



# ISSofBC's Truth & Reconciliation (T&R) Strategy

2024-2027

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### **Artwork by Alano Edzerza**

Born 1981 in Victoria, British Columbia) is a Tahitan artist and entrepreneur. He is a member of the Ganhada tribe and Edzerza's work has been shown in multiple exhibitions and

museums. He was involved with art from a young age, as his family was involved in the art world. Edzerza attended the Victoria School Aboard, where he won his first sculpture award at the age of thirteen. After this, he continued to work on his artwork and began exhibiting his work, while working in Northwest Coast art under the supervision of his family member, Terrance Campbell. He continued his career until he was able to present his own artwork to the public by designing art accessories for the people. Edzerza has worked with organizations such as the Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association (KAYA), where he teaches art to youth. Edzerza currently lives in Downtown Vancouver, where he manages his companies, and works through retail artwork. Alano is a proud supporter of ISSofBC and the work they do.



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## OPENING STATEMENTS

*“From first contact, newcomers and settlers to the land we now call Canada have had a profound and negative impact on Indigenous peoples. Oppression, discrimination, and violence have resulted in intergenerational trauma and a fundamental breach of rights. As a current-day settlement agency working closely and on behalf of the Government of Canada and other institutions, we are seeking to understand, acknowledge, and learn from the past to be a part of a better future built on respectful collaboration, inclusion and meaningful engagement.*

*Our work with newcomers to Canada of all types, whether permanent or temporary, provides us with a special opportunity and responsibility to promote, educate, and model the practices of Truth & Reconciliation. This Truth & Reconciliation Strategy (TRS) represents the next phase of this work, and the commitment of our entire organization to be thoughtful, intentional, and accountable for our own development. Like many organizations, we have done some work up to now, but we know this is just the start.*

*We thank everyone who has been part of the work to develop this Strategy, especially our friends, colleagues, and guides, Kory Wilson and Tami Pierce. Their wisdom and knowledge have been instrumental, though any gaps or shortfalls in this work remain our own. We hold up our hands in gratitude and appreciation.*

*Our vision as an organization is a time where everyone grows and thrives. Where we learn from each other and support one another as we build our futures together. To our staff, our volunteers, our partners, and most importantly to those we serve, we extend an invitation to join us in making this vision inclusive of those who have called these lands home for time immemorial. Together we can make Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC) and all the communities we serve that much stronger.”*

**Alec Attfield, Chair, Board of Directors,  
Jonathan Oldman, CEO**



*“We would like to begin by holding our hands up to all the ancestors who endured and fought to ensure we would be here today. We also honour everyone that works to make the world a better, more inclusive place where Indigenous peoples and ways of knowing and being are honoured and incorporated. This struggle has been ongoing since contact, but it was brought to most Canadians' attention through the 2015 Truth & Reconciliation Commission Canada. We are now seeing many examples of successfully bringing the voice of Indigenous peoples into every sector, industry and home with a commitment to truth on the path to reconciliation.*

*We commend ISSofBC for recognizing this work's importance and for their commitment to advancing reconciliation. We are honoured that we were selected to write this strategy in partnership with ISSofBC leadership. It is important that everyone in Canada understands the history of Canada and the contemporary reality of Indigenous peoples. We look forward to the necessary and meaningful work that ISSofBC will do to inform and empower newcomers to be successful in BC. Thank you for the opportunity you provided us to take your employees and clients on a journey of unlearning and relearning through this TRS designed exclusively for you.”*

**Kory Wilson, Puglid, Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, Consultant**

**Tami Pierce, Ksi Gwiniitsm, Tsimshian Nation, Consultant**



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The origin of the Land Acknowledgement can be found in Nation-to-Nation tradition and protocol that has been used as a way “for guests to show their respect for and pay homage to the Indigenous community with which they are visiting and engaging” (source: Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples and Traditional Land). ISSofBC works in different communities throughout the Lower Mainland as well as in other regions of BC. We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unsundered lands of the Coast Salish peoples of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, the Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Lheidli T'enneh, Semiahmoo, numerous Stó:lō Nations, Syilx Okanagan people, Tsawwassen and Qayqayt First Nations. Indigenous peoples have cared for, nurtured and sustained these lands since time immemorial and we are grateful for their commitment to protect the environment, the land, and the waters that surround us.

