



## INDIGENOUS STRATEGIC PLAN

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The 2009 Aboriginal Strategic Plan defined ten areas in which meaningful actions addressing Indigenous concerns should occur. The intent was not only to define these areas, but to give people and units across the university a way to locate their existing or intended work in a larger context. As implementation proceeded, considerable existing work was identified and stabilized, and significant new activity undertaken. Subsequent Implementation Reports (2010, 2012, 2014) documented these developments, identified challenges, and, based on an assessment of the changing landscape, suggested directions. Following the five-year report (2014), a series of less formal documents have continued to identify priorities in response to changing institutional and national environments.

Since 2009, significant developments have changed the national and international contexts. The publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) Final Report and Calls to Action in 2015 brought national attention to Indigenous issues, identified specific areas for action, and provoked considerable self-reflection within higher education. Many initiatives already underway at UBC, including the plans to develop the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, spoke to specific TRC calls or advanced initiatives in areas not explicitly named in the Calls. To date, however, not all areas identified by the TRC have been adequately addressed, and there is certainly the need for further action.

Events on the international level, including the passage of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), its subsequent endorsement in principle by the government of Canada (2010), and movements towards implementation (2016), also have had profound effects, shifting the framework within which Indigenous rights in Canada are imagined and contested, and resulting in, among other things, shifts in language, with "Indigenous" now emerging as a preferred term.<sup>1</sup>

At the university, after years of work in improving the responsiveness of student services, the active recruiting of Indigenous students has now been undertaken and is showing significant results. The proliferation, stabilization, and growth of Indigenous curricular and research initiatives now warrants thinking about their relationship in larger and more cohesive patterns. The growth of collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations now means that the pattern of collaborations can be more clearly articulated and supported as leading university practices. The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre is poised to become an additional hub for research, curricular support, public engagement, and collaborative dialogue.

The 2018 Indigenous Strategic Plan, while retaining the framework identified in its 2009 predecessor and continuing work it encompassed, identifies areas of need and opportunity in

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<sup>1</sup> This shift in language does produce some ambiguities: in Canada, the term "Aboriginal" has the specificity of a legal definition, referring collectively to First Nations (or "Indians"), Métis, and Inuit people historically originating in what is now Canada, where "Indigenous" often has a wider, international reach. In this document, we have adopted the term "Indigenous," but use it primarily in the narrower use, where "Aboriginal" would have been used in the past. Wider international uses are explicitly identified in context.

the contemporary landscape, both internal and external. As with the previous plan, it is fully informed by the acknowledgement of our university's location on unceded Indigenous territories, the role universities have played in Canada's colonial history, and the realization that, if we fail to develop and enact better ways of thinking about our processes and relations, we may simply continue to replicate the worst aspects of our past.

The Ten Areas Identified in the 2009 Aboriginal Strategic Plan.

1. Pre-university, Recruitment and Access Initiatives
2. Student Support and Retention
3. Curriculum and Public Programming
4. Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Support
5. Research
6. Study and Work Climate
7. Community Relations
8. Internal and External Communications
9. Development Initiatives
10. Administration, Evaluation and Resources

For the full text of the 2009 Aboriginal Strategic Plan and the 2010, 2012, and 2014 Implementation Reports, please see [aboriginal.ubc.ca/strategic-plan](http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/strategic-plan).

### **New Directions**

In the years since the formulation of the 2009 plan, **collaborative and equal partnerships** have emerged as a defining feature of Indigenous engagement at the university. Though collaborative co-development has long characterized some very important curricular and research projects, more have been developed. Initiatives such as the Indigenous Research Support Initiative (at the Vancouver campus – V) and Institute for Community Engaged Research (at the Okanagan – O) have increasingly come to define approaches that reverse the predatory research and objectifying pedagogical practices of the past, and many other kinds of valuable relations have developed. The collaborative development of curricular projects between Indigenous Studies and the Enow'kin Centre on the Okanagan campus, and between First Nations and Indigenous Studies on the Vancouver campus and the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning in the Northwest Territories are developing greater depth, and initiatives such as the development of cultural safety curricula on the Okanagan campus and the Indigenous Community Planning concentration in the School of Community and Regional Planning on the Vancouver campus have developed training for professionals deeply informed by community partners. Multi-institutional initiatives with provincial and community institutions such as that in Indigenous language fluency are now also taking shape. Innovative special projects, such as the Indigenous Summer Intensive on the Okanagan campus extend community engagement in new and vital ways. In addition, an increasing number of programs in which UBC students work and study in communities and in contact with community members and knowledge holders are also working to redefine concepts of knowledge and professional competence in many fields.

