



INDIGENOUS ADULT
& HIGHER LEARNING
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

IAHLA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

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**INDIGENOUS ADULT
& HIGHER LEARNING
ASSOCIATION**

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Our Mission

Our mission is to support quality post-secondary educational institutes that leverage Indigenous language, culture and knowledge to create adaptable, competent, skilled citizens who are able to contribute to local, provincial and national advancement.

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Letter from the Chair



On behalf of the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our 2023/24 Annual Report. This report provides an update on IAHLA's advocacy milestones, opportunities, and initiatives throughout 2023/24. Our work is grounded in the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education and advances the priorities of First Nations and Indigenous institutes. IAHLA supports its member institutes by holding the province accountable to its commitments made to First Nations in regard to post-secondary education under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) and the *Declaration Act Action Plan*.

At IAHLA's 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference, our Board and members convened to celebrate 20 years of IAHLA advocacy to advance quality of education in our communities for our learners.

Throughout 2023/24, in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), IAHLA continued its work to develop and implement the BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (BC PSE Model). In alignment with Pillar Two of the model, *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes*, in 2023/24, IAHLA and FNESC prioritized advancing legislation that recognizes First Nations-mandated institutes' integral role in the BC post-secondary education system through the provision of core funding and capacity funding for eligible First Nations-mandated institutes. This legislation will secure stable and consistent core operational and capacity funding necessary for First Nations-mandated institutes to thrive. Advancing legislation will also satisfy Action Item 1.8 of the *Declaration Act Action Plan* which calls for such legislation.

We are proud of the work we have done thus far, and IAHLA will continue to work in partnership with FNESC at the Post-Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table to hold the Province accountable to their commitments made under the *Declaration Act Action Plan*. We look forward to continuing this work in 2024/25 to ensure that the funding and legislation meets the needs of First Nations-mandated institutes who provide vital services and programs to our learners and communities.

Throughout 2023/24, IAHLA continued to partner with FNESC to administer funding and programs to member institutes. This included the administration of \$4M in one-time core funding, continued work on the First Nations-led, BC-specific approach to the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program, and support for member institutes participating in the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree Framework.

IAHLA and FNEESC also collaborated to provide feedback on a number of provincial government programs, such as the First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative and BC's Digital Learning Strategy. The growth and development of IAHLA member institutes was supported through annual IAHLA projects such as the Data Collection Project and the External Institutes Evaluation, and workshops at the 2023 IAHLA Conference.

Our member institutes continue to show their dedication to serving First Nations learners and communities. On behalf of the IAHLA Board, I would like to share our gratitude for the IAHLA membership and the honour it is to be in service of our institutes. I would also like to express the Board's appreciation to the Department of Indigenous Services Canada, and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills for their financial support and continued collaboration to administer and support many of the initiatives included in this report.

There is a great deal more that IAHLA must do to further the vision of First Nations control of First Nations post-secondary education and advance the shared goals of our member institutes. We look forward to continued engagement with our members and partners to further reconciliation through the fulfilment of the *Declaration Act Action Plan* and through the ongoing development and implementation of the BC PSE Model.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tracey B', followed by a horizontal line.

sumaxatk^w Tracey Kim Bonneau
IAHLA Chair



Introduction

For over two decades, IAHLA has operated as a unified advocacy and support organization advancing the collective goals of the First Nations mandated post-secondary institute and adult education centres. IAHLA's membership reflects the diverse and growing field of Indigenous-controlled post-secondary and adult education institutes in BC.

IAHLA is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of one member from each of the nine IAHLA regions and one Director at Large. The Board meets regularly to establish priorities and set direction for staff on project implementation and policy development.

IAHLA's 42 member institutes play a unique and vital role in the BC post-secondary education system by delivering post-secondary programs and services that respect and respond to First Nation learner and community needs. Through both independent efforts and in partnership with BC's 25 public post-secondary institutions, member institutes deliver a variety of programs, including:

- > College and university programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees;
- > Adult basic education and adult upgrading;
- > Language and culture instruction;
- > Trades; and,
- > Occupations specific training.

By offering programming under the direction of First Nations, within First Nations communities, IAHLA member institutes directly contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of their respective Nations. IAHLA has long prioritized advancing First Nations control of First Nations education, including a priority to secure provincial legislation that recognizes the role of First Nations -mandated institutes, and commits ongoing core and capacity funding to First Nations-mandated institutes.

