

DISTINCTLY
UVIC



A STRATEGY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA | 2023 FORWARD

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and respect the Lək̡ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̡ʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



*Welcome Banners, designed by Margaret August,
shíshálh Nation*

OUR PLACE IN A CHANGING WORLD

For over 60 years, UVic has proven its unwavering commitment to providing an excellent student experience in a supportive teaching and learning environment, to partnering with communities, and to pursuing research and creative activities that make an impact, both locally and globally. We are prepared to face a changing world with renewed commitment, enthusiasm, compassion and humility.

This moment will define our future. It will need us to try new ways of teaching, and new methods of tackling the world's most complex problems through creativity, innovative research and partnerships—building community inside and outside the classroom. Now is the time to re-imagine the lab and studio, libraries and offices, campus and community to create interconnected and interdisciplinary opportunities.

[This is the start of our next 60 years. It's our moment to be Distinctly UVic.](#)

Now is the time

Our times are marked by immediate challenges: from health crises and climate change to geopolitical instability and the hard but necessary work of confronting difficult truths about our history.

How we respond is up to us, but we need to do it now. This is an exhilarating time of innovation, collaboration and possibility. It is time to lead with our values and live up to our commitments to:

- Redress historical barriers to higher education for Indigenous Peoples.
- Uphold equity and create a culture of belonging.
- Address the climate crisis to ensure a more sustainable and fair future.
- Embrace innovation and community partnerships.

The world and the communities connected to UVic need us to work together to find new ways of learning, thinking and working. The world needs critical thinkers and interdisciplinary solutions; it needs perseverance and openness to the challenges ahead. It doesn't need us to be a wildly different UVic—it needs us to be bolder, more confident and more curious, but still distinctly who we are.

We must continue to amplify how our research, creativity and teaching responds to global opportunities. We must drive innovation, create partnerships and nurture the next generation of leaders, thinkers and citizens. We must strive to be relevant to local communities while also making a global impact. We must think critically about who we are and how we move in the world, embracing values of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

[Now is the time to be Distinctly UVic.](#)

HONOURING THIS PLACE

We are grateful for and deeply honour our place on Coast Salish territory along with the responsibilities that come with living and working here. Foundational to this plan is our commitment to the Lək'ʷənəjən Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ Nations, who have continuing relationships with and inherent rights to the land on which the university stands and to its neighbouring territories.

As part of UVic's commitment to upholding the rights and sovereignties of Indigenous Peoples, we recognize and acknowledge the damaging and colonial history of education in this country. We are committed to living up to and beyond the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

A commitment to Indigenous rights and to honouring the First Peoples of this territory is an essential step in creating the conditions in which everyone feels a sense of belonging within a respectful, welcoming community.

A note about language and teachings

Language is the foundation of Indigenous laws, worldviews and ways of knowing and being. The protection and revitalization of Indigenous languages is a priority for local Indigenous communities and for UVic.

Throughout this plan names and teachings are provided in Lək'ʷənəjən | SENĆOŦEN | English. These words and teachings have been shared with the university community by Elders, Language and Knowledge Keepers from the local Nations, and we are charged with upholding them through the Coast Salish teaching of Nəw̓es šxʷ cən ?ay šqʷeləqʷən | ÁMEKT TŦEN ÍY, ŠKÁLEȻEN | Bring in a your good heart and mind.

Elders Seniemten, Dr. Elmer George (Songhees Nation) and JSINTEN, Dr. John Elliott (Tsartlip First Nation) have provided permission and guidance on the use of Lək'ʷənəjən and SENĆOŦEN respectively throughout this document.



A NEW KIND OF PLAN

A distinct approach, building on a strong foundation

To develop this strategic plan, we stepped back to get a broad view of our journey over the past 60 years. Our new plan is built on a strong foundation of excellence in teaching, research and creative works, and our commitment to an outstanding student experience.

We also asked tough questions about what is needed from and expected of us. We heard from thousands of people like you: students, staff, faculty, alumni, retirees, donors, community members, Elders, partners and so many more. Through more than 6,000 engagements, we heard what the world needs from UVic, what you need from UVic and the impact we should be striving for in this moment.

We heard that UVic must tackle the big issues we are all facing as a society and a world, and be transparent about the role that universities have played in upholding the dominant systems of power, including colonization, white supremacy, historical trauma and patriarchal norms. This plan challenges us—leadership, individuals and the entire community—to resist these systems and be accountable to our commitments.

The following pages don't capture every detail of what we do at UVic. This plan urges us to be creative, innovative, collaborative, compassionate and brilliant—not on our own, but together. Bringing together different perspectives and lived experiences is what allows us to build better solutions. We are ready to take action and lift up the expectations we have for each other and the role UVic has in the world and the communities we serve.

