

IAHLA

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

INDIGENOUS ADULT AND HIGHER LEARNING ASSOCIATION

IAHLA ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26
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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 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 2025/26 Annual Report and share details of IAHLA's advocacy, activities and achievements over the past year.



It has been over two decades since our founding, and our work is still guided by the principles of our founders – trailblazers who worked to carve out a space for institutes like ours in a system that had for so long neglected our communities and learners.

Those leaders to whom we are so indebted devoted themselves to advancing First Nations control of First Nations education and bringing meaningful post-secondary education programs into their communities. Following in their footsteps, our members continue to reimagine what post-secondary education can look like, creating new, innovative partnerships and programs.

In my role as Chair of the Board I have many opportunities to learn about the exciting programs our member institutes offer and I am consistently inspired by the tremendous work happening in our communities. Despite the many constraints – funding and otherwise – that they face on a daily basis, our members continue to show their dedication and effectiveness in serving their learners and communities.

Over the past year your Executive and Board have been actively working with our partners at the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to advocate for additional resources to support the delivery of programs by First Nations mandated institutes. In particular, we are excited by the launch of a number of Teacher Education Programs and the many graduates of First Nations language fluency degrees each year.

IAHLA's role in providing a unified voice for its 39 member institutes has placed it in a truly unique position to mobilize change. This past year we have continued to focus on the effective implementation of the *First Nations Mandated Institutes Act*, working closely with FNESC and the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to ensure that what we are building is tailored specifically to the needs of our member institutes and will support the growth of our sector over time.

Of course there are still barriers to be overcome, the state of the economy has created uncertainty and impacts the resources available to us. Funding limitations persist and we are operating within an environment of volatility. Nonetheless, I know that our institutes are resilient and are continuing to advance culturally grounded curriculum that reflects our distinct identities.

On behalf of the IAHLA Board, I would like to thank you for your engagement as an IAHLA member. It is an honour to support you and be of service to our communities, institutes, and learners. 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.

Although there is still progress to be made toward realizing the vision of our founders, we have much to celebrate this year. I look forward to continued engagement with our members and partners to further advance First Nations education in British Columbia.

Sincerely,



sumaxatk^{w} Tracey Kim Bonneau
IAHLA Chair

Introduction



Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Founded in 2003, IAHLA provides a unified voice for First Nations mandated adult education and post-secondary institutes in British Columbia. In 2025/26, IAHLA's 39 member institutes played 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 is committed to building strategic partnerships to enhance the quality of education available for learners at First Nations mandated institutes.

IAHLA member institutes deliver a wide range of programming either independently or in partnership with public and private 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

Under the direction of a 10-member Board of Directors, IAHLA has supported member institutes through coordinated advocacy, resources and professional development. The Board meets regularly to establish priorities, set direction on project implementation and policy development, and engage in strategic planning to advance the organization and its aims.

This annual report summarizes the activities that IAHLA undertook in the 2025/26 fiscal year. These activities were supported with funding from 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.

Policy Context

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Action Plan

As required by DRIPA, the province and First Nations leadership have developed an action plan to meet the objectives of the UN Declaration. This Action Plan includes a number of action items that are directly tied to the work of IAHLA and its members:

- 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. This includes institutes mandated by First Nations, as well as a Métis post-secondary institute being developed by Métis Nation BC."
- 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."

As set out below, much of IAHLA's work in 2025/26 was focused on advancing these Actions which have been identified by First Nations Leadership as priorities.

BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model

The BC First Nations Tripartite Post-Secondary Education Model (BC PSE Model) is a First Nations-led policy and funding framework, endorsed by First Nations leadership, to advance First Nations control of First Nations post-secondary and adult education. This model underpins the policy and advocacy work conducted by IAHLA in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). The Framework is intended to guide systemic change in the post-secondary system in four areas:

1. First Nations Learners;
2. First Nations-Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes;
3. Community-Based Program Delivery; and
4. Respectful and Responsive Public Post-Secondary System.



Nuxalk College

Programs and Initiatives

First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act

The passing of the *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act* (the FNMI Act) in 2024 was a pivotal moment in the history of IAHLA. The FNMI Act recognizes the integral 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 significant milestone towards creating a post-secondary system that appropriately supports First Nations mandated institutes to meet the needs of their communities and learners.

Throughout 2025/26, IAHLA and FNESC continued to meet regularly with PSFS at the Post-Secondary Education Policy and Legislation Table to implement the legislation by co-developing the policies and procedures for the administration of core operational funding and capacity funding. In 2025/26, FNESC, working with IAHLA launched a new student counting methodology to collect data from First Nations mandated institutes to inform funding allocations under the *First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act*. The new student counting methodology was developed to ensure consistent and equitable data collection across First Nations mandated institutes.

