

## Going **BEYOND** Awards

# INDIGENOUS ACE PROGRAM (I-ACE)

The Indigenous Advancement of Cultural Entrepreneurship (I-ACE) program is Canada's only Indigenous co-designed and community delivered entrepreneurship program.

The vision is "To enable Indigenous people to take their rightful place in the Canadian economy as the original Canadian entrepreneurs."

The program provides prospective entrepreneurs with the skills, knowledge, and mentorship needed to successfully start and manage a business, serve the community with confidence, and foster economic development without foregoing traditional Indigenous values.

TRICORP partnered with the Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria to create and deliver I-ACE, providing top entrepreneurial education and mentorship to students directly in their community.



**Gustavson**  
School of Business  
University of Victoria



### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, PETER B. GUSTAVSON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

The Gustavson business education and approach is founded on our vision and the four value pillars that underpin everything we do: international, integrative, innovative and sustainability/social responsibility. These values are incorporated throughout the program in course content, in teaching style, in developing our students' global mindset and in our areas of specialization.

The quality of our program is reflected in the thought leadership our professors bring to the classroom and in the accreditations we have earned from AACSB, EQUIS, and as an early signatory to the UN Global Compact Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). We're a relatively small business school, with about 1,400 students, faculty and staff, located on the west coast of Canada. We get to know our students personally to help them excel and explore the exciting world of business management. We are a growing, dynamic business school with a bright future ahead.

## Going **BEYOND** Awards

Tribal Resources Investment Corporation (TRICORP) is a federally-incorporated lending corporation that is owned by five First Nations in Canada's Northwest and serves its 24 Indigenous communities with innovative economic development and training initiatives.

The overall objective of the partnership underpinning the I-ACE program is to clearly understand the uniqueness of each Indigenous student's needs and interests.

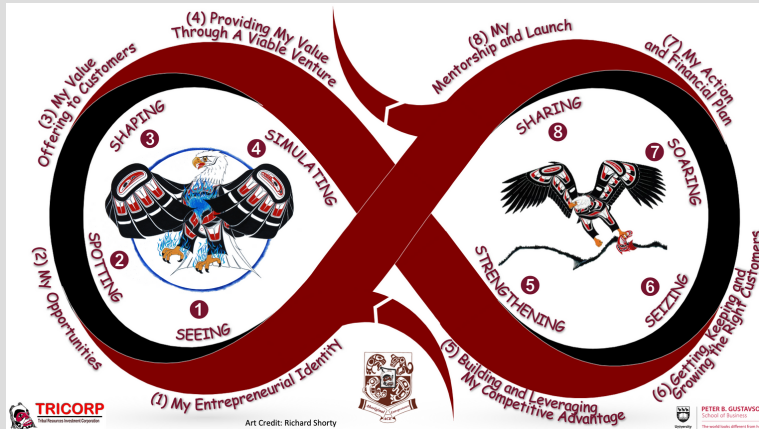
Providing the right information (culturally appropriate), at the right time and place (delivered in community), using the right method (visual learning and storytelling), ensures that Indigenous students can successfully start a business that they are passionate about without foregoing traditional values. Some individuals are deterred from starting a business because they believe they lack the entrepreneurial knowledge needed to create and maintain a successful start-up.

Others are looking for resources to facilitate the transition from a business idea into business ownership or to improve a pre-existing enterprise they own or manage.

I-ACE provides Indigenous students with the tools needed to turn skills and passion into viable businesses that benefit themselves and their community.

Key innovations at the partnership level include engaging Indigenous men and women, 19 and over, to shape business ideas on their own terms, in their own territory, through in-community delivery, rather than asking students to leave their rural communities to attend university in an urban setting.

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ACE Entrepreneurship Curriculum: 8S Model  
working with artist, Richard Shorty, for many years, including on the creation of our logo, we were graciously given license to use his painting of the Eagle used in the 8S curriculum model.

Richard's art perfectly embodies the 8 components of the program as students grow like the eagle and eventually build a nest for themselves in their community.