Interconnected plans

Look to the existing and emerging initiatives and goals that have been articulated in major institutional plans like Xw̱kʷənəjistəl | W̱CENENISTEL | Helping to move each other forward: UVic's Indigenous Plan, the Equity Action Plan, Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy, the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan, and the forthcoming academic and global engagement plans.

These plans, along with the operational plans that direct our daily activities, have been created by the UVic community and guide us as a community and an institution toward fulfilling the shared purpose, pledge, principles and priorities articulated in the strategic plan.

OUR PURPOSE, PLEDGE & PRINCIPLES

Our purpose

Inspired by and honouring place, we are a community-minded, globally engaged university where we transform ideas into meaningful impact.

Our pledge

We pledge to hold ourselves accountable to *?etalnəwəl̓ | ÁTOL,NEUEL* by respecting the rights of one another, being in right relationship with all things and by upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Our principles

Operating with excellence

We will pursue excellence in the way we teach, research, engage with the community and operate.

Contributing to change

We will make meaningful contributions to social, cultural, economic and environmental progress.

Upholding Indigenous ways of knowing

We will embrace and continuously promote Indigenous ways of knowing and being, with good hearts and minds.

Creating a welcoming space

We will cultivate an environment that is inclusive, equitable and supportive. UVic will be a place where each person feels like they belong.

Making room for risk-taking

We will nurture a culture that fosters trust, respect and accountability—where curiosity, courageous action and an openness to challenge are valued and encouraged.

Honouring lifelong learning

We will support learners through their lifelong educational journey, providing the skills and knowledge needed to reach their goals.

Lifting each other up

We will commit to helping people succeed in their endeavours, because we know that purpose and fulfillment are foundational to the fullest expression of human well-being.

Adding value when we join others

We will work to ensure our engagement with every partner is respectful, relevant and responsive through thoughtful dialogue and shared goals.



About the purpose, pledge and principles

Underpinning our approach and who we are as a community and a university, our purpose, pledge and principles will guide our decision-making in the coming decades.

- Our **purpose** gives us a sense of identity. It describes our direction, what we want to be known for and the impact we want to have.
- Our **pledge** is a non-negotiable commitment to supporting and honouring Indigenous rights. It is fundamental to what we stand for and a critical starting place for any work that upholds equity and justice.
- Our **principles** reflect our identity and character, guiding how we function as an organization.

The SIÁM STŁEWÁT NONET SWEKE,Ł | Highly Respected One's Peace of Mind at Last blanket, woven by Coast Salish weaver Myrna Crossley, is made with the intention of sharing values and teachings of the land, with acknowledgement of the First Peoples and their important teachings. It hangs in Čeqwənjín ?é?łəŋ, one of the new student housing and dining buildings at UVic.

"This 'highly respected' nobility-style blanket now lifts off the blanket of oppression and colonization and replaces it with a blanket from our culture in the university. This means 'peace of mind at last' for First Nations and the Settlers."

—Myrna Crossley



PRIORITIES THAT DEFINE AND UNITE US

Students, teaching and research are our foundation. Like all universities, at our core we are an institution defined by our commitment to education, discovery and the development and mobilization of knowledge, and to providing a supportive working and learning environment for our students, staff and faculty. Our areas of study and our strengths in research in scholarly activity are vast and all contribute to a better world.

But what makes UVic different?

Our community told us about the strengths and priorities that make UVic distinct—and was clear about what should guide us toward building a better tomorrow.

UVic is distinct because we prioritize:

Indigenous perspectives. We want to be a community that is open to learning, prioritizes being in right relationship with and respecting the rights of all people and things, and deconstructs systemic barriers to the full participation of First Peoples in the university's life and work.

People, places and the planet. From the campus to the global community, we support people's wellness and ability to thrive, and are addressing sustainability, climate action and the systemic barriers affecting equity, diversity and inclusion in multiple ways.

Change and transformation. Through a culture of trust, curiosity and flexibility, we will continuously re-imagine what we do, how we do it and why—being courageous and open to change helps us transform our communities and the world.

Partnerships and collaboration. We support collaboration among faculties, disciplines and divisions; between academic and administrative units; between the campus and our community; and between UVic and our international partners, alumni, research institutions, industry and governments.

These strategic priorities are what make us Distinctly UVic.

