



# 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 in-person 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.

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

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

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM PHASE 1



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, non-recognized 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 [vpicd@uvic.ca](mailto:vpicd@uvic.ca)



## MORE INFORMATION

Engagement process, project timelines, Terms of Reference, FAQs and resources: [uvic.ca/ovpi](https://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:
  - 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
  - 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
- An "Indian status card" issued by the government of Canada
- Copy of application materials submitted to the government of Canada for Indian status
- Status card of a 6(2) parent or 6(2) grandparent
- Written confirmation from a federally recognized band or tribal authority
- A citizenship card provided by a Métis National Council Governing Member
- Written confirmation provided by a Métis National Council Governing Member
- Inuit enrolment or beneficiary card issued by a modern Inuit treaty organization or government
- 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?

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?