

FINDING OUR PATH TOGETHER

Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Policy

External Report | Summer 2025



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Message from Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Dr. Robina Thomas, VP Indigenous

The University of Victoria's (UVic) renewed Xwkwənənistəl | W@ENENISTEL | Helping to move each other forward (Indigenous Plan, 2023) outlines a strong commitment to align the University with Indigenous laws and protocols. This commitment extends to 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. UVic, like many other post-secondary institutions, are revising the terms of eligibility for opportunities designated for Indigenous Peoples that result in material gain.

We have heard from our səlxwéyn | SELWÁN | Elders the importance of this work in upholding integrity, truth, respect and accountability. This work must be grounded in Skwes | TTE SKÁLS I, TTE Ś,XENANS | The Laws and Philosophies of these lands, and it must affirm the authority of Indigenous Peoples to determine their citizenship in accordance with their own legal orders, governance structures, customs and traditions. Our dear Elders tell us that we have a responsibility to ensure that the resources and opportunities set aside for Indigenous Peoples.

Through the development of the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) Policy and Associated procedures, we centered taking care of the well-being of the Indigenous community here at UVic. We remain committed to the continuity of this care by walking alongside individuals as they navigate this process with us.

I want to hold my hands up, with the deepest of respect, to the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Committee (ICDC) for the investment of your time and knowledge, as well as your tireless commitment to doing this work in a good way. To all those that attended any of our engagement sessions, provided feedback through our survey, or sat with us one-on-one, thank you for sharing your perspectives and experiences with us. You have shaped this policy to ensure it is reflective of the diverse lived experiences of our Indigenous community.

Huy tseep q'u Siem thank you respected ones.

R. Thomas

Guiding Commitments

Etalewtxw | ÁTOL,ÁUTW | Centre of respect for the rights of one another and all beings, the Office of the Vice-President Indigenous (OVPI) worked alongside our Elders to ground this work in the teachings and wisdom of the local Nations. Alongside the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Committee (ICDC), the foundational guiding commitments outlined below were established and upheld at every stage of this process. The ICDC worked to build trust and confidence among the Indigenous community at UVic. Regular updates were provided, and the ICDC remained available to ongoing feedback from the community.

Nawes šxw can ?ay šqwelaqwan | ÁMEKT TŦEN ÍY, ŚKÁLE¢EN:

We bring a good heart and good mind into our work, building relationships based on trust and respect.

Le?t šxw helə ?ə cə məkw sče?i sə? | S,HOL EŢ MEQ EN ENÁ SE SĆÆ:

We prepare ourselves for the work ahead with a view towards a future of promise and abundance.

Humility: We step into a learning position and recognize that this work is ongoing.

Inclusion & Intersectionality: We bring a diversity of voices to the table, and we recognize in this work the ways that colonization has functioned to undermine Indigenous self-determination and disrupt kinship and family relations.

Honesty & Dignity: We maintain a respectful environment where all members are encouraged and empowered to communicate disagreements in good faith and bring their whole selves into decision making.

Transparency: We work with open doors.

Privacy: We uphold the confidentiality of sensitive disclosures and information, and we work to align data collection and storage with data sovereignty principles.

Executive Summary

This report follows the roadmap the OVPI designed for the ICD's development process:



For each of the two phases of engagement, this report dives into an overview of the questions asked, the key themes that emerged from responses, and recommendations moving forward through this process.

These recommendations were largely grouped under the categories of:

- (1) engagement and communications
- (2) verification criteria
- (3) case-by-case procedural recommendations
- (4) non-policy related responses
- (5) implementation recommendations.

Phase one also looks at how the engagement strategy was received by the Indigenous community at UVic and how it was adapted moving into phase two as a result. Following this is an explanation of the approach to engaging specifically on drafts of the policy and procedures, as well as information on the portal development process. Wrapping up this report is the implementation plan for the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures.



Background

In various sectors, including post-secondary education, we have seen a rise of instances of individuals fraudulently claiming Indigeneity, resulting in the exploitation of Indigenous-specific resources or opportunities for material gain. As a result, several post-secondary institutions have begun transitioning away from self-identification towards affirming citizenship determined by Indigenous Nations, Peoples, and communities. 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.

The University of Victoria holds a commitment to recognizing and respecting the self-determination of Indigenous Nations. In "Indigenous Citizenship and Civil Society: An Intervention," Val Napoleon (2024) writes that:

"All Indigenous peoples had a legal order complete with laws; institutions through which law operates, legal authorities, substantive and procedural rights, legal obligations, and guiding legal principles.

These legal orders have been undermined but they have not disappeared, and across the country, Indigenous peoples are rebuilding their laws sector by sector – lands and resources, child welfare, governance, citizenship, water, dispute resolution, family, and so on."

Established from the beginning of this work, the policy includes key principles that reflect UVic's responsibility to ensure that institutional, decision-making processes uphold and affirm the ways that distinct Indigenous Nations exercise their laws. The implementation of the policy will be informed by the directions and requirements set by Indigenous Nations and their distinct practices for recognizing belonging.

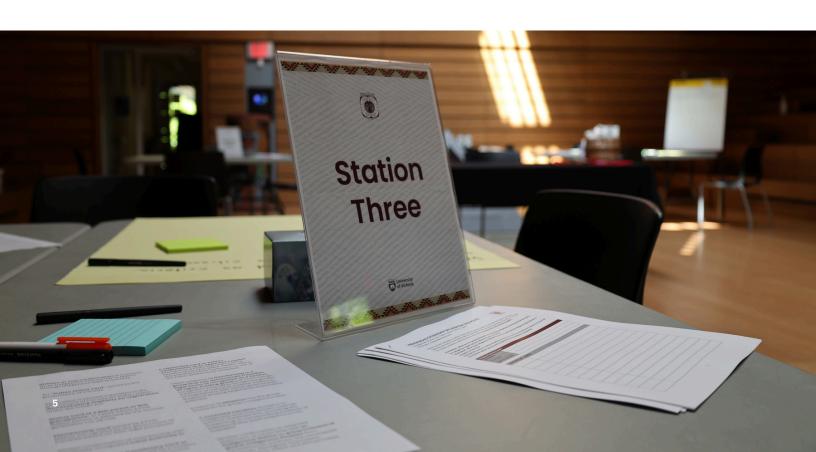
The committee guiding this work approached the development of this policy with humility and with the intention of stepping into a learning position to hold up our complexities and experiences with care. As a baseline for the work ahead, the university affirms how Naiomi Metallic & Cheyrl Simon (In "A Human Rights and Legal Analysis of the Understanding our Roots Report," 2023) understood institutional responses to this complexity:

"The areas of uncertainty are far greater than those that are clear. As a result, there will always be a degree of uncertainty that must be managed, the key will lie in addressing this uncertainty with the appropriate tools. Attempts to create blunt and simplistic definitions of who is Indigenous has been the approach taken by settler governments and is what has created the complex problem we face today" (p.66).

To further understand the scope of the work ahead, the Office of the Vice-President Indigenous (OVPI) began a process of understanding how other post-secondary institutions have approached efforts to revise eligibility procedures for Indigenous-specific opportunities. As of Summer 2025, we have reviewed several reports and policies drafted by the following institutions and agencies:

- Dalhousie University
- McGill University
- Queen's University
- The Tri-Agency (Government of Canada)
- University of Manitoba
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Waterloo
- University of Winnipeg
- Western University
- Wilfrid Laurier University

The OVPI continues to invite feedback on the ICD Policy and Procedures, which will undergo a two-year review process concluding in 2027. Two staff positions have been created to guide and support the implementation of the policy. The **Policy Implementation Manager** will support the process of building relationships with Indigenous Nations and will monitor applications, best practices, and the accurate, respectful implementation and communication of this policy across campus. This work will be deeply supported by the **Policy Navigation Officer** who will support students, staff and faculty in interacting with the new eligibility process and navigating the challenges associated with these new procedures.



Roadmap of ICD Engagement Strategy



Research and Committee Formation

As the university began to consider revising eligibility requirements, the OVPI met with səlxwéyn sqwél | SELWÁN SKÁL | Elders' Voices in Fall 2023 to receive guidance on how to move forward in protecting opportunities of material gain designated for Indigenous peoples at UVic, while ensuring that this work remained rooted Skwes | TTE SKÁLs I, TTE Ś,XENANs | The Laws and Philosophies of these lands. The Elders shared that UVic has a responsibility to ensure that the opportunities that it purports are for Indigenous peoples, go to Indigenous peoples, and that this policy is to be seen as a way of upholding healthy boundaries as a community.

