BC Budget 2022
Consultation Submission

Contents:
Addressing the Student Mental Health Crisis
Ending Sexualized Violence on Post-Secondary Campuses
Preserving and Revitalizing Indigenous Languages
The AMS of UBC, the Alliance of BC Students, and UVSS

The Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia - Vancouver, the Alliance of British Columbia Students, and the University of Victoria Students’ Society collectively represent over 155,000 students across British Columbia and are incorporated under the Societies Act. In our efforts to improve the quality of students’ educational, social, and personal lives, we advocate for affordable, accessible, and equitable post-secondary education in BC. This joint submission is an effort to demonstrate the collective needs of students as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Several immediate steps can be taken by the province to achieve those goals. As a result, the AMS of UBC, the ABCS, and the UVSS are jointly recommending the following:

**Mental Health**
Increased investments and resources for a more extensive and robust peer-support mental health network at post-secondary institutions across the province.

**Mental Health**
More funding and resources for the regular training and education of on-campus mental health providers to ensure services are culturally safe and competent.

**Sexual Violence Prevention**
*Allocate $5 million to address sexualized and gender-based violence year-over-year for the next three (3) years.*

**Sexual Violence Prevention**
Funding dedicated to ending gender-based and sexualized violence at PSIs should take into account the population size of each institution, as well as the existing supports in place at each PSI.

**Indigenous Student Support**
Establish standing funding to support reconciliation, Indigenization, and cultural revitalization efforts at post-secondary institutions through continued investments in an Indigenous Language Fluency Degree Framework and the Indigenous-led development of Indigenous Language Programs at post-secondary institutions across British Columbia.
Mental health is a key determinant of wellbeing, and it is inextricably intertwined with other aspects of health, such as social, economic, and physical wellness. Engaging in day-to-day activities—like working, studying, socializing, or even just getting out of bed in the morning—can be extremely challenging, and sometimes impossible, when struggling with mental illness.

Access to mental health services is crucial for the wellbeing and success of students. Inadequate mental health resources and supports has been a key concern of post-secondary students for decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue, and highlighted the critical mental health needs of students. It is vital that we change the current context of the mental health landscape to truly get in front of the problem and prevent further mental health crises. When students feel more supported in terms of their mental health, they are more likely to remain engaged in their academics and achieve graduation.\(^1\)

Studies have found that post-secondary students are at, “high risk for developing mental health issues” and currently thousands of students are struggling with mental illness across BC post-secondary campuses.\(^2\) Experts have identified several key themes surrounding student mental health at Canadian Universities, including:

- **Stigma of Mental Illness**
- **Campus Culture Related to Mental Health**
- **Mental Health Services Available, and Barriers to Mental Health Services on Campus**
- **Accommodations for Students’ Mental Health Needs**
- **Student Mental Health Coping Strategies**

In light of these highlighted themes, we are asking for a stronger commitment in the 2022 provincial budget to ensure that all students can get access to the mental health support they need. By providing culturally safe mental health resources and dedicating funding for peer-support and community strengthening programs, students struggling with mental health will be safer, better supported, and by extension, more committed to their academics.

There is a breadth of evidence demonstrating that peer support is an incredibly valuable and an effective form of supporting students’ mental health. The Mental Health Commission of Canada released their landmark report *Making the Case for Peer Support* in 2010, which brought together both literature and data from community consultations with people who had lived experience of mental health problems from across Canada.\(^4\) This report found that peer support services led to reductions in hospitalizations for mental health problems, reductions in symptom distress, and brought forth improvements in social supports and quality of life.\(^5\)
Peer support offers unique and effective opportunities for post-secondary students to address student-specific mental health issues.

The provincial government has recognized the importance of the role that peer support plays on post-secondary campuses. In 2019, the province provided $1 million to BCampus to research a provincial peer-training curriculum. This work led to the development of a curriculum for peer support worker training and established standards of practice across a range of disciplines.

Despite this investment, there still remain gaps for post-secondary institutions in being able to implement and operate peer support services. Unless post-secondary institutions are provided with dedicated funding, they will be unable to effectively implement these resources and curriculums.

Increased funding to university and college campuses for the implementation of these types of peer support services would allow post-secondary institutions to better meet the recommendations of BCcampus when it comes to peer support service delivery. These recommendations include:

- Paying peer supporters, valuing their contributions and work rather than an expectation that is voluntary
- Addressing other barriers to diverse representation, especially for under-represented communities
- Supporting peers to hold leadership positions
- Meeting people where they are at
- Individualizing the process for each campus community

In order for mental health services to be accessible for post-secondary students, services need to be culturally safe and competent, especially for those who face multiple systemic barriers and marginalization. Unfortunately, existing services on campuses often do not meet these necessary criteria, which means they are often unable to fully serve those students who need support the most. Additionally, limited diversity among faculty, staff, and administration often deters or alienates students from equity-seeking communities from accessing support services as they fear that they will not be understood or supported.