Such developments are important because they increase capacity in communities to understand and assess the potential value of university research and education, and the capacity of university researchers and students to understand communities' knowledge, priorities, and

practices. They establish the pathways through which the knowledge and expertise in communities can inform university practices and form part of reciprocal exchanges through which new knowledge may be co-created and applied to mutual advantage. The sharing of community knowledge—not through its uncontrolled disclosure, but through the mutually informing interactions between people from different knowledge systems who develop the capability to share and understand each others' views—fosters the development of community and university experts who can function respectfully and effectively across differences of culture, epistemology, and interests, and that is of significant benefit to many important social processes. While continuing and extending relationships that have been developing for years, such practices are also in alignment with the 2015 TRC Calls to Action and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The 2009 plan was designed as a *framework* because it acknowledged that the actual work that would realize the plan occurred in Faculties and other units, and that a focus on a set of centrally-administered or articulated initiatives might well have had the perverse effect of directing attention and support away from much of that valuable work. Indeed, in the early days of that plan, many significant existing initiatives became visible that had previously not been widely known on campus. This document, while suggesting new opportunities and directions, is similarly intended to be an adjustment and update to that framework and to provide a refreshed context for the next stage of development.

In addition to this Indigenous Strategic Plan, the larger university *Inspire* strategic plan calls for the formation of a TRC Action Plan. The TRC Action Plan will call upon Faculties and other units to identify both the work they are already doing and the work they are committing to that addresses the letter and spirit of the TRC Calls to Action. Implementation of both the Indigenous Strategic Plan and the TRC Action Plan will be campus specific. Their responses on the Vancouver campus will be gathered and analyzed by the Office of the Provost and the First Nations House of Learning, published on UBC websites, and updated annually, ensuring not only visibility to the efforts of Faculties and other units, but accountability to commitment to action. Senior university administration from both campuses will also report annually upon progress to the Board of Governors. Such yearly updates will be followed at less frequent intervals (2-3 years) with a more extensive report on the Indigenous Strategic Plan, also shared with the Board, assessing longer-term trends and developments, and defining further directions.

## **Research**

Since 2009, Indigenous research at the university has grown substantially across many fields. There is now even more reason to think about how such research initiatives form larger patterns and provide the opportunity for more integrated, coordinated, and effective work. While valuable research continues through a wide range of methodologies, the establishment in 2014 of the Institute for Community Engaged Research (O) and in late 2016 of the Indigenous Research Support Initiative (V) provide focal points for thinking about collaborative research practices, identifying and tracking Indigenous research initiatives, and imagining their potential interactions. In specific, these initiatives provide locations for identifying and supporting collaborative community research partnerships, better defining collaborative research methods and providing training and support for researchers seeking to undertake them, and assisting communities in connecting to university research assets.

Indigenous communities are often working to address complex problems that extend across multiple areas of expertise and are not easily resolved by single-researcher processes. The offices provide a means for assembling, when possible, research teams that may more adequately address these problems, taking full advantage of disciplinary expertise, while constructing collaborations that overcome their compartmentalization. While more effectively addressing community needs, the formation of such teams has broader implications and is in line with advanced thinking across a range of research areas. A clear benefit is the training of experts who are accustomed to working collaboratively across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. They, in turn, increase the university's capacity to educate students in more collaborative approaches. Students with the ability to form multidisciplinary teams and think across boundaries take those skills and their value into their future careers.

The ability of these initiatives to collect and document valuable collaborative and multi-disciplinary projects may also be of benefit in informing the work of funding agencies seeking to support Indigenous research and willing to consider the structure of their practices. At present, researchers report difficulty in describing such projects in ways that conform to existing funding guidelines. The result is that projects appear non-normative to research calls or must be distorted to conform to guidelines: in either case they are at a disadvantage in competitions and valuable work is inadequately supported. Defining evidence-based mechanisms, based on clearly defined bodies of successful work, would result in a system that is not only more equitable, but more efficient, productive, and responsive.

