



SUBJECT	Academic Presentation: Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship Program
SUBMITTED TO	Indigenous Engagement Committee
MEETING DATE	June 2, 2025
SESSION CLASSIFICATION	OPEN
REQUEST	For information only - No action requested
LEAD EXECUTIVE	Gage Averill, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Vancouver
SUPPORTED BY	Robert Kozak, Dean, Faculty of Forestry Garry Merkel, Director, Center of Indigenous Land Stewardship

PRIOR SUBMISSIONS

The subject matter of this submission has not been considered previously by the Indigenous Engagement Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Faculty of Forestry launched the Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship (ILS) in Spring 2024. This four-year interdisciplinary program was created to prepare students for careers in land and resource management with and for Indigenous governments on land stewardship. Developed through extensive collaboration with Indigenous communities, governments, and industry – the ILS aims to graduate a new generation of land and resource managers who have foundations in Indigenous knowledge, and in business, community development, communication, ecology, governance, law, remote sensing and mapping, wildlife management, and silviculture (among other skills).

The program was approved by the UBC Vancouver Senate in September 2020, by the Board of Governors in December 2020, and by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills in May 2022. In March 2024, the Board of Governors approved the field course fees for the program.

Now in its second year of operation, the program welcomed its first student cohort in 2024, with 75% of the student identifying as Indigenous. A second intake is currently underway, drawing 70 applicants for 30 seats, while continuing to maintain strong Indigenous representation (75% Indigenous). Though still in its start-up stages, the ILS program is quickly establishing itself and gaining recognition at regional, national and global levels.

This presentation provides an overview of the Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship program, including key developments since its launch and a look ahead at priorities and plans for the coming years.

PRESENTATION

1. Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship Program

Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship

June 2, 2025

Dr Rob Kozak, Dean, Faculty of Forestry

Dr Garry Merkel, Director, Center of Indigenous Land Stewardship

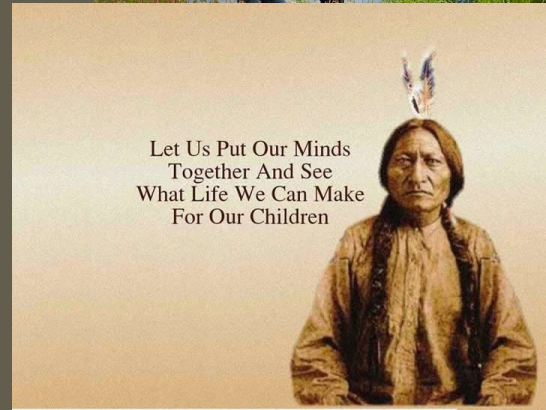


"If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed; If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree; If you are thinking a hundred years ahead, educate the people."

Kuhn Stu

"Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success, his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society."

Chief Dan George





INDIGENOUS
CENTRE OF
LAND
STEWARDSHIP

GROUNDING IN
EARTH-BASED
LAND ETHIC

“By 2050, land stewardship that integrates Indigenous science will be an accepted and globally used stewardship approach for the world’s lands.”

UBC Strategic Plan alignment

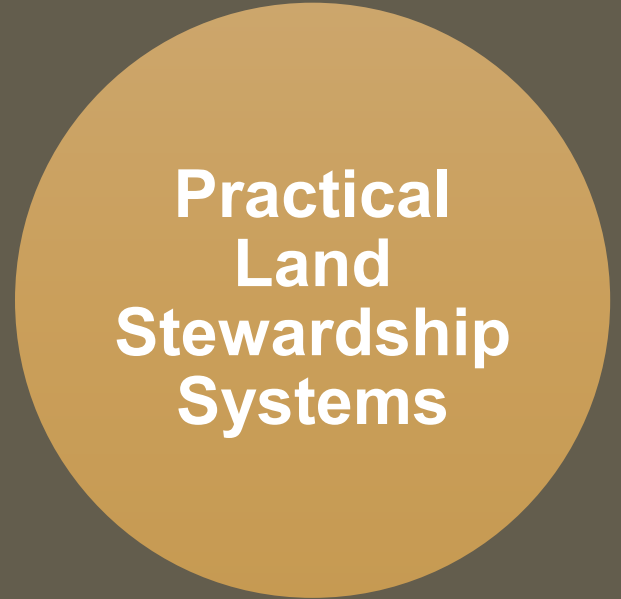
Goals (this touches all goals but the top 2 are):