To assist undertaking this work, the Vice-President Indigenous struck the ICDC, an expanded subcommittee of the Indigenous Strategic Leadership Advisory (ISLA) group, which brought together Indigenous students, Indigenous faculty and staff, and individuals from the University Secretary, Faculty Relations, the Faculty Association, Human Resources, the Office of the Registrar, the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE) and the OVPII. These members were selected to help the OVPI develop an engagement process that resulted in clear policy directions and implementation guidelines.

The committee also included leadership from other, non-Indigenous units on campus to help the OVPI through navigating complex institutional procedures and to share the knowledge and understanding of the issues necessary for the careful implementation of a policy of this nature. Through monthly meetings, the ICDC strategized an engagement process that would seek to include diverse and distinct perspectives from the Indigenous community at UVic to the table.

¹A full list of ICDC members is included in Appendix A: ICD Committee Membership and Terms of Reference.





Engagement Phase One

By Summer 2024, the ICDC began the first phase of engagement which focused on gathering input from the community pertaining to the scope of the policy, methods of demonstrating Indigenous citizenship, and identifying potential barriers or concerns. The consultation process included two in-person sessions, which more than 40 individuals attended, and an online survey that received 271 validated responses.²

An external consulting company was brought in to support these sessions, which included Indigenous counsellors for cultural support. There were four stations set up, each with their own engagement question and facilitator. Attendees were invited to sit with their colleagues and friends at these tables and encouraged to rotate between questions at their own pace.

Questions asked during the first phase of engagement sought to gather qualitative data on:

- How people are feeling about the development of this policy including its strengths and potential shortcomings or barriers it may cause, and the scope of who and what it should apply to;
- How Indigenous Peoples and Nations are conceptualizing what Indigenous citizenship is and how it can be demonstrated through various forms of supporting documents or information;
- Potential challenges for affirming claims of Indigenous citizenship;
- Terms that need to be clarified through robust definitions.

In-Person Sessions

At the in-person engagement sessions, the following questions were asked:

- What are the potential benefits of developing an Indigenous citizenship declaration policy for Indigenous opportunities? What are your concerns?
- What does Indigenous citizenship mean to you? How do Indigenous laws facilitate or recognize citizenship?
- What should be included as criteria to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship?
- What barriers exist when demonstrating Indigenous citizenship?

Survey

The survey was open for five weeks and five incentives were mailed to respondents selected at random. Between 900-1,200 people received the survey by email, and others were reached through social media and targeted outreach via UVic department administrative officers. It took respondents an average of 12 minutes and 30 seconds to complete the survey and it had a 77% completion rate. Of the 12 questions asked, two were demographic and one of which asked respondents to identify their relationship with UVic, which was the only required question.

² The survey received 304 total responses, 271 of which were validated while 33 were screened out as spam, bots, AI generated answers, or incomplete.

The remaining questions asked were as follows:

- 1. Does your department, unit or faculty have a process beyond self-identification for determining the eligibility of candidates for Indigenous-specific opportunities? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents)
- 2. If yes, what processes have been useful? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents)
- 3. If you have served on an adjudication, hiring or search committee, what challenges have you encountered with the process of determining a candidate's eligibility for an Indigenous-specific opportunity? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents)
- 4. The ICD Committee has identified the following examples of material gain. In your opinion, is there anything missing from this list for which you think a verification process at UVic should apply?
- 5. In your opinion, are there any specific opportunities where a verification process should not be applied?⁴
- 6. Please list any specific concerns or questions you may have about any of the above methods of verifying citizenship.
- 7. Based on your context and experience, what are other ways that people are recognized by their communities and Nations?
- 8. As we seek your thoughts on the design of a case-by-case verification process, what are some of the barriers to demonstrating citizenship with an Indigenous Nation or community?
- 9. What other words, concepts and ideas need to be defined for folks implementing and understanding the revised eligibility process?
- 10. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

⁴ The following list was provided as student services that would be excluded from the scope of the policy: Indigenous counselling/counsellors, First Peoples House Elders in Residence, Access to spaces in the First Peoples House, Food services and food programs, Academic Advising services, Community events, Centre for accessible learning/tutoring, Indigenous Student Support (IACE, Residence Life, etc.), Financial Aid (i.e. Emergency Bursaries), Student awards and scholarships, Health/Nurse and wellness supports, and Housing.



³ Material gain was defined as "having financial, professional and/or other tangible benefit." The list provided was: Full-time, part-time, term or continuing employment, Promotion, appointment and re-appointment, Salary adjustments or awards, Collective Agreement funds or leaves, Awards, bursaries and scholarships, Research grants, Financial aid, Designated seats on committees and governance boards, Fellowship or apprenticeship opportunities, Participation in mentorship programs, Designated seats in programs or courses, Designated spaces in student housing, and Access to Indigenous-specific campus services.

Recommendations: Phase One

All the data from these engagement activities was thematically analyzed and coded using Indigenous approaches that centred Indigenous ways of knowing and being, ethics of relationality, and cultural protocols, then brought together into a fulsome internal report that was circulated to members of ICDC. This report contained the high-level themes that responses to the engagement questions were organized under, anonymized quotes from participants, and emerging recommendations from the feedback received.

Following analysis, all responses were scanned for recommendations which were organized under the following categories: (1) communications and engagement, (2) verification criteria, (3) procedural, and (4) implementation.

This feedback was used to create an internal report for the ICDC, to inform early drafts of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures, and to develop phase two engagement questions and resources. These recommendations also helped to identify gaps in understanding and areas that necessitated further conversation, further informing the phase two engagement strategy.

Below are some of the key recommendations that emerged from this phase of engagement⁶:

- Advertise phase two engagement sessions further in advance, through more channels, and with more opportunities for students to contribute.
- Recenter Indigenous legal orders and the self-determination and sovereignty of communities to determine their own citizenship criteria.
- Clarify key elements regarding the scope of the policy: (1) it applies only where there are instances of material gain designated for Indigenous peoples, (2) it does not impact the ability to self-identify as Indigenous, (3) it will not be retroactively applied to those that have accessed an opportunity through a process of self-identification, (4) the process will only need to be completed once to access future and multiple opportunities, and (5) it cannot address instances where fraud has occurred.
- Continue developing a case-by-case process that is robust enough to mitigate Indigenous identity fraud, yet flexible enough to remain inclusive of legitimate Indigenous peoples with complex circumstances.
- Narrow down what 'Indigenous-specific campus services' will be included within the scope of the policy.
- Consider how this process might differ in its application with faculty/staff versus students, and what additional supports or resources can be developed for students through consultation with Indigenous student support staff.
- Identify harm mitigation strategies and mental health supports to direct individuals to, understanding the potential of this process to retraumatize, trigger, or otherwise negatively impact Indigenous individuals.

The Phase 1 Rollout Summary, an outward facing public report, summarized what was asked, the strengths and concerns associated with this process, and additional considerations for how individuals could demonstrate citizenship.

⁵ Refer to Margaret Kovach (2019) Conversational Method in Indigenous Research, First Peoples Child & Family Review 5(1), 40-48

⁶A comprehensive list of all recommendations are listed in Appendix B: Recommendations

 $^{^{7}}$ The full report can be found in Appendix C: Phase One External Summary



Engagement Phase Two

The second phase of engaging took place in Fall 2024, starting with two targeted sessions: one with Elders Voices and one with Indigenous student support staff. There were four other sessions held: one for students, one for staff and faculty, and two that were open to everyone (Indigenous students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members). Of these, one of the open sessions took place on Zoom and the remaining three took place in person at the Ceremonial Hall in the First Peoples House.

A repeated concern raised in phase one from Indigenous students was the lack of Indigenous student representation during the Summer, when the majority of students are away from campus and therefore not available to engage as readily or meaningfully in the in-person engagement sessions. As such, the second phase of engagement sessions were developed in a more thoughtful and comprehensive way to allow more opportunities to participate in the ways accessible and comfortable to participants.

