





INDIGENOUS SERVICES

AN INDIGENOUS VISION

A framework for action and accountability

The background features a complex abstract design with large, flowing, organic shapes in shades of dark blue, bright yellow, and grey. The shapes are layered and overlap, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall aesthetic is modern and dynamic.

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh [Squamish], sə́lilwətaʔɬ [Tseil-Waututh], and xwməθkwəy̓əm [Musqueam].

The background features a complex abstract design. It consists of several overlapping, organic shapes in a dark blue, a bright yellow, and a muted grey. The shapes are layered, with some appearing to be in front of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is modern and graphic.

The term “Indigenous” is used in the *Indigenous Vision [Vision]* to include First Nation (Status and Non-status), Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada. It is used instead of “Aboriginal” as defined under Section 35 (2) of the *Constitution Act* [1982]. The foundation of our *Vision* is Truth, which is woven throughout all our actions. Truth about Indigenous people, their history and contemporary realities, and the relationships—past and present—between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people must be acknowledged and understood. For the purposes of the *Vision* and its supporting plans, Reconciliation is viewed as an overarching process that respects and supports the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and ways across the Institute and our partnerships. Indigenization represents the set of actions associated with the pursuit of these aims.



Our Process

Consultation for the *Indigenous Vision* took place informally throughout 2018, with more structured interactions occurring during the fall of that year. We had the privilege of reaching close to 500 people within and beyond BCIT. Most of the consultation took place face-to-face in one of fourteen Indigenous Visioning Sessions, with the remaining input gathered through a written survey and one-to-one discussions.

The response was truly inspiring and reassuring, not only in terms of the scale of engagement, but also because it became clear that Indigenization was already well underway in many areas of the BCIT community. Although some participants were wary or lacked an appreciation for the BCIT decision to create a distinct *Indigenous Vision*, the majority of responses were uplifting, offering overwhelming support and a desire to learn more.

The *Vision* has been developed in parallel with the *BCIT Strategic Plan 2019–2022 (Relevance. Reach. Renewal.)*. Consultation around the *Strategic Plan* more broadly confirmed the pivotal importance of Truth, Reconciliation, and Indigenization to the BCIT community. The two documents are mutually reinforcing and together provide a framework for action and accountability.

Thank you to all who participated in the consultation and development of these plans.

Our Context

BCIT has been educating and inspiring learners for over half a century on the unceded traditional lands of the *Skw̓w̓w̓mesh* [Squamish], *səlilwətaʔ* [Tsleil-Waututh], and *xwməθkwəy̓əm* [Musqueam] First Nations. For that, we are grateful. We acknowledge that the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada has been troubled and that it must be reconciled.

Unfortunately, Indigenous people in Canada are still at the negative end of most socioeconomic indicators and are over-represented in areas such as the criminal justice and child welfare systems. There are persistent challenges in Indigenous access to and completion of education, both K-12 and post-secondary. Barriers include financial needs, the legacy of colonization, family and community responsibilities, and inherent institutional racism.

However, there is hope and many changes are taking place. Indigenous people are increasingly graduating from high school and enrolling in higher education. More broadly, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]* has completed its work, with 94 *Calls to Action*, and Canada has adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People [UNDRIP]*. Provinces and territories are responding to, engaging with, and supporting Indigenous people as never before. Colleges and Institutions Canada [CICan] has published its aspirational *Indigenous Education Protocol*, to which BCIT was the 50th signatory. Closer to home, the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training has directed all 25 public post-secondary institutions in the province to respond to the *TRC* and *UNDRIP*.

BCIT takes this responsibility seriously and we are deeply committed to Truth, Reconciliation, and Indigenization. We value our relationship with Indigenous peoples at all levels, across all campuses, throughout the province, and beyond. We recognize that post-secondary institutions have a role to play, not only in educating learners and supporting employees, but also in working with others to help improve the lives of all British Columbians and Canadians. With the renewal of the *BCIT Strategic Plan*, the time was right to articulate our objectives and priorities in an *Indigenous Vision* for BCIT.

Our Starting Point

The introduction of the *Indigenous Vision* in 2019 provides a focal point for the celebration of BCIT's 25-year commitment to the enrolment and success of Indigenous learners. Underpinned by successive strategies and plans, we have designed and delivered Indigenous programs and services since 1985, operated a dedicated Indigenous Services department since 1994, and worked and studied together in the BCIT Indigenous Gathering Place [*Mi Chap Tukw*] on the Burnaby Campus since 2011.