We express our gratitude for the opportunity to live, work and play on these lands. We are thankful for the places and spaces we occupy and for the generosity of the rightful owners of this territory. We commit to walking gently on the lands and in the space we occupy in the same way you once did, with respect, kindness and care.



## INTRODUCTION

Truth & Reconciliation is defined as an anchor (a foundation) within ISSofBC's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. This multi-year TRS outlines ISSofBC's commitment, goals, and deliverables in response to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Canada's "calls to action." As an agency that works with thousands of newcomers each year to support them in settling and thriving in communities, we have a critical role in advancing Truth & Reconciliation.

## PURPOSE

A multi-year TRS provides clear actions, deliverables, timelines, and accountability to our Truth & Reconciliation commitments. We seek to increase understanding and appreciation of Indigenous history contemporary realities, their peoples and rights.

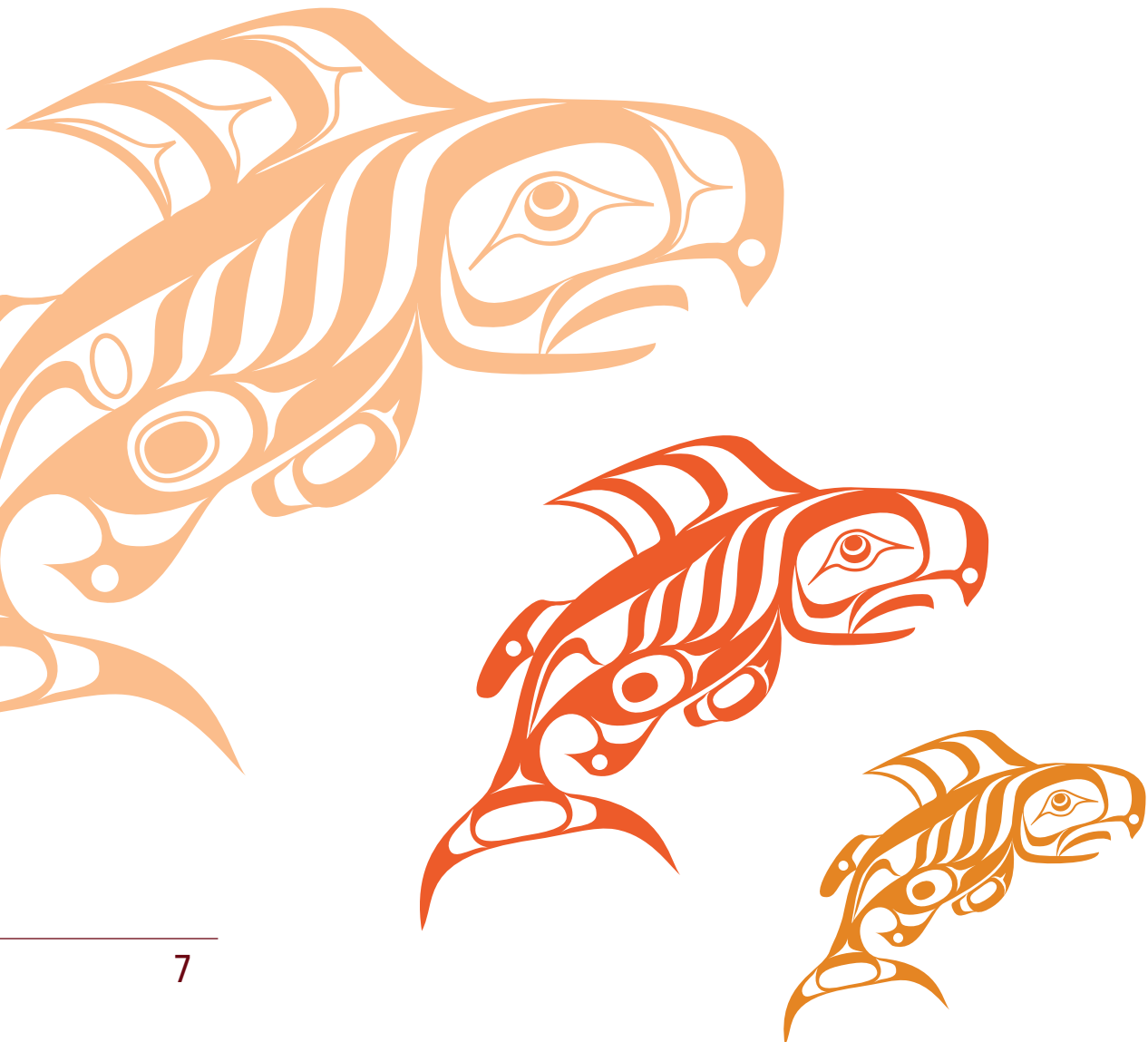
Four themes guide our strategy:

