



From Foundations to Futures at UFV

# Winds of Change

*50 Years of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion  
and Accessibility*

50  
1974 - 2024



SOUTH ASIAN  
STUDIES INSTITUTE  
University of the Fraser Valley

UFV

FIFTY YEARS  
FORWARD  
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<b>2</b>	Foreword
<b>4</b>	History of Indigenization at UFV since 1974
<b>9</b>	Academic Advising Centre
<b>11</b>	Alumni Association
<b>13</b>	Building Communities Across Cultures at UFV
<b>15</b>	Campus Living
<b>20</b>	CHASI
<b>23</b>	CIVL Radio
<b>25</b>	College of Arts
<b>28</b>	Community Engagement
<b>31</b>	Faculty and Staff Association
<b>33</b>	Fraser Valley India
<b>35</b>	International
<b>39</b>	Modern Languages
<b>41</b>	Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Human Rights
<b>43</b>	Peace and Reconciliation Centre
<b>47</b>	Queen Elizabeth Scholarship
<b>51</b>	Race and Anti-Racism Network (RAN)
<b>53</b>	School of Education
<b>56</b>	School of Social Work and Human Services
<b>59</b>	South Asian Studies Institute
<b>62</b>	Teaching and Learning Centre
<b>66</b>	Conclusion

## WINDS OF CHANGE

*A 50 Year UFV Anniversary Project*

South Asian Studies Institute, 2025

As the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) celebrates its 50th anniversary, the South Asian Studies Institute (SASI) is honored to present Winds of Change—a collaborative archival project designed to document and reflect upon the university's journey toward equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). This project was undertaken in Fall 2024 and Winter 2025 by SASI. It also highlights UFV's ongoing efforts in Indigenization and Reconciliation, capturing the transformative milestones that have shaped our academic community over the past five decades.

Winds of Change aligns with UFV's anniversary celebrations to commemorate the institution's growth and to acknowledge the individuals, departments, and initiatives that have actively contributed to fostering inclusivity. Through historical narratives and archival images—courtesy of Anne Russell and other UFV collections—this online book aspires to create a lasting institutional memory.

This work has been made possible through the generous support of the UFV 50th Anniversary Fund, which has provided essential funding for this meaningful endeavor. Winds of Change will stand as a living testament to UFV's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive community, ensuring these values remain embedded in its future.

SASI reached out to UFV departments and divisions to document their EDIA journeys. The histories in this project are a reflection of their responses.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to this project by sharing their stories, insights, and archival materials. Your work has been a crucial one in preserving and honoring the collective history of UFV, ensuring that the legacy of inclusivity and reconciliation continues to inspire generations to come.

SASI is proud to contribute to this important work, celebrating the diverse voices that have shaped UFV and laying the foundation for the next 50 years of growth and progress.

*Director: Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains*

*Research Assistant: Rashneet, BFA 2025*

## History of Indigenization at UFV since 1974

Dr. Eric Davis, Professor Emeritus, Former Provost and Vice President Academic

*"Coming here, just opened the door for higher education, certainly for myself, for my children."*

*"Education is highly valued among the Stó:lo people, and has been as far back as oral traditions record. Personally, I can only speak personally, it was really important. Largely because it is really difficult for many of our people, many of our First Nations, especially my generation and even the next generation, my children's generation, to leave home and be in an environment that is totally not connected to our community and our families. It is such a change. So... [Fraser Valley College] coming here, just opened the door for higher education, certainly for myself, for my children... So it really was a difference maker, for me and for my family."*

-- Gwen Point, February 26, 2024

The core concepts and themes of what we now call *"Indigenization"* were clearly articulated in the 1972 policy paper published as Indian Control of Indian Education and were well-known in the Fraser Valley. One of the co-authors, Stó:lō educator Bill Mussell, served on Fraser

Valley College's founding Board of Governors, then called the College Council.

The report established key education principles, emphasizing parental responsibility, local control, Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language as the foundation of learning, the need for Indigenous teachers and counselors, and better-prepared non-Indigenous educators.

- On August 4, 1974, Bill Mussell, as President of the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, sent a brief to Douglas Hamilton, Chairman of Fraser Valley College Council. The covering letter *"asks for an affiliation with the Fraser Valley College"* and *"proposes a structural relationship for the two educational institutions to work cooperatively."* At the end of the letter, Mussell concludes that *"it is hoped that [the brief] will be discussed at our August 6, 1974 College Council Meeting."*

*"The desirability of affiliation between the College and the Coqualeetza Centre seemed apparent. The need for space*

*on behalf of the College, and the need for operating dollars on Coqualeetza's part contributed significant material considerations to the philosophical ones. But if Coqualeetza's dowry and the College's affluence, combined with compatible philosophies, is not in itself sufficient evidence for a workable marriage, we must acknowledge that there has already been some pre-marital relationship that bodes well for a formalized union."*

-- Bill Mussell

In recognition of the growing Fraser Valley, a public post-secondary institution was founded in 1974 as Fraser Valley College with campuses in Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Mission and Hope. It was established as a response to the need for expanded vocational training in the communities of the Fraser Valley.

The Chilliwack Progress on January 22, 1975, reported that *"Indian representatives on Fraser Valley College (FVC) Council on Monday warned against any tendency to develop programs for Indian people without full consultation".* Dr. Larry Blake, Principal of UFV 1974-79, was given the following accolade by Shirley Leon (Siyamtelot), *"Dr. Blake used to come to everything we did, not just ceremonies, not just what we call today, photo ops, he was around all the time, just seemed to be part of our family".* Shirley Leon has a long history with this institution as a student, a guest lecturer in Dave Wyatt's Anthropology classes, a liaison for Coqualeetza, and more. She has devoted her life to education and serving her community. And she hasn't stopped. Today she and Sharon Syrette play leading roles in the Aboriginal Genealogy Society helping local Indigenous individuals discover their ancestors and, hence, their identity.

The following recommendations were made by the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre in a 1975

consultancy report titled: *Education Needs of Native Indians:*

1. An in-service training course in contemporary Indian life should be provided for all college staff
2. Professional development credits should be given for staff involvement in community activities
3. The college should sponsor activities to bring the staff and community together in formal and informal settings
4. A student orientation course in basic skills should be developed for Indians and non-Indians
5. The college should place more emphasis on Indian culture by displaying Indian artwork
6. Regular meetings should be scheduled between college counselors and those working on the reserves as social workers

More people were returning to Basic Training and Skills Development (BTSD) and College courses than before just by being made aware that opportunities exist. The jointly developed programs between Coqualeetza and FVC were as follows: Stalo History, Contemporary Indian issues, Human relations instructor training course, drug and alcohol counsellors course, Halkomelem language course, Halkomelem language instructor's training course, home-school co-ordinators in-service training course, arts and crafts, Native community workers programs, public speaking skills, communications and Native studies program. A number of these were university transfer programs.



The Chilliwack Progress reported on Oct 20, 1976, that FVC has initiated a program of how to teach Halkomelem language to others. Involved in the project were Roy Point, who had taken a prominent part helping preserve the language; instructor and linguist Brent Galloway; Albert Phillips; Mr. Charlie; Tillie Gutierrez; Edna Bobb; Jean Silver; Nancy Phillips, who conducted classes on Seabird Island, Elizabeth Phillips, and Amelia Douglas; Stella Pettis, Laverne Adams and Jo-Ann Archibald.

However when Wendy Burton joined the College in August 1979, she was not made aware of the 1975 report and was told by the Chilliwack Area Indian Council that *"the institution was not serving the needs of the [Stó:lō] students."*

There were many reasons for this (according to Wendy Burton):

1. The presence of Indigenous students in the classroom *"was not acknowledged."* *"Our stance as instructors was that we treat everyone the same, which is to say, we treat everyone as if they were white, able-bodied, middle class, privileged, educated in a particular way, male, heterosexual, you get the drift. And the accommodation of difference in 1979 ... wasn't even a concept. It wasn't even something we talked about."*

2. There was culturally inappropriate teaching.

3. One of the promises that the college had made to the communities was that all you had to do is be 19.

4. Colleagues at FVC said that these students were not prepared.

5. The communities were saying 'you are not

prepared for us'

6. The way that faculty taught was culturally inappropriate, and they didn't seem to care.

In 1987, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council commissioned FVC faculty member Kenvin Busswood *"to evaluate the strategies used in support of Indian Education at Fraser Valley College."* He reported:

- The Stó:lō want an education for their children and adults that is informed by their values and culture, honours the ICIE goal of *"local control over the design and delivery of educational services,"* and that provides the training needed to help settle land claims and practice self-government. They hoped the ongoing contract between the College and Coqualeetza would lead to the achievement of this goal.

- The contract between FVC and Coqualeetza was never *"addressed"* the question of control over design and implementation of programmes, and therefore, control implicitly remained with the College.

- Support for the partnership with Coqualeetza from College leaders, and their understanding of its benefits, waned after the mid-1970s as the government no longer appointed Indigenous people to the College Council and there was no longer hearing and learning from Indigenous points of view. Council members were *"unable to see concrete, programmatic results for the dollars given."*

- The Board determined that the contribution agreement with Coqualeetza, which had been steadily reduced over a couple of years, would be terminated.

- The Native Community became simply another of a number of interest groups that the College deals with.

The experiences and numbers of Indigenous students grew dramatically through the 1980's. The College Achievement Program and two programs offered at the College by UBC, NITEP and First Nations Studies, were especially popular.

Discussions with the students revealed that:

- They were *"Uneasy residents of the college community."*
- They found the College environment intimidating.
- Encountered racist attitudes.
- Their instructors had *"low expectations"* of them.
- The students lacked *"a sense of community."*
- They remarked frequently on *"the absence of [Indigenous] instructors on campus."*
- They felt *"that there is an urgent need for a Learning Assistance Centre."*

In 1990, the Provincial Advisory Committee for Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners published the Green Report. The 21 recommendations included:

- Developing Indigenous advisory boards at each post-secondary institution,
- Providing culturally relevant student services for Indigenous students,

• Adding Aboriginal Coordinators at post-secondary institutions,

- increased counselling and bridging programs for Aboriginal students,

- The creation and accreditation of *"Native language programs,"* and

- Acceptance of *"native-operated institutions as integral components of the post-secondary education system."*

Theresa Neel was hired to develop the Aboriginal Access Centre and was its first Coordinator. In a Skookum article she is noted to have said:

*"At the core of everything I did was the focus on how it would affect the individual students and enable them to be successful in post-secondary education. It was all so clear: the students needed resources and funding, they needed good financial aid and programming advice, and they needed involvement with the the Elders and their culture. [For the majority of students], it took having a college in their community to open the door to education for them."*

In 1991, Fraser Valley College became a university college with degree granting status as the new University College of the Fraser Valley. As a university college, it grew rapidly and soon became one of the largest university colleges in Canada.

From 1990-1995 FVC/UCFV developed a partnership with Coqualeetza to develop

*"The students needed re-sources and funding, they needed good financial aid and programming advice, and they needed involvement with the the Elders and their culture."*



*"We were not represented, our voices were not at the tables."*

the following areas at St. Mary's in Mission: Stó:lō & Native Studies, Native Literature, Career Planning, Reading & Study Skills, Anthropology, Culinary Arts. The First Nations Studies (FNST) was rolled out in 1998-99.

- Courses are created by an Elder's committee headed up by Gloria Wolfson and Robert Harding of the School of Social Work.
- The purpose of these courses was for all students in Social Work programs to be introduced to Stó:lō territory as well as the history and contemporary reality of the Stó:lō peoples.
- Gwen Point will be hired to teach the courses.
- Seeking approval from a curriculum committee, Gwen is told by a member that the courses don't belong in Social Work. She responds, *"what makes you think you can tell us where these should go?"* (Gwen Point interview).

In September, 2005 funding was provided from the Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Branch to work on the project Indigenizing our Academy to strategically plan post-secondary education for Aboriginal communities in traditional Stó:lō territory.

Mark Point was hired in October 2005 to consult with the Aboriginal community about developing an Aboriginal Studies department, enhancing Aboriginal

research capacity, boosting Aboriginal enrolment, and improving retention and success of Aboriginal learners at UFV.

September 2006, Point submitted a report containing his findings to UFV's Aboriginal Community Council. Indigenizing Our Academy: Strategic Planning Indigenous Post-Secondary Education at UFV.

On April 21, 2008, University College of the Fraser Valley was granted full university status to meet the growing needs for higher education within the region and the province of British Columbia.

In 2009 Xwexwilmexwawt: The Indigenous Affairs Office is established, and Shirley Hardman is appointed Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs. 275 delegates from 33 post-secondary institutions attended the "Indigenizing the Academy" National Conference in August 2012. The conference was the inaugural event at the Gathering Place, UFV campus in Chilliwack.

On Sept 18, 2013, at the *"Indian Residential School Day of Learning"* Herb Joe and Eddie Gardner started the day in a good way.

*"The mental abuse, the physical abuse, the sexual abuse, all of these things happened to us in all of our Nations across Canada. . . . The memories, scars, hurt, anger, shame, and hatred will always exist until the day I die."*

-- Residential School survivor Cyril Pierre

Dr. Gwen Point was installed and welcomed as UFV's second chancellor on Feb 4, 2015, at the Chilliwack campus at Canada Education Park. In an interview she said:

*"Willing to serve. Why? Well, if I learned anything, I did not turn down any opportunity. When it came to education. Whether being on the Board of Governors [in the 1990s or] being the Chancellor, simply because . . . we were not represented, our voices were not at the tables. Largely because of the reality of the education we went through and being marginalized. So I did not say no to any opportunity."*

In 2016, the Ministry of Advanced Education approved a Major and Minor in Indigenous studies with a goal to:

- Tap into a deep well of culture.
- To develop heart, mind, body and spirit with a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies, based on Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing.

In Fall 2017, UFV hosted the Witness Blanket, a large-scale art installation created by Carey Newman; it wove together hundreds of objects reclaimed from Indian Residential Schools and other important sites in Canada to recognize the atrocities of the Indian residential school era, honour the children, and symbolize ongoing reconciliation.