- 3. Partner with Indigenous communities
- 5. Lead *globally* and locally in sustainability

Core areas and strategies (top 3):

- S9. Knowledge Exchange
- S13. Practical Learning
- S17. Indigenous Engagement

**THE CORE
PIECES**



“Achieve excellence in bringing Indigenous People’s science, knowledge and land ethics together with natural resource science and management to create practical land stewardship systems.”

EARTH-BASED LAND ETHIC

Wholeness

- Everything is connected
- Everything belongs
- Everything is equal

Place

- Belong to, owns us, gives us identity
- Humans are animals
- Everything has its place

Behavior

- Live with
- Take what you need
- Culture law
- Learn from our relations

Use (management)

- Land is meant to be used
- Touch gently
- Inherent responsibility
- Wisdom

STEWARDSHIP SYSTEM

Governance

- Structure, decision making, law policy

Management

- Tenure allocation, compliance and enforcement

Planning Framework

- Type of plans, planning methodology, monitoring and updates

Resource Use Practices

- Standards, oversight

Economy

- Branding, relationships, certification

Started in early 1990's with a group of committed individuals

Held a series of local, national and international conferences and workshops in the 1990's (Ethic to Reality, Ethic in Education, Forestry is More Than Just Timber...)

Developed the initial concept paper in 1996 (TREES)

Implemented a national strategy to increase aboriginal professionals in the natural resources fields (AFTER)

Implemented the Indigenous Forestry Strategy in the Faculty of Forestry (2001)

Began developing the Center and Program concept under the umbrella of the Faculty about 10 years ago

Everything is based on significant outreach with various Indigenous groups, industry, professional associations, academia and others through workshops, interviews and planning sessions)

EVOLUTION...



CORE APPROACH

Distributive learning model

- Engages others in the research, design, and delivery
- Multiple entry points, learning in community
- Multiple delivery options

Accumulates and shares wisdom

- Indigenous knowledge & science
- Other knowledge & science (including local)
- Synthesis of common-sense approaches

Governance

- Deeply Indigenous-based
- Global perspective
- Understanding of earth-based land ethic
- Familiarity with distributive learning models

STATUS...



Secured \$8.5 million for the first 5 years from Mastercard Foundation



Delivered the first year (2024) with 12 students – 75% Indigenous



Have 70 applications for the 2025 intake (will approve 30 – can take up to 40) – will maintain 75% Indigenous



Established a close working alliance with the Katzie Nation for field school delivery at UBC's Malcolm Knapp Research Forest



Done 2 rounds of community engagement to explore 1- and 2-year certificate programs plus professional development options, most of which are intended to ladder into the BILS program



Hired a CILS Director, BILS Director, 2 BILS Program Managers (one on campus and one to develop learning hubs), 2 Assistant Professors and 2 Full-time Lecturers (more than 90% Indigenous including teaching assistants and other lecturers)

IN THE WORKS...



Building an open access information repository to house all things "Indigenous land stewardship" related



Developing tailored BILS curriculum for all courses (originally planned to adopt other Faculty of Forestry courses until curriculum was developed)



Establishing an Advisory Council for the Centre and the Program



Developing a global working network of other like-minded institutions and individuals



Exploring the option of using delivery partnerships for certificate and professional development offerings

CLOSING THOUGHTS

“The will to succeed is important,
but what’s more important is the
will to prepare”

Bobby Knight



This is transformative change



Many similarities between Indigenous
ethic and managing for ecosystem health



Our planet needs this type of thing NOW



50% of organizational change efforts fail
because of lack of readiness



Requires collective wisdom and
ownership



"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change things, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

R. Buckminster Fuller
1895-1993, Inventor & Futurist

Texas

(That's it)

Medu

(Thank you)

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