This annual report summarizes the activities that IAHLA undertook in the 2023/24 fiscal year. These activities were supported with funding from the Department of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS). IAHLA appreciates this ongoing financial support for our work.

Programs and Initiatives

BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model

Throughout 2023/24, IAHLA and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), under the direction of First Nations, continued to develop and implement the BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (BC PSE Model). The BC PSE Model is focused on First Nations control of First Nations education and envisions an equitable, respectful and transparent post-secondary system for First Nations. The BC PSE Model is endorsed by First Nations Leadership and supports First Nations quality education through four pillars: *First Nations Learners, First Nations-Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes, Community-Based Program Delivery, and a Respectful and Responsive Public Post-Secondary System.*

In 2023/24, IAHLA and FNESC prioritized the development and advancement of legislation that recognizes the role of First Nations-mandated institutes in BC post-secondary education system and commits the province to ongoing operational funding to support institutes' stability and the broader sector's growth.

IAHLA and FNESC continued to engage with First Nations through events and workshops, seeking direction on the BC PSE Model to ensure the Model reflects the priorities and needs identified by First Nations. Further details regarding the development of initiatives and policy related to the four pillars of the PSE Model is provided in the following sections.

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) requires the province to, in consultation and cooperation with First Nations in British Columbia, develop and implement an Action Plan to align BC laws with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Throughout 2023/24, IAHLA collaborated with FNESC and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) to continue advancing priority *Declaration Act Action Plan* Action items related to post-secondary education and language revitalization.

In December 2023, the Province released the Distinctions-Based Approach Primer, which is intended to build the provincial government's understanding on the legal basis for, and core elements of, a distinctions-based approach. A distinctions-based approach is supported by First Nations Leadership, which has repeatedly called for the province to act with appropriate respect for Indigenous laws and jurisdictions. The Province of BC's relations and dealings with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit must be conducted in a manner that is appropriate for the specific context, recognizing and respecting the distinct and different histories, rights, laws, legal systems, and systems of governance across territories which the province is operating within. In 2024/25, IAHLA and FNESC will continue to work with the Province to ensure the implementation of the Declaration Act Action Plan reflects a distinctions-based approach and appropriately recognizes and respects First Nations, as right and title holders in what is now BC.

Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Policy and Legislation Table

In 2022, IAHLA and FNEESC called for the creation of a First Nation-specific Post-Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table (PSE Policy and Legislation Table) with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. This table serves as a platform for IAHLA, FNEESC, and the Ministry to work together to advance priority policy and legislation as committed by the Province under the *Declaration Act Action Plan*, including legislation to satisfy Action Item 1.8. This table operates through the *Interim Approach to Implementing the Requirements of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Interim Approach).

Core and Capacity Funding for First Nations-Mandated Institutes

Since 2021, the Ministry has provided annual one-time grants of \$4M to FNEESC to be allocated as core funding to eligible IAHLA member institutes. IAHLA worked closely with FNEESC on the allocation of these funds to our eligible member institutes.

This funding has been critical for institutes to effectively meet the needs of students and communities and engage in long-term planning and advocacy. IAHLA will continue to work with FNEESC and PSFS on policy and regulation for the administration of core operational funding and interim capacity funding.

BC Post-Secondary Partnerships Program

In 2023/24, IAHLA continued to work with FNEESC to inform the administration of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) funding for the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program (PSPP) through a First Nations-led, BC-specific approach. This approach aligns with the BC PSE Model under Pillar Three: *Community-Based Program Delivery*. The program provides funding to First Nations for the delivery of community-based education in partnership with public post-secondary institutions.

The overall aim of the PSPP is to increase the number of First Nation learners pursuing post-secondary education. Projects funded through this program include language proficiency and revitalization, adult basic education, university entrance preparation or transfer courses, early childhood education, construction, and holistic wellness.

More information on the BC PSPP can be found at: <https://iahla.ca/pspp/>.

Indigenous Language Fluency/Proficiency Degree

The Indigenous Language Fluency/Proficiency Degree (ILFD) Framework is a language education framework based on the discussion paper developed by Dr. Jeanette Armstrong. The ILFD Framework was created in response to concerns that Indigenous language education programs were not increasing the number of fluent speakers of BC Indigenous languages. This framework is being advanced by IAHLA, FNEESC, and a consortium of First Nations, First

Nations-mandated institutes, and public post-secondary institutes.