Funding dedicated to the ongoing training and education of on-campus service providers can increase the cultural safety and competency of mental health services, as well as increase the safety, equity, and inclusion of post-secondary institutions across BC. In 2020, the UVSS, in partnership with the Students of Colour Collective and UVic Pride, conducted community-based research with BIPOC students regarding mental health at the University of Victoria. This project was conducted to learn about the barriers, gaps, and opportunities to improve campus services for BIPOC students. Students strongly expressed that having the opportunity to see BIPOC counsellors would increase the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health services. Training targeted to improving the cultural safety and competency of mental health services is crucial, and this must come alongside hiring diverse staff, faculty, and administrators.
Ending Sexualized Violence on Post-Secondary Campuses

**Recommendation 1:** Allocate $5 million dollars to address sexualized and gender-based violence year-over-year for the next three (3) years.

**Recommendation 2:** Funding dedicated to ending gender-based and sexualized violence at PSIs should take into account the population size of each institution, as well as the existing supports in place at each PSI.

BC Students have been calling for increased action to address sexualized violence at PSIs for decades, and we are proud to see important steps being taken by the government to combat this issue. The introduction of Bill 23 in 2016, which mandated that PPSIs in BC establish and implement stand-alone sexual misconduct policies, was a historic step forward in addressing sexual violence on post-secondary campuses. In 2019 we also saw an investment of $760,000 from the Ministry of Advanced Education to support a number of initiatives on campuses, such as educational resources and policy tools, geared to eradicating this violence.

However, more needs to be done. One in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault during their lifetime, and studies estimate that between 15-25% of women in North America will be sexually assaulted during their time at post-secondary. The risk of experiencing sexual violence on university and college campuses increases for those who experience multiple forms of identity-based marginalization, including Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and transgender women. And, unlike other crimes, sexual assault is not decreasing. Victimization rates from 2004 to 2014 declined for all crimes except sexual assault, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) have dramatically increased.

Now, Bill 23 has been in effect since May 19, 2017, and while all post-secondary institutions in BC have now implemented stand-alone sexual violence policies, there has been variation to the degree to which these policies have been successful. Many institutions had to navigate implementing infrastructure that did not previously exist, such as creating education and prevention programming, setting up dedicated offices to deal specifically with issues of sexual violence, and providing support services to survivors (with provisions for reporting and investigations) in a trauma-informed manner. This has been a complex undertaking, and it is important to recognize the financial resources that have been put behind this.

In consultation with members of the ABCS, as well as the AMS of UBC and the UVSS, we have heard the call for increased funding towards sexualized and gender-based violence prevention and support in post-secondary education from over 155,000 student voices. This is in addition to the existing organizations that have been working tirelessly to support survivors like Students for Consent Culture (SFCC), the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC), a community of practice comprised of students, faculty and staff and many other voices all over BC who are already dedicating their time and energy to this work.

While students are spending less time on campus due to the pandemic, sexualized and gender-based violence continues to
occur at high rates. A Statistics Canada report released in November 2020 found that 10% of women were very or extremely concerned about violence in the home. The health measures put in place in BC to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are an essential part of public safety, however, these restrictions have caused many people to become further isolated and effectively trapped in abusive home environments. In BC, Battered Women’s Support Services saw an increase of 300% in calls to their crisis line after the initial pandemic restrictions were lifted and women were better able to leave their homes to make calls.

Statistics Canada also reported on the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ2+ youth, and how many of these challenges have been exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. LGBTQ2+ students and youth face higher rates of income inequality, financial insecurity, and housing insecurity. These unique challenges, especially that of housing insecurity, have left LGBTQ2+ youth vulnerable, for example, “LGBTQ2+ youth may be forced to isolate at home with homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic family members, and alternative housing options may not be available or affordable”, violence may also be present in these hostile environments.

As students, staff, and faculty return to campus at varying paces across the province, our extensive consultation with students and workers revealed the recognition that this transition will bring a new influx of survivors of sexualized violence to these existing supports.

The recurring discussions with SFCC, SASC and a community of practice with workers from PSI’s across the province included sessions addressing the current funding, the gaps and limitations of this funding and resulted in a unanimous call for a significant increase. This increase can fund a necessary needs based assessment, plain language assessments on existing policy, as well as ensuring those who partake in this emotional and heavy work are compensated well and that those who are often volunteering their time can see some form of compensation for this necessary work. Moreover, existing educational resources, tools and programs require continuous funding for maintenance and growth.

