Shush u’yulh and Families
Welcome you to VIU
(Thank you respected ones of this place)

We acknowledge and thank the Snuneymuxw, Tla’amin, Snaw-naw-as and the Quw’utsun’ First Nations where VIU campuses are located for allowing us to share educational experiences on their traditional territories. We also acknowledge the three language groups on Vancouver Island, Coast Salish, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Kwakawkwa, and their respective communities as well as Métis Nations and Aboriginal organizations on Vancouver Island.

In keeping with the tun sy’u wén (your history/traditions) principle of knowing who you are, where you’re going and giving back, VIU Shush u’yulh (older brother/sister) wanted to share their journey through post-secondary. Many Shush u’yulh are first generation learners, meaning they were the first person in their family to access higher education. We have therefore included a few family members’ voices to share perspectives in supporting their loved ones. This beautiful booklet is their gift to new Indigenous students and their families to show that the way through university is not always easy, but it doesn’t have to be lonely. We hope the experiences of those who made it through will help you know where to turn during times of struggle and who to call when you’re ready to celebrate your successes. Either way, you and your family are part of a vibrant, caring community. We can’t wait to meet you!

Email: communitycousins@viu.ca  Phone: 250-740-6305
Amber Crittenden
Plains Cree Métis
Shush u’yluh
Bachelor of Arts, 2019
Lantzville, BC

Amber’s story

University provides many opportunities for growth, both in personal and academic ways. You really get what you put in. You are not alone. There are people here at VIU who will cheer you on and lift you up when you need it, but it’s up to you to put in the work. It’s not easy, but every step forward is success. Celebrate yourself! In my first year, I wish I knew that it was okay not to be okay. The ‘Su’luqw’a’ Community Cousins helped support me and show me it’s okay to have a bad day. I used to see university as a linear process, but it wasn’t. So, being able to have a good cry and talk about my day really helped me move forward and accept the love and support that was given to me.

“There is always support”

Scotty Frey – Sanderson
Amber’s Family
“There are so many possibilities!”

**Troy Barnes**
*Klahoose First Nation*

Shush u’yulh  
Bachelor of Arts, 2017  
Powell River & Nanaimo, BC
“Don’t be hard on yourself – C’s get degrees! Always use your [Indigenous/Big House] voice and know that you are worthy of a good life.”

Sara Fulla
‘Namgis First Nation
Shush u’yulh
Bachelor of Tourism Management, 2018
Nanaimo, BC
Shq’apthut
A Gathering Place

Visit Shq’apthut

Shq’apthut - A Gathering Place on the Nanaimo campus is the home of Services for Aboriginal Students (SAS). Everyone is welcome at Shq’apthut. It is a gathering place and home away from home for First Nations, Status, Non-Status, Métis, and Inuit students. Elders-in-Residence are available at Shq’apthut five days a week to assist you with matters that arise at each stage of your student experience. Visit, seek spiritual/cultural guidance, or listen to the traditional stories from our Elders; who are referred to affectionately and respectfully as Auntie and Uncle. Shq’apthut is also a place where cultural, academic, recreational, and social activities are promoted and celebrated. There are numerous feasts, success workshops, and other community events that we encourage all students to participate in throughout the year.
Supports for Aboriginal Students at VIU

• Change programs, courses, and get assistance with timetabling and registration.

• Find information about funding options for Status, non-status, Métis and Inuit students as well as Aboriginal bursaries, scholarships, awards, and student loans.

• Get help with finding housing and daycare.

• Access a range of academic workshops and one-on-one writing and research opportunities.

• Find opportunities to participate in and witness traditional cultural presentations from the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwak waka'wakw, and Métis Nations.

• One-to-one as well as group counselling support to Aboriginal students

• Employment, Internship, and Career Support

• 'Su'luqw'a' Community Cousins

• Support and access to Elders

• Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries

Services for Aboriginal Students

sas@viu.ca
Nanaimo Campus
250.740.6510

Cowichan Campus
250.746.3509

Powell River Campus
604.485.2878
“A new community of supporters await you, from your peers, to mentors, to Elders, to staff.”

Sheena Robinson  
*Heiltsuk Nation*  
Shush u’yulh  
Bachelor of Arts, 2018  
Nanaimo & Bella Bella, BC
Sheena’s Story

I’m from the Heiltsuk Nation in Bella Bella, B.C. My mom is from the Lawson family and we are part of the killer whale and eagle clans. My late dad is from Vancouver, which is where I was raised.