In the years since 2009, management of data has emerged, not only as a broader social imperative, but as an important aspect of Indigenous research and practice. Existing programs, such as the Indigitization initiative at the IK Barber Learning Centre on the Vancouver campus and the work of the Canada Research Chair in Okanagan Indigenous Knowledge, help to define systems that assist communities in digitizing and managing their data assets within the priorities, protocols, and knowledge systems of the communities themselves. Other programs, such as the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, are working to establish systems that address the formidable challenges of managing and increasing the functionality of large data sets drawn from multiple sources. Issues of data security, confidentiality, privacy, and transmission, as they are understood by those most affected by them, add to the complexity of such efforts, but their resolution produces tools of value for Indigenous communities and researchers and of use in many other areas. The ethics of data use, from the TRC records, to community records documenting traditional ecological knowledge, to health records of Indigenous people and communities, requires ongoing consideration, dialogue, strategy, and technical sophistication. Addressing Indigenous data is a clear area of need and opportunity in which the university can and should take leadership.

Finally, in recent years there has been a growing concern to involve students, and especially undergraduate students, in research. While that has always been a focus for some Indigenous programs (e.g., First Nations and Indigenous Studies), it is also important that Indigenous students have opportunities to gain research experience across disciplines. The highly successful recent pilot Indigenous Research Mentorship Program provides an example of the kind of program that should be sustained.

Recommendations:

- Support the timely expansion of the Institute for Community Engaged Research and the Indigenous Research Support Office and other initiatives that identify, support, document, and expand collaborative practices with Indigenous communities and organizations.
- Form an Indigenous data research cluster collating and integrating work on data management practices, data security, and ethics as they relate to Indigenous records community systems and concerns, and national needs.
- Expand opportunities for Indigenous graduate and undergraduate students to gain research experience.

**Curriculum**

As defined above, there is a clear need to extend curriculum that prepares advanced students and researchers with the tools and understandings necessary to undertake collaborative projects with communities. By further defining successful collaborative research practices, Indigenous Research Support Office (V) and the Institute for Community Engaged Research (O) support existing research-directed curricula across many areas. That critical work for a research university, however, must necessarily be built on a more extensive and robust foundation. While progress has, and is being made at many levels of educational systems in developing curricula addressing Indigenous history, circumstances, and concerns, it is still in its infancy, and we are still addressing more than a century of suppression of information and public awareness in this area. It is crucial that we build the more robust infrastructure now that will provide the basis for our future awareness, relationships, and functionality as a society.

In lead programs such as Indigenous Studies on the Okanagan campus, and First Nations and Indigenous Studies, First Nations and Endangered Languages, and Indigenous Legal Studies on the Vancouver campus, ways of thinking are being developed that honour the knowledge, political, and social systems of Indigenous communities and think beyond the inherited thought processes of our colonial past. As more students will be entering university with greater basic knowledge of Indigenous history, it is critical that their work is adequately supported and continues at an advanced and accelerated level, that the development of Indigenous-focused academic and professional programs continue, and that the cohort of Indigenous and other expert scholars be expanded to meet the growing demand for their skills and expanded areas of operation. It is equally critical that the expansion of capability be extended throughout the educational system through the teacher training programs and leadership of the Faculty of Education.

As noted above, many initiatives are now co-developing curricula with community partners and offering learning opportunities in community settings, and some, such as those developed in the Faculty of Forestry in conjunction with the Haida Education Society and the relationships with Dechinta and the En'owkin Centre, offer curricula jointly developed in community locations. Such initiatives are particularly valuable in providing the contexts and opportunities for community-based approaches to epistemology and pedagogy to be experienced and understood. It is also worth considering the development of learning spaces on campus, including outdoor spaces in addition to those at the UBC farm, that can better support those experiences and approaches.

In addition to the development of expert curricula, there is a corresponding need to develop curricula that prepares students across the university in many areas for other kinds of professional interactions with Indigenous people and communities, in areas such as the health disciplines, resource and financial industries, law, public policy, engineering, midwifery, and social services—areas in which Indigenous students are increasingly engaged, but Indigenous and expert faculty are as yet less available. It is equally important that all students have the opportunity to develop awareness and understanding of Indigenous topics that will support their informed engagement as citizens. UBC has a significant enrolment of international students. As some Faculties have already found, developing an understanding of Indigenous issues can be a signature part of international students' experience of UBC and, though local in its specificity, it can provide valuable ways of thinking about working with similar circumstances throughout the world. In recent years, introductions to the university's relations with and commitments to Indigenous communities have formed part of the orientation for both international and domestic students. Orientation programs provide an ongoing opportunity for strengthening awareness of these commitments.