This partnership of students of the ABCS, the AMS of UBC and the UVSS, representing over 155 000 student voices have consulted various organizations and communities that have, and continue, to work in incredibly challenging conditions to support survivors. These projects are still ongoing, and far more work still needs to be done. This funding has not been renewed since 2019 and there is no guarantee that further investments will be made. There is still far too much work to be done for this investment not to be renewed and increased. Providing ongoing and consistent support to these projects will allow those involved to develop longer-term plans and improve on existing work.
Preserving and Revitalizing Indigenous Languages

Recommendation 1: Establish standing funding to support reconciliation, Indigenization, and cultural revitalization efforts at post-secondary institutions through continued investments in an Indigenous Language Fluency Degree Framework and the Indigenous-led development of Indigenous Language Programs at post-secondary institutions across British Columbia.

A key part of enacting reconciliation at public post-secondary institutions (PPSIs) is ensuring that post-secondary education is accessible to Indigenous learners and honours and recognizes all aspects of Indigenous culture—especially Indigenous languages. The importance of including Indigenous language programs at PPSIs has been recognized by Indigenous communities and experts for decades, with Article 16 of the TRC18 calling upon post-secondary institutions to, “create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.”

Restricting Indigenous languages has been a key tool in the colonization and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada. For decades, the Indian Act forbade First Nations from speaking their native languages and these destructive, colonial policies have directly caused the critical endangerment, and erasure, of Indigenous languages across the country.20

Unfortunately, this is not a new issue. Indigenous communities and organizations have been vocal and have been warning governments about this destruction for years. Indeed, in 1998, the Assembly of First Nations declared a state of emergency on First Nations languages21, calling on the government of Canada to act immediately and, “to make a commitment to provide the resources necessary to reverse First Nation language loss and to prevent the extinction of our languages.”

Words are memory
a window in the present
a coming to terms with meaning
history made into now
a surge in reclaiming
the enormity of the past.


Language is our lifeline. It’s how we connect and tell our stories. It’s integral to our identity, survival and history.


Historically, the Government of British Columbia has been a provincial leader in legislating reconciliatory practices. In 2019, BC made history as the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement and align its laws with UNDRIP\textsuperscript{22}. Additionally, the provincial government has also already taken action to support Indigenous languages, through the First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) as well as in investments made under the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training.

The FPCC offers several community-based programs geared to the preservation and revitalization of First Nations languages, which are summarized in Table 1\textsuperscript{23}. In 2012, the Ministry of Advanced Education implemented the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, and one of the guiding principles of this long-term educational plan is: “First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and cultures are critical components of quality educational programming and are essential to support the success of Aboriginal learners”\textsuperscript{24}. The Ministry of Advanced Education also developed the Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) in the late 2010’s, which provided additional start-up funding to PPSIs to implement innovative new programs to meet the unique academic, social, and cultural needs of Aboriginal learners. Several Indigenous language initiatives have since been started by PPSIs under this plan, which are summarized in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Program Summary</th>
<th>Program Purpose</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Endangered Languages Project</td>
<td>This is a collaborative project that utilizes technology to catalogue, document, and teach endangered languages through an online website.</td>
<td>This website aims to foster the exchange of information related to at-risk languages and educate people about the value of Indigenous knowledge.</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities in BC and across the globe. Community and academic oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Gathering and Sharing Grants</td>
<td>These are grants to support language revitalization between Indigenous communities in BC through community-to-community mentorships.</td>
<td>This program provides funding so communities can connect and share language successes, tools and ideas.</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities in BC. Community oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Revitalization Planning</td>
<td>This program provides funding, resources and coaching to Indigenous communities in BC to develop plans for Indigenous language revitalization.</td>
<td>The purpose of this program is to support Indigenous communities in B.C. to develop comprehensive, long-term plans for the revitalization and strengthening of their languages.</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities in BC. Community oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Voices</td>
<td>This is a grant-based program that provides online language resources to help communities document their language for future generations.</td>
<td>The goal of this is to provide support to Indigenous communities in BC that want to document their language.</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities in BC. Community oriented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Indigenous language programs offered by the First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC). This table provides a high level overview of some of the major programs the FPCC runs relating to Indigenous Languages. More information can be found at: Indigenous Languages Arts Cultures BC | First Peoples’ Cultural Council (fpcc.ca)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPSI</th>
<th>ASP Initiative</th>
<th>Initiative Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capilano University</td>
<td>Aboriginal Language and Culture Certificate</td>
<td>The 30-credit certificate is designed to give introductory knowledge of language and culture; an understanding of composition and First Nations literature; 23 phonetics, language description and analytical skills; and storytelling ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Mountain College (CMTN)</td>
<td>First Nations Language Revitalization Conference</td>
<td>The College partnered with the First Nations Council to host a Language Revitalization Conference within the CMTN College region. CMTN management, staff, faculty and students are encouraged to attend and participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Island College</td>
<td>Nuu-chah-nulth Language Course - Aboriginal Transition Program</td>
<td>Development of two Adult Basic Education Provincial-level language courses in Nuu-chah-nulth language, followed by the development of the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Transitions program with a Language and culture focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Victoria</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization (BEDILR)</td>
<td>This BEDILR will provide the next step for community-based Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization cohorts to ladder into a degree program leading to teacher certification.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Initiatives funded by the Aboriginal Services Plan (ASP) at PPSIs across BC. This table provides a high level overview of some of the major initiatives the ASP has funded relating to Indigenous Languages. More information can be found at: Indigenous Post-Secondary Education & Training - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca).
These smaller scale Indigenous language programs have been incredibly successful at their respective institutions. However, **there still exists a wide gap between establishing these one-off language programs** and establishing a province-wide degree framework for Indigenous Languages Degrees. There have been extraordinary efforts to bridge this gap, with exciting developments at the University of British Columbia’s Okanagan campus with the establishment of the Bachelor of Nsyilxcn Language Fluency (or BNLF) program.