The in-person sessions were held in the Ceremonial Hall at the First Peoples House where four stations were set up for attendees to rotate between at their own pace, each with a different engagement question on a large poster that laid flat on each table. Each station had a facilitator and a notetaker present who were part of the ICDC, as well as notepads and markers. To care for the mind, body, and spirit of all those that participated, food was provided, an Elder and Indigenous medicines were present and available for cultural and wellness support, and these sessions were opened with a welcome and a blessing to honour local protocols. Door prizes were drawn for to incentivize participation and thank those who attended for sharing their experiences, perspectives and knowledges with us.



Going into phase two, summaries of what was shared by participants previously were brought back, and attendees were encouraged to begin thinking through how to strengthen the approach with this policy while addressing the opportunities and barriers that were identified by previous participants. New questions were brought to these engagement sessions mainly targeting two key concerns that were brought forward in the first phase of engagements. The first was how to address complexity in lived experiences of Indigenous peoples who, due to a myriad of reasons associated with the impacts of colonization, may not easily be able to demonstrate citizenship, while still ensuring the process is robust enough to address the root of the issue. The second concern centered around the vulnerability of members of the Indigenous community at UVic, specifically students, who will have to undergo this affirmation process and what supports or resources should be offered.

To make the sharing of feedback more accessible, an open-ended fillable form with the same engagement session questions asked at the in-person sessions was available on the OVPI webpage for individuals to complete if they did not feel comfortable, or were otherwise unable, to attend the engagement sessions. In addition to this, the OVPI extended an open invitation for any member of the Indigenous community at UVic to meet one-on-one. There were 88 registrants across all of the engagement sessions and about 50 attendees. Four (4) feedback forms were received, and eight (8) one-on-one sessions were held.

Members of Elders' Voices were asked the following questions:

- 1. Do you have any guidance for us about how we invite people to speak about who they are as Indigenous Peoples?
- 2. Are there words, names, or teachings that you've been reminded of during our conversations that you'd like to share?

During the session with Indigenous support staff, they were asked:

- 1. What Indigenous-specific student services should (or should not) require verification?
- 2. What resources or strategies have been helpful in connecting with Indigenous students, particularly those who may not seek one-on-one support? Do you have advice on how we might invite students (who might otherwise count themselves out of receiving supports) into a conversation?
- 3. If our Office were to introduce a new student-facing staff position to walk with students through a verification process*, what skills, knowledges and competencies should be required? What gaps in current supports might this position address?

The following questions were asked during the four remaining engagement sessions::

- 1. What are your hopes, concerns, and expectations regarding the development of a new eligibility process?
- 2. What are your thoughts on the criteria to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship?
- 3. What considerations or options could be available to recognize complex circumstances and barriers within the affirmation process?
- 4. What supports and resources are needed to help Indigenous students, staff and faculty engage with an ICD Policy?

 $^{^8}$ See Appendix D: Phase Two Engagement Posters for the posters that were printed and put at the four stations.

These questions were asked with the intention to:

- Gauge how this project is being understood by Indigenous members of the UVic community
- Seek feedback on the existing list of affirmation criteria and understand how individuals may engage with a case-by-case approach
- Determine staffing and resource needs to address complex cases and effectively support policy implementation
- Brainstorm procedures to address and affirm complex cases
- Understand what steps need to be taken to address barriers or blocks to engaging with the policy
- Identify priorities towards developing a framework to assess whether the objectives as set out in the policy were met

Recommendations: Phase Two

After completing the thematic analysis, recommendations were pulled from responses and sorted under the following categories: (1) communications and engagement, (2) verification criteria, (3) procedural, and (4) implementation[1]. This feedback was directly implemented into the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures drafts, in the planning for the ICD rollout starting with the portal being accessible in Summer 2025, and into implementation in Fall 2025.

Notably, during this phase of engagement much of the hesitancy, concern, or trepidation that was communicated by the Indigenous community at UVic in earlier sessions began to peter out. Some of the key recommendations that emerged included:

- Develop a comprehensive list of on- and off-campus resources and supports for those engaging in this process.
- Communicate that the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures are living documents that can be amended, and that the OVPI will remain communicative and responsive to the Indigenous community at UVic throughout implementation.
- Establish agreements with Indigenous communities and nations recognizing the distinct nature of how they determine their citizenship and membership criteria.
- Encourage Indigenous communities or nations to consider how they may create a pathway to address instances of disconnection or disenfranchisement in their agreements with UVic.
- Develop a clear appeals process.
- Consider how this policy can be adaptive to potential long wait times for citizenship supporting information/ documentation and how this will interact against institutional deadlines for opportunities of material gain.
- Ensure there is a student navigator to walk alongside applicants throughout the ICD portal process and that this individual is a long-term hire with cultural competency.
- Consider what workshops the OVPI can host to facilitate connections with supports and resources for applicants, and to provide support in applying for/accessing colonial documentation.
- Continue to ensure that this work is guided by local Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the teachings of these lands.

⁹A comprehensive list of all recommendations are listed in Appendix B: Recommendations



Drafting Policy and Procedures & Designing Portal Process

During the second phase of engagement, the OVPI also met with the Native Students' Union, Equity and Human Rights, Human Resources, Faculty Relations, the Faculty Association, the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Management, CUPE and PEA Unions, University Systems, General Counsel, and other units/departments whose portfolios will be interacting with the policy. These meetings continued into Spring and Summer 2025 and finalized (1) engagement on drafts of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures, (2) the language for future hiring to ensure it aligned with the policy, and (3) the portal development process.



Implementation

may arise going forward.

After nearly two years of engagement with səlxwéyn sqwél | SELWÁN SKÁL | Elders' Voices, the Indigenous Community Engagement Council (ICEC), and Indigenous members of the UVic community, we are at the final draft stage of our Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) Policy and Associated Procedures.

The final drafts of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures were brought to UVic's Board of Governors for a first review in June 2025 and to the Faculty Association. The portal will be open beginning in early Fall 2025 for Indigenous members of the UVic community to begin completing their declaration at their convenience. The OVPI anticipates that the policy and procedures will be approved and implemented by mid-Fall 2025, while full effect of the policy will be felt in 2026.

A final draft of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures was brought to the Board of Governors in June 2025 for a first review and will be brought again in Fall 2025 for approval. These final drafts will also be brought to the Faculty Association for approval. With this in mind, the OVPI anticipates an effective date for the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures in mid to late Fall 2025, with full effects being felt by the Indigenous community at UVic in 2026. In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the ICDC, the committee will be dissolved in Fall 2025 following the effective date of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures. Members of the ICDC may be invited back to be part of a review committee to address concerns and cases as they

The Director of Indigenous University Communications has developed a comprehensive communication plan for the rollout and implementation of the ICD Policy to ensure that Indigenous students, staff and faculty, and community members external to UVic can easily access information. This will include restructuring the ICD webpage to include an overview of the ICD process, downloadable copies of the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures, ICD reports, and tutorials for using the portal including a PDF and an audiovisual resource. A social media plan will be mainly focused on Indigenous student engagement and will answer FAQs, provide helpful links and information directing individuals to the ICD webpage. A news release using internal listservs will keep the UVic community including Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, apprised. Preliminary meetings took place individually with various BC post-secondary institutions where a shared priority was identified to create a community of practice to support each other in this work. With the support of the Policy Implementation Manager who has been hired, this work will be built upon.

The OVPI has established the following key values and commitments shaping the implementation of this policy:

- This policy is limited in scope. The policy revises the eligibility criteria for Indigenous-specific opportunities, where going forward the university will not rely on self-identification alone. This policy says that to be eligible for an Indigenous-specific opportunity, the applicant must demonstrate that they are representing themselves truthfully and accurately.
- This policy is not retroactive the new process applies only to instances where an individual applies for a new opportunity.
- The Policy only intervenes in situations where a person puts themselves forward, or agrees to be nominated, as an Indigenous Person for a material advantage administered by UVic (like an award, grant, bursary, designated seat or employment opportunity).
- The OVPI is committed to reviewing this policy and continuing to engage on best practices throughout its implementation.

Indigenous Citizenship, belonging and identity is complex, and the policy affirms the university's limited role with respect to determining eligibility.

- The University is committed to aligning itself with Indigenous Laws and Protocols. At the foundation of this policy, UVic commits itself to respects and affirms the distinct and inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to determine their Citizenship in accordance with their own Legal Orders, governance structures, customs and traditions.
- It's not the university's place to determine who is and who is not a member of a Nation or Community the policy and implementation strategy is geared towards ensuring that the university is responsive and accountable to Indigenous Nations and how they confirm their members.
- This Policy is a tool to assist the University through areas of inevitable uncertainty, especially where colonial legislation has continued to disrupt Indigenous Citizenship and where Indigenous Nations rebuild and strengthen their distinct Legal Orders.