In some areas, as the TRC identified, the development of core competencies is absolutely requisite, but in many others, there are clear benefits to expanded curricula as well—to Indigenous communities, in increasing social capacity to effectively address critical issues, and in the education of students who gain valuable job skills. There is also the need to assure that Indigenous students in all fields encounter curricula that is relevant, useful, and, above all, not still structured in the alienating colonial assumptions of past practice, and that faculty teaching in all areas become aware of the habits within their disciplines that replicate colonial thinking to the detriment of all students without their conscious intent. After decades of silence, it is critical that the university now not only fulfill its obligation to educate all students in these matters, but also provide the training to faculty and staff that will build their competence in addressing this moment of opportunity and responsibility.

Under the 2009 plan, attention was primarily directed at building the cohort of Indigenous and expert faculty and developing core curricula in Indigenous-focused programs. Following the publication of the TRC Final Report in 2015, many Canadian universities began to consider the ways in which knowledge of Indigenous history and contemporary circumstances could be extended to all students. Particularly on the Vancouver campus, with more than 50,000 students distributed across many specialist areas, the challenge of doing so is formidable, and, given the small number of expert faculty, the risks of injudicious deployment of inexperienced instruction are great. Many units, however, have begun developing and piloting approaches that are relevant to their areas, and units, such as the First Nations House of Learning and Indigenous Initiatives in the Centre for Teaching and Learning, have been tracking and assisting in those developments and informing others of the range of approaches they might consider. In this way, the university can work towards the goal of providing the opportunity for every student to develop a competence in understanding Indigenous issues at the advanced level expected of curricula at a leading research university. The set of leading practices already underway may be found in Appendix 3.

As noted above, the relative shortage of knowledgeable experts in what have long been suppressed and are now emerging fields of knowledge is a major constraint on widespread curricular development. There is clearly the need to expand the reach of expert and knowledgeable faculty. Approaches that take advantage of technology to assist other faculty

while building their competence are important. Noteworthy initiatives such as the Faculty of Education's *Reconciliation Through Education* MOOC and the ambitious *UBC 23-24* online initiative of the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health in the Faculty of Medicine explore ways in which electronic communications can provide information, structure online approaches to curricula, and provide the basis for more advanced face-to-face interactions. The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, designed to support the exploration of critical aspects of Indigenous history and experience through structured interaction with large data sets of historical records, will also provide advanced approaches to thinking about information, interactivity, and the widespread dissemination of interactive approaches in support of this educational mission.

Work in many fields suggests that potentially contentious discussions of difficult social issues can benefit from face-to-face interactions. The consequence of locating unskilled practitioners as experts in classrooms are well-known and almost always counter-productive. The Indigenous Initiatives unit in the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology was established more than ten years ago on the Vancouver campus to address this situation by assisting instructors in developing the skills to respond productively to contentious classroom discussions. Occasioned by a leading student project documenting the adverse effects of such discussions when not adequately addressed, this unit and its associated faculty experts have provided extensive training to a growing number of faculty, not in becoming subject area experts, but in better developing improved methods for approaching contentious topics for which they have had little preparation.

The functioning of this unit is one key to a potentially valuable curricular approach—one that positions instructors not as subject area experts, but as co-investigators with students of an area in which we have clearly been struggling as a society to overcome our inherited social deficit. By taking as a basis for discussion, for instance, the materials made available at the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre on the history of the residential schools and the experiences of students within them, students and instructors may begin to pool their observations about some critical themes in Canadian history and experience and co-construct interpretations that can be highly satisfying, in part because, as in other areas of advanced investigation, they are always a process and never complete. Such approaches may also then support the consideration of questions in which their instructors *do* have expertise—the significance of what students have begun to learn for their futures in their chosen fields of study. This approach recognizes that a full or complete understanding of Indigenous issues is not possible in a short time or at this point in the development of our social discourse on this important matter, but that the initiation of thinking about it can be a valuable aspect of their personal and professional lives.

As UBC responds to the TRC Calls To Action, it is vital that the tracking of initiatives across the university to develop Indigenous curricula persist, that leading practices and approaches are made available to others considering the development of curricula in their areas, and that resources supporting curricular expansion in this area be available through the core funding mechanisms of units across campuses, and that Faculties and units are accountable for their address of this area.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen and expand Indigenous-focused curricula in existing programs, and the development of additional initiatives to open new curricular areas.
- Create additional faculty positions in key Indigenous areas.
- Expand the capacity of the Indigenous Initiatives unit in the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, working with faculty subject area experts, to assist, coordinate, and track efforts within Faculties and programs across the university to develop relevant curricula on Indigenous issues, and to assist in strategic planning.
- Support efforts, through CTLT and in Faculties and units, to build professional competence for instructors in working with Indigenous topics, and in managing the often-contentious classroom discussions that can arise from them, or the reluctance of students to enter into discussions of them at all.
- Through the First Nations House of Learning, CTLT, and the Provost's Office, and dean's offices in each Faculty, track the progress of curricular development across the university as part of the accountability structure for unit performance.
- Take advantage of the Indigenous materials in campus orientation programs for incoming students as an opportunity to introduce the curricular discussion.
- Through the Faculty of Education and venues such as the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, support the training and development of teachers throughout the K-12 system in developing competence and innovative approaches to the introduction and expansion of Indigenous materials in their curricula.
- In concert with research initiatives in developing approaches to Indigenous data, continue to explore, through lead initiatives such as the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre and other Faculty-based initiatives, the potential of digital technology to support education in this area.