- Partnership
- Respect
- Opportunity
- Leadership.

Within each theme there are actions, deliverables, timelines and responsibility.

The TRS also highlights Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and evaluation criteria/measures that will guide the progress of our deliverables.

Truth & Reconciliation Commission Canada issued 94 "calls to action", calling on all levels of government - federal, provincial, municipal, territorial, and Indigenous - to work together to reform policies and services, to acknowledge the harms caused by residential schools and to seek timely and deliberate actions that aim to advance reconciliation. These "calls to action" included efforts to target newcomers to Canada. Our strategy, developed with guidance and collaboration of our two Indigenous consultants, closely aligns with the intent and spirit of Truth & Reconciliation.



## ISSOFBC'S TRUTH & RECONCILIATION JOURNEY SO FAR:

Our journey began over a decade ago. Foundational work and ongoing activities contextualize our future direction. Highlights from our journey to date include:

**2013:** Inviting an Indigenous leader as an AGM keynote speaker.

**2014:** Active involvement on the City of Vancouver Advisory committee for the 'Newcomers Guide on Indigenous Peoples.'

**2017:** Staff participation in the local walk for Reconciliation.

**2018:** First in-person all staff training provided by Indigenous trainer and author, Lynda Gray.

**2019:** Development and issuance of land acknowledgement guidelines for each site and email signatures.

**2020:** Collaboration with an Indigenous filmmaker and writer to produce the 'Welcome to Our Homelands' multi-lingual video and study guide for newcomers.

**2022:** To mark ISSofBC's 50th anniversary, launched the New Perspective Series with a national moderated discussion on Indigenous peoples perspectives of immigration.

**2022:** Through a national Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) grant, launched sector-wide capacity building Truth & Reconciliation multi-year projects and activities including completion of a Reconciliation Awareness Learning curriculum for all Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), an Indigenous Awareness 101 workshop for settlement staff, and additional voice-overs/translations to 17 first language versions of the 'Welcome to Our Homelands' video and accompanying study guide.

**2022:** Approved our new organizational strategic plan that includes Truth & Reconciliation as an 'anchor', along with a commitment to develop a TRS.



## ACTION PLAN

The following outlines key strategic Truth & Reconciliation areas of aspired change from “current” to “future” state to be achieved during the term of this strategy. These were developed in consultation and collaboration with our Indigenous Advisors. The next section outlines the resulting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), individual target timelines, and evaluation criteria/measures.

### CURRENT TO FUTURE STATE

No ISSofBC T&R vision.	»»	A clear T&R vision supported by planned initiatives/activities that fall within a multi-year strategy with key deliverables/goals and accountability.
Reliance on a small number of Indigenous Peoples/resources.	»»	Developing genuine and meaningful inclusion and engagement with Indigenous People.
Ad-hoc one-off T&R related client program activities.	»»	Consistent, intentional, and ongoing T&R client program activities.
Policies and procedures that exclude T&R principles.	»»	Updated policies and procedures that incorporate T&R.
Inconsistent T&R staff and Board awareness training.	»»	On-going awareness and skill-building for all staff and Board members.
No internal resources to guide and support our relational journey.	»»	Effective resources to help enrich our T&R commitments.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) & EVALUATION CRITERIA/MEASURES