This report will be used to communicate back to the local nations on whose lands UVic is situated, the Elders who guided this work, and the Indigenous community at UVic what the OVPI learned and how this knowledge is being used to move forward with this policy in a good way.

Appendices

Appendix A: ICD Committee Membership and Terms of Reference

Membership as of July 2025:

Vice-President Indigenous (chair)	Robina Thomas
Director of Indigenous Strategic Priorities and Community Engagement (co-chair)	Lalita Kines
Project coordination, OVPI	Julianna Nielsen, Acting Director, Indigenous University Initiatives
Project coordination, OVPI	Peyton Juhnke, Project Manager
Indigenous faculty member	Val Napoleon
Indigenous faculty member	Onowa McIvor
Indigenous faculty member	waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy
Indigenous graduate student	Estrella Whetung
Indigenous undergraduate student	Lauren Aimoe, NSU Firekeeper
Indigenous student	Kiana Cardinal-Arcand, Indigenous Law Student Association
University Secretary representative	Morag Mochan, Governance Services Manager
Faculty Relations representative	Pam Richards, Director, Faculty Relations & Academic Administration
Faculty Association representative	Christine O'Bonsawin
Human Resources representative	Kane Kilbey, AVP Human Resources
Office of the Registrar representative	Wendy Taylor, Acting Registrar
Communications, OVPI/IACE	Hannah Mashon, Director, Indigenous University Communications





Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Committee Terms of Reference:

Approving Authority: Vice-President Indigenous

Effective Date: January 2024

Context: The University of Victoria's (UVic) renewed Indigenous Plan (2023) outlines a strong commitment to align the university with Indigenous laws and protocols. This commitment extends to ensuring that the eligibility requirements for opportunities designated for Indigenous People are consistent with the ways that Indigenous Nations, Peoples and communities determine their citizenship.

UVic is one of many post-secondary institutions moving beyond self-identification to a process of verification where preferential and limited selection programs and opportunities are designated for Indigenous applicants and result in material gain.

Purpose: The OVPI has brought together an expanded subcommittee of the Indigenous Strategic Leadership Advisory (ISLA) group with the aim of effectively strategizing an engagement process that brings diverse voices to the table and results in clear policy directions and implementation guidelines.

The Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) Committee will guide the development of a policy and process that affirms the authority of Indigenous Peoples to determine their citizenship in accordance with their own legal orders and governance structures. Undertaking this work, the ICD Committee will remain responsive to the ways that colonization has impacted determinations and experiences of citizenship.

Guiding Commitments:

- <u>Pay šqwelaqwan</u> / <u>iv, ŚkÁLE¢EN</u>: We bring a good heart and good mind into our work, building relationships based on trust and respect.
- Le?t šxw hela ?a ca makw sče?i sa? | S,HOL ET MEQ EN ENÁ SE SĆA: We prepare ourselves for the work ahead with a view towards a future of promise and abundance.
- > Humility: We step into a learning position and recognize that this work is ongoing.
- Inclusion & Intersectionality: We bring a diversity of voices to the table, and we recognize in this work the ways that colonization has functioned to undermine Indigenous self-determination and disrupt kinship and family relations.
- ➤ Honesty & Dignity: We maintain a respectful environment where all members are encouraged and empowered to communicate disagreements in good faith and bring their whole selves into decision making.
- > Transparency: We work with open doors.
- Privacy: We uphold the confidentiality of sensitive disclosures and information, and we work to align data collection and storage with data sovereignty principles.





Objectives: Meeting twice monthly, the ICD Committee will determine and guide a cohesive, multi-unit collaborative approach to policy engagement, development and implementation over three phases:

Phase 1: Drafting & Engaging (October 2023 – September 2024)

- i. Determine and oversee a process to be carried out by the OVPI for engaging with Indigenous communities, Elders, staff, faculty, students and alumni.
- ii. Develop a first draft of an ICD policy in partnership with University Systems and General Counsel, considering the insights of colleagues at other universities.
- iii. Identify protocol to be carried out by the OVPI as the university seeks to create and confirm MOUs with BC First Nations, Inuit & Métis governing authorities.

Phase 2: Revising, Finalizing & Approving (September 2024 – February 2025)

- i. Review and revise drafts of an ICD policy to align the information and feedback gathered during the engagement process.
- ii. Work with University Systems and General Counsel to confirm secure and confidential procedures, platforms and mechanisms for collecting personal information and affirming eligibility.
- iii. Guide the preparation of documents necessary for policy approval through Senate and the Board of Governors.

Phase 3: Implementing & Communicating (February 2025 – September 2025)

- i. Determine timelines and communications strategies for policy implementation.
- ii. Create working groups to address specific tasks, questions and priorities, collaborating with IACE's Communications Officer and representatives from Student Affairs, the Office of the Registrar, the Better Data Project and Human Resources.
- iii. Concluding the work of the ICD committee, identify membership for a review committee to address concerns and cases as they may arise going forward.
- iv. Committee dissolved September 2025

For regular committee meetings to proceed, quorum will be met by:

- The Chair or Co-Chair
- 1 project coordinator
- 2 Indigenous faculty members
- Staff representatives necessary for supporting and advising particular conversations

Resources: Administrative support will be provided by OVPI projects staff.





Timeframe:

- The Terms of Reference for the ICD Committee will be submitted to the Approving Authority by January 10, 2024.
- The ICD Committee will be created by January 30, 2024 and will submit drafts of a ICD policy and process to the Approving Authority by Winter 2024.
- The work of the committee will conclude September 2025.





Appendix B: Engagement Session Responses and Recommendations
Phase One Engagement Responses – In-Person Sessions

Question 1: What are the potential benefits of developing Indigenous citizenship declaration policy for Indigenous opportunities? What are your concerns?

Feedback Summary: The major themes of the responses shared for the strengths of the policy were (1) assurance and protection, (2) reconnection, (3) strengthening and supporting Indigenous Peoples, (4) decolonization, (5) self-determination, and (6) cultural safety. For concerns, the major themes were: (1) gossip, media and lateral violence, (2) barriers in obtaining verification documents, (3) perpetuating harm and exclusion, (4) stigma and intergenerational trauma, (5) upholding colonial processes and documentation, (6) Métis-specific exclusion, (7) lack of communication, clarity, and consultation, (8) safety, accountability, and integrity, (9) fraud, and (10) not wanting to pursue recognition from Indigenous or federal governments.

Question 2: What does Indigenous citizenship mean to you? How do Indigenous laws facilitate or recognize citizenship?

Feedback Summary: There were critiques and concerns brought forward about the use of the term 'citizenship' in the context of the diversity of ways in which we relate to one another as Indigenous Peoples and Nations, and how we name that belonging or kinship. Within the context of beginning to engage on a policy, the term was unclear and carried significant and exclusionary, colonial baggage. We invited conversations around what 'citizenship' means, and we heard from engagement participants their experiences with connection to community, articulated in a more expansive way to include local, urban Indigenous communities.

There was feedback about how this policy can uphold Indigenous legal orders with a recognition that many of our Nations have work to do to realize the revitalization of their traditional governance structures. Along a similar vein, there were comments about the importance of engaging the local Indigenous communities in the development of this policy to ensure its reflective of local laws.

Question 3: What should be included as criteria to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship? **Feedback Summary:** In terms of other, more expansive ways of demonstrating citizenship, respondents shared that they would like to see the following included as considerations: scrip, situating self in relation to homelands, case-by-case flexible processes, community and family claiming you, Indigenous laws and legal traditions, letters of support from Elders or community members, using family names/connection to family, kinship and ancestry, recognition of lived experience, and local laws.

Question 4: What barriers exist when demonstrating Indigenous citizenship? **Feedback Summary:** Respondents raised questions about how the OVPI will walk with people with complex lived experiences, and ensure that the policy is robust enough to mitigate Indigenous identity fraud, yet flexible enough to accommodate those who are reconnecting. Others shared that the policy should acknowledge the limitations of recognition of Indigeneity under the Indian Act due





to the discriminatory policies that systematically excluded and, despite amendments, continue to exclude many First Nations individuals. It was raised that some instances may arise where there is a lack of consensus among Indigenous governments and/or Peoples about how they recognize citizenship, particularly in the instances where these colonial and exclusionary policies may have been adopted by Indigenous governments.