Richard is a self-taught artist who originally started painting wildlife at an early age. He was born in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory in 1959 and belongs to Northern Tutchone Tribe. Upon the completion of each program module, students receive a certificate representing their accomplishments. Each certificate corresponds to the eagle, with the final two stages symbolizing flight as students launch their businesses.

The program focuses on balancing cutting-edge concepts with practical learning, traditional values, and understanding current market opportunities.

Students benefit from experiential learning, mentorship, and top-class teaching from distinguished university educators and Indigenous community leaders.

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## PROGRAM IMPACT AND SUCCESS

The Indigenous ACE Program has been delivering entrepreneurial education in Indigenous communities across Canada since 2013.

Success is reflected in invitations from Indigenous Nations in BC to tailor an ACE program to address their community needs; coupled with additional funds received from federal and provincial governments, financial institutions and private donors, to expand the delivery.

Programs have been customized for over 48 communities in BC, from the North, through the Interior, to the Central Coast, Haida Gwaii and Vancouver Island. The program expanded across the county into the province of Ontario this year. The program is designed to be accessible in any community, so there is effectively no "main" location.

The Gustavson School of Business is honored to be invited into Nations across Canada to deliver the I-ACE Program. We co-create a unique program for each community with a customized curriculum.

Measurable impacts include 640 graduates from 44 cohorts in 68 Indigenous communities with 210 business started to date. Enabling the creation of more Indigenous businesses is important for the prosperity of Indigenous communities and helps move toward economic reconciliation in Canada.

Over 40% of the 207 instructors and mentors are now Indigenous. Perhaps most importantly, I-ACE saw the positive social impact and growth of the programs through the presence of new women and men entrepreneurs in Indigenous communities.

These individuals become role models in their communities, inspiring others to pursue economic self-reliance without foregoing traditional values.

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## PROGRAM IMPACT AND SUCCESS

### Student Awards

Jaimie Davis - NW-ACE Graduate, 2021 Small Business BC Award Winners

Ben Davidson - Haida Owned and Operated Graduate, 2017 BC Aboriginal Business Awards, Business of the Year, Outstanding Business Achievement: All About U Arts Ltd.

Patrick Shannon - Haida Owned and Operated Graduate, 2015 British Columbia Aboriginal Business Awards Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award Winner

Dana Foster - NW-ACE Graduate, 2015 Northwest Innovation Challenge Runner-Up

Harvey James Russell - NW-ACE Graduate, 2015 ThriveNorth Business Challenge Best New Social Enterprise Category Second Prize

Christine Moody and Giuliana Hauknes - NW-ACE Graduates, 2014 Northwest Innovation Challenge Winners

Ben Davidson - Haida Owned and Operated Graduate, 2014 BC Achievement Foundation British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations' Art Winner

### Program Awards

- 2019: EFMD Excellence in Practice Gold Award for Ecosystem Development
- 2016: STLHE Alan Blizzard Award in Collaboration in Teaching
- 2016: Global Stars Award finalist, Reimagine Education STARS, Wharton School of Business
- 2016: Gold Medal for North America and Overall Global Best Award from International Education Business Partnership Network (IPN) in partnership with Conference Board of Canada
- 2016: Alan Blizzard Award, Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for collaboration and excellence in teaching across Canada
- 2014: Leadership in Partnership and Collaboration Visionary Award, Industry Council for Aboriginal Business



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## SDG IMPACT

### GOAL 1: No Poverty

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

### GOAL 4: Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

### GOAL 8: Decent work and economic growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

### GOAL 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

### GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

### GOAL 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



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## LOOKING FORWARD

The Indigenous ACE program offers a unique opportunity for potential partners to co-create and be a part of the incredible social impact of the program. The proven and ongoing success of I-ACE shows a high impact per funding dollar, offering a unique opportunity to make a positive impact in the community with an existing and successful program.

The ACE program is in the process of responding to many new invitations from communities in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and our national footprint continues to expand.

Indigenous entrepreneurs can benefit many industries by starting and running their own business that can be contracted by large corporations to supply the products and services needed to complete major projects and enable ongoing operations in or around Indigenous communities.

**[www.iamace.ca](http://www.iamace.ca)**