The Bachelor of nsyilxcən Language Fluency, created in collaboration with En'owkin Centre, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) was the first ILFD program to be approved for delivery by the BC Degree Quality Assurance Board. In June 2023, the first cohort of eight learners of the Bachelor of nsyilxcən Language Fluency degree celebrated their graduation.

Between 2020 and 2024, five degrees that are aligned with the ILFD Framework received approval from the BC Degree Quality Assurance Board, and are now being delivered:

- Bachelor of nsyilxcən Language Fluency Degree

- Bachelor of St'át'imc Language Fluency Degree
- Bachelor of Nisga'a Language Fluency Degree
- Bachelor of Nteʔkepmx Tmíxʷ (Nlaka'pamux) Language Fluency Degree
- Bachelor of SENĆOŦEN Language Proficiency Degree

In Fall 2023, the BC Assembly of First Nations, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and First Nations Summit each passed resolutions calling on the province to provide increased and ongoing funding for the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree to implement DRIPA Action 4.30 and meet the urgent need to address language revitalization and the need for fluent language speakers. IAHLA continues to leverage these resolutions as the organization continues to advocate for increased funding for this initiative.



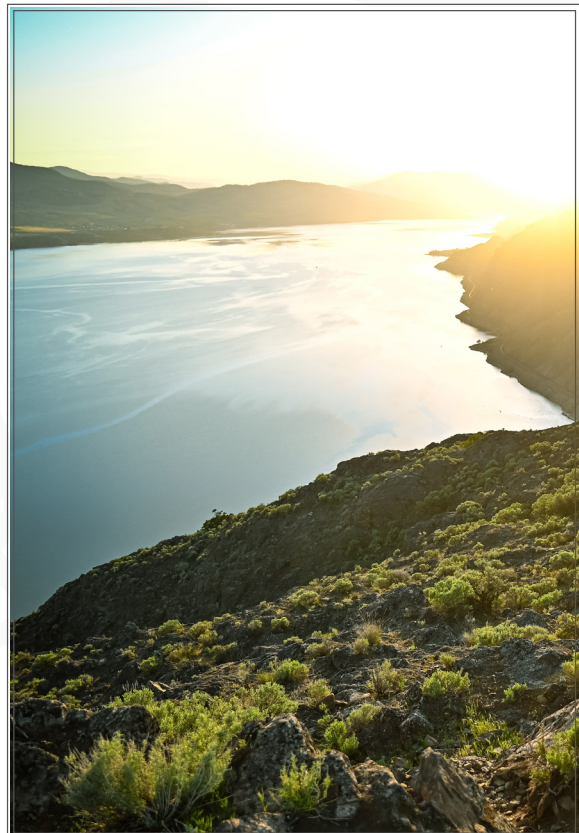
Action 4.3 of the *Declaration Act Action Plan* requires the province to “support Indigenous language revitalization through sustainable funding.” In May 2023, the Province committed \$1 million per year for three years under the *Stronger BC: Future Ready Action Plan* to support programs under the ILFD Framework. This amount is insufficient to sustain the existing programs, let alone support the development and onboarding of new programs. In 2024/25, IAHLA will continue to advocate for the Province to respond to the resolutions passed by First Nations Leadership and adequately fund ILFD programs.

First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative

In 2023/24, IAHLA was involved in the development and launch of the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills’s First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative which provided \$500,000 in funding to First Nations and First Nations-mandated institutes to develop and deliver micro-credentials. Micro-credential programs are short, stackable, and competency-based programs that seek to reduce barriers to programming and provide credentials that can be put towards education or career goals. In 2020, the Province provided funding to public post-secondary institutions for the development and delivery of micro-credentials. Following advocacy by IAHLA for equitable funding to First Nations and their institutes to partake in the development and delivery micro-credentials the Province, committed funding for the First Nations Micro Credential Initiative. IAHLA worked with PSFS to develop the parameters and materials for the First Nations Micro Credential Initiative. IAHLA representatives were involved in the adjudication of proposals.