BCIT had more than 1,700 Indigenous students in 2017/18, up from 34 fifteen years ago. As of 2019, the BCIT *Indigenous 101* workshops have been completed by over 500 employees, our three Indigenous Awareness Modules are in use by faculty and staff, and the development of the Indigenous Wellness Toolkit for learners is underway. Indigeneity is increasingly reflected in the curriculum and teaching practices at BCIT and the institution is more active in community outreach and program delivery across the province.

Yet, there is a great deal more to do. Common themes from our consultation include the desire for greater knowledge about Indigenous people and guidance on Indigenization. Faculty and staff want to learn how to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into the classroom or workplace. Indigenous students at BCIT express a need for holistic support in managing workload, finances, trauma, and identity issues. They are seeking mentoring and tutoring services across campuses and after hours. They recognize BCIT's strategic commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and they now want to see Indigenization permeate all aspects of their experience.

Endorsed by the BCIT Board of Governors, fully supported by the Leadership Team, and developed through extensive consultation with the broader BCIT community, the *Indigenous Vision* and its associated Implementation Plan provide the roadmap for moving forward.

Our Vision and Platform for Change

Bold and challenging to achieve, our *Indigenous Vision* is simple and clear. We aspire to a future in which:

- BCIT is the first-choice post-secondary institution for learners in BC;
- Well-developed pathways exist to support Indigenous learner transition to and from BCIT; and,
- Indigeneity is embedded and active across BCIT.

Foundational to our ability to deliver upon these aims are three defining features of BCIT's education model. All of these require sustained focus to ensure that they remain a platform for our success and leadership in Indigenization:

- Practical, applied education that is relevant to the evolving needs of employers, sustained through ongoing renewal and strong industry connections
- Community-aligned and community-based learning that ensures the relevance and reach of our programs
- Prior learning recognition that supports access for learners with equivalent work and life experience [non-formal educational backgrounds]

Reconciliation in the BCIT Strategic Plan 2019-22

In the *BCIT Strategic Plan*, we have articulated three commitments that represent our primary areas of activity and accountability. We are intent on being **a people-focused organization** that delivers **future-proof applied education**, amplifying our impact through **globally relevant connections**. These create the structure of our *Strategic Plan*.

Within our commitment to amplify our impact through globally relevant connections we will **infuse Indigenous knowledge and practices throughout the organization and within our partnerships to mobilize broader societal change**. This provides a focal point for our dialogue and actions in Indigenization, as well as a critical interface with our *Indigenous Vision*.

However, there are elements relevant to Indigenous learners, employees, and communities throughout the *Strategic Plan*. By embracing Truth and Reconciliation and promoting Indigenization throughout the BCIT community, we will honour Indigenous people, knowledge and culture, while preparing learners for success in a complex world through an education that is complete and relevant.

The *Vision* complements the three commitments in BCIT's *Strategic Plan*, as reflected in its objectives:

PEOPLE-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION

1. Support for the whole person
2. Visible integration of Indigenous values, traditions, and ways of knowing
3. Policies and practices that enable the success of learners, faculty, and staff

FUTURE-PROOF APPLIED EDUCATION

4. Relevant, reflective, and respectful curriculum
5. Access and inclusion for Indigenous learners—financial, academic, cultural, and physical
6. Preparation for economic independence through skills acquisition and the BCIT learning model

GLOBALLY RELEVANT CONNECTIONS

7. Sustained Indigenous partnerships and stakeholder engagement
8. Standard-setting approach to Indigenous integration with industry
9. Collaboration with our post-secondary peers in promoting Truth and advancing Reconciliation


Framework for Action

The Colleges and Institutes Canada [CICan] *Indigenous Education Protocol* “underscores the importance of structures and approaches required to address Indigenous peoples’ learning needs and support self-determination and socio-economic development of Indigenous communities. [It] is founded on seven comprehensive principles that aim to guide the institutions who agree to sign on to this aspirational document.”¹

As a signatory to the Protocol, BCIT has chosen to structure its *Vision* and implementation plan around these principles:

1. **Commit to making Indigenous education a priority**
2. **Ensure governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples**
3. **Implement intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to learners and communities**
4. **Support students and employees to increase understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples**
5. **Commit to increasing the number of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments throughout the institution, including Indigenous senior administrators**
6. **Establish Indigenous-centred holistic services and learning environments for learner success**
7. **Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training and applied research**

¹ <https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/indigenous-learners/protocol/>



“2019 marks the celebration of BCIT’s 25-year commitment to the enrolment and success of Indigenous learners. The introduction of this *Indigenous Vision* articulates an Indigenous strategy—a framework for action and accountability—for the Institute moving forward, which will enable and support change at BCIT and throughout the broader community. This is an exciting time for BCIT and we look forward to doing our part to improve the lives of British Columbians and Canadians.”

