

OKANAGAN COLLEGE, B.C.

Working with and learning from the Indigenous Community

Like many institutions, Okanagan College in B.C. has embedded indigenization in the Strategic Plan.

The direction is focused around one main goal: 'Working with, and learning from, the Indigenous Community.'

In an email response, Charlotte Kushner, Vice President of Students at Okanagan College, said the goal is an authentic partnership that benefits all parties and enriches the education of learners.

Implementation focuses on:

- Enhancing ties with Indigenous partners.
- Strengthening support services as well as physical, cultural, and spiritual spaces that are available to learners.
- Increasing opportunities for the college community to learn from Indigenous knowledge and culture.
- Identifying possible changes to College policies, structure, and processes that will benefit all.

"We have constructed 'Gathering Places' at all four of our College campuses (in Kelowna, Penticton, Vernon and Salmon Arm), Kushner said. "We have Aboriginal Transition Planners at all of our campuses to work with Aboriginal students from application right through to graduation."

"We host one of the largest PowWows in the region annually on our Kelowna campus," she said, "and in addition to our Convocation ceremonies we host a graduation/recognition event for our Aboriginal graduates."

The future? "We are looking to increase Aboriginal artwork and signage throughout our facilities to help create a welcome and comfortable space for all students and to recognize the territories of our Aboriginal partners," Kushner said. "Currently, 8% of our student population is Aboriginal. We are establishing goals and mechanisms to continue to increase that number."