Provincial Digital Learning Strategy

Throughout 2023/24, IAHLA worked with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to facilitate opportunities for First Nations-mandated institutes to provide input to the Provincial Digital Learning Strategy (DLS). The DLS aims to develop best practises, tools, and resources for the post-secondary system to enhance the use of digital technologies in post-secondary education. The IAHLA Board of Directors continues to engage with the Ministry on the DLS and a representative of the IAHLA Board continues to participate in the Digital Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) which oversee the implementation of the DLS.





Projects

IAHLA Data Collection Project

In 2023/24, IAHLA conducted the annual Data Collection Project (DCP), compiling information from institute and Learner surveys regarding programming, services, and experiences. The information gathered in surveys is analyzed to identify and understand the opportunities and challenges that exist for IAHLA mandated institutes. This information and analysis is summarized into both a system-wide report, which is shared with all IAHLA members and individual institute-level reports which are produced and distributed to the institutes who participated in the project. The final system-wide IAHLA Data Collection report can be read at <https://iahla.ca/projects/>.

IAHLA External Institutes Evaluation Project

Each year, IAHLA administers a grant IAHLA institutes to support carrying out engaging in an evaluation of the programs and services offered by their institutes. This year, two institutes will receive funding to support this project. Work undertaken follows the IAHLA External Evaluation Process, which includes the completion of an Internal Self-Study conducted by the institute, and an External Evaluation completed by qualified external evaluators. Data and analysis shared in the final External Evaluation report identifies areas of strength, as well as opportunities for growth, to inform capacity-building for the participating institute.

Student Information Systems Project

The Student Information Systems research project explored potential options for Student Information Systems for IAHLA member institutes. The collection and maintenance of such data can then be used to benefit operations of institutes, such as through supplementing proposals for external funding, or internally analyzing program success. The research project concluded in February 2024, with the final report shared with the IAHLA Board of Directors. The IAHLA Board of Directors will continue providing direction to staff and identify ways to support IAHLA members institutes in accessing Student Information Systems platforms.

Activity Highlights

- ▶ Continued to develop and implement the BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (PSE) in partnership with FNEC.
- ▶ Collaborated with FNEC and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to advance the five post-secondary and two language revitalization action items under the Province's Declaration Act Action Plan.
- ▶ Continued work with FNEC and Ministry of Post-Secondary Education through the First Nations-specific Post Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table to support the development of post-secondary policy and legislation committed to by the Province under BC's Declaration Act Action Plan.
- ▶ Worked with FNEC to allocate one-time core funding to nine IAHLA member institutes.
- ▶ Worked with FNEC on the allocation of provincial and federal funding through the BC Post Secondary Partnerships Program for 27 projects from the 2023/24 Call for Proposals, supporting the advancement of the third pillar of BC First Nations Tripartite PSE Model.
- ▶ Continued working with FNEC to support IAHLA member institutes developing or offering certificates, diplomas, and degrees under the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree Framework.
- ▶ Involved in the development and launch of the Province's First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative that provided \$500,000 to First Nations and First Nations-mandated institutes to develop and deliver micro-credentials.
- ▶ Completed the annual IAHLA Data Collection Project, resulting in a system-wide report and institute-level reports that document the nature of programming and services offered by IAHLA members institutes.
- ▶ Engaged with the Province to provide feedback on BC's Digital Learning Strategy to ensure the Strategy is responsive to the needs and priorities of First Nations learners and institutes.
- ▶ Continued research and discussion on student information systems for IAHLA member institutes.

Partnerships

IAHLA's relationships with Indigenous organizations, governmental agencies, and other post-secondary partners facilitates collaboration to produce research and develop projects, as well as encourage a coordinated and collective approach to advancing policy and legislation to support the capacity of the First Nations post-secondary and adult education sector.

FNESC and FNSA

IAHLA has worked closely with FNESC and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) through longstanding and close relationships since IAHLA's founding in 2003. The BC First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is a policy and advocacy organization that represents and works on behalf of First Nations in BC. FNESC has a mandate to support First Nations in their efforts to improve the success of all First Nations students and advance First Nations education in BC. The FNSA was created to support First Nations Schools and the development and implementation of appropriate, meaningful and quality education programs that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas.

IAHLA and FNESC have formalized their relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding, articulating the shared responsibilities of this partnership. The Memorandum of Understanding also acknowledges the joint role that IAHLA and FNESC have in developing the BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model.