On June 19, 2018, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people gathered at the UFV Gathering Place for ReconciliACTION, a day-long dialogue organized by UFV in partnership with Stó:lō Tribal Council. The day consisted of sessions on Truth Telling, Imagining a Future Together, and Taking Action on Reconciliation.

On May 8, 2019, UFV partnered with the Stó:lō community and hosted Together We Can: Indigenous Education Summit in S'olh Temexw.

In Oct 2022 Shirley Hardman is appointed as Associate Vice President, Xwexwilmexwawt.

In June 2024, Dr. Shirley Anne Hardman presents her PhD dissertation on The role of non-Indigenous Indigenizers.

On May 9, 2024, Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, is installed and welcomed as UFV's fourth Chancellor at the Gathering Place on the Chilliwack Campus, Canada Education Park.

On Sept 257, 2024 Dr. Shirley Swelchalot Hardman and Dr. Eric Davis presented: Indigenization and Reconciliation at UFV: 1974-2074. Founded only two years after the release of the 1972 policy paper *"Indian Control of Indian Education"*, Fraser Valley College came into existence at a time when Indigenous peoples were imagining a system of education for their children based on their own culture and values. Dr. Eric Davis presented his research into the ways in which the Indigenization of education shaped our institution. Dr. Shirley Swelchalot Hardman painted a vision of an Indigenized UFV in 2074 while reflecting on UFV's successes to date and the work still to come.



## Academic Advising Centre

Elaine Newman, Director and Bobby Jaswal, Associate Director

*"It's about meeting students where they are—both physically and emotionally."*

The Academic Advising Centre at UFV stands as a vital support system for students, helping them navigate their academic paths with confidence and clarity. Under the leadership of Elaine Newman, Director, and Bobby Jaswal, Associate Director, the centre has transformed into a dynamic hub where student success intersects with equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). With a mission to guide learners in achieving their academic, career, and personal aspirations, the centre has become a trusted partner for students and a cornerstone of UFV's student services.

Academic advising at UFV has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, advising services operated in a decentralized manner, embedded within various departments and faculties. In 2015, a comprehensive review led to a groundbreaking shift: the centralization of advis-

ing services into the Academic Advising Centre. Leaders like Peter Geller and Jodie Gordon championed this initiative, which aimed to streamline services and provide holistic support to students across all programs. Today, reporting to Vice-President, Students, Alisa Webb, the centre offers a wide range of resources tailored to meet the diverse needs of UFV's student body.

A key innovation that sets the centre apart is its adoption of place-based advising. Recognizing that not all students feel comfortable accessing services at the centre, advisors actively reach out to spaces such as the Indigenous Student Centre, the International Department, and Lá:lem te Baker (Student Housing). "It's about meeting students where they are—both physically and emotionally," says Jaswal. This proactive approach has made advising more accessible and created stronger connections with students from various backgrounds.

The centre's commitment to EDIA is evident in its ongoing professional development efforts. Advisors regularly engage in workshops and training that cover topics such as LGBTQIA+ inclusion, supporting first-generation students, and understanding Indigenous histories. Key milestones include the completion of the Indigenous Canada course and partnerships with cultural organizations like the Sikh Museum. Collaborative sessions



with experts like Michelle Pidgeon have further deepened advisors' understanding of indigenization and how to embed it meaningfully into their practices.

Inclusivity is also reflected in the centre's physical and virtual spaces. Multilingual welcome signs greet visitors, while safe space indicators reinforce the centre's dedication to fostering a welcoming environment. Physical adjustments, such as lower desks and mobility-friendly layouts, ensure accessibility for all. In one notable initiative, the centre partnered with UFV's TASK program to hire a visually impaired student who reviewed the website for universal design principles, leading to significant improvements in usability.





*"It's important that every graduate, no matter where they are in life, feels like they're still part of this community."*

For more than two decades, the UFV Alumni Association has served as a bridge between the university and its graduates, cultivating a strong sense of community while championing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). With over 50,000 alumni worldwide, the association plays a vital role in mentorship, career development, philanthropy, and student support—ensuring that UFV's legacy extends far beyond graduation. Through innovative initiatives, scholarships, and networking opportunities, the association continues to empower alumni while giving back to the university that shaped them.

At the forefront of these efforts is Whitney Fordham, Director of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the UFV Alumni Association, whose leadership has strengthened alumni connections while advancing the association's commitment to EDIA. "Our alumni are the heart of UFV," Fordham reflects. *"Their stories, their successes, and their contributions shape the university's legacy in profound ways."* Under her guidance, the association has expanded its engagement strategies, en-



suring that UFV graduates remain connected to their alma mater in meaningful ways.

The foundation of the UFV Alumni Association was laid in 2001, a pivotal time as UFV transitioned from a university college to a full-fledged university. As the institution grew, so did the need to establish an engaged alumni network—one that would support both graduates and current students. What began as a small initiative has since expanded into a thriving organization that connects, celebrates, and amplifies the voices of UFV alumni across industries and communities.

One of the association's most impactful contributions has been its commitment to student success. Recognizing that financial barriers remain a significant challenge for many students, the association has established scholarships and bursaries that prioritize equity-deserving groups. These awards not only provide financial relief but also reinforce the association's dedication to removing barriers to higher education.

In addition to financial support, the Distinguished Alumni Awards, launched in 2003, celebrate graduates who have made outstanding contributions to their fields and communities. By highlighting alumni achievements in areas such as healthcare, education, business, public service, and the arts, these awards underscore the profound impact UFV graduates have in local and global spheres.

Beyond recognition, engagement is central to the Alumni Association's mission. The Alumni Association creates opportunities for students and alumni to connect, share insights, and build meaningful professional relationships across industries.

This programming provides invaluable career guidance, networking opportunities, and real-world insights, equipping students with the tools they need to navigate their professional paths. Additionally, events like alumni panels, networking mixers, professional development workshops, and speaker series create meaningful spaces for alumni to reconnect, share knowledge, and collaborate.

EDIA principles are embedded in every aspect of the association's work. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of UFV's alumni, the association prioritizes inclusive representation within its board, programming, and outreach efforts. Whether by amplifying voices from underrepresented communities, celebrating achievements of alumni from diverse cultural backgrounds, or ensuring that events and initiatives are accessible to all, the association remains committed to fostering a welcoming and equitable environment.

*"We're always looking for ways to make our programs more inclusive and accessible,"* Fordham explains. *"It's important that every graduate, no matter where they are in life, feels like they're still part of this community."* Under her leadership, the association has focused on diversi-

fying its board and ensuring that alumni engagement initiatives reflect the needs of UFV's growing and increasingly diverse graduate base.

Despite its successes, the association faces challenges in maintaining long-term alumni engagement. As UFV continues to expand, keeping recent graduates connected and encouraging them to actively participate in alumni initiatives requires ongoing innovation. Additionally, as more alumni move beyond the Fraser Valley, ensuring that they feel a continued sense of belonging remains a key priority. Finding new ways to engage alumni globally, whether through virtual networking, regional chapters, or digital initiatives, is an important focus moving forward.

Looking ahead, the UFV Alumni Association is poised for growth and deeper impact. Plans include expanding mentorship opportunities, strengthening industry partnerships, and enhancing EDIA-focused initiatives. As UFV evolves, its alumni remain its greatest ambassadors—individuals who carry forward the values of inclusivity, community, and lifelong learning.

*"The strength of UFV doesn't just lie in its history but in the continued success and engagement of its graduates,"* Fordham reflects. *"Alumni are the heartbeat of the institution, and together, we create a legacy that extends far beyond the classroom."*

*"Alumni are the heartbeat of the institution, and together, we create a legacy that extends far beyond the classroom."*



## Building Communities Across Cultures at UFV

*Dr. Chantelle Marlor, Associate Professor, School of Culture, Media, and Society, Victoria Surtees, Teaching and Learning Specialist, Internationalization*

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) are central to UFV's mission to create a welcoming and inclusive campus. The Building Communities Across Cultures (BCAC) initiative is a shining example of these principles in action. Led by an interdisciplinary team including Dr. Chantelle Marlor, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Culture, Media, and Society; Victoria Surtees, Teaching and Learning Specialist for Internationalization; Daryl Smith, Director of UFV International; Satwinder Bains, Director of the South Asian Studies Institute (SASI); Dr. Edward Akuffo, Department Head in Political Science; and Dr. Anna Griffith, Assistant Professor in the School of Culture, Media, and Society, BCAC was designed to foster intercultural competencies and build a stronger sense of community among UFV faculty, staff, and international students.

*"Creating inclusive spaces isn't just a goal—it's a process of rethinking how we engage as a community,"* reflects Surtees. This philosophy guided the initiative through three interconnected phases: foundational learning sessions that began in March 2023, a transformative study tour to India in February 2024, and a post-tour phase focused on practical application starting in March 2024.

At the heart of BCAC lies a commitment to equity—ensuring that all voices are valued and heard. The program was designed to address the underrepresen-

tation of international students in broader institutional conversations. *"We wanted to shift the culture at UFV to one where every individual, regardless of their cultural background, feels they belong,"* explains Marlor.

The initiative's structure reflected this goal. Conversations about BCAC started as early as spring 2022, with a formal leadership team coming together by August. The team included individuals from different cultural and institutional backgrounds, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. This model extended to the participants, whose experiences were shaped by meaningful engagement with international communities both on campus and abroad.

BCAC embraced diversity through its programming and partnerships. The pre-tour learning sessions in early 2023 covered topics such as intersectionality, privilege, identity, and cultural humility. Participants engaged with resources from diverse voices—ranging from blogs and podcasts to academic articles—ensuring inclusivity in both content and

*"It's about fostering a sense of belonging—not just for students, but for everyone at UFV."*



delivery. In February 2024, participants traveled to Chandigarh, India, for a two-week study tour. Visits to Fraser Valley India (FVI) provided firsthand insights into the lives of international students, while engagements with local schools and cultural sites broadened participants' understanding of global diversity. *"It wasn't just about observing,"* says Surtees. *"We wanted to build reciprocal relationships and truly learn from one another."*

This diversity extended to the participants themselves, who represented various UFV departments, roles, and personal backgrounds. However, challenges such as caregiver responsibilities and tenure-track demands limited participation for some, underscoring the need for greater accessibility in future iterations.

Inclusion was both a goal and a process for BCAC. The project emphasized community-building through every phase, from its interactive learning sessions to its collaborative post-tour activities. Participants reflected on their experiences and developed actionable plans to bring their insights back to UFV. These plans ranged from departmental workshops to advocacy efforts that have strengthened the institution's inclusive culture. Participants also highlighted the personal growth they experienced through BCAC. *"I've seen colleagues step into leadership roles and speak up in ways they hadn't before,"* says Surtees. *"It's about fostering a sense of belonging—not just for students, but for everyone at UFV."*

Accessibility was a guiding principle for BCAC, from the design of its learning sessions to the logistics of the study tour. The leadership team offered multimodal resources, including recorded sessions, asynchronous materials, and personalized digital support. Participants were encouraged to share their needs, and the team adapted accordingly. On the study tour, flexibility remained key. Alternative activities were arranged for those with physical or dietary restrictions, and comprehensive safety plans

addressed medical and mental health concerns. Despite these efforts, challenges such as the financial and time costs of international travel highlighted areas for future improvement.

Digital literacy was another focus, with the team navigating varying levels of technological comfort among participants. *"Accessibility means more than physical accommodations,"* Marlor explains. *"It's about creating an environment where everyone can fully engage."*

BCAC's achievements reflect its thoughtful approach, but challenges remain. Time and funding were among the most significant hurdles. The initiative relied on one-off grants, such as UFV's Strategic Initiative Fund (SIF), and professional development budgets. *"Sustainability is key,"* Marlor emphasizes. *"If programs like this aren't structurally funded, their impact will always be limited."* Policy shifts also posed risks. Diplomatic tensions between Canada and India in late 2023 nearly derailed the study tour, highlighting the unpredictability of international collaborations. Despite these obstacles, the leadership team remains optimistic about the program's future.

Plans are already underway to refine and expand BCAC. Ideas include shorter, local study tours and hybrid learning models to make the program more accessible.

*"Institutional change takes time,"* says Marlor. *"But initiatives like BCAC lay the foundation for meaningful transformation."*



BCAC demonstrates how EDIA principles can drive impactful initiatives that benefit the entire community. From its diverse leadership to its thoughtful design, the project has inspired new ways of thinking and acting at UFV. As Surtees concludes, *"We didn't set out to change the institution overnight. But we've started something important—a journey towards a UFV where every voice matters, and everyone feels they belong."*



*“My role is centered on the people, ensuring that students feel connected, supported, and valued in their home away from home.”*

Campus Living at UFV is more than a residence; it's a vibrant, intentional community that fosters belonging, cultural connection, and holistic development for its residents. Under the stewardship of Christine Zapisocki, Manager of Campus Living, this department has become a leader in innovative programming and inclusive practices. With a mission rooted in respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility—drawn from the 4R's of Indigenous education—Campus Living exemplifies UFV's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA).

Established in 2009 as UFV's first student housing initiative, Campus Living originally operated as a unified department overseeing both housing operations and residence life programming. In 2018, a structural division separated these roles, allowing Christine's team to focus exclusively on creating meaningful student experiences. “My role is centered on the people,” she explains, “ensuring that

*students feel connected, supported, and valued in their home away from home.”*

A significant milestone in Campus Living's evolution was the indigenization of its curriculum in 2020. This curriculum incorporates the 4R's into four foundational pillars: self-awareness, relations to others, physical and intellectual engagement, and social responsibility. This framework reflects a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, blending Western and Indigenous perspectives to create a learning environment that is culturally responsive and globally relevant. Christine emphasizes,

*“Our next step is to expand this framework further by incorporating more global perspectives into our programming. This is an ongoing initiative we hope to implement fully in the coming years.”*

The development of this curriculum was enriched by the contributions of Lorna Andrews and Victoria Surtees. Andrews provided invaluable insights into indigenization and cultural inclusion, helping to embed Indigenous perspectives and practices into Campus Living's foundational programming. Surtees, with her expertise in international education, contributed to workshops and events fostering global citizenship, cultural exchange, and adaptation support for international students. Her efforts have enhanced residents' engagement with diverse perspectives, enriching the living-learning environment.