- 1.** ISSofBC's organizational commitment to Truth & Reconciliation will be clearly defined, with transparent reporting of actions and results published annually.
  - a.** Each September, starting in 2025, as part of the ISSofBC's annual impact report, we will publish our Truth & Reconciliation action plan report.
- 2.** ISSofBC will establish ongoing relationships with Indigenous Peoples and groups to ensure that we move forward in the right way in collaboration with honour, respect and humility. We will seek feedback and guidance on organizational decision-making and practices to help ensure we are fulfilling our ongoing commitment to our TRS.
  - a.** For each level of our organization (program, administrative, executive leadership, and governance), we will be able to provide evidence of both the processes established and the impact on decisions made and practices evolved.
  - b.** Organizational policies will take principles of Truth & Reconciliation into consideration with a documented co-development/review process completed.
- 3.** All staff and leaders will possess a foundational<sup>1</sup> understanding of the history and reality of Indigenous Peoples and how to make authentic commitments to Truth & Reconciliation.
  - a.** Annually, the organization will report on the percentage of staff who have completed/renewed defined foundational training and learning activities (95 per cent + annually by end of F25/26), and the percentage of those who have undertaken additional learning (25 per cent + annually by end of F25/26).
- 4.** All immigrant and newcomer clients of ISSofBC will be provided with opportunities to develop, at minimum, a foundational understanding of the history, contemporary reality, and importance of Indigenous peoples and the meaning and importance of Truth & Reconciliation and in direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action #93.
  - a.** Annually, the organization will report on the percentage of clients active in the prior 12 months who have completed or received foundational training/information as defined for each program type and engagement level (90 per cent + annually by end of F26/27).

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<sup>1</sup> Specific "foundational" elements of a cultural learning strategies for staff and service users to be further defined, but will include historical context, current realities, myths and misconceptions, principles and goals of reconciliation, engagement, and inclusion better practices.



## THEME #1: PARTNERSHIP

ISSofBC commits to building respectful, authentic and sustainable partnerships with local Indigenous Peoples. This relational journey is based on respect and a recognition that Indigenous Peoples have stewarded these lands on which we operate since time immemorial. We recognize the richness of Indigenous cultural, spirituality, and linguistic diversity and the historical treatment of Indigenous peoples through past and present policies of governments and other institutions.



ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish respectful, authentic, and sustainable relationships with Indigenous peoples where ISSofBC operates, including local nations, urban Indigenous groups, organizations, and stakeholder groups.	Co-create and implement an engagement plan to work with local Indigenous nations, urban Indigenous groups, organizations, and stakeholders. Identify at least one Indigenous leader who can represent local Indigenous Nations to work in partnership on relationship building and inclusion of local First Nations.	2024-2025	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
	Establish a formal partnership with a representative of local Indigenous nations to provide support to ISSofBC's Settlement services to identify opportunities to bring Indigenous and newcomer families together in celebration in Coast Salish regions and in line with ISSofBC's programming.	2024-2025	Chief Program Officer. Settlement & Refugee Services (SRS)/COO
	Collaboratively develop and launch an Elder-in-Residence or Knowledge Keeper pilot focused on guiding the implementation of this strategy and further development of sustainable relationship practices.	2024-2025	COO

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Build relationships through celebrations and events.	Ensure staff are allowed to participate in local Indigenous community events to develop relationships and advance knowledge and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, including June 21st celebrations and September 30th honouring, local pow-wows and ceremonial events. Encourage staff, leadership, and the Board to participate in at least one local Indigenous event annually.	Starting 2024-2025	Executive Leadership Team (ELT)/Board
	Extend opportunities to participate and reflect in local Indigenous community events to the Board and other volunteers. Encourage participation in at least one local event per year.	Starting 2024	Board/Volunteer Coordinators
	Plan and implement at least one ISSofBC event that celebrates the First Peoples of Canada in partnership with local First Nations representatives, including youth (Urban Native Youth Association).	Starting 2024-2025	Chief Program Officers (SRS), Language & Career Services (LCS)
	Build inventory of local Indigenous events and celebrations with key contact information.	2024-2025	COO with Indigenous Consultants
	Ensure all local Indigenous events and celebrations are highlighted on ISSofBC's website.	2024-2025	Director, Communications & Marketing (C&M)



ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Promote reconciliation through sphere of influence.	Ensure that volunteers are provided the opportunity to participate in reconciliation and that they understand the organization’s commitment to reconciliation and their role.	2024-2027 (Ongoing)	ELT
	Identify ‘Reconciliation Champions’ throughout the organization who will focus on planning and implementing activities across programs and services.	2024-2027 (Ongoing)	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS, and Chief People, Culture & Inclusion (PCI) Officer
	Communicate commitment to T&R publicly, including ensuring all marketing materials and communications reflect the inclusion of local Indigenous nations. Seek out opportunities to positively influence all groups engaging with ISSofBC to support and/or drive reconciliation outcomes and encourage them to begin their own journey of reconciliation.	2024-2027 (Ongoing)	Director, C&M
	Collaborate with colleagues within the Settlement sector to develop other ways to advance reconciliation.	2024-2027 (Ongoing)	CEO, COO, Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS
Promote positive community relations through anti-racism and anti-discrimination strategies.	Confirm existing HR policies and procedures comply with human rights and employment equity legislation in relation to Indigenous Peoples and ensure PCI intentionally sources and actively promotes the hiring of Indigenous peoples as staff and volunteers (see also Theme #3, Action 1).	2024-2025	Chief PCI Officer
	Ensure Indigenous consultants are included in discussions regarding organizational anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies, practices, and education.	2024-2025	Chief PCI Officer





## THEME #2: RESPECT

Respect is a central value and principle that drives our strategy. Respect is gained through the development of deeper relationships based on trust and engagement with local Indigenous peoples. We aim to gain greater insights and knowledge by listening, observing, and seeking greater understanding of such things as Indigenous cultural practices.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples in our service delivery area, including historical context and contemporary realities among volunteers, staff, management, and the Board.	Conduct a review of learning needs within ISSofBC, leading to the development and implementation of Indigenous cultural learning strategy that ensures all staff and the Board have at minimum a foundational knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues. Identify and implement an assessment tool that measures cultural knowledge and experience across the employment lifecycle.	2025-2026	COO and Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS and Chief PCI Officer
	The Board will undertake a review of the learning needs of Board members and will develop a T&R learning strategy for the governance level.	2025-2026	Board
	Implement the comprehensive use of RALL (Reconciliation Awareness LINC Lesson) curriculum for all language / LINC students.	2025-2026	Chief Program Officer, LCS and Director, LINC
	Develop and implement a strategy for inclusion of Indigenous learning and awareness in all service delivery areas of the organization (Employment/Self-Employment, Settlement, Resettlement, Language and Career College (LCC), and other services).	2025-2026	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS
	Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in formal and structured ongoing cultural learning such as cultural workshops with local Indigenous facilitators (i.e. cedar and wool weaving, drum making, dream catchers) and sessions to share local history, successes, challenges, and contemporary realities.	2025-2026 onwards	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Demonstrate respect for local Indigenous nations by observing cultural protocols.	Establish and implement clear understanding and protocols for land acknowledgements and protocol welcomes at all levels of ISSofBC and for different events and gatherings.	2024-2025	Director, C&M
	Ensure land acknowledgements are included on our website and on all marketing collateral, letterheads, and email signatures.	2024-2025	Director, C&M
	Seek opportunities to feature local Indigenous artwork and ensure the appropriate use of and protection of Indigenous artists. Always ensure the artist's information and the story behind the art is visible.	2025-2026 onwards	COO & Director, C&M
Improve cultural safety and humility in the workplace.	Ensure cultural safety and humility training includes a focus on Indigenous awareness.	2025-2026 onwards	Chief PCI Officer
	Conduct an audit of all ISSofBC sites to ensure consistent visible recognition of local First Nations and culture.	2024-2025	COO & Director, C&M
	Create and promote an Indigenous employee network with culturally appropriate support within the organization (may also serve as an internal co-development and consultation resource).	2024-2025	Chief PCI Officer
	Identify opportunities to offer support through Indigenous cultural and holistic models such as using Indigenous Wellness toolkits and promoting cultural and holistic wellbeing.	2025-2026	Chief PCI Officer