?ETALNəWÁL ÁTOL,NEUEL



Respecting the rights of one another and being in right relationship with all things

?etalnəwáł | ÁTOL,NEUEL | Respecting the rights of one another and being in right relationship with all things reinforces UVic's commitment to implement core local, national and international responsibilities and calls to action that support the rights and sovereignties of Indigenous Peoples—for example, [UNDRIP*](#), [DRIPA*](#), the [MMIWG Report*](#) and the [TRC Calls to Action.*](#)

?etalnəwáł | ÁTOL,NEUEL moves beyond individual and collective rights and focuses on our relationships with one another, with the land and waters, and with all living beings—working with respect for the rights of each other, showing respect for one another and being in right relationship with all things.

We are centring the languages and teachings of the local Nations and calling on all members of the UVic community to learn about, understand and respect their relationship with the laws, protocols and peoples of these lands and waters. By respecting the local Nations and honouring the teachings we each carry with us, we will centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being in teaching, learning, researching, services and wellness.

*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA); Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG Report); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (TRC).

GOALS

Sharing the work of creating an environment that supports Indigenous students, staff and faculty with the entire university community—supported by accountable practices and policies in all areas of our teaching, research and operations.

Ensuring the sustainability of all new and existing Indigenous programs and services.

Honouring the aspirations, laws, languages and sovereignties of local Nations through continued partnerships and relationship-building.

Taking responsibility for ensuring institutional structures and systems are accountable to the spirit of ?etalnəwáł | ÁTOL,NEUEL and informed by Čaléñən | ĆELĀNEN | Our birthright and teachings.



Language revitalization at UVic

UVic's Indigenous language programs trace their start back to the early 1970s, when a number of Quw'utsun (Cowichan) Elders began looking for ways to revive their language. Now, more than 40 years on, UVic remains in a learning stance. Aliko Marinakis (left), Indigenous Language Program Manager, and Onowa McIvor (right), Professor in Indigenous Education, work with communities to deliver programs that centre the language and teachings of local Nations.



PEOPLE, PLACE & THE PLANET

Sʔeyəłenxʷ | S,ÁEŁA'NW When things are in harmony

Our current social and environmental context clearly demonstrates the urgent need to solve the issues threatening the well-being of Earth and all beings living here. The teaching of Sʔeyəłenxʷ | S,ÁEŁA'NW | When things are in harmony reinforces what we know—that all life is interconnected, with individual and community choices having far-reaching impacts. Healthy communities depend on responsible stewardship.

UVic is a living lab, supporting and empowering people to exist more sustainably and improve the well-being of communities and our planet. By understanding the reciprocal and interdependent relationships in our world and the importance of diversity, community and genuine belonging, we discover how to live in transformative, respectful and thoughtful ways.

Together, we are working to create a healthier and more resilient future that upholds the well-being of our region and of all life on our planet. We advance local and global issues like climate action and sustainability, social justice and equity, and health and wellness. We embrace and are guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

GOALS

Inspiring and activating people to thrive in a changing world by tackling local and global challenges through critical thought and perseverance.

Including and supporting diverse and talented students, staff and faculty who want to make a difference in communities and have a positive impact on people, places and the planet.

Addressing systemic barriers to equity and inclusion and progressively integrating our guiding principles throughout all decisions, processes and outcomes, to transform practices within UVic.

Developing and sharing innovative strategies and solutions that support healthy, sustainable communities, and address global crises and our evolving world.

Feeding community well-being

Executive Chef Tony Heesterman and the University Food Services team are playing a central role in our collective efforts to address climate and sustainability by buying local, reducing meat proteins in campus menus and lightening UVic's carbon footprint.

NATURAL & NUTRITIOUS



CULTURE OF CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION



>Xəčiñəłħəwə́í | XEĆIÑEŁNEUEL Actively planning and problem solving

We aspire to create a culture of courage, trust, curiosity and flexibility that will advance our quest to solve big problems and create powerful, positive change.

New ideas can change everything—and Xəčiñəłħəwə́í | XEĆIÑEŁNEUEL | Actively planning and problem solving teaches us to engage deeply with challenges and opportunities. Cultivating change means having the courage to take risks, embrace new ideas, and be open to learning and trying things in new ways.

A culture of innovation becomes possible with trust between people, and across disciplines and areas of expertise. People are the key. Only by actively supporting the people who make up our community—with attention to equity and belonging—can we reach our full potential. Honouring and welcoming diverse ways of knowing and being creates fertile ground for ideas that can, and will, transform our communities and the world.

GOALS

Supporting collaborative approaches to innovation in our research, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning programs and operations.

Fostering adaptable, creative policies, governance and uses of space and resources to grow transformative ideas, partnerships, education and communities of practice.

Creating a culture of trust, respect and collaboration that will attract and support curious, courageous people who are driven to engage, solve, teach and learn.

Embracing risk-taking in the pursuit of knowledge, creativity and impact for all university activities.

