

# External Review of the Indigenous Studies Program

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## External Review Committee

Brenda Macdougall, University of Ottawa, Committee Chair

Bernie Perley, University of British Columbia

Jean-Paul Restoule, University of Victoria

## Executive Summary

This external review of the Indigenous Studies (IS) Program at the University of Victoria (UVic) highlights a dynamic, high-impact academic unit that is advancing UVic's mission through excellence in teaching, culturally grounded research, and service. The IS program, the only all-Indigenous academic unit at UVic, embodies a commitment to Indigenous resurgence, relational accountability, and decolonizing education. As requested, this report evaluates the program across six key dimensions: alignment with the university's mission; teaching and learning environment; research and creative activity; resource utilization; service to the university and external communities; and the visibility of "invisible" service contributions.

### 1. Alignment with UVic's Mission

The Indigenous Studies Program strongly aligns with UVic's mission and Strategic Plan through its emphasis on equity, diversity, and community engagement. The program's core values—resistance, resurgence, reconciliation—support UVic's institutional commitment to social justice, Indigenous empowerment, and truth and reconciliation. IS has not only responded to increasing student demand but also to national imperatives outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The IS program actively centres Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and protocols, ensuring that the university remains accountable to Indigenous communities on and off campus. Its success in expanding student pathways from programs such as Camosun College's Indigenous Studies Diploma also demonstrates a tangible commitment to accessibility and collaboration.

### 2. Quality of Teaching and Learning Environment

The teaching and learning environment in IS is exceptionally strong, despite capacity challenges. The program is characterized by high levels of student engagement, transformative learning, and curricular innovation grounded in Indigenous pedagogies.

Importantly, students report feeling respected and valued—an essential marker of cultural safety and belonging. The program serves a diverse cohort, with over 50% identifying as Indigenous. It cultivates critical skills in cultural protocol, self-location, and decolonial praxis.

### 3. Research and Creative Activity

The IS faculty have an impressive record of scholarly output and research funding. Their research bridges academic inquiry and community relevance, with significant impact across disciplines and communities.

#### 4. Resource Availability and Utilization

IS has received critical support from the Faculty of Humanities its growth has outpaced its resourcing.

#### 5. Service to the University and External Communities

The IS program offers exceptional service contributions across institutional and community domains.

This invisible labor—emotional, relational, and cultural—is not just additive but constitutive of the IS program's success and must be formally acknowledged and supported.

#### 6. Visibility of Invisible Service

The IS program is driven by often-invisible labor critical to Indigenous student success and community trust.

### **Recommendations**

The following Recommendations are, we hope, reflective of how the IS program, and the institution, can work to advance the principles adopted by the University in those key documents at the same time Indigenous Studies can chart its own pathway within the framework(s) established by the institution. Furthermore, no program is capable of implementing any recommendations offered without the support of the Faculty and/or the central administration:

1. Indigenous Studies Program Must Immediately Be Made a Department
2. Prioritize the Hire of an Associate Professor in Indigenous Studies to Address Leadership and Succession Gaps
3. Develop a Marketing and Fundraising Plan to Support Departmental Priorities
4. Establish a Dedicated and Protected Budget Line for Indigenous Protocols
5. Develop a Handbook for Sessional Instructors
6. Restructure the Administrative Assistant Role to Reflect Actual Duties and Needs
7. Create a Required Capstone Course at 400-level
8. Indigenous Studies Community Building Via Colloquia, Guest Speakers, Research Brown Bags, and/or Student Research Presentations
9. Develop a Student Handbook