I went straight to Langara College after high school – I’m not sure how I was accepted, honestly, when I look back on my grades – at the age of 17. In my first year I became really comfortable talking to the First Nations Advisor about my courses and any concerns, but I was too shy to go to the Native Student Centre because of my light skin. At the start of my second year I went straight to his office to say hi, only to find out that he had suddenly passed away over the summer. It really shook me up, and about a month later, my grandpa passed away. I struggled to concentrate on my studies and ended up dropping out. I went back a couple of years later, and this time my anxiety got the best of me – again, I dropped out. I was on academic probation for almost every term.

I spent the next decade working in the hospitality industry, thinking it was the only thing I was good at. My dad passed away and I fell into a destructive cycle of partying. After finally leaving a toxic long-term relationship I decided the only way to change my lifestyle was to go back to school.

I enrolled at VIU in the fall of 2015 at the age of 31. I didn’t know anybody at the school and was terrified that I would be the oldest student in my classes. I was happy to discover that school was full of people of all ages and backgrounds. I made friends and learned more about Indigenous history, culture, and ways of knowing.

Shq’apthut, or the Gathering Place, became my safe space. Yet I didn’t have a real sense of belonging until I joined the ‘Su’luqw’a’ Community Cousins. Through this mentorship program, I met a group of people who became family. I was able to overcome my fear of public speaking by MCing several events including the 2017 Aboriginal Graduation. I was part of the inaugural summer camp for Indigenous youth, Thuy ‘she’num Tu Smun’eem, and got to travel to California twice in an exchange program. Most importantly, I gave and received mentorship from peers, and gained the confidence to tell my story.

I graduated with almost straight A’s, and became a Shush u’yulh, or older cousin. I tell my educational journey at conferences and events in hopes that I’ll inspire others to follow their educational dreams. I now work as an Indigenous Education Support Coordinator and help transition students from high school to VIU, which ties in well with my role as a Shush u’yulh. I’m also now enrolled at Royal Roads University to do an online Master’s program, something I didn’t think was even possible a few years ago. It wasn’t an easy path to get to where I am, but with support from my family and my new community at VIU I was able to succeed.

I’d like new students to know that they should never be ashamed of who they are; how much or little they know about their own culture, language, and history; or how long it took them to get here. We’re all exactly where we’re supposed to be on our own journeys. Sometimes we just need a helping hand or two, and we should never be afraid to ask for this.
Educational Pathways of VIU Shush u’yulh

Hay ch qa’ sii’em siye’yu’ mukw mustimuxw

Shq’apthut, a gathering place

All campus community members are welcome

What helped you be successful?

Academic Advisors
“Encouraged me to push to the next level and believe in myself.”

Learning to be vulnerable
It’s okay to cry

Building relationships
with people who truly care about my wellbeing.

What made your VIU experience special?

“I found my voice here.”

“I hated school growing up, but now I love it.”

Room to grow and flourish. I felt supported by my teachers.”

What ways were you supported?

Fellow Students
Community Cousins
Family and Friends

Emotional Support
Having a safe space to cry and move forward

Academic Support
Teachers are seriously behind the success of their students

Financial Support
Elev program
VIU Financial Aid & Awards
viu.ca/financialAid

Highlights

The’yul she’num’ Tseep
Soup & Bannock Lunch and Learn
Community gatherings
Career Connections
Research opportunities
Indigenous portfolio
Living in Dorms
Safe space to learn

Gratitude Circle
Try biking to school. Take time for self care and remember, “Don’t eat your stress!”

Combat challenge with gratitude
Don’t let one test define who you are. You are so much more than that one test. Don’t be afraid to struggle, that’s where the growth happens.

Don’t panic little bannock

“Don’t fight with your instructors, but use your voice.”

Medicine Wheel
Kept me balanced

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Joking with peers

Gratitude Circle

Start healthy habits

Try biking to school. Take time for self care and remember, “Don’t eat your stress!”

Combat challenge with gratitude
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viu.ca/financialAid
“IT'S OKAY TO FAIL AND REALIZE SOMETHING MIGHT NOT BE FOR YOU... IF I DIDN'T STRUGGLE, I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM TODAY.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A 1ST YEAR STUDENT?

“STAY STRONG IN YOUR TRADITIONS. SHARE YOUR PROTOCOL.”

“DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF.”

“DON'T FIGHT WITH YOUR INSTRUCTORS, BUT USE YOUR VOICE.”

“BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE.”

“BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.”

“TALKED TO MY TEACHER. THEY WERE WILLING TO HELP.”

