration projects in BC’s water systems through a lens of community engagement and Indigenous knowledge. From applying for grants to getting into the field and reporting on outreach activities, everything is a learning experience from managing shoreline change crews to liaise with communities and to be the change we want to see happen to create a sustainable future for our planet.”

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