**Student Services, Student Recruitment, and Financial Aid**

Under the 2009 plan, significant progress has been made on both campuses in the provision of expert services to Indigenous students, and expert staff on both campuses monitor the complex range of service delivery constantly to identify problems as they arise. Particularly on the Vancouver campus, where student services personnel address the needs of more than 50,000 students and systems are complex, the importance of maintaining this system of monitoring and addressing structural issues is critical and depends upon the active involvement of administrators at the highest levels.

In recent years, changes affecting student experiences have progressed to the point where active recruiting is now in progress and having significant results. These results have been possible in part because deliberate training has increased the competence of all staff in Indigenous recruiting and information on Indigenous programs is integrated into every presentation. The benefits of broad training of all staff in recruitment are clear, and indicate the potential value of equally deliberate training extended across all student services areas, and, indeed across the university more generally.

On both campuses, considerable attention has been given to the development of multiple paths for entry (the Access Program on the Okanagan campus, the UBC-Langara program on the



Vancouver campus). The further development of these and other programs and others addressing the aspirations of both adult and K-12 learners must remain a priority.

UBC has a core commitment to student wellness, and programs that address the specific concerns of Indigenous students are central to fulfilling this commitment. Programs that build community and share expertise among students also contribute to student resilience must also be continued, though it is worth noting that Indigenous student gathering places now exist at many more places across campuses than was previously the case. The institutional environment more generally is an important contributor to both wellness and resiliency. The inclusion of indications of Indigenous presence in both indoor and outdoor campus design is an important element of success. While many excellent examples may be found on our campuses, ongoing design and redesign processes offer new opportunities.

The inclusion of more Indigenous students also means the growth of a substantial number of Indigenous alumnae/i. There is now both the opportunity and need to maintain contact with Indigenous alumnae/I and provide information about campus events and developments, and offer opportunities for involvement.

Although major commitments, both institutional and philanthropic, towards financial aid for Indigenous students have improved circumstances considerably, it is still the case that Indigenous students report higher levels of financial stress than their peers. The need to identify further resources for Indigenous students, both undergraduate and graduate, must remain a priority, especially for the Blue and Gold development campaign.

Recommendations:

- On the Vancouver campus, in concert with the VP Students, Registrar, and First Nations House of Learning, strengthen the system of monitoring and addressing critical issues in student services to assure they remain responsive to Indigenous student needs and new circumstances as they arise, and that systemic solutions to identified problems are clearly defined.
- Maintain and expand active recruitment programs, both to inform Indigenous students of the opportunities available to them at UBC and to indicate the university's interest to K-12 educators and administrators.
- Assure that outreach programs and multiple pathways to entry are maintained and expanded.
- Assure that campus wellness programs and opportunities for indicating Indigenous presence on campus are maintained and expanded.
- Include in the design and construction of new buildings and remodelling of existing structures, awareness of Indigenous presence.
- Develop specialized career mentorship programs for Indigenous graduate and undergraduate students.
- Develop the systems capability for identifying Indigenous alumnae/I and investigate the possibilities of forming an Indigenous alumni organization.
- Expand financial support for Indigenous students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

## **Recruitment and Support of Faculty and Staff**

The strength of Indigenous programs and initiatives across the university depends upon the recruitment and retention of Indigenous and other expert faculty and staff. Under the 2009 plan, the recruitment of faculty in particular proceeded through a set of flexible initiatives and arrangements designed to enable and promote the hiring of highly qualified faculty when unit circumstances and the availability of qualified candidates made successful recruitment possible. That system should continue, and more generic incentive initiatives, which often produce adverse results, avoided. With programs now established in leading positions in Indigenous areas, the flexibility to attract senior scholars is now particularly critical to develop and maintain.

