



**IAHLA**

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2024/25**

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Cover Image: A view in Tkemlúps te Secwépemc territory



**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 2024/25 Annual Report. This report highlights the advocacy, milestones, and initiatives undertaken by IAHLA in the 2024/25 fiscal year.*

IAHLA's purpose is grounded in the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education. For over two decades, IAHLA has proudly supported First Nations-controlled post-secondary and adult education centres through coordinated advocacy, resources, and professional development.

IAHLA member institutes embody First Nations inherent rights to control their education systems and play an integral role in their communities by increasing access to culturally relevant post-secondary and adult education. Many IAHLA member institutes are also champions for First Nations language revitalization and are at the forefront of supporting a new generation of fluent speakers in their communities.

At the 2023/24 IAHLA Annual General Meeting, following Strategic Planning and work done by the IAHLA Board of Directors, member institutes approved changes to IAHLA's Bylaws and Constitution that honour IAHLA's original purpose and mission in service to First Nations, while positioning us to move our organization and its members towards new opportunities and achievements.

Our member institutes are playing a growing role in the post-secondary sector. The Province now formally recognizes this through the First Nations Mandated Post Secondary Institutes Act (the Act), which was passed in the BC Legislature in May 2025. This legislation is a significant achievement for IAHLA. It is my hope that the funding and recognition achieved under the Act will project established and growing institutes forward and allow us to better serve our learners and communities.

Your Board has been hard at work, in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, to implement the Act in alignment with the vision for First Nations-Mandated Institutes under the BC Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model.

Our members continue to deliver the programs that their communities are prioritizing. Through our joint advocacy with FNESC, we have been able to access more funding than ever before for the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program and First Nations-led community-based programs. In 2024/25, five member institutes continued to work on the development and delivery of language fluency degrees in their languages, and three IAHLA member institutes accessed new provincial funding to deliver community-based Teacher Education Programs.



There are still hurdles to overcome. The funding for the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree (ILFD) framework is far below what is needed to support First Nations that are ready to deliver their own post-secondary language fluency programs. This work is urgent, and it is crucial that our communities have the appropriate resources to revitalize our languages. It is also critical that ongoing funding is made available for community-based Teacher Education Programs; we know that community-based programs are an effective solution to meet workforce needs, and First Nations are best positioned to deliver quality education and training to their community members.

I am proud of our member institutes who continue to show their dedication to serving First Nations learners and communities. I am consistently impressed with the courage and creativity demonstrated by IAHLA learners, staff, and educators as they advance quality First Nations community-based education amid resource gaps and limited funding. I also want to recognize the unique position of our organization as a coordinated regional voice for First Nations in BC.

I look forward to the outcomes of our member institutes' leadership in language revitalization, advancing culturally grounded curriculum, and creating education spaces which honor our distinct identities. 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.

As always, IAHLA is committed to advancing a coordinated approach to First Nations control of First Nations post-secondary education in BC, led by First Nations in BC, to meet the education and training needs of our communities and address the urgent need for language speakers. We look forward to continued engagement with our members and partners to further advance First Nations education rights.

Sincerely,

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

sumaxatk<sup>w</sup> Tracey Kim Bonneau  
IAHLA Chair

## Introduction

Since 2003, IAHLA supported First Nations controlled post-secondary and adult education centres in British Columbia, under the direction of a 10-member Board of Directors representing the 9 IAHLA regions and one Director at Large. The Board meets regularly to establish priorities and set direction on project implementation and policy development.

IAHLA's 39 member institutes play a critical 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. IAHLA member institutes deliver a variety of programs either independently or in partnership with BC's 25 public post-secondary institutions, 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.

IAHLA member institutes play a key role in improving community-based access to quality First Nations-led post-secondary and adult education programs, which directly contribute to the wellbeing of their communities. This annual report summarizes the activities that IAHLA undertook in the 2024/25 fiscal year. IAHLA appreciates the funding from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) to support these activities.



## Programs and Initiatives

### BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model

The BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (BC PSE Model) is a policy and funding framework designed by First Nations to advance First Nations control of First Nations post-secondary and adult education. The BC PSE Model is endorsed by First Nations leadership and advances systemic changes to the post-secondary system 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 2024/25, IAHLA's primary focus has been advancing Pillar Two: First Nations-Mandated Institutes. IAHLA works closely with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to implement the model under the direction of First Nations. IAHLA and FNESC continued to meet regularly with PSFS at the PSE Policy and Legislation Table to jointly develop the *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act* (The Act), which received Royal Assent in the BC Legislature on May 16th, 2024.