Kory Wilson
Executive Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships

Our Priorities for Action

As we implement the *Indigenous Vision*, we have agreed on our main areas of focus. These align with both the CIGan principles and our objectives. With the learner at the centre of our planning, we have developed three types of actions:

- Inclusion actions are people-focused and intent on building awareness and understanding around Truth, Reconciliation, Indigenization, the legacy of colonization, and the contemporary reality of Canada and Indigenous people.
- Accountability actions strive to create an environment in which all learners, and specifically Indigenous learners, find themselves reflected across the Institute and supported by programs, policies, and services designed to meet their needs.
- Relationship actions foster a culture in which respect and collaboration underpin all that we do. Based on authentic and sustainable partnerships, these actions represent progress towards a future in which we work together to promote the place and space of Indigenous people.

The Indigenous Implementation Plan will describe which of these will be pursued each year, together with the associated deliverables, accountabilities, and resources.

1. Institutional Commitment

We will work with academic and administrative leaders to develop and implement Indigenous strategies in their respective areas. We will pursue opportunities for increased funding through the BCIT Foundation to help enable change. And we will sustain internal and external consultation to strengthen community alignment and continue to refine and evolve BCIT's approach to Truth, Reconciliation, and Indigenization. More broadly, we will facilitate dialogue with our post-secondary peers to help accelerate sector-wide change.

2. Governance Model

We will ensure that structures and representation in governance recognize and respect Indigenous peoples. We will review and revise policies and leadership evaluation systems to ensure that they reflect Indigenous ways and promote Truth and Reconciliation. Through steady progress in Indigenization, we will expand our network of Indigenous Champions, within and beyond BCIT, to guide progress, raise awareness, and help reinforce and mobilize action.

3. Teaching and Learning

In partnership with faculty and Schools, we will implement intellectual and cultural traditions through renewed curriculum and learning approaches that build Indigenous competence in our students. We will promote Indigenous economic independence through relevant skills acquisition and introduce solutions to increase Indigenous learner completion rates. Critically, we will realign our prior learning assessment processes to extend access through recognition of competencies gained through non-formal education.

4. Understanding and Reciprocity

We will expand and promote Indigenous events across all our campuses, and we will strengthen communication to build awareness and a greater understanding. We will support faculty and staff knowledge development through provision of Indigenous guides and comprehensive inclusion training, which we hope to share with our partners and peer institutions. And we will invest to represent Indigenous culture throughout our physical spaces and facilities.

5. Employee Recruitment

Working with BCIT Human Resources and our union partners, we will align on approaches and targets for Indigenous hiring. Together, we will review and revise recruitment practices and orientation to help drive growth in the number of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments throughout the institution. This will include senior administrators, consistent with our focus on governance.

6. Learner Services

With Student Services and the BCIT Student Association (BCITSA), we will strengthen services and facilities to attract, welcome, and support a greater number of Indigenous learners. Wellness, tutoring, counselling, holistic supports, and financial assistance are priorities. We will reinforce pathways for Indigenous high school students, including the provision of academic support. In collaboration with industry, we will enhance job placement services to facilitate learner transition to work. And we will strive to create safer campuses for Indigenous learners by embedding Indigenous culture, language, and Elder involvement.

7. Relationships and Accountability

We will build relationships with Indigenous communities that support self-determination through education, training, and applied research. This will encompass the formalization of partnerships with local Indigenous Nations and organizations, support for the creation of meaningful agreements, and joint endeavours that promote entrepreneurship and sustainability through community-based programs. We will strive to be respectful and reflective of community needs in all our interactions.





For some Northwest Coast First Nations, a Copper—a traditional copper shield—symbolizes wealth and power. Knowledge is power. A Copper gains value the more it changes hands and is broken and put back together. Life can be challenging, but much like a Copper, our students build strength as they gain knowledge and overcome challenges. That is why we chose the Copper to symbolize this *Indigenous Vision*.

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This Copper was created by Alano Edzerza, a Tahltan multimedia artist and entrepreneur based in West Vancouver, British Columbia.

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EDUCATION
FOR A COMPLEX WORLD.



bcit.ca/indigenous