

November, 2022



VIU's Faculty of Management Initiatives to Support Commitments to Truth and Reconciliation and Access, Through Partnerships and Place-Based Learning

Background

VIU's Strategic Plan, "People, Place, and Potential", holds themes of advancing Indigenous commitments and access for all, which are woven throughout the objectives and goals. Recent progress at the institution builds on our past work through continuing development of supports and deeper engagement, such as a new Senate Standing Sub-committee on Indigenous Commitments, and the elevation of the administration of the Indigenous Education and Education portfolio to an Associate Vice President (previously a Director).

The Office of Indigenous Education and Engagement provides the leadership to develop community-based educational opportunities for students, and support faculty to bring Indigenous ways of knowing and being into their classrooms. They serve as a resource and interface between Indigenous communities and VIU.

The Faculty of Management

The Faculty of Management includes undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programming in business, hospitality management, and recreation/tourism management. As a teaching-focused institution serving communities in our region and beyond, we are responsible for supporting a rich connection between learners and the organizations they become part of, or partner with. In alignment with institutional values and strategies, the Faculty has taken steps over the past decade to develop capacity and education offerings that will support our Indigenous commitments, in particular the IETP and BFIC programs.

Indigenous Ecotourism Training Program (IETP)

Our story with Indigenous programming is highlighted by the IETP (formerly the Aboriginal ETP, the name changed to reflect the evolving discourse and respect for the needs of the community.)

The IETP is 7-9 months in duration, with participants brought together for 6-10 days/month in various communities to complete course work. The program provides certified skills for employment within British Columbia's rapidly growing Indigenous Tourism sector, and students benefit from an applied learning experience that leads to a Certificate in Adventure Tourism and Recreation for those who successfully complete all the courses.

The program was built on the relationship between VIU and Heiltsuk Tribal Council (HTC), which have had a protocol agreement in place since August 2011. In 2014, VIU and HTC partnered with North Island College to create a program that would support the growing interest of First Nations' communities in developing and enhancing tourism businesses focused on ecotourism and heritage tourism. Access to provincial project funding assisted in establishing the curriculum and support processes. Since the pilot that year, there have been five cohorts, including the most recent one in 2021.

A research project to evaluate the program was completed in 2022, producing the report "Enhancing Community Capacity and Evaluating Place-Based Pedagogy in Indigenous Tourism". The research attended to impacts in three domains, the "First Nations Voice", "Indigenous Student Voices" and

“Community of Practice”, which considered the pedagogical experience. A summary finding of the project stated that the program “has been powerful, incredibly successful, and transformative for students, communities, First Nations, instructional team members, administrators, and coordinators alike.”

Business Fundamentals for Indigenous Communities

In 2014 the Faculty of Management also delivered the first instance of a Business Fundamentals for Aboriginal Communities Certificate, in response to Indigenous community demand for business foundations education and potential bridging to degree programs. This program did not have the provincial funding or community partnerships that so effectively supported IETP, and the challenges led to the program lying dormant for several years.

The Office of Indigenous Education and Engagement identified continued desire for community-based business education, and the program was revisited, redesigned, (and renamed BFIC), in 2019. Community consultation led to changes in length, courses, sequence and focus, that helped the program better align with learner needs. In 2021, the program began delivery in-community for one of the Nations in the region, and with the learnings of IETP in mind, we are leveraging the experience of our past successes to drive further improvements

Other Activities

- The Faculty of Management continues to develop Indigenous-centered curriculum through a number of courses in the Business and Tourism disciplines (e.g., Indigenous Leadership, Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Indigenous Economic Development).
- The Faculty also has an Elder-in-Residence, Uncle Randy Fred – author, artist, and entrepreneur – who is providing leadership, guidance, and support for faculty, staff, and students. He opens our governance meetings, helps faculty with research projects and curriculum development, and working with a keen faculty member, has just initiated a project to introduce Indigenous language to the signage in our building.
- The Faculty of Management is providing PSE leadership for the Indigenous Gathering on Pathways in Business, coordinated by Chartered Professional Accountants of BC (CPABC).
- We are engaged with industry and other post-secondary partners on funding from MasterCard to distill best practices from IETP and move forward on a credential that meets ‘recognized value of Indigenous Land Management’.