

BACKGROUNDER: Aboriginal Canadian Entrepreneurs Program

Apr. 3, 2018

Program Fast Facts

Notable achievements of the Aboriginal Canadian Entrepreneurs program since launching in 2013:

- 275 graduates (as of April 2018) from 18 program cohorts
- ACE program offered in 26 Indigenous communities, including Prince George, Terrace and Haida Gwaii
- 72 businesses started by ACE alumni
- 34 ACE alumni pursuing further education
- 128 ACE alumni currently completing their business startup plans
- Program delivered by 163 instructors and mentors
- 30 per cent of instructors and mentors are Indigenous

Program Overview

The [Aboriginal Canadian Entrepreneurs Program](#) was developed in partnership with [Tribal Resources Investment Corporation](#) (TRICORP) and the University of Victoria's [Gustavson School of Business](#). It provides culturally sensitive and community-tailored business education to ensure the full participation of Indigenous people in the Canadian economy through business ownership.

Program Structure

Designed by a collaborative team of Indigenous business leaders and accomplished business professors, ACE focuses in the following ways on balancing leading-edge concepts with practical, experiential learning to explore entrepreneurship in a culturally appropriate way:

- **Bringing the university to the community:** a team of professors from Gustavson delivers courses in person, in community.
- **Enabling entrepreneurs to practice honing their opportunity:** identification, networking, negotiation, selling, and strategic- planning skills to create businesses that tap into local economic opportunities and strengthen their community.
- **Integrating Indigenous cultural elements into the curriculum** to communicate entrepreneurship from the Indigenous perspective.
- **Expanding students' experiences beyond business planning** to encompass collaboration, social innovation and positive cultural identity.
- **Mentoring students to supplement classroom learning:** community mentors provide students with insight into community building, the personal aspects of entrepreneurship, networking and financial opportunities.

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Approach businesses by *using* Indigenous culture and heritage, not *losing* it
- Complete a professional business plan that can secure startup financing
- Start new collaborative-based businesses that are viable and durable
- Become more employable in area of business interest

- Build the learning confidence of Indigenous students to further their education beyond the ACE program

Program Awards:

2016 Alan Blizzard Award, from the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. This national award celebrates excellence in collaboration in teaching. The award recognized the outstanding teamwork demonstrated by TRICORP, Service Canada, UVic Gustavson School of Business, and Aboriginal communities in the development and presentation of ACE.

2016 Gold Global Best Award Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Skills for the North America Region. Sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada and International Business Partnership Network, the award recognizes outstanding business education, business and community organization partnerships that have a significant impact on the communities in which they operate.

2016 Overall Global Best Award. ACE was selected from among the Global Best award recipients as the overall winner, chosen from a competitive pool of six categories encompassing seven world regions and 84 finalists.

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