The creation of the BNLF program originated from the work between the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) along with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) on a different education certificate. These institutions discussed the need to develop a post-secondary degree in Nsyilxcn—the language spoken by members of the Syilx Okanagan Nation—to operate alongside the community to provide both comprehensive and high-quality education in Nsyilxcn and to **promote new, fluent speakers with a deep understanding of the language, culture, and customs**\(^{25}\). The FNESC and IAHLA went on to create the guiding principles that would be needed to create such a program, ultimately leading to the development of an Indigenous Language Proficiency/Fluency Degree Framework by Dr. Jeanette Armstrong. Utilizing this framework, UBCO and NVIT were able to create the BNLF to be a comprehensive and culturally informed academic initiative, serving as a precedent for post-secondary institutions across British Columbia.

Cost-out figures for the UBCO Bachelor of Indigenous Language Fluency (Nsyilxcn) 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Faculty Revenue and Funding</td>
<td>$30,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Salary Expense</td>
<td>$238,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Salary Expenses</td>
<td>$21,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Net Position</td>
<td>$228,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Cumulative Net Position (Break-Even)</td>
<td>$313,926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the Ministry of Advanced Education made a $2 million investment to aid in this remarkable work. This was, however, a one-time funding injection, and **there is currently no standing funding for the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages** for BC PPSIs. With funding being a key component to ensuring that there are adequate resources to aid in the preservation of indigenous languages, and Article 13 of UNDRIP stating that Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize their oral traditional languages\(^{26}\), **it is critical that standing funding be made available to PPSIs and Indigenous communities who wish to create programs** which contribute to the preservation of their respective languages.

While the province has made great strides in enacting reconciliation, to respond to the urgency of this situation, efforts to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages must be multi-faceted, comprehensive, and immediate. The extraordinary and innovative **work done by Indigenous communities, organizations, Elders and activists across the province is truly incredible**; however, as the TRC Call to Action mandates, this work must also be taken up by post-secondary institutions and the provincial government **in coordination with the respective Indigenous communities**.
About Us

**The AMS of UBC** represents over 58,000 undergraduate and graduate students at the University of British Columbia’s Vancouver campus. Our mission is to improve the quality of educational, social, and personal lives of the students of UBC and its Affiliate Colleges.

**The Alliance of BC Students (ABCS)** is a coalition of five different student associations across British Columbia advocating at the provincial level for accessible and affordable post-secondary education in BC. Collectively, we represent over 80,000 undergraduate, graduate, and trades students. Our member associations include: the Langara Students’ Union, the Kwantlen Student Association, the University of Fraser Valley Student Union Society, the UBC Graduate Students’ Society, and the Capilano Students’ Union.

**The University of Victoria Students’ Society** represents over 19,000 students at the University of Victoria. Our mission is to be a leader in providing high-quality accessible services, advocacy, and events that enhance the student experience and to build a campus community that embodies our values.

Land Acknowledgement

The AMS of UBC, the Alliance of BC Students, and the University of Victoria Students’ Society operate and work on the traditional and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Sélílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ Nations. It is on their territory that we advocate for an affordable, accessible, and equitable post-secondary education. It is essential that we all collectively work towards meaningful and collaborative reconciliation.


25 UBC News: *UBC Okanagan to offer Canada’s first bachelor’s degree of Indigenous language fluency.* Accessed September, 2021: UBC Okanagan News (news.ubc.ca)