Partnerships have also played a key role in Campus Living's growth. Collaborations with Stó:lō communities and the Sq'ewá:lxw (Skawahlook) First Nation

have led to transformative initiatives, such as cultural workshops and land-based learning experiences. Residents have engaged in storytelling circles with Stó:lō elders and participated in sessions that connect them to the history and significance of the Fraser Valley. These partnerships foster meaningful, reciprocal learning experiences that benefit both students and the community.

Campus Living's partnerships extend beyond the Fraser Valley. While there are plans to integrate international perspectives into residence programming, these initiatives have not yet been implemented and are expected to launch in September 2025.

Local collaborations with community-based organizations have been instrumental in supporting student wellness and engagement. Campus Living has built strong partnerships with Fraser Valley Health Authority, Canadian Mental Health Association, BCCDC Harm Reduction Services, and World University Service of Canada (WUSC). These collaborations help integrate public health resources, harm reduction education, and



## Campus Living

*Christine Zapisocki, Manager, Campus Living*

global student initiatives into residence life programming, ensuring that students have access to essential support networks.



Interpreting and indigenizing the name of Baker House to Lá:lem te Baker—in Halq'eméylem, meaning “House of Baker”—was a pivotal step in embedding Indigenous culture into Campus Living. While the project is still in its preliminary stages, efforts are underway to incorporate Halq'eméylem into signage throughout the residence. Plans include QR codes on room plaques providing audio pronunciation guides, encouraging all residents to engage with and respect the Indigenous language.

This cultural integration extends to Indigenous art and symbolism. An Indigenous student artist, Chantelle Trainor-Matties, designed a crest featuring an otter, chosen for its cultural significance, representing resilience, adaptability, and community spirit. The crest is now central to Campus Living's branding, appearing on everything from welcome materials to apparel, fostering a sense of identity and belonging.

Campus Living's cultural celebrations have become hallmark events, uniting residents from diverse backgrounds. Diwali, Lunar New Year, Black History Month, Eid, and Ramadan are celebrated

*“It wasn't until we had students with mobility challenges that we realized how much more we needed to do.”*

*"The work we do is a privilege, and we're excited for what's to come."*

with vibrant cultural showcases, including traditional attire, music, and storytelling. Christine proudly notes that initiatives like Iftar dinners and cultural markets, first piloted within Campus Living, have since expanded to university-wide events.

Inclusivity and accessibility remain central focuses, extending to Campus Living's accessibility efforts. Lá:lem te Baker features wheelchair-accessible units, braille signage, and automatic doors. Christine acknowledges there is still work to be done. *"It wasn't until we had students with mobility challenges that we realized how much more we needed to do,"* she says. Today, proactive consultations during the application process ensure accommodations are ready before students move in, reinforcing the department's commitment to inclusivity.

The team's dedication to EDIA is evident in its hiring practices. The student staff team, which leads programming and serves as emergency responders, intentionally reflects the diversity of the residence. *"We prioritize hiring students with lived experiences that enrich our community,"* Christine notes. Comprehensive training for staff includes anti-racism workshops, Indigenous weaving knowledge sessions, and certifications in safeTalk, First Aid, and Naloxone administration, equipping them to navigate the complexities of intercultural living.



Challenges persist, particularly in balancing educational components with students' preference for social engagement. Christine describes how her team innovates to merge the two, citing events like *"Penne for Your Thoughts,"* where residents come together to examine topics from their own worldviews, share their experiences, and engage in thoughtful discussions—all while making pasta. Similarly, events like *"Brochats"* provide relaxed spaces for meaningful dialogue, offering students the chance to connect over tea and snacks while exploring critical themes such as mental health, identity, and belonging. These initiatives build community while fostering deeper understanding and meaningful conversations on important issues.

Looking to the future, Campus Living is poised to further expand its impact. Plans include enhanced professional development for student staff to support neurodivergent residents and deeper collaborations with UFV's Learning and Teaching Centre to refine its educational programming. Christine envisions Campus Living as a space where students not only thrive academically but also grow as global citizens.

*"This is more than a place to stay,"* Christine reflects. *"It's a space where students find belonging, discover themselves, and build the skills to lead in an interconnected world. The work we do is a privilege, and we're excited for what's to come."*



***"It's a space where students find belonging, discover themselves, and build the skills to lead in an interconnected world."***



Attendees gather to hear a speaker at the Afghanistan walkout.



## CHASI

*Dr. Martha Dow, Director of the Community Health and Social Innovation Hub*

The Community Health and Social Innovation (CHASI) Hub at UFV was founded in 2020 in response to a growing need for research-driven solutions to pressing social issues. Designed to bridge the gap between academia and community action, CHASI is a space where scholarship informs real-world change, prioritizing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) at every stage of its work.

At the helm of CHASI is Dr. Martha Dow, Director of the Community Health and Social Innovation Hub. A longtime UFV faculty member and sociologist specializing in community resilience, social policy, and equity-focused research, Dow has been instrumental in shaping CHASI's vision. *"We didn't build CHASI as a think tank that simply produces reports,"* she explains. *"We built it as a space where research is directly connected to people—where knowledge is mobilized in ways that create meaningful impact."*

CHASI's origins are deeply tied to its partnerships with the First Nations Health Authority, Fraser Health Authority, and the Divisions of Family Practice in Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack. These organi-

zations sought a research hub that would not only generate data but also mobilize knowledge in ways that directly benefit communities. That initial vision continues to drive CHASI's work, ensuring that its projects lead to policy change, social advocacy, and tangible improvements in quality of life.

CHASI's research spans public health, social justice, economic accessibility, and community well-being. Its collaborations with municipal, provincial, and national organizations have led to impactful research and direct policy interventions.

One of CHASI's most significant partnerships has been with the City of Abbotsford, where it has helped shape business retention strategies, homelessness initiatives, and quality-of-life surveys. These projects provide city officials with comprehensive, data-driven insights that inform policy decisions affecting thousands of residents. Additionally, CHASI has worked with local governments on emergency response assessments, including a post-fire recovery analysis for the City of Coquitlam, evaluating disaster preparedness and community resilience.

*"We're not just here to study problems. We're here to walk alongside communities in finding solutions that matter."*

The hub has also been deeply involved in Indigenous-led research, supporting initiatives that prioritize Indigenous sovereignty over historical knowledge. In collaboration with the Old Massett Village Council in Haida Gwaii, CHASI has assisted in archival research to locate missing children from residential schools, ensuring that the findings remain under the control of the affected communities. This project is part of CHASI's broader commitment to decolonization and Indigenous knowledge preservation, reinforcing the hub's dedication to ethical research practices.

Beyond policy and historical research, CHASI has actively contributed to public safety and youth engagement. In Abbotsford, the hub played a role in the city's gang prevention strategy, developing research-informed recommendations to support at-risk youth. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CHASI conducted a study on social isolation among seniors in White Rock, leading to policy changes that improved senior care and mental health resources.

CHASI's dedication to EDIA is evident in its approach to research, hiring, and community partnerships. The hub prioritizes accessibility both in its physical space



and research methodologies, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds can contribute to and benefit from its work.

The hub's workspace was intentionally designed to be an inclusive, collaborative environment, featuring adjustable desks, sensory-friendly lighting, and ergonomic workstations to accommodate diverse needs. Beyond physical accessibility, CHASI has worked to reduce barriers in research participation, offering alternative formats for engagement to include voices that are often excluded from academic studies.

CHASI also emphasizes equitable hiring practices, ensuring that its student research assistantships prioritize individuals from underrepresented communities. These positions provide students with hands-on research experience, mentorship, and opportunities to contribute directly to community-driven initiatives. "It's about more than just research," says Dow. "It's about creating spaces where diverse perspectives shape the work we do."

Despite its success, CHASI faces ongoing challenges, particularly around securing long-term funding for its projects. Many of its initiatives rely on short-term grants, making sustained impact difficult without institutional investment. Additionally, navigating bureaucratic processes within academia often slows the implementation of urgent, community-driven research.



To address these challenges, CHASI is focusing on strengthening partnerships and increasing research capacity. A key priority is expanding research on economic and social equity, with planned projects including a large-scale study on housing accessibility for international students, continued work on Indigenous-led climate resilience initiatives, and research on public health policies affecting marginalized populations.

*"We know the need for this kind of research is growing," says Dow. "The challenge is ensuring that we have the resources and institutional support to keep up with that demand."*

As CHASI approaches its fifth anniversary, it remains committed to building partnerships that drive meaningful change. The hub continues to expand its role as a leader in community-engaged research, ensuring that its work not only informs policy but also empowers communities.

Through its commitment to responsive research, equitable hiring, and social impact, CHASI exemplifies what is possible when academic institutions prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, and action. As Dow puts it, *"We're not just here to study problems. We're here to walk alongside communities in finding solutions that matter."*





## CIVL Radio

*Aaron Levy, Executive Director of CIVL Radio*

CIVL Radio, an independent nonprofit society, has become a beacon for media accessibility and inclusivity in the Fraser Valley. Since its establishment in 2005, CIVL has grown into a vital platform for underrepresented voices, operating from the heart of UFV's Abbotsford campus while serving a far-reaching mandate. At the helm is Aaron Levy, CIVL's Executive Director, who has led the station with a strong commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). "EDIA is our reason for existing," Levy explains. This ethos aligns with CIVL's mission to serve and connect the UFV community and the Fraser Valley through diverse, alternative, and community-focused programming. By providing a forum for individuals and groups to share ideas and observations, CIVL has become a powerful platform for dialogue and representation.

CIVL's roots trace back to a group of determined UFV students, including its early architect, Douglas McLean. With an entrepreneurial spirit, McLean, alongside volunteers like Rachel Kates, Miles Bissky, Damon Skuce, Ben Cadieux, Michelle Kneale, and Maxwell Winchester, conducted surveys, built aware-

ness campaigns, and garnered the support needed to establish a campus-based radio station. Their efforts culminated in CIVL's establishment as a society in 2005, followed by its FM broadcast licensing in 2010. Levy reflects on this legacy with admiration, noting the passion and vision of those who laid the groundwork for CIVL's mission to democratize media.

Under Levy's leadership, CIVL has expanded its accessibility and inclusivity initiatives. A key moment in the station's EDIA journey came in 2016 when CIVL introduced a policy requiring all radio shows to begin with an Indigenous land acknowledgment. While this decision was met with resistance—some long-standing volunteers even left—it underscored CIVL's commitment to reconciliation and inclusion. "We knew it was the right step, even if it wasn't the easy one," Levy recalls.

In 2021, CIVL took another step forward by launching a 30-minute anti-oppressive training module for all volunteers. The program covers topics such as microaggressions, cultural appropriation, and misgendering, equipping volunteers with the tools to

create respectful and inclusive content. Now available online for volunteers, the training sets a standard for inclusivity within media spaces.

CIVL's programming reflects its dedication to amplifying diverse perspectives. Projects like Hushed History of Racism, a five-part series funded by the Local Journalism Initiative, delve into systemic inequities in the region. Another impactful project, Resonating Reconciliation, empowered Indigenous volunteers to explore their heritage, including one participant who documented her grandfather's experiences in residential school—a profoundly personal and community-centered milestone.

The Fraser Valley Music Awards, launched in 2016, further illustrate CIVL's commitment to celebrating diversity. With categories for Indigenous, BIPOC, queer, and female artists, the awards not only recognize talent but also provide visibility and financial support to creators often excluded from mainstream platforms. "We wanted to ensure that everyone could see themselves reflected in the community," Levy explains.

Despite its achievements, CIVL has faced challenges. Located in a region where EDIA efforts were historically underprioritized, the station has often encountered resistance to its initiatives. Levy shares, "When I started in 2010, I had to shelve my anti-oppressive toolkit because there wasn't an appetite for it. Now, it's gratify-

*ing to see EDIA becoming a focus, even if there's still work to be done."*

The Fraser Valley's increasingly diverse population presents opportunities for CIVL to expand its reach. Collaborations with groups like UFV's Race and Anti-Racism Network (RAN) and Archway Community Services have already yielded powerful initiatives, such as Stories of Resilience, which aired on CIVL and highlighted immigrant women's experiences in Abbotsford.

Accessibility remains a cornerstone of CIVL's operations. The station consistently adapts its workflows to accommodate volunteers with disabilities, ensuring that barriers—whether physical, technical, or cultural—do not hinder participation. "When someone wants to contribute, we find a way to make it happen," Levy affirms.

As CIVL celebrates its milestones under UFV's 50th-anniversary banner, it continues to serve as a vital voice for equity and inclusion in the Fraser Valley. "Our job is to serve every community member inclusively and equitably—and we're proud to be a platform for those voices that often go unheard," Levy says.

CIVL Radio remains a powerful testament to the transformative potential of independent media, grounded in its commitment to storytelling, dialogue, and representation.

*"We wanted to ensure that everyone could see themselves reflected in the community,"*





*"Rather than broadly talking about inclusion, we needed to explicitly name and challenge racism."*

The College of Arts at UFV has long been a dynamic space for fostering critical thinkers, creative leaders, and engaged citizens. Rooted in a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA), the college continues to evolve, offering a broad spectrum of programs in the humanities, which includes the creative arts, and in the social sciences. More than an academic institution, it is a catalyst for change, empowering students to explore bold ideas, challenge perspectives, and develop creative solutions to real-world issues.

At the heart of this transformation is Dr. Sylvie Murray, Dean of the College of Arts, who has been instrumental in embedding EDIA principles into every facet of the college's structure. In doing so, she builds on the strong foundation created by her predecessor, Dr. Jacqueline Nolte. *"EDIA is not just an abstract goal—it has to be embedded in policies, curriculum, and daily interactions,"* she explains. Under her leadership, the college has taken deliberate steps to integrate EDIA into its governance, teaching practices, and community engagement efforts.

A landmark initiative in this journey was the approval of the Anti-Racism Framework in 2021. Developed through extensive faculty discussions, the framework shifted the college's focus beyond diversity and inclusion to actively opposing and address-

## College of Arts

*Dr. Sylvie Murray, Dean of the College of Arts*

ing systemic racism. *"Rather than broadly talking about inclusion, we needed to explicitly name and challenge racism,"* Murray notes. This framework is meant to inform practices such as, curriculum design and faculty training, ensuring that anti-racism remains a core priority.