In recent years, some forward-thinking units, faced with the possibility of recruiting Indigenous faculty, have undertaken preparatory measures to improve the unit's ability to respond well to new arrivals. In doing so, they have recognized that good intentions are unlikely to compensate for lack of information and understanding, and that preparation and discussion before a faculty member is under discussion or arriving is likely to be far more productive than leaving things to chance. Such discussions are critical: some very desirable Indigenous candidates may come from circumstances with little social capital and be, for instance, the first in their family to have an advanced degree. Coming from a social history in which members of their group have often been stigmatized as less intelligent or capable, they may be very reluctant to seek advice if they perceive a department culture to be insensitive or hostile, with the result that the kind of routine mentoring through which professional knowledge is shared with new colleagues will be effectively denied them, often with serious career consequences. Programs that assist units in anticipating issues can substantially contribute to success, and failure to undertake them can seriously compromise a new colleague's career if problems arise.

More generally, the ability of all faculty to contribute to an environment in which Indigenous colleagues and students and members of other traditionally underrepresented groups flourish should also be considered. It is not enough in recruiting to note the university's commitment to equitable hiring processes in position advertisements: the ability to work well in a multicultural environment should at minimum be considered a desirable competence for all hiring, and, in many positions, the ability to address Indigenous issues should also be considered a desirable, if not required competence. Such competencies, or the willingness to acquire them, are also requisite at administrative leadership levels if the university is to progress in these areas.

Many faculty, administrators, and staff come to UBC, whether from Canada or from other parts of the world, with little or no functional knowledge of Indigenous issues, and specifically those at play in BC. If the university is to develop a more informed and aware culture regarding these issues, it is vital that orientation programs, such as new faculty orientation or the Administrative Leadership Development Program not only include a basic introduction to Indigenous issues and the university's address of them, but opportunities to follow up, share best practices, commit to reporting, and develop a deeper understanding. Similar programs should be developed for incoming and existing staff, and particularly those in contact with Indigenous faculty and students. Investment in such programs is not only highly beneficial, but economical and efficient, since the time and energy required to address problems is significantly higher than that of the training that would have prevented them. Hiring initiatives designed to increase the participation of Indigenous people in the UBC workforce should also be undertaken, and venues for Indigenous staff from across the university to network should be developed.

Recommendations:

- Extend and develop flexible plans to improve the university's capacity to attract and retain research-level Indigenous and other expert faculty and staff, including those at more advanced career levels, and support their career advancement.
- Through FNHL, CTLT, and the Provost's Office, develop a program for departments that supports preparatory discussion of relevant issues in advance of Indigenous hiring.
- Develop hiring strategies, orientation programs, and other measures to assure that all faculty and staff are aware of the university's commitment to work with Indigenous people and have the information, training, and support to contribute to the success of that commitment.
- Develop a plan to increase the participation and advancement of Indigenous people throughout the UBC workforce.

### **Community Relations & Partnerships**

Throughout this document, the importance of collaborative development in many areas, notably in research, curricular development, and public programming, has been emphasized. There are, in addition, many ways in which UBC faculty, staff, and students interact with communities and organizations on a daily basis. While it may be very difficult at any one time to track all such interactions, collocating them and making them visible, in part to foster potential interactions among them and in part to suggest models for additional interactions, is now imperative.

It is also imperative to assess current interactions for the degree of collaboration and reciprocity they involve, and for the ways in which they support community work—or impose inequitable burdens on partners. Collaborative decision-making and equity in engagements are key aspects of the university's commitments to the TRC Calls to Action, and to effective alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendations:

- Through the collaboration of Community Engagement in the VP External Relations portfolio and the First Nations House of Learning, track, collocate, and make visible community engagement initiatives across campus, particularly those that lie outside of research and curricular development initiatives.
- Through this same partnership, extend support to units across campus seeking to develop partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

### **Leadership, Responsibility, & Strategic Infrastructure**

One of the most successful aspects of the 2009 plan, particularly on the large and complex Vancouver campus, was the development of expert staff who monitor activities and define strategic approaches in key areas, identifying problems that impede developments and progress, and identifying opportunities to extend and accelerate work, and, indeed, aspects of their work are noted in the areas already discussed. Two examples resulting from early work in the 2009 plan are the creation of the position of Associate Director for Strategic Aboriginal Enrolment Initiatives in Enrolment Services and the creation of the position of Strategist for Indigenous

Initiatives in the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, both operating primarily on the Vancouver campus. Others have followed, but because these two are established initiatives, they have had the time to evince another problem—the challenges of success.