Core and Capacity Funding for First Nations-Mandated Institutes

Since 2021, PSFS has provided capacity and core operational funding for First Nations mandated institutes through one-time funding



Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society

commitments. An ongoing funding commitment has now been established through the FNMI Act. While work on the necessary regulations, policies, and procedures for implementing the Act are ongoing, IAHLA has continued to work with FNESC and PSFS on the administration of core and capacity funding under an interim First Nations controlled process, using criteria jointly established in 2021 by IAHLA, FNESC, and PSFS.

BC Post-Secondary Partnerships Program

In 2025/26, IAHLA collaborated with FNESC on the administration of the ISC-funded Post-Secondary Partnerships Program (PSPP) through a First Nations-led, BC-specific approach. While the funding is held and administered by FNESC, IAHLA and FNESC jointly developed BC-specific program guidelines that set out how the program will be delivered in BC. This includes a jointly appointed Review Committee to review and score proposals. In BC, PSPP funding is allocated to First Nations and First Nations mandated post-secondary institutes to deliver community-based post-secondary education programming, in partnership with public post-secondary institutions.

In 2025/26, IAHLA and FNESC successfully advocated for an additional $5M from the Province which increased the available funds by more than 200 percent. Ten PSPP projects were funded at IAHLA member institutes.

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 based on a discussion paper by Dr. Jeanette Armstrong. The Framework is intended to build First Nations language proficiency and fluency.

Since 2021, IAHLA and FNESC, in partnership with First Nations and First Nation mandated institutes, have advocated for sustainable funding to support the development and delivery of degrees that are aligned with the ILFD Framework. While funding was initially one-time only, as a result of advocacy by IAHLA, FNESC, and First Nations leadership, PSFS has now committed $1M annually on an ongoing basis.

While IAHLA is pleased with the commitment of ongoing funding, $1M remains insufficient to meet the current need and does not allow for the funding to be extended to other communities.

All five of the currently funded Fluency Degree Programs are being led by IAHLA member institutes. The goal of IAHLA is that any First Nation in BC will be able to access funding to deliver a degree program in alignment with the Framework.

First Nations Community-Based Teacher Education Programs

First Nations have long called for funding to develop and deliver community-based teacher education programs as an effective mechanism for increasing the number of First Nations teachers in the province. In 2023/24, PSFS committed $5.4M over three years to fund the development and delivery of community-based

teacher education programs for First Nations.

In 2024/25, the first call for proposals for community-based teacher education programs was jointly developed and launched. Through this call, $3.3M was distributed to First Nations to develop or deliver community-based teacher education programs in partnership with a public post-secondary institution. Two IAHLA member institutes received $50,000 each to develop or adapt a teacher education program for future delivery and three IAHLA member institutes received $1M each to deliver a community-based teacher education program partnership. IAHLA participated in the review and adjudication of applications for funding.

In 2025/26, a second call for proposals launched, Through this call, one IAHLA member institute received funding to deliver a community-based teacher education program. Once again IAHLA participated in the adjudication process.

PSFS has now committed $2M in ongoing annual funding for this initiative.

Provincial Digital Learning Strategy

The Digital Learning Strategy is a PSFS initiative to support the post-secondary sector's adaptation to the increasing use and dependence on digital learning technologies. In 2025/26, IAHLA continued to engage with PSFS and other partners to advance projects in alignment with this strategy. IAHLA engaged with both the BC Electronic Library Network and the First Nation Technology Council to discuss the needs of IAHLA member institutes and how they can be addressed.



IAHLA Strategic Planning and Membership Review

At the 2024 IAHLA AGM, IAHLA members unanimously passed a Special Resolution to amend the language in the Bylaws and Constitution to reflect that IAHLA serves First Nations in BC and IAHLA's Members are "First Nations Mandated Institutes". Following this amendment, the IAHLA Board of Directors developed its *Policies and Procedures to Evaluate IAHLA Membership Eligibility*. The implementation of the 2024 amendments to the Bylaws and Constitution related to voting membership eligibility is ongoing work that will continue into 2026/27.

IAHLA Conference

The 2025 IAHLA Annual Conference brought together over 50 educators and administrators from IAHLA member institutes across British Columbia. With a theme of *Transformation and Connection Through the Power of Language*, the Conference highlighted the work being done by First Nations post-secondary institutes to protect and revitalize the distinct First Nation languages and cultures in British Columbia.

Feedback from the Event Evaluation were highly positive with 100% of respondents indicating that they were "very satisfied" with their conference experience. Many attendees highlighted the opportunity to network as being the component that they enjoyed the most about the conference, while others highlighted the keynote speaker and the workshops hosted by IAHLA member institutes.



IAHLA Conference

IAHLA Learner Experience Survey

Since 2005, IAHLA has conducted annual data collection projects to gather information that helps IAHLA and its member institutes better understand learner needs. Starting in 2024/25, IAHLA has focused this research on the experiences of learners at our member institutes, recognizing that understanding the learner experiences is essential for continuous improvements to educational environments.

The 2025/26 Learner Experience Survey collected feedback directly from learners enrolled at member institutes about their educational experience, programs, supports, services and barriers to success. The survey covers key areas including academic goals and engagement, educational quality and skill development, learner services and supports, well-being, satisfaction, and the challenges learners face in accessing and completing their education.

