

**IN.BUSINESS PACIFIC REGION OPENING CONFERENCE  
NOVEMBER 27-28, 2015, VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY, NANAIMO, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

In.Business: A National Mentorship Program for Indigenous Youth is a mentorship program that uses social media, smart technology, Aboriginal mentors, and in-person conferences to educate Aboriginal high school students about business. In.Business was established in 2011 by the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies at Cape Breton University (CBU). The Nova Scotia pilot of the In.Business program (the Business Network for Aboriginal Youth) was comprised of 30 students and six mentors from across Nova Scotia. In 2015, In.Business expanded nationally and is now comprised of 275 students and 40 mentors from across Canada, and includes students from every province and territory. In.Business is made possible by the generous financial support from Indigenous and Northern Affairs and various other government, private, and corporate contributors.

**The Journey**

The Pacific region includes students, mentors, and peer mentors from British Columbia and Alberta. From mid-September to early-October, presentations were made at 22 high schools across the region. Applications to the In.Business program were received from 99 students attending 32 high schools. Following the application process, which involved evaluating students' two-page application and a recommendation form, 54 students were selected with representation from 14 high schools (shown in map below) and 27 Aboriginal communities. Forty-seven students attended the opening conference in Nanaimo, BC. Leading up to the opening conference, students introduced themselves electronically via the In.Business Facebook group. Upon arrival, the day before the conference, students made their own name tags, and took part in ice breaker activities and interactive games.



**LOCATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOLS**



**LOCATION OF ALBERTA SCHOOLS**

**DAY 1 HIGHLIGHTS**

A traditional welcome was given by Vancouver Island University Elder in Residence, Gary Manson to the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The Honourable Judith Guichon, BC Lieutenant Governor and the Honourable John Rustad, BC Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation were in attendance and gave opening remarks to students and guests. Students then took a tour of Vancouver Island University, which was hosted by student ambassadors. During lunch, students were also treated to an inspiring talk and performance from Sirreal, a local hip-hop artist. In the afternoon, students took part in a tour of several businesses including: Strong Nation Books, an Aboriginal-owned bookstore, Pro-Elvis Jumpsuits, Industrial Paints and Plastics and Top Drawer Graphics. In the evening, students attended a Vancouver Island University's women's volleyball game, and went 10-pin bowling.



**Intro Videos** – Prior to the conference, students were asked to prepare a short video introducing themselves to the group. With very little guidelines for this challenge, students were asked to explain a little bit about themselves and their community, and why they applied for this program. The videos provided an opportunity for students and mentors to learn about the other people they would be interacting with for the next several months. The videos were very well done! To see for yourself, [click here!](#)

## DAY 2 HIGHLIGHTS



**Pitch It! Contest** – In the business world, getting approved for a loan is sometimes a very competitive process. Students were instructed to work in their groups with the guidance of a mentor to develop a pitch for an innovative business idea. In the scenario they were given, due to an economic recession, there were very limited funds available for business loans. In fact, there was only enough money to approve one loan, which meant teams had to convince judges that their idea was the best idea. Each group worked together to brainstorm ideas for their proposal and then made a 2 minute pitch. Under the mentorship of Cody Hodgson, the “In.Business Grizzlies” teamed up with the “In.Business Orcas,” to win the Pitch It team challenge. Their winning idea was an interactive Youth Activity Centre. Members of the

winning team (pictured from l-r) included: Kariya Bruised Head, Lord Beaverbrook High School; Echohawk Lavallee, Britannia Outreach; Braeden Male, Victoria High; Georgia Thorne (not shown), Cowichan Secondary; Wenonah North Peigan, Dr. E.P. Scarlett High School, Mercedes Tatoosh, Alberni District Secondary; Sierra Shade, Central Catholic High School and; Lakita Across The Mountain, Kainai High School.

The “Purdy Awards” were first handed out at our inaugural opening conference back in 2012. They are named after Purdy Crawford and are awarded at each conference to recognize special contributions to the program by students. The recipients of the Purdy Awards at the 2015/16 Pacific region opening conference were (pictured from l-r): Wenonah North Peigan, Dr. E.P. Scarlett High School; Jasmin Marston, Frances Kelsey Secondary School; Morgan Puglas, John Barsby Secondary School; Nathan Running Bird, Ernest Manning Secondary School and; Jordon Tynes, Ernest Milne Secondary School.



## SURVEY RESULTS

Before students returned home after the opening conference, they completed a survey based on their experiences over the two day conference. Some of the notable results include:

- When asked “What was your favorite part(s) of the opening conference,” 49% of responses were the “Vancouver Island University Campus tour.”
- Over 90% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement: “I found the guest speakers engaging and learned from their experiences.”
- When asked, “What topics do you hope to learn the most about while participating in this mentorship program,” public speaking, marketing, working effectively in groups, entrepreneurship and leadership/management were the five most popular responses.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

Until the group comes together again in May 2016, social media and various apps will be relied upon to keep students connected with their mentors and each other. Each student has been paired with a mentor and placed in a group with five or six other students. Students will be working on bi-weekly business challenges facilitated by their mentors. The main goal of this program is to help our students explore business opportunities and ultimately entice them to study business in the future. After spending a few days together, we are well on our way!

The 2015/16 Pacific region has representation from the following Aboriginal communities:

**Alberta:** Siksika First Nation, Kainai Blood Indian Reserve, Piikani Nation

**British Columbia:** Hupacasath First Nation, Cook's Ferry Indian Band, Lake Babine First Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Xaxli'p First Nation, Ahousaht First Nation, Cowichan First Nation, Haisla Nation, Beecher Bay First Nation, Mt. Currie First Nation, Musqueam First Nation, Gwawaenuk Tribe, Skidegate First Nation, Squamish First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, Tsawout, Tsartlip, Pacheedaht, Namgis, Cape Mudge, Nuchatlaht

**Other Provinces and Territories:** Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Misipawistik Cree Nation, James Bay Cree, Ross River

The 2015/16 Pacific region has representation from the following schools:

**Alberta:** Catholic Central High School, Father Lacombe High School, Strathmore High School, Lord Beaverbrook Secondary, Kainai High School, Ernest Manning Secondary, Dr. E.P. Scarlett High School, Piikani Nation Secondary, and James Fowler Secondary

**British Columbia:** Britannia – Outreach, Carihi High School, Cowichan Secondary, Dover Bay Secondary, Edward Milne Secondary, Frances Kelsey Secondary, John Barsby Secondary, Ladysmith Secondary, Robron Secondary, Sprectrum Secondary, Stelly's Secondary, Victoria High School, Alberni District Secondary, JN Burnett School  
Pictured below is a group photo of Pacific region students.



To view profiles, refer to our website: [Students](#) | [Mentors](#)



[www.cbuinbusiness.ca](http://www.cbuinbusiness.ca)

The  
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