Another key initiative has been the Equity-Based Dialogue and Engagement course, developed within the Peace and Conflict Studies program. Designed to build capacity in navigating complex discussions, the course equips students with skills in conflict transformation and constructive dialogue. *"It's easy to take a stance on an issue, but much harder to engage in meaningful conversations across differences,"* Murray observes. The course is part of a broader effort to cultivate a campus culture where difficult conversations can happen in a respectful and transformative way.

The College of Arts has also prioritized Indigenization and decolonization, particularly in curriculum development. The college's curriculum committee has been actively working to enhance Indigenous perspectives across programs, ensuring that Indigenization goes beyond token representation. Faculty members receive guidance on integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into their teaching, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. *"Indigenization is not just about adding Indigenous content—it's about shifting how we teach, how we engage with knowledge, and how we support Indigenous students,"* Murray explains.

Accessibility and student support are also central to the college's EDIA initia-

tives. Recognizing that traditional structures often create barriers, the college has embraced flexible learning models, diverse assessment methods, and faculty training to support students with differing abilities. While legal compliance remains a baseline, the college aims to go beyond it, emphasizing a holistic approach to accessibility. *"It's more than meeting the minimum requirements—it's about creating a culture where all students feel valued and supported,"* Murray says.

Collaboration remains key to these efforts. The college works closely with community partners, including organizations that provide practicum opportunities for students. These partnerships ensure that students gain hands-on experience while contributing to the community in meaningful ways. Additionally, faculty-led research projects engage students in real-world applications of their studies, further strengthening the college's role as a hub for socially engaged scholarship.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. Like many institutions, the College of Arts grapples with hiring barriers that limit diverse faculty representation. Provincial hiring policies and collective agreements add complexity to recruitment processes, making it difficult to prioritize underrepresented groups. *"We recognize the importance of faculty diversity—it matters to students, it shapes learning experiences—but hiring structures are complicated,"* Murray acknowledges. Addressing these systemic challenges requires ongoing advocacy and institutional support.

Looking ahead, the College of Arts remains committed to deepening its EDIA work. Plans include expanding faculty development programs, strengthening mentorship opportunities for underrepresented students, and refining policies that support meaningful change. As the college continues to evolve, it remains a space where academic excellence and social responsibility intersect.

*"Change doesn't happen overnight,"* Murray reflects. *"But through intentional efforts, collective action, and a willingness to listen and adapt, we can create an academic environment where everyone feels they belong."*





## Community Engagement

*Susan Mide Kiss, Vice-President, Community Engagement and  
Laura Authier, Vice President of Community Engagement and Director of marketing*

The Community Engagement portfolio at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) serves as a bridge between the university and the communities it impacts. More than just an administrative unit, this portfolio is dedicated to building meaningful, reciprocal relationships that extend beyond the campus. It ensures UFV remains deeply connected to the Fraser Valley and beyond, fostering engagement that is intentional, inclusive, and transformative.

Historically, UFV's external relations efforts were housed under the Vice-President, External portfolio, primarily focusing on marketing, alumni relations, and advancement. Recognizing the need for a more community-centered approach, UFV established the Vice-President, Community Engagement portfolio in 2022. This shift redefined engagement as an active, relationship-driven practice rather than a transactional function.

*"We are not just here to communicate with the community—we are here to be an active part of it and to serve as a good neighbor," explains Susan Mide Kiss, Vice-President, Community Engagement. "True engagement is about co-creation. It's about*

*listening as much as speaking, about ensuring our relationships with community partners are fostered to enhance mutual benefit and shared goals – in a good way."*

The transformation included restructuring key departments to align with this philosophy. Former marketing, alumni relations, and event units evolved into Communications Marketing and Brand Experience, Alumni Engagement, Community Programming and Experience, and Relationship and Fund Development. These changes reflect a broader commitment to engagement over promotion, collaboration over outreach, and meaningful connection over transaction.

The Community Engagement portfolio integrates equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) and truth and reconciliation into its core operations. A defining element of this work is the Principle-Based Decision-Making and Evaluation Tool, developed in partnership with the Community Health and Social Innovation Hub. This tool ensures that UFV's engagement efforts are measurable, accountable, and aligned with principles of reconciliation,

*"One of the biggest shifts in recent years has been moving beyond performative engagement toward authentic relationship-building."*

decolonization, and accessibility. *"Every decision we make—whether it's about hiring, partnerships, or program development—is guided by a commitment to equity and reconciliation,"* says Laura Authier, Associate Vice-President, Community Engagement. *"We ask ourselves: Are we amplifying diverse voices? Are we creating space for historically marginalized communities? Are we making engagement accessible to everyone?"*

UFV has long been a leader in Indigenous engagement, integrating Indigenous ceremony and traditions into institutional life. This was evident in President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Joanne MacLean's installation in 2018, where Stó:lō traditions were central to the ceremony—a practice that continues at UFV's major institutional ceremonies and events. The portfolio also prioritizes hiring practices that reflect the diversity of the communities UFV serves, ensuring that leadership recruitment emphasizes lived experience, relationship-building skills, and a commitment to inclusion.

The Community Engagement portfolio has launched several initiatives designed to strengthen UFV's presence in the region and deepen relationships with external partners.

One of these initiatives is the UFV Community Report – St'elt'elawtxw, introduced in 2023 as a reimagined version of UFV's alumni magazine. Rather than focusing solely on UFV's internal achievements, the report highlights community impact stories, showcasing collaborative projects between UFV and external organizations. *"The goal is to show that UFV is not just in the community—we are committed to working WITH the community,"* says Mide Kiss.

Another key initiative is St'elt'elawtxw -- A Celebration of Community, which



replaced the former Town & Gown gala. Unlike traditional fundraising events, there is no cost to attend this annual gathering, it is accessible and designed to be inclusive. It brings together 300 participants from across UFV's internal and external communities, offering a platform for diverse voices and community-driven storytelling.

The EDI Wall Calendar, originally launched by UFV's President's Task Force on EDI, has also become a vital tool in shaping engagement efforts. The calendar ensures that cultural, religious, and social milestones are recognized and integrated into UFV's communications and events. *"It may seem like a small initiative,"* explains Authier, *"but it has a profound impact on how we approach engagement. It ensures that we are being intentional about representation, inclusion, and visibility."*

Beyond these signature initiatives, the Community Engagement portfolio maintains long-standing partnerships with organizations such as Fraser Valley Pride, Indigenous community leaders, Community Futures (North, South, Stó:lō), Chambers of Commerce throughout the Fraser Valley, the Indo-Canadian Business Association, and various cultural organi-

zations. These collaborations are built on trust, reciprocity, and a shared commitment to community well-being.

Despite its success, meaningful community engagement presents challenges. One of the primary tensions the portfolio navigates is balancing tradition with transformation. Many alumni, faculty, and long-time community partners have strong ties to past institutional practices. Honoring that history while ensuring UFV evolves to meet the needs of today's diverse student body and broader community requires careful navigation.

Another challenge is the emotional labor required for EDI-centered engagement. *"This work is deeply personal,"* says Mide Kiss. *"It requires humility, ongoing learning and unlearning, and a willingness to acknowledge where we still have work to do."* She notes that one of the biggest shifts in recent years has been moving beyond performative engagement toward authentic relationship-building.

At the same time, UFV's 50th Anniversary celebrations have provided an opportunity to reflect on past achievements while setting a course for future transformation. The portfolio is currently co-creating a Community Engagement Framework, a long-term approach that will guide UFV's partnerships, engagement efforts, and institutional commitments for the decades to come – 50 years forward.

Community Engagement has an opportunity to redefine what community engagement looks like in post-secondary education according to Susan Mide Kiss. The goal is to create a model where engagement is not an afterthought—it is authentically embedded in everything they do.

As UFV continues to evolve, the Community Engagement portfolio is focused on deepening its impact and exploring new avenues for engagement. A major

priority is expanding partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and government agencies to enhance regional development initiatives. The team is also exploring new ways to support alumni engagement, ensuring that UFV graduates remain active contributors to both the university and the broader community.

However, challenges persist. The team acknowledges the need to continuously adapt to shifting community needs, ensuring that engagement remains relevant and responsive. *"Community engagement isn't static and there's different levels of engagement across a continuum,"* says Mide Kiss. *"We have to be willing to change, to learn from the people we work with, and to evolve in ways that truly serve the region – and beyond."*

Looking ahead, the Community Engagement portfolio remains committed to strengthening UFV's role as a community-anchored institution, where collaboration, inclusion, and shared impact define its relationships. Through its innovative initiatives, commitment to reconciliation, and dedication to authentic engagement, the portfolio is shaping a future where UFV's relationships with its communities are deeper, stronger, and more meaningful than ever before.



*"We have to be willing to change, to learn from the people we work with, and to evolve in ways that truly serve the region – and beyond."*

## Faculty and Staff Association

Dr. Satwinder Bains, VP Equity

*"Change isn't passive—it requires action, collaboration, and persistence.*

The Faculty and Staff Association (FSA) at UFV has been a powerful advocate for fairness, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that faculty and staff receive the support, representation, and protection they need in the workplace. More than a bargaining unit, the FSA serves as a voice for change, working to embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) into UFV's policies, labor practices, and institutional culture.

At the center of this work is Dr. Satwinder Bains, Equity Vice President, who has been instrumental in advancing EDIA within labor advocacy. She sees this work as fundamental to ensuring that faculty and staff—especially those from equity-deserving groups—experience fair treatment, meaningful opportunities, and a workplace free of discrimination. *"Equity isn't a checkbox. It's an ongoing process that requires real commitment,"* Bains explains. *"Institutional change doesn't happen by accident. It happens when we stand together, speak up, and ensure that fairness and justice are at the core of everything we do."*

A key focus of the FSA has been ensuring that EDIA principles are woven into

UFV's hiring practices, dispute resolution processes, and workplace policies. Through negotiations and advocacy, the association has pushed for clearer protections, accountability measures, and stronger language in collective agreements to address bias, discrimination, and systemic barriers.

Recognizing that faculty and staff of color, women, and historically underrepresented employees often experience additional challenges in hiring and career advancement, the FSA has worked to ensure that mentorship programs, hiring panels, and leadership pathways reflect a commitment to diversity. *"Representation matters,"* Bains emphasizes. *"We need to ensure that decision-making spaces reflect the people they serve."*

The FSA has also prioritized the integration of EDIA frameworks into hiring and promotion policies, advocating for transparent hiring criteria, bias-free selection processes, and equitable opportunities for advancement. These efforts aim to ensure that diversity is not just encouraged but actively supported at every level of the institution.

Beyond policy, the FSA has focused on workplace culture, ensuring that faculty and staff feel supported, valued, and protected. Initiatives such as anti-racism workshops, unconscious bias training, and accessibility audits have helped create a more inclusive environment for all employees. The association has also advocated for faculty and staff who have experienced workplace discrimination, ensuring they have the resources and institutional backing they need.

Another critical issue the FSA has taken on is workload equity, particularly as it affects women, racialized employees, and contract faculty. Through ongoing negotiations, the association has worked to address disparities, secure fair compensation, and push for better job security, ensuring that all employees—regardless of position—have equitable working conditions.

A major step toward workplace equity has been the FSA's focus on accessibility. The association has advocated for workplace accommodations, flexible scheduling, and hybrid work options, recognizing that accessibility is about more than physical spaces—it's about creating an environment where all employees can thrive.

Despite the progress made, significant challenges remain. Ensuring that EDIA commitments lead to real change across all levels of the university requires continued pressure, advocacy, and accountability. The FSA continues to push for institutional transparency, ensuring that equity-driven policies are upheld, not just promised.

The evolving landscape of higher education labor rights also presents challenges, particularly in securing protections for contract faculty, ensuring fair compensation, and addressing precarity in aca-

demic employment. These are critical equity issues, as vulnerable faculty and staff are often the most affected by unstable employment conditions.

Another ongoing challenge is ensuring that EDIA training and resources are available to all UFV faculty and staff. The FSA recognizes that true inclusivity requires continuous education, dialogue, and the willingness to challenge existing norms. Efforts to develop comprehensive professional development programs focused on EDIA remain a key priority moving forward.

As the FSA continues to champion workplace equity, it remains steadfast in its mission to advocate for fair labor practices, accessible policies, and a more inclusive institutional culture. Under Dr. Bains' leadership, the association is committed to deepening its EDIA efforts, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that UFV is a place where every faculty and staff member is valued and supported.

Looking forward, the FSA aims to expand its mentorship initiatives, increase representation in leadership roles, and push for further structural changes that eliminate barriers to success. The association also plans to strengthen collaborations with other advocacy groups and labor organizations, ensuring that UFV remains at the forefront of progressive labor policies in higher education.

Dr. Bains remains clear on the path ahead: *"Change isn't passive—it requires action, collaboration, and persistence. It's about standing together, pushing for what's right, and ensuring that equity and justice are woven into the fabric of our institution."*



*"Education is about more than knowledge—it's about creating pathways, breaking barriers, and shaping a world where diversity and inclusion are celebrated."*



Nestled in Chandigarh, India, the Fraser Valley India (FVI) campus is a pioneering initiative in international education that has transformed countless lives. Established in 2006, FVI bridges two worlds, offering Indian students Canadian-accredited programs while fostering cross-cultural understanding. More than just an academic institution, FVI is a living example of how equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) principles can drive meaningful connections and prepare students for a global future.

Led by Tushar Gajwani, Assistant Director at Fraser Valley India, the campus thrives as a hub for innovation, collaboration, and inclusion. *"FVI is more than an educational institution—it's a transformative space where students, faculty, and staff from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds come together to learn and grow,"* Gajwani explains.

From its inception, FVI has been deeply rooted in equity and accessibility. The campus's mission emphasizes creating pathways for students transitioning to Canada while fostering intercultural competencies and supporting underrepresented communities. This vision has evolved over time, incorporating innovative approaches to make education and support systems more inclusive and accessible for all.

