Winter 2026

Newsletter

The Office of the Vice-President Indigenous and The Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement







Teachings

Hé?ək^w ?ə cə čəléŋən łtə HÁEQ ŁTE OL TŦE ĆELÁŊEN ŁTE **Remember our ancestors** and birthright

> Nəćəmaat kwəns če?i Ć&NEUEL OL **Work together**

Nəẃes šx™ cən ʔaý šq™eləqwən ÁMEKT TŦEN ÍY, ŚKÁLE¢EN Bring in your good heart and mind

Le?t šx* helə ?ə cə mak* sče?i sə? S,HOL ET MEQ EN ENÁ SE SĆA Be prepared for the work to come

> Ləkwəŋən – top SENĆOŦEN – middle

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Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the Ləkwəŋən (Songhees and Xwsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkwəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Governor General Visit

In February, UVic held an emotion-filled event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action. Special guest Her Excellency The Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada and UVic Honorary LLD, began with opening remarks that touched on her personal experience at the TRC and her childhood and education in Nunavik. Simon highlighted the comprehensive work UVic has done in response to the 94 Calls to Action, including the Indigenous Resurgence and Language Revitalization program, the world's first JD/JID law degree and the recently-opened National Centre for Indigenous Laws (NCIL) at the Faculty of Law.

Joined by UVic faculty John Borrows, Andrea Wash and Hayalthkin'geme, Carey Newman, Associate University Librarian—Reconciliation Ry Moran moderated a panel discussion to inspire Canadians to think about actions past, present and future.

Simon reminds us of "Ajuinata, never give up," an Inuktitut word that urges us to engage students and youth in current discussions because they will be responsible for the ongoing work of reconciliation in the future.



Her Excellency The Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada.



Ry Moran moderating a panel discussion with Andrea Walsh, Carey Newman and John Borrows.

Meet the team and new faces of the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE)

We are excited to welcome four new staff members in the IACE office, and three new staff members in OVPI! Join us welcoming everyone to the team, and make sure to say hello!



Aja Sy Communications Officer

My role is to create culturally informed communications and marketing plans, guided by the objectives and priorities of IACE. I also work closely with the University Communications and Marketing (UCAM) staff to ensure broad and consistent IACE branding across campus.



Charlotte Charlie Cultural Protocol Liaison

I provide guidance on Coast Salish protocols, support cultural programming, and coordinate the Elders' Voices program at the First Peoples House to strengthen relationships across campus and community



Doreen Provencher Administrative Officer

My role involves close collaboration with the Executive Director on managing the department budgets and ensuring the departments administrative functions run effectively. I am honored to be part of this team.



opportunities and provide ongoing support for first year Indigenous students in STEM programs.

I develop student engagement

Izzy Ward LE, NONET First Year

STEM Coordinator

Mini-University Summer Camp 2025

The Indigenous Student Mini-University Summer Camp is hosted annually by the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement. This transformative initiative is designed specifically for Indigenous students in grades 9 to 12 residing in British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

The Mini-University Summer Camp includes a large range of academic, physical, creative, cultural and social activities. This year's camp featured many specialized programming events. From STEM and biology workshops to a career and faculty fair, and more creative programs like drum-making and salve-making, there is something for every student to enjoy. Over the course of the week, students participate in sessions that nurture skills which can be applied both in and outside of university settings.



Students at the Biology Workshop.



Salve-making workshop









Group shot: Students and staff from Mini-U 2025





Scan here to view the 2025 Mini-U Photobook!

Week of Welcome

Each semester, IACE hosts a Week of Welcome that encourages new and returning students to learn about the services offered in the First Peoples House and across campus. Taking place from September 8 to 12, Week of Welcome had much to offer!

- Daily Grab n' Go breakfast
- Elders' Brunch
- Student Support Fair
- Noon networking with Co-op & Career
- Meet n' Greet with the Native Student Union
- Bingo Lunch

Stay tuned to learn about next semester's Week of Welcome!



taff, students, and Elders laugh at the Elders' Brunc

Orange Shirt Day 2025

On Monday, September 29, 2025, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members gathered in the Quad to honour the lost children and Survivors of residential schools. their families and communities.

This year's gathering was especially important as it marks the 10th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Key speakers included Dr. Barney Williams, a Residential School Survivor, and Shauntelle Dick-Charleson, Victoria's Youth Poet Laureate and a member of the Songhees Nation. Alongside Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas, acting president and vice-chancellor and Ry Moran, associate university librarian - reconciliation, they shared reflections, poetry and teachings.

In the First Peoples House, the IACE team came together to provide a chill space for students to gather as an alternative to the event in the quad.



Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas speaks at the Orange Shirt Day event

New Staff & Faculty Blanketing Ceremony

In August, the UVic community welcomed over 15 new Indigenous staff, faculty, and librarians. To honour their arrival, a traditional blanketing ceremony was held in the Ceremonial Hall at the First Peoples House. Facilitated by members of local Coast Salish Nations, this ceremony allowed new staff, faculty, and librarians to request permission to live and work on Coast Salish territory. Followed by a delicious lunch and lots of visiting, this event was the perfect way to ring in the 2025/2026 academic year.