As these units have accomplished their goals, the demand for their services has increased and has often taxed their ability to respond, or to continue and maintain their strategic functions in the face of ever-expanding daily demands. An important aspect of strategic planning and resource allocation must be to account for such developments, and plan for the regular evaluation and expansion of successful initiatives as warranted, as long as they continue to extend their strategic value. It is also important to recognize that the costs of expansion and success are also felt by community partners: as the success of collaborative efforts increase, the costs of engagement for community partners, who are often already struggling to meet their immediate needs, must be considered and funding strategies for more equitable address of labour demands developed.

Particularly on the Vancouver campus, the reach of strategic planning for Indigenous initiatives now extends far beyond the First Nations House of Learning, and it is critical that the functions of staff embedded in other units be fully understood: their function is not to assume all responsibility for Indigenous programs, any more than that is the function of the First Nations House of Learning or of Aboriginal Programs & Services on the Okanagan campus. Rather, their function is to gather information, monitor systems, and identify problems, opportunities and strategies. It is then the work of others, with the resources and authority to implement them in their areas of responsibility. Drifting or defaulting from this system of shared responsibility will forestall future progress on new initiatives and compromise systems already working well.

One of the most successful initiatives of the 2009 plan was the formation of a monthly table comprised of the VP Students, Registrar, Associate Director, Strategic Aboriginal Enrolment Initiatives, and Director and staff of the First Nations House of Learning. This team was able to identify structural issues in student support, and, because it included those with authority to direct change, resolve them. Many longstanding and seemingly intractable problems have been resolved by this group. Issues in other areas, such as curriculum, may require the construction of similar tables.

More generally, the strategic functions defined above can only be fully effective if there is systemic engagement and accountability in leadership. Since 2009, there has been strong and highly productive involvement from senior leadership, the executive, and deans. Given the demands on senior leadership, it is understandable that not all of the leadership has had the time or opportunity to become more fully informed on Indigenous issues or the university's many engagements. It has also been the case that in many Faculties and some other units, leaders have not always known the extent of efforts in their own areas or always developed clearly defined and integrated strategies for Indigenous initiatives. It is critical that within each faculty and administrative unit, a clear understanding of an Indigenous strategy and clear lines of reporting and responsibility be defined. It is also critical that leadership commit to a program through which they become better informed, more aware, and more conversant in Indigenous issues. Experience since the 2009 plan began has indicated that there are often moments at which changes or opportunities that have been difficult to address suddenly become more possible. Significant advances can be made if the opportunity is not missed, but preparation and awareness are the keys.

Reporting on Indigenous initiatives must be a Faculty and unit-level responsibility, but the gathering of information by individual units, or by the Offices of the Provosts on both campuses, in itself is not enough: self-reporting must also be verified for its accuracy and for its congruence with the experiences of involved Indigenous people, reporting style and depth harmonized across units in university-level reports, and analysis of its placement in larger strategic planning undertaken. On the Vancouver campus, those functions fall to the First Nations House of Learning and others.

Recommendations:

- With the university executive and deans, strengthen the system of strategic planning and monitoring that will advance Indigenous initiatives across the university, recognizing that, while strategic analysis may fall to designated staff, responsibilities for address and implementation are more generally shared with unit leadership and operational staff.
- Strengthen designated planning and development units (e.g., Indigenous initiatives units in CTLT and Enrolment Services) to assure that their growth keeps pace with the rate of their successes, and that their ability to maintain their strategic functions is not eroded by the demand for their services.
- Assign within Faculties and other units, clear responsibility for maintaining a unit strategy and tracking implementation. Gathering, analysis, and publication of information for university-level reports on the Vancouver campus falls jointly to Academic Affairs and the First Nations House of Learning.
- Commit to a meaningful program in which senior leadership increase their understanding and capacity for addressing Indigenous issues, and commit to learning about and sharing best practices among their reports or reporting units.
- Develop programs that increase the awareness and capacity of all faculty and staff to understand Indigenous history, culture, and cultural safety concerns, and work productively with Indigenous students, colleagues, and communities.

**Funding**

The 2009 plan was based on the principle that Indigenous initiatives should be supported by core unit funding. The record of “special initiative” and “seed money” funding for Indigenous and minority initiatives across North America is one of spectacular and routine failure—of promising initiatives that consume entire careers, only to vanish as an imperative passes or funds constrict. The design of the 2009 plan as a framework in which units locate their existing valuable work and develop new initiatives, integrated into their core funding models, should continue as the way in which future initiatives are developed and sustained, and the determination of unit funding envelopes should take the university’s Indigenous strategy into account. The costs of movements towards co-development and reciprocal partnership with communities must also be addressed, and a university engagement policy developed that is responsive to these developments and opportunities and addresses the costs involved. The integration of Indigenous initiatives into core unit funding was a major principle and commitment of the 2009 plan and must be of this one: it is the most sustainable and least distorting practice. Targeted funding, where considered, must be very carefully assessed for the actual consequences of the incentive structures it creates and its potential to distort the functionality of the whole system.