FVI's curriculum and programming reflect its

commitment to EDIA in both tangible and systemic ways. With three undergraduate pathway programs—Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Computer Information Systems, and Bachelor of Arts—FVI adopts a holistic approach that integrates academics with real-world application and cultural sensitivity. Students are exposed to faculty from diverse backgrounds, including visiting professors from Canada and international experts, ensuring exposure to global perspectives alongside local insights.

The campus also prioritizes mental health accessibility, addressing a significant societal taboo in India. In a pioneering move, FVI began offering therapy sessions to students, initially on-campus and later through external arrangements for privacy and accessibility. This service has grown substantially, from just two sessions in its first year to approximately 80 monthly sessions today. Gajwani highlights, *"Mental health support isn't just about providing services—it's about reshaping narratives, especially in a culture where seeking help is often stigmatized."*

FVI actively celebrates cultural diversity through its events and student initiatives. Annual award ceremonies honor academic and non-academic achievements, fostering a sense of belonging among students, parents, and faculty. Clubs such as the *"Color Me Queer"* club provide safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ students, and partnerships with the Sikhya Foundation promote education for marginalized groups.

FVI's EDIA efforts are bolstered by mean-

ingful collaborations. Partnerships with the Mehar Baba Charitable Trust allow students to engage in transformative community projects, such as conducting computer training for underprivileged girls in rural areas. Other initiatives include working with UFV International on pre-arrival orientations and collaborating with Canadian organizations like PICS (Progressive Intercultural Community Services) to support students transitioning to life in Canada.

These collaborations ensure that FVI's initiatives extend beyond its campus, impacting communities both locally and globally. For example, the campus's Quest Scholars Club focuses on research initiatives that address child rights and disability inclusion in partnership with regional commissions in Chandigarh.

Accessibility remains a key focus for FVI, not only in academic programming but also in physical infrastructure and policy. All campus buildings are equipped with ramps, ensuring mobility for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, proactive measures, such as workshops and faculty development sessions, help ensure that staff and educators are equipped to support diverse learning needs.

The campus has also introduced initiatives like Tech Gear, which connects computer science students with industry professionals in Canada for hands-on experience and project development. This



program has enabled students to secure employment opportunities even before arriving in Canada, addressing challenges of economic stability and cultural adaptation.

While FVI's initiatives are impactful, challenges remain. Gajwani notes the difficulties of convincing students to participate in non-academic programs and bridging cultural gaps between the Indian and Canadian educational systems. Additionally, financial barriers and societal stigmas around mental health continue to pose obstacles.

Looking ahead, FVI aims to expand its programming to include reverse transfer opportunities, enabling Canadian students to study at the Chandigarh campus, thereby fostering greater cultural exchange. Plans are also underway to strengthen accessibility measures and increase the diversity of its faculty and student body.

FVI's story is one of resilience, innovation, and collaboration. As Gajwani aptly concludes, *"Education is about more than knowledge—it's about creating pathways, breaking barriers, and shaping a world where diversity and inclusion are celebrated. At FVI, we're proud to be part of that journey."*





## International

David McGuire, Associate Vice President, International, and Daryl Smith, Director of International

International connects UFV's campus community to the world, creating pathways for students to engage meaningfully across borders. Established in the early 1990s, the department has grown into a dynamic hub for global learning and collaboration, guided by a steadfast commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). Under the leadership of David McGuire, Associate Vice President, International, and Daryl Smith, Director of International, the department is redefining what it means to be a truly inclusive and globally connected university.

With initiatives that span continents, and a vision rooted in breaking barriers, International has become a driving force in shaping culturally competent graduates who are prepared to lead in an interconnected world. *"Our role is to create spaces and opportunities where diversity isn't just acknowledged but celebrated,"* McGuire reflects.

International's core responsibilities include the recruitment of international students, support for domestic students in global experiences, and facilitating faculty-led international efforts. Hosting students from over 70 countries annually, the department actively promotes diversity within UFV's campus community. *"Our region is incredibly diverse, but many of our domestic students have not ventured beyond British Columbia,"* McGuire shares. *"By welcoming international students and creating global learning opportunities, we are equipping all students with the competencies needed for a globalized future."*

One of International's most impactful milestones was the creation of the Global Lounge in 2014. Transforming what was once a basic waiting area into a vibrant community hub, the lounge serves as a gathering space for international and domestic students. Activities such as peer mentorship programs

and intercultural workshops hosted in the lounge foster a sense of belonging and encourage meaningful connections. This space symbolizes International's commitment to creating environments where students from all backgrounds feel supported and valued.

Supporting this mission are individuals like Walter Foreman, Associate Director, International Relations, and Yalda Ahmadi, Associate Director, Marketing & Applicant Relations, who lead initiatives to deepen global partnerships and enhance student engagement. Their efforts, along with the department's broader strategy, have enabled International to build meaningful connections with over 100 institutions worldwide, including the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and the University of Media, Arts, and Communication in Ghana.

To address barriers to participation in study abroad programs, International has implemented initiatives like the Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) project. Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, GSO prioritizes underrepresented groups, including Indigenous learners, students with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. Short-term study abroad opportunities, designed with community commitments in mind, have enabled more students to engage in global experiences without the financial



and logistical burdens of long-term travel.

Another notable initiative is the Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning (COIL) program, which provides students with virtual international experiences. By connecting UFV faculty and students with counterparts at partner institutions worldwide, COIL offers a cost-effective and inclusive way to foster intercultural competencies. *"Not every student can afford to study abroad, but programs like COIL ensure that every student can have a meaningful international experience,"* Smith elaborates.

The Indigenous Global Learning Collective (IGLC), developed in collaboration with Northern Arizona University and the University of Hawaii, is another example of this commitment. Designed with input from elders and knowledge keepers, IGLC offers decolonized study abroad experiences tailored for Indigenous learners. *"Indigenous students historically have low participation rates in study abroad,"* notes Smith. *"This program addresses those barriers and creates spaces where Indigenous learners feel supported and valued."*

International's collaboration with organizations like Daughters for Life and the Ghana Scholarship Secretariat further exemplifies its inclusive approach. By offering scholarships to young women from the Middle East and North Africa



*"Not every student can afford to study abroad, but programs like COIL ensure that every student can have a meaningful international experience,"*



and funding for students from rural Ghana, the department opens doors for individuals who might otherwise face insurmountable barriers to education.

Despite its successes, UFV International has faced challenges, particularly in navigating complex immigration policies and geopolitical tensions. Recent diplomatic strains between Canada and India, coupled with changes to federal immigration frameworks, have created uncertainties for students and staff alike. *“The past five years have been a rollercoaster,”* reflects McGuire. *“From the pandemic to natural disasters and political tensions, we’ve had to pivot constantly while maintaining our commitment to students.”*

The department is also keenly aware of the financial barriers that persist for many students. Scholarship funding remains a critical focus, with efforts underway to expand support for underrepresented groups. Additionally, new initiatives like hiring students through UFV’s Workplace Task Program aim to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities, further embedding EDIA into the department’s operations.

Looking ahead, International aims to deepen its engagement with EDIA

principles. Plans include expanding COIL initiatives, increasing representation in leadership roles, and addressing emerging challenges in international education.

International’s journey underscores the transformative power of global engagement rooted in equity and inclusion. Through innovative programming, strategic partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to EDIA, the department continues to bridge cultures and create opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. *“Internationalization is not just about mobility—it’s about fostering understanding, building bridges, and creating a world where diversity is celebrated,”* McGuire concludes.



*“From the pandemic to natural disasters and political tensions, we’ve had to pivot constantly while maintaining our commitment to students.”*

**“Internationalization is not just about mobility—it’s about fostering understanding, building bridges, and creating a world where diversity is celebrated,”**



## Modern Languages

*Dr. Alan Cameron, Professor of French and Russian*

*"A key part of UFV's Indigenization efforts is the inclusion of Halq'eméylem, the traditional language of the Stó:lō people."*

The Modern Languages Institute at UFV plays a crucial role in linguistic diversity, cultural exchange, and global citizenship. With courses in French, German, Halq'eméylem, Japanese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Russian, the department provides students with more than just language proficiency—it fosters a deeper understanding of the communities and histories tied to these languages.

For Dr. Alan Cameron, Professor of French and Russian, language education is more than an academic discipline—it is a bridge between cultures, histories, and perspectives. Through his work at UFV, he has witnessed firsthand how multilingualism shapes not only communication but also



identity and belonging. "Learning a language isn't just about words," he reflects. "It's about understanding the way different cultures think and express themselves."

Grounded in the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA), Modern Languages offers pathways for intercultural learning, ensuring that students can engage meaningfully with different linguistic traditions. Learning a language is not just about communication—it is about building relationships, preserving histories, and challenging cultural barriers.

A key part of UFV's Indigenization efforts is the inclusion of Halq'eméylem, the traditional language of the Stó:lō people. As a language that was nearly lost due to colonization, its presence in UFV's curriculum reflects a commitment to reconciliation and language revitalization. Through partnerships with Indigenous communities, the department ensures that Halq'eméylem is taught authentically and respectfully, making it an essential part of UFV's broader efforts toward decolonization.

Beyond Indigenous language initiatives, the department also reflects the linguistic realities of the Fraser Valley, offering Punjabi language courses that serve the region's significant Punjabi-speaking population. Recognizing the importance of fostering social cohesion and economic opportunity, Modern Languages equips students with practical skills for a globally connected world.

The department's commitment to EDIA extends beyond classroom instruction and into curriculum development. One of its most significant contributions is Bonjour, Le Canada!, a Canadian-focused French textbook written specifically for



French 101 and 102 at UFV. The textbook is also used at universities in Ontario and at Fraser Valley India. Dr. Cameron, who originally developed the textbook with colleague Dr. Renée Hamilton-Clark, is leading efforts to re-edit and update its content with a renewed focus on EDIA principles. A department-wide consultation process is underway to evaluate what changes are needed, with a particular emphasis on representation and inclusivity.

*"As we revisited the textbook, we recognized the importance of ensuring that the visual and cultural content reflects the diversity of French-speaking communities,"* Cameron explains. *"We updated images and materials to better represent different cultural backgrounds and identities."* In addition to these visual updates, the new edition will integrate more Indigenous content, ensuring that Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity is accurately reflected. Structurally, the textbook follows an expansive narrative, with the first four chapters set in Québec, the next four chapters covering the rest of Canada, and the final four focusing on French-speaking communities around the world.

Outside of the classroom, the department actively supports cultural immersion experiences, international study opportunities, and local engagement

initiatives. Students participate in language clubs, cultural events, and exchange programs, providing real-world applications of their studies. Faculty members work to create inclusive learning environments, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds feel supported in their language-learning journeys.

Despite its successes, the department faces challenges in sustaining and expanding certain language programs. Enrollment shifts and changing educational priorities pose risks to smaller language courses, requiring ongoing advocacy to maintain linguistic diversity within the university. Faculty members continue to emphasize that language education is not just an academic offering but an essential component of UFV's role in preparing students for an increasingly interconnected world.

Looking forward, Modern Languages remains committed to expanding access, strengthening EDIA principles, and reinforcing the value of multilingualism as a bridge between cultures. In a world where language shapes identity and opportunity, UFV's commitment to language education ensures that students are equipped to engage with different perspectives, communities, and histories—both locally and globally.

## Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Human Rights

Sundeep Hans, Director, EDI

*"Equity is not about patchwork solutions—it's about weaving it into the fabric of who we are as an institution."*

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Office at UFV stands as a transformative force, redefining how the institution approaches equity and belonging. Established in 2021 under the visionary leadership of Sundeep Hans, UFV's inaugural Director of EDI, the office is creating a foundation for systemic change. Through bold strategies, innovative initiatives, and unwavering commitment, the EDI Office is embedding equity into every layer of the university.

At the heart of this work is a comprehensive framework rooted in four quadrants: Policy and Procedures, Capacity Building, External Partnerships, and Data and Demographics. This model allows the EDI Office to tackle inequities holistically, bridging structural gaps while empowering the UFV community to enact change. *"Equity is not about patchwork*



*solutions—it's about weaving it into the fabric of who we are as an institution,"* Hans explains.

The Policy and Procedures quadrant lays the groundwork for structural change by embedding equity into UFV's governance. Hans and her team are working to redefine policies, such as the Respectful Workplace and Human Rights policy (Policy 18), ensuring that inclusion and fairness are enshrined in institutional guidelines. These efforts create a blueprint for tackling discrimination and fostering accountability at every level.

Building knowledge and fostering empowerment are central to the Capacity Building quadrant. Hans has spearheaded workshops and training programs that equip staff, students, and faculty with tools to address unconscious bias, racism, and exclusion. The development of an EDI micro-credential exemplifies this effort, providing participants with practical skills to challenge systemic inequities. This is a collaborative project led by the Continuing Education team as part of their SIF project, with support from the EDI and Teaching and Learning teams. Initially designed for UFV's internal community, the program is set to expand to external collaborators like Fraser Health and local municipalities, further cementing UFV's role as a changemaker.

Collaboration fuels the External Partnerships quadrant, which bridges UFV with broader societal efforts. From partnerships with provincial committees to



the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's BIPOC initiatives, Hans has cultivated networks that amplify the impact of UFV's EDI work. Local connections with community organizations bring relevance and accessibility, ensuring that UFV's initiatives resonate within the Fraser Valley and beyond. *"Partnerships allow us to push boundaries, align with global equity efforts, and meet the needs of the communities we serve,"* Hans notes.

The Data and Demographics quadrant provides the backbone of the office's strategy, focusing on equity-driven decision-making. The office is currently utilizing the data that is available and, in the future, hopes to conduct a thoughtful data collection process by way of a student, staff, and faculty census.

The office works to further the aims of the Institutional EDI Action Plan, a bold roadmap that integrates the quadrants into measurable goals and sustainable strategies. This living document reflects UFV's dedication to building a campus where equity is a guiding principle. *"The action plan isn't just a document;*

*it's a commitment to real, measurable change,"* Hans asserts.