"This ceremony, the act of seeking permission to live and work on the land, is so important. It is more than words, it moves us, as people to action, to engaging in a process, and it teaches us to be humble in walking on these lands and in our relationships"

> —Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas, Acting President and Vice-Chancellor



Left to right: Andrea Thibodeau (IACE), Joy Charleson (OVPI), Peyton Juhnke (OVPI), Carmin Bear Blomberg (OVPI), Keyara Brody (OVPI)



Family and friends attending the new staff & faculty blanketing ceremony



Lola Garcia (IACE) and Kathy Horne, Elder in Residence



Staff and Faculty Blanketing Ceremony

Distinguished Alumni Awards

The fifel ?a kws Xkwexneq SkwukwelsteneX | SlÁMĆEŁ | Distinguished Alumni Awards recognize the outstanding achievements of UVic Alumni in three categories including the Presidents' Alumni Awards, Emerging Alumni Awards and the Indigenous Community Alumni Awards. This year, the Indigenous Community Alumni Award was presented to four remarkable Indigenous women who graduated from UVic in the last three decades.



Crystal Clark is a Cree/Dene and Métis mother, artist, and Indigenous education specialist. Graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts in 2002, Clark has worked within First Nations and public schools across Alberta. Clark is also a two-time recipient of the Peace Hills Trust Art Award.



Verna (Pepeyla) Miller is a Residential School Survivor and member of the Nlaka'pamux homelands within the Interior Salish area of BC. Graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and Environmental Studies in 1996, she is the former director of Tmixw Research, an Indigenous research group interested in ethnobiology, water right, title and rights, cultural and sacred landscapes, and archaeology.



Aaju Peter is an Inuk lawyer, activist, educator and sealskin clothing designer who graduated from UVic with a Bachelor of Laws in 2005 and a Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization in 2022. In 2005 she was a part of the inaugural graduating class of the Akitsiraq program that involved partnership between UVic Law, the Akitsiraw Law School Society and Nunavut Arctic College.



Marcia Turner is a proud Gitxsan woman, and the founder and CEO of Daxgedim Haanak' Consulting, which specializes in systems change, decolonization and the advancement of the rights of Indigenous peoples. She graduated from UVic with a Certificate in Administration in Aboriginal Governance in 1996, followed by a Diploma in Public Sector Management in 2005, and a Bachelor of Arts in 2012.

New Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria recently updated its territory acknowledgement as a part of our relational duties to the Ləkwəŋən (Songhees and Xwsepsəm/Esquimalt) and WSÁNEĆ Peoples on whose territories we live, learn and work. The territory acknowledgement is not a static statement, but rather a living expression of respect, responsibility and reciprocity.

In addition to the updated statement, UVic also created a new territory acknowledgement video. All members of the UVic community are encouraged to use these two pieces together as a starting point. By doing so, we can begin to uphold our ongoing commitment to understanding our responsibilities as guests in these territories.

UVic extends a special thank you to Yux'wey'lupton, Dr. Clarence "Butch" Dick of the Songhees Nation, who generously shared his knowledge, language and teachings which guided and shaped this new territory acknowledgement and video.

Indspire Joins Up with UVic

In March, Indspire partnered with UVic to host "Pathways to Wellness: An Indigenous Student Dialogue", an event that encouraged Indigenous students to share their voices, and shape the futures of Indigenous student wellness and support services. Over the course of two full days, Indigenous UVic students, Indspire Award Laureates, and Indspire staff came together in the Ceremonial Hall at the First Peoples House to participate in this student dialogue event. With only 20 spots available, "Pathways to Wellness" featured keynotes, panels, breakout discussions and notable speakers Dr. Christopher Mushquash—Health (2023), Adam Gauthier— Youth - First Nation (2024), and Braden Kadlun—Youth -Inuit (2024). Attending students received a \$500 honorarium and were provided with meals and beverages throughout the course of the event.



Group shot of all those who attended the Indspire event!

Meet the 2025/2026 Native Student Union Council



Molly AkermanCouncillor-at-Large



Achilles LevanCouncillor-at-Large



James Dawson Councillor-at-Large



Leo Dougan Councillor-at-Large



K'sana Wood Lynes-Ford Stewardship Councillor



Anakin Bennett
Advocacy Councillor



Kwiadda McEvoy Communications Councillor



Lauren Aimoe Firekeeper

Mock Interview Clinic & Career Fair

On November 4th, the First Peoples House welcomed over 18 organizations to the Mock Interview Clinic and Career Fair for Indigenous students. From 11:00am to 2:00pm students attended the Career Fair, encouraging them to explore their curiosities about career opportunities for Indigenous students. The fair was a place to network with company representatives, ask questions, and explore the various pathways that can be taken after graduation. Complimentary lunch was provided for all those in attendance.

After a break to eat and enjoy each others' company, the Mock Interview Clinic began. From 1:30pm - 4:30pm, students were encouraged to practice their interview skills for a sample job in a realistic setting. Students were able to register for a 30-minute mock interview, followed by a 15-minute employer feedback session. Each year, the Mock Interview Clinic and Career Fair for Indigenous Students provides a place students to be curious, network, and engage with their future in a meaningful way. The IACE team extends a special thank you to the organizations in attendance.

