



University  
of Victoria

Law

JD/JID JOINT  
DEGREE PROGRAM  
IN CANADIAN  
COMMON LAW  
AND INDIGENOUS  
LEGAL ORDERS



# THE JD/JID — A UNIQUE AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAM

## JD/JID

The joint degree program in Canadian Common Law (JD) and Indigenous Legal Orders (JID) is the first of its kind in the world. This innovative program, combining the studies of Canadian Common Law and Indigenous peoples' laws, is breaking new ground for legal education in Canada and has earned UVic's Faculty of Law a well-deserved national and international reputation for leadership in Indigenous legal education and research.

Students graduate in four years with two professional degrees and a rigorous understanding of Indigenous law and governance, the academic qualifications to pursue a career in Canadian Common Law, and the fluency to create and manage institutions functioning across both spheres.



*"Law is so much more than words on a page, it is an essential part of a society's governance, culture, identity and way of expressing responsibility to each other"*

Val Napoleon, Director, Indigenous Law Research Unit, Professor and Law Foundation Chair of Indigenous Justice and Governance.

More and more, the Canadian legal system is recognising the merits of Indigenous legal orders, and progress is being made in Canadian federal, provincial and municipal legislation and policies, in partnership with Indigenous communities, in the areas of: governance, child welfare, criminal law, environmental law, intellectual property and many other areas. It is a hope of the program that its graduates will use the knowledge and skills they acquire during their studies to assist in efforts to expand the use of Indigenous legal orders in ways that will benefit Indigenous peoples across Canada and to strengthen Canadian society, and both the Canadian and Indigenous legal orders.



*Students devote one full term in each of their third and fourth years to field schools, where they learn from community-based experts on a particular Indigenous people's legal order and work with the community on law-related projects.*

## Field Schools

Students devote one semester of their third and fourth years to field schools, which allow learners and Indigenous communities to participate in knowledge sharing and legal skills development in practical and meaningful ways.

Under academic supervision, students learn from community-based experts on a particular Indigenous people's legal order, observe the ways in which Indigenous legal processes are being employed today, and work with the community on law-related projects.

Many students in the JD/JID program have said the field schools were the most impactful part of the program:

*"The knowledge and experiences we were exposed to during our field schools constitute some of the most profound occasions of my life. For the study of Indigenous legal orders, there truly is no educational alternative for spending time on the land with Knowledge Keepers who live and breathe a territory."*

Katie Mysak, JD/JID grad class of 2022.

## National Centre for Indigenous Laws\*

The university is expanding the Faculty of Law's Fraser Building to house a new National Centre for Indigenous Laws (NCIL). It will be an iconic, exemplary and Indigenous-informed facility that provides space appropriate for the learning and practice of Indigenous Laws for the JD/JID program and JD program, public legal education and outreach initiatives, Indigenous partnerships, research and knowledge transfer.

The new space will have an Elders' room and garden, and spaces for gathering, ceremony, and sharing of histories and knowledge. The design of the building will facilitate place-based learning and will create a flow between indoor/outdoor space including an outdoor learning deck, a sky classroom and a maker's room.

\* Provisional name.



*"In the tradition of the Coast Salish big houses, we have created the Centre as a place where Indigenous law is practiced, oral traditions are transmitted, legal issues and important decisions are deliberated over, and relationships are fostered and strengthened through visiting, feasting, singing and dancing."*

Sarah Morales (Su-taxwiye), Associate Professor, Coast Salish and member of the Cowichan Tribes.





The first cohort of JD/JID graduates celebrate at the Songhees Wellness Centre.

Photo credit: David Murphy

## Transforming the legal landscape



A new convocation hood was designed for JD/JID graduates by local Coast Salish artist Dylan Thomas from the Lyackson First Nation. The hood depicts Qeyux, a supernatural being associated with Ka:als who is a key figure in Coast Salish Mythology that had the ability to transform the world around him. The new convocation hood visually and symbolically expresses the essential role of Indigenous laws in Canada's multi-juridical system.

*"One of my life's great privileges was to walk the path of law school alongside the rest of my cohort. We had the opportunity to learn from some of the most well renowned Indigenous professors, First Nations communities, Hereditary Chiefs and educators - no other law school could provide that type of education."*

Jolene Ashini, Innu from Labrador,  
JD/JID grad class of 2022.

*"The JD/JID program truly changed my life and who I am as a person. I am deeply grateful to not only have had the opportunity to engage with Indigenous laws, but to have new ways of approaching problems, finding solutions, and understanding my relationality in this world. This is a law program like no other."*

Emmaline English, JD/JID grad class of 2023

## A record of achievement

JD/JID graduates are working in law firms across Canada, including Indigenous law firms in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Victoria and Whitehorse.

They are consistently recognized by employers for how well prepared they are and able to draw on a broader knowledge of both Indigenous laws and Canadian Common law.

Examples of JD/JID student articling positions:

- Yukon Legal Aid
- Criminal Defense Ontario
- BC Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and Prosecution Service
- Ministry of Attorney General Ontario
- Access Pro Bono BC's Everyone Legal Clinic
- Indigenous law firms across Canada

For more information, please visit: [uvic.ca/law/jid](http://uvic.ca/law/jid) or email [lawadmss@uvic.ca](mailto:lawadmss@uvic.ca).

The JD/JID program is a direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #50.

Cover art by Val Napoleon