The Act recognizes the role of First Nations mandated institutes in the BC post-secondary system and commits ongoing operational and capacity funding to eligible institutes. This legislation is a milestone achievement for IAHLA and is a step towards a post-secondary system that appropriately supports First Nations-mandated institutes to meet the post-secondary needs of their communities.

Throughout 2024/25, IAHLA, FNESC, and PSFS continued to co-develop the policies and procedures for the administration of the Act, such as eligibility criteria, application processes, and funding methodology. IAHLA visited a number of member institutes to inform approaches to policy and legislation.

IAHLA also worked with FNESC to engage with First Nations through events, workshops, and data collection to ensure that the development and implementation of the BC PSE Model continues to reflect the priorities and needs of First Nations.

Further details regarding initiatives and advocacy related to the four pillars of the PSE Model are provided in the following sections.

### Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan

Throughout 2024/25, IAHLA collaborated with FNESC and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) at various tables to continue advancing *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) Action Plan. Under the Declaration Act, the province must, 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*.

In alignment with the Distinctions-Based Approach Primer, IAHLA has advocated for increased funding for First Nations and First Nations-mandated institutes to deliver community-based programming that addresses priorities identified in The Declaration Act Action Plan. There are five key Action Plan items that relate to First Nations-mandated institutes and IAHLA has been working in partnership with FNESC to advance each of them simultaneously:

- Action Item 1.8 to “Recognize the integral role of Indigenous-led post-secondary institutes as a key pillar of B.C.’s post-secondary system through the provision of core funding, capacity funding and the development of legislation.”
- Action Item 4.2 to “develop and implement



an effective recruitment and retention strategy to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the K-12 public education system.”

- Action Item 4.30 to “support Indigenous language revitalization through sustainable funding.”
- Action Item 4.41 to “Work with First Nations, Métis chartered communities and urban Indigenous organizations to provide funding for self-determined, community-led programs for Indigenous Peoples to upgrade skills, obtain credentials, secure employment, and develop and support community economies.”
- Action Item 4.5 to “Co-develop a policy framework for Indigenous post-secondary education and skills training that includes:
  - ▶ supporting post-secondary institutions to be more culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and communities;
  - ▶ expanding the Aboriginal Service Plan program to all 25 public post-secondary institutions;
  - ▶ ensuring that Indigenous learners have access to student housing that is safe, inclusive, and enables them to thrive personally, academically, and culturally;
  - ▶ developing mechanisms for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and communities to play an integral role in public post-secondary institutions’ decision-making; and
  - ▶ identifying legislative amendments needed to ensure all public post-secondary institution boards include at least one Indigenous person.”

Further details regarding the initiatives under specific Declaration Act Action Plan items are provided in the following sections.

## Core and Capacity Funding for First Nations-Mandated Institutes

In 2024/25, IAHLA worked with FNEC to distribute a total of \$6.75M in provincial funds to eight IAHLA member institutes as a one-time grant for interim operational funding. Since 2021, PSFS has been making one-time commitments on an annual basis to support the core operations of First Nations-mandated institutes while a long-term funding mechanism was developed and established in legislation.

In 2024/25, the interim funding was allocated through a First Nations-controlled process, using the criteria jointly established in 2021 by First Nations, FNEC, IAHLA and PSFS. IAHLA continues to work with FNEC and PSFS on policy and regulation for the administration of core operational funding and interim capacity funding under the *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act*.

## BC Post-Secondary Partnerships Program

In 2024/25, IAHLA collaborated with FNEC to administer Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) funding for the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program (PSPP) through a First Nations-led and BC-specific approach. PSPP funding is allocated to First Nations and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes to deliver post-secondary education in community, in partnership with public post-secondary institutions.

In response to advocacy from First Nations Leadership Council, FNEC, and IAHLA, PSFS committed an additional \$5M in 2024/25 to support community-based program delivery. In 2024/25, provincial and federal PSPP funding supported twelve IAHLA member institutes to deliver community-based programs in



partnership with a public post-secondary institution.

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 post-secondary degree framework created by First Nations to build First Nations language proficiency and fluency. This initiative was initially developed by Dr. Jeanette Armstrong; IAHLA and FNEC, in partnership with First Nations and First Nation mandated institutes, have championed the initiative since 2021.

As a result of IAHLA and FNEC's advocacy, in 2023/24, the province committed \$1M each year until 2026/27. IAHLA supports the administration of this funding through a First Nations-controlled process and continues to advocate for increased funding to this initiative, recognizing that \$1M is insufficient to meet the urgent need to train First Nations language speakers.