Deloitte | First Nations Health Authority | Island Trust Conservancy | Peninsula Stream Society | RAVEN Trust | Science Venture | TRIUMF | Victoria Native Friendship Centre | BCAA | BC Assessment | Culture Foundry Studios | Indigenous Perspectives Society | Khowutzun Development Corporation | Make a Future—Careers in BC Education | McElhanney | Public Service Commission of Canada | Scotiabank Canada | Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services



Students exploring booths at the Career Fair



Staff from Career, Employment, and **Education Resources**



Students explore the BC Assessment booth

Campus Cousins

The LE, NONET Campus Cousins program consists of Indigenous upper-level undergraduate and graduate students who are passionate leaders, and dedicated to building a strong, inclusive community at the First Peoples House. This fall, 13 new Campus Cousins were welcomed to the First Peoples House.

From academic support to fun events, the Campus Cousins do it all! Do you need support in navigating your course load? Need a friend to study with for your next exam? Looking for fun activities to do on campus? The Campus Cousins are equipped to help Indigenous students in all of these areas, and more! With the help of LE, NONET Student Leadership Coordinator Lauren McLean, the Campus Cousins have already hosted numerous student events this year.

In October, the Cousins facilitated a drop-in art/regalia making workshop, bringing students together for sewing, beading and community-building. They also hosted a pumpkin carving session filled with fall vibes and "Spooky-Okee", a karaoke night where students could sing their favourite tunes! Followed by a pizza and movie night with a screening of *Twilight*, and "Halloween at the House", involving a costume contest and talent show-- October was a busy month for the Cousins!

Meet the Campus Cousins Crew!





Keira

Caleb

Grace

Delwyn







Melanie

Natasha

Christina

Carter









Ellashani

Shaunti

Kali

Christobel





Follow the Campus Cousins on Instagram! @campus_cousins

Mercedes

Welcome New OVPI Staff



Carmin Bear BlombergPolicy Navigation Officer

As the Policy Navigation Officer, I advise on the effective implementation of the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) policy, and support other initiatives, priorities and activities to create strengths-based and relationshiporiented approaches to Indigenous student outreach, orientation, retention and success.



Keyara Brody Policy Implementation Officer

As the Policy Implementation
Manager I support the coordination
and implementation of the
Indigenous Citizenship Declaration
(ICD) Policy. My work centers
Indigenous self-determination,
community accountability and
building meaningful relationships
with Nations, organizations and
community partners.



Joy Charleson Administrative Assistant

I'm excited to begin my new role as the OVPI Administrative Assistant. Supporting and working with our people is something I truly love, and I'm passionate about helping our community grow and thrive. It's an honour to be part of this team, and I look forward to building strong relationships, learning together, and contributing in meaningful ways.

Indigenous Citizenship Declaration

As of November 1, 2025, the Office of the Vice President Indigenous (OVPI) has revised the eligibility process for Indigenous-specific opportunities that result in material gain. The Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) Policy is the first of its kind in British Columbia. This process ensures that opportunities for material gain that are designated for Indigenous Peoples are accessed by Indigenous Peoples. It also ensures that the eligibility requirements for these opportunities align with the ways that Indigenous Nations, Peoples, and communities determine their Citizenship. With careful implementation and dedicated support staff, the ICD Policy will strengthen the ways that Indigenous Peoples bring our distinct ways of knowing and being into teaching, governance, and service at the university.



Learn more about UVic's Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Policy uvic.ca/ovpi/icd

Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Policy FAQs

What is the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) Policy?

The ICD Policy ensures that opportunities of material gain intended for Indigenous Peoples are accessed by Indigenous Peoples. The ICD Policy affirms UVic's commitment to uphold Indigenous laws and protocols, ensuring that the eligibility requirements for opportunities designated for Indigenous Peoples are consistent with the ways that Indigenous Nations, Peoples and Communities determine their citizenship. You can find more info about the ICD Policy and its development on our website. Scan the QR code or visit the link to learn more.

Why is the ICD Policy important?

It protects the integrity of Indigenous-specific opportunities that result in material gain and ensures they benefit Indigenous Peoples in the ways intended. It also affirms the authority of Indigenous Peoples, Nations and Communities to determine their citizenship in accordance with their own legal orders, governance structures, customs and traditions. This shift ensures that opportunities and resources designated for Indigenous peoples are granted based on collective and lawful recognition of Indigenous citizenship and belonging, rather than self-identification alone.

When and how can I engage with the policy?

You can engage with the policy at anytime through logging into the ICD Application portal found on our website (link below). You will only have to engage with the policy if you are applying for new Indigenous-specific opportunities of material gain such as employment, awards or designated seats whose applications have opened after the effective date of Nov 1st, 2025. The implementation of the ICD policy has a staggered timeline, if you are unsure of when you will need to engage with the ICD Policy reach out to your unit head or to vpiicd@uvic.ca.







































Contact us

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