While the journey has been marked by significant progress, challenges remain. Resistance to change, the slow pace of systemic transformation, and balancing competing institutional priorities are ongoing hurdles. Yet Hans remains resolute: *"Equity work is complex, but every small step forward builds momentum. It's about progress, not perfection."*

Looking ahead, the EDI Office is poised to elevate its impact. Plans include supporting the expansion of the micro-credential program, launching an EDI course tailored for intimate learning environments, and embedding inclusive practices into teaching, learning, and everyday operations. Hans envisions a future where EDI isn't just part of UFV—it defines it.

*"Equity isn't a checkbox or a standalone initiative; it's the lens that shapes everything we do,"* Hans reflects. *"Through our collective efforts, we're not just transforming UFV. We're setting a standard for how equity can lead society forward."*

*"Equity work is complex, but every small step forward builds momentum. It's about progress, not perfection."*

## Peace and Reconciliation Centre

*Dr. Keith Carlson, Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Indigenous and Community-Engaged History, Director of PARC, and Professor of History*

*"The challenge is getting people to recognize that while they may have faced hardships in one area, they may still benefit from unearned advantages in others."*

The Peace and Reconciliation Centre (PARC) at UFV was created to be more than just a research lab—it is a space dedicated to community-driven scholarship, reconciliation, and addressing historical and contemporary injustices. Rooted in principles of collaborative, community-engaged research, PARC fosters partnerships with Indigenous communities, equity-deserving groups, and social justice organizations. Its work extends beyond academia, ensuring that research leads to tangible outcomes that support marginalized communities.

For Dr. Keith Carlson, Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Indigenous and Community-Engaged History, Director of PARC, and Professor of History, leading the centre is about bridging the gap between universities and the communities they serve. *"Research should never be extractive,"* he explains. *"It should be done in full partnership with the people whose histories and experiences are being documented."*

The idea for PARC had been circulating before Carlson's arrival, but its official launch was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In summer 2021, PARC formally became a research centre, solidifying its role as a focal place for applied research, student training, and reconciliation-driven initiatives. *"When I stepped in, there were many brilliant*

*visions for what this centre could become,"* Carlson reflects. *"My role is to try and create space where all of those ideas can thrive while upholding the principles of reconciliation and maintaining best practices in community partnerships."*

At its core, PARC operates on a model of community-engaged research. Every project is designed in direct collaboration with either Indigenous communities, equity-deserving groups, or other local organizations. In summer 2024, PARC facilitated paid student research internships with groups such as the Hope Inclusion Project, where students contributed to anti-racism initiatives in the town of Hope. Other students worked with Seabird Island First Nation to develop curriculum resources for local schools, while another cohort partnered with Matsqui First Nation to support the reclamation of historical narratives. The Cheam First Nation collaboration focused on environmental monitoring efforts in Hope Slough, ensuring Indigenous knowledge was central to discussions on ecological restoration. *"These projects aren't just about producing research,"* Carlson explains. *"They're about equipping students with the tools to work ethically and responsibly with communities that have long been impacted by systemic injustices."*

Recognizing the importance of EDIA in research and training, PARC's hiring and student recruitment practices are intentionally designed to be accessible and equitable. Leanne Jarrett, Program



Xwelitem Siyáya:  
Allyship and Rec-  
onciliation Building  
Ceremony, 2024

*"By making it so nobody has unearned privileges we will gain new and shared mutual advantages for everyone."*



Coordinator, leads this effort, ensuring that hiring criteria and research opportunities are built around community-engaged principles rather than conventional academic hierarchies. *"Leanne recognizes that we want students who reflect the communities we work with,"* Carlson explains. *"If you are Indigenous and want to be involved in research that directly impacts your community, that lived experience, and connection is seen as valuable. We have criteria other than seeking the student with a perfect academic resume."*

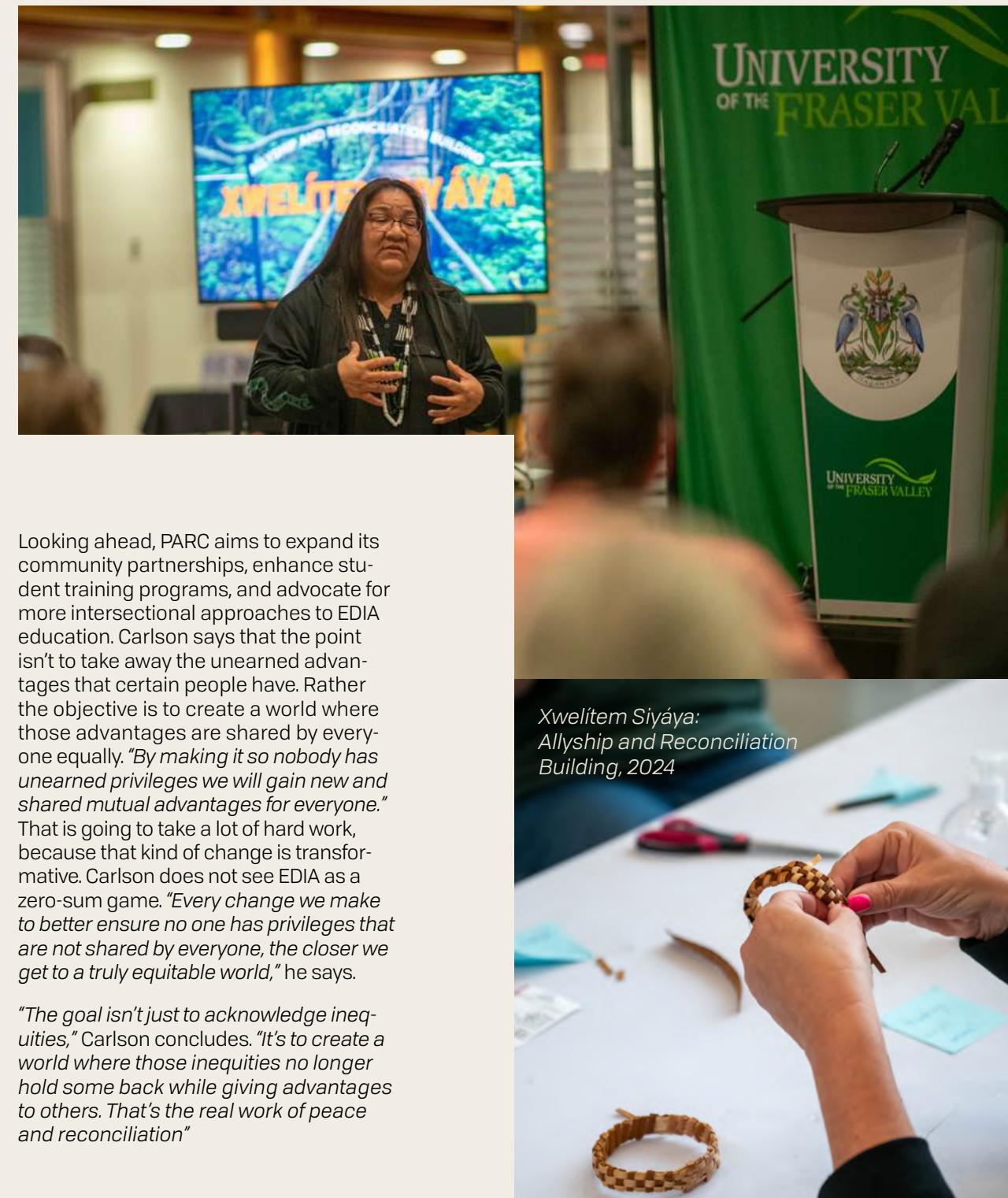
Another cornerstone of PARC's work is its new allyship-building program, Xwelitem Siyaya meaning "Non-Indigenous Friend" is a non-credit program, developed in partnership with Stó:lō leaders. It takes in 100 people per cohort, particularly targeting UFV staff, K-12 educators, law enforcement officers, and people working for First Nation. The individual classes and workshops are led by Stó:lō Knowledge Keepers who share aspects of Stó:lō culture, history, and the impacts of colonialism. *"We're moving past performative reconciliation,"* Carlson says. *"Participants leave not just with knowledge, but with the confidence to apply it in their workplaces and communities. We're*

*helping people who want to become genuine allies of Stó:lō people."*

Despite its successes, Carlson acknowledges the challenges of fostering intersectional EDIA conversations. A key issue is the tendency for individuals to perceive their experiences through a single lens—whether race, gender, class, or ability—without recognizing how multiple forms of privilege and oppression intersect. *"We all carry privilege in some form,"* Carlson reflects. *"The challenge is getting people to recognize that while they may have faced hardships in one area, they may still benefit from unearned advantages in others."*

He describes an exercise he often uses, asking individuals to identify their privileges by thinking about what it is they don't have to worry about—when walking home across a dark parking lot at night, for example. *"Someone like me has few if any worries. But a young woman, she worries for her safety; a young man from a racialized community, he worries he might be accused of being there to commit a crime; an elderly person with mobility issues, they worry they might slip and fall. They all have worries that I do not carry. I receive a micro-credit of white male privilege each time I get to do something without having to worry. Over time, little privileges like that add up and give someone like me a lot of unearned advantages."*

These discussions highlight ongoing systemic challenges within academia and beyond. While UFV and other institutions have made strides in embedding EDIA, Carlson notes that intersectional education often remains siloed. *"We have quite a few courses that address race, gender, or class individually, but what I get excited about is speaking with the faculty who create spaces for these conversations to happen together."* *"That's best practices, and that addresses the gap that students have identified."*



Looking ahead, PARC aims to expand its community partnerships, enhance student training programs, and advocate for more intersectional approaches to EDIA education. Carlson says that the point isn't to take away the unearned advantages that certain people have. Rather the objective is to create a world where those advantages are shared by everyone equally. *"By making it so nobody has unearned privileges we will gain new and shared mutual advantages for everyone."* That is going to take a lot of hard work, because that kind of change is transformative. Carlson does not see EDIA as a zero-sum game. *"Every change we make to better ensure no one has privileges that are not shared by everyone, the closer we get to a truly equitable world,"* he says.

*"The goal isn't just to acknowledge inequities,"* Carlson concludes. *"It's to create a world where those inequities no longer hold some back while giving advantages to others. That's the real work of peace and reconciliation"*



## Queen Elizabeth Scholarship

*Dr. Cherie Enns, RPP, Associate Professor, Program Chair: Planning, Geography, and Environmental Studies*

At the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), the Queen Elizabeth Scholars (QES) program is more than an international learning initiative—it is a platform for global leadership, community impact, and transformative education. Funded by Universities Canada, the Rideau Hall Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre, QES is a prestigious program that supports Canadian post-secondary institutions in providing students with international mobility experiences, cross-cultural exchanges, and hands-on learning opportunities. The program is designed to cultivate young global leaders who are engaged in sustainability, education, public health, and social justice initiatives. Through its partnerships in East Africa, India, and British Columbia, UFV's QES program continues to shape future leaders who are prepared to address global challenges through hands-on experience and community-driven solutions. The next round of QES funding will expand

these opportunities, supporting student placements in Kenya, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, where scholars will engage in youth-led development, environmental planning, Indigenous land rights, and climate-sensitive research.

Leading this initiative is Dr. Cherie Enns, a registered professional planner and UFV faculty member whose expertise in urban planning, international development, and sustainable communities has been instrumental in shaping UFV's approach to experiential and community-based learning. Under her guidance, UFV students have participated in policy development, conservation efforts, and educational initiatives, bridging academic research with real-world impact. Through collaborations with organizations such as BirdLife International, Mathare Roots Youth Initiative, and the Luckysummer Environmental and Waste Organization (LEWMO), Dr. Enns has helped create opportunities where students



can apply their knowledge, engage with diverse communities, and develop leadership skills in a global context.

The impact of the program is evident in the experiences of UFV students who have taken part in international internships, community development projects, and conservation efforts. Gideon Akuffo, a UFV student pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a pre-med concentration, completed an internship in Kenya, where he worked with Team Africa of BirdLife International on a conservation strategy for Critical Ecosystems and Landscapes in Eastern Africa (CrELEA). His work extended beyond research to grassroots initiatives, where he partnered with fellow UFV student Nick Todd and LEWMO to co-develop a waste management plan for 5,000 households in Nairobi. This led to the creation of the Football for Plastic League, an initiative that incentivizes youth to collect and properly dispose of plastic waste in exchange for opportunities to participate in soccer tournaments. This innovative approach not only tackled environmental sustainability but also fostered youth engagement, social inclusion, and long-term community resilience.

Another significant initiative within the QES program is the development of The

Roots Library in the Mathare Slums of Kenya, led by Madeline (Maddy) Swain, a literacy advocate and aspiring librarian. As a QES Scholar intern, Maddy collaborated with the Mathare Roots Youth Initiative to establish a community library for out-of-school youth, creating a safe space for learning and literacy development. Officially opened in September 2023, the library started with over 100 books, murals, and dedicated reading spaces aimed at eliminating financial barriers to education and improving literacy access in underserved communities. The initiative continues to seek sustainable partnerships to expand its reach and impact. Maddy's outstanding contributions were recently recognized with the King Charles III Coronation Medal, an honor that celebrates her leadership and commitment to community-driven literacy initiatives.

Despite its many successes, the QES program at UFV is not without challenges. Ensuring that global learning opportunities remain financially accessible continues to be a priority. While scholarships and funding exist, students from underrepresented backgrounds still face barriers to participating in international placements. Logistical obstacles, including visa processing delays, securing safe accommodations, and navigating cultural differences, can also present hurdles. UFV has worked to address these by expanding funding options, building



*"While scholarships and funding exist, students from underrepresented backgrounds still face barriers to participating in international placements."*

*"UFV is shaping a future where education extends beyond borders"*

stronger in-country support networks, and providing pre-departure training that equips students with cultural competency skills.

The university's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in global learning has also played a role in increasing accessibility. Former QES scholars like Lisa Harrington have used their international experiences to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and safer futures for marginalized communities, demonstrating the far-reaching impact of the program beyond traditional academic settings. Dr. Enns highlights the importance of ensuring these opportunities are inclusive, recognizing that while UFV has made strides in fostering diverse and accessible placements, there is always more work to be done.