Under the ILFD framework, First Nations can begin by delivering a certificate level program, eventually laddering into a bachelor's degree. In 2024/25, IAHLA worked with FNEC to administer provincial funding to the five IAHLA member institutes delivering ILFD programs at various stages of development or delivery. Also in 2024/25, W̱SÁNEĆ College and En'owkin Centre both graduated a cohort of fluent language speakers.

### **First Nations Community-Based Teacher Education Programs**

In 2023, PSFS committed \$5.4M over three years to fund the development and delivery of community-based teacher education programs for First Nations.

IAHLA, FNEC and PSFS jointly developed a 2024/25 Call for Proposals for community-based teacher education programs. In September 2024, PSFS launched the Call for First Nations in B.C. to apply for funding to either develop or deliver a teacher education program in partnership with a public post-secondary institution.

Through the 2024 Call, \$3.3M was distributed to First Nations to develop or deliver community-based teacher education programs. Of the successful applicants:

- Two IAHLA member institutes, W̱SÁNEĆ College and Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, received \$50,000 each in funding to work in partnership with their public post-secondary partner to develop or adapt a Teacher Education Program for future delivery.
- Three IAHLA member institutes, Stz'uminus Education Society, St'uxwtéws Education Centre (Bonaparte First Nation), and Wahmeesh Learning Center (Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nation) each received \$1M each in funding to begin program delivery in partnership with a public post-secondary institution in the 2026/27 Academic year.

## Provincial Digital Learning Strategy

The Digital Learning Strategy (DLS) is an initiative from PSFS to support post-secondary institutions' adaption to the increasing use and dependence on digital learning technologies.

In March 2025, IAHLA and FNESC began discussions with the BC Electronic Library Network (BC ELN) to participate in the Removing Barriers Initiative to "investigate information needs of Indigenous students and potential barriers to BC ELN membership for Indigenous post-secondary institutions, with a goal of developing recommendations for removing these barriers." IAHLA continues to engage with BC ELN to support the research initiative, with direction from the IAHLA Board of Directors.



## **Update to IAHLA's Bylaws and Constitution**

In 2024/25, IAHLA undertook work to align its IAHLA's Bylaws and Constitution to reflect the organization's purposes to support First Nations and First Nations controlled education in BC. On November 14th, 2024, IAHLA membership passed a Special Resolution to amend the language in the Bylaws and Constitution to include the term First Nation and First Nation-mandated institute. The purpose of the amendments is to codify First Nation control of First Nation education and ensure IAHLA's membership reflects First Nations controlled education in BC. This work is ongoing.

## **IAHLA Strategic Planning**

On August 8th, 2025, the IAHLA Board of Directors convened to discuss the strategic priorities of the organization. The Board confirmed priority areas of work for the organization, including the following short-, medium- and long-term priorities. At the 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference, the IAHLA Board of Directors presented the results of strategic planning to IAHLA member institutes and sought feedback from membership on the priorities.



## Projects

### IAHLA Learner Experience Survey

In 2024/25, IAHLA launched the Learner Experience Survey to collect information from learners on programming, services, and experiences. The information gathered through these surveys is analyzed to identify challenges and strengths of IAHLA member institutes to inform advocacy and opportunities for improvement. Insights from these surveys will be compiled into a report and made publicly available on the IAHLA website: <https://iahla.ca/projects/>.

### IAHLA External Institutes Evaluation Project

Each year, IAHLA administers two grants to member institutes to undertake an evaluation of their institute's programs and services. In 2024/25, IAHLA provided one grant of \$25,000 to one institute to conduct an External Institute Evaluation to support a more comprehensive evaluation of programming and operations. This evaluation adheres to 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. External Evaluation Reports produced by member institutes determine opportunities for growth and capacity-building for institutes.

### IAHLA Call for Student Enrolment

In 2024/25, IAHLA began developing a new methodology to count post-secondary and adult basic education Call for Student Enrolment at First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes. The new counting methodology seeks to establish a consistent and reliable method to measure student enrolment at First Nations-mandated institutes and the data will inform further advocacy under the BC PSE Model and the allocation of provincial and federal funding.