Government Agencies

IAHLA regularly engages with both the provincial and federal governments to further advocate for the priorities of member institutes.

IAHLA has strong working relationships with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (formerly the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training) at the provincial level, and Indigenous Services Canada at the federal level.

The relationship between IAHLA and FNESC with the Ministry was formalized through the 2016 Post-Secondary Education and Training Protocol Agreement. This agreement establishes regular meetings between IAHLA and FNESC with PSFS staff and leadership to inform the development of provincial policies, programs, and initiatives that apply to First Nations institutes and learners. Throughout 2023/24, this partnership has been integral to advancing several joint initiatives including:

- > Ongoing development of policy and legislation through the Post-Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table;
- > Advancing legislation that commits core funding to eligible First Nations-mandated institutes, as well as interim capacity funding to support institutes in becoming eligible for core funding;
- > Fulfilling actions items under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*;
- > Funding for community-based programming through the BC Post Secondary Partnerships Program; and,
- > Participating in the development, launch, and adjudication of the BC's First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative.

Partnership Highlights

- ▶ Continued work with FNEHC to support the post-secondary programs to advance First Nations education in BC, including the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree and the BC Post-Secondary Partnership Program.
- ▶ Continued work with FNEHC and the Ministry at the Post-Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table to advance legislation committed under Action item 1.8 of the DRIPA Action Plan and in alignment with Pillar Two of the BC PSE Model.



Board Members 2023-2024 (As of March 31, 2024)

Tracey Kim Bonneau, Chair
Kootenay/Okanagan Region
En'owkin Centre

Nadine Pascal, Treasurer
Coast Salish Mainland/Lower St'atl'imc
Ts'zil Learning Centre

Dr. John Chenoweth
Secwepemc/Northern St'atl'imc/
Nlaka'pamux
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Nancy Seward
Coast Salish/Island
Snuneymuxw House of Learning

Dr. Louise Lacerte [Until January 2024]
Tsilhqot'in/Carrier

Bonita Wallas
Kwakwaka'wakw/Heiltsuk/Nuxalk/
Oweekeno/Nuu-chah-nulth
K'ak'ot'lats'l School, Quatsino First Nation

Priscilla Michell
Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en
Kyah Wiget Education Society

Cathy Warren, Vice-Chair
Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish/Inland Tlingit
Kwadacha Dune Tiiy

Dr. Deanna Nyce
Haida/Tsimshian/Haisla/Nisga'a
Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a

Kendra Underwood, Secretary
Director at Large
W̱SÁNEĆ College

Voting Member Institutes

Ahousaht Education Authority

Blueberry River First Nation Adult Centre

Chemainus Native College

Coastal Training Centre

Cowichan Tribes – Quw'utsun Syuw'entst Lelum

En'owkin Centre (Okanagan Indian Educational Resources Society)

Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society

Gitwangak Education Society

Heiltsuk College

Ittatsoo Learning Centre

K'ak'ot'lats'I School

Ka:yu:k't'h'/ Che:k'tles?et'h' First Nations

Kitamaat Valley Institute

Kwadacha Dune Tiiy – Aatse Davie School

Kyah Wiget Education Society

Lip'alhayc Learning Centre

Muskoti Learning Centre – Saulteau First Nations

NEC Native Education College

Neskonlith Education Centre

Nexw7áystwaý Training and Trades Centre

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT)

Northern Shuswap Tribal Council

Ntamtqen Snmamayatn Adult Education (Lower Similkameen Indian Band)

NTC Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council NETP

Pacheedaht First Nation

Penelakut Island Learning Centre

Penticton Indian Band Adult Education

Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

Seabird College

Shishalh Nation

Secwepemc Cultural Education Society

Snuneymuxw First Nation/House of Learning

St'at'imc Education institute

Stein Valley Nlakapamux School

Sto:lo Nation

St'uxwtews Education Centre (Bonaparte First Nation)

Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre

TL'azt'en Adult Learning Centre

Tsay Keh Dene Nation Learning Centre

Tsilhqot'in National Government

Ts'zil Learning Centre (Lil'wat Nation)

Wabsuwilaks'm Gitselasu Adult School

Wahmeesh Learning Centre

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

W̱SÁNEĆ College

Audited financial statements will be added upon approval.

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