Recommendation:

- Develop and embed in unit reviews and funding mechanisms the capability to identify, acknowledge, and account for integrated unit commitments to this plan, not necessarily through segregating their costs, but by identifying the scope and strategy for their support and the degree to which they are embedded in core commitments and not reliant on contingent or external funding.
- Develop a community engagement plan that realistically assesses the costs of collaborative projects and the multiple ways in which those costs can be effectively addressed.
- Assure that commitments to financial and human resources keep pace with developments and demand.



## 2018 INDIGENOUS STRATEGIC PLAN FAQ

### Why a *framework*?

The ISP, like its predecessor, defines a framework that can accommodate and coordinate a wide range of activities, rather than naming or designating just a few. Such a framework is particularly important in a large university with many points of activity and engagement, and two campuses with very different circumstances and priorities. An adaptable framework is also important in providing a way to identify and locate opportunities and needs that may not have been possible to identify at the time the plan is written. A framework provides a way to address such circumstances and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

### Why no targets? Why no large special fund?

Targets often direct attention to results rather than the means of attaining them. Attention to processes, in contrast, develops the structures that produce results. It is more practical and more effective way to direct attention. Identifying targets or metrics, or establishing “special funds” also tends to create the supposition that only identified items are actually important. That can have the effect of directing effort and resources away from valuable areas and causing harm. Similarly, those responsible for unit allocations may think that a valuable initiative that does not attract special funds is not worthy of continued support.

Metrics may be valuable as *indices* of change or success, but not as directors: because something *can* be measured does not mean it is most strategic or significant in driving change. And, in all but a few special cases, allocation of funds through core processes produces the most stable and sustainable results

### Why refer back to the 2009 Plan?

The 2009 plan laid out a general framework for a comprehensive and integrated Indigenous strategy. The importance of the areas it defined have not changed. The 2018 plan builds on that framework, by assessing the many developments since 2009 and the opportunities for developments that were not possible or visible then, but are visible and possible now.

### What about implementation?

Because the circumstances of the two main UBC campuses are quite different and much of implementation occurs on the unit level, the campus-specific implementation strategy of the 2009 plan worked well, and that strategy should be retained.

The experiences of the 2009 plan also suggest that many aspects of implementation are *opportunistic*, in the sense that many desirable developments depend upon the right confluence of circumstances to become possible. The best implementation strategy is continuously developing and identifies emerging opportunities as they arise.



## ACCOUNTABILITY

The ISP calls for two forms of accountability:

1. **ISP Implementation Reports.** As with the 2009 plan, Implementation Reports on a 2-3 year cycle provide the opportunity to assess overall progress and strategic direction, identify areas of opportunity and need, and clearly define factors impeding further or more rapid progress.
2. **TRC Action Plan.** The ISP calls for the formation of a *TRC Action Plan* in which Faculties and other units clarify their operations and strategic commitments in Indigenous areas. Faculties and units update their information periodically (yearly) and the results are published on a website. The TRC Action Plan clarifies commitments and scopes of activity and allows tracking from year to year. Reporting and implementation is campus-specific.

The rubric for the TRC Action Plan is under development, but the reporting areas currently under consideration are noted below.

## TRC ACTION PLAN: PROPOSED REPORTING CATEGORIES

### For Faculties and Other Units

Indigenous Strategic Plans / Updates / Reports

Faculty Composition: # Indigenous / Expert Faculty; Support Staff / Faculty diversity training

Students: # Indigenous Students / Unit specific financial aid / recruitment & retention / outreach to pre-university / completion rates

Curriculum: Curricular Strategy / # and Type of Courses / Courses in Communities / Significant Partnerships

Research: Research Strategy / # Projects with Significant Indigenous Involvement / # Collaborative Design / Projects Registered with IRSI / # Researchers, Post-docs, Students Involved in Indigenous Projects

Community Relations & Cross Faculty Partnerships

### Central Reporting

Aggregated Statistics / Central initiatives, Including Central Financial Aid / Central Development Reports

### Specific Address of Numbered TRC Calls

Calls Listed by Number, with specific responses from named units