## Activity Highlights

- ▶ Collaborated with FNEESC and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to advance action items in *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Action Plan tied to community-based post-secondary education and language revitalization.
- ▶ In partnership with FNEESC, continue to develop and implement the BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (PSE).
- ▶ Continued work with FNEESC and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to implement the First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act.
- ▶ Worked with FNEESC to allocate one-time core funding to eight IAHLA member institutes.
- ▶ Worked with FNEESC to administer provincial and federal funding through the BC Post Secondary Partnerships Program for 23 projects.
- ▶ Continued working with FNEESC to support IAHLA member institutes to develop or offer certificates, diplomas, and degrees under the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree Framework.
- ▶ Engaged in a review of IAHLA's Bylaws and Constitution, IAHLA Strategic Planning, and consultation with IAHLA member institutes on the implementation of strategic priorities and the BC PSE Model.



## Partnerships

IAHLA's success is a result of the strong, ongoing and respectful relationships IAHLA has with a number of partners. These relationships, joint co-ordination, and collaboration, are essential to effectively advance policy and legislation to support First Nations post-secondary institutes and adult education centres in BC.

### FNESC and FNSA

FNESC is the lead policy and advocacy body, under the direction of the First Nations Leadership Council, to advance First Nations education in BC. FNESC works under the direction of First Nations to advance First Nations controlled education and support First Nations to improve the education experiences and outcomes of First Nations learners. The First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) was created to support First Nations K-12 schools to deliver quality education to learners in supportive and culturally appropriate learning environments.

IAHLA and FNESC have a close working relationship and work together to advance shared priorities and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which formalizes their relationship and outlines the respective roles of each organization in advancing the BC PSE Model.

### Government Agencies

To advocate for priorities of member institutes, IAHLA regularly engages with both the provincial and federal government. IAHLA has strong working relationships with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills at the provincial level, and Indigenous Services Canada at the federal level.

In 2016, IAHLA, FNESC and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills signed the Post-Secondary Education and Training Protocol Agreement formalizing this relationship. The Protocol establishes a regular meeting schedule between parties, and outlines respective responsibilities to advance provincial policies, programs, and initiatives that apply to First Nations institutes and learners.

## Partnership Highlights

Throughout 2024/25, our partnerships with FNESC and the Ministry have been integral to advancing several important initiatives, including:

- ▶ Developing policies and procedures for the administration of the *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act*; and
- ▶ Co-development and launch of a First Nations-led, Community-based Teacher Education Programs Call for Proposals.

## Board Members 2024/25

**sumaxatk<sup>w</sup> - Tracey Kim Bonneau, Chair**  
Kootenay/Okanagan Region  
En'owkin Centre

**Cathy Warren, Vice Chair**  
Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish  
Inland Tlingit/Tsek'ene  
Kwadacha Dune Tiiy

**Kendra Underwood, Secretary**  
Director at Large  
WSÁNEĆ College

**Nadine Pascal, Treasurer**  
Coast Salish Mainland/Lower St'atl'imc  
T'szil Learning Centre

**Nancy Seward**  
Coast Salish Island  
Snuneymuxw House of Learning

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

**Beatrice Michell**  
Tsilhqot'in/Carrier  
Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre

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

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

**Dr. Verna Billy Minnabarriet**  
Secwepemc/Northern St'atl'imc/Nlaka'pamux  
St'uxwtews Education Centre,  
Bonaparte First Nation

## IAHLA Voting Member Institutes

Ahousaht Education Authority  
 Chemainus Native College  
 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  
 K'ak'ot'lats'i School  
 Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations  
 Kitamaat Valley Education Society  
 Kwadacha Dune Tiyy  
 Kyah Wiget Education Society  
 Lip'alhayc Learning Centre  
 Muskoti Learning Centre - Saulteau First  
 Nations  
 NEC Native Education College  
 Neskonlith Education Department  
 Nexw7áystway Training and Trades  
 Centre  
 Nicola Valley Institute of Technology  
 (NVIT)  
 Ntamtqen Snmamayatn Adult Education  
 (Lower Similkameen Indian Band)  
 NTC Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council NETP  
 Penelakut Island Learning Centre  
 Penticton Indian Band Education Centre

Prince George Nechako Aboriginal  
 Employment & Training Association  
 Seabird College  
 Shíshálh Nation  
 Snuneymuxw First Nation/House of  
 Learning  
 St'át'imc Education Institute  
 Stein Valley Nlakapamux School  
 Stó:lō Nation  
 St'uxwtéws Education Centre  
 (Bonaparte First Nation)  
 Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre  
 Tl'azt'en Adult Learning Centre  
 Tsay Keh Dene Nation Learning Centre  
 T̓silhqot'in National Government  
 T̓szil Learning Centre (Lil'wat Nation)  
 Wabsuwilaks'm Gitselasu Adult School  
 Wahmeesh Learning Center  
 W̓SÁNEĆ College  
 Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute











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