

MEDIA RELEASE
November 27, 2015

Historic partnership among Vancouver Island University, Shqwi qwal for Indigenous Dialogue and Reconciliation Canada formed to convene Economic Reconciliation Dialogues

Nanaimo, BC – Vancouver Island University (VIU) Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties, Shqwi qwal for Indigenous Dialogue at VIU, and Reconciliation and Reconciliation Canada have announced a partnership to support delivery of economic reconciliation dialogues among business leaders and First Nations leadership.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Douglas White, Director of the Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation at VIU; Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Shqwi qwal for Indigenous Dialogue at VIU and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations; and Karen Joseph, CEO of Reconciliation Canada, on Thursday, shortly before Chief Atleo delivered a keynote address as part of VIU's inaugural Indigenous Speakers Series. The MOU signing was witnessed by VIU President & Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Ralph Nilson.

The Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation and the Shqwi qwal Initiative will work with Reconciliation Canada to engage senior level business and First Nations leaders to hear directly from each other and discuss together the current political, legal, and economic realities in this moment of reconciliation. This work aims to deepen the understanding of title and rights, the landscape of treaties including pre-confederation treaties, in order to support economic reconciliation and the emergence of a new economic model. This will be based on mutual accommodation, and co-creation of economic opportunities with Indigenous peoples.

This partnership is a next step in strengthening relationships among Indigenous peoples and the business community to enter into a new paradigm of shared prosperity for all Canadians.

Quotes:

Douglas White, Director of Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation, Vancouver Island University

“In order to fulfill our commitment to reconciliation, we must accept the challenge and responsibility of redefining who we are as Indigenous Peoples and Canadians,” says Doug White, VIU's Director of Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation. “Creating space for Aboriginal voices is just one part of it. We need to weave into the very core of who we are as a society a recognition of the need to build renewed relationships with First Nations, based on mutual respect, understanding and support. VIU already takes a leadership role in this area. By partnering with Reconciliation Canada, we will be able to continue to take the lead as we travel down this challenging and important path.”

Dr. Ralph Nilson, President & Vice-Chancellor, Vancouver Island University

“VIU has had the honour of working closely with First Nations communities, sharing knowledge and different ways of being based on mutual respect and understanding,” says Dr. Ralph Nilson,

VIU's President & Vice-Chancellor. "We place great value in these relationships and continue to invest in ways to achieve mutual accommodation. For example, we have Elders as faculty and a thriving Aboriginal student mentorship program. We have visible manifestations of our commitment such as Shq'aphut, the Aboriginal Gathering Place, our Ceremonial Convocation Suite and the totem poles recently raised on our Nanaimo campus. VIU is focused on creating relationships with First Nations based on hope and positive change. Partnership with Reconciliation Canada signals the University's commitment to keeping this conversation going and to investing in Aboriginal education and reconciliation with First Nations partners."

Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Shqwi qwal for Indigenous Dialogue, Vancouver Island University

"We will only achieve our full potential as a country – economically, socially, politically and culturally – when we have achieved full reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We can't solve problems derived from same consciousness that created those problems. We can, and we must work together to co-create a new understanding, a new consciousness, to take us to a place where we are able to work together – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – to build relationships that will allow us to achieve full reconciliation and in turn, our full potential. This MOU is an example of how this new consciousness and understanding can take shape and move us further towards our goal of reconciliation."

Karen Joseph, CEO, Reconciliation Canada

"As the go-to organization for reconciliation dialogue and action, Reconciliation Canada is supporting communities and organizations in their reconciliation journeys. Economic reconciliation is a crucial component of reconciliation and all Canadians can contribute to this process. This is an unprecedented moment for First Nation and business leaders in Canada to harness the surging appetite for reconciliation, and to forge a new way forward that ensures shared prosperity for all Canadians."

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About Vancouver Island University – Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation

Vancouver Island University (VIU) has established a Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation to focus on advancing research, understanding, and public dialogue in relation to Pre-Confederation Treaties from across the country and the challenge of reconciliation

About Shqwi qwal for Indigenous Dialogue Initiative at Vancouver Island University

In October 2014, the Shqwi qwal (Speaker) initiative was launched at Vancouver Island University, by the Province of BC, and is being housed at the Centre for Pre-confederation Treaties and Reconciliation in Nanaimo. The role of the Shqwi qwal initiative is to develop and increase knowledge while fostering understanding and partnerships between Indigenous peoples, the broader public, private and corporate sector through dialogue sessions on education and economic development. This initiative will also support the development of research and public policy papers in these areas.

About Reconciliation Canada

Reconciliation Canada (RC) is leading the way in engaging Canadians in dialogue and transformative experiences that revitalize the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians in order to build resilient and sustainable communities. Born from the vision of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Gwawaenuk Elder, Reconciliation Canada - A New Way Forward Society is an Indigenous-led, culturally diverse, registered charity. Their model for reconciliation engages people in open and honest conversation to understand our diverse histories and experiences. RC actively engages multi-faith and multi-cultural communities to explore the meaning of reconciliation and discover each community's unique strengths.

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