“I LEARNED TO ASK FOR HELP WHEN I NEEDED IT.”

HOW DID YOU OVERCOME CHALLENGES?

MEDICINE WHEEL kept me balanced

TRADITIONAL FOODS

JOKING WITH PEERS 😊

COMMUNITY COUSINS ❤

GRATITUDE CIRCLE 🙏

READ YOUR EMAILS!
Don't miss information about jobs and funding opportunities.

START HEALTHY HABITS
Try biking to school. Take time for self care and remember, “Don't eat your stress!”

COMBAT CHALLENGE WITH GRATITUDE
Don't let one test define who you are. You are so much more than that one test. Don't be afraid to struggle, that's where the growth happens.

“DON'T PANIC LITTLE BANNOCK”
“I believe in you. The university experience will stay with you forever. Enjoy it – it will be an exciting roller coaster ride. You will be challenged like never before. Breathe... you can get through. Know that you can reach out.”

Frank Broz
Cree Métis
Shush u’yulh
Bachelor of Science in Nursing, 2015
Nanaimo, BC
“Vancouver Island University is such a great university to attend, I’ve met wonderful people and became best friends with another student. Most of the profs are personable. There are great events and different communities such as the ‘Su’luqw’a’ Community Cousins that are there if you choose to participate. VIU staff/profs are super understanding, if you build relationships with them. I don’t think I would’ve graduated in a huge university with the different obstacles that occurred during my time at VIU. It’s ok to fail, it’s ok to take time off. It’s ok. We are all human. We go at our own pace. On the certificate/degree it doesn’t say how long it took to finish it. Just that you did it. Always take care of yourself, put yourself first. Find a balance. Manage stress. Also don’t let people’s views on how you should do things take any account of how you decide to do things.”

See Clarissa’s video message here: youtu.be/7YTV9kfGivw

Clarissa Peter
Cowichan Nation/ Cowichan Tribes (two different meanings)
Bachelor of Arts. 2019
EleV student
Cowichan Bay, BC.
“Sometimes you fail. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Just keep swimming!”

Karlee Drake  
*Cape Mudge Liqultokw*  
Shush u’yułh  
Bachelor of Arts, 2019  
Campbell River, BC
One highlight of Morgan’s VIU education was the involvement of her family in her educational journey – they were invited to feasts and welcome in the classroom. When she graduated, her dad said he felt as though he was graduating, too.

“Our kids were so enthusiastic when they were here. We got to be involved; we didn’t get that opportunity before. The Elders were a really big support for our entire family.”

Jack and Janie Mowatt, Morgan and Gina’s Parents

“One highlight of Morgan’s VIU education was the involvement of her family in her educational journey – they were invited to feasts and welcome in the classroom. When she graduated, her dad said he felt as though he was graduating, too.

“Family is everything to me, so this affirmed that VIU’s approach to families is meaningful,”

Gina Mowatt
Shush u’yułh
Bachelor of Arts, 2015

Morgan Mowatt
Shush u’yułh
Bachelor of Arts, 2017
Indigenous Education Navigators at VIU

Indigenous Education Navigators provide outreach and holistic support to prospective and current VIU students from regional Indigenous communities. Please connect with an Indigenous Education Navigator for support applying for funding to your Nation and if you under the age of 35 and self-identify as Indigenous, Métis, Inuit, or First Nations. You may be eligible to apply for an EleV scholarship.

Nanaimo Campus
Robert Mahikwa
Phone: 250.753.3245  Local 2211
Robert.Mahikwa@viu.ca
Sherry Mattice
Cell: 250.618.1773
Sherry.Mattice@viu.ca
Emmy Manson (Saletunat)
Cell: 250.667.3641
Emmy.Manson@viu.ca

Cowichan Campus
Tasha Brooks
Cell: 250.618.3225
Tasha.Brooks@viu.ca
Tun sy'u wén (your history/traditions) is a learning process where students discover who they are by standing in their strength and sharing where and who they come from. These processes prepare the ground for students to walk in their strength toward giving back. Tun sy'u wén is a continuous cycle of discovery and giving back individual learning to ‘all my relations.’ Begin your own tun sy'u wén journey in the following four pages and/or register in an Indigenous Learning and Recognition and Learning Portfolio Course (ILRP 100).

My long range employment, training or education goal is

My strengths and skills that will help me move forward are
### Potential roadblocks to my goals

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### My wellness plan

Ways I will balance the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional aspects of my life

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**Supports and resources that will help me move forward**

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**Things I can do to help myself move forward**

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