



June 21, 2012

## **MEDIA TIPS AND LEADS**

### **FUNDING SUPPORTS ABORIGINAL SUCCESS:**

The University of Victoria welcomes the announcement on June 21 of \$241,101 in Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education to support programs, activities and services both on campus and in local communities for Aboriginal learners.

"Supporting Aboriginal learners to succeed takes a variety of approaches, even before they arrive on campus," said Ruth Young, acting director of the Office of Indigenous Affairs. "This funding allows us to continue with programs that consider Aboriginal students' academic, social and cultural needs as well as create new programs with our community partners."

Initiated by the B.C. government in 2008, the Aboriginal Service Plan is part of a program intended to increase Aboriginal students' access, retention and completion rates at post-secondary institutions and build partnerships with community organizations.

"The Aboriginal Service plan is a key initiative in our government's commitment to support Aboriginal students during their post-secondary studies. I'm happy to see this funding dedicated to the ASP programs at UVic to help support Aboriginal learning, culture and language at the school," said Oak Bay-Gordon Head MLA Ida Chong.

Under Phase II of the plan, UVic has identified language revitalization, student transitions and community-based education as key areas. "This funding is important for supporting programs delivered in the community where students often don't have the same services and supports offered on campus," said Gina Starblanket, Aboriginal Service Plan project coordinator. "It is also an opportunity to incorporate a community voice within the institution in the direction and development of Indigenous programs at UVic."

The Office of Indigenous Affairs at UVic works with 13 community partners on a range of projects funded through the ASP.

Initiatives covered by ASP funding include:

- Elders' Voices program. Last year, 11 Elders had almost 1,500 personal contacts with Indigenous students, offering cultural support and guidance. The Elders, who are from local communities,

also conduct ceremonies and advise staff, faculty and administration on how Indigenous protocols can be incorporated into the institution.

- Development of a post-secondary tool kit for schools/departments interested in partnering with communities on community-based education. This will be a sister document to the Post-secondary Education Partnership Agreement Toolkit, published last December in partnership with the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, designed to support communities engaging in this process.
- Continuation of the position of Coordinator of Indigenous Student Support, which last year had 632 visits from students needing to connect with relevant services and programs on and off campus
- Week of Welcome held in the last week of September, orientation activities include welcome feasts, open houses, Elders' meet and greet, academic advising, faculty and student panels
- Successful Students Transitions Forum provides Indigenous adult learners with a multi-faceted experience that goes beyond a typical career fair for them to learn more about post-secondary institutions
- Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium < graduate students present their research in a gathering of students, faculty and staff. Presentations are live-streamed to the students' communities.

UVic is committed to increasing the number of Indigenous students graduating from all faculties. By providing student support programs, offering courses and programs relevant to Indigenous students and communities, and creating a gathering space for Indigenous students at the First Peoples House, UVic continues to strive towards making the campus a welcoming place for Indigenous students, faculty and visitors.

More than 800 undergraduate and graduate Indigenous students attend UVic.

30

**Media Contacts:**

Ruth Young, acting director of the Office of Indigenous Affairs, at (250) 472-4913

Denise Helm, manager of media relations and public affairs, at 250-721-7656 or [dhelm@uvic.ca](mailto:dhelm@uvic.ca).

*Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/uvicnews>*

**UVic media releases and other resources for journalists are available on the Internet at "<http://communications.uvic.ca/media>".**