Phase One Engagement Responses – Survey

Question 1 and 2: Does your department, unit or faculty have a process beyond self-identification for determining the eligibility of candidates for Indigenous-specific opportunities? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents). If yes, what processes have been useful? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents)

Feedback Summary: A summary of responses detailing processes faculty and staff have experienced beyond 'self-identification' are as follows: letters of support/verification from Nation/Tribal affiliation/community they claim or claims them, Indigenous identify documents, other information that upholds their claim and connection to community, and a written description of their "social location/relationship to their ancestral claim".

Responses indicated that amongst those units with processes beyond self-identification, the processes are in alignment with those being considered for the upcoming affirmation policy. Respondents emphasized the importance of considering other assessment processes such as community references or deeper explanations for the instances that will be more complex and exceed the functional capacity of the portal or limitations of standard policy and procedures.

Question 3: If you have served on an adjudication, hiring or search committee, what challenges have you encountered with the process of determining a candidate's eligibility for an Indigenous-specific opportunity? (limited to self-identified staff and/or faculty respondents) **Feedback Summary:** Respondents shared that confirming an applicant's affiliation or connection to their community is a challenge, and taking people at their word (self-identification) was reported as problematic. Indigenous hiring committee members were often relied upon to determine authenticity of candidate's claim. Hiring committee members were hesitant to ask for proof of indigeneity for fear of reprisal or encountering a human rights violation. It was stated that more attention is needed on whether the people applying have the knowledge and expertise that comes with the positions they are applying for where the position is specifically looking for Indigenous Knowledge in some capacity. Once hired, it is nearly impossible to address questions of authentic claims to Indigeneity. Respondents generally welcomed the introduction of processes and expectations to navigate what have been experiences as significant challenges.

Question 4: The ICD Committee has identified the following examples of material gain. In your opinion, is there anything missing from this list for which you think a verification process at UVic should apply?





Feedback Summary: The majority of responses suggested that the following be included in the scope of the policy: admissions, participation in Indigenous-specific events, research/publishing, and student services.

Question 5: In your opinion, are there any specific opportunities where a verification process should not be applied?

Feedback Summary: Respondents identified significant concerns around the inclusion of 'Indigenous-specific campus services' within the scope of the policy. 'Services,' as many respondents have noted, is too broad of a category.

Question 6: Please list any specific concerns or questions you may have about any of the above methods of verifying citizenship.

Feedback Summary: The feedback received indicated hesitancy regarding this policy, largely stemming from concerns about those who may not have the documents they anticipate being accepted due to different forms of colonization causing disconnection from their culture and/or community. Some of the other recurring concerns are how this process might replicate colonial processes of legislating Indigenous identity and how this policy will tend to the Indigenous communities or nations that are not recognized by the federal government.

Compared to other nations, there was a significant volume of feedback from Métis respondents to expand the accepted criteria for demonstrating Métis citizenship to include all five provincial Métis governments and the various chartered communities. Concerns were raised about how this policy would include Métis people who choose not to be registered with a Métis Nation government, those who cannot be registered due to residency requirements, or those who were disconnected.

Question 7: Based on your context and experience, what are other ways that people are recognized by their communities and Nations?

Feedback Summary: Respondents suggested upholding Indigenous legal orders for recognizing citizens. A specific theme that emerged was how this policy could recognize citizenship through the connection Indigenous peoples have to the community they are a part of including the time and energy they invest in contributing to their community.

Question 8: As we seek your thoughts on the design of a case-by-case verification process, what are some of the barriers to demonstrating citizenship with an Indigenous Nation or community? **Feedback Summary:** Recognizing the ways in which colonization has disconnected Indigenous peoples from our cultures and communities, responses emphasize the vulnerability of those reconnecting and the support that may be needed to assist them on their journey. Concerns were brought forward regarding barriers that may exist for those who are attempting to acquire supporting documentation such as the necessity of engaging with colonial processes and forms of recognition (particularly for nations that do not have their own formally established Indigenous legal orders for recognizing their citizens), long wait times, and limited resources (labour, time and





personnel) in Indigenous communities to provide documentation to support community members' claims of citizenship.

Question 9: What other words, concepts and ideas need to be defined for folks implementing and understanding the revised eligibility process?

Feedback Summary: The following were identified as policy-specific terms that needed to be defined within the context of this policy and work:

- Material Gain
- Eligibility
- Opportunity
- Case-by-case
- Indigenous Legal Orders & Indigenous Law & Legal Orders
- Custom Adoption vs Adoption

- · Citizenship vs Membership
- Federally Recognized
- Tribes
- Affiliation
- Belonging
- Community verification
- Affirming

Question 10: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Feedback Summary: There is concern about applying this policy broadly to Indigenous students, staff and faculty who will engage with it because of the heightened vulnerability of students, and how to apply the policy without causing undue harm to Indigenous peoples and communities. One way of doing this is centering Indigenous communities, specifically Elders and Knowledge Keepers, in thinking through the specific of this policy and how it will be applied.

Phase One Engagement Recommendations

1. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- a. Advertise phase two engagement sessions further in advance and through more channels.
- Hold targeted engagement sessions with members of Elders Voices, Indigenous student support staff, the Native Students' Union, and distinctions-based groups.
- c. Clarify in policy that the OVPI is upholding Indigenous legal orders and the self-determination and sovereignty of communities to determine their own citizenship criteria.
- d. Develop a working definition of 'citizenship' based on kinship, place, relationship, accountability etc. for the purposes of this policy that respects and acknowledges the concerns shared.
- e. Clarify key elements regarding the scope of the policy: (1) it applies only where there are instances of material gain designated for Indigenous peoples, (2) it does not impact the ability to self-identify as Indigenous, (3) it will not be retroactively applied to those that have accessed an opportunity through a process of self-identification, (4) the process will only need to be





- completed once to access future and multiple opportunities, and (5) it cannot address instances where fraud has occurred (refer to Academic Integrity and/or EQHR Discrimination and Harassment).
- f. Define 'risk' (i.e. to who and to what) as it pertains to this policy and how that aligns or differs with institutional ideas of risk to reputation, status, prominence, litigation, integrity, and assets.
- g. Think through ways to support non-Indigenous education/understanding about this policy so the labour isn't on Indigenous faculty, staff or students.

2. VERIFICATION CRITERIA

- a. Think through a case-by-case process that is robust enough to mitigate Indigenous identity fraud, yet flexible enough to remain inclusive of legitimate Indigenous peoples with complex circumstances.
- Specify the inclusion of Indigenous legal orders for recognizing citizens which may include ceremonial processes, oral traditions, genealogy/ancestry, and relational/community references.
- c. Expand the list of criteria to ensure it includes forms of verification that uphold Indigenous legal processes rather than colonial forms of recognition.

3. PROCEDURAL

- a. Think through anticipated wait times individuals will be facing to complete the portal process, as well as a way to expedite applications of those that are applying for opportunities that are time sensitive.
- b. Continue to develop a case-by-case process that moves beyond colonial documentation and recenters Indigenous perspectives around family, kinship, oral traditions, and community connection/involvement.
- c. Build out the composition of a review committee for complex cases.
- d. Narrow down what 'Indigenous-specific campus services' will be included within the scope of the policy.
- e. Ensure respect for global Indigenous peoples.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

- Consider how this process might differ in its application with faculty/staff versus students, and what additional supports or resources can be developed for students.
- b. Identify harm mitigation strategies and mental health supports to direct individuals to, understanding the potential of this process to retraumatize, trigger, or otherwise negatively impact Indigenous individuals.





- c. Assess capacity, support and resources available to Indigenous students through engaging with Indigenous student facing staff members.
- d. Think through how to make this process accessible and inclusionary to encourage Indigenous peoples to engage with it rather than counting themselves out.

Phase Two Engagement Responses

Question 1: What are your hopes, concerns, and expectations regarding the development of a new eligibility process?

Feedback Summary: The responses to this question emphasized the hope that this policy is centered in Ləkwənən and WSÁNEĆ teachings about being a welcoming place for others to these territories. Some concerns were expressed around the vulnerability of students who will be engaging with this process and/or those coming from complex circumstances such as adoption or those who are not connected to their community and how we can support them through the fear and potential harm this policy may cause.

