



VIU TO RECOGNIZE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WITH ANCESTRAL LANDS IN CANADA AS DOMESTIC STUDENTS

Change to tuition approach reflects VIU's continued and active support for process of reconciliation

VIU NEWS RELEASE: 2018/367

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, April 17, 2018

NANAIMO BC: VIU's Board of Governors has made a decisive move to approve a new tuition approach that expresses full respect and recognition of Indigenous citizenship and territories regardless of borders. The new approach will allow any Indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands are within Canada to be considered domestic students rather than international students (with the corresponding difference in tuition fees).

The Board's decision demonstrates VIU's continuing commitment to fulfill the recommendations of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also supports the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Jay Treaty of 1795. This treaty secured the rights of Indigenous peoples to continue to move freely across the US-Canada border, by land or water, in order to carry on trade or commerce with each other as they had done before the border was established.

"Education is a key determinant of social change and sustainable prosperity," said Dr. Ralph Nilson, President and Vice-Chancellor of VIU. "This change continues the work VIU is engaged in to further the process of reconciliation and create pathways for Indigenous peoples to access post-secondary educational opportunities. VIU strongly believes that all sectors and all institutions in our region and across the country must examine our policies and consider tangible and specific actions such as this to invest in and actively support reconciliation with Indigenous nations."

The new approach is a result of discussions VIU has had with Indigenous communities in the regions the University serves. Those discussions indicated that there was a strong interest in enhancing educational opportunities for citizens from those communities who live outside Canada.

Under this new tuition approach, Indigenous students whose ancestral lands are within Canada will no longer be subject to an 'international' tuition classification, but will be granted recognition as members of Indigenous nations and be eligible for the lower domestic tuition rate.

"VIU is committed to being a catalyst, through steps such as this, in moving the process of reconciliation forward," said Makenzie Leine, Chair of VIU's Board of Governors. "It is important that universities provide

access to education for Indigenous peoples by reaching out and building pathways to success for Indigenous youth and their communities.”

Quotes:

"Treaty recognition and implementation is a critical priority for First Nations, Canada and civil society, including colleges and universities. I lift up VIU for taking a lead in honouring the rights that are recognized in Article II of the Jay Treaty of 1795 and are part of the covenant chain of Treaties in North America. This new approach by VIU is an important recognition that our families and relations have lived and travelled around our homelands long before any border existed."

- *Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde*

"This is another example of VIU leading innovation on ensuring access to higher education for Indigenous peoples consistent with the recognition of our rights. The Jay treaty is part of a legacy of obligations and understandings respecting Indigenous peoples that have for too long been ignored and violated. It is through concrete action that changes the lives of people, like this tuition adjustment, that a better future can be built."

- *Douglas White III, Kwulasultun, Snuneymuxw Councillor and Director of VIU's Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation*

"I have had the pleasure of working closely on Indigenous programs with Dr. Nilson and his team at Vancouver Island University and am very pleased to add my support and congratulate VIU for taking yet another step towards greater recognition and reconciliation. Education is the key to our collective future, and the driver of social change. This new initiative, which sets out to explicitly recognize Indigenous heritage, is another example of positive and progressive leadership and a commitment to social change."

- *Dr. Michael Hawes, CEO, Fulbright Canada*

"This decision is a beautiful expression of reconciliation in action - a vision that will inspire. VIU is journeying beyond old limits, recognizing Indigenous citizenship and their territories regardless of borders. I feel great happiness welcoming Indigenous students home to study, accessing higher education here at VIU, sharing their gifts, rebuilding Nations."

- *Louise Mandell, Q.C., VIU Chancellor*

Background:

[Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada Report on First Nation border crossing issues](#)

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