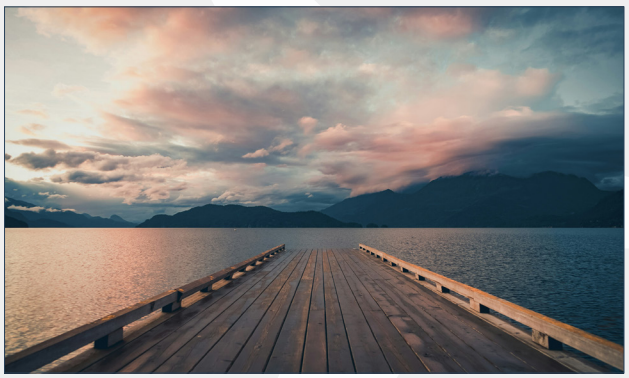
Following the survey, a report was created to provide a broad picture of the experiences and needs of learners in IAHLA member institutes. This survey informs advocacy and engagement priorities for 2026/27.

The 2025/26 Learner Experience Survey sector report is based on responses from 134 learners at 14 IAHLA member institutes, with findings suggesting that IAHLA member institutes play an important role in providing accessible, supportive, culturally relevant education for First Nations learners. This year's results were strongly positive across the sector. Nearly all respondents (98%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the education they received and 93% said they would recommend their institute to others.

IAHLA External Institutes Evaluation Project

To support the continued growth and improvement of our member institutes, each year IAHLA makes available funds through a Call for Expression of Interest for institutes to carry out an external institute evaluation.

In 2025/26, IAHLA provided one $25,000 grant to a member institute to conduct a 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.





Native Education College

Partnerships

IAHLA's accomplishments would not be possible without its enduring and respectful relationships with partners:

First Nations Education Steering Committee

FNESC is the lead policy and advocacy body for First Nations education in BC. Under the direction of First Nations, FNESC works to advance First Nations control of First Nations education and improve the education experiences and outcomes of First Nations learners.

IAHLA and FNESC work closely 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.

First Nations Schools Association

The First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) was created to promote improved educational outcomes for students attending K-12 First Nation schools. Several First Nations adult education centres in BC are members of both IAHLA and FNSA and in many other cases students transition from First Nations schools into IAHLA member institutes to further their education.

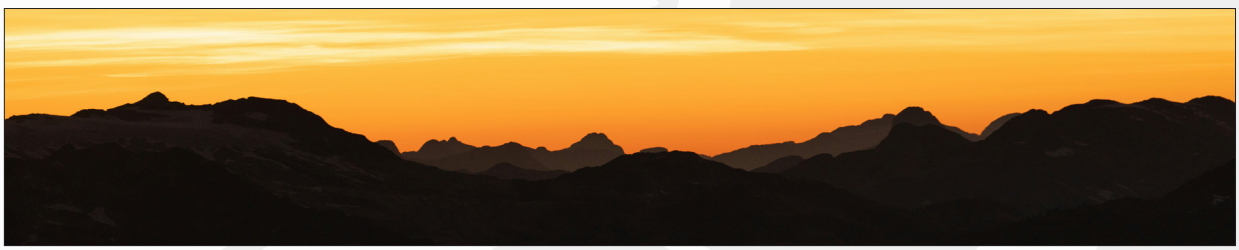
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

IAHLA meets regularly with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to advance the interests of its member institutes. This relationship is guided by the *Post-Secondary Education and Training Protocol Agreement* signed by IAHLA, FNESC, and PSFS in 2016.

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. PSFS also provides annual funding to support the work of FNESC and IAHLA.

Indigenous Service Canada

IAHLA engages with the federal government, specifically Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), to ensure that funding programs effectively meet the needs of BC First Nations mandated institutes. In particular, IAHLA and FNESC continue to convey concerns and recommended changes for the Post Secondary Partnership Program. ISC also provides annual funding to support the work of IAHLA.



Board Members 2025/26

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

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

Kendra Underwood, Secretary
Director at Large
W̱SÁNEĆ College

Nadine Pascal, Treasurer
Coast Salish Mainland/Lower St'atl'imc
Tŝzil 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 Wilx̱o'oskwhl Nis̱ga'a

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 Tiiy
- Kyah Wiget Education Society
- Lip'alhayc Learning Centre
- Muskoti Learning Centre - Saulteau First Nations
- Native Education College
- Neskonlith Education Department
- Nexw7áýstwaý Training and Trades Centre
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- Ntamtqen Snmamayatn Adult Education
- Nuu-chah-nulth 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
- Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre
- Tl'azt'en Adult Learning Centre
- Tsay Keh Dene Nation Learning Centre
- Tŝilhqot'in National Government
- Tsʔzil Learning Centre
- Wabsuwilaks'm Gitselasu Adult School
- Wahmeesh Learning Center
- W̱SÁNEĆ College
- Wilp Wilx̱o'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute



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