As Indigenous students may already face hesitancy in accessing spaces, supports, and/or opportunities designated for them, it was suggested to make a concerted effort to bring Indigenous students into this process in a welcoming way, while also creating more Indigenous-specific opportunities. Other concerns were about the barriers that applicants will face like document retrieval, financial burden, and emotional stress, as well as political impacts and Indian Act standards that will affect individual's eligibilities. Expectations about the policy focused on it being straightforward and accessible, in-person support being available, and that the policy being a living document.

In reflecting on the ICD policy and accompanying process, staff and faculty communicated their hopes to be able to focus more time and energy as Indigenous peoples on other work of importance to our communities, nations and ourselves rather than spending a great deal of time on identity politics. There was also an overwhelming hope shared that this work be grounded in local teachings, and that support be made available for those engaging in the process.

In terms of concerns, thoughts were shared about what an appeal process might look like, how the policy and process will tend to the complexity of lived experiences, the responsibility of the institution to be engaging in this work, and what support will be available for the grief and anxiety that might come from those that are deemed ineligible. Conversations about expectations for the policy focused on accountability to self, to each





other, to future generations, to our communities/ nations, to local teachings and peoples, and to the land.

Question 2: What are your thoughts on the criteria to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship?

Feedback Summary: There was a strong push to centre Indigenous legal orders and how these can help bridge gaps, particularly for those who are non-status, who have been apprehended, or who have been disenfranchised or disconnected in other ways. Further to this point, it was shared that an understanding of the nuances of understanding the nuances of adoption is important, notably and what kind(s) of adoption(s) make one a citizen of an Indigenous nation.

Feedback around Inuit and Métis citizenship criteria reemphasized its distinctness from First Nations' criteria. It was said that in the case of all Indigenous peoples, citizenship may be understood as more than ancestry but also community responsibilities and how one contributes. It was identified as important that every unit and department who is interacting with this policy is in alignment with the process and procedures.

Some respondents questioned whether it was the university's role to navigate how to overcome the complex circumstances individuals may enter this process with, or whether this is the responsibility of that individual's community and/or nation. There was again the identification of the importance of an in-person support person to help individuals navigate through the ICD portal process.

Respondents shared concerns around the complexity of affirming the citizenship of those with more complex circumstances such as those that have been adopted or have a family history of adoption, those that have been through the child welfare system, and those that have been disconnected because of the Indian Act. Further to this point, the ways that international Indigenous communities/ nations determine citizenship as being even more complex (such as through oral tradition, letters, and genealogy) was raised. There were multiple mentions of Indigenous identity as complex and fluid, including an individual's personal choice whether or not to register with their community and/or nation, or being limited in their choice depending on the intersectionality of their identity. It was stated that more support is needed to navigate this process.

Question 3: What considerations or options could be available to recognize complex circumstances and barriers within the affirmation process?

Feedback Summary: The theme of accountability reemerged in this question. Understanding again the vulnerability of students, there was a desire that this policy not be another onerous barrier for them. In terms of the policy rollout, it was said that there





should be clear communication from UVic about timelines and where applications are in the review process. A recommendation was made to change the wording of case-by-case (considered to be "too boxed in" or "prove yourself") to alternative pathway or other wording to reflect the flexibility in the process.

Access to a navigator to support students through the ICD portal process was brought up again, this time with more emphasis on this person being knowledgeable about Indigenous lived experiences and them being in this role consistently rather than having a high turnover as it may be difficult for students to rebuild trusting relationships. Other responses highlighted the importance of relying on Coast Salish Elders and teachings for guidance in this work and in helping people on their journey of reconnecting as guests to these territories.

While there was support for more expansive forms of supporting information such as stories, references, and documentation not from a colonial government or band council, there were also concerns about the potential for falsified information or documents. In terms of the process itself, there was a desire for it to be welcoming and inclusive, understanding also the emotional impact of this process on applicants. Given this, there was also a strong desire for support from the institution to help mitigate potential harm, namely in terms of flexibility in time to complete applications, instruction and direction for applications that require resubmission, and connecting applicants to supports available on campus.

Question 4: What supports and resources are needed to help Indigenous students, staff and faculty engage with an ICD Policy?

Feedback Summary: A number of the respondents repeated the need for in-person one-on-one support that is culturally knowledgeable and sensitive, and the hope that the policy will be readable (i.e. not too technical, complex or wordy) and accessible. Concerns were raised about the lack of access to colonial documentation that respondents thought may be necessary to successfully engage with the ICD process, and about the hesitancy from folks to self-identify though some say this policy will help them to feel more comfortable self-identifying and that people who are not Indigenous won't be able to steal their stories and use them for personal gain.

There was overwhelming feedback about the ongoing support required for applicants in navigating the ICD portal and application process, particularly for those with more complex circumstances. These responses centered around a designated navigator, streamlining the process so individuals are not going through the application process multiple times, follow-up if there are issues with applications, Elders Voices as being a support, the mental load





of applying, and connecting to supports at UVic and in the greater community. In instances of disconnection, it was cautioned that these individuals are not "othered" in the language being used and the importance of confidentiality in these, often times, sensitive cases.

Phase Two Engagement Recommendations

1. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- a. Creating clear communication about the policy rollout, including what will happen after it is introduced (i.e. plans for policy revision, postimplementation engagement sessions, etc.).
- b. Communicate that the ICD Policy and Associated Procedures are living documents that can be amended, and that the OVPI will remain communicative and responsive to the Indigenous community at UVic throughout implementation.
- c. Clarify what the portal process will look like with a visual aid.
- d. Develop a comprehensive list of on- and off-campus resources and supports for those engaging in this process.

2. VERIFICATION CRITERIA

- Establish agreements with Indigenous communities and nations recognizing the distinct nature of how they determine their citizenship and membership criteria.
- Encourage Indigenous communities or nations to consider how they may create a pathway to address instances of disconnection or disenfranchisement in their agreements with UVic.
- c. Develop a comprehensive list of the various forms of accepted documentation or supporting information that individuals can upload to the ICD portal that include, but are not limited to, colonial documentation.

3. PROCEDURAL

- a. Develop a clear appeals process.
- b. Consider how this policy can be adaptive to potential long wait times for citizenship supporting information/ documentation and how this will interact against institutional deadlines for opportunities of material gain.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

a. Ensure there is a student navigator to walk alongside applicants throughout the ICD portal process and that this individual is a long-term hire with cultural competency.





- b. Meet with all units, departments and faculties who may interact with the ICD policy prior to its implementation to ensure clear communication of process and procedures.
- c. Consider what workshops the OVPI can host to facilitate connections with supports and resources for applicants, and to provide support in applying for/ accessing colonial documentation.
- d. Continue to ensure that this work is guided by local Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the teachings of these lands.





Appendix C: Phase One External Summary





INDIGENOUS CITIZENSHIP DECLARATION POLICY

Summary: Engagement Session Phase One



BACKGROUNDER

The Office of the Vice-President Indigenous (OVPI) is in the early phases of drafting an Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) policy, which revises the eligibility criteria—from self-identification to a process of community verification—for Indigenous-specific opportunities that result in material advantages. This policy supports the university's commitment to honour the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous nations to enact their self-governance including their right to determine relationality through their own citizenship and membership laws, practices and customs. For more information on the phases of this work, the ICD committee, FAQs and more, please visit our webpage.

PHASE ONE ROLLOUT

The first phase of engagement included two inperson sessions with students, alumni, faculty and staff which took place on **June 19** and **June 27, 2024**.

These engagement opportunities were advertised via targeted emailing lists, departmental emailing lists, social media (Instagram and Facebook) and word of mouth at Indigenous gatherings and events. Across both sessions, there were 40+ attendees.

Additionally, an engagement **survey** was conducted from May 30 to July 5, 2024, which received **271** validated responses. The survey was comprised of 12 questions, two (2) of which were demographic, and of the 10 remaining, one (1) was multiple choice and nine (9) were open text.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PHASE 1





The questions being asked in phase one largely sought to gather qualitative data on:

- how people are feeling about the development of this policy including its strengths and potential shortcomings or barriers it may cause,
- the scope of who and what this policy should apply to;
- how Indigenous Peoples and Nations are conceptualizing what Indigenous citizenship and how it can be demonstrated through various forms of supporting documentation;
- potential challenges within existing frameworks for affirming claims of Indigenous citizenship, and:
- terms that need to be clarified through robust definitions.