The success of UFV's QES program aligns with the broader objectives of Universities Canada, which administers the initiative. In its 2022-2023 annual report, the QES program highlighted its support for 22

international projects across Canadian post-secondary institutions, reinforcing its mission to cultivate a network of young global leaders. By actively contributing to this initiative, UFV strengthens Canada's role in international education, showcasing how academic institutions can drive cross-border collaboration, research, and innovation.

Looking ahead, UFV remains committed to expanding its international partnerships and increasing student participation in global learning experiences. The university aims to further integrate experiential education with community-driven development, ensuring that students are not only prepared academically but also equipped to tackle pressing global issues through research, policy engagement, and grassroots initiatives. Through the continued leadership of Dr. Enns and the dedication of QES scholars, UFV is shaping a future where education extends beyond borders, fostering a generation of leaders who are ready to make a difference.



*"Looking ahead, UFV remains committed to expanding its international partnerships and increasing student participation in global learning experiences."*

## Race and Anti-Racism Network (RAN)

Ghizlane Laghzaoui, Chair of RAN and Associate Professor in the Modern Languages Department

*"The goal is not just to address racism but to create an environment where every student feels valued and empowered."*

The Race and Anti-Racism Network (RAN) at UFV is a vital advocate for anti-racism, equity and justice, committed to creating a campus free from systemic racism. Established in 2010, RAN brings together faculty, staff, and students to address racial discrimination. Under the leadership of many chairs and esteemed scholars, the network has grown into a pivotal force for change, driving initiatives that resonate across UFV and beyond.

Founded in 2009 by Dr. Adrienne Chan and Dr. Rita Dhamoon, RAN emerged from the need to provide a structured response to racism at UFV while connecting with the wider community. "RAN was envisioned as a collaborative space where conversations about racism could lead to meaningful change," explains Ghizlane Laghzaoui, Chair of RAN and Associate Professor in the Modern Languages Department. The network's independence from institutional structures has been one of its greatest strengths, enabling its members to advocate freely



and hold the institution accountable. One of RAN's most prominent activities is the annual March 21st event, held in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This event features panel discussions, workshops, and forums tackling contemporary racial issues, serving as a call to action for the entire campus. "It's an opportunity to highlight the ongoing fight against racism and ensure that it remains a priority for decision-makers," Ghizlane shares. The event has become a unifying moment for the UFV community, attracting participation from students, staff, and faculty who share a commitment to anti-racism. Beyond events, RAN has conducted significant research projects that have shaped UFV's approach to equity. The 2011 report, *Building Anti-racism and Inclusive Communities at UFV*, was a groundbreaking initiative that evaluated systemic barriers and offered recommendations for change and a working strategic framework for creating an anti-racist and inclusive framework at UFV. This was followed by *Voices from the Margin* in 2014, a project that collected firsthand accounts of racism experienced within UFV. The findings were a sobering reminder of the work still needed to combat systemic inequities. In 2021, a decade after the first report, RAN released a follow-up report to assess progress and identify persisting gaps. These projects not only provided critical insights but also strengthened RAN's advocacy for actionable change.



RAN's efforts have also contributed to institutional milestones, including advocacy for the establishment of UFV's EDI Office. "Our role is to amplify the voices of racialized communities and ensure that anti-racism remains a distinct and focused priority within broader EDI frameworks," explains Ghizlane. While these achievements reflect progress, she acknowledges the challenges of implementing transformative change in large institutions. "Racism is not always seen as a priority by decision-makers, and that's a reality we face," she notes.

Internally, RAN grapples with sustaining membership and preventing volunteer burnout. The network relies heavily on the dedication of a small group of members who balance RAN's activities with their professional and academic responsibilities. "It's always the same people doing the work, which can lead to exhaustion," Ghizlane reflects. Despite these challenges, RAN's members remain deeply committed to advancing its mission. Collaboration has been key to RAN's impact. Partnerships with UFV's Teaching and Learning Centre, Research Office, Students Union Society, Faculty and Staff Association, Scholarly Sharing Initiative,

EDI Office, and CIVL Radio have amplified its initiatives. Externally, RAN has forged alliances with community organizations like Archway Community Services, which have brought valuable perspectives and resources to its work. These collaborations exemplify RAN's ability to build bridges between the university and the wider community, reinforcing its commitment to fostering an inclusive campus culture. Looking to the future, RAN plans to deepen its engagement with students by establishing a student-led branch of the network. This initiative aims to empower the next generation of anti-racism advocates and ensure that students' voices are central to the conversation. "The goal is not just to address racism but to create an environment where every student feels valued and empowered," Ghizlane asserts. RAN's work is far from complete, but its legacy of advocacy and education stands as a testament to the power of collective action. Through its research, events, and collaborations, the network continues to push boundaries and challenge the status quo. As Ghizlane concludes, "Racism is an ongoing issue, but so is our commitment to fighting it. The work we do matters now more than ever."

*"Racism is not always seen as a priority by decision-makers, and that's a reality we face,"*



*"It's about shaping the future of education to reflect the values of equity, inclusion, justice, and reciprocal relationships."*

The School of Education exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to teacher education, shaping future educators through a steadfast commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). Under the leadership of Dr. Sheryl MacMath, Director of the School of Education, this program has evolved into a hub for transformative learning. What began as the Teacher Education Department in 2007—founded by visionaries Paul Orlowski, Barbara Salinger, Sandy Hill, and Barbara Moon—has grown into a program that not only educates teachers but actively shapes the future of education in the Fraser Valley and beyond.

Driven by the region's need for locally trained teachers, the program initially focused on elementary education, later expanding to include secondary cohorts by 2012. In 2014, it introduced its Bachelor of Education (BEd), a rigorous 10.5-month post-degree program accredited by the Ministry of Education and the BC Teachers' Council. The program's evolution reached a milestone in April 2024 when

it merged Early Childhood Education with Teacher Education to form the School of Education.

Central to this transformation are the school's five enduring values: social justice, critical mindedness, reflective practice, pedagogical sensitivity, and the integration of knowledge and practice. These values are aligned with the 5R's of Indigenous research—respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships—creating a framework that emphasizes reciprocal learning and community-centered education. From its inception, these principles have informed every aspect of the program's design, seamlessly integrating coursework with real-world teaching experiences. "It's about creating teachers who are reflective and critically minded, who can navigate the complexities of diverse classrooms," explains Dr. MacMath.

A pivotal moment in the program's journey came in 2017, when the department secured a \$10,000 Funds for Innovative Teaching (FIT) grant. This funding allowed the department to adopt a holistic, program-wide approach rather than treating each course as a silo. Over 10.5 months, students are immersed in a series of transformative activities that prepare them for socially just teaching.

The FIT calendar highlights the depth and breadth of these initiatives. During the fall term, students visit St. Mary's Residential School and the Gur Sikh Temple, participate in the privilege line exercise, and explore topics like identity and implicit bias through activities such as "Danger of

## School of Education

*Dr. Sheryl MacMath, Director of the School of Education*

the sole metric. This approach has helped diversify the program, with more Indigenous, South Asian, and multilingual students joining in recent years.

Language diversity has become a focal point of the program's evolution. Students are encouraged to embrace their linguistic backgrounds, reflecting the region's rich cultural tapestry. Resources and projects incorporate multiple languages, fostering inclusivity and providing future educators with the tools to support multilingual learners effectively.

Challenges persist, particularly around accessibility and equity. The School's relocation to the Mission campus in 2024 introduced significant barriers, including limited public transit and inadequate infrastructure for students with disabilities. *"Our students are paying thousands more just to commute, and accessibility remains an ongoing issue,"* says Dr. MacMath. Despite these obstacles, there are numerous benefits to the Mission campus. The redesign featured the work of Indigenous artists and architects to create bright and open spaces that mirror the Fraser Valley and Stó:lō culture. The School of Education students also value the space to move around in small groups, spend time outside, and experience what it means to create space for neurodiverse learners. While appreciating these benefits, the program continues to advocate for systemic changes that align with its mission.

Through its innovative curriculum, strategic partnerships, and unwavering commitment to EDIA, the School of Education stands as a beacon of transformative education. *"It's not just about preparing teachers,"* Dr. MacMath reflects. *"It's about shaping the future of education to reflect the values of equity, inclusion, justice, and reciprocal relationships."*



a Single Story." In the winter term, students engage with guest speakers from LGBTQIA+ communities, learn how to support refugee students, and participate in reflective practices like creating "Where I'm From" poems. The spring term includes an Indigenous Place Names tour through the Valley, mental health workshops, and a culminating conference titled "What Does It Mean to Be a Socially Just Teacher in the Fraser Valley?"

*"Every activity is designed to align with our commitments to Indigenization, decolonization, anti-racism, and social justice,"* Dr. MacMath emphasizes. These commitments, formally adopted in 2017, have become the foundation of every course, practicum, and initiative within the School of Education.

Partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations are integral to this work. Collaborations with leaders like David Schaepe of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Centre have enriched the program, enabling students to connect with resources such as a virtual museum on Stó:lō history. These partnerships exemplify the principle of reciprocity, ensuring that knowledge exchange benefits both students and the communities they engage with. *"It's about building relationships that are meaningful and mutually beneficial,"* says Dr. MacMath.

Representation within the program reflects its dedication to EDIA. Faculty hiring prioritizes candidates with lived experiences and a deep understanding of equity and inclusion, recognizing that such perspectives enrich learning environments and strengthen the teaching profession. Similarly, admissions processes are designed to prioritize critical thinking and a social justice orientation, moving beyond GPA as





## School of Social Work and Human Services

*Curtis Magnuson, Director, School of Social Work and Human Services*

For nearly five decades, the School of Social Work and Human Services (SWHS) at UFV has been at the forefront of social work and human services education, preparing students for practice in a wide range of settings. Under the leadership of its current director, Curtis Magnuson, the School has evolved from offering human services training in the 1970s to becoming a fully accredited School of Social Work that grants certificates and diplomas, as well as bachelor's, and master's degrees in social work. Rooted in principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA), the School equips future social work professionals and human service workers with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to support individuals, families, and communities facing systemic barriers.

The School's journey began with the introduction of a Social Services diploma in the mid-1970s. Originally housed within the Department of Social Services, the School introduced the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) in 1994, graduating its first class in 1996. Initiated by the School's first director, Dr. Gloria Wolfson, the School introduced a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree in 2011, under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Dow.

A commitment to Indigenization has long been central to the School's mission. In 1998, UFV hired Dr. Robert Harding, who worked alongside Stó:lō Elders and community leaders to develop a First Nations-focused Social Services diploma—a program that has since evolved to become the Social Service

*"Efforts to recruit and retain Indigenous faculty members have led to the creation of two Indigenous-specific faculty positions."*

Worker diploma with an Indigenous Focus. Other projects with an Indigenous focus have included substance abuse counsellor training for the Carrier Sekani First Nation and Community Support Worker training for Métis Nation BC. Today, the School continues to embed Indigenous knowledge and approaches in its curriculum, with courses like HSER 140 (Indigenous-Centred Human Services) and SOWK 392 (Indigenous Social Work), ensuring that students engage with Indigenous Peoples from a place of respect and cultural humility. More recently introduced, SOWK 491 (Indigenous Perspectives on Child and Family Welfare) deepens the BSW program's focus on decolonization within child welfare services.

The School has actively worked to support Indigenous students through key initiatives. In 2018-2019, SWHS partnered with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) to offer a one-time Master of Social Work cohort designed to increase accessibility for Indigenous students. The curriculum emphasized supervision and leadership, anti-oppressive and cross-cultural practice, social policy, and advanced assessment techniques, with students selecting a focus in Health, Children and Families, or Mental Health for their final project.



**Bachelor of Social Work Degree**

**EARN YOUR BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK DEGREE AT UFV**

Now you can earn your Bachelor of Social Work degree in the Fraser Valley. The University College of the Fraser Valley offers a BSW degree program in collaboration with the Open University.

Graduates of the BSW program are expected to be skilled in working towards empowering individuals, families, and small groups so that personal, familial, and community functioning is enhanced. Graduate social workers will be able to work cooperatively with other professionals and the community to improve social conditions, and promote equity and equality. Graduates should be able to work in a continuously changing social environment.

Entrance to the BSW program is at the third-year level, after completion of either the Social Services diploma program at UFV or a combination of university transfer and social services courses.

Mature students are particularly welcome in the BSW program, and part-time students are encouraged.

Field-work placements

An integral part of the BSW program are two field-work placements, which will help students to develop more fully as beginning practitioners. Field-work locations are in the field at the Abbotsford campus.

During the same period, the School collaborated with Métis Nation BC to launch the Community Support Worker program, an initiative funded through the Aboriginal Community-Based Training Partnerships Program. With \$691,000 in funding over three years, the program provided Métis students in the Lower Mainland with culturally relevant training in social and community support work, incorporating Métis cultural elements, Elder supports, and wraparound services to enhance student success. This initiative was part of broader efforts to make education and training more accessible while fostering a learning environment that honoured Indigenous ways of knowing.

The School also plays a key role in anti-racist and social justice education. Since 1994, courses such as SOWK 320 (Anti-Racist and Cross-Cultural Social Work) have emphasized the importance of dismantling systemic inequalities. Additional courses like SOWK 496 (Critical Approaches to Disability) and SOWK 493 (Feminist Social Work) provide students with interdisciplinary frameworks to address intersectionality in their professional practice.

The faculty has also been at the forefront of advocacy and social movements. In 1998, UFV faculty and staff members, including Magnuson, co-founded UFV's Pride Network (now UFV Pride), creating the university's first LGBTQ+ support service. Emeritus Professor Dr. Adrienne Chan was a founding member of the Race and Anti-Racism Network (RAN) at UFV and many of the School's faculty continue to be involved with RAN. Additionally, faculty members have engaged in critical research on media representations of Indigenous peoples, gender-based violence, and anti-racism initiatives—projects that have contributed to national conversations on social justice. In recent years, special topics courses have been added to include gender identity and expression and international social work, ensuring that the curriculum continues to reflect the evolving realities of marginalized communities globally.