### THEME #3: OPPORTUNITIES

ISSofBC believes that Indigenous partners, suppliers, and staff can accelerate our T&R journey. Our work in T&R must also consider our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy as the other anchor in our current Strategic Plan. These opportunities will lead to greater understanding of shared experiences with newcomers who have lived and been impacted by colonialism.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase Indigenous recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Establish a baseline and target for Indigenous representation within ISSofBC’s staff. Engage with existing Indigenous staff to consult on recruit, retention, and professional development strategy, and to develop an Indigenous recruitment, retention and professional development strategy that addresses, at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising of job vacancies to effectively reach and encourage Indigenous engagement.</li> <li>• Indigenous job applicants can declare their Indigeneity and identify which group they represent (First Nations, Metis, Inuit).</li> <li>• Any barriers to recruitment within organizational policies and procedures.</li> </ul>	2024-2025	Chief PCI Officer
	Create and advertise volunteer and student opportunities to effectively reach Indigenous peoples, recognizing these can be pathways to employment.	2024-2025	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS, Chief PCI Officer, Director, C&M
	Review and amend key ISSofBC policies and procedures as necessary to ensure they support Indigenous people to thrive.	2024-2025	Chief PCI Officer
	Undertake a concerted effort to include Indigenous representation at the governance table, including by recruiting qualified Indigenous directors.	2024 and ongoing	Board





ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure ISSofBC program-specific considerations to promote inclusion and belonging of Indigenous peoples.	Provide opportunities for Indigenous staff to participate in consultation on any new programs or changes that may include services that will be accessed by Indigenous peoples or communities.	2025-2027	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS
	Develop a framework to audit current practice tools, processes, deliverables, and projects to identify where cultural considerations must be included to address any issues.	2025-2026	Chief Program Officers, SRS and LCS
Increase Indigenous supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Indigenous businesses.	2024-2025	CFO and COO
	Develop commercial relationships and a procurement strategy with Indigenous businesses, including a recruitment strategy in partnership with Indigenous departments, event catering contracts, etc.	2024-2025	CFO and COO



## THEME #4: GOVERNANCE & TRACKING

ISSofBC understands that all aspects of the organization (employees, Board, volunteers and clients) must embrace our T & R strategy for our work to successfully evolve. Besides buy-in, governance and tracking will provide greater accountability on our journey and provide milestones of our collective efforts.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish Indigenous input to organizational decision-making at the ELT and Board levels.	Conduct a review of how to integrate Indigenous input and guidance into the organization’s governance model, including strategic plans, policies, and practices. Implement the resulting approved recommendations.	2025-2026 onwards	Board
	Establish Indigenous input into key organizational decisions at executive management level.	2024-2025	CEO
Establish and maintain an effective working group to drive the governance of this initiative.	Maintain Indigenous representation to guide the organization through this process, ensuring promising practices are identified and implemented, and that revisions to this plan are considered and implemented as required.	2024-2027	COO with Indigenous consultants

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE (FY)	RESPONSIBILITY
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of the TRS.	Identify and secure the resources needed for successful implementation of this plan.	2024-2027	COO/CEO
	Engage senior leaders and staff in the delivery of commitments, establishing an executive sponsor within the ELT.	2024-2027	COO
Build accountability and transparency through reporting achievements, challenges, and opportunities both internally and externally.	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on progress. Report regularly to Board and staff on progress. Publish an annual TRS report.	2024-2027	Director, C&M
	Ensure a second TRS is developed before the end of this TRS to develop the next three-year plan based on learnings, challenges, achievements, and opportunities and submit it to the Board for approval.	2026-2027	COO/CEO



## REFERENCES/RESOURCES

### **Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples and Traditional Land**

<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>

### **Government of Canada – Newcomers to Canada**

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524506203836/1557512859985>

### **Heritage BC**

<https://heritagebc.ca/learning-centre/reconciliation/>

### **ISSofBC’s Strategic Plan**

<https://issbc.org/blog/strategic-plan-2023-2025/>

### **One Day’s Pay**

<https://www.onedayspay.ca/>

### **Native Land Digital**

<https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>

### **Province of British Columbia**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship>

### **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**

<https://nctr.ca/about/history-of-the-trc/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/>

### **United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>