For a full list of the engagement session and survey questions, please see appendix A.

Figure 1 Word cloud of response data: "What does Indigenous Citizenship mean to you?"









WE ASKED:

What are the potential benefits and strengths of developing an Indigenous Citizenship Declaration policy for Indigenous opportunities? What are your concerns?

STRENGTHS

Assurance and protection

Reconnection

Strengthening and supporting Indigenous Peoples

Decolonization

Self-determination

Cultural safety

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEMONSTRATING CITIZENSHIP

Scrip

Situating self in relation to homelands

Case-by-case flexible processes

Community and family claiming you

Indigenous laws and legal traditions (including ways of recognizing kinship/relationality, ceremonies, oral traditions, and cultural adoptions)

Letters of support from Elders or community members verifying claim

Using family names, connection to family/ kinship web and ancestry

Recognition of lived experience

Local laws

CONCERNS

Gossip, media and lateral violence

Barriers in obtaining verification documents: accessibility, emotional labour, complex genealogy, wait times, lack of resources within nations, incomplete/ lost/ destroyed records

Perpetuating harm and exclusion by not tending to diversity of Indigenous experiences: Indian Act exclusions, modern day treaty communities, nonrecognized nations, distant ancestry, disconnection/displacement, child welfare/ adoption, international Indigenous people, multi-racial experiences

Stigma and intergenerational trauma

Upholding colonial processes and documentation

Métis-specific exclusion

Lack of communication, clarity and consultation about the process: engagement with local nations and staffing/ resources for the implementation of this policy

Safety and accountability/ integrity

Fraud/ fraudulent letters of support

Not wanting to pursue recognition processes within Indigenous home community or colonial government









WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

The feedback from Phase 1 was used to:

- Write a research report for the ICD Committee with recommendations for future engagement priorities and for policy directions based on the perspectives of Indigenous People at UVic
- Inform the list of supporting documentation that can be provided to affirm Indigenous citizenship
- Improve the engagement strategy to increase participation and gain insight from specific groups:
 - Increase communication about the policy and refer folks to the designated ICD webpage for more information
 - Include more information about mental health supports available to participants, and continue to have on-site support available at the engagement sessions
 - Advertise Phase 2 engagement sessions further in advance and through more channels (i.e. targeted emails, newsletters, social media, posters around campus)
 - Design targeted engagement session in Phase 2 with members of Elders Voices, Indigenous student support staff, distinctions-based groups (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and International Indigenous), and members of the Native Students' Union.

As we continue to walk alongside the UVic community in the development of this policy, we will continue to listen to the voices of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We invite anyone interested in sharing their perspective to attend one of the Phase 2 engagement sessions, or to contact the Office of the VP Indigenous to book a one-on-one session with a member of our team.

CONTACT

If you have additional questions, please send them to the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration Committee via email to **vpiicd@uvic.ca**



MORE INFORMATION

Engagement process, project timelines, Terms of Reference, FAQs and resources: uvic.ca/ovpi









APPENDIX A

Engagement Session Questions:

- 1. What are the potential benefits and strengths of developing Indigenous citizenship declaration policy for Indigenous opportunities? What are your concerns?
- 2. What does Indigenous citizenship mean to you? How do Indigenous laws facilitate or recognize citizenship?
- 3. What should be included as criteria to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship?
- 4. What barriers exist to demonstrating Indigenous citizenship?

Survey Questions:

- 1. Please select your primary relationship with UVic (Student, Staff, Faculty or Librarian, Alum, Community representative or partner, Other (please specify)
- 2. Please indicate your primary Indigenous citizenship or affiliation (Nation, Metis, Inuit, International Indigenous, please specify)
- 3. Does your department, unit or faculty have a process beyond self-identification for determining the eligibility of candidates for Indigenous-specific opportunities? (Yes or No)
- 4. If yes, what processes have been useful?
- 5. If you have served on an adjudication, hiring or search committee, what challenges have you encountered with the process of determining a candidate's eligibility for an Indigenous-specific opportunity?
- 6. The ICD Committee has identified the following examples of material gain* where a verification process may be implemented:
 - o Full-time, part-time, term or continuing employment
 - o Promotion, appointment and re-appointment
 - o Salary adjustments or awards
 - o Collective Agreement funds or leaves
 - o Awards, bursaries and scholarships
 - o Research grants
 - o Financial aid
 - o Designated seats on committees and governance boards
 - Fellowship or apprenticeship opportunities
 - o Participation in mentorship programs
 - o Designated seats in programs or courses
 - o Designated spaces in student housing
 - o Access to Indigenous-specific campus services

*Definition of Material Gain: having financial, professional and/or other tangible benefit. In your opinion, is there anything missing from this list for which you think a verification process at UVic should apply?









- 7. We seek your feedback on how to recognize claims to Indigenous citizenship. The ICD Committee has identified the following examples of how these claims could be recognized:
 - Written or oral confirmation of inclusion by an Indigenous community or Nation through Indigenous legal processes
 - o An "Indian status card" issued by the government of Canada
 - Copy of application materials submitted to the government of Canada for Indian status
 - o Status card of a 6(2) parent or 6(2) grandparent
 - Written confirmation from a federally recognized band or tribal authority
 - o A citizenship card provided by a Métis National Council Governing Member
 - o Written confirmation provided by a Métis National Council Governing Member
 - Inuit enrolment or beneficiary card issued by a modern Inuit treaty organization or government
 - o Other evidence of membership in a group that can demonstrate
 - Canadian legal forms of recognition as a Section 35 rights-holding group (via court rulings, recognition, evidence of historical treaties, evidence of negotiations with settler governments).
- 8. Please list any specific concerns or questions you may have about any of the above methods of verifying citizenship.
- 9. Based on your context and experience, what are other ways that people are recognized by their communities and Nations?
- 10. As we seek your thoughts on the design of a case-by-case verification process, what are some of the barriers to demonstrating citizenship with an Indigenous Nation or community?

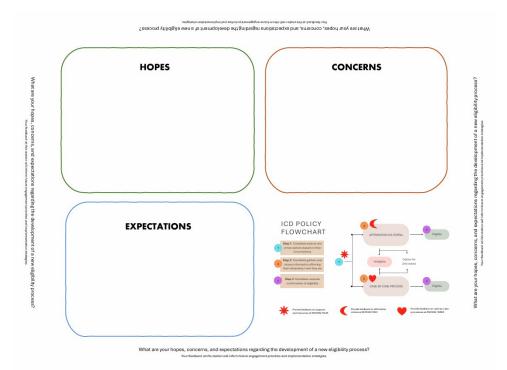
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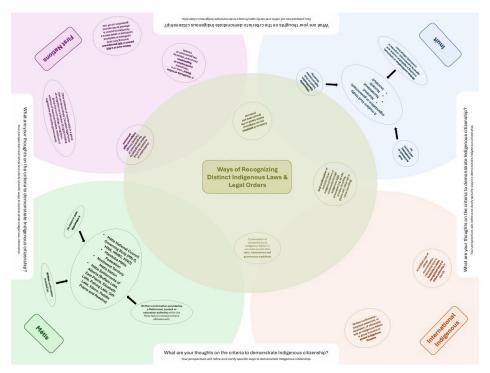
- 11. What other words, concepts and ideas need to be defined for folks implementing and understanding the revised eligibility process?
- 12. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?