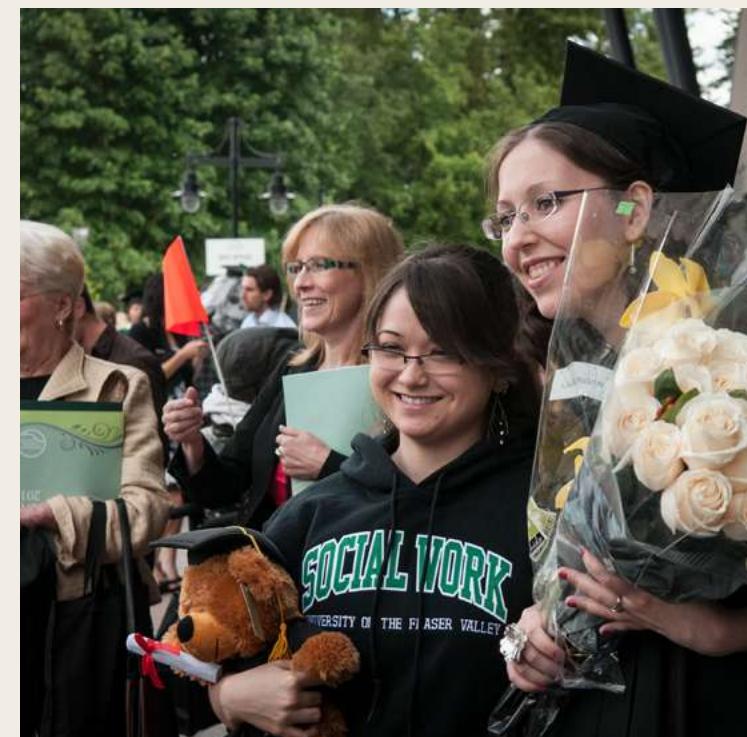
Beyond its academic offerings, the School has actively engaged in community partnerships to support experiential learning and advocacy. It has longstanding relationships with Indigenous child welfare agencies, including Xyólhéméylh (Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society), as well as organizations like Archway Community Services and DIVERSEcity that serve racialized and immigrant communities. Through field placements in social service agencies across the lower mainland, UFV social work and human services students contribute to community-based support networks while gaining invaluable hands-on experience. A three-year project led by then director Dr. Margaret Coombes – Counselling, Advocacy, Learning, and Leading (CALL) – saw practicum students working out of Abbotsford's Sweeney Centre to provide services to high school students and community members.

The School's dedication to EDIA is also reflected in its hiring and admissions

policies. Efforts to recruit and retain Indigenous faculty members have led to the creation of two Indigenous-specific faculty positions, ensuring that Indigenous perspectives continue to shape the curriculum. In student admissions, an equity-based application process grants additional points to applicants from underrepresented backgrounds, including Indigenous students and other equity-seeking groups, fostering greater diversity within the student body and profession.

Looking ahead, the School of Social Work and Human Services remains committed to expanding EDIA initiatives, deepening its decolonization efforts, and ensuring that students graduate with the tools to create meaningful change. As Magnuson reflects, *"Social work isn't just about responding to challenges—it's about reshaping systems to be more just, inclusive, and equitable for all."*

*"Social work isn't just about responding to challenges—it's about reshaping systems to be more just, inclusive, and equitable for all."*



## South Asian Studies Institute

Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains, Director

*"But our approach has never been about replacing existing histories—it's about ensuring that there is space for all voices in Canada's narrative"*

The South Asian Studies Institute (SASI) has been a transformative force in research, education, and community engagement since its formal establishment in 2006. With a mission to document, preserve, and share the histories and experiences of South Asian Canadians, SASI has become a vital institution for understanding diasporic narratives. Led by Dr. Satwinder Bains, Director of SASI, the Institute is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) through its research initiatives, partnerships, and educational programming.

SASI's journey began in 2006 as the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies (CICS), a response to the need for an academic space dedicated to South Asian scholarship within British Columbia. Community support played a crucial role in its founding, with volunteers and donors raising \$1.25 million in matching funds for the BC Regional Innovation Chair on Canada-India Business and Economic Development. The creation of the Chair in 2006 marked a milestone, providing a foundation for research on the eco-

nomic and social ties between India as a region of South Asia and Canada. Over time, SASI has evolved beyond its original mandate, shifting focus from India-Canada relations to the South Asian Canadian experience, leading to its rebranding 10 years after it was initiated, in 2016.

At its core, SASI is dedicated to amplifying historically marginalized voices. "South Asian history in Canada is often absent, omitted, neglected or fragmented," explains Dr. Bains. *"Our role is to ensure that our stories, struggles, and contributions are acknowledged and preserved in the Canadian record."* This commitment is reflected in the South Asian Canadian Digital Archive (SACDA), a pioneering initiative launched in 2019. SACDA serves as an open-access repository featuring over 60,000 historical images, documents, and oral histories, bridging gaps in historical documentation and making South Asian heritage more accessible to scholars and the public alike.

SASI's research agenda is shaped by community-driven needs. It has explored critical issues such as immigration patterns, host and home conflicts and resolutions, growing social integration, addressing discrimination, and the role of people of colour and economic mobility. The Institute has also addressed contemporary challenges, including a 2009 study on South Asian Canadian families and child welfare that highlighted rising cases of family breakdowns. *"Our research doesn't sit on a shelf,"* notes Dr. Bains. *"It informs policies, shapes conversations, and provides tangible solutions for our communities."*



Beyond research, SASI plays an active role in education and curriculum development. One of its most impactful contributions has been the Canada-India Studies Certificate, established in 2008, which allows students to explore the diaspora as well as historical and cultural ties between Canada and South Asia. Additionally, Saffron Threads, a K-12 learning resource launched in 2020, has helped integrate South Asian history into BC classrooms. *"Representation in education matters,"* says Dr. Bains. *"When students see their heritage reflected in their curriculum, it fosters a deeper sense of identity and belonging eliciting growth in citizenship and social incorporation."*

SASI's commitment to public engagement extends to its role as the cultural curator of the Gur Sikh Temple and Sikh Heritage Museum, a National Historic Site in Abbotsford. Since 2011, SASI has curated annual exhibits that provide insight into Sikh migration, identity, and contributions to Canada and generally about race and ethnicity in the Canadian context. These exhibits attract thousands of visitors each year, from students and educators to policymakers and community leaders. *"The museum is a living space where history meets the present,"* says Dr. Bains. *"It's about making the past relevant to today's conversations on diversity and inclusion."*

The Institute's work has not been without challenges. Advocating for South Asian representation in academic and public discourse has required persistent effort. *"There is always resistance when you push for change,"* Dr. Bains acknowledges. *"But our approach has never been about replacing existing histories—*

*it's about ensuring that there is space for all voices in Canada's narrative and recalibrating Canadian history to be more inclusive."* The institute's ability to navigate these challenges is rooted in its guiding principle: *"Nothing about us, without us."*

SASI's impact is also seen in its strong network of local, national, and international partnerships. The Institute collaborates with organizations such as Library and Archives Canada, Open School BC, Royal BC Museum and numerous galleries, schools, libraries, museums and universities. These partnerships have helped amplify its research and advocacy efforts, ensuring that South Asian Canadian stories are embedded within broader historical, global, local and social contexts.

Looking ahead, SASI remains committed to expanding its research initiatives, strengthening educational outreach, and fostering global collaborations. *"Our work is far from complete,"* says Dr. Bains. *"South Asian Canadian history is still being written and lived, and SASI will continue to play a crucial role in documenting and sharing that journey."*

Through its groundbreaking award-winning research, community-driven projects, and unwavering dedication to EDIA, SASI has not only preserved the past but has also shaped the future of South Asian Canadian scholarship in Canada. As the Institute continues to evolve, it stands as a testament to the power of academia in advancing social justice and inclusion.



## Teaching and Learning Centre

*Dr. Awneet Sivia, Associate Vice President,  
Teaching and Learning*

At the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), the Teaching and Learning Division plays a pivotal role in advancing faculty development, instructional excellence, and student-centered learning. As a teaching-intensive university, UFV is committed to ensuring that faculty have access to innovative teaching strategies, professional development, and resources to enhance student engagement and success. Under the leadership of Dr. Awneet Sivia, Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning, the division continues to expand its support systems, interdisciplinary collaborations, and strategic initiatives that strengthen UFV's teaching and learning landscape.

The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) serves as the central hub for faculty support, instructional research, and professional learning communities. Through workshops, one-on-one consultations, and classroom observations, the division provides faculty with opportunities to refine their teaching

practices, explore new methodologies, and integrate evidence-based strategies into their courses. Programs such as the Supported Learning Groups (SLG) initiative enhance student learning by pairing peer educators with students in high-demand courses, reinforcing collaborative, student-led learning models. The Launch Program for New Faculty provides mentorship, pedagogical training, and structured onboarding to support instructors as they transition into UFV's student-centered teaching environment.

A core priority for the division is the advancement of Indigenization and decolonization across UFV's academic programs. Lorna Andrews, Teaching and Learning Specialist, Indigenization, and Leanne Joe, Indigenous Curriculum Developer, work closely with faculty to embed Indigenous knowledge systems, ways of knowing, and relational learning approaches into courses and curriculum design. Initiatives such as the Educators' Journey Toward Reconciliation and



*"Change in teaching is a journey, not a destination."*

Weaving Knowledge Systems provide faculty with hands-on learning opportunities to integrate Indigenous worldviews into their pedagogy. The division, in collaboration with the Indigenous Student Centre, provides instructors with a set of Elders/Knowledge Keepers Guidelines to ensure that Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers are welcomed into classrooms with the appropriate protocols, respect, and recognition of their expertise.

In addition to Indigenization efforts, the division is leading UFV's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). Victoria Surtees, Teaching and Learning Specialist, Internationalization, supports faculty in adopting inclusive, anti-racist teaching approaches and integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into their courses. Faculty workshops on universal design for learning (UDL), inclusive assessment strategies, and decolonial teaching methods equip educators with tools to create equitable, accessible learning environments that reflect the diversity of UFV's student population. The division is also working to ensure UFV meets the BC Accessibility Act's requirements by integrating assistive technologies, designing barrier-free course

materials, and offering faculty training on accessible teaching strategies. The annual Accessibility Awareness Event (AAE) highlights inclusive teaching practices and promotes ongoing conversations about removing barriers to student success.

With technology playing an increasing role in higher education, the Teaching and Learning Division is also supporting faculty in adapting to emerging digital tools, online and hybrid learning models, and innovative assessment methods. A major initiative in this area is UFV's transition to Brightspace, the university's new Learning Management System (LMS), set to launch in 2025. Brightspace will provide a more interactive, accessible, and customizable digital learning experience, featuring multilingual support, adaptive learning pathways, and tools that support personalized student engagement. The division is leading faculty training and course migration efforts, ensuring that instructors are fully equipped to transition their courses to the new system and maximize its capabilities.

Despite its many successes, the division continues to navigate challenges in faculty engagement with new teaching methodologies. Encouraging instructors to shift from traditional, lecture-based approaches to more interactive, student-driven learning models requires ongoing mentorship, dialogue, and institutional support. Some faculty members face disciplinary constraints or hesitations in incorporating Indigenous perspectives, flexible assessment models, or technology-enhanced teaching, making tailored support essential. Dr. Sivia emphasizes the importance of meeting faculty where they are, ensuring that professional development opportunities align with their teaching philosophies while supporting UFV's broader educational goals. *"Change in teaching is a journey, not a destination,"* she explains.

*"Our role is to provide the right support systems so faculty feel confident in evolving their teaching practices in ways that truly benefit student learning."*

Looking ahead, the division is focused on expanding faculty-driven research on teaching innovation through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) initiative. This initiative encourages faculty to investigate new pedagogical models, contribute to research on high-impact teaching strategies, and apply evidence-based approaches in their classrooms. The division is also strengthening its international collaborations, working with educators globally to exchange best practices and foster global learning opportunities through COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) for UFV students.

As UFV continues to grow, the Teaching and Learning Division remains at the heart of transforming the university's teaching practices, supporting faculty excellence, and ensuring that UFV remains a leader in inclusive, accessible, and student-focused education. Through its faculty-first approach, commitment to Indigenization and internationalization, and investment in emerging teaching innovations, the division is reshaping the future of education at UFV and contributing to broader conversations in higher education pedagogy. Dr. Sivia captures this vision: *"Teaching is about fostering meaningful connections, inspiring curiosity, and ensuring that every student feels empowered in their learning journey. That's what drives our work every day."*

*"Our role is to provide the right support systems so faculty feel confident in evolving their teaching practices in ways that truly benefit student learning."*



Stó:lō place names tour, 2021.

## CONCLUSION

*A 50 Year UFV Anniversary Project*

UFV is Fraser Valley's lifeblood for post secondary education and its the long, varied, and robust history is full of great milestones, evolutionary movements of structural influence, visionary leadership initiatives, and ground-breaking efforts at inclusion. The stories you have read are a testament to UFV's indomitable spirit. At SASI we wanted to capture these stories as a vibrant archive of UFV.

Each department or division that shared their history in the project has played a role in the inclusive history of UFV, as a critically centered counter narrative to the larger colonialism influenced record. This archival record steps away from the dominant discourse and provides a fresh inclusion-focused perspective on the past 50 years as a vitally imperative effort. Not a token effort but one that is underlaid with the promise of change that affects all of us equally – without that promise we would not be able to accomplish all that we have for the last 50 years in an inclusive manner.

Meaningfully relating to and building understanding towards UFV's 50 year profile demands different perspectives from varied angles – one that is robust in its undertaking, yet honest and true to

the past and present. We have met this goal by building pride-in-place about our regional roots, our First Nations histories, our internationalization efforts, our will to believe that community inspires us to support our students and families and that advocacy for our roots is built into our DNA. While we have a long way to go as we all mature and evolve as a premier institution of excellence, we have met that bar and threshold in many ways. These ways provide the pathway for the future and the promise of our excellence is underlined around how we respond to most vulnerable, marginalized, and racialized communities.

We wanted to tell the stories that inspire us all. We have done that together. This record will live on as a valuable UFV archive.

To all the leaders that spoke to us at SASI and gave us their time in the interviews over the last six months, thank you for your work and your efforts

Sincerely,

*Director: Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains*

*Research Assistant: Rashneet, BFA 2025*



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