Making room for the conversation

Cara Segger (left) and Hannah Brown (right) are helping to make UVic a more inclusive space. A project manager and PhD student respectively, the two are committed and effective accessibility advocates, pushing boundaries and building connections to improve the lives for many on our campus.



PARTNERING FOR A SHARED FUTURE



?aýnəwéłí ?ist | ÍY,NEUELIST Moving forward together for the good of all

?aýnəwéłí ?ist | ÍY,NEUELIST | Moving forward together for the good of all instructs us to come to the table as engaged and authentic partners. We actively co-create inclusive, values-based partnerships that are reciprocal, mutually beneficial and long-lasting. We acknowledge that lived experiences and diverse knowledge systems are essential in finding solutions to the challenges facing society and the planet.

We aspire to co-create inclusive, values-based partnerships that aren't bound by organizational, hierarchical or disciplinary structures. Our systems and processes will be nimble and proactive in addressing challenges, bridging academic excellence and applied research, and encouraging courageous action and inquiry. Working with internal and external partners from academic institutions, industry, community organizations and government, we will engage in collaborative partnerships that contribute to community, society and the planet.

We will be leaders in bringing forward creative, informed, practical solutions for a sustainable and equitable future.

GOALS

Cultivating a culture of partnership so our university community and the communities we serve experience it as a defining cultural element at UVic—we are an open, responsive, supportive and preferred partner.

Transforming systems, structures and processes to create the ideal ecosystem for partnerships to flourish.

Responding to our partners' needs and opportunities by sharing insights and connections across communities.

Advancing and strengthening interdisciplinary and interdepartmental opportunities to provide new teaching, learning, research, creative works and service solutions.



Centring community at TEL, ILĆE

UVic students partnered with members of Tsawout and WSÁNEĆ First Nations for a ground-breaking archaeological field school in Cordova Bay. Centred in SENĆOŦEN language, oral history and local knowledge, the UVic-Tsawout 2023 Archaeological Field School at TEL, ILĆE sought to advance Indigenization and reconciliation efforts through an exploration of the spatial and temporal depth of Indigenous history in the area.

DISTINCTLY UVIC: IMPLEMENTING OUR PLAN

We don't need to do more; we need to think differently.

Use this plan every day to help us focus as we strive to do meaningful, impactful work that builds on our strengths and leans into what makes UVic distinct. Let it inspire the work we do, especially when we must choose between this or that. When we choose between staying the same or charting a new course, use it to help prioritize what initiatives and activities we start, stop or continue. Look to the existing and emerging initiatives and goals that have been articulated in major institutional plans:

- [Xwk̓ənənjistəl | W̓CENENISTEL | Helping to Move Each Other Forward: UVic's Indigenous Plan](#) is grounded in Coast Salish Sk̓w̓es | TTE SKÁLs I, TTE Š,XENANs | Laws and Philosophies. It builds on UVic's commitment to redress barriers in higher education and honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being in education, research and governance.
 - The [Equity Action Plan](#) provides UVic with strategic direction to advance equity, diversity and inclusion, and to create the conditions in which everyone feels a sense of belonging: as connected and respected parts of the university community.
- [Aspiration 2030: UVic Research and Creative Works Strategy](#) identifies UVic's research aspirations, actions, outcomes and the five overlapping impact areas where UVic's research and creative works are uniquely positioned to make a difference.
- The [Climate and Sustainability Action Plan \(CSAP\)](#) is a new and unique approach to sustainability and climate action at UVic—guiding us as we address and adapt to global challenges faced by all universities.
 - [Forthcoming academic and global engagement plans](#)

These plans, and the operational plans that direct our daily activities, are living documents that guide us as a community and as an institution toward fulfilling our shared purpose, pledge and principles.

So how are we going to use this to do our work differently?

How will this help us prioritize our work?

We hope that this plan will help each of us focus on what makes UVic distinct. This is how we can articulate what is most important to the UVic community and how we can best contribute to our changing world with a new level of creativity, enthusiasm, compassion and humility. As members of the UVic community, let's take an inclusive approach to implementing this plan. We are each responsible and accountable for living up to the purpose, pledge, principles and priorities we identified together.

Supporting our work

Annual implementation plans, accountability and activity reports, inspirational stories, how-to guides and calls to action will support the collective work of this plan. Please check in at [uvic.ca/strategicplan](#) to see how we are doing in moving this plan forward.

It's up to each of us to decide what we can do individually—and as a team—to support progress in our priority areas. This is everyone's plan—yours, ours and the next generation's, too.

Here's to another 60 years. Here's to being Distinctly UVic. Let's get started.