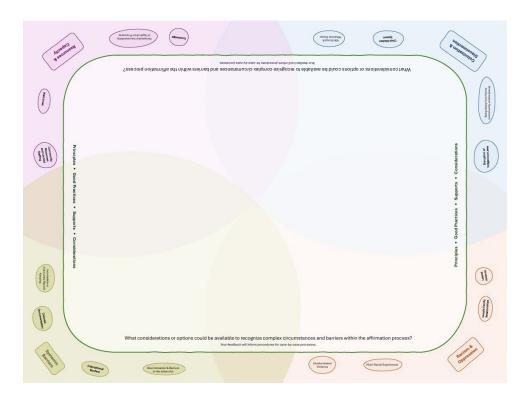
Appendix D: Phase Two Engagement Posters

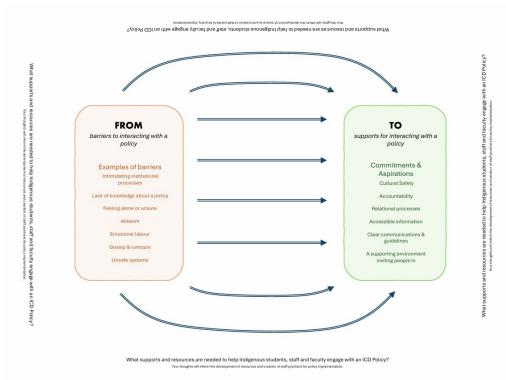
















Appendix E: Glossary of Terms

- "Agreement" refers to a distinct protocol and requirement for the University's implementation of this Policy with respect to specified Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship, confirmed in writing by a representative of an Indigenous Nation authorized to determine and/or communicate determinations of their Citizenship Laws, membership codes, and/or methods for recognizing belonging/kinship.
- "**Applicant**" means a person seeking to meet the eligibility requirements to access Indigenous-specific Opportunities that result in Material Gain.
- "Application" refers wholistically to an Applicant's (1) Declaration of Indigenous Citizenship and (2) Supporting Information.
- "Affirmation Process / Affirming" refers to the extent of the University's role and responsibility to recognize and accept the distinct ways that Indigenous Nations, Peoples and Communities determine and verify their Citizenship. The University is accountable to a process of confirming that an Applicant deemed eligible for Indigenous-specific Opportunities provides the Supporting Information as outlined in an Agreement or in this Policy's Associated Procedures.
- "Citizenship / Indigenous Citizenship" is an expression of Indigenous Laws, recognizing the authority of Indigenous Nations and communities to determine the legal requirements for Citizenship and the parameters of citizens' rights and duties. Within the scope of this policy, Indigenous Citizenship is a political status and deliberate kinship process conferred by an Indigenous political community, Nation or governing body, inclusive of alternative terms or designations of belonging applied in different geographical contexts.
- "**Declaration**" refers to a claim, assertion and/or statement of an Applicant's Indigenous Citizenship with a specific and recognized Indigenous Nation, People or Community (singular or plural). On a case-by-case basis, and recognizing complex circumstances, additional, verifiable information may be required to provide a Declaration.
- "Indigenous Laws" refer to the principles and processes that Indigenous Nations, Peoples and Communities use and have always used to govern themselves. Separate from western laws, Indigenous Laws are derived from Indigenous peoples' societies and their distinct sources of authorities.





"Indigenous Legal Orders" are constellations of Indigenous Laws and legal traditions that structure political communities and contain the social, economic and spiritual institutions of Indigenous Nations, Peoples and Communities.

"Indigenous Nation(s), People(s) and Community(/ies)" refers to distinct societies that hold ancestral and kinship ties and, through their Nation's histories and laws, collectively share relationships to the lands where they still live, or from which they have been displaced. For example, within the Canadian context, there are three distinct (and internally diverse) groups of Indigenous Peoples with unique histories, laws, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs, that is: First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

"Indigenous-specific Opportunities" refer to programs, procedures, competitions and nominations (e.g. Special Hiring Programs, designated funds, reserved seats & etc.) administered by the University, or administered by employees representing the University, intended to: (a) achieve diverse and equitable representation in an occupation, unit or program; (b) strengthen Indigenous ways of knowing and being in teaching, governance and service; and/or (c) otherwise enrich the ways we accomplish the university's academic mission and serve our community.

"Material Gain" refers to financial, professional and/or tangible benefit or advantages including, but not limited to: employment, awards, grants, and preferential or limited access to programs and services as specified in the Associated Procedures.

"Special Hiring Programs" in alignment with University Policy No. HR6110, refers both to job competitions that give preference to one or more of the designated groups (preferential hiring) and to job competitions that are limited to one of more of the designated groups (limited hiring) eligible under the BC Human Rights Code. The university obtains approval from the BC Human Rights Tribunal for its preferential and limited hiring programs.

"Supporting Information" refers to materials and/or evidence that (1) meets the requirements for Indigenous Citizenship as communicated by the Applicant's Nation(s), People(s) or Community(ies) in an agreement with the University, and/or (2) demonstrates the truth and accuracy of an Applicant's Declaration in alignment with the Associated Procedures.





Appendix F: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is considered material gain?

Material gain refers to a financial, professional or tangible benefit. Opportunities resulting in material gain include, but are not limited to:

- Full-time, part-time, term or continuing employment
- Promotion, appointment and re-appointment
- Awards, bursaries and scholarships
- Research or travel grants
- Financial aid
- Reserved seats on committees and governance boards
- Fellowship or apprenticeship opportunities
- Participation in mentorship programs
- Reserved seats in programs or courses
- Reserved spaces in student housing
- Access to Indigenous-specific campus services

If the opportunity is likely to appear as a line on a CV, the opportunity is likely associated with material gain.

- 2. How is eligibility for Indigenous-specific opportunities determined currently? Eligibility for Indigenous-specific opportunities has relied on a process of self-identification, where candidates or applicants are asked to provide a statement in a cover letter or otherwise indicate their belonging to a specific equity-seeking group. Currently, candidates are not required to provide information verifying their relationship to an Indigenous Nation or community. Fraudulent and negligent assertions of Indigenous citizenship and belonging may be addressed through the Policy on Scholarly Integrity (AC1105 B) as well as the policy governing the Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations (AC1300).
- 3. When will the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration policy be in place? The ICD Committee is currently leading a multi-phased engagement process with the goal of drafting a policy for approval in Summer 2025 and implementation in Fall 2025. Having a broad application through the university and being binding on members of the university community, the ICD policy must be approved by the necessary University Approval bodies. The Vice-President Indigenous is responsible and accountable for policy development, implementation, education, and compliance monitoring.





4. What are the interim guidelines for administering opportunities designated for Indigenous People?

Hiring managers for limited and preferential opportunities are encouraged to share this language in job description and offer letters:

The Office of the Vice-President Indigenous (OVPI) is in the early phases of drafting a policy and developing a process to affirm declarations of Indigenous identity, citizenship and membership at UVic where these claims result in material advantages, such as employment in an Indigenous-specific position. While the forthcoming policy can not be retroactively applied to this opportunity, the successful candidate(s) will be required to complete the Indigenous Citizenship Declaration (ICD) process should they apply for, or access, future opportunities resulting in material gain.

Please feel free to reach out to vpiicd@uvic.ca if you have specific question or concerns.

5. What is a preferential, limited, or Indigenous-specific opportunity? UVic currently has approval through the BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner to use preferential or limited hiring for Indigenous People. These Indigenous-specific employment opportunities address underrepresentation and bring in the qualified people we need to grow as a university community. For more information, please visit: https://www.uvic.ca/equity/employment-equity/preferential/index.php.
Bursaries, reserved seats and research awards limited or specific to Indigenous People are intended to redress systemic inequities by supporting access, retention, success and recognition in post-secondary institutions.

The ICD Committee is working with University Systems to design a secure web interface for applicants to upload files relevant to verifying their declaration.

The standing of a candidate's application would be connected with the candidate's V# through Banner and accessible only to a limited number of staff persons within the Office of the Vice-President Indigenous. Once an applicant is verified through the portal, they will not need to resubmit information or be re-verified to access future Indigenous-specific opportunities. Recognizing the complex nature of many cases, processes may be designed to support verification beyond the parameters of a portal system.

6. Why "citizenship"?

There is no pan-Indigenous legal order and no pan-Indigenous response to questions of Indigenous citizenship. The determination of these questions must always be according to a specific legal order, laws, and legal process. In the article *Indigenous Citizenship and*





Civil Society: An Intervention, Val Napoleon emphasizes the importance of specific legal orders and public, deliberative legal processes in determining Indigenous citizenship, advocating for a nuanced, context-driven approach to governance and citizenship.





Appendix G: Recommended Readings and Resources
Understanding our Roots - Nestimuk tan wtapeksikw Report

A Human Rights and Legal Analysis of the Understanding Our A Human Rights and Legal Analysis of the Understanding Our Roots Report by Naiomi Metallic and Cheryl Simon

<u>deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin Indigenous Truth Policy on Indigenous citizenship/membership</u>

<u>Listening to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities: Engagement on Recognizing and Supporting Indigenous Identity and Kinship</u>

<u>University of Winnipeg Indigenous Identity Working Group (UWIIWG) Terms of Reference</u>

<u>Indigenous Citizenship and Civil Society: An Intervention by Val Napoleon</u>



